

20 June 2017

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Environment Committee will be held on **THURSDAY 29 JUNE 2017** in the Council Chamber, Ebley Mill, Ebley Wharf, Stroud at **7.00 pm.**



David Hagg
Chief Executive

Please Note: This meeting will be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's internet site (www.stroud.gov.uk). By entering the Council Chamber you are consenting to being filmed. The whole of the meeting will be filmed except where there are confidential or exempt items, which may need to be considered in the absence of the press and public.

AGENDA

- 1 **APOLOGIES**
To receive apologies for absence.
- 2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
To receive declarations of interest.
- 3 **MINUTES**
To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 6 April 2017.
- 4 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**
The Chair of Committee will answer questions from members of the public submitted in accordance with the Council's procedures.
DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF QUESTIONS
Noon on MONDAY 26 JUNE 2017.
Questions must be submitted in writing to the Chief Executive, Democratic Services, Ebley Mill, Ebley Wharf, Stroud and sent by post or by Email:
democratic.services@stroud.gov.uk
- 5 **MEMBER REPORT**
 - a) Planning Review Panel.

- 6 WORK PROGRAMME**
To consider the work programme.
- 7 REPORT OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP: OUTSIDE BODIES**
The Chair will provide an update on the findings of the Task and Finish Group regarding outside bodies.
- 8 APPOINTMENTS**
a) Performance Monitoring Representatives
b) Outside Bodies
- 9 CAPITAL PROJECT MONITORING**
To consider the report on the following:
a) Stroud Valleys Initiative
b) Canal Regeneration (C2C)
c) Market Town Centres Initiative Fund
d) Wallbridge Gateway Site
e) Ebley Hydro
f) Stroud District Cycling and Walking Plan
g) Multi-Service Contract – Vehicle Replacement
- 10 ENVIRONMENT BUDGETS 2017/18**
To inform members of the details of the General Fund Revenue budgets that the committee is responsible for.
- 11 RECYCLING BANK SERVICE**
Approval is sought for the withdrawal of the Council’s recycling bank service as part of a number of multi service contract efficiency measures.
- 12 HARDWICKE NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN: PROGRESS TO REFERENDUM**
To inform members of progress regarding the Hardwicke Neighbourhood Development Plan (HNDP).
- 13 SELF BUILD AND CUSTOM HOUSEBUILDING REGISTER**
Approval is sought to introduce local connection and financial capability criteria for entry onto the Council’s Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Register and the introduction of fees.
- 14 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**
See Agenda Item 4 for deadline for submission.

Members of Environment Committee

Councillor Simon Pickering (Chair)
Councillor Paul Denney (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Chris Brine
Councillor Jim Dewey
Councillor Chas Fellows
Councillor Alison Hayward

Councillor Skeena Rathor
Councillor Haydn Sutton
Councillor Brian Tipper
Councillor Jessica Tomblin
Councillor Ken Tucker
Councillor Tim Williams

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

6 April 2017

7.02 pm – 7.40 pm

Council Chamber, Ebley Mill, Stroud

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Minutes

Membership:

Councillor Simon Pickering **	P	Councillor Sue Reed	A
Councillor Paul Denney *	P	Councillor Haydn Sutton	A
Councillor Chris Brine	P	Councillor Brian Tipper	P
Councillor Jim Dewey	P	Councillor Jessica Tomblin	P
Councillor Chas Fellows	P	Councillor Ken Tucker	P
Councillor Skeena Rathor	P	Councillor Tim Williams	A

** = Chair * = Vice Chair

P = Present

A = Absent

Officers in Attendance

Strategic Head (Development Services)	Accountant
Planning Strategy Manager	Democratic Services Officer
Policy Implementation Manager	

EC.051

APOLOGIES

There were none.

EC.052

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

EC.053

MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 February 2017 are approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

EC.054

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were none.

EC.055

WORK PROGRAMME

Three projects within the remit of Committee are included within the Council's capital programme, namely:-

- Wallbridge and realm enhancement scheme

- Cycling and walking plan
- Town centre support fund

There is an expectation that the Performance Monitoring Champions attend meetings regarding these three projects with the Strategic Head (Development Services). Progress on these projects will be reported to committee.

The Chair confirmed that a Task and Finish Group had been set up to review outside bodies and they would be discussed by the Community Services and Licensing Committee in June. Committee would also have the opportunity to be involved in a policy document for Salmon Springs.

RESOLVED **To note the work programme.**

EC.056 **BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2016/17 – REPORT 3**

The Accountant presented the above report outlining the forecast of the outturn position against the revenue budget and capital programme for 2016/17.

RESOLVED **To note the outturn forecast for the General Fund Revenue budget and the Capital programme for this Committee.**

**RECOMMENDED
TO STRATEGY
AND RESOURCES
COMMITTEE** **That the provisional carry forward as set out in paragraph 8 are approved (subject to the outturn position).**

EC.057 **PLANNING OBLIGATIONS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD)**

The Planning Strategy Manager outlined the above report, stating that this document would sit alongside the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which had now been implemented. The key focus of the SPD was to clearly set out the contributions towards affordable housing and local infrastructure the Council expects from a developer early in the negotiation process. He confirmed that the SPD was fully compliant with Government legislation. Development Control Officers had had an input into the SPD, as with all policy documentation.

The Strategic Head (Development Services) confirmed that CIL payments from planning permissions granted after 3 April 2017 would be allocated to those infrastructure schemes on the Regulation 123 List prioritised by the Council.

RESOLVED **(a) To adopt the Planning Obligations document set out in Appendix A as a Supplementary Planning Document.**
(b) To approve the responses to the consultees set out in Appendix B.

EC.058 **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

There were none.

The meeting ended at 7.40 pm.

Chair

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
29 JUNE 2017

**AGENDA
ITEM NO**

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WORK PROGRAMME

Date of meeting	Matter to be considered (ie insert report/project title)	Notes (eg lead member and officer)
14.09.17	Work Programme 2017/18	Leads: Chair and Strategic Head (Development Services)
	Capital Project Monitoring a) Stroud Valleys Initiative b) Canal Regeneration (C2C) c) Market Town Centres Initiative Fund d) Wallbridge Gateway Site e) Ebley Hydro f) Stroud District Cycling & Walking Plan g) Multi-Service Contract – Vehicle Replacement	Strategic Head (Dev Services) Canal Project Manager Strategic Head (Dev Services) Strategic Head (Dev Services) Strategic Head (Dev Services) Strategic Head (Dev Services) Strategic Head (Customer Services)
	Member Reports a) Performance Monitoring b) Stroud Concordat c) Planning Review Panel	Leads: Cllrs Cllrs Cllr N Studdert-Kennedy
	Budget Monitoring Report 2017/18	Lead: Accountancy Manager
	Local Plan Review: Issues Consultation	Lead: Planning Strategy Manager
	Draft Green Infrastructure Strategic Framework	Lead: Principal Planning Officer (Planning Strategy)
	Severn Estuary Mitigation Strategy	Lead: Principal Planning Officer (Planning Strategy)
	Stonehouse Neighbourhood Development Plan	Lead: Planning Strategy Manager
	14.12.17 (Budget)	Work Programme 2017/18
Capital Project Monitoring a) Stroud Valleys Initiative b) Canal Regeneration (C2C) c) Market Town Centres Initiative Fund d) Wallbridge Gateway Site e) Ebley Hydro f) Stroud District Cycling & Walking Plan g) Multi-Service Contract – Vehicle Replacement		Leads: Strategic Head (Dev Services) Canal Project Manager Strategic Head (Dev Services) Strategic Head (Dev Services) Strategic Head (Dev Services) Strategic Head (Dev Services) Strategic Head (Customer Services)
Member Reports a) Planning Review Panel b) Performance Monitoring		Leads: Cllr N Studdert-Kennedy Cllrs
Budget Monitoring Report 2017/18		Lead: Accountancy Manager
Heritage Strategy		Lead: Senior Planning Strategy Officer
Adoption of Green Infrastructure Strategy		Lead: Principal Planning Officer (Planning Strategy)

Date of meeting	Matter to be considered (ie insert report/project title)	Notes (eg lead member and officer)
08.02.18	Work Programme 2017/18	Leads: Chair and Strategic Head (Development Services)
	Capital Project Monitoring a) Stroud Valleys Initiative b) Canal Regeneration (C2C) c) Market Town Centres Initiative Fund d) Wallbridge Gateway Site e) Ebley Hydro f) Stroud District Cycling & Walking Plan g) Multi-Service Contract – Vehicle Replacement	Leads: Strategic Head (Dev Services) Canal Project Manager Strategic Head (Dev Services) Strategic Head (Dev Services) Strategic Head (Dev Services) Strategic Head (Dev Services) Strategic Head (Customer Services)
	Member Reports a) Planning Review Panel b) Performance Monitoring	Leads: Cllr N Studdert-Kennedy Cllrs
05.04.18	Work Programme 2017/18	Leads: Chair and Strategic Head (Development Services)
	Capital Project Monitoring a) Stroud Valleys Initiative b) Canal Regeneration (C2C) c) Market Town Centres Initiative Fund d) Wallbridge Gateway Site e) Ebley Hydro f) Stroud District Cycling & Walking Plan g) Multi-Service Contract – Vehicle Replacement	Strategic Head (Dev Services) Canal Project Manager Strategic Head (Dev Services) Strategic Head (Dev Services) Strategic Head (Dev Services) Strategic Head (Dev Services) Strategic Head (Customer Services)
	Member Reports a) Planning Review Panel b) Performance Monitoring	Leads: Cllr N Studdert-Kennedy Cllrs
	Budget Monitoring Report 2017/18	Lead: Accountancy Manager

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

**AGENDA
ITEM NO**

29 JUNE 2017

7

Report Title	REPORT OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP: OUTSIDE BODIES
Purpose of Report	To consider recommendations by the Task and Finish Group regarding the representation of Members on Outside Bodies.
Decision(s)	The Committee RESOLVES to approve the recommendation made by the Outside Bodies Task and Finish Group.
Consultation and Feedback	A questionnaire was provided for all Member Representatives on Outside Bodies to complete.
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. David Stanley, Accountancy Manager Tel: 01453 754100 Email: david.stanley@stroud.gov.uk
Legal Implications	If the Committee agrees not to continue with representatives on the bodies listed in Table 2, there will not be any right for Members to receive travel and subsistence allowances as part of the Member Allowances Scheme. Karen Trickey, Legal Services Manager Tel: 01453 754369 Email: karen.trickey@stroud.gov.uk
Report Author	Joanne Jordan, Strategic Head Customer Services Tel: 01453 754005 Email: joanne.jordan@stroud.gov.uk
Options	Remain the same. No changes to current appointments.
Performance Management Follow Up	Representatives are appointed annually at committee.

1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In June 2016 it was decided that a joint Task & Finish Group should be set up to review the Outside Bodies allocation for Community Services and Licensing Committee and Environment Committee for the civic year 2017/18.
- 1.2 A similar report will be considered at Community Services and Licensing Committee on 27 June 2017.
- 1.3 There is one Outside Body representative to be considered at Housing Committee for Home Start.

2. Task and Finish Group

- 2.1 The Task and Finish Group was made up of 4 Members – Councillor John Jones, Councillor Simon Pickering, Councillor Steve Robinson, Councillor Ken Tucker, and 2 Officers – Joanne Jordan, Strategic Head of Customer Services, and Barry Wyatt, Strategic Head of Development Services.
- 2.2 The Group was chaired by Councillor Simon Pickering and met twice to consider the existing number of Outside Bodies and the existing number of representatives on each of those Outside Bodies.
- 2.3 The Group consulted with each member representative of an Outside Body by asking them to complete a questionnaire. Each response was used to decide if appointing a member to an Outside Body was of value and benefit to the Council and the residents of the District.

3. CONCLUSION / RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Task and Finish Group recommended changes to the existing Outside Bodies and representatives after analysing the questionnaires.
- 3.2 Table 1 shows the recommended Outside Bodies that should continue with member representative(s) from Stroud District Council.

Table 1

Organisation	Current Representatives (reps)	Current number of reps	Recommended number of reps for 2017/18
Berkeley Nuclear Stakeholders	Councillor Brian Tipper	1 + 1 vacancy	1
Cotswold AONB	Councillor Nick Hurst	1	1
Lower Severn Drainage Board	Councillor John Jones	1	1
Minchinhampton & Rodborough Commons Advisory Committee	Councillor Nick Hurst	1	1
Stroud Concordat	Councillor Simon Pickering	1	1
Stroud Valleys Project Board	Councillor Nigel Cooper	1	1
Rural SUDS Steering Group	Councillor Simon Pickering	1	1

- 3.3 Table 2 shows recommended Outside Bodies that should not continue with member representative(s) from Stroud District Council. However, this recommendation does not suggest that a member cannot be a representative on an Outside Body if they would like to do so, in a personal capacity.
- 3.4 The Task & Finish group acknowledges the member representative support on Outside Bodies.

Table 2

Organisation	Current Representatives (reps)	Current number of reps	Recommended number of reps for 2017/18
Tyndale Monument	Councillor Ken Tucker	1	0
Wessex Water	Councillor Jim Dewey	1	0

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

**AGENDA
ITEM NO**

29 JUNE 2017

9

Report Title	CAPITAL PROJECT MONITORING
Purpose of Report	To inform the Committee of progress on capital projects within its remit and to recommend decisions on three projects to members.
Decision(s)	<p>The Committee resolves to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Discontinue the investigation work in to the Stroud Valleys Initiative and make the modelling work done by JBA consulting available to the Environment Agency in order to assist in the updating of the 2006 SFRA model. b. Agree the scope of the Stroud District Cycling and walking plan as set out in Appendix A. c. Suspend further investigatory work on the Ebley Mill Hydro project, pending a change in circumstances that improves both the return on the investment and gaining control over the land asset. d. Note the other project updates within the report.
Consultation and Feedback	Details are contained within the body of the report.
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	<p>Council approved the Capital budget proposals totalling £20.6m at their meeting in February 2017. This committee has oversight and responsibility for the capital projects outlined in the report.</p> <p>This report sets out some proposed changes to profiling of the Multi-Service vehicle replacement programme with an additional £84k required this financial year over and above the £250k allocated. Adjustments will be made to future year's allocations and may necessitate a further decision once the outcome from the efficiency work with Ubico has concluded.</p> <p>The Capital programme assumed a funding position based on the budget profiles set out in the February 2017 MTFP. If projects are delayed or are not able to achieve the desired outcomes and do not progress, then the capital budget would remain unspent and not reallocated to additional projects without consideration by the council as part of the 2018/19 budget setting process. Any change in expenditure outside of the agreed budget must be reported separately.</p> <p>David Stanley – Accountancy Manager (s151 Officer) Tel 01453 754100 Email david.stanley@stroud.gov.uk</p>

Legal Implications

Stroud Valleys Initiative

Any funding bids which have been made with the Initiative included will need reviewing (to see whether they require revising, rescinding or funding repaying) following any decision to discontinue the work.

The position in respect of intellectual property rights (e.g. copyright) will need considering in respect of sharing with the Environmental Agency (or any other body) the work done by JBA.

Stroud District cycling and walking plan

The Local Plan sets out the policies which planning applications should adhere to unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise; this will include the references to cycle and walking routes where appropriate.

Infrastructural financial contributions (including for the canal and transport) from developments are now collected through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule. Where the Schedule is not applicable obligations sought from developments through Section 106 Agreements will need to meet the legal tests of being necessary to make the proposed development acceptable in planning terms, directly related to the proposed development and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development; and, not had five or more separate planning obligations already provided towards its funding.

There are no other specific legal implications. However, as each project/route comes forward it may have its own separate legal implications which will be dealt with in their individual reports as and when they come to committee.

Ebley Mill Hydro project

There are no significant legal implications in suspending this project.

Note other projects within the report

The remainder of the report is for information purposes only and there are no specific legal implications.

However, each individual capital project will have its own separate legal implications which will be dealt with in their individual reports as and when they come to committee.

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Options	Part of the report is for information only. Any decision to re define projects outside of the scope of the capital programme would need to be recommended to Strategy and Resources Committee.
Performance Management Follow Up	Update reports are to be supplied to this committee on a regular basis
Background Papers/ Appendices	<p>Background reports on the Stroud Valleys initiative and Ebley Mill Hydro have been summarised in this report.</p> <p>Appendix A - The Cycling and Walking Plan Scoping Document</p>

Introduction

1. The following report provides an executive summary of each of the Capital Projects within the remit of the Environment Committee.
2. The purpose of this report is both to advise the Committee on progress with the capital projects and to recommend decisions to members. Where two of the projects are recommended to be discontinued/suspended it is on the basis that the funds identified for these projects would then become subject to decisions by Strategy and Resources Committee.

Stroud Valleys Initiative

3. SDC received a preliminary report on the feasibility of the Stroud Valleys Initiative project from JBA (our consultants on this project) with information to support the ESIF bid that was to help fund the project.
4. Information supplied in the preliminary report identified sites where interventions would be necessary in order to attenuate adequate volumes of

water to affect potential flood flows in the River Frome. It lacked the final cost benefit analysis that the full feasibility study should deliver.

5. It is clear from the report that there is only one site where any significant intervention could be made, immediately up stream of Wimberley Mills. The intervention would be to build a dam wall and bund across the river and valley, including the canal corridor as far as the railway line, with a control structure in order to attenuate up to 68,000m³ of storm water in the event of a major flood event.
6. While the water attenuated would mitigate any flood volumes that may be displaced if potential development sites downstream were developed. It would not be enough to reduce flood risk to properties currently at risk of flooding.
7. In order to evaluate the impact of such a structure it was considered in comparison to a scheme in Pickering designed to achieve similar flood management objectives, which has been implemented. As well as being able to show what the visual impact of such a scheme might be it also demonstrates both initial implementation and ongoing maintenance costs, in excess of £2m for capital build with a further £0.5m for design and project management with ongoing maintenance in excess of £7k/year. This assumes planning and consenting issues would present no significant constraint, which has not been explored as part of the study.
8. The comparison indicates that the cost would make the project beyond the scope of Stroud District Council even with funding through ESIF. There is no scope for funding through other schemes such as Flood Defence 'Grant in Aid' as the project would only offer benefit to future development and not to property currently at risk.
9. An earlier report from the JBA indicated considerable scope for developing the existing flood model of the river Frome which was created in 2006. Improvements indicated significant benefit in relieving flood blight simply through updating the model. JBA's new model was able to call on evidence from major flooding events in 2007, 2012 and 2014. Through observations in these events, flaws in the extents shown in the currently accepted 2006 model are highlighted, where sites that would be expected to flood didn't. The EA would not accept JBA's new model considering various elements to be too high risk, such as the little understood groundwater conditions in the Frome valley.
10. Improvements shown in the new model suggest that a sensible way to direct funding for flood improvement would be to use them to work with the EA to update the Frome flood model and develop a better understanding of the ground water regime in the valley. A new model would describe more accurate flood extents that are likely to show reduced risk to development land compared to the current model. This may free-up development land, but would also offer a better understanding of the hydrology of the Frome valley and therefore how further flood management improvements could be achieved.

11. It is recommended that this feasibility project is discontinued and that the findings of JBA are made available to the EA in order to feed in to updating the 2006 model.

Stroud District Cycling & Walking Plan

12. The Council has allocated a sum of £300,000 to a Stroud District cycling and walking plan. The profiling of the spending is geared to reflect the need to develop a plan/strategy prior to commissioning any capital works.
13. The document at Appendix A is a draft scoping report that starts to identify policy drivers, national and local context, and a basic textural description of the route with the communities that the plan would aim to connect. Once this is agreed the project team will need to consult on the route options prior to their formalisation and produce a strategy that moves towards implementation.
14. Clearly £300,000 is not going to deliver the entirety of the routes identified but is already being promoted as match funding against a number of other funding opportunities (RDPE growth fund and GCC highway spend). The intention is that the plan is used to direct, prioritise and bid for funding over a number of years rather than solely being the conduit to spend the £300,000 currently in the budget.
15. It is recommended that members agree the scope of the project as set out in the attached document.

Wallbridge Gateway Site

16. On 13th October 2016 Strategy and Resources committee resolved: 'That the Head of Asset Management progresses discussions with Stroud Town Council, Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) and Ecotricity on the design, costs and funding of a landscaping scheme for the land at Wallbridge and implements a scheme in consultation with those parties and the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Community Services and Licensing Committee and Environment Committees'
17. A project group is already in place with representatives from the above organisations. At the latest project meeting, 24th February 2017, budget contributions were confirmed as Stroud District Council (SDC) - £90K, Stroud Town Council (STC) - £10K, Ecotricity - £90K. While land transfer from GCC to SDC has taken place for land south of the canal, the transfer of land to the north of the canal was delayed pending resolution of issues relating to the stability of the old brewery wall and the costs of required remedial work.
18. While GCC resolved not to fund the repair work they have reached agreement with the Canal Project Team to support the use of volunteers to undertake the refurbishment. This would facilitate the land transfer of this section to the district council.

19. A draft design brief has been produced by STC for comment. The brief has been circulated internally and any amendments will be agreed with partners and relevant Members before release to architectural/design practices/interested parties. This may be done by SDC or Ecotricity as part of their project contribution.

Canal Regeneration

20. The Council has allocated £3m as matched funding towards a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid to be submitted in November. The Council will be the lead partner in this bid, working closely with the Cotswold Canals Trust (CCT). The outcome of this bid is likely to be known in 2018. A successful bid would enable restoration of a 4 mile length of canal West of Stonehouse to Saul Junction; connecting Stroud to the national waterway network.
21. Some volunteer-led work has already been undertaken in advance of the bid – primarily channel clearance west of the A38 at Whitminster. CCT has recently opened a new Visitor Centre at Bond's Mill. Next month, Waterway Recovery Group volunteers will begin construction of a new bypass at Dock Lock.
22. Alongside these, several pieces of work are being commissioned which will have the effects of both enhancing the bid and removing perceived risk. These include a heritage assessment, flood risk assessment, economic and social output projections and an outline planning application in respect of the 'missing mile'. CCT's volunteer team is already working hard on the various detailed elements of the bid.

Multi-Service Contract – Vehicle Replacement

23. Council has agreed an annual budget of £250k for the period of four years 2016/17 to 2020/21, for a capital programme of vehicle replacements for services covered by the Multi Service Contract.
24. The Vehicle Replacement Programme (FRP) produced by Ubico, and agreed by officers in June 2016, is revisited each year to identify necessary changes to the fleet. These changes are determined by operational needs and the remaining useful life and economic cost of maintaining individual vehicles; in an effort to maximise productive use of fleet resources and improve service efficiencies, vehicles that have become surplus to requirements are sold and income reinvested within the fleet; the vehicle fleet currently comprises of an agreed mix of new and used vehicles.
25. Officers have undertaken the first review of the FRP with Ubico. The financing of certain vehicles will be moved from ongoing hire to long term purchases; these changes will result in corresponding revenue savings. A number of vehicles have become surplus to requirements and will be sold; income from sales has been allocated to providing replacements within the fleet. The review outcome has identified a need to pull forward a capital spend of £84k from the budgeted profile (See Table 1 below).

25.1. Table 1

26. Financial Year	27. Capital Budget	28. Required expenditure	29. Variation
30. 2017/18	31. £250,000	32. £334,000	33. £84,000

Market Town Centres Initiative Fund

34. The Council has allocated a budget of £50,000pa for 4 years totalling £200,000 to support capital projects within town centres subject to match funding coming from the host town council. Officers have yet to design and launch the funding offer which will set out qualifying criteria, it is anticipated that this will be completed by the end of August 2017 following discussions with interested Town Councils. Futures schemes may result from the ongoing study in to the future of town centres which is likely to indicate the need for investment. It is understood that Nailsworth Town Council are investigating a scheme to turn Market Street in to a pedestrianised/shared space street and Dursley Town Council are to consider opportunities.

Ebley Mill Hydro

35. Previous reports on the progress of the project have been given as part of the Carbon Management Programme updates and on the Council's performance management system 'Excelsis'.
36. While the project remains technically feasible, given the low head height of the weir, the generation potential is modest (32Kw). Combining this modest potential with the need to site the turbine on the far side of the bank on land not in the ownership of SDC and therefore pay rent at 10% of the net profit, plus the likely cost for the provision of the required fish pass (based on the BHA estimate of £5,000 per KW = £160,000), means that the likely return on investment of £485,000 would be 3.1.6% taking in to account the current FIT rate at 7.65ppkwh. This is notwithstanding that it would exceed the available budget of £362,000.
37. The above calculation assumes a contingency of £29,600 but does not include actual figures for civil works or landscaping/aesthetic enhancement.
38. The potential for SDC to acquire the ownership of the far bank which would also allow for a lower cost fish pass to be secured has been explored as part of the Stroud valleys initiative but no agreement with the owners has been reached.
39. It is recommended that the project be suspended at this stage pending any change in the ability to secure land on the far bank at a reasonable cost and/or the availability of funding support that reduces the cost to the Council and consequently improves the ROI to SDC.

Draft - Stroud District Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan – Scoping Document

Background/Drivers

1. Government published its 'Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy' on 21st April 2017, following a period of consultation. The publication of the strategy met a requirement Under the Infrastructure Act 2015.
2. The ambition for England is to make cycling and walking the natural choices for shorter journeys, or as part of a longer journey.
3. Shorter journeys such as the commute to school, college, work or leisure trips, should see cycling and walking as the norm for all people whatever their background or characteristics. To realise this goal access to safe, attractive routes for cycling and walking should be substantially increased.
4. There is recognition that the ambition will only be delivered if central government works with local government, businesses, charities, and the public and 'supports local delivery partners to identify and deliver individual and tailored interventions fit for their own local areas'.
5. Together with the strategy, government have published guidance on the preparation of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans, to help support local delivery partners.
6. The strategy measures cycling and walking activity as stages, as described in the National Travel Survey (NTS). The basic unit of travel in the NTS is a trip, which consists of one or more stages. A new stage is defined when there is a change in the form of transport. Counting cycle or walking stages rather than trips allows the inclusion of journeys that involve cycling or walking but where this is not the main form of transport (for example, cycling to a railway station to catch the train to work).
7. While the longer term ambition outlined in the strategy runs to 2040 objectives are also set out for 2020:

By 2020, we will:

- increase cycling activity, where cycling activity is measured as the estimated total number of cycle stages made
- increase walking activity, where walking activity is measured as the total number of walking stages per person
- reduce the rate of cyclists killed or seriously injured on England's roads, measured as the number of fatalities and serious injuries per billion miles cycled
- increase the percentage of children aged 5 to 10 that usually walk to school

8. With the following aims set for 2025:
- We aim to double cycling, where cycling activity is measured as the estimated total number of cycle stages made each year, from 0.8 billion stages in 2013 to 1.6 billion stages in 2025, and will work towards developing the evidence base over the next year.
 - We aim to increase walking activity, where walking activity is measured as the total number of walking stages per person per year, to 300 stages per person per year in 2025, and will work towards developing the evidence base over the next year.
 - We will increase the percentage of children aged 5 to 10 that usually walk to school from 49% in 2014 to 55% in 2025.
9. Should these targets be hit government stresses the benefits will be substantial.

'For people, it means cheaper travel and better health. For businesses, it means increased productivity and increased footfall in shops. And for society as a whole it means lower congestion, better air quality, and vibrant, attractive places and communities.'

10. National planning policy sets out a clear approach to promote sustainable transport. One of the core planning principles set out in the National Planning Policy Framework is that the planning system should actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in sustainable locations.

'Walking and cycling should be seen as transport modes in their own right and an integral part of the transport network, rather than as niche interests or town-planning afterthoughts. We need to build a local commitment together to support this national Strategy.'

Gloucestershire's Local Transport Plan (2015-2031)

11. At a more local level support for the aims of the national strategy and national planning policy is already in place as evidenced in Gloucestershire's Local Transport Plan (2015-2031) and the Stroud District Local Plan.
12. Gloucestershire County Council (GCC), as the local transport authority, has a statutory requirement under the Transport Act 2000, as amended by the Local Transport Act 2008, to have a Local Transport Plan (LTP). The LTP sets the long term strategy for transport within the county and the county council commits to actively seek funding to deliver the transport schemes it identifies. With a vision to provide *'a resilient transport network that enables sustainable economic growth by providing door to door travel choices'* the LTP has 4 objectives:
- Support sustainable economic growth
 - Enable community connectivity
 - Conserve the environment

- Improve community health and well being.

A number of challenges are recognised in relation to cycling and walking including:

- Communicating the benefits to health and reduced obesity, of active travel modes
- Delivering a transport network that enables walking and cycling for short trips
- Promote increased levels of physical activity through walking and cycling
- Providing the opportunity for all to receive cycle training
- Increasing the economic benefits of cycle tourism where feasible

13. Six separate Policy Documents have been produced outlining how different parts of the transport network will overcome challenges to deliver the LTP outcomes. Reinforcing the messages within the national strategy, for Gloucestershire, these include, under policy documents related to Cycling, Highways and Rail:

- GCC will deliver a functioning cycle network by improving cycle linkages and safeguard quiet highway connections by working with delivery partners, other agencies, and community stakeholders to identify and remove barriers (physical or psychological) to cycling
- GCC will manage cycle infrastructure in line with the Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP), the Highways Maintenance Handbook and other guidance or policies such as the updated Gloucestershire Highways Biodiversity Guidance (2015)
- GCC will liaise with Local Planning Authorities and developers to ensure connectivity between new developments and existing infrastructure and to ensure that realistic opportunities for travel choice are taken up in new developments
- GCC will contribute towards better safety, security, health and thereby longer life expectancy by reducing the risk of death, injury or illness arising from transport. This will be provided by working with partners to improve personal safety perceptions of using the transport network services and promote the use of transport to contribute to enjoyment and psychological wellbeing
- GCC will work with partners to encourage levels of physical activity by encouraging greater numbers of people to walk and cycle short distance trips and to enable children to enjoy more independent, physically active lifestyles
- GCC will support the Rights of Way and Countryside Access Improvement Plan in identifying and seeking to support measures to improve safety, accessibility and the quality of the experience for walkers, horse riders, carriage drivers and cyclists where there is an identified need
- GCC will engage with delivery partners to maximise the desirability, demand and customer experience of using Railway Stations within Gloucestershire. Station facilities need to meet existing and forecasted demand by providing safe and secure facilities for pedestrians, cyclists, bus users and car users

14. The LTP considers the county across six separate travel corridors with a “Connecting Places Strategies” (CPS) for each characterising the distinctive transport issues affecting that area and identifying transport priorities. Countywide transport priorities are also identified together with priorities by different forms of transport, and capital delivery priorities for short term, 2015 to 2021 and longer term 2021 to 2031, periods.
15. Countywide Short-term capital delivery priorities (2015 to 2021) – **cycle** includes
 - *‘countywide Cycle infrastructure improvements’* and *‘Access improvements for Stroud Town Centre’*
16. Countywide Longer term capital delivery priorities (2021 to 2031) - **Rail** include
 - *‘Enhancements at Cam and Dursley, Stonehouse and Stroud railway stations’.*
17. Countywide Longer term capital delivery priorities (2021 to 2031) – **cycle** include
 - *‘Access improvements for Cam and Dursley Greenway to Railway Station’*
 - *‘Access improvements for Cam and Dursley Greenway to Uley’*
 - *‘Access improvements to national cycle route 45, Stroud’*
 - *‘Access improvements for Cainscross roundabout, Stroud’*
 - *‘Access improvement Multi-Use Track - B4008 between Little Haresfield and Stonehouse’*
 - *‘Cycle infrastructure improvements (countywide)’*
18. Within the Stroud CPS it is recognised that the canals and their towpaths are a special feature of the Stroud Valleys and the restoration of the Cotswold Canals has the potential to provide for leisure and commuter cycle routes as do the use of disused railway lines. There is also a real desire to increase cycle use among local communities along with the promotion of leisure cycling for tourists.
19. Within the Policy Document PD 2 – Cycle, GCC states it will implement policy proposals:
 - To improve cycle linkages between and within settlements throughout Gloucestershire by working with delivery partners, other agencies, the community and stakeholders to remove barriers to cycling and consolidate the network
 - To focus investment in cycling in more developed areas and especially where new development is planned
 - To recognise the role and function of the existing quiet lane network and seek to expand this where possible to provide safe cycle linkages
 - To ensure developers assess the needs of all pedestrians and cyclists within their development design and any improvements associated with

the development. All cycle infrastructure provided within the county will be in accordance with Manual for Gloucestershire Streets (MfGS) and Cycle Facility Guidelines

- To ensure all schemes on the local highway network will be subject to appropriate context reports and audits (including Road Safety, Non-Motorised Users, Walking, Cycling and Quality Audits) before design approval
- To support the development and promotion of the leisure cycle network, and Public Rights of Way Network to encourage greater use linking centres of population
- To work in partnership with communities in identifying local transport needs and solutions (through e.g. Parish and Neighbourhood Plans)
- To work with district / borough councils to ensure that new development is well connected to the existing transport network

20. Policy Document 2.2 Cycle Asset Management commits GCC:

- To work with partners to maximise investment in the county's cycle network as funding opportunities arise. This will include working in partnership with, the Local Enterprise Partnership, district / borough councils, Parish and Town Councils, developers, Sustrans, Highways England, and Department for Transport.

21. The LTP includes a target to increase cycle use within the county by 50% from 2015 to 2031.

22. The cycle priorities for improving health and wellbeing include: Access improvement between Eastington and Nailsworth.

23. While £1.2bn is linked to the long term national Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy most of this is already allocated. Similarly the LTP sets out capital delivery priorities but states that the identification of priorities does not reflect a commitment by the county council for funding. However, the county council states they will exploit all opportunities for additional funding where the fund supports the delivery of the LTP objectives. It is also stressed that the LTP will be a living document, and will be updated and amended to reflect the adoption of local plans or national guidance.

Stroud District Local Plan - November 2015

24. Cycling and Walking is already supported within the Stroud district through the Local Plan. Delivery Policy EI13 Protecting and extending our cycle routes states:

'The Council will encourage proposals that develop and extend our cycle network. Major development should provide new cycle routes within the development and connect to nearby established cycle routes'

Development will not be permitted where it significantly harms an existing cycle route or prejudices the future implementation of the following routes:

- *The Eastington to Chalford cycle route*

- *The Eastington to Nailsworth cycle route*
 - *The Cam and Dursley cycle route (and any proposed future extension to Uley)*
 - *The National Cycle Network Route 41 (Bristol to Stratford) and Route 45 (Salisbury to Chester) which cross the District and connecting routes to and from the Stroud Valleys Pedestrian Cycle Trail and the Cam and Dursley cycle route*
 - *Any other part of the cycle network highlighted through the Local Transport Plan.*
25. Mirroring the views expressed in the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy the LP recognises that cycling is now increasingly seen as a convenient, cheap and environmentally friendly means of transport and exercise, particularly, for local journeys. As part of an integrated transport policy, the Council is keen to make sure that short journeys by cycle are facilitated by convenient and safe networks that are available to residents, work staff and visitors alike.
26. On the planning of cycle routes the LP states that the following principles should be kept in mind:
- vehicle speeds should be kept down where there are significant numbers of cyclists;
 - conflict between cycles and motor vehicles should be minimised;
 - safe and convenient crossing points should be provided at busy roads and junctions;
 - parking for cycles should be secure and convenient; and
 - potential conflict between cyclists and pedestrians should be avoided where possible.
27. The LP also discusses the role of Sustrans in the district and highlights the focus of this plan in developing shared use paths. *Sustrans continues to implement the National Cycle Network, with Route 41 (Bristol to Stratford) crossing the Severn Vale through Berkeley and Frampton and Route 45 (Salisbury to Chester) linking Nailsworth and parts of the A419 with Stroud. Parts of these routes will be useful for local journeys as well as for recreation. The District Council, in conjunction with the County Council, will investigate connecting links with these routes (some are already part funded and partially in place) through the Stroud Valleys and from Cam and Dursley. The restoration of the Cotswold Canals provides an opportunity to enhance this network.*
28. Local plan Core Policy and Allocation Policies:
- Core Policy CP5 Environmental development principles for strategic sites also includes the provision that: *'Strategic sites will be readily accessible by bus, bicycle and foot to shopping and employment opportunities, key services and community facilities'*.
 - Site Allocations Policy SA1 Stroud Valleys states that Development briefs, to be approved by the District Council, will detail the way in which the land uses and infrastructure will be developed in an integrated and co-

ordinated manner. This includes addressing Cycle and pedestrian routes along the canal and river corridors, linking up with the existing network. Similarly, development briefs, master plans or guidance for other strategic site allocations stipulate requirements to be addressed related to cycling and walking:

- SA2 West of Stonehouse: Cycle and pedestrian routes through the development, connecting Nastend and Nupend with the town centre, Stroudwater Industrial Estate and Oldends Lane and footpath links from the development to the surrounding rural network, including improvements to the canal towpath.
 - SA3 North east of Cam: Extension to the Cam and Dursley cycle route along the line of the disused railway, through to the southern edge of the site and connecting Box Road with Courthouse Gardens. Improvements to Box Road, including the provision of a lit cycleway and footpath between the A4315 and Cam and Dursley railway station.
 - SA4Hunts Grove Extension: Cycle and pedestrian routes through the development connecting with Haresfield Lane and the existing Hunts Grove development.
 - SA4a Quedgeley East: The development of the site will provide contributions to off-site highway works including public transport, pedestrian and cycle links to Gloucester city, Stonehouse and Stroud, in accordance with the recommendations of the evidence base transport assessments.
 - SA5 Sharpness Docks: Cycle and pedestrian routes through the development, connecting with Oldminster Road and the Severn Way, including the restoration of the former railway bridge link and improvements to the high level swing bridge.
 - SA5a South of Severn Distribution Park: The development of the site will provide contributions to off-site highway works including public transport, pedestrian and cycle links to Newtown, Berkeley and Dursley, and other infrastructure including flood defences and biodiversity.
 - Core Policy CP11 related to New Employment Development also carries the proviso that Permission will be granted for industrial or business development, or for the expansion or intensification of existing industrial or business uses, provided that the proposals would be readily accessible by public transport, bicycle and foot or contribute towards provision of new sustainable transport infrastructure to serve the area, in order to make the development accessible by those modes.
29. The Local Plan also maps proposed cycle routes including those that are the focus of this plan. The background commitment and support through policy at national, county and district level is then in place and also supported at the neighbourhood level within respective Neighbourhood Plans in development for e.g. Dursley, Cam, and Stonehouse.

Routes

30. The focus of this plan will be routes from Saul to Stonehouse, Stonehouse to Stroud, Stroud to Brimscombe, Stroud to Nailsworth and between Cam & Dursley & Uley. Routes will be multi user/shared, off road, as much as practicable, with newly built paths or improved surfacing, sign posting and lighting where required. Improvements to cycle parking at Cam and Dursley, Stonehouse and Stroud railway stations will be included. Quality standards will aim to replicate those required on the National Cycle Network (NCN). Projects will work with Sustrans and Gloucestershire County Council to ensure development meets appropriate standards.
31. The regeneration of the Cotswolds Canals will mean opportunities arise to share space along the canal towpath. Engagement with the Stroud Valleys Canal Company will take place to ensure such opportunities are realised and to understand where sharing space is not feasible and alternative provision required.
32. Engagement with developments in the vicinity of routes will also take place to identify where support can be provided through planning mechanisms, Community Infrastructure Levy/S106.

The Cam, Dursley and Uley Greenway

33. The Greenway will be a multiuser (shared) route linking Uley, Dursley and Cam through to Cam & Dursley railway station. In the longer term the Greenway will link through to Sustrans National Cycle Network (NCN), Route 41, at Slimbridge. Route 41 is a long distance route that when complete will connect Bristol, Gloucester, Stratford-upon-Avon and Rugby.
34. Parts of the Greenway route will, by agreement, be provided by developers and opportunities for other developments to contribute to route provision will be explored. The Greenway already has an involved project group, who have received support from key partners, including GCC and Sustrans.
35. In 2008 on behalf of Vale Vision, (the Community Partnership for Cam and Dursley), Sustrans produced: 'A Cam & Dursley Greenway: A Feasibility Study for Vale Vision'. This study has recently (March 2017) been reviewed and an informal audit of requirements made, again by Sustrans, this time on behalf of GCC.
36. The continued interest/involvement of GCC and Sustrans highlights the strong partnership working around the Greenway with a number of other parties taking an active interest. An indicative overall route has been mapped, with the full route split into sections and the current status of each section highlighted, relevant issues raised and potential actions to progress development outlined. Some of the route is already in place although the majority requires full construction, with other areas requiring repair and/or addition of signage etc. Although the Greenway as first envisaged was to be entirely off road, the practicalities of project planning have dictated that some of the route will be on the highway. Alternative routes have been

considered and this will be reviewed as part of this plan. With the likelihood being that some on road travel will be required.

37. Two sections of the Greenway are to be provided as part of developments at Littlecombe and North East of Cam. The Littlecombe development is well underway with housing and commercial build already in place, including part of the Greenway route. As part of this plan engagement with planners and developers will take place to ensure the rest of the Greenway route is built out to the agreed standard and timeframe as detailed within planning permissions.
38. The strategic allocation at North East of Cam includes the other Greenway section to be provided through development. With no permission currently in place start on site is some time off, but again engagement with planners and developer will be required to ensure the respective Greenway section is provided.

Saul to Stonehouse (Chipmans Platt)

39. The Saul to Brimscombe/Chalford route can helpfully be split into sections. The potential route from Saul though to Stonehouse (Chipmans Platt) follows what will be the line of the canal. Restoration in this area is subject to another bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (Cotswold Canals Phase 1B). Should the bid be successful further financial commitments are already in place from Stroud District Council, GCC and the Canal and River Trust (CRT). Having the canal restored would entail restoration of the towpath and having those organisations already signed up should help ensure that the towpath is delivered as a multiuser path all the way through to Saul. It could then join up with Route 41 of the National Cycle Network (NCN) and the Gloucester & Sharpness canal towpath through to Gloucester and beyond. Route 45 of the NCN runs from Saul (where it links to Route 41) through Whitminster to Stonehouse (Chipmans Platt) but the canal towpath would provide a much more direct and safer route with as much of the distance as possible off road. Achieving such a multi user route would face the same obstacles as those facing the canal restoration itself, notably navigating the Chipmans Platt roundabout, crossing the M5 and crossing the A419/A38 roundabout. Although a potential route has been suggested this should be audited to raise any other issues and potential solutions. Sustrans have helped with such an audit on the Cam and Dursley Greenway and as a partner organisation could potentially support with audits of other routes, perhaps at the instigation of the County Council.
40. It may be that the multiuser route could be implemented ahead of the canal restoration. With proper planning with the Stroud Valleys Canal Company (SVCC)/canal team at SDC to ensure appropriate access to the line of the canal for digging out, only minor parts of the route would need restoring once the canal is in water. There are also land ownership issues along the route though and while land owners may be content with the canal being put through they may be less likely to support a standalone multi user route ahead of the canal. Certainly though the potential to bring more public use and related benefits to the area through use of the restored towpath as a multiuser route should be highlighted as part of the 1B bid to the HLF.

41. There is major development due to take place in this area with the West of Stonehouse development. Engagement with the planning team and developers should ensure that support for the multiuser route is also fully explored.
42. Another major development awaiting determination is the 'Eco Park' and new stadium for Forest Green Rovers, which is on the line of the canal. The applicant and landowner, Ecotricity, have engaged with the SVCC already and are supportive of the canal restoration through the site but the application is yet to be determined.

Stonehouse (Chipmans Platt) to Stroud

43. Although Route 45 of the (NCN) runs from the edge of Stonehouse, skirting the A419 and has a spur towards Stroud town, an alternative and more direct route uses the canal towpath. Phase 1A of the canal restoration programme consists of a six mile section between 'The Ocean' at Stonehouse on the Stroudwater Navigation and Brimscombe Port, to the east of Stroud, on the Thames & Severn Canal.
44. The development of the multi use towpath from The Ocean to Stroud is already complete (Route 45 goes from Chipmans Platt to the Ocean) and has according to the Cotswold Canals Trust '*already given a significant boost to cycling, it is well used by family groups, who appreciate the safety offered by a traffic-free path. It is also well used by commuting cyclists between Stroud and the Stonehouse industrial estates, eager to avoid rush hour traffic densities*'. There may be parts of the route that aren't suitable for cycling, particularly where the towpath necessarily narrows due to land ownership issues or other obstacles in the line of the restored canal/ towpath. Work is also ongoing on some sections of the canal e.g. at Wallbridge and Ryeford but the towpath will be rebuilt to standard when completed. Close liaison with the SVCC and Cotswold Canals Trust will be required to look again at any issues, with the potential to use funding from this plan to overcome problems and more widely for upgrading or maintenance required to ensure the suitability of the towpath as a multi user route.
45. Some of the canal and towpath restoration in this area came through planning obligations related to the Ebley Wharf development with some of the work carried out by volunteers and others, including restorative justice groups. Potentially similar support could be provided for towpath upgrades/maintenance or on other areas of multi user route development.

Stroud to Brimscombe

46. The canal towpath multi user route enters Stroud town at Wallbridge before following the canal towpath towards Brimscombe. Opportunities to enhance routes from Wallbridge into the town centre and to the station will be considered and potential routes audited.

47. Providing a multi user path along the towpath from Stroud to Brimscombe would encounter similar issues to those on the route of the canal restoration. While there is a path from Stroud to Brimscombe, it is not up to the standard recommended for shared use by GCC/Sustrans and while the canal is being dredged along the route or restoration not started, as at Canal Ironworks and Brimscombe, it is unlikely to reach that level. Engagement with the SVCC is crucial to keep up to speed with developments and to ensure that when restoration is taking place the use of the towpath as a multi user route is realised and development takes place at an appropriate standard. Although the restored towpath is the obvious multi user route between Stroud and Brimscombe it should be audited to highlight any impediments and alternative routes considered, particularly where it is not practicable for sharing the towpath, through land ownership, space issues etc. When canal restoration work takes place at Brimscombe Port this will include the provision of a multi user trail. Providing the trail ahead of the canal isn't really an option as the extent of the work required at Brimscombe would cause excess damage to the restored route. Much of this route will be about upgrading its quality, following auditing, resolving any issues and improving signage etc.
48. A route from Brimscombe through to Chalford could be considered as part of this plan. HLF only covers canal restoration to Brimscombe Port so route options and delivery would fall outside funding from that source.

Stroud to Nailsworth

49. There are some small sections of local route, non NCN, between Stroud and Nailsworth but the main route is a spur off Route 45 (Stonehouse and Nailsworth Railway Cycle Path) that runs between Stonehouse and Nailsworth. In Stroud the spur starts at Wallbridge and rejoins Route 45 adjacent to Dudbridge Meadow, before following the Bath Road/A46 past Lightpill, North and South Woodchester through to Nailsworth. The route then goes on to Minchinhampton and through into Cotswold District. Potential other routes from Stroud could be investigated and the existing route audited for impediments. The focus, however, on this section should be reinforcing existing routes and improvements/upgrading. The existing cycle track suffers from being overgrown and in places is in such a state of disrepair that cyclists and walkers are as one cyclist comments 'often faced with the dilemma of choosing between riding on the very busy roads such as the A46 and A419 rather than use the cycle track'. Repairing/restoring the infrastructure in this area would provide the opportunity to promote the route for utility but also for leisure/tourism use increasing the number of cyclists and activity generally bringing health and wellbeing benefits, linking in to potential funding opportunities.
50. To increase access and usability for different groups, routes and signage into town centres and signage to the respective nearby railway stations will be considered as well as improving cycle parking levels and standards at the stations. This will involve discussions with Network Rail and potentially accessing funding through them for cycling infrastructure. The County Council will also be an effective partner in this regard and there are already

discussions around increasing car parking at Cam and Dursley station that could be widened.

Other Routes

51. The focus of this plan is the aforementioned multi user routes, but there are also more rudimentary cycle routes across the district which the plan could consider in the future. There are also nascent plans for routes in Standish, linking Little Haresfield and Stonehouse and a route linking Wotton under Edge, Kingswood and Charfield. Potential improvements to NCN 41/45 around Frampton have also been raised.

52. Policy

- Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy - requirement Under the Infrastructure Act 2015
- Gloucestershire's Local Transport Plan (2015-2031)
- Stroud District Local Plan November 2015
- Neighbourhood Plans

Partners

53. A list of interested parties in the cycling and walking plan is already in place and keeping those groups involved and up to date with developments will be a key part of this plan.

- Gloucestershire County Council
- Stroud District Council
- Dursley Town Council
- Cam Parish Council
- Uley Parish Council
- Slimbridge Parish Council
- Stonehouse Town Council
- Standish Parish Council
- Wotton under Edge Town Council
- Sustrans
- Mid Cotswold Tracks & Trails Group
- Vale Vision
- Stroud Valleys Cycle Group (Cycling UK)
- Stroud Valleys Canal Company
- Cotswold Canals Trust
- Canal and River Trust
- Schools - Safe routes to schools
- Health Partnership
- Police and Crime Commissioner Office
- Sport England
- Active Gloucestershire
- Dursley Welcomes Walkers
- Stroud Disability Forum?
- St Modwen
- Ecotricity
- Stonehouse Wheelers

- Stroud Valleys Project
- BTCV
- Dutch Cycling Embassy

Funding Opportunities

54. Although this cycling and walking plan has potentially £300K assigned to it this will not be enough to undertake the level of work required, therefore other funding streams will be investigated. Various sources may be applicable due to the development and promotion of multi user routes having a number of benefits. Opportunities for funding through health and wellbeing, tourism, development and place making funding streams will be explored.
55. The use of volunteers to support development will also be considered. There is huge interest in cycling and walking and the provision of routes to make these easier and safer pursuits can garner effective community support. Harnessing this support, as exemplified by the Cotswolds Canals restoration locally, in terms of route construction and maintenance as well as potential fundraising or support for bidding opportunities could bring significant benefits.
56. Planning gain – developments at Littlecombe, NE of Cam, West of Stonehouse and potentially from other developments, Eco Park, Ham Mill, Brimscombe Port etc.
57. Community Infrastructure Levy Regulation 123 List includes:
 - Canal infrastructure; Infrastructure associated with improving or re-opening the Stroudwater Navigation, the Thames and Severn Canal or the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal including towpaths.
 - Transport: Transport infrastructure including highway improvement schemes, cycling and walking infrastructure and public transport (excluding specific mitigation works on, or directly related to, a development site).
58. Health - Local authority public health teams are key champions for walking and cycling, particularly supporting planning and behaviour change interventions that encourage people to be active both for pleasure and travel. The ring-fenced public health grant will continue until at least 2017-18 and funding for local authorities for public health has been outlined to 2020. It will be essential to engage with local public health colleagues.
59. Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) Growth Programme - Rural Tourism Infrastructure. Grants funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), which is part of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). Funding available within Gloucestershire LEP area but not all of district eligible. Minimum grant £35K maximum £170K for commercial projects. Intervention rate dependent on area and commercial nature of project. Programme handbook gives example of possible eligible project under new access infrastructure: *'The local district council is investing in paths to connect up a number of existing*

footpaths, cycle ways and bridleways. This will create a network of easily accessible circular routes of between 4 and 15 miles, which will make the area more attractive for walking and cycling.'

60. LEP priorities include: *create infrastructure to develop outdoor activities particularly walking and cycling for both the Forest of Dean and Cotswold areas.*
61. LEADER – The LEADER scheme is part of the RDPE and is funded by EAFRD. Money from the programme is given to Local Action Groups with grants awarded to local businesses and organisations. The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) manages the LEADER scheme nationally on behalf of Defra and makes payments to successful applicants. Cotswold LEADER programme area includes some of the Stroud district but a number of areas ineligible. Minimum grant £5,000. Maximum typically £50,000. Intervention rate 40% to 100% depending on nature of project. Priorities for the Cotswold Leader area include: Support for rural tourism, Provision of rural services and Support for cultural and heritage activity. All three include potential for funding infrastructure/access e.g. footpaths/cycle paths.
62. Sport England Localities Fund - Active Gloucestershire: Sport England looking to invest £130m in 10 localities. Active Gloucestershire already involved with Gloucestershire Moves project. Funding could include infrastructure but target is to increase levels of activity in currently inactive people and overcoming barriers they face.
63. The Gloucestershire Environmental Trust Company - Providing grants from funds generated by the Landfill Communities Fund for the benefit of Gloucestershire. Grants normally between £5K up to £150K. Scheme closes 31st March 2019. Clarity required over eligibility of multi user path but projects need to be discussed with company ahead of application.
64. Stroud District Council - £300K linked to Cycling and Walking Plan, potential to use as match/leverage for above programmes.
65. Gloucestershire County Council – Infrastructure funding through LTP, potential network maintenance funding and link to Sustrans. Councillor transport funding. Close liaison with GCC/Amey will also be in terms of potential funding, expertise, contracting and route construction itself.
66. Town and Parish Councils – Potential funding along routes.
67. Canal and River Trust – Supporting canal restoration and support for towpath use.

Risks/Obstacles

68. Lack of funding to complete all routes. While working to lever as much funding through different sources, it is recognised that costs may be out of scope. Sections of routes will be built out when funding allows and when further funding becomes available, sections and then routes will be linked. This overview plan sets out the main routes and context for support but on

the ground delivery is important, to 'prove the concept', highlight the priority given to cycling and walking in the district and to keep up the positive and proactive partnership built up around the plan.

69. There are a number of issues, impediments along all routes, including land ownership, quality standards, access to routes, path widths, planning, future maintenance costs, user conflict and providing safe mainly off road routes while negotiating the M5, A roads and roundabouts.
70. There is potentially an issue with the 'adoption' of routes, as cycle routes with the attendant maintenance liabilities. If route approved/adopted as cycleway, by GCC they become liable for ongoing maintenance. If GCC are therefore unwilling to adopt, with revenue funding becoming increasingly scarce for local authorities, could become an obstacle to delivery. Clarity and resolution of any issue will be required early on in the process.
71. It is recognised that at some points routes may not meet the accepted guidance standards for shared paths but this is unavoidable. The partnership around the project including GCC, SDC, Active Gloucestershire, Sustrans and various knowledgeable groups from the cycling and walking communities should be able to offer the necessary expertise to overcome issues.
72. Some of the routes are more definitive than others and have been 'audited' more recently. In discussion with partners it may be that Sustrans or similar are engaged to audit all routes to highlight impediments and set down definitive routes. This may also help with funding bids moving forward while crystallising the overall structure of the plan providing clarity to stakeholders and funders what is to be achieved and the sections within the overall routes. Having a standard view of all routes would also be useful to achieve the same quality across the piece and to ensure all groups are working from the same view/baseline.
73. Alternatively engaging volunteer partner groups, with knowledge of the local area could be a quicker and cheaper way of auditing the routes and there is no shortage of groups who would be willing to undertake such a role perhaps under the auspices of GCC or SDC. Government through the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy has released guidance on developing Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans, elements of which could be used to define routes and required improvements.
74. Increased usage of routes will bring many benefits but will also potentially bring more issues of user conflict. The development, implementation and promotion of a code of use, for the shared space, to alleviate any conflicts from various user groups will help in this regard.
75. The SVCC adopted a Towpath Policy in 2016, adapted from the CRT document 'Better Towpaths for Everyone' A national policy for sharing towpaths. The SVCC state that 'Stroud Valleys Canal Company is committed to providing a towpath available to all users of the canal, and to maintaining and improving the towpath to the best of our ability and resources'. The Principles of Towpath use has ten points including that:

- SVCC recognises the incorporation of towpaths as part of walking and cycling routes
 - Where there are concerns over towpath capacity or condition, we will seek opportunities to secure further external investment.
 - Where towpaths are unsuitable for some uses – too narrow or too heavily-used – we will seek to work with others to provide alternative routes.
76. SVCC already recognises then that they need to engage with others and aim to provide a shared use route along the towpath. This links with the outlook of the CRT, who highlight towpaths, 'in addition to giving access for traditional activities like boating or angling, offer sustainable journey choices, responding to the boom in walking, jogging & cycling.'
77. With the CRT responsible for over 2,000 miles of towpath in England & Wales, in urban and rural areas, it is welcome that they have a positive view of multiuse paths and that the SVCC are following their approach in relation to the canal towpath they are, and will be, responsible for.
78. Another major issue, rather than user conflict per se, is trying to encourage more use of routes for both utility and leisure cycling, where the needs of those undertaking or potentially wishing to undertake those forms of cycling can differ markedly. For 'commuting' cyclists, convenience is seen as of paramount importance, direct routes/shorter distances and fewer obstacles enabling cost and journey time savings. For the leisure user, relaxation, fun, 'family time' and getting outdoors may be more pertinent drivers (of course some will be in both groups, at different times and utility cyclists will have generally been 'leisure' cyclists).
79. While health/fitness and safety are concerns of both groups, they are perhaps for different reasons. Utility cyclists would no doubt prefer an off road direct route, (would be quicker and safer), but are more willing/confident to use the highway where the route doesn't exist or isn't quicker perhaps due to other users. (Potential to develop 'cycleways' on road but with kerb segregation etc is not within scope of this plan). Where leisure users would also prefer off road routes due to safety concerns/lack of confidence using the highway, it is obviously difficult, particularly where space/width constraints are apparent, as in the canal towpath, to produce routes that are suitable/attractive to both groups.
80. Resolving this issue may be beyond the scope of this plan, but it should be recognised and where possible overcome, with routes provided to a standard suitable for both groups including in terms of route width where achievable. Although improvements to NCN routes could be made as part of this plan the more direct routes, using the canal towpath, may be more appropriate for utility cycling. Route definition and auditing should keep in mind the requirements of both groups and consider how and where these could be met.

Timescales

81. Some routes are further ahead than others and even within routes sections will be able to be delivered on different timescales. Some elements of route delivery are linked to planning obligations, for example on the Greenway, at Littlecombe and NE of Cam. At Littlecombe some of the route is already in place while the rest of the site is well on the way to being built out, in contrast NE Cam has yet to receive permission, and so timescales for delivery will be quite different.
82. Engagement with the developers and planners will be required to ensure delivery standards and broach the possibility of an early start on the route at NE Cam.
83. SDC budget is available in the current financial year, 17/18 and will have to be agreed to protect, if not spent, into future years. Funding from other public sector sources may also be determined on an annual basis. Any successful funding bids will have their own timeframes for spend and delivery that will have to be met.
84. Background work on some routes is ongoing so the project has essentially already started. There will certainly be spend this financial year with delivery on different route sections as funding and availability of workforce allows. Other required permissions, consultations etc could also delay delivery. A project end date would therefore be arbitrary but in terms of trying to drive delivery and as many budgetary cycles end in 2020, April 2020, seems a suitable date for project closure.

Costs

85. Costs will only become clear once routes have been audited and obstacles to delivery highlighted and of course the costs will vary between sections that have to be built out and others that need resurfacing or face major impediments. There will also be cost variances where sections could be completed using volunteer labour rather than contractors and depending on whether costs can be reduced through the contracting authority/framework agreements, completing longer lengths of route bringing down overall cost per metre, instead of more piecemeal development etc.
86. As a guide Sustrans produced a cost estimate for a short section of works on the route of the Greenway, as follows:

Works

- Replace fence alongside river – recommended fence height 1.4 m.
- Surface existing compacted stone path (approx.. 45 m) with asphalt;
- Widen existing asphalt path to 3 m over 75 m. Extend path into open space at junction with Ewelme Close to avoid blind corner being created.
- Section of path in vicinity of mature tree to be no-dig construction or other technique to avoid damaging this tree.
- Flush kerbs needed for path interfaces with Ewelme Close carriageway. This is a very quiet cul-de-sac quite suitable for safe cycling.

- New path at eastern end to link to Uley Road. 2.5 m or 3.0 m wide path over 80 m, asphalt surface.
- The path width can only be obtained by building out the existing bank over a length of about 10m by importing fill to widen the available space. Cutting into the bank would have to be done at a lower level steepening the gradient of the climb to Uley Road.
- The recommended 1 in 20 maximum gradient cannot be achieved on the alignment of the existing path, and it may be preferable to curve the path across the slope to achieve 1 in 20, and avoid the root zone of the oak trees in this area.
- Widened opening to 1500 mm to Uley Road incorporating bollard or gateway feature to prevent vehicle access.

Indicative costs for Greenway

- Path construction: £105 per metre for 3.0 m wide path
- Post and rail fencing: £30 per linear metre
- Earthworks: allow £1,000
- Gateway feature / bollard: £250
- Contingency: At this small scale of works, with access difficulties at the west end, compared to the source of the price information, we suggest a 30% contingency is applied.
- Fees: For design, tendering, supervision of works, budget 15% of construction costs.
- Allow additional costs for planning permission; Flood Risk Assessment; Flood Defence Consent; public rights of way consent / Cycle Tracks Act process.
- Our estimate of construction cost, including contingency and fees is £34,000 excluding VAT.

This may not be an atypical budget costing requirement for other areas and it can be seen that in funding terms to complete all of the routes described in this plan major capital investment will be required.

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

**AGENDA
ITEM NO**

29 JUNE 2017

10

Report Title	ENVIRONMENT BUDGETS 2017/18
Purpose of Report	To provide details of the General Fund Revenue budgets that the committee is responsible for.
Decision(s)	The Committee RESOLVES to note the report
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. The General Fund revenue budget was approved by Council in February 2017. David Stanley – Accountancy Manager Tel: 01453 754100 Email: david.stanley@stroud.gov.uk
Legal Implications	The Council should regularly review its General Fund credits or debits to prevent a debit balance for each accounting year and make adjustments to its budget to reflect any material changes to the approved annual budget. In view of the recommendations in this report, this report is being provided for information only, a material decision not being required. (Refd15.06r15.06c20.06) Karen Trickey, Legal Services Manager Tel: 01453 754369 Email: karen.trickey@stroud.gov.uk
Report Author	Adele Rudkin - Accountant Tel: 01453 754109 Email: adele.rudkin@stroud.gov.uk
Options	None
Performance Management Follow Up	The committee will receive regular financial reports during the year with budget monitor reports due in September 2017 and March 2018, and an updated budget report in December 2017.
Background Papers/ Appendices	None

1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Council approved the General Fund revenue budget at its meeting in February 2017. This committee had previously considered the standstill revenue budget at its meeting in December 2016

- 1.2 The table within the report restates the revenue budget for the committee and only includes budgets that are considered to be controllable by the budget holder. This ensures that members are provided with an accurate overview of the financial performance of each service area without the potentially confusing financial position that can emerge when there are

variations on budgets that the budget holder has no direct influence over. Therefore, it excludes certain budgets deemed to be non-controllable, which are largely recharges from support services. The list below covers the main budget areas excluded:

- Support Service Charges (Corporate Support charges and Service Management Support charges)
- Internal Recharge income (received by support services as they charge-out their budgets to frontline services)
- IAS19/FRS17 Pension adjustment (An accounting entry that ensures the correct actuarial pension cost is included within the calculation of Net Total Cost as defined by CIPFA within the Service Reporting Code of Practice [SeRCOP]) **
- Depreciation and Capital Charges **

** These are notional charges made to service revenue budgets and are 'reversed out' below the line on the General Fund so have no impact on the level of Council Tax raised to support the Council's spending.

1.3 Budget monitor reports will include an additional appendix that will show the amount of support service charges allocated to each budget headings for reconciliations purposes.

Table 1 – Environment Revenue budgets 2017/18

Committee (COMM1)	Committee Summary Heading (COMM2)	Committee Service Area (COMM3)	Strategic Head	Budget Holder	2017/18 Budget (£) - Controllable items only
Environment	Canal	Canal Restoration Project	David Hagg	Dave Marshall	0
Environment	Canal	Canal Partnership	David Hagg	Dave Marshall	6,800
		Subtotal Canal			6,800
Environment	Strategic Head (Development Services)	Strategic Head (Development Services)	Barry Wyatt	Barry Wyatt	114,800
Environment	Head of Environmental Health	Head of Environmental Health	Barry Wyatt	Jon Beckett	69,200
Environment	Environmental Health	Environmental Health Team	Barry Wyatt	Jon Beckett	148,700
Environment	Environmental Health	Contaminated Land	Barry Wyatt	Jon Beckett	31,500
Environment	Environmental Health	Dog Warden Service	Barry Wyatt	Jon Beckett	81,500
Environment	Environmental Health	Environmental Protection	Barry Wyatt	Jon Beckett	190,400
Environment	Environmental Health	Food Safety	Barry Wyatt	Jon Beckett	152,400
Environment	Environmental Health	Health and Safety	Barry Wyatt	Jon Beckett	87,800
Environment	Environmental Health	Land Drainage	Barry Wyatt	Jon Beckett	59,600
Environment	Environmental Health	Public Health	Barry Wyatt	Jon Beckett	40,900
Environment	Environmental Health	Pest Control	Barry Wyatt	Jon Beckett	27,700
Environment	Environmental Health	Port Health	Barry Wyatt	Jon Beckett	2,000
Environment	Environmental Health	Planning Liaison	Barry Wyatt	Jon Beckett	14,200
		Subtotal Environmental Health			836,700
Environment	Head of Planning	Head of Planning	Barry Wyatt	N/A	0
Environment	Statutory Building Control	Planning and Building Control Admin	Barry Wyatt	Paul Bowley	255,300
Environment	Statutory Building Control	Building Control	Barry Wyatt	Paul Bowley	(128,000)
Environment	Statutory Building Control	Securing Dangerous Structures	Barry Wyatt	Paul Bowley	9,400
Environment	Statutory Building Control	Building Regulation Enforcement / Advice	Barry Wyatt	Paul Bowley	34,900
Environment	Statutory Building Control	Street Naming	Barry Wyatt	Neil Marriott	(3,700)
		Subtotal Statutory Building Control			167,900

Committee (COMM1)	Committee Summary Heading (COMM2)	Committee Service Area (COMM3)	Strategic Head	Budget Holder	2017/18 Budget (£) - Controllable items only
Environment	Planning Strategy/Local Plan	Planning Strategy	Barry Wyatt	Mark Russell	319,400
Environment	Planning Strategy/Local Plan	Preparation of Core Strategy	Barry Wyatt	Mark Russell	0
		Subtotal Planning Strategy/Local Plan			319,400
Environment	Development Control	Development Control	Barry Wyatt	Geraldine Le Cointe	(94,000)
Environment	Development Control	Trees	Barry Wyatt	Geraldine Le Cointe	43,000
Environment	Development Control	Conservation	Barry Wyatt	Geraldine Le Cointe	57,900
Environment	Development Control	Appeals	Barry Wyatt	Geraldine Le Cointe	0
Environment	Development Control	Planning Appeal Costs	Barry Wyatt	Geraldine Le Cointe	69,600
Environment	Development Control	Enforcement	Barry Wyatt	Geraldine Le Cointe	107,800
Environment	Development Control	Footpath Diversion	Barry Wyatt	Geraldine Le Cointe	(2,000)
		Subtotal Development Control			182,300
Environment	Economic Development	Business Development	Barry Wyatt	Mark Russell	0
Environment	Economic Development	Economic Development	Barry Wyatt	Mark Russell	54,200
Environment	Economic Development	Market Town Projects	Barry Wyatt	Mark Russell	24,000
Environment	Economic Development	Regeneration	Barry Wyatt	Mark Russell	108,300
		Subtotal Economic Development			186,500
Environment	Carbon Management	Energy Efficiency	Barry Wyatt	Maria Hickman	93,400
Environment	Carbon Management	Environmental Strategy Co-ordination	Barry Wyatt		0
Environment	Carbon Management	Energy Efficiency Contract (SWEA)	Barry Wyatt	Maria Hickman	0
Environment	Carbon Management	Climate Change (Planning & Policy)	Barry Wyatt		0
		Subtotal Carbon Management			93,400
Environment	Waste and Recycling	Refuse Collection	Joanne Jordan	Carlos Novoth	1,203,300
Environment	Waste and Recycling	Multi-Bank Recycling Sites	Joanne Jordan	Carlos Novoth	1,137,700
Environment	Waste and Recycling	Recycling and Environmental Initiatives	Joanne Jordan	Carlos Novoth	205,000
		Subtotal Waste and Recycling			2,546,000
Environment	Street Cleansing	Street Cleansing	Joanne Jordan	Carlos Novoth	601,100
	Environment Committee	ENVIRONMENT Total			5,124,100

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

**AGENDA
ITEM NO**

29 JUNE 2017

11

Report Title	RECYCLING BANK SERVICE
Purpose of Report	To seek approval for the withdrawal of the council's recycling bank service as part of a number of Multi Service Contract efficiency measures.
Decision(s)	The Committee RECOMMENDS to Strategy and Resources Committee the immediate withdrawal of the Council's recycling bank service.
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	<p>The report sets out a change to the service offered around Multi-Bank recycling and will reduce the costs of service provision as set out in the report.</p> <p>Members will recall that additional budget of £400k was approved by Council in February 2017 due to the anticipated overspend on the Multi-Services contract. This change will contribute to the overall savings and efficiencies on the Ubico contract that are being agreed during the year.</p> <p>David Stanley – Accountancy Manager Tel: 01453 754100 Email: david.stanley@stroud.gov.uk</p> <p>Risk Whilst the council may experience a loss of recycling material as a result of withdrawing the recycling bank service, this has been factored into the calculations. All residents are currently provided with a kerbside recycling service and therefore should not require the use of recycling banks</p>
Legal Implications	<p>Legal advice has been provided to the client officer on the proposed withdrawal of the service. (Ref:d15/06rc08/06) Karen Trickey, Legal Services Manager Tel: 01453 754369 Email: karen.trickey@stroud.gov.uk</p>
Report Author	<p>Carlos Novoth – Public Space Manager Tel: 01453 754406 Email: carlos.novoth@stroud.gov.uk</p>
Options	Maintain the current service at unnecessary cost to the council. This would be a duplication of the service currently offered at resident's doorsteps.

Performance Management Follow Up	Withdrawal of the service will be undertaken with prior notice given to relevant parish councils and Ward Members. Measures will be taken to prevent flytipping at locations vacated by the recycling banks. The situation will be monitored for the short term.
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1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The recycling bank service is currently provided within the council's new Multi Service Contract performed by Ubico Ltd. Service costs for the whole contract, exceeded the council's allocated budget by £275k in 2016/17 and is forecast to exceed the 2017/18 budget by £450k unless cost saving measures are implemented.
- 1.2 Prior to 1995, the recycling bank service was the only means of recycling within the district. As the kerbside recycling service has expanded, the bank service has reduced from 76 sites to 2 (Cainscross and Cam) and now represents only 1% of the council's recycling rate; the annual cost of maintaining the current service is £68,142.

2. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- 2.1 Whilst the recycling bank service continues to be used, it currently replicates the materials collected through the kerbside recycling service. This represents an unnecessary duplication of costs (this does not of course refer to materials such as Textiles, Books and DVDs).
- 2.2 There have also been a number of issues that have negatively impacted the service; these include their illegal use by local businesses and their use by residents as fly-tipping hotspots. General misuse of the facilities has also resulted in service costs and loss of revenue through contamination.
- 2.3 Table 1 below identifies the estimated cost savings to the council of withdrawing the service. The savings in-year total £17,945 provided the service is withdrawn by mid August 2017 and £59,542 in each subsequent year.

	Operational savings	Estimated loss of income	Current Asset value of banks	Estimated resale value of banks	Net Annual Savings
1 st Year (part year)	£34,071	£8,600	£10,526	£3,000	£17,945
Subsequent years	£68,142	£8,600	£0	£0	£59,542

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The council has a fully integrated suite of kerbside waste and recycling services that has incentivised maximum resident participation and material capture rates. The recycling bank service provides a duplication of services at unnecessary additional cost and is now considered an outdated method of recycling.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 Members are asked to recommend to Strategy and Resources Committee the withdrawal of the council's recycling bank service with immediate effect.

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

**AGENDA
ITEM NO**

29 JUNE 2017

12

Report Title	HARDWICKE NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN: PROGRESS TO REFERENDUM
Purpose of Report	To inform councillors of progress regarding the Hardwicke Neighbourhood Development Plan (HNDP)
Decision(s)	The Committee RESOLVES: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to accept all recommended modifications of the Examiner’s Report (Appendix A); 2. that the Hardwicke Neighbourhood Development Plan, as modified, meets the basic conditions, is compatible with the Convention rights, complies with the definition of a neighbourhood development plan (NDP) and the provisions that can be made by a NDP; 3. to take all appropriate actions to progress the Hardwicke Neighbourhood Development Plan to referendum on the 10th of August 2017.
Consultation and Feedback	The HNDP has been through two statutory consultations. Hardwicke Parish Council undertook a pre-submission consultation (Regulation 14) from 9 th September to 21 st October 2015 and the Council undertook a post-submission consultation (Regulation 16) from 1st March to 12 th April 2017. Both consultations lasted no less than the six weeks as required by the regulations. Hardwicke Parish Council considered the comments received during the Regulation 14 consultation and made changes to the plan. The comments received during the Council’s Regulation 16 consultation were provided to the examiner of the plan who considered them during the examination.
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	The Government issued guidance in October 2014 indicating that funding of £12m was available to local planning authorities to help them meet the cost of their responsibilities around Neighbourhood Planning. A total of £20,000 can be claimed for each NP area. This single payment will be made once a date is set for a referendum, following a successful examination. If Committee resolves to accept the examiner’s

	<p>report and progress the plan to referendum, potential funding of £20,000 would be available. Any costs incurred in excess of this will have to be borne by the Council.</p> <p>David Stanley – Accountancy Manager Tel: 01453 754100 Email: david.stanley@stroud.gov.uk</p>
Legal Implications	<p>The report and recommendations outline the current legal position with regard to the next stage in the process. The Council’s discretion with regard to proceeding to a referendum or otherwise is strictly limited by statute and in this case the requirements for proceeding to a referendum appear to have been met subject to the proposed modifications being included in the NDP.</p> <p>Alan Carr, Solicitor Tel: 01453754357 Email: alan.carr@stroud.gov.uk</p>
Report Author	<p>Simon Maher, Neighbourhood Planning Officer Tel: 01453 754339 Email: simon.maher@stroud.gov.uk</p>
Options	<p>Option 1 - Make modifications to the HNBP in accordance with the examiner’s recommendations</p> <p>This is the option promoted by this report. It consists of accepting the recommendations made in the neighbourhood plan examination report, determining that the HNBP meets the basic conditions and all legal requirements and should therefore proceed to a referendum.</p> <p>This approach is considered to be the best option for progressing the plan prepared by the community without any unnecessary delay in the decision making process.</p> <p>Option 2 – Make a decision that differs from the examiner’s recommendation</p> <p>If the Council were to propose a decision that differs from the examiner’s recommendation, the Council is required to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. notify all those identified on the consultation statement of the parish council and invite representations, during a period of six weeks, 2. refer the issue to a further independent examination if appropriate. <p>Option 3 - Refuse the Plan</p> <p>The Council can decide that it is not satisfied with</p>

	the plan proposal with respect to meeting basic conditions, compatibility with Convention rights, definition and provisions of the NDP even if modified. Without robust grounds, which are not considered to be present in this case, refusing to take the plan to a referendum could leave the Council vulnerable to a legal challenge.
Performance Management Follow Up	If a referendum is held and there is a vote in favour (50% plus 1) HNBP will be referred to Council to be “made” (i.e. brought into force). Once made, the HNBP will form part of the development plan for the District and will be used to determine planning applications within the Hardwicke Neighbourhood Area.
Background Papers/ Appendix	<p>Background Papers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hardwicke Neighbourhood Plan and submission documents • The basic conditions that neighbourhood Plans must meet and other basic conditions <p>Appendix A – Examiner’s Report</p>

BACKGROUND

1. Neighbourhood planning was introduced through the Localism Act 2011. New powers allowed qualifying bodies (parish or town councils) to produce NDPs. NDPs allow communities to set planning policies for their area.
2. Once adopted, NDPs join the adopted Local Plan in the Council’s Development Plan. They must be considered when planning decisions are made, along with the Local Plan and national planning policy.
3. Producing a NDP allows parish and town councils to increase the amount of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds they receive from developments within their area from 15% to 25%.
4. NDPs must be examined by a suitably qualified independent person, appointed by the Council and agreed by the qualifying body (Town/Parish Council). Neighbourhood plans must also pass a referendum of local voters by a simple majority. If a plan passes referendum, the Council must make (adopt) it, unless it breaches EU obligations or human rights legislation.

HARDWICKE NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

5. The Hardwicke Neighbourhood Area was designated by resolution of the Council’s Environment Committee on 4th February 2014.
6. The HNBP was led by a steering group subordinate to Hardwicke Parish Council (‘the qualifying body’).

7. A submission version of the HNDP was accepted by the Council on 8th February 2017, under regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) ('the regulations'). As prescribed by 'the regulations', the Council consulted on the plan for six weeks and arranged for the plan to be examined.

EXAMINATION

8. The Council appointed Andrew Ashcroft MRTPI as independent examiner of the HNDP.
9. The examination concludes once the Examiner's Report is received by the Council. The Examiner's Report contains a recommendation of whether the HNDP, with or without modifications, should proceed to a referendum.
10. The examiner's findings, including recommendations and the reasons for them, are set out in the Examiner's Report (Appendix A). The examiner only makes recommendations necessary to make the Plan meet the basic conditions and other legal requirements.
11. Following a request from the examiner, Hardwicke Parish Council submitted an updated Consultation Statement in order to meet the basic conditions, and specifically to include reference to their Regulation 14 Pre-Submission Consultation process.
12. The Examiner made clear that he was satisfied that no person or organisation had been disadvantaged by the omission of the Regulation 14 process within the original Consultation Statement, however it was requested that relevant parties be given an opportunity to make comment in the interests of openness and transparency.
13. The updated document was made available on the Council website, with an invitation to make further comment from 9th June to 23rd June 2017. Those consultees who responded during the Regulation 14 pre consultation period were also alerted to this process.
14. Any additional comments received during this period (subsequent to the time of writing) will be reviewed by the examiner, and if necessary a revised Examiner's report issued.

15. A summary of the recommended modifications is set out below:

Policy/Section	Summary of recommendation and reasons
Policy Gen 1 and supporting text	Modify policy and supporting text to conform with national and local planning policy.
Policy Gen 2	Small modification to policy wording for clarity.
Policy Hou 2 and supporting text	Replace policy with new wording to address issues of vagueness, interpretation, and clarity. Add design guide reference to supporting text.
Policy Hou 3	Minor amendment for clarity.
Policy Hou 4 and supporting text	Modifications to provide clarity to the decision maker..
Policy ISF1	Include reference to 'Facilities and Services Assessment' and remove references to those outside the neighbourhood area.
Policy MTC 2 and supporting text	Removal of those Local Green Spaces (LGS) which do not meet NPPF criteria. Reword policy to focus purely on LGS
Policy MTC 3	Remove some of the identified open spaces from the plan which do not fulfil definition of 'open space' in the planning context. Modify policy, supporting text, and map to reflect changes and to provide clarity.
Policy ENV 1	Minor amendment for clarity
Policy ENV 2	Minor amendment for clarity
Policy ENV 3 and supporting text	Modify policy to meet basic conditions and move some policy wording into supporting text.
Policy CT1 and supporting text	Replace the policy for clarity. Modify supporting text to reflect policy change.
Policy EC1	Replace first sentence for clarity
Policy EC2	Minor amendments for clarity on what proposals will be supported

CONSIDERATION

16. Following the completion of the examination, the Council is required to consider each of the examiner's recommendations and the reasons for them and decide what action to take in response to each. Officers have reviewed the Examiner's Report and agree with all the recommendations and the reasons for them.
17. The Council is required to consider whether the draft HNDDP meets the basic conditions, is compatible with the Convention rights and complies with the definition of an NDP and the provisions that can be made by a NDP or can do so as modified.
18. Officer's have carefully considered the HNDDP and the Examiner's report and consider that:

- 1- The HNBP, as modified by the Examiner's recommendations, has had regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The HNBP has been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework and national Planning Practice Guidance and modifications proposed to comply with national policy.
- 2- The HNBP, as modified by the Examiner's recommendations, contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. The HNBP has been subject to sustainability assessment that identifies the plan will have an overall positive effect.
- 3- The HNBP, as modified by the Examiner's recommendations, is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan as a whole for the area. The HNBP has been assessed against the adopted Stroud District Local Plan and modifications proposed to ensure the HNBP does not become out-of-date in the context of a review of strategic policies in the Local Plan.
- 4- The HNBP, as modified by the Examiner's recommendations, would not breach, and be otherwise incompatible with EU obligations. The Examiner's assessment has involved considering the following Directives: the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC); the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (2011/92/EU); the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC); the Wild Birds Directive (2009/147/EC); the Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC); the Air Quality Directive (2008/50/EC); and the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC). In addition, no issue arises in respect of equality under general principles of EU law or any EU equality directive. The Council issued a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Determination in November 2015, which confirmed to Hardwicke Parish Council that a SEA and a full HRA were not required on the HNBP.
- 5- The HNBP, as modified by the Examiner's recommendations, would not give rise to significant environmental effects on European sites and European offshore marine sites. The Council issued a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Determination in November 2015, which confirmed to Hardwicke Parish Council that a SEA and a full HRA were not required on the HNBP.
- 6- The HNBP, as modified by the Examiner's recommendations, is in all respects fully compatible with Convention rights contained in the Human Rights Act 1988. Section 5 of the Basic Conditions Statement submitted in support of the HNBP outlined the Qualifying Body's considerations as regards to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), including the extensive consultation set out in the Consultation Statement to ensure representations from all groups. The Examiner considered the Convention's Articles 6(1), 8 and 14 and its First Protocol Article 1. Nothing in his examination of the Draft NDP indicated any breach of a Convention right. There has been full and adequate opportunity for all interested parties to take part in the preparation of the Plan and to make their comments known.

- 7- The HNBP, as modified by the Examiner's recommendations, complies with the definition of an NDP and the provisions that can be made by a NDP. The HNBP sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land in the whole of the neighbourhood area; it specifies the period for which it is to have effect; it does not include provision about development that is 'excluded development' and does not relate to more than one neighbourhood area or repeat an existing planning permission.
19. Subject to consideration at the meeting, members are asked to authorise officers to make the modifications specified in the Examiner's Report and progress the modified version of the plan to a referendum.
20. The neighbourhood area matches the civic boundary of Hardwicke Parish; officers recommend that the referendum area should remain that of the Hardwicke Neighbourhood Area, as designated by the Council on 4th February 2014. However, the Council cannot make a decision that differs from the examiners' recommendations about the referendum area.

NEXT STEPS

21. The Council must publish a statement setting out its decision and the reason for making it. Officers will need to modify the plan and produce a final version for the referendum.
22. The Council must hold a referendum within 56 working days from the date that the decision to take the plan forward to a referendum is published. In consultation with the Council's returning officer and elections department, 10th August 2017 has been identified as the suitable date for holding a referendum.
23. If the plan passes referendum, the Council is required to make (adopt) it unless it breaches EU or Human Rights legislation. The Council's scheme of delegation does not delegate this decision to officers or the Environment Committee, so the decision to make the plan will be made by full Council. This decision is expected to take place in October 2017. The plan cannot be modified at that stage.

Hardwicke Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2031

A report to Stroud District Council on the Hardwicke Neighbourhood Plan

**Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
BA (Hons) MA, DMS, MRTPI**

Director – Andrew Ashcroft Planning Limited

Executive Summary

- 1 I was appointed by Stroud District Council in April 2017 to carry out the independent examination of the Hardwicke Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2 The examination was undertaken by written representations. I visited the neighbourhood plan area on 28 April 2017.
- 3 The Plan proposes a series of policies and seeks to bring forward positive and sustainable development in the Plan area. In particular, it proposes a series of environmental policies to control the design of new development and designates local green spaces. At its heart is an ambition to secure the future of the village as a vibrant, sustainable rural community which maintains a connection with the countryside to its south and west.
- 4 The Plan has been significantly underpinned by community support and engagement. It seeks to achieve sustainable development in the plan area and which reflects the range of social, environmental and economic issues that it has identified.
- 5 Subject to the recommended modifications set out in this report I have concluded that the Hardwicke Neighbourhood Plan meets all the necessary legal requirements and should proceed to referendum.
- 6 I recommend that the referendum should be held within the neighbourhood plan area.

Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
8 June 2017

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the findings of the independent examination of the Hardwicke Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2031 (the Plan).
- 1.2 The Plan has been submitted to Stroud District Council (SDC) by Hardwicke Parish Council in its capacity as the qualifying body responsible for preparing the neighbourhood plan.
- 1.3 Neighbourhood plans were introduced into the planning process by the Localism Act 2011. They aim to allow local communities to take responsibility for guiding development in their area. This approach was subsequently embedded in the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012 and which continues to be the principal element of national planning policy.
- 1.4 This report assesses whether the Plan is legally compliant and meets the Basic Conditions that apply to neighbourhood plans. It also considers the content of the Plan and, where necessary, recommends changes to its policies and supporting text.
- 1.5 This report also provides a recommendation as to whether the Plan should proceed to referendum. If this is the case and that referendum results in a positive outcome the Plan would then be used to determine planning applications within the plan area and will sit as part of the wider development plan.

2 The Role of the Independent Examiner

- 2.1 The examiner's role is to ensure that any submitted neighbourhood plan meets the relevant legislative and procedural requirements.
- 2.2 I was appointed by SDC, with the consent of the Parish Council, to conduct the examination of the Plan and to prepare this report. I am independent of both SDC and the Parish Council. I do not have any interest in any land that may be affected by the Plan.
- 2.3 I possess the appropriate qualifications and experience to undertake this role. I am a Director of Andrew Ashcroft Planning Limited. In previous roles, I have over 30 years' experience in various local authorities at either Head of Planning or Service Director level. I am a chartered town planner and have significant experience of undertaking other neighbourhood plan examinations and health checks. I am a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service.

Examination Outcomes

- 2.4 In my role as the independent examiner of the Plan I am required to recommend one of the following outcomes of the examination:
- (a) that the Plan is submitted to a referendum; or
 - (b) that the Plan should proceed to referendum as modified (based on my recommendations); or
 - (c) that the Plan does not proceed to referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.

The Basic Conditions

- 2.5 As part of this process I must consider whether the submitted Plan meets the Basic Conditions as set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. To comply with the basic conditions, the Plan must:
- have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State; and
 - contribute to the achievement of sustainable development; and
 - be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan in the area; and
 - be compatible with European Union (EU) and European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) obligations.

I have examined the submitted Plan against each of these basic conditions, and my conclusions are set out in Sections 6 and 7 of this report. I have made specific comments on the fourth bullet point above in paragraphs 2.6 to 2.10 of this report.

- 2.6 In order to comply with the Basic Condition relating to European obligations SDC carried out a screening assessment. The conclusion of the draft screening report

was that there were no significant environmental effects as a result of the production of the Plan.

- 2.7 The required consultation was carried out with the three prescribed bodies. All three were content with the outcome of the screening assessment.
- 2.8 SDC has also undertaken a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening report on the Plan. Its Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) screening report concluded that the Plan was not likely to have any significant effect on a European site. This conclusion was supported by Natural England. In coming to this decision, the relevant bodies took account of the Rodborough Common SAC, the Cotswolds Beechwoods SAC and The Severn Estuary SAC/SPA/Ramsar site.
- 2.9 Having reviewed the information provided to me as part of the examination I am satisfied that a thorough, comprehensive and proportionate process has been undertaken in accordance with the various regulations. The various reports set out a robust assessment of the relevant information. None of the statutory consultees have raised any fundamental concerns with regard to either neighbourhood plan or to European obligations. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, I am entirely satisfied that the submitted Plan is compatible with this aspect of European obligations.
- 2.10 In a similar fashion I am satisfied that the submitted Plan has had regard to the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and that it complies with the Human Rights Act. There is no evidence that has been submitted to me to suggest otherwise. There has been full and adequate opportunity for all interested parties to take part in the preparation of the Plan and to make their comments known. On this basis, I conclude that the submitted Plan does not breach, nor is in any way incompatible with the ECHR.

Other examination matters

- 2.11 In examining the Plan I am also required to check whether:
- the policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood plan area; and
 - the Plan meets the requirements of Section 38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the Plan must specify the period to which it has effect, must not include provision about development that is excluded development, and must not relate to more than one neighbourhood area); and
 - the Plan has been prepared for an area that has been designated under Section 61G of the Localism Act and has been developed and submitted for examination by a qualifying body.
- 2.12 Having addressed the matters identified in paragraph 2.11 of this report I am satisfied that all of the points have been met subject to the contents of this report.

3 Procedural Matters

3.1 In undertaking this examination I have considered the following documents:

- the submitted Plan.
- the Basic Conditions Statement.
- the Consultation Statement and its update (June 2017)
- the various Assessments in the evidence base
- the representations made to the Plan.
- the Stroud District Local Plan 2015
- National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012).
- Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014 and subsequent updates).
- recent Ministerial Statements (March, May and June 2015).

3.2 I carried out an unaccompanied visit to the Plan area on 28 April 2017. I looked at its overall character and appearance and at those areas affected by policies in the Plan in particular. My site inspection is covered in more detail in paragraphs 5.9 to 5.16 of this report.

3.3 It is a general rule that neighbourhood plan examinations should be held by written representations only. Having considered all the information before me, including the representations made to the submitted plan, I was satisfied that the Plan could be examined in this fashion. There was one request that the examination should proceed by way of hearing. However, that representation was very detailed and gave me all the information that I need to examine the Plan.

4 Consultation

Consultation Process

- 4.1 Policies in made neighbourhood plans become the basis for local planning and development control decisions. As such the regulations require neighbourhood plans to be supported and underpinned by public consultation.
- 4.2 In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 the Parish Council has prepared a Consultation Statement. This statement is generally thorough and well-prepared. It provides a proportionate level of detail to the Plan and its policies. However, the original Statement did not set out how the emerging plan took account of the various comments and representations received at the pre-submission phase of the Plan. This matter was rectified by the submission of a revised Statement during the examination process. I am satisfied that no party was disadvantaged by this omission. SDC published the revised Consultation Statement and carried out a period of targeted consultation.
- 4.3 Section 2 of the Statement sets out details of the wider consultation events that has been carried out as part the evolution of the Plan. The consultation events were well-structured and followed a clear sequence. Details are provided about:
- The inaugural workshop in September 2013
 - Designing a logo (February 2014)
 - The community general questionnaire (April 2014)
 - The consultation with the Youth Club (July 2014)
 - The Housing Needs Survey (January 2015)
 - The community drop in event (March 2015)
 - The parish Assembly (April 2015)
 - The establishment of a live website (March 2016)
- 4.4 The Consultation Statement provides very useful information about the methods of community engagement. It is helpfully supported by the reproduction of the various leaflets that were used.
- 4.5 It is clear to me that consultation has fundamentally underpinned the Plan's production. Advice on the neighbourhood planning process has been made available to the community in a positive and direct way by those responsible for the Plan's preparation.
- 4.6 The positive approach that was taken in responding to the earlier comments is reflected in the limited number of representations the submitted plan (see 4.8 below).
- 4.7 From all the evidence provided to me as part of the examination, I can see that the Plan has promoted an inclusive and comprehensive approach to seeking the opinions of all concerned throughout the process. SDC has carried out its own

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assessment that the consultation process has complied with the requirements of the Regulations.

Representations Received

4.8 Consultation on the submitted plan was undertaken by the District Council for a six-week period and which ended on 12 April 2017. This exercise generated comments from various persons and organisations:

- Marine Management Organisation
- Sport England
- Highways England
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Stroud District Council
- Environment Agency
- Network Rail
- The Canal and River Trust
- Redrow Homes
- Natural England
- Historic England

4.9 In examining the Plan I have taken account of all the representations received. In some cases, I have highlighted specific representations in this report where it is both appropriate and relevant to do so.

5 The Plan Area and the Development Plan Context

The Plan Area

- 5.1 The Plan area is located in the western part of Stroud District and to the immediate south of the built-up area of Gloucester. It comprises of the whole of Hardwicke parish. It was designated as a neighbourhood area on 4 February 2014.
- 5.2 The Plan area sits in an interesting landscape and provides a challenging context within which to prepare a neighbourhood plan. As the Local Plan comments, all the District's major routes to the north pass through this part of the District. They include the M5, the A38 and the Gloucester Sharpness Canal. Junction 12 of the M5 lies to the south of Hunts Grove. The motorway acts as a hard edge to the urban expansion of Gloucester City.
- 5.3 The Plan area is one of contrasts. The built-up settlement in the north of the Plan area is the principal focus of development. It sits to the north of pleasant open countryside in what the Plan describes as 'Rural Hardwicke' The traditional Hardwicke village has remained largely unchanged in terms of its layout and street pattern. The original core areas of the village are based on Church Lane and Pound Lane and St Nicholas Church. The Gloucester Sharpness Canal runs through the middle of the Plan area. It provides a fascinating route from the River Severn into Gloucester Docks. It is one of the defining features of the Plan area. The area to the west of the Canal is open countryside.

Development Plan Context

- 5.4 The development plan context is comprehensive and has provided a clear framework for the preparation of the neighbourhood plan.
- 5.5 The Stroud District Local Plan was adopted in November 2015. The Plan provides an up to date context against which the Plan can be assessed (as one of the basic conditions). All the policies in the plan are strategic policies for the purpose of neighbourhood planning.
- 5.6 The neighbourhood area is affected directly and indirectly by a series of Core Policies in the Local Plan. Core Policy CP3 sets out a settlement hierarchy for the District. The settlement of Hardwicke falls within the third of five tiers of settlements described as 'Accessible Settlements with Limited Facilities'. The Plan comments that these settlements possess a limited level of facilities and services that, together with improved local employment, provide the best opportunities outside the Local Service Centres for greater self-containment. They will provide for lesser levels of development in order to safeguard their role and to provide through any Neighbourhood Plans some opportunities for growth and to deliver affordable housing. The strategic allocation of Hunts Grove, which is partly within the Plan area, is anticipated to form a tier two local service centre settlement. Core Policy CP4 provides particularly useful guidance to the Plan. It seeks to bring forward high quality

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and distinctive development. Proposals are expected to be integrated into the neighbourhood concerned, to protect and enhance a sense of place and to create safe streets, homes and workplaces.

5.7 The Plan area falls within the Gloucester Fringe strategic growth area. This is one of eight mini place making plans within specific parish cluster areas in the District. Strategic development for this particular cluster includes that set out in Policy SA4 Hunts Grove extension. The part of this site within the neighbourhood area is shown on its Proposals Map. Paragraph 3.49 of the Local Plan sets out a range of guiding principles for development in this mini plan area. They include:

- The Gloucester fringe will continue to be a major focus for employment provision;
- Appropriate development will be supported to maintain Hardwicke (and Upton St Leonards outside the neighbourhood plan area) in their roles as Settlements with Limited Facilities;
- Conserve and enhance the landscape and built character of the urban/rural fringe to provide a strong and high-quality edge to the City of Gloucester;
- Secure high-quality distinctive design; and
- Improve non-motorised connections between the City suburbs and the rural hinterland.

5.8 The Local Plan also includes an extensive range of other related policies. The following policies have a particular impact on the submitted Plan:

CP2 Strategic Growth and Development Locations
 SA4 Hunts Grove strategic site allocations
 SA4a Quedgeley East strategic site allocation
 HC1 Meeting small-scale housing needs within defined settlements
 ES7 Landscape Character

Site Visit

5.9 I carried out an unaccompanied visit to the Plan area on 28 April 2017. I approached the Plan area from the M5/A38 and Pound Lane. In doing so I was able to see the relationship between the Plan area, the strategic road network and the built-up area of Gloucester to the immediate north. I parked in the Recreation Ground in Green Lane. Given the compact nature of the Plan area I was able to carry out the majority of my visit on foot.

5.10 I looked initially at the Recreation Ground and the associated playing fields. They were very well-maintained. I saw the very effective post and rail fence and hedgerow that forms its southern boundary.

5.11 I then walked back along Pound Lane to the village pond opposite the corner of Green Lane and Sticky Lane. I saw that it was also very well-maintained and provided an unexpected haven for wildlife. I then continued into Sticky Lane to look at

the Village Green and the Millennium Stone. I saw the range of Horse Chestnut trees in various places on the Green.

- 5.12 I then carried on along Green Lane and walked to the south along Glevum Way. It was being extensively used during my visit. In doing so I walked through the various identified open spaces and the local green space in this part of the Plan area.
- 5.13 I then carried on south to the Church and then along Stank Lane to the Canal.
- 5.14 I then walked back to the north along Church Lane and Sellars Road up to the Pilot Inn. I saw some very interesting buildings as I did so, including Old Hall.
- 5.15 In order to get a full impression of the Plan area I drove around the local road network including the built-up part of Hardwicke to the north of Green Lane and to the west of the Canal.
- 5.16 I finished my tour around the village by driving along A38 towards Gloucester. In doing so I saw the employment land at the A38 roundabout and the allotment area to its immediate north.

6 The Neighbourhood Plan as a whole

- 6.1 This section of the report deals with the submitted neighbourhood plan as a whole and the extent to which it meets the basic conditions. The submitted Basic Conditions Statement has helped considerably in the preparation of this section of the report. It is a well-presented, informative and very professional document.
- 6.2 The Plan needs to meet all the basic conditions to proceed to referendum. This section provides an overview of the extent to which the Plan meets three of the four basic conditions. Paragraphs 2.6 to 2.10 of this report have already addressed the issue of conformity with European Union legislation.

National Planning Policies and Guidance

- 6.3 The key elements of national policy relating to planning matters are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) issued in March 2012.
- 6.4 The NPPF sets out a range of core land-use planning principles to underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. The following are of particular relevance to the Plan area:
- a plan led system– in this case the relationship between the neighbourhood plan and the adopted Local Plan.
 - Seeking to secure high quality design and good standards of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings
 - Contributing to conserving and enhancing the natural environment
 - Conserving heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance
- 6.5 Neighbourhood plans sit within this wider context both generally, and within the more specific presumption in favour of sustainable development, which is identified as a golden thread running through the planning system. Paragraph 16 of the NPPF indicates that neighbourhoods should both develop plans that support the strategic needs set out in local plans and plan positively to support local development that is outside the strategic elements of the development plan.
- 6.6 In addition to the NPPF I have also taken account of other elements of national planning policy including Planning Practice Guidance and the ministerial statements of March, May and June 2015.
- 6.7 Having considered all the evidence and representations available as part of the examination I am satisfied that the submitted Plan has had regard to national planning policies and guidance in general terms. It sets out a positive vision for the future of the plan area and promotes sustainable growth. At its heart are a suite of policies that aim to allow infill development to proceed within the context of high quality design. It also sets out to safeguard open spaces. Table 1 of the Basic Conditions Statement is particularly effective in terms of mapping Plan policies with the appropriate paragraphs in the NPPF.

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- 6.8 At a more practical level the NPPF indicates that plans should provide a clear framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made and that they should give a clear indication of how a decision-maker should react to a development proposal (paragraphs 17 and 154). This was reinforced with the publication of Planning Practice Guidance in March 2014. Its paragraph 41 (41-041-20140306) indicates that policies in neighbourhood plans should be drafted with sufficient clarity so that a decision-maker can apply them consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. Policies should also be concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence.
- 6.9 As submitted the Plan does not fully accord with this range of practical issues. The majority of my recommended modifications in Section 7 relate to matters of clarity and precision. They are designed to ensure that the Plan fully accords with national policy.

Contributing to sustainable development

- 6.10 There are clear overlaps between national policy and the contribution that the submitted Plan makes to achieving sustainable development. Sustainable development has three principal dimensions – economic, social and environmental. It is clear to me that the submitted Plan has set out to achieve sustainable development. In the economic dimension, it includes two policies to provide a context for new housing and employment development (HOU1 and EC1). In the social role, it includes policies to promote accessibility into the countryside (GEN2), to encourage a mix of house sizes (HOU3), to maintain essential services (ISF1) and for the promotion of health and well-being through accessibility to open spaces (MTC3). In the environmental dimension the Plan positively promotes high quality design standards (GEN3) and sets out to safeguard the environmental assets in the Plan area (ENV1). It identifies a series of local green spaces (MTC2) within the context of safeguarding rural Hardwicke.

General conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan

- 6.11 I have already commented in detail on the development plan context in the wider Stroud District area in paragraphs 5.4 to 5.8 of this report.
- 6.12 I consider that the submitted Plan delivers a local dimension to this strategic context and supplements the detail already included in the adopted development plan. I am satisfied that the Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan.

7 The Neighbourhood Plan policies

- 7.1 This section of the report comments on the range of policies in the Plan. In particular, it makes a series of recommended modifications to ensure that the various policies have the necessary precision to meet the basic conditions.
- 7.2 My recommendations focus on the policies themselves given that the basic conditions relate primarily to this aspect of neighbourhood plans. In some cases, I have also recommended changes to the associated supporting text.
- 7.3 I am satisfied that the content and the form of the Plan is fit for purpose. It is thorough and distinctive to the Plan area. Other than to ensure compliance with national guidance I do not propose that major elements of the Plan are removed or that new sections are included. The Parish Council has spent considerable time and energy in identifying the issues and objectives that it wishes to be included in the Plan. This gets to the heart of the localism agenda. The various Assessments are very detailed and underpin the Plan with the type of evidence required for plan-making purposes.
- 7.4 The Plan is commendable to the extent that it includes only land use policies. This approach directly reflects Planning Practice Guidance (41-004-20140306) which indicates that neighbourhood plans must address the development and use of land.
- 7.5 I have addressed the policies in the order that they appear in the submitted plan. In some cases, there are overlaps between the different policies.
- 7.6 For clarity this section of the report comments on all policies whether or not I have recommended modifications to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions.
- 7.7 Where modifications are recommended to policies they are highlighted in bold print. Any associated or free-standing changes to the text of the Plan are set out in italic print.

Sections 1 to 4 of the Plan

- 7.8 These introductory elements of the Plan set the scene for its range of policies. They do so in a concise and proportionate way. The Plan is well-presented and arranged and is supported by well-chosen photographs and diagrams. The photographs add value and depth to the text in these sections of the Plan
- 7.9 The Introduction to the Plan (Section 1) provides a very clear context to the role and purpose of neighbourhood planning and to the designation of the neighbourhood plan area. It also sets out the key stages in the production of the Plan and the context provided by the development plan. Section 2 sets out the consultation methods used as part of preparing the Plan. This section overlaps with the separate Consultation Statement. Section 4 sets out some useful information on the challenges that have been addressed in making the Plan. It provides a very useful background and context to the Plan area. It also describes the overlaps between the emerging neighbourhood

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plan and the Stroud Local Plan. Section 4 describes how this evidence and context have cascaded into its Vision and Objectives. The outcomes are both logical and thorough.

- 7.10 These introductory sections demonstrate that the Plan has been prepared and submitted in a structured and ordered way. The policies have been developed in an iterative fashion and are the outcome of research and an assessment of available information.

Policies in General

- 7.11 The presentation of the Plan makes a clear contrast between the policies themselves and the supporting text. This will ensure that decision-makers have clarity on the policies in the Plan. In appropriate circumstances the policies are criteria-based. The adoption of this approach will provide useful long-term clarity for decision makers, local residents and land owners and investors alike.

Policy GEN1 - Settlement Boundary

- 7.12 The policy sets out a strategic context to development in the Plan area by establishing

a settlement boundary. Having done so the policy then has a focus on setting out the types of development that would be appropriate outside the settlement boundary.

- 7.13 SDC comments that the policy is vague and does not consolidate the policy basis already set out in the development plan. In particular, it comments that the policy fails to identify the type of development that would be acceptable within the settlement boundary. It also comments that there is conflict with national and local policy regarding what development is appropriate in rural areas.

- 7.14 Redrow Homes raise similar comments within the context of its promotion of land for residential development in the general area to the south of Green Lane. It argues that the wording of the policy is excessively prohibitive and allows no flexibility to meet national planning objectives. I address the open space matters in greater detail in relation to Policy MTC2 in the Plan.

- 7.15 This policy is clearly a fundamental element of the submitted Plan. It provides the context to other policies. On this basis, it is important that it has regard to national policy and is in general conformity with strategic policies in the development plan. Paragraph 55 of the NPPF sets out circumstances where residential development may be acceptable in rural areas. Other elements of the NPPF make more general commentary on supporting a prosperous rural economy. Policies CP2/CP3/CP4 of the Stroud Local Plan provide a strategic context for the control of development in the District. Whilst there is no specific need for a neighbourhood plan to include policies on each and every issue where they do so there is an expectation that they provide a neighbourhood plan context to the relevant strategic local policy context.

- 7.16 The representation from Redrow Home draws my attention to the interim findings of the Planning Inspector who is currently examining the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy. Redrow Homes also comments that the submitted neighbourhood plan is premature and prejudicial to the local plan process for both the Stroud Local Plan Review and for the JCS area. As part of my clarification of a series of matters with SDC on the submitted Plan I was advised that the Stroud Local Plan review process will commence in Autumn 2017 and is likely to conclude in 2022.
- 7.17 Plainly the neighbourhood plan has been submitted in challenging circumstances. Whilst some neighbourhood plans have had to grapple with emerging local plans within largely self-contained district areas, the Hardwicke Plan has the additional complication of the stated inability of the JCS authorities to accommodate the full extent of their housing needs within their administrative areas and its potential future implications on the neighbourhood area. In order to provide a solid basis on which a neighbourhood plan can be prepared the requirement is for it to be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the adopted development plan (in this case the Stroud Local Plan). Planning Practice Guidance (41-009-20160211) requires that neighbourhood plans take account of emerging local plans by sharing evidence and working collaboratively. In this case, the alignment and timing of the plans concerned has simply not allowed this to take place. As such I am satisfied that there is no prematurity issue as part of this examination. The same paragraph of the PPG is very clear that a neighbourhood plan can be submitted before or at the same time as the local planning authority is developing its local plan (in this case the Local Plan review).
- 7.18 At the same time I am satisfied that the submission of the neighbourhood plan will not prejudice either the Local Plan review or the future progress of the JCS. In particular, the former will make its own assessment of the Hardwicke site as promoted by Redrow Homes. In the case of the latter, the JCS main modifications are proposing an early review to address Gloucester's longer-term needs. Within this context, the local community and others will have their own opportunity to comment on any such draft proposals. In the scenario in which the proposal was included in the Local Plan review that Plan would have favour with the decision-maker as the last document to become part of the development plan. In any event, however national policy is clear that it is important to boost the supply of housing land (paragraph 47 of the NPPF). Within this context, I recommend that the sentence in the supporting text indicating that Hardwicke does not need any additional housing is deleted. Plainly this will be determined in the wider context of the Local Plan review.
- 7.19 Taking all these matters into account I recommend a series of modifications both to the policy and to its supporting text. In particular, the modifications to the policy make an appropriate distinction between development that would be acceptable within the settlement boundary and outside that boundary. The recommended modifications to the text provide a broader commentary to the policy itself. As some elements of the text in the submitted Plan are recommended for inclusion in the policy they are then recommended for deletion from the supporting text.

Replace the policy with the following:

Development proposals will be supported within the settlement boundary as shown on the policies map, on existing employment sites, and on sites allocated within the Stroud District Local Plan provided they meet the criteria set out in other policies in the Local Plan.

Outside the settlement boundary development appropriate to a rural area will be supported where it:

- **meets the essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside; or**
- **would represent the most viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets; or**
- **would re-use redundant and disused buildings and lead to an enhancement of their immediate settings; or**
- **would incorporate a dwelling of exceptional quality or innovative nature of design; or**
- **otherwise satisfies criteria set out in the development plan for development in rural areas**

All development should reflect the characteristics of its locality in general, and should safeguard the open spaces and local green spaces identified in this Plan.

Insert the following sentence at the start of the supporting text:

Policy GEN1 provides an overarching spatial approach to the Plan. It establishes a settlement boundary and identifies the types of development that will be supported both within and outside this boundary.

Delete As such, Hardwicke.... meet its needs'

Delete the final paragraph of the supporting text and replace it with the following:

Development outside the settlement boundary will be controlled in a manner that is consistent with both national and local planning policies. The second part of the policy sets out the types of development that will be supported in this rural area. This policy and others elsewhere in the Plan seek to reinforce the importance of the countryside to the south and west of the settlement boundary. They also respect the importance of the historic core of Hardwicke village based on the Parish Church of St Nicholas, Church Lane, Pound Lane and Sticky Lane.

Policy GEN2- Accessibility

- 7.20 This policy offers support to proposals that will contribute towards improving access to the countryside for visitors and residents alike. The supporting text helpfully identifies the opportunities for circular walk/cycle trails based on the Glevum Way, the Church and the Gloucester-Sharpness Canal.

- 7.21 The policy and its supporting text are well-crafted. They are distinctive to the Plan area. The policy meets the basic conditions.

Policy GEN3 - High Quality Inclusive Design

- 7.22 This policy identifies the Plan's objectives for high quality design. It does so in a very comprehensive fashion. It requires development proposals to have regard to local context and character. It also provides an overlap with Local Plan policy.
- 7.23 The policy has regard to national policy. In particular, it accords with paragraph 60 of the NPPF to the extent that it seeks to promote and reinforce local distinctiveness without being prescriptive. It is also in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan. It meets the basic conditions.

Policy HOU1 – Infill Development

- 7.24 This policy would apply both within the existing settlement boundary and within the areas shown on the policies map where new strategic allocations are proposed by the District Council. The policy is underpinned by a series of criteria, all of which are both appropriate and distinctive to the Plan area.
- 7.25 I recommend a modification to the opening part of the policy so that it gives the necessary clarity to the decision-maker. This will ensure that the policy has regard to national policy.

Replace 'considered...that:' with 'supported subject to the following criteria'

Policy HOU2 – Providing well-designed homes

- 7.26 This policy sets out the Plan's ambition for the delivery of well-designed new homes. It expects new dwellings to be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.
- 7.27 In its representation SDC comments that the policy is vague and is open to subject interpretation. I agree with its comments. I recommend a modification to address the issue and to frame the policy so that it can be readily applied through the development management process. This will give it the clarity required by the NPPF.

Replace the policy with:

Proposals for new residential development will be supported where the houses:

- **are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping;**

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- **draw on the existing character of the immediate area; and**
- **reflect good design principles set out within the Stroud Local Plan and supplementary planning guidance**

*At the end of the supporting text following the policy add the following sentence:
Policy HOU2 draws attention to the need to reflect supplementary planning guidance produced by the District Council. The Stroud District Residential Design Guide SPG (November 2000) is particularly applicable to this policy’.*

Policy HOU3 – Dwelling Mix

- 7.28 This policy sets out a requirement for new residential development to provide an appropriate mix of dwelling types and sizes. The supporting text refers to the Future Housing Assessment document. It also draws attention to the Hunts Grove development.
- 7.29 The approach taken is appropriate and evidence-based. I recommend a modification to frame the policy so that it can be readily applied through the development management process. This will give it the clarity required by the NPPF.

Replace ‘will’ with ‘should’

Policy HOU4 – Residential Gardens

- 7.30 This policy addresses new residential proposals in gardens of existing dwellings. The supporting text comments about some new developments of this type which, in the opinion of the Parish Council, have conflicted with the general pattern of the settlement.
- 7.31 SDC suggests that the policy approach is adequately controlled by Policy HOU1 and could therefore be deleted. I agree that such an approach would have merit. Nevertheless, on balance I am content that the policy should remain in the Plan, albeit in a modified format. It is not within my remit to improve the Plan and the deletion of this policy is not necessary to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions.
- 7.32 I recommend modifications both to the policy itself and to the supporting text. In relation to the policy I recommend that its format is modified so that it provides clarity to the decision-maker on what types of proposals will and will not achieve planning permission. As submitted the policy requires only that applicants demonstrate that they do not cause significant adverse impacts. In relation to the supporting text I recommend that it cross-refers the policy to Policy HOU1.

Replace ‘need to...that’ with ‘be supported where’ and ‘local character and amenity’ with ‘character, appearance and amenities of the immediate locality’.

Add the following sentences at the end of the supporting text:

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Policy HOU4 addresses this particular matter due to its significance to the local community. The policy has been designed to add value to Policy HOU1 in this Plan. That policy is more general in the issues it addresses. Proposals for residential development in existing gardens will need to comply with the provisions of both policies.

Policy ISF1 – Maintain Services

- 7.33 This policy sets out to safeguard existing local facilities and services. The policy would resist their loss through redevelopment or change of use unless it can be demonstrated that the facility is no longer viable. The Facilities and Services Assessment helpfully sets out the existing services of this nature in the Plan area, and those that will be delivered on the forthcoming Hunts Grove development.
- 7.34 I am satisfied that the principle and purpose of this policy is both appropriate and distinctive to the Plan area. In particular, it takes account of the new facilities that will be developed at Hunts Grove. However, I recommend two modifications to ensure that the policy meets the basic conditions. The first provides the clarity required by the NPPF in identifying in the policy that the local facilities and services to be safeguarded are those listed in the Assessment. This is not immediately apparent in the submitted policy. I also recommend that the Assessment lists only those facilities within the Plan area. The submitted version includes several facilities in the adjacent parish. Whilst I acknowledge that residents of Hardwicke will use these and other facilities a neighbourhood plan cannot control development elsewhere.

Insert ‘as listed in the Facilities and Services Assessment’ between ‘services’ and ‘through’

In the Facilities and Services Assessment delete any facility that is located outside the neighbourhood area

Policy MTC1 - Gloucester Sharpness Canal

- 7.35 This policy celebrates the importance of the Canal to the history and the environment of the Plan area. It recognises its increasing recreational and leisure value and supports proposals that would enhance these features.
- 7.36 The policy and its supporting text are well-crafted. The policy meets the basic conditions.

Policy MTC2 – Safeguarding Rural Hardwicke and its rural character

- 7.37 This policy identifies a significant amount of land to the south-west of Green Lane as open space. The intention of the policy is to safeguard the rural character of this part of the Plan area. The policy itself reads as though the open space is a single open space. However, the supporting text and the associated Open Space Assessment clarify that there are 25 separate proposed open spaces. Eight of the open spaces are proposed as local green spaces (LGSs) based on the community’s assessment

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of the various open spaces against the criteria in the NPPF (paragraph 77). The various open spaces vary significantly in size. At one extreme, open space 21 is 0.1 acres in extent, whereas at the other extreme open spaces 4 and 9b are 41.4 acres and 36.7 acres respectively.

- 7.38 The Open Spaces Assessment is very thorough in the way it scores the various sites against a series of factors. Several of the factors overlap with information in the NPPF relating to key principles for the designation of LGSs. Its section 6 is particularly helpful in describing each of the sites and identifying the ways in which the community consider them to be important. The Assessment also underpins the next policy which addresses open spaces and green infrastructure.
- 7.39 The policy has attracted a representation from Redrow Homes. There is a significant overlap between the various open spaces to the south-west of Green Lane and land which it is promoting for residential development. This matter has already been addressed in this report in paragraphs 7.14 to 7.18.
- 7.40 As I mentioned earlier in this report I looked at the various sites in detail on my visit to the Plan area. For the purpose of the examination I will address the proposed LGSs in some detail given the significance that they have in the NPPF and the implications of their designation for this purpose. In each case I will make my own assessment against the three criteria in the NPPF.

Area 2: Playing Fields north of Green Lane (9.6 acres).

- 7.41 This is a traditional recreation ground. It has a full-size football pitch and two smaller junior pitches with a range of ancillary facilities. I am satisfied that it is in close proximity to the community it serves. In particular, it sits to the west of the village hall and the Royal British Legion building. It is also clear that the playing fields are demonstrably special to the local community by virtue of its extensive formal and informal recreational use. It is the only formally-recognised and maintained recreational area in the village. It is local in character. The playing fields comfortably satisfy the criteria for LGS designation.

Area 3: Footpaths between Green Lane and the Church

- 7.42 This proposed LGS is a footpath linking Green Lane to the Church. I walked along sections of the path on my visit to the Plan area. I understand fully the comments made in the Assessment about the attractiveness of its various vistas and its extensive use. Nevertheless, the footpath is a footpath rather than an open space in its own right. It does not meet the rigorous criteria in the NPPF for LGS designation. In any event the footpath is safeguarded through separate highways legislation. On this basis, I recommend that it is not identified as LGS.

Area 5: Area around the village pond

- 7.43 This area is as described in the Assessment. I looked at it as part of my visit. It is a classic LGS. It is a small parcel of open space close to the community it serves.

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Area 6: The Village Green

- 7.44 The area is a rectangular village green. At its northern end, there is a very impressive Millennium stone. It is a tranquil area at the heart of the historic village. I saw from my visit that it was both well-maintained and well-endowed with Horse Chestnut trees. I am satisfied that it meets the criteria for designation as a LGS.

Area 8: Four Mile Elm allotments

- 7.45 This proposed LGS is a well-used series of allotments to the immediate west of the A38. As the Assessment comments, it represents a haven of calm in an otherwise busy area dominated by traffic noise. It clearly provides recreational benefits to those who tend the allotments. It is in close proximity to the community it serves and is local in scale. I am satisfied that the site meets the criteria set out in the NPPF.

Area 9a: Open Fields on the south-east side of Church Lane

- 7.46 For clarity this is the smaller part of the site within the northernmost part of the wider area 9 in the Open Spaces Assessment. I walked through this parcel of land when I visited the Plan area.
- 7.47 The parcel of land is very different in its character from the wider area 9 and indeed the other parcels of agricultural land proposed as open spaces elsewhere in the Plan. Rather than being in arable use it is open grassland. The Assessment comments that the parcel of land is well-known by the community for walking or strolling. I saw several people doing just that on my visit.
- 7.48 I am satisfied that the proposed LGS is within close proximity of the community it serves. I am also satisfied that it is local in scale and is not an extensive tract of land. At 5.1 acres, it is modest in size. The Assessment describes certain attributes of the site which confirms that it is demonstrably special to the local community and holds a particular local significance. Information is provided about its informal recreational use, its tranquillity and its ecological importance. With its views of the Church tower and the Cotswold AONB and the escarpment, the area is considered to epitomise the local character of Hardwicke. I agree with this assessment and consider that the identification of this parcel of land meets the basic conditions for designation as a LGS.

Area 16: Dales Wharf Promenade

- 7.49 This area of proposed LGS is very distinctive to the Plan area. It is well-known in the community and has benches and a grass space between the promenade itself and the adjacent gardens. It is an important area that links a modern residential

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community to its maritime heritage. It comfortably meets the criteria for LGS designation set out in the NPPF.

Area 22: Open Space between Dales Wharf promenade and the Dinmore Brook crossing

- 7.50 This area sits to the immediate north of Area 16. It is a tranquil space with a variety of landscaping and wildlife. It comfortably meets the criteria for LGS designation set out in the NPPF.
- 7.51 The evaluation of the proposed local green spaces in this section of the report should be read with the equivalent exercise for the proposed open spaces in Policy MTC3. Within the context of the submitted Plan an interconnected series of local green spaces and open spaces were proposed both in their own right and to safeguard the rural character of Hardwicke in general, and to the south-west of Green Lane in particular. To take account of the outcomes of this evaluation I recommend modifications to the contents and the structures of both policies. Both are underpinned by the Open Spaces Assessment. Policy MTC2 (as modified) would focus on local green spaces. Policy MTC3 (as modified) would focus on open spaces.

Replace the policy with the following:

The Neighbourhood Plan designates the following locations as Local Green Space, as shown on the Policies Map:

- **Playing Fields north of Green Lane**
- **Area around the Village Pond**
- **The Village Green**
- **Four Mile Elms allotments**
- **Open Field on south east side of Church Lane**
- **Dales Wharf Promenade**
- **Dales Wharf Promenade/Dinmore Brook crossing**

New development will not be permitted on land designated as Local Green Space except in very special circumstances

Replace the first and second paragraphs of supporting text with the following:

The Open Spaces Assessment has identified a series of open spaces that are important to the community. In different ways, they provide an outlook from the built-up area and the range of footpaths offer good opportunity for outdoor amenity activities. Some of the open spaces are identified as local green spaces. These are addressed in policy MTC2. Some of these local green spaces sit to the south of the built-up area. They help to provide a wider connection to the countryside in general, and to the historic core of Hardwicke in particular.

Policy MTC3 – Health and Well-being

- 7.52 This policy provides a context within which open spaces can be safeguarded, retained and enhanced. It is underpinned by the Assessment as detailed in the previous policy.
- 7.53 It is clear that significant effort and research has been invested in the Assessment in general, and its identification of LGSs and open spaces in particular. I am satisfied that in principle the characteristics of the Plan area warrant the identification of both LGSs and open spaces.
- 7.54 In terms of the details in the Assessment I am satisfied that many of the identified open spaces meet the basic conditions. In particular, they have a close affinity with the concept of open space as addressed both in the NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance. They are areas in use as open space and for sporting and recreational purposes. They are important in their role in promoting healthy communities.
- 7.55 However I recommend that the following proposed open spaces are deleted from the Policies Map:

Fields behind Tudor Cottages
 Fields to the north west of Church Lane
 Fields between Sticky Lane and the Quedgeley Business Park
 Fields to the south east of Church Lane
 Fields north of Shorn Brook
 Fields south of Green Lane

These parcels of land have their own characteristics and appearances. They have an inherent attractiveness. They also provide an agricultural context to the historic heart of Hardwicke. Nevertheless, they are not areas of open space within the context of national or local planning policies. They are parcels of agricultural land of different shapes and sizes. Other than where public footpaths run through certain parcels of land there is no public access into the land concerned nor do they have any direct recreational use. In several cases, they are very significant tracts of land.

- 7.56 Plainly the parcels of land provide an important context to the distinction between the urban and rural landscapes in the Plan area. This matter is addressed in my recommended modifications both to Policy GEN 1 and to its supporting text. This overall spatial policy (as recommended to be modified) has regard to national policy. It represents the most appropriate way in which decisions on the spatial distribution of development can be made in a strategic fashion.
- 7.57 I also recommend that the supporting text is modified so that it properly takes account of the recommended modifications. This will provide the clarity required by the NPPF both to the developer and to the decision-maker alike.

Add 'as shown on the policies map' after 'infrastructure'
Delete 'as well as open spaces'
Add the following as a separate paragraph to the policy:

Proposals to provide easy and safe access to local parks and valued informal open spaces will also be supported.

Delete the following proposed open spaces from the policies map:

Fields behind Tudor Cottages

Fields to the north west of Church Lane

Fields between Sticky Lane and the Quedgeley Business Park

Fields to the south east of Church Lane

Fields north of Shorn Brook

Fields south of Green Lane

Replace the supporting text with the following:

Policy MTC3 provides a context for the protection and enhancement of open spaces in the Plan area. They are shown on the policies map and their details are set out in the Open Spaces Assessment January 2017. Footpaths within these areas and footpaths that connect into these open spaces should also be retained.

Policy ENV1 – Environmental Assets

- 7.58 The policy provides a context within which the natural environment will be conserved and enhanced through the Plan period. It makes a specific series of requirements with which new development should comply.
- 7.59 The policy is appropriate to the Plan area. It has regard to national planning policy. I recommend a modification to clarify the requirement or otherwise for the need to provide and maintain effective sustainable urban drainage systems. As SDC comment this requirement will not necessarily extend to each and every development site. I also recommend that the format of the criteria lettering is corrected.

Insert ‘where proven necessary’ after criterion d.

Remove the double layering of letters applied to the criteria

Policy ENV2 – Landscape

- 7.60 This policy sets out to ensure that new development protects existing trees, hedgerows and other landscape features. It also requires that new planting should incorporate native species. This policy is particularly appropriate given the sensitive location of the Plan area on the southern fringe of Gloucester and within the Rolling Agricultural Plain landscape area.
- 7.61 I recommend a modification to the policy to bring clarity to the new planting requirements.

Replace ‘arboreal species to’ with ‘trees and shrubs characteristic of’.

Policy ENV3 – Wildlife

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- 7.62 This policy sets out to protect valuable biodiversity habitats as shown on the proposals map. The various areas are identified in the Ecological Assessment document. The policy continues by offering support for proposals that would contribute to the net improvement of biodiversity and wildlife corridors in the areas that surround these identified sites.
- 7.63 The policy has regard to national planning policy (NPPF 109-119) and is in general conformity with the development plan. I recommend two modifications to the policy to ensure that it meets the basic conditions. The first provides the clarity required by the NPPF in identifying in the policy how the decision-maker will react to any proposals for development on the identified sites. The second repositions key elements of supporting text from the policy into the supporting text.

Replace the first paragraph of the policy with:

Proposals for development on land identified as Biodiversity Sites on the Policies Map will not be supported.

In the second part of policy delete ‘Green wildlife...and fauna’

Add the following sentence at the end of the supporting text:

‘Policy ENV3 recognises that green wildlife corridors are important to help safeguard local flora and fauna. On this basis, the second part of the policy sets out a positive context within which new development that contributes to the net improvement of biodiversity and wildlife corridors in the surrounding area will be supported’.

Policy CT1 – Parking

- 7.64 This policy addresses the matter of developments that generate high levels of traffic. The Parochial School is identified as a particular example of this type of use.
- 7.65 There is a degree of disconnection between policy itself and the supporting text. The policy comments that developments that generate high levels of traffic will be encouraged to provide areas of parking and drop off points. As submitted this policy does not have the clarity required by the NPPF. In any event the supporting text is more focused on new developments providing car parking to standards identified in the development plan. I recommend modifications to both the policy and to the supporting text. In relation to the former the modification will ensure that development plan parking standards are respected and that drop off points are provided where appropriate. In relation to the supporting text they reflect the recommended modifications to the policy.

Replace the policy with the following:

All new development should provide car parking in accordance with the standards set out in the development plan. Where appropriate proposed developments that attract high levels of traffic at certain times should provide for car parking and drop off facilities either within the site or within close proximity to the facility.

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Reverse the position of the two paragraphs of supporting text.

In the first paragraph replace 'Gloucestershire.... Stroud District Local Plan' with 'development plan in place at the time of the determination of any planning application. At the time of the submission of the Plan this was Policy CP13 of the Stroud District Local Plan. This Plan gives a local dimension to the Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan.'

In the second paragraph add the following sentence at its end:

In appropriate circumstances developments that generate significant levels of traffic at specific times during the day should also provide dropping off facilities in order to ensure the safety of the local highway network'.

Policy EC1 – Location of Employment Development

- 7.66 This policy identifies that new employment uses should be directed towards existing employment areas as shown on the Policies Map. It also comments that proposals for employment development elsewhere will be considered against the requirements of General Policy 1.
- 7.67 I am satisfied that this policy has regard to national policy. Its cross-reference to General Policy 1 is helpful in this regard. I recommend a modification to the first sentence of the policy to provide the necessary clarity to the uses addressed in the policy and to ensure that the decision maker will be able to apply the policy consistently. As submitted the policy simply requires that employment uses will be 'directed' to existing employment sites.

Replace the first sentence of the policy with:

'Proposals for new employment development (Use Classes B1, B2 and B8) on the existing employment sites as shown on the Policies Map will be supported'

Policy EC2 – Existing Employment

- 7.68 The policy identifies that proposals for the change of use of existing business premises to other non-employment use classes will be resisted unless the existing use can be demonstrated to be no longer viable.
- 7.69 I recommend a modification to the policy so that it has the necessary clarity on what proposals will and will not be supported. The policy will need to have regard to national planning policy. The General Permitted Development Order 2015 has introduced significantly different permitted development rights than those that were in place at the time the Plan was being developed. In particular Classes O and P respectively of that Order provide a degree of flexibility (subject to conditions) for changes of use from offices (B1a) and storage/distribution (B8) to residential use without the need for planning permission.

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- 7.70 I also recommend a modification to the wording of the policy itself so that it provides an appropriate amount of flexibility to the decision-maker. As submitted the policy is prescriptive and will not allow SDC to consider all material planning considerations which may impact on individual proposals

Insert 'Insofar as planning permission is required' at the start of the policy.

Replace 'be resisted' with 'not be supported'.

Other matters

- 7.71 A Proposals Map has been submitted with the Plan. I recommend that it is more properly described as a Policies Map. Where I have recommended modifications to policies in this report and which require a reference to the map base I have recommended the use of 'Policies Map' in the relevant modification.
- 7.72 I also recommend that the title of the Plan reflects its purpose and becomes 'Hardwicke Neighbourhood Plan – Policies Map'. In addition I recommend that the key makes a more direct reference to the policies concerned.

Changes references from Proposals Map to Policies Map

Change the title of the Map to 'Hardwicke Neighbourhood Plan – Policies Map'

Insert the text in brackets after the following policy areas included in the submitted 'Proposals' Map

Local Green Space (Policy MTC2)

Open Space (Policy MTC3)

Employment Land (Policy EC1)

Biodiversity Sites (Policy ENV3)

Settlement Boundary (Policy GEN1)

8 Summary and Conclusions

Summary

- 8.1 The Plan sets out a range of policies to guide and direct development proposals in the period up to 2031. It is thorough and distinctive in addressing a specific set of issues that have been identified and refined by the wider community. It is positively prepared and includes a range of housing allocations.
- 8.2 Following my independent examination of the Plan I have concluded that the Hardwicke Neighbourhood Plan meets the basic conditions for the preparation of a neighbourhood plan subject to a series of recommended modifications.
- 8.3 This report has recommended a series of modifications to the policies in the Plan. Nevertheless, it remains fundamentally unchanged in its role and purpose.

Conclusion

- 8.4 On the basis of the findings in this report I recommend to Stroud District Council that subject to the incorporation of the modifications set out in this report that the Hardwicke Neighbourhood Plan should proceed to referendum.

Referendum Area

- 8.5 I am required to consider whether the referendum area should be extended beyond the Plan area. In my view, the neighbourhood area is entirely appropriate for this purpose and no evidence has been submitted to suggest that this is not the case. I therefore recommend that the Plan should proceed to referendum based on the neighbourhood area as approved by Stroud District Council on 4 February 2014.

- 8.6 It is very clear to me that a huge amount of hard work and dedication has been put into the preparation of this Plan. I am grateful to everyone who has contributed towards the smooth delivery of this examination.

Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
8 June 2017

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

AGENDA
ITEM NO

29 JUNE 2017

13

Report Title	SELF BUILD AND CUSTOM HOUSEBUILDING REGISTER
Purpose of Report	<p>To seek approval to introduce local connection and financial capability criteria for entry onto the Council's Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Register.</p> <p>To seek approval to introduce a fee for new applicants to join the Council's Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Register and introduce an annual retention fee for the renewal of applications.</p>
Decision(s)	<p>The Committee RESOLVES:</p> <p>1. to introduce local connection and financial capability criteria for entry on to the Council's Self Build & Custom Register as indicated in paragraph 3.2.</p> <p>2. to introduce a fee for new entries on to the Council's Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Register</p> <p>3. to delegate authority to the Head of Development Services to set the introductory fee and an annual renewal fee for remaining on Part 1 of the Register thereafter.</p>
Consultation and Feedback	Internal consultation has taken place with other departments(Planning Strategy, Asset Management)
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	<p>There are no financial implications arising directly from this report</p> <p>David Stanley, Accountancy Manager Tel: 01453 754100 Email: david.stanley@stroud.gov.uk</p>
Legal Implications	<p>The recommendations in respect of eligibility criteria and fees are consistent with the relevant legislation and consequently there are no material legal implications arising from the report.</p> <p>Alan Carr, Solicitor Email alan.carr@stroud.gov.uk Tel 01453 754357</p>
Report Author	<p>Laura Stephen, Senior Housing Strategy Officer Tel: 01453 754099 Email: laura.stephen@stroud.gov.uk</p>

Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not to introduce local connection / financial capability criteria to access the Register – this will increase the number of households registering. • Not to charge a fee for joining the Register – this may increase the number of households registering and place an undue resource burden on the Council. • To charge a fee for joining the Register that is greater than that proposed – this could act as a deterrent to lower income households who are seeking to join the Register.
Performance Management Follow Up	The management of the Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Register will be monitored through performance update at the Housing Review Panel and Planning Review Panel.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Government wants to enable more people to build or commission the construction of their own home. The Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 placed a duty on all Local Authorities to maintain and promote a Register of individuals and groups of individuals who are interested in self or custom build in their area. The Council's register was in place on 1st April 2016.
- 1.2 The initial regulations allowed UK or EEA applicants, over the age of 18 and wishing to develop a plot for their sole residence, to register with any number of local authorities. As of 31st October 2016 the Council had 48 eligible applicants.
- 1.3 The Act also placed a duty on the Council to have regard to the Register when carrying out planning and other functions and is regarded a material consideration in decision making.

2.0 The Self Build and Custom Housebuilding (Register) Regulations 2016

- 2.1 The Self-build and Custom Housebuilding (Register) Regulations 2016 came into force on 31st October 2016. These provided the ability for local authorities to introduce local connection and financial capability assessment tests for applicants seeking to join the Register. The Housing and Planning Act 2016 also came into force on the 31st October 2016, providing a new 'Duty to Grant Planning Permission', which requires local authorities to grant planning permission for enough serviced plots of land to meet the demand on the Register within 3 years of the Base Period in which those applicants were approved onto the Register.
- 2.2 Demand is determined as the number of applications approved onto the register within a given 'Base Period'. The first Base Period is calculated as 1st April 2016 to the date the Regulations came into force on 31st October 2016. This means that the Council is required to provide

planning consent for 'serviced plots' to meet the 48 applications approved during this period by 31st October 2019. The current Regulations do not set out the implications of not meeting this target. However, we expect monitoring requirements to be introduced by the Government at a later stage.

- 2.3 To ensure that the Register provides a realistic indication of local demand, the regulations enable the Council to determine locally set criteria for future entry onto the register. Following introduction the Register will be split into two parts: Part 1 for those applicants who meet the locally set criteria; and Part 2 for those applicants who do not meet them. Locally set criteria cannot be introduced retrospectively for existing registered applicants.
- 2.4 Following introduction, it will only be necessary for the Council to consider the number of applicants in Part 1 (plus existing applicants at the time of introduction) when providing sufficient planning consents for serviced plots to meet demand. The Council would still need to 'have regard' to the number of people on Part 2 in carrying out planning and other functions.

3.0 Local Connection Test

- 3.1 It is proposed to introduce a Local Connection test and limit entry to Part 1 of the Register to those who can provide 'a sufficient connection' with the authority's area.
- 3.2 The Regulations do not specify how the local connection test should be applied. It is proposed that we use criteria set down in the Housing Act 1996 that defines 'local connection' as a situation where someone has a connection through either normal residence (current or previous); employment; or family connection.

Normal residence:

Persons who have had, or whose partners have had, at the time of applying to the Self-Build Register their only or principal home in the Stroud District for a continuous period of six of the last twelve months, or three of the last five years.

Employment

Persons who have had, or whose partners have had, at the time of applying to the Self-Build Register their principal place of work in the Stroud District for a period of 6 months.

Family Connection

Persons who have had, or whose partners have had, at the time of applying to the Self-Build Register immediate family members (parents, adult siblings, non-dependent children) living in the Stroud District for a continuous period of 5 years.

In introducing a Local Connection test, the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Regulations 2016 do require that the following be included:

Persons who or whose partners are in the service of the regular armed forces of the Crown (defined within the meaning of section 374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006) or have left regular service within the past 5 years immediately preceding their application on the Self-Build Register.

- 3.3 Introduction of a Local Connection test will not require changes to be made to the Council's online application form as these Local Connection criteria questions already form part of the application, although as yet they have not formed part of any formal assessment.

4.0 Financial Capability Test

- 4.1 The introduction of Financial Capability criteria will require applicants to demonstrate that they have sufficient resources to purchase land in the District for their self-build project. At present there is no requirement for applicants to demonstrate they have the resources to bring forward a project.

- 4.2 To ensure that the Register provides a robust evidence base for decision making, it is proposed to introduce the following requirements (in addition to the Local Connection Test) for applicants on Part 1 of the Register:

- Identifying the amount of land (approximate) that would be needed to accommodate the size of property they are looking for in the area they are interested in.
- Indicating the approximate cost of such a site on the open market and evidencing this by way of examples of recent comparable market sales within the District or a confirmation letter from a registered valuer.
- Evidencing how they intend to fund the complete project build.

5.0 Introducing Fees

- 5.1 The Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding (Time for Compliance and Fees) Regulations 2016 allows Councils to charge an initial fee for applicants approved onto both parts of the Register and then subsequently (Part 1 only) a fee for each year that they remain on the Register. Any fee charged must be calculated on a cost-recovery basis and reflect the reasonable costs incurred by the Council.

- 5.2 Based on an assessment of the level of staff time involved in assessing new applications to the Register, administrating the Register and compiling statistics to inform Planning and other functions, it is proposed to charge an initial fee of £75 for entry onto Part 1 of the Register and £25 for entry onto Part 2 – the level of fees will ensure administrative costs are recovered whilst not acting as a deterrent to those who are truly interested in accessing the Register. It is also proposed to charge an ongoing annual fee, initially of £25 for applicants to remain on the Register.

Under the Regulations, this can only be applied to applicants on Part 1 of the Register.

5.3 The fees charged for entry onto and remaining on the Register will need to be reviewed regularly to ensure that the Council recovers the cost of delivering this service.

5.4 Individuals and groups of individuals not renewing their application on an annual basis, with payment of annual fee where applicable, will be removed from the Register.

6.0 Group of Individuals

6.1 If an assessment of individuals submits an application, the Local Connection criteria, Financial Capability Criteria and Entry Fee would apply to each household within that group.

7.0 Next Steps - Grant of planning permission

7.1 The Government is due to issue guidance shortly on how local authorities are expected to deliver the serviced plots for self build and custom build homes. Officers will consider the implications of these requirements and report back to a future Committee any major policy or financial implications.