

01 September 2017

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Environment Committee will be held on **THURSDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 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 29 June 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 11 September 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 WORK PROGRAMME**
To consider the work programme.
- 6 MEMBER REPORTS**
a) Performance Monitoring Representatives
b) Stroud Concordat
c) Planning Review Panel
- 7 CAPITAL PROJECT MONITORING**
a) Canal Regeneration (C2C)
b) Market Town Centres Initiative Fund
c) Wallbridge Gateway Site
d) Stroud District Cycling and Walking Plan
e) Multi-Service Contract – Vehicle Replacement
- 8 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2017-18 Q1**
To present a forecast of the outturn position against the revenue budget and capital programme for 2017-18.
- 9 LOCAL PLAN REVIEW - ISSUES AND OPTIONS PUBLIC CONSULTATION**
To agree a timetable for review and an issues and options paper for public consultation.
- 10 STONEHOUSE NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN**
To receive progress regarding the Stonehouse Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- 11 ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY OUTCOMES**
To inform the Committee of the outcomes from the District Council's Environment Strategy 2007-2027.
- 12 FUTURE OF TOWN CENTRES REPORT**
To note the report and support further discussions with town councils and key stakeholders to take forward its recommendations and related projects designed to improve our town centres.
- 13 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

29 June 2017

7.00 pm – 8.40 pm

Council Chamber, Ebley Mill, Stroud

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Minutes

Membership:

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

** = Chair * = Vice Chair

P = Present

A = Absent

Officers in Attendance

Strategic Head (Development Services)	Democratic Services Officer
Accountancy Manager	Water Resources Engineer
Public Space Manager	Neighbourhood Planning Officer
Regeneration Officer (Business)	Senior Housing Strategy Officer

EC.001

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Jessica Tomblin.

EC.002

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

EC.003

MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 April 2017 are approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

EC.004

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were none.

EC.005 **MEMBER REPORT – PLANNING REVIEW PANEL**

Councillor Nigel Studdert-Kennedy gave an update on the work of the Planning Review Panel.

RESOLVED **To note the report.**

EC.006 **WORK PROGRAMME**

14 September 2017 - Environment Strategy to be added to the work programme.

RESOLVED **To note the work programme.**

EC.007 **REPORT OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP: OUTSIDE BODIES**

The chair explained that a Task and Finish Group had considered the representation on outside bodies, and after consultation with Members had recommended changes which were outlined in the report.

RESOLVED **To approve the recommendation made by the Outside Bodies Task and Finish Group.**

EC.008 **APPOINTMENTS**

- a) Performance Monitoring Representatives – Councillors Alison Hayward, Haydn Sutton
- b) Appointments to Outside Bodies

Organisation	Representatives 2017/18
Berkeley Nuclear Stakeholders	Councillor Brian Tipper
Cotswold AONB	Councillor Nick Hurst
Lower Severn Drainage Board	Councillor John Jones
Minchinhampton & Rodborough Commons Advisory Committee	Councillor Nick Hurst
Stroud Concordat	Councillor Simon Pickering
Stroud Valleys Project Board	Councillor Nigel Cooper
Rural SUDS Steering Group	Councillor Simon Pickering

EC.009 **CAPITAL PROJECT MONITORING**

The Strategic Head of Development Services and officers gave updates on the following projects:

- (a) Stroud Valleys Initiative
- (b) Stroud District Cycling and Walking Plan
- (c) Wallbridge Gateway Site
- (d) Canal Regeneration
- (e) Multi-Service Contract – Vehicle Replacement
- (f) Market Town Centres Initiative Fund
- (g) Ebley Mill Hydro

- RESOLVED**
- a. To 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. To agree the scope of the Stroud District Cycling and walking plan as set out in Appendix A.
 - c. To 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. To note the other project updates within the report.

EC.010 ENVIRONMENT BUDGETS 2017/18

The Accountancy Manager presented details of the General Fund Revenue Budgets that are considered to be controllable by the budget holder.

RESOLVED **To note the report.**

EC.011 RECYCLING BANK SERVICE

The Public Space Manager presented the report and explained the reasons for recommending the withdrawal of the service, possibly by mid August 2017.

Members requested that this be advertised widely as the bank in Cainscross is used constantly throughout the day.

RECOMMENDED TO STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE **The immediate withdrawal of the Council's recycling bank service.**

EC.012 HARDWICKE NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN: PROGRESS TO REFERENDUM

The Neighbourhood Planning Officer presented the report, which is proposed to proceed to referendum which would take place on 10 August 2017.

- RESOLVED**
- a. To accept all recommended modifications of the Examiner's Report (Appendix A);
 - b. 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;
 - c. To take all appropriate actions to progress the Hardwicke Neighbourhood Development Plan to referendum on 10 August 2017.

EC.013**SELF BUILD AND CUSTOM HOUSE BUILDING REGISTER**

The Senior Housing Strategy Officer presented her report. She explained there is a register in place, from 1 April 2017 and currently has 130 households. Legislation puts a duty on the Council to provide service plots, although guidance is still awaited on how this will work with planning permission.

RESOLVED

- a. **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.**
- b. **To introduce a fee for new entries on to the Council's Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Register.**
- c. **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.**

EC.014**MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

There were none.

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm.

Chair

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

**AGENDA
ITEM NO**

**ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
14 SEPTEMBER 2017**

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WORK PROGRAMME

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

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

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

**AGENDA
ITEM NO**

14 SEPTEMBER 2017

7

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)	The Committee resolves to note the 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. Strategy and Resources committee will formally consider the re-profiled capital budget at their meeting in October 2017.</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	Where funding is provided by way of a grant it will need to be secured by a grant agreement, this will ensure it is used for the purposes intended by SDC and allow appropriate provisions for clawback/termination if it is not.

Legal Implications Cont'd/...	<p>This report is for information purposes only. There are no specific decisions required. Legal advice on each capital project will be provided as appropriate and required. Any strategic risks pertinent to the programmes should be referred to in the Strategic Risk Register. (Ref: r30.8c31.8d31.8)</p> <p>Craig Hallett, Solicitor & Deputy Monitoring Officer Tel: 01453 754364 Email: craig.hallett@stroud.gov.uk</p>
Report Authors	<p>Barry Wyatt, Strategic Head of Development Services Tel 01453 754210 Email: barry.wyatt@stroud.gov.uk</p> <p>David Marshall, Canal Project Manager Email david.marshall@stroud.gov.uk Tel 01453 754646</p> <p>Alana Roy Public Spaces Officer Email carlos.novoth@stroud.gov.uk Tel 01453 754406</p> <p>Gideon Darley, Regeneration Officer (Business) Email gideon.darley@stroud.gov.uk Tel 01453 754301</p>
Options	<p>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.</p>
Performance Management Follow Up	<p>Update reports are to be supplied to this committee on a regular basis.</p>
Background Papers/ Appendices	<p>None</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 of progress with the capital projects and to recommend decisions to members. Members will see that the two projects agreed at the last meeting to be discontinued, Ebley Hydro and the Stroud Valleys Initiative, have been removed from the update. The financial consequences of this change are covered in the budget update report.

Stroud District Cycling & Walking Plan

3. The Council has allocated a sum of £300,000 to a Stroud District Cycling and Walking Plan and Committee agreed the scope of the Plan at the last meeting (29/6/17). A number of meetings have been held since

Committee to progress various elements of the Plan and the proposed routes.

4. An Expression of Interest to the RDPE Growth Programme, Rural Tourism Infrastructure fund has been endorsed by the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) to move to a full application. Following a workshop, hosted by the RPA, in July, work continues on developing the full bid, which relates to the Dursley and Uley Greenway.
5. A scoping meeting has been held with Gloucestershire County Council officers to discuss the Plan and potential GCC input and support for implementation. GCC undertook to produce a sectionalised view of the Greenway route, to provide an idea of obstacles/costs etc related to individual sections. Another meeting was convened with the representatives of the Greenway team, Sustrans and GCC to discuss a report Sustrans had produced in relation to part of the Greenway and potential joint working moving forward. The possibility of using Sustrans to 'audit' other routes was also raised.
6. Following dialogue with other GCC officers, SDC are hosting a meeting (31/8/17) with GCC Members and Officers to discuss plans/options for the Nailsworth/Stroud cycle path.
7. Discussions have been held with Stroud Town Council (STC) relating to walking and cycling routes around the town and their plans of STC to support cycling. STC are to bid to the GWR Customer & Communities Improvement Fund to improve cycling parking provision at Stroud station. STC have requested match funding from us to support the bid for up to £10K as it fits well with the Stroud District Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. Separately officers have now been approached by Stonehouse Town Council for support for their bid to the same fund.

Wallbridge Gateway Site

8. 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'
9. 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.

10. 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.
11. 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

12. 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.
13. Some volunteer-led work has already been undertaken in advance of the bid – primarily channel clearance west of the A38 at Whitminster, with more planned this winter. CCT has recently opened a new Visitor Centre at Bond's Mill, where overhanging trees will be cut back this winter. Waterway Recovery Group volunteers are currently constructing a new bypass at Dock Lock. A 150m stretch of towpath between Pike Bridge and Dock Lock has been upgraded by visiting teams from Ecotricity and National Grid, together with our own volunteers.
14. Alongside these, several pieces of work have been 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'.

Multi-Service Contract – Vehicle Replacement

15. 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.
16. The Vehicle Replacement Programme (VRP) 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.

17. Officers have undertaken the first review of the VRP 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).

18. Table 1

Financial Year	Capital Budget	Required expenditure	Variation
2017/18	£250,000	£334,000	£84,000

Market Town Centres Initiative Fund

19. 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. The design of the scheme has not been finalised as we await the recommendations of the 'Future of Town Centres' report which is covered separately on the agenda. It covers five towns, Stroud, Nailsworth, Stonehouse, Dursley and Wotton-under-Edge and it is envisaged that those will be the towns eligible for support from the Market Town Centres Initiative Fund.

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

**AGENDA
ITEM NO**

14 SEPTEMBER 2017

8

Report Title	BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2017/18 Q1
Purpose of Report	To present to the Committee a forecast of the Outturn position against the revenue budget and Capital programme for 2017/18.
Decision(s)	<p>The Committee RECOMMENDS to Strategy and Resources Committee:</p> <p>a) the Capital Budget for the Ebley Mill Hydro scheme and the Stroud Valleys Initiative are removed</p> <p>b) the reprofiled capital budget for the Multi Service Vehicles is approved</p> <p>The Committee RESOLVES:</p> <p>c) to note the outturn forecast for the General Fund Revenue budget and the Capital programme for this Committee.</p>
Consultation and Feedback	Budget holders have been consulted about the budget issues in their service areas. The feedback has been incorporated in the report to explain differences between budgets and actual income and expenditure.
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	<p>The outturn forecast for the committee's budget shows a net overspend of £147k. This will be included in the overall General Fund outturn forecast reported to Strategy and Resources committee in October 2017.</p> <p>Expenditure to date on the committee's Capital budgets is low, but assurances have been provided by the relevant budget holders that the 2017/18 budget allocations will be fully spent by the end of the year.</p> <p>David Stanley – Accountancy Manager Tel: 01453 754100 Email: david.stanley@stroud.gov.uk</p>

Legal Implications	No legal implications to report. K Trickey, Legal Services Manager 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	Budgets will continue to be monitored on a regular basis by budget holders supported by Finance. Further finance reports will update the committee in December 2017 and April 2017, with the outturn position reported to Strategy and Resources committee in May 2018.
Background Papers/ Appendices	Appendix A

Stroud District Council Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) position

1. The Committee has previously been advised that we are faced with a challenging financial climate.
 - Stroud will be the first council in Gloucestershire to lose all government Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and will pay more money back to government than other councils in Gloucestershire (£549,000 from our own resources will go to Whitehall in 2019/20. Cheltenham will pay £391,000 and Cotswold will pay £218,000. The other three districts - Gloucester, Tewkesbury and Forest of Dean will continue to receive small amounts of RSG.
 - The current MTFP has already built in council tax increases of £5 per annum – the maximum allowed under government rules before triggering the need for a referendum of council taxpayers
 - Potential changes to New Homes Bonus will mean further reduction to this ‘reward’ payment and, as a result, our income will fall regardless of performance
 - The Government has yet to decide on business rate retention by local government. The expected primary legislation has been abandoned.
2. **It is against this background that it is important that budgets are not overspent. In cases where an overspend is forecast, management action must be taken to minimise or mitigate the impact on the council’s financial position of an overspend.**
3. The current MTFP, approved by Council in February 2017, anticipates that there will be a £3.5m gap between the Council’s income and expenditure by 2020/21. At that point we will have used up all our reserves unless we take action before then.

4. **Generating income and creating even greater efficiencies remain as important as ever, but there are likely to be cuts to the committee's budgets to close the funding gap. The budget setting process during the autumn will need to focus on these, with the budget proposals being considered by Strategy and Resources Committee on 18th January 2018.**

Background

5. This report provides the first monitoring position statement for the financial year 2017/18. The purpose of this report is to notify members of any known significant variations to budgets for the current financial year, highlight any key issues, and to inform members of any action to be taken if required.
6. **Due to the volume of information contained in the report, it would be helpful where members have questions on matters of detail if they could be referred to the report author or the appropriate service manager before the meeting.**

Revenue Budget position

7. Council approved the General Fund Revenue budget for 2017/18 in February 2017 including budget proposals of the administration. This committee had previously considered the standstill budget at its meeting in December 2016.
8. The latest budget for Environment Committee taking into account the carry forwards is £5.224m (Original Budget was £5.124m).
9. The monitoring position for the service at 30 June 2017 shows a projected net overspend **of £147k** against the latest budget, as summarised in Table 1. The overall position on the General Fund will be considered by Strategy and Resources committee at their meeting in October 2017.
10. The outturn position is mainly attributable to the major items outlined in Table 2 with an explanation of the significant variances that have arisen. (a significant variation is defined as being +/- £20,000 on each reporting line) in Appendix A provides a more detailed breakdown on the committee's budgets.
11. Table 3 shows the Capital spend and Projected outturn for the Environment Committee for 2017/18.

Table1 – Revenue budgets Environment Committee 2017/18

Environment Committee	Para Refs	2017/18 Original Budget (£'000)	2017/18 Revised Budget (£'000)	2017/18 Forecast Outturn (£'000)	2017/18 Outturn Variance (£'000)
Canal		7	7	7	0
Strategic Head (Development Services)		115	115	115	0
Head of Environmental Health		69	69	69	0
Environmental Health	13	837	937	867	(70)
Statutory Building Control	14	168	168	168	0
Planning Strategy/Local Plan		319	319	319	0
Development Control	15	182	182	74	(108)
Economic Development		187	187	173	(13)
Carbon Management		93	93	74	(19)
Waste and Recycling	16	2,546	2,546	2,822	276
Street Cleansing	16	601	601	682	81
Environment TOTAL		5,124	5,224	5,371	147

12. The table below outlines the key variances for this Committee.

Table 2 - Headline Budget variances

Service	Para Refs	Overspend / (Underspend) (£'000's)
Environmental Health	13	
Environmental Protection - Salary underspend		(28)
Health and Safety - Salary underspend		(10)
Pest Control - Salary underspend		(32)
Development Control	15	
Development Control - Salary overspend		61
Development Control -Income surplus		(169)
Waste and Recycling	16	
Refuse Collection - MS Contract		(25)
Multi-Bank Recycling Sites - MS Contract		4
Recycling and Environmental Initiatives - MS Contract		297
Street Cleansing	16	
Street Cleansing - MS Contract		81
Environment TOTAL		179

13. Environmental Health – (£70k) underspend
(Jon Beckett xtn 4443, jon.beckett@stroud.gov.uk)

This underspend is directly related to salaries. A number of vacancies have been identified through out the service and any potential savings will

be dealt with as part of a wider piece of work under the Workforce Plan review.

14. Statutory Building Control – (£124k) underspend (for info only)
(Paul Bowley xtn 4250, paul.bowley@stroud.gov.uk)

This variance is reported for information only as any surplus/overspend will be transferred to the Building Control Partnership reserve.

Gloucestershire Building Control Partnership is a shared service with Gloucester City Council and hosted by Stroud. The service is provided under the auspices of the Building Act 1984, an element of the service is in competition with the private sector. The shared service was established on the 1st July 2015 and has resulted in an increase in income due to receiving applications from both Stroud and Gloucester areas.

There are in year salary savings of (£47k) as a result of 3 vacancies (Building Control Technician, Building Control Surveyor and a Principal post). Two of these posts are currently in the recruitment process and will be filled over the next few months. The remaining Principal post will be reviewed as part the budget setting process later in the year.

15. Development Control – (£108k) underspend / income surplus
(Geraldine LeCointe xtn 4233, geraldine.lecointe@stroud.gov.uk)

There a number of reasons for the net variation on this budget which are outlined below.

Application Fees are forecasting a healthy surplus of (£108k). This additional income is based on the number and type of applications received at this time with the expected outcome similar to 2016/17.

A predicted Salary overspend of £61k – This variance is currently made up of two Case Management Assistant roles and casual staff. They are employed directly to manage the additional application fee workload, this overspend is offset against the income surplus above

The Council's existing pre-application fee charges are significantly less than neighbouring districts and do not reflect the actual cost to the Council of providing this service to the public The intention is to increase fees, principally for larger scale developments. Pre – application fees will be increased from October 2017. We intend to offer a high quality, efficient service, it is not anticipated that the fee increase will impact on the numbers of pre-application enquiries made.

16. Waste & Recycling – £276k overspend
Street Cleansing – £81k overspend
(Carlos Novoth xtn 4406, carlos.novoth@stroud.gov.uk)

Section 151 Officer narrative

The narrative from the budget holder below explains some of the detailed reasons for the in-year overspend position on the budgets for Waste and Recycling, Street Cleansing and Building Cleaning.

In short, the overall financial position on the Multi Service contract is explained by the 2017/18 gross cost of the Ubico contract (£5.452m) exceeds the available budget by around £820k. Taking into account the additional income from Recycling Credits and the JWP Incentive Payment, there is a projected net overspend on Multi-Service budgets of £387k. Members will recall that additional budget of £400k was requested for 2017/18.

Budget holder narrative

The variation on the Waste and Recycling services is attributable to the Multi Service Contract Cost

The first year's contract payments to Ubico have been made in line with the company's forecast spend for the year. Ubico have however reported an overspend of £36k in the first quarter due to an increase in insurance premiums. Whilst the increase relates to a full year's costs, Ubico have made full payment upfront. Ubico have stated that they plan to recover the overspend during the course of the year.

Ubico's 2017/18 forecast spend has taken into account efficiency savings made earlier in the financial year; these relate to a reduction in resources within the refuse collection, food waste collection and recycling collection services. The council expects to make further savings, totalling £18k net of costs in the current year and £60k each subsequent year, following the withdrawal of its 'Bring' bank system in August 2017; this will be reflected in the payments made to Ubico from September 2017.

Multi Service Costs

The cost of providing black and beige sacks does not presently fall within the Multi Service Contract; the decision to use these sacks was made sometime after the initial design of the waste service and was not therefore included in Ubico's proposals. The cost however has been accommodated by a planned underspend of the 'marketing' and 'garden waste administration' budgets. A review of the costs associated with the treatment of the council's dry recycling materials is due shortly; the outcome is hoped to show a reduction in net costs.

Multi Service Income Streams

Owing to the success of the waste service's overall performance, income to the council in 2017/18 is expected to increase from the budgeted figures; the increases include an additional £50k through JWP incentive payments and £60k through recycling credit payments. It is anticipated that 'recycling waste disposal income' will at least be maintained for the year – this mainly relates to income from the sale of waste paper and cardboard. There will be an increase in service charges for the bulky waste service from 1st September 2017 and the garden waste service for the start of next season (February 2018). Income for bulky waste is expected to increase by £8k in 2017/18 (£80k to £88k). Garden waste income is expected to increase as a result of the new charges and also increased capacity following a review of the collection rounds; this will allow for additional subscriptions before capacity is reached.

Capital Programme

17. The Environment Capital Programme of **£710k** was approved by Council in January 2017. This has subsequently been revised to **£1.1m** following the approval of the carry forwards/slippage and profiling changes by Strategy and Resources Committee at their meeting in June 2017.
18. Table 3 below shows the Capital Outturn forecast for the Environment Committee 2017/18, projecting an outturn variance of **(£61k)** at this stage of the financial year.

Table 3 – Environment Committee Capital Programme

Environment Capital Schemes	2017/18 Revised Budget (£'000)	2017/18 Spend to date (£'000)	2017/18 Projected Outturn (£'000)	2017/18 Outturn Variance (£'000)
Canal	184	15	184	0
Canal Regeneration(Saul to Stonehouse)	250	0	250	0
Stroud District Cycling & Walking Plan	50	0	50	0
Stroud Valleys Initiative	115	0	0	(115)
Market Town Centres Initiative fund	50	0	50	0
Wallbridge - Gateway	30	0	30	0
MSC - Vehicles	250	64	334	84
CMP - Ebley Mill Hydro	30	0	0	(30)
CMP - Heat & Power	141	54	141	0
TOTAL Capital	1,100	133	1,039	(61)

19. The Councils Capital programme for 2017/18 is reported and updated regularly throughout the year by the responsible officers and is covered in the Capital Projects update report.
20. Members received an update on the capital schemes for Stroud Valleys Initiative and the Ebley Mill Hydro in July 2017 and were advised that these schemes were no longer viable. Therefore, it is recommended to Strategy and Resources committee that the capital budgets are withdrawn.
21. The 2017/18 capital budget for the Multi Service Vehicles needs to be increased by £134,000, as set out in the Capital Budget Monitoring report to the committee in July 2017. The overall cost and profile of the MSC vehicle replacement programme will be reviewed as part of the 2018/19 budget setting process.
22. The actual spend to date figure is low, with budget holders providing assurance that the remaining relevant capital budgets are forecast to be spent in full this financial year.

Appendix A

Environment Committee	Para Refs	2017/18 Budget (£'000)	2017/18 Revised Budget (£'000)	2017/18 Spend to date (£'000)	2017/18 Forecast Outturn (£'000)	2017/18 Outturn Variance (£'000)
Canal Partnership		7	7	34	7	0
Strategic Head (Development Services)		115	115	27	115	0
Head of Environmental Health		69	69	18	69	0
Environmental Health Team		149	149	25	149	0
Contaminated Land		32	32	4	32	0
Dog Warden Service		82	82	18	82	0
Environmental Protection		190	190	45	162	(28)
Food Safety		152	152	35	152	0
Health and Safety		88	88	19	78	(10)
Land Drainage		60	160	30	160	0
Public Health		41	41	6	41	0
Pest Control		28	28	2	(4)	(32)
Port Health		2	2	(0)	2	0
Planning Liaison		14	14	4	14	0
Environmental Health		837	937	187	867	(70)
Planning and Building Control Admin		255	255	51	255	0
Building Control		(128)	(128)	(142)	(128)	0
Securing Dangerous Structures		9	9	5	9	0
Building Regulation Enforcement / Advice		35	35	18	35	0
Street Naming		(4)	(4)	(7)	(4)	0
Building Control		168	168	(74)	168	0
Planning Strategy		319	319	83	319	0
Preparation of Core Strategy		0	0	0	0	0
Planning Strategy/Local Plan		319	319	83	319	0
Development Control		(94)	(94)	(110)	(202)	(108)
Trees		43	43	11	43	0
Conservation		58	58	16	58	0
Appeals		0	0	0	0	0
Planning Appeal Costs		70	70	17	70	0
Enforcement		108	108	20	108	0
Footpath Diversion		(2)	(2)	0	(2)	0
Development Control		182	182	(45)	74	(108)

Environment Committee	Para Refs	2017/18 Budget (£'000)	2017/18 Revised Budget (£'000)	2017/18 Spend to date (£'000)	2017/18 Forecast Outturn (£'000)	2017/18 Outturn Variance (£'000)
Economic Development		54	54	2	54	0
Market Town Projects		24	24	(2)	24	0
Regeneration		108	108	18	95	(13)
Economic Development		187	187	18	173	(13)
Carbon Management		93	93	3	74	(19)
Refuse Collection		1,203	1,203	719	1,178	(25)
Multi-Bank Recycling Sites		1,138	1,138	207	1,142	4
Recycling and Environmental Initiatives		205	205	(87)	502	297
Waste and Recycling		2,546	2,546	838	2,822	276
Street Cleansing		601	601	112	682	81
Environment Total		5,124	5,224	1,201	5,371	147

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

AGENDA
ITEM NO

14 SEPTEMBER 2017

9

Report Title	LOCAL PLAN REVIEW – ISSUES AND OPTIONS PUBLIC CONSULTATION
Purpose of Report	To agree a timetable for review and an issues and options paper for public consultation.
Decision(s)	Committee resolves to:- <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the timetable for the review of the Local Plan set out in the Local Development Scheme (Appendix A) 2. Approve the Issues and Options Consultation Paper for public consultation commencing October 2017 (Appendix B)
Consultation and Feedback	There has been internal consultation with relevant departments and discussions held at Planning Review Panel. The draft issues and options paper has been amended to take account of points raised.
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	There are no financial implications directly related to this report. Adele Rudkin, Accountant Tel: 01453 754109 Email: adele.rudkin@stroud.gov.uk There are risks associated with delaying the start of the Local Plan review, in terms of potential speculative applications to deal with unmet needs arising from Gloucester. Whilst the Council can currently demonstrate a healthy 5 year land supply, early review also ensures that in the longer term the housing supply can be maintained.
Legal Implications	This report only outlines the preliminary stages of the pending review of the 2015 Local Plan. Any issues and options which emerge will not undermine the primacy of the policies within the adopted Local Plan. Karen Trickey, Legal Services Manager Tel: 01453 754369 Email: karen.trickey@stroud.gov.uk
Report Author	Mark Russell, Planning Strategy Manager Tel: 01453 754305 Email: Mark.Russell@stroud.gov.uk

Options	Options are: 1. approve the Local Development Scheme and Issues and Options Paper; or 2. amend the Local Development Scheme and Issues and Options Paper, or 3. delay the Local Plan timetable until further clarification is obtained on whether a strategic plan will be progressed for Gloucestershire
Performance Management Follow Up	Key stages of the Local Plan review will be subject to future reports to both Planning Review Panel and Environment Committee. Council will approve the draft Local Plan at pre-submission and submission stages.
Background Papers/ Appendices	Appendix A – Local Development Scheme 2017-2020 Appendix B – Local Plan Review Issues and Options Paper

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Council adopted the Stroud District Local Plan in November 2015. The Plan provides an up-to-date planning framework to assess planning applications and identifies sufficient housing and employment land to meet needs to 2031.
- 1.2 The Government expects local planning authorities to review plans regularly to keep them up-to-date and to update them in whole or in part at least every five years.
- 1.3 Policy CP2 of the Local Plan commits the Council to an early review of the Plan commencing by December 2019 at the latest. An early review was recommended by the Local Plan Inspector to address the possibility of future unmet development needs arising from outside or within Stroud district. The Joint Core Strategy (JCS) being prepared by Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury councils has now reached modifications stage and unmet housing needs have been identified for both Gloucester and Tewkesbury areas. Consequently, the proposed modifications commit the JCS authorities to undertake an early review of the plan.
- 1.4 A Statement of Cooperation was agreed in 2014 between Stroud District Council and the JCS authorities to coordinate early reviews of their plans to assess options across boundaries for meeting unmet needs.
- 1.5 The review of the Local Plan will also need to roll forward the Plan period to 2036 and meet needs arising over the 20 year period 2016-2036.

2. TIMETABLE

- 2.1** The Council is required to set out its timetable for Local Plan production in a document called the Local Development Scheme (LDS) which should be published on our website and kept up-to-date.
- 2.2** A draft LDS is set out in Appendix A. The recommended Local Plan timetable includes a series of key milestones. These are:
- Issues and options consultation (Autumn 2017)
 - Preferred strategy consultation (Autumn 2018)
 - Draft plan consultation (Autumn 2019)
 - Publication of plan (Autumn 2020)
 - Submission of plan (Winter 2020/21)
 - Examination (Spring-Autumn 2021)
 - Adoption of plan (Winter 2021)
- 2.3** As the role of the LDS is to provide clarity to local communities on progress with the development of planning policies affecting their areas, it is also proposed to include the known timetable for the production of neighbourhood plans, which form part of the development plan for the district post referenda, and other planning documents which assist with the implementation of planning policies.
- 2.4** The timetable is considered realistic and achievable. However, if a decision is made in the future to develop a strategic plan for Gloucestershire then the Local Plan milestones will require review, as any joint plan dealing with strategic matters would need to be in place before local plans sitting below the strategic plan could be progressed to adoption.

3. ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION PAPER

- 3.1** The intention is to start the Local Plan review process by undertaking public consultation, to identify the planning related issues and local needs that can inform the content of the future plan.
- 3.2** An Issues and Options Consultation Paper has been prepared to structure the debate (Appendix B). In summary, the paper includes the following:
- 0) Introduction – what it is about and how people can get involved
 - 1) Key issues – identifies 40 key issues grouped by Corporate Delivery Plan priority areas: economy; affordable housing; environment; health and wellbeing; delivery.
 - 2) Needs – identifies issues and options around:
 - Local economy and jobs
 - Our town centres
 - A need for local housing
 - Local green spaces and community facilities
 - 3) Future growth strategy – discusses different ways of managing future growth, including:

- broad strategy options of concentrated or dispersed development and growth points
- settlement hierarchy
- settlement development limits
- broad locations and potential sites by settlement

3.3 The Paper does not discuss the levels of future growth as this is a matter to be investigated by all Gloucestershire authorities once the Government has confirmed the new national methodology for calculating future housing needs. The Paper does not include detailed matters of policy wording which will be worked up once the overall strategy has been developed.

3.4 However, the Paper does discuss potential sites if development is needed in the future. The Paper includes broad locations and potential sites for future housing, employment and/or community uses put forward by landowners, developers and parish councils during the Strategic Assessment of Land Availability (SALA) process. However, the Paper makes clear that the identification of these sites at this stage does not indicate Council support for development at these locations. The purpose of the consultation is to seek local views on these options and to identify other site options which may be better.

4. NEXT STEPS

4.1 Public consultation will take place for eight weeks commencing w/c 9 October and ending w/c 27 November 2017. The following activities are proposed during that time:

- Article in Stroud District Council News advertising exhibitions
- Press release and newspaper advertisement
- Emails to groups and individuals on Planning Strategy mailing list
- Consultation paper and supporting documents on website
- On-line questionnaire via website
- Consultation paper at deposit points
- Public exhibitions at nine locations throughout the district – weekdays and Saturdays
- Eight evening meetings with town and parish councils (clusters)
- Meetings with statutory consultees, interest groups (community, schools, businesses, etc.)

4.2 The results of public consultation will help inform the development of the preferred strategy during 2018. Feedback will be reported to a future meeting of Environment Committee, together with the draft preferred strategy.

**Stroud District Council:
Local Development Scheme 2017-2020**

DRAFT

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) is Stroud District Council's programme for preparing planning policy documents for the District.

1.2 This LDS sets out:

- The current documents that make up the development plan for Stroud District and other relevant planning guidance;
- The documents that will be produced during 2017-20 to maintain an up-to-date development plan and other relevant planning guidance.

2.0 Current development plan for Stroud district

2.1 National planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.¹

2.2 The development plan for Stroud District currently comprises:

- Stroud District Local Plan (adopted November 2015)
- Waste and minerals local plans (see below)
- Neighbourhood development plans (see below)

2.3 The Local Plan was adopted by the Council on 19th November 2015 and provides a comprehensive spatial plan for the District for the period 2006-2031. The Local Plan includes a development strategy; core and delivery policies; site allocations; and a policies map. The Local Plan completely replaces the previous Stroud District Local Plan 2005.

2.4 Waste and Minerals Local Plans include:

- Gloucestershire Waste Core Strategy (adopted November 2012)
- 'saved' and as yet not replaced policies of the Gloucestershire Waste Local Plan (adopted 2004); and
- 'saved' policies of the Gloucestershire Minerals Local Plan (adopted 2003)

2.5 Further information on the current Waste and Minerals LDS can be seen here:

<http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/planning-policy/minerals-and-waste-development-scheme-mwds/>

2.6 Neighbourhood development plans (NDPs) produced by parish councils within Stroud District following a successful referendum also form part of the development plan. The following NDPs form part of the development plan:

1. Eastington NDP (made October 2016)
2. Kingswood NDP (made May 2017)
3. Stroud Town Centre NDP (made October 2016)
4. Whiteshill & Ruscombe NDP (made October 2016)
5. Hardwicke NDP (to be made October 2017)

¹ Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

3.0 Current supplementary planning guidance

Supplementary planning documents (SPD)

- 3.1 Supplementary planning documents (SPD) are documents that add further detail to the policies in the Local Plan. They are capable of being a material consideration in planning decisions but are not part of the development plan.²
- 3.2 The following documents have been adopted by the Council as SPDs:
- Industrial Heritage Conservation Area Management Proposals SPD (November 2008)
 - Sustainable Construction & Design Checklist SPD (February 2017)
 - Planning Obligations SPD (April 2017)

Supplementary planning guidance (SPG)

- 3.3 This form of guidance was prepared under the pre 2004 planning system and has limited weight. However, SPG's may still be taken into account as material considerations particularly if they relate to matters set out in the NPPF. The weight of the SPG increases if it has been prepared in consultation with the public and has been the subject of a Council resolution.
- 3.4 The following documents have been adopted by the Council as SPGs:
- Stroud District Landscape Assessment SPG (November 2000)
 - Stroud District Residential Design Guide SPG (November 2000)
 - Stroud District Shopfronts Guide (adopted December 2011)

Supplementary planning advice (SPA)

- 3.5 These documents support the planning policies adopted by the Council but have not been subject to the same level of process as either SPGs or SPDs. However, they can be referred to for guidance and may be used in decision making. The weight given to them may be more limited than other documents.
- 3.6 The following documents have been adopted by the Council as SPAs:
- Householder Design Guide (adopted 2007)
 - The Industrial Heritage Design Guide (adopted November 2008)
 - Stroud Public Realm Strategy (adopted January 2009)
 - Validation of planning applications (adopted July 2013)
 - Standish House Planning Concept Statement (adopted June 2015)
- 3.7 In addition, the Council has adopted the following village design statements and conservation area statements (CAS):
- Alkington; Bisley-with-Lypiatt; Frampton (CA); Kingswood; Kingswood CA; Longney and Epney; Nailsworth; Randwick; Stonehouse; Uley & Owlpen; Whitminster; Woodchester

² National Planning Policy Framework (Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2012), Glossary.

Other documents

3.8 To meet the Council's responsibilities under the Habitats Directive, the following document has also been produced:

- Interim strategy for Rodborough Common Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (adopted March 2015)

4.0 Future documents: Reviewing the Stroud District Local Plan

4.1 The Stroud District Local Plan includes within it a commitment to undertake an early review, commencing by December 2019. The following schedule sets out the details of the review:

<i>Name:</i>	Stroud District Local Plan Review 2016-2036	
<i>Subject and scope:</i>	Local plan setting out a sustainable development strategy for future growth (housing, employment, retail, leisure, community, infrastructure) whilst working within environmental limits (landscape, biodiversity, heritage, climate change).	
<i>Reason for preparation:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maintain an up-to-date planning framework for the District • To meet objectively assessed housing and employment needs arising from within the District • To consider assisting neighbouring authorities to meet their unmet objectively assessed needs to ensure that any shortfalls in delivery are met in sustainable locations 	
<i>Status:</i>	Development plan document	
<i>Geographical coverage:</i>	Stroud District	
<i>Time period:</i>	2016-2036	
<i>Duty to Co-operate:</i>	Working with neighbouring authorities within Gloucestershire and within the West of England to co-ordinate plans to ensure that development needs are met and to work collaboratively across local boundaries to ensure strategic priorities are met. However, a joint plan is not envisaged.	
<i>Programme / Production milestones:</i>	Issues (Reg.18 consultation)	Autumn 2017
	Preferred strategy (Reg. 18 consultation)	Autumn 2018
	Draft Plan (Reg.18 consultation)	Autumn 2019
	Publication of plan (Reg.19 consultation)	Autumn 2020
	Submission of plan	Winter 2020/1
	Examination	Spring-Autumn 2021
	Modifications	Autumn 2021
	Adoption	Winter 2021/2

4.2 Please note that if a future decision is made to develop a strategic plan for Gloucestershire then the Local Plan timetable will require review.

5.0 Future documents: Neighbourhood planning

5.1 The District Council is currently assisting a number of parish councils to produce neighbourhood plans or community right to build orders. Neighbourhood plans following a successful referendum will form part of the development plan for Stroud district.

5.2 The following table sets out current progress with neighbourhood plans.

<i>Name of neighbourhood area</i>	<i>Area designation</i>	<i>NDP / Order submission</i>	<i>Referendum</i>	<i>Plan / Order made</i>
Brimscombe & Thrupp	February 2016	Expected early 2018	No date yet	No date yet
Cam	February 2014	Expected early 2018	No date yet	No date yet
Chalford	June 2014	Expected early 2018	No date yet	No date yet
Dursley	February 2014	Expected September 2017	Expected February 2018	Expected April 2018
Eastington	September 2013	January 2016	August 2016	October 2016
Hardwicke	February 2014	February 2017	August 2017	Expected October 2017
Horsley	September 2014	No date yet	No date yet	No date yet
Kingswood	June 2014	April 2016	May 2017	May 2017
Minchinhampton	June 2015	September 2017	Expected February 2018	Expected April 2018
Nailsworth	June 2015	January 2016	August 2016	October 2016
Standish	February 2014	No date yet	No date yet	No date yet
Stonehouse	September 2013	March 2017	Expected November 2017	Expected December 2017
Stroud Town Centre	July 2014	December 2015	August 2016	October 2016
Whiteshill & Ruscombe	September 2013	January 2016	August 2016	October 2016
Wotton-Under-Edge	March 2015	No date yet	No date yet	No date yet

6.0 Future supplementary planning documents

- 6.1 The current Stroud District Local Plan includes within it a commitment to produce a number of supplementary planning documents to support the delivery of the Plan's policies. A Sustainable Construction and Design Checklist SPD and a Planning Obligations SPD have recently been produced and adopted. At the current time there are no further supplementary planning documents proposed.

7.0 Other documents in preparation

- 7.1 The following documents will assist in the implementation of the adopted Local Plan.

<i>Name:</i>	Severn Estuary mitigation strategy	
<i>Subject and scope:</i>	To identify a mitigation strategy for new development to avoid likely significant effects on the Severn Estuary SAC/SPA/Ramsar site. Will assist with the implementation of policy ES6 of the adopted Local Plan.	
<i>Status:</i>	HRA mitigation strategy	
<i>Geographical coverage:</i>	Catchment zone within Stroud District.	
<i>Programme:</i>	Adoption	December 2017

<i>Name:</i>	Heritage strategy and action plan	
<i>Subject and scope:</i>	To identify a strategy to address the issues and pressures that are facing the District's heritage assets, including the setting of priorities for Council action, underpinned by a series of action plans, which can be refreshed periodically. Will assist with the implementation of policies ES10 and ES11 of the adopted Local Plan.	
<i>Status:</i>	Supplementary planning advice	
<i>Geographical coverage:</i>	Stroud District	
<i>Programme / Production milestones</i>	Consultation	July-September 2017
	Adoption	February 2018

<i>Name:</i>	Green infrastructure guide	
<i>Subject and scope:</i>	To identify the multi-functional benefits of GI and how good practice in designing GI within new developments can enhance the current GI network for Stroud district. Will assist with the implementation of policies including policy ES14 of the adopted Local Plan.	
<i>Status:</i>	Supplementary planning advice	
<i>Geographical coverage:</i>	Stroud District but identifying linkages beyond district boundaries	
<i>Programme / Production milestones</i>	Consultation	May-June 2018
	Adoption	September 2018

8.0 Monitoring

8.1 The Council will publish regular monitoring reports to identify progress with the Local Plan.

8.2 At the current time, the Council produces annual reports covering:

- Housing land availability (each May-June using data from 1 April)
- Employment land availability (each May-June using data from 1 April)
- Five Year housing land supply (each June with a partial update each November)

DRAFT

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

**AGENDA
ITEM NO**

14 SEPTEMBER 2017

10

Report Title	STONEHOUSE NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN: PROGRESS TO REFERENDUM
Purpose of Report	To inform councillors of progress regarding the Stonehouse Neighbourhood Development Plan (SNDP)
Decision(s)	<p>The Committee RESOLVES:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to accept all recommended modifications of the Examiner’s Report (Appendix A); 2. that the Stonehouse 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 Stonehouse Neighbourhood Development Plan to referendum on the 23rd of November 2017.
Consultation and Feedback	<p>The SNDP has been through two statutory consultations. Stonehouse Town Council undertook a pre-submission consultation (Regulation 14) from 1st July to 12th August 2016 and the Council undertook a post-submission consultation (Regulation 16) from 5th April to 17th May 2017. Both consultations lasted no less than the six weeks as required by the regulations.</p> <p>Stonehouse Town 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.</p>
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	<p>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.</p>

	<p>If Committee resolves to accept the examiner's 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>
<p>Legal Implications</p>	<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>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Simon Maher, Neighbourhood Planning Officer Tel: 01453 754339 Email: simon.maher@stroud.gov.uk</p>
<p>Options</p>	<p>Option 1 - Make modifications to the SNDP 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 SNDP 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 town 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 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.</p>
<p>Performance Management Follow Up</p>	<p>If a referendum is held and there is a vote in favour (50% plus 1) SNDP will automatically become part of the development plan for the District and will be used to determine planning applications within the Stonehouse Neighbourhood Area. It will also be referred to Council to be “made”. If Council decides to not make it, the SNDP will cease to form part of the development plan.</p>
<p>Background Papers/ Appendices</p>	<p>Background Papers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stonehouse 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.

STONEHOUSE NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

5. The Stonehouse Neighbourhood Area was designated by resolution of the Council’s Environment Committee on 12th September 2013.

6. The SNDP was led by a steering group subordinate to Stonehouse Town Council ('the qualifying body').
7. A submission version of the SNDP was accepted by the Council on 17th March 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 SNDP.
9. The examination concludes once the Examiner's Report is received by the Council. The Examiner's Report contains a recommendation of whether the SNDP, 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. A summary of the recommended modifications is set out below:

Policy/Section	Summary of recommendation and reasons
Policy AF 1 and supporting text	Modify policy and supporting text for clarity and to conform with local plan.
Policy AF 2	Small modification to policy wording for clarity.
Policy AF 3	Remove unnecessary text and amend some wording for clarity and to comply with national policy.
Policy T1	Removal of unclear section of policy and minor amendment for clarity.
Policy T2 and supporting text	Minor policy modifications to provide clarity to the decision maker and modifications to supporting text to clarify relationship with Local policy.
Policy T4 and supporting text	Simplification of wording to provide clarity and compliance with National policy.
Policy T5	Modification of policy wording to reflect supporting text
Policy T6 and supporting text	Remove unnecessary text from policy wording for clarity.
Policy T7	Minor amendment for clarity
Policy T8	Minor amendment for clarity
Policy T9 and supporting text	Remove unnecessary text from policy to be included in supporting text, and correct factual error in supporting text.
Policy T10	Modification for clarity and to set out clear objective

Policy H1 and supporting text	Remove unnecessary final paragraph and amend supporting text to provide clarity
Policy H2	Amendments for clarity and alignment with local policy
Policy H3 and supporting text	For conformity with local policy
Policy EM1 and supporting text	For conformity with Local policy and to provide clarity
Policy EM2 and supporting text	To reflect changes to EM1 and to provide the clarity required by national policy
Policy EM3 and supporting text	To reflect changes to EM1 and minor amendment for clarity
Policy ENV1	Modification to provide clarity
Policy ENV2 and supporting text	Simplify the policy and transfer unnecessary text to justification section
Policy ENV3 and supporting text	Remove information in policy wording to supporting text for clarity and modify to conform with national policy
Policy ENV 3	Include a supporting map showing Green Spaces
Policy ENV 4 and supporting text	Modifications to provide clarity and to conform with local plan
Policy ENV 4	Include a supporting map showing building locations
Policy ENV 5	Modifications to provide clarity
Policy ENV 6	Minor amendment to provide clarity
Policy ENV 7	Minor amendment to provide wider policy approach to biodiversity
Policy ENV 8	Minor amendment to conform to national policy
Section 4.2	Modify sub-headings for clarity

CONSIDERATION

12. 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.
13. The Council is required to consider whether the draft SNDP 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.
14. Officer's have carefully considered the SNDP and the Examiner's report and consider that:
 - 1- The SNDP, 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 SNDP has been assessed against the

- National Planning Policy Framework and national Planning Practice Guidance and modifications proposed to comply with national policy.
- 2- The SNDP, as modified by the Examiner's recommendations, contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. The SNDP has been subject to sustainability assessment that identifies the plan will have an overall positive effect.
 - 3- The SNDP, 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 SNDP has been assessed against the adopted Stroud District Local Plan and modifications proposed to ensure the SNDP does not become out-of-date in the context of a review of strategic policies in the Local Plan.
 - 4- The SNDP, 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 2016, which confirmed to Stonehouse Town Council that a SEA and a full HRA were not required on the SNDP.
 - 5- The SNDP, 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 2016, which confirmed to Stonehouse Parish Council that a SEA and a full HRA were not required on the SNDP.
 - 6- The SNDP, as modified by the Examiner's recommendations, is in all respects fully compatible with Convention rights contained in the Human Rights Act 1988. 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 SNDP 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 SNDP, 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 SNDP 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.

15. 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.
16. The neighbourhood area matches the civic boundary of Stonehouse Parish; officers recommend that the referendum area should remain that of the Stonehouse Neighbourhood Area, as designated by the Council on 12th September 2013. However, the Council cannot make a decision that differs from the examiners' recommendations about the referendum area.

NEXT STEPS

17. 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.
18. 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, 23rd November 2017 has been identified as the suitable date for holding a referendum.
19. 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 February 2018. The plan cannot be modified at that stage.

Stonehouse Neighbourhood Plan 2016-2031

A report to Stroud District Council on the Stonehouse 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 May 2017 to carry out the independent examination of the Stonehouse Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2 The examination was undertaken by written representations. I visited the neighbourhood plan area on 18 July 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 policies to safeguard Key Employment Sites, to designate local green spaces, to safeguard its historic environment and to promote walking and cycling.
- 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 Stonehouse 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
30 August 2017

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the findings of the independent examination of the Stonehouse Neighbourhood Plan 2016-2031 (the Plan).
- 1.2 The Plan has been submitted to Stroud District Council (SDC) by Stonehouse Town 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 Town Council, to conduct the examination of the Plan and to prepare this report. I am independent of both SDC and the Town 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 System.

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 of the three consultation bodies were content with the outcome of the screening assessment.
- 2.8 SDC also carried out a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening report on the Plan. The screening report concluded that the Plan was not likely to have any significant effect on a European site. In reaching this conclusion the report comprehensively assessed the likely impact of the Plan on the Severn Estuary SAC/SPR/RAMSAR site, and two other SAC sites and a series of key wildlife sites and SSSIs. This conclusion was supported by Natural England.
- 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 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
- the Stonehouse Town Character Assessment 2016
- the representations made to the Plan.
- the Stroud District Local Plan 2015
- the 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 18 July 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.

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 very thorough, comprehensive and professionally-prepared. Its format and presentation is exemplary. In particular it includes three detailed appendices – a chronological schedule of all the consultation activities, a schedule of responses to the comments made at the draft plan stage and reproductions of the various press and publicity materials. The Statement (and its Appendix 2) sets out how the emerging plan took account of the various comments and representations received at the pre-submission phase of the Plan. This element of the Statement has been particularly helpful in my examination of the Plan.
- 4.3 Appendix 1 of the Statement sets out details of the wider consultation events that have 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 launch events in 2014;
 - the vision and objective events in mid-2014;
 - extensive consultation with a wide variety of local groups in late 2014/early 2015;
 - the consultation events on emerging policies in late 2015/early 2016; and
 - the use of drop in events and information stalls.
- 4.4 Appendix 3 of the Consultation Statement provides very useful information about the methods of community engagement. It is helpfully supported by a range of photographs and reproductions of the various leaflets that were used. This provides a real depth and level of interest to the document.
- 4.5 It is clear 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. Consultation and feedback has been at the heart of the Plan throughout the various stages of its production.
- 4.6 The positive approach that was taken in responding to the earlier comments is reflected in the very focused set of representations to 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
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opinions of all concerned throughout the process. SDC has carried out its own 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 17 May 2017. This exercise generated comments from various persons and organisations:

- Sport England
- Marine Management Organisation
- Highways England
- Natural England
- Historic England
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Environment Agency
- Network Rail
- Robert Hitchins Limited
- Stroud District Council

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 central part of Stroud District and to the immediate west of Stroud. It comprises of the whole of the Stonehouse parish. In 2011, it had a population of 7725 people. It was designated as a neighbourhood area on 12 September 2013.
- 5.2 The Plan area is very distinctive. It is primarily based on the built-up area of Stonehouse and includes both the Stroudwater Navigation Canal and the River Frome to the south of the town centre. At the heart of the town is a vibrant High Street containing a wide variety of retail, commercial and other services for the local community.
- 5.3 The Plan area includes several distinctive features which translate into specific policies. The town itself is the principal focus of development in the Plan area. Its form and character is influenced by the two railway lines that pass through the town. The southern part of the Plan area is defined by the waterways described above. The western part of the Plan area is dominated by its industrial and business areas. These are important both locally and in a wider District context in providing high quality jobs and economic prosperity. Located to the west of the Plan area the M5 provides the Plan area with excellent access to the strategic highway network.

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. It provides an up to date context against which the Plan can be assessed as part of the basic conditions. All the policies in the Local 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. Stonehouse falls within the first of five tiers of settlements described as 'Accessible Local Service Centres'. The Plan comments that these settlements are the District's main towns and the primary focus for growth and development. They will continue to provide significant levels of jobs and homes. Core Policy CP4 provides particularly useful guidance to the Plan. It seeks to bring forward high quality 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. Several of the Plan's policies are designed to achieve this purpose.

5.7 The Plan area falls within the Stonehouse cluster in the Local Plan. The Local Plan contains eight mini place making plans which address specific parts of the District. The vision for this particular cluster includes the delivery of mixed use development as set out in Policy SA2 on land to the west of the town. Paragraph 3.17 of the Local Plan sets out a range of guiding principles for development in this mini plan area. They include:

- The retention of the physical distinctiveness of the town;
- A focus on canal and canal corridor conservation;
- The enhancement of existing transport links;
- Town centre and public realm improvements;
- Securing high quality design in keeping with local character and identity.

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

Core Policy CP12	Town Centres and Retailing
Delivery Policy EI1	Key Employment Sites
Delivery Policy EI4	Provision and protection of railway stations and halts

Site Visit

5.9 I carried out an unaccompanied visit to the Plan area on 18 July 2017. I approached the Plan area from the west off the M5. In doing so I was able to see the relationship between the town and this important transportation system.

5.10 I looked initially at the employment areas in the west of the neighbourhood area. I saw the variety of industrial units and their interesting layout around the Oldends Lane/Brunel Way loop. This part of the visit helped me to understand the significance of these employment sites to the economy of both the Plan area and the wider Stroud District.

5.11 I then looked at the area to the south of the town centre. I saw the significance of the A419 Bristol Road connecting the M5 to Stroud and beyond. I also saw the importance of the Stroudwater Navigational canal. I took the opportunity to walk along its towpath from Downton Road to the iconic Nupend House. In doing so I saw the very well-equipped children's play area off Wharfdale Way.

5.12 I then walked into High Street via Regent Street. I saw the wide range of fine stone and brick houses, the Regent Street surgery and the Hopeland School buildings.

5.13 I took some time to look at the wide range of retail, commercial and administrative buildings in the town centre in general, and in High Street in particular. The scale and significance of the buildings reflected its former importance as a strategic road until the new A419 was constructed. They ranged from the timber-framed Tudor House to the former Police Station and courts to the Crown and Anchor Hotel (and now

occupied by a doctors' surgery). The well-maintained and impressive milestone reinforced that the town is 9 miles from Gloucester and 31 miles from Bath.

- 5.14 I then continued my visit by walking up to the railway station and then into Verney Road. I saw that the station was both well-maintained and well-used. I also saw that the bridge from one platform to the other also provided an effective pedestrian connection into the north-eastern part of the town. As I walked through Burdett Road I saw a range of very pleasant brick houses with stone detailing. I also saw the very distinctive and ornate central downpipe proudly sitting on the front elevation of 8-10 Burdett Road.
- 5.15 As part of my tour around the Plan area I looked at the range of local green spaces as identified in Policy ENV3.
- 5.16 In order to get a full impression of the Plan area I drove around the local road network including along the A419 into Stroud. This helped me to understand the connection and transport links between these two principal settlements in the District.

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 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
 - proactively driving and supporting economic development to deliver homes, businesses and industrial units and infrastructure.
 - 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 safeguard key employment sites and to designate local green
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spaces. It also includes important policies to safeguard the town's rich built heritage. Appendix B of the Basic Conditions Statement helpfully maps the Plan policies with the appropriate paragraphs in the NPPF.

- 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 that the submitted Plan has set out to achieve sustainable development. In the economic dimension, it includes policies to safeguard employment sites (EM1/2), to support small and medium sized businesses (EM3) and to support communication and connectivity infrastructure (EM4). In the social role, it includes policies to safeguard and promote community facilities (AF1/2) and to meet local housing need (H1). In the environmental dimension, the Plan positively promotes high quality design (ENV7), identifies local green spaces (ENV3) and seeks to protect heritage assets in general, and those of the Canal in particular (ENV4/5). These and other matters are helpfully set out in Appendix E of the Basic Conditions Statement.

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. There are several areas where it appropriately adds local detail to Local Plan policies.

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 Town 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.
- 7.4 The Plan is commendable to the extent that its focus is on 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. Section 4 goes on to highlight some priority projects which are not in themselves land use in nature. This is appropriate and is anticipated in national policy.
- 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 and 2 of the Plan

- 7.8 These introductory elements of the Plan set the scene for its detailed policies. They do so in a concise and proportionate way. The Plan is very well-presented and arranged and is supported by well-chosen photographs and diagrams. The photographs in particular add value and depth to the text throughout the Plan. The whole effect is exemplary. It demonstrates that significant care and attention has been given to the Plan. It also adds to its attractiveness and legibility.
- 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 a good summary of how the Plan has been developed. Section

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1.3 provides a very proportionate and well-constructed outline of the neighbourhood area. Section 1.6 provides a connection to the adopted Local Plan. Section 2 sets out the vision and objectives for the Plan area. It helpfully describes the key findings that have underpinned the development of the Plan in general, and its policies in particular.

- 7.10 These introductory sections demonstrate that the Plan has been prepared and submitted in a professional way. The policies are set out in Section 3. They have been developed in an iterative fashion and are the outcome of proper research and an assessment of available information. The policies are arranged so that they sit within the context provided by the five themes in the Aims and Objectives section.

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 alike. The Plan has been the subject of a health check. This is reflected in the generally robust nature of its policies.

Policy AF1: Protecting Community Facilities

- 7.12 The policy sets out the Plan's approach towards the protection of existing community uses. It is underpinned with a significant amount of supporting information. The importance of this policy reflects its comment that 'there is a strong community spirit in Stonehouse'.
- 7.13 The structure of the policy is essentially formed of two related points. The first part establishes a general degree of protection for existing community facilities. The second part of the policy then identifies a list of eight 'particularly valued community amenities and facilities'. A third part of the policy then clarifies that the loss of identified community facilities (in the second part of the policy) will not be supported.
- 7.14 Plainly the second part of the policy has the clarity required by the NPPF. It will be immediately obvious to all concerned which facilities are affected by the policy. The first part of the policy is far less clear both in general terms and in establishing what facilities existed at any time. I sought clarification from the Town Council on this matter. It advised that it had intended to safeguard all community facilities in the town (in accordance with policy EI6 of the Local Plan). Its formulation of the neighbourhood plan had identified eight specific facilities that are considered to be locally valued. I recommend a modification to the policy so that it achieves this objective. Plainly the policy cannot directly introduce degrees of control for the various facilities. Nevertheless, as a result of the public feedback into this part of the Plan it would be appropriate to highlight the particular importance of the eight facilities in the supporting text.

- 7.15 The submitted policy refers the need for any proposals that would replace community facilities to satisfy identified local plan policies. Whilst this is not ideal it has the clarity required by the NPPF. In any event it will avoid the need to repeat one policy in the other.

Replace the policy with the following:

Existing community facilities should be safeguarded and protected.

Where planning permission is required, proposals which would involve the loss of existing community facilities will only be supported where they satisfy the various criteria in policies E16 (community buildings) and ES13 (Open spaces) of the Stroud Local Plan.

Insert the following additional paragraph in the Justification after the existing first paragraph:

Policy AF1 sets out the Plan's approach to this important matter. It reflects the approach already adopted in the Stroud Local Plan. Community consultation has highlighted eight facilities in the town that are considered to be particularly locally valued community facilities as follows [list here i) to viii)]

Policy AF2: Additional Community Facilities

- 7.16 This policy follows on from the previous policy. In this case the policy is based around a positive promotion of new and/or improved community facilities. Such an approach is entirely appropriate. It reflects the distinctive nature of the town and its strong sense of community.
- 7.17 The policy sets out a series of well-constructed criteria that any such proposals would need to meet. They are appropriate to the Plan area. The fourth criterion addresses water related issues (run-off, quality and flood risk). However, the format of this criterion is both different to the other three and does not have the clarity required by the NPPF. It requires that proposals should 'adequately' address such issues without identifying what would be required. I recommend a modification to address this point.

Replace criterion iv) with the following:

'The proposal would not have significant detrimental impacts on surface water run-off, water quality or flood risk in the immediate vicinity of the site'.

Policy AF3: Design and quality in the town centre

- 7.18 This policy addresses a series of issues. At its heart is a wish to retain the breadth and variety of the retail offer in the town centre, to increase the variety of goods available and to improve the wider quality of the retail environment. These ambitions reflect the strong sense of community that I saw on my visit to the Plan area and its inherent sustainability and self-sufficiency for day-to-day goods and services. The policy has the clear ability to contribute to the achievement of all three components of sustainable development in the Plan area.

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- 7.19 The first part of the policy includes several elements of supporting text which add little value. I recommend accordingly and to ensure that the policy has the clarity required by the NPPF.
- 7.20 The second part of the policy welcomes proposals that would increase the diversity of retail provision and which would occupy vacant floor space above shops and other commercial uses in the town centre. I recommend modifications to this part of the policy so that it acknowledges that not all the potential proposals that may arise would need planning permission. This point was acknowledged by the Town Council in its helpful response to my clarification note. This would particularly be the case where an existing retail unit changed the type of goods it offered. I also recommend that the policy should offer 'support' rather than 'encouragement'. This will bring the clarity to the policy that is required by the NPPF.

In the first part of the policy delete:

In i) 'where people.... facade'

In ii) to improve.... safety'

**Replace the second part of the policy with two separate paragraphs as follows:
'Insofar as planning permission is required proposals which would increase the diversity of the retail provision in the town centre will be supported'.**

'Insofar as planning permission is required proposals for the use of upper floors in the town centre will be supported where they comply with the criteria set out in the first part of this policy'.

Policy T1: Pedestrian Routes

- 7.21 This policy sets out to address a series of factors. At the heart of the policy is a wish to safeguard existing pedestrian routes and to support new ones that may either arise in their own right or as part of development proposals. It respects the fact that the town is sufficiently small and flat for most residents to have the ability to access key facilities on foot.
- 7.22 The first and fourth components of the policy meet the basic conditions. Respectively they address the protection of existing rights of way and the realignment of footpaths where this is necessary as a result of new development.
- 7.23 The second component of the policy addresses improvements to existing routes. It is a general supporting policy. Its focus is on prioritising such improvements. However, the policy provides no context to any priority within such routes or against other similar works. In order to bring clarity to this part of the policy I recommend that the word 'prioritised' should be replaced with 'supported'.
- 7.24 The third component of the policy refers to proposals which may result in the closure of pedestrian routes and how future access should be handled. However, it is not clear what this policy is seeking to achieve. In any event its two elements contradict

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one another. On this basis, I recommend that the component is deleted. Its overarching ambition is largely safeguarded by the application of the first and fourth components of the wider policy.

**In the second component of the policy replace ‘prioritised’ with ‘supported’.
Delete the third component of the policy.**

Policy T2: New Development and Pedestrian Links to the town centre

- 7.25 The policy sets out an expectation that new development will provide safe and convenient access to the town centre. It highlights that the town is divided by its principal roads and the two railway lines. The policy has been designed to give a local delivery tool to Policy EI12 of the Local Plan.
- 7.26 The supporting text recognises that developments close to the town centre will be better-placed to meet the expectations of this policy. It then acknowledges that it is likely that any development will be on the edge of the town. In this regard, the text then highlights the strategic importance of the delivery of the mixed-use allocation in the Local Plan to the west of the town (Policy SA2). The separation of this site from the town centre by the Gloucester to Bristol railway line is specifically referenced.
- 7.27 This is an area where the emerging neighbourhood plan has been overtaken by events. In April 2016 outline planning permission was granted by SDC for the development of this strategic allocation. That planning permission includes conditions relating to pedestrian and cycling accessibility. On this basis, the development of that site is now a commitment. It would also be unreasonable for the Plan to introduce an additional raft of requirements for the site’s eventual development over and above those already imposed by SDC (by way of conditions as part of the planning permission) on the basis of its application of adopted Local Plan policies. I recommend modifications to the supporting text to clarify this matter.
- 7.28 The policy itself is appropriate within the context of the geography of the town. In addition, it is designed to be operated in a flexible way to reflect the location and size of the potential sites themselves and the range of opportunities that may or may not exist to connect them to the town centre and to other principal facilities. I recommend modifications so that the policy has the clarity required by the NPPF. There is no need for the policy itself to refer directly to a Local Plan policy. In addition, I recommend that the focus on ‘encouraging’ proposals to provide the necessary links is replaced with a focus on them being ‘supported’. This will provide a more permissive focus to the policy.

Replace ‘In line.... encouraged to’ with ‘New developments will be supported where they’

In the second part of the policy criterion ii) delete ‘(where feasible and viable)’

After the second sentence of the Justification include:

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Policy T2 of this Plan provides a local delivery tool to Policy E112 of the Local Plan. It reflects the geography of the town.

Replace the final section of the Justification (from Site Allocation Policy SA2 to policy E112 of the Local Plan) with:

'The strategic allocation identified in the Stroud Local Plan (Land to the west of Stonehouse Policy SA2) for new residential and employment development was granted outline planning permission in April 2016. It includes its own proposals for pedestrian and cycle access. These details will be clarified as the District Council makes decisions on the various reserved matters applications'.

Policy T3: Design of Off-Road Pedestrian and Cycle Routes

- 7.29 This policy sets out a series of requirements for any new or improved cycle and pedestrian routes that are provided or incorporated within development proposals.
- 7.30 As with Policy T2 it reflects the compact size and geography of the town and the desirability of providing non-car modes of transport. It meets the basic conditions.

Policy T4: Proximity of new development to facilities and services

- 7.31 This policy looks to ensure that new development is accessible to existing facilities and services in the town. It reinforces the community and accessibility approach that underpins the wider Plan.
- 7.32 I recommend that the policy is modified so that it adopts a simpler format. As submitted it is somewhat confusing and as a result does not have the clarity required by the NPPF. I also recommend that its approach and title is modified so that it refers to 'accessibility' rather than to 'proximity'. Whilst the two factors are closely related accessibility is a factor that can be directly influenced by the planning system.

Replace the opening part of the policy with:

Where appropriate new development should be designed to enhance accessibility to local facilities and services. Particular attention should be paid to:

In criterion i) replace 'the defined.... sequentially' with 'the travel hierarchy considering sequentially'

In criterion ii) insert 'the creation of' at its start.

Delete the final paragraph of the policy

Insert the following additional paragraph of supporting text at the end of the Justification:

In circumstances where a design and access statement or a travel plan is required as part of a planning application the documents concerned should address the issues in this policy.

Policy T5: Existing Cycle Routes

- 7.33 The policy sets out to respond to strategic guidance in the adopted Local Plan on the importance of promoting and safeguarding cycle routes.
- 7.34 As submitted there is a disjoint between the policy and its justification. The former concentrates exclusively on development proposals that would result in the closure or the diversion of such a facility. The justification (and indeed the context provided by the Local Plan) has a focus both on safeguarding existing routes and providing a supporting context for the provision of new facilities. I recommend a modification to the policy to address this matter. The resulting policy is more positive. It also responds to the representations made by SDC and Robert Hitchins Limited on this policy.

Replace the policy with the following:

‘Development proposals for new and amended cycle routes will be supported where:

- **There is no net loss to the effectiveness of the existing cycle network;**
- **Provision is made for accessibility to motor scooters; and**
- **They have been designed or adapted to act as wildlife corridors (where feasible and viable)’.**

Policy T6: New Developments and cycle links to the town centre

- 7.35 This policy continues the strong theme of promoting cycle links from new development to the town centre. It requires that new development will be required to provide safe convenient and pleasant cycle routes where it is appropriate to do so. The second half of the policy sets out specific requirements in the event that the routes are located off-road.
- 7.36 I am satisfied that the principle of the policy meets the basic conditions. The promotion of sustainable transportation measures has regard to national policy. The policy is also in general conformity with strategic policies in the development plan. In addition, the policy takes appropriate account of the geography of the town and has sufficient flexibility to be applied on a case-by-case basis. Nevertheless, its first component is wordy and includes elements that are best captured in the justification to the policy. I recommend accordingly. The combined effect of the modifications will be to bring the type of clarity to the policy as required by the NPPF.

Replace the first part of the policy to read:

‘Where appropriate new development will be required to provide safe, convenient and pleasant cycle routes either on quiet roads or off-road. Where possible and deliverable, and where the location of the proposal generates a need, routes should be provided to the town centres and to principal facilities including local schools. Routes should include safe and convenient crossings of roads and railways where necessary.’

At the end of the Justification add:

Policy T6 sets out a context within which strategic policies can be implemented in the neighbourhood area. It has been designed to be applied in a flexible way to reflect the scale of the development concerned and the opportunities that exist for its connection to the town centre and other facilities.

Policy T7: Cycle Parking

- 7.37 The policy sets out to achieve two things. Firstly, it seeks to safeguard existing cycle parking and secondly it supports the provision of new facilities. It continues the approach set out in this initial part of the Plan.
- 7.38 The policy is written initially in a negative rather than a positive fashion. I recommend that this matter is remedied by reversing the position of its two component parts. In their separate ways both components otherwise meet the basic conditions.

Reverse the respective positions of the two component parts of the policy.

Policy T8: Improving Key Pedestrian and cycling routes

- 7.39 The policy supports the development of a series of improved key pedestrian and cycle links. The proposed links are appropriate and reflect the geography of the town as described earlier in this report.
- 7.40 I have taken into account the representations made by Robert Hitchens Limited on this matter. Nevertheless, the policy does not directly seek to impose further requirements on the development of the strategic allocation to the west of the town (and which already has outline planning permission).
- 7.41 The second part of the policy requires any proposals to 'pay particular attention' to Gloucestershire County Council standards. As submitted this part of the policy does not have the clarity required by the NPPF. I recommend accordingly.

In the second part of the policy replace 'pay particular attention to' with 'be in accordance with'.

Policy T9: Railway Station

- 7.42 This policy has a focus on the existing railway station in Burdett Road. It supports improved facilities at this important transport hub in the town. Their development would plainly extend the use and attractiveness of the existing station.
- 7.43 The submitted policy contains elements of supporting text within the policy. I recommend accordingly to address this matter. I also recommend a modification to correct a factual error in the Justification.

Replace the first part of the policy with the following:

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‘Proposals for additional station amenities and for improved access at the Burdett Road railway station and its associated land as shown on Map 5 will be supported.’

At the end of the second paragraph of the Justification add:

There is considerable potential to introduce additional station amenities and to improve accessibility. In particular the station would benefit from having improved access for people with disabilities and for cycle parking.

In the final paragraph of the justification replace T9 with T8

Policy T10: Loss of parking capacity

- 7.44 The policy seeks to safeguard the capacity of off-street car parking in the town centre. I saw the need for this policy when I visited the Plan area. Whilst accessibility on foot is good there were those who travelled to the town centre by car and who therefore needed access to good short-stay car parking.
- 7.45 I recommend modifications to the policy so that it can achieve its desired objective. As SDC point out there is no direct means by which off-street car parking can be protected as envisaged by the submitted policy. The modified policy reflects the opportunities that may exist for replacement parking facilities as part of wider development proposals.

Modify the policy to read:

‘Development that results in the loss of existing off-street town centre car parking will only be supported where suitable and accessible replacement facilities are provided, or where it can be demonstrated that the parking spaces proposed to be lost are no longer needed.’

Policy H1: Local needs housing

- 7.46 This policy offers support to new housing proposals which meet local housing needs in the town. It draws particular attention to the need for bungalows and smaller dwellings for young persons.
- 7.47 The proposal has generated a representation from Robert Hitchins Limited. It draws attention to the existing outline permission for the strategic mixed development site to the west of the town and the extent to which it addresses such needs. The Town Council has clarified that the policy is intended to apply to future developments. I recommend a modification to the supporting text to reflect this situation.
- 7.48 I also recommend that the final part of the policy is deleted. It is not necessary for a neighbourhood plan directly to repeat a local plan policy.

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Delete the final paragraph of the policy

At the end of the final paragraph of the Justification include:

The policy applies only to new development that may come forward within the Plan period. It does not affect the existing outline planning permission on land to the west of Stonehouse.

Policy H2: Ease of access in new residential development

- 7.49 The policy sets out a series of requirements for the layout of and levels of access within new residential developments. It addresses the related issues of access for service vehicles, the Gloucestershire Manual for Streets and for safe access for pedestrian and cyclists. The underlying objective of the policy is to reduce on street car parking.
- 7.50 I am satisfied that the purpose of the policy is appropriate for the Plan area and in general terms meets the basic conditions. Within this overall context I recommend that it makes explicit reference to SDC car parking standards. The measures identified in the policy will be unlikely to achieve their desired outcomes if the inherent design and layout of the residential proposals concerned do not provide for their own car parking requirements. I also recommend a modification to the third part of the policy. As submitted it comments that developers 'are encouraged to consider carefully' the design and layout of development. This approach does not have the clarity required by the NPPF.

Before the first component of the policy insert:

'Proposals for housing development should provide off-street car parking spaces to meet current Stroud District Council parking standards.'

In the third part of the policy replace 'are encouraged.... carefully' with 'should arrange'

Policy H3: Play areas in new residential development

- 7.51 This policy sets out the Plan's requirements for play areas in new residential development. It makes direct reference to policy ES15 of the adopted Local Plan.
- 7.52 As submitted the policy is not in general conformity with the equivalent Local Plan policy on two counts. In the first instance, it introduces a size threshold (10 or more dwellings) where the Local Plan policy applies to all developments. In the second instance, it does not make provision for the potential off-site provision of play spaces where circumstances would make that approach acceptable.
- 7.53 There would be a case for recommending the deletion of this policy. In any event with appropriate modifications it would largely repeat the adopted Local Plan policy. However, on balance I recommend that the policy is retained and modified so that it is in conformity with the adopted policy. Its justification refers to the ambition to allow

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children to play safely within the immediate area where they live and provides an example of local best practice.

Replace the policy with the following:

‘Development proposals for new residential development should provide play space to meet the standards set out in policy ES15 of the Stroud Local Plan. Where the achievement of this standard is unrealistic or inappropriate within the boundaries of the development site a financial contribution will be sought in lieu of on-site provision. When new provision is provided appropriate measures will be sought to ensure the future satisfactory maintenance and management of the open space.’

At the end of the first section of the Justification add:

Policy H3 sets out the Plan’s approach to the need for play space. Ideally it should be provided within the boundaries of the site itself. However, there may be circumstances where the site is too small or where it would otherwise be inappropriate to provide play space on site. As such the policy sets out the opportunities for off-site contributions. These should be applied to the improvement or consolidation of existing play spaces that would be within realistic walking distance of the proposed residential development.’

Policy EM1: Safeguarding Local Employment Sites

- 7.54 As its title suggests this policy sets out to safeguard identified employment sites in the town. It has the potential to be an important policy given the significance of the employment provision in Stonehouse both to its own needs and those of the wider District. It also has the ability to contribute significantly to the achievement of the economic dimension of sustainable development in the Plan area.
- 7.55 As submitted the policy is very extensive. It includes significant elements of supportive text that would sit far better in the justification section of the Plan. In addition, the policy identifies the five principal employment areas in the Plan area as ‘Local Employment Sites’. However, as SDC point out the five sites identified are identical to the sites in the town included within the schedule of ‘Key Employment Sites’ in Policy E11 of the Local Plan (sites EK26-EK30). On this basis, their separate designation in the submitted Plan is both unnecessary and potentially confusing. I also recommend that the title of the policy should be changed accordingly.
- 7.56 The policy also sets out a series of criteria against which proposals for new development will be assessed on these sites. Most of these criteria meet the basic conditions and will have the effect of stimulating further economic growth and development on the five sites concerned.
- 7.57 However, I recommend modification to two of the criteria. The first is in regard to criterion ii) which proposes a degree of flexibility for the change of use to alternative uses. Whilst that criterion incorporates viability issues and the need for a marketing period it is not in general conformity with Local Plan Policy E11. That policy adopts an

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absolute approach. In any event the Stonehouse sites are of major importance to the economy of the District and have excellent access to the M5 and the wider strategic highway network. On this basis, I recommend that the criterion is deleted. This would not directly prevent SDC from taking its own decision on a planning application where a viability case could be made for an appropriate alternative use.

- 7.58 The second is in regard to criterion iv) which supports the expansion of existing premises where there is a net increase in full time employment or where a business plan demonstrates the need for additional space. Plainly the expansion of employment premises would be appropriate subject to design and amenity issues (addressed elsewhere in the policy). Nevertheless, the specific issues identified by this criterion are unduly onerous. Some businesses may need to expand their premises to take account of new production process or to accommodate new orders. The approach in this criterion also is at odds with national policy. In particular paragraph 21 of the NPPF is very clear that ‘investment in business should not be over-burdened by the combined requirements of planning policy expectations’. The need for a business plan is also unnecessary. By definition the commercial operation concerned will have come to its own decision about the need for expansion. Thereafter it would be fall to SDC to consider any planning application that may be required purely on its planning merits. On this basis, I recommend that the criterion is simplified.

Replace the policy to read:

Development proposals for employment use on the employment sites identified on Map 7 will be supported where they:

- **Make more effective or efficient use of the site as employment land; or**
- **Provide complementary ancillary uses which improve the attractiveness of the employment sites; or**
- **Propose the expansion of existing premises; and**
- **Have no adverse impacts on the surrounding built character of the employment site concerned or its wider landscape setting; and**
- **Meet the requirements of relevant development plan policies**

Change the title of the policy to ‘Safeguarding Key Employment Sites’.

Insert the following additional text in the Justification between the existing first and second paragraphs:

The existing key employment areas in Stonehouse are identified on Map 7 (see Appendix 2: Maps p.78). They are:

- *Bonds Mill Industrial Estate*
- *Stonehouse Park*
- *Upper Mills Industrial Estate*
- *Oldends Lane Industrial Estate*
- *Ryeford Industrial Area*

These sites are protected as Key Employment Sites in Local Plan Policy EI1. This protection recognises that the five sites provide significant employment opportunities for the Stonehouse Cluster, the wider District and the M5 corridor from Bristol to Gloucester and Cheltenham.

Policy EM2: Resisting loss of employment space outside designated employment sites

7.59 This policy follows on from the approach adopted in Policy EM1. It seeks to exercise control over the potential loss of employment sites and premises beyond those identified as Key Employment Sites. In doing so it sets out a more flexible policy context than that set out in Policy EM1. This is both appropriate in its own right and has regard to paragraph 22 of the NPPF which highlights the need to promote alternative uses for land and buildings where there is no reasonable prospect of its use for employment purposes. Nevertheless, I recommend a modification so that the context of this policy is identical to that set in Policy EM1 with regard to the definition of Key Employment Sites.

7.60 The policy sets out three circumstances in which proposals for non-employment uses will be supported. The first is where a viability case can be made. The second is where the employment floorspace can be replaced. The third is where the proposed use would provide equal or greater benefits to the local economy and the community. I am satisfied that in principle the first and the second factors are appropriate. The third factor is however open to significant interpretation. The Justification offers no guidance on the matter or how this aspect of the policy would be applied by SDC as part of its wider development management functions. Whilst I have some sympathy for the approach adopted it does not have the clarity required by the NPPF and I recommend that it is deleted. Plainly SDC could consider any application which identified the type of alternative benefits proposed in the submitted policy on a case-by-case basis.

Replace the initial part of the policy with:

‘Development proposals that would result in the loss of employment land outside that identified in the Key Employment Sites shown on Map 7 will be supported where:’

Replace criterion i) with:

It can be demonstrated that the use of the site or premises concerned solely for employment is no longer viable; or

Delete criterion iii)

Insert the following additional supporting text as a separate paragraph at the end of the Justification:

‘The policy sets out two circumstances in which the loss of employment sites or premises will be supported. In relation to the first point on viability any such planning application will be expected to demonstrate that a 12-month active marketing

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exercise has taken place for employment purposes on the open market at a realistic price and that no reasonable offers have been submitted’.

Policy EM3: Supporting small and medium sized businesses

- 7.61 The policy supports the development of small and medium sized enterprises. It identifies a series of six environmental factors with which such proposals should comply. The policy has clear regard to national policy. The Plan recognises that its business parks and the historic mill complexes provide significant opportunities for the development of small businesses.
- 7.62 The policy requires that such proposals ‘demonstrate market demand’. For similar reasons to those that I have set out in regard to Policy EM1 this requirement is too onerous. New businesses will have come to their own judgements about the demands for their businesses. Some may be experimental. Some will flourish whilst other will fail in the first few years. These issues are matters of commercial judgement rather than of a planning nature. I recommend accordingly.
- 7.63 The Justification to the policy correctly identifies that the mill complexes in and around Stonehouse provide a wider range of employment opportunities. Nevertheless, a neighbourhood plan can only comment on development opportunities in its own defined area. On this basis, I recommend the deletion of the words ‘and around’.

Delete ‘they demonstrate market demand and’

Delete ‘and around’ in the first paragraph of the Justification

Policy EM4: Connectivity and Communications Infrastructure

- 7.64 This policy offers support to proposals that would improve broadband, telecommunications and ICT connectivity. It has the ability to contribute significantly to the achievement of the economic dimension of sustainable development in the Plan area.
- 7.65 The policy has appropriate regard to national policy. It meets the basic conditions.

Policy ENV1: Maintaining and protecting the natural environment

- 7.66 This policy seeks to ensure that development proposals conserve and where appropriate enhance the natural environment of the Plan area. It reasonably and appropriately makes specific reference to Key Wildlife Sites and to Priority Habitats. The second part of the policy highlights the need as appropriate for development proposals to identify and deliver mitigation measures. The policy has clear regard to national planning policy.

- 7.67 I recommend a modification to the second part of the policy to bring the clarity required by the NPPF. As submitted it includes a series of mitigation measures as examples.

In the second part of the policy delete ‘for example’ and insert the following at the end of the policy ‘or other mitigation measures as appropriate to the particular proposal’.

Policy ENV2: Green Infrastructure Network

- 7.68 This policy addresses the Green Infrastructure Network in the town. It is an extensively-worded policy which includes significant elements of supporting text. In effect, the policy indicates that development proposals that maintain and enhance this network will be supported.
- 7.69 On this basis I recommend that the policy is simplified and that the supporting text (currently located in the policy) is reproduced in the Justification. This will ensure that the policy has the clarity required by the NPPF. The Justification (as modified) will also provide the appropriate degree of explanation for the modified policy.

Replace the policy with the following:

‘Development proposals that maintain and enhance the locally valued green and blue infrastructure network, as identified in Map 10, will be supported’.

Reposition the first four sentences of the policy as submitted to the beginning of the Justification section.

Policy ENV3: Local Green Space

- 7.70 This policy designates five parcels of land as local green space. It does so within the context provided by paragraphs 76 to 78 of the NPPF. Their designation is underpinned by detailed information in the Plan’s evidence base. The policy is appropriately designed to safeguard the identified parcels of land as local green space. In particular the second part of the policy identifies the limited range of development that will be acceptable within local green spaces. They mainly relate to small scale proposals that would enhance the use of the spaces themselves and improve access to them. I looked at the five sites as part of my visit to the Plan area. In their different ways, I am satisfied that they meet the tests set out in the NPPF.
- 7.71 The policy provides a significant degree of detail and content. This is primarily on the basis that it includes the details that have caused the sites to be designated as local green space. This information would sit better in the Justification. This approach would bring the clarity required by the NPPF. I recommend accordingly.
- 7.72 The local green spaces are appropriately identified on a map base (Map 11). However, that map also shows a series of other environmental assets which are unaffected by policies in the Plan. This has the ability to introduce a lack of clarity on

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the role and significance of the various designations. This matter is reinforced by the initial wording of the policy itself. It conflates the wider issue of green infrastructure with the specific designation of local green spaces. To resolve this matter and to reflect the status provided by local green space designation I recommend that they are shown on a separate Map.

- 7.73 I also recommend a specific modification to criterion iii) of the second part of the policy. This would have the effect of making its application more general so that it has proper regard for national policy.

Replace the first part of the policy to read:

Local Green Spaces are designated at the following locations as shown on Map [insert number]:

- **Severn Road Park Estate Green**
- **Midland Road Park Estate Green**
- **Boakes Drive Green**
- **Verney Fields**
- **Court View Ponds**

In the second part of the policy (criterion iii) replace ‘species’ with ‘biodiversity’.

Insert the following additional text at the end of the Justification section:

‘Five local green spaces are designated as follows. The reasons for their designation is shown in brackets. Further detail on the designation of the sites is included in the Plan’s evidence base. [List at this point a) to e) from the submitted policy]’

Include a separate map in the Plan identifying the local green spaces. Explanatory Note -this map should identify the five local green spaces by reference to their detail (a-e) in the policy. The map should be to a smaller scale than Map 11 so that the five sites can be accurately identified for development management purposes.

Policy ENV4: Protecting the heritage assets of Stonehouse

- 7.74 This policy has been designed to protect local heritage assets in the town. It reflects its rich history in general terms and its industrial heritage in particular. Its principal focus is on local heritage assets.
- 7.75 The submitted documents included the Stonehouse Town Character Assessment. This document usefully describes character areas in the town and identifies important non-designated buildings that contribute towards its character. Appendix 3 (of the submitted neighbourhood plan itself) then identifies local heritage assets in each of the four character areas.
- 7.76 The policy and its justification are well-intentioned. Nevertheless, as submitted its format is rather confusing and the policy falls well-short of displaying the clarity required by the NPPF. In particular it does not have regard to national policy which
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indicates that the responsibility for preparing local lists rests with the local planning authority (here SDC). Both SDC and the Town Council have helpfully responded to my clarification note on this matter. SDC comments that it is intending to produce a local list for the wider District at some future point. The Town Council comments that it anticipates that the buildings identified in this Plan (Appendix 3) can eventually be incorporated into the emerging local list.

- 7.77 I recommend modifications to the policy and to the supporting text to address these matters and to bring the clarity required by the NPPF. In particular the recommended modifications remove any direct reference to a local list of heritage buildings. I also recommend that the policy is simplified by the deletion of its second part. In most cases the issues which it addresses are already covered by other policies in the Plan or other technical guidance. I also recommend that the buildings concerned are shown on a separate map.

The buildings shown in Appendix 3 and on Map [insert number] are identified as important character buildings.

Proposals for the demolition, redevelopment or substantial alterations to the important character buildings should demonstrate the consideration that has been given to retaining:

- **The important character building itself;**
- **Its most distinctive and important features;**
- **The positive elements of its setting and its relationship to its immediate surroundings; and**
- **The contribution that the building and its setting makes to the character of the local area.**

In the supporting text (second paragraph) replace 'local heritage interest (see Appendix 3) which' with 'important character buildings. These buildings are shown in Appendix 3 of this Plan. They'

Delete the final sentence and replace with:

'The identification of these important character buildings does not constitute a local list of non-designated heritage assets. Stroud District Council is considering the preparation of such a local list for the wider district. Once that process begins the important character buildings in Appendix 3 of this Plan can be assessed for inclusion in that District-wide list on the criteria used as part of that exercise.'

Include an additional map in the Plan showing the buildings in this policy (and Appendix 3).

Policy ENV5: Protecting and enhancing the Stroudwater Canal

- 7.78 This policy sets out a positive context within which the Canal can be safeguarded and improved. It provides a robust local dimension to policy ES11 of the Local Plan. It addresses accessibility issues and the provision of moorings.

- 7.79 The policy is both designed to be a free-standing policy and to sit within the wider context provided by the Cotswold Canal Trust's long-term vision of creating a navigable through route to the Rivers Thames and Severn. This wider vision is both visionary and exciting. Nevertheless, it is best expressed within the Justification rather than the policy itself. In any event many of its proposals will be outside the planning system in general, and outside the neighbourhood area in particular. I recommend accordingly. In doing so I recommend that the first three elements of the policy become three separate parts of the modified policy. In the third element of the policy I recommend a modification to its wording so that it has the clarity required by the NPPF. I recommend that the fourth element of the policy as submitted (its criterion iv) is deleted. There is no need for a neighbourhood plan to reiterate the need for proposals to comply with the adopted Local Plan.

Delete the opening element of the policy.

Recast the policy so that it reads as three separate paragraphs beginning with: Opportunities to...

Proposals for moorings....

The provision of temporary moorings....

Delete the section of the policy beginning with iv) Development proposals....

In the third paragraph of the modified policy replace 'is likely to' with 'would'.

Insert the following additional text in the Justification after the existing first paragraph: 'The Neighbourhood Plan supports the wider ambitions of the Cotswold Canals Trust. This seeks to establish a navigable through route to the Rivers Thames and Severn. The policy provides a local context to assist this project and specifically to improve accessibility to the canal in Stonehouse'.

Policy ENV6: Protecting views and vistas

- 7.80 This policy identifies a series of important public views and vistas that the Town Council wishes to safeguard. I saw several of the vistas on my visit to the Town. In some cases, they reflect the setting of the town below the Cotswold escarpment.
- 7.81 SDC comments that the policy duplicates the information on views and vistas contained within Map 13 and recommends that the policy is simplified. That approach would have its own merits. Nevertheless, it is not necessary to ensure that the policy meets the basic conditions.
- 7.82 I recommend a detailed modification to the second part of the policy to bring the clarity required by the NPPF.

In the second part of the policy replace 'will need to' with 'should'.

Stonehouse Neighbourhood Plan – Examiner's Report

Policy ENV7: High Quality Design

- 7.83 This policy sets out the Plan's ambitions for high quality design. It seeks to provide a local dimension to national policy set out in the NPPF.
- 7.84 One representation has suggested that the policy should be deleted on the basis that it adds little to the design policy in the adopted Local Plan. I am not persuaded by that argument. As the Justification to the policy highlights the good design of buildings was supported during the consultation processes and good design can actively contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development.
- 7.85 One of the 12 core planning principles in the NPPF (paragraph 17) is '(always seek) to secure high-quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings'. The approach adopted in the policy has regard to the more detailed design elements of the NPPF. In particular, it sets out a positive requirement for high quality and inclusive design (paragraph 57), it develops a robust and comprehensive policy (paragraph 58), it proposes outlines of design principles (paragraph 59) and does so in a locally distinctive yet non-prescriptive way (paragraph 60).
- 7.86 I recommend a modification to criterion iv) to reflect the comments on the Plan made by SDC. As submitted the criterion is very specific to insects and nesting birds. It would be more applicable if it adopted a more general approach. That approach would not affect the ability to provide habitats for these two parts of the ecosystem in the Plan area. The wider approach would more properly have regard to national policy.

Replace criterion iv) with 'enhancing biodiversity'

Policy ENV8: Provision of private outdoor amenity space in new developments

- 7.87 This policy sets out the Plan's requirements for private outdoor amenity space. It confirms that this should normally be provided as a private rear garden. It largely restates existing Local Plan policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance. Nevertheless, it reinforces the importance the wider green infrastructure in the neighbourhood plan area.
- 7.88 The policy is well-designed and constructed without generally being overly-prescriptive. I recommend that the references to 'preferably rectangular' in the third paragraph and criterion i) is deleted. This element is too prescriptive and is contrary to the NPPF. It also has the ability to result in inappropriate designs if it was to be applied rigidly.

Delete '(preferably rectangular)' from the third paragraph.

Policy ENV9: Allotments

Stonehouse Neighbourhood Plan – Examiner's Report

7.89 This policy supports the development of additional allotments. It identifies four appropriate criteria against which proposals can be assessed.

7.90 The policy meets the basic conditions.

Other Matters

7.91 I have commented earlier that the submitted Plan concentrates on land-use matters in accordance with national policy and guidance. However, at the same time the development of the Plan has generated an interest in a series of non-land use matters. This approach is anticipated in national policy. Section 4 identifies a series of possible projects for community infrastructure levy funding (Section 4.1) and a series of other priorities (Section 4.2).

7.92 SDC suggests that the various projects in Section 4.1 should be included within the topic sections earlier in the Plan. This approach would have merit. However, it is not required to ensure that the Plan meets the basic conditions. Projects that may receive funding (such as improvements to the railway station) may need planning permission in their own right. Decisions of that nature would be taken by SDC on the basis of neighbourhood plan and other development plan policies.

7.93 Section 4.2 of the Plan lists a series of other priorities as follows:

- Maintenance of footpaths
- The introduction of an additional loop of the Cotswold Way into Stonehouse
- The protection and improvement of cycle routes
- Improvements to Oldends Lane
- Burdett Road station
- Local needs housing
- Canal related facilities
- Urban edges and gateways

7.94 I am satisfied that these other priorities are appropriate for inclusion in the Plan. They are properly located in a discreet section in its structure. They also clearly relate to and overlap with the range of land-use policies in the bulk of the Plan. They will contribute in their different ways to the promotion of sustainable development in the town.

7.95 For absolute clarity I recommend that some of the bold headings are modified so that they more fully describe their purpose (and as set out in each of the various headings) as follows:

Replace:

- *‘Cotswold Way’ with ‘The introduction of an additional loop of the Cotswold Way into Stonehouse’*

- 'Cycle Routes' with 'The protection and improvement of cycle routes'
- 'Oldends Lane' with 'Improvements to Oldends Lane'
- 'Housing' with 'Local needs housing'

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.
- 8.2 Following my independent examination of the Plan I have concluded that the Stonehouse 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 Stonehouse 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 12 September 2013.

Stonehouse Neighbourhood Plan – Examiner's Report

- 8.6 It is very clear 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 the examination.

Andrew Ashcroft
Independent Examiner
30 August 2017

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

**AGENDA
ITEM NO**

14 SEPTEMBER 2017

11

Report Title	ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY OUTCOMES
Purpose of Report	To inform the Committee of the outcomes from the District Council's Environment Strategy 2007-2027.
Decision(s)	The Committee resolves to: a) Recognise the achievements made by the District Council in implementing the strategy. b) Agree that work on revising the Strategy is commenced and that an updated version is brought back to the Environment Committee for approval.
Consultation and Feedback	As detailed in the report
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	No significant legal implications to report on the current report which seeks authority to undertake a wholesale review of the Strategy. (Ref:rcd31/8) K Trickey, Legal Services Manager Tel: 01453 754369 Email: karen.trickey@stroud.gov.uk
Report Authors	Barry Wyatt, Strategic Head of Development Services Tel 01453 754210 Email: barry.wyatt@stroud.gov.uk Petula Davis Principal Projects Officer Tel 01453 754289 Email Petula.davis@stroud.gov.uk
Options	The Council can chose not to have an Environment Strategy and not to invest in any initiatives that are not part of its statutory function.
Performance Management Follow Up	As detailed in the report
Background Papers/ Appendices	Environment Strategy 2007-2027 Link The original report agreeing the adoption of the strategy Link

Background

1. During 2005 it became clear that the Council needed to make a step change in its performance if it was going to respond successfully to public demands for more action on the environment, in particular reducing waste to landfill, tackling climate change and improving the quality of public spaces.
2. During 2006 the Council undertook an extensive programme of consultation, stimulating the debate through the use of an Environment 'Green' Paper. The 2006 annual budget survey was also used to test the priorities of local people. What came through very strongly was that Environment was the top priority for local people; scoring higher than affordable housing and community safety. The 2006 and 2007 household budget surveys revealed that 69% and 68% of local people respectively thought that the environment was important or very important.
3. The complementary survey of companies showed 78% in 2006 and 83% in 2007 of business people felt the same way. The Green Paper consultation results showed that waste and recycling and climate change response dominated the concerns of local people.
4. In the 2007 budget surveys people were also asked whether they were satisfied that the Council was improving the local environment. 63% (85% 2016) of business people and 75% (78% 2016) of householders agreed that this was the case.
5. The results of the consultations were used to develop a new 20-year Environment Strategy. The Council adopted this in February 2007. (see hyperlink in the background papers section). We focused on those things that would help us 'live within environmental limits'.
 - Sustainable consumption and production – *'More for Less'*
 - Climate Change and Energy – *'Confronting our greatest threat'*
 - Protecting our Natural Resources and Enhancing the Environment - *'Clean, Green and Safe'*
 - Creating Sustainable Communities – *'From local to global'*
 - Keeping the Council and the Local Community Focused on Environmental Limits – *'Let's not forget how important the issue is'*
6. The Council's 4-year Corporate Delivery Plan and Medium Term Financial Plans were also aligned with the Strategy. In the 2006/07 budget round an additional £1.5m was made available over the medium term to support the delivery of our Environment Strategy; £700,000 on climate change response, £525,000 on waste and recycling and £225,000 on public spaces.

Where we are today

7. The strategy is now over 10 years old and is in need of updating. This is not as a result of the strategy being out of date or superseded by national or international events, but is more to do with the actions or aspirations that were set out in the strategy largely having been met.
8. Appendix 1 sets out the original targets from the strategy and provides a case by case commentary of what was achieved. There has been some refocusing at a national level that has made reporting on some elements impossible but in the main the achievements have been significant.
9. The legacy of the strategy is significant with areas of note being the Council's approach to waste and recycling and in its continued commitment to energy conservation in domestic properties through the Warm and Well Partnership, which was given a significant boost by the groundbreaking 'Target 2050 Initiative'. The investment in the Strategy has been returned several times over by bringing in external funding for domestic energy installations alone.

Moving forward

10. Recognising that we are now in a different place both nationally and locally and a 20 year strategy with actions may be too inflexible to respond to both opportunities and threats. It is proposed that the Council's approach is to split the Strategy between the longer term principles along similar lines as set out in paragraph 5, but under those principles we set out annual actions as part of the Corporate Delivery Plan.
11. In order to recognise and report on outcomes and achievements from business as usual activities, periodic reports can be presented to Environment Committee.
12. A Task and Finish Group has already been established and with the support of officers the intention is to draft a new strategy to include a refresh of the five areas of focus. It is proposed that a draft report is presented at February 2018 Environment Committee.

Environment Strategy Outputs/Outcomes

The summary of the outputs set out below should be read in conjunction with the Environment Strategy 2007-2027. The formatting follows that set out in the original document.

Priority 1 - Sustainable Consumption & Production - 'More for less'

1. Playing our part in influencing consumption patterns, in particular by making sure that citizens and consumers have access to appropriate advice. The initial emphasis will be on energy efficiency / micro generation and waste /recycling.	
Original 2007	Current position
during 2007 we will work with SWEA to establish a 'one stop shop' for advice on energy efficiency and micro generation	The advice line was set up as part of the 'Warm and Well' service with funding from District and the County Councils. The advice is now more targeted to those at risk of fuel poverty or cold related illnesses.
to undertake a marketing campaign aimed at better communicating what can be recycled in the district and increasing the numbers of householders who classify themselves as 'committed recyclers'	There was positive progression in terms of communicating what can be recycled but ultimately improvement was held back until the new waste collection service could be launched. This has resulted in a significant increase in recycling rates.
2. Establishing a new waste strategy, with increased emphasis on reducing waste at source and making use of it as a resource	
Original 2007	Current position
participate in the development of the Gloucestershire Joint Municipal Waste Strategy, which will set the overall direction for waste management in the district through to 2020	SDC participated in the development of the JMWS, but it is difficult to determine if it had any definable positive outcomes for the District.
test new waste collection systems during 2007 and consider options to roll this out across the entire district.	The 'Stanley's' trial clearly demonstrated the potential collection rates achievable for a food waste collection system. This and other options fed in to the scheme design that is now in place. The new waste services have resulted in a significant increase in landfill diversion.
help and support the business and education communities in the development of commercial waste recycling initiatives	SDC have supported the commercial and education communities through its input into waste recycling schemes that are currently provided by local recycling collectors and processors. Prior to the council's involvement, businesses were unable to attract commercial waste recycling companies to Stroud
3. A new commitment to sustainable procurement, where our aim will be to become a centre of recognised good practice	
Original 2007	Current position
review all our contracts by May 2007, identifying those with the most significant environmental impacts and identify the outcomes	This was carried out as a single action but since that time the environmental information required to support tenders and the scoring used to assess bids has moved on significantly.

Priority 2 - Climate Change and Energy - 'confronting our greatest threat'

1. Putting climate change at the heart of our policy making and operations	
Original 2007	Current position
sign the Nottingham Declaration during 2007	Signed but now has been superseded by Climate Local. SDC became carbon neutral in 2015.
2. Establishing a climate change delivery plan that starts the process of moving towards a low carbon economy and adapting to climate change	
Original 2007	Current position
invest £400k up to 2010 to establish a 'one stop shop' for advice on energy efficiency and micro generation and developing the long term infrastructure (inc exemplars)	Done as part of the Target 2050 initiative. Link to Energy remains an active list of Gloucestershire installers.
increase the numbers of h/holders achieving the 40% house to 10% by 2020 and 100% by 2035	While laudable at the time, the removal of fiscal incentives and legislative tools rendered the target unachievable even if it could be measured!
introduce supplementary planning advice during 2008 to incorporate renewable energy production	Completed but soon made obsolete by legislative change that made 'Merton' type rules unlawful.
expect our partner RSLs to deliver high environmental standards for all new homes	RSL (RPs) standards are usually in excess of private providers.
require all new housing developments to be carbon neutral by 2016 in accordance with proposed part L of building regs and encourage early compliance	Following years of debate, Part L of the Building Regs was never implemented to achieve zero carbon. Also Councils were restricted from requiring standards that exceeded national regulations as demonstrated through the Local Plan examination process.
invest £300k up to 2009 in helping at least 20 local small businesses and 10 community buildings to reduce their CO2 emissions	Complete as part of the '2050 Initiative'. Output reports were published at the time.
ensure robust enforcement of Integrated Pollution Control and Prevention Control Regime to control emissions of GHG and other pollutants	Ongoing as part of the work of the Environmental Protection Service.
complete during 2007 a £200k Strategic Flood Assessment Model of the River Frome catchment	Complete and now evolved further with updated modelling as part of the Stroud Valleys Initiative.
work with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust during 2007 to understand and plan for impacts of climate change on the district's natural environment	The Council adopted the 'Nature Map' produced by the GWT in order to provide opportunity for biodiversity to move in response to longer term climate change by avoiding habitat fragmentation and isolation. The Council continues to work with the natural environment stakeholders and the Local Nature Partnership (LNP) to monitor change and mitigation. SDC has worked closely with the LNP, GWT & other agencies on the development of an emerging 'green infrastructure strategy' in 2017.
reduce total carbon dioxide emissions by 60% by 2050 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to reduce domestic sector (non transport) CO2 by 20% by 2010 • to reduce domestic sector (non 	Local and Regional CO2 Emissions Estimates for 2005-2012

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> transport)CO2 by 30% by 2020 to reduce domestic sector (non transport) CO2 by 60% by 2035 	Year	Industry and Commercial	Domestic	Transport	Total
	2005	2.8	2.7	4.1	9.6
	2006	2.9	2.7	4.3	9.9
	2007	2.8	2.6	4.3	9.7
	2008	2.7	2.5	4.1	9.5
	2009	2.4	2.3	4.0	8.7
	2010	2.5	2.5	3.9	8.9
	2011	2.4	2.1	3.7	8.3
	2012	2.3	2.4	3.7	8.4
the installation of on an average 1.5MW of renewable energy generating capacity per annum up until 2020 (total: 22MW)	As at 31/03/16 10.293 MW of renewable technology in the Stroud district* *www. Renewablesandchp.ofgem.gov.uk				
To reduce CO2 emissions from SDC's direct operations by a minimum of 3% per annum	Direct emissions as at March 2016 = CO2e = 2619 tonnes compared with 2007/08 = CO2 3581 tonnes				
To max the amount of advice given and the number of energy efficiency and renewable generation measures installed in domestic, public and community buildings as a result of Council interventions	Between 2001-2016, 11084 measures were installed improving 6352 properties				

Priority 3 - Protecting our natural resources and enhancing the environment - 'clean, green and safe'

Building on our successful Green Spaces Strategy we will establish a new plan for delivering public and natural spaces	
Original 2007	Current position
appoint a 10th Neighbourhood warden by May 2007 and provide district wide coverage (12) by 2008	Completed but now at 8
during 2007 and 2008 to work with parish council and other agencies to identify the most important public and natural spaces in the district including road and streets and ensure that these are being appropriately managed (eg supporting community calls for 20mph zones and safer walking routes to school)	From 2007 Stroud District Council has worked with Communities as well as Town and Parish Councils to produce and adopt 11 Design Statements and 3 Neighbourhood Development Plans where important public and natural spaces have been identified. In 2012 the Council undertook a review of protected open spaces as part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan. In 2017 the Council is preparing a Green Infrastructure Strategy that refers to the concept of a strategic network of high quality green spaces in both urban and rural locations. These locations pass through the built environment and connect it to the wider surrounding rural area. These areas offer environmental and quality of life benefits. Stroud District Council has a limited role in respect of highway operation and control.

	<p>Nevertheless the Council has acted as an advocate for local communities. The Council has worked in partnership with Highways England and the Gloucestershire Highway Authority to plan for future growth in the District. Since 2009 the Road Safety Partnership have recommended the introduction of 20mph limits within built up areas and around schools, shops, markets, playgrounds and other areas where pedestrian and cyclist movements are high. School Safety Zone Guidance was also introduced in 2013. The Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan (2015-31) sets the long-term transport strategy for Gloucestershire up to 2031. It aims to influence how and when people choose to travel so that individual travel decisions do not cumulatively impact on the desirability of Gloucestershire as a place to live, work and invest. It supports the delivery of the Strategic Economic Plan and Development Plans to maximise the opportunity for highway infrastructure investment within the county.</p>
<p>ensure that by 2009 all council property is being managed to maximise biodiversity</p>	<p>This objective was not achievable across all green spaces that we manage. However, we manage our Parks and selected open spaces in a sensitive manner to increase the diversity of flora and fauna within those sites. The use of chemicals is restricted and leaving grass cuttings in situ feeds and improves soil structure. Biodiversity in Stratford park is also monitored regularly and an annual review undertaken. These reports have shown year on year increases in species numbers.</p> <p>Green Flag Award achieved year on year. The cemeteries that we are responsible are also managed to maximise the opportunity for acknowledged Biodiversity interests to occupy these sites.</p> <p>We protect important natural Limestone grassland on Selsley Common, through sensitive management including appropriately timed grazing by cattle to prevent scrub invasion and species loss. We manage our Woodlands in line with the Council's Tree policy and in Partnership with Town and Parish Councils. The Council has supported the creation of Community Orchards at Cam for example.</p>
<p>during 2007/08 establish a baseline of the proximity of urban 'wildlife friendly' green space and corridors to local neighbourhoods</p>	<p>A proximity baseline was not established as this need was overtaken by Stroud District (since 2007) establishing a Service Level Agreement with the Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records. This is a unique source of information about our county's wildlife and natural environment including rural and urban wildlife friendly space. GCER work with local recorders and wildlife groups to collate their sightings, bring</p>

	<p>together all the available information and build a database of over a million biological records. These can be used to comply with environmental legislation and policies. This information has been used in determining planning applications and providing information to support Parish Plans, Neighbourhood Plans and Design Statements. In 2017 the Council is preparing a Green Infrastructure Strategy that refers to the concept of a strategic network of high quality green spaces in both urban and rural locations. These locations pass through the built environment and connect it to the wider surrounding rural area. These areas offer environmental and quality of life benefits.</p>
<p>make sure that maximising biodiversity is a key aspect of the Canal Area Action Plan which will be completed during 2007</p>	<p>The Canal Area Action Plan was never taken forward, but maximising biodiversity has remained a key aspect of the Canal Project. We have eliminated Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed from canal land, and greatly reduced Himalayan Balsam.</p> <p>A reed fringe has been maintained where possible, whilst new structures on the canalised river section all contain fish and eel passes.</p> <p>New wetland habitat has been provided and native deciduous trees planted. Over 100 nesting boxes have been provided along the canal corridor and bat bricks provided in a restored bridge.</p> <p>Opening up the canal has itself created well over 1 km of new open water habitat, where previously the channel had been completely filled in and was thus dry.</p>
<p>for the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to reduce crime by 15% by 2008 as measured against the 2003/04 figures</p>	<p>Ultimately our objectives are aimed at reducing crime and fear of crime throughout Stroud District. In the last 5 years (up to 2016), there have been 33% less recorded crimes than in previous 5 years.</p>
<p>for the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to reduce the fear of crime by 5% by 2008 as measured against the 2003/04</p>	<p>Ultimately our objectives are aimed at reducing crime and fear of crime throughout Stroud District. In the last 5 years (up to 2016), there have been 33% less recorded crimes than in previous 5 years.</p>
<p>for every community to have identified and agreed management plans for their most important public and green spaces by 2010</p>	<p>This objective has not been achievable for all communities but where there has been new Housing development we have supported and identified opportunities for maximising green infrastructure and ensuring plans are in place for future management. Towns and Parishes are encouraged to include outdoor play and green spaces in their Parish Plans/NDPs. Management plans are in place for Stratford park, the districts main destination park.</p>
<p>general satisfaction with the quality of public and green spaces to be increasing annually until 2012</p>	<p>As part of broader council services, customer satisfaction levels have remained high.</p>

to achieve national top quartile performance for the proportion of relevant land and highways (%) that are assessed as having: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. combined deposits of litter and detritus 2. from which unacceptable levels of graffiti are visible and 3. from which unacceptable levels of fly posting are visible 	The requirement on local authorities to gather information through a tightly regulated inspection regime and report on the results through a national database ceased to be applied several years ago. SDC had performed well against each of the categories at the time, bringing it in line with standards across Gloucestershire. The segmented data had since been used to drive improvements.
to achieve national top quartile performance for the percentage of residents expressing satisfaction with standards of cleanliness	This indicator has not been recorded since the Place Survey in 2008 when 62% of residents were satisfied
district wide coverage of neighbourhood wardens (12 in total) by 2008	Completed but now 8 wardens
by 2008 70% of abandoned vehicles are to be removed within 24 hours from the point at which the council is legally entitled to remove the vehicle	Over 70% of vehicles are collected where this criteria is met.

Priority 4 - Creating sustainable communities - 'from local to global'

1. Placing the achievement of sustainable communities at the heart of our Local Development Framework	
Original 2007	Current position
to progress the council's Core Planning Strategy in line with timetable set out in the Local Development Scheme with the intention of incorporating policies which clearly reflect the climate change agenda by August 2008	Local Plan was adopted in November 2015 New LDS is emerging in 2017.
to work with partners to try and deliver the Stroud Transport interchange and to deliver the canal corridor that acts as a 'green' transport route with suitable provision for cyclists and walkers	The Transport Interchange project failed to get the engagement/agreement of the bus operators due to concerns regarding the amount of dead mileage and ultimately the funding provision from GCC was reallocated. Working with the Canal Trust, the canal towpath between Stroud and Stonehouse is almost complete allowing access to a 'green route'
to support community led proposals for improving environmental sustainability where there is widespread public demand and endorsement (eg support of the Bisley Community Composting Scheme)	NDPs have come in to existence since the strategy was produced and can provide a focus for such community priorities notwithstanding that it is not a land use/spatial matter. Delivery Policy ES1 of the Stroud District Local Plan seeks sustainable construction and design techniques. The Council adopted checklists and guidance as SPD to accompany the Policy in 2017. This was a response in part to public consultation and demand.
review our Regeneration Strategy during 2007/08 to ensure that it continues to enable us to invest in and support the development of the local economy, particularly the provision of goods and services by local business	This Strategy was not renewed; however regeneration projects and proposals form part of the Adopted Stroud District Local Plan. E.g. Delivery Policy EI2 and Allocation SA5 at Sharpness. Also other corporate document have a strong regeneration theme such as the Corporate Delivery plan, Jobs and Growth Strategy and the procurement strategy

to review and revise our 'Green' Travel Plan during 2007 including taking forward other transport related actions identified in this strategy (see Priorities 1 and 2)	A review has been undertaken by the Energy Savings Trust and a review of current arrangements is taking place.
District wide coverage of Town and Parish Plans that contribute to the evidence base for new Local Development Documents	In 2004 the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act reformed the planning system to produce a Local Development Framework comprising a range of planning documents of which Local Development Documents formed part. The original Act has been amended in 2015 to refer to Local Plans and the National Planning Policy Framework (which replaced Planning Policy Statements). Nevertheless there are 11 adopted community or Parish Design Statements. There are currently 4 adopted Neighbourhood Development Plans and another 15 emerging NDPs. All have contributed to the District Council's current evidence base and place making proposals for the adopted Local Plan and the future Local Plan Review. As such, they have informed the Adopted Local Plan district wide policy cover.
To deliver the core strategy in accordance with the timetable set out in our Local Development Scheme	Completed

Priority 5 - Keeping the Council and local community focused on environmental limits - 'let's not forget how important this issue is'

1. Making sure that consideration of environmental limits is built into everything that we do and that we continue to understand what the demands of local people are	
Original 2007	Current position
During 2007 establish an independent Climate Change Panel to advise the Council on the issue and evaluate its performance	Complete. The panel met over a two year period and reported on three themes, food, transport and housing. The reports were well received and assisted in the development of subsequent work stream and policy.
maintain our existing Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) registration and use the requirement to produce an annual Environmental Statement to report progress against our strategy and delivery plans	Complete and ongoing
to continue to train and develop elected members and staff so that they are able to deliver continuous improvement in the Council's environmental performance	Part of the induction programme for staff but currently not for members
work with the Local Strategic Partnership to develop a vision of an environmentally sustainable district, embed this within the Sustainable Community Strategy and use the Local Development Framework and Local Area Agreement process to deliver key aspects	Complete
produce a bi-annual State of the Environment Report based on the Audit Commission's nationally agreed basket of quality of life indicators	The indicators have been removed
all new land use planning documents will have Strategic Environmental Assessment applied and overtime all existing and new policies (not just overtly environmental ones) will be subject to rigorous environmental evaluation	Local Plan adopted following SEA methodology.

use our annual budget survey of households and businesses to test levels of satisfaction with our environmental performance and environmental quality within the district	Continuing in 2016 74% of residents and 84% of Businesses were satisfied that SDC was working to improve the environment
carrying out another 'Green Paper' consultation exercise and adopting a revised Environmental Strategy for the council during 2010/11	Environment Committee Working Group set up to review it in 2017

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

**AGENDA
ITEM NO**

14 SEPTEMBER 2017

12

Report Title	FUTURE OF TOWN CENTRES REPORT
Purpose of Report	To consider the contents of the enclosed final report and to agree to further discussions with the relevant town councils and stakeholders to take forward its recommendations.
Decision(s)	Committee resolves:- 1. To note the contents of the Future of Town Centre report 2. To support further discussions with town councils and key stakeholders to take forward its recommendations and related projects designed to improve our town centres.
Consultation and Feedback	There has been internal consultation with relevant departments and discussions held at Planning Review Panel. Environment Committee considered the draft report in February 2017. External stakeholder consultations have subsequently been undertaken including with all five town councils which have informed the final report.
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	There are no financial implications directly related to this report. Adele Rudkin/Accountant Tel: 01453 754109 Email: adele.rudkin@stroud.gov.uk There is a risk that without positive co-ordinated action from the public, private and voluntary sectors, our town centres will suffer decline reflecting long term national trends.
Legal Implications	No significant legal implications to report. (Ref:r24/8c31/8d31/8) Karen Trickey, Legal Services Manager Tel: 01453 754369 Email: karen.trickey@stroud.gov.uk
Report Author	David Lowin, Principal Planning Officer Tel: 01453 754345 Email: david.lowin@stroud.gov.uk
Options	Options are: 1. note the report and recommend discussions with town councils to deliver its recommendations, or 2. amend the report in particular the policy recommendations, or 3. undertake further consultation before finalising the

	report.
Performance Management Follow Up	Follow up discussions with town councils and stakeholders to be reported to the Planning Review Panel and, where action is required, to relevant Council committees.
Background Papers/ Appendices	Appendix A – Future of Town Centres - Stroud, Nailsworth, Stonehouse, Dursley, Wotton Under edge, August 2017

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** National planning policy advocates that local planning authorities should develop planning policies to promote competitive town centre environments and set out policies for the management and growth of centres over the plan period.
- 1.2** The adopted Local Plan mirrors generally the thrust of national planning policy and Strategic Objective SO3 aims at: 'Improving the safety, vitality and viability of our town centres, which link to and support the needs of their rural hinterlands'.
- 1.3** Notwithstanding the current policies of the Local Plan, the aim of the current report is to consider both the potential spatial policy responses to the new challenges for town centres which are emerging, and also to consider what other powers the Council has to influence positively and support the town centres studied.
- 1.4** Following consideration of national trends set out in an initial report to Environment Committee in February 2017, discussions have subsequently taken place during the spring and early summer with all of the town councils to identify local issues and potential future opportunities and relevant policy responses.

2. SUMMARY OF 'FUTURE OF TOWN CENTRES' REPORT

- 2.1** Section two of the report considers the national context, dealing with the growth and form of e-retailing, the rise of 'cafe culture' and the growth of leisure uses and spending. The report also considers the current effects of electronic business on the numbers of physical premises such as banks, building societies, travel agents, estate agents and other retailers whose business model has been changed and challenged by the introduction of electronic service provision.
- 2.2** Section three of the report considers past and current planning policy, both national, district and neighbourhood and the current evidence base. Section four details the current character and health of each of the five towns, updating previous survey material and considering the current health of each centre together with a consideration of the likely direction of travel.

- 2.3 Section five of the report sets out the results of the stakeholder engagement that was undertaken with town councils during the spring and summer.
- 2.4 The sixth section of the report sets out a consideration of the stakeholders responses and introduces a SWOT analysis for each of the towns. The final section of the report, based on the SWOT analysis and the feedback of the stakeholders suggests potential spatial and non spatial policy responses for each of the towns.

3. NEXT STEPS

- 3.1 Subject to the Committee's approval, meetings will be set up with the five town councils to discuss the findings, in particular the suggested policy recommendations, and to agree priorities for action by all parties.
- 3.2 The results of those meetings will be reported back to the Planning Review Panel initially and may feed into the Local Plan review process and, where relevant, other work programmes of this Council.

APPENDIX A



**FUTURE OF TOWN CENTRES
STROUD, NAILSWORTH, STONEHOUSE, DURSLEY,
WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE**

August 2017

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Introduction

This study aims to consider what the major Town Centres within Stroud District Council (SDC) area will look like in 2031 and how they may function. The study further considers what policy levers are at the disposal of SDC to modify negative effects or boost positive effects of change and how effective they are likely to be. In seeking to achieve this objective the study is divided into the following sections. The first section will consider the national context: whilst the major towns in the District are imbued with an individual character and are likely to require consideration of individual policy responses to the challenges of the future they will all come under the influence of the national context in which they operate.

The second section of the study will consider critically the existing policy context and the existing evidence base.

The third section of the study will examine the existing character and health of each of the Town Centres. The Town Centres chosen for the study accord with the top two levels of Town Centres as set out in Policy CP12 of the adopted Stroud District Local Plan (November 2015) namely the Principal Town Centre and Other Town Centres. The fourth section will report on the presentation of the findings of the first four sections of the study to stakeholders in each of the Towns. The section will include the stakeholders' suggestions for potential policy changes to respond to the likely evolution of the Towns.

The final section of the study will consider the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) to each Town. This section will also consider, drawing on the stakeholder engagement, the potential policy responses by Stroud District Council and other actors to the circumstances found within each Town Centre and their likely efficacy.

1 The National Context

- 1.1 The retail and service sectors of town centres have undergone and are still undergoing considerable change which will affect the functioning of town centres during the study period. The previous paradigm was that with increasing wealth, population and leisure time coupled with increasing personal mobility that there was a need for a continual expansion of retail and service floor-space, with planning policy seeking to direct that growth to suitable locations, either in town, edge of town or out of centre. That paradigm is now very questionable. Unfortunately, whilst there are strong clues as to the replacement paradigm it has not yet fully emerged to unequivocally guide policy responses. The study will, in the remainder of this section, consider the detail of these new trends and their effect.

E-Retailing

- 1.2 The archetypical 'High Street' in the last Century up to the 1980s comprised a butcher, greengrocer, baker and grocer with ancillary service uses. It was the only place for food, clothes and homewares, banking and other services. The rise of out of town supermarkets and retail parks in the 1980s marked the commencement of the decline of traditional 'High Streets' and resulted in various pieces of Government guidance/policy protecting town centres. A report by David Milt, Head of Consumer Research at Parcelhero, entitled '2030: The Death of the High Street' notes that in 1950 there were 600,000 shops in the UK; in 2012 there were 290,000. The onset of e-retailing in all its forms - click and collect, home deliveries, online shopping - has provided a further challenge.
- 1.3 The UK has one of the most developed online markets in the world, but physical stores are still very much at the heart of shopping, nevertheless¹ the channels for retailing are becoming increasingly intertwined. In particular this is best demonstrated by the fact that 'click and collect' spend at constant prices was forecast to grow substantially between 2015 to 2016 from some £8bn to £11bn. There is evidence of consumers viewing comparison products in store but ordering online, potentially at a lesser cost. The decimation of physical booksellers on the High Street can chiefly be laid at the door of Amazon, whose growth into other goods categories including the purchase of a small supermarket group with stores in the UK, also provides a significant threat in the future.
- 1.4 Physical stores will remain at the heart of shopping but with the growth of various channels the level of overall spend will increase but will not necessarily lead to an immediate demand for new floorspace. The outlook for new retail/service floorspace is far from clear, Experian consider that non store retailing spending will continue to grow rapidly in real terms from 2015 to 2035, outpacing traditional forms of spending, to account for some 20% of sales by the mid 2030s².

1 Verdict/True value of Stores July 2016.

2 Experian Retail Planner Briefing Note 13 Oct 2015.

- 1.5 It is expected that the demand for new convenience goods floorspace up to 2031 will be very modest mirroring the expected growth in overall convenience expenditure. For comparison goods the redevelopment of older more inefficient space, potentially redundant service sector space such as banks, is likely to result in some demand but less than would have been forecast without the existence and growth of multichannel retailing.

‘Cafe Culture’

- 1.6 The growth of ‘cafe culture’ has been the saving of many high streets. Neil Wrigley, Professor of Human Geography at the University of Southampton, quoted in the Financial Times notes:³
‘The UK’s town centres and high streets have been progressively shifting their orientation from retail to services and leisure uses for at least two decades in line with changing consumer culture, lifestyle and demographics’.
- 1.7 In his research on 1,100 high streets he found the number of cafes, restaurants, hairdressers and opticians increased by 24% between 2000 and 2006, whilst apparel stores fell by 4%. This trend persists with research by The Local Data Company finding that health and beauty services were among the fastest growing businesses by floorspace in 2015.
- 1.8 The growth of cafe premises and their popularity is evidenced by the emergence of nationwide chains such as Starbucks, and Costa, though consumers prefer independent operators.⁴
- 1.9 The growth of cafe culture is reinforced by the trend of increased ‘eating out’, particularly evident amongst those of below pensioner age.⁵ A trend that will be likely to be enhanced as those in younger age cohorts move through having been socialised into increased demand for ‘eating out’.
- 1.10 The specific evidential reasons for the growth in expenditure in cafes/ restaurants are difficult to find but in the case of cafes the free on site Wi-Fi, the improvements to the range of products on offer and the changes over the last decade to working practices may account for some demand as there is an increasing blurring of work and leisure time.
- 1.11 Restaurant expenditure growth may be accounted for by factors such as increased interest in the culinary arts, not least stoked by the plethora of ‘cooking shows’ on television and foreign travel, engendering in the population desire for new culinary experiences. The latter trend has also helped the continued existence of specialist convenience retailers supplying artisan and niche products.

3 FT 14/6/16 .

4 Cafe culture show data May 2016.

5 NEMS market research March 2016.

- 1.12 A further factor may be the growth in interest of certain sections of the population in the provenance of food, its sustainability credentials and also the trend towards healthy eating.
- 1.13 The result of a diversified town centre which has an active 'cafe culture' is increased dwell time of town centre users and increased footfall and night time usage.

The 'Service' Sector

- 1.14 The typical High Street up until the millennium was the spatially preferred location of such service type uses as banks, building societies, recruitment agencies, estate agents, turf accountants and post offices. This is no longer a given.
- 1.15 Turning first to banks, the onset of personal electronic banking, including seeking loans, together with personal electronic transfer of funds has made the use of cash and cheques decline. The introduction of debit and credit cards with contactless technology has further reduced the need for citizens to carry cash. The provision of online banking and the ubiquity of ATMs have reduced the physical need for banks to retain premises on Britain's high streets. A financial website 'This is Money' reported in May 2016 that: "Britain's biggest banks have shut three branches every two days in the past year"
"Campaigners argue suburbs; market towns...tend to suffer most".
- 1.16 A leading article in the Sunday Times Business section of 4th December 2016 noted that five years ago the largest five banking groups had some 7821 branches, in December 2015 some 6740 and a year later in December 2016 some 6,225.
- 1.17 Building societies are also coming under the same pressures of the electronic age as banks with the continued growth of online banking. It can plausibly be argued that the principle customers for physical branches of both banks and building societies are the same groups and now comprise those within the population who were socialised before the widespread use and expertise in electronic communication. This group are by definition destined to decline with time, there is therefore scant expectation that the demand for physical financial premises will grow; rather it is to be expected that the current trend of decline will continue.
- 1.18 Service uses such as recruitment agencies and estate agents are also being affected by the 'electronic revolution'. Websites such as Purple Bricks and Right Move are run from offices with no physical presence on the High Street. It is also foreseeable that in the future estate agents will no longer need, nor wish to pay for, premises on the high street. The vast majority of their business can be undertaken electronically, with staff based either at home or in offices, a cheaper option than being in a retail premise on the High Street. Similarly it is to be expected that recruitment agencies will fall under the same pressures with much of their business being able to

be undertaken electronically coupled with off the High Street offices. Travel agents are already a much rarer use on the High Street than prior to the emergence of 'holiday' web sites and internet sites such as Expedia and Trivago.

- 1.19 Even the presence of turf accountants on the 'high street' are under threat. The rapid growth of online betting from electronic devices provides customers easy access to gambling. The continued existence of physical betting shops may be a function of the cash pay out slot machines which are licensed within those premises. With online gambling growing it is possible that cash slot machines may not be sufficiently popular, nor supported by government, to ensure the continued presence of betting shops on the High Street. A recent biannual study (May 2017) by the Gambling Commission shows a gradual reduction in premises. In addition there is a recent enhanced pressure from social campaigners to end the licensing of those machines. The result would be further pressure on betting shop companies to reduce their presence on the High Street as the gambling machines provide the overwhelming bulk of profit in many premises. It is noteworthy that the sector as a whole has undergone considerable consolidation such that independent operators are a rarity. Decisions on individual sites are made at a corporate level based on profit and dependant on the licensing regime.
- 1.20 Even quasi-public bodies have not been immune from changing consumer habits and technology. Over the past 30 years the number of post offices in the UK has almost halved from some 22,000 branches in the early 1980s, although with Government intervention the numbers have remained stable over recent years at a branch network of some 11,500 branches. The Government's paper '2010 to 2015 Government Policy: Postal Service Reform' notes that " the Government's strategic policy for the future of the Post Office network sees a network with a minimum of 11,500 post office branches being maintained with the company becoming more sustainable and viable'. However this level of coverage is somewhat of an aspiration and the impact of electronic technology and the need to run a commercial operation may place pressure on this aspiration. It is also noteworthy that uses such as 'job centres' on high streets have also declined, not least because of seeking cost reductions.

Trends in Leisure

- 1.21 Research completed by the Economic and Social Research Council assessing the diversity of uses within 1,100 centres and high streets during 2000 to 2006 (the years preceding the recession) provides a clear indication that during this time, when the economy was strong the leisure service industry was thriving. They found that Leisure spend is often considered a discretionary activity, and as such, consumer spending on leisure is greatly influenced by the economic climate and in particular average levels of disposable incomes. However, when assessing the average spend of UK households on leisure activities it becomes clear that even in light of an economic downturn consumers in the UK have shown a

growing desire to engage in leisure activities.

Figure 1 | ONS Weekly Household Spending Data on Leisure Items

Leisure Item / Activity	2006	2011	2014
Sports admissions, subscriptions, leisure class fees and equipment hire	£5.80	£6.70	£6.90
Cinema, theatre and museums etc.	£2.00	£2.40	£2.80
Admissions to clubs, dances, discos, bingo	£0.60	£0.60	£0.50
Gambling payments	£3.60	£2.70	£2.90
Restaurants and café meals	£12.80	£14.70	£16.60
Take away meals/food and other snack food	£8.10	£8.40	£8.80
Total	£32.90	£35.50	£38.50

Source: *'Family Spending, 2015 Edition'*, ONS, released on 8 December 2015
'Family Spending, 2012 Edition', ONS, released on 4 December 2012
'Family Spending, 2006 Edition', ONS, released on 28 January 2008

Figure 1 illustrates changes in UK average weekly household spending on leisure before the recession (2006), during the recession (2011) and after the recession (2014). ONS have adjusted all the figures to strip out the effects of inflation, so that true like-for-like comparisons can be made.

The most recent ONS data (for the 2014 year) identified that an average household would spend £38.50 on leisure activities, including £6.90 on 'sports admissions, subscriptions, leisure class fees and equipment hire' and £2.80 on going to 'cinemas, theatres and museums'⁶. This is out of a total of £531.30 spent on average per week by UK households. It is interesting to assess the data on average household spending from the ONS for the years both preceding (2006) and during the recession (2011). The ONS average household spending figures for 2011 identify that out of the average weekly spend of £483.60, households spent – £6.70 on 'sports admissions, subscriptions, leisure class fees and equipment hire', £2.40 on going to 'cinemas, theatres and museums'. What is more, ONS data from 2006 confirms that on average households spent £455.90 per week, and of that £5.80 was spent on 'sports admissions, subscriptions, leisure class fees and equipment hire' and £2.00 on the 'cinema, theatre and museums' etc. The

⁶ 'Consumers spending more on cars and leisure, says ONS', Brian Milligan, BBC Business News Online, 8 December 2015

significant increases in spending from 2006 to 2014 illustrate the popularity of spending on leisure activities. Leisure service units within UK town centres increased by 23% between 2000 and 2006⁷.

- 1.22 As evident when assessing consumer spending figures (recorded by the ONS) as at 2014 the leisure industry had strengthened since previous years (2006). Mintel calculated that this industry was estimated as worth £80 billion in 2015, approximately 15% higher than the 2010 total expected worth⁸
- 1.23 However the opportunities to introduce such attractions as cinemas, gyms and restaurants only exists where there is a shortage. For the towns studied, and in particular Stroud, there is already a cinema, and a relatively newly opened gym. In Dursley it is understood that the newly enhanced leisure centre 'The Pulse' has attracted a considerable clientele.

Summary

- 1.24 In a 2014 study undertaken by the University of Southampton entitled 'High Street Performance and Evolution' the authors (Professor Neil Wrigley and Dr Dionysia Lambriri) found that the speeding up of the trends that have been identified above was a function of the recession in the UK economy from 2007 to 2011, but warn that high streets will not revert to the pre-existing paradigm. The authors consider that at the heart of the evolution the High Street will continue the long term structural shift away from retail provision to non-electronic personal services.
- 1.25 The direction of travel on e-retailing in all its forms is mixed; in some retail categories the adoption of multichannel retailing may strengthen physical stores, i.e. click and collect. Other forms of e-retailing including those applicable to service uses, such as banking are and will continue to lead to a diminution of demand and overall reduction of physical floorspace.
- 1.26 There is a positive story to tell with the rise in local convenience stores and food outlets, giving evidence to the trend outlined above of a newly emerging food and cafe culture.
- 1.27 Research by PWC in the first half of 2016 reported in October 2016 noted: 'Comparison goods retailers are under the most pressure across Great Britain with fashion stores and men's and women's clothes shops all in the six hardest hit sectors'
- 1.28 Matthew Hopkinson, Director of The Local Data Company stated: 'The retreat of multiples from town centres continues, reflecting the wider changes happening in retail driven by the retrenchment of comparison

7 'British High Streets: from Crisis to Recovery? - A Comprehensive Review of the Evidence', Economic and Social Research Council and the University of Southampton, March 2015

8 'Leisure Review', Mintel, October 2015

goods retainers, especially in clothing and footwear....the spaces left by the traditional occupants of our High Streets are being increasingly filled by health card operators, food and beverage operators and the ongoing rise of the discounters’.

- 1.29 It would be tempting to conclude that a new paradigm has emerged to guide policy formulation and action, but this would be misleading. Some trends may be less long term than current consumer fashion, such as the emergence of the ‘pound shops’. A flight by consumers to a quality shopping experience with increased economic prosperity, could spell the end of this category’s expansion.
- 1.30 However the reduction in demand for floorspace for financial services is not likely to be reversed and will be likely to continue. The demand for convenience floorspace is also not likely to grow to any large extent. In particular, the growth in convenience goods expenditure is very low and the market is being affected by home delivery, click and collect and competition from ‘deep discounters’, such that more established fascias may be forced in some locations to reduce floorspace or even depart the market as Morrison’s ‘C Stores’ have done. The increase in major fascia small convenience stores has been made at the expense of the traditional corner shop⁹
- 1.31 The reduction in apparel and shoe sales floorspace, not linked to multi channel retailing is also, with the affects of electronic shopping, likely to continue. However the rise in demand for personal services, leisure and cafe culture floorspace is likely to continue.
- 1.32 High Streets will continue to be the focus of retail and community leisure activity, however, the challenges they face are potentially more challenging than they have faced since the commencement of the 20th Century. The ongoing pattern of change suggests that larger centres, which have a greater representation of national retailers, are likely to be well placed to weather the changes.
- 1.33 For smaller centres Town Centre strategies which support the continued evolution of the High Street are considered even more vital. This may involve less prescriptive policies towards centres reflecting rather than opposing some of the trends outlined above. Policies which support the emergence of better quality rather than a larger retail centre, maximising the benefits of the tourist trade and proscribing value to a retail unit in use, even for uses such as hot food takeaway in circumstances where they are already prevalent, is preferable to having a long term vacancy on the High Street.
- 1.34 It will be important that town centres are well positioned to be able to adapt to on-going changes in the retail and leisure sector.

9 Sunday Times 30/10/16

2 Policy Context and Evidence Base

Policy Context – the History

- 2.1 The challenges of the 1980s with the rise in out-of-town shopping comprising large food stores and retail parks produced a reaction from policy makers. Planning circulars and planning policy guidance were produced from the 1970s onwards where successive governments sought to modify negative effect on Town Centres.
- 2.2 An article in The Planner (August 2016) reporting on a National Retail Planning Forum seminar 'The Changing Face of Retailing', noted that the planning system is too inflexible and too slow to respond to changes in retail with the result that many UK High Streets face an uncertain future.
- 2.3 Cliff Guy, in a book entitled 'Planning for Retail Development' published in 2007, identifies four distinct phases of policy reaction to the emergence of threats to the established dominance of the High Street.
- 1960s/1970s- early days of retail regulation with initial resistance to new retail forms.
 - 1980s – a loosening up of regulation to a more market led approach allowing an expansion of new retail forms, mirroring the prevailing general political climate of the 'Thatcher era'
 - Late 1980s – the gradual tightening up of policy as effects on Town Centres become perceived by the public and policy makers.
 - 2000s - the continuation of Town Centres first policy which has redirected off-centre developments and focused attention back into Town Centres.
- 2.4 As can be noted by this very summarised policy chronology, policy has tended to switch emphasis between restriction on new forms of retail development, to limited encouragement of such development as the realisation of its positive economic effects are recognised and then returning to greater restriction as pressure groups, public sentiment and nostalgia takes hold. The policy reaction to the 'out of town revolution' was not one of a consistent evolution of policy but rather a reaction to economic circumstances pertaining at the time and political and social pressure. The chronology of policy change justifies the judgement set out above that the planning system is good at responding too late and not necessarily appropriately after events occur. It is generally a function of planning policy that it is very firmly based on compelling evidence, however, real world chronology often requires more immediate policy re-consideration but this tends to lag behind the real time events.

Current Policy

- 2.5 With the new decade of the 2010s Government sought to promote a more pro development approach to assist the economy out of recession and to simplify and reduce the quantity of planning guidance. The result was the publication

of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in March 2012, a much vaunted reduction of some 1,500 pages of advice to 49, though the NPPF was backed up by guidance available only electronically which is much lengthier. The NPPF document is currently under review.

- 2.6 Section 2 of the NPPF focuses on ‘Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres’, with the advice that policies in Development Plans produced by local authorities should be positive, promote competitive town centre environments and set out proposals for the management and growth of centres over the plan period. The NPPF recognises the social importance of Town Centres requires definition of primary and secondary shopping frontages and recognises the role of street markets. The document also encourages planning authorities to produce policies which meet the needs of all Town Centre uses, including leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential uses.
- 2.7 The NPPF marks a continuation of the immediately preceding advice of the sequential approach for main Town Centre uses, a Town Centre first approach. Retail, leisure and office proposals outside the Town Centre above a national size threshold require to be justified by an impact analysis on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in town centres.
- 2.8 It is noteworthy that the NPPF in the section that first deals with town centres (2.3) encourages the growth of centres. This encouragement of Town Centre growth in an electronic age of retailing and certainly the commencement of a new retail paradigm may be an example of previous attempts by policy to regulate by fighting yesterday’s battles. John Reynolds of the Oxford Institute of Retail Management and Said Business School said at the 2016 National Retail Planning Forum that under pressure from internet shopping:
- ‘spatial aspects of retail were changing rapidly’ requiring ‘a more creative, flexible and permissive planning system’ ‘The planning system is very good at saying no; it’s much less good at facilitating flexibility and growth’.¹⁰
- 2.9 The Stroud District Local Plan was adopted as part of the Development Plan on 19th November 2015 and the policies in the Plan are a major determinant of development management decisions. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 2.10 Material considerations can include inter alia emerging Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP), the NPPF, and National Planning Practice guidance.

10 The Planner, August 2016

- 2.11 The adopted Local Plan policy dealing with retail and Town Centres is Core Policy CP12. The policy sets out a retail hierarchy with Stroud being the sole Principal Town centre and Dursley, Stonehouse, Nailsworth and Wotton – under –Edge being designated ‘Other Town Centres’. Primary and secondary shopping frontages are defined on the proposals maps in the plan.
- 2.12 The stated purpose of the core policy is to seek to protect and bolster the role that the District’s Town Centres play in providing jobs and contributing to the local economy. The hierarchy was informed by district wide retail studies undertaken in 2010 and updated in 2013. These studies have been further updated as part of this report and the results will be set out in the next section.
- 2.13 The policy seeks to maintain the role of the identified centres to ensure they provide a range of facilities and services; retail proposals outside the centres are required to justify their use by submission of retail impact statements for proposals over 1000sq m for Stroud and for the remaining centres studied 500sq m (Policy E19 refers).
- 2.14 The Local Plan seeks to encourage all Town Centre appropriate uses to locate in the centres such as leisure, entertainment, cultural, tourist entertainment and mixed uses.

Evidence Base

- 2.15 As part of the evidence base for the Stroud District Local Plan 2015 an update to the 2010 Retail Study was produced by GVA dated July 2013. The study found that there was no real change in floorspace requirements between the 2010 study and the 2013 update. However, this conclusion was reached on the basis of the forecast special levels of trading at that time (mail order and e-retail). However, as discussed in section 1 of this report those assumptions have not been amended to account for the increased growth of e- retail.
- 2.16 The study recommended changes to secondary frontages in Stroud, and definition of a primary shopping area and Town Centre boundary changes to Stonehouse and Nailsworth. This recommendation is reflected in the adopted Local Plan.
- 2.17 The amount of vacant floorspace within the towns studied was not taken into account as a potential reservoir of available space. Since 2013 the likely demand for retail capacity in the towns being studied will have and continues to be affected by new retail commitments outside the District’s boundaries. For example, John Lewis will be opening in Cheltenham and there is also a further 100,000 sq ft site potentially available in the town. The expansion of the sub-regional shopping centre at Cribbs Causeway, now a called-in planning application by the Secretary of State, and the expansion of the retail offer at Gloucester Docks to include a Next Home and fashion stores will all have an effect.

- 2.18 The policies of the adopted Local Plan are bolstered by the emergence of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP), whose policies, when the plans have undergone a referendum, have the same force as policies of the adopted Local Plan.
- 2.19 Of the centres the subject of this study, Stroud has a 'made' Town Centre NDP, whilst Stonehouse and Dursley have draft plans and Wotton-under-Edge has recently published a community plan update.
- 2.20 The Stroud NDP sets out a vision for the centre to build upon policy and to form a base for the promotional statements seeking to deliver that vision up to 2035.
- 2.21 The vision for the town is that it should be "a welcoming, healthy, thriving place.... attractive and (making) the most of its heritage and its diverse cultural character; it should be accessible to all and have a vibrant feel; and it should be an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable place which reflects its bohemian and green personality".
- 2.22 The NDP in summary contains policy which seeks to encourage new business and residential floorspace to locate in the centre, particularly on upper floors and also seeks to encourage the retention of retail frontages within the primary shopping area. The NDP also identifies sites capable of redevelopment and enhancement. Within the promotional statements the NDP seeks to influence matters beyond the remit of the Town Council, such as car parking provision, town centre promotion and pedestrian priority.
- 2.23 The NDP at Appendix Three, within a SWOT analysis, notes the threat of falling market share by reason of the growth of other centres and the growth of e-retailing. The SWOT analysis in the NDP reproduced at Appendix 1 of this report demonstrates the concerns and potential of the current situation, but the potential remedies are perhaps curtailed by the document being a spatial plan with only spatial policies being promulgated.
- 2.24 The Stonehouse NDP is at an advanced stage currently being considered through an examination to be followed by a referendum and, subject to approval being made by SDC and acquiring the status of a constituent part of the Development Plan.
- 2.25 The draft NDP encourages retail and service premises within the defined primary retail frontage and notes that the town has a 'vibrant high street with high occupancy rates' but also acknowledges the competition threat from 'online retail offers'.
- 2.26 A Pre-Submission draft version of the Dursley NDP was published in November 2015. A major cornerstone of the draft document is the 'vision for Dursley' which looks ahead twenty years. The vision is that the town will serve 'as the prime market town serving the South of Stroud District'. The Plan seeks to retain Town Centre retail and support local tourism. The Plan

notes that whilst since 2007 when an Urban Design framework identified specific action, some of which has occurred, such as the new Sainsbury's store, there remains a continued aspiration to improve public realm as opportunities arise. The Plan envisions non-spatial opportunities to support the Town Centre including setting up a retailers' association and, in conjunction with SDC, to set up a Business Improvement District to raise funds to improve retailing in the Town. Whilst the mechanism for this initiative is clear there are no specific projects envisaged apart from an unspecified marketing campaign and events. The Plan promotes improvements to long and short stay car parking in the Town Centre, though the Plan recognises that this Policy requires action by other bodies.

- 2.27 The Wotton-under-Edge Community Plan was first published in 2005 and has been reviewed in 2016. The plan is not a document produced under the auspices of national planning legislation but it nevertheless is a relevant source for this present study.
- 2.28 The Plan notes that the world in 2005 looked very different to current circumstances having weathered a global financial crash and with the effects of Brexit still to emerge. The Plan notes that the High Street businesses have been diminished with the closing of banks and the onset of online shopping and home deliveries and finally the increasing attraction of other centres within the greater Bristol conurbation.
- 2.29 The Plan notes the strengths of the town, including the Town Regeneration Partnership and the high quality historic centre, but notes the persistent perceived parking problems in the centre. The Plan within its priorities identifies the need for a diverse selection of shops and a reduction in number of vacant premises and within an Appendix to the Plan sets out suggested action to achieve this aim. Those actions together with other potential initiatives will be further discussed later in this study.

3 Existing Character And Health Of The Town Centres

- 3.1 The third section of this report focuses on the retail health of the Town Centres that are being studied utilising time series data to identify apparent trends since 2005. Whilst they should be treated with caution the overall balance of the various categories of retail is compared to the United Kingdom percentages. In addition the commentary on each Town will also comprise more subjective analysis drawn from surveying the individual centres.

Stroud

- 3.2 The time series survey data of Stroud Town Centre and the other studied centres from 2005 to 2016 are set out in Appendix 2. That data utilises the areas as defined as the town centre at the time of the particular surveys and therefore strict comparison is not entirely accurate as the area has expanded, nevertheless, the figures demonstrate that the percentage of convenience outlets (4%) is far below the national average (13%). In fact,

the surveyed figures highlight a trend that that has occurred over time, with a significant fall in convenience food retail stores now being reduced to a single supermarket (Iceland), a baker and two small shop units. The town now has no butcher or dedicated greengrocer. However the town has a notable and well attended farmers market on Saturdays.

- 3.3 The overall level of vacancies is commensurate with the national percentage. The percentage of comparison units in the town is above the national average, though the number of national retailers or even regional retailers is small; the most notable being Argos, New Look, WHSmith, Halfords, Boots and Wilkinson.
- 3.4 The Town has greatly benefited by being the home, in various buildings, of an expanding and dynamic employer, Ecotricity, whose employees, circa 700, are a major component in supporting the Town Centre.
- 3.5 The Town is markedly different from the other towns studied, mirroring its position in the retail hierarchy in the Local Plan. The number of retail premises present is nearly three times larger than the next biggest town (Nailsworth). The Town acts as the 'capital' of the District, demonstrated by its position in the Retail Rankings 2014 (a UK wide ranking of Town Centres produced by Mintel) at number 503, compared to Nailsworth (1895) and Dursley (2146). Stroud is described in those rankings as a 'Major District' centre, with Nailsworth and Dursley both described as Local Centres. The remaining two towns, Wotton-under-Edge and Stonehouse, are not present in the rankings.
- 3.6 Appendix 3 comprises three tables derived from a current study by the Council's retail consultants focused on Stroud which consider the likely demand for comparison floorspace in Stroud up to 2031, including existing commitments, but with a reduced market share reflecting increased competition from other centres which have planned or implemented investment such as Cribbs Causeway, Gloucester and Cheltenham. The results show that the level of comparison floorspace capacity is likely to reduce considerably, with only the final period, 2026 to 2031, having some potential growth. However, capacity analysis for such a distant period as 2026 to 2031 must be treated with considerable caution, as such variables as e-retailing's growth trajectory or even the emergence of new forms of retailing and national trends are difficult to quantify with any accuracy for such a distant period. In addition, whilst it is possible to project the floorspace requirements to 2035, the end date for the ongoing review of the adopted local plan, the difficulties of producing long term predictions as set out above leads to any data produced from 2031 to 2035 being subject to very great uncertainty. It is a more productive exercise to review the likely need for floorspace in the early 2020s for later periods, when data will be more reliable.
- 3.7 It is likely that with the merger of Argos and Sainsbury's the existing Argos premises in Stroud will at some stage be replaced by a 'click and collect' facility within the existing out of centre Sainsbury's store. National retailers

such as Wilkinson (Wilko), New Look and Halfords may also refine their business model as a reaction to national trends and choose at the end of lease periods to withdraw from lower order centres such as Stroud. Wilkinsons have recently announced nationwide redundancies and WHSmith business model robustness has been questioned by some retail specialists such as David Milt in his report '2030; The Death of the High Street' referred to in Section Two of this study. In a recent study produced for Sheffield City Council and Rotherham MBC by GVA the authors note that 'it will be the smaller town centres that will lose out'. It is also noteworthy that the Town's main anchor retail development, Merrywalks, is currently for sale and the future for this site is far from clear.

- 3.8 As discussed in Section Two of this report, the threats of e-retailing and consumption of services electronically, such as banking, recruitment, house buying, gambling and travel all present a meaningful threat to Stroud and the demand and need for physical presence on the High Street premises.
- 3.9 Nevertheless, a more positive future view of convenience retailing in particular, is not unreasonable given the paucity of convenience outlets in Stroud and the food culture evidenced by the popularity of the Farmers Market and reinforced by national trends (as discussed in Section Two). However, whilst an identified gap in the market is evident, the fulfilment of it will depend upon local initiatives. The likely emergence on out of town sites of discount convenience retailers may restrict this opportunity somewhat.
- 3.10 A project entitled the Digital High Street Pilot, incorporating the #WDYT ('What Do You Think') campaign, sponsored by the Dept. of Communities and Local Government and Gfirst, the Local Enterprise Partnership, has recently reported. The aim of the project, focussed on Stroud as well as neighbouring Gloucestershire towns of Gloucester and Cheltenham, was to increase the use by retailers of social media to advertise their activities and retail offer and the results demonstrate that the town has moved from 270th in the UK Digital Influence Index in 2016 to 106th presently. Whilst the project provided no data on increased revenue for retailers within the town it has resulted in an increased awareness and use of social media within the town by retailers.
- 3.11 In summary, the existing Town Centre of Stroud is facing a future where there is likely to be a marked contraction of comparison floorspace, a reduction in the number of service units across several categories in reaction to national e-retailing trends and as a consequence freeing up of more retail space. These trends will be accompanied by an increase in vacancy rates. There are some opportunities to reduce this level of unused space by capitalising on the evident popularity of the market and current dearth of convenience floorspace in the centre. The role of the town as an entertainment and leisure destination has been slowly growing as Appendix 2 illustrates, though the overall percentage is under the national average but may nevertheless provide an indication of the future direction of travel. The use of the Town Centre for well attended and popular cultural events such as "The Fringe' demonstrate the potential of the Town Centre to host such

events. Finally the vitality of the broad retail function of Stroud is underpinned by the in town location of a major, expanding and technologically cutting edge employer, Ecotricity. This latter factor is both a blessing and a curse as the company could easily relocate, as a yet undetermined planning application, at an out of town site adjacent to Junction 13 of the M5 provides such an opportunity.

Nailsworth

- 3.12 Appendix Two sets out the composition of Nailsworth: it is the second biggest retail centre in the District, but is some three times smaller than Stroud in terms of overall retail outlet count. The survey material shows that since 2005 the overall level of retail units in the centre has remained stable and the retail categories which have achieved most growth are the leisure and miscellaneous categories. The overall balance of retailing, demonstrates a small deficiency against the national average in convenience goods outlets. However it is noteworthy that the centre has been able to retain butchers, a fishmonger, a baker and three supermarket premises to serve the local population's day to day needs. In surveying the Town it is noticeable that there is evidence that it has become a leisure and tourist destination as well as a functional centre. The establishment of premises such as 'Hobbs' evidence this leisure aspect as do other cafes and restaurants, such as 'Wild Garlic' and the abundance of gift shops and independent small fashion retailers. The town has no large-scale representation from comparison national retailers and this confirms that the town's function is as a local centre albeit with a considerable leisure and tourist content.
- 3.13 The centre has seen the reduction of service units including bank premises, but overall this has not to date adversely impacted on the level of vacancies, which at 5% are well below the national average of 11%. In summary there is scant evidence that e-retailing has had, to date, an adverse effect on the Town. There has been some effect on the town of electronic banking and other service delivery but this has not resulted in a material change to vacancy levels.

Dursley

- 3.14 Appendix 2 records that at present the overall number of convenience and comparison premises in the Town Centre is broadly similar throughout the survey period from 2005 to 2016. In terms of vacancies there was a small spike in the period of 2009 to 2013 which could perhaps be attributed to the recession in the UK economy but levels have now returned to pre-recession levels.
- 3.15 The overall balance of retailers in the town provides a solid convenience base to serve the Town's population. During the period recorded by Appendix 2 there has been a closure of two banks, but one of the premises has now been re-opened as a popular cafe. This is in line with a trend which shows a rise in leisure uses in the town. This trend is discernible in all

of the towns studied. There has also been a loss of other service outlets such as building societies.

Wotton-under-Edge

- 3.16 The time series data for Wotton–under-Edge records that in a similar fashion to Dursley the overall balance of retailing between comparison and convenience has remained fairly constant with eight convenience outlets, including two small supermarkets and some 35 comparison stores. In a similar manner to Dursley and Nailsworth there has been a small growth in leisure outlets and similarly to Dursley a fall in service uses. This is reflected in the withdrawal of banks. In the case of Wotton the closure of the Nat West branch left a very significant and visually important building vacant and in poor repair for some years though it is now being renovated to provide a family dwelling.
- 3.17 It is noteworthy that the level of vacancies in Wotton-under-Edge has grown from some 4% in 2005 to 10% in 2016. This overall level of vacancies is consistent with the other smaller towns studied, with the exception of Nailsworth, but the growth of vacancies is untypical for the towns studied.

Stonehouse

- 3.18 Stonehouse is the smallest of the Towns studied as measured by the total number of retail outlets, though the second largest Town in the District by population. The percentage of convenience units has remained broadly constant for the eleven year period studied, as has the proportion of comparison units. As with Dursley and Wotton, the overall representation of leisure uses has grown but there has been a more marked reduction in service uses constituting some 10% fall from 2005 until 2016.
- 3.19 The level of reduction of service uses reflects the effects of e-commerce with a fall in representation by banks and the closing of the post office and its relocation into a sub post office branch within a supermarket.
- 3.20 The overall levels of vacancies in Stonehouse are currently consistent with the towns studied within the range of 9 to 10% and consistent with the national level of vacancies at 11%, with the exception of Nailsworth, at half of this level.

Summary

- 3.21 There is a marked difference in both scale and function of Stroud to the remaining towns studied which reflects the Local Plan’s hierarchy of centres. The four towns studied excluding Stroud all have a mainly local importance, where the function is to serve the local population’s comparison and above all convenience needs. All have and will be in the future affected by the rise in e-banking and the provision of other services electronically.
- 3.22 Nailsworth, from the survey material, appears to be the most successful with

signs that it is developing a leisure and retail offer that is attractive to not only its natural catchment area but a wider tourist function with up market food retailers, restaurants and gift shops.

- 3.23 Wotton-under-Edge, Dursley and Stonehouse, from survey material, are all providing a local centre function to their catchments; all have suffered from the withdrawal of banking services but their future role is likely to continue, but with perhaps fewer retail outlets. The relative success of Nailsworth may provide some lessons for the other towns and the views of stakeholders will assist in forming judgements and policy responses.
- 3.24 Stroud perhaps offers the most challenges, with a small convenience offer, a comparison offer that may be under threat by the potential withdrawal of national fascias and the impact of e-retail and competing alternative higher order centres which have significant ongoing investment. The forecast impact is, as discussed above, a marked reduction in demand for comparison floorspace, such that there is likely to be a vacant and growing surplus in the next decade. The service sector is also likely to see a marked decline as national influences continue to have effects. These effects will increase vacancies and if not managed will reduce the overall attractiveness of the town markedly.
- 3.25 The success of the weekly Farmers Market and the marked growth of the leisure sector from some 45 outlets in 2005 to 61 in 2016 are worthy of further consideration, perhaps signposting a refining of the function of the town.

4 Results of Stakeholder Engagement

- 4.1 Following the submission of the first four sections of this report to the Environment Committee of Stroud District Council on 16th February 2016 the Committee resolved that stakeholder engagement should be undertaken to assist in producing potential policy responses to the challenges identified. These stakeholder meetings were undertaken in May and June 2017. The results of those meetings are set out below.

Stroud

- 4.2 A meeting was held on 22nd of May 2017 at Stroud Town Council offices and attended by Town Council members and other interested persons including members of the group responsible for the town's NDP.
- 4.3 The stakeholders considered that the demographic composition of the Town Centre's resident population was an issue, with a prevalence of single, unemployed people, whose spending power and positive active engagement in the town's life both during the daytime and the night time leisure economy was limited. A potential policy response identified by the stakeholders present was to promote increased residential accommodation within the centre, but such new residential floorspace should, it was suggested, be of higher quality and aimed at 'young professionals'. It was suggested that to

achieve this that consideration be given to relax the SDC policy requiring 30% affordable dwellings in new residential schemes.

- 4.4 The stakeholders considered that there was considerable potential for additional residential accommodation within the Town Centre but recognised that there were difficulties in persuading landlords to rent vacant flats, such as the nine vacant flats in Merrywalks. The stakeholders noted that there were some 450 persons resident in the town centre NDP area, but more could be done, particularly as the NDP was encouraging in this respect.
- 4.5 Turning to retail activity the group reported that the owner of a local independent comparison shop, 'Moonflower' had conducted a survey and found a surprising number of shops within the town trading without a website, some without even an email address. The stakeholders considered that support to increase retailers' online presence and expertise would be useful.
- 4.6 The restoration of the canal was considered important and the potential for increased tourism arising from this project was an opportunity but the perceived lack of visitor accommodation was highlighted as a difficulty for this initiative and more generally.
- 4.7 The stakeholders considered that the image of Stroud was as an 'arty' town rather than a 'foody' destination and the Town Council is commissioning an Arts Strategy to consider the future. The group noted that the amount of commercial filming in and around the town had been increasing. The success of such events as 'The Fringe' and the potential to build on this success is considerable. The future of the Subscription Rooms is currently under review but its importance to the Town as an entertainment venue was recognised.
- 4.8 The stakeholders considered that policy responses to the future of the town should also focus on women shoppers, noting that a town that works well for women and children, as well as families with provision for good child care and play provision was likely to be successful.
- 4.9 The stakeholders noted that in 1996 at the time of the Community Planning Conference the condition of the town centre was 'dire' but had improved immeasurably since that period. Reference was made to the study produced by Nicholas Falk of URBED in 2005 considering the night time economy in Stroud which could beneficially be updated.
- 4.10 The perennial matter of adequacy and cost of parking was raised. The success of the 'Free After Three' initiative was recognised by stakeholders and acknowledged, however, some stakeholders considered that pay and display was less effective in attracting people into the town than a pay on departure regime. The removal of on-street parking restrictions during evening hours and on Sundays was considered to be necessary to improve access to the town's facilities and services.

Nailsworth

- 4.11 The meeting with Nailsworth Stakeholders occurred on 12th June 2007 and was attended by Town Councillors, the Mayor and the Town Clerk.
- 4.12 Following a general introduction to the first four sections of the report a stakeholder stated perceptively that: "Places that survive will be places that offer an experience of being in a specific town".
- 4.13 This cogent insight presaged a considered debate on the future function of the town as envisioned by the stakeholders. There was recognition that Nailsworth had a very positive brand which could be marketed more effectively, an architecturally attractive town framed by attractive surrounding landscape; with a distinctive football team, now newly promoted to the Football League.
- 4.14 Whilst there was discussion concerning the adequacy of parking provision, which is free in the Town, there was recognition that if the physical environment of the town was attractive and welcoming then parking, whilst important, was not a matter that should restrict the continuing success of the town.
- 4.15 However, there was discussion that the town was, by reason of footway conditions, not particularly disabled friendly. There was also concern expressed about recent GCC highway and associated 'improvements' in the town, where the stakeholders considered that the funds used could have been better spent if their Council had either been meaningfully consulted or had some control over the budget. There was also a belief that the well-used cycle track leading into the town should have remedial work to the surface and appropriate signing as the track approached the town.
- 4.16 The stakeholders felt that town centres should have a long-term plan which included specific design guidance. The future role of SDC in the promotion of the town was discussed and it was generally considered that the role of SDC and the Town Council should be as facilitators and not the 'doers'.
- 4.17 There was discussion about successful events that had now been abandoned, 'Nailstock' was recognised as being a good event but the group considered that a festival calendar should be drawn up and publicised.

Dursley

- 4.18 Representatives of Dursley Town Council met with the report author on 14th June 2017 to discuss and comment upon the initial four sections of this report. As part of this stakeholder meeting the representatives from the Town Council drew attention to a published 2014 study produced by 'Hidden Britain' entitled 'Tourism Development in Dursley'. The document notes that the town is attractive with a historic Market House and that the 'quality of the streetscape is very good'. The study notes that 'The town is extremely well positioned to attract walkers on the Cotswold Way', a matter that was picked

up by the stakeholders and is reported later in this section.

- 4.19 The study recognises that there is little information targeted at visitors in terms of signage or advice and considers that there is scope to sign and upgrade the library as a visitor information point in the absence of a tourism information centre. The infrastructure of the town would be strengthened by both publicity for tourist accommodation and additional accommodation.
- 4.20 Many of the themes in the Hidden Britain document were discussed at the stakeholder meeting, with a recognition that there was a continued need for additional tourist accommodation, and moreover the need for the emergence of a comprehensive internet presence which allowed, via hyperlinks, visitors to access accommodation, dining and event choices and information. The stakeholders noted that there was a relatively newly formed steering group 'The Cotswold Edge and Severn Vale Tourism Network'. However web content depended on volunteer input and whilst was an example of a local initiative, it had yet to make a significant impact.
- 4.21 The stakeholders noted that the Town had a business group Dursley Business Inclusive which is a member of the Association of Gloucester Business Groups along with Stroud and Wotton-under-Edge Chambers of Trade and Commerce and a newly formed networking group 'Join the Dots' aimed at promoting hidden opportunities to support business.
- 4.22 The importance of the Cotswold Way to the Town was stressed by stakeholders and making Dursley a recognised waypoint for refreshment and accommodation was seen as a future priority of the Town together with maintaining its function as a destination for its resident population.
- 4.23 The stakeholders considered that additional emphasis could be put into the utilisation of the historic market building and curtilage as a market, noting that it was not as successful as the Stroud Farmers Market.
- 4.24 The 'eating out' and leisure offer in Dursley was considered to be mixed with some establishments reflecting a past era being unattractive to some age groups.
- 4.25 In terms of parking, the stakeholders reported that generally there was sufficient supply but a new planning application for a long stay car park on the former Bailey Newspapers Group site on Long Street would, if approved, allow the car parks nearest the centre to function as short stay parking.
- 4.26 The stakeholders considered that the Town, and indeed other Towns, would benefit from a permissive planning regime which encouraged small scale offices to be easily established as a bridge between home working and more substantial premises with longer more formalised leases.
- 4.27 The stakeholders were firmly in favour of encouraging residential units to be established, either new build or conversions from other uses close to the Town centre.

Wotton-under-Edge

- 4.28 The meeting with stakeholders in Wotton took place on 25th May 2017 at the Town's Civic centre. The meeting was attended by members of the Town Council as well as members of the Chamber of Trade and Commerce.
- 4.29 Following the meeting, a written submission was received from a long standing local trader recounting, in some detail, the history of his particular premises and drawing attention to the needs of his and other businesses in the Town to have improved parking provision. The issue of parking provision in the Town was also a matter that some stakeholders felt deeply about. The Wotton Community Plan update 2016 in its review of the Town notes: 'Our high street businesses have been hit by the recession, by structural changes in banking, by the growth in online shopping and home deliveries, by the acute lack of parking for cars and tourist coaches, by the lack of a supermarket with a trolley to car service and by the building of rival stores in Chipping Sodbury, Yate, Dursley, Thornbury, Tetbury and Nailsworth , as well as the growth of Cribbs Causeway'.
- 4.30 The parking issue was of particular current interest to some stakeholders as a planning application to increase parking in the Town had recently been withdrawn and prior to its withdrawal had engendered considerable debate and dissension in the Town.
- 4.31 The stakeholder group considered that aside from the role of the Town Centre serving the resident population the future of the Town lay in supporting tourism. The stakeholders understood the value of the assets of the Town, the Cotswold Way, the history of the Town and environs, the visually attractive High Street, the town cinema and swimming pool. However there was a view expressed that the town's location at the southern edge of Stroud District Council's area meant that it looked to the South and was perceived as such by the local population, to the greater Bristol area rather than the town being the gateway to the Cotswolds.
- 4.32 The tourist information centre was reported as being well used with a steady demand for printed information. The festivals that have been run in the town have been well supported and the Town Council's web site has been refreshed.
- 4.33 Stakeholders felt that whilst individual initiatives had been successful there was a need for a co-ordinated approach to market the Town more widely, to focus a wider audience on its undoubted assets as a base to explore the southern Cotswolds Scarp area, its history, and of course the Cotswold Way which was an attraction of both national and international importance. The stakeholders considered that co-operation with marketing with the other Towns in Stroud District Councils area located on the Cotswold Way would be important.
- 4.34 Turning to the retail sector, the stakeholders considered that the Town was fortunate to have retained a good range of shops that served the

population's day-to-day needs. However, as highlighted in the Community Plan Update, competition was fierce with higher order centres and e-retailing which had left some stakeholders nervous of the town's ability to retain a retail base sufficient to serve day to day needs, particularly as some stakeholders considered that the town was developing into a dormitory town with physical retail activity being undertaken on the journey to and from work. As noted in the previous section, the growth in retail vacancy rates in the town had been the highest of any of the towns studied, from 4% to 10%, potentially indicating that the concerns of the stakeholders are well-founded.

- 4.35 The stakeholders understood that individual retailers in the town who had invested in e-retailing had benefitted from that investment and drew attention to the availability of training to set up sites. However, it was noted that individual retailers had not always been receptive to this form of trading and there was resistance to engagement.
- 4.36 The stakeholders noted that the top of the High Street is now devoid of retail premises with the closure of the bakery and Nat West Bank, and suggested that there could be a case for redefining the core shopping area. Generally, the return to residential use of the former Nat West Bank was welcomed as this very significant building was once again in use. However, stakeholders were nervous of the precedent that this change of use could set.
- 4.37 The stakeholders also identified that they had an active and large Chamber of Trade and Commerce, the biggest in the District but the organisation had been reducing in membership and had recently been left leaderless with the President stepping down. There was concern that the Chamber was finding it difficult to recruit and retain local retailers, as many retailers are not resident in the town.

Stonehouse

- 4.38 The meeting with the stakeholders at Stonehouse took place on 10th April 2017 at Stonehouse Town Council offices. Prior to the meeting the clerk to the Council sent a SWOT analysis carried out by the Council together with a list of identified needs as follows:
- There is a need for a core centre to the parish;
 - There is a need for local shops which are accessible to all;
 - There is a need for better community liaison through a Chamber of Commerce and/or Town Centre Manager, business advice (particularly for failing businesses) and grants from District/County Council for shop front improvements, events etc;
 - There is a need for a review of car park charges and/or the use of the revenue from those charges.

The SWOT analysis produced by Stonehouse Town Council is reproduced below:

Stonehouse	
<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Opportunities</u>
Central car park	Free car park might encourage trade
Gateway to Stroud from M5	Promotion from M5 entry points
Central rail station	Refreshment/toilet facilities
Small property units	Small business/office space/pop-up shops
Road frontage	Exploit for outdoor eating
Town greens	Food markets
Town events	Wider promotion
Neighbourhood shopping for travel restricted families	Health shops or artisan retailers
Some attractive buildings	Discourage virtual library/cashpoints
Links to countryside	Encourage residential redevelopment
	Exploit Cotswold Way/cycle paths
	Employment area nearby
<u>Weaknesses</u>	<u>Threats</u>
Social housing and low incomes	Ship Inn site bland development
Bypassed by A419	Ratrun to M5
Lack of cultural identity	Lack of S106/CIL funding
Unattractive shop fronts	Empty units increase desolation
No tourism offer	Disconnection from canalside
No Chamber of Commerce	Lack of investment in joint efforts: In Bloom
Planning restrictions	Large out-of-town retailers
Fast food outlets. Pubs are not gastro pubs	Retail parks taking employment space

- 4.39 The stakeholders confirmed that they generally agreed that the initial four sections of the report that was sent to them reinforced their view that change was inevitable.
- 4.40 The group considered that the Town Centre was important in two respects, firstly to provide a facility for local people to access services and undertake retail activity, but secondly a social function, as a leisure destination.
- 4.41 The stakeholders expressed concern that a historically active Chamber of Commerce and Trade was now not active. The main resident-led group that was active was Rotary but their efforts spread beyond a concentration on Stonehouse.
- 4.42 The stakeholders felt that a music event would be well supported but funding was an issue. The stakeholders were keen to have a market in the town but felt that they could not compete with Stroud's Saturday market. The stakeholders also noted that the existing public houses were not particularly inviting to a broad range of people, particularly families.

- 4.43 The group also considered that the existing signage both for motorists and cyclists/pedestrians was inadequate and improvement would exploit the town's relationship to the canal and the Cotswold Way.
- 4.44 Parking in the Town Centre was a matter that the group held passionate views about. The thrust of their argument was that since the demise of a travel company, Travelscope, with a considerable consequential reduction in demand for car park spaces, the supply of spaces in the SDC car park now exceeded demand. As parking fees were imposed to regulate parking in a situation of demand exceeding supply there was a strong case that parking fees should be dispensed with.
- 4.45 There was some discussion concerning the attitude to applications within the Town Centre for change of use of former retail premises to residential. In summary, the re-use of vacant retail premises was seen as a less than optimal outcome with the stakeholders preferring to see the retention of shop units.
- 4.46 The stakeholders expressed concern that the major impact on Stonehouse that was going to occur with the development of the major urban extension known as Land West of Stonehouse was not going to provide any community benefit to the Council by reason of its being excluded by the CIL charging schedule and not benefitting from the terms of the Section 106 agreement. There was also strong support voiced by stakeholders to re-opening of the Bristol Road station.
- 4.47 The stakeholders considered that SDC should consider employing an officer to act as a catalyst to positive action in Town Centres across the District with a source of funds to be applied to town centres to reduce business rates, provide shopfront grants and support events, stalls and advertising.

5 Consideration of Stakeholders' Responses and Potential Areas for Policy Responses

- 5.1 In the introduction to this report it was stated that following the examination of national trends, a review of current national, local and neighbourhood Town Centre Policy, a review of current data on each town and stakeholder engagement that a Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis (SWOT) for each Town would be undertaken prior to considering potential policy responses.
- 5.2 It is recognised that two such SWOTs exist already, one for Stroud and the other for Stonehouse. The latter is set out in the text of the previous section and is the work of the Town Council whilst the former is set out in Appendix 1 being an extract from the Stroud Town Centre Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.3 Given the individual nature of each of the settlements the likely policy responses will most likely be successful if they are generally specific to each town and address the weaknesses and opportunities of each settlement.

Research¹¹ and commentary has identified that Town Centres need to build on their existing strengths, their history, heritage and natural surroundings. Published plans are by definition planning documents which look to spatial policy, whereas the protection/mitigation and invigoration of a town from the potential threats that have been identified in this report will need a broader based response, utilising potentially fiscal and leadership stimuli.

Stroud

- 5.4 The SWOT for Stroud accurately reflects the evidence of the current state of the Town gained from the analysis of data and the stakeholder engagement. The SWOT is taken from the Town Centre NDP and is set out at Appendix 1 however the analysis does omit several matters:
- The lack of a significant permanent 'convenience' offer within the Town Centre;
 - The concerns of stakeholders relating to the size and quality of residential accommodation within the Town centre.
 - The analysis also fails to consider the potential threat of Ecotricity moving out from their town centre base.
- 5.5 Turning first to physical land use policies, the Town Centre NDP in terms of spatial policy addresses the issues raised in the SWOT and provides both policies to protect the town from ill-thought-out development and physical projects that have been chosen to enhance the Town. Those positive projects are an ambitious list, even given that they are divided into three time categories: short 5 years, medium 10 years and long, 20 years, relying on CIL receipts and/or S106 funds with the uncertainties within the UK economy with Brexit and the vagaries of change to CIL arrangements. Nevertheless, these are physical projects which have been carefully considered in the light of a recognised plan making process and supported by the population.
- 5.6 The missing element that is not considered in the physical plan, although alluded to, is the role of the town in the future. The Town will in the future continue to function as the major centre for the District, but the challenges of e-retail and the attraction of higher order centres present a threat and an opportunity. The NDP identifies the cultural importance of the town providing a home for an established nationally and internationally recognised creative community. However, there is a need to consider a conscious brand focus for the town and to produce an action orientated marketing plan to further that focus.
- 5.7 It is suggested by the stakeholders, with considerable justification, that the appropriate focus should be the arts. That 'brand' Stroud should be marketed with that focus on the arts linked to the fact that it is an attractive Cotswold town on the Cotswold Way, matters often underplayed or even ignored in the perception of the settlement. The current state of marketing of the town relies on the Cotswold Tourism Partnership and other

¹¹ 21st Century High Street British Retail Consortium 2009.

Cotswold-wide sites together with the District Council, and the national trails website featuring the Cotswold Way. All those bodies focus on a wider area than the Town.

- 5.8 As a consequence, it is recommended that the Town Council take the lead in co-ordinating and enhancing the marketing effort for the town.
- 5.9 The priorities for that role are to consider the existing coverage and also enhancing the existing Town Council website to include additional information and relevant hyperlinks focusing on the role of the town as a centre for the creative arts and crafts, advertising events, and providing links to tourist accommodation, and dining opportunities.
- 5.10 Turning to the Town's retail function the introduction of retailers to the advantages of e-retailing, linking to social media and assistance with setting up websites will help to protect the health of the town's retail function. This is an area where as there is a commonality of requirement between all five Towns, to a greater or lesser extent, the action should be facilitated by SDC, with assistance from each of the Town Councils and where active the individual Chambers of Commerce and Trade.
- 5.11 The car parking issues and charging regimes are recommended to be addressed for all the settlements that raised the issue by SDC as part of an overall review of District wide parking strategy which is understood to be being considered. The need identified in Stroud to better serve a 'night time' economy by varying or eliminating existing Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) should be taken up by SDC as a facilitator with the County Highway Authority to define and produce a plan to deliver this change together with improvements to footways for pedestrians.
- 5.12 The missing elements of the SWOT analysis within the NDP identified above that were either raised by stakeholders or identified during the compilation of this report are generally not matters where the levers of influence rest with any public body. However, a successful prosperous town will set a context for increasing activity and potentially new convenience outlets to serve both the resident population but also the increased tourist footfall. Similarly, a successful town will make the desire for a dominant employer to move out less likely and even if that were to occur the town will be more resilient to weather the impact. A successful town centre will attract new residential development because there will be demand to live there.
- 5.13 As the District-wide adopted Local Plan is currently being revised, it is recommended that with the likely demand for retail floorspace declining in the next plan period for all the five settlements studied that the review considers amending the defined primary shopping frontage and the Town Centre's boundaries.

Nailsworth

- 5.14 There is an opportunity to improve the Town Square area with refurbishment or redevelopment of retail units, enhancing the public realm and providing residential units above the ground floor retail outlets.
- 5.15 The lack of maintenance of the surface of the cycleway from Stroud along the valley was commented upon, as was the lack of signage on the path when entering the Town. It is recommended that these matters are addressed by the County Council as Highway Authority and the Town Council in conjunction with the Highway Authority. Similarly the concern expressed by stakeholders on the condition of footways within the Town is a matter for the County Council. The overall concerns on the physical condition and state of maintenance of highway infrastructure together with the complaint that the allocation of resources by the Highway Authority are made without recourse to the Town Council could be resolved by regular scheduled meetings with the Highway authority to discuss and consult on their ongoing maintenance programme.

Dursley

- 5.16 Following the stakeholder engagement reported at section five of this document the SWOT analysis is set out below:

Dursley	
<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weaknesses</u>
Attractive built environment	Little tourist information either physical or electronic
Attractive landscape setting for Town	Signage
On route of Cotswold Way	Long stay car parking
Good range of convenience offer	Lack of tourist accommodation
	Coherent marketing of Town
<u>Opportunities</u>	<u>Threats</u>
Focus on tourism	Brexit
Planning Application submitted for long stay car park	Withdrawal of further service units
Newly launched tourism group	Existing market not sufficiently regular
Demand for small B1 offices on very short tenancies	Economic downturn
Market facilities at historic market hall	e-retailing
Build on nascent cafe and food culture	
Support for new residential adjoining and in town	

- 5.17 Dursley Town Council has in recent times made efforts to join with other communities to support a new marketing initiative. However, in common with all the towns studied there is an electronic marketing deficit. It is recommended that SDC involve itself in assisting larger towns such as Dursley to link their websites with the wider SDC tourism network and also

the larger marketing bodies covering the Cotswolds and the Cotswold Way.

- 5.18 The signposting of car parks in the Town to enable motorists to differentiate between long and short stay car parks is recommended as well as specific signage for visitors arriving via the Cotswold Way to inform walkers of the Town's attractions.
- 5.19 The historic and attractive market hall as a focal point of the town is underused. The use of the space for markets that would attract specific trips by residents and tourists is sporadic. A programme of events for that space planned well in advance and widely disseminated would be very worthwhile and link in with the recommendation to review and improve the electronic marketing of the Town.
- 5.20 The present tourist information is handled by the current library staff on a volunteer basis giving information to visitors; the service relies on the good will of library staff and is not advertised. It is recommended that this service is formalised with as noted above in town signage directing visitors to the library on the basis that the current position can be formalised.
- 5.21 The changes to the world of work highlighted by the stakeholders require careful consideration. Many small businesses start out by being based at home, however may then, for various reasons, not least the availability of space in modern homes, require an office. The problem is that office availability in small towns is limited and normally what is available is too large for start-ups and require considerable commitment in terms of lease length. Given that the SDC Local Plan is currently under review and that there is likely to be further loss of service use floorspace in all the town centres studied, there is an opportunity to consider whether non retail use policies in the current plan restricting alternative uses to those within the A use class should be amended to allow at ground floor within town centres small scale offices offering flexible rental terms and space.

Wotton-Under Edge

Wotton-under-Edge	
<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weaknesses</u>
On the Cotswold Way	Percentage rate of growth of retail vacancies
Very attractive town	Likely continued loss of service users
Town set in attractive landscaped setting	'A hidden gem
Considerable historic interest	Chamber of Trade large but ineffective
Good range of independent traders	Advantages of e-retailing not widespread
Community website	
Tourism information premises	
Community assets: cinema and swimming pool	
<u>Opportunities</u>	<u>Threats</u>
Tourism role in Town	Brexit/Economic slowdown

'Big Up' Town	e-retailing
	Role of Town perceived as commuter town
	Loss of trade by reason of parking

5.22 The stakeholders recognised that Wotton has a considerably advantageous setting and a history that provides heritage assets which reflect that history back to the 12th Century. In addition the town has a manned tourist information centre, is on the route of the Cotswold Way and has both an active community web site and large Chamber of Trade. However the Town has in the past ten years experienced the highest growth rate of vacant retail premises, from some 4% to 10%. Whilst this latter figure mirrors the national average the growth rate of vacancies is a matter of concern.

5.23 The role of Wotton is both perceived to be within the Town Council and in reality a commuter town. The retail offer is varied but parking supply and the growth of other centres have taken their toll.

5.24 Given this situation as identified by the stakeholders the town badly needs exposure to a wider tourism focused market. The recommendation that a review of web sites and the linkages between them in marketing the area has been a consistent theme for all the towns and also applies to Wotton. SDC is undertaking a parking review and the adopted Local Plan is being reviewed with an expectation that potential remedies to the current situation will be found.

5.25 The advantages of e-retailing for individual traders is clear and within Wotton there are good example in kitchenware and country pursuits stores who flourish in spite of having a restricted population catchment. The Town Council should seek to identify traders without effective email/website or e-selling platforms so that the advantages can be demonstrated and advice given. The Chamber of Trade could provide assistance with this initiative.

Stonehouse

5.26 The SWOT analysis for Stonehouse was presented by the Stakeholders at the previously reported meeting and is set out in the previous section, however it is reproduced below to aid the reader:

Stonehouse	
Strengths	Opportunities
Central car park	Free car park might encourage trade
Gateway to Stroud from M5	Promotion from M5 entry points
Central rail station	Refreshment/toilet facilities
Small property units	Small business/office space/pop-up shops

Road frontage	Exploit for outdoor eating
Town greens	Food markets
Town events	Wider promotion
Neighbourhood shopping for travel restricted families	Health shops or artisan retailers
Some attractive buildings	Discourage virtual library/cashpoints
Links to countryside	Encourage residential redevelopment
	Exploit Cotswold Way/cycle paths
	Employment area
<u>Weaknesses</u>	<u>Threats</u>
Social housing and low incomes	Ship Inn site bland development
Bypassed by A419	Ratrun to M5
Lack of cultural identity	Lack of S106/CIL funding
Unattractive shop fronts	Empty units increase desolation
No tourism offer	Disconnection from canalside
No Chamber of Commerce	Lack of investment in joint efforts: In Bloom
Planning restrictions	Large out-of-town retailers
Fast food outlets. Pubs are not gastro pubs	Retail parks taking employment space

- 5.27 The SWOT analysis demonstrates that some of the concerns applicable to Stonehouse are capable of being addressed as part of the recommendations that are relevant to each of the settlements.
- 5.28 In particular the parking study that is being initiated by SDC will pick up the perceived parking issue in Stonehouse that the supply of parking exceeds demand and therefore the justification for parking fees in the town will be reviewed.
- 5.29 Similarly, the tourism issue, in part, will be addressed by reviewing the existing web based coverage and introducing hyperlinks to aid visitors.
- 5.30 The perceived 'isolation' of Stonehouse from the A419 and in particular the canal can be addressed by undertaking discussions with the County Council Highway Authority to consider upgraded signage and in due course the Canal Trust who will be recipients of monies from the Section 106 from Land West of Stonehouse to be spent on towpath upgrade which could include signage.
- 5.31 The lack of a Chamber of Trade is a weakness in the Town, as 'in town' activities need an active community. This matter is one which is in the hands of the Town Council to assume a leadership role to try and engender community activism including resurrecting the Chamber of Trade.
- 5.32 The recent losses of banks have been a blow to the town but it is to be expected that there will be further losses of service uses. The current level of retail vacancies is not inconsistent with national averages; however the

Town needs to actively pursue a role over and above one to service its' catchment population. The Town, whilst being set in an attractive setting, is at a disadvantage to the other settlements as the quality of the setting is less advantageous. Its location 'just off the Motorway' probably offers the best opportunity to maintain its health. Enhanced highway signage and marketing will have a beneficial effect.

5.33 The impact of relatively nearby retail stores is a matter concerning to the stakeholders, however perversely as the town has areas of social housing and low incomes these factors have assisted the town in keeping local shopping not requiring the use of private cars.

5.34 The stakeholders' identified need for small office spaces are similar to those heard by the stakeholders in Dursley and can be dealt with by consideration of revised policy in the review of the Local Plan currently being undertaken.

Summary of Potential Policy Responses

5.35 This final section of the report will be divided between recommended policy responses which are applicable to all the Towns studied and individual policies applying to specific towns.

5.36 The recommended policy responses will be divided into land use recommendations and non spatial potential actions.

5.37 The District-wide recommendations for potential spatial policy examination are as follows;

- Review of Town Centre boundaries, having regard to the likely effect of at least static or even falling net demand for retail floorspace, taking into account reduction of some categories of service uses.
- Review of primary shopping frontage's designated areas, having regard to changes that have occurred and may occur during the next ten years.
- Consideration of forming planning policy that will be permissive to the encouragement of small Town Centre office uses which provide individual small work spaces with flexible rental arrangements.
- Permissive policy to encourage the regeneration/redevelopment of sites identified in NDPs and other identified opportunities in each of the Towns.

5.38 In terms of non spatial policy it is a common theme for all the Towns studied that there is a noticeable deficit in terms of marketing of the individual towns and their cultural and leisure events and the lack of hyperlinks between regional websites, such as Cotswold tourism, and the Cotswold Way, SDC's own tourism site and the websites of the various towns. It is therefore recommended that SDC act as a facilitator to review with individual Town Councils their web sites content and to produce recommendations for both improvements to individual websites and the

creation of hyperlinks.

5.39 The ongoing review of SDC parking policy in the Towns studied should be produced as soon as possible having regard to levels of demand and the advantages and disadvantages of rationing of spaces by the imposition of charges.

5.40 It is recognised that the individual Chambers of Trade and Commerce can with Town Councils provide a leadership role in their respective communities. However, the Chambers of Trade in the towns studied are not necessarily in a healthy state. In order to re-invigorate and encourage Chambers of Trade it is recommended that SDC acting as a facilitator of economic growth seek to engage with all the Chambers and the Town Councils with the aim of assisting the Chambers to co-operate with their respective Town Council'

5.41 The lack of awareness by individual traders to the advantages of having a website capable of selling on line and the potential for social media is widespread in the towns studied. It is recommended that SDC acting as a facilitator assisted by the Town Councils and Chambers of Trade undertakes a project to educate and assist individual traders to join the 'electronic age'.

5.42 In terms of Town specific policy:

5.43 **Stroud**

- SDC to approach the Highway Authority to remove TROs within the town to boost the night time economy.
- SDC and the Town Council to discuss with the Highway Authority the provision of signage to assist motorists in locating car parks.
- SDC to review the areas in the Local Plan designated for primary and secondary frontages.
- SDC to support the re-invigoration of Merrywalks.
- SDC to support, allied to local groups including the Town Council, the advancement of the role of the arts and leisure in the Town Centre.
- SDC to support the physical improvements of the Town Centre as detailed in the NDP.

5.44 **Nailsworth**

- The Town Council to be encouraged by SDC to draw up a long term plan for the town centre;
- SDC acting as a facilitator to host a meeting with the Town Council and the Highway Authority with the aim of setting up a forum for regular contact between the Town council and GCC so that local consultation on spending plans by GCC can be consulted on with the Town Council.
- SDC to consider promoting improvement to the Market Street area including redevelopment of the existing retail area to produce an improved townscape with the potential to provide enhanced public

spaces and residential development over shops.

5.45 **Dursley**

- SDC, the County Council and the Town Council to initiate a project to enhance the signage in the town for pedestrians and cyclists.
- SDC to engage with GCC Highways and Town Council to improve highway signage for motorists seeking parking.

5.46 **Wotton-under-Edge**

- SDC to initiate a meeting with the Town Council and other interested parties ahead of the publication of the District wide review of parking to consider potential solutions to the particular issues in the town.

5.47 **Stonehouse**

- SDC to initiate discussions in consultation with the Town Council with GCC to seek 'brown' tourist signs to be erected on the A419 to indicate the availability of the Town's services to motorists on that road.
- SDC to initiate discussion with Highways England to amend signage at Junction 13 to introduce 'brown signs' advertising directions to Stonehouse's attractions.

Appendix 1: Stroud

Source Stroud Town Centre NDP 2016

Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats (SWOT) analysis

Strengths		Opportunities	
<p>Markets.</p> <p>Independent shops.</p> <p>Canalside improvements.</p> <p>Pedestrianised areas.</p> <p>Parks.</p> <p>Cultural street life and festivals.</p> <p>Countryside setting.</p> <p>Cafés.</p> <p>Historic features.</p> <p>Subscription Rooms.</p> <p>Community expertise, experience, energy and enthusiasm.</p>		<p>Ongoing investment in the canal regeneration.</p> <p>Significant amount of undeveloped and underused land close to the town centre.</p> <p>Successful Farmers' Market bringing shoppers into the town centre.</p> <p>Popular festivals and cultural activities bringing people into the town centre.</p> <p>Growth of Ecotricity in the town centre.</p> <p>Redevelopment of Market Tavern.</p> <p>Improved rail links.</p> <p>Stroud defined as 'Principal Town Centre' in Local Plan.</p>	
Weaknesses		Threats	
<p>Quality of the shopping facilities.</p> <p>Appearance of the streets.</p> <p>Appearance of key buildings such as Merrywalks multi-storey car park and the cinema.</p> <p>Traffic congestion.</p> <p>Parking charges.</p> <p>Anti social behaviour.</p> <p>Pedestrian/vehicle conflict.</p> <p>Condition of roads and pavements.</p> <p>Empty shops.</p> <p>Barriers to ease of movement between canal and town centre.</p> <p>Poor 'legibility' into and around the town centre.</p> <p>Lack of effective delivery on plans and projects.</p>		<p>Out of centre retail developments take shoppers and investment away from town centre.</p> <p>Competition from other centres such Gloucester, Cheltenham and Cirencester.</p> <p>Growth of internet and phone shopping.</p> <p>Congestion discourages people from coming to the town centre to shop, enjoy cultural and leisure activities.</p> <p>Historic character continues to deteriorate.</p> <p>Lack of connectivity between canal and town centre undermines regeneration.</p>	

Appendix 2

Summary Time Series Data

Stroud

	<i>Convenience</i>		<i>Comparison</i>		<i>Service</i>		<i>Leisure</i>		<i>Miscellaneous</i>		<i>Vacant</i>		<i>Total Number</i>
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	
20-Oct-05	11	4	107	38	67	24	45	16	35	12	20	7	285
20-Oct-06	11	4	109	38	68	23	47	16	32	11	23	8	290
20-Oct-09	16	5	101	35	68	23	44	15	31	11	32	11	292
09-Nov-12	16	5	108	34	71	22	56	18	37	12	29	9	317
25-Jul-13	15	5	108	34	70	22	56	18	36	11	32	10	317
16-Jul-14	13	4	110	35	72	23	58	18	38	12	27	8	318
07-Dec-16	12	4	111	35	69	22	61	19	36	11	31	10	320
GB Jan 17		13		29		27		25		6			
GB Jan 17 Vacancy Rate												11	

Notes:

Surveys from 2012 to 2016 inclusive include all town centre commercial properties, some of which were excluded from earlier reports

GB data from Local Data Company. All currently live businesses in the area, counts split by classification

Convenience: Bakers. Butchers & Fishmongers. Confectionery, Tobacco, Newsagents. Groceries, Supermarkets & Food Shops. Off Licences. Petrol Filling Stations.

Comparison: Books, Arts & Crafts, Stationery, Printers. Car & Motorbike Showrooms. Charity & Secondhand Shops. Chemists, Toiletries & Health. Department Stores & Mail Order. Discount & Surplus Stores. DIY, Hardware, Builder's Merchants & Household Goods. Electrical Goods & Home Entertainment. Fashion & General Clothing. Florists & Garden. Footwear. Furniture, Carpets, Textiles, Bathrooms & Kitchens. Gifts, China & Leather Goods. Jewellers, Clocks & Watches. Pet Shops & Pet Supplies. Sports, Toys, Cycle Shops & Hobbies.

Service: Auto & Accessories. Auto Services. Banks, Financial Services & Building Societies. Employment & Post Offices. Estate Agents & Auctioneers. Hairdressing, Health & Beauty. Household & Home. Launderettes, Dry Cleaners & Other. Locksmiths, Clothing Alterations & Shoe Repairs. Pawnbroking & Cheque Cashing. Travel Agents & Tour Operators.

Leisure: Accommodation. Bars, Pubs & Clubs. Cafes & Fast Food. Entertainment. Restaurants.

Miscellaneous: Medical. Non-Retail. Transport.

Nailsworth

	<i>Convenience</i>		<i>Comparison</i>		<i>Service</i>		<i>Leisure</i>		<i>Miscellaneous</i>		<i>Vacant</i>		<i>Total Number</i>
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	
19-Oct-05	12	11	53	49	24	22	10	9	3	3	6	6	108
19-Oct-06	12	11	52	48	23	21	10	9	2	2	9	8	108
20-Oct-09	13	12	52	47	23	21	11	10	3	3	9	8	111
25-Oct-11	14	13	54	50	23	21	11	10	2	2	5	5	109
30-Nov-12	14	13	54	49	22	20	12	11	4	4	5	5	111
18-Jul-13	14	13	56	50	21	19	15	13	4	4	2	2	112
18-Jul-14	14	13	56	50	21	19	14	13	5	5	1	1	111
22-Sep-16	12	10	50	43	25	22	16	14	7	6	6	5	116
GB Jan 17		13		29		27		25		6			
GB Jan 17 Vacancy Rate													11

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Leisure: Accommodation. Bars, Pubs & Clubs. Cafes & Fast Food. Entertainment. Restaurants.

Miscellaneous: Medical. Non-Retail. Transport.

Dursley

	<i>Convenience</i>		<i>Comparison</i>		<i>Service</i>		<i>Leisure</i>		<i>Miscellaneous</i>		<i>Vacant</i>		<i>Total Number</i>
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	
19-Oct-05	8	7	30	28	29	27	13	12	16	15	11	10	107
19-Oct-06	9	8	33	31	31	29	13	12	17	16	4	4	107
20-Oct-09	7	7	29	28	28	27	13	13	14	13	13	13	104
25-Oct-11	7	7	28	27	27	26	13	13	13	13	16	15	104
20-Nov-12	7	7	28	27	28	27	13	13	16	15	12	12	104
22-Jul-13	7	7	28	27	27	26	15	15	15	15	11	11	103
22-Jul-14	7	7	30	29	27	26	15	15	15	15	8	8	102
04-Oct-16	7	7	30	29	26	25	15	15	15	15	9	9	102
GB Jan 17		13		29		27		25		6			
GB Jan 17 Vacancy Rate													11

Notes:

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Service: Auto & Accessories. Auto Services. Banks, Financial Services & Building Societies. Employment & Post Offices. Estate Agents & Auctioneers. Hairdressing, Health & Beauty. Household & Home. Launderettes, Dry Cleaners & Other. Locksmiths, Clothing Alterations & Shoe Repairs. Pawnbroking & Cheque Cashing. Travel Agents & Tour Operators.

Leisure: Accommodation. Bars, Pubs & Clubs. Cafes & Fast Food. Entertainment. Restaurants.

Miscellaneous: Medical. Non-Retail. Transport.

Stonehouse

	<i>Convenience</i>		<i>Comparison</i>		<i>Service</i>		<i>Leisure</i>		<i>Miscellaneous</i>		<i>Vacant</i>		<i>Total Number</i>
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	
19-Oct-05	6	9	19	28	21	31	12	18	8	12	2	3	68
19-Oct-06	7	10	17	25	20	29	12	18	8	12	4	6	68
10-Sep-09	7	10	18	26	19	28	13	19	8	12	4	6	69
07-Nov-12	6	9	21	30	17	25	14	20	7	10	4	6	69
17-Jul-13	6	9	22	32	17	25	14	20	9	13	1	1	69
17-Jul-14	6	9	21	30	18	26	15	21	9	13	1	1	70
17-Nov-16	7	10	19	27	15	21	14	20	9	13	6	9	70
GB Jan 17		13		29		27		25		6			
GB Jan 17 Vacancy Rate													11

Notes:

Surveys from 2012 to 2016 inclusive include all town centre commercial properties, some of which were excluded from earlier reports

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Service: Auto & Accessories. Auto Services. Banks, Financial Services & Building Societies. Employment & Post Offices. Estate Agents & Auctioneers. Hairdressing, Health & Beauty. Household & Home. Launderettes, Dry Cleaners & Other. Locksmiths, Clothing Alterations & Shoe Repairs. Pawnbroking & Cheque Cashing. Travel Agents & Tour Operators.

Leisure: Accommodation. Bars, Pubs & Clubs. Cafes & Fast Food. Entertainment. Restaurants.

Miscellaneous: Medical. Non-Retail. Transport.

Wotton-under-Edge

	<i>Convenience</i>		<i>Comparison</i>		<i>Service</i>		<i>Leisure</i>		<i>Miscellaneous</i>		<i>Vacant</i>		<i>Total Number</i>
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	
19-Oct-05	9	10	36	40	25	28	11	12	5	6	4	4	90
19-Oct-06	9	10	37	41	25	28	11	12	5	6	3	3	90
11-Nov-09	9	10	34	38	25	28	11	12	5	6	5	6	89
31-Oct-11	8	9	34	39	25	28	12	14	3	3	6	7	88
30-Nov-12	9	10	31	34	27	30	11	12	5	6	7	8	90
19-Jul-13	10	11	31	34	27	30	11	12	4	4	8	9	91
22-Jul-14	9	10	34	37	27	29	11	12	2	2	9	10	92
27-Oct-16	8	9	35	39	23	26	12	13	3	3	9	10	90
GB Jan 17		13		29		27		25		6			
GB Jan 17 Vacancy Rate													11

Notes:

Surveys from 2012 to 2016 inclusive include all town centre commercial properties, some of which were excluded from earlier reports

GB data from Local Data Company. All currently live businesses in the area, counts split by classification

Convenience: Bakers. Butchers & Fishmongers. Confectionery, Tobacco, Newsagents. Groceries, Supermarkets & Food Shops. Off Licences. Petrol Filling Stations.

Comparison: Books, Arts & Crafts, Stationery, Printers. Car & Motorbike Showrooms. Charity & Secondhand Shops. Chemists, Toiletries & Health. Department Stores & Mail Order. Discount & Surplus Stores. DIY, Hardware, Builder's Merchants & Household Goods. Electrical Goods & Home Entertainment. Fashion & General Clothing. Florists & Garden. Footwear. Furniture, Carpets, Textiles, Bathrooms & Kitchens. Gifts, China & Leather Goods. Jewellers, Clocks & Watches. Pet Shops & Pet Supplies. Sports, Toys, Cycle Shops & Hobbies.

Service: Auto & Accessories. Auto Services. Banks, Financial Services & Building Societies. Employment & Post Offices. Estate Agents & Auctioneers. Hairdressing, Health & Beauty. Household & Home. Launderettes, Dry Cleaners & Other. Locksmiths, Clothing Alterations & Shoe Repairs. Pawnbroking & Cheque Cashing. Travel Agents & Tour Operators.

Leisure: Accommodation. Bars, Pubs & Clubs. Cafes & Fast Food. Entertainment. Restaurants.

Miscellaneous: Medical. Non-Retail. Transport.

Appendix 3

The Potential Effect on Demand for Comparison Floorspace in Stroud 2016 to 2031.

TABLE 1: COMPARISON GOODS CAPACITY, 2016-2031**Stroud (including commitment)**

	2016	2021	2026	2031
Available comparison goods expenditure	£603.0	£665.5	£795.1	£946.9
Turnover from study area	£100.5	£110.7	£132.0	£156.8
Market share	16.7%	16.6%	16.6%	16.6%
Expenditure inflow	£6.0	£6.6	£7.9	£9.4
Total turnover potential	£106.5	£117.3	£139.9	£166.2
Benchmark turnover of existing and committed facilities	£106.5	£116.9	£130.6	£145.6
Commitment	£7.6	£8.4	£9.3	£10.4
Residual expenditure	-£7.6	-£7.9	-£0.1	£10.2
Indicative sales density for new comparison goods floorspace (£/sq m)	£5,275	£5,789	£6,467	£7,211
Indicative retail floorspace capacity (sq m net)	-1445	-1372	-10	1417

Notes:

Total expenditure taken from Table 5f.

Turnover from study area taken from Tables 9a-9d.

Market share is the turnover from study area expressed as a percentage of total available expenditure.

Expenditure inflow based on assumptions made in 2010 and 2013 Retail Study.

Total turnover potential is the study area derived turnover plus expenditure inflow.

Benchmark turnover at 2016 assumed to match total turnover potential, projected forward assuming a growth in efficiency of existing floorspace.

2015 PRICES

TABLE 2: COMPARISON GOODS CAPACITY, 2016-2031**Stroud (excluding commitment)**

	2016	2021	2026	2031
Available comparison goods expenditure	£603.0	£665.5	£795.1	£946.9
Turnover from study area	£100.5	£110.7	£132.0	£156.8
Market share	16.7%	16.6%	16.6%	16.6%
Expenditure inflow	£6.0	£6.6	£7.9	£9.4
Total turnover potential	£106.5	£117.3	£139.9	£166.2
Benchmark turnover of existing and committed facilities	£106.5	£116.9	£130.6	£145.6
Commitment	£0.0	£0.0	£0.0	£0.0
Residual expenditure	£0.0	£0.4	£9.3	£20.6
Indicative sales density for new comparison goods floorspace (£/sq m)	£5,275	£5,789	£6,467	£7,211
Indicative retail floorspace capacity (sq m net)	0	73	1435	2862

Notes:

Total expenditure taken from Table 5f.

Turnover from study area taken from Tables 9a-9d.

Market share is the turnover from study area expressed as a percentage of total available expenditure.

Expenditure inflow based on assumptions made in 2010 and 2013 Retail Study.

Total turnover potential is the study area derived turnover plus expenditure inflow.

Benchmark turnover at 2016 assumed to match total turnover potential, projected forward assuming a growth in efficiency of existing floorspace.

2015 PRICES

TABLE 3: COMPARISON GOODS CAPACITY, 2016-2031**Stroud (excluding commitment) (lower market share)**

	2016	2021	2026	2031
Available comparison goods expenditure	£603.0	£665.5	£795.1	£946.9
Turnover from study area	£100.5	£99.8	£119.3	£142.0
Market share	16.7%	15.0%	15.0%	15.0%
Expenditure inflow	£6.0	£6.0	£7.2	£8.5
Total turnover potential	£106.5	£105.8	£126.4	£150.5
Benchmark turnover of existing and committed facilities	£106.5	£116.9	£130.6	£145.6
Commitment	£0.0	£0.0	£0.0	£0.0
Residual expenditure	£0.0	-£11.1	-£4.2	£4.9
Indicative sales density for new comparison goods floorspace (£/sq m)	£5,275	£5,789	£6,467	£7,211
Indicative retail floorspace capacity (sq m net)	0	-1915	-646	685

Notes:

Total expenditure taken from Table 5f.

Turnover from study area taken from Tables 9a-9d.

Market share is the turnover from study area expressed as a percentage of total available expenditure.

Expenditure inflow based on assumptions made in 2010 and 2013 Retail Study.

Total turnover potential is the study area derived turnover plus expenditure inflow.

Benchmark turnover at 2016 assumed to match total turnover potential, projected forward assuming a growth in efficiency of existing floorspace.

2015 PRICES