

**STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**13 JANUARY 2022**

|  |  |       |          |               |
|--|--|-------|----------|---------------|
| <b>Report Title</b>  | <b>STROUD CANALS VISION AND STRATEGY</b>   |       |          |               |
| <b>Purpose of Report</b>                                       | To consider a Draft Canals Strategy for the District.  |       |          |               |
| <b>Decision(s)</b>   | <b>The Committee RESOLVES to approve the Draft Stroud Canals Vision &amp; Strategy set out in Appendices A-C for a period of public consultation.</b>  |       |          |               |
| <b>Consultation and Feedback</b>                               | Consultation and discussions have taken place with members of the Strategic Leadership Team, Regeneration and Investment Board, key stakeholders, town and parish councils and members of the public.  |       |          |               |
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| <b>Options</b>   | Option 1: to do nothing. This is not recommended as it could lead to the Council being without a clearly articulated strategy and objectives for supporting the canals network. Option 2: to agree or make amendments to the draft Strategy. |       |          |               |
| <b>Background Papers</b>                                       | None   |       |          |               |
| <b>Appendices</b>  | Appendix A – Stroud Canals Vision & Strategy<br>Appendix B – Canal Strategy Areas, Profiles & Placemaking Frameworks<br>Appendix C – Piloting the Strategy in the Wallbridge Area  |       |          |               |
| <b>Implications (further details at the end of the report)</b> | Financial  | Legal | Equality | Environmental |
|  | Yes  | Yes   | Yes      | Yes           |

## 1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The network of canals within the District (the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal running from Hardwicke in the north of the District to Sharpness in the south, and the two Cotswold Canals running from Saul Junction in the west, to Chalford in the east) provide a valuable resource for the area, whether for water borne commercial or visitor activities, as a leisure or travel route for walking and cycling or as an attractive setting for residents and businesses at our towns and villages. The canal corridors also contain a wealth of natural and built environment features, which contribute to local ecology, heritage and our general physical and mental wellbeing.

- 1.2 The restoration of the Cotswold Canals and the wider regeneration and active use of the canal network through the area provide significant opportunities to develop the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the District and its communities. However, to date, canal related opportunities have tended to be pursued as discrete technical projects, for example, the physical restoration of the canals (e.g. the “missing link” canal restoration project) or site based regeneration projects (e.g. Ebley Mill Wharf and Brimscombe Port regeneration projects).
- 1.3 The recently adopted Council Plan identifies the need to develop a long term vision and strategy to ensure projects maximise opportunities to achieve broader social, economic and environmental objectives: -
- Social – contributing to developing healthy, active and accessible communities
  - Economic – providing for local jobs, supporting the vitality of our towns and rural hinterlands
  - Environmental – reducing our carbon footprint and conserving and enhancing our distinct natural and historic built environment
- 1.4 A long term strategy will provide the strategic direction for the future and provide a framework for an evolving detailed action plan which will identify short, medium and long term projects to be delivered by the Council, stakeholders and local communities. An effective Canals Strategy with a powerful narrative will also provide the platform to make effective future funding bids to Government and other funding bodies.
- 1.5 Urban design consultants DHUD, working with Hilton Barnfield Architects, were appointed in April 2021 to prepare a whole corridor strategy for our canals network, working with the Council, key stakeholders and local communities.

## **2. A SUMMARY OF THE CANALS STRATEGY**

- 2.1 The Stroud Canals Vision & Strategy (the Canals Strategy) has utilised the Future Place methodology, endorsed by RIBA, DLUHC, Homes England, Historic England, the RTPi and Local Partnerships, to understand and inform the function and identity of the canals corridor throughout Stroud District.
- 2.2 Using this methodology, the Canals Strategy identifies unique and locally distinctive drivers to define an overarching vision for the whole canal corridor; align a series of individual canal strategy areas with these drivers; and establish a catalogue of ingredients to enable the Council to implement this vision. The Canal Strategy documents are set out in Appendices A-C and are supported by a series of background reports.

### *Drivers for Change*

- 2.3 The Canals Strategy identifies 3 overarching ‘Drivers of Change’ by which the canal network can maximise its social, economic and environmental benefits.
- Continuity – By providing a continuous accessible route the canal can connect communities and create essential links between businesses, services and functions and continuous green infrastructure as a spine through the District
  - Clustering - People, activities and places can unite around the canal as a thoroughfare, an attraction, a centre of activity and unique recreational space. In this

way the canal can catalyse focussed activity as a new junction of trade and a centre for sociability and community

- Crossings - By creating a variety of local crossings and connecting activity on the banks of the canal, more strategic connections can be formed at a district level which see people not only accessing the canal corridor but accessing a variety of district-wide opportunities and in doing so being enabled to cross socio-economic boundaries as well as physical ones

#### *Profiling each Canal Strategy Area*

- 2.4 In order to establish how these drivers can benefit each part of the canal network, the Strategy breaks down the canal corridor into 14 Canal Strategy Areas based on a layering of characteristics, function and policy. Each strategy area is profiled against the drivers to identify the types of future interventions ('ingredients') needed to maximise their future roles.
- 2.5 The process of profiling the canal strategy areas acknowledges that the vision for the canal to fulfil its full potential applies in different ways in different locations. Localising the vision by applying it in each canal strategy area avoids the risk of a homogenised approach to the whole canal corridor. The profile established for each of the canal strategy areas represents the individual way in which each area is best able to contribute to the future vision for the canal corridor. Each area will contribute in a unique way to the overall function and identity of the whole canal corridor. The profile established for each area provides the basis for identifying the design priorities and placemaking objectives in each area.

#### *Ingredients of the Future Place*

- 2.6 The Canals Strategy includes a catalogue of more specific ingredients of the future place which provide built form and public realm typologies for implementing the vision in each strategy area. These ingredients are proposed to be used in accordance with the drivers of change and their selection as design typologies for any given site is justified on the grounds of the contribution they make to realising the reframed vision of the Future Place. A series of Placemaking Frameworks assist in identifying the spatial priorities in each strategy area.

#### *Piloting the Strategy at Wallbridge*

- 2.7 As part of the development of the Canals Strategy, a pilot case study has been produced for the Wallbridge area of Stroud to test and demonstrate how the Strategy can be applied to a specific area. The pilot exercise is intended to be a resource and guide to the use of the Strategy along the whole corridor. In this way the Pilot exercise itself serves as a tool in the implementation of the Canals Strategy across the whole corridor.

### **3. ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION**

- 3.1 Initial engagement with key stakeholders involved an in depth questionnaire focussing on key issues and opportunities for the canals network, which was followed up by 1-2-1 interviews or "clinics" with over 20 organisations.
- 3.2 A stakeholder workshop was held in July 2021 which explored via interactive workshop sessions setting goals for the canals network to be incorporated into the Strategy.

- 3.3 A Town and Parish Council event was held in October 2021 which presented material on progress with the Strategy focussed on the areas represented at the meeting and asked for feedback on a forthcoming public questionnaire survey.
- 3.4 Public engagement commenced in November 2021 with an online survey seeking to find out what people's experiences are of using the canals in the district. Respondents were asked to identify one or more of the 14 separate canal strategy areas which they use most often to focus on specific areas for attention. The results have informed the contents of the Canals Strategy.

#### **4. NEXT STEPS**

- 4.1 Following consideration by Committee, it is proposed to publish the Draft Strategy for a formal period of public consultation using methods and processes in accordance with our adopted Statement of Community Involvement. Responses received will be considered and an amended Strategy will be brought back to a future meeting of Environment Committee for approval as a Supplementary Planning Document. This will give the document weight within the planning system and ensure that all future developments within the canals corridor take account of and reflect the contents of the Strategy.
- 4.2 Our consultants have produced recommendations for the structure and contents of a future Action Plan, to identify projects to take forward to deliver the Strategy. Officers will work with key stakeholders to set out key projects for the Action Plan set against short, medium and long term timeframes, identifying the relevant delivery partners and financial resources. This Action Plan will be considered at a future meeting of this Committee.

#### **5. IMPLICATIONS**

##### **5.1 Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications from adopting the Strategy for consultation. Upon consideration of the action plan, financial requirements will be identified and appropriate resourcing decisions made through this committee

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##### **5.2 Legal Implications**

Following consultation, it is intended that the amended Canals Strategy will be brought back to a future meeting of Environment Committee for approval as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

SPDs should build upon and provide more detailed advice or guidance on policies in the adopted Local Plan. As they do not form part of the development plan, they cannot introduce new planning policies into the development plan. They are however a material consideration in decision-making. They should not add unnecessarily to the financial burdens on development.

Regulations 11 to 16 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 set out the requirements for producing SPDs, including public participation and inviting representations.

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### 5.3 **Equality Implications**

An equality impact assessment of the contents of the final Canals Strategy will be reported to Environment Committee when the final document is considered for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document. Equality impact assessments will also be carried out for any projects or other schemes included within the Action Plan that have the potential to impact on communities and/or staff on the grounds of protected characteristics.

### 5.4 **Environmental Implications**

Maximising the environmental benefits of the canal network is an explicit objective of the Canals Strategy and various tools are used to promote this objective, including the use of a carbon neutrality tool to assess the potential for the Strategy Areas to deliver on our 2030 Strategy. The intention is for the Canals Strategy to be adopted as Supplementary Planning Document to policies contained within the Stroud Local Plan, which is itself subject to full Sustainability Appraisal.