

7.1. Introduction

7.1.1. The built environment includes all of the rich diversity of buildings contained within Stroud District, both historic and modern. The District contains almost 5000 Listed Buildings, 42 Conservation Areas, 68 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, over 4000 archaeological sites and 14 Historic Parks and Gardens set predominantly within the Cotswolds AONB and the contrasting estuarine landscape of the Severn estuary and its plains. There is a strong inter-relationship between the District's high quality built environment and its landscape and the traditional use of local natural materials. This inter-relationship has created a distinct, much loved character to the District. There is a need to ensure the protection and enhancement, wherever possible, of these assets.

7.1.2. However, the District also experiences considerable pressure for development. It is essential that the investment and other benefits which that can bring are not lost. A balance must be struck between the need for development and the desire to preserve the character and quality of the built environment of our District. This can be achieved partly by directing development away from the most sensitive areas and buildings, but critically by ensuring that development which does take place is itself of high quality. It should reflect and respect that which exists already, and make its own contribution to the character and appearance of the District.

7.1.3. This section of the Local Plan contains policies on how best to assimilate new development into the District, as well as policies on how to make the best use of our historic buildings and areas.

7.2. Objectives

1. To ensure that new development either respects and reflects the distinctive character of the District's traditional settlement patterns and built form or introduces good quality innovation in urban design and architecture where this is not detrimental to existing character, or where this will establish character where local distinctiveness is lacking.

2. To provide a balance between the need for new development and the desire to protect the District's built heritage and preserve the amenities of its residents.
3. To ensure that appropriate areas of the District, which are particularly rich in architectural and historic interest, have their character or appearance preserved or enhanced, but without stifling necessary and desirable development.
4. To ensure that the District's rich collection of buildings of special architectural or historic interest, and their settings, are respected, whilst allowing them to meet the needs and aspirations of today.
5. To protect and record sites and settings of archaeological importance.
6. To ensure that the District's historic parks and gardens, and their settings, are protected from inappropriate development.
7. To find new sustainable uses for underused rural buildings within the District, whilst resisting unsustainable conversions or the re-use of insubstantial buildings and those which detract from their surroundings.
8. To support the harnessing of renewable energy, where this does not involve unacceptable environmental impact.

7.3. New Development

Central Government Advice

7.3.1. The Government's general advice on new development is contained in Planning Policy Statement 1 Delivering Sustainable Development 2005. It emphasises that planning shapes the places where people live and work and the country we live in. Key Principle (iv) states that planning policies should promote high quality inclusive design in the layout of new developments and individual buildings in terms of function and impact, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development. Design which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area should not be accepted. It states that *'High quality and inclusive design should create well-mixed and integrated developments which avoid segregation and have well-planned public spaces that bring people together and provide opportunities for physical activity and recreation. It means ensuring a place will function well and add to the*

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overall character and quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development. This requires carefully planned, high quality buildings and spaces that support the efficient use of resources’.

7.3.2. PPS1 para. 38 advises that it is proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness, again particularly where this is supported by clear plan policies or supplementary design guidance.

7.3.3. PPS1 also stresses the need to take account of the range of effects (both negative and positive) on the environment, as well as the positive effects of development in terms of economic benefits and social well being. Effects should be properly identified and assessed through the sustainability appraisal process, taking account of the current quality of the environment in the area and any existing environmental issues relevant to the plan.

7.3.4. In September 1998, the DETR published ‘Places, Streets and Movement’, which is designed as a companion guide to Design Bulletin 32. This document relates to residential development in particular, but contains some important messages about the importance of high quality development, urban design, and the importance of local distinctiveness. One of the document’s key messages is about designing developments to create a sense of place, rather than simply to accommodate the motor car.

7.3.5. Additional guidance on design matters has been provided by the DETR in its more recent publication: By Design (May 2000). This document seeks to promote higher standards in urban design and is intended as a companion to PPGs. The guide is relevant to all aspects of the built environment including the design of buildings and spaces, landscape and transport systems. The guide emphasises that the most important ‘tool’ of a local authority in delivering better design is its Development Plan, within which design policies should be set out, and against which development proposals will be assessed.

Gloucestershire County Structure Plan

7.3.6. The adopted Gloucestershire Structure Plan recognises that it is vital that development

and change in the County protect and enhance its natural and historic environment. The interaction of people with the natural environment has created a varied and locally distinctive landscape. New development should respect and enhance the environment in its scale, location and design.

Urban Design

7.3.7. Urban design, in the context of this Plan, relates equally to rural areas and the countryside, and the urban areas within the District. This reflects the meaning given to ‘good design’ by PPS1 as set out in paragraph 7.3.1 above. Good design should be integrated into the existing urban form and the natural and built environment.

7.3.8. There have been developments within the District, as elsewhere in the country, constructed in the last few decades, that have paid little attention to urban design, whether it be the relationship between buildings and spaces within the development itself, or the way the development relates to existing nearby buildings and spaces. Many of these developments are characterised by not respecting the urban design and existing vernacular, but equally by failing to produce a coherent alternative from which future inspiration can be drawn. The result is often development of standard building types, in a standard layout, which could be from almost anywhere in the country.

7.3.9. The Council wishes to see new development break away from that mould, and show that new development can either dovetail neatly into existing built form or, particularly in areas where no strong tradition exists, produce imaginative new urban design, which can itself provide inspiration for other new development in the area at a later date. In areas where a strong urban form exists, the proposed new development will have to be of an exceptionally high standard to justify moving away from that tradition.

7.3.10. The urban design of a place can often include a significant piece of open, undeveloped land. This Council is committed to the best use of under-used land within our urban areas, but this does not mean that it is appropriate to develop every piece of undeveloped land. The contribution such

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undeveloped areas make to the urban design of a place will be considered under Policy BE2, if a proposal comes forward to develop, partially or wholly, such an area.

Site Analysis

7.3.11. Site analysis is a fundamental part of the design process as it derives the design concept for the site and assists in the achievement of successful development. This is particularly important for larger and sensitive sites. Plans, sketches and explanatory information should be used to demonstrate the influence of the townscape and public realm considerations upon the development proposal. The Council will therefore expect a full site analysis to be submitted for larger and more sensitive sites, including the allocated sites, illustrating the opportunities and constraints of the site and demonstrating that full consideration has been given, in the wider context, to the following:

1. legibility, permeability, views and vistas;
2. layout, form, scale and character and townscape;
3. the social, economic and functional roles of the site;
4. public open space;
5. significant landscape, environmental and ecological features; and
6. the historic environment including archaeological and historic features.

Public Realm

7.3.12. The public realm consists of the outdoor spaces within a settlement: - the streets, parks and market squares, in which the public move and socialise. The District is fortunate in that many of its historic settlements have a high quality public realm. In the more recent past, this aspect of development and its importance to the wellbeing of residents, workers and visitors has been overlooked, and the close relationship between buildings, their uses and public spaces has sometimes been ignored. The Council wishes to promote a higher quality of public realm and there are a number of key aspects that new developments should address.

7.3.13. **Permeability** - movement to, and through, a place. There should be direct, safe and pleasant routes suitable for pedestrians and cyclists, as well as vehicles, providing good links throughout a development and beyond. Historic settlements tend to have a good level of permeability, whilst more modern developments, particularly cul-de-sacs, have very low levels of permeability. The needs of pedestrians should be put before other traffic. There should be no unnecessary barriers to the ease of movement.

7.3.14. **Legibility** - the ease with which pedestrians, cyclists and/or drivers can orientate themselves and 'read' an area to understand how it is arranged, and which way to go for different places, amenities and facilities. A number of physical features can play a key role in achieving greater legibility. Sequences of spaces can be linked through the use of landmarks which act as points of reference, by maintaining views through, or by means of design continuity in choice of materials, street furniture, lighting and landscape. Landmarks may be key buildings, public art features, or landscape features such as specimen trees. Places which are generally distinctive will be more memorable and help people to orientate themselves.

7.3.15. **Human Scale** - what is perceived at eye level. A comfortable pedestrian environment relates to the scale and pace of the pedestrian, rather than vehicle occupants. Development should be interesting at eye level with pedestrian friendly frontages, i.e. frontages with activity or which provide informal surveillance. Consideration should be given to locating activity at the ground floor, particularly at focal points of pedestrian movement. Building frontages to public spaces should incorporate doors and/or windows to provide physical and visual links between them. Street and public spaces should be defined by built form, or where appropriate, structural planting. Any gaps in the building line should be intentional, and well defined by the buildings that surround it.

7.3.16. **Public and Private Space** - There should be a clear distinction between these spaces. Where buildings are set back from the pavement, the boundary of the public space should be clearly marked, for example by walls, or fences, which will assist in creating a sense of enclosure. Buildings should front streets or

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other public spaces, which will increase awareness of activities in public spaces, create more animated public spaces, and safety for users. Strong building lines along street blocks define the street scene and allow private space to be located within the block's interior.

7.3.17. **Public Art** - Public art can play an important role in improving the legibility of the public realm, and the community's sense of ownership of public spaces, particularly where it is involved in its production. The Council will seek public art provision, including contemporary works or art or craft, in appropriate development schemes, for example where it would enhance public spaces or buildings that surround such spaces.

7.3.18. **Landscape** - Open spaces should be designed to contribute to the character and quality of the place, and may be hard (built) or soft (planted) or a combination of both, as appropriate. The needs of users should be uppermost in the design of open spaces, for example streets should provide attractive through routes between places and activities, and large open spaces such as parks should be well integrated with the development. Further guidance concerning protection of existing landscape features and nature conservation is contained within the Natural Environment section.

POLICY BE1

New development will be permitted where:

1. it is physically integrated with its surroundings by preserving, extending and improving links with the existing public highway that provides safe, convenient and attractive through routes;
2. existing features which contribute to the area, landmark features, and views to them are retained in an appropriate manner or improved;
3. existing building frontage lines are maintained, or gaps result in benefits to the quality of the public space. Where there are no established building lines, streets and other public spaces, these should be defined by new building frontages;

4. the scale, location, use and landscaping of public spaces creates distinctive, attractive and safe areas;
5. there is a clear relationship and distinction between public and private space; and
6. the layout and design of new development takes account of the need to reduce crime.

The Wider Context

7.3.19. New development should not be considered in isolation from that surrounding it. Analysis of the wider area can be valuable in establishing movement patterns, plot sizes and arrangements, and design references, and, at the larger scale, guide proposals in terms of their potential impact on the landscape setting and appropriate skyline solutions.

7.3.20. **Roofscape and Skyline** - The shape, scale, heights, variety of construction, and orientation of buildings all contribute to producing a pleasing rhythm and generally harmonious skyline across the District. The skylines are dominated by domestic buildings, with punctuations normally formed by key buildings such as church spires, old mills and their chimneys, and other public buildings. Views over roofscapes are very common in the District due to its topography and this pattern should be respected, and new skyline features incorporated that contribute to this character.

7.3.21. **Street Pattern** - The historic street pattern throughout the District illustrates a pattern of organic evolution, with settlements growing slowly over time and buildings within adapted for different uses. It is only in the latter part of the last century that this pattern has been disrupted and sensitivity to the local environment and context lost. Street patterns have tended to become standardised through, for example the rigid application of highway standards, provision of services and building setbacks from the highway, producing a bland and uninspirational townscape within the District. The Council wishes to encourage innovation in urban design wherever possible, whilst respecting historic patterns in sensitive locations.

7.3.22. **Scale and Character** - Historically, building heights and plot sizes have varied depending on the nature and location of

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development. Variety in these aspects of the built form is important in creating an interesting environment. Where single use development on a large scale is proposed, variety should be maintained to avoid bland, monolithic form.

POLICY BE2

New development, will be permitted where the proposal represents a high quality urban design, and is compatible with its surroundings. Where this is not appropriate, the development should create a strong and distinctive urban design itself. In all proposals the following considerations should be addressed:

1. the layout and form of existing and the proposed development, and where appropriate the historic pattern of the area;
2. the relationship of the proposed development with its wider landscape setting;
3. the scale and character of the existing and proposed townscape in terms of road and pavement width and alignment, building heights, building line, plot size, density, elevational design and materials;
4. any features or open spaces, buildings and/or structures of character on or adjoining the site;
5. the scale, use and landscaping of the spaces between and around buildings;
6. views/vistas afforded from within, over and out of the site; and
7. the roofscape/skyline, development form and boundaries of the existing and proposed development seen in long or medium distance views.

7.3.23. Further guidance on the nature of locally distinctive urban design, how best to respect and reflect it, and on the nature of strong and distinctive urban design is contained in the Council's adopted supplementary planning guidance: Residential Design Guide.

7.3.24. Slavish adherence to highway standards in the past has compounded the poor quality of layout of many developments, especially residential development, and produced a road dominated and often sterile scheme. Application of highway guidelines should not be allowed to

compromise the quality of the townscape. The Council is particularly keen that new development respects, maintains or contributes positively to the District's high quality environment and it will investigate and incorporate design solutions to enable highway guidelines to be incorporated sensitively within proposed schemes.

Design of Buildings

7.3.25. The design of new buildings themselves is a closely related, but separate subject from urban design. The concerns of the Council about some of the development, particularly large - scale development, which has taken place in the last few decades, in terms of the design of buildings, is similar to the concern expressed above in respect of urban design. Too much new development has paid little attention to the traditions that have influenced existing, traditional buildings in the area. Equally, new development has often failed to provide a new and imaginative approach of high quality, which could be respected in the future. Too many buildings are standard building types, which are not designed for the sites on which they are built, but are selected from a 'patternbook', which is the same one used throughout the country. As a result, local distinctiveness is neither respected nor promoted, and a monotonous mediocrity results.

7.3.26. The Council wishes to see it demonstrated that new development can be well designed, and can be made to fit in with the existing built form. Equally, where no strong tradition of built form exists, it wishes to encourage imaginative and innovative design, rather than the use of standard building types. In areas where a design tradition exists, the proposed new development will have to be of an exceptionally high standard to justify moving away from that tradition. Further guidance on the nature of locally distinctive building styles, design features, and materials, and on the nature of strong and distinctive design is contained in the Council's adopted supplementary planning guidance, entitled 'Residential Design Guide'.

7.3.27. The Council is also encouraging the production by local communities of 'Village Design Statements'. These will supplement the Council's own guidance, and will, where

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appropriate, be adopted as supplementary planning guidance.

POLICY BE3

Proposals for street and infill development will be permitted where the proposal represents a high quality of urban design and is compatible with its surroundings. Where this is not appropriate, the development should create strong and distinctive design itself. In all proposals, the following considerations should be addressed:

1. the building line, scale of the area, heights and massing of adjoining buildings and the characteristic building plot widths;
2. the architectural characteristics and the type, colour of the materials of the adjoining buildings; and
3. the complexity and richness of materials, form and detailing of existing buildings where the character of the area is enhanced by such buildings and the new development proposes to replicate such richness.

7.4. Conservation Areas

Central Government Advice

7.4.1. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (PLBCA) Act 1990 provides the legal framework for Conservation Areas. Paragraph 17 of PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development 2005 stresses how much the Government is committed to protecting and enhancing the quality of the natural and historic environment, in both rural and urban areas. Much of the remainder of the government's advice is contained within PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment 1994.

7.4.2. Conservation Areas are defined as being '*areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*'. Section 69 of the PLBCA Act imposes a duty on Local Planning Authorities to designate such areas, and paragraph 4.2 of PPG15 stresses that it is the quality and interest of areas, rather than that of individual buildings, which should be the prime consideration in identifying Conservation Areas for designation.

7.4.3. Section 71 of the PLBCA Act places a duty on Local Planning Authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of Conservation Areas, and paragraph 4.10 of PPG15 gives further guidance on this subject. It makes clear that these detailed statements of proposals for individual Conservation Areas should not themselves be part of the development plan. In Stroud District, these are being produced in the form of Conservation Area Statements (CASs) for each Conservation Area, and they will be adopted by Stroud District Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance, as and when they are finalised.

7.4.4. Section 72 of the PLBCA Act requires that special attention be paid in the exercise of planning functions to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. Paragraph 4.14 of PPG15 makes it clear that this special attention extends to the consideration of development proposals which are outside a Conservation Area, but which affect its setting.

7.4.5. Paragraph 4.16 of PPG15 points out that many Conservation Areas include the commercial centres of the towns and villages of which they form part. PPG 15 makes it clear that control within these Conservation Areas cannot realistically take the form of preventing all new development: the emphasis will be controlled and positive management of change, which allows the area to remain alive and prosperous.

Gloucestershire County Structure Plan

7.4.6. The adopted Gloucestershire Structure Plan makes reference to the distinctive historic environment of the County being conserved and enhanced in Policy NHE6, including Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, historic parks and gardens and sites of archaeological importance.

Conservation Areas in Stroud District

7.4.7. In line with Government guidance outlined above, Stroud District Council will, when and where appropriate, identify further areas of special architectural or historic interest, and designate them as Conservation Areas. It will also review existing Conservation Areas, to

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consider whether their special status is still justified, and to consider whether any boundary changes are appropriate. A decision as to whether to designate a new Conservation Area, or whether to amend an existing one, can only be based on a thorough analysis of the architectural and historical interest of the area. However, decisions will also have to be made about the priority to be given to such work in a District which already contains 42 Conservation Areas, and about the order in which such reviews and potential designations will take place. The Council will therefore give priority in the review process to those areas which are, or are likely to be, subject to the greatest pressure for development.

7.4.8. In line with Government guidance set out above, the District Council will continue to produce, for each conservation area, a Conservation Area Statement (CAS) comprising a character analysis, detailed policies for the preservation and enhancement of the area, and, where appropriate, the use of a Direction to limit the scope of permitted development rights. These CASs will be adopted by the Council and used as supplementary planning guidance when making decisions under the various planning acts.

7.4.9. Stroud District Council has, for many years, appreciated the need to conserve the best of the District's historic areas, and many Conservation Areas have already been designated. These vary from the historic hearts of many of the District's towns and villages, to areas designated primarily for the character of their industrial heritage, which is particularly rich within Stroud District. When considering proposals within, or that affect the setting of any of these areas, regard should always be had to the established character and appearance of that particular area. Stroud's Conservation Areas are very varied in their character, and a solution which may be appropriate in one Conservation Area will not necessarily be appropriate or acceptable in another. Regard should always be had to an adopted CAS where this exists, but in areas where a CAS has yet to be finalised, it is still vital to establish the nature of the character and appearance of the area, and to seek to preserve or enhance that identified character or appearance.

Demolition in a Conservation Area

7.4.10. When dealing with proposals for the demolition of an unlisted building in a Conservation Area, the value of the building will be measured in terms of the contribution it makes to the character or appearance of the area. Where an adopted CAS exists for the relevant Conservation Area, it will be used to assist in assessing the nature of that character.

7.4.11. Sometimes, the reason for allowing a building within a Conservation Area to be demolished is because the quality of the replacement building is such as to outweigh the contribution made by the existing building. In such circumstances, a condition will usually be imposed to prevent demolition until contracts for work to erect any replacement building, or buildings, have been signed.

POLICY BE4

Applications involving the demolition of an unlisted building, buildings or other structure or structures, within a Conservation Area, will only be permitted if:

1. either (a) the structure to be demolished makes no positive contribution to the character or appearance of the area; or (b) the condition of the building or structure is such that the cost of repairing and maintaining it outweighs its importance, and the value derived from its continued use;
- and
2. detailed proposals have been approved for the re-use of the site, including any replacement building or other structure that retains or make a greater contribution to the character or appearance of the area than the building or structure to be demolished.

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New Development in, or Affecting the Setting of, a Conservation Area

7.4.12. Section 72 of the PLBCA Act states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. Paragraph 4.14 of PPG15 makes it clear that the same test must be applied to development outside, but affecting the setting of, a Conservation Area. Policy BE5 sets out in more detail what preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area entails within Stroud District. Where an adopted CAS exists for the relevant Conservation Area, it will be used to assist in assessing the nature of that character.

POLICY BE5

Development within, or affecting the setting of a Conservation Area, will only be permitted if all the following criteria are met:

1. the siting of the development respects existing open spaces, patterns of building layout, trees, and boundary treatment and does not harm any positive contribution made to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area by any of these;
2. the scale, design, proportions, detailing and materials used in the proposed development are sympathetic to the characteristic form in the area, and compatible with adjacent buildings and spaces;
3. it does not cause the loss of features of historic or characteristic value; and
4. important views within, into and out of the area are protected.

7.4.13. In order to show that a proposal for new development within or affecting the setting of a Conservation Area will meet all the criteria listed in Policy BE5, it will nearly always be necessary for that application to be for full planning permission. Outline applications may sometimes be acceptable for proposals for major development. However, these should include, as matters to be determined at the outline stage, at least siting, means of access and design.

Alterations and Extensions to a Building in a Conservation Area

7.4.14. Applications for alterations or extensions to unlisted buildings within Conservation Areas will be expected to meet the criteria set out in Policy BE5. However, such proposals have a very particular and intimate relationship with the building to which they are to be attached. It should therefore be ensured that such proposals are sympathetic to the building, and to the wider Conservation Area.

POLICY BE6

Proposals to alter or extend an unlisted building in a Conservation Area will only be permitted if the proposal is sympathetic in design, scale, materials, detailing, colour and landscaping to the rest of the building and to the Conservation Area.

Changes of use within a Conservation Area

7.4.15. It is important that buildings within Conservation Areas are retained in use, and are not simply retained as museum pieces, incapable of beneficial use in today's society. Finding a new use for a redundant building, which contributes to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area, is therefore important. However, it is also important to ensure that any new use does not itself either directly, through alterations to the building, or indirectly, through associated activity, adversely affect the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

POLICY BE7

A change of use of a building in a Conservation Area will be permitted if both the following criteria are met:

1. the new use will not require any changes in the appearance or setting of the building, other than those which will preserve or enhance its contribution to the character or appearance of the area; and
2. any traffic generation, vehicle parking or noise can be catered for in a way that preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the area.

7.5. Listed Buildings

Central Government Advice

7.5.1. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (PLBCA) Act 1990 provides the legal framework for listed building control, whilst government advice is largely contained within PPG 15, entitled 'Planning and the Historic Environment', published in September 1994. Whilst Section 54A of the 1990 Planning Act does not apply to applications for listed building consent, Section 16 of the PLBCA Act places a statutory requirement on Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to *'have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses'*. In considering any planning application which affects a listed building, the LPA must consider how the listed building is affected. Paragraph 3.3 of PPG15 explains the importance of listed buildings, describing them as *'a finite resource and an irreplaceable asset'*. It states that there should be *'a general presumption in favour of the preservation of listed buildings, except where a convincing case can be made out, against the criteria set out in this section, for alteration or demolition'*.

7.5.2. Paragraph 3.5 of PPG15 lists those criteria, and sets out the issues which are generally relevant to the consideration of applications that seek to alter or demolish a listed building. These comprise the following:

- the importance of the building in architectural and historic terms;
- the particular physical features of the building which justify its inclusion in the list;
- the building's setting, and its contribution to the local scene; and
- the extent to which the proposed works would bring substantial benefits for the community, particularly by contributing to the economic regeneration of the area, or the enhancement of its environment.

7.5.3. Paragraphs 3.8 - 3.11 of PPG15 consider the use of listed buildings. They state that the best way of securing the upkeep of historic buildings and areas is to keep them in active use. The best use will very often be the

use for which the building was originally designed, but not all original uses will now be viable or even appropriate. For the great majority of listed buildings, PPG15 states, keeping them in active use must mean economically viable uses, which will often necessitate some degree of adaptation. PPG15 therefore concludes that *'policies for development and listed building control should recognise the need for flexibility where new uses have to be considered to secure a building's survival'*.

7.5.4. Paragraphs 3.12 - 3.15 of PPG15 deal with alterations and extensions to listed buildings. They make it clear that, in judging the effect of any alteration or extension, it is important to balance the effect of any changes on the special interest of the listed building against the viability of any proposed use, and of any alternative uses. Many listed buildings can sustain some degree of sensitive alteration or extension to accommodate continuing or new uses, and the merit of some new alterations or additions should not be discounted. However, listed buildings vary greatly in the extent to which they can accommodate change without loss of special interest, and in some cases successive minor works of indifferent quality can cumulatively be very destructive of a building's special interest.

7.5.5. PPG15 makes it clear that consent should only be given for the total or substantial demolition of a listed building when all reasonable efforts have been made to sustain existing, or find new uses, and these efforts have failed, that preservation in some form of charitable ownership is not possible, and that redevelopment would produce substantial benefits for the community which would decisively outweigh the loss resulting from demolition. Where proposed works would only result in partial demolition, PPG 15 states that the same considerations should be addressed as in relation to extensions and alterations.

Gloucestershire County Structure Plan

7.5.6. Policy NHE 6 of the adopted Gloucestershire Structure Plan is the only relevant policy.

Listed Buildings within Stroud District

7.5.7. Stroud District contains over 4,500 listed buildings, the architectural and historic interest of which, and hence the reason for their listing, varies enormously. It is very important, in any planning decision where a listed building or its setting is affected, to ensure that regard is had to the character, features, setting and history of the particular listed building affected by that decision. There will not be a solution which is appropriate to all listed buildings within Stroud District. It will be necessary to consider the particular listed building affected, and design the solution to fit the needs of the building.

7.5.8. The policies which follow are intended to give guidance on how listed buildings should be taken into account when considering planning applications which affect them. They will be applied to applications involving buildings which are listed at the time the Plan is published, but also to any buildings listed after this Local Plan has been prepared and adopted. They do not go into detail as to exactly how alterations and extensions to listed buildings should be carried out. This is not however to say that this is not important, only that it is not appropriate within the confines of a Local Plan. In many applications for listed building consent, often with no accompanying planning application, it will be the detail which will be the determining factor in whether the application is successful. In recognition of this, the District Council has produced a publication entitled 'Historic Buildings - A Guide to Their Repair and Conservation', which has been adopted as supplementary planning guidance, and which provides further guidance on the appropriate treatment of listed and other historic buildings. This publication should also be referred to when seeking to comply with the policies on listed buildings which follow.

Demolition of a Listed Building

7.5.9. The designation of a building as being of special architectural or historic interest singles that building out as being one of a very small percentage of this nation's built form which is worth preserving for those reasons. There is a strong presumption in favour of the retention of any building which is listed. In

addition there is also a presumption against the demolition of any features which contribute to the special architectural or historic interest of the building.

7.5.10. A strong case will need to be made to justify the demolition of all or part of a listed building, and this will usually be based on changes in circumstances, whereby there is no longer any prospect of finding a viable use for the building, where the listed building is in a dangerous condition, or where the partial demolition will actually improve the character or appearance of the listed building. One such strong case may be, as set out in PPG15, where the proposed works will bring substantial benefits for the community. If an application is made to demolish a listed building, there will be an automatic consultation with English Heritage. The purpose of this consultation is to provide specialist advice to the Secretary of State, who ultimately determines applications for demolition.

7.5.11. Many listed buildings within Stroud District were constructed with quite significant curtilages, and an appreciation of that curtilage helps to enhance our appreciation of the listed building itself. Where a subservient building falls within either the historic or modern curtilage of a listed building, it will be treated as a curtilage listed building. Development involving the demolition of a curtilage listed building should be able to show, if it is to be permitted, that the demolition involved will improve the character, appearance or setting of the principal listed building, or will bring substantial benefits for the community.

POLICY BE8

Development involving the total demolition of a listed building will not be permitted unless there are very exceptional circumstances where all the following criteria are met:

1. the listed building concerned is a Grade II Listed Building;
2. the condition of the building is such that the cost of repairing and maintaining the building outweighs its importance, and the value derived from its continued use;
3. there is no other viable use for the building; and

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the demolition of the building will not cause harm to the setting of any other listed building, the character of a Conservation Area, or the character of a street scene.

POLICY BE9

Development involving the partial demolition of a listed building, or the demolition of a curtilage listed building, will only be permitted where the demolition will achieve the preservation of the listed building and its setting.

7.5.12. There may be occasions where the demolition of a listed building is permitted, so that redevelopment of the site can take place. In such circumstances, a condition will usually be imposed to prevent demolition until contracts for work to erect any replacement building, or buildings, have been signed.

Extension or Alteration of a Listed Building

7.5.13. Almost every use carried on within a listed building will at some time change, whether fundamentally or gradually and incrementally. Consequently the building may have to evolve to suit those changed circumstances, and if an alteration or extension to a listed building will bring substantial benefits to the community, then this will be an important factor. However, there will always be a limit to this process in order to preserve the character and historic features of the building. When dealing with the alteration or extension of a listed building, the emphasis should be on achieving minimum intervention. Where alterations or extensions can be made in line with this concept, the use of the correct materials, techniques and methods will not only preserve the character, but should enhance it.

7.5.14. Adherence to certain principles will help to ensure that the character of the building is maintained. These are:

- identifying and respecting the origins of the building;
- understanding the importance of its form, layout, construction techniques, development and materials;

- minimising structural alterations;
- causing minimum disruption to the floor plan of the building, especially those with large open internal spaces;
- ensuring the reversibility of non-structural alterations;
- executing any approved alterations or extensions using appropriate materials and construction techniques;
- preserving the historical features of the building, and not obscuring them with any extensions; and
- avoiding, other than in particularly sensitive circumstances, mimicking the styles of previous architectural periods.

POLICY BE10

Development involving proposals to extend or alter a listed building, or any feature of special architectural or historic interest that contributes to the reasons for its listing, will not be permitted unless it would preserve the building, its setting, and any features of special architectural or historic interest the building possesses.

Change of Use of a Listed Building

7.5.15. As stated above, PPG15 stresses the importance of keeping a listed building in active use, so as to increase its chances of remaining in good condition. Stroud District Council is committed to looking after the District's rich heritage of listed buildings, and the best way of doing this is to ensure that they remain in active use. Stroud District is also an area where considerable development pressure is exerted, and it is important that the best use is made of our historic areas and buildings. It may be possible for new uses to take place in a listed building, which then both keeps the building in use, and prevents the need for the development to take place on a greenfield site instead.

7.5.16. Some of Stroud District's larger listed buildings, particularly those which were originally in commercial rather than residential use, have the potential to contribute to the economic regeneration of parts of the District. It is therefore important that a change of use of a listed building which would bring substantial

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benefits for the community, and enable economic regeneration, is considered positively, and solutions are sought which protect the special interest of the listed building, whilst allowing the change of use to proceed.

7.5.17. This does not mean that any change of use will be acceptable in any listed building. Whilst it is important to maintain a listed building in active use, this must not be at the expense of the special architectural or historic interest which is the reason for the building being listed.

POLICY BE11

A change of use of all or part of a listed building will be permitted if it would preserve the building, its setting, and any features of special architectural or historic interest the building possesses.

Development Affecting the Setting of a Listed Building

7.5.18. Many listed buildings have an intimate and historically or architecturally important relationship with their settings. Inappropriate development within the setting of a listed building can cause as much harm to the special interest of the listed building as an inappropriate alteration or extension to it. In some cases, the setting of the listed building can be quite extensive.

7.5.19. It is important that preserving a less critical element of the setting of a listed building does not in itself prevent development which would otherwise bring substantial benefit for the community. However, it is also the case that necessary development should respect its surroundings, and in particular the setting of any listed building or buildings. This setting would include the relationship of the primary listed building with its curtilage listed buildings, open spaces, and other buildings in the area. Particular consideration must be given to protecting the relationship between the listed building and any space or building which was historically used in association with the primary listed building.

POLICY BE12

A proposal for development that affects the setting of a listed building will only be permitted where it preserves the setting of the affected listed building.

7.6. Archaeology

Central Government Advice

7.6.1. The way archaeological remains and interests should be taken into account by the planning system is explained in PPG16: Archaeology and Planning 1990. Part A emphasises the importance of archaeology, pointing out that archaeological remains are a finite, non-renewable resource which, in many cases, are highly fragile and vulnerable to damage and destruction. It states that where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by proposed development, there should be a presumption in favour of their preservation.

7.6.2. Part B of PPG16 deals with the role of development plans, stating that these should reconcile the need for development with the interests of conservation, including archaeology. It also advises that the desirability of preserving an ancient monument and its setting is a material consideration in determining planning applications, whether that monument is scheduled or unscheduled, and advises on the importance of dealing with archaeological considerations within the development control process. The PPG also provides advice on the processing of planning applications that affect sites with remains of lesser importance and the need for satisfactory arrangements for the excavation, recording and publication of results for such remains.

Gloucestershire County Structure Plan

7.6.3. Policy S6 of the adopted Gloucestershire Structure Plan is also relevant to archaeology. One of the elements which the policy states should be safeguarded is 'the sites and landscapes of archaeological and historical value'. Policies SH1, NHE6 and NHE7 are also relevant.

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Archaeological Sites of National Importance

7.6.4. At present, 68 Archaeological Sites of National Importance within Stroud District are scheduled as Ancient Monuments under the terms of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, as amended by the National Heritage Act 1983. These monuments are set out, together with their parish location and grid reference, in Appendix 5 to this Plan. Not all sites of national importance are scheduled, and English Heritage is undertaking a review of archaeological sites within Gloucestershire. The completion of this project is likely to lead to an increase in the number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments within Stroud District, and Policy BE13 will be applied to these additional sites, as well as ones in existence at the time this Plan is prepared and adopted. An up to date and more comprehensive list of archaeological sites/structures, as well as information on historic landscapes and historic settlements can be found in the County Sites and Monuments Record, held by the Archaeology Service of Gloucestershire County Council.

POLICY BE13

Development will not be permitted where it would involve significant alteration or cause damage to nationally important archaeological remains (whether scheduled or not) or would have a significant impact on the setting of visible remains.

Archaeological Sites of Local Importance

7.6.5. Whilst archaeological sites of national importance should be preserved as a matter of the highest priority, Stroud District also contains a large number of archaeological sites which are of a more local importance. (Details of these sites may be obtained from Gloucestershire County Council.) Whilst these remains should also, where possible, be preserved, it will be necessary to reconcile this preservation with the needs of development. Where proposed development would give rise to substantial benefit for the community, this should not be prevented from taking place by

the existence of archaeological remains of only local importance. However, these remains should still be protected as much as possible, and where archaeological remains or their settings may be affected by a development, applicants should submit an assessment of the archaeological implications of their proposals as part of the planning application. They should also submit details of how the impact of their proposals on the archaeological remains or their settings will be mitigated.

7.6.6. Where the affected archaeological remains or their settings are worthy of recording, development will not normally be permitted until adequate provision has been made and secured through planning conditions or legal agreements for an appropriate programme of archaeological investigation and recording. Its scope will depend on the results of any assessment, and may include survey, excavation, recording or a watching brief, and the analysis, archiving and publication of the results.

POLICY BE14

Development that detrimentally affects archaeological remains of other than national significance will not be permitted unless the importance of the development outweighs the value of the remains.

7.7. Historic Parks and Gardens

Central Government Advice

7.7.1. Government guidance on Historic Parks and Gardens is contained in paragraph 2.24 of PPG15. This states that Local Planning Authorities should protect parks and gardens included in English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest, both in preparing development plans and in determining planning applications. It stresses that the effect of a proposal on a registered park or garden, or its setting, is a material consideration.

Gloucestershire County Structure Plan

7.7.2. Policy NHE 6 of the adopted Gloucestershire Structure Plan is relevant.

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Historic Parks and Gardens in Stroud District

7.7.3. There are currently 14 registered Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Stroud District. These are defined on the Proposals Map, and listed in Appendix 4 to this Plan, together with their grade, parish location and grid reference.

7.7.4. Proposals for development within any of these parks or gardens, or affecting the setting or important view from them, should respect the special historic interest of the affected park or garden, and will not be permitted if they fail to do so. Policy BE15 will be applied to all planning applications which contain proposals for development which affect the historic character, or the setting of any of the parks or gardens listed in the paragraph above, or any park or garden subsequently added to the register.

POLICY BE15

Development which would lead to the loss of, or cause harm to, the historic character, or setting, of any part of an historic park or garden, will not be permitted.

7.8. New Uses for Buildings in the Countryside

Central Government Advice

7.8.1. Government advice on the re-use and adaptation of existing rural buildings is contained in paragraphs 17–18 of PPS7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas. This stresses the important role such re-use can have in meeting the needs of rural areas for commercial and industrial development, tourism, sport and recreation. This role, however, is subject to qualifications. For example, the building must be of permanent and substantial construction, the new use must not lead to undue dispersal of activity, the form, bulk and design must be in keeping with their surroundings, and buildings in the open countryside must be capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction.

7.8.2. PPS7 stresses that residential conversions of such buildings will usually have

little positive impact on the economy, and are often detrimental to the fabric and character of historic buildings. In the open countryside, residential conversions may be controlled in the same way as new housing, especially if the existing building is unsuitable for conversion without extensive alteration, rebuilding or extension, or if the creation of a residential curtilage would have a harmful effect on the character of the countryside.

Gloucestershire County Structure Plan

7.8.3. Policy E 4 of the adopted Gloucestershire Structure Plan states that “Commercial and industrial development in the open countryside will be strictly controlled and restricted to small scale sensitive enterprises which are essential to agriculture or forestry or other rural industries, or which re-use existing buildings in a manner which maintains or enhances the character and appearance of the surroundings”.

Conversion to Non-Residential Use

7.8.4. In Stroud District, the re-use of buildings within, or adjacent to, identified settlements where a village envelope has been defined, for commercial or industrial purposes, can help to provide premises for local employment. Such development is welcomed in these locations. Research commissioned by Stroud District Council on rural employment in 1997 (The Rural Employment Study) has shown that rural businesses within Stroud District tend to draw a high proportion of their employees from the local area. Therefore, where a new business sets up in, or close to, an identified settlement, they will have ready access to a potential workforce. Such enterprises can help to maintain the viability of that settlement, by providing employment, patronage for village shops and pubs at lunchtimes, and removing the need for those workers to leave the settlement to find work. In addition, providing employment close to a reasonable number of dwellings can help to remove, or at least minimise, the need to travel to work, and therefore assist in reducing CO2 emissions in the local area.

7.8.5. However, Stroud District also contains a large number of rural buildings in more remote

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locations, either in the smaller villages or hamlets, or in the open countryside. These buildings are often served by substandard roads, with little or no access to public transport. The conversion of these buildings to employment use would draw employees from further afield, and they will nearly always have to rely on the private car to get to and from work. In cases where the building proposed for conversion is particularly remote, the change of use will also often generate a level of traffic which will adversely affect the character of the countryside. In such cases the benefits of the development will have to clearly outweigh the harm arising from the traffic generated, if permission is to be forthcoming.

POLICY BE16

The re-use and adaptation of a building in a rural area for a commercial, industrial or recreation use will be permitted if all the following criteria are met:

1. the building is of substantial, sound and permanent construction;
2. the form, bulk, and general design of the building is in keeping with its surroundings, and setting within the landscape;
3. the proposed conversion respects local building styles and materials;
4. the traffic to be generated by the new use can be safely accommodated by the site access and the local road system, and will not be detrimental to the rural character of the area;
5. appropriate levels of parking can be provided on site, without detriment to the rural character of the area; and
7. if the building is not in an identified settlement, it is capable of re-use and adaptation without major or complete reconstruction, or major extension.

Conversion into Residential Use

7.8.6. PPS7 advises that, in areas where the creation of local employment is a priority, Local Planning Authorities may include in their development plans policies which do not allow residential re-use unless either attempts have been made to secure a suitable business re-use, or the residential conversion is a

subordinate part of a scheme for business re-use. However, it also states that residential conversions may have a part to play in meeting identified housing needs. In Stroud District, there are cases, as set out above, where business re-use of a rural building would not be acceptable. In some of these cases, a residential re-use may not pose the same problems (for example of traffic generation). However, where the employment or recreational use of a building would comply with Policy BE16, priority will be given to these forms of development and residential conversion will only be considered where there is no prospect of these uses coming forward, or where the residential element is subsidiary to a business use. Gloucestershire First has a property database which may assist in finding businesses for rural buildings, or to advertise buildings available for employment use. The Local Authority will expect a statement of the efforts made to secure alternative uses to accompany any applications for residential conversion.

7.8.7. The conversion of buildings which are located well away from any identified settlement, or public transport route, into residential use, causes problems. As well as possibly detracting from the rural character of the area, such conversions mean that it is certain that the future occupiers will be entirely dependent upon the private car for all journeys, whether for work, school, shopping or leisure. Allowing such conversions would be contrary to the objectives set out in the housing chapter, and in the Structure Plan, which seek to provide new housing in areas where best use can be made of existing facilities, and to minimise CO2 emissions from the use of the private car.

POLICY BE17

The re-use and adaptation of a building in a rural area for residential use will not be permitted unless both the following criteria are met:

1. every reasonable attempt has been made to secure a suitable employment or community re-use for the building; and
2. all the criteria set out in Policy BE16 are met.

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7.8.8. For the purposes of interpreting the above policies (BE16 and BE17), the following explanatory comments should be helpful:-

- Substantial, sound and permanent construction implies a building of stone or brick walls, under a tiled or slated roof. It would not usually include buildings made of wood, metal sheeting, or a single skin of concrete blocks, or roofed with corrugated plastic or metal, or any form of sheeting unless these are suitable for the intended purpose.
- Form, bulk and general design includes the building's size, layout, design features, materials, and appearance within the natural and built environment.
- An identified settlement means a settlement having a boundary defined on the Proposals Map accompanying this Plan.

7.9. Design and Town Centre Uses

7.9.1. Policies on the location of development within town centres is included in the Town Centres chapter. However, it is also relevant to consider design issues relating to retail development and other town centre uses. Many of the District's town centres are partly within Conservation areas, and these issues are therefore covered to some extent in the earlier section of this chapter dealing with Conservation Areas. However, all town centres, whether in a Conservation Area or not, must provide a high quality environment if they are to continue to be places that people wish to visit. The design of shops, their signs and advertisements, and the relationship of the proposed development to its surroundings are important elements in the appearance and visual amenity of shopping areas and can assist in adding to their vitality.

7.9.2. The following policies are aimed at improving the visual appearance of proposals so that, together with other policies, they help towards the revitalisation of shopping areas. The following policies should be read in conjunction with the District Council's supplementary planning guidance 'Shop Fronts and Advertisements - A Guide To Design Policies' which gives a more detailed explanation of the standards by which the District Council will consider applications.

7.9.3. Individual buildings, by virtue of their size, siting and design have a significant effect on the overall street scene. The design of proposals for retail development should have proper regard to the relationship with the surroundings and should where appropriate, develop and enhance local character. Existing features of value, such as trees and rights of way, should be safeguarded and enhanced where appropriate. Designs which add interest and variety and which reflect local context will be encouraged. These are all elements which should be taken into account in ensuring that any proposal for new retail development complies with Policies BE2 and BE3.

Shop fronts

7.9.4. Shop fronts can help create an interesting and attractive street level environment if carefully designed and integrated into the architectural style of the building. Proposals should have regard to the proportion, scale and overall design of existing buildings and should take account of the design features of neighbouring shop fronts to ensure the development will fit in with the character of the street scene.

POLICY BE18

Planning permission for new or replacement shop fronts will be granted where the proposal is sympathetic to the architectural style and materials of the building and contributes to the enhancement of its surroundings in scale and proportion, materials, style and general appearance.

Advertisements

7.9.5. Advertisements, discreetly sited and thoughtfully designed, can make a lively contribution to the street scene. However, many advertisements are poorly conceived and insensitively located. The number and design of advertisements on shops should assist with the identification of the premises, but not be detrimental to the visual amenities of a building or area.

7.9.6. Internally illuminated signs and advertisements will not be permitted in Conservation Areas, unless the character or appearance of the area is preserved or

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enhanced and in all circumstances will only be permitted where the signs are not detrimental to their surroundings. Details of the location, position, dimensions of the sign face, method of illumination and the maximum luminance will be required and planning permission will be appropriately conditioned.

POLICY BE19

Consent for the display of an advertisement will be granted where the proposed advertisement meets all the following criteria:

1. it is sympathetic in style, siting, materials, location and design and where appropriate, illumination, to the building or location on which it is displayed;
2. it relates satisfactorily to existing signs and does not result in a cluttered appearance; and
3. it does not prejudice public safety.

Security Measures

7.9.7. Increasing levels of crime and vandalism have led to many businesses taking measures to improve security. A number of options are used, including video surveillance, alarm systems, alterations to window designs, use of laminated glass, provision of removable external grilles, internal shutters and external roller shutters of various designs.

7.9.8. Whilst some of these measures have little impact on the appearance of a building, others can have a significant impact both individually and collectively on the street scene. Security grilles and shutters can be highly intrusive and damaging to the appearance of an area. External grilles and shutters have the greatest impact on the street scene, with perforated or slotted shutters being less damaging than solid shutters. Internal lattice grilles are the least damaging, allowing window displays and lighting to remain visible.

7.9.9. Planning permission will normally be required for external grilles and shutters. Whether shutters and grilles are acceptable will depend on the balance between their impact on the individual building and the character of an area and the need for security.

It will not normally be appropriate to erect external solid shutters on buildings within a Conservation Area.

POLICY BE20

External security grilles and shutters will only be permitted where both the following criteria are met:

1. the need for security outweighs the impact on the individual building, the local area and the vitality of the shopping area; and
1. security cannot be provided by the use of internal grilles or shutters.

Perforated shutters and grilles should be used except where these would provide inadequate security and the additional impact of solid shutters is acceptable. Measures should be taken where possible to minimise the visual impact of the shutters and grilles.

7.10. Renewable Energy

Central Government Advice

7.10.1. Government advice on renewable energy is contained in PPS22: Renewable Energy, 2004 together with a Companion Guide. The PPS stresses the national importance of developing sources of renewable energy. The Government has already set a target to generate 10% of UK electricity from renewable energy sources by 2010 and to cut its carbon dioxide emissions by some 60% by 2050. It suggests that development plans should consider the contribution the particular District can make to meeting need on a local, regional and national basis. Increased development of renewable energy resources is vital to facilitating the delivery of the Governments commitments on both climate change and renewable energy. The PPS points out that permitting renewable energy projects can make an important contribution to the national economy, and can help to meet our international commitments on limiting greenhouse gas emissions.

7.10.2. The PPS does not rule out any areas for developing renewable energy, but does state that particular care should be taken in assessing proposals for renewable energy

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projects in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), areas of archaeological or historic importance, and on the coast (in addition to National Parks and the Broads). In assessing proposals in these areas, the Central Government's policy on the importance of renewable energy needs to be balanced with the need to take full account of the specific features or qualities which justified designation.

Gloucestershire County Structure Plan

7.10.3. The adopted Gloucestershire Structure Plan deals with renewable energy. It stresses the general environmental benefits associated with the harnessing of renewable energy. Where conditions are suitable, Stroud District should contribute to Gloucestershire's emerging sub regional target of 40-50MW by 2010. This contribution should reflect the nature and extent of resources in the Stroud area, and other relevant planning considerations. Small-scale developments could be permitted within Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty provided that there is no significant environmental detriment to the area concerned.

Renewable Energy in Stroud District

7.10.4. Stroud District is an area with potential for the harnessing of various types of renewable energy. However, it is also an area of very attractive landscapes, high nature conservation interest, archaeological and historic interest. A careful balance therefore needs to be struck in deciding where, and in what circumstances, schemes for renewable energy will be permitted.

7.10.5. One wind turbine has already been permitted and erected in the District, within the Cotswolds AONB. This involved a consideration of the balance between the need for renewable energy, and the harm done to the landscape, and areas of historic interest; namely the setting of a Conservation Area and listed buildings. The upland areas of Stroud District are naturally windy places, and may be suited to the further harnessing of wind energy. Another area with potential is the Severn estuary. However, both these include nationally designated areas (AONB and RAMSAR site).

Any further applications would therefore have to prove that they will not have an unacceptable impact on the specific features or qualities which justified designation.

7.10.6. Stroud District also contains a number of watercourses, ranging from the River Severn to small streams, some of which may be suitable for the production of hydro-electric power. Planning permission has already been granted for one such scheme, on the River Frome at Ebley, although it has yet to be implemented. This is in a Conservation Area, with considerable wildlife interest, and affects a river which is very prone to flooding. Again, all these issues had to be resolved, and balanced against the need for renewable energy, in reaching a decision. The same will need to be true of further applications for harnessing water power.

7.10.7. Other forms of renewable energy are also available, and may be exploited within Stroud District to a greater level than is currently the case. These range from major schemes, such as the harnessing of tidal power, to the burning of biomass and the erection of solar panels.

POLICY BE21

Proposals enabling the harnessing of renewable energy will be permitted provided the following criteria are met:

1. there is no adverse visual impact on the Cotswold AONB;
2. there is no adverse effect on sites of nature conservation or heritage conservation interest, or areas or facilities of special importance for tourism and recreation;
3. there is no unacceptable adverse effect on the amenities of local residents.
4. the proposal is accompanied by adequate information to indicate the extent of possible environmental effects and how they can be satisfactorily mitigated.

7.11. Telecommunications

Central Government Advice

7.11.1. Government advice on telecommunications is contained in PPG8:

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Telecommunications 1992. The PPG states that modern telecommunications are an essential and beneficial element in the life of the local community and in the national economy. However, it also stresses the need for a balance to be struck between the needs of the telecommunications industry and environmental objectives, including the protection of the countryside. In recent years the Government has clarified this by issuing statements urging mast-sharing by telecommunications operators in order to reduce the proliferation of individual masts.

Telecommunications in Stroud District

7.11.2. The main issue relating to telecommunications in Stroud District is the visual impact of masts, particularly in areas of open countryside. The Plan seeks to encourage mast-sharing in order to reduce the numbers of masts. It also seeks to encourage the use of slimmer, less visually intrusive structures, and the selection of less prominent sites. The Council is concerned about the potential proliferation of redundant masts and will include a condition on any permission to the effect that, where a mast is no longer required, it should be removed within a reasonable time.

POLICY BE22

Proposals for new telecommunications development will be permitted provided that all the following criteria are met:

1. it does not have an unacceptable impact on the landscape, particularly in areas designated for the importance of their landscape, or on areas or buildings of historic interest;
2. if the proposal is for a new antenna, it is to share an existing mast, or is in an area where no such mast exists or the possibility of sharing an existing mast has been fully investigated, and found not to be technically feasible; and
3. if the proposal is for a new mast, it is for the least obtrusive mast possible, and is in the least visually intrusive location possible.