

0. GENERAL OBJECTIONS

0.1 GENERAL OBJECTIONS RELATING TO THE PLAN

The Objections

Plan/320/0978	Country Land & Business Association
Plan/397/1330	Stroud District Task Force
Plan/397/1323	Stroud District Task Force
Plan/397/1321	Stroud District Task Force
Plan/232/0622	Gloucester No1 Circuit of Jehovah's Witnesses

Summary of Objections

- (a) A local plan that balances environmental, social and economic considerations is vital for the success of the District. Policies should not be worded negatively.
- (b) The potential for a standard system of impact fees for smaller developments with a contribution to urban regeneration should be explored.
- (c) It is not clear how some of the site-specific proposals and those relating to the built environment, relate to sound ecological and urban design principles.
- (d) The potential for neighbourhood regeneration initiatives should be further explored.
- (e) The Plan does not address the needs of minority religious groups for places of worship.

Inspector's Reasoning and Conclusions

0.1.1 I note the Objector's comments regarding the need to ensure that the Plan balances environmental, social and economic considerations and I consider that the policies in the Plan will help to achieve this aim, taking into account any material considerations. However, I do not agree that all policies in the Plan should be worded positively or that the policy wording should state "will be permitted...provided that" with appropriate criteria. Policies which are restrictive should generally not be phrased positively and those which are promotional should not be phrased negatively. This is in accordance with best planning practice, for example, that set out in 'Better Local Plans'¹. The Council has tried to word the policies as positively as possible, in the light of the subject matter and local circumstances, depending on whether the authority is generally seeking to encourage or discourage development through a particular policy. Also, the Plan should be read as a whole, with any one policy being read together with other relevant contents in the Plan. This will ensure that any proposal is assessed against all the policies that are relevant to it and that there is no danger that the criteria in one policy will be taken as the only test of acceptability.

0.1.2 A standard system of impact fees for smaller developments which could be used to contribute towards urban regeneration would require legislation. The Local Plan is not the appropriate medium through which this issue should be explored.

¹ "Better Local Plans – A Guide to Writing Effective Policies" published by the Planning Officers Society, October 1997, with assistance in its compilation from the Royal Town Planning Institute and Government Offices in the Regions.

0.1.3 In relation to issue (c), there will be opportunities to achieve the application of sound urban design and ecological principles during the consideration of site-specific development proposals at the planning application stage of development. Such applications would be assessed against relevant Policies in the Plan, which provides a framework for this purpose. Policies in the Built Environment and Natural Environment Chapters would be particularly relevant.

0.1.4 Regeneration cuts across many areas of local government and requires a corporate approach at various levels. A local plan is essentially concerned with land-use and it can only complement and contribute to an authority's wider corporate strategy rather than attempt to convey the whole of it. The Council's regeneration focus has traditionally been on town centres and the local plan has incorporated relevant land-use aspects in that respect. However, I understand that the potential to explore neighbourhood regeneration initiatives in the District does exist and that the Council is prioritising this as part of the Council's corporate work. For example, the Council is working with others to develop a Local Strategic Partnership and is producing a Community Strategy, including a regeneration theme, in line with the Government's local agenda. This will include the development of schemes under the Market and Coastal Town initiative and the Rural Renaissance. The work being undertaken meets the general thrust of the objection.

0.1.5 The Revised Deposit Plan has provided an opportunity to overcome the objection to the lack of adequate provision in the Plan for places of worship, through the inclusion of a reference to community facilities in Policy S13 and paragraph 6.16.2. This is in accordance with paragraph 4.13 of PPG12, which advises local planning authorities to consider the relationship of planning policies and proposals to social needs and problems, including their likely impact on different groups in the population such as ethnic minorities and religious groups. Paragraph 4.14 of PPG12 also states that "Plans should also make provision for schools and higher education, health facilities and places of worship." I sympathise with the difficulties highlighted by the Objector in obtaining suitable places of worship. The Objector has not identified a specific site for allocation in the Plan, but I am satisfied that the amendments to Policy S13 would allow the proper consideration of any proposals for places of worship, requiring planning permission, that might come forward in the Plan period.

RECOMMENDATION 0.1

Make no modification to the Plan in response to these objections.