

## 5.1. Introduction

**5.1.1.** Housing is a key issue for the Local Plan and this chapter sets out the amount and location of additional housing land to be provided, together with policies which seek to control residential development both within and outside the defined urban areas and settlement boundaries.

**5.1.2.** Housing land requirements are based largely on projections of population and household formation information. At mid 1991 there were some 104,200 people residing in the Plan area. Forecasts suggest that the total population is likely to be 110,400 by 2011.

**5.1.3.** The most notable forecast trends for the District, based on the latest figures issued by the Government Office for the South-West are set out below:-

- A decline in the number of children in the District - particularly in the latter half of the Plan period.
- A gradual decline in 'young workers' (16 to 24) up until 2001 when the trend reverses with an increase before levelling out again at the end of the Plan period.
- A sharp decline in those of working age group (25 to 44).
- A substantial increase in the older working age group (45 to 64). The size of the workforce is affected, however, by other considerations such as early retirement.
- An increase in the retired population (65+) with a fairly substantial increase in the latter part of the Plan period.
- A continuing increase in the number of small households, particularly one person households.

**Table 5.1: Stroud District Local Plan Area Population Projections**

Ages	0-15	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Total
1996	21.7	10.4	29.5	27.7	18.8	108.1
2001	21.5	9.8	28.5	29.6	19.5	108.9
2006	20.3	10.7	26.9	31.2	20.5	109.6
2011	19.4	10.8	25.4	32.0	22.8	110.4

Source: ONS 1996 Sub-National Population Projections (Consultation Document).

## 5.2. Objectives

1. To ensure that sufficient housing land is made available which allows housing development to proceed in line with Structure Plan requirements and Central Government Advice.

2. To release sites for new residential development which will not substantially affect the character or functioning of existing settlements or surrounding countryside and which are properly located to take account of employment, environment, infrastructure, public transport and traffic considerations.
3. To phase the release of sites to ensure that best use is made of previously used land, and that a continuous supply of housing land is available throughout the Plan period.
4. To enable the provision of affordable housing at appropriate locations, in order to meet the needs of those people not able to compete easily in the existing housing market, and to ensure that the existing stock of affordable housing is maintained.
5. To ensure that housing development is concentrated in the District's urban areas and principal settlements, and that the best use is made of land in sustainable locations.
6. To ensure that housing development in the District's rural areas meets local needs, is sustainable, and enhances the character of its surroundings.
7. To encourage the bringing into efficient use of empty and underused property, particularly close to the District's town centres.
8. To ensure that extensions to properties respect the original dwelling, and do not detract from the character of their surroundings.

## 5.3. Central Government Advice

**5.3.1.** Planning for housing is introduced in PPG1: General Policy and Principles 1997 which says that, in preparing development plans, authorities should consider the land-use requirements of various types of social provision. For housing, the key objectives for the location of development and the allocation of land are:

- (a) to ensure that the planning system identifies an adequate and continuous supply of housing land which is both available and sustainable;
- (b) to make effective use of land in urban areas by allocating the maximum amount of housing to previously developed sites in larger urban areas;
- (c) outside urban or village areas, to provide land for housing in locations which are, or will be, well served by public transport and with good access to employment and a range of services;
- (d) to provide a mixture and range of types of housing to meet the increasingly varied types of housing requirements; and
- (e) to ensure that housing is available where jobs are created.

**5.3.2.** PPG3: Housing 1992 stresses the need for the re-use of urban land, particularly derelict or under-used land, as a means of relieving pressure in the countryside and also stresses the importance of local choice, through the Local Plan process, in deciding how to meet the needs for new housing development. PPG3 makes it clear that the provision of affordable housing is relevant to planning and, where a need exists, it should be addressed in Local Plans. PPG3 states that it may be desirable for new development on a substantial scale to incorporate a reasonable mix and balance of house types and sizes to cater for a range of needs. It goes on to state that where there is a lack of affordable housing to meet local needs, planning authorities may seek to negotiate with developers for the inclusion of an element of affordable housing in schemes, and may include policies in Local Plans to this effect.

**5.3.3.** Government Circular 6/98: Planning and Affordable Housing states that affordable housing is a material planning consideration which may properly be taken into account in formulating development plan policies. Whilst the primary objective will be to ensure that there is enough land to meet the agreed needs in terms of numbers, local planning authorities should also ensure that there is a mix of dwelling types and sizes - whether through new house building or conversions - to cater for a range of housing needs; and should encourage the development of mixed and balanced communities in order to avoid areas of social exclusion. The Circular states that, where there is evidence of need for affordable housing, Local Plans should include a policy seeking an element of such housing on suitable sites. It is stressed in the Circular that the term 'affordable housing' encompasses both low cost market and subsidised housing that will be available to people who cannot afford to rent or buy houses available on the open market.

#### **5.4. South West Regional Guidance (RPG10)**

**5.4.1.** The current South West Regional Planning Guidance was produced in July 1994 in response to the strategic advice submitted to the Secretary of State by the South West Regional Planning Conference.

**5.4.2.** The RPG indicates an annual average figure of 1,650 dwellings for Gloucestershire or 53,000 dwellings over the period 1991-2011. RPG10 states that the figures should be a major consideration in formulating housing provision in Structure Plans, but they should not be regarded as inflexible targets or precise requirements for each year.

**5.4.3.** The RPG advises that the bulk of new housing development should be concentrated in and

around the main urban areas, where future employment, shopping and leisure development will be focused. The best use of land within existing urban areas needs to be balanced with the protection of the historic built environment and of valuable recreational and amenity space.

**5.4.4.** In rural areas the RPG advises that emphasis should be placed on providing for housing in locations that are within or well related to settlements that have or can provide an adequate range of employment opportunities and community services. The RPG recognises that in some areas there is a dispersed settlement pattern of small towns and villages and that there may be less scope in these locations to serve development by public transport. Therefore, it may be necessary to consider to what extent development pressures can be accommodated or to examine the potential for encouraging the improved provision of public transport. The RPG also contains advice on the need for affordable housing.

#### **5.5. Housing Location Strategy**

**5.5.1.** The Council's housing location strategy builds upon the framework set by national, regional and strategic policy guidance. In particular, it interprets the Gloucestershire County Structure Plan policies to provide site specific locations for future housing growth in Stroud District.

**5.5.2.** The focus for growth is the central Severn Vale. The boundaries of the central Severn Vale are not defined in the Structure Plan. The guidance in Structure Plan Policy H4 prioritises development: *'within Gloucester and Cheltenham and then to locations adjacent or close by that are or can be easily and conveniently accessed by means of transport other than the private car.'*

**5.5.3.** This suggests a boundary that could change over the plan period in response to the provision of public transport. However, for the purposes of allocating land now, it effectively requires the first priority for any allocations in Stroud District to be adjacent to Gloucester where existing public transport may be supplemented and improved by new provision.

**5.5.4.** The next priority in searching for sites as set out in the Structure Plan is within and adjacent to the existing towns of Stroud/Stonehouse. These towns, and the wider area of the Stroud valleys, provide a good mix of employment, shops, services and a focus for public transport. It is the Council's view that the most sustainable housing development should and can take place at the heart of this area, as close as possible to the town centre of Stroud. This is an important part of the District Council's

strategy in encouraging and enabling the regeneration of the town centre. In the wider area of the Stroud valleys, the landscape setting may be compromised if this area was to take a greater proportion of development than that identified through the Local Plan allocations.

In addition, development to the west of Stroud and Stonehouse is unlikely to provide the same impetus to regeneration of Stroud, being further removed from the central focus of services and public transport facilities. It is possible that it may also draw resources away from the town centre where they are most needed.

**5.5.5.** The third level of a settlement hierarchy in Stroud District requires the identification of other settlements where development should only be provided if environmental and other constraints can be accommodated satisfactorily. Dursley and Cam are the focus for employment and services in the southern part of the District. Thus they are identified as principal settlements capable of accommodating a reasonable level of growth consistent with the character and function of the settlements. Development should also support local services and the economic and social well-being of their local communities. and fulfill this role. Housing development is allocated to previously developed sites, as close to the Dursley town centre as possible, to assist in its regeneration. However, Dursley is constrained considerably by the AONB. Therefore, further growth is allowed for at Cam, well related to the provision of employment, the Cam and Dursley Railway Station and other local services.

**5.5.6.** Finally, there are smaller settlements that play an important role as local employment and/or service centres. In many of these, shops and services are struggling to survive. The situation is worsened by decreasing household size leading to declining populations in the villages. Simply put, this means there are less people to sustain village shops and services.

**5.5.7.** The Council is concerned about the loss of employment and services in these centres. In addition, it is increasingly difficult for the indigenous population to compete in the housing market in the rural areas. Therefore, small allocations of housing development are proposed to bolster the role of these centres. It is the Council's intention that sites allocated for housing development in villages will mostly contain high levels of affordable housing to help address this problem. Scope for large scale development in these settlements is limited by landscape, topography and other environmental constraints.

## **5.6.Role of Previously Developed Land**

**5.6.1.** In line with national, regional and strategic guidance, this Local Plan places great weight on the advantages of using previously developed land for new development ahead of greenfield sites. In the preparation of the Plan, and in producing information for the National Land Use Database, a large number of sites have been considered in terms of their development potential including many previously developed sites.

**5.6.2.** However, it has to be acknowledged that in a predominantly rural area such as Stroud District, the potential is far less than in more urban areas. It is not merely the fact that there is not so much derelict and under-used land. A large proportion of the land that has been considered remains in productive use and forms the base for industrial employment in the District. Much is not currently 'available' for development and it is not possible to predict the economic fortunes of individual businesses that may lead to the future release of sites. If such land were to be turned over to housing then either the workplaces displaced would need to be provided on employment sites elsewhere in the District - probably on greenfield land - or more people would seek work outside the District with an inevitable increase in the need to travel. Neither of these consequences fit within the desire to plan for sustainable development.

**5.6.3.** Therefore, whenever possible, previously developed land has been allocated for future housing needs, but not at the expense of the unacceptable loss of employment land. It is the intention of the Plan to see as much previously developed land as possible redeveloped before greenfield land is used. To that end phasing policies are introduced later in this section that seek to ensure that, as far as is possible and reasonable, greenfield sites are only developed after the redevelopment of previously used sites.

## **5.7. Housing Land Requirements**

**5.7.1.** The Local Plan has been drawn up within the framework of the Structure Plan, which includes the proposal that provision be made for the accommodation of about 9,400 new dwellings within Stroud District in the period 1991-2011.

## **5.8.Unidentified Sites - 'Windfalls'**

**5.8.1.** Central Government advice acknowledges that housing land availability assessments may include an allowance for the development of small unidentified sites of less than 0.4 hectares. This includes small infill sites, residential conversions, redevelopment of residential and employment sites and the conversion of redundant agricultural

# STROUD DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN: DRAFT FOR DEPOSIT - NOVEMBER 1999

## 5. HOUSING

buildings. Therefore, a high proportion of such development, commonly known as 'windfall sites', occurs on previously used land.

**5.8.2.** Whilst every effort has been made to identify sites of more than 0.4 hectares, a further allowance can be made for unidentified sites of up to 1 hectare where past experience provides clear evidence that more sites in this range are likely to emerge than can be individually identified in advance. In allocating land for development the Structure Plan indicates that the continuing potential yield from such windfall sites should be taken into account.

**5.8.3.** It is difficult to assess accurately the number of windfalls under this definition that have come forward since 1991 in Stroud District. The absence of an adopted Local Plan has meant there were few allocations during this period except those made in the 1994 Deposit Local Plan. As a consequence, almost any housing development, regardless of size, may be regarded as a windfall. Therefore, the table below indicates the number of houses given permission on sites since mid 1991 **excluding the allocations made in the Deposit Version Local Plan 1994:**

**Table 5.2: New Consents for Windfall Developments 1991- 1997**

Year	No.of consents
1998	184
1997	197
1996	248
1995	*150
1994	*149
1993	269
1992	260
1991	396

**Note:** \*These lower figures reflect that allocations were made in the Deposit Version of the Local Plan in November 1994.

**5.8.4.** It is obvious that a much higher level of windfalls have come forward over recent years than the allowance made for in the Structure Plan, which is for about 100 dwellings provided as windfalls per year in the Stroud District. However, the allocations in this Plan include a number of previously developed sites that would formerly have come forward as windfalls. In addition, the rate of windfall provision is anticipated to fall as the availability of suitable sites for redevelopment, infill or conversion reduces. Therefore, rather than use the rate of past windfall provision as a guide to future provision, the Council has adopted the County Council's approach of making an allowance for small sites only. For the remaining plan period (from 1 January 1999 to 30

June 2011) an allowance for windfalls of 1230 dwellings is made. However, the contributions that windfall sites make to land supply for housing will be monitored closely. Should it be necessary, this estimate will be changed in future in accordance with the results of monitoring studies.

**5.8.5.** Some sites in the District have the benefit of planning consent subject to the signing of Section 106 Legal Agreements (at 1 January 1999). The largest of these are:-

**Table 5.3: Sites with Planning Consent Subject to Section 106 Legal Agreements**

Longfords Mill, Minchinhampton	73 dwellings
Mawdsleys, Uley Rd, Dursley	75 dwellings
Former Graham's Builders yard, Cheapside, Stroud	30 dwellings
Opp. Stonehouse Court Hotel, Stonehouse	60 dwellings
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>238 dwellings</b>

**5.8.6.** The District Council takes the view that these sites, together with the allocations made within the Plan area, will ensure a reasonable supply of housing will continue to come forward during the Plan period.

**Table 5.4: Housing Land Provision 1991-2011**

	No. of dwellings
Completions mid 1991 to 31/12/98	3,045
Commitments (Planning Permissions valid at 31/12/98)	1,795
Windfalls (unidentified sites contribution 1/1/99 - 30/6/2011)	1,230
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>6,070</b>
Housing allocations in the Local Plan	3,390
Sites subject to Section 106 Legal Agreements	238
<b>Total Provision</b>	<b>9,698</b>
Structure Plan Requirement	<b>about 9,400</b>

**5.8.7.** The Council is mindful of the word 'about' in the Structure Plan and the need to be flexible in its interpretation. The Local Plan therefore proposes an over-provision on the Structure Plan requirements of approximately 3.4%.