Stroud District Council

ENVIRONMENTAL APPRAISAL

STROUD DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN

REVISED DEPOSIT

OCTOBER 2000

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Directorate of Development and Leisure

ENVIRONMENTAL APPRAISAL

1. Introduction

The overall purpose of this appraisal is to indicate the extent to which environmental concerns have been integrated into the preparation of the Stroud District Local Plan. The Government considers that the planning system and in particular the preparation of development plans can contribute to the objectives of ensuring that development and growth are sustainable. It requires all local authorities to carry out a full environmental appraisal of their development plan to ensure that it incorporates the principles of sustainable development (PPG12: Development Plans, January 2000).

The Government's approach to sustainable development is set out in 'A Better Quality of Life – A Strategy for Sustainable Development in the UK' (1999). The Strategy is based on four broad objectives:

- Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
- Effective protection of the environment
- Prudent use of natural resources
- Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment

To help meet these objectives, Government guidance recently introduced the requirement for environmental appraisal to encompass social and economic issues as well as environmental concerns (Paragraph 4.16, PPG12).

This appraisal is based on the former Department of the Environment's good practice guide on environmental appraisal and development plans, requirements of PPG12 and examples of best practice from other local planning authorities. The good practice guide sets out the value and purpose of environmental appraisal:

- to clarify the environmental objectives of the Plan;
- to understand the implications for the environment of any policy option, or interacting group of policy options;
- to enable the implications for different, wide ranging, and potentially conflicting aspects of the environment to be taken into account;
- to demonstrate to users of the plan how the policies have regard to environmental matters.

(Environmental Appraisal and Development Plans: A Good Practice Guide, DoE, 1993)

2. Scoping the Plan

The first step of the appraisal process involves a scoping exercise to ensure that the plan embraces the right scope of policies and proposals to achieve sustainable development. The scope for the Plan was defined using the Planning Policy Guidance Notes that set out the Government's policies on different aspects of planning, including environmental issues. This scope was used to inform the content of the plan and then used as a checklist to ensure the actual Plan reflected the defined scope.

3. Compatibility Matrix

The second step of the process is a consistency analysis to test whether the plan's aims are compatible with each other. The results of this analysis are shown in the Compatibility Matrix (Table 1), together with a list of the Plan's aims. Table 1 illustrates that the aims are compatible with each other.

TABLE 1: COMPATIBILITY MATRIX

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Plan's Aims
	✔	•	•	•	✔	✔	•	•	•	•	1
		✔	✔	✔	•	✔	✔	✔	•	•	2
			•	•	•	✔	•	•	•	•	3
				✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	•	4
					•	✔	✔	✔	•	•	5
						✔	•	✔	✔	•	6
							✔	✔	✔	✔	7
								•	•	✔	8
									✔	•	9
										•	10
											11

Key:

✔	Compatible	**X**	Incompatible
•	No Direct Relationship	**?**	Unknown

Aims of the Plan:

1. To enable the economic prosperity of the District by increasing the choice and diversity of employment opportunities within the District.
2. To accommodate the anticipated levels of growth of development in a sustainable way.
3. To provide for all housing needs across the District.
4. To make full and effective use of existing infrastructure and community facilities and services.
5. To make full and effective use of land that has previously been developed.
6. To meet community needs and priorities for infrastructure, services and facilities.
7. To reinforce the role of the District's towns and key villages by enhancing their vitality and viability.
8. To protect and enhance the character of the District's natural and built environment.
9. To contribute to the efficient use of energy both in new development and transport use by providing increased opportunities to reduce the need to travel.
10. To improve the social and cultural opportunities for the community.
11. To ensure the high quality of design in development proposals.

4. Policy Appraisal

The third step of the process is the policy appraisal. This involved the assessment of individual local plan policies against a set of environmental criteria. Table 2 sets out the environmental criteria. These criteria are based upon those set out in the DoE's Good Practice Guide and are expanded to include social and economic criteria to reflect the full range of issues encompassed within the concept of sustainability. In defining the categories of stock for the purposes of this environmental appraisal, consideration has been given to the need to:

- identify all significant aspects of the environment on which land use plans can impact;
- distinguish clearly between these so that their use will be informative; and
- keep the number of components in the stock to as few as possible to keep the process manageable.

Table 2 forms a checklist against which policies can be examined to see if they will have a negative or positive impact on the environment. Table 3 sets out the policy impact matrix. This allows the impact of each policy on each aspect of the environmental stock to be identified. Positive impacts are shown by a '/', negative impacts by a 'x' and no significant relationship or impact by '*'. Where an impact is unknown or unpredictable a '?' is used. The appraisal is based on judgements about the relationship between each policy and environmental criterion.

TABLE 2: ENVIRONMENTAL STOCK CRITERIA

Global Sustainability

Criteria	Significance	Indicators
Transport	Motorised transport accounts for one third of the UK's energy consumption and 20-25% of all carbon dioxide emissions. Planning has potential to reduce transport carbon dioxide emissions through locational policies aimed to reduce trip length and number of trips. Provision of convenient, safe and attractive cycle and pedestrian routes can influence the level of car use for local trips. Public transport plays an important role in reducing car dependency.	• Trip length • Number of motorised trips • Public transport access • Pedestrian and cycle access
Energy Use	Buildings are major consumers of energy and account for half of UK carbon dioxide emissions. Planning can encourage more efficient use of energy through the siting of buildings, their layout and density, design and reuse of materials. Renewable energy sources (wind, tidal, wave, eater, geothermal and biofuel) can be exploited to provide a substitute for fossil fuels avoiding significant carbon dioxide emissions. Planning can encourage exploitation or safeguard potential.	• Energy efficiency of buildings • Re-use of materials • Renewable energy potential
Carbon Dioxide Fixing	Plants play an important role in maintaining steady levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Planning can protect existing tree cover and promote new planting as part of developments to offset carbon dioxide emissions resulting from energy use by transport, industry and housing.	• Tree cover • Other vegetative cover
Biodiversity	Encouraging biodiversity in urban and rural areas through protection of habitats and species, including designated wildlife sites, and protection of other natural features of importance to wildlife. Wildlife is important for aesthetic, recreational and sustainability reasons. Form and layout of development, as well as its location can influence biodiversity.	• Designated sites • Other features important to wildlife • Biodiversity

Natural Resources

Criteria	Significance	Indicators
Air	Atmospheric pollutants have negative impacts on the local environment and global sustainability. Vehicular traffic and industry are the main sources of pollution. Planning through locational policies and traffic management influences level and impact of pollutants arising from industry and traffic.	• Carbon dioxide emissions • Local air quality
Water	Water is essential to life. An appropriate level of water supply and quality is important not only for human consumption and wildlife but also for domestic, industrial and recreational use. Planning impacts on water supply and quality through nature and location of development and the pattern of recreational use.	• Quality of water courses • Water conservation
Land & Soil	It is important to retain good quality agricultural land for food production and to safeguard land against contamination and dereliction. Planning plays a key role in encouraging the re-use of brownfield sites that are often contaminated or derelict.	• Safeguarding good quality agricultural land • Soil quality • Contamination and dereliction
Minerals & Waste	Husbanding of key mineral resources is a key sustainability goal. Planning has influence directly through development control and indirectly through the amount and nature of development, the encouragement of reuse and the promotion of recycling.	• Consumption of minerals • Recycling of buildings, land or reuse of materials

TABLE 2: ENVIRONMENTAL STOCK CRITERIA (CONT.)

Local Environment

Criteria	Significance	Indicators
Landscape & Countryside	Development may encroach on valued landscapes and open countryside including designated areas of particular landscape importance. The character of the landscape is important to the economic well being of the area particularly tourism and valued by residents requiring protection and enhancement.	• Countryside character • Conservation and enhancement of the AONB • Protection of Special Landscape Area and Areas of High Quality Landscape
Built Environment	Environmental factors such as noise, smells and health and safety influence the quality of life for people. Development control can influence these factors. The built environment contributes to the environmental quality of an area and can be influenced by urban design.	• Noise or air pollution • Safety and sense of security • Townscape quality
Cultural Heritage	Development may enhance or harm protected buildings, conservation areas or sites of archaeological value. It can impact on the history of a place and special significance people attach to it.	• Impact on Listed buildings and conservation areas • Protection of Scheduled Ancient Monuments and archaeological remains
Open Space	Countryside provides important opportunities for informal recreation. Formal recreational land and open spaces in towns and villages are important for their visual and ecological qualities as well as recreation. Planning can help protect these areas and retain public access to them.	• Quality and availability of land for informal and formal recreation opportunities • Public access

Economic and Social

Criteria	Significance	Indicators
Housing	Provision of adequate level and choice of housing to meet the needs of the resident and migrant population. Mix in size and tenure can be encouraged through the Plan. Planning can help meet housing need through the provision of affordable housing.	• Affordability • Supply
Equality of Opportunities	Ensuring equality of access to housing, facilities, services and resources for different groups. Developments can put pressure on existing facilities or generate a need for new facilities. Developers may be required to address the implications of their development.	• Community facilities • Social equity • Optimise use of developer contributions • Public transport provision
Economy	Ensuring a diverse range of local employment opportunities through the provision of employment land to help reduce levels of unemployment in urban and rural areas.	• Employment land and infrastructure • Rural employment opportunities
Vitality of Centres	Town centres are important focuses for retailing, services, employment and public transport.	• Mix and range of uses • Attractiveness • Accessibility

TABLE 2: ENVIRONMENTAL STOCK CRITERIA (CONT.)

Economic and Social (cont.)

Criteria	Significance	Indicators
Health	Human health conditions can be influenced by air and water quality. Opportunities for formal and informal recreation as well as walking and cycling can help promote a healthy lifestyle.	• Air quality • Water quality • Recreational facilities • Pedestrian and cycle access
Communities	Support the vitality of rural and urban communities by promoting self-sufficiency through the protection of existing and provision of new community facilities, shops, services and employment opportunities. Affordable housing provision plays an important role in allowing people to live in areas where they were raised. Sympathetic development and good quality design can help promote a sense of pride within communities.	• Community facilities • Shops and services • Employment opportunities • Affordable housing • Sympathetic design