

2.1. Part of a Corporate Purpose

2.1.1. Stroud District Council's overriding purpose is defined in its Business Plan 1999-2000 as:-

to make the Stroud District a better place to live and work for everyone.

2.1.2. The Council has developed a number of corporate aims to guide the Council's continuous development as an organisation, dedicated to serve the people living and working in the District. These are:-

- to ensure that high quality services are provided to meet public needs;
- to protect and improve the environment;
- to help build economic prosperity;
- to help those in particular need;
- to protect the community's health and safety; and
- to create and expand recreational and cultural opportunities.

2.1.3. The Council's Planning Service and this Local Plan make their contribution to achieving the Council's purpose, co-ordinated with other related services and programmes such as:-

- Housing Strategy.
- Economic Development Strategy.
- Dursley Regeneration Strategy.
- Stroud Regeneration Strategy.
- Tourism Strategy.
- Environment Strategy.
- Access Strategy.

2.2A. Sustainable Development

2.2.1a. The concept of sustainable development first emerged in the late 1980s and was defined by the Brundtland Commission in 1987 as:

'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'

Since that time the need to ensure that development and growth are sustainable has become central to Government objectives.

2.2.1b. The Government's approach to sustainable development is set out in 'A Better Quality of Life, a strategy for sustainable development in the UK' (May 1999). In this, four broad objectives are identified that need to be met to put sustainable development into practice:

- 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.

2.2.1c. The document sets out 10 guiding principles reflecting key themes that should be applied to all decision making. Emphasis is placed on developing economic and social capital whilst providing sound stewardship of environmental capital through the application of these principles:

- Putting people at the centre.
- Taking a long term perspective.
- Taking account of costs and benefits.
- Creating an open and supportive economic system.
- Combating poverty and social exclusion.
- Respecting environmental limits.
- The precautionary principle.
- Using scientific knowledge.
- Transparency, information participation and access to justice.
- Making the polluter pay.

2.2.1d. Also included in the strategy are a range of more detailed objectives, key actions and commitments, and a series of indicators to help measure progress towards sustainable development. The strategy is supplemented by a variety of other Government publications² that provide further guidance on specific topics.

2.2.1e. The above objectives and principles form a basis for action from Government down to the local level. Whilst achieving sustainable development requires action from us all, whether as individuals or as part of organisations, the Government recognises the key role that the planning system can play. In determining future land use through the planning system, we must consider how development decisions affect the environment, the economy and society. The consequences of decisions must be considered in both the short term and the much longer term, and in both their local and wider impacts.

2.2.1f. This concept of sustainable development is embodied in all recent Planning Policy Guidance Notes. PPG12 (January 2000) relating to Development Plans emphasises the need for local plans to have regard to not only environmental issues, but also economic and social issues. It stresses the importance of integrating sustainable development and transport and land use policies in development plans. Planning can help to create the

² *Planning for Communities of the Future (February 1998)*
New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone (July 1998)
Planning for Sustainable Development: Towards Better Practice (October 1998)
Quality of Life Counts (December 1999)
Quality and Choice: A Decent Home For All (April 2000)
Transport 2010 (July 2000)

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right conditions for economic growth, can positively help to address social needs and problems and can provide effective protection of the environment and natural resources. In focusing on the land use considerations of these issues, the local plan will help to deliver a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come.

2.2.1g. This Local Plan can play its part in working towards a sustainable society in a number of ways:

1. Influencing the location of new development in order to reduce the need to travel and make provision for an integrated transport network.
2. Supporting and encouraging the growth of the local economy to provide job opportunities.
3. Helping to make provision for homes for all - reducing social exclusion.
4. Making the best use of previously used land and property - particularly in the larger settlements of the District.
5. Looking at accommodating new means of producing energy - especially from renewable resources.
6. Planning for new development that takes account of energy conservation in terms of site layouts, building design, provision for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport
7. Protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment giving particular priority to those resources which are finite.

2.2.5. However, it must be recognised that there will be inherent conflict between some of these. There will be times when the need to make provision for development will not fit easily with the desire to protect the environment. This Plan provides the framework for decisions that will strike a balance

between the two issues, with the concept of sustainability underpinning its approach.

2.2.6. The Local Plan only plays a part in this process of achieving sustainable development. Strategies and actions are needed at all levels - from Government policy down to individual actions - to pull in the same direction if the concept is in any way to be achieved. The provisions of the Local Plan will not in themselves achieve a sustainable society, but they will play their part in working towards it.

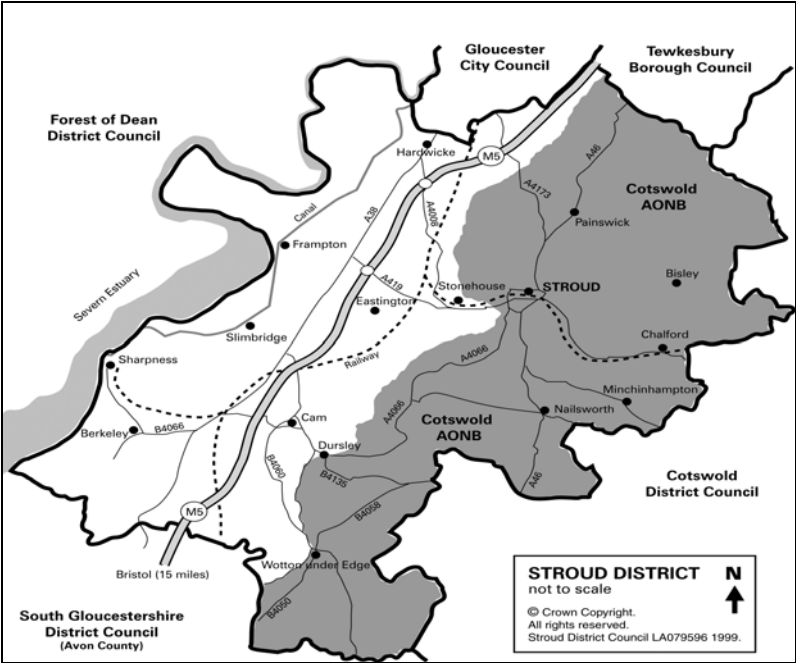
2.3. The Existing Situation

2.3.1. For the purpose of the Local Plan, it is important to recognise that in working towards sustainability, the existing environment and land use patterns have a large influence on how people behave. This section therefore outlines the features of the District in general terms. Individual chapters will describe the local situation in more detail relating to the topic covered.

Location

2.3.2. Stroud District, (see map), covers an area of about 175 square miles in the south of Gloucestershire. Its western boundary is formed by the Severn Estuary beyond which lies the Forest of Dean District. To the north lies Gloucester City and Tewkesbury Borough Councils whilst Cotswold District Council is the adjoining local authority to the east. South of the District lies South Gloucestershire District, a unitary authority bordering Bristol which is some 15 miles south of Stroud's southern boundary.

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Population/Built Environment

2.3.3. The District is predominantly rural in character. Its population was estimated to be 109,000 in mid 1998, with the settlements of the Stroud Valleys and those of Cam, Dursley and Wotton-Under-Edge containing about three-quarters of that total. Appendix 2 contains a map indicating the parishes of the District and their mid 1998 population estimates.

2.3.4. Stroud (town), is the main commercial and shopping centre serving the District. It competes with Cirencester and Tewkesbury as the most important town in the County for industrial/commercial/retail activity after Gloucester and Cheltenham. Dursley and Cam provide the main focus for industrial, commercial and shopping activities in the southern part of the District.

2.3.5. The towns of Painswick, Minchinhampton, Nailsworth, Stonehouse, Wotton-under-Edge and Berkeley provide facilities and services for wider local needs, whilst a number of villages provide a range of local facilities or services to cater for community needs. Beyond these there are a large number of hamlets and individual properties that rely on the larger towns and villages for facilities and services.

2.3.6. Stroud District is fortunate in having a high quality of built environment. This is founded upon the local distinctiveness of the Cotswold and Severn Vale buildings, particularly the rich historic and architectural heritage of these areas. Small dispersed villages used to serve an agricultural hinterland whilst the larger villages and towns have mostly grown around the woollen and cloth industries of the 19th century. The District contains 62 scheduled ancient monuments and over 4,500 buildings listed as being of architectural or historic interest. In addition, there are 42 designated conservation areas throughout the District.

Economy

2.3.7. The Stroud economy shares many of the key features of the wider area of Gloucestershire. It has a healthy, diverse and strong economic base. Historically, agriculture formed the base of the economy. However, this sector saw significant decline in the last century to the point where less than 1,500 people are now employed in agriculture. Despite this, agricultural land use still has a major impact on the District. About 80% of the District's area is in agricultural use, predominantly dairying and livestock in the Vale with cereals, cattle and sheep on the Cotswolds. Retention of a healthy rural economy, aided by farm diversification, remains important to the well-being of the District's economy and character.

2.3.7a. The manufacturing sector now forms the backbone of the economy, well supported by the public administration, distribution, hotels and banking and finance sectors. These sectors account for over 80% of employment in the District. Gloucestershire is forecast to have the fifth fastest growth in gross domestic product of any UK county up to 2010. Employment in the service sector is expected to be the fastest growing area, and the high proportion of self employed is expected to continue to increase. Stroud is well placed to benefit from these trends as new patterns of working continue to emerge.

Table 2.1: Population in Employment by Sector 1998⁴

Sector	Percentage
Manufacturing	30.7
Public admin	22.9
Distribution / hotels	21.5
Banking / finance	11.8
Other services	3.7
Transport / communications	4.6
Construction	4.8

2.3.8. Stroud has a well skilled workforce of some 49,000 people. The unemployment rate remains below the national average, standing at 2.1% at June 2000 against the national average of 5.6%.

2.3.9. The Stroud Valleys are the 'engine room' of the District's economy. The majority of the District's main manufacturing and service sector businesses are located in the Valleys. There is also a strong industrial presence in the south of the District with major employers at Dursley, Wotton-Under-Edge and Berkeley.

2.3.10. However, Gloucester, Cheltenham and Bristol are significant influences on the District. Being major employment bases they attract commuters from the area. Whilst the District does import some employees it is a net exporter of around 12,300 workers⁵ to surrounding administrative areas.

2.3.11. These cities have also had a significant impact on Stroud's retail and leisure industries. Major development in and adjacent to these cities draws shoppers and those seeking commercial entertainment from the area. This has contributed to the decline of the town centres of Stroud and Dursley with the loss of shopping and leisure facilities.

2.3.12. Tourism has an important role in the local economy. About 8% of employment in the District is sustained in full or part by tourism. It generates over

⁴ Gloucestershire Labour Market Information Unit

⁵ Source: Census 1991.

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£41million spending within the District. The Council recognises the part that tourism can play in economic development within the District. Where possible it will support and enable tourism projects that provide positive economic benefits without unacceptable damage to the environment or the community.

2.3.13. Despite the overall healthy nature of the Stroud economy there are pockets of social deprivation. Symptoms of exclusion and underlying decline are apparent in electoral wards in Stroud, Cam and Dursley. A successful Single Regeneration Bid⁶ in 1998 addresses some of the issues. However, provision of new employment opportunities close to these areas would also help to alleviate some of the problems.

Natural Environment

2.3.14. The eastern half of the District is part of the Cotswold Hills, which is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). To the west of the Cotswolds escarpment there are superb views stretching across the low-lying landscape of the Severn Vale. In addition to the AONB, other more locally important landscapes have been identified in the District. Twelve landscape character areas and their important features were identified in a landscape assessment of the District undertaken in 1996.

2.3.15. The wildlife, flora and fauna of the District are also highly valued. The Severn Estuary and much of the foreshore in the District is a protected wildlife habitat under the RAMSAR Convention in addition to its designation as a Special Protection Area, a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a proposed Special Area for Conservation.

2.3.16. Land covering over 2,800 hectares is designated as either Site of Special Scientific Interest or National Nature Reserve. These areas, protected for their nature conservation value, cover a wide range of habitat types from beech woodlands to natural limestone grasslands. Some of them form part of the extensive commons which also serve as a valuable asset for informal recreation.

2.3.17. Water plays an important role in the natural environment. With the Severn Estuary to the west, the District contains around 42 kilometres of coastline and is accessible to the open sea via Sharpness Docks. The Vale formed by the River Severn is very low lying and there are extensive areas susceptible to flooding. The catchment of the Severn includes the Rivers Frome, Cam and Little Avon within the District. These rivers, and their

tributaries, flowing down from the Cotswolds escarpment provide an abundance of rich natural habitats and impressive landscape features. In addition the man-made canals running through the District are important landscape and wildlife corridors.

Transport

2.3.18. The District is accessible by a wide range of transport modes, which are either well established or have the potential to be improved. In broad terms however, the western part of the District in the low-lying Severn Vale is more accessible than the eastern part in the hills of the Cotswolds.

Road: The M5 motorway runs the length of the District with junctions south of Gloucester, west of Stonehouse and just across the southern District boundary in South Gloucestershire District. Major roads (A46, A38, A419, A4135 and A4173) provide links to the M5 and the M4. Therefore, within half an hour drive of the District's borders, Gloucester, Cheltenham, Bristol, Swindon, Bath, Cirencester, Yate and Tewkesbury can all be reached.

Rail: There are rail connections with the Midlands, South Wales and the South-West via Gloucester and Bristol, and with London and the South-East via Swindon from the Stroud, Stonehouse and Cam and Dursley Stations.

Sea: The District also contains the location of the country's most inland seaport - at Sharpness on the Severn Estuary. The Docks are less than 15 kilometres (9 miles) from junctions 13 and 14 of the M5. They provide cargo handling facilities for ships up to 5,000dwt.

Air: Bristol Airport, south of the District, and Birmingham Airport to the north provide the nearest scheduled and charter air services. The closest local airport is at Staverton, mid-way between Gloucester and Cheltenham.

Canal: The Sharpness-Gloucester Canal links the operational port of Sharpness to Gloucester. Although there is no regular trade along the canal since the closure of Gloucester Docks, the canal retains the potential for such commercial traffic. The restoration of the Stroudwater and the Thames and Severn Canals will provide an opportunity for leisure and commercial traffic.

Cycle: Two cycle routes within the District form part of the Sustrans National Cycle Network. The Berkeley Vale to Gloucester Cathedral route is complete whilst the Stonehouse-Nailsworth route is complete between those two towns, via Stroud, but the links to the network require further work.

⁶ *Regeneration of Gloucestershire's Market Towns: Better Communities – SRB Challenge Fund Bid led by Gloucestershire County Council*

2.4. Forecast Levels of Growth

2.4.1. The Gloucestershire County Structure Plan has indicated that a substantial level of growth is anticipated in the need for new dwellings in the County over the Plan period to 2011. About 50,000 new dwellings will be required, County-wide, to meet the demand from:-

- natural increase in the existing population;
- immigration from other areas to the County; and
- the continuing decline in household size brought about by factors such as:-
 - ◆ people living longer and staying in their homes longer, thus slowing down the recycling of property;
 - ◆ young people moving away from the family home earlier than they used to;
 - ◆ married people getting separated or divorced and thus requiring separate units of accommodation; and
 - ◆ more people preferring to live alone.

2.4.2. In distributing this growth through its strategic policy, the County Council has allocated about 9,400 dwellings to Stroud District. However, as the Plan period started in 1991, some of these have already been built and others have been committed through new planning permissions given since 1 July 1991. An allowance is also made for windfall development (i.e. that which cannot otherwise be predicted). Taking account of these factors, the balance for the District is about 3,150 dwellings for which land must be provided for in the Local Plan policies and proposals.

2.4.3. The Structure Plan also makes forecasts of the likely growth in the number of people requiring jobs during the Plan period. For the County this is 28,650 jobs, with Stroud's share being 6,700 jobs. These figures are translated into a requirement for land that will accommodate new employment generating development. This is allied with policy considerations that aim to promote the economic health of the County and to direct growth in a sustainable way. Taking these factors into account, a requirement for 532 hectares of land for employment purposes is identified in the County. The distribution of this in the Structure Plan gives Stroud District's share as about 100 hectares of land.

2.5 Purpose and Aims of the Local Plan

2.5.1. Planning policy can create or assist change towards a more sustainable society. In formulating the Local Plan, the concept of sustainability, an examination of the current situation of the District in land-use terms and the forecast levels of housing

and employment growth have all been taken into consideration. The main purpose of the Local Plan in influencing change is:-

To establish a framework of planning policy that will provide opportunities for maintaining and improving the overall physical, economic and social well-being of Stroud District whilst protecting and enhancing the highly valued environment in which people live and work.

2.5.2. In establishing this framework there are a number of aims that provide a starting point for more specific objectives, policies and site proposals through which the Local Plan purpose will be achieved. These are:-

- To enable the economic prosperity of the District by increasing the choice and diversity of employment opportunities within Stroud District.
- To accommodate the anticipated levels of growth of development in a sustainable way.
- To provide for all housing needs across the District.
- To make full and effective use of existing infrastructure and community facilities and services.
- To make full and effective use of land that has previously been developed.
- To meet community needs and priorities for infrastructure, services and facilities.
- To reinforce the role of the District's towns and key villages by enhancing their vitality and viability.
- To protect and enhance the character of the District's natural and built environment.
- 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.
- To improve the social and cultural opportunities for the community.
- To ensure the high quality of design in development proposals.

2.6. The Strategy

2.6.1. The strategy of the Local Plan has a number of elements to it. These are outlined in the following paragraphs. They take account of preceding sections on the place of the Local Plan in the national, regional, strategic and corporate settings, the need for sustainable development, the existing situation and the forecast levels of growth for the District. From this background, the purpose and aims of the Plan have been established. The strategy now expands upon that framework and provides the basis for the more detailed policies and proposals to be found under topic chapters.

Settlement role and function

2.6.1a. In the past there has been little focus to housing growth in the District. The distribution of new housing has been largely dispersed around the District. At the same time we have seen the decentralisation of retail and leisure facilities away from town and village centres and a major growth in employment opportunities outside the District, particularly at Gloucester and Bristol. Assisted by the lack of significant investment in public transport, these trends have contributed to an increased use of the car and less sustainable lifestyles.

2.6.1b. There is a need to address these patterns of development over the rest of the plan period, and beyond, in order to bring them into conformity with the national, regional and strategic planning policy frameworks and to meet sustainability objectives. To help with this, the role of the District's main settlements and the major influence of Gloucester and Cheltenham at its northern borders is outlined below. This summarises the anticipated future role of the named settlements in accommodating development, particularly housing growth, over the plan period and provides a basis for development patterns beyond this plan period.

Central Severn Vale

2.6.1c. The Central Severn Vale as described in the Structure Plan includes parts of Stroud District. At the heart of this area are the Gloucester and Cheltenham urban areas. Gloucester abuts the northern borders of Stroud District and its urban form extends into the District at Hardwicke and at the former Brockworth Airfield in Upton St Leonards. Cheltenham lies further north of the District, separated from it by part of Tewkesbury Borough.

2.6.1d. Gloucester and Cheltenham's sphere of influence extends well beyond their boundaries. They are both important economic, social, cultural and service centres with Gloucester also having a strong industrial past. There are good transport links by road and rail to most parts of the country. Bus services radiate out from their centres to their suburbs and into Stroud District. Gloucester is linked to Sharpness Docks and the Bristol Channel via the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal.

2.6.1e. Gloucester and Cheltenham are major shopping centres for many people living in the county both in terms of city centre shops and out-of-centre retail facilities. They draw visitors and workers from a wide area as important historic towns, major tourist destinations and as major employment centres.

Urban Area

2.6.1f. They are the major urban areas referred to in the Structure Plan and are central to Structure Plan policies that seek to concentrate growth in the Central Severn Vale in compliance with the principles of sustainable development. Since it borders Stroud District, Gloucester is of particular relevance in this context.

Stroud

2.6.1g. Stroud lies within the sphere of influence of Gloucester and many of its residents travel there for work, shopping and entertainment. However, Stroud forms the main cohesive built-up area within the District comprising most of the parishes of Cainscross, Stroud, Rodborough, part of Randwick and a few properties in Stonehouse and Thrupp. With a population of about 25,000, its focus is Stroud town centre which serves a broader hinterland for shopping, employment and services. However, the town centre has seen significant decline in recent years with changes in patterns of shopping and the Council is seeking the regeneration of the town through a series of initiatives.

2.6.1h. Stroud town is served by a railway station on the Gloucester-London line and is a focal point for bus services serving the area. It is the meeting point of transport routes following the route of the five valleys and is a natural focus for many commercial, leisure and education facilities serving the wider area. Therefore, Stroud is the urban focus of the Stroud Valleys and forms the District's only urban area as referred to in the Structure Plan. However, the capacity of the area to absorb new development is constrained by physical and environmental attributes.

2.6.1i. Development has historically taken place in the valleys stretching out from the town. The distribution of such development reflects the topography of the valleys. Industrial development has taken place along the valley bottoms, historically based on the woollen and cloth industries. Smaller settlements, both clustered and linear, have formed along the lower slopes interspersed by important open gaps. These mostly are set in or against the high quality landscape of the Cotswold AONB and have the character of overgrown and scattered village settlements rather than towns. Together with Stroud urban area, they provide an immediate population catchment for the town of about 50,000 people.

Principal Settlements

Stonehouse

2.6.1j. The town of Stonehouse lies to the west of Stroud in the Frome Valley. Its population of 7,000 is

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served by a good level of local facilities and services for everyday needs. Despite its proximity to Stroud, Stonehouse retains a separate identity. It is a working community, well located adjacent to the District's largest employment area at Oldends Lane and its associated industrial estates. It has good transport connections being under 1.5 kilometres from junction 13 of the M5 via the A419 and served by a rail station on the Gloucester-London mainline. Hourly bus services connect the town to Stroud and Gloucester. It functions primarily as a local service centre. Stonehouse should be regarded as one of the District's principal settlements^{7,6} as referred to in the Structure Plan.

Cam and Dursley

2.6.1k. Whilst retaining separate community identities, these settlements together are the focus for employment and services in the southern part of the District. Historically Dursley has grown as the main town, and contains services and facilities typical of a small town centre to serve the wider area. Since Dursley is constrained by the steep topography and the AONB status of the surrounding land, residential growth in the area has more recently centred on Cam. Together they form a cohesive planning unit with a population of about 14,000 that is the main principal settlement⁷ serving the South Vale area of the District. The catchment population including the surrounding rural parishes is estimated to be about 30,000 people.

Small Towns and Larger Villages

2.6.11.a. Village services and facilities have declined over recent years and there is poor availability of affordable housing in the rural areas. These facts result from changes in lifestyles and social trends, much of which is outside the control of the planning system. Such problems are accentuated in those villages where there has been little growth. The continuing decline in average household size means fewer customers for services and facilities in those villages. The problem is compounded by small properties having been extended and upgraded, and new housing in villages comprising mainly the large, detached variety. Consequently, there have been few new small sized houses to replace the smaller stock lost.

⁷ *Principal Settlements are required to be defined by Structure Plan Policy S2 to "form the focal points for a scale of development which was consistent with the character and function of the settlement, and supports local services and the social and economic well-being of local communities". The supporting text states: "Development at principal settlements will be at a much smaller scale than development in the main urban areas."*

2.6.11.b. Therefore, in order to build upon existing infrastructure, to help arrest the decline of services and facilities in villages serving a wider area, to provide opportunities for affordable housing and to help build thriving village communities, an allowance has been made for limited growth in small towns and larger villages in the District that act as service centres to a wider, though local, catchment area. These are Berkeley, Eastington, Kings Stanley, Kingswood, Leonard Stanley, Minchinhampton, Painswick, Sharpness, Whitminster and Wotton-under-Edge

2.6.11. Employment in the settlements has declined in recent years and there is a significant degree of out-commuting from the area. The loss of jobs coincides with the decline of manufacturing business on which the area's economy was based. This has presented some opportunities for redevelopment of aged industrial premises. However, there is a need to provide a better balance between employment and housing and to provide land and premises suited to modern employment needs. Dursley town centre has also suffered with changing shopping patterns and the growth in vehicular traffic. The town is therefore the subject of a range of initiatives aimed at regenerating its economy and environment.

Nailsworth

2.6.1m. Nailsworth is an important settlement in terms of its scale, role and function. It lies 8 kilometres south of Stroud at the head of the Nailsworth Valley and has a population of about 5,500 people. It too has a good level of community services and facilities and is well located in relation to employment opportunities. The town is relatively thriving and has good bus service connections to Stroud. However, Nailsworth is well contained by the steeply sloping valley sides and the boundaries of the AONB thus severely limiting any growth potential. There are no realistic development opportunities readily available. Therefore, Nailsworth is not defined as a principal settlement. Any expansion in housing is likely to come about through redevelopment opportunities within the defined settlement boundary. Nailsworth is considered to be suitable only for a scale of growth commensurate with its character and role. For the purposes of shopping policy, Nailsworth is acknowledged as an important town centre serving wider local needs.

Stroud Valley Settlements

2.6.1o. Wotton-under-Edge and Berkeley act as service centres for their immediate rural communities in the South Vale. These settlements have a good

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level of community facilities and services⁹ and have significant employment opportunities close to, though not within, their boundaries. However, both are constrained in their immediate development potential. Wotton lies on the Cotswold escarpment and is within the AONB. Berkeley has other environmental constraints – historic landscape, flooding, power lines. In addition it only has public transport links to Gloucester and Bristol on an infrequent basis. Wotton has bus services linking to Bristol, Stroud, Dursley and Yate. The potential to improve public transport to these towns is to be looked at through the market towns initiative set out in the Local Transport Plan¹⁰.

2.6.1p. Wotton and Berkeley may be seen in a wider context and associated with their nearby settlements of Kingswood and Sharpness which are both capable of accommodating some growth. These settlements lie about 1 kilometre from Wotton and Berkeley respectively. They are both equally close to significant employment opportunities. There are regular bus services between Kingswood and Wotton. These settlements would also be served by the proposed railway station re-opening at Charfield, approximately 3-5 kilometres away. Public transport between Berkeley and Sharpness requires improvement. Development opportunities may assist in improving these services.

2.6.1q. Development in the context of Wotton/Kingswood (joint population of about 7,000) and Berkeley/Sharpness (joint population of about 3,000) would support the roles of these communities in serving their immediate rural areas. It would help to protect existing services and facilities in the face of declining household sizes. It would provide better opportunities for reducing travel demands between existing and proposed employment opportunities and the nearby settlements. In this way development would improve their level of self-containment and prove sustainable at the local level. At the same time it would respect the environmental constraints around Wotton and Berkeley. These four settlements are therefore considered suitable for a low level of growth commensurate with their character and role.

2.6.1r. Minchinhampton: This small town of about 2,500 population has a reasonable level of facilities and services⁹ including a large primary school, library and doctors' surgery. It acts as a local centre for a wider area in this respect. The town lies

entirely within the AONB and development is constrained by this designation. Provided care is taken to integrate new development into the town and adjoining landscape, Minchinhampton is considered suitable for a low level of growth commensurate with its character and role.

2.6.1s. Kings Stanley and Leonard Stanley: Whilst retaining separate community identities, the built up area of these villages adjoin each other and they can be regarded as a single planning unit. The joint population of about 2,800 is reasonably well served by community facilities and services⁹ and has regular bus services to Stroud and Gloucester. The villages lie in the open valley floor of the River Frome and below the Cotswold escarpment about 6 kilometres from Stroud town centre and about 3 kilometres from the major employment area at Stonehouse. Kings Stanley is bounded to the east by the AONB but otherwise the villages are not constrained by environmental designations. The villages comprise mostly of post war development and have a largely suburban character. Together they form a suitable focus for a low level of growth commensurate with their character and role.

2.6.1t. Painswick: The population of about 1,900 is well served by a good range of community services and facilities⁹. Painswick performs a similar role to Minchinhampton, providing a local centre for a wider area. It is also acknowledged for its attractiveness to tourists. Regular bus services connect the town to Cheltenham, Gloucester and Stroud. The town lies on the steep sides of the Painswick Valley and is entirely within the AONB. There are small pockets of land on the edges of the village that may be suitable for small scale, well designed development if it can be integrated into the character of the settlement. However, it is not suitable for a large level of development and its longer term potential is limited by the topography. Therefore, Painswick is considered suitable for a low level of growth commensurate with its role and character.

2.6.1u. Eastington: This village of about 800 population has an adequate range of facilities including a primary school and local shops. It lies on a slight rise above the River Frome, 8 kilometres west of Stroud. The village comprises mainly post war residential development and is only about 1 kilometre from major employment opportunities at Stonehouse. Hourly daytime bus services connect the village to Stroud and Dursley. Gloucester can be easily accessed via junction 13 of the M5 motorway about 1 kilometre away. The village is unconstrained by environmental factors and is capable of accommodating a small level of growth. It is therefore a settlement capable of a low level of growth commensurate with its role and character.

⁹ Community facilities and services includes primary schools, shops, post offices, health facilities (doctor, dentist, optician etc), public houses, cafes, restaurants, churches, meeting halls, recreation facilities, libraries, public transport links and public utilities (water, gas, electricity, sewerage etc).

¹⁰ Local Transport Plan – a document produced by the Gloucestershire County Council in co-operation with District Councils to present transport strategies for the County and seek Governing funding.

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2.6.1v. Whitminster: This village of about 500 population also has an adequate range of facilities and services including a primary school and shop. It lies in the Severn Vale about 9 kilometres west of Stroud, 10 kilometres south of Gloucester. It has undergone considerable growth in the last 10 years and is unconstrained by environmental considerations. There is a limited amount of local employment at Whitminster. The village is considered suitable for a low level of growth commensurate with its role and character.

Other Settlements

2.6.1w. Smaller villages with provision of only basic community facilities and services also have defined settlement boundaries. The prospect of growth is therefore retained through the possibility of windfall provision on infill plots and through affordable housing provision on 'exception' sites. These are the lowest order of settlements in terms of their suitability for development since they lack at least one of the following:

- Primary community facilities or services
- Proximity to employment
- Access to public transport

These settlements are considered to be suitable only for very small scale levels of development within their boundaries.

Summary

2.6.2. The approach taken to accommodating new development is to locate this in or adjacent to existing settlements. In doing this a clear priority is given to directing the greater part of growth towards:

- the Central Severn Vale;
- the Stroud urban area;
- the principal settlements of Stonehouse, Cam and Dursley.

Lower levels of growth are allowed for at the small towns and larger villages of Berkeley, Eastington, Kings Stanley, Kingswood, Leonard Stanley, Minchinhampton, Newtown/Sharpness, Nailsworth, Painswick, Whitminster and Wotton-under-Edge. Other defined settlements will only provide very low levels of development through windfall provision.

2.6.2a. Table 2.2 below demonstrates how the Structure Plan requirement to accommodate about 9,400 dwellings in the District up to 2011 is focused in this way. The greater part of the requirement is located south of the Gloucester urban area in the Stroud urban area and at Dursley and Cam.

Table 2.2: Distribution of about 9,400 Dwellings to 2011

	CENTRAL SEVERN VALE	STROUD URBAN	PRINCIPAL SETTLEMENTS	SMALL TOWNS/LARGE VILLAGES	REST OF DISTRICT
Completions (3,653)	227	854	587	913	1,072
% of total completions	6%	23%	16%	25%	29%
Commitments (1,325)	201	238	382	339	165
% of total commitments	15%	18%	29%	26%	12%
Allocations (3,599)	2,000	579	668	322	30
% of total allocations	55%	16%	19%	9%	1%
TOTAL (8,577)	2,428	1,671	1,637	1,574	1,267
% OF TOTAL	28%	19%	19%	18%	15%

Note:

Completions = 01/07/91 to 31/12/2000.

Commitments = at 01/01/01.

Allocations = non-committed allocations in this Plan at 01/01/01.

- Difference in total to Structure Plan figure is due to windfall allocation

Transport

2.6.4a. The Local Transport Plan (LTP) for Gloucestershire (July 2000), is the County Council's statement of policy and strategy for transport, and the bid document to Government for transport capital funds. The Plan was developed jointly by the County and District Councils.

2.6.4b. It includes an implementation programme for the 5 years 2001/2006. Strategies have been developed for specific elements of transport – walking, cycling, public transport, highway maintenance, highway improvements, social exclusion, road traffic reduction. Also, strategies have been developed for spatial elements. In this respect, of particular relevance to Stroud District are the Central Severn Vale Area, the Stroud Valleys Area and the Market Towns Strategies.

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2.6.4c. Targets are set in the Plan for reduction in traffic growth, increases in journey to work trips by modes other than the car, reduction in road accidents and an increase in cycle journeys across the County. Progress on the LTP and targets will be monitored and submitted to Central Government on an annual basis.

2.6.4d. The LTP forms part of the context within which the Local Plan has been developed. Objectives in the Local Plan are consistent with those of the LTP in respect of transport issues. Policies and proposals in the Local Plan have been developed to help achieve the targets of the LTP, for example, policies designed to increase the opportunities for people to live closer to their work thus reducing the need to travel are included. The need for contributions towards, or the provision of, infrastructure to improve public transport, cycling and pedestrian facilities is identified within many of the land allocations and will be sought wherever relevant in development proposals. On the other hand, the Local Plan process has helped inform the LTP, for instance, in identifying the need to address particular transport issues in market towns. The teams processing the respective Plans will continue to keep each other informed to ensure the integrated approach to development planning and transport provision.

Role of previously developed land

2.6.4e. 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.

2.6.4f. 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. Some of it is not in an appropriate location to meet sustainable development guidelines. Also 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.

2.6.4g. 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 in appropriate locations as possible redeveloped before greenfield land is used. It is possible that new brownfield sites will continue to emerge following adoption of this Plan. Proposals to redevelop these can still be permitted provided they are in appropriate locations and in line with the policies of the Plan. Account of such developments will be taken in the Review of the Plan under the 'Plan-Monitor-Manage' regime advocated by the Government. In addition, phasing policies are introduced in the housing chapter that seek to ensure that, as far as is possible and reasonable, greenfield sites are only developed after the redevelopment of previously used sites.

Employment

2.6.5. The Gloucestershire County Structure Plan identifies a requirement about 100 hectares of land for employment purposes in the District. Around half of that already exists as commitments through planning consents and allocations previously made in the Stroud District Local Plan, Deposit Version 1994. This Plan makes provision for the remainder through the allocation of employment sites to meet the requirements of expanding indigenous businesses, start-up enterprises and new industry attracted to the District.

2.6.6. The allocated sites are well related to the main settlements, providing the opportunity for people to live and work in close proximity without the need for long car borne journeys. A variety of sites are allocated to provide a choice and diversity in scale and nature of land that is essential to promote the health of the local economy.

2.6.7. In addition to meeting the Structure Plan requirement, this Plan seeks to protect and improve existing employment sites. The economic base of the District lies within the Stroud Valleys, at Cam and Dursley and with outlying major employers near Wotton-under-Edge (Renishaw) and Berkeley (Magna BNFL). There is a need to increase the job opportunities in these areas to counter the adverse effects of journey to work out-commuting from the District which exceeds in-commuting and to increase opportunities for people to live close to their workplace.

Environment

2.6.8. This Plan strikes a balance between accommodating new development and the protection

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and enhancement of the environment. With an undeniably high quality rural and built environment lying between the cities of Bristol and Gloucester and Cheltenham, Stroud District experiences intense development pressures. The Cotswold escarpment wraps around the main built-up areas of the Stroud Valleys and Dursley, and borders parts of Stonehouse and Cam. Thus the potential expansion of these settlements is constrained by virtue of the Cotswolds protected landscape status and the topography. With half the District covered by AONB and the rest highly visible from the escarpment, many of the smaller settlements are susceptible to adverse effects of development on their character and their settings.

2.6.9. This presents a particular dilemma since it is the locations within and adjacent to the main settlements that provide the most sustainable options for development, particularly in their potential to reduce car travel and maximise the use of alternative modes of transport. In addition, some villages still need to grow as identified in paragraph 2.6.4.

2.6.10. The strategy employed accepts that there is a need to build within and adjacent to the main towns and villages, but to do so in a manner which minimises the adverse effects. Whilst first priority is given to large sustainable developments south of Gloucester, smaller developments can be absorbed more readily into existing settlements. Therefore, remaining development allocations are contained within a larger number of smaller sites (i.e. small relative to the scale of the settlements involved). As far as possible these lie on 'brownfield' sites and within settlements. However the scope for such development is very limited. It is inevitable that some allocated sites have to be outside the limits of previous development boundaries and also that some land relating to villages in the AONB will be used.

2.6.11. Beyond the use of a very small amount of land within the AONB, no other and protected for its landscape or biodiversity status is proposed for development. To move towards a sustainable pattern of development that balances all the aspects of the 'sustainability' concept, this is a small compromise. The vast majority of the AONB will remain unaffected by development.

2.6.12. The Local Plan strategy will also provide long-term protection for individual features and the broad character of the countryside, allowing development only where it is essential to have a location in the countryside location. Large areas of the District are covered by a variety of designations protecting their special natural features and assets (elements of environmental capital). These cover special landscapes, wildlife habitats, archaeological sites, flood risk, water resources and the best

agricultural land. These designations will continue to be enforced rigorously in the control of development.

2.6.13. In addition to the protection of particular areas of land for their environmental capital, it is Government policy that the open countryside should be protected for its own sake. It is important to avoid piecemeal development in the countryside in order to retain its broad character and appearance and to prevent the damaging impacts of a substantial increase in the need to travel. In respect of the character of the landscape in Stroud, a study has been undertaken and the findings form the basis of protective policy covering this issue. The resulting landscape classification - Stroud District - Landscape Assessment - is available as supplementary planning guidance.

Town Centre Regeneration

2.6.14. The main town centres of Stroud and Dursley have suffered gradual decline in their vitality and viability over a number of years. It is important that the Local Plan addresses the issue of regeneration of Stroud and Dursley. A considerable amount of background work has been undertaken by the District Council and comprehensive regeneration strategies have already been formulated. From these the land-use elements are presented as policies and proposals that will assist in the process of revitalising the towns and improving their economic viability.

2.6.15. It is a vital component of the regeneration strategies that the catchment populations are increased in these towns. This may be achieved by policies that encourage higher residential densities and the re-use of previously developed land and property, (often referred to as 'brownfield' sites), for residential use within the towns and by the allocation of suitable sites for dwellings within reasonable travel distance, preferably on foot, by cycling or by public transport, of the centres. These measures will provide a bigger potential market within the shortest possible travel distance of these centres. This will assist in meeting the sustainability objectives of the Plan while contributing to the regeneration of the towns.

2.6.16. Other proposals will seek to promote specific sites in the centres for development, especially for mixed uses incorporating residential, leisure and commercial uses. Such developments will bring new attractions to the towns and again aid the regeneration processes.

Services and Facilities

2.6.17. Underlying the key issues of settlement and employment locations, regeneration of Stroud and Dursley, the health of rural areas and the protection

of the environment is the most efficient and effective use and provision of services and facilities. This is an important aspect of creating a sustainable pattern of development. The Plan provides a framework within which infrastructure and service providers can formulate or adjust their own investment plans in order to meet the needs of the future population of the District.

2.6.18. Too often in the past this type of investment has followed rather than preceded development. Where development takes place, it is important that the provision of new, or improvements to existing, facilities and services is made in step with the development. Developers may be expected to contribute towards the cost of provision of infrastructure. The opportunity will be taken to negotiate such contributions through the process of considering planning applications. Where they can be identified in advance, such considerations are highlighted in relevant proposals in this Plan.

Design

2.6.19. It is an integral part of the strategy that all development proposals will need to demonstrate a high quality of design. This is important in all aspects - from the design and layout of individual buildings to the layout and the provision of associated facilities such as roads and open space. Well designed developments will complement existing sensitive environments and may create new dynamic environments in areas of poor character or lacking distinctive character.

2.6.20. Beyond traditional issues of density and overall layout, form, scale, height, massing detailing, materials, important design aspects relating to sustainability in its broadest sense will be energy conservation, crime prevention, accessibility for all people and reducing people's need to travel. Good design can improve environmental quality, attract new business and investment, promote sustainable development, reinforce civic pride and a sense of place. In short, it can make a positive contribution to the quality of life for residents, workers and visitors to the District.

Culture and Leisure

2.6.21. The final element of the strategy is to ensure that the community is provided with the cultural and leisure facilities to serve its needs. Such facilities range across the provision of space and buildings for sport, art, entertainment and passive recreation. These are valuable amenities that can contribute to the overall appearance of the environment, providing focal points for public use and enhancing our health and quality of life.