

6.1. Introduction

6.1.1. Town centres provide a broad range of facilities, services and employment opportunities, and are a focus for both the community and public transport. Many of the District's town centres still contain specialist shops and historic buildings, characteristic of traditional town centres, that contribute to their role as tourist destinations as well as a focus for local communities. Over recent years however, a number of changes have taken place that have affected the pattern of shopping provision and diverted trade away from traditional town centres. Such changes include a growth in the number of large foodstores providing for one-stop shopping trips on a reduced frequency, the development of retail warehouses selling DIY goods, electrical appliances, carpets, furniture and other bulky goods and the development of large out-of-town regional shopping centres such as at Cribbs Causeway, on the outskirts of Bristol, which provide a full range of shopping and leisure facilities.

6.1.2. These new types of retailing have become established in response to greater consumer spending power, demand for a wider choice and new types of products, and greater mobility as car ownership has increased.

6.1.3. At the same time, retailers have changed both as a response to and because of opportunities for change that have arisen. New technology has streamlined check-out, storage and delivery systems and price competitiveness has raised the profile of economies of scale, particularly in the food and convenience goods trade, where the trend away from independent retailers to major chains has been marked. Government policy in the recent past also allowed the development of many out-of-town shopping centres.

6.1.4. The balance of uses within town centres has also changed. Contraction in the number of retail shops has provided the opportunity for replacement by service uses, including restaurants and hot food take-aways, estate agencies, building society branches and a range of other professional services.

6.1.5. Town centres can play a key role in helping achieve sustainable development by becoming the focus for new development which will encourage both urban regeneration and multi-purpose shopping and leisure trips which indirectly will help reduce the number and length of car-borne journeys.

6.1.6. Design and town centre uses are dealt with separately in Section 7.9 of the Built Environment chapter.

6.2. Objectives

1. To assist in the regeneration of Stroud and Dursley town centres.
2. To sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of established town centres, district and local centres, and villages.
3. To encourage and support development in appropriate locations where it sustains and enhances vitality and viability, improves the character of town centres and meets the needs of the area.
4. To ensure that shopping facilities are accessible to all members of the community.
5. To concentrate new retail development in locations that minimise the need to travel, promote transport choices and encourage combined visits to use other services and facilities.
6. To protect and enhance the role of local shopping centres, and individual shops and village shops.
7. To ensure that development in town centres is of high quality, to make them attractive places in which to live, work, and shop in.

6.3. Central Government Advice

6.3.1. PPG6: Town Centres and Retail Development 1996 contains Central Government's policies and proposals for retailing and is supplemented by advice contained in PPG13: Transport 1994.

6.3.2. The Government's key objectives for retailing are:

- to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres;
- to focus development, especially retail development, in locations that maximise the opportunity to use means of transport other than the car;
- to maintain an efficient, competitive and innovative retail sector; and
- to ensure the availability of a wide range of shops, employment services and facilities to which people have easy access by a choice of means of transport.

6.3.3. Local Authorities are required to adopt a sequential approach in selecting sites for new retail development and other key town centre uses. Preference should be given to town centre sites followed by edge-of-centre sites, district and local centres and only then, out-of-centre sites in locations that are accessible by a choice of means of transport. Proposals for retail developments should be assessed in relation to their impact on the vitality

and viability of nearby towns and town centres, accessibility by a choice of means of transport and their impact on overall travel and car use.

6.4. Gloucestershire County Structure Plan

6.4.1. Town centres are seen as an important element of the adopted Structure Plan: Second Review's strategy for future development in Gloucestershire. The Plan identifies a hierarchy of centres to help ensure that any development is of an appropriate scale and consistent with the particular role of the centre. Stroud and Dursley town centres are within the second tier of centres, along with Tewkesbury and Cirencester. District centres in Gloucester and Cheltenham form the third tier and so do not apply to Stroud. The settlements of Berkeley, Minchinhampton, Nailsworth, Painswick, Stonehouse and Wotton-under-Edge are consistent with the fourth tier of the hierarchy for retail purposes, though they are not 'principal settlements' as defined for housing growth purposes. The final level of the hierarchy is local centres.

6.4.2. Town centres should be, or have the potential to be, well served by public transport. Local centres should be easily accessible by cycling and walking. The sequential test to locating new retail development and other key town centre uses which attract a lot of people should also be applied through Local Plans.

6.5. Need for New Retail Development

6.5.1. Stroud is the largest town centre within the District. Its importance in the hierarchy of town centres in Gloucestershire is recognised in the Structure Plan. Whilst Gloucester and Cheltenham are sub-regional centres which have county-wide catchment areas, Stroud, together with Dursley, Cirencester and Tewkesbury form a focus for a wider than local catchment.

6.5.1a Town centres within the District are small compared with the nearby centres of Gloucester and Cheltenham and regional shopping centre of Cribbs Causeway. The proximity of the District to these centres, combined with the District's predominantly rural catchment, limits the attractiveness of the District for national retailers and therefore the ability of town centres within the District to increase their floorspace and range of goods to any great extent. The only exceptions are Stroud and Dursley as the principal town centres in the north and south of the District.

6.5.1b In the north of the District, in addition to Stroud, the principal retail facilities, for both convenience and comparison goods are

concentrated in Nailsworth and Stonehouse. Both towns are in close proximity to Stroud and compete for expenditure from Stroud's catchment area. Minchinhampton and Painswick, also in the north, have limited retail floorspace and serve a local catchment.

6.5.1c In the south of the District, the main town centre after Dursley is Wotton-under-Edge with Berkeley providing a more local facility.

6.5.1d With the exception of Stroud and Dursley the only retailers likely to be attracted to these towns independent retailers who require small units in town centre locations. Sufficient vacancies exist within the District's town centres to satisfy any demand of this kind arising during the Plan period.

6.5.1e Stroud and Dursley are the only towns within the District capable of accommodating any significant growth in retail floorspace. Household surveys and capacity analysis indicate that potential exists to maximise the retention of expenditure locally and help reduce distances travelled for shopping trips. Trade retention for convenience goods in the south of the District is poor and significant comparison goods expenditure, particularly for bulky goods, is leaking out of the District to nearby competing centres.

6.5.1f Stroud, as the main comparison goods centre in the District, is the only centre that has the potential to attract any significant level of comparison retailing to the District. In order to meet current and future needs arising during the Plan period for comparison goods, sites have been identified for mixed use development and specifically for bulky goods retailing in Stroud.

6.5.1g. Dursley is poorly provided for in terms of convenience provision and has the potential to have a much stronger role in providing for main food shopping needs. A site has been identified in Dursley town centre to meet this need and to help the regeneration of the town centre as a whole. The District's other towns are well catered for in terms of convenience provision and have a level of facility commensurate with their role and function. There is unlikely to be any need for further large scale food development, other than in Dursley, during the Plan period.

6.5a Stroud Town Centre

6.5.2. Stroud has been facing increasing competition over the last 10 to 15 years from other town centres, particularly Gloucester, Cheltenham and Cirencester. Stroud's problems in attracting investment have emanated from the physical constraints of its topography, its somewhat isolated geographical position - it is effectively by-passed by the M5 - its closeness to Gloucester and Cheltenham

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and national patterns of retail investment and development during the last twenty years or so.

6.5.3. Nationally, retail investment and development have been most active in the larger centres which have tended to expand at the expense of smaller market towns. To compound matters locally, Cirencester has managed to attract tourists, thereby allowing it to grow disproportionate to its resident population. It now includes a range and quality of retailers which will attract customers from Stroud's catchment area for comparison shopping.

6.5.4. The weak trading position of Stroud was highlighted in a survey undertaken in 1997 which showed that almost half of visits to the town centre originate within two miles of the centre and only 11.5% of visitors live more than five miles from the centre. These are very telling statistics and indicate the very tight catchment from which Stroud draws its customers.

6.5.5. It was estimated that, at that time, over 60% of the catchment area's spend on comparison goods was going outside the area, principally because of the lack of national retailer representation in Stroud town centre. By contrast, two thirds of the local catchment population did their main food shopping in Stroud, with Tesco and Waitrose, being the two most popular supermarkets. Sainsbury's supermarket was not built at the time of survey.

6.5.6. Stroud town centre has suffered from a lack of investment over many years, and this has affected its vitality and viability. It has a high level of vacant shops, there are few multiples and increasing numbers of charity and budget stores. There is a lack of leisure and entertainment facilities in the centre and consequently the atmosphere in the evening is poor. Few people live in the town and while it has an attractive historic core there are no specific visitor attractions at present. The town centre also experiences problems of traffic congestion and difficulties with access due to its topography.

6.5.7. The District Council has identified the need to regenerate Stroud Town Centre as a priority, and has taken responsibility for the co-ordination, development and implementation of initiatives to achieve the regeneration of the town centre. The first of these was the establishment of the Stroud Town Centre Partnership, which meets on a regular basis to discuss matters relating to the regeneration of the town centre. It includes representatives from the business community, the voluntary sector and education, as well as local authorities.

6.5.8. A Regeneration Strategy has also been drawn up with the aim of increasing the vitality and viability of Stroud by diversifying its role and reducing its reliance on shopping as the main attractor. This is

regularly updated, the most recent version being produced in September 1998. The strategy undertakes a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) for the town centre. It then uses that analysis to set out a series of aims which will guide the regeneration of the town centre. These aims are:-

1. to create a unique identity for Stroud town centre;
2. to secure public and private sector investment in the town centre;
3. to improve Stroud's competitiveness as a retail centre;
4. to retain and enhance existing businesses and service providers within the town centre;
5. to introduce new leisure, entertainment and cultural attractions within the town centre;
6. to promote Stroud as a tourist destination;
7. to create new business opportunities within the town centre;
8. to increase the town's residential population;
9. to improve accessibility both to and within the town centre;
10. to enhance the town centre's physical environment;
11. to improve safety and security within the town centre; and
12. to bring vacant and under-used land and premises into productive use.

6.5.9. These aims cover a broad spectrum of initiatives, some of which are land-use based. Those that are land-use based are developed into policies and proposals in this Plan.

6.5.10. Initiatives that have been implemented include the introduction of a traffic management scheme to reduce the amount of through traffic whilst retaining vehicular access to the town centre, and improvements to the Subscription Rooms and forecourt. This enables one of the most important buildings in the town centre to be used to its full potential as a venue for arts and entertainment and for the public area around the building to be used as a town square. The establishment of a cinema in the town centre is a top priority.

6.5.11. The District Council is committed, in partnership with the private sector in Stroud, to improving the environmental quality of the town, promoting the development of the economy, and the range of facilities and attractions for shoppers and visitors. A Town Centre Manager has been appointed to ensure the achievement of these aims.

6.6. Retail Strategy for Stroud Town Centre

6.6.1. The Council recognises the importance of planning for future needs in retailing and other

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sectors, particularly in Stroud and Dursley, where regeneration is vital to ensure their continuing function as the district's major centres. The strategy therefore seeks to accommodate retail growth within the town centres, and also outside where this will not impact adversely on centres. The strategy aims to:-

1. protect and maintain Stroud town centre's role as the local retail and service centre for the town and its rural environs by retaining the diversity of the retail experience of mainstream and independent retailers;
2. promote new development to a level which will ensure the continued diversity of the historic town centre whilst enhancing the retail offer available in the town;
3. accommodate new trends and innovations in retailing and to locate development in accordance with the sequential approach.
4. link shopping proposals with environmental enhancement and traffic management to achieve an attractive environment for future investment; and
5. maintain the attractiveness of the town centre in terms of the range of goods and services available.

6.6.2. Retailing in Stroud town centre is characterised by small units, which reflects its predominant historic composition, selling comparison goods and operated by independent retailers. National retailer representation is limited, and again concentrated in the sale of small, comparison goods.

6.6.3. The vacancy level is higher than the national average but has fallen in recent years. The vacancies are spread throughout the town centre in both modern and older premises. This situation tends to confirm the present lack of investor interest in the town.

6.6.4. Representation in the town of larger bulky goods operators, such as those selling furniture, carpets and electrical goods, is limited. Competition from larger centres and out of centre retailers outside the District, as well as a lack of suitable premises in the town all contribute to the limited provision of such goods.

6.6.5. The above strategy attempts to balance the Council's wish to ensure the survival, in the long term, of the town centre as the main retail destination, but recognises also that the retail range within the town generally should be enhanced to offer visitors a more extensive range of goods and services.

6.7. Definition of Stroud Town Centre

6.7.1. Stroud town centre for the purposes of the operation of the retail policies in this Plan includes the historic core of the town which contains a broad range of facilities and services and also the focal points for public transport. The area is therefore, by definition, compact.

6.8. Changes of Use in Stroud Town Centre

6.8.1. The Council recognises the need to maintain a core of retail activity in the town centre, but is also aware of the fact that other, complementary uses, during the day and evening, can reinforce the town centre's attractiveness to local residents and shoppers. The Council has defined Primary Shopping Frontages in a very limited area, with the intention that this area is retained as the town's retail core, and the Council will seek to establish or maintain, as a guide, 70% of each section of the Primary Frontage in retail (A1) use. A section of the Primary Frontage is considered to be a particular street block frontage, or a frontage of up to 50 metres either side of the application site, whichever is less. The Prime Shopping Frontages in Stroud are shown on the Stroud Town Centre Inset Map.

POLICY S1

Within the primary shopping frontages of Stroud town centre, a change of use at ground floor level from Retail (Use Class A1) use to financial and professional services (Use Class A2) or food and drink (Use Class A3) uses will be permitted where the proposed use would not significantly undermine the retail function of the town centre. Each application will also be assessed against the following criteria:

1. the site's location and prominence within the shopping frontage;
2. the size of the premises and its frontage;
3. the number and distribution of existing non A1 uses and any unimplemented planning permissions for non A1 uses within the primary frontage;
4. the nature and character of the proposed use and the level of activity associated with it; and
5. the maintenance of a window display.

Changes of use from A1, A2 or A3 uses to uses other than A1, A2 and A3 will not be permitted within any of the Primary Shopping Frontages of Stroud town Centre.

6.8.2. In accordance with PPG6, the importance of the town centre providing a range of uses is recognised. The Local Plan therefore restricts the extent of secondary frontages within Stroud town centre and also places less restriction on changes of

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use of premises from A1 retail use to other uses than on premises within the Primary Frontages. In order to ensure that retail remains an important activity at ground floor use within secondary frontages, the Council will expect at least a third of the units of a particular street block frontage, or a frontage of up to 50 metres either side of the application site, whichever is less, to remain in A1 retail use. The Secondary Shopping Frontages in Stroud are shown on the Stroud Town Centre Inset Map:-

POLICY S2

Within the secondary shopping frontages of Stroud town centre, a change of use at ground floor level from Retail (Use Class A1) to financial and professional services (Use Class A2) or food and drink (Use Class A3) uses will be permitted subject to the following criteria:

1. the retail function of the area is not undermined; and
2. there is no loss of a residential unit.

Changes of use from A1, A2, or A3 uses to uses other than A1, A2, and A3 will not be permitted within any of the secondary shopping frontages of Stroud town centre.

6.8.3. Elsewhere in the town centre, premises currently in retail, financial and professional service or food and drink use could usefully be allowed to be converted into residential, thereby increasing the town's residential population. In order to encourage such conversion, as well as the conversion of accommodation at first floor level and above, (covered by Policy H15) normal requirements for amenity space and car parking will be relaxed within the town centre.

6.8.4. Other uses appropriate to a town centre, such as leisure, entertainment, medical and employment will also be encouraged to locate within these areas. The underlying objective is, over time, to concentrate Stroud's retail activity into a smaller core, and to facilitate the development of other parts of the town centre into lively, vibrant areas of mixed use.

POLICY S3

Within Stroud town centre, outside the defined primary and secondary frontages, changes of use to uses which will assist in enhancing the vitality and viability of the town centre will be permitted.

6.9. Development Proposals in Stroud Town Centre

6.9.1. As part of the District Council's desire to regenerate Stroud town centre, appropriate redevelopment which aids this process in and around the town centre will be encouraged, particularly for mixed use development. Many sites within the town centre have potential for such redevelopment, but are in locations where a number of potential uses would be acceptable. They are therefore not allocated in this Plan, but where such sites come forward for development, they should be for uses which will assist the regeneration of the town centre. In each case, a development brief should be prepared and agreed with the District Council, prior to the granting of any planning permission.

POLICY S4

Proposals for the development of sites within Stroud town centre will be permitted provided they will contribute to the regeneration of the town centre and support or enhance its role and function. In the case of any major development, or the development of sensitive sites, a development brief should be prepared and approved by the District Council prior to the grant of any planning permission.

6.9.2. For the purposes of Policy S4, a major development is defined as one involving the erection or change of use of over 1,000 sq.metres of floorspace.

6.9.3. The attraction of a cinema to the town centre is a high priority in assisting Stroud's regeneration, by extending the attractiveness of the town and its evening economy. The bus station on Merrywalks has been identified as a suitable site for a cinema, as part of a mixed use scheme, and subjected to a feasibility study. An Alternative site is proposed for buses at the Integrated Transport Interchange, as set out in the Transport chapter. Provision should be made for buses prior to development starting on the site. The Merrywalks site is large enough to accommodate other appropriate town centre uses, such as retail and other leisure uses. It is, however, essential that any redevelopment of this site includes a cinema.

6.9.4. It is important that the site is accessible by all means of transport for all users including a good level of public transport provision, and encourages linked trips to the town centre. Ensuring high quality public transport to the site will be important.

PROPOSAL S5

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The bus station site, on Merrywalks, Stroud, is allocated for mixed use. Any development proposal must include a cinema. Other acceptable uses in addition to a cinema are likely to be within Use Classes A1, A3 and D2. In conjunction with the development of this site, a Section 106 Legal Agreement will be sought covering the following issues:-

1. Ensuring pedestrian links to the town centre.
2. Contributions to improved public transport and cycle access to the site; and
3. Associated off-site highway improvements.

6.9.4a. A large area of under utilised land on the edge of Stroud Town Centre at Cheapside Wharf has been identified for mixed use development. Development of this site has the potential to improve an important gateway into the town centre and to provide a range of complementary uses to aid its regeneration. It is important that the site is not viewed either physically or functionally as being separate from the town centre but as an extension to it. A key part of any development on this site will be the provision of pedestrian and cycle links across the railway line to integrate the site with the town centre, and a public transport interchange at Stroud Railway Station to improve access to the town centre as a whole.

6.9.4b The Thames and Severn Canal dissects the site and should be a focus for part of the development. Its towpath is part of a dedicated route providing access for pedestrians and cyclists from the surrounding area. Contributions will be sought towards the canal's restoration and for a canal bridge to improve access across the site for pedestrians and cyclists.

6.9.4c. The comprehensive redevelopment of this site is sought to contribute to the regeneration of the town centre. This will help ensure the realisation of a high quality scheme, the site's full integration with the town centre, and that safe, attractive and convenient cycle and pedestrian access can be secured across the site. It is anticipated that this site will come forward for development during the second half of the Plan period.

POLICY S5A

Land at Cheapside Wharf is allocated for mixed use development including a public transport interchange, housing and public car parking. Any development proposal should support or enhance the vitality and viability of Stroud town centre. In conjunction with the development of this site, Section 106 Legal Agreements will be sought covering the following issues:-

1. contributions towards the restoration of the Stroudwater / Thames and Severn Canal;
2. contributions towards improvements to pedestrian and cycle links from the site to the town centre and the Canal towpath;
3. contributions towards the construction of a public transport interchange; and
4. contributions towards off-site highway improvements.

A development brief shall be prepared and approved by the District Council prior to the grant of any planning permission.

6.9.5. The Council recognises that the current nature of retail premises within the town centre are unattractive generally to bulky goods operators and this section of the retail market has very limited representation in the town, causing related shopping trips to take place out of the District. Also, the nature of the historic centre is such that it is difficult to provide suitable new premises for this type of retail without causing harm to the historic character of the centre. Bulky goods are considered to be those goods which require a large amount of display space due to the large size of items or, are, by virtue of their size, shape and weight, difficult to carry easily. The Council is aware that these forms of development also often sell small items. However, due to the character of the town centre, the sale of such items may impact unacceptably on it. The Council will, therefore, limit the sale of non bulky items which may be sold from these developments to a level which is of a minor and ancillary nature to the store's operation, in terms of retail floorspace and turnover. Bulky goods do not include small items which, as part of the store's operation, are sold in bulk.

6.9.6. In line with the sequential test set out in PPG6, it is considered important that this demand is accommodated as close to the town centre as possible. In order to promote non food bulky goods retail development in Stroud, the Council has allocated land at Far Hill as suitable for this form of development. The Far Hill site is located just outside the defined town centre along a major bus route into the town.

PROPOSAL S6

Far Hill car park, Cainscross Road, Stroud, is allocated for non-food retail (bulky goods). In conjunction with the development of this site, a Section 106 Legal Agreement will be sought covering the following issues:-

1. Improvement of pedestrian links to the town centre.
2. Contributions towards improved public transport to the site.
3. Associated off-site highway improvements.
4. Contributions towards the restoration of the Stroudwater Canal.

6.10. Dursley Town Centre

6.10.1. Dursley is the second largest town centre in the District and is the main centre in the South Vale.

6.10.2. The eastern part of Parsonage Street is the principal shopping street, and is a pedestrian priority zone. Retail deliveries have in the past tended to conflict with its mainly pedestrian use, and this problem is being addressed through the installation of street furniture to emphasise pedestrian only areas and bays for the loading and unloading of vehicles. The other streets in the centre are Long Street, which is affected by heavy lorries delivering to industrial premises, and Silver Street/Market Place which suffer from heavy traffic flows, gradients and narrow pavements.

6.10.3. A study of the town centre, which was commissioned by Stroud District Council in June 1991, indicated that, generally, the centre was in a difficult trading position. This was mainly because it was not large enough to attract major multiple traders in comparison/durable goods. The study considered that to produce a substantial improvement in the centre's trading position expansion was needed by way of the development of a supermarket within the town centre.

6.10.4. The Dursley Town Centre Regeneration Strategy, published May 1997, set out a number of proposals to aid the regeneration of the town including the redevelopment of the Castle Street and Rackfield site for a supermarket. This proposal and other land use proposals - the redevelopment of Bymacks for employment and housing, and the town centre relief road - have been incorporated into the Plan. The Dursley Town Centre Partnership is in the process of producing a new strategy for Dursley Town Centre that will supersede the 1997 Strategy.

6.11. Retailing in Dursley Town Centre

6.11.1. Dursley town centre's pattern of retailing is much simpler than Stroud's. The main shopping focus is on the pedestrianised area of Parsonage Street, and this is undeniably Dursley's primary shopping area. Beyond this is a more limited area within the town centre where non-retail uses can be allowed to predominate. Dursley is in this respect similar to some of the District's other town centres, such as Wotton-under-Edge and Stonehouse. It is not therefore proposed to include policies on changes of use from retail which are particular to Dursley. Instead, Dursley is included in those town centres covered by Policies S9 and S10, set out later in this chapter, under 'Retailing in Other Town Centres'.

6.12. Development Proposals in Dursley Town Centre

6.12.1. As set out above, the Dursley Town Centre Regeneration Strategy specifically identifies proposals which should be brought forward to aid its regeneration. The redevelopment of Bymacks is dealt with as a mixed use allocation within the Housing Chapter and the construction of the Dursley Relief Road is dealt with under Proposal T13 in the Transport chapter. One remaining and important proposal is for the redevelopment of the Castle Street and Rackfield site to provide a quality supermarket providing 1,390-1858 sq.metres net (15,000-20,000 sq.ft.net) floorspace.

6.12.2 It is considered vital that Dursley's ability to compete with other town centres should be enhanced by the construction of a supermarket, but that this must be in a location within the town centre, where linked trips to the supermarket and the rest of the town centre are a real likelihood. In connection with this proposal, the two most important obligations are ensuring good pedestrian links with the town centre, and construction of the Dursley Relief Road through the site. This part of the Relief Road will ultimately form the access road serving the supermarket. A development brief has been prepared setting out detailed requirements for the development of the site, including provision for cycle, bus and taxi access.

PROPOSAL S7

A site at Castle Street and Rackfield is allocated for a supermarket of approximately 1,858 square metres net floorspace. In conjunction with the development of this site, a

Section 106 Legal Agreement will be sought covering the following issues:-

- 1. Ensuring pedestrian links to the town centre; and**
- 2. Construction of the Dursley Relief Road through the site.**

6.12.3. The proposal for a new supermarket will displace existing car parking adjacent to Castle Street. Replacement parking facilities are therefore proposed at the rear of Parsonage Street. Access to this car park will be from May Lane, and rear servicing of properties on Parsonage Street should be incorporated where possible to remove the current need for servicing at the front of properties.

6.12.4. The provision of a pedestrian link from the new car park to Parsonage Street will further enhance the vitality of Parsonage Street.

PROPOSAL S8

Land to the rear of Parsonage Street is allocated as a replacement car park for the facility affected by the development of the supermarket at Castle Street.

6.13. Other Town Centres

6.13.2. The shopping area in **Stonehouse** is mainly concentrated along High Street (from near its junction with Regent Street) northwards to The Green and extends along part of Queens Road. Stonehouse town centre experiences a large volume of traffic through its town centre. There is limited opportunity for further new development other than by redevelopment.

6.13.3. The extent of **Nailsworth's** central shopping area comprises Old Market Street, Fountain Street, Market Street, Bridge Street and George Street. The Nailsworth Conservation Area coincides with part of the central area. Recent environmental improvements have taken place in the town centre in Old Market at the bus station and at Mortimer Gardens. Additional shop units are also currently under construction in George Street and Fountain Street.

6.13.5. The main shopping streets in **Wotton-under-Edge** are Long Street, High Street, Church Street and Market Street. The town centre is reasonably vibrant, having relatively low vacancy rates. However, much of the town centre is made up of narrow one-way streets, with inadequate servicing facilities, and there is a perceived shortage of short-stay parking.

6.13.6. **Berkeley's** shops are small and mostly local in character, serving the needs of the town and tourists. Car parking is adequately served by kerbside provision and the public car park at Lower Berrycroft.

6.13.7a. The town centres of **Painswick** and **Minchinhampton** are situated within Conservation Areas and consist of a small number of units serving local needs and the tourist industry. Minchinhampton's shopping area is concentrated along High Street, extending at its southern end into West End and Tetbury Street, while Painswick's is dispersed around New Street, Bisley Street, St.Mary's Street and Victoria Street. Both centres suffer from congestion and parking problems during summer months.

6.14. Retailing in Other Town Centres

6.14.1. In Wotton-under-Edge, Stonehouse, Nailsworth, and Dursley it has been possible to identify a core area, which has been defined as primary frontage, and where non-retail uses should not make up more than 20% of defined frontages. In some centres, where the primary area is relatively concentrated, the defined frontage is the centre's whole primary area, whilst in others, where the primary area is more divided, there may be more than one area of defined frontage.

6.14.2. In the primary frontages, the Council considers that a maximum of 20% of non-shopping use frontage represents a reasonable balance between achieving the advantages of concentrating shopping outlets and making provision for service uses which also contributes to the vitality and viability of the centres.

6.14.3. In addition, each of the centres listed above has defined boundaries, and has shopping streets or areas which are within the defined centre, but outside the primary areas. It is within these areas that uses such as financial and professional services and the sale of hot food and drink can best be located. It is intended that within these areas a greater degree of flexibility can be exercised over the use of any particular premises, with the emphasis being on accommodating uses appropriate to a town centre. In Berkeley, Painswick and Minchinhampton, the nature of the centres is such that no primary frontages can readily be defined, and the whole centre is covered by Policy S9. This is to protect the small number of retail units (Class A1) that exist within these centres to prevent the town centre's retail function being undermined further.

6.14.4. For the purposes of the operation of Policies S9 and S10, Dursley town centre is included.

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6.14.5. The Prime Shopping Frontages in each settlement are shown on the Dursley, Stonehouse and Nailsworth Town Centre Inset Maps, and Wotton-under-Edge Inset Map:-

POLICY S9

Within the defined town centres of Berkeley, Minchinhampton and Painswick or the defined primary shopping frontages of Dursley, Wotton-under-Edge, Stonehouse, and Nailsworth, a change of use at ground floor level from Retail (Use Class A1) to Financial and Professional Services (Use Class A2) and Food and Drink (Use Class A3) uses will only be permitted where the proposed use would not undermine the retail function of the frontage or centre.

Changes of use from A1, A2 or A3 uses at ground floor level to uses other than A1, A2 and A3 will not be permitted within any of the defined primary shopping frontages or the defined town centres of Berkeley, Minchinhampton and Painswick.

6.14.6. For the purposes of Policy S10 vacant units will be classified as being in their previous use, and each frontage or group of shown on the Nailsworth Town Centre Inset Map will be treated individually for the purposes of measuring the percentage of non-retail.

6.14.6a. Applications for the change of use from Use Class A1 to Class A2 or Class A3 within the defined town centres of Dursley, Wotton-under-Edge, Stonehouse and Nailsworth, but outside the defined primary frontages, will be assessed against Policy S11.

POLICY S10

Within the defined town centres of Dursley, Wotton-under-Edge, Stonehouse, and Nailsworth, a change of use at ground floor level from Retail (Use Class A1), Financial and Professional Services (Use Class A2) or Food and Drink (Use Class A3) uses to uses other than A1, A2 and A3 will only be permitted if all the following criteria are met:-

1. the unit is not within a defined primary shopping frontage.
2. the unit has been vacant for a considerable period, and every effort has been made to market it, at a realistic price, for an A1, A2 or A3 use.
3. the proposed use is one that will assist in enhancing the vitality and viability of the centre.

POLICY S11

Planning permission will be granted for development proposals within the defined town centres of Dursley, Wotton-under-Edge, Stonehouse, Nailsworth, Berkeley, Painswick and Minchinhampton that support or enhance their role and function. The proposed development must:

1. sustain or enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre and its environment; and
2. be in keeping with the character, size and operational requirements of the established town centre.

6.15. Developments Attracting Large Numbers of People

6.15.1. Developments attracting large numbers of people including retail, office, indoor leisure and entertainment uses will be assessed against Policies S12 and T1. Town centres are the preferred location for all developments attracting large numbers of people as they provide the best opportunity for comparison between providers of goods and services, linked trips and access by public transport. As set out in previous sections of this chapter, this Plan anticipates the vast majority of new retail investment to take place within the town centres of Stroud and Dursley.

6.15.2. There has been growing concern both nationally and locally about the cumulative impact of out-of-centre retail developments on the long term vitality and viability of traditional town centres. The development of major new out-of-centre services and facilities within the District and close to its boundaries would undermine the vitality and viability of existing shopping centres within the District by drawing trade away from them and lead to an increase in the need to travel by car.

6.15.3. Out-of-town stores seek a trading advantage by catering primarily for car-borne shopping trips. However both PPG 6: Town Centres and Retail Developments and PPG 13: Transport recognise the need to reduce vehicular movements in both number and length. Retail development should therefore be accessible to all transport modes but in particular by

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public transport, pedestrian and cycle modes. Town centres in this context are the most appropriate location for retail development followed in accessibility terms, by edge-of-town centre sites.

6.15.4. In accordance with Government guidance on the sequential approach, the Council will expect proposals for developments attracting large numbers of people to be located in the existing town centres of the District. Exceptionally, where such sites cannot be made available and a need is demonstrated, there may be scope for development at edge-of-centre sites where they are close enough to provide easy and attractive pedestrian access to the town centre, district and local centres followed by out-of-centre development on sites which are accessible by a choice of means of transport and do not adversely affect the vitality and viability of any town centre. When assessing the suitability of sequentially preferable sites, developers will be required to be flexible in terms of format, design and scale of development.

6.15.5. Proposals for new retail floorspace which would undermine the role of established town centres will be resisted and the cumulative effect of proposals will continue to be an important factor in the consideration of planning applications. The Council will, however, welcome proposals for new or upgraded shopping facilities within town centres where these improve the range and quality of shopping provision and contribute to improvements in the shopping environment.

6.15.5a Developers of proposals will be expected to provide evidence that addresses the criteria set out in Policy S12. All new retail proposals of 1,000 square metres or more, or in cases where local circumstances justify a lower threshold, should be supported by a retail impact assessment. Transportation assessments will also be required in line with the thresholds set out in the Draft PPG13, or the Revised PPG13 when published.

6.15.6. The Council wishes to ensure that, where planning permission is to be granted for retail development outside town centres, the nature of retailing permitted does not change over time without the implications of that change being assessed first. The type of goods sold and subdivision of retail units outside town centres will therefore be restricted by condition or legal agreement. Applications to vary conditions to existing retail permissions and for extensions to existing stores will be assessed against Policy S12.

POLICY S12

In settlements with defined town centres, proposals for, development that would attract large amounts of people should be consistent

with the scale and function of the town centre. Outside town centres (on edge or out of centre sites), such proposals will only be permitted where suitable town centre sites cannot be identified and a need is demonstrated for the proposed development. Developers of out-of-centre proposals will also be required to demonstrate that there are no suitable sites available, either on the edge of centres or on existing allocations and that they are well served by a choice of means of transport.

In addition, development proposals (in, edge, or out of centre) will only be permitted if all the following criteria are met:-

- 1. It will not harm the vitality and viability of town centres either by itself or cumulatively with other proposals, planning permissions, developments or Local Plan allocations;**
- 2. it will not undermine town centre strategies nor lead to the delay or abandonment of needed investments;**
- 3. where retail development is proposed, agreement is reached with the Council regarding the range of goods to be sold;**
- 4. it will not have an unacceptable impact on travel patterns nor result in a substantial increase in car usage; and**
- 4. the site is not allocated for an alternative use.**

6.16. Local Shopping Centres, Community Facilities and Individual Village Shops

6.16.1. The District contains a number of local shopping centres and one District Centre, which meet local needs, often including a newsagent, a general grocery store and a sub Post Office and occasionally a pharmacy, hairdresser, or other small shops of a local nature. The provision of these small-scale local shopping facilities helps ensure residents have convenient access to a reasonable range and choice of facilities while helping to reduce travel and car use and to secure a more sustainable environment.

6.16.2. Individual urban based and village shops can provide an essential and valuable service to the community, particularly to those who do not have access to a car. The Council also recognises that as communities develop, either socially due to the changing structure of the community or as a result of new developments, new community facilities may be required. Proposals for new local shopping and community facilities within residential areas and villages will therefore be supported provided they are

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of a size and scale that is related to the needs of the local community and are accessible by public transport, cycling and walking. To ensure that proposals will not lead to unacceptable levels of vehicle traffic, applications will be assessed against Policy T1.

POLICY S13

Planning permission will be granted for community facilities and individual or small groups of shops (Use Class A1) to serve everyday shopping needs within existing settlement boundaries provided all the following criteria are met:-

1. the development is consistent with the scale and function of the settlement or locality;
2. the development would not have an unacceptable impact on the environment or the amenity of local residents;
3. the development would not give rise to unacceptable levels of vehicular traffic or on-street parking to the detriment of the amenities of the surrounding areas and highway safety; and
4. the development is served by adequate on-street parking or off-street parking in accordance with the Council's Parking Standards.

6.16.3. In view of the distance of many of these local centres from the main town centres, it is important that their shopping function should be maintained. The intrusion of uses which are not appropriate to a shopping area can undermine the retail function of local shopping facilities. The Plan therefore seeks to protect these defined district and local shopping centres from excessive changes of use away from retail, which would harm their vitality and viability, and will seek to establish or maintain, as a guide, 80% of the defined shopping frontage in retail (A1) use.

6.16.4. The defined district and local shopping centres are:-

Table 6.4: Defined District and Local Shopping Centres

Place/Street	Numbers (inclusive)
Cam District Centre High Street	6-28 7,19-25 Units 1-3, and adjacent supermarket and post office
Cainscross, Stroud Westward Road	16-26

	Store between 26 and 50 Westward Road
Kingshill, Dursley Kingshill Road	2-16 and adjoining supermarket
Woodfield, Cam Phillimore Road	1-7
Brimscombe Gordon Terrace	1-5 and adjoining Post Office
Manor Village Tanglewood Way, Bussage	35-45

POLICY S14

Within the defined Cam District Centre or local shopping centres, a change of use at ground floor level from Retail (Use Class A1) to Financial and Professional Services (Use Class A2) or Food and Drink (Use Class A3) uses will only be permitted where the proposed use would not undermine the retail function of the centre.

Changes of use from A1, A2 or A3 uses at groundfloor level to uses other than A1, A2 and A3 will not be permitted within the defined Cam District Centre or local centres.

6.17. Loss of Individual and Village Shops, Public Houses and other Community Uses

6.17.1. There is concern within the District, particularly in some rural areas, that certain community uses/services are being lost from settlements. Typical examples of services under threat are village stores, post offices and public houses, where the buildings are being converted into other uses. Once lost, they are gone for ever. In some settlements, a public house may provide the sole meeting place for local inhabitants. A lack of adequate public transport underlines the need to prevent the loss of local shops, public houses and other community facilities.

6.17.2. The services do however need the support of the local population if they are to survive. When considering proposed changes of use, it will be necessary to take account of the level of this support. If a service becomes unviable as a result of a lack of patronage, it may not be possible to prevent a change of use. However, the applicant will need to demonstrate that the existing service is indeed unviable, or that alternative provision exists within walking distance.

6.17.3. It is considered that 800 metres represents the maximum distance from a local facility that can normally be considered convenient to walk for everyday activities. This guideline and the range and choice of other facilities in the locality will be used in assessing the accessibility of acceptable alternatives.

POLICY S15

Development which involves the loss of individual shops, public houses, village halls and other community facilities will only be permitted where:

- 1. there is no prospect of a continued community use;**
- 2. there are adequate alternative facilities in the locality which cater for the needs of the local population; and**
- 3. the current or previous use is no longer viable.**

6.18. Garden Centres

6.18.1. Stroud District contains a considerable number of garden centres. Many have grown from being small-scale nurseries, selling only plants grown on the premises, to substantial retail outlets, selling all manner of garden-related and, increasingly, non garden-related products.

6.18.2. Horticultural nurseries often start out on agricultural land, without requiring planning permission. They then begin selling plants grown on site, still without requiring planning permission. It is often only at the stage that they wish to grow into a 'garden centre', and sell plants not grown on site, as well as other garden-related products, that planning permission is first required. This creates a problem in itself, as the business will be an established one, on a site which may or may not be suitable for the use proposed, in terms of, for example, highway safety, or the effect on nearby residential properties.

6.18.3. It is recognised that garden centres fulfil a particular need, and, because at least a proportion of the goods sold may be grown on site, will often by necessity be located in the countryside, remote from the District's town centres. Provided the proposed garden centre can comply with the general policies mentioned above, a countryside location may be acceptable provided it is proposed only to sell garden-related products, and not diversify into a more general retail business. Such a diversification usually includes the sale of goods which should more appropriately be sold from town centres, and would

thus be contrary to PPG6 and PPG13. The Council will also carefully consider the impact of such development on areas of high quality landscape or nature conservation value, and the effect on the local highway network which is often inadequate in countryside locations to cater for these developments. Consideration will also be given to opportunities for access by modes of transport other than the car.

6.18.4. Where garden centres are permitted away from town centres, therefore, conditions or planning obligations will usually be required to control the range of goods sold. These will be enforced, and extensions to sell goods which should more appropriately be sold from a town centre will be resisted. Proposals for garden centres not meeting criterion 1 of Policy S16 will be assessed against Policy S12.

POLICY S16

Proposals for new garden centres or extensions to existing centres will only be permitted where the following criteria are met:

- 1. the range of goods to be sold is entirely garden related and consists predominantly of plants, at least some of which are grown on the premises; and**
- 2. the site is reasonably accessible to the catchment population by public transport, cycling and walking.**

6.19. Retailing from Filling Stations

6.19.1. The volume of non-petrol sales from petrol filling station forecourts has increased significantly over recent years. Convenience stores at petrol filling stations can reduce the number of journeys by car by allowing multi-purpose trips. There are some areas in the District where the convenience store at the petrol filling station represents the only shopping facility for a local community. However, such developments should not be allowed to expand to the extent that they may harm the vitality and viability of existing centres, and proposals will be judged against Policy S12, in the same way as other proposals for developments attracting large numbers of people.

6.19.2. Where new petrol filling stations are permitted which include a substantial amount of retail floorspace, or where a redevelopment or an extension is proposed which provides additional retail floorspace, conditions may be imposed which restrict the extent of the retail floorspace and the range of goods to be sold.

6.20. Class A3 Food and Drink Uses

6.20.1. The introduction of restaurants and hot food take-aways can have a positive impact on an area's vitality, but can also harm the amenity of an area, particularly where late opening hours affect local residents. Consideration will therefore be given to the need to restrict hours of opening where residential amenities could otherwise suffer. Sites such as town centres are less sensitive and later opening hours, or unrestricted opening times, may be appropriate.

6.20.2. Many considerations, when dealing with proposals for A3 uses, are already covered by other policies in the Plan. If the proposal is within a town centre, then the appropriate policies earlier in this chapter should be applied.

6.20.3. PPG6 makes it clear that the sequential test should apply to uses other than retail, and this includes A3 uses. Some new A3 uses may be intended to serve a purely local market and will be considered under Policy S13. However, many others are not, and attract large numbers of people from wide catchment areas. These uses should, be located within established centres wherever possible, and should be accessible to a choice of forms of transport. Proposals of this nature will be considered under Policy S12.