

10.1. Introduction

10.1.1. The effects of increasing levels of leisure time, disposable income and mobility, combined with a changing population structure, have served to increase the demand for both formal recreation and informal leisure activities. As a result of these trends and rising public expectations, the pressures on and for recreation provision continue to increase. This is especially the case with regard to informal leisure activities in the countryside.

10.1.2. The District Council recognises the increasing value and importance of recreation and leisure pursuits and wishes to encourage appropriate provision for all sectors of the community. The traditional role of local authorities as providers of recreation facilities has changed in recent years. Today, the private sector plays an important role in catering for the more specialist demands such as health and fitness clubs, leisure centres and golf facilities.

10.1.3. The Local Plan aims to make provision for an appropriate range of open space and leisure, social and cultural facilities both within existing settlements and new developments and at suitable locations in the countryside. Full consideration of the recreational and leisure needs of the community must, however, be balanced against other development requirements of the community and the desire to protect the District's environment.

10.2. Objectives

The key Local Plan objectives for recreation are as follows:-

1. To retain and provide an appropriate level and distribution of public open space, recreational facilities and entertainment opportunities in settlements to meet present and future local needs.
2. To protect and seek to improve the quantity, quality and accessibility of outdoor play space, particularly in areas where there are identified shortfalls in provision or the Council's adopted standards of provision are at risk through new development.
3. To encourage informal recreational use of the countryside in a manner which conserves its landscape and wildlife value and minimises the conflict between users.
4. To protect and improve existing footpaths and public rights of way within the countryside and to safeguard their character.
5. To seek the restoration of the canal channels and corridors to encourage through navigation, public access and local economic and environmental improvements.

10.3. Policy Framework

Central Government Advice

10.3.1 Central Government advice concerning provision for sport and recreation is largely contained within the consultation draft of PPG17: Sport, Open Space and Recreation 2001. This provides a national land use planning framework for the development of sport and recreation. It emphasises the need to safeguard and enhance existing recreational opportunities in recognition of their important role in the social well-being of local communities. It states that Local Plans provide the appropriate context in which to assess a community's needs for recreational facilities by identifying deficiencies in the provision of public open space. It further states that Local Plans should include policies which protect existing recreational facilities and encourage a new and wider provision of facilities which are co-ordinated with other land use policies. In the case of new residential developments, both PPG17 and Circular 1/97 suggest that the use of planning obligations may be an appropriate method of securing these facilities.

Gloucestershire County Structure Plan

10.3.2. The Adopted Structure Plan: Second Review sets the strategic context for planning policies relating to recreation and leisure. It includes a number of policies which aim to encourage the provision of formal and informal recreational facilities and improve public access to both urban and rural recreational resources. Furthermore, the Structure Plan stresses the need to use natural resources for recreation and leisure in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

National Playing Fields Association

10.3.3. There are no statutory national standards for the provision of open space. PPG17 suggests that Local Planning Authorities should have regard to standards recommended by sports' governing bodies, the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) and similar recreational interest groups. With regard to the NPFA, their 'Six Acre Standard' recommends a minimum level of outdoor playing space of 2.4 hectares (6 acres) per 1,000 population and this standard has now become widely adopted as a suitable assessment for outdoor play space provision. The standard is composed of formal facilities, both publicly and privately owned, for children's and youth and adult use. Whilst this standard was devised principally for urban areas it has been applied to indicate the general level of recreational provision within the whole of Stroud

District. The provision of outdoor play space in accordance with precise national standards may be considered less critical in more rural areas because of the opportunities for access to the countryside for casual play. On the basis of the 'Six Acre Standard' local assessments of provision can be made by the Local Planning Authority and policies can be developed to reflect the level of adequacy of provision of the outdoor recreational facilities.

Stroud District Council Outdoor Playing Space Survey and Leisure Strategy

10.3.4. A comprehensive survey of outdoor playing space in Stroud District was conducted in 1999 by the District Council as part of the process of policy preparation for this Local Plan. The full results of this survey have been published separately in a document entitled 'Outdoor Playing Space – A Survey of Local Provision and Needs'. The survey revealed a number of deficiencies, in terms of both quantity and quality, with regard to outdoor play space provision in certain areas of Stroud District. The survey will be used, in conjunction with the District Council's recently published Leisure Strategy, as a basis for assessing future outdoor recreational needs within the District.

10.4. Sport and Formal Recreation

Adequacy of Provision

10.4.1. The outdoor recreational facilities referred to in this section (with the exception of Policy R4) relate to the definitions in the NPFA's 'Six Acre Standard' document, namely facilities available for sport, active recreation and/or children's play. For the purposes of this Plan the District Council has adopted the 'Six Acre Standard' as an appropriate minimum standard for outdoor playing space across the District and will apply this standard of provision to new residential developments. This standard does not include open space which serves primarily an amenity function.

10.4.2. The value of outdoor playing space and its role within open space in general is well documented and acknowledged in PPG17 as making a significant contribution to the environment and to the physical and social welfare of communities. Outdoor playing space will be afforded protection, as appropriate, in respect of its amenity value and contribution to the local environment as well as its contribution to recreational activity.

10.4.3. It is the intention of the District Council to ensure that, through the planning system, adequate opportunities exist for communities to participate in recreational activity. The District Council will monitor the supply of and demand for outdoor sporting and recreational facilities, seek to make the most

effective use of existing facilities and identify deficiencies and opportunities for further recreational provision.

10.4.4. The District Council's survey of outdoor playing space identified a number of outdoor play areas, shown on the Proposals Map and in Appendix 7, which should be safeguarded from development. These sites have recreational and amenity value and also make an important contribution to the quality of local environments by providing green spaces within the more urbanised areas. With the exception of school playing fields, the sites identified are those which are considered to be suitable and available (as a matter of practice and policy) for public use. This is the case whether they are in the ownership of public, private or voluntary organisations.

10.4.5. The survey of outdoor playing space also identified a number of areas within the District which have low levels of provision. There is under-provision of playing pitches and equipped children's playing space in some parishes, urban areas and larger settlements. Consequently, in certain parts of the District, the adopted standards of recreational provision are not attained. In an attempt to address this situation the results of the outdoor playing space survey, together with the Leisure Strategy, will be used to assess local needs and guide the future provision of outdoor playing space.

10.4.6. Land for sporting and recreational use has often been a target for development in the past. Once developed, this land is usually permanently lost as a recreational resource. The Local Plan gives equal consideration to opportunities for participation in sport and play as to other land use activities. It seeks to protect outdoor playing space where its loss will result in an under-provision, and to improve or provide additional facilities where an identified deficiency exists. The loss of existing outdoor playing space and, in particular, any of the identified sites, could result in an under-provision of outdoor playing space or exacerbate an already existing deficiency. PPG17 suggests that when outdoor playing space is no longer required for its original purpose it should, initially, be assessed in terms of its ability to meet the demand for recreational land in the wider community. Policy R1 seeks, through positive safeguarding measures, to ensure that these outdoor playing spaces are not lost through their development. Policy R1 also acknowledges that there may be exceptional circumstances where such protection could be relaxed, provided that certain safeguarding conditions are met. Improvements to existing outdoor play areas may take the form of facilities which enable more intensive usage, such as floodlit all-weather pitches or children's play equipment. In addition, the development of privately owned outdoor playing facilities (which were not, as a matter of practice and policy, available for use by the public)

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may be permitted provided part of the site is retained as outdoor playing space for use by the public on a permanent basis. The current level of outdoor play space provision within a locality will also be taken into consideration when assessing development proposals against criterion 4 of Policy R1.

POLICY R1

Development proposals that involve the loss of existing outdoor playing space in public or private ownership, including those sites listed in Appendix 7 as Outdoor Play Space, will only be permitted if:

- 1. alternative outdoor playing space of at least the equivalent quantity, quality and accessibility of that lost is provided within the locality; or**
- 2. it can be demonstrated that no shortfall in accessible outdoor playing space exists in the area, or would result from the development; or**
- 3. the loss of part of a site leads to enhanced provision of outdoor playing space on the remainder of the site; or**
- 4. the loss of part of a site in private ownership, and not currently available for public use, leads to public usage on the remainder of the site.**

Outdoor Recreation Site Allocation

10.4.7. At Newtown, Sharpness a deficiency of provision has been identified following the loss of all outdoor play provision to built development without alternative provision having effectively been made. An area of land was identified in the previous Local Plan following negotiation between Hinton Parish Council, Stroud District Council and British Waterways to meet the needs of the community and replace those facilities which had been lost. This allocation for new public outdoor play space is carried forward in this Local Plan and identified on the Proposals Map. It is therefore protected from alternative development. The allocated site forms part of a larger area of land which has been designated as a Key Wildlife Site by the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. In accordance with Policy N3 of this Plan, the Key Wildlife Site designation will be taken into account when considering proposals for recreational development on the allocated site.

PROPOSAL R2

Land at Oldminster Road, Sharpness is allocated for public outdoor play space.

Outdoor Playing Facilities in Educational Use

10.4.8. School playing fields can provide valuable opportunities for outdoor recreation in areas where recreation provision is deficient. These open spaces can also make an important contribution to the visual amenity of local areas. PPG17 emphasises the need to make the best use of school recreational facilities for local communities and contains guidance on the issue for local authorities.

10.4.9. Policy R3 deals with those recreational facilities which are likely to be surplus to requirements during the Plan period. The disposal of sites considered surplus to educational needs has not, in the past, fully recognised the continuing important recreational and amenity value which the sites provide to the wider community. School playing fields should not be disposed of until it has been established that the sites will not be required in the longer term for school or community use. The disposal of educational facilities could reduce the stock of existing outdoor play areas and thus place additional pressure on the remaining facilities, especially for pitch sports.

10.4.10. Therefore, the disposal of playing fields and other outdoor playing facilities in educational ownership for non-recreational purposes will be opposed. In addition to resisting the loss of these playing facilities, the Local Education Authority and owners of private facilities (whether or not in educational use) will be encouraged to allow a wider public use of their facilities by entering into formal joint use agreements.

POLICY R3

Permission will not be granted for the development of playing fields in educational ownership where:

- 1. the loss will result in a future shortage of land for educational recreation; or**
- 2. the land could make a valuable contribution in reducing an identified deficiency in outdoor playing space provision within the community.**

Permission will be granted to proposals that involve the joint use of school playing fields with local communities to help meet the demand for formal sports provision.

Amenity Open Space

10.4.11. In addition to open space for formal outdoor play provision, open space for passive recreation and amenity use is considered particularly valuable in providing wider social and environmental benefits to those living, working and playing within urban areas. These areas can also act as havens and habitats for flora and fauna and can thus encourage biodiversity. Open space of this nature does not fall within the NPFA 'Six Acre Standard' categories and no other generally accepted standard has been derived which can be applied. Policy R4 affords protection to amenity space (including 'Pocket Parks') and private undeveloped land with existing or potential recreational value in areas where the provision of more formal recreational facilities is deficient, or where the site contributes to the visual quality or character of the area.

POLICY R4

Permission will not be granted for the development of amenity spaces that would:

- 1. remove opportunities for recreation in areas identified as being deficient in other forms of outdoor recreational provision; or**
- 2. erode the visual quality or character of an area.**

Open Space provided in association with New Residential Developments

10.4.12. In determining proposals for residential development, an important consideration will be the extent to which a requirement to provide public open space arises. All residential development will add to the demand for outdoor recreational facilities in areas which are already deficient in provision. Planning obligations will therefore be sought to ensure that all new residential developments (apart from extensions, replacement dwellings, some types of affordable housing and accommodation for the elderly) provide, on a pro-rata basis, a sufficient amount of public open space and recreational facilities to meet the needs of the prospective residents of the development. Of particular concern in Stroud District is the need to ensure that adequate outdoor playing space for children is provided in association with new residential developments, and that appropriate contributions are made to the provision of larger areas of youth and adult play space which serves the new development. Policy R5 seeks to address this issue. For the purposes of this Local Plan the District Council has adopted the NPFA's 'Six Acre Standard' and will apply this standard to all new residential developments. This

standard excludes landscaped areas and other informal amenity areas, for which additional provision may be necessary.

POLICY R5

Proposals for new residential development should provide appropriate public outdoor playing space in accordance with the adopted standard of 2.4 hectares per 1,000 population. Where achievement of this standard is unrealistic or inappropriate within the boundaries of the development site, a financial contribution will be sought in lieu of on-site provision, as detailed in Supplementary Planning Guidance, 'Residential Development Outdoor Play Space Provision'. Amenity open space will be sought, as appropriate, in association with new residential development.

10.4.13. Wherever possible, the provision of outdoor playing space should be made on-site as an integral part of the development. It should be of an appropriate type to serve the needs of the development, and in a location well related to the proposed residential properties. The detailed requirements of any outdoor playing space provision will vary between sites and depend upon the needs of the residential development proposed and the level of existing recreational provision.

10.4.14. There may be circumstances when it is not realistic or appropriate to accommodate the required outdoor playing space on the development site itself. Many residential developments may be small in scale (eg. single dwellings) and will, individually, only generate small outdoor playing space requirements which would be impractical to provide or be too small to be of value on their own. Cumulatively, however, these small residential developments will still contribute to the demand for outdoor recreational facilities. Therefore Policy R5 proposes, where appropriate, to provide new, or improve existing outdoor playing space facilities off the development site, but within the locality, via a commuted payment from the developer. The recreational open space needs will be assessed having regard to each individual development proposal, to ensure that any financial contribution is fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development, as set out in Circular 1/97 and PPG17.

10.4.15. Children's outdoor playing space should be provided within the boundaries of the development site where this is feasible and appropriate. Where off-site provision is required via a commuted payment, children's outdoor playing space should be located in close proximity to the proposed development to enable safe and easy access by children. In the case of playing facilities for youth and adult use, the issue of time and distance travelled to

access these facilities is of less significance. It would be expected that, in most circumstances, commuted payments for this type of facility would be provided for off the development site, but close or accessible to the community it serves. Where the provision of new youth and adult recreational facilities is not feasible or appropriate within the locality of the development, the financial contributions will be used to improve existing youth and adult facilities within the area in accordance with the outdoor playing space survey and Leisure Strategy. The District Council will also expect developers to meet the cost of maintaining on-site outdoor recreational facilities for a period of fifteen years following their installation. Supplementary Planning Guidance entitled 'Residential Development Outdoor Play Space Provision' has been prepared which explains, in detail, the District Council's strategy for the provision of outdoor playing space and the implementation of the commuted payment scheme.

Further Provision of Recreation Space

10.4.16. Proposals H1 and H2 within the Housing chapter identify the public outdoor playing space requirements associated with these new residential developments. These new recreational sites will help towards the achievement of an improved level of provision across Stroud District and will be protected from built development, where appropriate, in accordance with Policy R1.

Golf Courses and Driving Ranges

10.4.17. During the latter part of the 1980s golf became a growth sport and demand for courses and facilities rose rapidly throughout the country. Although this demand subsided during the recession of the early 1990s, the large areas of land needed to accommodate golf courses and their pressure upon areas of high landscape quality continue to raise important issues for the planning system.

10.4.18. Golf courses are acknowledged as an acceptable use of the countryside. They can provide leisure facilities for local residents, increase opportunities for public access to the countryside and help stimulate the local economy by generating jobs and encouraging tourism. Local authorities are being encouraged to recognise this and make provision, where appropriate, to accommodate these demands. This view is supported by Sport England (previously known as the English Sports Council) for the South West which recommends the provision of an additional nine hole golf course (preferably on a 'pay-as-you-play' basis) for the Stroud area in its 1993 publication 'Golf - Subject Report'.

10.4.19. The accommodation of demand, however, has to be balanced against a number of other material considerations. For example, PPG7: The

Countryside 1997 states that once agricultural land is developed, even for 'soft' developments such as golf courses, its return to high quality agricultural land is seldom practicable. Similarly, the restoration of important natural habitats and landscape features is rarely possible and often very expensive. With regard to Stroud District, a major area for concern involves golf course development proposals within the Cotswolds AONB. New golf courses should not be developed in AONBs unless their impact is insignificant or they will make a positive contribution to the character of the landscape and nature conservation of the area. Where appropriate, conditions will be attached to planning permissions for golf course development to control any raising of ground levels or infilling of topographical features.

10.4.20. Based on Gloucestershire County Council recommendations published in 1991, the District Council has adopted guidelines for the location and design of golf courses in the District. These guidelines should be referred to by those proposing the construction of golf courses as they provide Supplementary Planning Guidance on the subject. Proposals for development of this nature will be assessed against the relevant Local Plan policies.

Indoor Sport and Leisure Facilities

10.4.21. The provision of indoor facilities for sport and leisure is an important element of the wider provision of recreational opportunities. Indoor facilities offer the opportunity for all-year-round use and help to meet a large public demand for sports activities. Such facilities exist throughout Stroud District, with a major complex within Stroud itself at Stratford Park which serves the surrounding urban area. In Dursley, Wotton-under-Edge, Stonehouse, Nailsworth and Berkeley, school facilities are utilised by the local community through formal joint use arrangements between the District Council, the County Council and the schools' Governing Bodies.

10.4.22. There are parts of Stroud District deficient in indoor sports provision as identified in a report by Sport England for the South West entitled 'Community Sports Facilities' 1990. These deficiencies have also been recognised in the District Council's Leisure Strategy. Sport England has since produced detailed guidance 'Facilities Planning Model' 1998 which addresses the issue of community sports facilities and its provision. The District Council will seek to address this deficiency issue by securing extra provision through additional formal joint use agreements. Facilities such as village halls, community buildings and schools are valuable assets and particularly suitable for rural communities where indoor sports provision is often poorly provided for and unlikely to be served by a local leisure centre. Facilities such as these are

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protected by Policy S15 in the Town Centres chapter of this Local Plan.

10.4.23. New developments which provide indoor sport or recreation facilities will be supported by the District Council, especially where there is an identified need for such facilities. Development proposals for new indoor recreational facilities should have a minimal impact on the amenity of residential areas, the environment and on the highway network. Proposals for development of this nature will be assessed against the relevant Local Plan policies, with particular reference to policies S12 and S13 of the Town Centres chapter and Policy T1 of the Transport chapter. In some communities there may be scope for rationalising and combining the use of existing facilities with the provision of a single multi-purpose local community centre.

10.5. Informal Recreation

Access to the Countryside - Public Rights of Way

10.5.1. The countryside is important not only for its nature conservation interest and visual qualities but also as a major resource for informal recreational activities. Visits to the countryside are a major leisure activity enjoyed by millions of people nationwide each year. Stroud District is fortunate in containing outstandingly beautiful and diverse countryside of the highest quality, together with a number of important and attractive public rights of way, such as the Cotswold Way National Trail and the Severn Way.

10.5.2. Access to recreational opportunities in the countryside is achieved largely by means of a network of well established public rights of way existing within the District. This network comprises all those footpaths, bridleways, roads used as public paths (RUPP) and byways open to all traffic (BOAT) indicated on the Definitive Map, over which the public have a right of passage, together with other routes with public access (ORPA) as defined by Ordnance Survey. Whilst responsibility for monitoring and developing this network primarily lies with Gloucestershire County Council, the District Council is able to assist by protecting the rights of way from the adverse effects of development and, in appropriate cases, seeking improvements to rights of way in development proposals.

10.5.3. Walking and rambling are popular recreational pursuits within the District and proposals to facilitate these activities will be supported, in co-operation with landowners and other relevant user groups. Recent legislation in the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 has reinforced this aim by encouraging the 'opening-up' of some previously inaccessible areas and the modernisation

of the rights of way system. Initiatives such as access and management agreements which aim to open up, promote and maintain rights of way networks for community use are welcomed and, where possible, will be supported. In the Cotswolds AONB the demand for recreation and access can be met providing this is consistent with the conservation objectives of the AONB designation.

POLICY R6

Permission will not be granted for development proposals that would have an adverse impact on the route, character, function and recreational value of public rights of way. Proposals that develop and improve the public rights of way network will be permitted, provided that the proposals are compatible with and sensitive to the local environment.

10.5.4. Where proposals for development are likely to affect a public right of way, the effect of that proposal on the character, function and recreational value of the public right of way will be considered. In exceptional circumstances, development proposals may be permitted if they include measures to maintain, divert or replace the public right of way in a manner that does not result in the route being less attractive, safe or convenient to the public.

Recreation Facilities in the Countryside

10.5.5. Although many forms of recreation require locations within or adjacent to urban areas, some activities require extensive amounts of land and can appropriately be located in the countryside. The scale, nature and overall impact of recreational activities and ancillary developments in the countryside can vary and include, for example, car parking facilities, country parks or the accommodation of more active pursuits such as motor sports, horse riding or water-based sports.

10.5.6. Whilst recreational opportunities in the countryside can be promoted, it is important to recognise the potentially damaging effects that countryside recreation activities can have on the landscape, nature conservation or historic character of the countryside. Proposals for the development of recreation facilities in the countryside will be assessed against the relevant Local Plan policies. Development proposals of this nature will need to be sympathetic in location and design to their surroundings and cause minimal conflict and disruption. This is especially the case in the Cotswolds AONB where the main objectives of conservation and enhancement of the landscape will be of prime importance when considering development proposals.

10.5.7. In the countryside, opportunities may also exist to develop recreation facilities which bring derelict or degraded land back into use. Similarly, the re-use and adaptation of existing buildings can have an important role in meeting the recreational needs of rural areas whilst reducing the need for new buildings.

Horse Related Development

10.5.8. Horse riding and related activities are an increasingly popular form of outdoor countryside recreation. Demand for stabling, equestrian centres and other related facilities has also increased, resulting in development pressures in the open countryside and especially those areas close to towns and villages. Whether planning permission for horse related development is required depends primarily on whether the horses are used for agricultural, recreational or commercial purposes. Annex F within PPG7: The Countryside provides guidance on this issue.

10.5.9. Advice contained in PPG7 stresses the need for horse related development to incorporate high standards of design, materials and construction of buildings and care of land in order to minimise the impact on the character, diversity and appearance of the countryside. However, in an attempt to control the number of new dwellings constructed in the countryside for equestrian activities, the re-use of existing buildings will be encouraged, where appropriate. In the case of proposals for commercial equestrian development, a location that enables safe and easy access to facilities which are suitable for exercising horses will be required if adequate on-site facilities are not available. Safe and easy access, in this context, could include the use of bridleways, RUPPs, BOATs and some lower classified highways. In certain circumstances, where equestrian development is acceptable in principle, conditions may be imposed requiring the removal and storage of horse training equipment when not in use to protect the visual amenity of the surrounding area. In addition, watercourses will need to be protected from animal waste and contaminated surface water in accordance with guidance from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) and the Environment Agency.

POLICY R7

Proposals for horse related development, such as stables, riding schools and arenas, will only be permitted where the development:

- 1. can provide adequate facilities for the exercising of horses within the curtilage of the property; or**
- 2. has safe and convenient access to facilities suitable for the exercising of horses.**

Canal Based Activities

10.5.10. Within Stroud District, the corridors of the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal, the Stroudwater Canal and the Thames & Severn Canal provide a valuable resource for the public to enjoy both active and passive recreational activity. In addition to their role as recreational resources, the canal corridors represent important landscape features and have historical, architectural, nature conservation and educational value. The canals also have the potential to contribute towards economic and urban regeneration objectives by providing attractive locations for canal-side development. The contribution canals and canal towpaths can make in achieving more sustainable patterns of movement is also significant. Many of these issues have been identified by the DETR in its policy document 'Waterways for Tomorrow' (2000). There are, therefore, diverse demands placed upon the canal corridors in Stroud District and, due to their proximity and/or links to urban areas, they can be readily accessed by relatively large sections of the community. To accommodate successfully these various activities in a way which avoids or minimises conflict will require careful management.

10.5.11. A study carried out by British Waterways in 1996 (Cotswold Canals Corridor Study) identified the valuable social, economic and environmental potential associated with the re-opening of the Stroudwater and the Thames and Severn Canals in Stroud District. The study concluded that, in their current condition, these canals represented a major unrealised asset in the area. The District Council, similarly, has recognised the potential of these waterways and will liaise closely with the Cotswold Canals Trust and British Waterways with the aim of promoting, where appropriate, the use of the canals as resources for recreational and economic activity. Proposals for development along the canal corridors will be assessed against the relevant Local Plan policies. With regard to the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal, it is important to note that this waterway acts as a resource for drinking water, as well as a commercial waterway, and is in close proximity to areas of major conservation interest along the Severn Estuary. British Waterways, in conjunction with the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal User Forum, has produced the 'Gloucester and Sharpness Canal Corridor Study'. The main objectives of this study are to identify commercial, tourist and recreation development initiatives and to encourage these initiatives in a manner that is consistent with the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, landscape character and natural resources. The District Council will refer to this

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document when considering development proposals along the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal corridor.

10.5.12. The Stroudwater Canal and the Thames and Severn Canal have not operated as commercial waterways for many years and some sections have fallen into disuse or become obstructed by highway development or infilling. In the most serious cases it is not possible to identify, on the ground, the original route of some parts of these canals. However, the identification of both the original and replacement 'missing links' is of great importance if the objective of through navigation is to be realised. The District Council will, therefore, liaise with British Waterways, the Cotswolds Canal Trust and relevant landowners with the aim of identifying and protecting these 'missing links'. Nevertheless, there are long stretches of the canal corridors, rather than the canals themselves, which serve recreational purposes such as traffic-free towpath walking and cycling. The long term potential of the canals is recognised by the District Council, not only for their recreational, aesthetic and commercial value but also as a resource of interest to industrial archaeology and nature conservation. The Cotswold Canals Corridor Study has identified a number of priority restoration projects for the canals in Stroud District and, together with the Cotswold Canals Trust and British Waterways, the District Council will support these restoration objectives with the aim of re-opening the canals in their entirety. Development proposals that hinder the realisation of these objectives and prevent the canals from reaching their full potential will, therefore, be resisted. At the same time, development proposals which assist the restoration of the canals will be encouraged, providing other relevant Local Plan policies are complied with. These will include having regard to the role canals can play in maintaining the supply of water resources. Any development adjacent to a canal should also respect its setting. Development proposals will be required to incorporate a high standard of design and, in many cases, this will include appropriate canal-frontage design.

POLICY R8

Development on the historic route of, or adjacent to, the Stroudwater, Thames and Severn and Gloucester and Sharpness Canals will be permitted provided that the development does not prevent the improvement, reconstruction, restoration or continued use of the related canal and its towpath for the purposes of through navigation and public access. Where appropriate, planning obligations will be sought that contribute towards the improvement or restoration of the related canal and towpaths. Any development adjacent to a canal should relate to its setting.

10.5.13. In the 1990s, the District Council offered practical assistance and financial support in the restoration of the Cotswold canals corridors by working in partnership with key bodies such as the Cotswold Canals Trust, British Waterways, the Company of the Proprietors of the Stroudwater Navigation and the Stroud Valleys Project. The intention behind Policy R8 is to adopt a more positive and pro-active approach to the restoration of the Cotswold canal corridors by seeking planning obligations from developers in accordance with Circular 1/97.

10.5.14. In appropriate circumstances, development proposals abutting the actual canal channels will be required, under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, to contribute to the improvement or restoration of the related area of canal and towpath. The District Council believes that certain forms of development (eg. residential and leisure) will utilise, and benefit from the close proximity of, the canal corridors. The nature and scale of the contributions sought by the District Council will be related to the individual circumstances of each development proposal. The scale of individual contributions will be a matter of negotiation between the developer and the District Council. The relative distribution of developer contributions between canal/towpath improvements and other required community benefits will also be subject to negotiation.

Allotments

10.5.15. Allotments are an important food and informal leisure resource which can contribute to the green space of urban environments and provide a haven for wildlife. Their proximity to residential areas is an important factor in their location. A reduction in the provision of allotment land or the relocation of allotments to less advantageous positions will not be supported unless evidence of previous, present and likely future under use can be demonstrated.

10.5.16. If it is demonstrated that an allotment site is no longer in demand the priority of the District Council will be to consider, in areas where there is an identified shortfall in provision, whether the land could be converted to other forms of outdoor recreational space. Allotments often form the only viable alternative for future development of outdoor recreational space within the built-up areas of towns and villages.

POLICY R9

Permission will not be granted to development proposals that involve the loss of existing allotment land unless both the following

criteria are met:

1. demand for allotment land within the locality no longer exists, or suitable alternative provision of allotment land, of comparable quality, can be made available locally; and
2. the allotment land is not suitable for, or not required to rectify any local shortages of public outdoor playing space.

central locations to ensure minimum disturbance to residential areas and easy access by both public and private transport. In such a way, these developments can help enhance the vitality of town centres throughout the day and evening by reinforcing existing entertainment facilities through a system of mutual support.

10.6. Arts, Cultural and Entertainment Facilities

10.6.1. Arts, cultural and entertainment facilities can provide an important source of leisure for the local community and can be widely defined to include a number of diverse activities. The District Council recognises the important contribution these facilities make to the social and economic welfare of the community. This is particularly the case in smaller communities with town and village halls. The encouragement of creative cultural activities, through the provision of appropriate infrastructure, can help town centre regeneration objectives by promoting community involvement, vitality, distinctiveness and local identity. In an attempt to address this issue the District Council has formulated its own Cultural Development Strategy to direct resources to particular gaps in provision. Despite a high level of interest in various forms of leisure activities, the actual level of infrastructure within the District is low. For example, the District has no purpose built theatre, no concert hall and no art gallery. Although the town of Wotton-under-Edge has a 179 seat cinema to serve the South Vale area, the District's main town of Stroud lacks such a facility. However, there are some other notable entertainment facilities in Stroud such as the Subscription Rooms which hosts concerts, exhibitions and events. Similarly, the Prema Arts Centre in Uley has a national reputation for both its exhibition and performing arts programme.

10.6.2. Attempts will be made to ensure that a wide range of arts, cultural and entertainment facilities are retained and made available for community use. The development of other, modern facilities will be encouraged, subject to meeting the criteria listed in other relevant Local Plan policies (in particular, policies S12 and S13 of the Town Centres chapter and Policy T1 of the Transport chapter), in order to cater for different sections of the community and to increase the attraction of the towns to staying visitors. In particular, the provision of a cinema to serve the Stroud urban area and its hinterland is seen as a priority, and has been promoted through Proposal S5 of this Plan, together with a high quality arts display venue. It is considered that entertainment facilities should be developed in