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6. Our environment and surroundings

Moving the District towards becoming Carbon Neutral by 2030, adapting to the effects of climate change and providing resilience for the future, whilst ensuring that development protects, conserves or enhances our local environment.



Core Policies

- 6.1 These policies sit at the heart of the Plan. They are the principal means of delivering the two strategic objectives about our environment and surroundings (SO5 and SO6).

A 'checklist' for quality design and development

Core Policy CP14: High quality sustainable development ►

- 6.2 Every building and development project in Stroud, whether it is for a new house, office block, car park, retail store, or other, will have to be designed and constructed to the highest quality so that it is an asset to the environment in its widest sense. Development in the District will be required to satisfy policy requirements to ensure that it is sustainable, addresses climate change, achieves high standards of design and layout and contributes to a sense of place-making. The Council also seeks to reduce the impact of roads and traffic, and this policy requires that layouts and design provide convenient access via footways, cycle paths and, wherever possible, public transport to shops and services that provide for everyday needs, reducing the need to travel locally by car.
- 6.3 In responding to the policy criteria, reference will be made to any relevant technical reports that could include Flood Risk Assessments, Water Framework Directive Compliance Assessments, Air Quality Assessments, Preliminary Risk Assessments (for land contamination), Environmental Statements and Ecology Assessments in addition to those referred to in the final paragraph of the policy.



Core Policy CP14

High quality sustainable development

High quality development, which protects, conserves and enhances the built and natural environment, will be supported. Development will be supported where it achieves the following:

1. Sustainable construction techniques, including facilities for the recycling and collection of water and waste, measures to minimise energy use and maximise renewable energy production
2. No unacceptable levels of air, noise, water, light or soil pollution or exposure to unacceptable risk from existing or potential sources of pollution. Improvements to soil and water quality will be sought through the remediation of land contamination, the provision of appropriate SuDS measures that help waterbodies to meet good ecological status
3. Adequate water supply, foul drainage and sewage capacity to serve the development and satisfactory provision of other utilities, transport and community infrastructure
4. Avoids areas at risk of flooding unless it is necessary and is made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere
5. An appropriate design and appearance, which is respectful of the surroundings, including the local topography, built environment and heritage
6. Re-use of previously developed land and/or the adaptation of existing buildings that make a positive contribution to the character of the site and surroundings, unless demonstrably unviable
7. No unacceptable adverse effect on the amenities of neighbouring occupants
8. Contributing to the retention, conservation and enhancement of important landscape and geological features and biodiversity interests (including ecological networks resilient to current and future pressures and where appropriate contribute to green infrastructure)
9. Contributing to a sense of place both in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way in which they integrate with their surroundings including appropriate landscaping, biodiversity net gain, appropriate open space, sport and amenity space provision
10. A design and layout that aims to assist crime prevention and community safety, without compromising other design principles
11. Efficiency in terms of land use, achieving higher development densities in locations that are more accessible by public transport and other non-car modes and where higher densities are compatible with the character of the area and the setting of the development
12. It is not prejudicial to the development of a larger area in a comprehensive manner
13. Safe, convenient and attractive accesses on foot and by cycle and suitable connections with existing footways, bridleway, cycleways, local facilities and public transport
14. It is at a location that is near to essential services and good transport links to services by means other than motor car.

Major development should contribute to the provision for allotments and/or community orchards, where there is an identified need in the Council's Open Space and Green Infrastructure Study.

Development proposals will be required to demonstrate how they have responded to the above criteria through the submission of Design and Access Statements and relevant technical reports. It is important that the applicant provides clear and informative plans, elevations and street scenes and, where required, Masterplans, Development Briefs, Concept Statements and Design Codes to show how these criteria have been taken into account where necessary.



A quality living and working countryside

Core Policy CP15: A quality living and working countryside ▶

- 6.4 Preventing the proliferation of development in areas away from existing settlement development limits is important, as they are not generally well located for the facilities and services their users need. In the Stroud countryside, proposals for additional development outside settlement development limits are likely to lead to increased use of the private car as the rural areas are poorly served by other transport modes. Such development would be contrary to national policy. Proposals may be able to address deficiencies in accessibility to services through the provision of new infrastructure. The countryside in some locations may be important to avoid the coalescence of towns and villages and to retain their individual character. These areas should be protected to retain visual and physical separation.
- 6.5 The Council will facilitate and promote sustainable patterns of development and sustainable communities in rural areas. The policies in this plan are intended to sustain, enhance and, where appropriate, revitalise country towns and villages (including through the provision of affordable housing) and for strong, diverse, economic activity, whilst maintaining local character and a high quality environment. Delivery policies elsewhere within this Plan address the specific forms of development set out within the principles 1 to 9.
- 6.6 Proposals for agricultural workers' dwellings will need to demonstrate that they comply with these policies. Community facilities include development for health (including preventative social care and community support services), cemeteries, education, play and leisure or culture together with libraries, village/community halls, public houses and religious buildings. The Council recognises the role of leisure and recreational activities (that do not require significant buildings) to support small rural communities. To ensure these policies are relevant and effective, the Council will work with parish and town councils, rural communities and businesses to establish their needs and priorities.



Core Policy CP15

A quality living and working countryside

In order to protect the separate identity of settlements and the quality of the countryside (including its built and natural heritage), proposals outside identified settlement development limits will not be permitted except where these principles are complied with:

1. It is essential to the maintenance or enhancement of a sustainable farming or forestry enterprise within the District; and/or
2. It is essential to be located there in order to promote public enjoyment of the countryside and support the rural economy through employment, sport, leisure and tourism; and/or
3. It is a 'rural exception site', where development is appropriate, sustainable, affordable and meets an identified local need; and/or
4. It is demonstrated that the proposal is enabling development, required in order to maintain a heritage asset of acknowledged importance; and/or
5. It is a replacement dwelling or subdivision; and/or
6. It is a house extension; and/or
7. It will involve essential community facilities; and/or
8. It will involve the re-use of an existing rural building; and/or
9. It is a scheme of up to 9 dwellings at a designated Tier 3b, 4a or 4b settlement, to meet identified housing needs or address demographic imbalances and is supported by the local community.

Where development accords with any of the principles listed above, it will only be permitted in the countryside if:

- i) it does not have an adverse impact on heritage assets and their setting; and

- ii) it does not have an adverse impact on natural assets, PROW and/or landscape character; and
- iii) it does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings;
- iv) in the case of dwellings for a farming or forestry enterprise, it is accompanied by an appraisal to justify the development in terms of a functional text, a financial test and that there are no other dwellings or buildings within reasonable proximity that could be used; or
- v) in the case of proposals to re-use redundant or disused rural buildings, these should be capable and worthy of conversion without substantial reconstruction or significant alteration. Any such conversion will involve a building that positively contributes to an established local character and sense of place and the conversion should maintain the character of the original building and provide an enhancement of its immediate setting. In the case of replacement buildings, they must bring about environmental improvement; or
- vi) in the case of extensions to buildings, it does not result in an inappropriate increase in the scale, form or footprint of the original building; or
- vii) in the case of replacement dwellings, the proposal must bring about environmental improvements and not result in an inappropriate increase in the bulk, scale, form or footprint of the original building; or
- viii) in the case of new buildings for essential community facilities, they cannot be accommodated within the identified settlement development limits or through the re-use or replacement of an existing building.



Delivery Policies

- 6.7 These policies add detail to the interpretation and application of the Plan’s development strategy and core policies.

A sustainable future: living, working and growing within our environmental limits

Delivery Policy ES1

Sustainable construction and design

Sustainable design and construction will be integral to new development in Stroud District. Development proposals should meet the following requirements:

1. Achieve net-zero carbon – all new development should achieve a net-zero carbon standard by means of:
 - an overall minimum 35% reduction in emissions over Part L 2013 Building Regulations achieved onsite;
 - a minimum of 10% and 15% reduction in emissions over Part L 2013 Building Regulations achieved respectively in homes and in non-domestic developments through fabric energy efficiency improvements;
 - residual emissions offset through payments to a Stroud District Council carbon offset fund;

Major development proposals should calculate and minimise carbon emissions from any other part of the development, including plant or equipment, that are not covered by Building Regulations, i.e. unregulated emissions.

These standards are required unless it can be clearly demonstrated that they are not viable for the development in question.

2. Reduce the potential for overheating – All new development should include a recognised overheating risk assessment (Home Quality Mark (HQM) or equivalent)
3. Minimise waste and maximise the recycling of any waste generated during construction and in operation – All new development should provide internal recycling bins (HQM or equivalent)
4. Conserve water resources by incorporating water efficiency and water re-use measures and minimise vulnerability to flooding
5. Be efficient in the use of materials, including the type, life cycle and source of materials to be used - All new development should use sustainably sourced materials during construction (HQM or equivalent)
6. Be flexible and adaptable, allowing future modification of use or layout, facilitating future refurbishment and retrofitting
7. Provide cycle parking – All new developments should provide covered and secure cycle parking facilities (HQM or equivalent) in accordance with Local Plan standards
8. Enable electric vehicle charging – New developments with off road parking should provide electric vehicle points (HQM or equivalent) in accordance with Local Plan standards
9. Applications for all development will need to be accompanied by a completed Stroud District Sustainable Construction Checklist.

All development will be built in accordance with the approved plans and the Sustainable Construction Checklist.

- 6.8 Designing new development to reduce carbon emissions and energy demand will play an essential part in Stroud District becoming carbon neutral by 2030. Whilst today’s new homes and businesses are energy



efficient with lower heating bills compared with existing properties from the past, they are still not fit for the future, either in terms of their emissions or their adaptation to our likely future climate.

- 6.9 The Government is planning on introducing a **Future Homes Standard** by 2025. However, local authorities retain the power under the **Planning and Energy Act 2008** to stipulate energy performance standards that exceed the Building Regulations. Armed with such powers, efforts from leading planning authorities to accelerate the pace of carbon emission reductions within their local areas are valuable and contribute to national strategies, some of which are currently in danger of failing to meet agreed targets. Additionally, emissions from buildings have not been falling at the pace required, with the **Committee on Climate Change** finding in 2019 that buildings emissions in 2018 remained higher than 2015 levels.
- 6.10 Low carbon energy efficient homes have already been built at scale within the country and the standard can be met using traditional construction methods and materials without adding substantial development costs. **Policy ES1** provides a feasible method for developers to achieve Net Zero Carbon by allowing carbon offset payments to mitigate any remaining emission reductions that cannot be achieved onsite. Detailed guidance will be produced to explain how the enhanced standards can be complied with. Statements will be required from developers at the planning application stage to demonstrate how these standards will be met and the Council will put in place monitoring and reporting arrangements to ensure policy compliance and to assist with reviewing the effectiveness of the policy.
- 6.11 The Council currently operates a **Sustainable Construction Checklist**, which will be updated to reflect the latest standards and best practice. The purpose of the checklist is to highlight sustainable construction matters

that developers can consider. It is not intended to duplicate the elements of sustainable construction that are incorporated into the building regulations. It will enable the Council to assess which sustainable construction principles have been considered in development proposals for new build and/or refurbishment of existing buildings, but does not seek to prescribe a set standard or requirement. The Council encourages a holistic approach where sustainable construction considerations are taken fully into account from initial project thinking through to development completion. This approach should achieve high quality sustainable development which is responsive to people's needs and can help avoid unnecessary project delay.

- 6.12 In taking a pro-active approach to energy efficiency and sustainable construction developers will be expected to provide details of how buildings may be economically retrofitted to achieve the latest standards.
- 6.13 All major development applications shall include a waste minimisation statement in accordance with **Core Policy 2** of the adopted **Gloucestershire Waste Core Strategy (WCS)** or its successor.

Delivery Policy ES2

Renewable or low carbon energy generation

Decentralised renewable and low carbon energy schemes will be supported and encouraged, and will be approved where their impact is, or can be made, acceptable.

In determining applications for renewable and low carbon energy, and associated infrastructure, the following issues will be considered:



- a) the contribution of the proposals, in the light of the Council’s pledge to be carbon neutral by 2030, to cutting greenhouse gas emissions and decarbonising our energy system.
- b) the impact of the scheme, together with any cumulative issues, on landscape character, visual amenity, water quality and flood risk, heritage significance, recreation, biodiversity and, where appropriate, agricultural land use, aviation and telecommunications.
- c) the impact on users and residents of the local area, including where relevant, shadow flicker, air quality, vibration and noise.
- d) the direct benefits to the area and local community.

Ground-mounted solar energy developments are more likely to be supported in areas identified as suitable in principle as set out on the Policies Map. Outside these areas, applicants will need to provide a clear justification for the suitability of the chosen development site for solar development at the relevant scale. Ground-mounted solar developments are more likely to be supported if they fall within Landscape Character Areas of lower sensitivity to the relevant development scale.

Proposals for renewable energy proposals within the AONB will be encouraged, however, where development proposals will affect the AONB, the benefits of development must demonstrably outweigh any harm to the designated area or its setting.

Additionally, proposals for wind energy development:

- should be located within a suitable area as indicated on the Policies Map;
- are more likely to be supported if they fall within Landscape Character Areas of lower sensitivity to the relevant development scale;
- may also be suitable in principle if they are located in large new development sites, existing industrial estates or if they are proposed in neighbourhood plans or through community energy schemes; and it can be clearly demonstrated that the scale of the development is appropriate to the site, the benefits of the development outweigh any

harm to the local community, and that the development complies with the relevant criteria in Policy ES2.

Where appropriate, provision should be made for the removal of the facilities and reinstatement of the site should it cease to be operational.

Particular support will be given to renewable and low carbon energy generation developments that are led by, or meet the needs of local communities.

6.14 Increasing the use of renewable and other low carbon energy technologies will be a key means of delivering the challenging CO2 emissions reductions targets set by the Government. As well as incorporating low and zero carbon energy production into new development, Local Authorities will need to encourage stand-alone schemes that contribute to national commitments to cut greenhouse gases and meet increased energy demand from renewable sources.

6.15 Such development can have positive effects upon local communities, as well as natural resource use and building resilience to future climate change. For example, photovoltaic arrays at the Dursley swimming pool and at Cam - Winterbottom Memorial community hall; which all generate an income source for those facilities.

6.16 The Council will encourage low or zero-carbon energy generating projects that contribute positively to the aim of reducing CO2 emissions and to national commitments to increase renewable electricity production, provided that they meet the criteria set out in **Policy ES2**. In the case of wind energy development, the planning impacts identified by affected local communities should be fully addressed to ensure that the proposal has their backing.



6.17 Developers will be required to provide information on the justification for and likely impact of proposals, including:

- the appropriateness of the location for the specific technology involved and what reasonable alternatives have been considered;
- the nature and extent of early engagement with local communities and how this engagement has informed the evolution of the proposal;
- local amenity implications and how an acceptable living environment will be maintained;
- information on noise and emissions generation;
- a visual impact assessment incorporating an analysis of landscape character and the relationship to any significant heritage assets;
- appropriate ecological surveys, following the most recent national guidance and best practice; and
- in the case of hydropower schemes, a **Water Framework Directive Compliance Assessment** and evidence of discussions with the Environment Agency about requirements of the **Environmental Permitting Regulations**.

6.18 As set out in the **NPPF**, Local Planning Authorities should only grant planning permission for wind development in identified suitable areas. However, wind is a highly constrained development type, with the appropriateness and viability of development at particular sites often requiring investigation through lengthy site-specific surveys. It is not feasible for the Local Plan to identify particular site allocations for wind development that would have a sufficiently evidenced reasonable prospect of delivery, and that would demonstrably support a sufficient deployment of onshore wind in the light of the District's target of achieving carbon neutrality by 2030.

6.19 Therefore, the approach taken in **Policy ES2** is to identify all land with technical potential according to the District's Council's **Renewable Energy Resources Assessment (RERA)** (2019) as suitable for wind development; but to require that all proposals on this land also satisfy a variety of criteria that will ensure that impacts upon the environment and amenity of the district can be adequately controlled. These criteria are set within the policy which are an additional requirement to being in a suitable area on the **Policies Map**.

6.20 As part of the Council's **RERA**, a strategic **Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (LSA)** seeks to provide an initial indication of landscape sensitivity but should not be interpreted as defining the suitability of individual sites for a particular development. The **LSA** does not replace the requirement for more detailed **Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVA)** for any proposed development. It is often the case that there are pockets of land within **Landscape Character Areas (LCAs)** which have higher or lower landscape sensitivity to a given renewable development scenario. These will tend to only be revealed through detailed **LVA** at planning application stage.

6.21 **Policy ES2's** spatial provisions relating to ground-mounted solar are similar to those relating to wind, but, consistent with the provisions of the **NPPF**, are more flexible, defining areas as potentially suitable and allowing consideration of developments outside these areas where clear justification can be provided.

6.22 The Council will require site maintenance and management measures to accompany a planning application. This shall include removal of any development structures and where appropriate restoration of the land or building upon cessation of that use.



Delivery Policy DES3

Heat supply

Development proposals should include a communal low-temperature heating system where viable.

The heat source for the communal heating system should be selected in accordance with the following heating hierarchy:

1. connect to local existing or planned heat networks
2. use of zero-carbon renewable heat or CHP
3. use of local ambient or secondary heat sources (in conjunction with heat pumps*, if required)

*heat pumps assumed to become zero-carbon when grid decarbonises.

Where a local heat network is planned but not yet in existence or connection is not currently viable, but may become viable in the future, the development should be designed to allow for the cost-effective connection and supply at a later date. In this case the heat should be supplied according to steps 2 and 3 of the above hierarchy

6.23 Communal heating is a technology which uses one heat source to provide heat to two or more properties. Instead of each property having its own heating system separate from any other property, a group of properties connected to a district or community heating network all receive heat (in the form of hot water or steam) from a central source, via a network of insulated pipes. This can be more efficient than each property having its own heating system, because heat generation is more efficient at larger scales.

6.24 **The Committee on Climate Change's** core Net Zero Carbon scenario suggests that around 5 million homes across the UK will need to be

connected to heat networks by 2050. In this context, the Government's **Clean Growth Strategy** suggests that around one in five buildings will have the potential to access a largely low carbon heat network by 2050.

- 6.25 The heat source of a communal heating system is traditionally a basic boiler, although more recently higher efficiency Combined Heat and Power (CHP) systems are used. CHP produces both heat (sometimes with cooling) and electricity, so with a CHP district heating system, as well as a network of pipes distributing heat/cooling, there is also a grid connection or network of wires to distribute electricity to one or more local users. In the latter case, where the output is not grid-connected, this is referred to as a private wire network.
- 6.26 A large part of the cost of developing a heating network is laying pipes, due to the need to excavate roads or other land, which is expensive. An energy centre, which houses the heat source, also needs to be established; this could be located within one of the buildings in the network or it could be in its own separate building. Overall costs vary widely depending on the number and type of buildings connected and the area covered. Installing a heat network in a new development is usually cheaper than installing it in an existing development because pipes can be laid at the same time as other infrastructure when roads are built. In this way, new developments often act as a trigger for a network, but with the potential to also supply existing heat demands from buildings in the vicinity which may improve economic viability.



Delivery Policy ES3

Maintaining quality of life within our environmental limits

Development proposals (as appropriate to their nature and scale) will demonstrate that environmental risks have been evaluated and that appropriate measures have been taken to minimise the risks of adverse impact to air, land and water quality.

Permission will not be granted to any development which would be likely to lead to, or result in an unacceptable level of:

1. noise, general disturbance, smell, fumes, loss of daylight or sunlight, loss of privacy or an overbearing effect
2. environmental pollution to water, land or air and an unacceptable risk to the quality and quantity of a water body or water bodies
3. noise and vibration in sensitive locations
4. increased risk of flooding on or off the site, and no inclusion of measures to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding
5. detrimental impact on highway safety (including Public Rights of Way)
6. adverse impact on or from contaminated land, where there is a risk to human health or the environment
7. antisocial behaviour and / or environmental crime.
8. loss of healthy soils and in particular to the best and most versatile agricultural land and the economic and other benefits it offers

6.27 The Local Plan provides environmental criteria against which individual development proposals can be assessed to seek to maintain the quality of life of residents, workers and visitors alike. This approach seeks with other policies to ensure the delivery of sustainable growth within our environmental limits.

6.28 The effect of a development on the safety and/or amenities of any residents, visitors or occupiers of adjacent land and premises are a consideration as part of living within our environmental limits. The likelihood of development on particular sites causing harmful or disturbing effects will vary greatly, depending on the nature of the development proposed, and the number and proximity of nearby residential properties and other occupied property. The important point is that such effects should be considered when putting forward a scheme.

6.29 Our industrial heritage means that there are many sites that have had one or more industrial or commercial uses, which may have resulted in soil and water contamination that may need to be addressed. Sites which pose a current and imminent hazard to health, buildings, water or the environment can be managed under the contaminated land provisions of the **Environmental Protection Act 1990**. The implementation of satisfactory investigation, risk assessment, remediation and validation of sites subject to historic contamination is managed through the planning process. On a precautionary basis, the possibility of contamination should be assumed when preparing plans or considering planning applications in relation to all land subject to or adjacent to previous industrial use and also where uses are being considered that are particularly sensitive to contamination, for example, housing, schools, hospitals and children's play areas.

6.30 Overbearing is a term used to describe the impact of a development or building on its surroundings, particularly a neighbouring property, in terms of its scale, massing and general dominating effect.

6.31 Healthy soil is fundamental to Britain's farming system and to producing the food we eat. It provides the means for plants to grow, which also helps to create the oxygen we breathe and clean the water we drink. British



farmers work hard to protect and maintain healthy soils. Without fertile soils, farmers would not be able to grow crops productively, or support their livestock effectively. Soil can also increase our resilience to climate change, by storing carbon, locking in greenhouse gases that would otherwise be released into the atmosphere, and helping to prevent flooding. Soil health can be defined as a soil's ability to function and sustain plants, animals and humans as part of the ecosystem. High quality agricultural land (grades 1,2 and 3a) is therefore an important resource. Once developed, even for other open space uses, the return to viable agricultural use is rarely feasible. It is important to protect, as far as practicable, the best and most versatile agricultural land from development.

Delivery Policy ES4

Water resources, quality and flood risk

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessments (SFRA 1 and 2) will be used to inform the location of future development within the District, including to take account of climate change.

In considering proposals for development the District Council will weigh up all of the relevant policy issues when giving full consideration to the sequential test and implementing the "Exception Test" where necessary. Applications will be supported by Flood Risk Assessments (FRA) where appropriate that demonstrate the development will be safe, not increase flood risk elsewhere, and maximise opportunities to reduce flood risk (including Natural Flood Management). Flood risk should be considered at an early stage in deciding the layout and design of a site to provide an opportunity to reduce flood risk within the development.

All new developments shall incorporate appropriate Sustainable Drainage Measures (SuDs) in accordance with National Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems. This should be informed by specific catchment and

ground characteristics, and will require the early consideration of a wide range of issues relating to the management, long term adoption and maintenance of SuDs.

For all developments in areas with known surface water flooding issues, appropriate mitigation and construction methods will be required including, where appropriate, contributions towards maintenance of existing defences that benefit the site, development or maintenance of existing flood warning services, development of future flood alleviation projects and/or provision of upstream rural SuDS projects.

Applications and proposals which relate specifically to reducing the risk of flooding (e.g. defence / alleviation work, retro-fitting of existing development, off site detention / retention basins for catchment wide interventions) will be sought.

New development in areas with known ground and surface water flooding issues will seek to provide betterment in flood storage and to remove obstructions to flood flow routes where appropriate.

Development will:

1. Conserve and enhance the ecological flood storage value of the water environment, including watercourse corridors and catchments
2. Open up any culverted watercourse, where safe and practicable, to create an asset of ecological and community value
3. Improve water efficiency through incorporating appropriate water conservation techniques including rainwater harvesting and grey water recycling
4. Discharge surface run-off, not collected for use, to one or more of the following, listed in order of priority:
 - a. discharge into the ground (infiltration); or, where not reasonably practicable
 - b. discharge into a surface water body; or, where not reasonably practicable
 - c. discharge to a surface water sewer, highway drain, or other drainage system; or, where not reasonably practicable



- d. discharge to a combined sewer
- 5. Connect to the main foul sewer network where possible
- 6. Consider the cumulative impact of adjacent development(s) in devising an appropriate drainage strategy
- 7. Consider measures to help bring the waterbody to a good ecological status.

6.32 Water is a vital resource and its management is fundamental to sustainable development. The way in which water is managed can determine whether new development, land management, water usage, mineral working and waste management have a positive or negative impact on people and the environment. Good planning of water issues can provide us with clean and reliable water supplies, areas for recreation, habitats for wildlife and flood mitigation. Stroud District has an intricate network of rivers, streams and pools which contribute to the richness, diversity and beauty of our District. With a legacy of industrial infrastructure and historic water management issues, opportunities will be sought that can offer hydro morphological and ecological improvements e.g. removal and modification of barriers to habitat connectivity and fish movement such as weirs and culverts and achieving riparian improvements that contribute to natural and structurally diverse river corridors and floodplains. Within the natural environment, woods and trees can play a part in delivering positive water quality and water flow outcomes. They offer opportunities to make positive water use change whilst also contributing to other objectives, such as biodiversity, timber & green infrastructure. Rivers can offer the multi-functionality with recreation, amenity and environmental purposes, allowing the preservation of flow routes and flood storage, and at the same time providing valuable social and environmental benefits contributing to other

sustainability objectives. It is important functionality for this purpose should not compromise natural habitats One of the many benefits of woods and trees is their ability to help us respond to a changing climate. Trees, in the right places, help us to adapt to climate change by reducing surface water flooding; reducing ambient temperature through direct shade and evapo-transpiration; and by reducing building heating and air-conditioning demands. Therefore, the Local Plan seeks to adapt to climate change by minimising and militating against future flood risk and by managing its water resources.

6.33 Flood risk should be considered at an early stage in deciding the layout and design of a site to provide an opportunity to reduce flood risk within the development. When determining planning applications, the Council shall ensure flood risk is not increased elsewhere, and only consider development in flood areas where informed by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment, following the Sequential Test and Exception Test if it should be demonstrated that:

- within the site, the most vulnerable development is located in areas of lowest flood risk unless there are overriding reasons to prefer a different location;
- development is appropriately flood resilient and resistant, including safe access and escape routes where required in accordance with DEFRA guidance;
- where necessary, it is accompanied by a Flood Evacuation Plan in consultation with the Emergency Services;
- any residual risk can be safely managed; and
- it gives priority to the use of sustainable drainage systems.



- 6.34 The **Level 1 SFRA** makes use of existing information to allow the application of the sequential test and to identify where the exception test is likely to be necessary. The **Level 2 SFRA** involves a more detailed review of flood hazard (flood probability, flood depth, flood velocity, rate of onset flooding) taking into account the presence of flood risk management measures such as flood defences.
- 6.35 Historically surface water drainage systems have been designed to remove surface water from a site as quickly as possible by means of underground piped systems. This has the potential to increase flooding problems downstream and does not contribute to the natural recharge of groundwater levels. Such systems contribute to the transport of pollutants from urban areas to watercourses and groundwater. With concerns surrounding the impacts of climate change and the requirements of legislation including the Water Framework Directive, a more sustainable approach to drainage is required to reduce flood risk, manage water quality and provide integrated amenity benefits.
- 6.36 The favoured approach in Stroud District is **Natural Flood Management** for dealing with surface water. **Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)** aim to mimic natural drainage processes and remove pollutants from urban run-off at source. They comprise a wide range of techniques, including:
- Green Roofs
 - Permeable Paving
 - Rainwater Harvesting
 - Swales
 - Detention Basins
 - Ponds
 - Wetlands
- 6.37 This is not a comprehensive list and applicants should identify the most appropriate scheme, or combination of schemes to suit the proposed development. The multi-functional role of **Natural Flood Management** and **SuDS** should be considered in developments. They can provide, alongside flood alleviation measures, green corridors and wildlife habitat creation and therefore could provide holistic solutions for development sites as part of a wider green infrastructure network. Waterside areas, or areas along known flow routes, can act as Green Infrastructure, being used for recreation, amenity and environmental purposes, allowing the preservation of flow routes and flood storage, and at the same time providing valuable social and environmental benefits contributing to other sustainability objectives.
- 6.38 In the case of multiple development sites (sometimes part of a single allocation or multiple nearby allocations) a site drainage masterplan will be expected to ensure that multiple developers across different development sites work together towards an approved overall drainage strategy. Agreement of an overall master plan for the development will enable strategic infrastructure to potentially serve multiple development parcels and be designed appropriately to provide wider benefits and efficiencies in design that would not otherwise be possible. The drainage masterplan should also outline key milestones that need to be achieved for critical infrastructure prior to the commencement of some phases. This will help to align programmes between multiple stakeholders.
- 6.39 Consultation and discussion should take place with the **Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)** which is the County Council in relation to assessing SuDS. Such discussions should focus upon the run-off destination hierarchy set out in the National Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems.



Delivery Policy ES5

Air quality

Development proposals which by virtue of their scale, nature or location are likely to exacerbate existing areas of poorer or marginal air quality, will need to demonstrate (potentially by provision of a formal air quality assessment) that effective measures can be taken to mitigate emission levels in order to protect public health and well-being, environmental quality and amenity. Mitigation measures should demonstrate how they will make a positive contribution to the aims of any locally agreed air quality and/or transport strategies for Stroud District and may include:

1. landscaping, bunding or separation to increase distance from highways and junctions
2. possible traffic management or highway improvements to be agreed with the local authority
3. abatement technology and incorporating site layout / separation and other conditions in site planning
4. traffic routing, site management, site layout and phasing
5. managing and expanding capacity in the natural environment to mitigate poor air quality.

6.40 Air quality is a measure of the degree to which the air in a given location is free from any chemical, physical or biological agent that modifies the natural characteristics of the atmosphere. Key sources of air pollution in the UK include transport, energy production, industry and manufacturing, domestic combustion, and farming. The health impacts of poor air quality have long been established, especially with regard to respiratory conditions such as asthma and emphysema, which can be exacerbated by air pollution. Air quality in Stroud District is predominantly good with the majority having clean unpolluted air. At present there are however a very small number of potential individual locations where the combination of

traffic, road layout and geography could possibly result in exceedences of the annual average for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and fine particulates (PM₁₀).

6.41 This Local Plan seeks a multifaceted approach to minimising any potential air quality issue as acknowledged in the **Habitat Regulations Assessment** by locating new development where there is a viable range of transport choices, seeking to boost the self-containment of settlements to reduce commuter flows and through seeking to utilise the benefits from managed development and growth. The **Gloucestershire Air Quality and Health Strategy** describes the strategic approach in Gloucestershire to improving air quality and mitigating its impact on health as it relates to nitrogen oxides and particular matter (with recognition that this scope may increase as evidence and priorities develop). The strategy has been developed to be delivered through a partnership approach across agencies, professionals and members of the public who are active in Gloucestershire.

6.42 **Policy ES5** requires that all development which either because of the size, nature or location will have the potential to exacerbate known areas of poor or marginal air quality, is required to overcome this barrier to development by demonstrating the measures they will take to help mitigate these impacts. Development which could potentially impact upon **Natura 2000** sites through contributions to aerial deposition e.g. industrial process within 10km of a **Special Protection Area (SPA)** or **Special Area of Conservation SAC**, will require an assessment of the likely impacts. Trees can improve air quality through the absorption of particulates from vehicle emissions and other sources. Temperature differences can be controlled through woodlands. Woodland contributes towards delivering and improving both physical and mental health. The Council will take account of air pollution (CO₂, ammonia, methane, NO_x,



particulates for example) that arise from some farming activities. Combinations of these gases along with traffic pollution has the potential to cause harm to human health and wider environmental harm.

Delivery Policy DES1

Conversion of redundant agricultural, forestry and rural buildings

The conversion of redundant agricultural, forestry and rural buildings outside of defined settlement development limits to an alternative use will be permitted where:

1. The location is sufficiently well related to existing infrastructure, amenities and services;
2. The existing vehicular access is suitable in landscape terms for the use proposed;
3. The original building is worthy of conversion with regard to its current character, scale and condition, without the need for substantial reconstruction, significant extensions or ancillary buildings;
4. Conversion will not result in the need for another agricultural or forestry building on the holding as a replacement;
5. If the building proposed for conversion is not a traditional one, there are no redundant traditional buildings within the holding capable of being re-used in the first instance;
6. There is no adverse impact on the character of the building and its setting, in particular its agricultural/forestry character, and
7. The building is converted to the most appropriate viable use according to the following hierarchy:
 - i. Firstly, housing for essential agricultural or forestry workers, or succession housing for former agricultural or forestry workers
 - ii. Farm/forestry diversification for employment use

- iii. Affordable housing
- iv. Farm/forestry diversification for visitor accommodation or facilities
- v. Open market housing

The hierarchy i-iv must be carefully considered with robust evidence (including marketing over a reasonable period) before open market housing can be supported. Applications must demonstrate that all reasonable efforts have been made to secure alternative viable uses.

- 6.43 Changes in the agricultural industry have led to large numbers of rural buildings becoming surplus to requirement as new, comparatively much larger, buildings are constructed to help reduce labour costs and address changes in animal welfare standards. The traditional rural building is now frequently used for low key storage and other uses, but inevitably without an economically sustainable use, many now suffer decay which can lead to demolition or collapse. Hence many rural buildings may be suitable for conversion to alternative uses when they are no longer required for agricultural or forestry purposes. These buildings include both modern and traditional structures, although the uses appropriate for these different types of building will inevitably vary because of their size and character.
- 6.44 The key to delivering a successful conversion is ensuring that any rural building is re-used or adapted in a way that retains its integrity and local distinctiveness. These objectives echo the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**, which places good design, enhancement of local distinctiveness and the conservation of the historic environment at the heart of sustainable development in rural areas. There is a clear tension in trying to find a new sustainable use for a traditional rural building, which at the same time helps sustain its character and contribution to the landscape. Preserving the character of typical or traditional rural buildings



is important, as such buildings can be considered to make a significant and valuable contribution to the rural landscape character and its sense of local distinctiveness. They should be considered as reminders of the evolution of the rural landscape.

6.45 The usual harmonious relationship that traditional rural buildings have with their surroundings can be considered to contrast dramatically with their modern and much larger pre-fabricated replacements. These modern buildings tend to possess a utilitarian character, which can sometimes appear as visually intrusive in a rural landscape; but any potential harm caused by their scale, form and materials has to be balanced with the functional need for these buildings to support an agricultural holding/rural enterprise. Therefore, while their presence in the rural landscape may be accepted as part of modern farming practices, these modern pre-fabricated farm buildings may not follow historic disciplines set by the availability of local materials, traditional construction techniques and other location factors.

6.46 In the case of more modern structures, it will be necessary to demonstrate that the building has been properly used for agricultural purposes for a substantial period of time, prior to any application being submitted for an alternative use. This is to prevent buildings being constructed under false pretences, merely to secure a non-agricultural use in a rural location, contrary to the Local Plan Strategy and accompanying policies.

6.47 There is a wide variety of alternative uses for rural buildings, which may be considered appropriate, depending on the character and location of the existing building. **Policy DES1** sets out a hierarchy of alternative uses, which should be considered in turn, only proceeding with uses lower down the hierarchy if higher uses are demonstrably not viable or possible.

6.48 Barns and other rural buildings may also provide habitat and shelter for protected species such as owls and bats for example. An assessment by a qualified ecological surveyor should be carried out and options explored to both conserve and secure appropriate biodiversity net gain in that location.

Protecting our built and natural heritage

Delivery Policy ES6

Providing for biodiversity and geodiversity

Development proposals shall provide a minimum of 10% net gain in biodiversity through enhancement and creation of ecological networks within and connecting with those beyond the district by:

1. Incorporating and enhancing existing and creating new biodiversity features within their design; and
2. Maximising opportunities to enhance and create links between ecological networks and habitats of principal importance. Links should be created both on-site and, where possible, with nearby features; and
3. Biodiversity within a development needs to be managed, monitored and maintained; and
4. Development proposals within, or in close proximity to, an ecological network corridor should enhance the functionality and connectivity of the corridor. Development that would impact on the strategic ecological network causing fragmentation or otherwise prejudice its effectiveness will not be permitted.

Development proposals shall also demonstrate that the mitigation hierarchy has been followed sequentially in accordance with the principles of:

- i. avoid



- ii. reduce, moderate, minimise
- iii. rescue e.g. translocation
- iv. repair, reinstate, restore, compensate or offset.

Where development is considered necessary, adequate mitigation measures or, exceptionally, compensatory measures, will be required, with the aim of providing an overall improvement in local biodiversity and/or geodiversity.

Where development proposals are likely either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, to cause harm to the nature conservation or geological interest of **Internationally** important sites, they will not be permitted unless:

- a. There is no suitable alternative to the development; and
- b. There are imperative reasons of overriding public interest; and
- c. Appropriate compensatory provision can be secured to ensure that the overall coherence of the site(s) is protected and enhanced.

Other important habitats and sites of geological and geomorphological interest will be protected, managed and enhanced. Up to date, comprehensive ecological surveys undertaken in accordance with industry guidelines and standards will be required to support and inform development proposals that would affect sites for nature conservation, protected species, or species or habitats of importance.

Development that will adversely affect the following designations shall not be considered sustainable development and will not be permitted:

- **National** SSSIs and NNRs
- **International or Nationally** protected species, or species and habitats of principal importance. It will be important to consider the future conservation status of the relevant species in their natural range.

Development should not adversely affect:

- **Local** Wildlife Sites,
- **Local** Nature Reserves,
- **Local** Geological or Geomorphological Sites,
- **Local** ecological or Green Infrastructure networks

The assessment of adverse impacts will apply to potentially damaging development proposals that may affect a designated area and will include the consideration of adverse cumulative effects with other existing or proposed development.

6.49 Mechanisms for delivering **Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)** can be on site, off site, in full or combination. Onsite can be delivered using habitat creation/enhancement via landscaping/green infrastructure. Offsite can be delivered through habitat creation/enhancement on land holdings or via habitat banks. The mitigation hierarchy is also applied and some irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland will not be eligible for offsetting. Existing mechanisms for protecting ecology will remain in place and BNG will not apply at SSSI's.

6.50 Developers will be required to maintain their improvements for at least 30 years and this may involve the use of conservation covenants described as private voluntary legal agreements between a landowner and a responsible body that will safeguard the land for conservation. Conservation covenants will continue to apply even if the land changes hands. The wider valuable natural environment includes not only nationally protected species and sites, but also **Local Wildlife Sites, Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Sites** and other features of nature conservation value, including:

- priority species and habitats of conservation concern (those listed on the English List – section 41 of the **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act**)
- areas of habitat with restoration potential (particularly those identified on the **Gloucestershire Nature Map** or identified through



other landscape scale projects and within any ‘Nature Improvement Area’ recognised by the **Local Nature Partnership**); and

- features that provide an ecological function for wildlife (such as foraging, resting and breeding places) – particularly wildlife corridors of all scales, which provide ecological connectivity, allowing species to move through the landscape, and which support ecosystem functions.

6.51 The Council is working with the **Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership (LNP)** to deliver a **Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)**, which will provide a spatial strategy for nature. It will identify opportunities and priorities for enhancing our natural environment in Gloucestershire and assist implementation of the **Nature Recovery Network (NRN)** and ecosystem services. Local Nature Recovery Strategies (for delivering the Nature Recovery Network) will enable opportunities for the delivery of multiple benefits to be identified and should provide the best value for time and money invested.

6.52 It is vital that all stages of sustainable development are informed by relevant ecological information, from site selection and design to planning decisions and long-term management. All effects should be considered, including positive and negative, direct and indirect, cumulative, and on- and off-site impacts over the lifetime of the development (including construction, operational and restoration phases), also giving consideration to disturbance effects such as noise, lighting, recreational pressures, trampling, traffic, domestic pets, vandalism etc. All effects upon the natural environment should be addressed sequentially in accordance with the principle of the ‘mitigation hierarchy’:

- avoid
- reduce, moderate, minimise
- rescue e.g. translocation

- repair, reinstate, restore compensate or offset.

6.53 Compensation is a last resort, but will be necessary in some instances where other approaches cannot guarantee a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity. Such measures should be delivered within the development site where possible; however, where this is not feasible, it may be more appropriate to deliver offsite measures through legal agreements and landscape scale projects. The District Council with the **Gloucestershire LNP** are investigating mechanisms to deliver off-site compensation. Appropriate compensatory measures should demonstrate net gain of at least 10% of the biodiversity resource over a thirty year timeframe, and be delivered as close to the development site as possible to avoid the degradation of local ecological networks or ‘ecosystem services’.

6.54 In addition to the existing **Mitigation Strategies** being operated on the **Rodborough Common SAC** and the **Severn Estuary SAC, SPA and Ramsar**, the **Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)** of the Local Plan has identified measures that will be required now for the **Cotswolds Beechwoods SAC** over the Local Plan period, to ensure no adverse effect occurs on the SAC due to the expected population increase in the County and the associated increase in recreational activity. A core catchment zone has been defined around this SAC, to reflect the current patterns of activity based on settlements. Development proposals within this core catchment zone will be required to contribute to mitigation measures. The Council commits to jointworking with partners on this cross boundary issue, in order to avoid an adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC associated with increased recreational activity over the relevant plan periods. The initiatives will be funded principally through s106 contributions that contribute towards an agreed **SAC Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy**. Where, instead of a bespoke solution, provision is made for contributions to be paid and pooled towards implementing the



Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (upon which Natural England has been consulted), the District Council will not require an **Appropriate Assessment** of the planning application.

- 6.55 Where a development includes specific measures to avoid and mitigate its impact upon the **Special Area of Conservation (SAC)** or **Special Protection Area (SPA)**, the District Council will, in consultation with Natural England, undertake an **Appropriate Assessment**. This will consider the effect of the proposal on the SAC or SPA and the avoidance and mitigation measures, including size and location of any proposed semi-natural open space.

Delivery Policy ES7

Landscape character

Within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), or on land that may affect its setting, priority will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the natural and special qualities of the AONB, including landscape quality / landscape beauty, tranquillity; dark skies; natural heritage and cultural heritage. Proposals that are likely to impact on, or create change in, the landscape of the Cotswolds AONB should have regard to, be compatible with and reinforce the landscape character of the location. Major development will not be permitted unless it is demonstrated to be in the national interest and that there is a lack of alternative sustainable development sites.

In all locations development proposals should conserve or enhance the special features and diversity of the different landscape character types found within the District. Priority will be given to the protection of the quality and diversity of the landscape character for its own intrinsic beauty and for its benefit to economic, environmental and social wellbeing. Development will only be permitted if all the following criteria are met:

1. The development will protect or enhance landscape character; and

2. Natural features including trees, hedgerows and water features that contribute to the landscape character and setting of the development will be both retained and managed appropriately in the future; and
3. Detrimental effects on types, patterns and features which make a significant contribution to the character, history and setting of a settlement or area will be avoided.

Opportunities for appropriate landscaping will be sought alongside all new development, such that landscape type key characteristics are strengthened.

Proposals will have regard to the local distinctiveness of the different landscapes in the District, drawing, as appropriate, upon relevant assessments, including: Stroud District Landscape Character Assessment (2000), Cotswold AONB Landscape Character Assessment(2000), Stroud Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (2016) and the Cotswolds AONB Landscape Strategy and Guidelines (2003).

- 6.56 **Landscape Character Assessments (LCA)** are a nationally recognised tool to help us understand and describe landscapes in an objective way to define distinctive characteristics, inform policy development, planning and land management decisions, and assist in monitoring change. Landscape Character Assessments can also assist with the process of assessing the sensitivity and capacity of places to change, and the impacts and significance of potential development. Landscape Character Assessments can be prepared on different scales, ie at national, district, neighbourhood and site level.

- 6.57 The **Stroud District Landscape Assessment (2000)** provides a comprehensive statement of landscape character and quality across the entire District. Issues relating to key characteristics, landform and context, land use and landscape patterns, settlement and vernacular character, human response and sensitivity to change are identified for the 12



Landscape Character Areas, together with key priorities for action. These remain relevant to this Local Plan. Further evidence gathering work for this Local Plan has included the **Landscape Sensitivity Assessment** (2016), which has examined the landscape sensitivity around our larger villages and towns to potential housing and employment development.

- 6.58 The **Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)** covers 15 local authority areas including Stroud District. The special qualities of the Cotswolds AONB are the key attributes for which the AONB is considered to be important. Most unique to the Cotswolds AONB is the unifying character of the limestone geology, including its visible presence in the landscape and its use as a building material. Other special qualities of the AONB include its internationally important, flower-rich grasslands and ancient, broadleaved woodlands; escarpment; dry stonewalls; river valleys; high wolds; tranquillity and dark skies; vernacular architecture and distinctive settlements; accessible landscape offering quiet recreation; and significant archaeological, prehistoric, historic and cultural associations. **The Cotswolds AONB Management Plan** ('the Management Plan') is a statutory plan, which sets out the vision, outcomes and policies for the management of the Cotswolds AONB and has been prepared by the **Cotswolds Conservation Board**. This is a material consideration when considering development proposals within the AONB. Other documents prepared by the Board may be relevant, including position statements, woodland and biodiversity strategies, landscape sensitivity dark skies and tranquillity studies.

Delivery Policy ES8

Trees, hedgerows and woodlands

Development will seek where appropriate to enhance and expand the District's tree, hedgerow and woodland resource, which will contribute to:

- health and wellbeing
- carbon sequestration; and
- climate change mitigation and adaptation.

There should be no net loss of hedgerows as they form a key component of local ecological networks and ecosystem services.

Development that would result in the unacceptable loss of, or damage to, or threaten the continued well-being of locally valued and/or protected trees, hedgerows, community orchards, veteran trees or woodland will not be permitted.

Where the loss of trees and/or hedgerows is considered acceptable, adequate replacement provision will be required that utilises local and native species that are in sympathy with the character of the existing tree or hedge species in the locality and the site.

Tree surgery work requiring consent must be undertaken in accordance with arboricultural best practice.

Development proposals shall provide soft landscaping details, including tree, hedge and wood planting where appropriate. Landscaping schemes should take account of local landscape character, ecological interests (including green infrastructure networks) and should include the planting of indigenous species where appropriate.

The Council will seek long-term maintenance and management plans to accompany the soft landscaping proposals where appropriate.

- 6.59 Trees, woodlands and hedges make an important contribution to the beauty, diversity and distinctiveness of our rural landscapes and the beauty and liveability of our townscapes. Tree and woodland canopies



create shelter and shade, contribute to carbon sequestration, intercept rainfall and airborne pollutants. Trees and hedges can regulate the movement of water through river catchments, reducing soil erosion and the leaching of pollutants into surface and ground waters. The Council will use the **Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership (LNP) Tree Strategy** to guide woodland conservation and creation. The vision is to achieve thriving network of sustainably managed trees and woodlands covering at least 20% of the county, delivering resilience and connectivity for people, wildlife and the economy. This strategy will help co-ordinate actions across the County working with partners and stakeholders. The Council will work with the LNP and partners to develop an implementation and delivery action plan. Woodland ecosystems are a key component of the County's biodiversity providing habitats for both rare and common species. Trees and woodlands take many years to mature: ancient woodlands and veteran trees in particular are irreplaceable. There should be no net loss of hedgerows, due to the importance of this feature as components of local ecological networks and ecosystem services. Hedgerow replacement should align with local ecological networks wherever possible. If any hedgerow removal has to take place it should take place outside of bird nesting season to avoid the need for exclusion netting that can impact wider functioning of this ecological corridor. In summary, these natural features improve our health and wellbeing, help mitigate climate change effects and provide eco-system services, both on the national scale and at the local level.

- 6.60 Mature trees, woodlands and hedges are sensitive to the impacts of development, either directly through their removal or indirectly through the impacts of construction. Due to the length of time and the cost taken to replace mature features, and the contribution they can make to the quality of development, they should be retained and protected where possible. Surveys and assessments carried out in accordance with

recognised standards should be used to inform the design process and minimise impacts. Where their loss is unavoidable they should be replaced with suitable new planting either within the site or in the locality if this is more appropriate. Development can make a positive contribution to the tree and hedgerow resource in the locality through new planting or the restoration and improved management of existing features. Native indigenous species planting will be encouraged where they respect and enhance the local landscape character.

- 6.61 Where trees within or adjoining a site could be affected by development, a full tree survey and arboricultural implications assessment to **BS 5837** will be required as part of the planning application. This needs to be carried out at a sufficiently early stage to inform the design of the development. The implementation of any protective measures it identifies will be secured by the use of planning conditions

Delivery Policy ES9

Equestrian development

The keeping of horses for leisure and recreational purposes or as part of commercially based equestrian activity shall be considered acceptable where development that, through its environmental impact, either enhances or does not diminish environmental quality of those rural areas in which it is to take place. The level of activity generated by a proposal will be taken into account.

Such development shall be integrally connected with wider land management and be development requiring a countryside location. In particular, a longer term landholding management and maintenance plan will be expected to accompany any equestrian development proposal.



Any proposal for the conversion or change of use of existing equestrian establishments to a non-equestrian use will be discouraged, unless there is a strong case setting out why an exception should be made.

6.62 Horses have been an important part of the rural landscape for hundreds of years. Originally they were work animals that contributed to the farming economy. Today the majority of horses in the AONB and Severn Vale are kept for recreation and leisure purposes. Development related to equestrian businesses as well as the keeping of horses for personal use is an increasingly popular activity in the District. To date, equestrian development has had little impact on landscape character due to the relatively sparse distribution of these types of development. However, there is increasing concern that the cumulative impact of equestrian development and the management of land for horses may adversely change the character of the landscape and hence affect the natural beauty of the District.

6.63 In addition to licensed riding schools and livery yards, horses and ponies are kept for personal use throughout the District. In several areas the presence of an equine activity is apparent due to the visible signs of development e.g. outdoor exercise arenas/ménages, buildings, field divisions, overgrazing, field shelters, jumps and other equine use related equipment, etc.

6.64 The number of developments involving a small number of horses for personal enjoyment is numerous whereas the number of larger scale developments such as livery yards, riding schools and training and competing establishments is fewer. The potential impacts (including cumulative impacts) of all scales of development need to be considered:

- Change in character of existing buildings and settlements as a result of change of use of buildings.
- Introduction of uncharacteristic new buildings to the landscape and settlements would affect landscape character and natural beauty.
- Changes in landform to accommodate new buildings and exercise areas may adversely impact upon landscape character.
- Changes in grazing regime may affect ecological diversity of grassland and subdivision of fields may affect landscape character.
- Paraphernalia related to equestrian development e.g. horse boxes, jumps, manure heaps, and temporary structures may become more visible in the landscape.
- Potential erosion of bridleways and roadside verges as a result of intensive use.
- Horse manure heaps can be unsightly and cause problems if lit.
- Horse riding is a sustainable way to enjoy the AONB and Severn Vale reducing the impact of tourism and recreation.
- Appropriate tree and woodland planting to mitigate the impacts of development creates new opportunities for wildlife.
- Equestrian related activities contribute to the District economy and as a result the management of the natural environment.

6.65 The Council (working with relevant stakeholder interests) will seek to produce further advice or a policy statement that will cover the following equine development/activities: stabling and ancillary buildings (including accessibility and location), field shelters, indoor and outdoor exercise areas and facilities, other exercise activities and grazing/field management that is appropriate to the landscape character and biodiversity.



Delivery Policy ES10

Valuing our historic environment and assets

Stroud District's historic environment will be preserved, protected or enhanced, in accordance with the principles set out below:

1. Any proposals involving a historic asset shall require a description of the heritage asset's significance, including any contribution made by its setting, and an assessment of the potential impact of the proposal on that significance, using appropriate expertise. This can be a desk based assessment and a field evaluation prior to determination where necessary and should include the Gloucestershire Historic Environment Record.
2. Proposals and initiatives will be supported which conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the heritage significance and setting of the Districts heritage assets, especially those elements which contribute to the distinct identity of the District. These include:
 - A. the 68 sites of national archaeological importance (which are designated as Ancient Monuments), any undesignated archaeology of national significance, and the many buildings that are Listed as having special architectural or historic interest
 - B. the stone, bronze, iron age and roman settlements and remains; the medieval settlements including Berkeley Castle; historic houses; historic parks, gardens and villages
 - C. the townscapes of the larger towns such as Stroud where the industrial heritage influenced its historic grain, including its street layouts and plot sizes
 - D. the District's historic market towns and villages, many with designated conservation areas, such as Berkeley, Wotton Under Edge, Minchinhampton, Painswick and Dursley.
3. Proposals will be supported which protect and, where appropriate, enhance the heritage significance and setting of locally identified heritage assets, such as buildings of local architectural or historic

interest, locally important archaeological sites and parks and gardens of local interest.

4. Proposals will be supported which protect and, where appropriate, enhance key views and vistas, especially of locally distinctive landmark features such as the spires and towers of historic churches and mill chimneys.
5. Any harm or loss would require clear and convincing justification to the relevant decision-maker as to why the heritage interest should be overridden. Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, this will not be viewed as a justification for loss or alteration.

A full programme of work shall be submitted with the application, together with proposals to mitigate any adverse impact of the proposed development, and where appropriate, this shall be implemented through measures secured by planning condition(s) or through a legal agreement.

6.66 The historic environment is important for its own sake. It is also central to the character and identity of the District. It is a source of immense local pride, as well as being a valuable educational and economic resource. The historic environment should also act as a positive stimulus and inspiration to place making in all parts of the District so that it can reinforce local identity and play a part in increasing the appeal of the area as a place to live, work, visit and invest in. New development should seek opportunities to draw on the historic environment in order to maintain and enhance local character and distinctiveness.

6.67 National planning policy provides guidance on the identification, significance, and protection of heritage assets – from sites and buildings of local historic value to listed buildings, conservation areas, historic parks and gardens and archaeological remains. National policy expects that the



contribution of such heritage assets to local character and sense of place is recognised and valued and that policies ensure they are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

6.68 Stroud District has an important legacy of heritage and cultural assets, including over 3,300 listed buildings, 41 conservation areas, 14 registered historic parks and gardens and 68 scheduled monuments. There are additionally a wide range of undesignated historic buildings, archaeological sites and remains, and historic parks and gardens, as well as places, areas, landscapes and structures of local historic interest. Undesignated local heritage assets may be identified locally, including through the definition of ‘local listing’ criteria in **Neighbourhood Development Plans**, as well as incidentally through the development management process. Information about heritage assets can be found in the **Gloucestershire Historic Environment Register (HER)**.

6.69 The Council has produced a **Heritage Strategy** to positively address the issues and pressures that are facing our heritage assets, including a programme for the appraisal and management of our conservation areas and the monitoring of any heritage assets “at risk”. The strategy is framed around four priorities:

- Understanding our heritage and its significance
- Capitalising on our heritage
- Positive management
- Raising our heritage up the agenda

6.70 Applications for development that affects heritage assets and their settings directly or indirectly will need to describe the nature of the significance of the assets affected (including any contribution made by their setting), and set out how development will conserve or enhance the heritage assets and their settings in a manner appropriate to that

significance. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset’s importance and sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on its significance.

6.71 A **Heritage Statement** will be required for development proposals that will have a potential impact on any of the designated or undesignated assets listed in (i)-(vi) and for any major development proposal:

- i. conservation areas; listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments;
- ii. the character of the historic cores of the market towns and villages;
- iii. landscape features, including ancient woodlands and veteran trees; field patterns; watercourses; drainage ditches and hedgerows of visual, historic or nature conservation value;
- iv. archaeological remains;
- v. historic parks and gardens; and
- vi. assets of local heritage significance.

6.72 Development proposals that involve any harm to or loss of a heritage asset would require clear and convincing justification, in accordance with the **NPPF**. A development proposal will not be permitted where substantial harm to a designated heritage asset is likely to occur unless demonstrably outweighed by substantial public benefits, which cannot be realised in any less harmful way.

6.73 As an irreplaceable resource, the historic environment is crucial to sustainable development in Stroud District, ensuring that our heritage can be enjoyed for its contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations. The Council recognises that in some instances the pursuit of carbon neutrality and energy efficiency will be difficult in the historic environment. Nevertheless, the criteria contained in this policy will apply,



where such measures require permission. As a general principle, alterations will be viewed more favourably where:

- measures can be reversed or removed, as and when the technology becomes obsolete or is superseded; and
- alterations are designed and located to be as visually inconspicuous as possible.

The Council will seek to produce further advice on achieving carbon neutrality and energy efficiency in the historic environment.

Delivery Policy ES11

Maintaining, restoring and regenerating the District's canals

The Council will continue to support and deliver the restoration of and other necessary functional improvements to the District's canals. It will seek to improve access to and along the canals to encourage use for transport and for leisure / recreational purposes.

Development on the route of, or adjacent to, the Stroudwater Navigation, the Thames and Severn Canal or the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal must not prevent the improvement, reconstruction, restoration, widening or continued operational use of the canals or towpaths.

All developments adjacent to the canals must respect their character, setting, biodiversity and historic value as well as have regard to improving and enhancing views along and from the canals. Environmental improvements to any canal's appearance will include enhancement of its historic and biodiversity value.

In assessing any proposals for development along or in the vicinity of any of the Districts three canals, the Council will have regard to any relevant adopted guidance.

Reasonably related financial contributions may be sought via Community Infrastructure Levy or, where appropriate, via legal agreements for contributions towards the improvement or restoration of the related canal and towpaths.

6.74 Within Stroud District, the **Gloucester & Sharpness Canal**, the **Stroudwater Navigation** and the **Thames & Severn Canal** provide a valuable resource for the public to enjoy both active and passive recreational activity. The latter two canals are now known collectively as **The Cotswold Canals** and are subject to an ongoing restoration project, led by Stroud District Council, to reconnect the canals with the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal at Saul Junction and to reconnect with and restore the former canal basin at Brimscombe Port to the east of Stroud. There are longer term aspirations to continue the Thames & Severn Canal east of Brimscombe Port to reconnect with the Thames at Lechlade.

6.75 **Policy ES11** supports the restoration of the canal network and for functional improvements to facilitate canal based tourism, including the widening of stretches to achieve the required width of at least 10 metres, permanent and visitor moorings, services such as water, pump out and power points and other visitor facilities. The policy also supports proposals for wider canal side regeneration, subject to respecting the historic built environment and the natural environment.

6.76 Stroud's **Industrial Heritage Conservation Area (IHCA)** runs the entire length of the Cotswold Canals, from Sapperton in the east to Saul in the west – some 14 miles (23km). As well as their historical, architectural and educational value, the District's canals are important landscape features, with biodiversity interest. Our canals are already an important part of the District's green infrastructure network and with maintenance they provide



green corridors for wildlife, as well as playing a role in conveying flood waters, in association with the often adjacent river network.

- 6.77 The canals contribute towards economic and regeneration objectives by providing attractive locations for canal-side development, but this must be carefully balanced with their conservation and enhancement. The **Industrial Heritage Conservation Area** has an adopted **Design Guide and Management Proposals SPD**, which provides guidance. The contribution that canals and canal towpaths can make in achieving more sustainable patterns of movement is worthy of note, including opportunities to create and improve links with other walking and cycling routes. Consequently, the Council will support appropriate measures to improve access to the canals for active travel and transportation purposes.
- 6.78 The Council is producing a **Canal Strategy** to develop a whole corridor approach to the District's canals. The Strategy will identify further opportunities to develop the canals as a resource to maximise the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the District and its communities.

Quality of design: places and spaces

Delivery Policy ES12

Better design of places

The District Council will require the layout and design of new development to create well designed, socially integrated, high quality successful places, where people enjoy living and working, with legible and well planned routes, blocks and spaces, integrated residential, commercial and community activity, safe attractive public spaces and pedestrian/cycle routes without traffic conflict, secure private areas, better designed buildings and landscaped spaces.

New development should be designed to offer flexibility for future needs and uses taking into account demographic and other changes. The Council will expect the improvement of existing buildings to meet changing needs and to sustain the District's housing and commercial building stock.

All new development must be based on thorough site appraisal including reference to any adopted Design Statements, Design Codes, Neighbourhood Development Plans, Secured by Design standards and be sensitive to its context as well as contributing to sustainable living and carbon neutrality.

'Design Quality', reflecting a thorough understanding of the site context, must be demonstrated as part of any proposal. The Council will require the submission of a Design and Access Statement which clearly demonstrates the design and suitability of the proposal in its local context where necessary.

- 6.79 The quality and success of new places is ultimately judged by how enjoyable it is to use or visit, how easy it is to find your way in and through, how safe and secure it feels, how the buildings and adjacent spaces relate to each other and how attractive it looks as a whole. These responses are important in all developments, whether a small infill



development or an extensive development scheme. The main way that people experience buildings from day-to-day is from public streets or spaces. Therefore, the contribution new development makes to the quality of the public realm is of considerable importance.

6.80 An important part of making high quality places is to ensure that new buildings are well designed. This means making buildings attractive in their own right, appropriate in their setting and fit for their purpose. Buildings and layouts need to embed both the Council and **NPPF** commitments to securing carbon neutrality. It is also important that buildings are designed in an adaptable way, to ensure there is flexibility in their potential use and function across the life of a building. Proposals should accord with relevant local design planning documents or advice. The Council will particularly encourage the use of **Design Codes** forming part of any **Neighbourhood Development Plan**.

Delivery Policy DES2

Green Infrastructure

All development proposals should, where appropriate to their nature and scale:

1. protect existing green infrastructure and the functions this performs;
2. increase the functionality of existing and planned green infrastructure especially where this helps to mitigate the causes of and addresses the impacts of climate change;
3. improve the quality of existing green infrastructure, including local networks and corridors, specifically to increase its attractiveness as a recreation opportunity and its value as a habitat for biodiversity;

4. protect and improve access to and connectivity between existing and planned green infrastructure to develop a continuous right of way and greenway network and integrated ecological system/network;
5. secure new green infrastructure in order to cater for anticipated increases in demand arising from development particularly in areas where there are existing deficiencies assessed against standards contained within this Plan; and
6. provide long-term management arrangements for new and enhanced green infrastructure within development sites.

Where a loss of, or negative impact on green infrastructure functionality or ecological system/network is unavoidable, development proposals should demonstrate what mitigation measures are proposed and/or replacement green infrastructure will be provided. Any replacement or mitigation measure should seek to secure a net gain in biodiversity and be deployed as closely as possible to the affected green infrastructure asset.

Development that is demonstrably harmful to an identified strategic green infrastructure asset, or adversely affects the functioning and/or implementation of approved strategic green infrastructure projects, will not be permitted.

6.81 **Green infrastructure (or GI)** is recognised as a cornerstone of sustainable development and communities. It is considered essential with the many economic, social and environmental benefits it offers. It is therefore important to the quality of life of residents, business and nature, contributing towards creating places where people and the environment can thrive.

6.82 Green infrastructure is the network of green spaces and natural elements that intersperse and connect our towns and villages. GI is the term used to describe the network of natural and semi-natural spaces and corridors in a given area. These include open spaces such as parks and gardens, but also



allotments, woodlands, fields, hedges, lakes, ponds, playing fields, coastal habitats, footpaths, cycle routes and watercourses. Crucially, GI provision is not limited to traditional green spaces such as parks and other open spaces, but can involve various interventions to thread nature into streetscapes, or provide corridors of connectivity between GI 'assets'. GI is defined by its multifunctionality. A single GI asset can deliver a range of benefits to people (both physical and mental well-being), as well as biodiversity and landscape.

6.83 GI can help to create high quality, attractive and functional places that will provide a setting for day- to-day living. It can also address the negative impact of habitat loss and fragmentation by promoting habitat creation, enhancement and connectivity (on site as part of development or through any biodiversity off-setting), and plays an important role in reducing local temperatures, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and alleviating flood risk and soil erosion. As a largely rural District, Stroud can be considered rich in GI assets of various kinds, and has a valued landscape that gives the District its identity and provides the context for our natural and heritage assets such as Rodborough Common, the Cotswolds' Beechwoods and the variety of mills adjacent to the Cotswold Canal network.

6.84 This policy is designed to reflect the changed policy landscape since the previous **Green Infrastructure County-wide Strategy** prepared in 2015. In particular, this includes an increased emphasis on the importance of GI in responding to concerns over health, wellbeing, habitat fragmentation and climate change resilience. Against a backdrop of future growth and development within the District, a revised strategic framework is needed to ensure that the existing GI network is protected, strengthened and expanded to deal with future challenges. The Council has produced an evidence base on District GI needs and requirements with work

undertaken by our consultants. The Council will consider the requirements for GI, in line with evidence (including the **LNP Nature Recovery Network**) and relevant **Local Plan** policies, when determining planning applications.

Delivery Policy ES16

Public art contributions

Proportionate contributions will be required towards the provision of publicly accessible art and design works from development proposals comprising major residential schemes or major commercial, retail, leisure and institutional development involving 1,000m² gross floorspace or 1ha of land or more which are publicly accessible. Public art should help create a sense of place for that development.

Smaller schemes will be encouraged to include Public Art as a means of enhancing the development's quality and appearance. The level of contribution will be negotiated on an individual basis dependent upon the nature of the development proposal, taking into account the impact of this requirement on the economic viability of the development proposal.

6.85 The Stroud District has a long cultural and arts heritage with clear associations with the Arts and Crafts movement for example. This tradition in the District is thriving and it continues to be a great place to live or visit with festivals, shows, colleges, galleries arts and crafts workshops. Any search will reveal that the District is full of colourful and creative attractions and activities.

6.86 The provision of public art can contribute to this cultural and artistic heritage and assists in enhancing the distinctiveness of developments. The Council supports the **Create Gloucestershire** aim to make arts 'everyday' for local people. Such initiatives can positively assist the establishment of



a sense of place and identity. Art can help in enhancing the appearance of both buildings and their setting, the quality of the environment and can help promote culture and civic pride, benefitting general health and wellbeing. Public art may take many forms including art installations and sculptures, seating, signage and landscape design or it may be integrated as a functional element of a development through metalwork, lighting, floor and window designs. The Council will encourage the involvement of local artist(s) at an early stage of design. This will ensure that any artistic feature is incorporated into the scheme from the outset, rather than being added as an after-thought within new development. The Council will encourage the provision of new works of art as part of any development scheme and, in determining planning applications, will consider the proportionate contribution made by any such works to the appearance of the scheme and to the amenities of the area in accordance with **NPPF** tests and requirements. Any potential contribution to future maintenance of a public art feature will be considered on a case by case basis.

