

Core Strategy Topic Paper: Summary Guide to our Evidence Base

February 2010

Background

The Council has published a series of background papers to accompany the Core Strategy – Alternative Strategies consultation (February 2010). These cover a range of issues and provide more technical or detailed information than is contained in the consultation document itself. They also provide links to the various published sources of evidence on which the development of the housing and employment options has been based.

The background papers are:

1. District Profile: a Portrait of Stroud District
2. Climate Change and Stroud District
3. Housing land availability
4. Employment and economic growth in Stroud District
5. Alternative Strategies Consultation: how we developed the seven strategy options
6. Summary guide to our evidence base
7. A summary of townscape analysis and urban design strategies
8. Rural settlement classification
9. Infrastructure position statement
10. Preliminary habitat regulations screening work
11. Summary of responses to the Issues consultation
12. Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment for the Alternative Strategies Consultation

These background papers can be downloaded from the Council's website or are available from the Council in hard copy at a charge to cover photo copying and postage/packing.

Should you wish to make comments on the contents of this document, please write to

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 As part of the plan-making process Stroud District Council has commissioned a number of background technical studies to provide evidence during the preparation of the Local Development Framework. The studies aim to strengthen our understanding of the District in relation to the issues and challenges it faces, and the key drivers for change. Evidence from these studies has contributed to the preparation of the Core Strategy – Alternative Strategy’s Options consultation document and will continue to play a part as we refine the options and develop the preferred option for the Core Strategy for Stroud District.

2. The use of evidence

- 2.1 Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12) confirms that a Core Strategy must be founded on a robust and credible evidence base - otherwise there is a risk that it will be found unsound at examination. This position is confirmed within advice recently issued by the Planning Inspectorate.
- 2.2 PPS12 outlines that the evidence base for the production of core strategies should contain two elements – participation, and research / fact finding.
- 2.3 With regard to public participation, the Council consulted extensively on an 'Issues' document in the spring / summer of 2009. The Council received a substantial number of responses and these have been taken into account in the preparation of the current Core Strategy – Alternative Strategy’s Options consultation document. In addition, following the previous consultation, the Council has talked to a wide range of people and organisations. We have worked closely with partners in the Local Strategic Partnership, Parish and Town Councils, Gloucestershire County Council and neighbouring Authorities, Developers, environmental bodies and infrastructure providers, to gain a deeper understanding of their issues and their perspectives. The results of this dialogue have been used in the preparation of the current consultation document.
- 2.4 Full details of the results of the previous Issues consultation in 2009 can be found at:
<http://www.stroud.gov.uk/docs/lp/core.asp#next>
- 2.5 The Council has also undertaken or commissioned a number of technical studies which provide environmental, economic and social information relating to the District and its neighbouring areas. Some of these have been undertaken jointly with other authorities such as the SFRA. Several studies are still underway, including a Retail Assessment and the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. The results of these studies will be posted in due course on the Council’s website.
- 2.6 The studies that are currently available are summarised in the next sections of this paper. The notes can only be a brief assessment of what each study contains. Further more detailed information will be available from the studies themselves and so links are provided where possible to allow access to the full study documents.



3. Evidence Studies

Stroud Employment Review 2007

- 3.1 This review was undertaken by GVA Grimley on behalf of the Council in 2007. The full document can be viewed on the Council's web site. The review followed an earlier review (November, 2003) which was undertaken by White Young and Green & Chestertons on behalf of the Council but which was restricted to the Stroud Valleys.

http://www.stroud.gov.uk/info/localplan/Stroud_Employment_Land_Review_Final.pdf

- 3.2 The main findings of the review are as follows:

- To maintain and enhance the economic diversity and vitality of the District
- To increase rural employment opportunities
- To allocate land in accordance with Local Policies to allow businesses to expand and new firms to start up
- To ensure employment uses have good public transport accessibility
- To minimise any adverse effects of necessary development for employment on the community or the environment
- To enable the growth of sustainable tourism.
- Retention of best quality employment sites for employment purposes.
- Making suitable land available for business
- Making land available locally – sustainable development
- Widening the area of employment considered now productivity based approach
- Low carbon approach
- Achievement 40-50 MWe in Gloucestershire from renewable electricity technologies
- Provision of workforce with relevant skills as number of older people fall out of employment and retire. Consideration of new apprenticeships.
- In the Gloucester and Cheltenham HMA provision will be made for: Growth of about 41,700 jobs (Draft RSS)
- Parts of the South West, particularly some of the more rural areas, are characterized by low wage/low productivity/low skill occupations. Developing the skills and general capacity of the workforce is an essential element of any strategy to encourage the establishment of more successful, innovative and competitive enterprises in these areas.
- Need a supply of the right people in the right places with the right skills.
- Farmed environment is significant
- Rural jobs important especially to provide sustainable jobs and stop commuting.
- Employment land should be reassessed on a three year rolling programme.
- New types of jobs need to be created e.g. skills based jobs, creative industry, Stroud has an arts based sub sector.
- Continue economic growth that is compatible with Governments stated environmental objectives.
- Development plans provide the policy framework, weighing the importance of industrial and commercial development with that of maintaining and improving environmental quality. The principles of sustainable development require the responsible use of man-made and natural resources by all concerned in a way that ensures that future generations are not worse off. Careful attention to environmental issues makes good economic sense for business and industry.



- Planning authorities should therefore ensure that their development plans contain clear land-use policies for different types of industrial and commercial development and positive policies to provide for the needs of small businesses.
- There should be an aim to ensure that there is sufficient land available which is readily capable of development and well served by infrastructure. Local Authorities should also ensure that there is a variety of sites available to meet differing needs. A choice of suitable sites will facilitate competition between developers; this will benefit end-users and stimulate economic activity.
- Business often gives high priority to good access to roads and sometimes rail and airports.
- Development plans should provide locations which minimise the need for travel and provide sustainable development.
- Discourage development where it would lead to congestion.
- Policy – This Common Inheritance – and other policies seek to reduce and control greenhouse gases and development should only be encouraged where more energy efficient forms of transport are available.
- Planning authorities may indicate that they will give preference to proposals from industrial and commercial users who would benefit from efficient rail or water services rather than for retail or housing proposals which could be located elsewhere. Such policies need to be approached with flexibility and care. Their purpose is to maximise the use of other transport facilities other than the roads.
- It may not be appropriate to separate industry and commerce from residential areas as they may be a source of employment and services but they need to be of an appropriate scale which would not affect residential amenity.
- In rural areas development needed to sustain the rural economy need to be weighed against the need to protect the countryside and other considerations such as ecology, landscape, wildlife, agriculture, natural resources, recreation, etc.

3.3 The Key Facts are as follows:

- There is a large amount of out commuting
- There needs to be more skills based jobs
- Quality of land and buildings needs to be assessed
- Need to keep best quality sites for employment purposes
- Premises need to be near key travel networks; area near to M5 identified.
- Adequate supply of B1a premises but other use classes may need further allocations.
- Several scenarios raised including some mixed use development on some of the lower ranking sites to make them financially viable for development.
- Some of the older established industries such as banking and power generation likely to decline while other service based and knowledge based industries such as computing likely to increase.
- Consider the deletion of sites at Cam and Sharpness from plan.
- Stonehouse becoming the 'office' location for the district.
- Any land use strategy should be employment led.
- Canal corridor could make a contribution towards the provision of sites for employment in a unique environment.



Strategic Housing Market Assessment – (SHMA)

- 3.4 The County Council and the Six District Councils have worked together to produce a Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Gloucestershire (SHMA).
- 3.5 Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 3 "Housing" states "Local Development Documents and Regional Spatial Strategies policies should be informed by a robust, shared evidence base, in particular, of housing need and demand, through a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and land availability, through a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment". (CLG Nov 06) PPS3: Housing states that *"...the Government's key housing policy goal is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home, which they can afford, in a community where they want to live.*
- 3.6 In order to meet the requirements of PPS3, in 2007 the six Gloucestershire District and Borough Councils and Gloucestershire County Council jointly commissioned consultants to complete a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) for the Gloucestershire Housing Market Area of the South West Region.
- 3.7 Following stakeholder consultation the suite of SHMA documents was finalised on 16th February 2009.
- 3.8 The following link provides access to the full details of the SHMA.
- <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=15389>
- 3.9 The main findings of the review are as follows:
- Out-commuting a problem - need to reduce travel especially by car.
 - Need to balance housing with employment opportunities.
 - General lack of affordable housing.
 - Most important gap in housing is the 'intermediate' one.
 - Overall pattern is for smaller units with preference for 2 bed units.
 - Need for larger units especially affordable larger units to buy into or ones for social rent.
 - Pressing need for smaller units in some parts of the district e.g. the east.
 - Annual housing provision (Stroud) to 2026, 455 of which affordable need is 264 which equates to 58%.
 - 30% target for affordable units likely to be too low for the next 20 years to meet demand and a 40% target especially on Greenfield sites should be considered. However, need to consider all circumstances of site such as contamination and other planning gains.
 - Third of affordable housing could be intermediate housing.
 - BME population relatively low.
 - House prices above national average and compare to prices in south east of country.
 - Requirement for single person accommodation.
 - High proportion of elderly people expected in the future and need to be catered for in accommodation terms and services – 52k over county over today's figures in 2026. People 75+ accounting for much of this figure.
 - More than one third of the County's households contain someone who has a long term illness and this could be an opportunity to provide some lifetime homes.



- Population in county expected to rise over next 20 years from 47,000 to 57,000 (21.3% increase) with a female population greater than male
- Difficulty for households with an income of less than £35 k to buy into housing.
- Global credit crunch – difficulty in obtaining mortgages and monies for developers to build.
- Average earnings (£24,274) of Gloucestershire below national average but above regional average.
- Need for Gypsy and Show peoples pitches.
- Right to buy has diminished the availability of social housing available.
- The level of owner-occupation in Gloucestershire was also higher than the national average.
- Average house price across Gloucestershire £235,184 (Land Registry, 2007).
- 6.4% of employed people across the HMA may be defined as Key workers' who tend to be slightly older and are generally employed in jobs which fall into the highest social groups

Stroud Housing Needs Assessment (SHNA)

- 3.10 Stroud District Council has recently undertaken a new Housing Needs Survey and has appointed Fordham Research to undertake an up to date survey of the District's housing need.
- 3.11 The key facts and headlines are as follows:

Using the Communities and Local Government (CLG) model for assessing need for affordable housing it is estimated that 1,027 households are in current housing need. To reduce this backlog over five years and meet newly arising need for each year, it is estimated that there will be a need for approximately **424** units to be provided per annum, taking account of the distribution of recent and planned supply between the social rented and shared ownership sectors. If the policy in the Proposed Changes to the South West Draft RSS of meeting some housing need arising from Gloucester in Stroud District is applied equally to housing need, this rises to **570** units per annum.

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)

- 3.12 In accordance with Government guidance, Stroud District Council has completed a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). The purpose of the SHLAA is to identify sites with housing potential in order to assess the potential of the District to accommodate additional residential development. The aim is for the Council to produce a report that will outline the amount of land available in the District for housing development. The final report forms part of the evidence base for Stroud District Council's Local Development Framework (LDF).
- 3.13 The SHLAA is not a statement of Council policy and does not allocate land for future housing sites. Therefore, the inclusion of a site within the assessment does not mean that the site will be allocated for housing now or in the future. It is for the Local Development Framework process to select sites for future development. Site allocations will be dealt with via a specific Sites Allocation DPD in the future with the possible exception of 'Strategic Sites' which may be allocated in the Core Strategy.
- 3.14 The SHLAA was completed by Roger Tym & Partners in accordance by Government Guidance and can be viewed at the Council's Web site indicated below:



http://www.stroud.gov.uk/docs/localplan/housing_land.asp

3.15 The Key Facts are as follows:

The SHLAA process is a theoretical process and concludes that from the sites submitted to the Council for consideration along with outstanding full and outline planning permissions, it has been demonstrated that there is a theoretical supply of land to meet the 5 year requirement; 10 year requirement and 15 year requirement.

Retail and Town Centres Study

3.16 The Council has recently commissioned GVA Grimley to undertake a retail and town centre's study on behalf of the District Council. The study is ongoing and further details will be made available at a later stage when the Consultants Report is published

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)

3.17 Stroud District Council with the other five District Councils and the Gloucestershire County Council have worked together to produce a Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). Halcrow were appointed as consultants to undertake much of the work involved. The SFRA identifies levels of flood risk from all sources of flooding within the District. The assessment will be used to inform the emerging Local Development Framework and as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

3.18 This work allows the flood risk vulnerability and flood zone compatibility to be examined using the Sequential Test set out in PPS 25 "Development and Flood Risk". Further work such as a Level 2 SFRA will be carried out in order to provide a detailed assessment of the risk of flooding from non-fluvial sources in areas where new development is proposed. It will also be required where the need to apply the exception test is identified. A level 2 SFRA involves a more detailed review of flood hazard (flood probability, flood depth, flood velocity, rate of onset of flooding) taking into account the presence of flood risk management measures such as flood defenses. They can also inform the level of detail required for site-specific Flood Risk Assessments (FRA's) by developers.

3.19 Countywide information on the SFRA can be found at <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?Articleid=17247>

3.20 Main Headlines and Key Facts are as follows:

- Surface water flooding:
- Major surface water flooding problems identified at:
- Areas within the Severn Valley where clays & mudstones are found which are close to the water table & are frequently saturated.
- Stroud – steep catchments (River Frome), combined urban drainage networks, older properties & woodland debris blocking the urban drainage network.

3.21 sequential approach should be taken in plan making and development control decision making.

- Government guidance requires a risk based approach to planning.
- PPS25 provides guidance on the sequential approach.
- Flood Zones are the starting point.



- The SFRA Flood Maps identify Zones 2 and 3.
- These Zones identify river flood risk (ignoring existing defences).
- Other forms of flooding are also included on the maps.
- See Table D.1 in Annex D of PPS25.

The sequential test Part 1.

- Aims to steer development to sites with little or no flood risk.
- The SFRA has refined EA Flood Map data.
- Taking account of other sources of flooding and climate change.
- Where no Zone 1 sites are available.
- Decision makers should identify reasonably available Zone 2 sites.
- Applying the Exception Test, if required.

The sequential test Part 2.

- Where no Zone 1 or Zone 2 sites are available.
- Decision makers should identify reasonably available Zone 3 sites.
- Applying the Exception Test, if required.
- Within each Zone, development should be directed to sites with the lowest probability of flooding.
- Higher vulnerability uses should be sited with the least flood risk.

The Exception test.

- For the Exception Test to be passed.
- (1) Demonstrate the development provides sustainability benefits that outweigh flood risk.
- (2) Development should be on developable previously developed land (PDL), if not, there should be no reasonably available developable PDL sites.
- (3) A supporting Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) is required to demonstrate, inter alia, that development will be safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

Key Policy Drivers.

- Making Space for Water: Taking Forward a New Government Strategy for Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management' outlines the Government's proposals for forward planning of flood management over the next 20 years.
- Water Framework Directive - the most substantial piece of European Community (EC) water legislation to date. It requires all inland and coastal waters to reach "good ecological status" by 2015.

Policy Objectives.

- To seek risk reduction through spatial planning and site design (e.g. apply the Sequential Test process directing new development to the least risky areas, seek opportunities for land swaps).
- To reduce surface water runoff from new developments and agricultural land (e.g. make SUDS a requirement).
- To enhance and restore the river corridor (e.g. avoid culverts for new developments, set back development from the river).
- To protect and promote areas for future flood alleviation schemes (e.g. safeguard flood storage areas, seek opportunities for developer contributions).
- To improve flood awareness and emergency planning (e.g. Flood Warnings Direct service offered by the Environment Agency).



Open Spaces

3.22 Main Headlines and Key Facts are as follows:

- Open spaces provide many roles ranging from the provision of active areas for formal recreation to areas of quiet relaxation. They can also have an amenity and environmental value by providing both physical and environmental breaks, especially in predominantly urban areas. The natural environment can also benefit as they can provide areas for biodiversity. They can enhance the character of a particular area whether they are publically or privately owned and can contribute to the character of an area.
- There is no national standard for the provision of open spaces and recreational provision is largely contained within PPG17 – Sport and Recreation. It emphasises the need to safeguard and enhance existing recreational opportunities in recognition of their important role in the social well being of local communities. In recent years, the effects of increasing levels of leisure time, disposable income and mobility, have served to increase the demand for both formal and informal levels of recreational provision.

3.23 The District Council has provided a SPG relating to the provision of ‘Residential Development Provision of outdoor Play space’ and details of this SPG are found at the link below:

http://www.stroud.gov.uk/info/outdoor_play_space_provision.pdf

3.24 The SPG is now associated with Policy RL5 of the Stroud District Local Plan November 2005 and sets out the amount and type of recreational provision required within developments that are being proposed. The amount of provision is linked to the National Playing Fields ‘six acre standard’ document. This standard recommends a minimum level of outdoor play space of 2.4 hectares (6 acres) per 1,000 population. It has now become widely adopted as a suitable assessment for outdoor play space provision.

3.25 The SPG identified that in certain parts of Stroud District there are deficiencies in the type and scale of recreational provision and the need to both provide new spaces and enhance some existing facilities.

3.26 The NPFA’s ‘Six Acre Standard’ does not include outdoor areas which serve primarily as amenity open space. In some cases the location and size of amenity land restricts its use as an outdoor recreational resource. An example of this includes grassed highway verges. However, in many cases, amenity land can serve two functions. It can act as a green visual space within residential areas and it can also serve as an informal recreational facility, especially for children. Hence, in practice, there is often little distinction between land used for amenity purposes and land used for children’s informal recreation.

3.27 The District has large areas of land designated as being within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and within these designated areas there is an opportunity for recreation to take place ranging from informal recreation on common land to the use of the many footpaths, including The Cotswold Way for walking. The countryside therefore affords the largest of the open spaces within the District to be enjoyed by the residents and visitors to Stroud District.



Other forms of Open Spaces

Amenity Green Space

- 3.30 This typology relates to small open spaces commonly found in housing areas. It includes informal recreation spaces and green spaces in and around housing, with the primary purpose of providing opportunities for informal activities and enhancing the appearance of residential or other areas.

Natural and semi-natural green spaces, including urban woodland

- 3.31 This typology relates to woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands (e.g. downlands, commons, meadows), wetlands, open and running water, nature reserves and wastelands with a primary purpose of wildlife conservation and biodiversity. It has wider benefits for the local community such as ecological and education opportunities as well as natural landscaping.

Green Corridors

- 3.32 Green corridors include towpaths along canals and riverbanks, cycleways, rights of way and disused railway lines. The primary purpose is to provide opportunities for walking, cycling and horse riding whether for leisure purposes or travel and opportunities for wildlife migration. Wider benefits for the local community include promoting health, wellbeing and providing access routes for local residents and wildlife.

Parks and Gardens

- 3.33 Primary Purpose – Accessible, high quality opportunities for informal recreation and community events. The parks and gardens typology relates to urban parks, recreation grounds, formal gardens and country parks. They range from urban parks such as Bank Gardens in Stroud to the larger grounds surrounding Woodchester Mansion. This typology has many wider benefits as they support the creation of a sense of place for the local community, ecological and education opportunities as well as structural landscaping for the local area.

Outdoor sports facilities

- 3.34 Outdoor sports facilities is a wide-ranging category of open space and includes natural or artificial surfaces either publicly or privately owned which are used for sport and recreation. Examples include playing pitches, athletics tracks, bowling greens and golf courses with the primary purpose of participation in outdoor sports.

Allotments, community gardens and urban farms

- 3.35 This typology provides opportunities for those people who wish to do so to grow their own produce providing landscaped open space for the local area that can promote improved physical and mental health. There are also some opportunities for bio diversity.

Cemeteries, churchyards and other burial grounds

- 3.36 Churchyards tend to be encompassed within the walled boundary of a church and cemeteries are burial grounds outside the confines of a church. These include private burial grounds, local authority burial grounds and disused churchyards. Again there is an opportunity for bio diversity.

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Core Strategy Consultation:

Alternative Strategies for shaping the future of Stroud District
8th FEBRUARY – 22nd MARCH 2010

This background paper has been published to support the main 'Alternative Strategies' consultation document: a discussion paper, which looks at seven alternative spatial strategies and proposed policies. You can see this online at www.stroud.gov.uk/core and at the following locations during their normal opening hours:



- Town and parish council offices that open to the public: Berkeley, Cainscross, Cam, Chalford, Dursley, Minchinhampton, Nailsworth, Painswick, Rodborough, Stonehouse, Stroud, Wotton-under-Edge



- Public libraries at Berkeley, Brockworth, Dursley, Nailsworth, Minchinhampton, Painswick, Quedgeley, Stonehouse, Stroud, Wotton-under-Edge

- The customer service centre at Stroud District Council offices, Ebley Mill. There are computers for public internet access here as well.



- The Tourist Information Centre at the Subscription Rooms, Stroud

You can print out **consultation response forms** from our website or take a photocopy from APPENDIX 1 of this document. Please return your completed form to the address given on the back of this document by Monday 22nd March 2010.

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