

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

**AGENDA
ITEM NO**

16 FEBRUARY 2017

7

Report Title	THE FUTURE OF TOWN CENTRES
Purpose of Report	To seek approval of the draft Future of Town Centres report for public consultation with relevant stakeholders
Decision	Committee RESOLVES to approve the Draft Future of Town Centres report (Appendix A) for the purposes of stakeholder engagement.
Consultation and Feedback	Members engaged through Planning Review Panel: from early evidence-gathering through to recent discussion around the emerging draft (16/2/17). There has been ongoing informal engagement with the Council's external retail and town centre consultants, and. ongoing informal consultation and engagement with key officers and relevant Council service areas.
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	There are no direct Financial Implications arising from this report. A further report is due in September 2017, that may give rise to resource allocation decisions. Adele Rudkin, Accountant Email: Adele.Rudkin@stroud.gov.uk Tel: 01453754109
Legal Implications	There are no material legal implications arising from this report. Alan Carr, Solicitor Email alan.carr@stroud.gov.uk Tel 01453754357
Report Author	David Lowin Principal Planning Officer David.lowin@stroud.gov.uk
Options	Options are: 1. Not to take forward a draft report for relevant stakeholder public consultation; or 2. Approve the draft report for stakeholder public consultation; 3. Delay public consultation to allow for amendments to the draft report.
Performance Management Follow Up	Following completion of the stakeholder consultation to complete the report setting out the results of the consultation and consider the potential land use and other policy responses to the likely future of the studied town centres.
Background Papers/ Appendices	Background papers Appendix A – Draft 'Future of Town Centres'

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The NPPF advocates that local planning authorities should develop planning policies to promote competitive town centre environments and set out policies for the management and growth of centres over the plan period.

1.2 The adopted Local Plan mirrors generally the thrust of the NPPF and Strategic Objective SO3 seeks:

‘ Improving the safety, vitality and viability of our town centres , which link to and support the needs of their rural hinterlands’.

Core Policy CP12 of the plan produces a hierarchy with Stroud being identified as the sole **Principal Town Centre** and the remaining towns studied in the report, Dursley, Stonehouse, Nailsworth and Wotton-under-Edge being grouped as the second tier of the hierarchy under the designation **Other Town Centres**.

1.3 It is noteworthy that the policy of the Local Plan does not mirror the aspiration of the NPPF to seek the growth of centres.

1.4 Notwithstanding the current policy of the Local Plan the aim of the completed report is to consider both the potential spatial policy responses to the new challenges for town centres which is emerging, and also consider what other powers the Council has to influence positively and support the town centres studied.

1.5 From the survey of published material undertaken to date and summarised in the attached draft of the first sections of the study it is clear that town centres are facing considerable challenges, not faced for several generations, by changes in retail activity as the ‘electronic ‘ revolution gathers speed. This will undoubtedly lead to a reduction or even an absolute decline in the demand for retail floorspace, and potentially a new role for our town centres.

2. NEXT STEPS

2.1 Subject to the Committee’s approval, the report will be consulted upon with relevant stakeholders both to gain general acceptance of the national trends set out in the report, but also to engage with stakeholders in the towns to garner ideas both spatial and non spatial for the centres . The responses from the stakeholders will be analysed and taken into account before the final report is prepared. The final report will consider potential appropriate spatial and non spatial policy responses to ensure the ongoing success of the town centres.

2.2 The findings of the consultation and the final report will be reported to Environment Committee in September 2017. Members will be requested to consider those recommendations, progress and key findings will be reported to Planning Review Panel in the interim.