

# STONEHOUSE DESIGN STATEMENT



Supplementary Planning Advice





Some three years ago the Town Council commissioned a Design Statement to provide supplementary planning advice for those seeking planning permission in Stonehouse. The Steering Group which has created this document comprised non-elected residents and Town Councillors. While the Town Council has been involved fully, it has given considerable independence to the residents on the Steering Group to deliver a document that expresses the views of those who live and work in the Town. I commend them for their efforts to involve all members of our community during the entire process, culminating in a major public consultation session at the Town Council Offices in October 2004.

This document sets out to explain how the requirements of Stroud District Council's Local Plan may be applied to Stonehouse. Its key message is that any development should be in keeping with its immediate surroundings. The recommendations of the document are fully supported by the Town Council.

The Town Council is grateful to all those who have shown interest in, and contributed to, the development of this Design Statement. It warmly acknowledges the support and guidance provided to the Steering Group by Officers of Stroud District Council.

**Councillor Mattie Ross**  
**Town Mayor and Chairman of Stonehouse Town Council**

**On 10th November 2005 Stroud District Council agreed formally to use this document as supplementary planning advice.**

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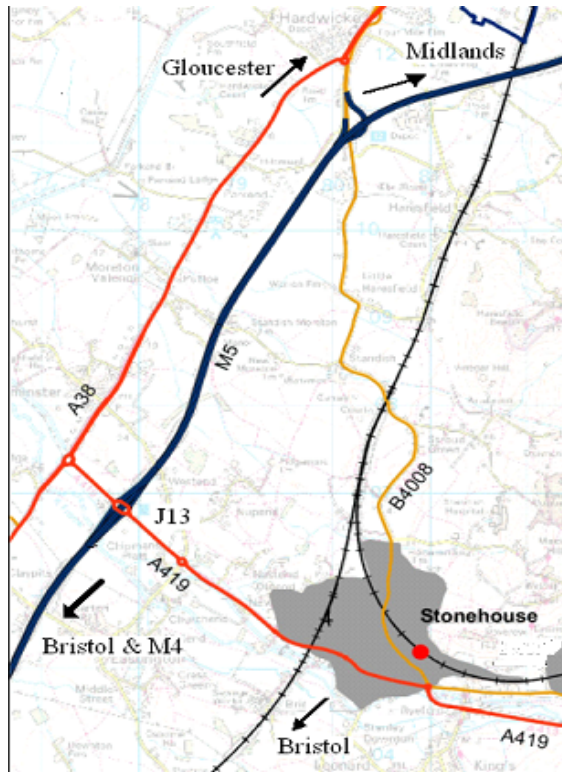
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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Stonehouse**

1. Stonehouse is a small town in the Severn Vale with a population of more than 7000. It is 9 miles south of Gloucester, 30 miles north of Bristol and 2 miles from Junction 13 of the M5 motorway. It began life as a small rural village and, despite its recent development, the countryside is never more than a few minutes away. The hills of the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty can be seen from the High Street, and the Cotswold Way passes through the outskirts of the Town.

2. There has been a great deal of development in recent years, so that there are now houses of all types, ages and sizes. Industrial estates have been created at several old mills and there is a large purpose-built estate at Oldend Lane, all with easy access to the M5 and A38. Farming continues alongside industry on the fringes of the Town.



The location of Stonehouse

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3. Stonehouse has a wide variety of shops in and around the High Street, providing for almost all needs. The railway station gives ready access to London, Gloucester and beyond. Car drivers can park for a small fee in the car park off High Street.

4. Stonehouse is an attractive town with much to please and interest in the mix of building styles and materials. This, together with its excellent facilities and the beautiful countryside, and the welcoming people who live here, makes it a most pleasant town in which to live and work. It is noteworthy that despite much development over the years it retains open spaces on the Town Boundary in all directions.

## **Purpose of the Design Statement**

5. This document has been written:

**for residents** - to provide guidance for keeping alterations in sympathy with the character of local buildings;

**for developers, designers, architects & builders** - to appreciate what is acceptable to the Town's community regarding new or modified building works;

**for Stonehouse Town Council** - to support its responses to development proposals referred by the Planning Authority;

**for the Local Planning Authority** - as supplementary planning advice to the Stroud District Local Plan, SDLP (Reference 2).

***It does not remove the necessity to seek planning permission, if required by the Local Planning Authority.***

6. The document is intended to conform to Chapter 2, paragraphs 3.15 to 3.18 inclusive of PPG 12 (Reference 1).

7. The Design Statement is designed as a single document to provide supplementary planning advice. It has been endorsed fully by the Town Council which has taken a keen interest in its development. A folder will be retained in the Town Council's office which will hold the supporting evidence collected by the Steering Group and the considerable work carried out by Staff and pupils of Maidenhill School.

## **CONSULTATION**

8. At a public meeting in February 2002, the Town Council invited non-elected residents to become members of a steering group to prepare a design statement for the Town. The Council agreed that the group should have a core team of five Town Councillors plus a number of residents.

9. John Kirby, a resident, has been the Chairman since the Group's initial meeting in June 2002. Four other residents have been long-term members and a further five residents have been members for various periods. Since early in the project Maidenhill School has been represented on the Steering Group and at least one teacher has participated in most of the activities.

10. On 15<sup>th</sup> February 2003 the Steering Group held a briefing in Park Junior School to inform residents of its plans.

11. On 7<sup>th</sup> June 2003 a Design Workshop was held on the Town Green. The following activities took place prior to the event and on the day:

- a) Forty eight disposable cameras were purchased with funds allocated by the Town Council.

- b) A number of cameras were provided to Maidenhill School for use in projects (Geography and Citizenship) that complemented the work of the Steering Group.
- c) Project work by pupils of the School was displayed in the foyer of the Co-operative Supermarket during the week preceding 7<sup>th</sup> June, and also on the Town Green on the day.
- d) Information about the event was published in Neighbourhood News and posters designed by Maidenhill students were posted around the Town.
- e) A team prepared a large-scale table-top map of the Town to act as focal point for discussions – with the aid of small flags on which comments could be added - from Gloucestershire Rural Community Council’s “Planning for Real” kit.
- f) The Maidenhill School Band played on the Green during the morning.



“Planning for Real” on the Town Green



Maidenhill School Band playing during the Design Workshop

- g) Cameras were issued to residents who photographed their likes and dislikes around the Town. The first 6 films were processed during the day and brought back to the marquee. Some of the pictures were displayed in the marquee to aid discussion. The remaining cameras were brought in over the next fortnight, processed and made available to the Steering Group.
- h) The Citizen published an article the following Friday and, on the following Wednesday, Stroud News & Journal produced a double centre-page spread using a number of the photographs.
- i) One hundred people took time out to fill in the questionnaire and to have their say on what they thought of Stonehouse.
- j) The considerable effort made by Maidenhill School raised the profile of the event and ensured that a wide cross-section of the community was aware of the activities and their purpose. A number of residents, Town and District Councillors, together with our County Councillor and our Member of Parliament, assisted on the day.

12. A public consultation was conducted to seek the views of residents, businesses and other interested parties on the draft Design Statement prior to its finalisation. This started on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2004. Although it was nominally of 6 weeks duration, the Steering Group continued to accept comments for as long as practicable.

- (i) Strenuous efforts were made to advertise the consultation. Twenty five posters were distributed to shops and businesses in the centre of Town and almost 200 flyers to businesses, mainly those on the industrial estates. In addition, flyers were sent to 53 consultants in Gloucestershire and 32 in Bristol.
- (ii) The Citizen published an article on 14<sup>th</sup> October and there was a whole-page article in the October issue of Neighbourhood News (supplied free to all homes in Stonehouse and to those businesses within the Town).
- (iii) The draft Design Statement was available from the Internet. In addition, 54 paper copies were supplied by the Town Clerk.

(iv) On Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> October a consultation session was held in the Town Council Offices to give residents and other interested parties an opportunity to discuss the content of the document, have their questions answered and have their views recorded. On the preceding Monday, 23 posters were delivered to shops and businesses in the centre of Town. These were focussed on the consultation session.



Public Consultation session in the Council Offices



- (v) At the consultation session displays, comprising relevant photographs plus the recommendations in the draft Design Statement, illustrated each section of the document. Large-scale maps of Stonehouse and its surroundings were displayed for reference, including one which showed the protected areas in and around Town; another showed public footpaths.
- (vi) Approximately one hundred people participated in the session. A number of Town and District Councillors assisted, together with our County Councillor.
- (vii) On 11<sup>th</sup> November The Citizen published an article on the consultation session.

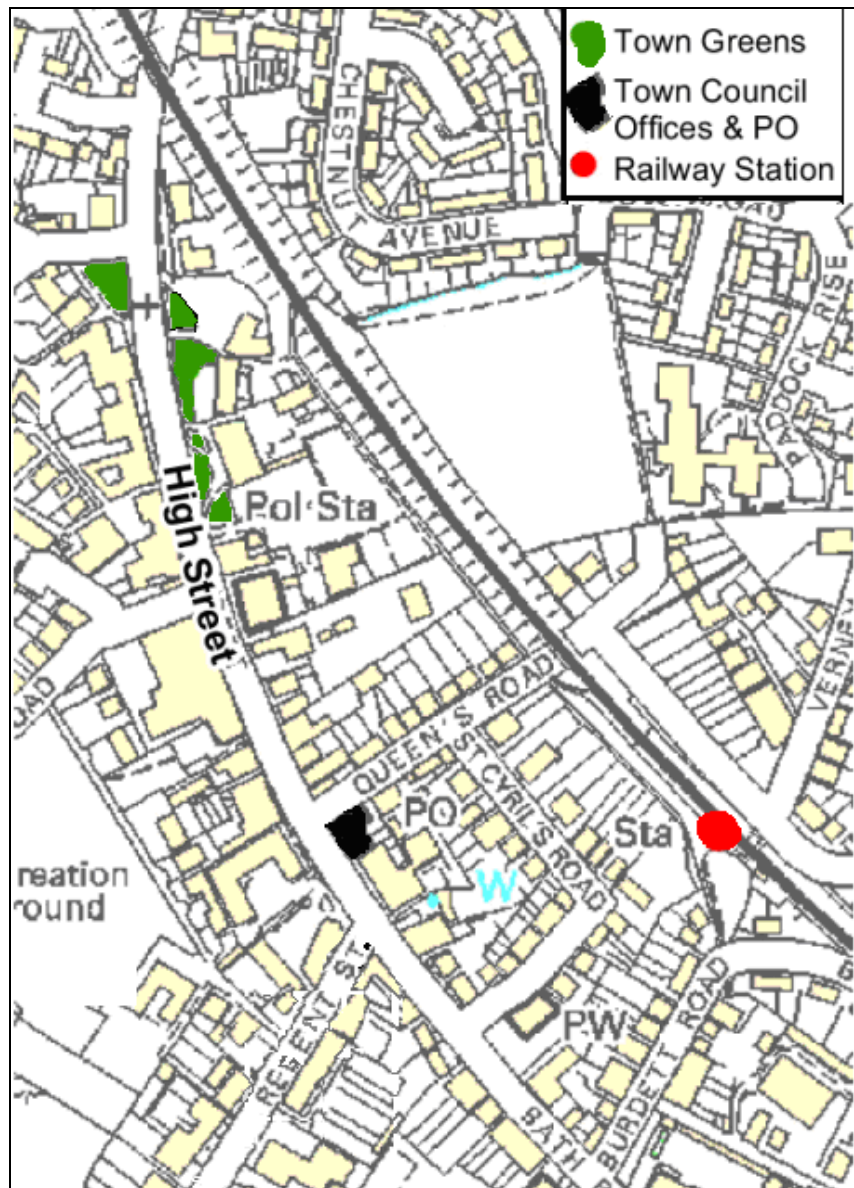
13. In addition to information gleaned from all of the above, the Steering Group has drawn on opinions expressed at the Annual Town Meetings in 2002, 2003 and 2004 where an explanation of the work of the Group was given to update the members of the Community.

14. The Town Council has been involved fully throughout while giving considerable independence to the residents on the Steering Group to deliver a document that expresses the views of those who live and work in the Town.

## THE HEART OF THE TOWN

15. The **Stroud District Local Plan, SDLP** (Reference 2) describes the Town Centre in Stonehouse as “mainly concentrated along High Street (from near its junction with Regent Street) northwards to The Green and extends along part of Queens Road”. The Heart of the Town incorporates the Town Centre (as specified on a map within the District Plan) and its surroundings including the Memorial Green and the entire High Street from the railway bridge at the start of Gloucester Road to the junction with Regent Street at the start of Bath Road.

16. The main thoroughfare through the Town (Bath Road, High Street and Gloucester Road) provides a rich variety of architecture.



The Heart of the Town

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For example, there are many splendid buildings along its length, nineteen of them Grade II Listed [Reference 3; see Appendix 1 to this document], and many other fine examples in the surrounding area. These help to give Stonehouse a unique identity within Stroud District.

17. When travelling south on the main thoroughfare, the views to the Cotswold Escarpment and to Doverow Hill are particularly striking, culminating in the broad panorama beyond Horsetrough Roundabout of the hills of the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).



The Cotswold Escarpment from Horsetrough Roundabout

18. The Town Greens, at the heart of Stonehouse, complement and enhance the buildings around them, giving the main thoroughfare and its surroundings an individuality, much appreciated by residents and no longer common in the main streets of British towns. It is a refreshing change from the typical high street with shop fronts, banks and offices built to predominantly uniform, standardised national designs. It is the strong wish of the Town Council that this individuality be preserved, and where possible, enhanced.

19. The well-used pavements of the High Street are of varying width because of the retention of paved forecourts. This also contributes to the uniqueness of the High Street. The pavements cry out for restoration of native trees which were present well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is the wish of the Town Council that every opportunity be taken to introduce native trees along the main thoroughfare, subject to the approval of the Highway Authority (Gloucestershire County Council).

20. Equally important to the retention of the Town's individuality are other open spaces within the environs of the High Street: the Rest Garden and the Recreation Ground by Laburnum Walk (both belong to the Town Council) and, a little further afield, Doverow Hill.

21. The following groups of buildings and focal points along the High Street are much appreciated by local people:

- The former Crown & Anchor public house and adjoining Grade II Listed 18<sup>th</sup> Century stable & coach house fronted by one of the Town Greens. These buildings of character house a splendidly refurbished modern medical centre and pharmacy. The Green to their front is a popular gathering place for Saturday morning stalls, exhibitions, etc.
- The other Town Greens have distinctive buildings around their periphery including Nos. 58, 60 (Orchard House) and 62 High Street (all Grade II Listed) to the west, and the Globe Inn to the east.



Memorial Green

- The wide portion of High Street between the junctions with Regent Street and with Queens Road fronted by a wide pavement with inset parking area. On the east side is the 1930s Post Office & Barnard Parade, and the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Queen Anne Cottage; on the west side the 17<sup>th</sup> century Woolpack Inn, and Regent Street with distinctive Victorian buildings at its junction with High Street.
- The former sorting office attached to the Post Office which has been converted recently to the Town Council's splendid new offices.

22. As indicated above there have been good examples of sympathetic adaptation of existing fine buildings [e.g. the Town Council Offices and the pharmacy]. The Town Council will encourage planning applications which seek to adapt existing buildings so as to preserve and enhance as much of their character and appearance as practicable. This is supported fully by **Policy B2 of SDLP**.

### **B2**

***“Proposals for street and infill development will be permitted where the proposal represents a high quality of urban design and is compatible with its surroundings. Where this is not appropriate, the development should create strong and distinctive design itself. In all proposals, the following considerations should be addressed:***

1. ***the building line, scale of the area, heights and mass of adjoining buildings and the characteristic building plot widths;***

2. ***the architectural characteristics and the type, colour of the materials of the adjoining buildings; and***
3. ***the complexity and richness of materials, form and detailing of existing buildings where the character of the area is enhanced by such buildings and the new development proposes to replicate such richness.”***

23. The Assembly Room (Grade II Listed 18<sup>th</sup> century; attached to the old Crown & Anchor public house) is located adjacent to the Town Greens and the Town car park. The Town Council would welcome any planning application which sought to adapt this building for the benefit of the community while preserving as much of its character and appearance as practicable.

24. At the Design Workshop, all those who contributed to the questionnaire prized highly the Town Greens and the views to the hills – particularly those afforded by open spaces including the Town Greens, the Berryfield and the Canal. It was their clear desire that every effort should be made to preserve these. As a result the Town Council wishes that, in proposed future developments, applicants seek to maximise the lines of sight to the hills, to local Church spires and other valued features – particularly where viewed from public places. This might be achieved, for example, by careful arrangement of buildings on development sites.

25. While some of the commercial buildings lack aesthetic appeal others give encouragement for the future. In the Design Workshop evidence on this was provided by photos taken by residents and from a questionnaire; for example, while the appearance of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Woolpack Inn was greatly appreciated by residents, that of the Cooperative Supermarket was not (although members of the public valued its function).

26. Some of the High Street shops were photographed a great deal during the Design Workshop as examples where extension to the front of an existing commercial building had impaired its appearance. This should not happen in future given ***Policy B17 of SDLP***.

### **B17**

***“Planning permission for new or replacement shop fronts will be granted where the proposal is sympathetic to the architectural style and materials of the building and contributes to the enhancement of its surroundings in scale and proportion, materials, style and general appearance.”***

The Town Council endorses this Policy and recommends that it be applied rigorously.

### **Recommendations Associated with the Heart of the Town**

27. It is the wish of the Town Council that the distinctive features of the main thoroughfare which give it its strong individuality be preserved and enhanced. These include: the Town Greens and the buildings around them, the views from the main thoroughfare to the hills and the buildings of individual style, irregular frontages and forecourts (i.e. not of standardised designs common to large businesses).
28. The Town Council will encourage planning applications which seek to adapt existing buildings so as to preserve and enhance as much of their character and appearance as practicable. This is supported by **Policy B2 of SDLP**.
29. The Town Council will encourage applicants for proposed future developments to seek to maximise the lines of sight to the hills, to local Church spires and other valued natural and man-made features – particularly where viewed from public places.
30. Where planning permission is sought for new or replacement shop fronts, the Town Council recommends that **Policy B17 of SDLP** is applied rigorously.
31. It is the wish of the Town Council that every opportunity be taken to introduce native trees along the main thoroughfare, subject to the approval of the Highway Authority (Gloucestershire County Council).

## **RECREATIONAL AREAS**

### **General**

32. Existing open spaces in the Town were identified by the participants in the Design Workshop as features much valued by residents. This was also the subject of a large public meeting in the Town in February 2002. All were keen that these areas be preserved for the benefit of all residents and visitors to the Town.

33. The following ***Policies of Stroud District Local Plan, SDLP*** (Reference 2) are of particular relevance to areas used for recreation:

#### **N6**

***“Within the Cotswolds AONB, priority will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the landscape over other considerations, whilst also having regard to the economic and social well-being of the AONB. Development within, or affecting the setting of the AONB will only be permitted if all the following criteria are met:***

- 1. The nature, siting and scale are sympathetic to the landscape;***
- 2. The design and materials complement the character of the area; and***
- 3. Important landscape features and trees are retained and appropriate landscaping measures are undertaken.***

***Major development will not be permitted unless it is demonstrated to be in the national interest and that there is a lack of alternative sites.”***

#### **N8**

***“Development proposals should conserve or enhance the special features and diversity of the different landscape character types found within the District as identified in the Stroud District Landscape Assessment. Priority will be given to the protection of the quality and diversity of the landscape character.***

***Development will only be permitted if all the following criteria are met:***

- 1. natural features and water features that contribute to the landscape setting are retained and managed;***
- 2. there is no unacceptable impact on long distance views; and***
- 3. the benefits of the proposed development outweigh any harmful effects on the landscape.”***

**R1**

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

- 1. alternative outdoor playing space of at least the equivalent quantity, quality and accessibility of that lost is provided within the locality; or***
- 2. it can be demonstrated that no shortfall in accessible outdoor playing space exists in the area, or would result from the development; or***
- 3. the loss of part of a site leads to enhanced provision of outdoor playing space on the remainder of the site.”***

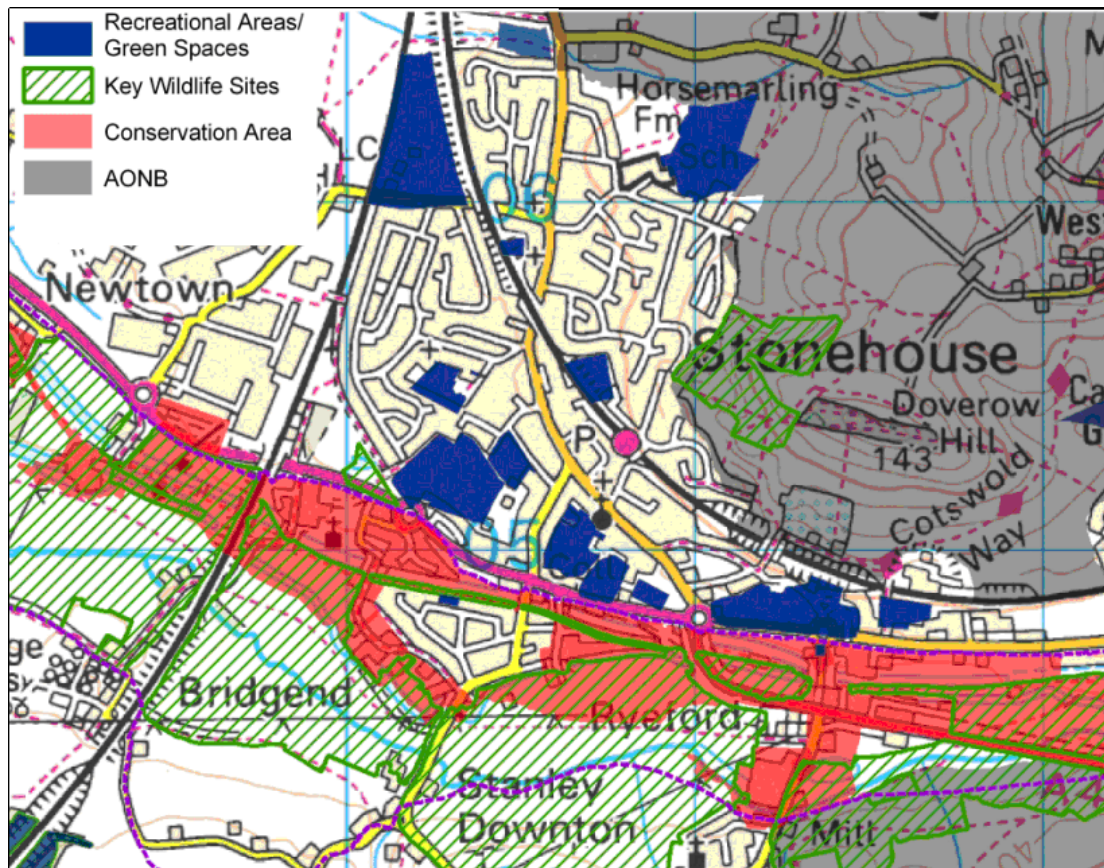
**R3**

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

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

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





Areas of Recreation, Wildlife, Conservation and Landscape Value

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34. Most of the following open spaces are used for recreation (see Reference 2 for details).

### Recreation Ground

35. The Recreation Ground next to the Community Centre, by Laburnum Walk, is an important open space close to the High Street. With the splendid backdrop of the Cotswold Escarpment, seating and a play area this field is popular with people of all ages. It is a **Protected Outdoor Playspace** under the terms of **Policy R1 of SDLP**.

36. The Recreation Ground is linked to the High Street by the following three routes:

- A public footpath alongside the Woolpack Inn.
- Through the Rest Garden which was the Churchyard of the former Congregational Church. The Garden is equipped with picnic tables and benches, and is well used.
- Along Laburnum Walk past Tudor House (now the Tudor Tandoori - much photographed by admiring residents who participated in the Design Workshop).

37. The Recreation Ground is separated from the Berryfield (see the Section on **Green Spaces**) by a fence.

### **Oldend Lane Playing Fields**

38. These playing fields, located between the two railway lines which converge to the north of the Town, are Stonehouse's main playing fields. Various clubs are based on Oldend Lane and the playing fields benefit from a modern pavilion which is kept in good condition. There is a fitness trail around its perimeter. This would be one of the best places to locate enhanced facilities for young people. These fields are protected under ***Policy R1***.

### **Meadow Road Playing Field**

39. This is located between Meadow Road and Upper Queens Road. It is equipped with a play area. A public footpath along its northern boundary provides a convenient short cut to the Town centre for people who live on the Meadow Road estate. This playing field is protected under ***Policy R1***.

### **Stagholt Lane Playing Fields**

40. These playing fields form part of the open space to the north of Stonehouse. There is a modern pavilion and one of the football pitches available for use by the Town's young people. The fields, which are outside the Stonehouse Town boundary, are protected under ***Policy R1***. These fields are well used, are close to the large estates to the north of the Town and should be preserved as playing fields in the future.

### **Maidenhill School Playing Fields**

41. Maidenhill School has playing fields which are well used by pupils of the School and, along with its leisure facilities, are open for use by members of the public. The floodlit tennis courts are used in the evening for five-a-side football. They are also used for primary school football and netball tournaments.

42. The School is to have a sports hall with dance studio which will be open to the public as part of the recreation centre. Maidenhill School makes a significant contribution to the community.

### **Doverow Hill & Verney Fields**

43. Doverow Hill is one of Stonehouse's best-known landmarks and the 6 acres of woodland on top of the Hill are used for recreation by people of all ages. The land was purchased by Stonehouse Parish Council in 1896. Subsequently, a gift of money allowed the setting up of a Charitable Trust to administer the land and to use the income from the invested money for the upkeep and maintenance of the woods. The donor asked that they be kept in a natural state.



Stonehouse & Doverow Hill viewed from the South West

44. The members of the Trust make regular inspections of the woods. They try to keep them as the donor would have wished, although the line between 'natural' and 'neglected' can be hard to draw.

45. As an area for public enjoyment, Doverow Hill is ideally situated overlooking Stonehouse, Kings Stanley, Leonard Stanley and the Severn Vale. The circular walk around its perimeter provides superb views. The Hill, its woods and Verney Fields provide habitat for a wide range of wildlife and there is much to interest the naturalist. The Town Council and Doverow Hill Trust do their best to conserve the area.

46. Access to the Hill can be gained by several routes from the Town, the most direct being up Queens Road, Verney Road then through Verney Fields. The views over the Town from Verney Fields are spectacular. The importance of Doverow Hill as part of an open space between Stonehouse and Ebley/Stroud cannot be underestimated and should be preserved. This site is well protected against development by its status as a trust and by its location within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) [see **Policy N6 of SDLP**].

### **Play Areas in Estates**

47. It has been the practice to site childrens' play areas within new housing developments to reduce the risk to young children by keeping them close to home. This practice causes a burden on the Town Council because of the requirement to maintain safe play equipment, but the existence of the play equipment protects these sites from future development. Provision of facilities for teenage children is a priority and there is a clear demand for skateboard facilities in the Town.

48. The recently-constructed estates of **Boakes Drive** and **Court View** provide good examples of creation of pleasing open spaces within their boundaries, and linkage to the existing network of public footpaths. In the former case, the large grassed area blends in well with the overgrown northern bank of the Stroudwater Navigation Canal.

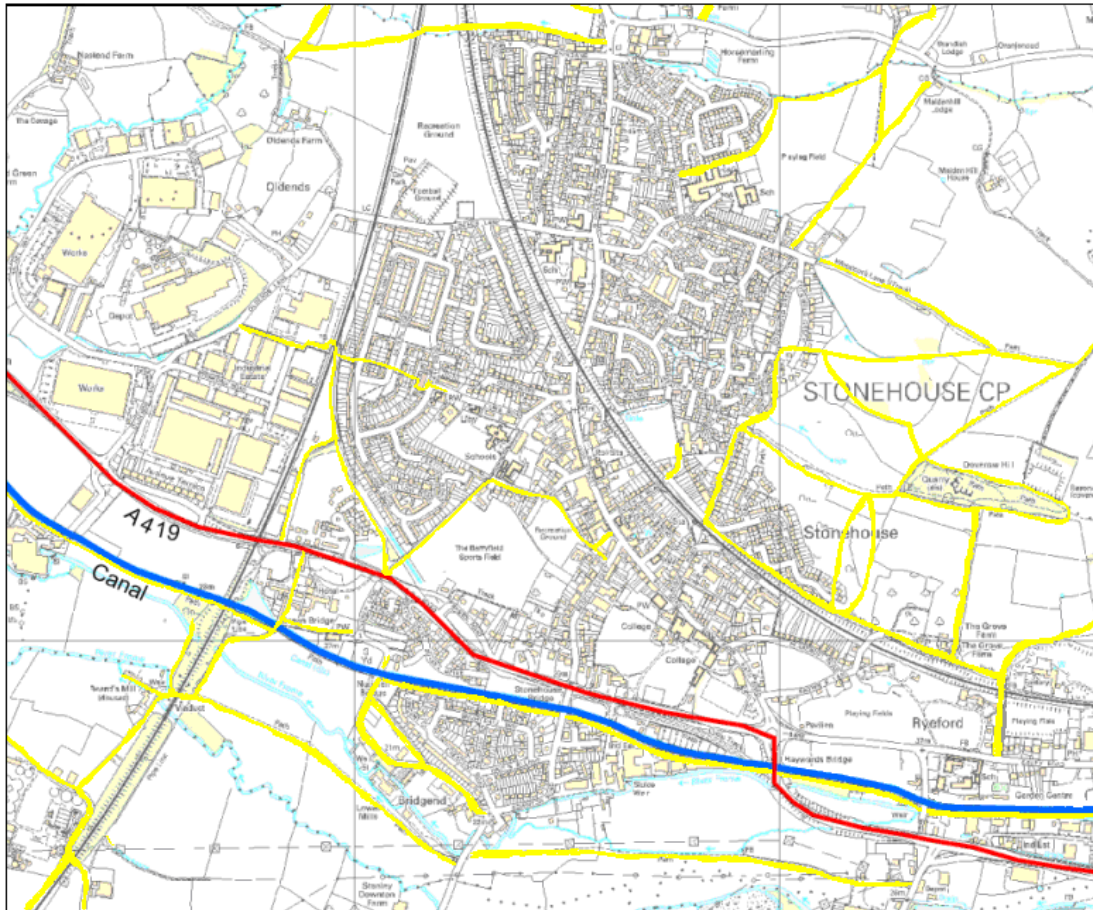
### **Tranquil Places and Walks Free from Traffic**

49. **Policy T2 of SDLP** is of particular relevance to pedestrian routes and rights of way in relation to developments:

#### **T2**

***“Proposals for development will not be permitted unless there is, or provision is made for, safe convenient and attractive access for pedestrians, taking into account the needs of disabled people, within sites and where appropriate to the surrounding area. These should be lit where appropriate and further security provided through building layout and landscaping.”***

50. Throughout Stonehouse there are in regular use many tranquil places, traffic-free and traffic-limited footpaths and back lanes. These give pleasure and added safety for local people and their children. Regent Street is a good example of a former thoroughfare which is now a leafy, tranquil lane much enjoyed by local people since it was closed to through traffic. Existing public footpaths are protected and maintained by Gloucestershire County Council. The Town Council will expect any future housing developments to conform to **Policy T2 of SDLP** by delivering safe pedestrian access through the site, linked where possible to the existing footpath network.



Key public footpaths in Stonehouse (in yellow)

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### Cycle Paths Giving Access to the National Cycle Network

51. **Policy T3 of SDLP** is of particular relevance to pedestrian routes and rights of way in relation to developments:

#### **T3**

***“Proposals for development will not be permitted unless there is, or provision is made for, safe and convenient cycle access within the site and to the surrounding area, where appropriate. Contributions will be sought where appropriate to provide cycle links with the surrounding area.”***

52. Stonehouse has easy access to the developing National Cycle Network. National Route 41 runs through Frampton on Severn, linking Bristol and Gloucester, and National Route 45, although still under construction, will extend to Swindon the excellent trail based on the former railway route to Nailsworth. During the re-development of the Bridgend junction on the Bristol Road extensive cycle access was incorporated. This level of commitment, which is fully compliant with **Policy T3 of SDLP**, is expected on all future developments. Safe access for cyclists is to be enhanced wherever possible.

### **Recommendations Associated with Recreational Areas**

53. The Town Council supports the preservation of the open spaces identified in this section, in accordance with ***Policies N6, N8, R1 and R3 of SDLP***, for the benefit of all.
54. Doverow Hill is of the first importance to Stonehouse. It is a notable landmark, provides much enjoyment for residents and habitat for a wide range of wildlife and forms an open space to the east of the Town. It is the strong recommendation of the Town Council that this area be preserved in a natural state.
55. The Town Council supports the measures provided in ***Policy T2 (Pedestrian Access)*** and ***T3 (Cyclist Access) of SDLP*** for any future development. Stonehouse requires developers to take positive action to provide traffic-free or traffic-limited walks and cycleways - on which pedestrians and cyclists have priority - through new housing developments so that they link into the existing networks. The Town Council recommends that the quality of the surfaces, the avoidance of steps & steep slopes, and the width of these paths be made suitable for wheelchairs.

## **GREEN SPACES**

56. The following green areas, which are not normally accessible to the public, define the boundaries of the residential areas of Stonehouse and allow uninterrupted views to hills beyond. As building development continues in and around the Town, it is the wish of the Town Council that the areas identified remain free from development, particularly of industrial and commercial buildings. These areas of open space define the Stonehouse settlement and provide space between the Town and neighbouring towns and villages.

57. ***Policies N8 and R1 of Stroud District Local Plan, SDLP*** (Reference 2) are of particular relevance to the areas in this Section; also ***paragraph 10.4.10 of SDLP***:

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

### **Berryfield**

58. The Berryfield, which is a large playing field owned by Wycliffe College, is a key open space which allows glorious views of the Cotswold Escarpment and Doverow Hill. Since it is privately owned, the general public does not have access to this field. In recent years the owner has strengthened the fencing to ensure that no unwanted access can be gained. However, the views can still be enjoyed by all. Nevertheless there is considerable strength of feeling among residents about the need to retain it as a green field. A number of attempts have been made by Wycliffe College, most recently in 2002, to sell part of the Berryfield for housing development and these have been strenuously resisted by the people of Stonehouse. In the mid 1990s a public inquiry into the refusal of planning consent was dismissed by an independent Planning Inspector. Some of the largest public meetings of recent times have been generated by the desire of residents to keep this area as open green field.



Stonehouse & Doverow Hill from the Berryfield

59. The marvellous views to the hills can be savoured when walking along the public footpath from Quietways to St Cyr's Church, adjacent public footpaths and along Laburnum Walk. Also by those fortunate enough to live in adjacent homes.

60. This site is a **Protected Outdoor Playspace** under the terms of **Policy R1 of Stroud District Local Plan, SDLP** (Reference 2) but, being in the ownership of a private organisation, remains at risk of development. It is the strong recommendation of the Town Council that the field remains in a greenfield state.

#### **Conserved Areas near Court View**

61. On completion of the Court View estate, the builder was required to provide protection for greater-crested newts (a protected species) on adjacent land, now designated a **Key Wildlife Site** by the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust as being of county-wide importance (see Appendix 6 of Reference 2).

62. The former Midland Railway cutting between Midland Road and Court View provides an important habitat for a wide variety of wildlife, including badgers and foxes. Now that a footpath has been constructed along its southern edge (passing alongside and through Court View) it has considerable potential as a habitat and nature trail of great beauty. Sadly this idyllic wildlife haven is spoiled by debris thrown into the cutting and its ponds. The footpath connects with a causeway which carries the public footpath from St Cyr's Church to Elm Road.



### **Foxes Field**

63. This field lies between Stonehouse and Ebley. It borders Doverow Hill and the Cotswold Way runs across this open area. This land forms the boundary between Stonehouse and Ebley and, if lost to housing or industrial developments, would join Stonehouse to Stroud in one long conurbation. The Town Council recommends that Foxes Field be designated as a strategic gap to avoid coalescence of Stonehouse and Ebley.

### **Grounds of Windrush**

64. The playing fields of Wycliffe Junior School, including Tily's Field, provide further green areas on the eastern borders of Stonehouse. Housing here would spread the eastern border of the Town towards Ebley and encourage a solid line of housing along the Ebley Road. This site is currently protected under **Policy R1 of SDLP**.

### **Field to the south-east of Horsetrough Roundabout**

65. This field, which is within the Stroud District Industrial Heritage Conservation Area, separates Ryeford from Stonehouse. Ryeford is a significant industrial heritage area and it is the wish of the Town Council that it retains its distinctiveness through avoidance of coalescence with surrounding urban areas including Stonehouse.

66. The field is sandwiched between two of the roads which radiate from Horsetrough Roundabout: Ebley Road and the Ebley Bypass. This site is on the south-eastern border of Stonehouse and flanks the Canal. Development here would spoil an outstanding view of the Cotswold Escarpment from the area around Horsetrough Roundabout and it is the wish of the Town Council that every effort should be made to maintain it as green field in order to protect the view of the Cotswold Escarpment.

### **Site of the former Ship Inn**

67. See the Section on **The Canal** for a detailed analysis of the need to reserve this site as the new Town Wharf. This is a most important site within the boundaries of Stonehouse and it is the wish of the Town Council that its future be linked to the restoration of the Canal and the provision of access to the Town centre by those using the Canal corridor.



Site of the former Ship Inn

### **Meadows by the River Frome to the south of Bridgend**

68. These are part of the flood plain of the River and are unsuitable for houses or commercial properties. They form a natural boundary between Stonehouse and the Stanleys to the south. It is important to retain the pastoral river valley qualities of the River Frome since there are few landscapes of this nature within Stroud District (Reference 4). The Town Council would be opposed to development on these meadows.

### **Field opposite Avenue Terrace**

69. This field is bounded by the Canal, the A419 road, Bond's Mill, and the railway embankment which carries the line from Gloucester to Bristol. The Town Council recommends strongly that this field remains undeveloped to balance the loss of the covenant on the next field by the A419 towards Newtown Lock (for which development has been proposed). The retention of this field as an important open green space would ensure that the railway and Avenue Terrace form the south-western boundary for housing, leaving a gap between the Town and the industrial or business development to the west of Stonehouse.



Avenue Terrace from the Canal

### **Court Farm Paddock**

70. This field is in a Conservation Area. To the north, it is bordered by the A419 and, to the south and east, by a group of historic Listed buildings in a rural setting. Ocean Lane, a private road leading to The Ocean (Site D in the Section on The Canal), passes along its eastern edge. The planned restoration of the Canal is to start from The Ocean.

71. This field has been the subject of two recent planning applications for residential development. Both were refused by Stroud District Council. Appeals against these refusals were dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate in July 2003.

72. Keeping this area green would help maintain the character and relationship of a group of the oldest buildings in Stonehouse [Reference 3; see Appendix 2 to this document]. For those travelling from Junction 13 of the M5, the open view from the A419 across Court Farm Paddock provides part of the splendid historic entrance to the Town and to the District.

### **Fields bordering the road from the B4008 to Standish Hospital**

73. The northern boundary of Stonehouse is formed by the stream running to the north of Arrowsmith Drive. In order to define the Town boundary, the Town Council recommends strongly that the farmland on the rising ground north of the Town Boundary remains undeveloped. The Town Council does not wish the Town boundary to be extended to the north. Failure to prevent development there would lead to ribbon development towards Standish and Gloucester. The area is outside the Settlement boundary but falls in the **Cotswold AONB** (Reference 2).

### **Recommendations Associated with Green Spaces**

74. Where the owners of open land seek to exclude members of the public by installation of fencing, hedges, walls or means of enclosure, and where those boundaries would require planning permission, the Town Council recommends the use of designs which minimise blockage of views of the Cotswold AONB and Doverow Hill.
75. It is the wish of the Town Council that the areas identified in the preceding section remain free from development, and supports the measures provided in **Policies N8 and R1 of SDLP**.
76. It is the strong recommendation of the Town Council that the Berryfield remains in a greenfield state.
77. The Town Council recommends that Foxes Field be designated as a strategic gap to avoid coalescence of Stonehouse and Ebley.
78. It is the wish of the Town Council that every effort be made to maintain the field to the south-east of Horsetrough Roundabout as green field in order that Ryeford retains its distinctiveness through avoidance of coalescence with surrounding urban areas, and to protect the view of the Cotswold Escarpment.
79. It is the wish of the Town Council that the future of the site of the former Ship Inn be linked, where possible, to the restoration of the Canal and the provision of access to the Town centre by those using the Canal corridor.
80. The Town Council recommends that no development is allowed on the meadows by the River Frome (to the south of Bridgend) since they are part of the flood plain of the River; also since there are few landscapes of this nature within Stroud District.
81. The Town Council recommends strongly that the field opposite Avenue Terrace remains undeveloped to balance the loss of the covenant on the next field by the A419 towards Newtown Lock. The retention of this field as open green space would ensure that the railway and Avenue Terrace form the south-western boundary of the Town.
82. The Town Council recommends strongly that the Town boundary should not be extended to the north.

## **THE CANAL**

83. Together with the Thames & Severn Canal, the Stroudwater Navigation Canal links the River Severn to the River Thames and the wider national network.

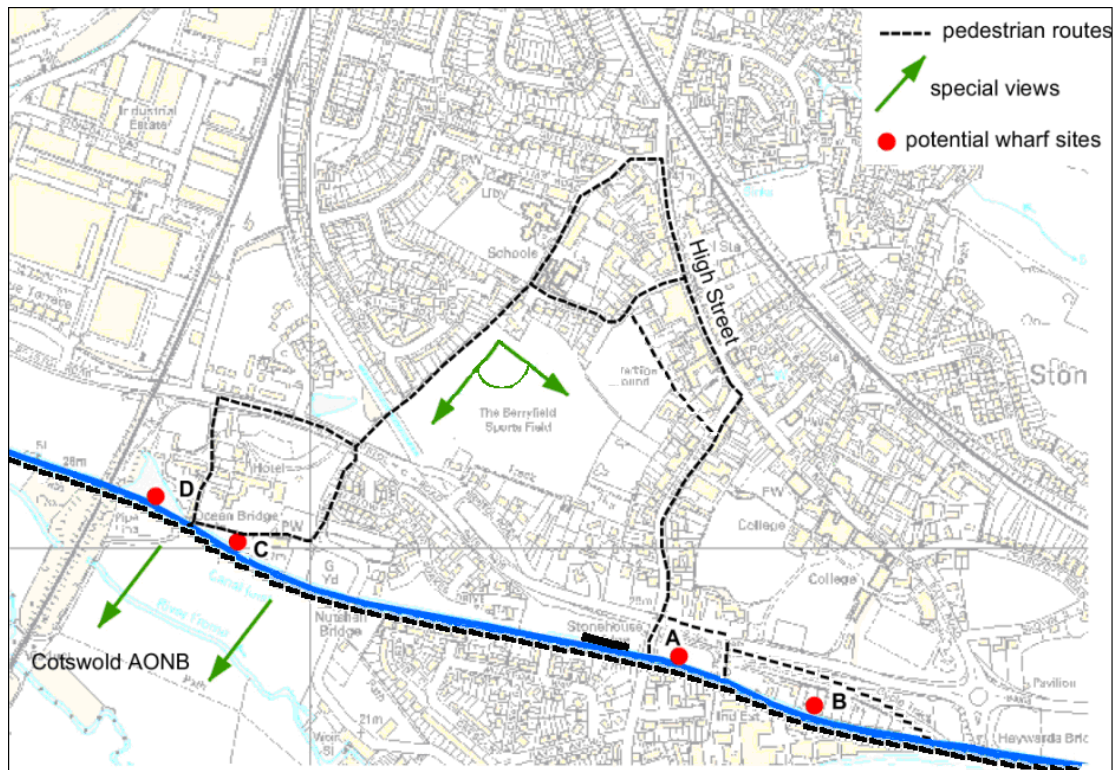
84. The Stroudwater Canal, which runs along the northern edge of the Bridgend area of Stonehouse, was abandoned half a century ago. Its banks have become thick with reeds, over-hanging native trees and undergrowth which provide a quiet sanctuary for wildlife particularly ducks, moorhens, swans and water voles. Following abandonment the long-term existence of the Canal's valued wildlife was being threatened by natural processes such as silting. The Canal will require careful management to retain its biodiversity value.

85. The restoration of the Cotswold Canals progressed on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2004, with the success of British Waterways' bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The £11.3 million grant on behalf of the Cotswold Canals Partnership, represents just under half the funding for the conservation-led restoration of a 6-mile stretch of canal from The Ocean at Stonehouse on the Stroudwater Navigation in the west to Brimscombe Port on the Thames & Severn Canal east of Stroud. Works will be commencing on this stretch in Winter 2005-06. As part of the project the Partnership will also acquire the remaining 4 miles of the Stroudwater Navigation between Stonehouse and Saul Junction. It will open a 10-mile multi-user trail and prepare the way for connecting the restored phase one section with the Gloucester & Sharpness Canal in the future. This will have implications for managing the canal environment as well as for local community aspirations over forthcoming years.

86. The Stroudwater Navigation enhances the setting of properties along its banks and currently provides opportunities for tranquil traffic-free walks and bicycle rides for residents and visitors. Angling is a popular pastime in Stonehouse.

87. The vision of the Cotswold Canals Partnership is the restoration of the Canal to full navigation. Restoration will provide a golden opportunity to exploit the Canal and its towpath for the pleasure of residents, Canal users, ramblers, cyclists and tourists. Stonehouse residents have indicated their enthusiasm for the provision of facilities locally for mooring and other services such as watering points. Such a location could provide a public house as well. These uses would complement the Canal and could draw visitors to the Town centre – particularly if an inviting route were to be available. The impact of greater usage will need to be balanced with conservation of those Canal-environment qualities which are most valued by the local community.

88. The following land adjacent to the Canal has potential for development to complement the restored Canal:



Canal sites and associated pedestrian routes

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89. **Site A: The former Ship Inn site** (see photograph alongside paragraph 67). This site is by the north-east end of Stonehouse Bridge (which carries Downton Road from the traffic lights on the A419 over the Canal). It is the clear favourite of the Town Council. The site is owned by Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) as windfall from the development of the A419 and Stonehouse Bridge. On several occasions in recent years when the County Council sought permission to sell or develop this site there was considerable opposition from residents culminating in a number of large public meetings. In 2001 permission to build a pupil referral centre on the site was refused. Then, in 2002, an appeal was launched by the GCC against refusal for the pupil referral centre but seeking outline permission for residential development. This was refused.

90. It was the clear opinion of those questioned at the Design Workshop that the former Ship Inn site should be used for recreation to complement the restored Canal e.g. provision of watering and sanitary facilities. Many favoured the provision of a pub that could be used by the residents of Bridgend and of the new housing developments alongside the Canal. As Canal restoration proceeds, this will reinforce the argument that this site should be the new Town Wharf. It is opposite Regent Street, now closed to through traffic, which offers an attractive route for pedestrians and cyclists to the High Street in tranquil, leafy, pleasing surroundings. As with the other potential routes, this one crosses the A419. Nevertheless the crossing is controlled by traffic lights and is well protected by secure barriers.

91. The restored wharf at the extension of Boakes Drive (by the north-west end of Stonehouse Bridge) remains a public wharf but with limited mooring. Access to the Town centre via Downton Road and Regent Street is to be provided for pedestrians

and cyclists as part of the development. Given the limited space for mooring facilities at the former Ship Inn site, the wharf at the extension of Boakes Drive could provide valuable supplementary mooring since the two sites are separated only by Downton Road. The crossing at Downton Road is controlled by traffic lights and is well protected by secure barriers.

92. Stonehouse Town Council considers the former Ship Inn site to be the prime candidate for the new Town Wharf. Once funding has been provided for the Canal's restoration the Town Council will work with Gloucestershire County Council and the Cotswold Canals Partnership to promote the site as the new Town Wharf. A report on implications for Stonehouse Council of Cotswold Canals restoration was presented to the Town Council in 2002 (Reference 5). The Council is considering commissioning an updated report in the light of the recent successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

93. **Site B: The land on the north bank, between Hayward's Bridge (which carries the Ebley Bypass over the Canal to Horsetrough Roundabout) and Site A.** The ownership of this site is split between Wycliffe College and Gloucestershire County Council. It contains the College's old boathouse and an inviting tree-lined public footpath and cycleway (formerly the Midland Railway branch line to Nailsworth which includes a splendid iron bridge over the Canal). At present much of this area is overgrown and contains a few dilapidated and unused buildings. This site offers the same attractive route to the High Street as Site A. However Wycliffe College has planning permission for a new swimming pool and car parking on the site. The Town Council recommends that any development of this site should seek to capitalise on the benefits of the restoration of the Canal and enhance leisure facilities for residents and visitors. Ideally, this site should be planned comprehensively in conjunction with Site A.

94. **Site C: The land on the north bank, by St Cyr's Churchyard (Grade II\* Church with a number of Grade II\* and Grade II monuments) and behind Stonehouse Court Hotel (Grade II\* former Manor House).** This land is close to Nutshell House and Bridge (both Grade II) – key landmarks of Stonehouse.



Site C

The concentration of interesting buildings of outstanding merit is a particular attraction of this site. This is offset however by the difficulty that access between the site and the Town centre appears possible only via the Churchyard or a private road (known as Ocean Lane) from “The Ocean” (Site D - see below). At present, both routes are lightly used. However neither route would appear to be practical for significantly heavier use. That is a pity since the route to the High Street from St Cyr’s Church via Church Lane and the public footpath along the western edge of the Berryfield is in tranquil, leafy, pleasing surroundings (though the distance is appreciably greater than from Sites A and B). As with the other routes, this one crosses the A419. Nevertheless the crossing is controlled by traffic lights and is well protected by secure barriers. It is the view of the Town Council that this is not the best site for the Town Wharf and that other development on it would be inappropriate.

95. **Site D: Stonehouse “Ocean”.**

This beautiful stretch of water, now part of the Canal, was probably one of the fishponds which served the ancient Manor House, now Stonehouse Court Hotel (Reference 6). This site is a haven for wildlife. It is adjacent to the previous one and suffers from the same difficulties regarding access to the Town centre. It is also the furthest of the sites from the High Street. It is the view of the Town Council



Site D

that this is not the best site for a Town wharf and that other development on it would be inappropriate.

96. In addition to the tranquil waterside setting provided by the Canal, all four sites benefit from uninterrupted views to the **Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)** beyond the broad valley of the River Frome which has unique landscape characteristics within Stroud District (as identified in Reference 4). The tranquility stems from the abandonment of the Canal more than half a century ago. The likely increase in visitors and boats arising from Canal restoration will inevitably have an impact on the tranquility and this will need to be managed carefully. Nevertheless, judged from the experience at Saul on the Gloucester-Sharpness Canal, the impact would be expected to be manageable.

97. When the Stroudwater Navigation and Thames & Severn Canals are restored fully, trips by water between London and Gloucester would be possible, as would a circuit taking in Gloucester, Stroud, Oxford, Banbury, Warwick, Stratford, Tewkesbury, Gloucester.

98. In Stonehouse, restoration of the Canal is expected to:

a) Increase visitors, and encourage trade for local businesses, provided that convenient mooring and watering facilities can be made available for those boating/navigating on the Canal.

b) Increase the number of long-distance walkers and cyclists passing through the Stonehouse area as a result of the intersection of the Canal towpath with the Cotswold Way and the National Cycle Network.



Nutshell House & Bridge



### Recommendations Associated with the Canal

99. The site of the former Ship Inn is the clear favourite of the Town Council as the new Town Wharf. It is in the optimum location for easy access to Stonehouse Town centre by an attractive route with little traffic. Since the site's previous use was for social/leisure purposes, proposed developments on this GCC-owned site for non-social/leisure purposes have proved to be very sensitive with residents. The Town Council recommends strongly that the site be reserved as the location of the new Town Wharf. Further, that no decision on its development should be taken until the plans and details for the physical restoration of the Canal become clearer.
100. The Town Council recommends that any development of Site B should seek to improve leisure facilities for the Town and be planned comprehensively in conjunction with Site A. The development should take maximum advantage of its canal-side location and accommodate the cycle route to Nailsworth.
101. It is the view of the Town Council that neither Site C nor Site D is the best site for a Town Wharf and that other development on these sites would be inappropriate. If either Site C or Site D were to be considered for use as the new Town Wharf, the Town Council recommends that access difficulties to the Town centre would first have to be overcome.
102. Some recent developments by the Canal, such as the extension of Boakes Drive, have caused appreciable blockage of the views from Bristol Road of the Canal, the **Cotswold AONB** and the intervening meadows by the River Frome (which have unique landscape characteristics within Stroud District). These views which the public enjoys from the A419 and from the Canal towpath are key features of the landscape setting of the Canal and its tranquil character. Indeed the **AONB** classification indicates their general appeal. The views to the south beyond Horsetrough Roundabout, and from the Canal towpath between Nutshell House & Bridge and Bond's Mill are valued highly by residents and towpath users – even by motorists using the B4008 and the A419. The Town Council recommends that any future developments by the Canal be designed so as to minimise blockage of views by, for example, arrangement of buildings and minimising of their heights.

## **FUTURE DEVELOPMENT**

### **Housing**

103. Existing buildings employ a range of construction materials, particularly in the older sections of the Town: walls of stone/ashlar, redbrick or render – even a few timber-clad; roofs of slate, stone, tile or thatch. Stone details are much in evidence on redbrick buildings e.g. window surrounds, lintels and quoins.

104. There is a mixture of terrace, detached and semi-detached houses, of one, 2, 2½ and 3 storeys - rarely more than 3 storeys in height. A number of the older houses in the Town centre sit close to the pavement creating a strong continuous sense of containment.

105. Houses on the older roads present an eclectic mix of architectural styles; post-Second World War estates are each more homogeneous yet with their own characteristics. Many are enhanced by open space or green features; some benefit from a backdrop of natural features (Doverow Hill and the Cotswolds, the Canal, etc); some enjoy views to a distant Church spire or tower. Maintenance of line of sight to such cherished features, particularly to the hills, would enhance any new developments. Indeed, at the Design Workshop, all those who contributed to the questionnaire prized highly the views to the hills – particularly those afforded by open spaces including the Town Greens, the Berryfield and the Canal. It was their clear desire that every effort should be made to preserve these. As a result the Town Council wishes that, in proposed future developments, applicants seek to maximise the lines of sight to the hills, to local Church spires, and to other valued features. This might be achieved, for example, by careful arrangement of buildings on development sites. The Town Council will encourage such designs.

106. Housing estates: Rosedale Avenue at the foot of Doverow Hill found good favour with residents for its layout and appearance; decreasingly so for Boakes Drive, Arrowsmith Drive, Little Australia and Court View. A common criticism of the last mentioned was that it presented the backs of houses to the traveller along the A419 and that it detracted from the Grade II\* Stonehouse Court Hotel (former Manor House) located opposite.

107. The following ***Policies of Stroud District Local Plan, SDLP*** (Reference 2) are of particular relevance to future developments:

#### **B1**

***“New development will be permitted where the proposal represents a high quality urban design, and is compatible with its surroundings. Where this is not appropriate, the development should create a strong and distinctive urban design itself. In all proposals the following considerations should be addressed:***

- 1. the layout and form of existing and the proposed development, and where appropriate the historic pattern of the area;***
- 2. the relationship of the proposed development with its wider landscape setting;***

3. ***the scale and character of the existing and proposed townscape in terms of road and pavement width and alignment, building heights, building line, plot size, density, elevational design and materials;***
4. ***any features or open spaces, buildings and/or structures of character on or adjoining the site;***
5. ***the scale, use and landscaping of the spaces between and around buildings;***
6. ***views/vistas afforded from within, over and out of the site; and***
7. ***the roofscape/skyline, development form and boundaries of the existing and proposed development seen in long or medium distance views.”***

**Item 2 of B1A**

***“New development will be permitted where existing features which contribute to the area, landmark features, and views to them are retained in an appropriate manner or improved;”***

108. The Town Council supports these Policies fully and recommends that, in all applications, analysis of the site and its context - in the immediate vicinity - should be conducted to establish the appropriateness of the proposed style and materials, for example. In addition, where new housing development is to be permitted close to existing homes, the Town Council recommends that every effort be made to:

- preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the existing residential areas by retention or even restoration of features of merit including mature hedges and native trees, existing stone and brick walls;
- use appropriate boundary treatments such as traditional hedges, walls and railings wherever possible and avoid substantial lengths of wooden fencing and walls, in excess of 1 metre high, fronting public highways and spaces;
- design out crime, and fear of crime, through maximising natural surveillance and use of appropriate boundary treatments and lighting;
- limit loss of line of sight to cherished features including the hills, Church spires, Canal and River e.g. by grouping and arrangement of buildings to maximise the remaining views;
- minimise invasion of privacy e.g. by limiting the height of the new houses, arrangement of the houses on the site, and restriction of upper-floor windows facing existing homes, subject to the principles of good design.

## **Starter Homes & Affordable Housing**

109. Affordable housing is defined in the Housing chapter of the **SDLP** as:

***“Housing that needs to be provided for those people who are in housing need, but who cannot afford open market rents or prices.”***

110. The **SDC’s Housing Needs** survey, updated in July 2003 (Reference 7), highlighted the increasing need for affordable housing in the District. The shortage of such housing is a matter of concern to the Town Council not least because encouraging young people to live in Stonehouse is essential if its vitality is to be maintained.

111. **Item 1 of Policy H8 of SDLP** (Reference 2), as amended in October 2003, and the **first paragraph of Policy H9** are of particular relevance:

### **Item 1 of H8**

***“An element of affordable housing will be sought where a demonstrable need for affordable housing exists in or adjacent to the Stroud Urban Area\* ..... on sites of 0.5 hectare or more or capable of development of 15 or more dwellings unless unusually high costs associated with the development of the site, or the realisation of other planning objectives which take priority, make this not viable.”***

### **First paragraph of H9**

***“The affordable housing provided by the operation of Policy H8 shall provide for a mix of affordable housing which reflects local housing need, and should be integrated into the development of which it forms a part.”***

112. Prior to its amendment in October 2003, the above site size threshold was ***“on sites of one hectare, or for the development of 25 or more dwellings”***. In a town with as few available sites for future developments as Stonehouse, this has proved to be insufficient to persuade house builders to include affordable housing. As a result, few starter and affordable homes have been built in recent times. It remains to be seen whether the amended site size threshold will result in construction of additional affordable homes.

113. It is the strong wish of the Town Council that all proposed housing developments make provision for starter and affordable homes. The Town Council will encourage any development on a brownfield site that makes provision for affordable homes where the proposed number of houses in that development is less than 15 or the area of the site is 0.5 hectare or less.

114. It is the recommendation of the Town Council that, where a new development is to include affordable houses, they are distributed through the development and not grouped together. The Town Council supports **Policy H9**.

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\* In Reference 2, Stroud Urban Area includes Stonehouse

115. **Policy H15 of SDLP** is also of relevance to Stonehouse:

**H15**

***“Proposals to use the upper floors above shops and offices in town and local centres for residential use will be permitted where this does not threaten the viability of the ground floor commercial use.”***

116. There is floorspace above a number of the shops in Stonehouse which might provide flat-type residential accommodation. Ensuring full use of these would help provide rented accommodation within the Town. This would have the added benefit of improving security in the Town centre. The Town Council supports **Policy H15** and will seek to encourage the active use of such floorspace for residential purposes.

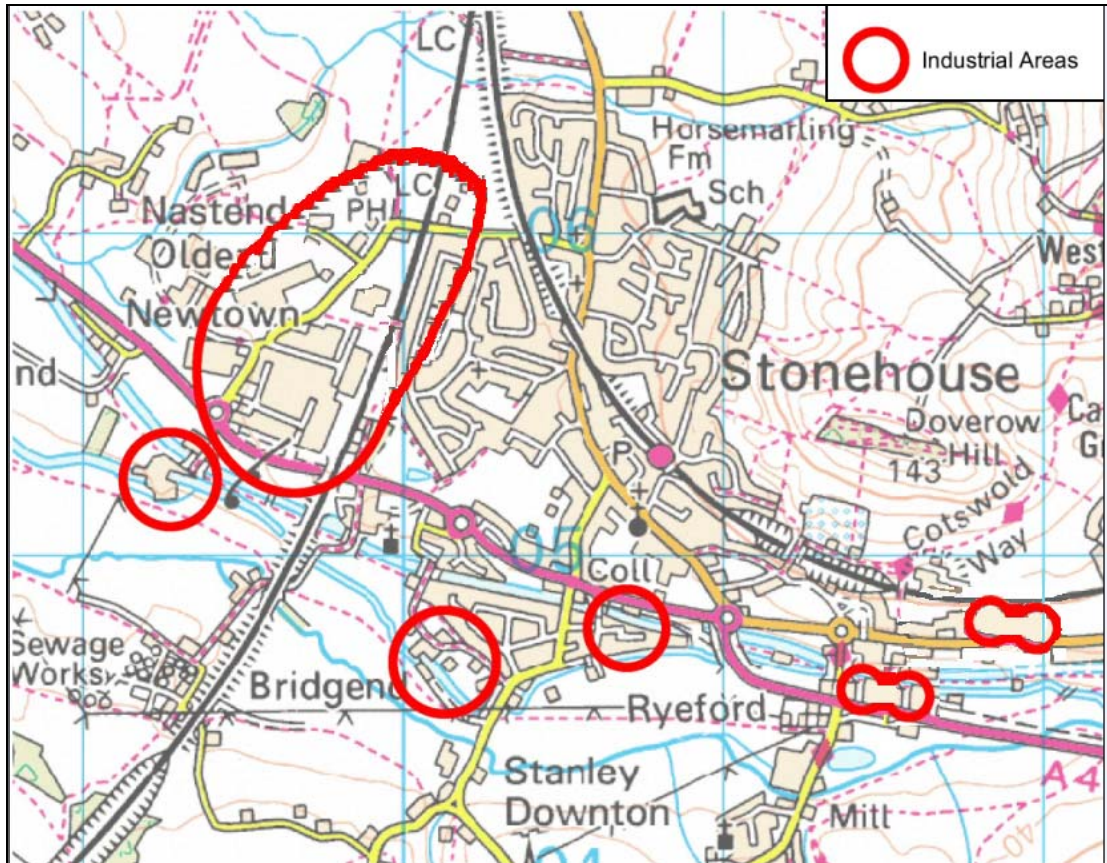
### **Industry & Business**

117. Industry and business have been part of Stonehouse for as long as there have been records. According to the Domesday Book there were 2 mills and 2 vineyards in the Town a thousand years ago. The River Frome provided a potent source of water power to drive mills in the area. With the opening of the Canal in 1779, cheap coal became available resulting in a booming wool trade.

118. The Stonehouse Brick & Tile Company started production in 1890; gradually it quarried away one side of Doverow Hill. It was an important employer of labour for the next 70 years, closing in the 1960s.

119. As part of the preparations for the Second World War “shadow factories” were set up for key industries in “safe areas” including Stonehouse. In 1938 Sperry Gyroscope came to Bond’s Mill and a large factory was built for the Hoffman bearing manufacturing company, both close to the Canal. The real growth of the Town dates from the establishment of these factories, with housing and other services having to grow to meet their needs. This had a significant effect on the appearance and character of Stonehouse. Since then, the Town has settled into its current boundaries.

120. Today there are a number of industrial estates in the Town, mostly on the outskirts, particularly at and near Oldend Lane. Stroudwater Business Park has experienced extensive development in recent years. Stonehouse has the largest allocation of industrial development on green fields in Stroud District. With more than 150 businesses on the industrial estates, the Town Council has concerns that Stonehouse has taken a disproportionate share of the industrial development within the District.



Industrial areas in Stonehouse

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121. The areas of land allocated for employment use will, when developed, have a significant impact on the setting of the Town. The areas adjacent to Nastend Farm and Oldend Farm are on rising land and development in these areas will be highly visible from vantage points such as Haresfield Beacon as well as local footpaths. The Stroud Landscape Assessment (Reference 4) also expresses concern about the impact of industrial development in this area on views from the Escarpment. The Town Council recommends strongly that the floor levels and heights of the new units are planned so as to minimize their impact on the landscape and that the colour of the cladding blends with the local landscape. The Town Council supports the inclusion of well planted landscape belts to soften the impact of the new units.



Industrial development near Nastend Lane

122. The A419 Bristol Road is a major gateway into Stonehouse carrying 25,000 vehicles a day. It is the Town Council's view that development of the employment sites adjacent to this road represents an opportunity to create a quality gateway into the Town that is memorable and distinctive. The Town Council recommends that quality landscaping should be incorporated; this should build on existing features such as the avenue of lime trees to the west of Oldend Lane roundabout. Alternative boundary treatments such as hurdle fencing could also be considered. The Town Council recommends that service areas and car parks should not be clearly visible from Bristol Road.

123. The Town Council recommends that new industrial areas be laid out so as to allow permeability within the areas and to enhance walk and cycle links into Stonehouse and onto the National Cycle Network. Also that existing footpaths, bridle-paths and lanes should be retained and enhanced.

124. As industrial and business building development continues in and around Stonehouse, it is essential that specific green spaces remain free from development. It is the strong recommendation of the Town Council that building is not permitted on the greenfield areas identified in the section on **Green Spaces**.

## **Recommendations Associated with Future Development**

125. The Town Council recommends that, in proposed future developments, applicants seek to maximise the lines of sight to the hills, to local Church spires and other valued features.
126. The Town Council supports ***Policies B1 and B1A (Item 2) of SDLP*** and recommends that, in all applications, analysis of the site and its context - in the immediate vicinity - should be conducted to establish the appropriateness of the proposed style and materials, for example. In addition, where new housing development is to be permitted close to existing homes, the Town Council recommends that every effort be made to:
- preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the existing residential areas by retention or even restoration of features of merit including mature hedges and native trees, existing stone and brick walls;
  - use appropriate boundary treatments such as traditional hedges, walls and railings wherever possible and avoid substantial lengths of wooden fencing and walls, in excess of 1 metre high, fronting public highways and spaces;
  - design out crime, and fear of crime, through maximising natural surveillance and use of appropriate boundary treatments and lighting;
  - limit loss of line of sight to cherished features including the hills, Church spires, Canal and River e.g. by grouping and arrangement of buildings to maximise the remaining views;
  - minimise invasion of privacy e.g. by limiting the height of the new houses, arrangement of the houses on the site, and restriction of upper-floor windows facing existing homes, subject to the principles of good design.
127. The Town Council will encourage any development on a brownfield site which makes provision for affordable homes where the proposed number of houses in that development is less than 15 or the area of the site is 0.5 hectare or less.
128. It is the strong wish of the Town Council that all proposed housing developments make provision for starter and affordable homes.
129. It is the recommendation of the Town Council that, where a new development is to include affordable houses, they are distributed through the development and not grouped together. The Town Council supports ***Policy H9***.
130. The Town Council supports ***Policy H15 of SDLP*** and will seek to encourage the use of the upper floors above shops and offices for residential purposes.
131. In respect of industrial and commercial development, the Town Council recommends that:



- At Nastend Farm and Oldend Farm, the design of any new development should be such as to minimize the impact on the landscape through consideration of levels, heights and colour of cladding; thick well planted landscape belts should be included to reduce the impact of the development from vantage points and local footpaths.
- On sites adjacent to the A419 Bristol Road the opportunity should be taken to create high quality landmark buildings to create a distinctive gateway to the Town; in respect of landscaping the emphasis should be on quality rather than quantity and service areas and car parks should not be clearly visible from the main road.
- New industrial areas are laid out so as to allow permeability within the areas and to enhance walk and cycle links into Stonehouse and onto the National Cycle Network. Also that existing rights of way are protected and enhanced.

## **THE ENVIRONMENT**

132. Stonehouse nestles in the Severn Vale, in the valley of the River Frome and on the lower western slopes of Doverow Hill. The Hill is one of Stonehouse's landmarks and is used for recreation by people of all ages. A circular walk around the perimeter provides superb views. A charitable trust - Doverow Hill Trust - was set up in 1968 to keep the Hill in its natural state. Beech, ash, sycamore, hawthorn, hazel, hornbeam and cherry grow there. The area is designated a **Key Wildlife Site** (Reference 2).

133. The Town has attractive views of the Cotswolds to the north and to the south. The **Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)** - along the eastern edge of the Town and to the south - can be seen from the High Street and the Cotswold Way passes through the outskirts. At the Design Workshop, all of the people interviewed considered that the views to Doverow Hill and the Cotswolds provided a splendid backdrop for the Town. In answer to the question "what things do you most like about Stonehouse", the top choice was the scenery and views as well as the woodland walks in and around the Town. It is the clear desire of the Town Council and of the residents that these irreplaceable natural aspects of the settlement must be conserved for the benefit of present and future generations. Any new developments should allow footpath access to these walks and be arranged so as to maximise views of the much-loved views. **Policy T2 of Stroud District Local Plan, SDLP** (Reference 2) is of particular relevance:

### **T2**

***"Proposals for development will not be permitted unless there is, or provision is made for, safe convenient and attractive access for pedestrians, taking into account the needs of disabled people, within sites and where appropriate to the surrounding area. These should be lit where appropriate and further security provided through building layout and landscaping."***

134. The settlement of Stonehouse presents an attractive, green environment. The High Street has many mature native trees and the Town Greens provide welcome open space at the centre of the Town. The Greens present an open vista along with seating areas and attractive flower beds and hanging baskets.

135. In addition to those already mentioned there are a number of other open spaces that add to the green environment of Stonehouse including the playing fields of Maidenhill School, Park School and Wycliffe College (see the section on **Recreational Areas**).

136. Recently built housing estates such as Court View and Arrowsmith Drive include open areas that mirror the Town Greens. The area to the east of Court View has been designated as a **Key Wildlife Site** (see Reference 2) for greater-crested newts (a protected species). On the southern edge of the Town is a designated Conservation Area which follows the Stroudwater Navigation Canal and areas to its north and south. The **SDC Green Spaces Strategy** (Reference 8) has given an ongoing commitment to the protection and management of conservation areas.

137. The area around the Stroudwater Canal and St Cyr's Church also presents a green area towards the southern edge of the Town. It is popular with anglers. Due to lack of use as a canal for more than half a century, its banks have become thick with reeds and native trees which attract wildlife in abundance including ducks, moorhens, swans and water voles. With the restoration of the Canal this

environment will change. The Town Council will work in partnership with the relevant parties to ensure such development is sympathetic to the surrounding area.

138. There are a number of tranquil places within the Town that enhance the environment. The Rest Garden, just off High Street, provides a space for quiet reflection and the many public footpaths allow quiet enjoyment of the environment. (see **Green Spaces** section)

139. The environment of Stonehouse is diverse. Part of its appeal is the variety and interesting mix of building styles and materials that have been used in the settlement and the patterns of open space within the Town.

140. The following **Policies of SDLP** are of particular relevance to the environment in Stonehouse:

**Item 2 of B1A**

***“New development will be permitted where existing features which contribute to the area, landmark features, and views to them are retained in an appropriate manner or improved.”***

**N3**

***“Development proposals that would adversely affect, either directly or indirectly, a site supporting any legally protected species or its habitat, or priority species or habitats as defined in Gloucestershire Biodiversity Action Plan, will not be permitted unless safeguarding measures can be provided through conditions or planning obligations to secure their protection. Where appropriate, development proposals should contribute to Gloucestershire Biodiversity Action Plan targets.”***

**N4**

***“In development proposals, important landscape features such as trees, hedges, shrubs, vegetation, green lanes, walls, woodland and unimproved pasture should be retained and managed to conserve and enhance biodiversity. The impact of development on such features should be minimised and will be controlled through the use of conditions and planning obligations.”***

**N10**

***“Development will not be permitted if it would damage or destroy trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order, or identified as Ancient Woodland, or in a Conservation Area unless either:***

***1. the removal of one or more trees would be in the interests of good arboricultural practice;***

***or***

***2. the benefits of the proposed development outweighs the amenity or landscape value of the protected trees.***

## N11

***“Development that would destroy or significantly damage an ‘important’ hedgerow will not be permitted unless the benefits of the development outweigh the ‘importance’ of the hedgerow in terms of its contribution to landscape character or appearance, or its nature conservation, historical or archaeological interest.”***

### Recommendations Associated with the Environment

141. Where a condition has been attached to outline planning permission requiring that a wildlife survey be carried out before any development commences, the Town Council recommends that the site be preserved undisturbed until submission and review of the survey is complete.
142. ***Item 2 of Policy B1A of SDLP*** states that ***“New development will be permitted where existing features which contribute to the area, landmark features, and views to them are retained in an appropriate manner or improved.”*** The Town Council recommends that developments must retain all such features unless strong justification is made for their removal or loss.
143. The Town Council will seek to ensure that applicants proposing new developments make every effort to retain, as far as practicable, the scenery and views as well as the woodland walks in and around the Town. This supports ***Policies B1A and B1 of SDLP, and Green Spaces – A Partnership Approach.***
144. ***Policy N11 of SDLP*** states that ***“Development that would destroy or significantly damage an ‘important’ hedgerow will not be permitted unless: the benefits of the development outweigh the ‘importance’ of the hedgerow in terms of its contribution to landscape character or appearance, or its nature conservation, historical or archaeological interest.”*** Since mature hedgerows usually enhance the quality of the local environment, the Town Council recommends that all mature hedgerows on, or bounding, development sites be preserved unless strong justification is made for their removal.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

The Town Council would expect to review the Design Statement in 3 years:

145. to bring it into line with new regulations, particularly the recent Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act, in consultation with Stroud District Council;
146. to incorporate the latest experience of the Town Council's Planning & Transportation Committee;
147. to check that it is in conformity with other SDC guidance and the future Local Development Framework e.g. its Green Spaces Strategy;
148. to review design statements produced by other towns and villages for fresh ideas and experience.

## **REFERENCES**

1. *Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 12: Development Plans*, Chapter 2, paragraphs 3.15 to 3.18 inclusive, published by the Office of Deputy Prime Minister (1999). Available from website [www.odpm.gov.uk](http://www.odpm.gov.uk).
2. *Stroud District Local Plan, As Proposed to be Modified*, published by Stroud District Council (May 2005). Available from website [www.stroud.gov.uk](http://www.stroud.gov.uk).
3. *Listed Buildings in Stonehouse of Special Architectural or Historic Interest*, published by Stroud District Council (February 1987, updated May 2002).
4. *Stroud District Landscape Assessment*, Supplementary Planning Guidance published by Stroud District Council (November 2000).
5. *Cotswold Canals Restoration – Feasibility Report: Implications for Stonehouse Council* by John Rogers, Summer 2002.
6. *The Stroudwater Navigation* by Joan Tucker (Archives Director of the Company of Proprietors of the Stroudwater Navigation), published by Tempus Publishing (2003).
7. *Housing Needs Within Stroud District*, published by Stroud District Council (July 2003). Available from website [www.stroud.gov.uk](http://www.stroud.gov.uk).
8. *Green Spaces Strategy – A Partnership Approach 2004-2007*, Draft 2, published by Stroud District Council (April 2004). Available from website [www.stroud.gov.uk](http://www.stroud.gov.uk).

## **OTHER READING**

9. *Residential Design Guide*, Supplementary Planning Guidance published by Stroud District Council (November 2000).

## APPENDIX 1

### **Grade II Listed Buildings on Main Thoroughfare (Reference 3)** (Bath Road, High Street & Gloucester Road)

#### BATH ROAD, SOUTH SIDE

- i) Wycliffe College Chapel Spire, ref. 7/139
- ii) Ivy Grove, ref. 7/140
- iii) School House, ref. 7/141
- iv) No. 43 (Haywardsend), ref. 9/142
- v) No. 45 (Haywardsend Mews), ref. 9/143

#### HIGH STREET, EAST SIDE

- vi) Queen Anne Cottage (No.1) , ref. 7/173
- vii) No. 19 (Apsley House) & **No. 19A**, ref. 7/174
- viii) Assembly Room (to south of former Crown & Anchor), ref. 7/175
- ix) Coach House (to north of former Crown & Anchor), ref. 7/176

#### HIGH STREET, WEST SIDE

- x) No. 30 (Tudor House), ref. 7/179
- xi) No. 54 (Barclay's Bank), ref. 7/180
- xii) Nos. 58, **60 (Orchard House) & 62 (formerly detached house, now row of 2 houses with shop)**, ref. 2/181
- xiii) No. 78 (Holmleigh), ref. 2/182
- xiv) No.80, ref. 2/183

#### GLOUCESTER ROAD, WEST SIDE

- xv) No. 10 (Hill View House) & No. 12, ref. 2/171

## APPENDIX 2

### **Historic Buildings in the Vicinity of Court Farm Paddock (Reference 3)**

- i) Coach House immediately north east of Little Court, Grade II, ref. 6/146
- ii) Little Court and The Coach House, Grade II, ref. 6/147
- iii) Barn to north of Coach Farmhouse, Grade II, ref. 6/148
- iv) Court Farmhouse, Grade II, ref. 6/149
- v) Cartshed to west of Court Farmhouse, Grade II, ref. 6/150
- vi) Court Farm Mews (not listed).

Also, just behind these:

- vii) Stonehouse Court Hotel, Grade II\*, ref. 6/145
- viii) St Cyr's Church, Grade II\*, ref. 6/152