

Hardwicke Parish Council

Neighbourhood Development Plan
2015–2031



January 2017

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1. Introduction

Overview

The Hardwicke Neighbourhood Development Plan (the Plan) is a planning document that has been compiled based on the views of the local community and supported by evidence of employment, environment, housing and local facility and service needs of the community. Neighbourhood Planning was introduced as part of the Government's Localism agenda; a new approach aimed at giving local people more of a say in the future development of their areas. This is very important for Hardwicke as the Parish wants to influence its own future.

The 2011 Localism Act empowers local people to decide on the content of the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), however it must comply with higher level planning policy and legislation. This includes, but is not restricted to, compliance with:

- a. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG);
- b. The strategic policies in the Development Plan for the local area;
- c. Achieving sustainable development;
- d. EU obligations such as strategic environmental assessment, habitat assessment; and Human Rights requirements

The Parish of Hardwicke is part of the District of Stroud. The local strategic context (condition (b) above) is, therefore, set by the Stroud District Local Plan, adopted in November 2015.

The Hardwicke NDP has two work elements:

- a. Gathering of community requirements – this work-stream identified the requirements for a sustainable Hardwicke through assessment of responses from public consultations. The findings of each were then analysed, refined and supported by evidence gathering. The outcome was a framework of planning policy recommendations to move towards a sustainable Hardwicke through to 2031.

- b. Alignment with the Stroud District Local Plan – a key requirement of NDPs is the need to comply with the NPPF and District Local Plans, in this case the Stroud District Local Plan. Hardwicke Parish has an important and definitive role in the Local Plan. The Hardwicke NDP strategy has been designed to implement this role.

Purpose of the Plan

The community driven Plan provides a vision for the future and sets out its objectives together with policies required for their implementation. Objectives and policies have been developed following analysis of:

- the natural environment of the parish;
- social and economic characteristics of population; and
- issues and needs raised by the community and other interested parties from recent consultation events.

The Plan's policies that will supplement the Stroud District Local Plan to guide the evolution of the Parish during the plan period (up to 2031). This NDP forms part of the Development Plan, thus enabling the views of the Hardwicke community to be taken into account by Stroud District Council (SDC) when it considers applications within the Parish. Once a NDP has been approved, subsequent planning decisions must be made in accordance with the policies and aspirations embedded in that Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

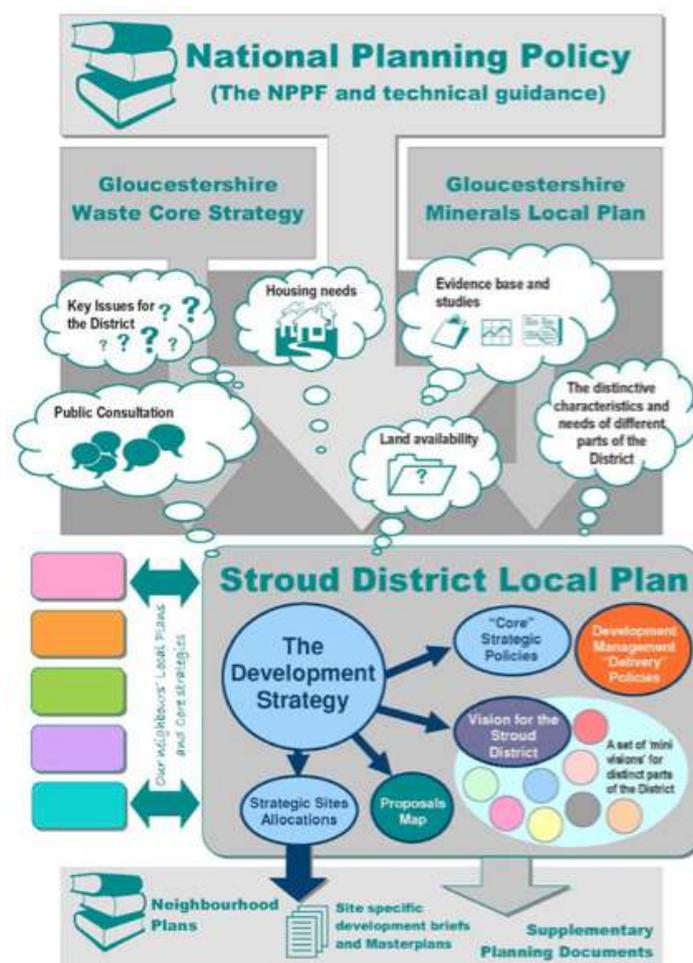
Process of producing the Plan

The Plan has been prepared by the Hardwicke Neighbourhood Development Plan Group (HNDPG) which consists of members of the community and Parish Councillors. The group receives support and advice from the Gloucestershire Rural Communities Council (GRCC) in their role as community advisors and SDC in their role as the Local Planning Authority. Specialist advice has been provided by national and local organisations.

HNDPG applied for the designation of the neighbourhood area in October 2013, and this was approved by SDC in February 2014. An inaugural workshop held in September 2013 identified the general views of the community and establish the key issues. Further workshops held during the period of producing the NDP established further detail to be incorporated into the Plan. Evidence gathering commenced in April 2014 and subsequently informed key objectives to guide the Plan. Draft policies were then produced to deliver the previously identified objectives.

In September 2015 a draft version of the NDP was produced, submitted to SDC, and consulted upon for a six-week period. Views were provided by statutory consultees including SDC, The Environment Agency and Gloucestershire County Council. Screening opinions were also undertaken by SDC at this stage and concluded that a Strategic Environmental Assessment and a Habitat Regulation Assessment are not necessary to support the Plan. Further work has been undertaken based on the feedback received and has informed the submission version of the Plan.

Further detail on the Plan process, notably the consultation exercises carried out, can be found within the accompanying Consultation Statement.



Evidence base

The following Local Plan documents have been used to inform this Plan:

- Stroud District Local Plan (2015);
- Gloucestershire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2014);
- Stroud District Council Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (2011);
- Gloucestershire Biodiversity Action Plan;
- Stroud District Council Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Local Development Framework Level 2 (2012);
- Stroud District Council Employment Land Study (2013);
- Stroud District Council Landscape Character Assessment (2000)

In addition to the above, the following documents have been produced, based on the assessments undertaken by the HNDPG:

- Future Housing Assessment;
- Ecological Assessment;
- Open Space Assessment;
- Communication and Transport Assessment;
- Facilities and Services Assessment;
- Local Character Assessment;
- Future Employment Assessment;
- Listed Buildings Assessment;
- Key Views Assessment.

The following documents also accompany the Plan:

- Consultation Statement;
- Communications Plan;
- Sustainability Screening Report;
- Basic Conditions Statement.

Next steps

The next step is for the Plan to be submitted to SDC to help progress the NDP further to a stage where it can be submitted for Examination in Public. SDC will publicise the Plan for further consultation with statutory consultees.

Subject to a successful Examination outcome, the Plan will proceed to a local referendum where the community of Hardwicke will be asked whether they wish for the NDP to form part of the Development Plan and be used by SDC in determining planning applications within the Parish. An approval rate of 51% of the respondents will result in the Plan being incorporated into the Stroud District Development Plan.

Monitoring

The Hardwicke (NDP) covers the same period of time as the Local Plan which currently ends in 2031. To ensure that the objectives and policies continue to be appropriate and relevant throughout this time, the Plan will be subject to regular monitoring and review. This will be carried out every 5 years, by the NDP Review Group, a sub-committee of the Hardwicke Parish Council.

As part of the monitoring and review process, consideration will be given to ensuring that the plan continues to meet local needs, for example, by repeating the Housing Needs Survey periodically.



2. Consultation Methods

The degree of success for any NDP is dependent on securing the involvement of the community. Effective communications are key to this. Soon after its formation on 22nd January 2014, the HNDPG agreed a Communications Plan that sets out the strategy and options for maximising community involvement in developing the NDP.

During the course of producing the Plan numerous consultation events have been held and various surveys have been undertaken. Details of the events and surveys as well as their outputs can be found within the 'Hardwicke Neighbourhood Development Plan – Communication Statement' which forms part of the evidence base which supports the NDP.

The Plan has been developed by engaging with local people and businesses in an effort to gather their views on how development should be managed in the Parish. The HNDPG has been mindful to study national and local planning documents and evidence commissioned by SDC to support the Stroud District Local Plan.

Initial consultation on the Plan took place in September 2013 with an open community workshop, facilitated by GRCC, to explain the NDP concept and obtain initial views from the Hardwicke Community. From this inaugural workshop six themes emerged that flow through the development of the plan, providing structure to its aims and objectives.

The six themes are:

- i. Housing to Meet Local Needs
- ii. Improved Services and Facilities
- iii. Maintaining the Community
- iv. Protecting the Environment
- v. Communication and Transport
- vi. Enhancing the Local Economy

Various questionnaires, assessments, Parish Assembly meetings and drop-in events have subsequently taken place to strengthen the evidence base behind the Plan. Further information on all of these methods can be found within the Consultation Statement.

3. Place Setting

Overview

The Hardwicke Parish is 6.5 miles north-northwest of Stroud and 4 miles southwest of Gloucester City centre; close to the River Severn with the Gloucester-Sharpness canal passing North-South through the Parish. The southern edge of the Parish is adjacent to junction 12 of the M5 motorway. The A38 Bristol-Gloucester road runs through the Parish and allows a straightforward journey into the city of Gloucester.

Hardwicke has survived as a village since the 12th century, evolving slowly with time on the outskirts of Gloucester City and having a historically strong community identity with “Severnsiders”. Its earliest ecclesiastical and possible farming connection with Haresfield could well be the reason for Hardwicke being part of the Stroud District rather than its closer neighbour Gloucester. Prior to 1961 development was linear along the main routes in and out of the village. Because of this its infrastructure has tended to be spread resulting in a village without a traditional village centre. Today the pre-1960’s development is seen as being the ‘original’ Hardwicke.

The southern and western area of the Parish is known as ‘Rural Hardwicke’ and is the historical heart of Hardwicke, retaining and reflecting its heritage dating back to its origins around 12th century. Indeed St Nicholas Church history states that ‘Winebaud de Ballon in 1092 gave a church called Hardwicke, with its tithes and 6 yardlands, to Bermondsey Priory and the priory is said to have sold that church in the latter part of the 13th century, or early part of the 14th century’. The area has a high proportion of isolated farmsteads with scattered settlements and several loose clusters of houses. A high proportion of the houses are single farmsteads on or near sites of some antiquity.

In the 20th and 21st century, the recent exponential growth in strategic housing development within the northern (‘Urban Hardwicke’) and eastern (‘East Hardwicke’) areas of the Parish has increased erosion



of the Parish's rural character and landscape to cater for Gloucester's and Stroud's need to grow.

Further information on the differing areas of Hardwicke Parish can be found within the accompanying Local Character Assessment document, which forms part of the Plan's evidence base.

As Hunts Grove and its Local Service Centre (LSC) develops Hardwicke will look to its LSC for its services and facilities. Urban and East Hardwicke will then be seen as part of the urban fringe whilst Rural Hardwicke continues to retain its distinctiveness, rural character and charm. There is also commercial activity along the Gloucester/Sharpness Ship canal and river which has also influenced the locality.

Census data shows that in the years between 2001-2011 comparison with 2001, the population increased by 6.38% to 3,901 and comprising of 1,659 households. Since this time a significant number of new homes have been built and the population has increased (and will continue to do so given the Hunts Grove extension).

The Parish has also had an increase in the population of those aged over 60 (increased by 6.5%), whereas the number under 45 decreased by over 10%. With the ageing population of Hardwicke Parish it is considered important to enhance and make full use of our outdoor leisure opportunities such as the Canal paths, footpaths and cycle ways, to maximise the health and well-being of the community.

Community consultation and review of the evidence used to produce the Plan identified the rural nature of mid-Hardwicke as being integral to the Parish's character. This NDP therefore places significant weight on conserving, and where possible enhancing, the rural character of this area for the current and future residents to enjoy. The conservation of these assets are one of the main fundamental aspects of the Plan, whilst recognising the importance of Hunts Grove to the future of Hardwicke through its development and LSC.



Stroud District Local Plan

The Stroud District Local Plan places Hardwicke in the group of communities on the Gloucester Fringe. It recognises that Hardwicke and Upton-St-Leonards have limited facilities with no towns that act as local service centres. Hardwicke is described as distinctly rural in character, populated by scattered hamlets and farmsteads. Almost half of the Gloucester Fringe area is designated part of the Cotswold AONB and there are dramatic and far-reaching views to and from the Cotswold escarpment. As a result Hardwicke is classed as a tier three community.

In the Local Plan, Hunts Grove (along with Berkeley, Frampton on Severn, Minchinhampton, Nailsworth, and Wotton Under Edge) is designated a Tier two community, it has a role to provide a Local Service Centre (LSC) for its new community and the Gloucester fringe Parishes including Hardwicke. The Local Plan requires that Hardwicke retain its village character and sense of community, while East Hardwicke hosts the Hunts Grove community that will become the LSC for Hardwicke.

Paragraph 3.39 of the Local Plan identifies its vision for the Gloucester Fringe as 'Growing a sustainable community at Hunts Grove and preserving Gloucester's rural hinterland'. It goes on to identify a number of 'Guiding Principles' for its Vision. These principles have informed the NDP Strategy ensuring the Plan reflects the requirements of the Stroud District Local Plan.

The role of the remaining Parishes of the Gloucester fringe is to retain their distinctiveness and rural character. The Stroud District Local Plan requires that Hardwicke retain its village character and sense of community while East Hardwicke hosts the Hunts Grove community that will become the LSC for Hardwicke. So there is an opportunity to ensure new development complements Hardwicke's character, landscape and other natural environment features with high quality design and access.

Some of the Local Plan guiding principles are relevant to Hardwicke:-

- Conserve and enhance the landscape and built character of the urban/rural fringe to provide a strong and high quality edge to the City of Gloucester. Development at Hunts Grove to be physically contained and limited by A38 / M5 and the geographical and functional distinctness of Hardwicke village and Hunts Grove will be maintained.
- Improve non-motorised connections between the City suburbs and the rural hinterland; enhance the existing good transport links and movement corridors and allow good permeability through any new development for walkers and cyclists.
- Avoid development that would increase the risk of flooding elsewhere or be at risk itself.
- Secure high-quality, distinctive design, in keeping with local identity and character; preserve the individual character and distinctiveness of communities, villages and hamlets
- Managed and accessible countryside for leisure, recreation and health.
- Support low-impact development which will boost the rural economy: including farm diversification and uses that will bolster tourism, leisure and accessibility to the countryside for visitors and residents.

These requirements have informed the NDP Strategy and ensures that the Plan reflects the requirements of the Stroud District Local Plan.

4. Vision and Objectives

Vision

Our vision is for Hardwicke to retain its diverse identity, which comprises rural and urban fringe characteristics.

The housing, employment, services and facilities needs of the community during the Plan period will be met through the development of the Hunts Grove Local Service Centre in the eastern area of the Parish. The traditional areas of Hardwicke will retain their rural identity through the preservation of the valued landscape and historic character.

Objectives

During the consultation exercises carried out to inform the Plan, the following key themes were identified:

- i. Housing to Meet Local Needs
- ii. Improved Services and Facilities
- iii. Maintaining the Community
- iv. Protecting the Environment
- v. Communication and Transport
- vi. Enhancing the Local Economy

The following objectives have been identified under each of the six key themes to deliver the above vision:

Housing to Meet Local Needs:

- Deliver a sustainable housing supply strategy tailored to meet the needs of the Parish, including an adequate supply of affordable housing to meet the needs of the Parish, thus enabling local people to live in the village throughout their life
- Identify standards in future housing design and style that protects and supports the rural context of the village and the surrounding landscape whilst promoting the environment
- Ensure development is well designed and reflects the heritage and distinctive character of Hardwicke



Evidence:

Data outlined within the NDP Future Housing Assessment demonstrates that Hardwicke household numbers are projected to increase by 86% between 2011 and 2021 with an additional 52% increase between 2021 and 2031. This will result in Hardwicke's population more than doubling between 2011 and 2031 driven by approved developments. The impact and implications of this substantial increase on Hardwicke are unquantifiable until the developments near completion. Community feedback requested no further development during the Plan period.

The projected growth in 2 person households in Hardwicke is statistically significant against other averages. Whilst the increase is significant in percentage terms the actual numbers will be more than accommodated by the current approved developments within the timeframe of the NDP.

The need to retain the rural village feel of mid-Hardwicke, and the diverse character of the Parish as a whole, is a common theme running through community consultation responses. It is essential, therefore, to consider the key features that give Hardwicke its current character in the design of new dwellings.



Improved Services and Facilities

- Facilitate the delivery of new services and facilities to meet the needs of the Parish in Hardwicke, including new provision in association with the development at Hunts Grove
- Retain and support existing services and facilities within Hardwicke
- Promote and develop continued use of the Village Hall through regular and annual events, and maximising community use of the Village Hall

Evidence:

It has been identified that the services and facilities to be delivered as part of the Hunts Grove development will meet the needs of the Parish during the Plan period. In relation to this theme, the Plan aims to ensure that these facilities are effectively delivered. Additionally, the local community have expressed a desire through questionnaire responses to retain and support existing key services and facilities, therefore these should be preserved.

Maintaining the Community

- Preserve and enhance the distinctive heritage of the Parish and where possible its surrounding area
- Retain and enhance valued open spaces within the Parish, notably land south-west of Green Lane
- Encourage the continued involvement of community members in the ongoing process of plan-making, monitoring and delivery of development with emphasis on engagement with younger people
- Protect the identity of Hardwicke and maintain its rural Village 'feel' by enhancing the key features that prevents any further coalescence of Hardwicke with Gloucester and Quedgeley
- Ensure future developments include safety initiatives such as neighbourhood watch

Evidence:

The local community stated clearly in their response to the NDP consultation that community spirit and maintaining a rural feel were the key issues

of importance to them. The Parish has 3 distinct areas (Rural, Urban and East Hardwicke) of differing characteristics, therefore it is important to pull on the strengths of these areas to promote the Community of Hardwicke Parish as a whole. Further information on these distinct areas is detailed in the Local Character Assessment evidence base document.

Of particular importance is the land to the south-west of Green Lane, which is an open space that is highly valued by the Hardwicke community by virtue of the fact that it significantly contributes to creating the rural feel to mid-Hardwicke and the footpaths which run through this area provide pleasant opportunities for recreational activities. It also allows for views to be obtained from the village out towards St Nicholas Church and the wider countryside to the south and east.

Also of importance to the local community is the undeveloped gap between the Gloucester urban edge and Hardwicke village. To prevent coalescence of these areas, it will be important to retain open land between them thus helping to maintain their separate identities, protect their landscape settings and avoid creation of continuous development.

For recreational activities, respondents gave great importance to the existing benefits they enjoy from our footpaths, village hall, Royal British Legion club, football pitches, canal towpath, walking in open green spaces with lovely vistas, cycling routes, allotments, dog-walking, and wildlife. It is therefore important that existing public open spaces within Hardwicke are retained and continue to be made available for use by all. Any development proposals must demonstrate that they are contributing towards the quality of existing green spaces and where necessary provide new green spaces. Further information on open spaces within the Parish can be found within the Open Spaces Assessment document which forms part of the evidence base which supports the Plan.

Hardwicke's other amenities such as the village hall activities, which comprise a Youth Club, Women's Institute, Toddler groups; sports field, cricket square and children's play area, were also seen as a benefit, as were the Post Office, Public House and local shop. The planned LSC at Hunts Grove which will provide a new

primary school, dedicated community centre, health centre, sports and recreational facilities and allotments, is also seen as being beneficial in the future.



Protecting the Environment

- Identify and protect important open spaces within the Parish
- Protect and enhance the high quality landscape within the Parish and the setting of Hardwicke village
- Maintain the distinctive views and visual connectivity with the surrounding countryside from public places within the Parish
- Protect and enhance biodiversity

- Identify, protect and maintain important hedgerows and ditches that are integral to the maintenance of Hardwicke as a rural Parish
- Ensure that new development mitigates against current and potential future flooding risks within the Hardwicke boundary
- Promote and encourage effective recycling arrangements
- Promote the use of green energy production

Evidence:

During the public consultation exercises carried out the local community made clear that they consider the retention of the Parish's environmental assets to be an essential requirement of the NDP, with 92% of respondents to the Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire taking this view.

Hardwicke's Green and Open Spaces are very important to the community as they provide a beautiful, tranquil and scenic outlook to the Parish and give people enjoyment through leisure pursuits. Specific open spaces and vistas that contribute towards the rural feel of the traditional areas of Hardwicke were identified by attendees of consultation events and have been fed into the development of the Plan.

The tranquillity of areas of Hardwicke is important for mental and physical well-being, and improves quality of life for the local community. It's one of the main reasons why people are attracted to the area from towns and cities, to 'get away from it all'. Large parts of Hardwicke are shown to demonstrate high levels of tranquillity which is an important part of its landscape character and environment, and as such, some areas of the Parish are particularly sensitive to development.

Hardwicke has a wonderful mix of biodiversity that provides diversity and richness to the landscape and forms vital wildlife havens and corridors as well as providing rich sources of food for insects, birds and animals. The local community have indicated that the Parish's flora and fauna is an important environmental asset that should be retained.

Hardwicke is influenced by many water features, such as the Gloucester – Sharpness Canal, Shorn Brook, Dimore Brook, various ponds and water culverts, and many older homes in the Parish have a stream, ditch or culvert running either through or alongside their properties. Some older houses also have wells in their gardens. Residents' feedback has shown that these water courses form an important part of the openness of the land adjoining the housing settlement of Hardwicke.

Due to its flat and low-lying character, areas of the Parish suffer from flood risk, rainfall on the ground surface/rising groundwater and overwhelming of the Dimore and Shorn Brooks. As such, additional development will put pressure on the existing flood risk mitigation measures in place within the Parish, and this will need to be adequately mitigated.

Communication and Transport

- Improve the connectivity of all parts of the Parish by a range of transport modes, including walking, cycling and public transport with particular emphasis on connectivity along the canal
- Ensure that new development is well connected to village facilities by a range of transport modes, including walking, cycling and public transport and, where appropriate, makes suitable provision towards new sustainable transport infrastructure
- Ensure safe vehicular and pedestrian access and promote pedestrian safety
- Support the maintenance of bus services during peak times and connections with other services
- Provide adequate parking provision as part of proposals for developments that will attract a high level of traffic

Evidence:

87% of respondents to the NDP consultation questionnaire expressed concern for road safety in Hardwicke, especially the increased congestion and speeding on the smaller, rural roads such as Church

Lane, Pound Lane, Green Lane and Sellars Road, as well as on the main Bristol Road. Parking around Hardwicke was also raised as a concern, particularly around Hardwicke Parochial School.



Enhancing the Local Economy

- To support the development and sustainable growth of rural business in Hardwicke

Evidence:

As part of the consultation carried out to inform the Plan, all businesses within the Parish were sent a questionnaire giving them the opportunity to inform HNDPG of their needs during the Plan period. Although a few of the responding businesses indicated that they expected to grow somewhat by 2031, a need for additional employment land was not highlighted. Moreover, the Stroud District Local Plan provides sufficient employment land within the Parish to meet its needs during the Local Plan period.

5. The Hardwicke NDP Strategy

The Hardwicke NDP strategy is designed to complement and supplement the role for Hardwicke Parish in the Stroud District Local Plan. The Stroud District Local Plan provides the overarching strategy for the development of Stroud District through to 2031. It seeks to ensure Hardwicke retains its village character and sense of community, whilst promoting East Hardwicke, which hosts the Hunts Grove community, as the local service centre for Hardwicke.

The NDP Strategy is to ensure that the Parish's housing and development needs are met whilst preserving the valuable landscape which surrounds the village core that is crucial to retaining the character of the Parish.

This will be achieved by:

- Ensuring that the approved residential developments within the Parish, and future infill development, deliver the type and mix of housing that is needed within Hardwicke;
- Providing opportunities for existing businesses to expand within the allocated employment sites and the settlement boundary;
- Conserving and enhancing the Parish's valued landscapes and built environments to ensure that the rural identity and character of the village is retained;
- Continuing to improve accessibility to the countryside for local people and visitors for leisure, recreation and health reasons.
- Improvement of the Parish by responding to the issues identified by the community in Plan consultation exercises



6. Policies

General Policies

Policy GEN1 – Settlement Boundary

Development proposals will be supported within the settlement boundary as shown on the policies map, on existing employment sites, and on sites allocated within the Stroud District Local Plan provided they meet the criteria set out in other policies in the Local Plan.

Outside the settlement boundary development appropriate to a rural area will be supported where it:

- meets the essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside; or
- would represent the most viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets; or
- would re-use redundant and disused buildings and lead to an enhancement of their immediate settings; or
- would incorporate a dwelling of exceptional quality or innovative nature of design; or
- otherwise satisfies criteria set out in the development plan for development in rural areas

All development should reflect the characteristics of its locality in general, and should safeguard the open spaces and local green spaces identified in this Plan.

Policy GEN1 provides an overarching spatial approach to the Plan. It establishes a settlement boundary and identifies the types of development that will be supported both within and outside this boundary.

In accordance with the housing requirement identified for Hardwicke by SDC, and the assessment that forms part of the evidence base behind this Plan, Hardwicke's

housing need up to 2031 is significantly exceeded by the approved developments and the extension allocated to Hunts Grove within the Stroud District Local Plan (2011-2031).

Furthermore, the evidence gathered to support this Plan indicated that there is no requirement for further land for employment development within the Parish, and that future employment needs up to 2031 can be met within existing employment sites.

However, to ensure that the Plan is consistent with the national planning policy, further development will be allowed within the settlement boundary, as defined by SDC; on existing employment sites that are identified on the proposals map; and on sites allocated within the Stroud District Local Plan.

Development outside the settlement boundary will be controlled in a manner that is consistent with both national and local planning policies. The second part of the policy sets out the types of development that will be supported in this rural area. This policy and others elsewhere in the Plan seek to reinforce the importance of the countryside to the south and west of the settlement boundary. They also respect the importance of the historic core of Hardwicke village based on the Parish Church of St Nicholas, Church Lane, Pound Lane and Sticky Lane.

Policy GEN2 – Accessibility

Proposals that contribute towards improving access to the countryside for visitors and residents for leisure, recreation and health reasons, with a view to enhancing tourism, will be supported where they are consistent with other policies within this Plan.

The local community stated clearly in their response to the NDP consultation that community spirit and maintaining a rural feel were the key issues of importance to them. There is a strong community spirit and the Public House, village green, countryside, shops and a Church, are important contributors to create a 'village feel'. For recreational activities, great importance was given to the existing benefits residents enjoy from the footpaths, village hall, Royal British Legion club, football pitches, canal towpath, walking in open green spaces with lovely vistas, cycling routes, allotments, dog-walking, and wildlife. It will therefore be important that existing public open spaces within Hardwicke will be retained and continue to be made available for use by all.

Accessibility of the countryside helps to support and enhance health and well-being of visitors and residents. It is important to maintain access to, footpaths, recreational, green and open spaces which have a local amenity or conservation value. Leisure and recreation to support health and wellbeing could be developed through circular walk/cycle trails around Hardwicke with particular focus on Glevum Way, the Church and the Gloucester – Sharpness Canal.

Policy GEN3 High Quality Inclusive Design

All development will be designed to a high quality, be inclusive and reinforce local distinctiveness. Proposals will be supported where they have regard to local context and preserves or enhances the character and quality of Hardwicke. Development proposals, extensions and alterations to existing buildings and structures will have regard to the guidelines set out in the Stroud District Local Plan and wherever possible, add local detail.

They will also be required to:

- a. make use of land while respecting settlement patterns, density, character, landscape and biodiversity of the surrounding area;
- b. be suitably designed for the context within which they are set, and use traditional and vernacular building materials where such treatment is appropriate;
- c. ensure that the scale and massing of buildings relate sympathetically to the surrounding area;
- d. utilise modern construction techniques to reduce energy, heat and water consumption; and
- e. create safe environments addressing crime prevention and community safety.

In order to retain the character of Hardwicke, new development must be sympathetically designed so that it is in-keeping with the existing character of the Parish and to reduce the risk of crime. New development should also be sustainably designed to support the transition to a low carbon future, which is one of the key planning principles outlined by the Government within national planning policy.

Development will be encouraged to make the most of 'Building for Life 12' criteria to demonstrate their commitment towards achieving sustainable development and high quality inclusive places and spaces. This commitment includes demonstrating how proposals have maximised the use of renewable energy, minimised energy waste and maximised the capture and use of natural water. Efficient use of space is an important component of good design however this should not be at the expense of building new bungalows. Development proposals must also accord with the design guidance contained within the Stroud District Local Plan.

Detailed Policies

Housing to Meet Local Needs

Policy HOU1 – Infill Development

Infill development will be supported subject to the following criteria:

- a. it is within the settlement boundary or a site allocated for housing by the Stroud District Local Plan;
- b. no harm is caused to the amenities of the occupiers of the neighbouring properties;
- c. the scale, height, form and materials are sympathetic to the neighbouring built form and the character of the street scene;
- d. it does not result in the loss of important open space within Hardwicke;
- e. the traditional boundary treatment of the site is retained and, where feasible, reinforced; and
- f. it is consistent with other policies within this Plan.

As outlined under General Policy 1, Hardwicke does not require any further development during the Plan period to meet its identified need. However, the principle of limited infill dwellings within the settlement boundary is considered acceptable provided that it is consistent with the other policies.

Focusing new development within the settlement boundary ensures that the built extent of the village does not sprawl into the surrounding landscape which is crucial to the rural character of the Parish. It can also help to ensure that new development is concentrated in locations near to established services and facilities, reducing the need for residents to use the private car to access services and facilities to meet their daily needs.

During consultation exercises the local community considered this to be an appropriate method to accommodate further development within the Parish.

Policy HOU2 – Providing well-designed Homes

Proposals for new residential development will be supported where the houses:

- are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping;
- draw on the existing character of the immediate area; and
- reflect good design principles set out within the Stroud Local Plan and supplementary planning guidance

Ensuring that all future dwellings within Hardwicke are designed to the highest quality will ensure that the Parish's distinctive character is retained and new high-quality living environments are created. This is in accordance with Strategic Objective 6 of the Stroud District Local Plan.

Policy HOU2 draws attention to the need to reflect supplementary planning guidance produced by the District Council. The Stroud District Residential Design Guide SPG (November 2000) is particularly applicable to this policy.

Policy HOU3 – Dwelling Mix

All new housing developments should provide and demonstrate an appropriate mix of dwelling types and sizes to meet the needs of current and future households in Hardwicke.

The Hardwicke NDP - Future Housing Assessment document, which forms part of the evidence base, sets out the type and size of housing that has been identified as necessary to meet the needs of the Parish up to 2031. In order to meet this need, all planning applications, including the reserved matters applications for the remaining dwellings at Hunts

Grove and applications on the allocated Hunts Grove Extension site, should take the findings of this document into account when determining the housing types and sizes to be provided so that they meet the identified local need.

Policy HOU4 – Residential Gardens

Proposals for new development in residential gardens will be supported where they do not cause significant adverse impacts upon the character, appearance and amenities of the immediate locality.

Over the past few decades Hardwicke has seen new development being built in residential gardens, which conflicts with the general pattern of development within the settlement. Gardens, and in particular back gardens, also have an important role in promoting biodiversity through their role as wildlife habitats and corridors. They are also important to the health and well-being of communities. New development in gardens will need to demonstrate that it will have minimal impact on the local character of the area in order to comply with this policy.

Policy HOU4 addresses this particular matter due to its significance to the local community. The policy has been designed to add value to Policy HOU1 in this Plan. That policy is more general in the issues it addresses. Proposals for residential development in existing gardens will need to comply with the provisions of both policies.

Improved Services and Facilities

Policy ISF1 – Maintain Services

Proposals that result in the loss of existing local facilities and services as listed in the Facilities and Services Assessment through redevelopment or change of use will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that the existing use is no longer viable.

Responses from the public consultation exercises that were carried out demonstrate that it is vital to safeguard and enhance the important services and facilities that exist within Hardwicke and also make best use of the provision of new facilities (in Hunts Grove) such as a Health facility/Doctors surgery as well as Youth, Community and Family facilities.

The role for Hunts Grove in the Stroud District Local Plan is for it to be the Local Service Centre for the Hardwicke Parish, and forthcoming Services already planned there also include a multi-faith church, sports facilities; health centre; school; allotments; shopping centre and community centre.

The supporting Facilities and Services document demonstrates that the existing services and facilities within the Parish, as well as those to be delivered through the Hunts Grove development, are sufficient to meet the needs of the Parish's residents over the Plan period.

Maintaining the Community

Policy MTC1 – Gloucester Sharpness Canal

Development which enhances the recreational, environmental and leisure value of the canal and its setting will be supported along the Gloucester Sharpness Canal.

The Gloucester Sharpness Canal runs north-south through the centre of the Parish and is highly valued by the local community. Development along the canal is restricted by Policy ES11 of the Stroud District Local Plan. However the canal provides the opportunity to enhance opportunities for recreation, leisure and the environment, and development which seeks to achieve this will be supported by this policy.

Policy MTC2 – Safeguarding Rural Hardwicke’s Rural Character

The Neighbourhood Plan designates the following locations as Local Green Space, as shown on the Policies Map:

- Playing Fields north of Green Lane
- Area around the Village Pond
- The Village Green
- Four Mile Elms allotments
- Open Field on south east side of Church Lane
- Dales Wharf Promenade
- Dales Wharf Promenade/Dinmore Brook crossing

New development will not be permitted on land designated as Local Green Space except in very special circumstances

The Open Spaces Assessment has identified a series of open spaces that are important to the community. In different ways, they provide an outlook from the built-up area and the range of footpaths offer good opportunity for outdoor amenity activities. Some of the open spaces are identified as local green spaces. These are addressed in policy MTC2. Some of these local green spaces sit to the south of the built-up area. They help to provide a wider connection to the countryside in general, and to the historic core of Hardwicke in particular.

Policy MTC3 – Health and Wellbeing

Proposals that retain or enhance the Parish’s network of open spaces and green infrastructure as shown on the policies map will be supported where they are consistent with other policies within the Plan.

Proposals to provide easy and safe access to local parks and valued informal open spaces will also be supported.

Policy MTC3 provides a context for the protection and enhancement of open spaces in the Plan area. They are shown on the policies map and their details are set out in the Open Spaces Assessment January 2017. Footpaths within these areas and footpaths that connect into these open spaces should also be retained.

Protecting the Environment

Policy ENV1 – Environmental Assets

The quality of Hardwicke’s natural environment will be conserved and enhanced by ensuring that new development:

- a. conserves and enhances the setting and qualities of Hardwicke’s countryside;
- b. provides a net gain in Hardwicke’s biodiversity, where possible, through positive management of an enhanced network of designated sites and green infrastructure;
- c. preserves open spaces that have been identified as important to the Hardwicke community;
- d. provides and maintains effective Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems where proven necessary; and
- e. takes into account Hardwicke’s best and most versatile agricultural land.

As noted by the community during the NDP consultation exercises, the natural environment of Hardwicke contains a number of assets which contribute towards the rural setting of the village. It is essential that the identified assets are protected in order to retain the character of the settlement, which is highly valued by local people.

The supporting Ecological Assessment document has identified a number of sites that are of particular ecological value within the Parish. These sites should be protected from development, and opportunities to enhance biodiversity elsewhere within the Parish should be sought. Likewise, the Open Spaces identified within the supporting Open Space Assessment as ‘significantly important’ and ‘important’ to the Hardwicke Community should be preserved. The wider countryside located within the Parish is also important to its character and must be effectively conserved.

The local community have also expressed concerns in relation to flood risk within the Parish. All new developments should therefore provide effective Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) where proven necessary, and these shall be properly maintained to ensure that developments do not increase the risk of flooding throughout their lifetimes.

Policy ENV2 – Landscape

Where possible new developments should seek to contribute to protect existing trees, hedgerows and other landscape features. Planting for new development should incorporate native trees and shrubs characteristic of the local area.

The Stroud District Landscape Character Appraisal identifies that Hardwicke Parish lies within the Rolling Agricultural Plain landscape area, which is characterised by strong field patterns that are medium to small in scale; dispersed pattern of isolated villages amongst arable and pasture land uses; semi-enclosed landscapes with some distant views; and views across flat terrain towards churches from within settlements.

Although also sited within the Gloucester Fringe, the Parish reflects the above key characteristic features of the Rolling Agricultural Plain Landscape Character Area. It is important that these are retained in order to conserve the landscape value of the Parish and character area.

Existing trees within the Parish shall be protected, and developments should seek to avoid locating developments within root protection zones.

Moreover, any proposed planting and landscaping schemes which accompany development within Hardwicke shall incorporate the existing landscape features of the Parish so that any future developments effectively assimilate into the Parish's environment.

Policy ENV3 – Wildlife

Proposals for development on land identified as Biodiversity Sites on the Policies Map will not be supported.

New development that contributes to the net improvement of biodiversity and wildlife corridors in the surrounding area will be supported, where it is consistent with other policies within this Plan.

The supporting Ecological Assessment document has identified areas that contain valuable biodiversity

habitats, and these have subsequently been translated onto the proposals map. It has been identified through the NDP consultation exercises that the rich and diverse flora and fauna found within the Parish is highly valued by the community and, in accordance with national planning policy, it is therefore necessary to protect and enhance these areas.

Policy ENV3 recognises that green wildlife corridors are important to help safeguard local flora and fauna. On this basis, the second part of the policy sets out a positive context within which new development that contributes to the net improvement of biodiversity and wildlife corridors in the surrounding area will be supported.

Communication and Transport

Policy CT1 – Parking

All new development should provide car parking in accordance with the standards set out in the development plan. Where appropriate proposed developments that attract high levels of traffic at certain times should provide for car parking and drop off facilities either within the site or within close proximity to the facility.

All new developments should provide a level of parking that is in accordance with the standards outlined within the development plan in place at the time of the determination of any planning application. At the time of the submission of the Plan this was Policy CP13 of the Stroud District Local Plan. This Plan gives a local dimension to the Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan.

The local community has identified that parking is an issue within the village, notably at Hardwicke Parochial School. In order to ensure that further developments within the Parish do not cause similar issues, developments that will attract a high level of traffic should provide adequate car parking facilities to adequately accommodate for the vehicular movements to and from the development. In appropriate circumstances developments that generate significant

levels of traffic at specific times during the day should also provide dropping off facilities in order to ensure the safety of the local highway network.

Enhancing the Local Economy

Policy EC1 – Location of Employment Development

Proposals for new employment development (Use Classes B1, B2 and B8) on the existing employment sites as shown on the Policies Map will be supported. Proposals for employment development outside of the allocated employment land will be considered against the requirements of General Policy 1.

There are a number of existing employment sites within Hardwicke Parish, and these are identified on the proposals map. It is outlined within the supporting NDP Business Summary document that local businesses have not expressed any particular needs during the Plan period. Therefore it is concluded that any additional employment development within Hardwicke can be accommodated for within the existing employment sites.

This is consistent with the approach of the Stroud District Local Plan, which seeks for employment growth to be focussed on existing employment sites.

Policy EC2 – Existing Employment

Insofar as planning permission is required, proposals for the change of use of existing business premises to other non-employment use classes will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that the existing use is no longer viable.

In accordance with national and local planning policies, existing employment premises shall be protected for employment purposes. In order to prove that the existing use is no longer viable evidence should be provided to demonstrate that the premises has been unsuccessfully marketed for 12 months consecutively.