

Cinderford and Ruspidge

Introduction

- 2.1 Cinderford and Ruspidge are located on a valley side on the eastern fringe of the Forest of Dean. The two settlements are linked, with Cinderford situated in the north and Ruspidge in the south in a steeper and narrower part of the valley. The combined population of Cinderford and Ruspidge is approximately 10,000. It is a principal settlement in Structure Plan terms. To the east Cinderford stretches outside the boundary of the Forest and to the west onto a flat valley floor abutting the edge of the statutory forest. The presence of the valley side and the forest edge are major constraints on potential development sites in Cinderford. Cinderford and Ruspidge form one of the four principal settlements in the District.
- 2.2 The historical evolution of Cinderford and Ruspidge is closely linked with the growth of the iron and coal industries. The traditional, rather haphazard settlement pattern is still visible in the layout and form of the town's older residential and commercial areas, but is now interspersed with newer infill development. The remnants of the industrial past are less visible. Now only a small number of mine buildings and other features related to the coal, iron and transport industries remain. Although most of the old industrial buildings have been demolished and many sites have been redeveloped, there is extensive surviving archaeological evidence relating to the areas industrial past. These remains include archaeological deposits and surviving above ground structures. Where development proposals are likely to affect sites of archaeological interest or potential, archaeological assessments will be required in accordance with Policy (R)FHE.7.
- 2.3 Since the last Local Plan, Cinderford has grown modestly. Recent housing developments include the erection of 26 flats at the former lorry park on Valley Road, redevelopment work at Hilldene in the north east of Cinderford to replace blocks of local authority flats, and the redevelopment of the former college site in Station Street.
- 2.4 Cinderford is a major employment centre in the Forest of Dean. The present industrial area centred on the Forest Vale Industrial Estate is almost completely developed and is the most extensive in the Forest of Dean and occupies much of the flat valley floor to the west of the town.
- 2.5 Of all the Forest towns Cinderford is in the greatest need of revitalisation and is perceived as such by local residents and by the Forest of Dean District Council. There is a need for investment, especially in the town centre, and for the continued development of employment both on new land to be identified and within the existing town.
- 2.6 Cinderford and Ruspidge are set in attractive locations. The statutory Forest and attractive countryside surround the town and there are long views of the Forest landscape from the town's high points. The close proximity of the statutory Forest does however restrict development opportunities within Cinderford.

Development Strategy

- 2.7 The Plan strategy has the aim of revitalisation of the Forest of Dean, with a particular need for action in the south Forest. The key locations for new development to assist revitalisation are the three south Forest towns. Of these, Cinderford has the largest current employment base, principally related to the very extensive industrial area (Forest Vale Industrial Estate) located on the western edge of the town, and has the largest population base. The Plan will propose further development at Cinderford to build upon the role of the town as an important employment and service centre.

- 2.8 Cinderford also has the greatest need of revitalisation. A series of in-depth investigations of the town and various successful funding bid documents have identified the issues facing the town. These include a town centre lacking vitality and with an under- developed service function, an urban fabric displaying clear signs of decay and the need for renewal, pockets of high levels of social deprivation including low household incomes, low educational attainment, poor health, and other associated deprivation indicators, and a relatively narrow employment base.
- 2.9 Cinderford is identified in the Council's Corporate Plan and in this Local Plan as the priority target for action to achieve community revitalisation. A Cinderford Partnership has been established to provide the focus for a wide variety of actions. A vital role for the Local Plan is to provide a framework of policies and proposals which will promote development and investment that will contribute to revitalisation.
- 2.10 The strategy for Cinderford therefore will:
- Provide for continued opportunities for employment development through land allocations
 - Identify improvements to the town centre in order to create opportunities for employment, investment in improving the urban fabric, and for developing the vitality and viability of the town centre
 - Provide for housing land opportunities to increase the catchment population base of the town and town centre, and to provide a range of new housing stock, including affordable housing
 - Promote the redevelopment of brownfield sites and allocate sites for mixed use development, particularly where there are opportunities for associated urban improvements and making better use of land
 - Identify a transport network for Cinderford which would lead to a reduction of lorry movements through the town centre
 - Enable additional investment in essential infrastructure and services for the benefit of Cinderford
- 2.11 Around 26 hectares of land will be allocated for employment use, sites will be allocated for development in the town centre, mixed use sites will be allocated for both employment and housing uses, and land will be allocated for around 585 dwellings, environmental improvement schemes will be identified and brownfield sites proposed for redevelopment to improve the urban fabric.
- 2.12 The strategy will make use of opportunities for the development of land. It is acknowledged however, that there are major constraints to overcome, as the physical form of Cinderford, the topography and the presence of the statutory Forest boundary so close to the existing urban edge all provide major constraints. There will be a need to concentrate opportunities on previously developed sites in many cases. Many of these sites have associated problems, for example, of potential instability from underground workings, or contamination, fragmented ownerships, and existing uses.
- 2.13 In implementing the above strategy, the Council will work with the Cinderford Partnership and utilise potential funding sources from the Single Regeneration Budget, Coalfields Regeneration funding, and the Regional Development Agency, all of which have indicated or have identified a resource allocation to Cinderford.

Employment

- 2.14 Opportunities for further employment development at Cinderford will be identified in relation to the allocation of land to the west of Cinderford and in the Newtown area, mixed use sites within the town, and opportunities in the town centre. The town centre will be considered later in this chapter.
- 2.15 The principal concentration of employment land is at the existing Forest Vale and Whimsey industrial areas, where approximately 13 hectares of undeveloped land is available, as indicated by the two policies below.

Employment Allocation - Forest Vale and Whimsey Industrial Estates

(R)F.Cinderford 1

Around 10 hectares of land within Forest Vale and Whimsey Industrial Estates will be allocated for B1, B2 and B8 employment use.

- 2.16 The above land principally comprises the undeveloped parts of the existing industrial estates at Forest Vale, and the adjoining Whimsey Industrial Estate. It includes various undeveloped plots available for development.
- 2.17 The above allocated land is a vital employment resource for Cinderford, given the constraints upon identifying additional land for employment. The Council will strictly apply policy (R)FE.3, which restricts the change of use of employment land. The Council will also implement the provisions of Policy (R)FE.2 to these established employment sites, particularly with respect to seeking enhancements to the environmental quality and amenity of this employment area.
- 2.18 The capacity of the overall industrial area identified by the above policy may well exceed 10 hectares. This is because there is land within the allocated area which is presently occupied but is under-used, or in a semi-derelict state. These conditions particularly apply in an area lying in an arc between Steam Mills Road and Valley Road. Policy (R)FE.2 would permit the further intensification or redevelopment of this area for employment use.
- 2.19 The proximity of the industrial area to Cinderford, offers an opportunity to ensure that new development can be accessed by a variety of transport modes including walking, cycling and public transport. Development proposals for the site should reflect criteria set out in policies (R)FT.1 and (R)FT.3 of the Forest of Dean Local Plan, and where appropriate, contributions to highway and transport infrastructure will be sought.
- 2.20 The undeveloped sites contain a number of ecological features, including watercourses, marshy areas and trees. Existing ecological features should be retained where possible and Policy (R)FNE.3 will apply to all development proposals.

Employment Allocation - Newtown

(R)F.Cinderford 2

3 hectares of land at Newtown is allocated for classes B1, B2 and B8 employment use. Only B1 use will be permitted adjoining the existing residential area of Newtown in order to protect residential amenity. The development will be required to:

- 1. Provide appropriate contributions to the construction of the proposed Forest Vale Spine Road extension where required to provide access to the allocated site.**
- 2. Provide for safe and convenient pedestrian and cycling links to the adjoining highway network and the town centre.**
- 3. Provide appropriate contributions to provide and enhance bus services to link the site to the principal trip attractors in Cinderford and to the surrounding employee catchment areas.**

- 2.21 The allocated site principally comprises an open field, together with some mixed industrial and residential uses occupying a southern section of the site. On the western boundary of the allocated site the Plan provides for the Forest Vale spine road extension, from the vicinity of the Winner Garage in the south to a junction with Steam Mills road in the north.
- 2.22 This is a key site for prospective employment development in Cinderford as it is a relatively unconstrained site in physical terms, although it will require the provision of services and access. There is the potential to include the occupied parts of the allocated site (which are not intensively used) through redevelopment. The Regional Development Agency have identified the land as a potential site for investment.
- 2.23 The development of the site will be required to contribute to the proposed construction of the Forest Vale spine road extension, from which it can obtain access. The Highway Authority has indicated that it will not support any additional access to Newtown Road, in order to prevent increased traffic using this substandard route.
- 2.24 Development will be restricted to B1 use only adjoining the existing residential area of Newtown on the northern boundary of the allocated site. Proposals will be assessed to ensure they do not detract from the present level of amenity for existing dwellings.
- 2.25 A development brief has been prepared for this site and is available as supplementary planning guidance. The brief provides a guide for development at the northern end of Cinderford and covers employment land at Northern United, (policy (R)F.Cinderford 3) the mixed use allocation at Newtown (policy (R)F.Cinderford 5), and the Western Access Road (policy (R)F.Cinderford 14).

Employment Allocation - Northern United

(R)F.Cinderford 3

8.7 hectares of land at Northern United will be allocated for B1, B2 and B8 employment use. Proposals for development will be required to contribute to the proposed western access road to Cinderford which will also provide access to this allocated site. In addition a contribution will be required towards the construction of facilities to encourage access by walking, cycling and public transport.

- 2.26 Northern United largely comprises a former colliery site now occupied in part by a variety of businesses and extends to the east to include the brickworks. Adjoining the occupied area is additional vacant land which is included in the allocation. A stoned forest track runs through the allocated site from the A.4136 and continues to join Forest Vale road, which is the principal spine road for the industrial area of Cinderford. The Plan proposes that a new western access road to Cinderford from the A.4136 should follow the general alignment of the stoned track, and eventually should form part of the principal lorry access route for the town. (See policy (R)F.Cinderford 12).
- 2.27 The allocated site has been agreed as a priority investment site by the Regional Development Agency and is eligible for Coalfields Regeneration funding. It is anticipated that investment will be made within the Plan period to provide infrastructure, tackle any issues of instability or contamination, and rationalise uses to enable additional development to take place. This is regarded as a key development opportunity for Cinderford. The eventual redevelopment of the site is likely to retain some users, in which case a total area of 8.7 hectares may not ultimately be available for development.
- 2.28 Access to the site will be from the A.4136. Development will be required to contribute to the improvement of the forest track running through the allocated site to bring it up to a standard suitable to form part of the proposed western access road to Cinderford. Highway improvements are likely to be required where the new western access road forms a junction with the A.4136.

Employment Allocation - Lightmoor

(R)F.Cinderford 4

1 hectare of land at Lightmoor will be allocated for B1, B2 and B8 employment use. Development will be required to safeguard and enhance the former Engine House within the site.

- 2.29 Lightmoor is a former colliery site now occupied principally by a timber processing use. There is currently little opportunity for additional development on the site. This situation could change however, and the site offers potential therefore for a future more intensive use. The site is eligible for Coalfields Regeneration funding should the opportunity for redevelopment arise.
- 2.30 The former colliery engine house within the site is an important historic reminder of the previous use, and is a Listed building. Any development affecting the Listed building or its setting will be required to safeguard the engine house, and where appropriate to contribute to its enhancement.
- 2.31 The site lies within the woodlands of the Forest of Dean. The Landscape Character Assessment which has been published as supplementary planning guidance, recognises the Forest of Dean as a distinct landscape type. Development should be designed and located with sensitivity to this forest setting. Careful consideration should be given to enhancing the setting of development and ensuring that views of the development are mitigated.

Mixed Use Allocations

- 2.32 The urban form of Cinderford contains significant areas of existing mixed development, with employment and residential areas in close proximity and sometimes intermingled. There are areas which provide specific opportunities for promoting redevelopment in the form of mixed use development sites. One such site in Cinderford is allocated in this Plan, at Newtown. Other opportunities may also arise, and will be considered under policy (R)FE.3 which provides for alternative uses, while still retaining an emphasis upon protecting employment land for continued beneficial employment use.

Mixed Use Allocation - Newtown

(R)F.Cinderford 5

6 hectares of land at Newtown will be allocated to accommodate about 70 dwellings and about 3.4 hectares of employment land for B1 and B2 uses. The development will be required to:

1. Provide for the construction of the proposed Forest Vale spine road extension where it passes through the allocated site
2. Provide for strategic landscaping to the site boundaries and within the site, incorporating existing landscape features where appropriate
3. Provide for mitigation measures and compensatory provision to address environmental impacts arising from the development
4. Provide for safe and convenient pedestrian and cycling links to the adjoining highway network, to the town centre and to continue the Linear Park footpath
5. Provide for access to land to the west of the site allocated for recreation and leisure use under policy (R)F.Cinderford 15
6. Provide for an appropriate number of affordable housing units
7. Provide an appropriate contribution to educational provision for the prospective occupiers of the site
8. Provide an appropriate contribution to youth/adult playspace provision within Cinderford
9. Provide an appropriate contribution to enhanced bus services to link the site with the principal trip attractors in Cinderford.

- 2.33 The site allocated by the above policy provides a significant opportunity within Cinderford to provide for both housing and employment uses, the redevelopment of brownfield land with more compatible uses, access to a proposed leisure development area and the opportunity to secure investment in transport

infrastructure in relation to the Forest Vale spine road extension. A development brief has been prepared for the site as supplementary planning guidance.

- 2.34 Land to the east of the proposed spine road will be allocated for housing development. The land currently is unused or under-used, and part is an employment site. Existing residential development is located to the north and south of the site. Access to the site will be from the proposed spine road extension which will have a junction with Steam Mills Road. The development will be required to fund the construction of the spine road through the site. Newtown Road is unsuited to provide access to the site. The Council will give priority to the construction of the proposed Western Access Road as the primary access route into Cinderford. The need for the construction of the Spine Road Extension will be judged against the progress made on securing the Western Access Road. The Council will seek appropriate contributions to the improvement of bus, pedestrian and cycle links to local facilities and to the town centre, to educational provision, affordable housing and play space provision.
- 2.35 To the west of the proposed spine road alignment a site of 3.3 hectares is allocated for B1 and B2 employment uses. This site is a key employment development proposal and is anticipated to be available for development. The site has the potential to be able to provide a good quality environment capable of attracting a variety of uses. A high standard of development will be sought. Where the site fronts residential development conditions will be applied to protect residential amenity. There will be a need to investigate ground conditions as the site has previously been utilised for open cast coal and clay extraction.
- 2.36 Development of the allocated site will be required to provide for vehicular access to the west, where land is allocated for tourism, recreational and leisure use.
- 2.37 Cinderford is identified as a Forest Fringe Settlement in the Landscape Character Assessment, which has been published as supplementary planning guidance. The layout and design of new development should complement the characteristics of this landscape. Careful consideration should be given to enhancing the setting of development and ensuring that views of the development are mitigated.
- 2.38 The site allocation includes land within the Cinderford Linear Park which is identified as an English Nature Grassland Inventory Site and a Key Wildlife Site and thus a site of Local Nature Conservation Interest subject to Policy (R)FNE.9. This provides, in summary, that unavoidable harm to nature conservation interests must be minimised and that proposals which are permitted for their social or economic benefits will be required to provide compensation for those nature conservation features that would be harmed or lost as a result of the development, with the overall aims to ensure no net loss of biodiversity and to enhance it wherever possible.

Housing

- 2.39 The Plan strategy provides for the concentration of new housing development on the towns in the District. Provision will be made for around 585 dwellings in Cinderford.
- 2.40 Since 1991 approximately 500 dwellings have been completed in the Cinderford and Ruspidge area, and there are outstanding consents for around 192 dwellings, with a further 74 under construction at the start of 2004. Housing completions have tended to slow down in Cinderford in the latter part of the last decade as the housing land supply has decreased.
- 2.41 Only one greenfield site is identified in the Plan for housing development, for 150 dwellings at St. Whites Farm. The remaining sites are predominantly previously used or under-used land, including mixed use sites as referred to earlier in this chapter.

Housing Allocation – Station Street

(R)F.Cinderford 6

5.1 hectares of land at Station Street will be allocated to accommodate at least 165 dwellings. The development will be required to:

1. Provide for safe and convenient pedestrian and cycling links to the town centre.
2. Provide for off site highway improvements to enable appropriate access to the site
3. Provide for an appropriate number of affordable housing units.
4. Provide an appropriate contribution to education provision for the prospective occupiers of the site
5. Provide an appropriate contribution to youth/adult playspace provision in Cinderford
6. Provide for an appropriate contribution to improving or replacing a community building for the benefit of site occupiers.

2.42 This is a large site located in close proximity to the town centre. The principal uses comprise a foundry and an adjoining business park. Both have been subject to planning permission for residential redevelopment in the past. The permission on the foundry site has lapsed, but that on the business park is current. A further planning permission has been issued for residential development on another part of the site.

2.43 There will need to be provision for appropriate vehicular access to the site, and off-site provision for pedestrian and cycle links to the town centre together with an appropriate contribution to educational provision and to affordable housing provision on the site. The Council will also seek to negotiate a contribution to the provision of community facilities. A development brief has been prepared for the site as supplementary planning guidance.

Housing Allocation - Valley Road North

(R)F.Cinderford 7

0.65 hectares of land at Valley Road will be allocated to accommodate about 30 dwellings. The development will be required to:

1. Provide for safe and convenient pedestrian and cycling links to the town centre
2. Provide for an appropriate number of affordable housing units
3. Provide an appropriate contribution to educational provision for the occupiers of the site
4. Provide for amenity open space and play space within the site
5. Provide an appropriate contribution to youth/adult playspace provision within Cinderford
6. Provide an appropriate contribution to off site highway works to provide safe vehicular access to the site
7. Provide an appropriate contribution to enhanced bus services to link to the town centre.

The Council will seek to ensure a comprehensive development of the allocated site.

2.44 The allocated site is currently occupied principally by a coach depot and a breakers yard. The site provides an opportunity for redevelopment for residential use. A development brief will be prepared for the site to form supplementary planning guidance.

Housing Allocation - St. Whites Farm

(R)F.Cinderford 8

7.1 hectares of land at St. Whites Farm will be allocated to accommodate about 150 dwellings and the relocation or expansion of St. Whites Primary School. Development will be required to:

1. Provide for strategic landscaping to the site boundaries, and within the site, incorporating existing landscape features and hedgerows where appropriate
2. Provide for safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle links to the surrounding highway network and to the town centre
3. Provide for the retention or diversion of existing public rights of way within the site and for pedestrian access to footpaths adjoining the site
4. Make available within the site sufficient land to accommodate the needs of St. Whites primary school for either relocation or expansion
5. Provide for an appropriate number of affordable housing units
6. Provide an appropriate contribution to educational provision for the prospective occupiers of the site
7. Provide an appropriate contribution to off site highway works necessary to accommodate the vehicle movements arising from the site
8. Provide an appropriate contribution to enhanced bus services to link the site with principal trip attractors in Cinderford
9. Provide an appropriate contribution to youth/adult playspace provision within Cinderford.

- 2.45 St. Whites Farm is located on rising ground to the south of Cinderford, and lies within Ruspidge Parish. It abuts the existing irregular but almost continuously developed frontage dwellings to the B.4226. Much of the site is elevated above that road and enjoys good long views over the forest to the west of Cinderford.
- 2.46 The boundaries of the allocated site are carefully drawn to achieve containment of the development within the landscape in relation to existing hedge-lines and trees and ensuring that development remains below the ridgeline to the east. Although Cinderford and Ruspidge are identified as Forest Fringe settlements, the site at St. Whites is characteristic of the Ridges and Valleys landscape type as described in the Landscape Character Assessment which has been published as supplementary planning guidance. The layout and design of new development should complement the characteristics of this landscape. Careful consideration should be given to enhancing the setting of development and ensuring that views of the development are mitigated. A development brief has been prepared for the site and is available as supplementary planning guidance. Access to the site will be from the B.4226 to the north.
- 2.47 The adjoining St. Whites primary school is on a split and highly constrained site. Provision will need to be made within the allocated site for either a new school site, or an extension of the site area of the existing school. Detailed discussions will be required with the County Education department to establish the requirement, including the potential for vehicular access to the school through the allocated site. The development will be required to contribute to provision for the educational needs of the site occupants. This contribution will be in relation to the needs of the development and will include land and contributions to buildings as appropriate when the needs of the school are established.
- 2.48 5.1 hectares of the site as defined on the Proposals Map will accommodate about 150 dwellings at a density of not less than 30 dwellings per hectare including access roads within the site, private garden space, car parking, incidental open space, strategic landscaping and children's play areas. The remaining 2 hectares will accommodate the relocation or expansion of St Whites Primary School with any residual land being made available as open space.

- 2.49 Appropriate contributions will be sought for off-site improvements at the junction of St. Whites Road and Valley Road, to improvements to the footpath and cycle links with the town centre, and to enhanced bus links to the town centre. The Council will negotiate an affordable housing provision on the site based on information from the Housing Waiting List and the Housing Needs Study.
- 2.50 The opportunity may arise for Cinderford Rugby Club to re-locate to a site south east of St. Whites Farm. In the event of this becoming a firm proposal, Policy (R)FTRL.2 would apply and there is no requirement to make a specific land allocation in the plan.

Housing Allocation - Nailbridge

(R)F.Cinderford 9

2.8 hectares of land at Nailbridge will be allocated to accommodate about 70 dwellings. The development will be required to:

1. Provide for strategic landscaping to the site boundaries, and within the site, incorporating existing landscape features and hedgerows where appropriate
2. Provide for safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle links to the surrounding highway network and to the town centre
3. Provide for pedestrian access to footpaths adjoining the site
4. Provide for the continuation of leisure access through the site to conform to policy (R)F.Cinderford 14
5. Provide for an appropriate number of affordable housing units
6. Provide an appropriate contribution to off site highway works to provide safe vehicular access to the site
7. Provide an appropriate contribution to educational provision for the prospective occupiers of the site
8. Provide an appropriate contribution to enhanced bus services to link the site with principal trip attractors in Cinderford
9. Provide an appropriate contribution to youth/adult playspace provision within Cinderford.

- 2.51 The land allocated by this policy comprises two parts. The northern area is the site of the disused Nailbridge sawmill. It is separated from the southern part by existing sporadic low density development. The southern part comprises a field which adjoins the aforementioned residential area to the north. A recreation ground containing a football pitch lies to the south. Both sites gain access separately from a minor roadway with a junction to the A.4151 to the west.
- 2.52 The prior use of the sawmill site may have given rise to issues of ground instability and contamination. The allocated site is bisected by a culverted watercourse in the sawmill area, which continues to become the western boundary of the pasture field. There is a risk of flooding from the watercourse. Proposals for development will need to address the above issues.
- 2.53 Nailbridge is a settlement lying within the Forest Fringe. The Forest Fringe is identified as a specific landscape type by the Landscape Character Assessment, which is published as supplementary planning guidance. The layout and design of new development should complement the characteristics of this landscape. Careful consideration should be given to enhancing the setting of the development and ensuring that views of the development are mitigated.
- 2.54 An improved access will be required from the A.4151, to provide access to each of the two parts of the allocated site. The Council will negotiate appropriate contributions to improved bus, cycle and pedestrian links to provide for access to local facilities and to the town centre, a contribution to educational needs if required, and to the provision of affordable housing on the allocated site. A development brief has been prepared for the site and is available as supplementary planning guidance. The brief indicates a possible internal link between the two parts of the allocated site.

Housing Allocation - Valley Road South

(R)F.Cinderford 10

2.6 hectares of land at Valley Road will be allocated to accommodate about 90 dwellings. The development will be required to:

1. Provide for strategic landscaping to the site boundaries and within the site, incorporating existing landscape features where appropriate
2. Provide for safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle links to the surrounding highway network and to the town centre
3. Provide for an appropriate number of affordable housing units
4. Lay out and provide for the future maintenance of amenity land and playspace
5. Provide an appropriate contribution to educational provision for the prospective occupiers of the site
6. Provide an appropriate contribution to off-site highway works necessary to accommodate the vehicle movements arising from the site.
7. Provide an appropriate contribution to youth/adult playspace provision within Cinderford.

2.55 About 1.8 hectares of the allocated site is occupied by an abattoir with associated open land to its east which acts as a cordon sanitaire for surrounding dwellings. It is this site principally which is proposed for residential development. The northern part of the allocated site, comprising about 0.8 hectare of land, is presently used as an open amenity area contributing to the cordon sanitaire around the abattoir.

2.56 If the abattoir should relocate, there is an opportunity to re-develop the site for residential use. The site should be designed to incorporate an amenity area and playspace to meet the requirements of the future occupiers of the development. The development will be required to make secure provision for the future maintenance of the play and amenity area.

2.57 Cinderford is identified as a Forest Fringe Settlement in the Landscape Character Assessment, which has been published as supplementary planning guidance. The layout and design of new development should complement the characteristics of this landscape. Careful consideration should be given to enhancing the setting of the development and ensuring that views of the development are mitigated. A development brief has been prepared for the site and is available as supplementary planning guidance.

Town Centre

2.58 Cinderford town centre is not thriving. The town centre Health Checks study (1999) concluded it was in a neutral state of health, where indicators gave cause for some concern about the ability of the town in its present form to fulfil its potential, and to adequately cater for the needs of the catchment population, retailers and investors. Initiatives were considered to be necessary to improve the functioning of the town centre

2.59 The above study did not conclude that the town centre was in decline. It did establish that it is vulnerable, particularly to competition from Coleford and Lydney, as well as to other centres outside the District. Particular features of concern were the poor pedestrian environment, the unattractive wider environment, neglected buildings, a high level of vacant premises and pedestrian/vehicle conflict. Coleford and Lydney both offer clear opportunities for retail development sites within their town centres. The dense urban character and the topography of Cinderford offers much more restricted opportunity. There is a need to be aware of the potential impact upon Cinderford of town centre development in other centres, and to promote such opportunities in Cinderford.

2.60 There are also some strong factors which underpin the prospects for enhancing the functioning of Cinderford town centre. It has by far the highest pedestrian flows in the prime shopping area of any of the District towns, it is the second largest centre in terms of numbers of shopping units, it has a very stable retail base, and with the Westgate store and Woolworths it has two important retail attractors for comparison goods.

2.61 The need for revitalisation in Cinderford has been established earlier. Improving the performance and attractiveness of the town centre will play a key role in achieving this objective. There is a very high outflow of expenditure from Cinderford for both convenience and comparison goods expenditure (60% and 80% respectively). The strategy must be to aim to recapture a proportion of this lost expenditure in the form of new retail floorspace and other investment in the town centre, to provide for new jobs, investment to refurbish the environment and to improve amenity for town centre users, and to increase the level of services and facilities locally accessible to the catchment population.

2.62 The Plan therefore will contain policies and proposals to:

- Identify and allocate sites for development
- Encourage mixed uses in town centre premises
- Identify opportunities for environmental improvements
- Identify opportunities for traffic management
- Reduce pedestrian/vehicle conflict
- Propose additional car parking and associated
- Pedestrian links to the town centre.

2.63 The Council will work with the private sector, other bodies and particularly the Cinderford Partnership to develop and implement the above proposals.

Environmental Improvements

2.64 A scheme to improve the environment of the Triangle area is complete. This will have important beneficial effects. The Council, with its partners, will now proceed to develop and implement a complementary scheme to extend improvements from the High Street adjoining the Triangle up to the Dockham Road/Co-op supermarket area. These two schemes encompass most of the primary shopping frontages of Cinderford. Part of the latter scheme included a proposal to develop new public car parking at Heywood Road (including the Marshall's Lane car park), and provide improved pedestrian linkages to the High Street. The proposal will be complemented by the recent completion of a 500m² net retail floorspace extension to the Co-op supermarket, with associated amenity improvements to the highway frontage in the Dockham Road area.

Car Parking

2.65 Most of the town centre car parks were operating near capacity at peak times. Only a minority of the off street car parks are in public ownership. Adequate and convenient town centre parking is an essential element of the effective functioning of small and rural towns such as Cinderford. The extension of the Co-op supermarket has reduced the available off street parking.

2.66 As noted above therefore, a new public car park has been constructed. The provision of this car park, with associated public toilets and improved pedestrian access to High Street, is a key development for Cinderford town centre in the Plan period, particularly when linked to the environmental improvement scheme noted above.

Town Centre Transport

2.67 The A.4151 passes through Cinderford town centre and provides access to other routes which form part of the lorry route network for the Forest of Dean. The alignment of the High Street in particular leads to clear problems of vehicle/pedestrian conflict, with a relatively narrow carriageway, pavements which are of inadequate width in places, and with most of High Street being on quite a steep incline.

2.68 The Council proposes to work with the County Council to develop a traffic management strategy and proposals which would aim to reduce the level of conflict in the town centre, and where possible to manage the routing of HGV traffic away from the town centre.

Heywood Road Site

(R)F.Cinderford 11

0.38 hectares of land will be allocated adjoining Heywood Road/High Street for retail use. Other uses appropriate to a town centre, including residential use, will be permissible but should not result in a significant loss of continuity of retail frontage at ground floor level. Development will be required to contribute to environmental improvements in the High Street/Dockham Road area.

- 2.69 The frontage to this allocated site comprises a secondary retail frontage at present. It is positioned however, between the primary shopping area of the Triangle and a principal trip attractor at the Co-op. It is a prominent frontage within the town centre environment. The Council propose to undertake an environmental improvement scheme between the High Street and Dockham Road. There is the opportunity therefore to improve the performance of this site within the town centre. Development will be required to contribute to the above improvements.
- 2.70 The primary use of ground floors within this frontage will be for retail purposes. However, given its current secondary frontage status it would be permissible to permit other appropriate town centre uses at ground floor level, provided that cumulatively they would not result in a loss of continuity of retail frontage. Provision should be made as appropriate to link to the east-west pedestrian access, and to provide for pedestrian access through to Heywood Road
- 2.71 The redevelopment of this site and the High Street/Marshall's Lane site will provide approximately 10 dwellings.

Transport

- 2.72 The principal east-west route through the Forest of Dean is the A.4136 which is located immediately to the north of Cinderford. The County Council lorry management strategy seeks to direct HGV traffic with appropriate destinations onto this route. Cinderford is connected to the A.4136 by the A.4151, which runs through Steam Mills, the High Street and the town centre, and through residential streets. The A.4151 also provides the main access into the principal employment area of Cinderford to the west of the town.
- 2.73 The poor alignment and conflicting land uses along the A.4151 generates problems of vehicle/pedestrian conflict. It is proposed therefore to protect land for the future construction of a western access road into Cinderford from the area of Northern United to the existing Forest Vale spine road. This will provide for HGV and other traffic with a destination in Cinderford's principal employment area. The new road will contribute to the management of through traffic by providing an alternative route, encouraging traffic to avoid travelling through the town centre. In effect it will also function as a bypass to the west of Cinderford, eventually linking the A.4136 with Cinderford Bridge and the B.4226 Speech House road, the latter giving access to the central Forest communities.
- 2.74 The western access road would need to be funded principally from development contributions. Land has been allocated alongside sections of the route which may bring forward such contributions. It may be however, that progress on completing the route will extend beyond the end of the Plan period. The route should be identified and safeguarded however, as a strategic transport proposal for Cinderford.
- 2.75 The 1996 Local Plan safeguarded a further route, known as the Forest Vale spine road extension. This route continues the present Forest Vale road from the vicinity of Winner Garage to a junction with Steam Mills road. The purpose of the route proposal is to relieve traffic, particularly HGV movements, along a section of Steam Mills road and give direct access to the employment area west of Cinderford, and also function as a western bypass as described above.
- 2.76 It is proposed to continue to safeguard this route as it is possible it may be capable of being constructed during the present Plan period. It will need to be funded principally from development contributions, and land has been allocated for development in the Plan period along the length of the route. When

constructed it will serve the purpose identified above and will give partial relief to the Steam Mills area. When the western access road is completed it would be possible to consider traffic management measures in Steam Mills to mitigate the effects of traffic, and manage the movement of HGV traffic.

- 2.77 The District Council will work with the County council on investigating and implementing a traffic management system in Cinderford which would aim at reducing the level of vehicle/pedestrian conflict and HGV traffic within Cinderford, particularly in the High Street and town centre and at Steam Mills. The investigation will also encompass the potential for developing the Forest Vale road alignment as a bypass to Cinderford, and the consequences for other parts of the highway network, at Cinderford Bridge and on St. Whites Road for example.

Western Access Route - Safeguarding

(R)F.Cinderford 12

Land will be safeguarded as shown on the Proposals Map Inset to enable the construction of a western access road into Cinderford. The development will be required to provide for mitigation measures and compensatory provision to address environmental impacts arising from the development.

- 2.78 A route for the western access road is shown on the Proposals Map Inset. Further design work on the route will be required. Policies (R)F.Cinderford 3 and 16 identify the need for development gaining access from this route to contribute to the cost of its construction. The proposed road passes through a Key Wildlife Site. The ecological damage or loss resulting from the construction of the new road across the Key Wildlife Site will need to be mitigated, and compensatory provision made, as required by Policy (R)FNE.9.

Forest Vale Spine Road Extension - Safeguarding

(R)F.Cinderford 13

Land will be safeguarded as shown on the Proposals Map Inset to enable the construction of the Forest Vale spine road extension to Steam Mills. The development will be required to provide for mitigation measures and compensatory provision to address environmental impacts arising from the development.

- 2.79 Construction of this road will provide more direct access from the A.4136 into the principal employment area of Cinderford, and provide some relief for Steam Mills. It will also give access to land allocated for residential and employment use, and indirectly to land allocated for recreation and leisure use. Construction of the route will principally be funded by development contributions, as provided for by policies (R)F.Cinderford 3 and (R)F.Cinderford 15. The proposed road passes through an English Nature Grassland Inventory Site and a Key Wildlife Site. The ecological damage or loss resulting from the construction of the new road will need to be mitigated and compensatory provision made as required by Policy (R)FNE.9.

Environment, Leisure and Recreation

- 2.80 The origin of the modern town of Cinderford is closely related to the exploitation of coal and minerals around the edge of the statutory forest. Cinderford developed in a rather haphazard way along a hillside bordering the Forest boundary. The present urban form reflects these origins, with a linear structure, a quite dense urban form and a network of roads and tracks intersecting frequently at acute angles. The industrial origins of the town are evident and the quality of the built environment is poor in many areas.
- 2.81 Improvements to the urban environment of Cinderford will be sought through the application of the policies and proposals in the Plan. In assessing development proposals in Cinderford particular emphasis will be given to addressing issues of environmental amenity. Appropriate measures will be sought as part of developments to improve the environmental quality of buildings, the urban townscape, employment areas and open spaces.

- 2.82 There is a major shortfall in Cinderford of both children's playspace and sports pitches, a deficit of around 18 hectares and 16 hectares respectively in relation to NPFA standards. It will be important therefore to secure playspace provision on new housing developments, and contributions to new sports pitch provision. The physical constraints in Cinderford limit the option for sports pitch provision. An allocation is made by (R)F.Cinderford 15 which includes provision for sports pitches near Steam Mills Lake.

Cinderford Linear Park

(R)F.Cinderford 14

Land comprising the Cinderford Linear Park will be further developed for leisure and recreational use. Additional land will be allocated as an extension to the Linear Park at Nailbridge.

- 2.83 The Linear Park as established extends from Cinderford Bridge in the south to the Hawkwell Inclosure in the north. It is a major outdoor recreation and leisure asset for Cinderford. Footpaths have been established throughout the site, and connect to other existing footpaths which continue to the Nailbridge causeway and the A.4136. An extension to the Linear Park is proposed on land adjoining and to the south of the A.4136. Other land is similarly allocated in the Drybrook/Harrow Hill village chapter to the north of the A.4136.
- 2.84 Development proposed in the Steam Mills area ((R)F.Cinderford 15) will be required to ensure the continuation of the existing footpaths linking the Linear Park and its proposed extension. The type of tourism and leisure development proposed will be compatible with the continued recreational use of the Linear Park.

Steam Mills Lake Recreation/Leisure Site

(R)F.Cinderford 15

11.3 hectares of land surrounding Steam Mills Lake will be allocated for leisure and recreation use to include the provision of sports pitches and buildings for outdoor sports, and commercial uses for recreation, leisure and tourism. Contributions will be sought from developments as appropriate towards the construction of the proposed western access road to Cinderford.

In addition the development will be required to provide for mitigation measures and compensatory provision to address environmental impacts arising from the development.

- 2.85 The allocated site currently comprises the northern section of the Linear Park. It is presently used solely for outdoor recreation and leisure, primarily walking and fishing in Steam Mills Lake. The site formerly was used for open cast coal extraction and subsequently clay extraction. Reserves of clay are still present under parts of the site and provision should be made for their identification and removal prior to the implementation of the development in those areas. The site lies within the statutory Forest boundary but the effect of the mineral extraction and poor restoration at the time has rendered it of little use for afforestation.
- 2.86 It is considered that the site is capable of being used more intensively for recreation and leisure use, and possibly tourism. In particular there is the potential to lay out additional sports pitches which would help remedy the significant deficit in youth/adult outdoor play provision in Cinderford. It may be a suitable site for the relocation of an existing sports club. It would be acceptable to permit additional buildings to assist the establishment of a sports use on the site.
- 2.87 There are a number of water features on the site, including a large lake resulting from previous mineral extraction. The site offers possibilities for a more intensive form of outdoor recreation and leisure development or tourism.

- 2.88 Given the topography of the site it is likely that sports pitches would be located to the north of Steam Mills Lake. Access to this area would be from the mixed development area to the east. Development proposing to gain access from the present forest track forming the southern boundary of the allocated site would be required to contribute to the making up of the roadway to comprise part of the proposed western access route into Cinderford. The ecological damage or loss resulting from the construction of the new road will need to be mitigated and compensatory provision made as required by Policy (R)FNE.9.

Ruspidge

- 2.89 The area in Ruspidge identified on the Proposals Map Inset as a Locally distinctive Area has a distinctive character of layout and style of building which is strongly representative of the original haphazard pattern of development of Cinderford. This is attractive in itself and is of historical relevance. It is likely that this pattern has been maintained because of the poor access into the area, which is characterised by narrow lanes, which are themselves an attractive feature. Any new development including residential infilling and replacement buildings and uses will be required to compliment the characteristic open and sporadic pattern of this part of the settlement, or result in an significant improvement to the built environment.