Cinderford Business Plan
Issues and Options Report
February 2007

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1. Foreword

Background
This Issues and Options report forms an important stage in the development of both the Cinderford Business Plan and the Cinderford Area Action Plan (AAP). The report is intended to encourage debate about how regeneration aspirations for Cinderford can be met. It discusses the range of potential actions likely to be required over the next ten years in order to achieve regeneration aims which focus on helping make Cinderford a more:

- Attractive, green and sustainable environment;
- Desirable and affordable place to live;
- Exciting place to work and do business;
- Fun and imaginative place to play and visit;
- Accessible place which is well connected;
- Active community with better facilities; and
- Supportive and inclusive place to learn.

The development of the Business Plan and the early stages of the AAP, has been guided by a series of strategic objectives (explained fully in Section 6). These seek to:

- Promote Cinderford as a model of sustainable development and management;
- Stimulate economic development which raises the skills level of the local workforce;
- Address an acute housing affordability problem;
- Provide significantly improved community facilities, to serve both the local population and also a wider catchment; and
- Provide better and more sustainable road, pedestrian and cycle access both to, and within, Cinderford.

In considering the potential for future development and redevelopment in Cinderford, this Issues and Options report aims to promote the concept of a sustainable community. In doing so, it supports the stance taken by the Government in addressing climate change, which it regards its “principal concern for sustainable development”¹. The Business Plan and AAP will therefore pay particular attention to measures for achieving energy efficiency in general², and housing in particular. Indeed, Cinderford, with its geographic advantages of supplies of stone, clay, wood, wind and water, is particularly well-placed to become a focus not only of sustainable development, but also of innovation in the field, building upon the skills and heritage of the local population. Hence the Business Plan and AAP both emphasise that sustainable development is not an aspiration for the future, but something to be achieved now.

Purpose of this report
The report sets out a range of possible actions which could be taken forward in Cinderford over the next ten years. It considers both land use and non land use related actions. However, it focuses in particular on the options for physical development and redevelopment and hence looks at the locations, size and type of sites required. The report presents a review of the current allocations for development outlined in the Local Plan and considers the potential need to roll these forward, amend them or add new allocations.

This document serves two purposes (both of which are discussed further in Chapter 3):

- Firstly, it functions as an interim report for the Cinderford Business Plan; and
- Secondly, it functions as a consultation report for the Issues and Options stage for the Cinderford Area Action Plan (AAP), a key planning document which will form part of the new Local Development Framework (LDF) and set out the new planning guidelines for the town.

¹ Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change, Supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1, consultation draft, Communities and Local Government, December 2006.
² Building A Greener Future, Towards Zero Carbon Development, Consultation, Communities and Local Government, December 2006.
Your views
The report identifies a number of key areas of change. For each, possible options for redevelopment are presented. These options are intended to promote debate about the nature and scale of development that should be promoted. Comments and feedback on these options are welcomed and will help to guide the preparation of site specific proposals for inclusion within the Area Action Plan.

In order to generate structured feedback, a series of consultation questions are posed within each chapter. These questions are repeated within the questionnaire which can be found in Appendix 1.

The consultation period will run until Thursday 29th March 2007. Please send responses to Wendy Jackson, Cinderford Regeneration Manager, Forest of Dean District Council, High Street, Coleford, Gloucestershire, GL16 8HG. A summary of this report is also available and can be downloaded from www.cinderford2016.net.

The comments received following the consultation period on this document, together with other comments already received during earlier stages of the study, will allow the evolution of a preferred strategy which will form the basis for the AAP.

At this stage the consultation is relatively informal. However, the preferred strategy will, in due course, be the subject of formal statutory consultation in accordance with planning regulations.

Structure of this report
Figure 1.1 illustrates the study process and the way in which this is reflected in this report. Following this introduction:

- Chapter 2 describes the background to the project;
- Chapter 3 - sets out the status of the Business Plan and its relationship to the Area Action Plan process;
- Chapter 4 provides an overview of the key baseline findings;
- Chapter 5 summarises the planning policy context;
- Chapter 6 summarises the main regeneration aims for Cinderford and sets out the principles that should underpin the way forward;
- Chapter 7 provides a summary of the key consultation activities undertaken, and findings, to date;
- Chapter 8 sets out the main ideas currently being considered to address the regeneration needs of Cinderford and explains how these ideas have been generated;
- Chapter 9 looks at the availability of land for development;
- Chapter 10 and 11 - considers possible future options for the key development sites; and
- Chapter 12 sets out the next steps for the project as a whole.
Figure 1.1 - Structure of report and relationship to study process

- Review of problem, issues and baseline statistics
  - Chapter 4 and Baseline Report
- Review of planning policy context
  - Chapter 5 and Baseline Report
- Consultation with local community and stakeholders
  - Chapter 7 and Baseline Report

Confirmation of aims and objectives to guide the regeneration of Cinderford
  - Chapter 6

- List of potential projects, actions and initiatives for the regeneration of Cinderford
  - Chapter 8
- Consideration of potential sites for development and identification of key potential areas for change
  - Chapter 9

Consideration of options for key areas of change (Northern Quarter and Town Centre)
  - Chapter 10 and 11

Initial market testing
- Assessment of contribution to objectives
- Initial consideration of technical feasibility

Review of Local Plan sites
- Review of other potential sites for development
- Initial review of site constraints and landowner aspirations
2. Background

English Partnerships (EP), the national regeneration agency, has identified Cinderford as a priority for the south west of England under its National Coalfields Programme. This Programme assists former coalfield communities across England by creating new employment, homes, leisure facilities and public space. The funding available from English Partnerships, combined with other agencies, is significant and could offer a unique opportunity to regenerate Cinderford and its surrounding area.

In this context, in May 2006, a team led by Halcrow and including Alder King and Kevin J Toombs (Property and Commercial), and Bournemouth University Business School (Education and Learning), was appointed to undertake a Business Plan for Cinderford. The aims of the Business Plan, as set out in the original project brief, are to:

- Develop and agree a Business Plan for the regeneration of Cinderford;
- Lead and take forward the EP Coalfields Programme work in Cinderford;
- Bring together strategic partners and their resources for the benefit of Cinderford and wider Forest of Dean area; and
- Ensure the involvement of local people in the regeneration of Cinderford.

The commissioning client for this project is the Cinderford Regeneration Board, which comprises the following organisations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cinderford Regeneration Board: Organisations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forest of Dean District Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>English Partnerships (EP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucestershire County Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Forester newspaper</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Dean Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forest Enterprise</td>
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</tbody>
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The study commissioned by the Regeneration Board comprises two key elements of work:

- Firstly, technical work and consultation on the Business Plan led by Halcrow;
- Secondly, the development of a Community Learning Plan, led by Bournemouth University Business School.

The Learning Plan is a fundamental element of the community led socio-economic regeneration promoted by the Business Plan. Further information regarding its role and how it forms part of the Business Plan is provided in Section 3 of this report.

Key Outputs

In summary, the Cinderford Business Plan will address the following key questions/issues:

*Where are we now and where would we like to be?*
How is the town performing economically compared to other centres?
What are the main issues facing the town? Looking forward, what is the vision for the town?

These issues were addressed in the Baseline Report published in 2006.

*How do we get there?*
What policies, proposals and projects are required to deliver the vision.
These issues are addressed in this Issues and Options report.

A key part of the final Business Plan for Cinderford will be a list of recommended projects, actions and initiatives to take forward over the next ten years. These are likely to include new development and redevelopment, (to be taken forward within a sustainable mixed use framework) as well as non land use related initiatives (for example those related to learning and training). Therefore, while this Issues and Options report deals predominantly with potential development options for land in and around Cinderford the final Business Plan will deal in more detail with community, and in particular, learning initiatives.

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3 In January 2007 English Partnerships announced a merger with the Housing Corporation. This new agency will be known as ‘Communities England’. 
The Business Plan will be used to lever in both public and private sector investment to Cinderford. An important part of the Business Plan process is therefore to investigate the viability of various potential scenarios and, where appropriate, identify potential costs and sources of funding.

As described in the next section, the Business Plan document will underpin an Area Action Plan (AAP), part of the new Local Development Framework (LDF) for Cinderford and will therefore perform a wider role than the statutory planning process.

**The Study Area**

The Study Brief for the Business Plan project defined the study area for the work. This recognised the importance of:

- A core area, largely coincident with the built up area of Cinderford in which it is envisaged that most of the actions/initiatives will be focussed, and
- An area of influence - defined with reference to parish boundaries but reflects the area that is likely to be affected by actions within the core area, and may benefit from particular actions/recommendations locally,

The boundaries of the two areas are shown on Figure 2.1.
What is an Area Action Plan (AAP)?

An AAP is a new style spatial plan which shows how different uses and facilities operate and fit together. National Planning Guidance recommends that AAPs are developed as part of the LDF process for areas where there is a need to drive development.

This new form of spatial plan (introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) seeks to enable the delivery of land-use objectives and aspirations. It differs from old style plans in that it includes and integrates economic, social and environmental objectives in allocating land and stipulating its use.

Although there is no single definition of spatial planning, there are six common principles, as follows:

- **Visionary** – clear, distinctive and realistic vision of how an area will develop and change;
- **Wide-ranging** – providing a mechanism for delivering sustainable development by relating economic, social and environmental objectives to the use of land;
- **Participative** – involving the community in considering an area’s needs, aspirations and issues;
- **Integrated** – taking account of other strategies and policies that bear on the use of land;
- **Responsive** – so that changing circumstances can be accommodated; and
- **Deliverable** – realisable objectives, with the roles of the local authority, and other agencies, specified.

Planning Policy Statement (PPS12) states that “Area Action Plans should be used to provide the planning framework for areas where significant change or conservation is needed. A key feature of area action plans will be the focus on implementation. They should:

- Deliver planned growth areas;
- Stimulate regeneration;
- Protect areas particularly sensitive to change;
- Resolve conflicting objectives in areas subject to development pressures; or
- Focus the delivery of area based regeneration initiatives.”

It goes on to say that “In areas of change, area action plans should identify the distribution of uses and their inter-relationships, including specific site allocations, and set the timetable for the implementation of the proposals. Further guidance, such as the layout of uses within these allocations and design requirements etc, may be provided in the relevant area action plan or in one or more supplementary planning documents in the form of a master plan.”

**The Relationship to the Local Development Framework**

This Cinderford AAP sits within the wider statutory planning context provided by the Forest of Dean’s emerging Local Development Framework. Figure 3.1 illustrates this relationship.

**Figure 3.1 - Relationship of the Area Action Plan to the LDF**
Relationship between the Business Plan and the Area Action Plan

Assemble evidence to inform DPD
Identify issues arising and consider options (with community participation)
Develop the preferred options and prepare Submission Draft DPD
Baseline review and report
Options assessment and report
Report of Findings from Consultation
Draft Action and Implementation Plans
Finalise Action and Implementation Plans
Submission of DPD to Secretary of State
Report of Findings from Consultation
Examination by Inspector, and Binding Report
Adoption and monitoring of DPD

The Business Plan has involved a lengthy period of reviewing literature, undertaking site visits, and consultation with a wide range of individuals and organisations. This information was brought together in the Baseline Report which, as shown in the figure opposite, is the first stage of both the Business Plan and the AAP process.

This Issues and Options report, together with the technical work and consultation undertaken in recent months, forms part of the issues and options stage of the AAP process. Planning legislation requires meaningful consultation with the community and stakeholders during the issues and options stage, although there are no formal timescales for consultation during this stage. A public consultation exercise which began in September and a series of meetings with stakeholders have already informed the issues and options stage. This report now seeks feedback on more detailed issues and options from stakeholder and the wider community.

Following this consultation process, the next step for the Business Plan project will be to assess the various options for the regeneration of Cinderford and draw up an Action and Implementation Plan.

The Business Plan process will conclude in Spring 2007 and will be taken forward through the remaining statutory process relevant to the AAP by the Forest of Dean District Council. This will include a six week period of consultation on a preferred option.

As part of the AAP process a statutory Sustainability Appraisal, is being undertaken by Forest of Dean District Council.
Other relevant on-going studies
A number of other studies or relevance to the Business Plan are currently ongoing. These include:

- The community Learning Plan (part of the same commission as the Business Plan);
- The town centre enhancement study (a separate commission, but undertaken also by Halcrow); and
- The Miners Welfare Hall refurbishment feasibility study (a separate study being undertaken by Hannah Reynolds Associates).

The Community Learning Plan
The preparation of the Learning Plan is being led by Bournemouth University Business School. The Learning Plan will identify and develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that the community feels will help them to lead their lives the way they want to lead them. It focuses attention on what is needed both now and over the next ten years to help deliver the benefits of physical, social, and environmental regeneration in the Cinderford area.

The Plan will support learning for economic success, social progress, and health and well-being, leading to the development of a more flexible and sustainable community. While the economic element of the Cinderford Community Learning Plan is its main initial focus, it is important also to recognise the benefits that learning can bring for health and well-being and individual confidence, and the link between social well being and economic progress. Recommendations for improved learning are being drawn up in close consultation with business contacts, not for profit organisations and both informal and formal learning providers.

The Business Plan will need to consider three main issues which have a direct impact on the Learning Plan
- Transport linking learners and centres;
- Spatial layout to accommodate the Royal Forest of Dean’s estates strategy, hotels, community facilities, all designed in an environmentally sustainable manner; and
- Adequacy of learning facilities in the Area of Influence.

The Town Centre Enhancement Study
This study is focussing on the retail core of the town and in particular on the area between Lidl in the north and the Town Council offices in the south. The study is looking at proposals to improve the town centre environment so that it becomes more attractive for people to shop and spend leisure time.

A key focus for the study is to identify improvements that will help to draw people who shop at the Co-Op (and potentially in the future a new Tesco store) into the town centre, so that they also continue to support independent shops. Improved pedestrian access and an attractive, high quality town centre environment are therefore key. In this context the Environmental Enhancement Study is considering opportunities to:

- Create a larger pedestrian area at The Triangle;
- Reduce traffic speeds to 20mph;
- Re-pave the footpaths in high quality, locally distinctive materials;
- Incorporate attractive new public art, potentially including the words and phrases in the footpath to create a town trail; and
- Create a sense of arrival, by enhancing key ‘gateways’ to the town.

Specific consultation on these proposals is being undertaken separately; hence views are not explicitly sought through this issues and options process. Further details about the consultation for the town centre project can be found on the web at www.cinderford2016.net The recommendations of the town centre study will complement the Business Plan and it is hoped that some improvements can be taken forward as ‘quick wins.’ Early consultation undertaken for the town centre study identified public support for the Business Plan to consider a potentially radical re-thinking of the town centre. Ideas about how the area as a whole could be enhanced so that it becomes a more vibrant hub for the market town and surrounding area are therefore discussed later in this report.

Miners Welfare Hall
This study has made specific recommendations for options to improve the hall for a wider variety of community uses and put in place a new management structure. This concept is supported by this Issues and Options report.
4. Baseline Information and Key Issues

The first output of the Business Plan was a Baseline Report which collates a wide range of relevant statistics and information about Cinderford and presents an analysis of the existing situation. It therefore forms an important reference document upon which the consideration of issues and options for the future of the town and its surrounding area can be based.

The Baseline Report covers the following topic areas:

- Strategic and local policy framework;
- Economic baseline;
- Social and community facilities baseline;
- Market appraisal;
- Transport infrastructure and movement;
- Landscape character and ecology; and
- Townscape and built heritage.

The analysis presented in the Baseline report was primarily desk-based, but was been informed by considerable consultation with relevant groups and bodies. The conclusions from the Baseline Report, and their implications for the issues and options report, are summarised here but the full document is available on the internet, at www.cinderford2016.net.

Strategic Framework

Cinderford, and the District as a whole, is identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy as an area where there is a need to stimulate the economy. Analysis of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation shows that deprivation is particularly marked in education and training, in which Cinderford ranks amongst the worst 10% of areas nationally. In other indicators Cinderford performs better, but there are nevertheless a number of important issues to address.

Consultation suggests that low self esteem and a negative perception of Cinderford as a place to live or do business is a growing problem. Generally, the town is perceived as being ‘down at heel’ and positive change is required to turn perceptions around, encourage self-belief and deliver an improved quality of life for all.

The Economy

Cinderford’s economy is too narrow. Manufacturing continues to dominate, accounting for over 24% of all employment in Cinderford in 2001 (compared to 14% across Great Britain as a whole). Many jobs are low-skilled and low-paid. There is therefore a need to widen the economic base by attracting new industry to the town, not only in manufacturing, but also in other sectors, such as research, offices, environmental industries, food processing, education leisure and tourism. A wider base will help to ensure that the employment structure of the local area is more closely aligned with that of the region as a whole. It will also provide an opportunity to reduce out commuting.

Housing

As in many other areas, housing affordability in Cinderford is a particular issue as house prices are rising faster than average wages. Consequently levels of owner occupation are lower than average.

Population Change

Cinderford has a declining 15-24 age population. There is a need to make the town more appealing to this age group through provision of affordable housing, appropriate job opportunities and a wide range of interesting community facilities.

Education and Skills

Educational attainment is poor within Cinderford. The Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that parts of Cinderford rank within the top 10% of most deprived areas in the country for education skills and training and that other parts of the study area also perform relatively badly.

Furthermore, the 2001 census showed that almost 27% of the 16 to 74 population in Cinderford had no qualifications (compared with 17% across the South West). Whilst GCSE level passes are at a similar rate as the South West, Cinderford has a much lower than average rate of A level, AS...
level HSC or Degree level passes. Further details about the performance of Cinderford’s schools are included in the Learning Plan.

There is clearly a need to raise skills levels in order to open up a wider range of employment opportunities for individuals and encourage self-fulfillment and provide a skills base which will be more likely to attract business investment into Cinderford.

Health
The health of the population is relatively poor, perhaps, in part, due to the legacy of the mining heritage. The Index of Multiple Deprivation shows Cinderford East as within the worst 30% of areas in terms of health deprivation and disability. Similarly, the 2001 census shows Cinderford to have a higher proportion of economically inactive people due to permanent ill health or disability than the region as a whole. Consideration therefore needs to be given to actions that may help to promote healthy lifestyles.

Health care facilities have recently come under threat due to the potential loss of facilities at the Dilke. However, consideration of these issues is not part of this project Brief. Further consultation on the future of health care services is planned for later in 2007, after the Business Plan is complete. The Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust (PCT) have agreed that the following position statement be included here for context.

The Forest of Dean GP Commissioning Cluster Plan recently adopted by the new Gloucestershire PCT recognises that, in the longer term, the current Dilke Hospital buildings will either need significant rebuild or re-provision. Early work is in hand, involving a wide range of interest groups and organisations, to consider all potential options for the provision of healthcare in 5 or 6 years time within the Cinderford area. It is envisaged that the Multi Agency Community Hospitals Steering Group (‘the Bidding Group’) will undertake significant public engagement in 2007 on how health services can be maintained and developed. The group will want to ensure that the whole of the local community help determine which options are considered further and which are ruled out. In order not to pre-judge the results of this exercise the Business Plan will not make specific recommendations for health care facilities.

Town centre

The attractiveness of the town as a retail centre is poor. There is a need to help promote the continued viability of the town centre for both independent retailers and high street names.

Sports and leisure
Whilst Cinderford enjoys an attractive forest setting, there is a deficit of formal outdoor/park space within the built up area. Similarly, whilst there are a range of other facilities for sports and activities on offer there is local demand for improved facilities. For example, young people are keen to see indoor facilities, for example for climbing and skateboarding. The Council’s Crime and Disorder team also recognise that these facilities could act as important diversionary activities. The existing facilities at the Heywood leisure centre are in need of investment and it is understood that improvements to the football ground are also required in order to bring facilities in line with new Football Association standards.

Transport and movement
The road network in and around Cinderford has remained largely unchanged for many years. Traffic dominates the town centre and there are a number of locations where there are clear conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles. The Town Centre Enhancement Study (currently underway) is exploring opportunities for localised improvements to improve footways and reduce traffic speeds. However, broader more strategic solutions also need to be considered.

Access improvements between the A4136 and the north of Cinderford have been considered for many years. Whilst two routes are allocated in the Local Plan there are differing views on the needs for the Western Link Road and/or the Spine Road extension. The choice of route depends largely on the scale of development proposed and hence needs to be considered as an integral part of this study.

Landscape, townscape and ecology
There is a clear need to link the built up area better with the surrounding forest and to ‘bring the forest into the town’. The forest is an important asset and more should be made of it for recreation, landscape and ecological purposes. There are known ecological issues on some of the potential development sites and taking forward development proposals will therefore depend on these issues being handled in a sensitive manner.
5. Policy context

The Baseline Report (published in September 2006) provides a full review of relevant planning policies at the national, regional and local level. This section therefore provides a brief overview of the key planning issues that are especially relevant in considering the key issues and options.

Regional Planning Guidance

The emerging Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) emphasises the need to stimulate the economy across the Forest of Dean as a whole. It notes that housing growth has not been matched by job creation and recognises that "stimulating economic activity, increasing the opportunity for people to live and work in close proximity" is a key issue.

The RSS allocates an overall average of 270 dwellings per year to Forest of Dean district between 2006 and 2026 (total of 5,400 dwellings). Set within this context, at the local level the emerging LDF concludes that sites already allocated and likely to come forward will meet this requirement and therefore no new sites are required to be allocated for housing.

Discussions with Planning Officers at the Forest of Dean District Council suggest that there is potential to re-distribute housing allocations within the district and that this could negate the potential conflict with regional planning policy which would arise if additional housing were promoted in Cinderford alongside the other district wide allocations. At this relatively early stage in the process, up to approximately 150 dwellings from elsewhere within the district could potentially be re-allocated. These would come from sites within Newent and Coleford, which are currently not scheduled to come forward until the latter stages of the current local plan period. Re-allocation to Cinderford would reflect the regeneration advantages to be gained through reducing local entry-level housing need and also encouraging investment in housing at the top of the cost spectrum.

Forest of Dean District Council Corporate Plan

The Business Plan and the AAP should also be set within the wider context of the District Council’s Corporate Plan. The overarching aim for the district, set out in the Corporate Plan, is:

“To promote thriving communities and provide quality environments we can be proud of.”

The corporate vision for the district is that it will be:

“A self confident, safe, healthy, prosperous community, caring for the well being of all its residents, its heritage and environment.”

The Business Plan and Area Action Plan clearly have an important role in helping to achieve these aims and this vision in the Cinderford area.

Current Local Plan - Overarching aims and objectives

The aims of the current Local Plan, set out below, form the basis for rolling forward the LDF and associated AAP, these are:

- To achieve the economic, social and environmental revitalisation of communities throughout the Forest of Dean, while recognising the particular needs of the south Forest;
- To promote the principles of and contribute to sustainable development, including locating development so as to minimise the travel demands arising, and the reuse of previously developed land;
- To concentrate development in the four towns of the District, and to develop their role and function as accessible employment, service and transport centres;
- To conserve, protect and enhance the natural and man-made environment; and
- To provide for the economic and social well-being of rural communities.

The Local Plan recognises that

“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.”
Housing - Current Local Plan
The current adopted Local Plan allocates a total of approximately 585 dwellings within Cinderford over the period 1999 to 2006. The allocated sites are:
• Newtown (70 dwellings);
• Station Street (185 dwellings);
• Valley Road North (20 dwellings);
• St Whites (150 dwellings);
• Nailbridge (70 dwellings); and
• Valley Road South (90 dwellings).

The current housing situation in Cinderford is one where sites allocated in the Local Plan are of a relatively dispersed nature. Relatively significant allocations are made on the edge of the existing residential area (Cinderford 6: Station Street and Cinderford 10: Valley Road South). Both of these sites are constrained by existing occupiers and no specific locations have been identified for their relocation. The Business Plan therefore needs to consider how these businesses could practically be assisted in their relocation. Furthermore, there are understood to be ground contamination issues to resolve on both sites.

Further housing allocations (Cinderford 5: Newtown and Cinderford 9: Nailbridge) are constrained by access issues which need to be resolved to bring these sites forward. Indeed, though the early consultation undertaken for this study the current owners of the Nailbridge site have confirmed that this issue is a significant constraint.

Employment - Current Local Plan
The adopted Local Plan seeks to protect the use of Forest Vale/Whimsey Industrial Estate for employment use and to ensure that no land currently in employment use is lost to other uses. Forest Vale occupies a large area of Cinderford, and over the last few years has benefited from significant regeneration effort, which needs to be maintained. There is also an existing employment use at Lightmoor, which falls within the Area of Influence. In addition to this area, the Local Plan allocates the following sites for employment use:
• Northern United (Cinderford 3)
• Newtown (Cinderford 2 and Cinderford 5).

To bring forward the sites allocated for employment, in particular the sites at Newtown, improved access is required into the northern area of Cinderford.

The form and nature of the use of Northern United will need to fit with the overall vision for Cinderford – there are possible heritage and biodiversity implications redevelopment at that site, but these would need to be considered further. The practicality and viability of retaining the existing buildings at Northern United depends on its future use.

LDF Core Strategy
The LDF Core Strategy (Preferred Options, Pre-Publication Draft, May 2006), sets out an overall vision:

“to promote thriving communities and provide quality environments, to develop the local economy including tourism, and to provide affordable homes, facilitate the regeneration of towns and create safer communities.”

The subject areas considered by the Core Strategy are: environment, business and economy, tourism, housing, transport and access to services, regeneration of towns, crime disorder and community safety, health and leisure, education and lifelong learning and arts. Regeneration of the economy is seen as “the key priority” and will focus on the market towns. The aim is to increase self-containment through reducing out-commuting. In regenerating the market towns, the objective is to reduce the amount of trade lost to towns outside the district. It will be important for the AAP to work towards delivery of this vision in Cinderford.

Draft Policy CS4 aims to concentrate development at the four towns. Specifically for Cinderford, it states that:

“...the continued emphasis will be on the regeneration of the town to be achieved through improvements to the employment base, the town centre and supporting services.”
Housing - Issues and Options
The Housing Issues & Options Paper for Discussion (July 2006) examined three options for the re-distribution of housing:

1. Retain existing allocations in Local Plan with extended phasing
2. Retain Local Plan Phase 2 (2008 – 11) allocations, delete Phase 3 (beyond 2011)
3. Review and redistribute allocations to reflect revised strategy

These have thus been the subject of statutory review and consultation through the Local Development Framework process.

In terms of density, the assumption is that average density will be in excess of 30 units per hectare, and higher where possible. And considering affordable housing, “40% of the number of units proposed on sites … will be expected to be for affordable housing.”

It will be important for the Business Plan and AAP to have regard for the emerging LDF policies on housing. The Issues paper identifies the following key objectives, which are also relevant to the Business Plan:

- Meet the housing needs of the community, providing a range of types of dwellings so that everyone may have a decent home;
- Allocate land sufficient to meet the requirements set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy;
- Provide new housing in locations where a suitable range of services and employment exists or can be reasonably provided;
- Ensure that the above provision enables the maximum development of affordable housing; and
- Allocate land where required, making best use of available previously developed sites in meeting the identified needs.

Employment - Issues and Options
The Employment & Tourism Issues & Options Consultation (September 2006) sets out the economic context of the district in detail. The objectives set a strong focus for providing for new employment in accessible locations and providing a choice of sites and premises. It states that there is an increasing reliance on small, indigenous enterprises, and that there is demand for small business premises and start-ups.

The Issues and Options paper considers the quantity of employment land available across the district and the implications of this on the location of new allocations. The employment aims of the LDF are to:

- Maintain a supply of sites to meet local requirements, increasing opportunities for people to live and work in close proximity.
- Allocate land where required, making best use of available previously developed sites in meeting the identified needs; and
- Make best use of existing infrastructure and provide land in broadly in proportion with the housing provision.
- Consider the requirements of local employers who have expansion needs;
- Be aware of the needs of small, indigenous enterprises in terms of sites and premises;
- Ensure that, as far as possible, any new employment sites incorporate accessibility by a variety of transport modes, and access to services and facilities. Access to the strategic road network is particularly advantageous; and
- Consider demand for small business premises.

These aims provide an important context for the Business Plan and emphasises the need for regeneration policies and proposals to deliver much needed employment.

For Cinderford the employment issues paper states that about 26ha of land is allocated for new employment. However, it also acknowledges that as some of this has now been developed (specifically at Forest Vale), it goes on to say that “…there is now a shortage of land which can be readily developed. The sites allocated at Steam Mills could provide additional land but would require considerable investment in infrastructure.”

Summary
The existing adopted Local Plan makes proposals for continuation of trends to satisfy perceived demand. However, it does not seek to provide the significant change, either in land use or investment to achieve Cinderford’s regeneration. New options are thus necessary to meet regeneration aims and objectives. The housing and employment issues papers set an important context for the AAP and therefore provide a strong context for the identification of possible ways forward for Cinderford.
6. Aims and Objectives

Key considerations
The baseline findings, together with the results of the consultation, have helped to identify a number of key considerations which inform the issues and options process. These include the following key points/questions:

- Stagnation/decline is not an option – structural change is required to break out of the current downward spiral;
- How to reverse the downward spiral – the need to “think big” and be aspirational;
- There are a number of sources of public sector funding that could be used to help deliver a brighter future for Cinderford. However, tapping into these funds will depend on galvanizing local and vocal support for a clear way forward;
- There is a need to consider the built and natural environments in an integrated manner;
- It is important to recognise the heritage of the area (and potentially draw on it), but take the town forward and look towards the future;
- There is an important distinction between physical and social regeneration – many of the possible actions focus on physical, but social regeneration issues are integral and just as important;
- There is a clear need to deliver a form of development which is sustainable in its widest sense;
- There is an inevitable conflict between the desire for additional land for development and the retention of sites for nature conservation; and
- There are a number of potential policy constraints to development which raise potentially dilemmas, for example, the desire, by the South West Regional Assembly, to restrict housing development outside ‘principal urban areas’, despite the desire of small towns to expand in order to survive.

Together the baseline and consultation findings show that a change of approach is required. It is clear that there are a number of important areas for action, but that the regeneration of Cinderford will need an integrated and holistic approach.

Overall aims
In this context, the overall regeneration aims are to work with the local community to make Cinderford a more:

- Attractive, green and sustainable environment;
- Desirable and affordable place to live;
- Exciting place to work and do business;
- Fun and imaginative place to play and visit;
- Accessible place which is well connected;
- Active community with better facilities; and
- Supportive and inclusive place to learn.

These aims were the subject of consultation in September 2006 and were generally supported.

It will be important for the Business Plan, and in turn the Area Action Plan to deliver improvements against all of these aims in order to deliver a balanced, sustainable community.

Figure 6.1 provides further detail on the specific aspirations for Cinderford.
Figure 6.1 - Aims and objectives for the regeneration of Cinderford

**Fact:** Cinderford is a fantastic place to live, but rising house prices mean some people can’t afford to buy homes here. **What we want:** A mix of decent homes of different types to support a range of household sizes, ages and incomes.

**Fact:** Cinderford has some very successful businesses, but overall the economy is dominated by manufacturing and wages are generally lower than in other towns. **What we want:** Retain manufacturing, but also diversify the economy, to provide a wider range of jobs and increased wages.

**Fact:** As a whole, the Forest attracts a large number of tourists, but not many of them come into Cinderford. Also, existing leisure facilities need to be improved. **What we want:** To attract more visitors, through the provision of unique facilities that will also provide local jobs.

**Fact:** The area has some unique community facilities, but these need support if they are to keep going. **What we want:** To see existing facilities continue to thrive, but with new facilities to offer a broader range of things to do.

**Fact:** The area has good education facilities but its residents have few qualifications. **What we want:** To develop a more supportive environment where everyone can learn and improve themselves.

**Fact:** Cinderford is at the heart of the forest, but access to it, and within it, is relatively poor. **What we want:** Improved links both within the town, and to other places.

**Fact:** Cinderford enjoys an attractive forest setting, but this environmental quality is not reflected in the town. **What we want:** To bring the forest into the town, by greening built up areas.
Strategic Objectives

Whilst all of the issues set out in Figure 6.1 are important, the earlier consultation and technical work, suggests that the following strategic objectives are likely to be the most important in strategic terms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainable development</th>
<th>Employment and skill levels</th>
<th>Housing and affordability</th>
<th>Community facilities</th>
<th>Transport and access</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To promote Cinderford as a model of sustainable new development and management, and reduce the town’s ‘carbon footprint’, by following the guiding principles set out in the boxes on the next page.</td>
<td>To stimulate economic development which raises the skills level of the local workforce, providing higher skilled and higher paid employment.</td>
<td>To deliver new housing, all of a mixed tenure form, in large part to reflect the acute housing affordability problem.</td>
<td>To provide significantly improved community facilities, to serve both the local population and also a wider catchment area.</td>
<td>To provide better road, pedestrian and cycle access both to, and within, Cinderford.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sustainable development
It is clear that sustainable development principles needs to be at the heart of any plans for the regeneration of Cinderford. However, there are many definitions of sustainability. The Sustainability Appraisal work for the Cinderford Area Action Plan (which is progressing in parallel to the consultation and technical work on the Business Plan) uses the following explanation of sustainability referred to in the Forest of Dean Community Plan (2004). This definition is also helpful in setting the context for the Business Plan.

“The simple idea of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come. A widely-used international definition is ‘development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

“Another way of looking at it is what would we want to be here for our grandchildren? A great environment, employment opportunities and a good standard of living?”

Green Futures for Cinderford
Securing funding for regeneration through the English Partnerships National Coalfields programme and other public sector funding streams is likely to depend on demonstrating high standards of sustainability in all development proposals. It is intended that all projects and actions will need to be assessed against a series of criteria in order to ensure that only those that have the potential to contribute towards the overall objective of sustainable development go forwards for implementation.

Figure 6.2 summarises the kind of sustainability and ‘eco’ criteria which will guide future regeneration initiatives.

Further work is therefore required to draw up a set of detailed, achievable ‘eco’ standards. It is likely that these will reflect the environmental standards that English Partnerships has adopted for all new homes, retail, office and industrial buildings constructed on its land. These standards aim to cut carbon emissions, reduce water use and therefore contribute to a more sustainable future, a higher quality of life, lower utility bills for occupiers and more pleasant surroundings.

Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) standards are one way in which the environmental impact of development schemes can be assessed. BREEAM measures the impact of a scheme on a scale of "Pass", "Good", "Very Good" and "Excellent". By specifying the BREEAM rating that new development is expected to achieve, high standards of design and construction can be insisted on. Similarly, for residential development, the National Home Energy Rating (NHER) can be applied. The NHER is based on an estimate of a homes total annual energy costs and is presented as an index figure of between NHER 0.0 and 10.0 where the higher rating predicts lower running costs.
As an example, in other areas English Partnerships insist that developments achieve, at least, the environmental standards set out in Table 6.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building Type</th>
<th>Rating Scheme</th>
<th>Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>(BREEAM) EcoHomes*</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NHER</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offices</td>
<td>BREEAM for Offices</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>BREEAM 5/93</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>BREEAM Retail</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* EcoHomes is the name given to the BREEAM scheme for residential developments but note that this is to be replaced by the Code for Sustainable Homes.

A key consideration for the Business Plan will be to look at how developers can be encouraged to adopt the highest practical standards and the role that the new code can play in this regard. In line with English Partnerships aspirations for new homes the Business Plan will look at adopting the 3* rating as a minimum acceptable standard in all projects issued for competition from 2007 with a view to moving toward the 6* rating by 2013.

As well as promoting energy conservation, the Government is encouraging energy generation at the local, neighbourhood and private level to utilise renewable energy sources. The Business Plan will therefore consider how such generation can be promoted in Cinderford.

**Emerging LDF**

The emerging Local Development Framework is likely to reflect guidance set out in the PPS1 consultation document on Climate Change, by introducing a policy which requires new development to generate their own power from sustainable sources.

The proposed LDF policy will read “The Council will require all developments, either new build or conversion, with a combined floor-space of 500m², or one or more residential units, to incorporate on-site renewable energy equipment to reduce predicted CO2 emissions by at least 10%.” New development in Cinderford will therefore be expected to comply with this policy. However, consideration could also be given to introducing more stringent rules.

**Questions for consultation**

What level of environmental standard do you think would be suitable to insist upon in Cinderford?

Do you have any suggestions about how the standards could be measured?
7. Summary of consultation

Consultation with the local community, businesses, and stakeholders has been ongoing since the start of the project. This has included:

- The findings of meetings and discussions held with officers and stakeholder representatives during the period May to September 2006;
- Public consultation undertaken on 8th July 2006, including a voting game and a ‘postcard from the future’ exercise;
- Public and stakeholder consultation undertaken during an 8 week period over September, October and November 2006;
- Ongoing consultation with the Cinderford Consultative Panel throughout the duration of the study; and
- Ongoing consultation with the Cinderford Regeneration Board throughout the duration of the study.

This section provides a brief overview of the key consultation findings in order to set the scene for the more detailed consideration of issues and options.

Voting game

A consultation day was held in Cinderford Triangle on July 8th 2006. The main activity undertaken was a voting game which allowed people to vote for the three issues they considered to be most important for the future of Cinderford. Votes were cast by throwing balls into buckets pre-marked to represent eight key issues.

During the course of the day 114 people voted. The results show that, with the exception of health and social care issues, which received the highest number of votes (due to the proposals for closure of the Dilke being out for consultation at the time), a number of issues all received a similar number of votes. This suggests people feel that the following issues are all equally important for the future of Cinderford.

In discussion many of the respondents, of all ages, also noted the importance of providing facilities and activities for younger people. Therefore, whilst no specific bucket for this issue was provided, it will be important for the Business Plan to consider this issue.

Postcards from the future

At the July consultation day people were also encouraged to send a ‘Postcard from the future’ explaining what they hoped Cinderford would be like in 2016.

The responses to this provide a general, qualitative feel for the sort of place people would like Cinderford to be. The postcards were completed by passers by in the town centre, but also by Year 7 pupils at Heywood School. The key aspirations noted were for:

- Improved leisure facilities - including sports facilities as well as cafes, restaurants and general entertainment;
- Improved town centre with a wider retail offer;
- More affordable housing; and
- Improved transport links (both by car and public transport).
Cinderford Consultative Panel Brainstorming
On 17th July 2006 a brainstorming exercise was held with the Consultative Panel (a group set up as a sounding board for the Business Plan). This focussed on understanding what the group saw as the ‘critical success’ factors of Cinderford’s regeneration.

The following is a summary of the key factors identified in response to the question ‘I would consider the regeneration of Cinderford to be a success if…..’

- There were more leisure/employment opportunities AND more employment;
- All educational needs were better catered for;
- There were more jobs for graduates (so that they do not feel they need to move away);
- Educational attainment was higher;
- The town was seen to lead the way (was more innovative and risk taking);
- There was less reliance on the car;
- There were more opportunities to get out and meet people;
- There were more outlets for growing businesses at the right rates;
- It created an environment in which successful small businesses can thrive;
- It helped to differentiate Cinderford from ‘opposition’ towns;
- There was a better sense of community;
- There were more opportunities for shopping;
- People chose to come to/visit Cinderford;
- More money was retained locally;
- The quality of people’s lives was richer;
- There was a broader offer that meant people could enjoy the whole ‘Cinderford Experience’;
- There was improved infrastructure;
- It meant young people acted as ‘co-producers’ (delivering improvements for themselves);
- It retained a ‘market town’ feel;
- The industrial estate was greener and improved; and
- The forest was taken into Cinderford (rather than Cinderford into the forest).

September public consultation
The focus of consultation has been on an 8 week period of public and stakeholder consultation which took place between September and November 2006. During this period views were sought on the types of actions and initiatives people would like to see go forward.

The consultation was based around an exhibition display which is replicated in Appendix 2. The exhibition boards put forward a range of ideas for the future, based around eight key theme headings. Feedback forms allowed people to vote for the actions they saw as top priorities. Whilst the overall level of feedback was limited, the responses give a flavour for the sorts of issues people see as the most important. The following suggestions are those that received the most support:

- Accommodate more housing in the town centre, to generate a more vibrant feel;
- Assist existing sites designated for housing to be developed;
- Support for existing facilities, such as Candi, Artspace, Creative Partnerships and GL14;
- Support the refurbishment of the Miners Welfare Hall;
- Re-route heavy goods vehicles so fewer of them travel through the town centre. We could also encourage these vehicles to enter Cinderford from the north through strategic signing. This will create a better town centre environment;
- Relocate some existing uses – perhaps the cricket club and/or football club to both provide better facilities, and potentially free up some land for further development;
- Provide sustainable new employment-led schemes as part of mixed-use schemes on ‘brownfield’ land, such as at ‘Northern Arc’;
- Diversify and improve integration of the town centre through redevelopment to improve shopping facilities;
- Strengthen the role of the Linear Park;
- Promote a greening strategy for the existing industrial estate and residential areas to ‘bring the forest into the town’;
- Explore opportunities for increasing views from the town centre out to the forest; and
- Create a multi use leisure and activity centre.
8. Identification of Possible Actions

There are a number of different ways in which the strategic objectives for Cinderford could be achieved. Figure 8.1 provides an overview of the factors which have influenced the identification of possible actions.

A list of actions that have the potential to contribute towards achieving the strategic objectives has been identified based on consultation, technical appraisal and market analysis. The following pages provide an overview of the key actions, projects and initiatives that have been identified as offering the best opportunities to:

- Lever-in both public and private sector investment to regenerate Cinderford;
- Deliver the aspirations of the local community; the Cinderford Regeneration Board and client group; and
- Provide an integrated and holistic strategy for the regeneration of Cinderford.

Many of these actions and projects involve physical development and it is these aspects that are most relevant to the AAP process. Indeed, it is clear that new development and redevelopment will be critical if Cinderford is to move forward. However, it is also important to recognise the importance of non-development related initiatives, in particular those related to training and skills, as these are likely to be of crucial importance in underpinning the regeneration of Cinderford.

For each identified actions or project, a brief commentary is provided to explain the:

- Origin of the idea and specifically how the baseline data or consultation findings provide a justification for it;
- Extent to which the idea is likely to be commercially viable and whether there is likely to be private sector interest in bringing the idea forward;
- Possible locations for physical development projects;
- Potential regeneration benefits; and
- Potential risks, uncertainties or issues to be addressed.

As presented in this chapter, the actions are not all mutually exclusive. That is, whilst some of the actions could be delivered in a stand alone fashion, taking forward some actions would potentially preclude others due to competing demands for sites or due to commercial, policy or other constraints.
Figure 8.1 - Factors influencing the identification of possible actions

- Technical baseline review
- Ideas put forward by the community
- Meetings with stakeholders
- Project team brainstorming
- Community consultation
- Initial review of planning and commercial constraints
- Ideas put forward by previous studies
- Meetings with Council officers and funding bodies

Identification of possible actions and options
New office development

**Contribution to objective:** Employment

**Link to baseline/consultation:**
Cinderford’s economy is currently dependent upon manufacturing and diversification into other sectors, is therefore important. Office based jobs, which are typically higher wage and higher skill, are likely to be an important requirement as part of an improved overall employment base. This desire should not undermine the need to maintain Cinderford’s traditional manufacturing strengths and associated skills.

**Market analysis/feasibility:**
Market demand for office space in Cinderford is currently low. However, if offices can be provided in an attractive setting, with improved access, it is likely that employers could be encouraged to locate in Cinderford. The success of office facilities at Vantage Point, at Mitcheldean, based upon good provision of central services in a campus setting, provides encouragement for the development of additional offices at Cinderford. The main market is likely to be for local businesses that are now looking to expand. Initial property advice suggests that there could be demand for around 20,000sq. ft. of office accommodation. However, public sector investment is likely to be required to prepare these sites for marketing. There may also be a case for the public sector to provide office accommodation for lease and the ‘Priority Sites’ programme may be a potential mechanism for delivery.

**Potential location:**
Offices could potentially be provided on the sites currently allocated for employment uses in the Local Plan. In addition the area around Steam Mills Lake could also provide a potentially attractive setting.

**Likely regeneration benefits:**
- Will attract a greater range of skills to Cinderford, could reduce loss of skilled/educated staff and improve the employment offer
- Reduced out commuting
- Compatible with desire for a smarter, greener image for Cinderford

**Potential risks/disbenefits:**
- Potential difficulty in attracting private sector investment
- Providing flexible office of the right size to attract the market

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New retail development

**Contribution to objective:** Employment/community facilities

**Link to baseline/consultation:**
A common theme in the consultation undertaken to date has been a call for improved retail offer, especially from high street stores. Public opinion has been to encourage shops to complement the existing and proposed supermarket facilities with a wider range of good quality shops, and thus to reduce long distance shopping trips.

**Market analysis/feasibility:**
It is likely that, in the future, it could be possible to market, and attract investment in, two types of retailing:
1) Edge of town, bulkier goods or trade related retailing (for example carpets, tiles and tool hire). Initial property advice suggests that around 50,000 sq. ft of bulky good retail space could be marketed (although there is a likely conflict with planning policy).
2) In town retailing to complement supermarket development. However, the range of potential developers will reflect whether Tesco’s proposals (currently the subject of a planning application) are implemented, and also how successful they prove. Initial property advice suggests that companies such as Boots, Argos, Wilkinson, Peacocks, Superdrug, Brantano and Pets at Home could be targeted.

**Potential location:**
Edge of town retailing for a limited range of bulky non-food goods could be potentially commercially viable on land currently allocated for leisure and recreation uses at Steam Mills or within the industrial estate. Attracting new retailers to the town centre is likely to depend on providing a location adjacent to, or well-connected, in terms of walking, to Tesco.

**Likely regeneration benefits/issues:**
- Improved retail offer and lower ‘leakage’ and additional employment

**Potential risks/disbenefits:**
- Potential planning policy conflict for edge of town retailing
- Risk of undermining central retailers, unless the focus is bulky goods
- Need to ensure retail development is associated with environmental and access enhancements in particular, attractiveness to market may also reflect availability and ease of use of car parking
New leisure facilities in the town centre

**Contribution to objective:** Employment/community facilities

**Link to baseline/consultation:**
The absence of leisure facilities *in the town centre* was a frequent topic of respondents to the initial phase of consultation. While other Forest and nearby towns have good quality public houses, restaurants and coffee bars to attract both local residents and visitors, Cinderford is poorly served. In particular, there is demand for coffee bars during the full working day and safe, clean, good quality restaurants at night. *(See also reference to demand for new hotel and for other social facilities.)*

**Market analysis/feasibility:**
This is a market sector which is performing well nationally and in the region, although the risks of ill-founded ventures are recognised.

**Potential location:**
It is proposed that such new facilities are integral to the redevelopment/new development of retail facilities. Opportunities should be taken to utilise sites that would allow use of pavements, courtyards and public areas in good weather. Facilities should not be located within new shops, but be independent.

**Likely regeneration benefits/issues:**
- Potential additional local jobs, both directly and indirectly, through attracting more visitors into the town centre
- Providing social identity to the town and establishing night-life

**Potential risks/disbenefits:**
- The track record of failed ventures is long. The risk could be reduced by the encouragement of quality franchises.
- Development is unlikely prior to major retail (re)development

New industrial development

**Contribution to objective:** Employment

**Link to baseline/consultation:**
Whilst the baseline work demonstrates a need to diversify the local economy it will be important to continue to support manufacturing businesses, but to ensure that, where possible, this is ’moved up a notch’ towards higher ‘tech’, higher skill, higher wage sectors.

**Market analysis/feasibility:**
There is currently a reasonably strong demand for industrial employment land. In particular, a number of local employers are known to be looking to relocate or expand.

**Potential location:**
Priority should be given to making more prudent, efficient use of the existing industrial estates, in the first instance and looking at existing Local Plan allocations at Steam Mills and Northern United in the second instance. The use of alternative sites should be considered only when such sites have been illustrated to be unsuitable due to size, traffic volumes, or because of the nature of the industrial process involved or the type of emissions produced.

Public sector investment may be required to remediate and service key sites and potentially also to assist in land assembly.

**Likely regeneration benefits/issues:**
- Potential additional local jobs - If firms can be relocated locally, potential prevention of jobs moving outside the area

**Potential risks/disbenefits:**
- Too much emphasis on this sector would not help to diversify the existing employment base.

An example of an eco-friendly employment building
Relocation of the abattoir

**Contribution to objective:** Employment (and links to housing)

**Link to baseline/consultation:**
The existing abattoir currently employs over 100 people on a site of about 4 acres. However, the existing site is considered a 'bad neighbour' due to its proximity to residential development, and the generation of considerable traffic and odours. Provision of an alternative site within Cinderford would help to retain jobs within the local area and may facilitate the expansion of the businesses. As well as being a major employer, the abattoir also offers an education and training role. Relocation of the business would help to improve the overall environment and perception of the town and would also free up a site which is allocated in the adopted Local Plan for residential uses.

**Market analysis/feasibility:**
The abattoir's owners are searching for new premises and are ready and willing to move, should a suitable site be identified and it proves economic to do so. Any new site should at least be as large as that at present. Moreover, the owners would prefer to incorporate replacement for its facilities currently leased at the Enterprise Centre, amounting to some 40,000 sq. ft. (though the degree of urgency for such a move is not as pressing). Depending on the location of an alternative site there may be some demand for public sector funding to create an appropriate development platform and to provide good access and other facilities.

**Potential location:**
Four sites are potentially suitable:

a) **Lightmoor.** This out-of-town site would prove advantageous in moving the facilities from residential areas, but proposals would need to indicate compatibility with conservation of the forest. Development of the site should not sterilise viable mineral deposits, nor cause the cessation of the existing Forest Products Limited. The cost of providing mains drainage would be high.

b) **Land adjacent to the existing sewage treatment works.** The use of land held by Severn Trent Water may be acceptable in strategic terms and is isolated from residential properties, but should not prejudice the water company’s plans for sewage treatment. Access to that site could be achieved along an existing track, and would benefit from the removal of an untidy Scrapyard. An alternative access would be to cross the former railway line (now the linear park) by a road bridge, but the financial implications might be severe. That access would have the advantage of meeting Valley Road at the existing roundabout;

c) **Northern United.** This site also has the advantage of isolation, and good access onto the strategic road network. However there are other competing demands for the site and an abattoir may not provide the prestigious occupier for the site that this important location demands. No feasibility tests have yet taken place as to whether the existing former pit buildings could be utilised in a redevelopment scheme;

d) **Cricket club site, Forest Vale industrial estate.** This site would be large enough and could be provided with a good access. However, the use may not be compatible with existing employment uses, and the replacement of the cricket pitch on an alternative site would be a pre-requisite of development.

**Likely regeneration benefits/issues:**
It is very important to the local economy to retain the business in the local area, and not to move to other alternative sites away from Cinderford. Redevelopment would:
- Retain/increase local jobs.
- Create the positive impact of taking the abattoir away from the residential area.
- Free up the site for alternative uses.

**Potential risks/disbenefits:**
- Dependent on a financially acceptable offer for the residential development of the existing abattoir site.
- All alternative sites carry either a planning or financial risk with their development, and public intervention to facilitate development may be necessary.
New hotel

**Contribution to objective:** Employment/ Learning/Tourism

**Link to baseline/consultation:**
Despite its attractive forest setting, there is currently no hotel in Cinderford. Indeed, the 2002 Tourism Development Study noted that the Forest of Dean is underperforming in terms of tourism spending and yield and attributes this, in part, to “the limited range and quality of the accommodation base.” Statistics from 2001 also show that the distribution, hotels and restaurants sector is under represented in Cinderford, compared to the South West and Great Britain. Leisure and tourism is identified in the Regional Economic Strategy as an important growth area. There is much public support to encourage tourism development in the area, provided the forest environment is not unduly damaged.

**Market analysis/feasibility:**
It could be possible to attract private sector interest in a hotel of around 50 to 80 beds. It is not likely that the hotel would appeal to the buoyant “business tourism” market of roadside motels, but could prove viable for a higher class of overnight visitors, willing to pay more. It is likely that developers would not be national chains, but rather be regional operators. The business would need to be supported by the use of the facilities for conferences and for social events such as weddings. A hotel could prove viable but might need public investment to stimulate initial interest in investment. Its success depends on the successful emergency of Cinderford as an attractive ‘brand’.

**Potential location:**
The Steam Mills area, currently allocated for leisure and recreation under Policy Cinderford 15, could offer an attractive setting, close to main roads and in a wooded location, adjacent to a lake. No town centre sites are large enough, and would not attract investment. Other countryside sites might prove attractive, but would be subject to objections on rural policy grounds.

The Northern United site is well suited for hotel development given its good access and its wooded setting. It would need to be clearly visible from the A4136. The only other possible concept in the area that would not attract policy objections would be the redevelopment of the Dilke Hospital, but that option is not currently available.

**Likely regeneration benefits/issues:**
A hotel could assist in:
1) Diversifying the employment base
2) Helping to promote the local tourism market and draw tourism spend into Cinderford
3) Offering additional opportunities for training in hospitality and catering (if linked with the Forest of Dean College).

**Potential risks/disbenefits:**
Private sector interest may be limited to the regional operators, and would be likely to rely on positive marketing and access/environmental improvements. It may be difficult to secure a high quality eco-building from the type of private sector hotelier that would be attracted to Cinderford.

Hotels have a poor reputation for wage levels, which are already fairly low in Cinderford. Therefore, a high quality hotel that requires high skills inputs would be preferable over a budget facility.

Although the adopted local plan policy (Cinderford 15) and supporting paragraphs suggest the possible use of the area for tourism, no specific reference is made to hotel development, and this concept would thus be a significant modification of policy.
Renewable Energy - New Biomass facility

**Contribution to objective:** Environment/sustainability/employment

**Link to baseline/consultation:**
The baseline work and the consultation, particularly with potential funding partners, has indicated that future development should be green and sustainable. The opportunity to generate electricity from renewable sources is a key consideration which has the potential to 'put Cinderford on the map'.

**Market analysis/feasibility:**
There is currently much private sector interest in developing a biomass facility in Cinderford. This would utilise forest waste products in order to generate heat and power. There is an identified continuing supply of fuel to drive such a project.

In addition, other forms of renewable energy production could be considered, for example a community wind turbine. Indeed, as much of Cinderford lies on a ridge, it has the potential for 'capturing' wind in an economic and efficient manner.

**Potential location:**
There has been private sector interest in developing a biomass facility at Northern United. This site is well-located in terms of strategic access to receive importation of fuel supplies. It is understood that the former pit buildings could be utilised. The site is well-located to supply energy to new and existing development in the northern part of Cinderford.

**Likely regeneration benefits/issues:**
- Opportunity to deliver an exemplar form of development providing locally generated carbon-neutral power for local homes/employers
- Could potentially co-locate with a wide range of other land uses

**Potential risks/disbenefits:**
- This land use would be likely to employ fewer people than an alternative form of land use on this site (although land requirements are relatively small)

Further work is required to demonstrate the continued availability of fuel at economic rates
Greening of Forest Vale Industrial Estate

**Contribution to objective:** Employment/environment

**Link to baseline/consultation:**
The image and appearance of the Forest Vale Industrial Estate is critical to the overall impression potential investors have of Cinderford. ‘Greening’ the estate, for example by planting trees along key routes, and introducing planting, improved lighting and public art at key junctions could considerably enhance the overall environment; however, this is set within the constraint of landowner aspirations.

**Market analysis/feasibility:**
Analysis suggests that the type of employers that it will be important to attract in order to diversify the employment base are likely to demand higher quality surroundings.

The new Parklife initiative, recently rolled out in Cinderford aims to link together companies in the same geographical area, on business parks, industrial estates or in the same vicinity, to take advantage of networking, skills development, staff recruitment and provide business advice. Improvements to the local environment, together with initiatives such as Parklife could help to encourage new investors to consider Cinderford.

**Likely regeneration benefits/issues:**
- Overall step change to the environment of the industrial estate, making it more attractive to higher skill, higher wage employers
- Improved overall image and perception

**Potential risks/disbenefits:**
- May depend, in part, on co-operation of land owners
- Need to public funding to improve the existing environment, in order to attract a new range of employers
Intensification of Forest Vale Industrial Estate

Contribution to objective: Employment

Link to baseline/consultation:
Discussions with Council officers and site visits have identified a range of opportunities to improve the existing industrial estate by:
1) Intensifying use through the preparation and marketing of vacant plots. This is likely to require land assembly and detailed masterplanning;
2) Potentially constructing speculative units for sale or lease (which could potentially be managed/supported by Priority Sites or Network Space);
3) Rationalising existing land uses to free up underutilised land for development;
4) Potentially clustering similar ‘bad neighbour’ type land uses
5) A positive marketing campaign; and
6) Seeking good design and contributions from new developers to provide a more attractive and sustainable environment through tree planting, retention and creation of green corridors, habitat enhancement, consistent and wise use of street furniture, together with construction using local materials and sustainable design, including energy conservation and generation.

Market analysis/feasibility:
Analysis suggests that the type of employers that it will be important to attract in order to diversify the employment base are likely to demand higher quality surroundings as a prerequisite. A comprehensive plan of opportunities will be essential to promote coordination of future actions.

Likely regeneration benefits/issues:
Overall step change to the environment of the industrial estate, making it more attractive to higher skill, higher wage employers.

Potential risks/disbenefits:
- Likely difficulties with land ownership.
- Opportunities to improve/rationalise are likely to be linked to lease agreements, therefore may take some time to deliver.
- There will be a need to attract public funding to improve the existing environment, in order to attract a new range of employers.
New mixed tenure housing schemes

Contribution to objective: Housing (and links to employment objective)

Link to baseline/consultation:
The current adopted Local Plan allocates a total of approximately 585 dwellings within Cinderford over the period 1999 to 2006. Bringing forward housing development, as part of mixed use schemes, will be crucial in meeting local policy housing targets and will be important in delivering a balanced sustainable community. The emerging Local Development Framework concludes that sites already allocated in the adopted Local Plan and likely to come forward will meet housing requirements to 2026 and therefore no new sites are required to be allocated for housing. However, importantly, there is the potential to re-distribute up to approximately 150 dwellings from within the district. The rationale for possible re-allocation is a recognition that Cinderford has land available that could be developed with limited environmental consequences, and that the town is best placed for the emergence of a mixed community of housing, employment, retail and other facilities.

Cinderford remains the Forest town with the greatest demand for affordable housing. Organisations are keen to bring forward such housing both for let and for sale. Occupancy of such properties would bring young, working age people into the town and enhance its vitality.

Public consultation suggests that the limited development of green field sites on the edge of Cinderford (for example at St. Whites) might be regarded as a reasonable price to pay in order to ensure a continued supply of housing available at a reasonable price for local residents and incomers wanting to work locally.

Market analysis:
Private sector interest in residential development is reasonably strong. However, the allocated sites have a number of difficulties to overcome relating to the relocation of existing users (e.g. the abattoir site), the potential cost of remediation and providing access. Accordingly, although redevelopment of allocated sites near the town centre has progressed well, the development of more peripheral sites has been slow. Public sector funds may be required to pump prime development. Alternatively, consideration could be given to reallocating sites for other uses, or recognising that development for any urban use may not be appropriate or feasible.

Potential location/market analysis:
There are a number of potential scenarios for accommodating more housing, dependent upon the scale and type of development, they include:

a) Development on sites currently allocated for housing in the local plan - Inclusion in the adopted Local Plan reduces reasonable risk of public objection to development;

b) Reallocation of local plan sites in order to potentially bring forward housing on sites currently allocated for employment or retail

c) Additional housing development on newly identified sites which are either not currently allocated in the Local Plan for are allocated for other uses, such as leisure and recreation, potentially including St. Whites, on land south-east of the present Local Plan allocation, Steam Mills or other sites, if existing users could be relocated, for example the football ground.

d) As part of mixed use schemes elsewhere

Likely regeneration benefits/issues:
New residential development is needed to provide a better mix of housing types and especially to deliver much needed affordable housing. Additional housing, over and above that currently allocated in the local plan could help to increase land values, making sites viable for development and potentially generating funds for community facilities and improved infrastructure, through Section 106 contributions.

Potential risks/disbenefits:
Some of the sites currently allocated in the Local Plan are unlikely to be developed during this plan period because of circumstances beyond their owners’ control. Public intervention (e.g. through creation of access) may prove necessary to ensure implementation.

If further housing development was to be promoted on any new site more detailed design work would be required to ensure its acceptability in landscape, ecology and accessibility terms.
Intensification of residential uses in the town centre

Contribution to objective: Housing

Link to baseline/consultation:
Public response indicated that there was a recognition that additional affordable housing in the town was both necessary and desirable. It was also known that many shop and other ground floor units had potentially usable residential facilities on upper floors. Evidence from other market towns suggests that the presence of residents in town centres deters potential crime and helps to maintain public facilities from vandalism. For many years, the government has endorsed the concept of “living above the shop”, but initiatives have had limited success.

Market analysis/feasibility:
The District Council currently offers grants for the conversion of spaces over shops for living accommodation. However, there has been little use made of such grants, and a more successful, widespread campaign to encourage conversion should take place. It would be appropriate for a detailed study of the town centre to define a “defensible” retail core area, including possible areas for redevelopment. Such a study would identify areas where redevelopment for residential purposes could take place.

Likely regeneration benefits/issues:
- Housing form is likely to be affordable, and will help to satisfy considerable local demand;
- Provides “life” and security to town centre
- Generates income for local landowners
- Creation of new residential units would not contribute to district total of new housing units.

Potential risks/disbenefits:
- May prove difficult to identify landowners;
- Funding may still not prove adequate to convince landowners of viability of schemes, especially if they consider there is “hope value” associated with redevelopment of sites. Therefore, early identification of redevelopment sites and of defensible town centre retail area would be advantageous.
New link to A4136

Contribution to objective: Transport (and links to employment and housing)

Link to baseline/consultation:
Poor access from the A4136 has been a constraint to the economic prosperity of Cinderford. It remains a key constraint to the potential development sites at Steam Mills and Nailbridge. Consultation with businesses, for example through the survey undertaken by Alder King, has shown that existing businesses and potential investors see access as a key problem. Market analysis suggests that a wider range of investors and developers could be attracted if a high quality access to the town that creates a strong, positive first impression, were created.

Specific issues include the following:
- Heavy traffic passing through Steam Mills is a significant concern for local residents and the Town Council and hence the present route of the A4151 is unlikely to satisfactorily accommodate additional movements, particularly if a ‘significant’ scale of development were to be promoted at Steam Mills;
- The A4151/A4136 junction is problematic, particularly for heavy good vehicles and non-local traffic. Indeed, the complexity of the junction may deter trips to Cinderford from the A4136;
- The proximity of Steam Mills primary school to the main road remains undesirable despite recent works to ‘turn around’ Steam Mills Primary School; and
- The access to the Nailbridge housing allocation (70 units) onto the A4136 is poor; and
- The initial visual impression of Cinderford, when driving from the north, is not positive.

Market analysis/feasibility:
Good, attractive, safe access is seen as key to regeneration of the town. Based on these issues, a number of alternative strategic access solutions have been considered, relative to the form and nature of potential land-use at Steam Mills. Initial work has demonstrated that these could be technically feasible, although would be expensive to deliver.

Some funds may be available from Section 106 contributions from nearby development. However, given the likely costs of bringing forward the Steam Mills and Northern United sites for redevelopment, the potential for developers’ contributions is likely to be relatively limited. Indeed, some may argue that the new road links may benefit the whole town and not simply their development and may seek to restrict the contribution. Although some funds may come forward through the Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan, there would be a need to compete for funding against other schemes across the County. Public sector funding, primarily through the English Partnerships Coalfields Programme is likely to be the major potential source of funding. Without such funding, a principal catalyst for regeneration may not be available.

Potential location
A number of potential routes have been considered. These were presented as options during the September 2006 consultation, as:

Route 6: Spine Road Extension (as per Local Plan)
Route 7: Extension of Spine Road Extension;
Route 8: Western Access Route (as per Local Plan)
Route 9: Alternative alignment along existing forest track)

For full diagram see exhibition boards in Appendix 2
Likely regeneration benefits/issues:
An improved route would open up access to development land at Steam Mills and hence would essentially be a catalyst for job creation. However, the extent to which each route is appropriate depends on the desired mix of new development to the north of Cinderford. Therefore, the option selected is inevitably closely linked to the options for redevelopment set out later in this report.

If a generally “local” scale of development were provided at Steam Mills Route 6, (as already promoted in the Local Plan) or some derivation of it, could be sufficient to accommodate this additional traffic. However, Route 6 would not solve existing problems on the A4151 (as above), and moreover the stretch of the A4151 from its proposed junction with the new road to the A4136 could well also require upgrading.

Route 7 would solve the junction problems, but would be unlikely to be delivered due to the relatively limited benefits. Moreover, differences in levels would mean that construction costs would be unacceptably high.

Route 8 does not have the support of the statutory authorities, despite its inclusion in the Local Plan through the Inspector’s intervention. Moreover, the scale of development on Northern United is unlikely to ever justify this route financially, as it would not facilitate additional development at Steam Mills or around the lake.

Route 9 could be designed to create a significant positive impact to the image of Cinderford through the creation of an attractive forest entrance. The route would utilise a forest track and not cause any significant loss of trees, and is thus acceptable, in principle, to the Forestry Commission as landowners. It would allow for the closure of the existing junction of the A4136 and A4151, and downgrading of the present A4151 for access only – significantly enhancing the environment at Steam Mills, and increasing the likelihood of implementation of allocated sites in that area. There are thus potential environmental and social benefits to be derived from this option. Furthermore, the statutory highway authority has confirmed that they would not object to this route in principle, provided there were sufficient justification. However, it is recognised that the environmental effect of that new route would need to be justified and any detrimental effects mitigated.

Potential risks/disbenefits:
- Potential difficulty of securing Section 106 funding, given likely costs of bringing development sites forward;
- The likely lengthy timescales involved in delivering any new access route
- Requirement of public funding up-front, with post-hoc retrieval of developers’ contributions
- Need to justify and mitigate environmental impacts
- Any route would have to be agreed with the County Council as Highway Authority
- Any new road would need to avoid woodland covered by the 1981 Forestry Act
Remodelling of the town centre

Contribution to objective: Employment and skill/community facilities

Link to baseline/consultation:
As well as functioning as the heart of the market town, the town centre is a key employment asset. However, the centre does not function as well as it could, and perhaps as a reflection of this, the early consultation work has identified public support for potential radical re-thinking and consensus in terms of a vision for a greener, better integrated, more vibrant town centre with an improved retail offer.

Market analysis/feasibility:
Initial work suggests that there are a range of important opportunities in the town centre, for example to:

- Remodel key areas of the town to create new, larger, retail units of a size and style to attract new retailers (potentially high street names) and hence add to the overall retail offer.
- Encourage a more mixed use feel to the town centre, for example by encouraging the refurbishment of spaces over shops to provide flats or by redeveloping vacant land/windfall sites for housing.
- Ensure that the potential arrival of a new supermarket of a significant size (although not yet confirmed), acts as a catalyst for the wider regeneration of the existing town centre.
- Define key ‘anchors’ at either end of the town, so that people are drawn through the town centre, thus helping to increase footfall in the central retail area.
- Relocate some uses that do not necessarily need a town centre location, in order to free up space for uses more compatible with an overall vision for the retail core of the town (for example light industrial or business/operational uses).
- Diversify the leisure/entertainment offer in the town centre, for example by encouraging and providing accommodation suitable for cafes and bars.
- Accommodate users that have a social/community role and help to provide a focus in the town centre, for example a one-stop-shop.
- Build on the work that the Forest of Dean District Council is currently carrying out in relation to its shop-front improvement scheme.

Potential location and likely regeneration benefits/issues
On the basis of previous consultation, four key areas of change have been identified.

Site 1: Land around the existing Westgate Store, Millbrook Engineering and linking back to the Miners Welfare
Look at ways to connect the Miners Welfare Hall easily and safely with the town centre so that it functions as an ‘anchor’ to the northern end of the town, for example by:

- Improving physical linkages, especially pedestrian routes to the hall - for example by improving the route adjacent to the Westgate Store
- Opening up views so that the Hall is visible from the town centre
- Creating a new civic square/linear space that links the hall to the town centre
- Potentially relocate Millbrook Engineering to free up a town centre site potentially for sustainable residential, retail or office uses.

Site 2: Area between the Triangle and Co-op
Refocus the town so that the Co-op area becomes an anchor at the southern end, and so that it is easy and convenient for people who shop there to also use the town centre area, for example by creating a new parade of shops/ pedestrian area that links the Co-op to the Triangle

Site 3: Parade of shops on High Street (including the Spar)
Improve this key shopping area by:

- Improving the look and image of these retail units, so that they function more as a landmark; and/or
- Remodelling these units to provide retail space that would appeal both to existing retailers and potential new investors

Site 4: BT telephone exchange and adjacent land
Potentially relocating the BT telephone exchange to free up land adjacent to the town centre for other uses which may include an element of retail and/or housing and/or car parking. A safe pedestrian access to the town centre would be an essential requirement of any scheme on this site.

All of the above aspirations could be brought forward within the context of the existing Local Plan.
Potential risks/disbenefits:
- Complicated pattern of land ownership.
- Potential need for CPO action if radical re-thinking is to be undertaken.
- Possible impact of ‘thinking big’ on existing viable businesses.
- Given the issues above, possible difficulties of delivery within the 10 year period of this Business Plan.
- Need to refocus the town whilst retaining its market town feel.
- New development in the town centre would need to provide adequate car parking and development schemes should also consider ways to alleviate the current perceived shortage of parking. However, land values are likely to mean that town centre car parking is likely to be difficult to deliver.
Improved traffic management

Contribution to objective: Transport

A number of possible options for improving traffic management have been identified and are dealt with in turn on subsequent pages. These include:

- A one way system; and/or
- Greeing of key transport routes; and/or
- Improvement to alternative routes; and/or
- A signing strategy.

Traffic Management - One way system

Link to baseline/consultation:
The idea of a one way system for Cinderford was raised by local traders during the early consultation on this project. It was initially put forward for consideration through the ongoing town centre enhancement project but, given the strategic nature of the suggestion, is of more relevance to the Business Plan/Area Action Plan. Traders felt that a one-way system would offer an opportunity to reduce traffic in the town centre and hence give over more road space to pedestrians. The idea has received mixed support in wider consultation.

Market analysis/feasibility:
Initial work undertaken as part of this project suggests that a one way system could be broadly feasible and has a number of key benefits. An experimental system, to test the implications, could be a possibility in the short term. However, a full traffic study (which is beyond the scope of this project) would be required to further investigate technical feasibility.

Potential location:
The pattern of circulation proposed by local retailers is shown on the plan opposite. Once traffic is in the town centre, it has two ‘exit’ routes, either along Belle Vue Road or Commercial Road/Victoria Street.

Likely regeneration benefits/issues:
A one way system potentially offers the opportunity to provide a step-change in environmental quality to the town centre. For example, it would free up space for pedestrians and cyclists and would allow space for a greening of the environment. Key areas likely to benefit include the retail area of High Street, and in particular the section between Valley Road and Station Street, where footways are currently narrow and where there is a known accident problem.

Potential risks/disbenefits:
There would be a number of detailed issues to address. Full consideration would need to be given to the implications of this on more strategic traffic movements, including bus operations. The effect on residential areas would also need to be carefully assessed. The proposals would be likely to meet objection from local residents. Therefore it is suggested that any scheme that is acceptable in terms of traffic management and physical constrains, and not entirely acceptable to the local community, could be the subject of a short term experiment.
Traffic Management - Signing Strategy

Contribution to objective: Transport

Link to baseline/consultation:
The traffic signing in and around the town is not well integrated. There is little advance notification for the town, as opposed to the Forest of Dean as a whole, so it is not considered as an advance destination. Signing for traffic from the A4136 does not seek to differentiate between traffic needing the town centre and through traffic or that for the industrial areas.

Market analysis/feasibility:
Work on a signing strategy would need to be co-ordinated and implemented by Gloucestershire County Council, as highways authority. It would need to comply with sub-regional signing strategy

Potential location:
Signing would need to be considered at A48/A40 close to Gloucester, and from Monmouth. Locally, signing would be required at the A4136 and A4151 junction and at other key junctions.

Likely regeneration benefits/issues:
- Removal of unnecessary traffic from town centre;
- Clearer access to industrial sites

Potential risks/disbenefits:
- Measures would be likely to only carry advisory status, thus enforcement could be problematic
- Would need to be progressed as part of a wider package of transport and traffic management measures

Greening of key transport routes

Contribution to objective: Environment/Transport

Link to baseline/consultation:
Many consultees (including the Traders Association, Town Council, and Consultative Panel) have acknowledged the need to ‘bring the forest into the town’. The forest setting of Cinderford is seen as a unique asset but many consultees agree that the town should have better links to the forest and that opportunities should be taken to make the built up area greener and more attractive.

Market analysis/feasibility:
Many measures could be undertaken at little capital cost. Approaches to the town could be made more attractive as part of the same initiative that sought to divert through traffic through signing and junction measures, and through the imposition of a 20 mph limit in the town centre. Measures would not only be applied to roads, but also to cycle and pedestrian links.

Potential location:
Key approach roads and routes to the town,

Likely regeneration benefits/issues:
- Focussing on the main transport routes will help to create a strong visual first impression of the town;
- Will increase residents’ confidence in the town and give an impression that positive action is being taken;
- Would act as a source of Oxygen and absorber of Carbon Dioxide;
- Would add to the existing ecological links between the town and the forest

Potential risks/disbenefits:
Will require ongoing maintenance, including a committed replacement programme in case of vandalism or because of difficulties of establishment.
Traffic Management - Improvements to alternative traffic routes

Contribution to objective: Transport

Link to baseline/consultation:
A common theme in the consultation undertaken to date for this study, and also in previous consultation, has been a concern about the domination of traffic, and particularly larger vehicles, on the town centre environment. There has been a long standing aspiration to remove heavy vehicles from the town centre. (This comment is in addition to the need to seek to remove road traffic from Steam Mills, as discussed in the previous section.)

Market analysis/feasibility:
Initial study of the highway network suggests that it may be possible to upgrade Valley Road as its capacity and that of its junctions is reasonable. However, it is recognised that the junction between Valley Road and B4226 is sub-standard. St Whites Road is quite wide enough to carry additional traffic, but it is beset by parked traffic and is fed by a number of difficult junctions. The proximity of the school is currently a concern, but plans to build a new school, away from the road, could make improving this route more viable. It is therefore considered that these routes can function as an alternative outer route not only for traffic to the industrial estates, but also for through traffic.

With minor reservations, the concept of using these roads is supported by the public, which recognises the advantages of reducing traffic numbers, and especially heavy lorries, from the town centre.

The success of measures would depend not only upon on-line improvements, but also on a consistent signing strategy. This could potentially include a vehicle size or weight restriction to discourage heavy vehicles from travelling through the town centre (however, the potential difficulties of enforcing such a restriction, which would have to allow access, would need to be further considered).

Potential location:
St. Whites Road/Valley Road.

Likely regeneration benefits/issues:
The provision of alternative routes would:
- Take through traffic away from the town centre
- Open up opportunities to further improve the town centre environment for pedestrians, thus encouraging retail investment in the town;
- By reducing the volume of traffic in the town centre, opportunities will arise for environmental enhancement of roads not only in the town centre, but also at gateway points to the centre;
- A comprehensive traffic management strategy would allow for ease of safe movement on St Whites Road and at the junction of Valley Road with B4226.

Potential risks/disbenefits:
The success of any diversionary routes would be likely to depend on:
- A comprehensive signing strategy, which would carry costs of implementation;
- The provision of improved access between the north of Cinderford and the A4136;
- The successful relocation of St. Whites Primary School to its proposed location further away from St Whites Road. Note that there would remain the difficult issue that the school's playing fields lie on one side of St Whites Road, while the school is to the other. Successful implementation of a traffic management scheme would thus depend either on the acceptable relocation of the playing fields, or to the provision of a safe crossing point of St Whites Road that would not significantly jeopardise the free flow of traffic along that road;
- Effective enforcement;
- Potential perceived issues about loss of passing trade from the town centre;
- Convincing residents near Valley Road that the overall benefits of such a scheme outweigh possible disbenefits.
New multi-use activity centre

**Contribution to objective:** Community facilities, employment

**Link to baseline/consultation:**
FODDC Crime and Disorder team have previously identified a potential need for a facility such as an indoor skate park and climbing wall as a potentially important diversionary facility. Currently young people travel out of the County for these facilities hence a local facility could help reduce out commuting retain leisure spending. Consultation with local residents throughout the Business Plan project has highlighted a demand for this type of facility.

An opportunity to provide a flag ship facility that would both serve local residents, as well as draw in visitors and tourists from a wider area has been identified, both by stakeholders and the District Council. This could provide the types of activities outlined above, but could also be broadened out to include leisure pools and spa facilities.

**Market analysis/feasibility:**
A number of local clubs are currently looking for improved premises.

**Potential location:**
Steam Mills could offer a potential location for this facility. Alternatively the Rugby Club training ground at the southern end of the Linear Park could be a possibility.

**Likely regeneration benefits/issues:**
A large facility could help to put Cinderford on the map, add to its credibility and enhance its reputation. It would help to provide quality facilities for young people and provide some local employment.

**Potential risks/disbenefits:**
- Unlikely to provide as much employment as other potential land uses

Tourist attraction at Drybrook Quarry

**Link to baseline/consultation:**
There are proposals for the re-use of Drybrook Quarry as “Rainbow Valley”: an observation plateau for lagoon cliffs, hanging gardens and (inter alia) nurseries. The concept would depend on the creation of a park and ride site to the north of the quarry to which it would be connected by a railway through an existing tunnel, currently in poor, unacceptable condition.

**Market analysis/feasibility:**
The local group has undertaken some simplistic assessment of the market, but this does not provide adequate information to suggest the concept is viable. A feasibility study undertaken professionally is required, and the concept has adequate imaginative quality to merit funds being set aside for such a study.

**Potential location:**
Drybrook Quarry, with potential connections to A40.

**Likely regeneration benefits/issues:**
These proposals have the potential to deliver something unique to Cinderford and may warrant further feasibility work which could be a recommendation of the Business Plan.

**Potential risks/disbenefits:**
- Likely to have a relatively limited impact in regenerating Cinderford itself and providing and encouraging an improved skills base;
- That study should examine the principal environmental issues (e.g. traffic generation and impact of bats in tunnel);
- Implementation requires the assent of Hanson PLC, which owns the quarry and is likely to maintain a working presence for perhaps a further ten years. Hanson’s commitment to the project is unclear;
- The project requires the prior extraction of viable deposits of aggregate;
- Implementation of the park and ride site and improvement to the tunnel would be expensive and lengthy.
Improvements to the Linear Park

**Contribution to objective:** Community facilities, leisure and recreation and the environment

**Link to baseline/consultation:**
Whilst Cinderford enjoys an attractive forest setting, there are relatively few open spaces for recreation close to the town centre. The linear park is an important asset, but more could be made of it, through positive management.

Many of Cinderford's residents exhibit poor health and therefore improved open spaces offer an opportunity to encourage outdoor activities.

**Market analysis/feasibility:**
The southern end of the Linear Park which protrudes into the built fabric of the town to the east of Valley Road, appears suitable and appropriate for allotments. Use of the southern end of the Linear Park itself could become more formalised to provide Cinderford with a public park. Public consultation suggests that a formal public park would be popular. There is no scope for a park to be provided in the town centre.

The southern end of the Linear Park could also potentially accommodate an activity centre for younger people, perhaps on the site of the former Rugby Club training ground. There is also potential for additional water features along the route of the Park.

In the north, the linear park could be extended to and beyond Steam Mills lake.

**Likely regeneration benefits/issues:**
- Improved local environment for local residents but this needs to be delivered without significant loss of wildlife habitats
- More opportunities for outdoor recreation and healthy lifestyles

 Provision of a new football ground

**Contribution to objective:** Community facilities, leisure and recreation

**Link to baseline/consultation:**
The existing football ground, located in the Hilldean area, opposite Heywood School is in need of refurbishment. It is understood that the club are under pressure to invest significantly in disabled access improvements at their current site by March 2007. This level of investment at the current site will not be possible, hence a new pitch would be necessary to allow the club to continue.

Consultation with the local community has shown that there is a strong call for improved leisure and recreation facilities.

**Potential location:**
A number of locations for a new football ground have been considered by consultants employed by the club. These have included land near the bowling club in Steam Mills, as well as land to the south of Steam Mills Lake (an area known locally as Hawkwell Enclosure). The club's referred site would be south of Steam Mills lake.

**Market analysis/feasibility:**
Relocation away from the existing football ground would lead to the potential "release" of nearly 2 ha of land with good potential for housing.

The sale of the Hilldean site would be likely to generate much, if not all of the capital, needed, to develop the new site. However, the new pitch would probably need to be built while the present one is in operation. Therefore, some form of bridging loan will be necessary, possibly with limited capital.

**Likely regeneration benefits/issues:**
- More opportunities for outdoor recreation and healthy lifestyles.
- Potential to create a flagship site which would help to generate local pride.
- Opportunity to allow community use of training facilities
New campus for Royal Forest of Dean (RoFD) College

**Contribution to objective:** Employment and skill/community facilities

**Link to baseline/consultation:**
Educational attainment is poor within Cinderford. The Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that parts of Cinderford rank within the top 10% of most deprived areas in the country for education skills and training and that other parts of the study area also perform relatively badly. Public comment suggests that the poor educational attainment stems from the college having previously relocated away from Cinderford.

The College provides a key facility for the Forest as a whole and for its hinterland. It wishes to expand the services it offers and to bring facilities onto one site. At present, facilities are spread between the 5 Acre site near Coleford and a site at Vantage Point at Mitcheldean. The College is presently considering the adequacy of those sites and what level of new facilities should be provided, but it is likely that a comprehensive site would be favoured.

**Market analysis/feasibility:**
The results of a study by the College's consultants is awaited. It is highly unlikely that funding from normal educational funds and/or from the private sector would provide for the full range of facilities sought. It is likely that some facilities to be offered by a redeveloped College would be available to the community as a result of conditions applied to funding.

**Potential location:**
Steam Mills.

**Likely regeneration benefits/issues:**
- Provision of a state of the art comprehensive tertiary education facility on one site in an attractive setting.
- Opportunity for community use of college facilities.
- Opportunity for re-use of existing college facilities.
- Provision of a catalyst for encouraging better educational attainment in Cinderford as a whole.
- Generation of secondary employment through provision of additional facilities being attracted to the town.

**Potential risks/disbenefits:**
- Contingent on results of College study.
- Likely to be dependent on bringing together funding resources from many different streams in a coherent manner.
- Need for effective and flexible public transport links with Cinderford and nearby settlements, allowing good use of the facilities outside the normal education working day.
- Assembly of a site providing an adequate area and facilities

The successful creation of a new college facility at Steam Mills would have more advantages than disadvantages. Nevertheless, it would run contrary to existing policy, and would need to be considered against its environmental impact. It would be advantageous if the facility were seen to form part of a mixed development proposal for this part of north Cinderford.

**Other initiatives to improve learning**
Consideration of opportunities to improve learning are being developed through the Learning Plan study. The recommendations will be reported separately but incorporated into the final Business Plan document. The work undertaken to date on the Learning Plan is focussing on identifying ways to:

a) Build on R FoD College plans;
b) 'Formalise' the Learning Team as a vehicle for harnessing the motivation, energy and commitment to improve skills in the area and to communicate and share information about learning activities;
c) Widen involvement and support for the extended services initiative, build on the school's cluster as a means to integrating 'family' based opportunities for learning;
d) Employ a Learning Plan champion;
e) Develop Cinderford as a national/regional leader for creative sector training;
f) Develop Cinderford as a national/regional leader for natural environment sustainability training; and
g) Build a social development project around 2012 Olympics.
Improvements to community halls

Contribution to objective: Community facilities, leisure and recreation (possible links to learning)

Link to baseline/consultation:
Consultation, in particular with the Cinderford Consultative Panel, has identified improvements to community and parish halls as a key local priority in the area of influence. Bids for funds for improvements to facilities have previously been made to the Acorn Fund and to the Coalfields Regeneration Trust, so the desire for enhanced facilities is clearly deeply felt.

Potential location:
Existing village halls and community halls in the area of influence - The Pludds and District Village Hall, Ruardean War Memorial Hall and Soudley Recreation Ground and Village Hall Trust were successful in securing a small amount of funding from the Acorn Fund in 2006 (a 'one off' opportunity for community based projects to secure funding from the Forest of Dean District Council). However, it is understood that further funds are sought in order to deliver local aspirations for the halls.

Market analysis/feasibility:
This study has not undertaken a review of the feasibility of improving existing village halls. However, in general terms the concept of supporting and improving community facilities in the villages within the area of influence is supported, particularly where these buildings offer opportunities as a venue for learning and training facilities.

Likely regeneration benefits/issues:
- Potential to ensure that the regeneration work 'reaches out' to the outlying communities
- The enhanced facilities would engender greater community spirit and confidence in rural areas
- The use of local facilities would reduce the need to travel using private cars
- Better facilities for learning would increase the skills base and job opportunities for local people
- Some halls are of local heritage value that otherwise would be lost.
Summary
Bringing forward many of the ideas and aspirations outlined in the previous section is likely to require a range of different approaches. Some of the actions could be taken forward in the short term within the context of the existing Local Plan. Others do not require planning permission. These could therefore form part of a ‘core package of measures’ for the Business Plan subject to further work to demonstrate feasibility, funding and consultation responses. The actions and projects that could form part of this core package of measures include:

- Intensification of Forest Vale Industrial Estate
- Greening of Forest Vale industrial estate
- Intensification of residential uses in the town centre
- Improved traffic management, potentially including, a one-way system, development of a signing strategy and improvement to alternative routes to ensure heavy traffic avoids the town centre;
- Greening of key transport routes
- Refurbishment of Miners Welfare Hall
- Improvements/continued funding for existing community facilities
- Potential tourist attraction at Drybrook Quarry
- Extension and improvement to the linear park
- Improvements to existing community halls in the area of influence.

Non land use actions, for example those arising from the Learning Plan would also fall in this category.

Other projects which are land use specific and relate to new development will need to be considered in the context of available land as there are a number of potentially compelling demands for space or a number of different approaches that could be taken to providing these facilities.

It may be possible to accommodate some of the aspirations on existing Local Plan sites. However, in some cases, it may be necessary to consider other sites or to rethink existing allocations. The descriptions provided above demonstrate that, in particular, there are some key decisions to be made about the potential future role of existing housing, employment and leisure and recreation allocations in the Steam Mills area.

Questions for consultation
Which of the actions, projects and initiatives set out on the previous pages do you think are most critical for Cinderford?

Are there any actions or ideas that you would not want to see go forward?

Are there any other actions, projects or initiatives that you think should be considered through the Business Plan/Area Action Plan process?

Projects that fall into this category include:

- New office development
- New retail development
- New leisure facilities in the town centre
- New industrial development
- Relocation of the abattoir
- New hotel
- New biomass facility
- New housing schemes
- New link to the A4136 and linked to this potential improvements to alternative traffic routes
- Remodelling of the town centre
- New multi use activity centre
- Relocation of the football ground
- New campus for the Royal Forest of Dean College
9. Potential sites for development

Options and land use planning scenarios
If the Business Plan and the AAP are to deliver the ideas and aspirations set out in the previous chapter the justifiable designation of land for development will be critical.

In general terms, there are three possible scenarios for the way in which the Business Plan/AAP could seek to deal with land use allocations. These are summarised in the boxes opposite.

In each case the core package of non land use specific actions (which would be common to each scenario) could be combined with an approach which seeks to:

1. Retain existing adopted Local Plan allocations for the uses currently specified, although with a new programme of phasing. This would therefore mean a continuation of the existing situation.
2. Retain some Local Plan allocations but reallocate others for alternative uses. This could involve reallocating sites to focus more on either:
   - Employment
   - Housing
   - Community uses
3. Retain some local plan allocations, reallocate others and identify additional sites for development and include these as new allocations.

These three scenarios are broadly in line with the options being considered through the wider LDF process. Indeed, both the housing and employment issues and options papers (issued in 2006) have considered various scenarios of retaining, reallocating and identifying new sites for development.

### SCENARIO 1

- Core package of non land use specific actions
- PLUS
- Retention of Local Plan allocations

### SCENARIO 2

- Core package of non land use specific actions
- PLUS
- Retention of some Local Plan allocations
- PLUS
- Reallocation of some Local Plan allocations

### SCENARIO 3

- Core package of non land use specific actions
- PLUS
- Retention of some Local Plan allocations
- PLUS
- Reallocation of some Local Plan allocations
- PLUS
- Addition of new allocations for development
Implications of scenario 1
The existing Local Plan allocations, highlighted on Figure 9.1, are likely to limit opportunities to meet the aspirations for Cinderford due to their relatively limited scale, and also because of difficulties in bringing some of the sites forward.

Implications of scenario 2
It is likely that achieving the aspirations set out in the previous chapter is likely to require a new approach to the release of land for development in Cinderford.

Table 9.1 demonstrates that there are potential opportunities to consider alternative uses for the following sites currently allocated in the Local Plan (these sites are also shown on Figure 9.1):

- Cinderford 7, Valley Road North - reallocate housing site for employment uses;
- Cinderford 5, Newtown - reallocate employment site for residential or for a hotel;
- Cinderford 2, Newtown - reallocate employment site for housing;
- Cinderford 14, Northern end of Linear Park - reallocate for employment or retail uses; and
- Cinderford 15, Reallocation leisure/recreation site for mixed use development.

In addition, the adopted local plan indicated the continued use of specific sites as open/protected spaces, but these are not the subject of specific policies. Two such sites could offer opportunities for alternative uses which could benefit the regeneration of Cinderford. These are:

- The cricket club, located within the industrial estate and potentially suitable for employment uses; and
- Cinderford football club ground, which could be redeveloped for housing.

Both sites presently provide valuable recreation facilities which would need to be replaced to an enhanced standard elsewhere in the area prior to redevelopment.

Figure 9.1 shows that sites at Northern United, Steam Mill and Newtown (subsequently referred to in this report as the ‘Northern Quarter’) present the greatest opportunities. Bringing this area forward for development is not going to be straightforward as there are a number of potential constraints that will need to be carefully considered. However, if these can be overcome it is likely that this area could support a mix of different uses and therefore play a key role in Cinderford’s regeneration. Indeed, these sites offer significant opportunities to help achieve the overall vision of the LDF which is to

“to promote thriving communities and provide quality environments, to develop the local economy including tourism, and to provide affordable homes, facilitate the regeneration of towns and create safer communities.”

Particular consideration will need to be given to the environmental impact of development. There are important habitats and species within this area and proposals will need to be sensitive to these. Development is also likely to require land assembly, remediation and management.

The public sector funding potentially available for the redevelopment of this area could be significant. However, securing funds will depend on agreeing a way forward.

There are a number of different ways forward for these sites and therefore there are some important decisions to be made on the most appropriate pattern of land use. Chapters 13 and 14 consider these issues in more detail.

Implications of scenario 3
Consideration of releasing additional sites for development could have benefits for Cinderford, providing a scale and quantum of growth that could support wider improvements.

Opportunities have, to date, been identified for additional development sites at the following locations and these are highlighted on Figure 9.1:

1) Adjacent to the existing housing allocation at St. Whites;
2) On the site adjacent to the sewer treatment works, subject to operational requirements; and
3) Other town centre sites which may come forward for development in the future to changing requirements of retailers.
Considerations
In considering the most appropriate scenario for Cinderford it is important to take account of the extent to which each is likely to be in line with both the Regional Spatial Strategy and the emerging Local Development Framework.

All of the scenarios presented offer the opportunity to meet the objectives of the LDF, albeit to differing degrees. Scenarios 2 and 3 potentially provide the greatest opportunity to address the issues and strategic objectives but this will depend on the detail of how land is allocated. The following Chapters examine these possibilities.

Questions for consultation
Do you agree that sites at Northern United, Steam Mills and Newtown offer the greatest opportunities for regeneration?
Are there other new sites which should be considered for key development projects?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Existing local plan allocation</th>
<th>Possible scenarios for the Business Plan/Area Action Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Residential        | Cinderford 5  
Newtown (70 dwellings);                                                                 | • Retain as housing allocation                                                                                           |
|                    | Cinderford 10  
The abattoir site, Valley Road South (90 dwellings)                                    | • Retain as housing allocation, subject to relocation of the abattoir                                                   |
|                    | Cinderford 6  
The foundry site, Station Street (185 dwellings)                                    | • Retain as housing allocation                                                                                           |
|                    | Cinderford 7  
Valley Road North (20 dwellings)                                                    | • Retain as housing allocation; or  
• Reallocate as employment land                                                                                           |
|                    | Cinderford 8  
St Whites (150 dwellings)                                                      | • Retain allocation; or  
• Expand allocation to allow additional housing                                                                            |
| Employment         | Cinderford 3  
Northern United and brick works area (8.7 hectares)                                   | • Retain allocation; or                                                                                                 |
|                    | Cinderford 5  
Newtown (6 hectares)                                                                         | • Retain allocation; or  
• Reallocate for housing development                                                                                     |
|                    | Cinderford 2  
Newtown (3 hectares)                                                                         | • Retain allocation; or  
• Reallocate for housing                                                                                                 |
|                    | Cinderford 1 - intensification of employment uses at Forest Vale                          | • Retain allocation                                                                                                       |
| Leisure and        | Cinderford 15 - Steam Mills lake area                                                       | • Retain allocation, but seek improvement to environment/facilities; or  
• Reallocated for employment, housing, retail or community uses                                                         |
| recreation         | Cinderford 14 - Southern end of linear park                                                 | • Retain allocation, but seek improvement to environment/facilities; or  
• Reallocate northern section for employment or retail uses                                                                 |
| Open space         | Cricket Ground                                                                             | • Retain; or  
• Reallocate for employment uses, subject to provision of alternative facilities                                         |
| Football ground    |                                                                                             | • Retain; or  
• Reallocate for employment or housing, subject to provision of alternative facilities                                 |
Figure 9.1 - Location of Local Plan allocations and additional potential sites for development
10. Northern Quarter

Site location and planning status
The ‘Northern Quarter’, illustrated in Figure 10.1, adjoins existing residential and employment development to the east, borders areas of forest to the north and west and adjoins the Forest Vale Industrial Estate to the south. There has been a long history of mineral extraction and industrial workings in this area.

The area is currently covered by the following Local Plan allocations:

1. The area around, and to the south of, Steam Mills lake is allocated for leisure and recreation uses under policy R. F Cinderford 15;
2. The north eastern corner is covered by allocation R.F Cinderford 5, a mixed use allocation for 70 dwellings and 3.4 hectares of B1 and B2 employment uses; and
3. The eastern section is covered by allocation R. F. Cinderford 2 for 3 hectares of B1, B2 and B8 employment uses.
4. The north western section (the site of the former Northern United colliery and adjacent land) is allocated in the Local Plan for employment uses under policy (R) F Cinderford 3.

The Local Plan also shows two possible access improvements:

5. An extension to the spine road from Valley Road to Steam Mill; safeguarded in the Local Plan by Policy 13; and
6. The Western Access Road, linking Valley Road to the A4136 via Northern United, safeguarded in the Local Plan by Policy Cinderford 12.

The options for this site consider the possibilities of either taking forward the existing Local Plan allocations or reallocating parcels of land for alternative uses.

Current land uses:
The majority of the area falls within Cinderford’s Linear Park. It has some tree cover and also contains a lake resulting from previous mineral extraction. The area is predominantly used for outdoor recreation and leisure, primarily walking and fishing, although, as stated above, clay extraction continues, serving Coleford Brick and Tile works. Although the area falls within the statutory forest boundary the effect of mineral extraction and poor restoration has rendered it of little use for afforestation.

The north western land parcel is the site of the former Northern United colliery and is currently vacant, although some buildings still remain. The adjacent parcel has a number of existing operational uses, including the Coleford Brick and Tile Works, which is unlikely to relocate within the lifetime of the Business Plan. Options for regeneration must accommodate this existing use, and recognise the need to allow for clay extraction locally.

Figure 10.1: Current Local Plan allocations for Steam Mills/ Nailbridge/Newtown and Northern United area
Opportunities
As noted earlier in this document, the Northern Quarter is the only significant area of land potentially available for re-development. Essentially, comprehensive, mixed use, development of this area has the potential to “put Cinderford on the map” and to lever-in public and private sector investment to take forward the regeneration effort for the entire town and its hinterland.

The site offers opportunities to promote a high quality mixed use development which builds on the attractive lakeside and forest setting and potentially provide a mix of the following types of facilities.

- New **community facilities** of a size and scale that would be difficult to accommodate on alternative sites elsewhere in the town, for example a multi-use sports and activity centre;
- Sports pitches, and specifically a new ground for Cinderford Football Club;
- A site that may be suitable for the **Royal Forest of Dean college**.
- A new **hotel** to support increased tourism;
- Land suitable for **higher skill, higher value employers** who may be more likely to invest in higher quality employment space set within a more attractive setting;
- Starter units for small businesses;
- Space for the relocation of existing employers;
- **High quality housing** development and/or affordable housing to meet local demand;
- A facility to provide combined heat and power from **biomass**; and
- A low key **tourist or educational attraction**, to interpret the biomass facility.

It is likely that any scheme for Steam Mills will need to provide a range of facilities but, due to land and compatibility constraints, some of the above may be mutually exclusive.

Early consultation work and direction provided by key stakeholders has given a strong lead towards providing a mixed-use form of development which can be considered as an examplar form of eco-development; in other words, development which meets high sustainability standards and energy efficiency targets. This form of development would fully respect its forest setting. Any development here should ‘set the standard’ for development elsewhere within the town and across the district and region.

Constraints/Issues
Work undertaken for previous studies, most notably the Cinderford Regeneration Arc study completed by RPS for SWRDA in 2002, as well as technical work undertaken during the course of this project has identified a number of potential issues that may constrain development of this site or will need to be taken into account at the detailed stage. These include:

- There are likely to be considerable costs involved in bringing these sites forward due largely to access and remediation costs;
- Potential impact on wildlife and in particular on a known population of Great Crested Newts on the area to the south of Steam Mills lake (known as Hawkwell Enclosure);
- Need for improved access to service development;
- Commercial viability due to the costs likely to be involved in remediating and servicing sites ready for development;
- Potential conflict with the findings of the inspectors report at the Local Plan inquiry;
- Multiple land ownerships and potential problems related to land consolidation;
- Potential risk of flooding and the potential need for a Flood Risk Assessment;
- Potential conflict with the Forestry Act in areas where there is reasonable tree cover;
- The potential to re-use or clear existing buildings, and in particular the pithead buildings on Northern United which, whilst are of local value are of no particular architectural merit; and
- The need to retain woodland, as defined by the 1981 Forestry Act (as this is not available for development).

Work undertaken to date suggests that these constraints could be overcome if the site is taken forward for development in a sensitive and responsive manner. However, it is likely that bringing this area forward for development will depend on public sector investment, primarily through the English Partnerships National Coalfields Programme.

Access is a crucial consideration. Analysis suggests that two routes are feasible and could be delivered. If a relatively local scale of development were pursued the Spine Road Extension (as identified in the adopted Local Plan) may suffice, although that in itself would not solve existing
problems on the A4151. If a ‘more significant’ scale of development is accommodated an alternative alignment, potentially joining with the A4136 to the west of the existing junction may offer a more practical way forward.

The options presented in this Chapter are structured around consideration of a number of potential development ‘cells’, the general location of which is shown in Figure 10.2. By way of introduction to the options, the issues affecting each cell are discussed briefly here.

**Figure 10.2 - Potential development ‘cells’ within the Northern Quarter**

**Cells 1 and 2**
- The site of the former Northern United Colliery and currently allocated in the Local Plan under policy (R) F Cinderford 3
- Existing buildings on the site are of no particular architectural merit but there may be calls from the community for retention for socio-historic reasons.
- Bats are known to roost in some buildings, therefore any development would need to deal appropriately with this issue.
- Existing occupier of site with lease in place.
- The site is owned by SWRDA/English Partnerships therefore offers potential as a ‘quick win’.
- The secluded nature of the site means it could be suitable for general industry however consultation has revealed a strong desire for this to be a flagship site which takes advantage of its position adjacent to the A4136 and signposts to people that Cinderford is ‘on the up’.

**Cell 3**
- Wooded location adjacent to forest track.
- Currently covered by Local Plan allocation (R) F Cinderford 3.
- Adjoins existing employment uses. Potential for Biomass facility, which could serve these users.
- Reasonable potential for development.

**Cell 4:**
- Currently part of the leisure and recreation Local Plan allocation (R) F Cinderford 15.
- Currently accessible only by forest track but access could be provided by a new link road utilising the forest track (route 9).
- The site was previously an open cast mine - this may mean that a buffer area either side of the highwall would need to be retained
- Sensitive location, adjoining woodland to the north and Steam Mills lake to the south - likely to limit size of potentially developable plot.
Cell 5
- Currently allocated in the Local Plan for employment uses - (R) F Cinderford 5.
- Accessible from existing A4151 but would benefit from spine road extension.
- Identified by previous RPS Study as an area of high risk in respect of land stability and contamination issues - therefore may require higher value land uses to secure commercial viability or more significant public sector investment.
- Part of the site was previously an open cast mine - this may mean that a buffer area either side of the ‘highwall’ would need to be retained.
- Currently little commercial interest in bringing this site forward for employment uses.
- A number of archaeological sites are known to be present.
- Any land use on this site would need to be sensitive to the ecological issues and forest setting. An English Nature (now Natural England) grassland site falls within this cell, located adjacent to the A4151 and the existing forest. Care would need to be taken to mitigate against impacts to this designated site. Discussions with Natural England are ongoing.
- Potential risk of flooding - falls within the flood areas shown on the Environment Agency flood maps.
- The site could be retained as an employment allocation or, through the Area Action Plan process, residential/retail uses could be promoted as these higher value land uses may make development more commercially viable.

Cell 6:
- Currently allocated in the Local Plan for housing - allocation (R) F Cinderford 13.
- Adjoins existing residential development to both the north and south.
- Potential risk of flooding - falls within the flood areas shown on the Environment Agency flood maps.
- Currently some private sector interest in bringing this site forward for housing.
- Accessible from existing A4151.
- Currently part of the leisure and recreation Local Plan allocation (R) F Cinderford 15 and the focus of clay extraction is to the south. The planning consent requires restoration of the ponds created by extraction as dry land.
- There are two main options for this site. Either the site is retained for leisure and recreation uses or the site is promoted for alternative uses.
- Adjoins Steam Mills Lake. If leisure is the key focus, the area around the lake could be enhanced for outdoor recreation, in particular for fishing. Alternatively, the lakeside setting could make the site attractive for higher quality residential/employment uses. General industrial uses would not be appropriate for this site.
- Currently accessible only by forest track but access could be provided by a new link road.
- Identified by previous RPS Study as an area of low to medium risk in respect of land stability and contamination issues. This lower risk means that this site may potentially be more straightforward to develop and thus could be implementable early in the plan period.

Cell 8:
- Currently allocated in the Local Plan for employment uses - allocation (R) F Cinderford 2.
- Access currently difficult but would be improved with provision of a new access road either the Spine Road extension, or route 9 utilising the forest track.
- Identified by previous RPS Study as, in part, an area of high risk in respect of land stability and contamination issues - therefore potentially difficult/expensive to bring forward for development.
- Potential risk of flooding - falls within the flood areas shown on the Environment Agency flood maps.
- This future land uses will depend on resolution of the above issues but it could prove suitable for a mix of uses.
Cell 9:
- Potentially the most sensitive of the potential development cells.
- Great Crested Newts are known to be present in the ponds within this cell, therefore development proposals would need to take account of this issue and seek to either maintain the existing habitat or provide for translocation.
- Currently relatively heavily wooded so trees would need to be retained as part of any development proposals.
- Currently part of the leisure and recreation Local Plan allocation (R) F Cinderford 14 therefore, in the short term, development for alternative uses would run a risk of being contrary to Local Plan policy although no firm proposals for the use of the Linear Park have come forward.
- Potentially accessible from existing highway network, but access would be improved through provision of a new link road.
- Identified by previous RPS Study as an area of high risk in respect of land stability and contamination issues - therefore potentially difficult/expensive to bring forward for development.
- Adjoins existing industrial estate to the south.
- Relatively secluded location.
- Could potentially be a suitable location for new sports pitches - a land use which is likely to be consistent with the current Local Plan.
- Alternatively this site could be used for employment, and it could be considered as an extension of the existing industrial estate. It could potentially be a location for ‘bad neighbour’ uses.

The options
Taking account of this analysis and the aspirations set out in Chapter 8, four options for the future development of the Steam Mills area have been presented based on different themes.
- Option 1: Leisure and recreation/community facilities led
- Option 2: Housing and retail led
- Option 3: Employment and learning led
- Option 4: A mixed use approach

This theme led approach to the options is intended to generate debate about the balance between uses. For example, the balance between employment and community uses, or between housing and employment.

The options are intended to promote discussion which will help confirm land-use priorities for the town. The following drawings focus on the possible predominant land uses for each ‘cell’ of the site. However, it is intended that, where possible, a mixed used approach is adopted in accordance with Government guidance. Hence:
- In areas shown as residential, opportunities to include open space, leisure or retail facilities or compatible small scale, low impact, employment would be considered as part of the detailed process; and
- In areas shown as employment opportunities to incorporate a residential aspect would be considered, although the extent to which this could be feasible may depend on the scale and form of employment sought;

The preferred option is likely to be a mix of the options presented here. Therefore, the consultation aims to generate comments that will help identify the best aspects of each option.

Subsequent design work will then be undertaken to work up a more detailed preferred option which shows, at a finer grain level of detail, how the land uses could be combined.

Question for consultation
Taking account of the issues set out on the following pages, which of the options/theme led approaches do you think is most appropriate for Cinderford?

Please note that you can use the form in Appendix 1 to note which option you prefer or, if appropriate, to suggest a slightly different configuration of land uses.

Which of the potential road alignments do you think is most appropriate?
Option 1: Leisure and recreation led

**Key features**
- Largely consistent with the existing Local Plan allocations although new build facilities will be required
- New site for Cinderford football club
- A new flagship multi use sports and activity centre/wet weather attraction to potentially include a skate park, climbing wall and leisure pool together with space for local clubs, learning, training and the arts
- A new hotel, possibly located adjacent to a small tourist facility to interpret history of power generation in the area and offer woodland activities
- An extension to the spine road, as proposed in the Local Plan
- A biomass facility using wood and timber waste from the forest to supply heat and power to the proposed new development
- Housing and employment, as envisaged by the current Local Plan.

** Likely outputs**
- Around 70 houses, including affordable housing
- Employment space to provide around 600 jobs
- Improved tourism facilities and attractions
- Improved recreation facilities for residents and visitors

**Issues**
- Early consultation identified strong community support for improved community facilities and this site is unique in offering the space to provide a significant facility. However, recreation based development is likely to generate lower land values than other alternatives, and this may impact on the financial viability of proposals
- A recreation focus would be less intensive than alternative forms of development, and therefore offer more opportunity for green space and habitat creation
- The extension to spine road would not relieve existing problems on the A4151 at Steam Mills, but could be easier to deliver than the alternative alignment shown on Options 2, 3 and 4.
- Attracting a hotel developer would require positive marketing as part of an emerging exciting image for Cinderford
- A new road will benefit local businesses
- The biomass plant will help Cinderford promoting itself as green and sustainable business town
Option 2: Housing and retail led

Key features

- High quality employment space set around Steam Mills lake and additional space for employment-led mixed use development to the south, and also on Northern United
- Additional housing adjacent to the site currently allocated in the Local Plan
- Live/work units in a forest setting to allow people to run small businesses from home
- A new tree-lined avenue offering a green entrance to the town and a new junction with the A4136
- A biomass facility, to provide a sustainable form of energy for nearby employers and houses

Likely outputs

- Around 240 houses
- Employment space to provide around 1200 jobs
- Opportunities for new business start ups and a diversified economic base

Issues

- An increased residential element will help to make the overall development more financially viable and increases opportunities to provide affordable housing. Residential uses are also more likely to generate financial contributions towards other improvements.
- The new tree-lined road will create a positive image to people approaching the town and will also relieve problems on the A4151. It also assists Nailbridge allocation to come forward for development. The overall uplift in quality resulting from the new approach road has the potential to help make development sites more attractive for private sector investment. However, this alignment would be more expensive and have a greater environmental impact than the route shown in option 1. Any route would have to be agreed with the County Council as Highway Authority.
- A lakeside setting could help to attract higher skill, higher wage businesses. Small businesses could potentially re-use the pithead buildings on Northern United
- Provision of additional local jobs may help to reduce out-commuting
- As in Option 1, the biomass plant will help Cinderford promote itself as a sustainable business town
Option 3: Employment and learning led mixed use scheme

Key features
- A high quality employment led scheme set around the lake and retention of the Newtown/Steam Mills employment sites allocated in the Local Plan
- An employment site at Northern United, potentially suitable for the relocation of existing local employers
- A site which could be utilised as a potential new campus for the Royal Forest of Dean College
- A new tree-lined avenue land a new junction with the A4136
- A biomass facility, to provide a sustainable form of energy for nearby employers and houses

Key outputs
- Around 70 houses
- Employment space to provide around 1400 jobs (excluding employment potentially associated with the Royal Forest of Dean College)
- New training and development opportunities
- Opportunity for synergy between college and local employers
- Significant opportunities for new business start ups and a diversified economic base

Issues
- A lakeside setting could help to attract higher skill, higher wage businesses
- A new college would address one of the key deprivation issues and raise the profile of the town. However, the preferred location for a new campus is dependent on the results of a separate study currently being undertaken by the college.
- Potential difficulty in marketing this quantum of employment land, although improved access is likely to help attract new businesses For issues related to the new road, see text for option 2
- Provision of additional local job opportunities may help to reduce outcommuting
- As in the other Options, the biomass plant will help Cinderford promote itself as a sustainable business town
Option 4: Mixed use scheme

Key features
- Additional housing adjacent to the site currently allocated in the Local Plan, and provision of live work units for small businesses
- A site which could be utilised as a potential new campus for the Royal Forest of Dean College
- A new hotel
- A biomass facility, to provide a sustainable form of energy for nearby employers and houses
- A new multi use sports and activity centre as in Option 1
- A new tree-lined avenue and a new junction with the A4136 with adjacent high quality employment space

Key outputs
- Around 220 houses
- Employment space to provide around 300 jobs (excluding employment potentially associated with the Royal Forest of Dean College)
- New training and development opportunities
- Opportunity for synergy between college and local employers
- Improved recreation and tourism offer

Issues
- Provides a balance of housing, employment, tourism and recreation led development
- Additional housing, above Local Plan allocation will help make the development more financially viable, and provides opportunities to deliver affordable housing
- For issues related to the new road, see text for option 2
- Attracting a hotel developer would require positive marketing as part of an emerging exciting image for Cinderford
- A new college would address one of the key deprivation issues. However, the preferred location is dependent on the results of a separate study
- As in other Options, the biomass plant will help Cinderford promote itself as a sustainable business town
11. Town Centre

The town centre is also an important site in its own right. It will be important to ensure that the future growth and development of Cinderford is supported by a vital and viable town centre. Early consultation work has identified public support for potentially radical re-thinking and a consensus in terms of a vision for a greener, better integrated, more vibrant town centre with an improved range of shops.

Question for consultation
Which of the two options for the town centre do you think is most appropriate?

Town Centre Option 1 - General improvements/limited remodelling

Key features
- Promote shop-front improvements through the Council’s grant programme
- Encourage new residential development in selected locations by encouraging the refurbishment of flats over shops or by redeveloping sites at the north end of the High Street for housing
- Remodel the Spar parade of shops to provide retail space that would appeal both to existing retailers and potential new investors
- Relocate industrial uses opposite the Miners Welfare Hall, to free up space for housing or additional car parking

Issues
- Would be largely consistent with the existing Local Plan and potentially more straightforward than Option 2.
Town Centre Option 2 - More significant remodelling

**Key features**
- As in Option 1, promote shop-front improvements
- As in Option 1, encourage new residential development in selected locations
- Create a new parade of shops/pedestrian area that links the Co-op to the Triangle
- Bring the Miners Welfare Hall into the town centre by providing a more direct link to the Triangle, for example by improving the pedestrian route adjacent to the Westgate Store
- Potentially consider the development of the BT site for either car parking or housing

**Issues**
- Would affect more land ownerships, therefore a longer term approach would be required
- Provides opportunity to create modern retail space and attract a wider retail offer
12. Next Steps

The comments received on this report (and the associated executive summary) will need to be considered in the light of the findings of other on-going technical work which includes:

- More detailed market testing, to confirm demand (in particular for housing and employment) and hence commercial viability
- More detailed consideration of site constraints and the feasibility and deliverability of different options to include:
  - Contamination and land stability issues
  - Drainage, flooding and utility requirements;
  - Ecology, biodiversity and landscape issues; and
  - Transport issues
- More detailed consideration of the potential need for public sector investment
- Developing a process for ‘sieving’ and refining the options to ensure that those taken forward have the potential to meet the environmental and sustainability principles set out at the beginning of this document.

This technical work is ongoing, and will continue during the consultation period. In addition, the findings of the consultations considering the future of the Royal Forest of Dean College will become available. There may also be additional information about the future of health care facilities in the area.

Together, the findings of the consultation and the technical work will be used to help:

- Confirm which projects should be promoted through the Cinderford Business Plan/Area Action Plan project
- In the case, of land use related projects, identify suitable locations; and
- For the key sites, work up more detailed proposals.

The preferred strategy will be subject to a ‘Green Book’ assessment to demonstrate value for money and this information will be used as the basis of an approach to various funding partners.

The preferred strategy will be the subject of further statutory consultation through the Area Action Plan process. This will be undertaken by the District Council once the Business Plan process has come to an end and will adhere to the relevant planning regulations.
Appendix 1: Questionnaire
Your views….
Please use this form to record your views. All comments should be posted to Wendy Jackson, Cinderford Regeneration Manager, Forest of Dean District Council, High Street, Coleford, Gloucestershire, GL16 8HG by Thursday 29th March 2007

Question 1
Chapter 8 sets out a range of actions, projects and initiatives which have potential to contribute towards the regeneration of Cinderford.

Which of these do you think are most critical for Cinderford?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Are there any actions or ideas that you would not want to see go forward?

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……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Are there any other actions, projects or initiatives that you think should be considered?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Question 2
Chapters 9, 10 and 11 discuss possible locations for new development. The ‘Northern Quarter’ and the town centre are identified as key opportunities for new development which will boost the regeneration of Cinderford.

Do you agree that these sites offer important opportunities for regeneration?

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……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Are there other new sites which should be considered for key development projects?

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……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Question 3
Chapter 10 presents a series of options for how the Northern Quarter could be redeveloped to help meet the regeneration aims and objectives for Cinderford. The options are based on a series of themes reflecting the range of land uses that could potentially be the focus of development.

Which of the options do you think is broadly most appropriate? (please circle)

Option 1      Option 2          Option 3             Option 4

I’d like to suggest a slightly different combination

P.T.O
If you’d like to suggest combining the land uses in a slightly different way please describe your ideas below. This could involve picking your favourite ideas from options 1 to 4 and combining them into a single option. Please use the space below to describe what the key elements of your alternative option would be and where they should go.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key element (for example, housing, employment, community facilities)</th>
<th>Suggested location (for example, at Northern United, adjacent to Steam Mills Lake, adjacent to the A4151)</th>
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**Question 4**
The options within Chapter 10 show two alternative alignments for a new tree-lined avenue. Which of the road alignments do you prefer? (please tick)

- The spine road extension, between the A4151 and Valley Road, as shown on Option 1
- The alternative alignment, between the A4136 and Valley Road, as on Options 2, 3 and 4.

**Question 5**
Page 11 looks at different ways the town centre could be improved. Which option do you think is most appropriate? (please circle)

Option 1  Option 2

Comments/suggestions ........................................................................................................................................
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**Question 6**
Please use the space below to note any other comments you would like to make.

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**About you**

Your name .........................................................................................................................................................

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, which one? ...................................................................

Your address ......................................................................................................................................................

Your postcode ...................................................................................................................................................

Please ensure all responses reach us by midday on **Thursday 29th March 2007**. Details will be used only for the purposes of analysing feedback and will be protected in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act.
Appendix 2: September Public Exhibition
What’s this all about?

Our aim
To work with the community to make Cinderford a more:

- desirable and affordable place to **live**
- exciting place to **work** and do business
- fun and imaginative place to **play** and **visit**
- accessible place which is well **connected**
- attractive and **green** environment
- active **community**, with better facilities
- supportive and inclusive place to **learn**

Your role...

We need your **help** so that we can **agree** where the community wants Cinderford to be in 2016. We’ve set out some of the main ideas for the future of Cinderford but we want to know what you **think** is right for the area. If you have any other ideas, please let us know. This consultation forms part of the statutory planning process.

Have your say...

Your comments will help us get the plans for the future of Cinderford right.

You can tell us your views by:
- Completing a feedback form; or
- Speaking to a member of the team; or
- Sending us a ‘postcard from the future’; or
- Logging on to our website www.cinderford2016.net

a better town  for everyone
**Why we are doing it...**

**Cinderford can’t stand still...**

The town needs to build on its strengths and resolve its problems to become a more balanced and sustainable place, where the community has a better quality of life.

We need your input, thoughts, help and support to move Cinderford forward over the next 10 years and beyond. This will ensure that today’s residents, as well as future generations, have a sustainable future.

**Moving forward...**

Moving forward will require lots of work and action. It will need to include new development and new infrastructure. How we do this, what we build and where it goes will be critical.

But it’s not just about building. Moving forward will involve other projects and initiatives that make use of the existing buildings and spaces. If we get this right, it will mean that everyone will benefit from an improved quality of life.

**Achieving a balance...**

We need to improve the balance between the factors shown in the diagram below to create a more sustainable Cinderford.
**How are we going to do it?**

**Planning ahead...**

We need to put together an overall plan for what the **community** wants the area to be like in ten years time. This will become the planning guidance for Cinderford - it will be called an **Area Action Plan**. This special status means it will help guide what is built in the future, where it goes and what it looks like. This public consultation exercise will assist the Forest of Dean District Council to prepare preferred options for the Cinderford Area Action Plan as part of the new **Local Development Framework** for the District.

This process will help to attract investment and **make things happen**. If we get this right, we will be able to get **funding** from a range of national, regional and local organisations, including through the National Coalfields Programme. This money will be critical if we want to **move forward** - and we need your **support** to do that.

Much of this funding is likely to apply mainly to the **core area** shown on the plan opposite. Therefore, this exhibition focusses on possibilities within this area. Improvements in the ‘core area’ could well benefit surrounding parishes, as shown by the **area of influence**. Funds for projects in the wider ‘area of influence’ could be available, if these link in with the overall aims for the core area.

**The first steps...**

We need to start by agreeing a set of principles.

If we really want to move forward, we need to make sure that the following principles underpin everything we do.

- Use local, natural and renewable materials
- Bring the forest into the town
- Utilise sustainable forms of energy
- Ensure new buildings are efficient in their use of energy and water
- Make use of local skills and labour
- Make quality a priority
- Involve the community throughout

**A cleaner greener future**

**your town, your future**
Cinderford - Building Success

Living

Our aim
We need to provide a mix of new housing types and to deliver more affordable housing for first time buyers and low income families. We also need to make better use of the existing housing. But most of all we need to ensure all new housing is of top environmental quality drawing on, and making the most of, the attractive forest setting and local materials.

What we could do, why and where...

1. Accommodate more housing in the town centre, to generate a more vibrant feel. For example, by promoting 'living-above-the-shop', better use of vacant premises, and/or redevelopment.
2. Assist existing sites designated for housing to be developed. In some cases existing uses would need to be re-located, in others access would need to be improved.
3. Support mixed-use schemes on the industrial estate, to provide a better range of activity.
4. Provide sustainable housing as part of mixed-use schemes on 'brownfield' land, such as at 'Northern Arc'.
5. Provide further housing on 'greenfield' land, such as at St. Whites, to provide a range of housing types to the south of the town.
6. Promote 'executive homes' to border the Linear Park, to take advantage of its setting.

Things to consider...

- We would need to ensure that use of land for housing would result in no overall loss of employment land, by providing land elsewhere.
- Any significant additional housing provided in Cinderford (above that already planned) might run contrary to existing policy.

How we would do it...

- All new housing would be required to meet national Eco-Homes standards, and would be of top quality design.
- Dwellings would be encouraged to be made of locally sourced materials.
- A range of housing types would be provided, to suit a range of budgets, lifestyle and ages.
- Any new housing would need to fully respect its ecological and landscape setting.

Locally sourced materials could improve quality  Improved design could bring the forest into the town
Working

Our aim
We need to support existing businesses. We also need to attract new businesses to ensure Cinderford’s economy moves forward. We need a wider range of local employment opportunities and improved skills and knowledge to help businesses flourish and for people to obtain higher paid jobs. We also need to provide a more attractive environment for people to do business.

What we could do, why and where...

1. Intensify the use of existing employment land, by making better use of vacant or under-utilised land.
2. Cluster similar businesses at Forest Vale and elsewhere – possibly through relocation – to free up land for employment redevelopment.
3. Provide a sustainable, local fuel source, for example through a biomass centre at Northern United or on Forest Vale.
4. Provide sustainable new employment-led schemes as part of mixed-use schemes on ‘brownfield’ land, such as at ‘Northern Arc’. These would provide more jobs and a wider range of jobs.
5. Diversify and improve integration of the town centre through redevelopment to improve shopping facilities.

Things to consider...

- Environmental impacts of any new employment land would need to be carefully considered.
- Getting the balance of employment opportunities right would result in a positive regeneration impact.

An example of an eco-friendly employment building

How we would do it...

- New employment buildings would be encouraged to be carbon efficient. By this we mean the promotion of green technologies, and local fuel sources.
- Any new employment facilities will need to be better integrated into their surroundings.
- Employment generation would need to be complemented with appropriate training and skills for the local workforce.
- A range of employment premises would be provided, with a focus on smaller and flexible space.
Playing and Visiting

Our aim

We need to ‘put Cinderford on the map’ and give visitors more of a reason to come to the area. We need to ensure that more people who visit the forest come into Cinderford; that will mean improving the town centre environment. We need to support and improve sports and leisure facilities for the local community. We also need to ensure that any new development is supported with appropriate leisure and recreational facilities.

What we could do, why and where...

1. Build a ‘Sustainable Energy’ tourist centre. This could potentially link with the biomass plant, and could also draw on the site’s mining heritage.
2. Create a food & drink centre, showcasing local produce, and better linked in to local cafes and restaurants.
3. Enhance cycle links between the forest and the town centre, especially through the Linear Park, to attract visitors to the forest into the town.
4. Relocate some existing uses – perhaps the cricket club and/or football club to both provide better facilities, and potentially free up some land for further development. Appropriate locations would need to be found.
5. Provide a flagship multi-use activity centre comprising, for example, a youth centre, basketball courts, skatepark and climbing wall, of a scale to serve both residents and tourists.

Things to consider...

- These facilities would improve quality of life, and also contribute to the economy.
- It would probably be more difficult to secure appropriate funding, without other forms of development.
- The location of these facilities is flexible.
- Improvements to the town centre could provide opportunities for increased tourism and leisure.

How we would do it...

- Any increase in tourism should draw on Cinderford’s setting, history and local skills.
- There would be a focus on providing facilities for younger people.
We need **better access** to stimulate the town’s economy and help unlock land designated for development. This is particularly the case in the northern part of town, in the Steam Mills area. Both existing and new development will need to be well served by **public transport**. The “entrances” to Cinderford need to be improved to **enhance its image**. The **town centre** would benefit from less traffic.

### What we could do, why and where...

1. **Build a new road** between Steam Mills and the A4136. This will ease movement through the area, and strengthen links with the town centre. It will also release sites designated for development.
2. **Visually improve** the route between the north of Cinderford and the town centre.
3. **Create new entrance features** (for example a distinctive public art feature) as people enter the town to improve Cinderford’s image.
4. **Re-route heavy goods vehicles** so fewer of them travel through the town centre. We could also encourage these vehicles to enter Cinderford from the north through strategic signing. This will create a better town centre environment.
5. **Make existing car parks** more accessible by better signs and footway links.

### Things to consider

- Better town centre parking is probably dependent on redevelopment.
- Re-routing of heavy goods vehicles would depend on significant improvements to existing roads.
- Public transport improvements are required to link housing to work, study and play.

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### Better connectivity at Steam Mills

If you agree that better road links in the northern part of Cinderford are important, we need your help to decide the most appropriate route, the options are:

6. **The 'Spine Road Extension'**.
7. It might be possible to **extend this route** up to the main road (A4136).
8. **The 'Western Access Route'**.
9. Another possible **alternative** would be to create a ‘green’ and positive image on entering Cinderford: through the forest towards Steam Mills Lake.

### Things to consider

- Routes 7 and 9 are already identified in the District Council’s Local Plan.
- It is unlikely that more than one new road could be funded.
- The route of any new road would depend on both environmental considerations and the nature of proposals for nearby land.
- Provision of any new road would need to be supported by further analysis to ensure the approval of relevant statutory bodies.
### Greening

We need to bring the **quality of the forest** and environment surrounding Cinderford into the town itself. This means exploring opportunities for **‘greening’** the existing town. We also need to be careful about ensuring that any new development respects its **forest setting**, as well as its more immediate needs.

**What we could do...**

1. Strengthen the role of the **Linear Park** through a management strategy.
2. Promote a **greening strategy** for the existing industrial estate and residential areas to ‘bring the forest into the town’.
3. Seek to promote the conservation of **key historic buildings**.
4. Promote **biodiversity studies** and habitat creation.
5. Explore opportunities for **increasing views** from the town centre out to the forest.

**Things to consider**

- Environmental enhancements would need to be an integral part of any other forms of new development.
- Funding sources for environmental enhancement works can be more difficult to secure.

### Community

Cinderford has some good existing **community facilities** – these need to be supported. There is also a need to provide **new facilities** to improve the overall quality of life in the town. Whilst it is relevant to the Business Plan, the uncertainty surrounding the **Dilke Hospital** is subject to separate consultation processes and timescales.

**What we could do...**

1. **Support for existing facilities**, such as Candi, Artspace, Creative Partnerships and GL14.
2. Retain, and where possible improve, facilities in the **area of influence**.
3. Support the refurbishment of the **Miners Welfare Hall**.
4. Support the re-location of **Splinters**.
5. Support the re-location of **GL14** and the **radio station**.
7. Provision of a **state-of-the art sustainable, multi-use community facility**, providing flexible space for, for example, exhibitions, conferences, weddings, learning and health.

**Things to consider**

- Community facilities can add considerably to the overall quality of life, but funding sources are often difficult to tap into.
- The re-location of St. White’s Primary School is likely to depend on housing proposals for nearby land going ahead, and its size will depend on whether further housing gets built.

### Learning

A **wider range of knowledge and increased skills** are essential to a **successful economy** and to boost the self-confidence of the population. A **Community Learning Plan** is being developed as an integral part of the Business Plan. It will seek to promote lifelong learning to deliver sustainable economic development, social progress and health and well-being.

**What we could do...**

1. **Appoint a Community Learning Plan Champion** to integrate and develop learning opportunities for everyone; 0-90+. This will bring together learning providers, the public and businesses throughout the area.

**Things to consider**

- This process will benefit both those wanting to learn, and businesses wanting to use new skills. But it is dependent on funding, requires long-term investment, and needs early cooperation on ideas and funding.
- Local schools and the Royal Forest of Dean College will play an important role in the learning process.

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**a green, active and supportive town**
Putting it all together…

For Cinderford to move forward in the right direction over the next ten years, the different factors in the coloured wheel below need to be more effectively linked together. There are a number of ways this can be achieved, and it is our job to take your comments from this consultation to develop an agreed way forward.

To achieve a more sustainable Cinderford which is able to grasp the opportunities and create an improved quality of life, we need your input and support to achieving funding, to enable us to move forward. Please give us your views by completing a feedback form.

This public consultation exercise will assist the Forest of Dean District Council to prepare preferred options for the Cinderford Area Action Plan as part of the new Local Development Framework for the District.
Appendix 3: Risk Assessment

The options presented in this report are subject to a number of important risks. Those identified at this stage are set out below, but further risks are likely to be identified as more detailed technical work is undertaken.

1. **Mining and land stability:** Due to the history and former use of the land, land stability (and contamination) will be a key issue in determining the exact spatial organisation of land, and this is closely linked to financial viability.

2. **Costs of new infrastructure:** Linked to the above, new access, energy and land remediation requirements in particular will be costly to deliver. Whilst there is the opportunity to lever-in public sector investment to assist with this through financial ‘pump-priming’, the development value created will be a key consideration in order to ensure that a preferred strategy is deliverable in financial (as well as technical) terms.

3. **Public sector funding:** The scale of development necessary to lever in public sector funding is crucial. If only smaller-scale schemes/options/proposals are pursued, it may be unlikely that significant public sector funding could be secured. This issue requires further analysis and discussion as a preferred strategy emerges.

4. **Landowner commitment:** To implement and deliver many of the options, more than one landowner is involved. Landowner commitment and ‘buy-in’ to any emerging preferred strategy will therefore be crucial, as will agreeing a way forward to deliver the preferred strategy.

5. **Possible need for Compulsory Purchase:** Linked to the above, if a preferred strategy emerges around a consensus but certain landowners are uncooperative, there may potentially be a need for CPO action. This is probably more likely for any of the preferred schemes within the town centre, given that the complexity of landownership in that area is greater.

6. **The specification of land-uses and built form:** This is dependent on more detailed demand analysis, in particular, if an education facility is to be provided, more detail is needed regarding the exact land-take those facilities would require.

7. **Ecology and heritage:** Ecological and, to a lesser extent heritage, issues will be an important feature of any preferred strategy – they will need to be treated with sensitivity. However, depending on which option(s) are pursued, there could potentially be vociferous objections to an emerging preferred strategy. Even if no overriding objections are raised there are certain to be capital and revenue costs associated with mitigation.

8. **Existing buildings on Northern United:** There is no definite consensus as to the value of these buildings in architectural or heritage terms. Certain options propose their re-use (at least in part), but options which propose their demolition could face objections on these grounds.

9. **The market for employment land:** A better understanding of market/demand for smaller flexible units is required. Whilst there is evidence of demand for this type of facility/space within the district, the depth of that demand needs to be further investigated. There may also be an emerging demand for some small-scale office space which warrants further investigation.

10. **Uncertainty of new superstore in town centre:** This Business Plan is being prepared in the context of a major planning application for a new superstore in the town centre which is currently being determined by Forest of Dean District Council. This presents a degree of uncertainty for the options and issues for the town centre area, and this is unlikely to be resolved until a planning decision is made.

11. **Transport and access solutions:** The provision of a new road link in the Steam Mills area is a complex issue and there are a number of inter-related issues. The solution is in large part dependent on the nature and scale of land-use in the Steam Mills area for the preferred strategy, but it is unlikely that there will ever be a full consensus as to a preferred solution. Transport management solutions in the town centre are also complex and require further detailed technical work.

12. **The statutory forest:** Linked to the above, the Inspector for the previous Local Plan Inquiry (into the now adopted Local Plan) considered this issue and concluded that “…there are no planning grounds to exclude all proposals for development on the basis that they would affect Crown land within the Statutory Forest and that such development could have important planning benefits. In particular it would help to address a local need for enhanced employment provision in terms of both quality and quantity” (12.29).

13. **The future of the Royal Forest of Dean College:** As discussed within the report, the findings of the consultants’ study will need to be fed into consultation on the preferred options.