2.0 Strategic context

2.1 Introduction
To understand Cinderford we need to understand how it is located and connected to its wider context at the strategic and the regional level. Cinderford is strategically located in the South-West Region and the county of Gloucestershire. The town is located within ten miles of the Welsh border.

2.2 National planning context
PPS1 Planning for Sustainable Development (2005), defines the overarching goal of the planning system to be the delivery of development which meets current economic, environmental and social needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. In Cinderford this means supporting new economic sectors to revive a post-industrial economy, providing new housing to meet current needs identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), (2006), and delivering the necessary community and transport infrastructure to accompany it. There is an opportunity to support environmental sustainability in Cinderford by building on brownfield land, exceeding national standards of energy efficiency and renewable energy supply in new development (also supported in PPS22 Renewable Energy (2004)), reducing waste output and other environmental impacts, and by providing the best possible sustainable transport infrastructure to encourage greater reliance on sustainable transport modes over the private car. High standards of environmental sustainability are an aspiration of the Cinderford Regeneration Board and sustainable development principles will therefore be promoted accordingly in AAP strategy and design codes.

The Cinderford Business Plan options incorporate different ways of promoting sustainable development in Cinderford by proposing new residential and employment uses, new community infrastructure and environmental improvements. Assessment of the relative sustainability credentials of each proposal will be an important part of the decision-making process in formulating the Preferred Option. Equally, during the masterplanning process, the spatial locations of different land uses will be chosen on their ability to encourage sustainable movement and equality of access to jobs and services within Cinderford. This will also be informed by the objectives of PPS6 Planning for Town Centres (2005) which aims to reinforce, rather than undermine the vibrancy of existing town centres. In view of the Northern Quarter’s location at the fringe of an existing settlement, the AAP will aim to knit new development in with existing shops, services and transport infrastructure.

In its rural setting, Cinderford’s growth will need to be guided by PPS7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (2004). Development will need to be concentrated to maximise use of brownfield land and minimise sprawl. The AAP will need to promote a range of uses which maximise the potential benefits and leisure opportunities of the surrounding Forest of Dean and to ensure that all development is in keeping and scale with the Forest, and sensitive to its particular countryside character. These aims are compatible with those of the Forestry Commission, which aims to protect and enhance England’s woodlands while increasing the contribution that trees, woods and forests make to our quality of life, A Strategy for England’s Trees and Forests (2007). Synergies between the aims of the Forestry Commission and the national planning policies will be sought and capitalised upon in AAP strategies.

An important role of the AAP is to facilitate delivery of homes in Cinderford to help the Forest of Dean meet housing targets set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy. The AAP will identify the most sustainable sites for housing, reflecting principles set out in PPS1, and, responding to PPS3 Housing (2006), will provide a range of housing types and sizes to meet identified local needs to the highest possible standards of quality.

An assessment of floodrisk is built into baseline stage of the AAP process. Any floodrisk identified will be addressed in line with guidance from PPS25 Development and Floodrisk (2006); selection of development sites will be informed by their relative vulnerability to flooding, and should development be deemed necessary in any sites identified to be at risk, the APP will promote flood reduction and resilience measures in such developments.

In July, the Government published a consultation document on proposed changes to PPS6, which reviewed the ‘need test’ regarding new retail development outside of town centres. The document recommends that the need test be superseded by an ‘impact test’ which will take social, economic and environmental criteria into account, including retail diversity, consumer choice, loss of trade, impact on town centre investment, impact on sustainable development and climate change, scope for regeneration and job creation. It is expected that these changes will be incorporated in a revised version of PPS6 in early 2009.
2.3 Strategic road connections

Cinderford lies on the A4151 which runs from the A48 trunk road at Elton, approximately four miles to the east of the town and close to the River Severn, to the A4136 near Drybrook, approximately one mile to the north. The A4151 effectively bisects Cinderford town into east and west sections.

The A4136 runs east to meet the A40 trunk road at Huntley, and both the A48 and A40 provide access to Gloucester and the M5, which is approximately 12 miles to the east of Cinderford. Further to the east access to the M5 motorway can be gained for connection to the South West or the Midlands. To the west of Cinderford, the A4136 connects with the A40 at Monmouth, which is some nine miles distant. The A40 then provides a dual carriageway link with the M4 to the south and the M5 to the north. The town is linked to Coleford, which lies approximately five miles to the southwest by the B4226.

Car journey times

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Distance</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester</td>
<td>14 miles</td>
<td>22 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheltenham</td>
<td>22.5 miles</td>
<td>34 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>37.9 miles</td>
<td>55 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiff</td>
<td>49.7 miles</td>
<td>1:05 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham</td>
<td>71.1 miles</td>
<td>1:27 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>128.5 miles</td>
<td>2:53 hrs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 2.3.1 Strategic road connections
2.4 Strategic rail, air and sea connections

Cinderford is not connected to the National Rail network. However it is possible to access the rail network and travel further afield. The nearest railway stations to Cinderford are at Lydney and Gloucester. Lydney station is approximately 12 miles south of Cinderford, accessed via the A4151 and A48(s). Gloucester station is approximately 13 miles north east of Cinderford, accessed via the A4151 and A48(n).

Lydney is on the Cardiff to Gloucester line. The frequency of trains from Lydney is approximately one per hour though at certain times in the day there are two hour gaps in the service. All the trains that serve Lydney operate between Gloucester and Cardiff with some services continuing beyond Cardiff to Maesteg. Lydney station is separated from the rest of the town by the Lydney by-pass. As a result it is not in a good location for the town centre or the bus station so integration is difficult.

Gloucester railway station is sited within the city centre, across the road from the bus station where all the buses from Cinderford terminate. Gloucester station is served by a range of rail routes including direct trains to Cheltenham, Worcester, Birmingham, Bristol, Swindon, Reading and London. There is at approximately one train per hour to each of these destinations.

Train journey times
From Gloucester Station to:

- Bristol: 0:55 - 1:20 hrs
- Birmingham: 1:00 - 1:10 hrs
- Manchester: 2:54 hrs
- London: 1:55 - 2:10 hrs

Airports

- Bristol International: 45 miles, 1:16 hrs drive
- Cardiff International: 65 miles, 1:23 hrs drive
- Birmingham International: 74 miles, 1:30 hrs drive

Fig. 2.4.1 Strategic rail, air and sea connections
2.5 Strategic connectivity: summary

The key messages for Cinderford’s strategic location are the following:

- The town is located at a considerable distance from any major cities. The closest major city is Bristol, which is approximately 1 hour drive away.
- The town is located within commuting distance of Gloucester, which is 14 miles’ drive away.
- The town is not directly located on the motorway network. The nearest junction is to the M5, which is 20 miles drive away.
- The town is poorly connected by rail, with the station at Gloucester being 14 miles away. Gloucester Station offers a train service to both Bristol and Birmingham (1 hour). Train services to London are limited with one direct train every 2 hours.

In summary, Cinderford is poorly located in terms of the strategic transport network, and is hampered by not having a rail station. However, being off the major strategic transport network has created a town with a unique identity and culture that has not been diluted by national or global interests. Cinderford, by being out of the commuting belt for a major city, also manages to not be blighted by being a dormitory town. The real strength of the town is its regional context, which is discussed in the following section.