

Woodchester Parish Design Statement



The Design Statement describes the visual qualities and features of the Parish, as seen through the eyes of local residents. It sets out the key qualities of the Parish environment and the local values put upon them. It seeks to inspire future development that can respect and enhance the unique character of Woodchester. I believe the production of this document will show how people and their locally elected representatives can get more involved in planning for their areas. This is the essence of the Government's Big Society ambitions. A good planning system is essential for the economy, environment and society.

It represents a genuine opportunity for the local community to influence the future of the place where they live. As such, it can be considered an important initial step towards genuine neighbourhood planning, as proposed in the recently passed Localism Act. It will assist the delivery of good and informed contemporary designs that will be in harmony with the environment and local community aspirations. It should enable local people to exercise influence as well as inform the District Council's planning policies and decisions. This work, I believe, can make a real difference to Woodchester.

Finally, the community work within this Design Statement will enhance the understanding between the District Council, the local community, designers, and developers, in a meaningful and collaborative way. I therefore support and welcome this document.

Councillor Barbara Tait
(Cabinet portfolio holder for Planning & the Environment)

Adopted by Stroud District Council at full Council 26th April 2012.

Woodchester Parish Design Statement

Contents

Page 3	Status of Village Design Statements
Pages 4/5/6	Woodchester its Past and Future
Page 6/7	Setting and map of Cotswold AONB
Page 8	Maps of Conservation area and Wildlife Sites
Pages 9/10	Settlement Area, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas, and Map of Settlement Areas
Pages 10/11/12	Survey and Questionnaire
Page 12	The Economy of Woodchester. Industry and Commerce
Pages 13/14	Agriculture and Recreation and map of Green Spaces
Page 14/15	Design Guidance Comments from questionnaires
Pages 15/19	Detailed Design Guidance Policies
Page 20	Climate Change
Page 21	Conclusions
Page 22	The Purpose of Planning by the Minister for Planning
Page 23	Audit Trail
Page 24/25	National Planning Policies

Woodchester Parish Design Statement

Status of Village Design Statements

A Village Design Statement (VDS) is an important aid in determining planning applications for development. As Stroud District Council said when it approved the Stonehouse Design Statement in 2005:

“An approved Village Design Statement is a 'material consideration' to the determination of a planning application and is therefore helpful in operating the planning process.”

The Government's *Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing* (PPS3) June 2010 states:

“18. To facilitate efficient delivery of high quality development, Local Planning Authorities should draw on relevant guidance and standards and promote the use of appropriate tools and techniques, such as Design Coding alongside urban design guidelines, detailed master plans, village design statements, site briefs and community participation techniques.”

The strong localism agenda of the Coalition Government enhances the importance of a VDS. In a recent statement, Housing Minister Grant Shapps said:

“Getting the design of homes and neighbourhoods right is an important priority for the Government. We will support communities in their wishes to take the lead in shaping new developments in their area and adopt higher standards of design and sustainability.”

This Village Design Statement has been compiled from the research carried out by the volunteer groups and very much guided by comments received from parishioners of Woodchester.

It seeks to assist in the management of change, not only for larger developments but also smaller works that might change the look and feel of the Parish. It emphasises the cherished features of the landscape and buildings. It encourages good and sustainable design features to be incorporated in any new development.

This Statement also tries to look to the future and suggest how the Parish can become more sustainable and enjoy a lower carbon footprint.

Local people in villages and small towns are well placed to identify local character and distinctiveness, described in terms of the landscape setting of the village, the pattern and shape of the settlement, and the nature of buildings, spaces, landmarks and special features.

A VDS can help to interpret the local character and what may constitute good design in the local context. Such an approach gives value and detail at the local level that can be linked to broad statements of policy intent at the national level. If adopted by the District Council as Supplementary Planning Advice, such design statements can become a material consideration when determining planning applications.

The recommendations in this document should be carefully considered in planning decisions relating to Woodchester Parish, but it must be borne in mind that there can be tensions between different strategies and policies that operate at many different levels and for a variety of purposes. All can be relevant in reaching a balanced planning decision. Each individual application is decided on its own merits in the context of many different documents operating at different levels, from international, through to national and local. These documents are carefully considered and weighed by the District Council Officers and Members prior to a final planning decision. This means that in some instances other policies may take precedence over the recommendations made here.

Quotes from the questionnaire have been used throughout this statement supporting the 'village opinion'.

Woodchester Parish Design Statement

1 Woodchester - its Past

1.1 The history of Woodchester itself is traceable to the time of the Romans, however the hills and valleys of the Parish have been inhabited for thousands of years before their arrival, back to the Neolithic period – some 6000 years ago. The nearby hills contain evidence of their habitation with the 5 long barrows and a few standing stones or Monoliths. However evidence of their settlements is no longer prominent or visible to the naked eye.

1.2 About 300BC, the Belgae arrived and probably it was this tribe of head hunting Belgians who were the first real settlers of the Woodchester valley.

1.3 The Romans then saw off the Belgae and remained until about 407 AD leaving the Roman Celts until the Saxon invasion some 170 years later. Woodchester was obviously a prized estate as 2 Saxon Manors were settled at either end of the Parish at the Priory and Woodchester Mansion. It was through this period that the first written record of Woodchester as a timber producing area was recorded in 716AD.

1.4 The Romans were probably the first significant occupants with the most famous relic of that era being the Orpheus Pavement that lies beneath the ground in North Woodchester close to the Old Priory.

1.5 The village is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086.

1.6 During the Medieval Period the owners of the various estates who had strong ecclesiastical connections prospered, mainly due to the woollen industry. The settlement developed along the valley side road from Stroud to Nailsworth, first in North Woodchester and Rooksmoor, then after 1600 in South Woodchester.



1.7 By 1600 the area had become prosperous through the cloth making industry that provided employment until the end of the 19th century when the trade moved North where larger mills facilitated large scale production of lighter more fashionable cloth. During this period the character of the village was very much created with the out workers' cottages, mill owners' and merchants' houses being built, and the need for fields to farm sheep, and woodland for fuel.

1.8 Since that period the former mills have been occupied by other industries and the cottages converted to private homes. Infill of residential development has taken place predominantly in North

Woodchester Parish Design Statement

1.9 Woodchester, along the A46 and on the edges of South Woodchester. Some of the former industrial buildings became dilapidated and have been converted to residential use.

1.10 Before the improvement of communication the Parish had many public houses, butchers, farriers and other local trades serving the community. Sadly many of these have long gone and we now struggle to keep just one post office, three public houses and some local trades.

1.11 ***“Woodchester is a product of its history and industry and this is reflected in its layout, architecture and landscape. The high quality of the workmanship of traditional buildings is no accident and I think this has to be acknowledged when any proposals are put forward for further developments or extensions to existing buildings to avoid damaging this visual and skills heritage.”***
Quote from the questionnaire.

See Detailed Design Guidance Policies page 15 onwards.

2 and its Future

2.1 In many ways the cottages of the outworkers and other houses have gone full circle as within the Parish 22% of those replying to the questionnaire work from home and a further 11% work within the Parish. These range from professionals reliant upon the internet for communication, to trades people working out of small workshops and offices. It is likely that more people will want to work from home and locally and be more self-sufficient

2.2 **Policy Guidance Justification 1.** Resulting from the questionnaire village opinion suggests that to maintain the economic character of the village local employment and home-working should be encouraged. See Design Guidance Policy O page 19.

2.3 The road and rail network has brought wealth to the area, allowing city workers to commute from country houses. This, together with the wealthier retired people, has fuelled the demand for the larger merchants' houses, maintaining the mix of properties within the Parish. The development of the newer housing estates provides more affordable housing for local folk albeit they are still out of the reach of many pockets.

2.4 This mix of accommodation and commercial properties set within the existing landscape allows the diverse character of the Parish to be retained and this the Parish feels is very important.

Quotes from the questionnaire.

2.5 ***“Woodchester is a very nice place to live because of the diversity of buildings. We have a mix of Cotswold stone, brick and render. We have large handsome houses, small cottages, two fine very good looking churches and a very successful and well run village hall. The factories and businesses fit very well into the landscape.”***

2.6 ***“Walking through the Parish offers great diversity of character, fabulous views and many historical features. All of these need preserving especially the use and retention of local stone and building styles. South Woodchester High Street is so beautiful and encaptures all of 18th century England. I love it!”***

2.7 **Policy Guidance Justification 2.** Resulting from the questionnaire village opinion supports the protection of existing open spaces from development and the character of the buildings from unsuitable alterations. See Design Guidance Policy G &H page 17.

2.8 Essentially there is a trend towards localism that is leading to self-sufficiency, exemplified through the South Woodchester Amenity Land Trust (SWALT) providing allotments and a community orchard, local vegetable box deliveries, and the enthusiasm to support the Post Office/village shop and pubs which are essential to maintain an active and interactive community.

Woodchester Parish Design Statement

2.9 *“Woodchester has already lost one shop and post office, so it is good to see that villagers strongly support the remaining shop/post office for incidental shopping, the supply of non food services and sale of local products. The latter is an area which could well be expanded and might attract more local custom as well as passing trade.”* **Quote from questionnaire**

2.10 Policy Guidance Justification 3. Resulting from the questionnaire village opinion suggests that there should be a guideline to support local services and wishes them to be retained and if possible increased. It also calls for a play area with swings, slides and climbing equipment as identified in the Parish Plan to be sited centrally in the Parish when a suitable site is identified. At the time of writing SWALT have offered land for the development of a play area, subject to funding.

See Design Guidance Policy N page 19.

2.11 There is an ageing population problem that is nationwide and Woodchester is no exception. Both North (Berryfield) and South (Farm Court) Woodchester have single storey accommodation for the elderly. It is considered important to retain this provision.

3 Setting

3.1 *“perhaps the best thing about Woodchester is its beautiful countryside and amazing wildlife.”*
“the countryside is peaceful and relaxing, it has a few bubbling streams flowing through it, the birds softly sing and sweep through the cool breeze. There are horses, sheep, deer, foxes, badgers and rabbits.”
Pupils of St Dominic’s Primary School

3.2 The Parish of Woodchester is surrounded by Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty as shown on the plan above and sits between Nailsworth and Stroud straddling the A46. Split into 3 main residential areas, North and South Woodchester and Rooksmoor, it also includes large areas of agricultural land, National Trust woodland, private woodland and many smaller parcels of undeveloped land both cultivated and wild.

3.3 Through the valley runs Nailsworth Stream, a recorded habitat for nationally protected species such as otters, white clawed crayfish, rare moths and butterflies. Alongside it is the cycle track that connects Stroud with Nailsworth and Stonehouse, forming part of the National Cycle Network route 45.

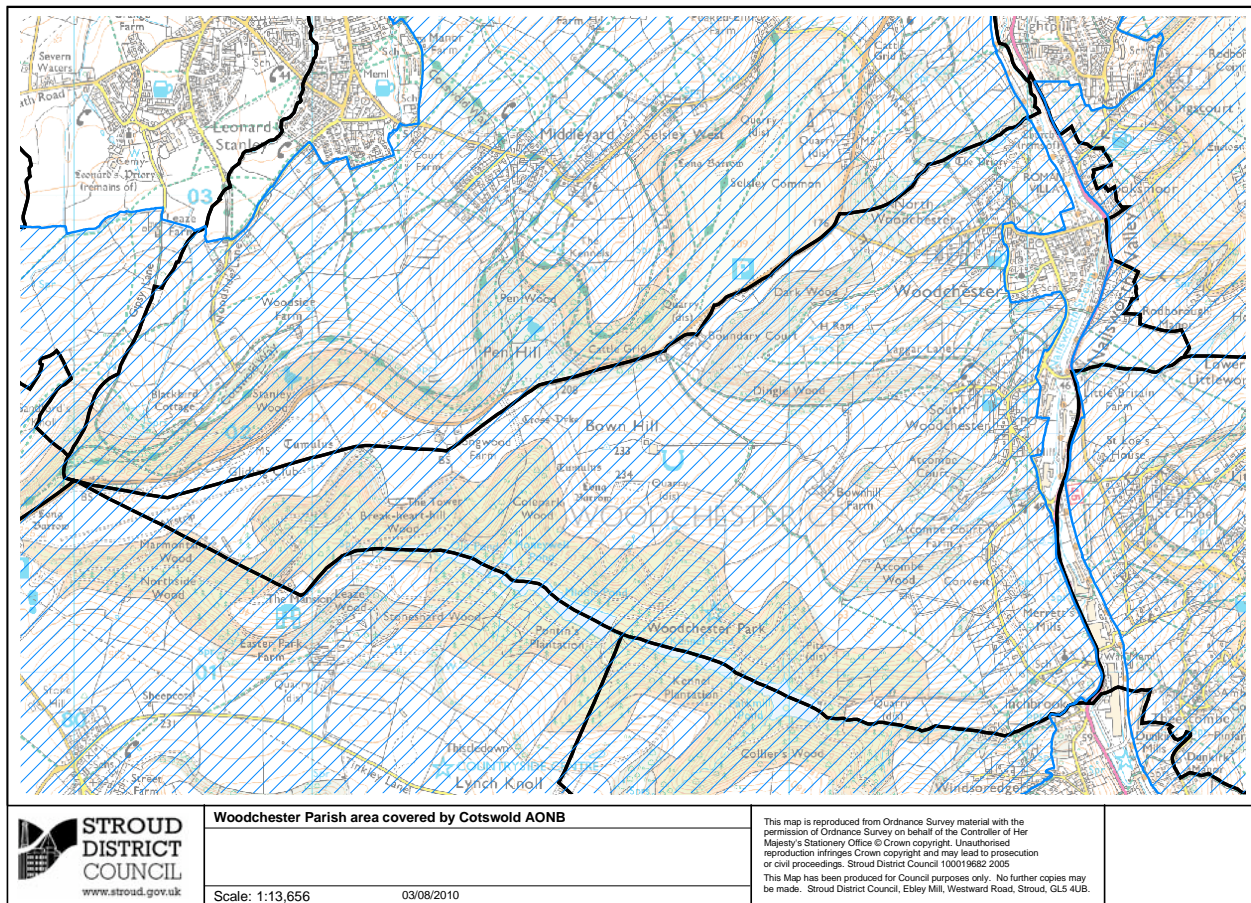
3.4 In the main most of the Parish is on the east facing slope of the valley enjoying views across to Rodborough and Amberley. Equally, we are looked at from the other side of the valley by their residents. Both views typify classic Cotswold valley development of mainly ribbon development interspersed by paddocks trees and fields. The corridor of trees, hedges, shrubs and fields provides an important wildlife link to areas such as Woodchester Park, Selsley Common SSSI and Rodborough Common SAC

3.5 Potential developers should consider the impact on wildlife and biodiversity to minimise harm.

3.6 Policy Guidance Justification 4. Resulting from the questionnaire village opinion suggests that there should be a guideline for the protection and enhancement of open spaces and encouragement for creating wildlife habitats. 76% of respondents rate open spaces very important for bio-diversity and wildlife. See PGJ 2 and Design Guidance Policy G,H,I,J pages 17/8.

3.7 In considering the Parish as a whole it has to be remembered that Rooksmoor lying to the East of the A46 is very much a hamlet in its own right with a predominance of older houses within a fairly tight community. North Woodchester to the West of the A46 has a high proportion of post 1950’s housing laid out in traditional estate style, interspersed with several older cottages and larger houses, built around St Mary’s Parish Church. South Woodchester, on the other hand, is mainly a compact village of older cottages with the very narrow High Street at its heart, from which lanes lead to mainly detached houses of varying ages spreading South as far as St Dominic’s School and Cow Lane.

Woodchester Parish Design Statement



3.8 In order to maintain the setting of the Parish as a whole, special account has to be taken of the enhancement and preservation of the open spaces, woodlands, wetlands and wildlife corridors that separate these different areas of the Parish and provide its very special character. Views from the Parish across the valley are also very important and should be protected as they are essential in allowing the Parish to fully embrace the value and beauty of the Cotswold A.O.N.B.

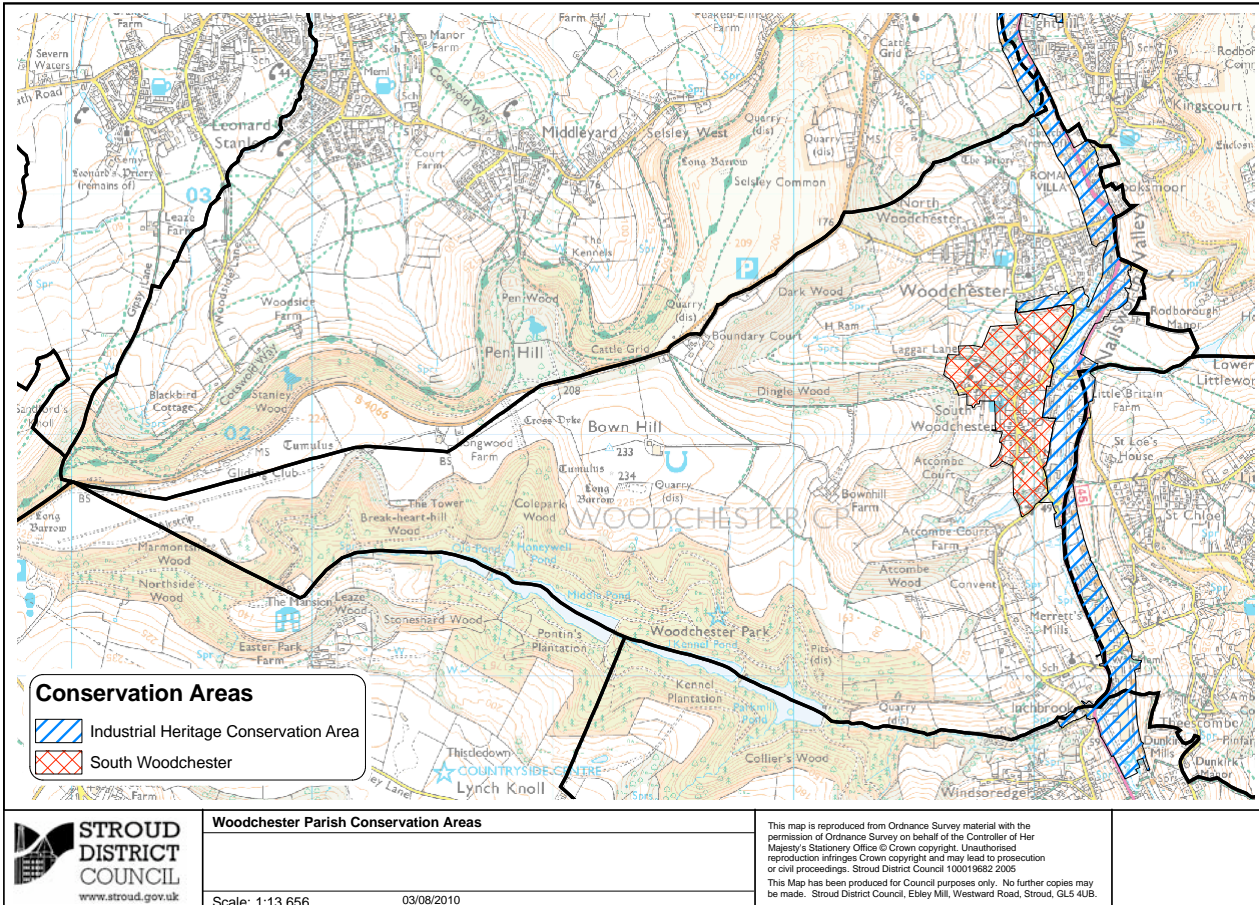
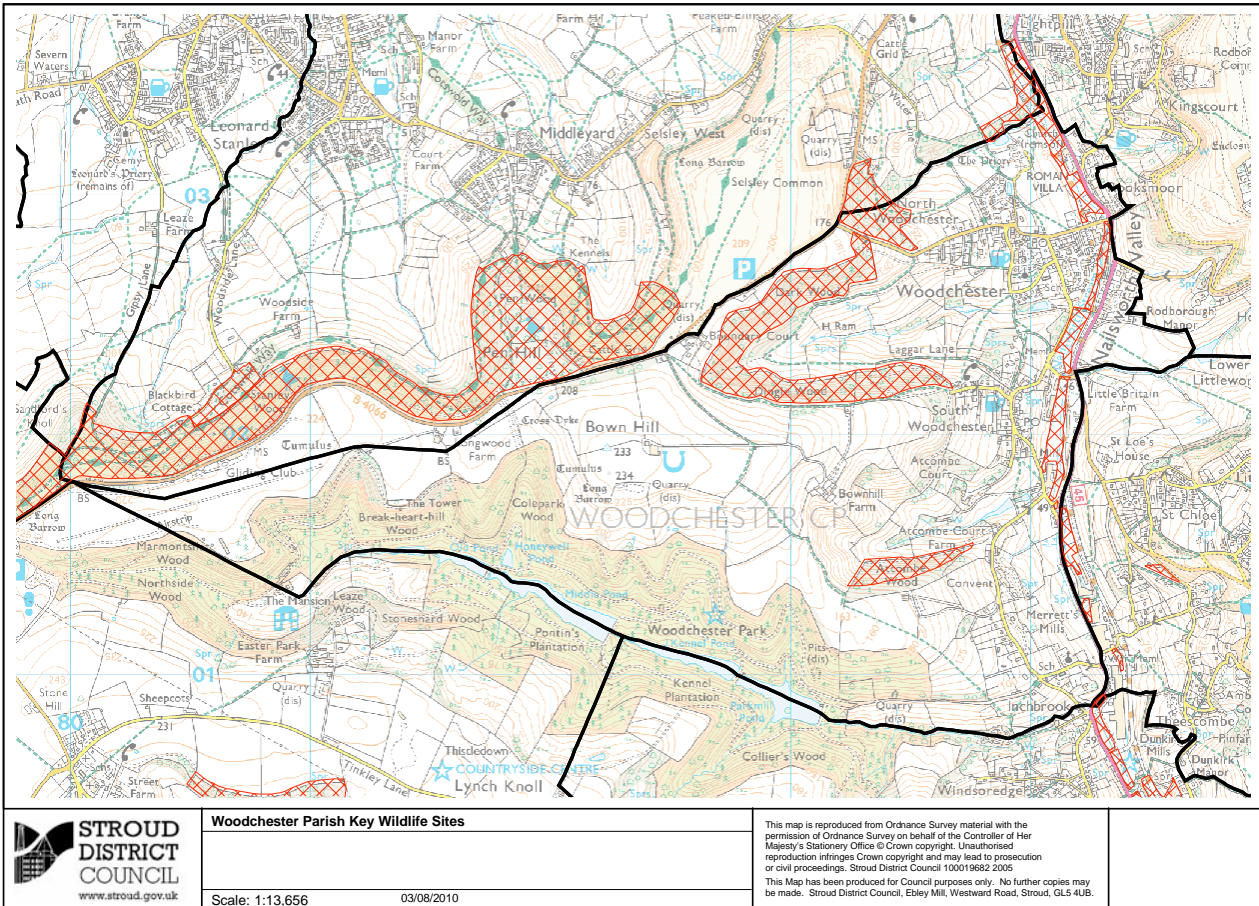
Quotes from questionnaire.

3.9 ***"Any development should not only take into account the style of architecture of the area but most importantly respect the landscape and setting of this Parish. The pockets of green and wooded land are an essential part of the Parish and should not be built on."***

3.10 ***"Appropriate infill would not fundamentally alter the character of the village. The retention of open spaces is essential to retain the charm of Woodchester"***.

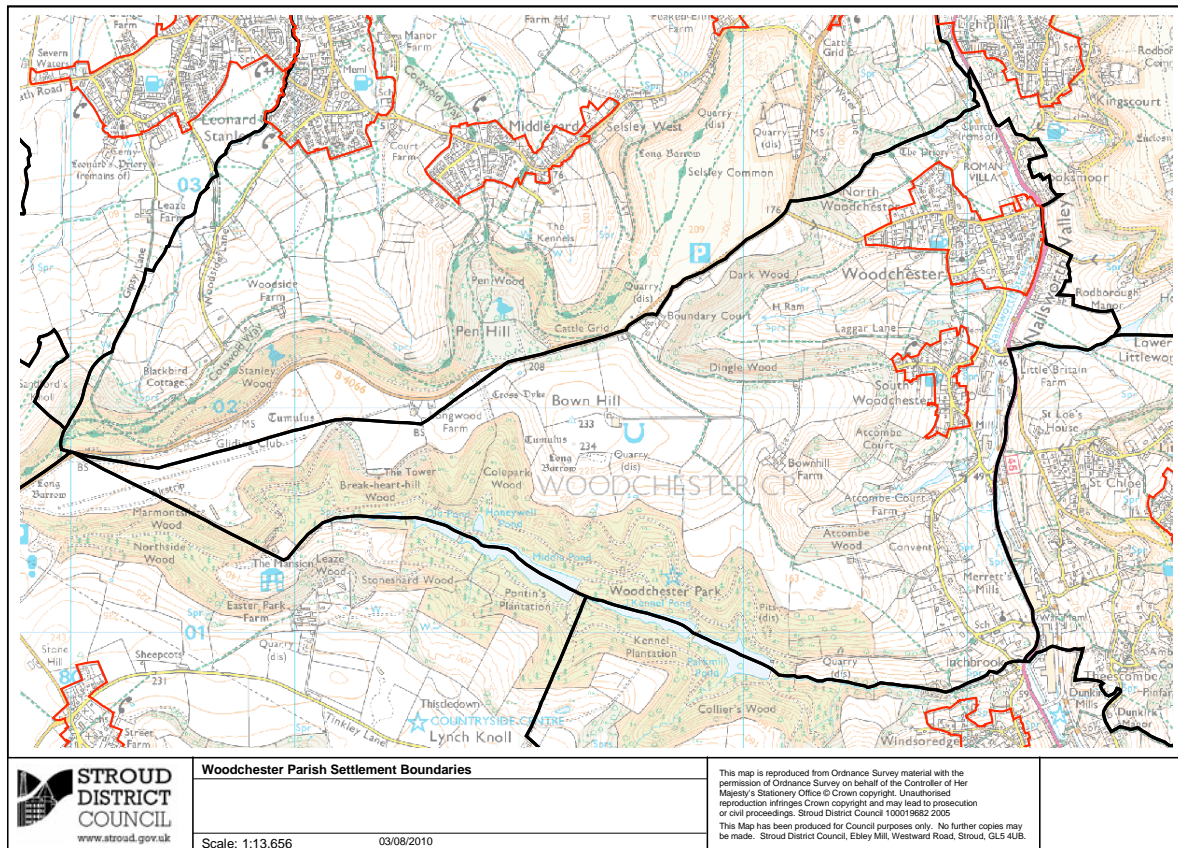
3.11 **Policy Guidance Justification 5. Resulting from the questionnaire village opinion suggests that the views from the Parish and the open spaces should be protected. 86% of the respondents rated the visual amenity extremely important. See Design Guidance Policy G and H page 17.**

Woodchester Parish Design Statement



Woodchester Parish Design Statement

4 Settlement Areas, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas



4.1 Within the settlement area are listed buildings and conservation areas. Many areas of the Parish are covered by Conservation Areas that protect them from development considered inappropriate by Stroud District Council.

4.2 Listed buildings are those that have been identified at a national level as being of sufficient cultural, architectural and historical interest. Any work to change the character, integrity or appearance of the buildings requires special consent.

4.3 Listed buildings are referred to as 'historical assets' in P.P.S.5 where it states that 'The Government's overarching aim is that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations'.

4.4 New development and changes within a Conservation area are controlled quite strictly. Repairs and maintenance can be carried out in a manner so as not to change the character of a building without needing consent, for example the replacement of windows, re-roofing with different material, changing boundary types etc.

4.5 Whilst individual areas and properties may be protected it is clear from the survey that important to most people is the beauty of the combination and blend of types of buildings and their proximity to open spaces, trees, footpaths and views.



Woodchester Parish Design Statement

Quotes from the questionnaire.



4.6 *"Woodchester is a very nice place to live because of the diversity of buildings. We have a mix of Cotswold stone, brick and render. We have large handsome houses, small cottages, two fine very good looking churches and a very successful and well run village hall. The factories and businesses fit very well into the landscape."*

4.7 *"Walking through the Parish offers great diversity of character, fabulous views and many historical features. All of these need preserving especially the use and retention of local stone and building styles."*

4.8 *"Dense, 'urban-style' development has historically been a typical part of the Cotswold scene and, in many cases, can add to its charm. Handled carefully there is no reason why it cannot continue to do so."*

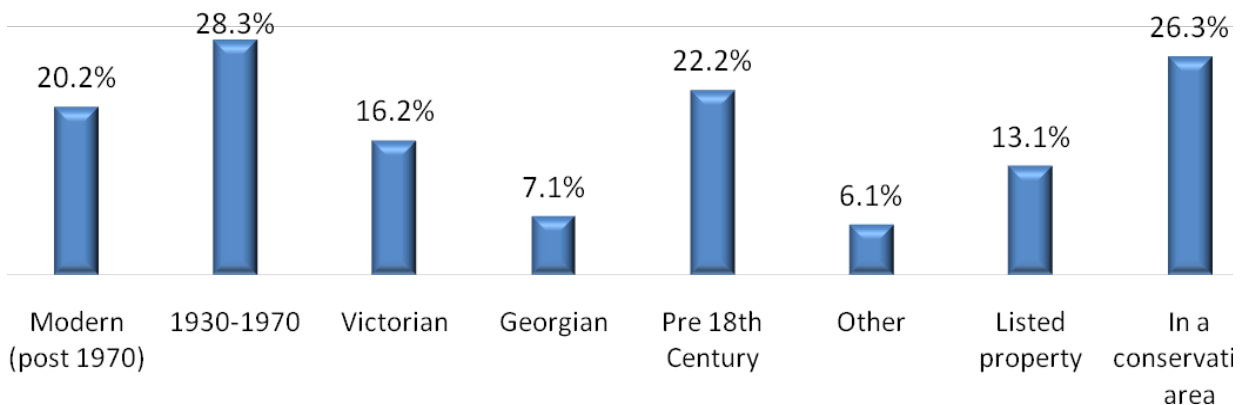
4.9 *"No one building easily sums up Woodchester for its residents but for most the essence lies either in South Woodchester's narrow winding High Street, or in the grand houses such as Atcombe Court, Woodchester House, Southfield Mill House and the Priory. A strong claim can also be made for the village's two Victorian High Gothic Churches, the Convent of the Poor Clares, or for the industrial buildings such as Frogmarsh Mill and the converted Teazle Tower. Although they resemble other Cotswold inns, the two ancient pubs, 'The Ram' and 'The Royal Oak', among the oldest buildings in the village, sum up much of the best in Woodchester."*

4.10 **Policy Guidance Justification 6.** Resulting from the questionnaire village opinion suggests that it is important that any new building is in keeping with the environment and local architecture so as to ensure the balance of scale, open space and quality of design.

See Design Guidance Policy A page 15.

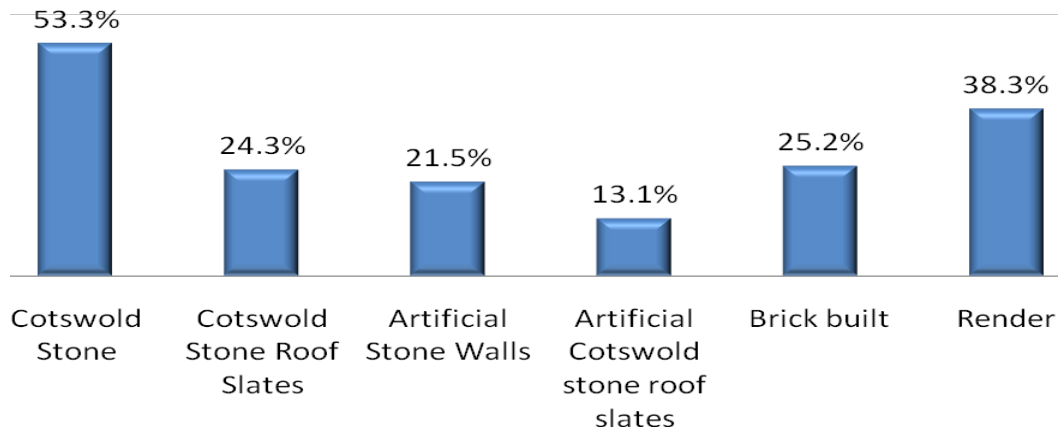
5 Survey and Questionnaire.

5.1 There were 105 online responses to the survey and 16 paper copies collected that have been analysed. The survey represented people living in various styles of housing, as follows.

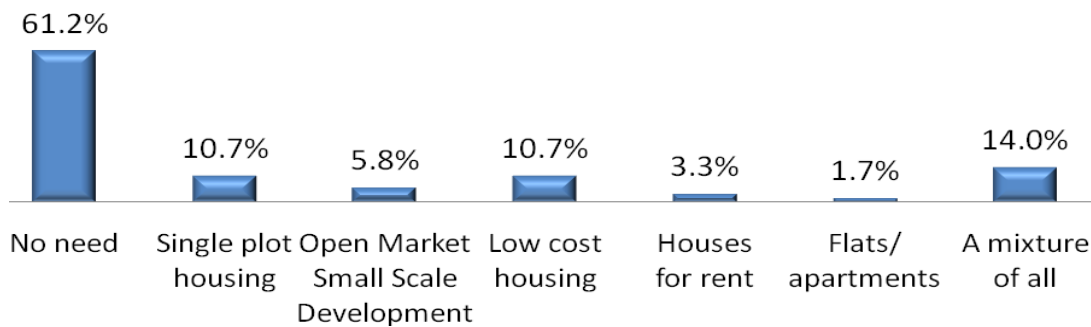


Woodchester Parish Design Statement

5.2 'The properties the people lived in used a variety of building materials as represented below.

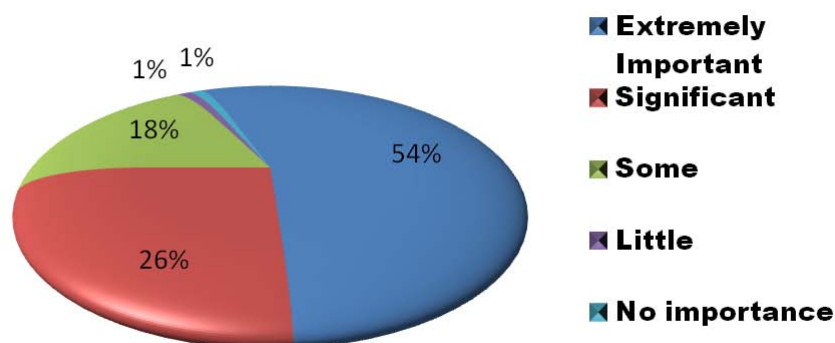


5.3 Those responding liked the setting of the two halves of the village, with a mix of historic Cotswold stone and modern reconstituted stone or brick buildings, in a lovely open valley with far reaching views of woods, fields and pasture. Their dislikes were principally three; first, the run down and neglected nature of some of the historic properties in the village, as well as dilapidated industrial areas; second, the bugbear of all Cotswold villages, rat running and speeding traffic through the village; third, the excessive speed of the traffic on the A46.



5.4 There was divided opinion about the need for more housing in the village. Two thirds of respondents didn't want any, or only very limited, housing development but one third accept the need for development on potential future sites.

5.5.80% of respondents felt that buildings should be in keeping with the environment and local architecture.



Woodchester Parish Design Statement

5.6 The chart on page 11 shows how the respondents to the survey indicated where, if at all, they would prefer development to take place. The sites favoured are brownfield or existing industrial sites. Building on paddocks or orchards was strongly opposed, but opinions were divided regarding in-fill development on larger gardens. The general feeling was that each case should be judged on its own merit.

5.7 Respondents were asked about the relative importance of visual aspects of energy conservation/generation measures with respect to the economic/ecological benefits. It is of interest that in an era when we are all being encouraged to be environmentally aware, 63% of respondents felt that the visual aspects of energy conservation were more important than the economic/environmental benefits. While there was a general acceptance that every effort should be made by both individuals and communities to conserve energy and minimise waste, it was considered important to take a responsible view as to where and how to position renewable sources.

5.8 ***"Orchards are now a priority habitat and important for biodiversity-they should not be built on."*** *Quote from questionnaire.*

6 The Economy of Woodchester Industry and Commerce

6.1 From the survey it is concluded that the main theme linking discussions on the quality of life in Woodchester is 'Strength through Diversity'. Likes included the setting of the two halves of the village, with a mix of historic Cotswold stone and modern reconstituted stone or brick buildings, in a lovely unspoilt setting. The village is a thriving one with a good mix of population, excellent schools, two interesting Victorian churches, three pubs and a post office. Many residents live and work in the village and this stops Woodchester from becoming merely a dormitory or commuter village.

6.2 ***"One of the strengths in Woodchester is seen in the number of local residents who both live and work in the village. Two thirds of respondents regard the availability of a range of local jobs as important to the viability of village life, though an equal number expressed concern over the run down appearance of so many of our industrial estates."*** *Quote from questionnaire.*

6.3 As can be seen from the survey, Woodchester has a high percentage of people working from home mainly using broadband and mobile phones to communicate. There are also a few small workshops within the Parish.

6.4 The encouragement and support of local commerce providing the opportunity for local employment is essential to maintain the 'energy' within the Parish as well as reducing the overall carbon footprint.

6.5 With such a cross-section of working skills, the mix of people and property is maintained which in turn maintains the true character of this interesting Cotswold Parish. Working from home, and local workshops and factories are therefore essential to the area; however the impact of over-development of this use has to be carefully balanced with the additional traffic and parking that it may create.

6.6. Local industry and home working are essential to the life of the Parish and should be encouraged. The use of existing industrial and commercial properties should be retained to provide local employment and services. Whilst dilapidated commercial properties may be capable of being converted to residential, there should be a presumption in favour of the retention for commercial use.

6.7 Where appropriate the rebuilding and extension of small-scale starter units within existing commercial properties should be encouraged.



Woodchester Parish Design Statement

6.8 Policy Guidance Justification 7. Resulting from the questionnaire village opinion suggests that there should be a guideline to support local industry/employment opportunities. This could be achieved by encouraging the adaption of old industrial buildings to house modern industry and not restricting home working.

See Design Guidance Policy O page 19.

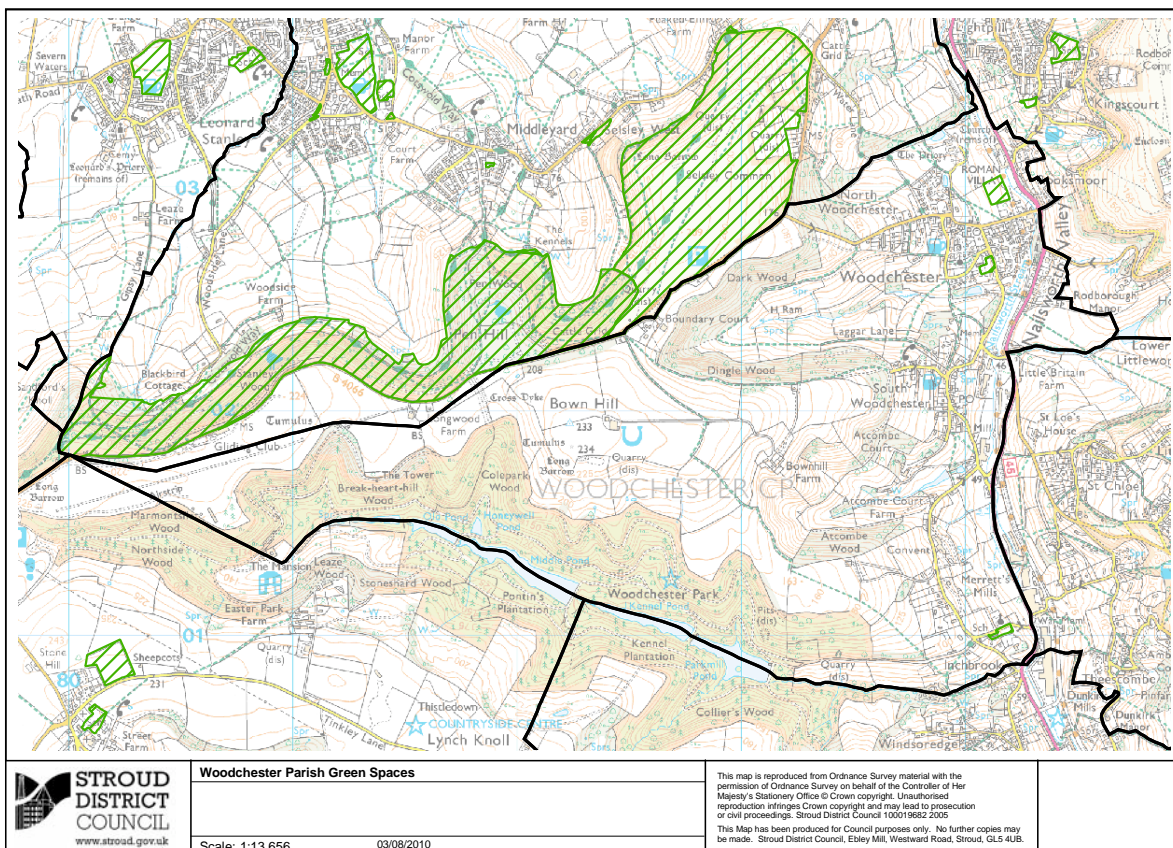
7 Agriculture and Recreation

7.1 Farming has influenced the character of Woodchester historically and is ongoing albeit in a different form. In many ways it has reverted to traditional styles of small-scale farming, smallholding and even backyard farming, relying less on pesticides or fertilisers and where the aim is a degree of self-sufficiency rather than to make a profit.

7.2 The two working farms are Bownhill and Manor Farm. The former is partly arable rotating wheat, barley, oats, potatoes and linseed, with some permanent pasture currently grazed by sheep and horses from the livery stable. The latter is cattle and arable. Additionally there are numerous smaller areas of land that provide opportunities for food production, grazing and habitat for fauna and flora. There are two large areas of woodland owned by the National Trust which are managed predominantly to encourage flora and fauna.



7.3 The Convent of the Poor Clares is set in some 27 acres of un-spoilt and traditionally farmed pasture land and is an important smallholding in the Parish. The retention of this land as farmland is important as is the overall character of this imposing estate.



Woodchester Parish Design Statement

7.4 The only 'green spaces' recorded on the plan on page 13 are the two primary schools and the football field in North Woodchester. The playing field off Convent Lane used by St Dominic's school is another important parcel of land that is used for sport and educational purposes. Recently SWALT has been established by a consortium of locals who have purchased a neglected field to convert into allotments, orchard, play area and communal land. These should be allocated as 'green spaces' of value to the local communities and protected.

7.5 Land-sharing schemes should be encouraged to support the full use of spare land that owners either cannot or do not want to use, so as to permit the production of local food.

7.6 It is important to preserve our farming and fields because they underpin the Village's character, views, flora and fauna.

7.7 **Policy Guidance Justification 8.** Resulting from the questionnaire village opinion suggests that there should be a guideline for the protection and further creation of habitat for flora and fauna by keeping established woodland and hedgerows and creating new ones.

See Design Guidance Policies J & M page 18.

8 Design Guidance. Comments from questionnaires

Quotes from the questionnaire.



8.1 *"Woodchester's unique character lies in its diverse mix of vernacular stone buildings of differing periods and styles, its narrow High Street, grand houses of the 17th-19th century standing in their own grounds or parks, industrial and mill sites and a hotch potch of Victorian, pre and post Second World War developments, all set in the enclosed woods and pastures of the Nailsworth valley. In sum, Woodchester may not have the unity and obvious touristy attractiveness of many typical Cotswold villages, however its strength lies in combination of the familiar and the unusual, the diversity of character, fabulous views, historical features such as the Roman Pavement and Woodchester Park, the village's association with the woollen industry of the 18th century and the sense of continuity provided by modern industries sited in older mill buildings."*



8.2 *"The village has a nice mix of buildings of different styles from the 16th -20th centuries and lacks the architectural unity of some other Cotswold villages but that is part of its charm. Development of closely packed modern seventies style housing in North Woodchester is a bit monotonous, so there's a need to develop sites like Rooksmoor Mills or Station Road in a style that respects the industrial/mill buildings to be found elsewhere in the Stroud Valleys."*



8.3 *"We need to preserve the quality of buildings in the village and the green spaces in between and not allow people to develop and build houses in back gardens."*

Woodchester Parish Design Statement

8.4 *"Woodchester is a very nice place to live because of the diversity of buildings. We have a mix of Cotswold stone, brick and render. We have large handsome houses, small cottages, two fine very good looking churches and a very successful and well run village hall. The factories and businesses fit very well into the landscape."*

8.5 *"Walking through the Parish offers great diversity of character, fabulous views and many historical features. All of these need preserving especially the use and retention of local stone and building styles."*

8.6 *"South Woodchester High Street is so beautiful and encaptures all of 19th century England. I love it!"*

8.7 *"Appropriate infill would not fundamentally alter the character of the village. The retention of open spaces is essential to retain the charm of Woodchester".*

8.8 *"Each case should be treated on an individual basis without a blanket policy."*

8.9 The majority of replies in the survey indicated within the Parish a strong desire to retain the wealth of different styles of building, character and setting.

8.10 The settlement areas that are shown on the map on page 9 generally shows the land that can be built on. Infill is the main opportunity, i.e. building on large gardens, vacant land and the conversion of larger houses or extension of smaller houses. Recent amendments to PPS 3 look at the need to maintain a healthy balance of garden space to houses that fits with the character of the area and in some cases will regard gardens as green space.

8.11 Development outside these areas is restricted by saved District and County Policies. Furthermore survey results showed concerns that not only would the character of the Parish be changed but the road systems serving the Parish would not cope with the heavier traffic.

9 Detailed Design Guidance Policies

9.1 The following design policy guidance for buildings is generally directed to small-scale house-building, alterations, renovations, extensions, industrial and commercial buildings. It also applies to agricultural and horticultural buildings and the enhancement and protection of the countryside.

Buildings

9.2 These guidelines seek to complement the good design principles set out in Planning Policy Statement 1 – Delivering Sustainable Development (2005) at a local level.

Woodchester new build Guidance Policy A



There cannot be only one design guide for the Parish due to the previously mentioned variety of areas and properties. North Woodchester has a predominance of 20th Century buildings where similar design may suit. Within the Settlement Boundary infill is most appropriate when development should either respect the surroundings or complement it by a contrasting design. Street scenes, views to open spaces and character should prevail in design criteria. A design statement with commentary on material, layout and design options and conclusions to justify the final design choice should accompany a planning proposal.

Woodchester Parish Design Statement

Woodchester extensions and/or renovation Guidance Policy B



These should at all times complement the existing structure using material that is pertinent to the main building. For example a mix of roof pitches, coverings, window styles generally may not be so attractive. When renovating, the use of the original material type and style should be encouraged or in some cases a complete contrast of style and material may work. Using similar, lower quality material often leads to a poor job that has a short life span and spoils the appearance of the area. The property featured combines a traditional look that contrasts with more modern glazing. This contrast with its sensitive design results in a pleasing mix of styles.

Woodchester roof styles Guidance Policy C



A distinctive feature of the area is roovescape. The older roofs are generally steep having up to 70 degree pitches, some with ridges in the shape of a cross and dormer windows and use of Cotswold Stone tiles. These typify views in the Cotswolds and are essential to its character. The retention of these roofs is paramount. Newer buildings often have roof pitches as low as 30 degrees that in a group appear acceptable but in isolation amongst the traditional pitched roofs do not sit comfortably. Flat roofs are generally not recommended owing to their poor visual impact, however it could be used to accommodate a green roof, provide an amenity or to prevent visual intrusion.

Woodchester building materials Guidance Policy D



Throughout the Parish materials used range from natural stone to brick to rendered concrete. Setting is all important and in order not to lose the character of the area it is suggested that materials used should complement and reflect the surroundings.



Woodchester windows Guidance Policy E - UPVC, wood or metal to meet U value requirements?



Listed buildings are severely restricted by planning law as to the style, but elsewhere even in conservation areas, the replacement of windows may not be controlled. They all have their place but within conservation areas and older unlisted buildings the use of UPVC should be restricted so as not to detract from the property. Wood with double glazing often looks much more fitting in older buildings whereas UPVC can look fine in younger buildings. Their appearance can be improved in older style properties by using an appropriate sill, wood or stone.



Woodchester Parish Design Statement

Woodchester detailing and individualism Guidance Policy F



Throughout the Parish can be seen quirky detail incorporated into the fabric of buildings. It is to be encouraged in new buildings to continue the character of the area. Detailing of fenestrations, windows, doors, gutters, etc. should be carefully considered so as not to spoil existing detail or conflict with local design and styles. This should be referred to in the design and access statement accompanying a planning application.

Woodchester open spaces Guidance Policy G



Open spaces are valued locally and should be protected as these areas provide a sense of well being and place. Also, spaces around dwellings often contribute to local character.



Woodchester setting Guidance Policy H



Imperative to the Parish is its setting, the countryside that surrounds the village and the fields and woodlands within. The relationship of buildings to the countryside on the fringes of these settlements is highly sensitive to change. Small incremental changes can cumulatively have a significant impact on character and need to be carefully considered.

Woodchester landscaping Guidance Policy I



To maintain visual attractiveness and a sense of peace the landscaping of gardens and meadows requires careful consideration. Landscaping plans, schedules of planting and future maintenance details should accompany a submitted planning proposal for any new dwellings or commercial/business premises.

Woodchester Parish Design Statement

Woodchester boundaries Guidance Policy J



The use of hedging and dry stone walls and opportunities for their protection and extension are encouraged not only for visual and local character reasons but also for the benefit of flora and fauna.

It will be considered favourably having taken into account other amenity and local character considerations in determining a submitted planning proposal.

Woodchester car parking Guidance Policy K



This is a huge issue especially in South Woodchester High Street where the village was designed and built without cars in mind, but now most homes have two cars that are parked in the road. Some say they act as a speed control. Future development has to incorporate parking and consideration for the distinctive character of the buildings. This is important given the narrow roads within the Parish.

In North Woodchester Selsley Road is the bugbear as this is used by through traffic as a rat run, that represents an increased and locally unacceptable potential road safety risk.

Woodchester eco design matters Guidance Policy L



Wind turbines, solar heating panels, hydropower, photo voltaic cells and insulation are issues that have to be considered in new development and existing properties. Conflicts can arise in conservation areas as certain constraints may prevent the use of these. Wind turbines can be visually intrusive and being in a valley may not be effective; photovoltaic cells can be less visible these days with changes to technology and materials and can be more effective. Insulation can have huge benefits and be less visual. The use of UPVC windows can spoil the appearance of the older properties so wooden frames should be fitted. K glass can have energy conservation benefits but can appear out of

keeping on older properties with historic glazing. Any proposal should address all these matters as part of any design and access statement accompanying a planning application.

Guidance Policy 9 Justification. Resulting from the questionnaire village opinion suggests that there should be guidance to support the increased use of energy conservation/generation.

Woodchester Rural Management Guidance Policy M



Smaller paddocks, fields and water in the locality provide important habitats and havens for wildlife and wild flowers and should be conserved. Gardens add to bio diversity value as they can provide a wealth of nectar and pollen bearing flowers that in turn support insect life and other species and design should reflect this opportunity. Ponds and wetland (bog gardens) provide aquatic habitat and drinking water. A balance of formal and informal gardening is to be recommended.

Woodchester Parish Design Statement



Road verges if managed appropriately can support an array of wild flowers and should be protected and enhanced.



Local Services

There has been a decline in recent years in some local services due mainly to economic choices made by the consumer.

However in many ways the Parish has a good supply of local services -

- two primary schools
- two churches
- village hall
- three public houses
- Post Office and shop
- many local private service industries - taxi, garages, tradesmen
- communication networks - cycle-path, bus and footpaths.

Woodchester Local Services Guidance Policy N



Parishioners are encouraged to use local facilities for goods and services. This will contribute to community vitality and any appropriate proposal that can facilitate their use and enhancement will be supported.

Employment Opportunity and Design Guidance Policy O



The Parish wish to conserve the economic heritage and the vitality of the village. Local employment opportunities including home-working will be encouraged where their design complies with other policies.

But how do we now communicate?

The Woodchester Word has been expanded and is now looking to offer a platform for local information and comment. It is delivered to every household 4 times a year.

A website exists www.woodchesterparish.org.uk. and the village is encouraged to use it for notices and comments.

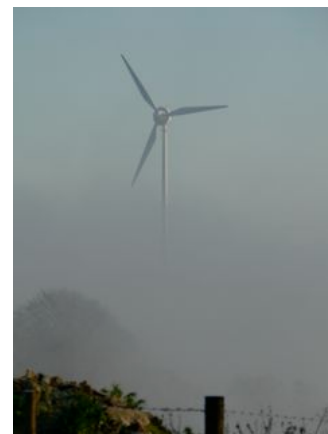
The parish has five notice boards.

Guidance. Resulting from the questionnaire village opinion suggests that all parishioners engage in the use of these media to maintain their viability and community vitality.

Woodchester Parish Design Statement

10 Climate Change

10.1 With the forecast of a changing climate and a reducing supply of oil and gas, as well as the spiralling energy costs, consideration needs to be given to the way we manage our lives and habitat.



10.2 Many parishioners expressed concerns over the visual intrusion of solar and photo voltaic panels and wind turbines. This is only one way of reducing our carbon footprint. Clearly, there has to be a balance between the visual appearance and energy efficiency of such installations. Many roofs are suitable for siting solar and photo voltaic panels, particularly those on more modern properties. Listed properties and those in Conservation areas need to have consideration of the impact locally. Wind turbines are perhaps more suited to hilltop locations and to serving a community rather than an individual property.

10.3 Thermal insulation should be improved to conserve energy. Excessive rain storms create the increased risk of flooding and therefore the use of rain water harvesting should be encouraged which also would facilitate the recycling of water. 'Green roofs' also reduce the run off of rain and create additional, unusual fauna and flora habitats. Car parking and patios should be porous to reduce the rate of rain water run off.

10.4 With the Nailsworth stream running through the Parish could waterpower be utilized?

10.5 Public transport and car sharing should be supported.

10.6 The cycle way to commute to work and travel to the shops is available on our doorstep and should be well maintained and the use of it encouraged.

Quotes from the questionnaire.

10.7 ***"Windmills and other generating mechanisms are critical to our future. There must be a balance of good, low visual siting and economic/ecological benefits"***

10.8 ***"Energy production is a priority issue for social and economic reasons and should not be affected by minor visual concerns."***

10.9 ***"There might be areas of conflict as regards listed buildings where rash/ill informed decisions may be taken in misguided attempts to conserve energy at the cost of the historical fabric of the structure."***

10.10 ***"Each application should be considered on its own merits and a decision based on the scale of impact of those that are immediately affected. Restrictions that seem to favour one point of view over another only serve to divide communities"***

10.11 ***"We should not be afraid to make the changes which our age requires, though, of course, as sensitively as possible. This is an organic landscape, not a museum."***

10.12 ***"If every house in Woodchester was fitted with solar panels, windmills and modern double glazed doors and windows, the main character of the village would be destroyed- there are villages with more modern housing that can accommodate this"***.

10.13 **Guidance.** Resulting from the questionnaire village opinion suggests that all parishioners should be encouraged to reduce their own carbon footprint and that of the Parish whilst not spoiling the character of our environment. The public bus service should be retained.

Woodchester Parish Design Statement

Conclusions

This Village Design Statement is the synthesis of views expressed by parishioners with additional input from the authors. Taken at a point in time it can only reflect the thoughts of today. We are living in a fast-changing world and society, where needs change rapidly.

Thought has been given to how we see the future needs and desires. However, to many the ideal would be that nothing need or should change. Yet it does, as history demonstrates with the development of Woodchester as a living and thriving community. Therefore this document seeks to influence the management of the changes that will inevitably occur.

In order for this Parish Design Statement to remain current and for it to comply with other relevant planning policies, the document will need to be regularly reviewed in the future so as to be relevant to the present and not the past.

1: *Delivering Sustainable Development*, ODPM (2005) (PPS1), which says that,

... planning should facilitate and promote sustainable and inclusive patterns of urban and rural development by [amongst other things] protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of countryside, and existing communities.

Woodchester Parish Design Statement

The purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development.



Sustainable means ensuring that better lives for ourselves don't mean worse lives for future generations.

Development means growth. We must accommodate the new ways by which we will earn our living in a competitive world. We must house a rising population, which is living longer and wants to make new choices. We must respond to the changes that new technologies offer us. Our lives, and the places in which we live them, can be better, but they will certainly be worse if things stagnate.

Sustainable development is about change for the better, and not only in our built environment.

Our natural environment is essential to our wellbeing, and it can be better looked after than it has been. Habitats that have been degraded can be restored. Species that have been isolated can be reconnected. Green belt land that has been depleted of diversity can be refilled by nature – and opened to people to experience it, to the benefit of body and soul.

Our historic environment – buildings, landscapes, towns and villages – can better be cherished if their spirit of place thrives, rather than withers.

Our standards of design can be so much higher. We are a nation renowned worldwide for creative excellence, yet, at home, confidence in development itself has been eroded by the too frequent experience of mediocrity.

So sustainable development is about positive growth – making economic, environmental and social progress for this and future generations.

The planning system is about helping to make this happen.

Development that is sustainable should go ahead, without delay - a presumption in favour of sustainable development that is the basis for every plan, and every decision. This framework sets out clearly what could make a proposed plan or development unsustainable.

In order to fulfil its purpose of helping achieve sustainable development, planning must not simply be about scrutiny. Planning must be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which we live our lives.

This should be a collective enterprise. Yet, in recent years, planning has tended to exclude, rather than to include, people and communities. In part, this has been a result of targets being imposed, and decisions taken, by bodies remote from them. Dismantling the unaccountable regional apparatus and introducing neighbourhood planning addresses this.

In part, people have been put off from getting involved because planning policy itself has become so elaborate and forbidding – the preserve of specialists, rather than people in communities.

This National Planning Policy Framework changes that. By replacing over a thousand pages of national policy with around fifty, written simply and clearly, we are allowing people and communities back into planning.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Clark". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Rt Hon Greg Clark MP
Minister for Planning

July 2011

Woodchester Parish Design Statement

Audit Trail

Work on the preparation of this Village Design Statement began after a public meeting held in April 2009 attended by 58 parishioners. Sub-committees were established with responsibility for communications, residential, sustainability, transport, natural environment, schools, agriculture and commerce and collating and final production.



These committees researched their topics and produced pictorial presentations and questions that were then presented at a public meeting, analysed and then presented at the primary schools' and village fetes. At the village fete, a draft questionnaire was also tried.

This questionnaire was then refined, agreed with Stroud District Council and circulated to all householders with the Woodchester Word and made available on-line. Both were promoted on the village website and by posting 4 large banners around the Parish.

120 questionnaires were received and analysed, with the findings being published on the village website. A smaller group of parishioners was then set the task of preparing the content of the Village Design Statement using reference papers and the parishioners' comments to shape the document.

Throughout this process continual input and assistance has been given by Conrad Moore, and John Balfe, Planning Strategy Team staff of Stroud District Council, ensuring that this document follows the guidelines set and meets the criteria for design guidance.

The draft design statement was at all times available to be read via our Parish website www.woodchesterparish.org.uk together with appendices. Comments were invited.

A draft was sent to various Agencies and all adjacent Parishes for comment.

A final draft was posted on our website and all previous consultees were invited to comment before adoption by Stroud District Council.

The paper record of the audit trail is held by our Parish Clerk.

"I would like to thank all parishioners who have contributed their time and skills to producing this Village Design Statement that will provide important guidance in shaping the future of Woodchester, based on an appreciation of its unique character and heritage."

Gervase Hamilton
Chair of Woodchester Parish Council

Woodchester Parish Design Statement

National Planning Policies that should be read with this document

Woodchester Guidance Policies	National Planning Statements	SDC Saved Local Plan Policies	Other Planning Advice Documents
Natural Environment			
WGP G open spaces	PPS7 para 24/25	NE10 HN8	Stroud District Landscape Assessment (2000) http://www.stroud.gov.uk/docs/lp/landscape.asp http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=13189
WGP H setting in the countryside	PPS9	NE3 NE4 NE5 NE6 NE7	Stroud District Landscape Assessment (2000) http://www.stroud.gov.uk/docs/lp/landscape.asp http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=13189
WGP I landscaping	PPS9	NE11	Stroud District Landscape Assessment (2000) http://www.stroud.gov.uk/docs/lp/landscape.asp http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=13189
WGP J boundaries	PPS9 PPS7 para 24/25	NE6 NE10	
Farming			
WGP H setting in the countryside	PPS7 para 28	NE10 HN8	http://www2.defra.gov.uk/food-farm/ http://www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/landmanage/land-use/
Building			
WGP A new builds to respect surroundings	PPS1 PPS3	HN8	
WGP B/C/D/E/F extensions/ renovations to complement existing structure	PPS1 PPS3	HN8	
Infrastructure			
WGP M maintains verges to encourage wildlife corridors	PPS9	NE5 NE6 NE12	Gloucestershire Biodiversity Plan http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2479 http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=13190
WGP K future development has to incorporate parking.	PPG13	GE5	

Woodchester Parish Design Statement

Woodchester Guidance Policies	National Planning Statements	SDC Saved Local Plan Policies	Other Planning Advice Documents
WGP K restricts development that brings increased traffic	PPS1 PPS7 PPG13	GE5 GE7 TR1 BE16	
WGP N supports local services			
Business			
WGP O supports local employment opportunities and homeworking	PPS4 PPS7	BE16	
Community			
WGP N supports local services	PPS7	SH15 RL1 RL3 RL4	
Climate change and its effect			
WGP L and Guidance 10.13 supports the increased use of energy conservation/generation	PPS1 PPS5 PPS22		http://www.stroud.gov.uk/info/micro_technology_notes.pdf http://www.stroud.gov.uk/info/plan_strat/renewable_energy.pdf

Whilst this table is up to date at the time of printing, when the proposed National Planning Policy Framework is adopted and/or the Stroud District Planning Policies are updated, this table may need to be reviewed.