

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

STROUD TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY

1. Strategy Development

1.1 Why spend money on a strategy, why not just do the works?

The strategy is the key mechanism to locate and secure funding for implementation. Without a strategy the Council would be in a weak position to attract additional funding. It also provides a prioritised framework to improve changes across the town centre area.

1.2 Who will do it?

Delivery will be managed via the Concordat bodies (Gloucestershire County Council, Stroud District Council, Stroud Town Council as well as Project Stroud).

1.3 We have done strategies before, nothing ever happens. Why do another one?

Previous strategies have not been as rigorously developed or consulted upon. Previous strategies and plans have provided valuable background information and evidence to guide the development of the Strategy e.g. footfall data, Stroud Area Community Strategic Plan

The ownership of the current Strategy by the Concordat members also spreads the responsibility for future delivery, implementation and guidance to Gloucestershire County Council, Stroud District Council, Stroud Town Council as well as Project Stroud.

1.4 This has concentrated too much on the centre of the town. What about the surrounding areas of Stroud?

This study has been instructed by the Concordat and funded by Stroud District Council. The scope of the study has been limited, to a degree, by the funding available. The area covered has been targeted to include the key service elements of the town centre and points of interest as well as the key gateways or arrival points such as the railway station, car parks and bus interchange.

2. Vehicle Circulation and Traffic

2.1 Why is there so much emphasis on car access ?

The strategy is seeking to balance the needs of all users in the town. A key aim is to improve the environment of the town centre and enhance the experience. Part of this requires a review of traffic movement and improved management of car parking.

The strategy recognises that there will still be a reliance on the use of private vehicles to access Stroud. However, within the town centre, the strategy is attempting to balance the needs of different users, respecting different modes of transport and to ensure that private vehicles do not dominate the central area.

2.2 I need to drop off elderly relatives, where can I drop them off if you remove on street parking?

Further development of the proposals will enable creation of pick-up/ drop off areas. One suggestion is the creation on “drop off area” by the Railway Station.

2.3 Is Russell St/ London Road wide enough to be 2 way ?

At present no, however it has been in the past. GCC as a Concordat member have been heavily involved in Strategy development. County Highways have specifically reviewed the proposals and considered highway design requirements throughout. They have advised that a two way road can be achieved along Russell Street/ London Road. Further detailed design and consultation will be required.

2.4 Will 2 way on Russell St/ London Road cause traffic to back-up, increasing pollution and making the area unpleasant.

Traffic in the town centre is currently increased by hopeful motorists circling Russell St and George St looking for on-street parking.

Permitting access north/south along Russell St/ London Road will permit ease of entry to the town centre and access to key car parks. However, the street design will require traffic to travel slowly. This will make crossing Russell Street easier for existing shoppers. Russell Street will be used for access to the station and to London Road car parks. Slow moving traffic on Russell Street will mean it is not considered an attractive through-route and will not be a preferred option for traffic instead of using Dr Newton's Way.

2.5 Will the strategy reduce the number of places that Taxi's can pick up and drop off?

The Strategy development has had the benefit of input from the Stroud Taxi Association at our consultation events. Following refinement of plans and further consultation, the location of taxi pick up points may want to be changed. However, all necessary and appropriate consultations will take place prior to any possible suggestions being taken forward.

2.6 There are too many lorries using the High Street, how will the strategy help?

Lorries delivering goods to retailers on the High Street is a necessity of their trading activity. As they are generally small retailers, placing restrictions upon delivery times is not always possible. Instead, the strategy suggests redesigning the street so that delivery vehicles use only part of the carriageway and are required to park in a designated area. The aim is to provide a wider area for pedestrians and reduce the current "chicane" effect created by too many vehicles parking "ad hoc" on the High Street. This has been successful in other towns.

2.7 Can / will the High Street be connected back to Parliament Street?

This is an idea being suggested following consultation events. There is a desire to encourage more pedestrians to visit the upper end of the High Street and to encourage shopping on Nelson Street; we are seeking to extend the town centre retail circuit. However, it is too early to comment in detail on whether such a link should be made for vehicle traffic. This is something which could be considered in more detail as a further design stage.

2.8 What happens to the bus stop on Russell Street – is it going to stay?

Further detailed design and consideration of these issues will be required prior to any changes being made.

3. Canal

3.1 How does the Strategy link the canal to the town centre?

A key requirement of the instruction was to identify routes to improve access between the existing town centre and the restored Canal. The consultants have considered these issues and identified potential future access points.

3.2 Where is the bridge to cross the railway and canal?

The cost of delivering a new bridge crossing over the canal and railway will be very high. It is considered outside the scope of this strategy as a route for implementation of such a costly item cannot be identified by surrounding potential development opportunities. Instead the strategy is focussing on improving the existing links and enhancing access from the canal at Walbridge into the town centre.

4. Pedestrian and Cycle Movement

4.1 Have you considered the needs of wheelchair users and those with buggies when recommending paving surfaces?

The strategy has not yet identified specific surface materials. However, all suggestions regarding types of paving etc have been considerate of a number of issues, including their need to be accessible to a wide variety of users.

4.2 Why is there an indication that George Street will be pedestrianised, my business will suffer without the passing trade ?

It is proposed to restrict access to George St to enhance the setting of the Subscription Rooms and forecourt and generally improve the environment for George Street and King Street.

The Strategy proposes that George Street becomes incorporated into the *Traffic Restriction Order* area. This will mean that buses, taxis, delivery vehicles and blue badge holders will be permitted to access the street. The street would be redesigned to narrow the carriageway and provide wider pedestrian areas. This in turn will improve the footfall and hence the passing trade for your business.

We received a large number of comments regarding the proposals and priorities. The majority were in favour of removing parking on George Street and improving the streetscape. On balance, the Strategy reflect the majority view regarding the needs and priorities for change within the town centre.

4.3 The Strategy will make an attractive town centre but what will it do to make it safer?

The design proposals include suggestions for resurfacing the streets. This will make the streets safer for general movement with less trip hazards etc. The Strategy also proposes the development of a lighting strategy which will enhance the town at night.

Generally, the proposals are aimed at attracting more people to the town centre, at more times of the day and night and to spend longer there. The presence of more people is generally considered to create a safer environment.

4.4 What considerations have been made regarding cyclists?

The access and egress to the town will be improved by attention to the key gateways into the town centre. These will include access on foot, bicycle and vehicle.

The Strategy will also look at street furniture which includes cycle parking provision. The number of spaces and locations will be reviewed in conjunction with user groups.

5. Parking

5.1 The car parks are full- where are we meant to park?

Independent car park survey results indicate that the car parks are not at capacity (and are unlikely to be so for some time). It is acknowledged that there are some peak periods such as Saturday mornings in conjunction with the Farmers Market.

There are 1250 car parking spaces within 500 m (5 mins walk of the town centre).

5.2 Why can't we have more free on-street parking like other Market Towns?

Based on the Strategy, there will be minimum net loss of on-street car parking in Stroud. Absence of paid parking and presence of on-street parking in other towns is leading to such congestion and difficulties for customers that other Partnerships are currently considering their options for change.

5.3 Images show that Council intends to build over the Parliament St car park, why ?

Consultation has identified long term potential growth areas. The development of these will be dependent upon future proposals and planning requirements. New development would have to consider allocation of parking for the increased customers it would generate.

5.4 When you take away the line markings how are people supposed to know where they are not meant to park?

The removal of line marking will be done in conjunction with *traffic regulation orders* and essential gateway signs which inform drivers of the restrictions and requirements. Repaving works will also be designed to provide clear areas where loading and unloading or parking can occur.

5.5 Has the proposed parking on Cornhill take into account the required access to premises backing onto it?

Proposed parking on Cornhill will be subject to further detailed design and consultation with residents, businesses and transport operators etc.

6. Implementation

6.1 When will it all happen?

The Public Realm Strategy is a document which will steer future investment in streetscape and general town centre improvements. Delivery will be over a variety of timeframes (short, medium and long) depending on the scope of works required for the stage and the availability of funding for implementation.

6.2 Where will the money come from for implementation ?

Funding for implementation will be applied for on the strength of the strategy document. As with all multi-faceted capital works programmes, a variety of sources can be used to access funding depending upon the implementation stage and 'theme'. Opportunities may arise from Town, District or County Council sources and contributions or grants from regional, national government or other grant bodies.

6.3 Will there be a disruption to town centre operations if you do all of this at once?

Funding opportunities will dictate that delivery is unlikely to occur all at once. Mechanisms to ensure that disruption will be minimised and managed successfully will be a key element of the consultation process. The overall delivery will be led by the Stroud Concordat.

6.4 What opportunities are available at present to implement some of these proposals?

Some of the proposed projects may be brought forward independently due to the nature of work. Two possible areas include: Bank Gardens and Rowcroft / Wallbridge. Further assessment and design will be required prior to consultation and review of funding opportunities. Certain consultation could also commence such as identifying the palette of suitable paving materials.

6.5 Who now has the responsibility to make sure this all happens?

The Delivery & Implementation Plan (section 7 of the Strategy), is the key management tool to oversee the next stages of work. Detailed analysis and assessment, design and further consultation are required prior to physical implementation occurring.

The project will remain the responsibility of the Stroud Concordat and be managed by the members of the Concordat. On this basis, future implementation will remain under the leadership of the Town, District and County Councils for the next steps of work required prior to delivery of improvements. Project Stroud will remain as a key guiding organisation.

7. General Topics

7.1 Why isn't the bus station / interchange included ?

Delivery of the Interchange depends upon land owners co-operation. At present, the key land owner has not prioritised the need and will not discuss the issue further. Proposed improvements in the Strategy can be undertaken without impact on the Station area or Merrywalks terminus.

7.2 Why focus on new paving when it is the economy that needs a boost ?

The Strategy is focussed on improving the street scene. Improving this should attract further investment and development in the town. As a result, more shops may emerge and the economy will grow.

7.3 Why does the Strategy not reference the need to remove the temporary steps to the top of Merrywalks ?

The steps are owned and managed by the owner of Merrywalks and not Gloucestershire Highways, Town Council or District Council. The steps have been deemed safe, and whilst all tiers of government would like to see them replaced, there is no legislative mechanism to force this to occur.

7.4 The images show that Council has already made a decision about how the five key places should look. How is this a consultation document if you don't give the public options?

This is a public exhibition for the final Public Realm Strategy. The Strategy was consulted on in January 2008 and May 2008 to collate ideas and gauge the priorities for change in the town centre. The Public Realm Strategy document includes images to assist the reader to understand the *potential* for key areas as described in the report. The images are initial ideas only. The graphics provided are there to help the reader, not to dictate future format.

7.5 How does the Strategy stop chain stores from locating to Stroud?

The Strategy is concerned with improving the spaces between buildings in Stroud. Evidence from public realm improvement schemes in other market towns demonstrates that improving the public realm attracts more people to a town, increases the dwell time of visitors and shoppers and leads to more money being spent in the towns' facilities. These improvements are expected to help to regenerate the town centre and improve the economic standing of the town. Such improvements are expected to attract further investment into the town.