

- 16.5 The following policy will deliver the vision by managing development and where appropriate, partnership working.

#### **POLICY CS34 - RURAL AREAS**

Development plan documents and development proposals will take account of the vision for the rural areas and partnership priorities, accord with Neighbourhood Plan initiatives and will:

1. protect, conserve and enhance the rural areas' distinctive character, beauty, wildlife, landscape, biodiversity and heritage
2. protect the best and most versatile agricultural land and opportunities for local food production and cultivation to provide for nearby urban areas and settlements
3. protect the unique and valuable setting provided by the rural areas to the urban areas and other settlements in South Gloucestershire, which contributes to the district's distinctive sense of place and identity
4. protect the designated Green Belt and the Cotswolds AONB from inappropriate development
5. maintain the settlement boundaries defined on the Policies Map around rural settlements until they are reviewed either through Neighbourhood Plans, the Policies, Sites and Places DPD or a replacement Local Plan following engagement with local communities and other stakeholders/partners
6. provide affordable housing through Policy CS19 (Rural Exception Sites), Policy CS18 (Affordable Housing) Neighbourhood Planning and give consideration to allocating Affordable Housing Only Sites, with any allocations to be identified in the Policies, Sites and Places DPD
7. protect rural employment sites, services and facilities and support farm diversification in order to provide local employment, sustain rural and village life and reduce the need to travel
8. encourage contributions to appropriate new communication technologies (e.g. high speed broadband) which will support working from home and other rural enterprises

- 9. support renewable energy proposals where they conform to Policy CS3 (Renewable, Low Carbon & Decentralised Energy Generation)**
- 10. seek contributions to providing Green Infrastructure, including woodland, public transport, walking, cycling and bridleway links to and from the rural area, in recognition of the rural area as a valuable recreation and tourist asset and in order to promote healthier life styles**
- 11. deliver with partners, and seek contributions to, the Rural Transport Package on improved accessibility and transport provision detailed in Policy CS7 (Strategic Transport Infrastructure)**
- 12. demonstrate through the preparation of appropriate Flood Risk Assessments, surface water plans and drainage strategies, how flood risk will be managed**
- 13. recognise the role that rural areas can make to projects and initiatives that address and adapt to the challenges of climate change.**

16.6 The Core Strategy sets out an integrated approach to balancing the conservation and enhancement of the countryside and rural settlements with sustaining and promoting thriving local rural communities and the rural economy.

16.7 Within the open countryside and within villages and other settlements without defined settlement boundaries, development will be strictly controlled in line with other relevant policies.

16.8 The best and most versatile agricultural land will be protected from unacceptable development. This is particularly important in view of the increasing need to produce food locally due to the anticipated impact of climate change. Lower grade land may also be valuable for the cultivation of non food crops, including biomass.

16.9 It is important for the rural areas to thrive by creating and maintaining sustainable, mixed and inclusive communities. Limited housing development will be allowed in accordance with Policy CS5 (Location of Development) within those villages or parts of villages which have settlement boundaries defined on the Policies Map. The approach to the distribution of development in the rural areas will be reviewed, in conjunction with community and stakeholder engagement. Any amendments to the approach will be identified in Neighbourhood Plans, the Policies, Sites and Places DPD, or a replacement Local Plan. Affordable housing will be delivered through Policy CS18 (Affordable Housing) and Policy CS19 (Rural Housing Exception Sites) and Neighbourhood Planning.

- 16.10 The viability of the rural economy also needs to be ensured by providing and protecting sufficient land and premises for a range of employment opportunities of a scale appropriate to the settlement/locality, supporting farm diversification and development for tourism where the scale and environmental impact is consistent with the rural location and by protecting existing services and facilities. National policy, the policies in Chapter 9 (Maintaining Economic Prosperity) of this document and other LDF documents will be applicable.
- 16.11 It is important to recognise the role that rural enterprises play in supporting the economy. Where appropriate, consideration will be given through the concept statement process (as set out in the Council's Statement of Community Involvement) to the long term future planning of existing significant rural enterprises located outside village development boundaries, provided there are no overriding conflicts with established policy.
- 16.12 The design of new development must respect and enhance the varied and distinctive character and settings of the rural areas.
- 16.13 A package of rural transport initiatives is proposed to improve linkages both within the rural areas, and to key places of employment, shopping, leisure, education and other facilities and services. Elements of this package require further investigation, for example the provision of additional multi-modal interchanges, including Park and Share provision, demand responsive transport initiatives and the reopening of Charfield Station.
- 16.14 The potential development of a new nuclear power station at Oldbury and associated transmission grid would have a significant impact on the rural areas. However as the principle or details of the project are yet to be confirmed, the strategy for the rural areas does not deal with the implications that might arise from the development. Further information about proposed major infrastructure projects is given in Chapter 18.

### Partnership priorities

- 16.15 The Council will:
- encourage rural communities: to undertake local housing needs surveys, prepare parish plans and support Neighbourhood Planning, in order to set out the future needs and aspirations for their communities and to help inform the review of the approach to the distribution of development in the rural areas, the preparation of future DPDs and assist in the determination of planning applications
  - work with partners to encourage the provision of appropriate new communication technologies, such as high speed broadband, to the rural areas
  - work with partners and communities to enhance rural accessibility by the development of viable, innovative, demand responsive and community transport initiatives and improvements to public transport
  - work with partners to establish a shared understanding of the impacts and level of recreational and leisure activities, residential moorings and associated development along the River Avon. Whilst recognising the need to minimise flood risk, suitable and proportionate action will be taken to address development and to seek to ensure that moorings have a positive impact on the surrounding environment, in order to protect the character and quality of the area which make it so popular.

### Phasing/Development programme

- 16.16 Development in rural areas will be achieved by empowering local communities to shape the future of their own areas through opportunities presented by Neighbourhood Planning. Limited development will be permitted within those villages with defined settlement boundaries. This approach to the distribution of development in the rural areas will be reviewed and any amendments to this approach will be identified in

Neighbourhood Plans, the Policies, Sites and Places DPD, or a replacement Local Plan.

### Delivery

- 16.17 Development will be delivered by Neighbourhood Planning, the private sector and where appropriate Registered Social Landlords and other partners through the development management process.
- 16.18 Transport improvements will be delivered through the Rural Transport Package and partnership working.
- 16.19 Parishes will be encouraged to prepare parish plans and undertake Neighbourhood Planning.