Parish Priorities Statement
Stroud Parish

Introduction

The South Downs National Park Authority decided in May 2022 that it would review parts of its Local Plan in line with Government Policy and ensure the Plan delivers on corporate priorities relating to Climate Action, Nature and a National Park for All. The views and input of the local community into the Local Plan Review are vital to us particularly those of our town and parish councils. One way in which town and parish councils can contribute to the Local Plan Review is through a Parish Priority Statement (PPS).

This Parish Priority Statement for Stroud has been prepared using written submissions from residents. The responses demonstrate a high degree of alignment around protecting the rural character of the parish, addressing road safety and active travel challenges, safeguarding valued landscapes and green spaces, and ensuring that any future development is limited, appropriate, and infrastructure improvement led.

Community Engagement

This PPS is informed by a broad range of qualitative resident submissions collected through a parish-wide consultation exercise. 27 responses were captured from approx. 200 houses. The responses reflect a wide cross-section of residents, including families, older residents, commuters, home workers, business owners and those with long-standing ties to the parish. Individual responses have been synthesised to identify recurring themes, priorities and shared concerns, rather than attributing views to named individuals.

Vision for the Future

Over the next 10–15 years, residents would like to see Stroud evolve in a way that protects its distinctive village character while addressing a small number of long-standing challenges. The key changes prioritised by the community are:

1. A safer, more connected parish – with meaningful traffic calming on the A272, safe pedestrian crossings, and a dedicated walking and cycling route to Petersfield that avoids the dangers of the A272 and the A3 crossing.
2. Protection and enhancement of Stroud's landscape and biodiversity – including open fields, hedgerows, ancient trees, woodlands, water meadows and views to the Downs; alongside active measures to strengthen nature recovery and habitat connectivity.
3. Sustainable, infrastructure-led community resilience – focusing on drainage, flooding mitigation, renewable energy solutions, appropriate scale community facilities, and support for home working and local businesses rather than further housing growth.

Development and Management of Land

There is a strong prevailing view that Stroud has already accommodated a significant level of development in recent years, particularly through the Stroudfields scheme, and that no further housing is required during the current Local Plan period (to 2033). The community places a higher priority on allowing recent developments to fully integrate, and on addressing infrastructure pressures before any additional growth is considered.

If further development were to be contemplated in the longer term, it should be:

- Small-scale and incremental
- Infrastructure-led
- Located within or immediately adjacent to the existing settlement, and
- Avoid development north of the A272 or on open agricultural land

No specific sites are identified for development. Brownfield, infill or redevelopment opportunities may be preferable in principle, but only where they do not erode character, increase traffic danger, or compromise landscape and biodiversity value.

Residents consistently identify the following as requiring strong protection:

- Open fields and agricultural land surrounding the village
- Stroud Common and the green spaces around the Seven Stars public house
- North Stroud Lane, its sunken lanes, hedgerows, copses and water meadows
- Woodland belts, mature oak trees and historic hedgerows
- Valued views to and from the Downs and along the village approaches

Any funding from development (such as Community Investment Levy) should be prioritised to the development of a permanent playground and improved play facilities.

Homes

The dominant view is that no further housing development is required. Where development cannot be avoided, residents express a preference for:

- Genuinely affordable homes for local people
- Smaller dwellings suitable for first-time buyers or downsizers
- Self-build or custom-build homes with strong environmental credentials

Smaller 2–3 bedroom homes are most commonly referenced, reflecting concerns that recent developments have skewed towards larger, less affordable properties that are often subsequently extended.

Any new homes should:

- Be well integrated into the existing settlement form and landscape
- Be highly energy efficient
- Incorporate renewable energy generation (e.g. solar, heat pumps)

- Avoid increasing flood risk

Design

Stroud's character is defined by its dispersed village form, strong relationship with surrounding countryside, and varied but traditional built buildings design. Particularly important features include:

- The green and open aspect around the Seven Stars
- Linear development along Winchester Road
- Traditional cottages, brick and flint buildings, and farm structures
- Informal lanes, hedges, walls and verges that soften the street scene

Residents emphasise the importance of:

- Traditional local materials (brick, flint, timber, clay tiles, slate)
- Front gardens, hedges and brick walls rather than close-boarded fencing
- Modest scale, pitched roofs and context-led design

The Natural Environment

There is strong support for protecting and enhancing existing nature while improving connectivity across the parish. Suggested opportunities include strengthening and linking hedgerows and woodlands, regenerating neglected areas (such as the woodland behind the pub and local ponds), and exploring new pond creation to support wildlife. There is recognition of past successes, including millennium planting and improved village hall grounds.

Improving access and connectivity is a key theme, particularly making footpaths more robust year-round.

Alignment with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy is critical, including creating habitat corridors and improving biodiversity resilience (in light of ash dieback and climate change).

Engagement with landowners and farmers is seen as essential, ensuring nature recovery sits alongside continued farming; while resisting inappropriate development that would damage green infrastructure or increase flood risk.

Jobs

Residents support existing businesses, farm diversification, improved digital infrastructure and low-impact rural enterprise.

Stroud's economy is characterised by a mix of local businesses, farms, service uses and a high level of home working. The community wishes to:

- Protect existing businesses, including the Seven Stars, farms, garages, care facilities and small business units
- Support farm diversification and sustainable rural enterprise
- Improve digital infrastructure to support home working and microbusinesses
- Encourage low-impact, locally appropriate business activity rather than large-scale commercial growth

Public Spaces

Highly valued public and semi-public spaces include:

- The green and pond near the Seven Stars
- Village Hall grounds
- The playground
- Stroud Common

- Public rights of way and surrounding open countryside

Residents support:

- Retaining and enhancing these spaces for both people and nature
- Improved awareness and accessibility of existing green spaces
- Provision of a permanent site for a playground and improved play facilities

Infrastructure

Priorities include safe active travel routes, traffic calming, highway drainage improvements and investment in community facilities.

Key infrastructure priorities repeatedly identified by residents are:

Active Travel

- A safe, off-road walking and cycling route to Petersfield
- A safe crossing of the A272 and A3 for pedestrians and cyclists
- Improved, year-round condition of footpaths

Roads

- Effective speed reduction through the village
- Pedestrian crossings at key locations
- Measures to prevent rat-running and inappropriate vehicle use of rural lanes

Drainage and Flooding

- Improved highway drainage along the A272
- Protection of land that acts as natural flood attenuation

Community Facilities

- Any funding from development (such as Community Investment Levy) should be prioritised to the development of a permanent playground and improved play facilities.
- A small community or village shop, potentially linked to the pub
- Improved bus stops and services
- Support for renewable and community energy initiatives; starting with the establishment of a Parish sub-working group to take ownership of the net zero plan

Conclusion

The prevailing community view is that Stroud should remain a small, rural parish prioritising landscape protection, biodiversity, safety and quality of life over further growth.

The PPS sets out a clear expectation that future planning policy should focus on infrastructure improvement, environmental resilience and community wellbeing, rather than housing-led expansion.

This statement reflects a strong collective desire to protect what makes Stroud special, while addressing long-standing issues that affect residents' daily lives.

Appendix

2025 additions to 2013 Stroud Parish Plan.docx