

## Issues 3

**3.0.1** The main challenge facing Cotswold District is to plan for future development requirements in the most sustainable way possible, making provision for homes (particularly for people with a local connection), jobs and community facilities, while protecting the area's outstanding natural and built environment.

### Natural and Historic Environment

**3.0.2** It is imperative that the character, appearance and diversity of the District is protected and wherever possible enhanced, especially within areas of high historic, landscape or nature conservation importance. It is also important to ensure that new development is well designed; respects biodiversity and green infrastructure; and does not lead to the coalescence of settlements.

**3.0.3** The District's natural and historic environments are its greatest assets. The challenge is to harness these sensitive assets to economic advantage by managing tourism, agricultural diversification, minerals, waste and other changes to rural areas in a sustainable and non-intrusive manner.

**3.0.4** Future housing, employment and other development will need to be suitably designed and located to minimise visual and other impacts on the sensitive Cotswold landscape and built heritage.

### Population and Housing

**3.0.5** The relatively large and growing elderly population, coupled with a reduction in the numbers of young people, have implications for the structure of communities, and places demands on health and public services. In particular, more adaptable accommodation is likely to be required, together with the requisite service provision.

**3.0.6** Delivering an appropriate mix of housing that meets the District's Objectively Assessed Need, including the requirements of people on middle/ lower incomes and first time buyers, is a major challenge. Evidence produced by the National Housing Federation suggests that the average price of a house in Cotswold District is 19 times the average salary<sup>(13)</sup>. Failure to provide an appropriate mix of housing has led to more economically-active people, particularly the young, being forced to look elsewhere for somewhere to live. This is likely to exacerbate the adverse economic, social and commuting consequences for the District.

**3.0.7** The District's high second home ownership adversely affects housing affordability.

### Local Economy

**3.0.8** The District's economy has been resilient during the recession and it is forecast to continue growing. However, Cotswold District imports labour to support its growth and experiences problems recruiting suitably skilled staff, particularly in the professional, skilled trades and engineering sectors. A well-skilled and accessible workforce is necessary to support the growth of existing and new employers.

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13 The report is based upon Mean house price (Land Registry 2013), gross median earnings (ASHE, ONS, 2013) [www.housing.org.uk](http://www.housing.org.uk)

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**3.0.9** Tourism is a major and growing part of the local economy. However, if not properly managed, it could have adverse impacts on the District's environment and the daily life of local people. The challenge is to enable and manage sustainable tourism, which will safeguard the countryside, heritage and culture for future generations while providing benefits to the local economy.

**3.0.10** Significant 'leakage' of comparison (non-food) shopping trips from Cirencester to centres beyond the District needs to be addressed to help sustain the town's important retailing role<sup>(14)</sup>. Parking availability in the centre of Cirencester is nearing capacity at peak periods.

### Infrastructure and Service Provision

**3.0.11** The continuing loss of village shops, post offices, schools and pubs<sup>(15)</sup> has meant that the retention of rural services and facilities has become a key issue throughout much of the District. The challenge will be to resist the loss of important facilities, wherever possible, while supporting the delivery of new ones and enabling the provision of better access to local service centres for residents living in rural areas.

**3.0.12** To help ensure the continued success of micro businesses, there is a need to support the improvement of broadband speeds and mobile telecommunication connections in many rural parts of the District.

### Sustainable Travel

**3.0.13** High dependence on car travel, coupled with a significant proportion of residents who commute daily into and out of the District<sup>(16)</sup>, present a major challenge to a District with few sustainable transport options. In-commuting is likely to put pressure on parking provision in the main centres of employment, notably Cirencester, while out-commuting has added to parking pressures at Kemble and Moreton-in-Marsh rail stations.

### Climate Change and Flood Risk

**3.0.14** The potential impact of climate change has to be taken into account in planning for all new development, both in terms of location and design<sup>(17)</sup>. Increased energy and water efficiency will also need to be considered along with water storage measures, sustainable drainage systems, and renewable energy generation<sup>(18)</sup>.

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14 Cotswold Retail Study Update (December 2016)

15 Roles and Function of Settlements Study 2012; Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (2017); Economic Land Monitoring Report 2015-2016; Cotswold Corporate Strategy and Corporate Plan 2012–2015 Cotswold District Council: [www.cotswold.gov.uk](http://www.cotswold.gov.uk). English Indices of Deprivation 2010 Office for National Statistics [www.data.gov.uk](http://www.data.gov.uk)

16 Census 2011 ONS

17 NPPF paragraph 10 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

18 Water Cycle Study, Cotswold District Council [www.cotswold.gov.uk](http://www.cotswold.gov.uk)

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**3.0.15** A significant number of solar farms and single wind turbines have been installed on agricultural land within the District. Opportunities for renewable energy development need to be considered carefully against the conservation of the District's rich built heritage and scenic beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.