

Stroud District Local Plan Site Allocation PS20

Vision Document

October 2020

ecotricity

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Introduction - Our Vision

INTRODUCTION

This document has been produced on behalf of Ecotricity Group, in support of Stroud District Council's Local Plan Review. Its aim is to provide the vision for the proposed 'Eco-Park' on Land at M5 Junction 13. Eco-Park is a flagship proposal centred around the delivery of a new stadium and training hub for Forest Green Rovers Football Club (FGRFC) and a Green Technology Cluster, a truly sustainable business and commercial site. Additional uses proposed include a hotel and care provision, as well as significant landscaping and biodiversity enhancements

As a whole, Eco Park is expected to support around 4000 jobs.

The site is allocated in the emerging Stroud District Draft Plan under PS20 'M5 Junction 13'. The majority of the allocation is controlled by Ecotricity who have recently secured outline planning permission for a 5,000 seater capacity football stadium, sports pitches and parking for FGRFC to the north of the A419 (reference S.19/1418/OUT).

The overall concept will also see Ecotricity work with relevant stakeholders to open up part of the Stroudwater canal beside the M5, and a full planning application submitted by Stroud Valleys Canal Company for the 'reinstatement of the 'Missing Mile' section of the Stroudwater Navigation is currently being determined (Reference S.19/0291/FUL). This canal restoration project has recently received a c.£9m grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The aim of this document is to outline the overall aspirations for the allocated site. We wish to work with Stroud District Council and its stakeholders towards delivering a comprehensive and holistic masterplan for PS20 as an exemplar sustainable development that delivers social and economic prosperity for Stroud as well as significant environmental benefits.

This masterplan and vision document has been prepared with the input of a specialist design team that embrace all aspects of delivering the Eco-Park concept, including:



- Ecotricity Group Limited
- Davies Landscape Architects
- Ridge and Partners LLP
- Cotswold Archaeology
- Consult QRD
- Hatch Regeneris

THE VISION

The vision is to create a new 'Gateway to Stroud' with sustainability at its core. The Eco-Park will deliver a flagship development, meeting the needs of both FGRFC as well as the need for employment and care identified by Stroud District Council, whilst also addressing the local and national agenda of reducing our carbon output.

At its core, the proposals provide a hub of activity for FGRFC, consolidating the Club's playing, training and fitness requirements in one location. At its centre is the proposed stadium which has been designed by the world-renowned architects Zaha Hadid to be built almost entirely of wood; the first time that this will have been done, for a modern stadium anywhere in the world.

The Green Technology Cluster is proposed to be an exemplar business and commercial site. The intention of Ecotricity is to attract likeminded companies on site from the zero-carbon economy who specialise in sustainable/green technologies and associated practices, creating a cluster of knowledge intensive businesses in one location.

In addition to these principle uses, the masterplan also includes a hotel to support both the stadium and Green Technology Cluster, as well as improve the tourism offering in Stroud District more generally. The proposed Care Village will meet a need identified by Stroud District Council, whilst complementing the existing residential development adjacent to the site, currently being constructed west of Stonehouse. These land uses will be set within a strong landscaped framework, providing integration with the river, canal restoration works and surrounding landscape, as well as significant land proposed for biodiversity gain.

Ecotricity wish to push boundaries of sustainability, and at the heart of the Eco-Park concept is an aspiration to create an overtly low carbon development. To achieve this aim, the development will embrace innovative building design and construction; green energy production; green infrastructure; sustainable transport; sustainable urban drainage (SuDs) and the adoption of best practice ecological management and enhancement.



Introduction - About Ecotricity

About Ecotricity

Ecotricity was founded in 1995 as the world's first green energy company and now supplies customers across the UK from a growing fleet of wind and sun parks, with all its electricity supply coming from 100% renewable energy. Ecotricity has introduced green gas to Britain and in addition has also constructed Britain's first national network of electric vehicle charge points known as the Electric Highway. More recently, Ecotricity have introduced vegan energy, and have been the first energy company in the UK to be recognised by the Vegan Society. Ecotricity also manufactures its own wind turbines in the Stroud Valleys and has a growing vegan food production company.

Ecotricity is a high technology business, developing cutting edge green technology and energy for a low carbon future and generating a large number of knowledge intensive and highly skilled jobs within Gloucestershire and the UK.

About FGRFC

FGRFC was founded in 1889 and is currently the joint-highest ranked football side from Gloucestershire in the football pyramid, and plays in League 2 of the Football League. The Club currently plays at New Lawn, Nailsworth; however, the site is physically constrained and has poor accessibility and there is a need for new facilities to support the club's growth and progression in the football league.

FIFA has recently described FGRFC as the greenest football club in the world. It is also the first and only vegan football club in the world and it is the first club in the world to be certified carbon neutral by the United Nations. FGRFC is a community club with extensive training opportunities for local children and a comprehensive education programme about sport, sustainability and other environmental issues. The Club is bringing together football and environmental consciousness in a way no other football club in the world is doing right now.

FGRFC Community engages with members of the community of all ages, providing a unique opportunity to help address local priorities and national issues. Working with schools, community organisations and sports clubs across Gloucestershire and beyond, FGR Community uses football as the medium to educate, motivate and inspire.

"Eco Park could be a fantastic development for Stroud, a great new home for FGRFC, and a centre of excellence for sport in Gloucestershire.

"At the same time, it's going to be a place where green businesses and technology companies come together and share ideas, a real focal point of creativity and innovation for the area – and a part of the green industrial revolution that's beginning to take off around the world."

(Dale Vince, Ecotricity founder and FGRFC Chairman)



Image from Stadium summary leaflet - April 2019 designed by Zaha Hadid Architects

Site Context and Planning Background

SITE CONTEXT

The site comprises mixed agricultural fields, situated on land between Junction 13 of the M5 and the A419. The A419 provides one of the principal entrances to Stroud from the west, highlighting its importance as a gateway site into Stroud.

POLICY CONTEXT

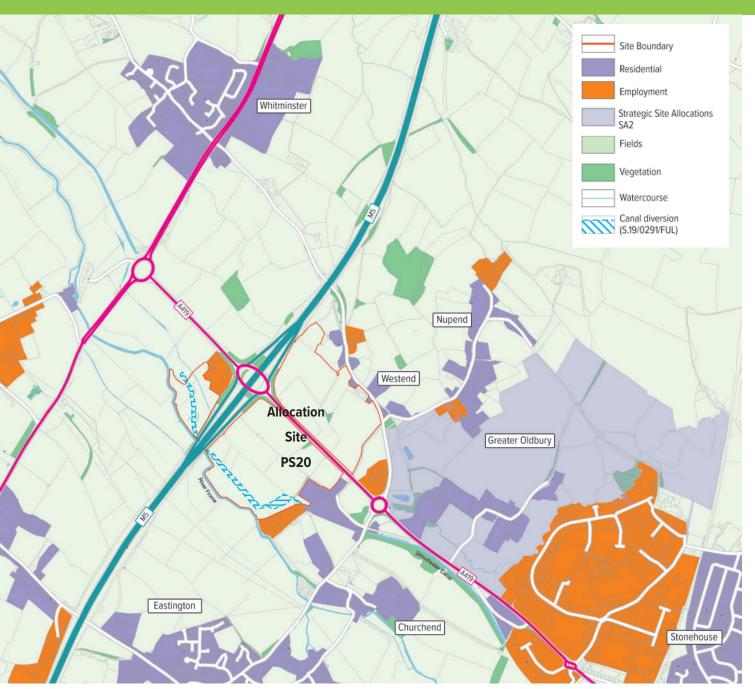
The site forms part of an allocation in the emerging Stroud District Draft Plan under PS20 'M5 Junction 13' which looks to deliver the following:

"Land at M5 Junction 13 (in Eastington Parish), as identified on the policies map, is allocated for a strategic mixed used development, including 10ha employment, sports stadium, sports pitches, canal and open space uses, together with strategic landscaping. Detailed policy criteria will be developed to highlight specific mitigation measures and infrastructure requirements and how development will prioritise walking, cycling and public transport over the use of the private car. A development brief incorporating an indicative masterplan, to be approved by the District Council, will detail the way in which the land uses, and infrastructure will be developed in an integrated and co-ordinated manner."

GFirst LEP also identify the site within the Strategic Economic Plan as well as the Local Industrial Strategy. The Local Industrial Strategy highlights that Gloucestershire sees an opportunity to be the greenest place to live and work in England and a 'magnet county' championing natural capital-based growth, creative green business development opportunities, and reducing its carbon emissions to net zero by 2050 or sooner. The Industrial Strategy supports the allocation of the site, highlighting that the Eco Park will create up to 4,000 new jobs, with a focus on attracting companies from the growing green economy in Gloucestershire and beyond.



Site Context





The Gateway to Great Oldbury opposite the Shell Garage off the A419





Existing homes and William Morris House at Chipmans Platt



Approaching the allocation site PS20 from the A419 and M5 Jct 13.



Existing A419 lay-bys bordering allocation site PS20

Site Considerations - Overall Constraints

KEY CONSTRAINTS

The site has been subject to a significant amount of technical work as part of previous planning applications. This technical work has established the key constraints and parameters for the site and have informed the Illustrative Framework Plan, and includes:

- Openness and character of the Industrial Heritage Conservation Area and visual links along Frome Valley corridor.
- River Frome corridor and additional minor watercourses associated with the site.
- Existing landscape features and habitats that positively contribute towards landscape character and biodiversity.
- Flood Zone 3 to the south west.
- Visual amenity and setting of neighbouring settlements and public rights of way, including the Cotswolds AONB.
- Noise from the M5 corridor.



Summary of Key Considerations 5

Illustrative Masterplan



FGRFC Stadium and Training Facilities

STADIUM AND TRAINING FACILITIES

The Need for the Development

The existing stadium at New Lawn was not designed to accommodate the large match day crowds which are now commonplace since promotion to League 2. The limited accessibility of the existing stadium by public transport, lack of parking onsite, and issues with power and water availability to provide sufficient ancillary facilities (e.g. catering) provide significant difficulties on match days. With aspirations to progress through the football leagues, the Club is in dire need of more space to grow and flourish. This was recognised by District Councillors who approved the application for a new stadium in December 2019.



Existing FGRFC Stadium at New Lawn

The Stadium

The new stadium would be some 84% bigger enabling all fans to have a seat and enjoy refreshments unlike the current stadium which has more standing capacity than seating, and inadequate catering facilities. The stadium design could also see the capacity increased to 10,000 - subject to planning approval. Ancillary uses for the stadium are likely to include a club shop and food and beverage facilities which will also complement those working at the Green Technology Hub. The stadium also provides significantly more parking,

together with internal access roads and parking for coaches and bicycles. Sustainable transport measures include match day buses from Nailsworth, Stroud and Stonehouse, as well as improved cycle and pedestrian connections to and from the site. Overall, over 60% of season ticket holders and 95% of current League 2 clubs are expected to have quicker journey times to the new stadium.

The stadium has been designed by world renowned architect Zaha Hadid and will be made almost entirely out of wood. The stadium will be recognisable and unique structure which has the potential to be an iconic landmark of local, regional and national significance.

Training Facilities

There are no dedicated training pitches at the New Lawn, and there is currently a shortage of good quality pitches within the District. The First Team train at Chippenham, while the Ladies, Youth and Academy Teams train as far away as Cirencester and Bristol. This provides logistical difficulties for the club and is not sustainable in the long term.

The training facilities proposed include: 2 x full sized grass pitches and a goalkeeper area for use by the First Team: 8 various sized grass pitches for use by the Academy, Youth and Ladies teams; an indoor articial pitch; outdoor all weather football pitch; clubhouse facility; and fitness centre within the adjacent hotel. The proposed facilities will support usage by the First Team, Ladies, Youth and Academy Teams, as well as wider community use. This will provide the Club with a home where it can consolidate its activities, providing a sustainable platform for the Club to secure and build on its success of becoming a Football League 2 Club and help to propel the Club into League 1 and beyond. This will be of benefit not only to the Club, its fans, and the local community, but also to the local economy.

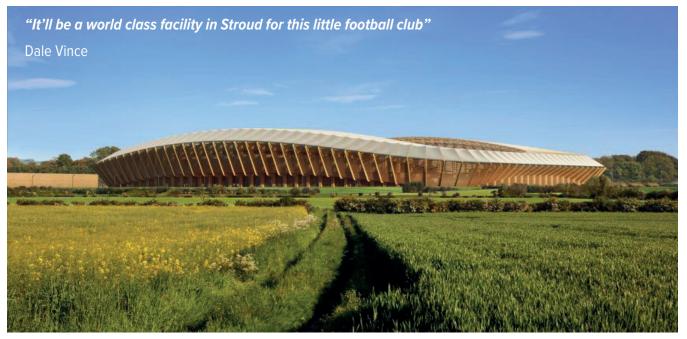


Image from Stadium summary leaflet - April 2019

Employment Uses

GREEN TECHNOLOGY CLUSTER

Our vision is to create a regionally important cluster of like-minded companies from the green economy. This is in line with the aim of achieving a carbon neutral agenda that is currently supported by GFirst LEP, the County Council and District Council, as well as the aspirations of the Local Industrial Strategy for Gloucestershire to be 'the greenest place to live and work in England'.

It will comprise approximately:

- 38,146 sqm of B1 Floorspace;
- 18,750 sqm of B2/B8; and
- 325 sqm of ancillary D1 floorspace.

The Green Technology Cluster will be for companies of the green economy and will look to achieve such occupiers as opposed to more traditional office uses. As such, it would be unlikely to compete with other B1 uses located in town centres, and other business parks elsewhere in the Stroud District. The mix of B1, B2 and B8 uses would complement each other creating a supply chain approach and synergy.

It will help to deliver key aspirations of both the adopted Local Plan and emerging Local Plan Review, namely:

- Reducing the level of daily out-commuting from the District;
- Attracting more knowledge-based industries, enabling greater employment opportunities for the highly skilled and well qualified working population.
- Delivery of employment land within the M5 Corridor 'the Growth Zone'.

The employment cluster is complimentary to the stadium, sharing car park areas, which would otherwise be empty during the week and help to support the Transport Hub.

Job Creation

The FGR Stadium and Green Technology Hub site comprises approximately 16.5ha of mixed agricultural fields, situated on land between Junction 13 of the M5 and the A419. The latest illustrative masterplan for the site proposes a mix of uses, including commercial space, a hotel and care facilities.

The table below sets out the proposed floorspace schedule for each Use Class together with the estimated (gross) number of on-site FTE jobs that could be supported by each Use Class. Overall, it has been estimated that 3,115 (gross) FTE jobs could be supported once the proposed development is complete and occupied. This includes:

2,916 FTE gross jobs supported at the Green Technology Hub

47 FTE jobs supported at the Stadium

In addition to the direct on site jobs, the development will also be expected to support additional employment through indirect supply chain and induced effects. HCA's 2014 Additionality Guide1 recommends a local employment multiplier of 1.29 for both office and industrial developments. This is a composite multiplier which captures both indirect supply chain and induced effects. Based on 3,115 gross jobs, this will imply an additional 903 jobs supported as result of indirect and induced effects.

In total 4,018 gross FTE jobs could be supported, including indirect and induced effects.



Images prepared by Glen Howells Architects on behalf of Ecotricity for the original Green Technology Park planning application - 2016



Table 1 - Estimated Gross On-Site Jobs Supported

Use	Floorspace	Measurement	Employment	Estimated
	sqm		Density	Gross FTEs
B1a Office	30,957	NIA	12	2,580
B8	13,125	GEA	70	188
Warehouse				
B2	5,344	GIA	36	148
Industrial				
D1 Creche	325	GEA	n/a	15
Stadium	-	-	n/a	47
Academy	2,138	GIA	150	14
Hotel (up to			n/a	33
100 beds)				
Care	·		n/a	90
Facilities				
Total				3115

Ancillary Uses - Hotel

HOTEL

Stroud District has a relatively buoyant visitor economy, with an estimated 2.8 million day visits to the District and 782,000 visitor nights per year. This currently supports over 3,000 jobs across the District in the tourism sector and its supply chain. The market seems to be dominated mainly by leisure travellers (not corporate quests), with continued growth in this area.

There is a relatively limited supply of hotel beds within the immediate vicinity of the site, with 16 hotels and 355 beds within a five-mile radius. Many national hotel chains already have a presence within the local area; however they are relatively small in size. The Travelodge adjacent to the proposed site has 40 beds and the Premier Inn in Stroud only has 32 beds. There have been no recent completions of new hotels within Stroud District over the last five years.

There is currently a lack of luxury hotels (4-5 star) in the local area, with none located in Stroud District and the nearest one located 14 miles from the proposed site. This is recognised in Stroud's recent Tourism Update, which also suggests that there should be a focus on attracting developers to the local area who could deliver this type of provision.

The site is an attractive location given proximity to the M5 Motorway and the Cotswolds. The site would be attractive for tourist visits and those travelling to other parts of the country (e.g. long distance journeys to Devon and Cornwall). The proposed 5,000 capacity stadium and Green Technology Cluster will also drive demand for hotels.

The growing population, as well as increased employment in the area, will boost the visiting friends and relatives (VfR) market and the corporate tourism respectively.

While there is a need to be cautious, with the visitor economy particularly hard hit by COVID-19, there are positive signs that domestic tourism will increase during the pandemic as international travel is limited. Over the long-term, it is expected that demand for visitor accommodation will return to pre-Covid levels.



Research suggests that there is a positive case for additional hotel provision in Stroud and that:

- This should be of a medium to larger scale in terms of size compared to current provision
- Deliver a better quality offer compared to the current supply (a 3-4 star hotel could be considered)

This should also consider the potential to provide a differentiated offer such as a spa or leisure hotel.









Ancillary Uses - Care Village

CARE VILLAGE

The proportion of people aged 65+ in Gloucestershire exceeds the national figure, with Stroud also surpassing the county average. As is the case in many parts of the UK, the number of older people in the county has steadily increased over the last 10 years. Projections suggest this trend will continue, with the number of people aged 65+ projected to increase by 59.4% between 2016 and 2041.

The Local Plan Review acknowledges the predicted sharp rise over the next 20 years in the number of older people living in the District, and one of the key strategies for meeting Stroud District's housing needs up to 2040 is to deliver homes for older people, including sheltered, enhanced sheltered and extra care housing. The Stroud Local Plan Review Draft Plan identifies that Stroud District will accommodate at least 650 additional care home bedspaces to meet the needs of the District 2020-2040. The Gloucestershire Local Housing Needs Assessment 2019 also demonstrates that there is a significant need for both Sheltered and Extra-Care accomodation in Stroud District.

Whilst there are some existing Care Homes within the wider Stonehouse area, there are no leasehold retirement properties, or extra-care properties, in this part of the District. There are also no Care Villages, which offer a genuine housing choice for older people, in this part of the District.

The proposed Eco-Park looks to deliver a Care Village, which is likely to comprise of a care home, as well as a number of extra-care and sheltered housing options. The delivery of a variety of housing types as part of a Care Village provides the opportunity to meet the needs identified by Stroud District, as well as providing a genuine community with flexibility to remain on site as residents' needs change, as there is the availability of 24-hour care on site.

The Care Village is proposed to be located adjacent to the existing residential development along Grove Lane and is also adjacent to the Great Oldbury development at West of Stonehouse. There is no provision for care

accommodation as part of the Great Oldbury development and therefore the proposed Care Village helps to contribute towards providing a balance of housing within this growing community. It is also well placed to benefit from its local centre, the facilities on offer as part of the wider Eco-Park, and equally there is the opportunity for the facilities at the Care village to be available for the wider community also.

It is well known that FGRFC undertake significant work in the community, including with older people. The Club provides fitness, wellbeing and activity sessions for the older generation, and also looks to facilitate matchday access and non-matchday experiences for over 65s. One of the key initiatives is to tackle loneliness and this has only been heightened since the Covid-19 Pandemic. The Club is one of 31 English Football League Clubs behind the 'Lets Tackle Loneliness Together' which currently includes befriending phone calls, online social groups, a pen-pal scheme, phone calls, garden gate visits, free meals and drop off, and offers of help so older residents can gain confidence leaving their home. Moving forwards, FGRFC will explore ways to bring people together to build strong community spirit, with a focus on groups at particular risk of loneliness and will work to continue these initiatives in the future. The proposed location of the Care Village within the wider Eco-Park provides opportunities for these relationships to be reinforced within the older community.









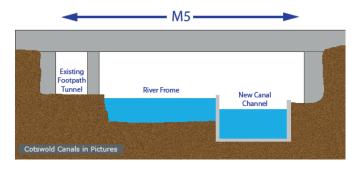
Ancillary Uses - Canal Restoration

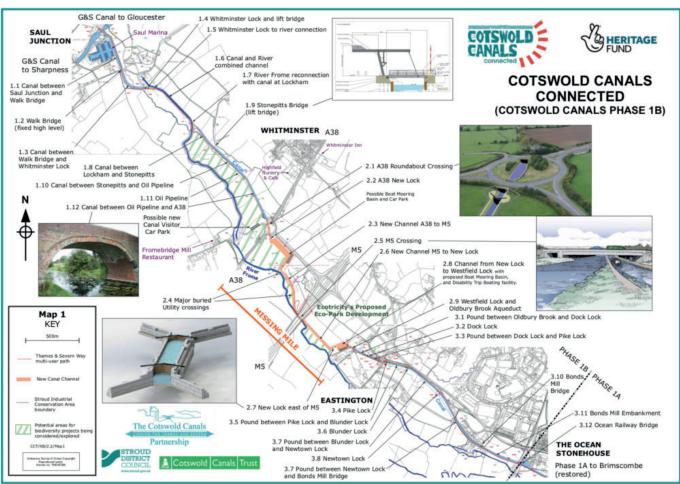
CANAL RESTORATION

The allocated site PS20 includes land which is proposed for canal restoration works. The project, known as the 'Missing Mile' looks to restore parts of the Stroudwater Navigation including waterway, locks, bridges and wetlands which were destroyed when the A38/A419 roundabout and M5 were built in the late 1960s west of Stonehouse.

This part of the site will be brought forward by Cotswold Canals Trust and Stroud Valleys Canal Company and a planning application is currently being determined by Stroud District Council for 'reinstatement of the 'Missing Mile' section of the Stroudwater Navigation and development of associated infrastructure including locks, mooring basins, car parking and café/leisure facilities.' (application reference S.19/0291/FUL). The proposals also include a new canal towpath providing a pedestrian and cycle link between the site and surrounding area.

Ecotricity is supporting the delivery of the 'Missing Mile' through the offer of land. The land between the proposed canal and River Frome will be protected and enhanced for biodiversity.



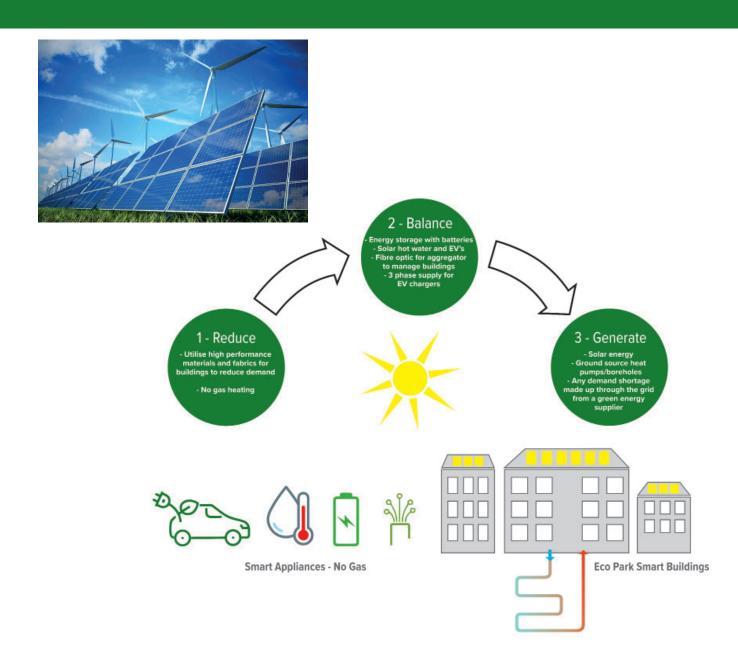




Sustainability Objectives

To employ the very best, innovative and most recent practices in green energy production and building design with the aim of, over time, being carbon neutral

- Set out a clear and robust energy strategy for the development.
- Achieve a BREEAM rating of 'Excellent' across the site.
- Source local materials where possible as well as materials from sustainable sources.
- Minimise or mitigate significant adverse effects on the environment and surrounding area.
- Plant lots of climate resilent and wildlife friendly trees.
- Monitor energy and water consumption from the site, as well as waste minimisation.
- Employ a 'fabric first' approach to building design to minimise operational energy demand, consumption and CO2 emissions.
- Encourage innovation in building design.
- Maximise the potential for on site renewable energy production with the aim of generating more energy than the buildings will consume.
- Showcase the latest green technologies developed from with the Green Technology Cluster.



Sustainable Transport

Eco-Park aims to be an exemplar for green travel and push the modal shift away from the private car.

At the heart of the Eco-Park proposal is an entirely sustainable strategy for access and movement. Sustainable transport measures look to promote accessibility to and from the site by walking, cycling, the use of personal electric vehicles and public transport. In addition, transport within the site will prioritise walking and personal electric vehicles such as scooters. The development will be forward facing whereby new technologies and initiatives will be encouraged, including the potential for driverless electric vehicles within the site. Where possible, roads within the site will prioritise sustainable transport modes over the car.

Charging points and secure parking facilities will be provided for electric bicycles and scooters to encourage greater use of these forms of personal transport. The masterplan has been designed to connect to existing cycling and walking networks to make these modes of transport more convenient and to encourage walking and cycling to the site and discourage the use of the private vehicle.

30% of all car parking spaces will be provided with electric charging points, and infrastructure will be installed from the outset to allow for this to increase to 100%.





- Promote accessibility of the site by walking, cycling, the use of personal electric vehicles and public transport.
- Provide charging points and secure parking facilities for electric bicycles and scooters to encourage greater use of these forms of personal transport.
- Provide bus stops on both sides of the A419 in safe and easy walking distance of employment areas and stadium.
- Ensure 30% of all car parking spaces have electric charging points with scope to increase to 100%.
- Connect to existing cycling and walking networks to discourage the use of the private vehicle.







Landscape and Biodiversity Strategy - Environmental Net Gain

Our primary aim is to significantly increase Biodiversity Net Gain targets through a range of diverse habitats and interconnected green and blue infrastructure

We are looking to provide more than the minimum requirement within the Environment Bill to ensure that there is a significant net gain for biodiversity which will be measured with the Natural England Biodiversity Metric.

The proposed development has been designed with significant Green Infrastructure provision to assimilate the development into the landscape.

Key objectives are:

- Where possible, retain, protect and enhance existing sensitive environmental features and habitats such as watercourses, trees, hedgerows, woodlands and species rich grassland.
- Create a long term management plan for existing and proposed habitats to ensure significant net gains are achieved.
- Enhance wildlife connections and green corridors around the site.
- Include a hierarchy of SUDS features including interlinked drainage ditches, swales, marshy grassland and open water bodies.
- Create new and diverse areas of biodiversity enhancement land.
- Uses climate, disease resistant resilient species that could help modify micro-climate in the future.
- Create a long term landscape and ecology management plan.











Protecting The Historic Environment

To respect and take account of known heritage assets

A fundamental design principle of the master plan has been to protect and mitigate harm to the key heritage constraints including the Industrial Heritage Conservation Area (IHCA), Listed Buildings along Grove Lane, and the known and potential archaeological resource.

An iterative process of Masterplanning has been undertaken with the District Council, which has seen the removal of all buildings from the IHCA. Whilst the pitches in the IHCA will result in a partial alteration to the agricultural character of the landscape, the sense and experience of open green space across the site will be retained due to extensive planned landscaping and planting. This heritage led designed approach has resulted in a masterplan which minimises harm to the historic environment.

The heritage benefits provided as part of the proposal include the provision of land to enable the establishment of a new canal which will link the Stroudwater Canal with the wider canal network, resulting in the re-creation of a navigable canal route through the landscape.

An interpretation board and posts will be provided along the line of the former canal to enable an understanding to be gained of the line of the former course of the canal which once crossed the site. Additional recommendations have been made to further reduce the effect on the historic environment, including setting limits on building heights and agreeing a mitigation strategy for onsite archaeological remains.



Westfield Bridge marking the alignment of the Old Canal route



Looking west along the alignment of the Old Canal route across PS20



West Farmhouse (Grade II listed), Grove Lane



Meadow Mill (Grade II Listed) opposite the southeast boundary of PS20



Social & Economic Benefit

Deliver a diverse range of high quality job opportunities and facilities that provide long term benefits and prosperity for the local community and Stroud district

- Create a regionally important cluster of like-minded technology companies from the green economy attracted by the Ecotricity brand and sustainability credentials of the pioneering world class stadium.
- Deliver a state of the art sports facility and venue.
- Promote access to local and wider recreational routes and countryside to encourage exercise and well being during the working day.
- Provide high quality employment opportunities. with sustainable transport links to the wider community.
- Create an attractive gateway into Stroud.
- Provide facilities to encourage local tourism
- Raise the profile of Forest Green Rovers and propel them into the Premiership.
- During construction opportunities for employment and training will be promoted to the local job market and locally sourced materials will be used where possible.









