

Policy CTC3

Enhancing Coleford Town Centre

Proposals for development which allow for the enhancement of the public realm within the Town Centre as shown on Map 3 will be supported.

Such proposals will be required to be designed sensitively and should be appropriate to the historic environment in terms of materials, scale and detailing, and take into consideration views of the Clock Tower (Map 13). The following proposals will be particularly supported:

- Shop front enhancements including restoration of traditional shop fronts and signage
- Provision of public art
- Introduction of areas of soft landscaping, planting, covered areas and seating to the area around the Clock Tower
- Improved signage and accessibility including interpretation linked to the town's heritage

Policy CTC4

Supporting Town Centre Retail and Service Provision

Proposals for new retail and service facilities which enhance the vitality and viability of the existing town centre of Coleford in Map 3 will be supported, provided that:

- New commercial/retailing development will be required to demonstrate that its range of goods and services are complementary to the existing offer.
- Proposals should be of a scale and design which are sympathetic to the distinctive character of the Conservation Area.
- At any one time, the majority of ground floor units in Coleford's Town Centre should be within Class A1 retail¹⁹, or community facility/service use.

Changes of use of local retail premises to mixed offices and residential accommodation will be supported, but loss of retail premises to wholly residential use will not be supported.

¹⁹ See Use Classes Order Appendix P

²⁰ Heritage Lottery Fund, Townscape Heritage www.hlf.org.uk/looking-funding/our-grant-programmes/townscape-heritage



5.2 Economy

5.2.1 Coleford's economy has changed considerably in the last 30 years and is now mixed and varied. The town centre provides many of the area's jobs, particularly in services and this has to some degree offset the continued weakening in manufacturing employment. The Forest of Dean District Council office (the only medium-sized, service employer) is situated to the south, within the town centre. There are also medium employers in the manufacturing sector, such as Suntory and SPP which have an international market. Most of the employers are smaller businesses, many of which link to the local community and wider tourist economy. Just under a quarter of those in employment work in the public sector, but not many in Coleford.

5.2.2 The economically active population in the area of 4,127 residents (67.8% of the population) is lower than that found nationally (69.9%) and the economically inactive population is correspondingly higher (32.2% locally compared with 30.1% nationally). More people work part-time than in the rest of the country (Fig 9) and fewer work from home (2.7% compared with 3.5% for England).

2016 community consultation evidence findings on retail are included in Tables 1a and 1b in Appendix B.

Proposed actions for the Town Council, partnerships and other interested parties (See projects section 7.1). Note for improvements

- public realm
- townscape heritage²⁰
- shop fronts
- vacant sites/shops need to be brought into use as a matter of urgency

5.2.3 Strategic planning policy, as set out in the Forest of Dean Core Strategy, sees Coleford as better serving its current area of influence by developing better facilities in the town centre, particularly services for residents and tourists. This is encompassed within the following:

- Overall the three largest sectors of the economy are manufacturing, 695 employees (18% of those in employment); retail 590 employees (15%); health and social work 420 employees (11%)

■ Coleford has much lower levels of people working in managerial and professional occupations: 30.1% compared with over 40% for Gloucestershire and England. The proportion of people receiving out of work benefits is also higher, 10.2%, than for England, 9.8%; and the number of unemployed claimants per job, 436, was much higher than nationally, 343

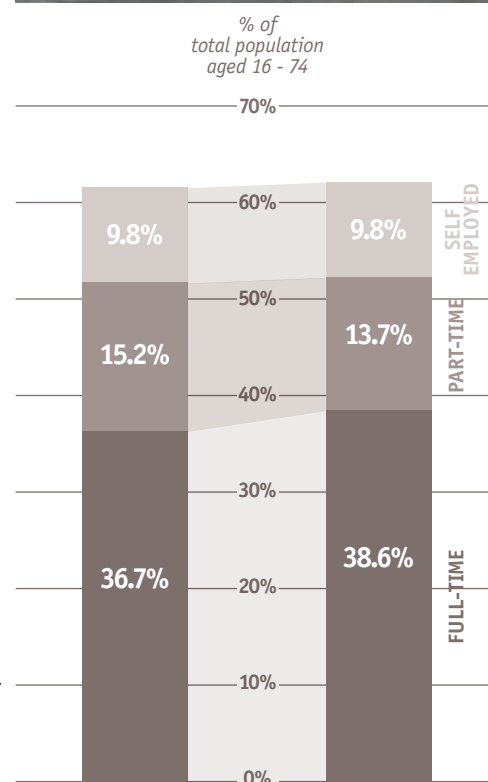
■ From the statistical evidence, more Coleford residents have no qualification (29.56%) than in the Forest of Dean (24.52%) and in the South-west (20.7%). Those with the higher professional qualifications (level 4+) are also lower in number, with 18.55% compared to the Forest's 23.97% and the South-west's 27.37%.

5.2.4 The Forest of Dean Core Strategy also concluded that:

[of the four Forest of Dean towns,] three... towns [Cinderford, Coleford and Lydney] exhibit significantly different travel to work dynamics. They are not very self-contained and have a reasonably strong relationship with Gloucester.

However, there is a well-established, if complex, relatively local commuting pattern in place. Future growth in the three towns could be expected to reinforce such a sustainable pattern, not as freestanding individual towns but as a tight local network...

Figure 9 People in Employment by Employment Status. Source: Community Profile for Coleford, ACRE, OCSI 2013



Photographs of large, small and medium scale employers



Community Consultation

5.2.5 The extensive community consultation and engagement activity has provided a range of suggestions for improving the economy of the NDP area (see Fig 10). These and further consultations have led to the policies following. (Appendix B and S Consultation evidence)

- To enhance the character of Market Place and improve the gateways leading into the centre of Coleford

- To set up a Tourist Information Centre, enhance the attractiveness for tourists, and make more of the heritage (N.B. TIC started operating March 2016 in the town centre)

- To increase shopping and widen its range in and around Coleford

- To enhance mobile/broadband services and accessibility in the Parish

- To encourage more jobs locally in tune with more, smaller/starter homes

- Landscape, including that separating Coleford town from the surrounding settlements

5.2.6 The Core Strategy already sets the strategic planning framework, including the identification of the boundary for the town centre, new employment allocations and Tufthorn for intensification of employment use. Coleford is particularly wishing to:

- enhance opportunities for training and skills
- encourage the establishment of an artisan/craft centre/museum/visitor attraction
- conserve and enhance the green infrastructure, to give increased accessibility for visitors and local residents

5.2.7 The Site Allocations in the FoDDC Local Plan also sets a number of more detailed proposals for Coleford (Map 7). Following recent consultation, further more detailed proposals will be confirmed but will include a focus on tourism, including infrastructure.

5.2.8 The importance of commuting to residents is illustrated by the number of households owning more than one car as in Fig 11. Whilst the Forest is a rural area, Coleford is one of the four key Forest market towns, with a cluster of employment opportunities. There is significant out-commuting, and development of local jobs will reduce that number, decreasing the impact of traffic movements on the local environment and adding to the multiplier effect in terms of the local economy.

5.2.9 One of the key objectives of the Core Strategy and this Neighbourhood Plan is to improve on Coleford's potential as a tourist area. This will help support the businesses and services in the town and help to sustain, diversify and grow the local economy. Whilst the town centre, with its shops, services, pubs, cinema and cafes is a key component in seeking to achieve this, the development of the tourist-based economy needs to make the most of tourist assets across a much wider area and this needs to be done by creating links and networks and by including land use planning within a much wider range of activity. For example, Coleford Town Council, Coleford Area Partnership and local groups have organised the first Coleford Walking Festival offering differently themed walks, with a range of distance and difficulty from May 15th to May 21st 2017. In total 26 walks will be led by local people with different expertise, ie an average daily choice of 4 walks. This has included working with the Forestry Commission in planning the use of those trails in forest areas.

5.2.10 The Neighbourhood Plan, therefore, concentrates on a finer grain of detail. Details of all sites including some not in the Core Strategy/Site Allocations Plan are found below; more detail on tourism and its provision; protection of existing businesses



Figure 10 **Economy, Transport and Infrastructure: Initial Consultation Findings**

and smaller estates outside Tufthorn which give employment are also evident.

5.2.11 Tourism development which includes the following are encouraged:

- tourist accommodation when it involves the use, re-use or conversion of an existing building, or it is to support the diversification of an existing rural business
- low-cost tourist accommodation, e.g. caravans, camping and hostels
- a proposal for a craft centre/artisan centre/small local museum in character within the town
- improvements to the public realm, including signage, public information, street furniture, and parking for all
- soft landscaping in the Town Centre
- Incorporation of new and extended networks of paths and cycleways, such routes as:

From Coalway/Broadwell/Mile End through via Nag's Head RSPB Reserve, to Sculpture and cycle trail, Parkend Station and thus Lydney

Christchurch Forest Holidays into Coleford Town Centre (and then link through to Lydney – see above)

From Milkwall Bridge via Scarr Bandstand to Clearwell Iron Mines and into Coleford via Lamsquay and Puzzle Wood

Around Gorsty Knoll, connecting into Dark Hill route

5.2.12 As well as the medium-sized businesses in the area, such as Suntory, and the larger employment areas, such as Tufthorn, the Neighbourhood Plan also includes a number of smaller employment

Map 7 FoDDC Allocations Plan Dec 16

© Map taken from Parish Online

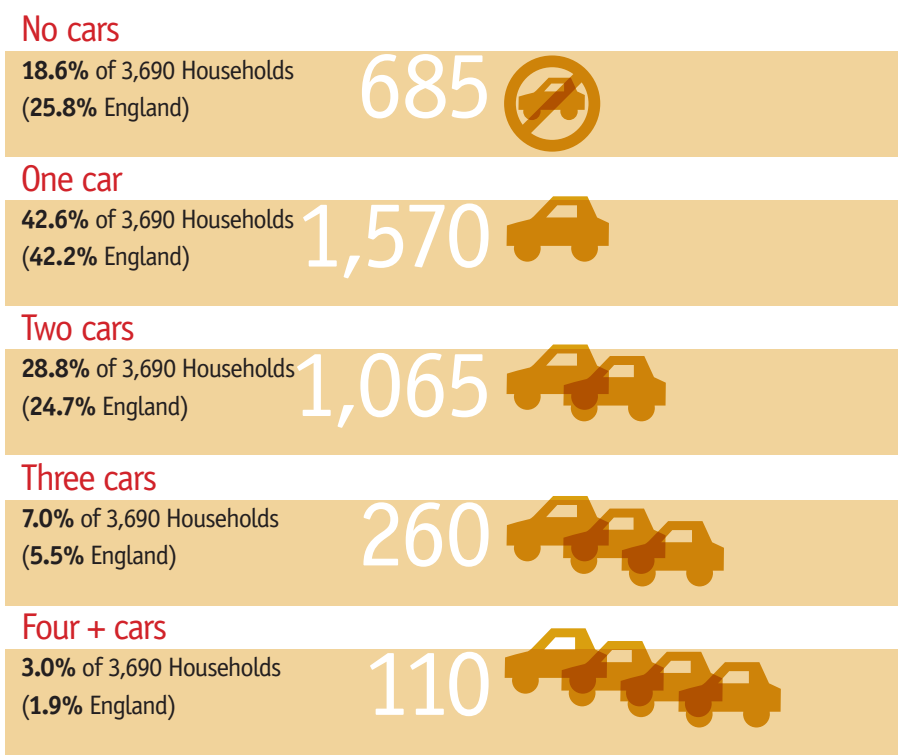
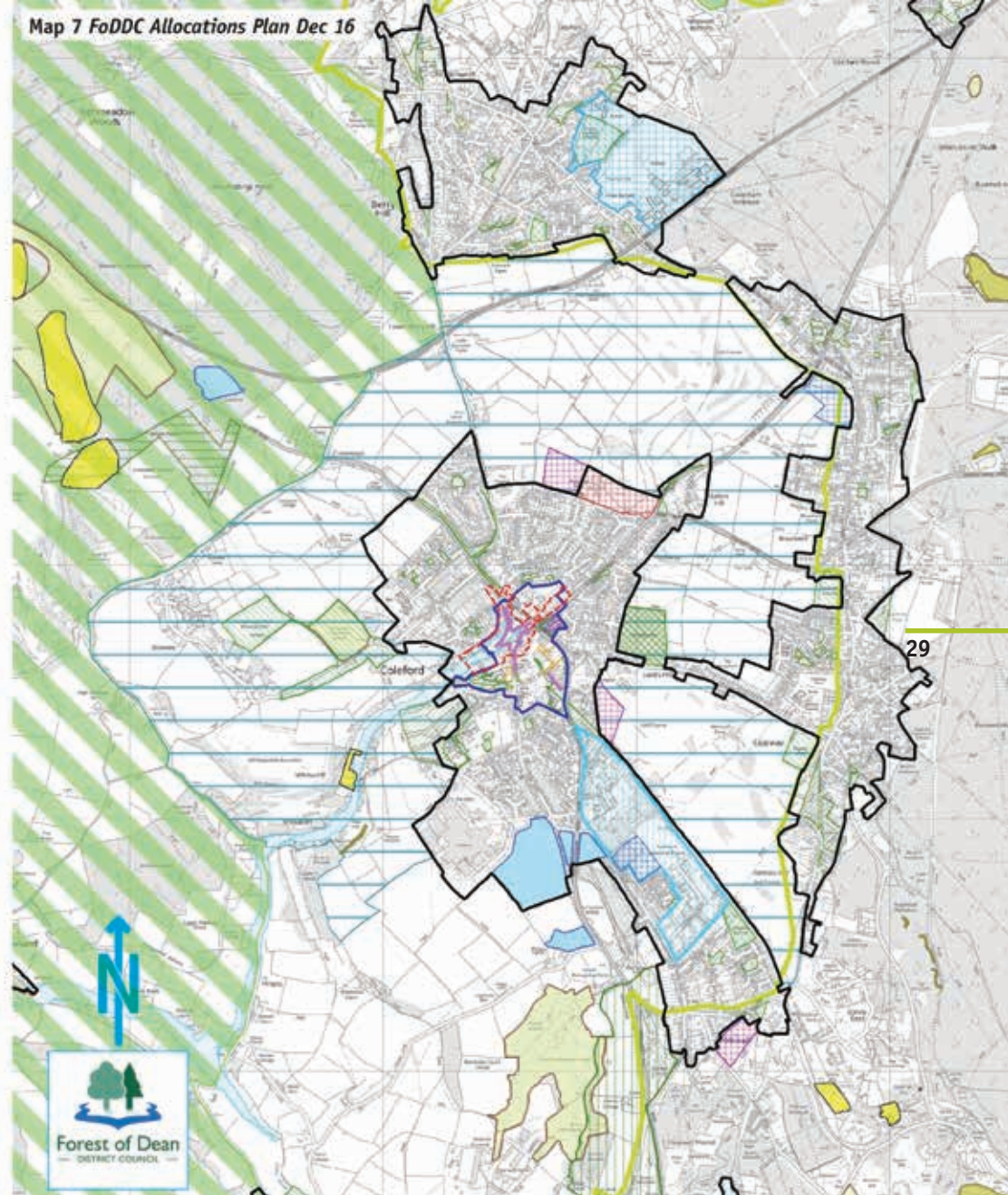


Figure 11 Car Ownership. Source: OCSi 2015 from 2011 census data

uses. These uses should be protected and supported to retain the local employment they provide and to support local growth.

5.2.13 Connectivity is now an essential part of everyday infrastructure for all residents and to encourage business development within the Parish, business efficiency and allow businesses and services to be used from home.

Map 7. Forest of Dean Allocations Plan Further Changes December 2016
Larger scale maps available at www.colefordtownplan.com/map





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Policy CE1 Supporting Tourism Development

Proposals which expand and/or maintain the existing tourism and related facilities as part of the area's economic development and growth will be supported provided that they:

- are sensitive to the distinctive character of the location
- are designed to be proportionate to the location in terms of scale and type
- in particular, reflect Coleford's unique industrial and other built heritage assets
- would not have an adverse impact on the natural environment and biodiversity
- are designed to mitigate any traffic impact or congestion
- respect key views as in Map 13
- provide appropriate signage for tourist information

See 5.2.11 for examples of such tourism development

See also 5.2 Economy and 5.7 Infrastructure, Transport and Pedestrian Access

See also opportunities for developer contributions which may be sought (list with 5.7.12)

Policy CE2

Protecting and Supporting the Development of Local Employment Outside the Town Centre

The Plan supports the retention and the improvement of the economic well-being of the neighbourhood area.

Proposals to improve or expand existing employment-generating uses will be supported when they:

- are sensitive to the distinctive character of the location;
- are designed to be proportionate in terms of scale and type;
- would not have an adverse impact of the natural environment and biodiversity; and
- are designed to mitigate any traffic impact or congestion

Proposals to change such uses to non employment-generating uses will be supported when:

- The property has been empty for more than 12 months, and after recent, active and appropriate marketing for at least 12 months there is no prospect of re-use in the short term; or
- The property is in poor condition and not economically viable for employment use (such as B1, B2, and B8); or
- The proposal for non-employment uses would help retain a heritage asset; or
- The proposal is for a tourism-related use with demonstrable economic benefits; or
- The proposal promotes the support and enhancement of local employment in the whole of the Parish, which may include promoting homeworking, professional and forest industries, the creative industries and local produce

See also Opportunities for developer contributions which may be sought (see 5.7.12).

Policy CE3

Improved Connectivity

Subject to such proposals complying with other development plan policies new residential, employment and commercial development will be supported where it incorporates new digital connectivity or improves the existing provision.