

EMPLOYMENT

INTRODUCTION

- 9.1 Cheltenham is one of Gloucestershire's two sub-regional employment centres. Over 50,000 people work in the Borough, 35% in offices and 25% in manufacturing industries. The town is the county's principal office centre, housing the headquarters of several national and multi-national businesses, and government agencies, including the vast GCHQ telecommunications centre. The substantial industrial sector includes Smith Industries and the aerospace divisions of TI Dowty, which both have large manufacturing complexes on the edge of the town. Other sectors which provide relatively high levels of employment are retailing, financial services, tourism, education and health.
- 9.2 Cheltenham's economy is not self-contained, but forms part of a wider area of economic activity in north Gloucestershire. 33% of people who work in the town live elsewhere, and 30% of residents work outside the Borough, primarily in Gloucester and Tewkesbury.
- 9.3 The second half of the 1980's saw Cheltenham's economy boom, with unemployment in the Travel-to-Work Area as low as 2.8%. Office employment, boosted by the financial services sector, grew rapidly; in the manufacturing sector employers were experiencing skill shortages in key areas. Since 1990 unemployment has risen and fallen again, standing in July 1997 at 3.7% in the Travel-to-Work Area and 4.9% within the Borough. The recession of the early 90's, coupled with cuts in defence expenditure, has had a marked impact on jobs in manufacturing industry. Research indicates that over the next decade there will be a substantial decline in defence related employment. This will affect the whole of the South-West region, both in terms of direct defence jobs and reduced orders for defence manufacturers. Cheltenham has major manufacturers involved in defence related work which may shrink as a result of the 'Peace Dividend' and a large workforce at GCHQ.
- 9.4 Larger employers have reacted in a variety of ways to the problem of defence cuts: Smiths has undertaken internal rationalisation; after its takeover by TI, Dowty had undergone a series of closures and mergers that leaves it with a smaller workforce but a strong position in the marketplace. Aerospace is not only defence

related and the major companies benefit from significant contracts in the civilian sector. Where Cheltenham's employment may continue to suffer is in the smaller firms that have relied entirely on subcontracts from the defence industry. Such firms will need help to retrain or diversify; if not many manufacturing skills will be lost.

THE STRUCTURE PLAN

- 9.5 The Structure Plan First Alteration acknowledges the role of Cheltenham as a major sub-regional and service centre. However, the Plan and the Secretary of State for the Environment place a high value upon the unique historic and environmental character of the town and its setting, and consider it to be of overriding importance. For these reasons, the Plan proposes that the growth of the town, which in the past has been employment-led, cannot continue unrestrained. Its strategy is therefore one of restraint. Employment growth beyond the levels proposed would not only upset the strategic balance of development in the county, but would also lead to increased commuting, further demands on a limited land supply, and, because of the close links between housing and employment, pressure to release more land for housebuilding.
- 9.6 Despite the policy of restraint, the Cheltenham Policy Area will accommodate about 24% of the county's requirement for office jobs and 15% of land for manufacturing and warehousing. This is largely made up from existing commitments and previous Local Plan allocations.
- 9.7 The Structure Plan makes a general provision for all types of employment in the Cheltenham area. Policy E.8 contains a requirement for provision to be made for 30 hectares of employment land within Cheltenham Policy Area between 1986 and 2001, with Policy E.9 proposing that the majority of this land will be located within the Cheltenham urban area and at Bishop's Cleeve. Taking account of environmental constraints and limited opportunities in the Policy Area, the Plan bases this figure on the amount of land already committed. Policy E.1 specifies that Cheltenham Borough's (pre-1991 boundary) share of the total is 5 hectares.
- 9.8 The employment demand generated by the Policy Area has been estimated by taking account of local population growth, in-

migration, national employment trends and unemployment. The forecast job need for the Policy Area is 8,250 jobs; above the capacity of the committed and allocated land. In order to compensate for the limited land allocation in Cheltenham Policy Area, the Structure Plan makes generous allocations of employment land at Brockworth and Ashchurch in the Gloucester and North Vale Policy Areas. Not only will these sites play a significant role in relieving pressure for employment land in Cheltenham, they will also provide substantial opportunities for new industrial growth to offset the decline in defence manufacturing.

LOCAL PLAN APPROACH

9.9 The overall objectives of the Plan are to maintain a healthy economy whilst conserving and enhancing Cheltenham's environment. The Local Plan employment policies are based on the strategy of the First Alteration to the Structure Plan, which aims to redirect major employment growth away from Cheltenham to locations outside the Policy Area. This is a long term strategy, formulated at a time of relatively high unemployment. However, the economic recession of the early 1990's and a simultaneous reduction in the number of jobs in the defence and aerospace industries had a major impact on employment levels in Cheltenham. Unemployment rose and the number of jobs within the Borough fell. As a result the Council has resolved to take action to regenerate the local economy, to replace lost jobs and to seek to return to the levels of employment projected in the Structure Plan. Measures to counteract the decline go beyond the scope of the Local Plan, which primarily deals with issues of land use. Decisions on retraining, investment in research and development, diversification or even attracting new business are taken in the context of the wider economic unit of Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury. The Local Plan does not place undue restraint on such measures that would benefit the economy of the whole area.

9.10 Subject to the limitations of being a land use plan, this Plan endeavours to ensure, so far as it can, that the local economy remains healthy, and that there remains a diversity of employment opportunities. It therefore includes policies to allow for development or redevelopment, subject to other Plan policies, to restore levels of

employment. Where appropriate, priority is given to local businesses. The Plan also aims to ensure that new developments fit in with existing land use, cause minimum disturbance to neighbouring activities, and their layout and design make a positive contribution to the quality of the local environment.

9.11 There are no Enterprise Zones or Simplified Planning Zones in the Borough. The Council does not consider that any of its industrial estates or land allocations meet the criteria for Simplified Planning Zone designation.

EMPLOYMENT LAND SUPPLY

9.12 The Structure Plan allocation of 30 hectares of employment land in the Cheltenham Policy Area (of which 5 hectares is to be provided in Cheltenham Borough - pre-1991 boundary) was based entirely on previous commitments and plan allocations. Since then some of the land has been developed, a small amount has been lost to other uses and new sites previously not identified for employment uses have received planning permission.

9.13 Table 5 illustrates the situation at 1st July, 1997. This indicates that the broad Structure Plan requirements have substantially been met, and so demonstrates limited scope for further allocations of land for employment purposes, in accordance with the strategy of restraint.

9.14 There are very few greenfield sites in the Borough that could be considered for general employment use, but some opportunities do exist for B1 activities, which by definition can co-exist with residential and other uses. These may arise as small-scale new development or as redevelopment. Employment uses will not normally be allowed where a residential use would be lost, or on sites not already in employment use in predominantly residential parts of the conservation areas.

POLICY EM 66 (EM 1) ***EMPLOYMENT USES***

The Borough Council will only permit the development or change of use of land for employment use where the development:

TABLE 5

EMPLOYMENT LAND PROVISION IN CHELTENHAM POLICY AREA AT 1.7.97

Borough	Site	Area (ha)
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SITES DEVELOPED SINCE MID-1986		
Cheltenham Borough	Gloucester Road	0.60
“	Arle Avenue	1.02
“	UCCA (UCAS)	0.61
“	Arle Farm	4.42
“	Pate Court	0.31
“	Manor Road	1.58
“	Moors Gardens	1.18
“	Bath Road	0.24
“	Rosehill, Evesham Road	2.83
“	Royscot House	0.11
“	Tewkesbury Road	0.30
“	Runnings Road	1.25
Area developed, Cheltenham Borough		14.45
Tewkesbury Borough	Staverton Technology Park	1.14
“	Staverton	0.77
“	The Grange	4.19
	Smith's Land	3.54
	Finnegan's Place	2.48
	Stoke Road (Malvern View Business Park)	3.12
Area developed, Tewkesbury Borough		15.24
TOTAL AREA DEVELOPED		29.69
SITES UNDER CONSTRUCTION AT 1.7.1997		
TOTAL AREA UNDER CONSTRUCTION		0.00
OUTSTANDING SITES AT 1.7.1997		
Cheltenham Borough	Moors Gardens	0.63
Area outstanding, Cheltenham Borough		0.63
Tewkesbury Borough	Stoke Road (Malvern View Business Park)	0.58
“	Staverton	0.77
“	Smith's Land	5.55
Area outstanding, Tewkesbury Borough		6.90
TOTAL AREA OUTSTANDING		7.53
SITES LOST TO OTHER USES		
Cheltenham Borough	Telehoist/Meigh Castings	5.99
“	Liddington Estate	0.20
“	Hewlett Road (former Smiths site)	0.53
“	Tesco, Gloucester Road	2.91
“	Small sites	0.30
Area lost, Cheltenham Borough		9.93
Tewkesbury Borough	Smith's land reallocated to Green Belt	2.05
Area lost, Tewkesbury Borough		2.05
TOTAL AREA LOST		11.98
Total net provision Cheltenham Borough		5.15
Total net provision Tewkesbury Borough		20.09
TOTAL NET PROVISION CHELTENHAM POLICY AREA		25.24
STRUCTURE PLAN REQUIREMENT		ABOUT 30.00

(a) accords with policies BE 10 and HS 77;
and

(c) involves land already in employment
use.

(b) accords with Structure Plan policies E.1
and E.8; or

INDUSTRY

- 9.15 The County Council estimated that some 2,450 of the Cheltenham Policy Area's forecast job requirements will be in manufacturing and warehousing. With the Structure Plan Alterations limiting land allocation to about 30 hectares for all kinds of employment it is extremely unlikely that the supply of industrial land will satisfy demand during the plan period.
- 9.16 The introduction of the Use Classes Order 1987 has made it difficult for the Council to secure an allocation solely for industrial use. The Order included a new B1 business use class which includes offices, premises for research and development, and industrial processes, provided the use can be carried out "*in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, soot, ash, dust or grit.*"
- 9.17 This merging of light industrial and office uses into a single class has considerable land use implications. Generally developers have obtained much higher rents for office property than for industrial units, and there is now a strong incentive to build offices or to convert industrial buildings on sites traditionally reserved for industrial use. This had tended to push rents beyond the reach of traditional light industrial users and so, effectively, to reduce both the stock of industrial premises and the diversity of job opportunities.
- 9.18 The Council has only limited ability to influence these trends, but there are two areas over which it does have control - proposed changes from industrial and business to other use classes; and the use of land in its ownership.

Existing industry

- 9.19 In view of the limited number of new development sites in the urban area, the town can ill afford to lose existing industrial sites and premises to alternative uses.
- 9.20 Such land often comes under pressure from other kinds of land use, such as retailing or leisure. PPG6 advises that retailing is a suitable use for employment land. The PPG does, however, accept the protection of land should not normally be allowed on land designated for other uses, such as industry, where it may have the effect of limiting the range and quality of sites that would be available for such uses. Cheltenham has a very limited allocation of new employment land; the allocation was set by the Structure Plan well below calculated demand in a direct attempt to restrain growth in the town

and redirect it to areas outside the Policy Area (see paragraph 9.8 above). This limited allocation means that although Structure Plan requirements for employment land have been satisfied there is, nevertheless, a shortage relative to likely demand over the plan period. Because of this limited supply the Council wishes to ensure that sites currently in employment use remain available for B1-B8 industrial uses and are not eroded by retail or leisure activities.

- 9.21 However, industrial estates are also the most appropriate sites for many service based industries, especially car showrooms, and this will normally be permitted on industrial land. The Council is concerned that some of these uses may, by virtue of the General Permitted Development Order, change to retail use without the need for permission. Therefore any permission granted for such use will be restricted to ensure that any future use will be within existing B1 to B8 Use Classes (see Policy RT 90).
- 9.22 In order to protect this land the Council will define industrial land on the Proposals Map and the following Policy will apply.

POLICY EM 67 (EM 2) **INDUSTRIAL LAND**

On land identified on the Proposals Map as industrial land, the Borough Council will not permit a change of use to a use outside Use Classes B1 to B8 inclusive, except:

- (a) **for the sale of motor vehicles; or**
- (b) **where the continuation of an industrial use on traffic or environmental grounds is undesirable.**
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Warehousing

- 9.23 Warehousing is a land use which, in principle, is suited to industrial land, though its employment densities tend to be low. In Cheltenham, where development land is scarce, warehousing could displace industrial activity. Some warehousing, which serves a local market, may need to be located in Cheltenham for operational efficiency, but that serving a national or regional market is better located close to major transport links. A number of sites outside the Cheltenham Policy Area are well situated in relation to the M5 and trunk roads, and are capable of satisfying demand for these larger distributors.

9.24 Consequently, in view of Cheltenham's limited land availability for industry and the Council's wish to discourage the generation of heavy traffic, warehousing will be directed to these locations unless it is serving a clearly identified local need.

POLICY EM 68 (EM 3)
WAREHOUSING

The Borough Council will not permit the development of new warehouse buildings or the change of use to a warehouse unless:

- (a) **it serves only the distribution needs of a local market; or**
 - (b) **it provides essential storage for local businesses.**
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Note

The change of use between business use and warehousing of premises under 235 sq.m. floor area is permitted under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995.

Council owned industrial sites

9.25 The Council has previously identified two sites as suitable for industrial development, at Moors Gardens (Tewkesbury Road) and Arle Farm (Hayden Road). Both sites have received outline planning permission in the past, are well located for industrial development and are capable of early development. At Moors Gardens some 0.6 hectares remains available for development, along with redevelopment opportunities on adjoining land. At Arle Farm, there is a further hectare for light industrial development. Due to the proximity of housing development, the land at Arle Farm will be limited to light industrial (B1) Use.

9.26 Although the Structure Plan policies envisaged that some industrial businesses may have to relocate or develop outside Cheltenham, there are many existing local firms which would not wish to do so. They may have other branches close by, an immobile local workforce or the need to be close to customers or local facilities. Small businesses, in particular, often supply a very localised customer base. For this reason, the Council will give special consideration to the needs of local users when releasing land for industrial development.

9.27 Cheltenham's economy has always relied heavily on small businesses and in the past some

have grown to become substantial employers. The Council is keen to encourage the establishment and growth of the town's small business sector. Small industrial sites and premises are always in great demand, yet the private sector is often unwilling to undertake the construction and management of small units. The Council has completed a scheme involving the conversion of a Victorian warehouse to create 16 small business units at Berkeley Mews, High Street. The Council will monitor the level of demand for its High Street scheme before undertaking a further small unit development.

COUNCIL ACTION EM A53

The Borough Council will reserve land at Arle Farm for light industrial (B1) use. The industrial development will be used to meet the needs of local users and small businesses.

Industrial development away from industrial estates

9.28 Government advice lays great emphasis on allowing small businesses to operate without hindrance from local 'red tape'. PPG4 reminds planning authorities that a great variety of activities can operate satisfactorily within the limits of the B1 Business Use as defined by the Use Classes Order 1987, and the fact that a business is non-conforming is not sufficient justification for enforcement or refusal of permission. In Cheltenham there are many examples of businesses operating successfully within predominantly residential areas; problems tend to arise when successful businesses grow beyond the capacity of their site. The Council will not attempt to inhibit compatible business activity in these areas, but will resist intensification beyond the reasonable capacity of the site or if such an intensification will have a harmful effect on its surrounding area.

POLICY EM 69 (EM 4)
INTENSIFICATION OR EXPANSION OF INDUSTRIAL OR COMMERCIAL USES

The Borough Council will not permit the intensification or expansion of industrial or commercial uses which cause environmental nuisance in residential areas.

9.29 In some cases, a change of ownership or intensification of use can lead to difficulties for both neighbours and businesses. When an activity has reached the point where it is causing

an environmental disturbance or traffic hazard, particular in a residential area, the only realistic solution is for the business to relocate to a less sensitive site. Relocation is often expensive, especially if sites are in short supply, and the firm may not have the resources to move. In considering the release of its own industrial land the Council will consider the relocation needs of badly sited firms where appropriate. The Council will endeavour to promote relocation, but because resources are likely to be limited in the plan period, only the most urgent cases can be considered. Where relocation is undertaken, the Council will seek to ensure the continuation of a business by offering such assistance as it may be empowered and able to do.

- 9.30 Where a business has been relocated, the use of the site will be discontinued and permission can be anticipated for a change of use or redevelopment of its existing premises to a use more consistent with their location.

COUNCIL ACTION EM A54
The Borough Council will assist and encourage the relocation of industrial or commercial uses that cause serious environmental nuisance in residential areas.

Hazardous and incompatible industrial activities

- 9.31 In some areas of the town, the location of hazardous industrial processes or processes incompatible with many surrounding land uses imposes limitations on the development or use of adjoining sites. Similarly the high pressure gas storage facility at Moors Gardens has created a zone within which certain industrial processes are prohibited (see Council Action UI A104).
- 9.32 In determining planning applications for development which propose hazardous or incompatible uses in new locations, the Council will consult relevant agencies, including the Health and Safety Executive and will take into account factors additional to those contained in Council Action EM A55. Where appropriate the Council will require an Environmental Assessment. (See also Policy NE 62).
- 9.33 Planning permissions for industrial activity in other locations will, where appropriate, be subject to conditions to prevent the introduction of hazardous materials or processes where not otherwise subject to permission.
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COUNCIL ACTION EM A55
The Borough Council will have regard to the advice of appropriate specialist advisory bodies in determining planning applications for development involving hazardous or incompatible industrial activities, or for development in proximity to such activities.

Environmental improvement in older industrial areas

- 9.34 Despite considerable investment and redevelopment in recent years, small pockets of run down industrial buildings remain, particularly in the town centre. In Lansdown Lanes the Council undertook a programme of road and footpath improvement, car parking provision and environmental enhancement. This has transformed the Lanes into an attractive business area with a mix of small workshops, offices and flats in the former coach houses and mews buildings. The scheme involved considerable expenditure and it is unlikely that the Council will be able to undertake a similar exercise in isolation. There may, however, be opportunities to improve similar areas in conjunction with residential area improvement schemes.

COUNCIL ACTION EM A56
The Borough Council will undertake and encourage environmental improvements in industrial areas, where appropriate.

Applications for industrial development

- 9.35 The environmental quality of industrial estates is generally poor, particularly in older industrial areas. Improvements can only be achieved incrementally as individual sites are redeveloped. The fact that the surrounding area is of poor quality will not be regarded as an excuse for low grade redevelopment.
- 9.36 In order to ensure that developments make a positive contribution to the town and to protect adjoining areas, whether residential or commercial, Policy NE 62 will apply. Applicants for industrial developments will be expected to satisfy the Council's requirements in the following manner:
- * Traffic generated must not overload the neighbouring highway network. Where necessary, improvements to the local highway network must be funded by the

development.

- * Roads within the site must meet the Local Highway Authority's standards.
- * Adequate loading, manoeuvring and parking space shall be provided within the site (see Table 17 for the relevant car and cycle parking standards).
- * In addition to private vehicle access, applicants should take into account the needs of cyclists, pedestrians and public transport users.
- * The type of activity shall not cause undue demonstrable harm to nearby established industrial users.
- * No undue environmental disturbance such as noise, vibration, smell or dust shall be cause to adjacent residential properties. Where appropriate, restrictions on the hours of operation will be imposed.
- * The development and industrial processes undertaken shall not result in the pollution of ground or surface water.

Design standards

- 9.37 A significant contribution to improving the environmental quality of industrial areas can be achieved by applying a high standard of design to industrial estates and buildings. Landscaping, provision of amenity space and screening of storage and outdoor process areas will also be expected as part of new industrial developments and redevelopment proposals.

COUNCIL ACTION EM A57

The Borough Council will prepare development briefs for new industrial estates and for existing industrial estates when redevelopment is proposed.

BUSINESS USE DEVELOPMENT

- 9.38 The Structure Plan First Alteration forecast that 3,550 of the 8,250 additional jobs needed to satisfy the requirements of Cheltenham Policy Area would be in offices, a figure based on the proportion of employment in offices in 1986.
- 9.39 The introduction of the B1 Use Class by the 1987 Use Classes Order removed the distinction between offices, other business and light industrial uses, and consequently the requirement for a specific allocation of office

floorspace was removed from the Structure Plan First Alteration. Instead provision for business use in the Cheltenham Policy Area is to be made within the allocation of about 30 hectares of land for employment use. In addition the plan includes two policies written to reflect the changes brought out by the Use Classes Order.

- * Policy E.1A states "*Business development will normally be permitted on land for employment uses and in appropriate locations within the urban areas and principal settlements, subject to there being no adverse environmental impact and in accordance with the area employment policies*".
- * Policy E.8 states "... *The distribution of land for employment uses and sites for business development will be determined by the availability of suitable sites and permitted only where it does not prejudice the high environmental quality of Cheltenham*".

Location of business use development

- 9.40 The Government has made clear its intention to work towards ensuring that development and growth are sustainable. Both PPG6 and PPG13 lay emphasis on encouraging land uses which attract a lot of people to locate in positions which are accessible by a choice of means of transport. For such uses, including commercial and public offices, local planning authorities are required to adopt a sequential approach to the selection of sites for development. This means that first preference should be for town centre sites, where suitable sites or buildings suitable for conversion are available, followed by edge of town centre sites, district and local centres and only then out-of-centre sites in locations accessible by a choice of means of transport.

- 9.41 In Cheltenham, particular circumstances have influenced the way in which the terms 'town centre' and 'edge of town centre' have been interpreted for the purposes of the sequential test.

- 9.42 First, for office (i.e. B1) development, PPG6 defines edge of town centre locations as being within a walking distance of about 500 metres of the station or other public transport interchange. In Cheltenham, the railway station is nearly 2 kilometres from the heart of the town centre and cannot be used for this purpose. Instead, the

station stands to be assessed as an out-of-centre site accessible by public transport.

9.43 Second, in Cheltenham town centre, the location of office development is already limited by Policy BE 10 to a defined 'Core Commercial Area,' in order to protect the residential character of the Cheltenham (Central) Conservation Area. Some of the residential parts of the conservation area are within 500 metres of the primary shopping areas. To be consistent with Policy BE 10, the terms 'town centre' and 'edge of centre' as used in PPG6 must also equate to the defined 'Core Commercial Area.'

9.44 For these reasons, Policy EM 70, which sets out the sequential approach for business development, treats the Core Commercial Area as defined on the Proposals Map as equating to a boundary defining the limit for edge-of-centre locations.

POLICY EM 70 (EM 101)
LOCATION OF BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT

Subject to Policy EM 71, the Borough Council will permit B1 business use in the Core Commercial Area. Where no suitable sites or buildings suitable for conversion are available in the Core Commercial Area, alternative locations will only be permitted in the following sequence:

- (a) **district or neighbourhood centres;**
 - (b) **out-of-centre sites accessible by a choice of means of transport.**
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Note

The town centre and district and neighbourhood centres are shown on the Proposals Map.

Level of business use development

9.45 Soon after the Structure Plan First Alteration was drafted the rate of new business use development and high level of outstanding planning permissions indicated an office supply well above the amount needed to satisfy Cheltenham's employment requirement of 3,500 jobs, with the prospect of significant over provision well before the end of the Structure Plan period.

9.46 As illustrated by Policies E.1A and E.8, the County Council expressed concern that the level

of business use development in the centre of Cheltenham should not prejudice the environmental quality or character of the town. There was also the fear that unrestrained development would harm the Structure Plan strategy of restraining the overall growth of the town.

9.47 The creation of new jobs beyond the town's immediate needs places pressure on the existing labour market. These new jobs must either be filled from the present workforce, which is growing only slowly, or by attracting staff to the town from other parts of the country. Unemployment in Cheltenham for more than 2 decades has been usually below the national average, and often those who are unemployed may not want or may not have the skills to undertake the kind of jobs which office companies offer. Consequently, employers have filled these jobs by attracting staff from other employers in the town (with potentially damaging effects), or by attracting staff from other parts of the country, so giving another twist to the cycle of growth.

9.48 Staff filling new jobs require homes. There is a limited amount of land available in the town for new housing development. The town cannot continue to expand into the countryside because of the Green Belt (designed, amongst other things, to prevent the coalescence of Cheltenham, Gloucester and Bishop's Cleeve) and the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Housing for people working in Cheltenham could be provided in other parts of Gloucestershire, but this only increases rather than relieves traffic and parking problems in the town. Development within the already built-up area of the town is often undesirable because of loss of open areas, and higher densities increase traffic and reduce the quality of local environments. In addition, the development of the scarce remaining land must be carefully controlled if there is to be scope to meet local needs in the future.

9.49 The most visible manifestation of the pressure on Cheltenham's environmental quality generated by the increase in business use employment has been the growth of traffic congestion and the demand for car parking. In a historic town like Cheltenham, even if resources were available, there is little scope for introducing major changes to the road system to relieve congestion arising from growing volumes of traffic. Such major changes would significantly impair the character of the town. High volumes of traffic also damage the

environment and physical fabric of the town. Congestion, as well as lengthening journey times and frustrating the motorist, delays more efficient forms of transport, such as buses. Motorists' frustration can lead to accidents. Growth in traffic movements also increases the need for car parking spaces. In the town centre, there is considerable commuter parking in residential streets. Parked cars, whether off-street or on-street, detract from the environmental quality of residential areas and the high visual quality of the Central Conservation Area.

9.50 In 1988 the Council decided that the rate of business growth had to be reduced if the town were not to become choked and the Structure Plan strategy of restraining growth were to be sustained. The Council introduced an Interim Office Policy, which placed restrictions on large scale office development. The interim policy, combined with national economic recession, served to reduce the development pressure, while the backlog of planning permissions that had built up allowed gradual growth of new office space in the town. The review of the Local Plan has allowed the Council to reappraise the policy in the light of changed economic circumstances and to bring it up to date; both to accommodate changes to the Use Classes Order and to comply with current Government guidance.

9.51 The recession of the early 1990's reduced demand for office space, although locally generated demand still exists for modern high quality space. The other pressures which prompted the introduction of the Interim Policy have not abated: traffic and parking problems dominate and there are few remaining opportunities for housing growth.

9.52 In order to satisfy locally based demand, but at the same time comply with the strategy of restraint, the Council's policy controlling B1 development is designed to ensure that development will only take place where its impact will not be harmful to Cheltenham's environmental quality and historic character. Proposals will be assessed on the basis of traffic generation and visual impact. The cumulative impact on the local housing and labour markets will be closely monitored, as will the level of business development to ensure that provision does not significantly exceed the 30 hectares of employment land required by Structure Plan Policy E.8.

9.53 Business development will not normally be permitted where a change of use from residential use is involved (see Policy BE 10, which seeks to protect the residential character of the Conservation Areas, and HS 77, which resists the loss of residential accommodation throughout the Borough).

POLICY EM 71 (EM 8)
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Subject to the provisions of Policies EM 66 and EM 70, the Borough Council will permit B1 Business Use where:

- (a) the development will not create any serious traffic or environmental problems or lead to an unacceptable increase in travel by car; and**
- (b) the site is not allocated on the Proposals Map for a use other than B1 development; and**
- (c) the development can be achieved without harming the town's character and high environmental quality;**

or a change of use to B1 is necessary and the preferred solution to ensure the renovation of a building of special architectural or historic interest.

Note

All development (including redevelopment and extensions to existing premises) will be subject to the Council's car parking standards for business development (see Policy TP 130 and Table 17).

OTHER EMPLOYMENT

9.54 The Structure Plan forecasts that 2,250 jobs are required in addition to office based and manufacturing sectors. This represents an average of 150 new jobs per year. The largest contributors will be the retailing and tourism sectors.

Retailing

9.55 Since mid-1986 two large supermarkets have been built on the edge of Cheltenham and another has opened close to the town centre. In 1991 the Beechwood Place Shopping Arcade opened and the town now has two out of centre retail parks. Retailing remains an important employment sector and there are further opportunities for retail growth, subject to the policies of this plan.

Tourism

- 9.56 The Council has adopted a Tourism Strategy to promote the town, and it has seen considerable investment in new and upgraded hotel space. The Council's active involvement, particularly in promoting conference business, should generate further employment opportunities.

Education and health

- 9.57 Other service activities likely to grow are education and health. Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education has undertaken a programme of expansion which has considerably increased student numbers. Further extensions to Cheltenham General Hospital are planned, and as the population ages there will be increased demand for staff in both public and private health sectors.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

- 9.58 Although unemployment levels in Cheltenham have usually been well below the national average the economic situation can change very rapidly, as recent years have shown. Cheltenham's success during the 1980's was due to the diversity of employment opportunities and the presence of booming 'high technology' employers and the rapidly growing financial sector. Both these areas are vulnerable to national and international economic swings, with the added concern of reduced defence expenditure on the manufacturing sector. The Council wishes to see greater diversification and looks to the small firms sector for future employment opportunities. The Council supports Business Link and the Gloucestershire Enterprise Agency which provide a support service for small and medium sized businesses. The Council is also part of a regional network that has been set up to attract inward investment to the five Counties of Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Avon, Somerset and Dorset. The West of England Development Agency (WEDA) promotes the region abroad and handles foreign inward investment inquiries. Locally, the Gloucestershire Development Agency handles inquiries from WEDA and is also working with the District and County Councils to develop business networks and employment opportunities in the county. Because Cheltenham cannot offer a range of sites and premises to satisfy all users (especially larger industrial operations) the Council actively co-operates with the GDA and neighbouring Councils to ensure that companies can meet their accommodation needs within the

Cheltenham/Gloucester/Tewkesbury employment catchment area.

- 9.59 In the longer term, if the worst fears concerning defence related jobs are realised, the whole of the South-west Region will experience higher than expected unemployment. Solutions to alleviate this are outside the scope of a land use based plan. The Council will closely monitor the situation, and in co-operation with other local authorities seek support from government departments and the European Community as appropriate.
- 9.60 An unemployment rate of 4.9% in the Borough translates to an unemployed population of 2,000. Many of these people have been unemployed for six months or more, yet some employers have recruitment problems. The overall strategy for training rests with the Gloucestershire Training and Enterprise Council, and the Council hopes to see training programmes geared to the needs of Cheltenham's employers and unemployed.
- 9.61 Under the provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Council is empowered to undertake limited activities to promote the economic development of the area. Subject to the overall restraint on the town's growth, the Council will pursue opportunities for reducing unemployment within the town. Areas where the Council can make a positive contribution are in the encouragement of small businesses, and new business opportunities co-operating with other agencies to provide training for the long term unemployed, and working with local businesses to assist their projects.
- 9.62 The Council is aware of the problems facing married women and single parents who wish to return to work. Other minority groups, including disabled people, are presented with obstacles to employment. The Council will endeavour to identify problems and, where it is able, to undertake measures to improve employment opportunities.

COUNCIL ACTION EM A58

The Borough Council will pursue the aim of increased employment opportunities for the population of Cheltenham. In particular the Council will:-

- (a) *promote the establishment of new small businesses; and*

(b) co-operate with other agencies in increasing job opportunities and training for the long term unemployed.
