

To the Planning Strategy Team, Stroud District Council.

I attended the public consultation held in Berkeley Town Hall last Saturday 11 January. These comments refer to proposed developments in the Berkeley and Sharpness area.

My main concern is the provision of transport links. The roads around Berkeley leave much to be desired especially the links from the A38 to the Berkeley by-pass. That through Berkeley Heath has recently been re-surfaced but I note that at one point it is already starting to subside. Added to which it is not really suitable for fast or heavy traffic as there are no walkways and quite a lot of residential properties. The other road to Heathfield is in a very poor state and it will not be too long before a vehicle has a nasty accident. I expect to see a heavy lorry in the ditch at any time. We were promised a link from the end of the bypass to the A38 years ago, but it has never materialised.

Then we have a new housing estate with access off the by-pass at Berkeley which means that it is no longer a by-pass. No safety barrier has been erected opposite this new entrance and again I am waiting for an accident to occur with a vehicle going over the kerb and down the bank. We are still putting up with mud and mess on the by-pass after two years.

Now you are proposing a new development accessing the by-pass just over the brow of the hill past the Station Road roundabout. Has anyone considered the steepness of the road that will join the by-pass? This promises to be another load of mud, mess and delays.

Has anyone actually considered the large volume of heavy traffic that uses the by-pass every day going to and from the docks at sharpness. I believe (and hope) that it is the intention to keep the docks in operation. After all this was why the by-pass was built in the first place.

Then we have the noise from the by-pass. It goes on all night. The road surface must be the noisiest that could possibly have been selected. Do you really want another housing estate next to this road?

I was speaking to a man from the council at the consultation and trying to make my point about establishing better transport links before any development was commenced. He tried to explain to me that this would have to develop as houses were built so as to offset the cost. Apparently the contractors would have to fund most of the road network. To my mind this is not satisfactory. I mentioned the new housing estate above. We had traffic lights and one way working on a dirty mid ridden by-pass for several months. Maybe the roads on the individual developments could follow but the main arterial links need to be established first so as to minimise the disruption to individuals and organisations. The contractors should be penalised if they cause inconvenience.

Another point I made when I responded to the previous consultation was about the use of farming land for development. The Severn Vale is largely made up of alluvial deposits which, as we all know, are ideal for farming either as grass land for animals or as arable for crops. As our population increases the importance of this type of land will undoubtedly come into its own. Not only that but if imports of foodstuffs were to become compromised in some way, for example by drought overseas, we might be glad to have our farmland and those farmers, so keen to sell now for development, might will rue the day.

From a purely aesthetic point of view I would like to keep the vale as it is now with rolling green fields, wild verges, animals and birds. I see what is proposed regarding reserves but frankly that is only because some particular land is unsuitable for building for one reason or another. It looks good on the map but what else could you do with it?

Then we have the issue of employment. Most people who come to live in your new houses will already be employed elsewhere. They are not going to find a job locally so will have to travel out of the area. The man from the council tried to tell me of the employment opportunities that would exist on the old power station site. The only two things of any note there so far are the Stroud College and the Police Academy. Both ship their employees and attendees in from outside the Berkeley and Sharpness area. The police will certainly not be encouraged to live in Berkeley. In most families both adults work. If you build 5000 houses as a very minimum you will need 5000 jobs. At its very height, one of the largest employers in Gloucestershire, Listers of Dursley and Cinderford and Swindon employed about 5000 persons and 3000 on the Dursley site. There is nowhere in the Berkeley / Sharpness area large enough to support factories or offices of that magnitude. If there were, you know and I know, that most of the employees would come from outside the area.

I think building houses of the magnitude suggested in a farming area like Berkeley / Sharpness is nonsense and a pipedream. I cannot see how it can be environmentally friendly or climate friendly. I fear that if it did go ahead there would be many problems in the future and the promised transport links will never be installed, as experience has proven regarding our by-pass.

I would like to say that I spent a considerable time filling in the on-line comments form last time there was a consultation on these matters. Unfortunately, I can't help feeling that the government, and their agent the council, have their own agenda and such consultations do little to change or affect the thinking of the planning authorities. None the less, for what it is worth, my thoughts are above and I thank you for the opportunity.

