

For the attention of Mark Russell

The proposed development for Berkeley Cluster

I would like to respond by email regarding the development proposed for the Berkeley cluster area, which includes large parts of the Newtown, Brookend and Sharpness landscape.

It is hard to believe that a special part of Gloucestershire could be carved up and transformed from a quiet, beautiful landscape into a soulless town where building sites will appear, creating noise, damage to road surfaces, and pollution. How this change of use for the entire countryside will impact on positively on infrastructure, lifestyle and security is unimaginable.

So let's say that this proposal goes head, then the problems and issues of this area will surface.

The recent heavy rainfalls have created floods on our narrow roads, and the fields in the area have been saturated for months. Some fields have turned to lakes. We see the rivers levels that flow through the area rise like never before. This is global warming which will be with us for many years. It will create subsidence, gradually making properties unsafe. Adding a huge amount of housing to one area can only add to this.

We all recognise the development in Berkeley (Canon Rise) is an eyesore. Not many houses have sold, progress for more new builds is slow. Pavements along the bypass are non-existence. Witnessing young mothers with prams having to negotiate the road to walk into Berkeley is frightening. If these houses are slow to sell, and infrastructure dangerously non-existent, why add more estates, totally destroying the landscape that draws new families to the area? Why contemplate building more empty properties?

It is proposed that there will be less need for cars because there will be better public transport. Well, it couldn't get worse! A bus is a rare sight and the nearest train station is too popular and cannot meet demands, with too little parking and too little carriages. The likelihood of extending the rail-line to Berkeley Heath appears little more than a pipedream, realistically. It is very unlikely that Network Rail would fund it or consider it a priority. It is not able to provide an efficient and reliable service as it is!

So, with a revolutionary new public transport system, does that mean that there will be few new roads as the town is created? It is blatantly obvious that the roads are busy enough with the present population, and the A38 and M5 junctions almost at gridlock in rush hours. The county struggles to maintain the roads that are operational now, with all drivers coping with deep pot holes.

Let's say families do bring cars with them, where will they park?

How will families with members who have mobility issues or special educational requirements needs be met? How will emergency vehicles get to their patients quickly? Where will the patients go, with local hospitals overflowing now? Who will look after our most vulnerable residents, with the local medical centre under threat of closure?

It is suggested that the proposal for the huge number of homes is manageable as Sharpness/Berkeley has, according to Stroud District Council, current services and leisure facilities to sustain a huge garden city –type development:

I have to strongly disagree.

To summarise:

1. Sharpness has one shop and the Dockers Club.
2. Newtown consists of one shop, one pub, a church and one Primary school. It has a sporadic bus service.
3. Brookend has no shops, and one pub.
4. Wanswell has no shops, one pub and a secondary school owned by the Plymouth Brethren. As they run this school as a Private enterprise, it offers no facilities for education or leisure.

Berkeley has a number of charity shops, 2 small 'supermarkets' and a Pharmacy. It has 2 pubs and a primary school. The bank is closed and Berkeley receives a mobile bank for a few hours once a week, which is inaccessible to anyone who is disabled and anyone pushing a pram or pushchair.

I've already mentioned the roads, but let's imagine the roads are actually in good working order. Are they suitable and sufficiently 'prepped' to cope with the significant traffic increase that will come from construction vehicles, and eventually, if the homes sell, the new owners' vehicles?

At the moment there are B roads and C roads leading out of Brookend and Wanswell, which eventually lead onto the A38. There is an incomplete by-pass from Sharpness to Berkeley Heath, then a B road leading to A38, but traffic including lorries, still use Alkington Lane, which, I believe, is a C road, and unsuitable to heavy vehicles. I've already mentioned the bottle-necks at Falfield, turning left onto the road to M5. The A38 northbound also becomes busier at Junction 13 and at Quedgeley. Therefore with a huge housing development existing in Sharpness/Berkeley area, this congestion can only get a lot worse. Creating cycle lanes and pedestrian walkways is a positive move and clearly crucial for those travelling to work locally. Sadly that does not apply to many who live here at the moment. Even less so in the future.

There is mention of taking special consideration into carefully developing the natural environment. Carving up a beautiful part of Gloucestershire cannot ever be justified as helping to preserve the natural environment. I have walked through the fields from Newtown to Wanswell, then onto Berkeley and marvel at its natural beauty. We are lucky to enjoy wildlife, landscapes and horticulture that has defined this area for centuries.

I believe many people appreciate that our area, along with the rest of the county, must take its brunt of housing to meet national targets, but to place so many houses in such a small area will leave a cluttered mess. To decimate such a wide area that has wonderful views, history and geographical significance seems ruthless and wrong. Once an area like this is destroyed, its close community lost, it's gone forever. Not a legacy I would be proud of, and therefore I feel I have to do everything in my power to stop such a fundamental tragedy.

Government house building targets should be more equally distributed in smaller scale amongst existing towns and villages throughout the county. It appears that the infrastructure promised by both councils and developers such as schools, health centres, employment, transport etc are only ever promises at best and rarely delivered as promised at the time of planning and approval.

Therefore please consider at least reducing the number of houses and make further consideration into viewing other potential areas of beauty, such as the Cotswolds, which, if it were to also take its share of housing, would also have limiting effect of its natural beauty. What about other areas nearer to Gloucester so commuting is easier?

Gloucestershire has always attracted visitors because of its beautiful landscape and its peacefulness. Surely it has to be our legacy to preserve that for future generations, not be remembered as the generation that destroyed it.

Yours sincerely,

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Resident of Brookend.