



16 January 2019

Local Plan Review
The Planning Strategy Team
Stroud District Council
Ebley Mill
Westward Road
Stroud
GL5 4UB

Dear Sirs

**Stroud District: Local Plan Review
Emerging Strategy Paper**

My husband and I moved to Minchinhampton in 2014, having previously lived on the outskirts of a very busy city. We specifically chose Minchinhampton as we loved its setting as a hilltop town on the eastern fringes of Minchinhampton Common and having been surrounded by development in our previous area, we were reassured to be living in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and in a historic Cotswold town with narrow streets, very close to Minchinhampton and Rodborough Commons, owned and managed by the National Trust.

Having been made aware that Stroud District Council are in the process of reviewing the current Local Plan, I attended the public consultation on the emerging strategy at the Hub in Minchinhampton in December 2018. I have also read the Emerging Strategy Paper in great detail.

1. Comments relating to 4.2, the Emerging Growth Strategy

1.1 On page 42 of the Strategy Paper, Settlement Boundaries, reference is made to three options. I consider Option 1 to be most appropriate particularly as it is stated on page 43 that this Option 1 is likely to have broadly positive effects on the environmental SA objectives as development outside of settlement limits is strictly controlled.

1.2 Minchinhampton is situated in the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the revised National Planning Policy Framework of July 2014 gives unequivocal protection to landscapes with AONB. Paragraph 172 states "Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection"

1.3 In view of this fact, I consider current settlement boundaries should remain as in the current Local Plan for all towns in the AONB.

2 **Comments relating to page 56 of the Strategy paper: Minchinhampton - Potential Sites and Alternatives**

2.1 I agree with the description made regarding Minchinhampton. However I strongly object to the introduction of two further development sites in Minchinhampton - in PS05 East of Tobacconist Road (up to 100 dwellings, doctors surgery) and PS04 South of Cirencester Road (Up to 50 self-build/custom build dwellings).

2.2 This in fact is amending the settlement boundary, which as stated above, I believe should not occur - especially with regard to its close proximity to Minchinhampton and Rodborough Commons.

2.3 Stroud Valley Project (SVP) has teamed up with The National Trust and Natural England to help conserve Rodborough and Minchinhampton Common. In particular, recent concerns have been raised over the increase in the human population around the Commons - the worry being that the wide diversity of species including rare insects and wild flowers will be diminished. Also there is a continual worry about the safety of free-roaming cattle.

2.4 With the expansion of the settlement boundary, and development at PS05 and PS04, it will most likely mean at least an additional 200 cars based in Minchinhampton, with associated delivery vehicles, regularly driving to and from the area across the commons on a daily basis. Together with large-scale development in Cirencester in process, the unfenced road across the commons, used as a commuter rat-run for travellers to Stonehouse and the M5, will become even busier and eventually the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) with its rare and diverse species will be destroyed.

2.5 Public transport to our town is very poor. It therefore makes it essential that most households are car-dependent as it is virtually impossible to commute to employment – the last bus leaves Stroud at 5:35, making travel from Gloucester/Cheltenham/Stonehouse and even Nailsworth very difficult, and there are no links to Cirencester or Bristol. I personally use the bus service to travel to the leisure centre, but one-way only as the times do not work for returning when I wish.

2.6 As I mentioned at the Public Consultation meeting at the Hub when a member of the public expressed that the future was “cycling” – cycling to and from Minchinhampton is far from practical to families with young children, the elderly and infirm, especially when travelling up the steep narrow winding access roads and across the common in dark wintry conditions.

2.7 As far as I can see, PS05 is situated on the same land as the highly contentious planning Application S.15/2567/FUL (which was withdrawn by the developers in 2016) for housing and a doctors’ surgery at Glebe Farm/Tobacconist Road, Minchinhampton. This application attracted a large number of objections, over 730. Apart from the fact that the site was outside the settlement boundary it was considered by many that central roads of Minchinhampton could not cope with any more relatively large-scale development; a high flow of traffic from the surgery and housing would feed into the extremely narrow Tetbury Street junction, the High Street and West End.

2.8 Paragraph 84 of the NPPF, is therefore also very relevant. This states “Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, **does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads** ...”

2.9 Although I ultimately object to any large-scale development and expansion of Minchinhampton beyond the current settlement boundary, if there is no alternative and PS05 and PS04 become part of the local plan, I would hope that access to and from PS05 is restricted to Cirencester Road and not via roads feeding into the extremely narrow roads of Minchinhampton town centre. (In fact, the alternative blue edged sites MIN002 and MIN003 would be more acceptable than PS05.)

Yours faithfully

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