

Comment on Stroud District Draft Plan for Consultation

My overall opinion is that any developments should be small and associated with existing settlements to maintain thriving inter-generational communities and prevent exclusion and depression. Before any development on any site, existing infrastructure should be improved to a suitable level (phone signals, broadband, roads, drainage, local shops, meeting places, transport) and any new infrastructure required should be in place before people are expected to live there.

With reference to proposal for 5000 houses to be built over coming years in the Sharpness area

In general, building a massive housing estate on green fields located on an isolated site, with little in the way of facilities, services or infrastructure and destroying the character of Berkeley and all the surrounding hamlets is not the way forward. I realise that this is just a 'get-out' for all the other district councillors and the 'let's dump it all at Sharpness' mentality continues to persist. It is a pity that they don't come and look at the area instead of just reading the propaganda put out by the potential developers.

However, given that some housing provision is required, nothing should be built until all the infrastructure is in place

Comment on SO1a – Affordable housing at Sharpness will lead to social isolation and exclusion due to the lack of existing facilities locally and the unlikelihood of them being provided during the time the housing is being developed. Judging by the housing currently destroying the historic appearance to Berkeley Town, they are more likely to be 'anywhere' houses like those currently destroying the character of Thornbury and Cam.

The Sharpness Vale: Natural Neighbourhoods document contains a lot of statements beginning 'could' and not many starting 'will'.

Item 11 – 'deliverability and next steps' makes a feature of a 'designed and integrated infrastructure' but who exactly is going to provide and maintain all the green routes, grey water treatment, bus services, railway station and all the other attractive ideals. At a basic level, who is going to pay for a road link between the end of the bypass at the east of Berkeley and the A38/M5 through route. GCC have made it clear over many years that this is low in their list of priorities, despite the massive increase in heavy traffic with the coming of the ever-expanding distribution centre on top of the docks' businesses' traffic. It is unlikely to be the people who want to build a massive development of houses on a very isolated greenfield site with little access to the surrounding area. Every internet enquiry will reveal that this area's closest facilities provider is Lydney. There is just a small matter of the river!

Building on green fields, away from all facilities and services is not the answer to the housing shortage and even at the information evenings it was made clear that important items of the infrastructure would not be developed until all the housing is complete; for example, the railway station. Land will be provided for a secondary school, eventually, but

not an actual school. This will be publicly funded. Meanwhile the secondary school at Wanswell will be knocked down to build more houses

On housing, there is little evidence that the development will be any different to those already destroying the character of towns like Thornbury. Same houses, different towns. The area does require affordable homes and that is accepted but building lots of substandard small boxes is not the answer. A truly green vision would be to have minimum space standards for dwellings that allow families to grow and each with a suitable amount of outdoor space for small children to play safely at home and for residents to be able to do some relaxing and destressing gardening.

Comment on SO2: Local economy and jobs

Given the rate of technical development over the last 30 years, it is to be hoped that there will be provision to embrace green technology in any development now and in the future. The developers need to get workable broadband and mobile provision installed at the outset if they truly want people to work from home. The jobs available in the local area since the nuclear power station closed have reduced significantly. People have to travel to work mostly to the south towards Bristol. What type of employment is going to be attracted to an area well off the beaten track? Distribution centres are not the way forward especially as developments in robotics and logistics reduce the need for people. A community cannot exist where the majority of work is for lorry drivers. Enhancement of skills is a worthy ideal, but currently it is impossible for young people from this area to pursue higher education due to a complete lack of useful public transport.

Comment on SO3: Town centres and rural hinterland

The proposed development will destroy Berkeley as a historic market town. It is interesting that the facilities of Berkeley are used to promote development when it has been both District and County Council's policy to allow the town to die. The closure of the hospital, library, bank, police station and secondary school, a lack of useful public transport, the non-completion of the link road to the A38, plus allowing a shoddy housing estate to spoil the entrance to the town have all worked against Berkeley. Meanwhile developers want to destroy views further by building on surrounding greenfield sites. Berkeley does have its tourist attractions in the castle, the Jenner museum and the extremely popular Cattle Country, and more could be made of all of these, but lack of parking and a decline in the quality of shops available leads local people to go elsewhere for their day to day needs. In the future people are not going to walk from Sharpness to do their shopping in Berkeley! (I am fully aware that the library is open a few hours per week, but it is run by volunteers, and that a mobile bank visits for two hours a week. When the hospital was closed the Vale Hospital at Dursley was the replacement facility. You can't get there if you haven't got a car. Apparently the primary school's swimming pool is a local asset; it is open when the weather is good and enough volunteers and lifeguards are available.)

Comment on SO4: Transport and Travel

An integrated transport system would be wonderful but all transport money is concentrated on Gloucester and Cheltenham and we are told that the local services are underused. That is because they are not fit for purpose. They don't go to where people want to go, they take far too long and there is no guarantee that you will be able to get home. In Cheltenham,

there are buses every ten minutes to various destinations. In Berkeley there is a two-hourly service between about 7am and 5pm. You can't have an evening out unless you use a car. You can't get to the railway station unless you use a car. Locals know only too well that the taxi fare back from Bristol is generally £60-£65, but that is a bargain compared to the fare back from Dursley which is in the region of £20.

The developers' planning people stated at one of the public meetings that they would not be installing electric vehicle charging points at the homes they intend to build, nor would they be installing them in the car parks where people will have to keep their cars, as cars would not park at the houses. I would like to see how they would deal with say 3 small children, a buggy and a weekly shop, getting them from the car park to their home. If everyone is going to have their shopping delivered but there is no vehicular access to the houses, I don't think Tesco's delivery drivers are going to bring all your shopping from the designated car park.

Anecdote: I have personally been the victim of a fairly useless 'ring and ride' system. I had a badly broken arm and couldn't drive for many months. I needed to get to work at Berkeley Power Station, so I tried to use 'Ring and Ride'. However the first bus of the day was always scheduled to go from Dursley to the power station and then it could come and pick me up and take me to the power station. According to the driver, there was never, ever anyone on the first bus from Dursley, but he had to do that trip first. This meant that I ended up arriving at my desk at about 9:45/10:00 instead of 08:00. The last return ride I could book was at 01:00pm so I was very lucky to have such understanding employers who allowed me to do half days. On the return trip there was another power station employee who couldn't drive so he was dependent on someone taking him to work in the morning and on the "ring and ride" service to get home, so he could only work part time.

If active travel is the system that was explained at the roadshows where you phone for a bus when you need one, I would be interested to know who will be funding and running the massive fleet of buses which will be needed. Apparently, if you need to travel north for work, you will be able to use the reinstated train service from a new station (which will not be built until there are 5,000 houses). If you need to travel south, you will call on a bus to come and get you. If half of the 5000 houses contain one person who needs to travel south for work, that would be in the region of 40 buses. And, we were authoritatively told, these buses would all travel south via Alkington Lane. Have you seen Alkington Lane? Have you driven along it? It needs to be completely rebuilt from its sub-base upwards due to the massive number of HGVs travelling to and from Sharpness. For some of its length it is not wide enough for two lorries to pass each other and the verges have been destroyed.

Comment on SO5: Climate change and environmental limits

This is a very worthy section of the Local Plan proposal but how does building a massive number of houses on greenfield sites on a floodplain at a topographical dead end with unsuitable transport routes fit in with this objective? Not at all.

Any new neighbourhoods must have carbon free heating systems (solar, wind, ground source etc) and with full provision for charging of electric vehicles at people's homes. Unless this can be guaranteed from the outset and incorporated in the initial infrastructure, the whole ethos of a 'garden village' will fall apart.

Comment on SO6: Our District's distinctive qualities.

Based on conserving and enhancing landscape, heritage, townscape and biodiversity, the Berkeley cluster is a completely unsuitable location for major development. The landscape is farmland and wildlife habitat, the heritage is the docks and canal and their associated infrastructure, the townscape is small hamlets of a few houses dotted around the countryside and biodiversity is huge and spectacular, from the river Severn to the water meadows to the north east of Berkeley.