

[REDACTED]

Local Plan Review
Stroud District Council,
Ebley Mill,
Westward Road,
Stroud GL5 4UB

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22nd January 2020

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I am against using a Berkeley/Sharpness new town as an option for locating houses in the second Draft 2019 Local Plan for the reasons stated below. Also the need for additional houses in the national plan needs to be addressed in light of Brexit and its impact on net immigration in the UK.

1. Impact on Local Community

The plan is intending to take the combined rural Sharpness and Berkeley communities of about 3,100 population in 2011 adding at least 10,000 more than 3 times as large and creating a major town larger than the current combined towns of Cam and Dursley. This huge community is being placed on the edge of a river with a very limited road system out in only one direction.

An estate of 200 was allowed in 2017 on the outskirts of Berkeley to support the town (a town for historic reasons not size) businesses. This 200 house estate is having a very negative impact on the Grade 1 listed medieval castle. This new massive "garden village" with its own retail centre is likely to destroy the Berkeley centre more than the lack of 200 houses ever would. And the rural setting of the castle has been lost for nothing.

2. Impact on Infrastructure

Clearly this is a major area of concern. 5-8000 more cars will head off each day to Bristol, Gloucester, or Cheltenham, the major places of employment, each about 20 miles away. Within the Stroud District you cannot be further from all three places.

Trains are currently at capacity due to the short platforms. The nearest station at Cam daily has a full car park with additional cars parked everywhere in nearby streets.

The suggestion of busses is ridiculous. 100+ busloads of people who are happy to depend on bus timetables to be where they want when they want and who are happy to walk miles at the end of their journey to get to their places of work is very unlikely.

When they take to the roads, the junctions at Falfield in particular will be unable to cope as it is currently a problem at rush hour before more than 5000 houses planned for Berkeley, about 1500 planned for Wisloe, 3500 or so planned for the outskirts Thornbury. Bristol was worried about the 16,000 extras cars after the Severn Bridge toll were dropped. 10,000 more from north of the city means the roads will be at a standstill for much of the day.

It is also worth mentioning that when the M5 is closed for an accident between junctions 14 and 13, often for hours or much of the day, the traffic moves onto the A38 to avoid the jam. The ensuing chaos would be dire. Also in the summer the holiday traffic backs up to junction 14 north from Bristol on Fridays and Sundays with a big impact on local roads as drivers avoid the jams.

There are promises of new schools, jobs, and road improvements but you still have the problem of a large built up area miles from major infrastructure hubs.

3. Impact on Environment

The Convention on Wetlands, called the Ramsar Convention, is the intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. Government planning guidance states: "You'll need to check if the proposed development is on, or might affect ... a Ramsar wetland...SSSI...local wildlife site." The River Severn has Ramsar protection, Slimbridge Wetlands and Wildfowl Centre is 5 miles up the road, and Berkeley has a Key Wildlife Site near Mobley" The migration patterns of birds to the Slimbridge site on the Severn and the major migratory patterns for other sites will be severely disrupted by such a large development in their path.

In addition the area around Berkeley/Sharpness is a known Great Crested Newt habitat. Great care would be needed to ensure there is no significant loss of breeding and foraging land. Newts have a very fragile life cycle.

The change of the local landscape from rural to urban and the impact on views from the Forest of Dean will also have negative on the local area as a tourist destination.

The proposed site has flood plain implications. Local roads flood regularly and the effect on runoff in the area is likely to be made worse by the building of such a large development. Mitigation with swales and other water collection is likely to be inadequate. As the site is located between the Cotswold hills and the Severn and the Welsh hills, water has nowhere to go. The ground water levels in the area are very high due to the water pressure from this effect. Getting the balance right will be very difficult with a development of this size.

4. Employment

Employers like to be where there is a large catchment of skilled workers. As stated before the sites are as far as they could be from areas of major employment in the Stroud district. If a major employer came to the area, the traffic generated would just add to the local road congestion problems.

Employment opportunities have been encouraged in Sharpness for the last 30 years with little uptake apart from a few warehouse jobs, due to its remoteness from good transport infrastructure which makes it difficult workers to get to work, e.g. for early shifts etc.

Summary: Too many houses in the wrong place. I would like you to ensure that the Inspector reads my letter.

Sincerely,

