

[REDACTED]
20th January 2020

To the planning department at Stroud Council.

Please note my objections to the area below and the 5000 houses planned for this area.

PS36 New settlement at Sharpness

I will refer to PS36 as an estate as this is what I believe it will be

I object strongly on the following grounds:

Inappropriate area and amount of housing:

I do not think this area is suitable for such enormous development. The phase one plans will join Berkeley and Sharpness together. If phase 2 were to proceed the smaller villages of Brookend, Newtown, Hinton, and Wanswell will also get swallowed up into an estate the size of Quedgeley. I think it is completely disingenuous of the council to state that PS36 will be a "new settlement". It is obvious to anyone, even the local population with no planning experience like myself, that your proposed new settlement will become one large conurbation. I can understand the need to call it a new settlement as otherwise you would be breaking your own rules as far as I can see. Nearly all of the villages / towns in the draft plan have a black outline indicating the SDL ie to my understanding the site development limit. Sharpness does not appear to have this, and Newtown's is difficult to distinguish on page 117. Brookend and Wanswell do not have any bold black SDL either. But it would appear that this proposal is fine for the council as you do not envisage the allocation as an extension of the existing settlement of Newtown and Sharpness but as a distinct new tier 2 settlement in its own right. This is very convenient for the council. It is difficult to express my frustration at the council's ability to make the rules up as you see fit. Perhaps, you might decide that Coaley's SDL can be abutted with a new estate. After all it is only 1.3 miles to the train station, has the same provision of facilities as Sharpness and has very few developmental restraints and yet you decide there will be no building here at all! I would imagine the council could allocate some hectares for employment if they wished added to which the access to the train station would make commuting sustainable.

More suitable areas:

There are alternatives further north in the district at Hardwicke and Whaddon which are nearer the District Council's proposed powerhouse of work opportunities between Gloucester and Cheltenham. Developments further north would mean a reduction in commuting and better access to infrastructure, in line with Stroud District Council policy DCP1.

Loss of good agricultural land: the grading of the agricultural land is HIGH and therefore I believe should not be considered for development of this scale. Once built on it is lost for ever for any other more appropriate use whether this is for arable organic farming, small scale meat production, forestry for example. All of these uses help to soak up carbon emissions – building houses on this land does not.

Landscape Impact issues: The Forest of Dean is an AONB. This development will be visible for miles and will ruin views from the Forest and from Stinchcombe hill. This is in contrast to SDC's commitment to protect these areas and views.

Poor access to major roads and high congestion:

Sharpness is not on a through road but is the end of the road. This fact automatically means that this area involves increased levels of commuting. The current population have to a large extent family ties with the area and consequently their commuting for family reasons is less than people who would be coming into the area "to live in the country" from major cities such as Gloucester and Bristol. You must acknowledge there is absolutely no local need for 2400 houses within 20 years. We may be county folk but we don't breed like rabbits.

The current road network is completely inadequate for such a development. No matter what the applaudable aspirations for reducing car use, it is clear that people will continue to use cars even if there is a bus service or potential rail link. It is pie in the sky to imagine that everyone will abandon their cars - buses will not be able to get people to all their destinations when they want to go, it is not feasible. People travel for leisure, work, to visit friends, for appointments, for a myriad of reasons and to a multitude of destinations. Cars will be used albeit electric. A large number of people in the area travel to Bristol and beyond for work. The roads out of Berkeley will not cope with the increase in traffic. There is nothing in the plan to take the bypass to the A38, it is just an aspiration for the future which is meaningless. The Breadstone road and the road to Berkeley Heath will be inundated with traffic. **The Alkington road from Mobley corner to the A38 at Newport hardly copes now with traffic. The local lanes will quickly be discovered to be used as "short cuts" to the A38 such as the lane to Stone via Berkeley' High Street, the road through Breadstone to the Prince of Wales, the lane via Purton. These roads are not of a standard to cope with the intensity of traffic that would be the reality. The junctions on to the A38 at Berkeley Heath, Newport will be heavily congested with long tail backs.**

Motorway junction congestion:

The access to the motorway junctions are already under great pressure - people leave to get to work earlier and earlier due to the traffic congestion. With the added traffic from Thornbury and more planned estates at Buckover junction 13 will be completely unable to cope. **The highways have already probably realised the error of putting in traffic lights at a huge expense that need to be turned off at commuting hours.**

Rail link:

It is easy to say there will be a railway station but we all know that it is not easy to deliver this. Apparently Portishead has been expecting a train station for years that was promised when development started. I believe they are still waiting. Cam and Dursley train station is already suffering from major parking problems with commuters from Quedgeley adding to the problem. I fail to see how this station could cope with a further influx of passengers whilst waiting for a new station in the estate **that there is no guarantee will ever happen.** There is no planned potential for a direct rail link from the estate to Bristol. .. passengers would have to change at Cam. **This is another negative regarding the sustainability view.** I do not know if there is scope in the timetable to increase the frequency of trains. **With the amount of people you envisage living here, how many extra trains would be needed to fit your vision?** In Dec 2019 there was a newspaper article stating that the rail commute from Cam to Bristol was 4th most expensive outside London. Considering most people commuting go to Bristol from this area how is this going to encourage sustainability and make people want to use public transport? They will still want to have a car for other reasons so why would they be willing to travel to Cam by bus or train (at an unknown cost) to wait for a connection to Bristol and pay £230 a month for a rail pass. Obviously this is at today's rates – undoubtedly it will be more expensive than this.

Employment:

Employment in the area is another major concern. As stated, people commute. The council has previously said that this is not a good area for creating employment. I wonder what has changed. Your plan states that 10 hectares would be allocated for employment use. When I spoke to the developer and asked how many jobs he thought this would provide he told me 5000, then said he thought more like 10,000. And I am supposed to respond positively to such an outrageous statement! This makes a mockery of consultations. How are the public whose lives will be affected by Stroud council's plans be expected to believe half of what is written when developers make such comments. Are the developers responsible for providing employment? Of course not. Are they responsible for building offices / warehouses? So there is an allocation of land for employment in the draft but nothing to guarantee that any further employment would be forthcoming. To give an example of commuting by public transport - I worked as a nurse in both Gloucester and Cheltenham on shift work. There is no way that I could get to my place of employment without a car. This would probably be the same for a variety of people employed in other service industries such as police, fire etc.

80% of SDC's proposed housing development is in the South of the Stroud district mostly at the 2 identified "growth points" Sharpness being the main one. Most of the employment is in the North of the district with the future district plan being for a Powerhouse of employment between Gloucester and Cheltenham. Surely putting most housing in the South does not agree with Stroud policies to reduce carbon emissions as commuting will inevitably increase. This development will not meet Stroud's plan to be carbon neutral by 2030. The dispersal option for development, preferred by most of the local population distributes the load on infrastructure in a less intrusive manner which is more sustainable and makes more sense re: reducing the carbon emissions from commuting. Alternative more sustainable and suitable sites closer to the main employment centres would be more appropriate.

Bus service:

The plan talks of rapid bus services to main settlements. I wonder when these would be put in place, if at all. The current bus services are almost non-existent. By rapid presumably the planned buses would not be stopping in any of the villages that are still villages and have not been swallowed up by the enormous estate. **How many extra buses would be needed to transport all the people to their places of employment which undoubtedly will be in the major cities although you seem to be trying to sell the vision that everyone will work at home or in the 10 hectares that may or may not materialise into any substantial level of employment. Of course there will be tourism to employ hundreds or perhaps thousands of people. Just how will tourists provide jobs? A costa coffee near the canal or on the estate, a b & b ? More likely air bnb that won't provide any jobs just people renting out their second homes.**

Green fields and flood risk:

All of this planned housing estate is on green fields. How can building 5000 houses enhance the natural environment - one of the alleged principles outlined on page 119?. How many trees and hedges will be removed for the benefit of the environment? The developers will benefit, the house builders will benefit, the landowners selling the land will benefit, the wildlife will not.

The Severn estuary is a SAC / SPA / RAMSAR site. There is a conservation area that covers Sharpness old dock and the canal. There are key wildlife sites between the docks and Newtown. I do not know the area in hectares planned for the development in total or in either phases. Interestingly the plan does not state this - perhaps this is because it would be too shocking. The map on page 120 shows a large area of green with a tractor and a flower. This is apparently "strategic landscaping, including green infrastructure (indicative)". I have no idea what this means. Is this area for houses or no houses? What is meant by green infrastructure... is this wind turbines or solar panels? How are we expected to make valid comments on such an enormous

development when it is not possible to really understand your masterplan? (**which I must add sounds ominously like the Nazis.**) I am wondering if it will not be built on because it is in the flood zone. Thus the concentration of houses would be in a much smaller area than I had originally thought. Basically, the area is not appropriate for housing due to the current flood risk. With the knowledge of climate change that is currently in the headlines on a daily basis I think it is imperative that the council reconsiders this whole plan - the current flood risk area is highly likely to expand and the planned estate will be at constant threat of flooding, **I think that housing should be on a much smaller scale and limited to no more than 500 in total on the highest ground..** I would suggest that the flood zone area should be considered for environmental plans, such as forest and rewilding. If the fields are built on they can no longer absorb rainwater. Stroud council has supported projects that are promoted as good examples of rewilding - I believe that water sinks into soil under a tree at 67 times the rate it sinks into soil under grass. This would support a plan to plant lots of trees and far less houses!. Increasing biodiversity needs space, trees absorb carbon, less flooding More sustainable

Light Pollution and potential effect on bird migration:

This county already has in my opinion far too many street lights. I can only imagine how many street lights will appear in this conurbation you have planned. Any almost dark sky that we have will be gone and I cannot see that this is good for wildlife or for the psychological wellbeing of people . Plus there will inevitably be a potential detrimental effect on migratory birds going up the Severn en route to Slimbridge. I have lived in cities under the orange glow - it is unnatural. I would suggest that the council takes out every other street light that it has currently and in any new development thinks hard about the necessity of numerous lights especially when householders are so keen to put up security lights as well.

Local facilities, Shopping and Impact on Berkeley town:

I don't think the shops in Berkeley will benefit hugely from this plan. You acknowledge in 2011 that this development is likely to have a negative effect on Berkeley's high street. There is very little parking in the town; people won't walk to get large amounts of shopping they will want to take a car or otherwise get shopping from large supermarkets after work or on their way back from work. If a large supermarket is built on the estate the local shops would suffer again as they would not be able to compete. In general large supermarkets kill local shops.

A major issue is health facilities - Berkeley only just has a functioning surgery now and it is run by locums. How the town will cope with the extra 200 houses on Canonbury rise is hard to imagine. An extra 2400 houses , an extra 5000 houses! There is a major incentive to remain well as it takes a long time to get appointments. It is very unfortunate nowadays if you suffer with bad health - I dread getting old or sick. Trying to cope with this appalling plan just makes me incredibly anxious . Amenities in the town have gone over the years - the secondary school, the cinema, the hospital, a full time library , a police station - probably because there was not the population to support them because the council did not allow a gradual increase in housing in the area over the past 20 years. Now, you decide against the majority of people's wishes that you will inundate the area with 5000 houses. **My understanding is that most of the people who responded to previous consultations did not want this option of development ie two large conurbations but opted for dispersal as a more appropriate strategy with adding houses to existing towns and villages. I wonder how much notice the council takes of previous submissions . I think dispersal through the district, using brownfield sites where possible and adding to existing larger settlements would be more sustainable and have less of a detrimental impact on a unique estuarine environment of international importance.**

I would think that when planning for the future the evidence should precede the plan. . Has the council followed due diligence principles or are you trying to find the evidence to fit a plan you have been presented with from a development company . A company that is highly professional and has obviously spent a lot of money on marketing and is able to present a vision that meets every need, ticks boxes, crosses the T's and dots the I's. Except that it is in the wrong place – an internationally important estuarine area , a flood zone, an area that should be totally protected and whose development should be in keeping with climate change aspirations – increasing biodiversity, encouraging planting forests, organic small scale arable farming, rewilding. This will enable the area to be sustainable and contribute to SDC's aspiration to be carbon neutral by 2030. Small scale building using good design, and obviously technological developments to ensure efficiency of heating, electricity use etc does not have to be limited to large developments. I think it should be mandatory that all new build housing should meet the most stringent targets for reducing carbon emissions ie electric charging points for cars, triple glazing , the most efficient form of heating, solar panel roofs etc. To presume that only huge developments can achieve such targets should not be acceptable.

When talking of facilitiesThe draft plan page 115 says that Berkeley has a swimming pool - it is hardly a public pool like Dursley has - the junior school pool which is open occasionally in the summer holidays dependent on volunteers.

Education:

The junior schools are to my knowledge almost at capacity now; the secondary school was sold off and children have to commute to school rather than cycle or walk like they used to. I believe that KLB in Wotton will soon not be an option for this locality as it is at capacity. Where are the children supposed to get an education... how long before Rednock is full, Thornbury is full, Quedgeley. You plan to build houses on the Wanswell site ... There is no evidence that new facilities will materialise in these plans - do developers build the schools, the health facilities, the transport links? So we add to the carbon emissions by shipping out the senior school children as there is no school locally for 11 to 14 year olds. The site at the power station does not take children from 11 and is specifically aimed at science and technology only. I wonder if SDC will in its wisdom say we can send children to Lydney to school. This has been one of the choices for a long time as being in our catchment area – it is only about a 35 mile trip one way via Gloucester or a swim across the river Severn or a train ride across a bridge that hasn't existed since 1960.

Affordable Housing:

There are no guarantees about affordable housing for local people. "Adequate provision" just really is just a vague aspiration.Your vision for the future is easy to write on paper but I feel that the reality is that Stroud council needs to meet its targets, tick boxes and is "dumping" the majority of its housing quota in the south of the district because it is an easy option - green fields; and landowners wanting to make a killing are playing into the council's hands.

I do not know the definition of a village but I hardly think that 5000 houses constitutes a village or perhaps by the time you have completed phase two you will be calling the urban area you have created and the villages that you have destroyed a large town full of leisure opportunities. When you have made your new community and ruined the current happy rural communities that have existed for centuries I hope I will be dead. What chance do we have of our voices being heard when everyone feels this is a paper exercise? What chance do we have of influencing a decision that people feel is pretty well made. I have had to buy the plan as I cannot rely on the internet and would not be able to read pages on the internet and keep swapping to complete this survey. It has been extremely difficult to understand the book and I can't say I have been able to study it

all. I feel that it is designed to put people off of responding as it is so huge and complicated. So much of it is made to sound idyllic - garden village, opportunities to grow food, vibrant neighbourhoods, beautiful designed houses, healthy communities. I think the developer thinks we should celebrate the idea of having a farm on what is already farmland! You are trying to sell the idea of a village when we all know it is nothing like a village. I am not sure how many houses Berkeley has - maybe a thousand and this is a town. But 2400 houses - a garden village, 5000 houses a garden village ! Apparently the developer is now changing the title to a nurturing neighbourhood or something of this ilk - does this mean he no longer has to use garden city principles? It is hard to believe anything that is written in this plan other than that a few people are planning to get very rich by nurturing their bank accounts. I am utterly dismayed at all of these plans which can easily be changed by developers . Affordable housing - what is this? How many houses, what size, when in the development, what guarantees they will be built? Nothing in your plan leads me to believe that your masterplan vision will be realised by developers.

In 2011 in the Stroud District Council document on potential locations for strategic growth there was "very little market demand for employment development in this location". What has significantly changed? There is no change in the road structure; no guarantees that jobs would come to the area because you leave some space for " employment opportunities". Commuting, dormitory town would be the reality. When the power station employed people there were enough houses for the local area - now we suddenly need 5000 houses. How does Stroud imagine that they can predict the population needs past 2040 and thus come up with a phase 2 of 2600 houses? This would appear to be the needs / wishes of the developers who obviously want to ensure that they make as much money as possible and do so by solving SDC's housing for the next 30 plus years. I understood that the local plan was supposed to go to 2040 but we get an extra 10 years added to further dump more housing. I can find no mention in your draft plan for any other area getting houses allocated beyond the current plan date. This is unfair and wrong in my opinion.

To meet government targets SDC need to make available for developers 638 dwellings per annum (12,760 over 20 years). The current plan shows in excess of 15,000 new homes . Of course SDC want to have an easy option – level ground , green fields, no need to look at brownfield sites, no need to worry about the next who knows how many years because the developers have a plan that will sort out all the issues of the SDC; an excess of houses how marvellous for you. It is unfair, it is unjust, is unsustainable, it is wrong on so many levels. This is a marketing ploy by very clever people who are keen to sell a utopian vision by providing wonderful spiel and pictures of a development that will make them incredibly rich whilst destroying our area's rich history. It seems Stroud Council has not listened to the residents of this area who have said that they are keen to have some affordable and proportionate development ; that they support dispersal through the district as an appropriate strategy. In a democracy which I believe we still live in why are the wishes of the few (landowners and developers) put before the people the council is supposed to represent.

Cultural identity

No thought is given to protecting rural communities which have their own culture. You acknowledge that it is a beautiful area, but it is a rural area and has been for centuries. Generations of families have remained in the same area; people care about each other, Both Berkeley, Sharpness and the smaller villages and hamlets have their own identity, This development threatens to annihilate everything that people hold dear - looking out for neighbours, chatting in the local shop, making sure that relatives are looked after. Bring in thousands of people and the cultural identity of the areas will change beyond recognition The

Stroud area is officially designated a Rural district with the Severn Vale its most rural part. This council's Core Strategy states that it "aims to protect and enhance the natural and built up environment of the district." This proposal is counter to this strategy. Building 5000 houses in the vale can hardly been seen to be protecting and enhancing the environment.

Your tourists you want to flock to the area in their cars of course will be able to admire the thousands of houses and the excellent leisure facilities along with your new vibrant community. I don't think so - maybe the canal tow path can be tarmacked and perhaps you will think of building a multi storey car park for all the visitors .

I sincerely hope that the council will reconsider due to the many points that they raised themselves in objection to Sharpness as a growth area. I am now aware of the plan for a social landlord to own and maintain ownership of some of the proposed houses. Wherever there is a density of social housing there are inevitable problems – there are no go areas in Thornbury, Kingsway estate for instance. I lived in one of the worst estates in Gloucester so I do know the consequences that this can bring and I can assure you that there become large areas that cause huge problems to the whole area.

Thank you for considering these issues. I hope they have as much time and attention paid to them as the developers plans get.

Please ensure that should this draft plan go to inspection that my objections and this letter is shown to the inspectorate.

