

Q&A from the Community Meeting Wednesday 4 August 2021



Design and Funding		
	Question	Answer
1	Brimscombe Port is not a brownfield site	The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 defines 'brownfield land' in the same way as previously developed land (i.e. land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure). Therefore, Brimscombe Port is by Government definition a brownfield site.
2	Has the output spec been reviewed in light of the need of Covid recovery for communities? It was a great spec but doesn't seem to have been flexed to reflect the changing social needs - particularly for young people?	<p>The Output Specification for Brimscombe Port is aligned with the Council's recovery work following the pandemic.</p> <p>Community engagement will be a key part of the plans for the redevelopment of the Port and getting people from all demographics will be central to that work. We expect Stroud District Youth Council to be involved in this process, they represent the views of young people at a District level, giving young people the opportunity to have a voice, to discuss relevant issues, engage with decision-makers and contribute to improving the lives of young people within their communities.</p> <p>In addition, the Social Value section in the Output Specification focuses on training and apprenticeships as part of the redevelopment.</p> <p>We are also working alongside the Parish Council to ensure we are reaching as many people as possible and that everyone has the opportunity to shape the plans for the community space, where the land has been offered to the Parish Council for them to develop, own and manage a new facility. Community engagement again will be key to ensure that the space delivers what the community wants for all age groups. It has not been agreed at this stage what that looks like and so what the community needs in terms of Covid recovery will be important.</p>

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3	<p>The buildings are at the end of their life and may need to be demolished but why can't a new skate park be brought into the plans?</p> <p>Has redeveloping the skatepark even been considered?</p>	<p>We are unable to include a new Skatepark as part of the plans due to the way the project is funded.</p> <p>An initial £7.6m of public funding was used to acquire this site by Homes England's predecessors (the South West Regional Development Agency) to secure it for the canal project and to regenerate it when it was bought from British Waterways in 2009. The Council and its funders have subsequently committed over £5m in additional public investment to the project to de-risk the site and contribute to the essential infrastructure (reinstatement of canal and mooring basin, de culverting of the river and new access road off the A419) that is required to take the site out of the flood plain so redevelopment is possible. The extent of the infrastructure required is already disproportionate in terms of cost to the number of homes and commercial spaces that are to be built.</p> <p>The Council considered whether the Skatepark could be included early on in the project but the remaining area would not leave enough space to make a financially viable scheme that would attract developers, as the skate park is so large it would remove a significant proportion of the remaining developable land. Housing is essential to provide the additional capital funding to make the scheme viable. The public funding that has been received is to see much needed housing delivery on the site, including 30% affordable homes, and as set out and consulted on in the Local Plan.</p> <p>This is a £40 million project overall and private sector investment is also needed to develop the site, this will not happen without the public subsidy (and was demonstrated when the site was marketed previously in 2011, with one bidder interested but requiring between £3.5 to £5m of public subsidy to proceed). An alternative site was offered in 2018 to Rush to build a new facility but unfortunately at the time they were not able to take this forward, having been unable to secure funding to progress a planning application for the proposed new building.</p>
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4	<p>Is the funding in place to take the canal from Stroud Brewery to the Port?</p>	<p>The funding is not in place for the next phases. The Canal Project has always been done in sections as opportunities and funding allows and is also thanks to the many volunteers who continue to contribute their time and expertise to the project. The four miles for Phase 1a from Stonehouse to Stroud Brewery was completed with Heritage Lottery Funding and a recent bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for Phase 1b for £8.9 million was successful. This will see the canal connected up from Stonehouse to Saul Junction and on to the national network.</p> <p>Many people live around the canal with walkers, cyclist, boaters, paddle boarders all enjoying the beautiful environment before it is all connected. It is more likely that funding will be made available for the final connections once Brimscombe Port is redeveloped. The aim is that Brimscombe Port will be the catalyst for other sites along this valley and out to Saul junction in accordance with our Canal Strategy that is currently being developed.</p> <p>Allowance has been made in the design of the infrastructure to enable boats to be craned into the basin until the canal is fully opened up. Plans include thirty moorings including seven for residential use. They will be the only such moorings on the Stroudwater canal and will add to the housing diversity in the area.</p>
5	<p>Could new buildings be incorporated for current enterprises?</p>	<p>The Council is offering an area of land or space within a building for free to the Parish Council for a community space. There will be opportunities to engage with the Parish Council and the District Council about what that looks like. We welcome discussions about future community uses on the site and have encouraged people to come forward with their proposals.</p> <p>Please see Q3.</p>

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6	<p>Is the funding ring fenced or is there a chance the money could be diverted to fund something else? Is there a time limit on using the funding?</p>	<p>The funding is ring fenced for this specific development. The £2m loan we have received from Homes England is from their Accelerated Delivery programme and there is a funding agreement to ensure that the redevelopment of the site is brought forward. This is also in accordance with the Council's Local Plan.</p> <p>If the Council does not progress the scheme in line with the milestones set out in the funding agreement, then there is the option for Homes England to take the site and deliver the project themselves or withdraw the funding.</p> <p>We also have grant funding of £776,000 from the One Public Estate (OPE) Land Release Fund. This programme is a partnership between the Office of Government Property in Cabinet Office, the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and enables Councils to bring forward surplus Council-owned land for housing development.</p> <p>The funding is from a National pot and the Council was told that it was one of the best bids presented due to the fact that the Council had shown that the site has been de-risked to enable it to be unlocked for private investment. Stroud was the only Council in Gloucestershire to receive funding under this programme in this round. However, if we do not deliver, this will affect the Council's ability to access future funding rounds to bring in much needed public funding into the district.</p>
7	<p>How many jobs will come in to the commercial space and commercial enterprise centre?</p>	<p>It is envisaged that circa 1,000m² of commercial space is provided, depending on viability. The Development Partner will be required to determine a suitable mixture e.g. retail, office and workshop/gym uses for the site and will assess the market for these uses. In addition, once the plans for the community space are agreed by the Parish we will be able to know how many jobs may come forward.</p>

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8	<p>Has refurbishment been formally considered?</p>	<p>The Council took on the Heritage Lottery funded Cotswold Canal Restoration project in 2008. The reinstatement of the canal and Brimscombe Port has been included in the Stroud District Local Plan for many years and consulted on as part of the Local Plan process. It is expected to deliver this section of the canal restoration and a minimum of 150 homes. The Business Park straddles the route of the canal and basin and the culverted River Frome, refurbishment of the units would mean that the canal would not be reinstated here for the foreseeable future and so has not been formally considered as an alternative as it is an integral part of the canal restoration project.</p> <p>The warehouses were built in the 1960s/1970s and are now over 50 years old, in a poor state of repair, with leaking roofs, minimal insulation and contain asbestos. There is also a legacy of contamination following the tipping of waste into the old canal and basin and a remediation strategy is required as part of the planning permission for the infrastructure works. The amount of money required to invest to bring these buildings up to the standard expected in line with our 2030 strategy compared to the money generated through rent would be unviable as well as not fulfilling the requirement to deliver a minimum of 150 much needed homes and the reinstated canal.</p>
9	<p>Have you actually done a carbon audit of the embodied carbon?</p> <p>Is this project really carbon sensitive?</p>	<p>The Council has not carried out a carbon audit on the project. However, we recognise that we should always look at retrofitting as one of the options when reviewing assets due to the amount of carbon that is released into the atmosphere from the demolition and erection of new buildings.</p> <p>The majority of the housing stock owned by the Council will be upgraded by retrofitting rather than redeveloping as part of our 2030 Strategy to make them as energy efficient as possible.</p> <p>In this case, keeping the buildings has not been formally considered as an alternative to demolition as buildings have to be removed in order to reinstate the canal and basin which is an integral part of the canal restoration project. See answer to Q8.</p>

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		<p>The new buildings will need to be built to high energy efficient levels to fulfil the Council's requirements for the project. See answer to Q11.</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>If Ebley (blocks of flats) is seen as an exemplar project how can we be confident in the Council's understanding of a truly exemplar project?</p> <p>Can the Council point to a development elsewhere in the country, or indeed elsewhere, that it thinks is an exemplar of the type of redevelopment it has in mind? It's always easier to comment on other like schemes elsewhere that have the look and feel that SDC envisions for the Port?</p>	<p>The inclusion of Ebley in the presentation was just to demonstrate that a canal side setting and development could be achieved and show how people can benefit from the canal without it being connected to the wider network. This was not put forward as an exemplar scheme and was not a project developed by the Council and so did not have the vision that the Council has set out in the Output Specification.</p> <p>The Port site will be built to Building with Nature standards, developed by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, ensuring that nature is put at the heart of the development to the benefit of both wildlife and local people. Gloucester Services was built to this standard and has won numerous architectural awards.</p> <p>The decision was made to not submit a hybrid planning application (to include an outline application for the redevelopment) when we submitted the planning application for the infrastructure. This was because the level of detail required for an outline application for a site in the Industrial Heritage Conservation Area (IHCA) would prevent innovation coming forward from the private sector and we did not want the design to be committed at that stage. The Council does not wish to suggest any architect residential led scheme as an exemplar as we want the developers to be innovative in their designs and there are many ways to deliver an exemplar project.</p> <p>Further details about the Council's Design Standard Objectives can be found on page 12 of the Output Specification which clearly sets out what the Council is looking for in the design of the scheme.</p>

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11	Who is advising on your carbon strategy?	<p>The 2030 Strategy is an overarching plan, designed to (among other goals) guide carbon monitoring and reduction in current and future projects. The 2030 Strategy was developed in collaboration with other Councils, consultants, research papers and local stakeholders. In addition to our overall strategy, the Council has joined an external carbon accounting scheme that will allow us to compare our successes and failures with other Councils. We are building our internal environment team to include a range of expertise, which will mean we can assess all projects from a more holistic perspective - including carbon.</p> <p>We have a team of officers, two of which are new to the team, bringing combined experience (through academia and employment) in environmental management, environmental science and public engagement.</p> <p>In our pre submission draft Local Plan 2021 the delivery policy ES1 addresses sustainable construction and design and requires all new development to achieve a net-zero carbon standard. You can find out more here.</p> <p>The next stages of plan preparation involve submitting the draft plan and all associated documents and evidence base to the Planning Inspectorate. The Council is currently preparing for submission and this is expected to happen late summer/early autumn depending on the volume and complexity of consultation responses received.</p> <p>The redevelopment will need to comply with the final adopted Local Plan. In addition, the Output Specification sets out the requirements for the project in terms of sustainability.</p>
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12	<p>Which two buildings have bats and so need to be demolished in certain timeframes? Also aren't there 2 bat windows per year?</p>	<p>Buildings 7 and 8 on the Industrial Estate alongside Port Lane and the river need to be inspected by a bat licensed Ecologist prior to demolition. The demolition works also need to take place outside the bat active season which is between May and September, as stated in the Government's guidance - Bats: surveys and mitigation for development projects, which also avoids the majority of the bird nesting period.</p> <p>This is all set out in the Construction Environment Management Plan prepared by our Ecologist and submitted as part of the planning application for the demolition and infrastructure.</p>
13	<p>I have spoken to an agent advising developers this morning and he said that the developers aren't worried about the existing buildings on the site. They are more worried about the canal not being connected</p>	<p>The Council has carried out two rounds of soft market testing (contacting and speaking to developers directly) which showed that the main cause for concern for all involved was the requirement that the Development Partner deliver both the canal reinstatement works and the associated infrastructure to enable the site redevelopment. The inclusion of the works together under the same contract is seen as very restrictive to the attractiveness of the scheme.</p> <p>The extent of the infrastructure required (and perceived cost/risk associated with this) is considered disproportionate to the area of land released for redevelopment and the number of new homes/commercial space that can be delivered.</p> <p>As such, the Council continues to de risk the project by carrying out the demolition itself and procuring a contract for the infrastructure. This will result in a tendered cost and contractor ready to deliver the work, to maximise the interest from developers to the project.</p> <p>The issue of the canal not yet being connected has not been raised.</p>

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14	Is the plan to start the engineering works in advance of getting a developer?	<p>We are looking for a Development Partner who will carry out the Phase 1 infrastructure works as part of the redevelopment of the Port. The timings of the Phase 1 infrastructure works will be down to the Development Partner to programme depending on how they design the redevelopment. The Council has decided to procure a Design and Build contract for the infrastructure works separately to the residential element to secure a fixed price and programme, but then to transfer the package over to the Development Partner who is delivering the residential/commercial development (once appointed) to co-ordinate, manage and deliver.</p> <p>However, we may decide to proceed with the infrastructure contract ourselves as we have managed this type of work with other sections along the canal.</p>
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Communities		
15	Where is all the representation from young people?	Please see Q2
16	Who is this project a legacy for?	The project will be a legacy for the whole community, providing homes, enterprise and job opportunities, visitor experience and enhanced habitat /biodiversity.
17	Many places would aspire to such a level of community engagement as currently exists on site already. How is this going to improve this?	We are exploring ways of engaging with the community and are developing a community engagement plan for the redevelopment phase. As raised in the meeting, the event on Wednesday 4 August 2021 was just the start of the process following a quiet period during lockdown and whilst the planning application for the demolition and infrastructure was being determined. This took from July 2019 to March 2021 due to delays with response from third party consultees but followed the well-attended pre-planning application drop-in event in December 2018.

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		We want to engage with residents across the parish and with smaller face to face meetings where we can hear the views of the whole community.
18	What we need is space to share how this actually feels for individuals and families attached to the Port. There's nothing about Ebley that inspires me or fills me with joy as a case study of success. Maybe the community measures success in different ways?	Please see Q10.
19	Can the council articulate what degree of community engagement they are trying to achieve? Willing to have a presentation by Charles Landry or similar?	Community engagement will be a key part of the plans for the redevelopment of the Port and getting people from all demographics will be central to that work. We expect Stroud District Youth Council to be involved in this process to ensure the voice of young people is part of the planning process for the redevelopment. We are also working alongside the Parish Council to ensure we are reaching as many people as possible and that everyone has the opportunity to shape the plans for the Community space.
20	This has been quoted as being a "Community Centred Project" - can you expand on what this looks like...." "Can you give examples of other exemplary Community Led Projects"	This project will be delivered through a partnership of the Council and a Development Partner to be selected. Please see Q19 regarding community engagement.
21	We need structured community engagement to continue following this session. The Parish Council can perhaps lead the next one	We have committed to continued engagement and will work with the Parish Council to deliver this.

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22	It's my understanding that the Parish Council has been working hard to share the concerns of the community and has not been heard - it would seem completely unfair and ineffective to ask them to liaise?	We have engaged with the Parish Council on a number of occasions and will continue to do so. Their concerns and views will always be listened to and acted upon as far as possible. We have committed with the Parish Council to deliver effective community engagement and both Councils want to work together on this.
23	Does any member of the community who isn't directly involved in the scheme and lives in Brimscombe and Thrupp support the current strategy?	This is difficult to answer as we only had 60+ individuals in this meeting and there is a population of approximately 1800 in the parish. We have had messages which support the project and we will continue to seek all views as we move forward.
24	No discussion on how community engagement manifests itself. When will this be discussed?	This is being discussed with the Parish Council and further details will be shared/publicised asap. Please also see previous answers.
25	Isn't it a big risk to have local opposition to the plan?	There is often some opposition to large development projects like this and any opposition is always a risk. However, we must not lose sight of the benefits that this redevelopment will bring. This is why community consultation and engagement is so important and will develop as we move forward.
26	Is a pause possible to review and seek true community engagement including our young people post COVID and on light of the climate and ecological breakdown	The process has been discussed and approved through the proper democratic and decision making process of the Council, including the request for tenants to stay longer at the beginning of June 2021. This will be an exemplar development where nature will be put at the heart of the development to the benefit of both wildlife and local people and with many of the benefits outlined earlier. Many of the services currently on this site will not be lost to the district or the communities they serve.

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27	Could the existing businesses/charities/services be included in the overall plan? Could they be rehoused as part of the Port development?	Work is ongoing by the existing tenants to find new homes and they were very clear from the outset that their tenancies could only be temporary and this has been reinforced throughout. Some have already found new homes and we continue to offer support to help others do so. The tenants have all stated that they are supportive of the redevelopment of the Port.
28	What guarantees are there that the amenities will be provided (RUSH or not), given the one opportunity for a cast-iron guarantee has been rejected?	No guarantees can be provided but we are doing all we can to support tenants with their relocation plans.
30	Is there likely to be further face to face meeting to engage residents and local Community in the coming weeks?	There will be further engagement throughout the development. We are working with the Parish Council on the format/approach.

Tenants		
31	Can there be a community based referendum on whether to proceed with the proposed new development or not to and to retain and encourage the activities already on site?	The democratic decision making processes of the Council (including planning) are open and people have the ability to participate and influence these. Please see Q8.

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32	Why can't that building form the cornerstone of the site? RUSH is truly unique.	Please see Q3 and Q8
33	Would it be possible to pause in the name of Covid recovery just to give young people services as they regroup after the pandemic?	The process has been discussed and approved through the proper democratic and decision making process of the Council, including the request for tenants to stay longer at the beginning of June 2021. Many of the services currently on this site will not be lost to the district or the communities they serve.
34	Maybe just the building housing Rush could be kept. The reasons to demolish might be that the building is unsave-able but I don't know if that is true. I could imagine just fencing it off, giving it its own access and sorting the rest.	Please see Q3 and Q8.
35	What specifically is the council doing to help Rush, vs unhelpful council actions in 2018 and 2019?	The Council has provided significant financial support to RUSH since early 2018, it has been because of this that it has been able to continue operating. We have also commissioned a site/building search for it and offered it an alternative site at Stratford Park. We have allowed it to occupy beyond the end of its original lease. We continue to offer help and support to RUSH to relocate along with Active Gloucestershire.
36	Can RUSH be included as the business element of the development?	Please see Q3.
37	Would you review your timelines if your electorate asked you to? What if the community feels the time isn't quite right at the minute	We considered this request in detail at a meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee at the Thursday 10 June 2021. The implications of any further delay are set out in the report from that meeting.

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	and we would like another year with those existing services?	
38	I ask again why or why does everyone have to be evicted in the mean time	<p>Please see reply to Q13 and Q14.</p> <p>We need to move forward with clearing the site and enabling the development to happen to the approved timetable. Demolition works are due to start this October and this time scale means a shorter development programme.</p>
39	If there are so many developers interested why is the need to demolish RUSH to de-risk?	Please see reply to Q13, Q14 and Q38
40	We don't want Rush to move but is the Rush building, with its leaking roof and problems with drains able to continue to deliver the incredible service it has done for the last eight years? Or will a pause mean we miss this development opportunity and RUSH still have to move?	<p>Rush have stated that they do not want another winter in this building. It is in a very poor state and needs to be demolished as part of wider enabling of the redevelopment.</p> <p>A pause could mean we lose both RUSH and the redevelopment of the Port.</p>
41	It seems like the SDC would get the community's support IF it integrated the current wonderful community businesses? Things have changed a lot since these tenants were just given temporary spaces? Both the Grace Network and RUSH are places that are an example to us all?	There are opportunities for some of the community/social enterprises to be part of the future of the Port but the current tenants need to vacate the Port in the interim whilst development takes place. There are numerous short, medium and long term opportunities within the district that the current tenants are following up.

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42	<p>Rather than employing a top down approach to designing the community engagement strategy for these projects can SDC please co-design this with the local community from the outset? Can SDC also please acknowledge that the current tenants and the activities that flourish from their work are an intrinsic and valuable part of the existing community?</p>	<p>We are working with the Parish Council on continued engagement and will also be asking local residents directly on how they wish to be engaged with the redevelopment of the Port. The value of existing tenants and services are absolutely recognised and work is under way to find new homes for these, where possible within the district.</p>
43	<p>Is there not an alternative vision that includes nurturing what's there, retrofitting / repairing, and developing in the spaces left over. Retaining social value and taking the most carbon neutral strategy.</p>	<p>Please see answer to Q8.</p> <p>The buildings are at end of life, some have asbestos and the site itself suffers from contamination that needs to be cleaned up. The historic port mill will be retained and major investment is under way, including the water source heat pump. It is attracting tenants already. The Ship Inn has a new landlord and is proving to be an attractive venue.</p>
44	<p>Is there an intention to adapt the plan based on our feedback?</p>	<p>The design of the site/facilities will be developed with our Development Partner and input will be sought at key stages from the local community. Community consultation and engagement is a requirement of our Output Specification and is also an intrinsic part of the planning process.</p>
45	<p>I'm assuming then that Rush will stay open until the leisure review is complete? Because it might tell you the very best way to meet the health and wellbeing being needs of our young people are best met</p>	<p>The Leisure Review is a district wide review of leisure facilities and includes advice on the provision of a skate park. RUSH has announced that it will close on Sunday 29 August 2021 and has had the support of the Council.</p>

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	by having a well run safe indoor skate park? You surely wouldn't let a key youth service fold right in the middle of doing that review?	
46	I have only heard people expressing a view of having space for a rethink. Will this be considered?	Please see Q26, Q33 & Q40.

Communications

47	Will there be a public response from SDC to the questions posted in this chat?	Yes – this document covers the questions raised in the community meeting held on Wednesday 4 August 2021.
48	Rather than sending us updates, please can you receive updates from the community? And let us know how they have been acted on?	We will do both. This will be a feature of ongoing community engagement we are working with the Parish Council to set up.
49	Will concrete answers be provided to the above questions? If so by when?	Please see Q47.