

Hearing statements from BaSRAG

Matter 1 Legal and Procedural Requirements

Re question 11:

The responses to the Additional Technical Consultation (Sept/Oct 2022) were not published on the SDC website until 13th February 2023. This is unacceptable giving interested parties insufficient time to consider those comments and is yet another example of the continued failure of the council to follow due process (see our Reg 19 response, rep 538 annex 1).

Matter 2 Spatial strategy and site selection methodology

Re question 5:

We have been made aware of a meeting arranged by the previous Chief Executive of Stroud District Council to promote Sharpness as a site for major development via a “stakeholders meeting” in 2017. This was prior to the publication of the Issues and Options paper, clearly indicating that Sharpness was “chosen” prior to the official strategy being formed. It appears that all that has followed has been designed to justify that pre-determined position.

Re questions 6, 15:

The scale of growth at the proposed new settlement at Sharpness is inconsistent with the settlement hierarchy. The level of growth proposed is completely disproportionate to the settlements of Berkeley and Sharpness at levels 2 and 3a respectively in the hierarchy.

The settlement hierarchy is based on data in the Stroud District Settlement Role and Function Study – Update 2018 that provides incorrect data for Berkeley. Our comments made to the limited consultation on ‘Additional Technical Evidence’ in Oct 2022 (064 in EB113b) draw attention to some of these as they were reflected in the SALA Transport Accessibility (EB112).

Re question 18:

There is no impact assessment that we can find of the effects of the new settlement on the businesses in Berkeley/Sharpness. It is merely assumed they will benefit. For example, what would be the impact of a new local centre in the new settlement on the retail offering in Berkeley? There is no retail impact study!

Re questions 4, 16, 27, 28, 29:

as per our Reg 19 response.

Matter 5 New settlements at Sharpness and Wisloe

Re questions 1 to 6:

No new evidence been forthcoming that demonstrates the Sharpness new settlement is viable and deliverable. No funding is identified to deliver transport ‘solutions’ and no evidence of support from vital authorities such as Network Rail, Highways England, bus operators, Wessex Water Authority, etc. It is our understanding that such evidence should be available before allocations are made and should not be produced later in the process to justify making the allocations, i.e. ‘post-hoc rationalisation’. SDC should have developed a robust evidence base first and used that to develop

the spatial strategy across the plan area, and only then pick the most suitable locations for development.

Re question 4b:

We understand that the last set of traffic surveys used for transport modelling was undertaken during 2021 when movements were unusually low due to Covid restrictions.

Re question 19:

The promotional material for the site has variously described the proposed development as an 'eco-village'; a 'garden village built along 'garden city principles'; 'natural neighbourhoods'. Interestingly, the developer's promotional material on their website (<https://www.sharpnessvale.co.uk/our-vision/>) has dropped all reference to these descriptions (checked 13/02/2023 20:00 hrs).

Community engagement throughout has been poor to say the least. BaSRAG met with Stroud District Council in 2019 and they recognised us as a legitimate interested party and said they would keep us engaged with the process. We have had no contact instigated by them since other than notification of the formal consultations in the process. For the Draft Plan Consultation, the council didn't even arrange a public meeting in Berkeley, until we intervened.

We met with representatives of the developers on 28 November 2019. Similarly, despite promises to the contrary, we have had no further contact from them until a hastily arranged meeting on 24 January 2023, which did not provide any new evidence to undermine our objections to the development.

Re questions 13, 14:

as per our Reg 19 response.