



Dear Sirs,

I am writing to comment on the Emerging Strategy Paper 2018 for the Stroud District local plan.

As an opening observation I would say that the amount of information and the number of documents which need to be referred to make it extremely hard work to understand fully all that is being proposed. Additionally, the survey designed to seek public opinion is so off-putting and hard to complete that a cynic might imagine it had been created that way deliberately to stop people completing it! I have therefore decided to put my comments in an email.

Previous consultation was based on 4 options of which option 4 proposing new growth points was one of the two the least popular – there is no evidence that this has changed. You now seem to be suggesting a 5<sup>th</sup> “hybrid” option, upon which there appears to have been considerably less if any consultation. It feels as though the idea of a significant new growth point is only now being pursued in the light of the new requirement to build a significantly larger number of houses in the Stroud district than was previously expected. This increased requirement for houses seems to have been imposed using a fairly blunt method of calculation and in no way reflects a new economic need for more people to work locally.

A large development on this scale is unlikely to be popular anywhere in the district as it is out of all proportion to the existing landscape, does not fit it with the communities which already live here and requires a level of facilities and infrastructure which do not exist.

Specifically, I oppose the proposal of the site at Newtown/Sharpness for a substantial development on the basis of its location in relation to employment opportunities, amenities and facilities which would be required by new inhabitants.

The document states that “New development should be located near places of employment and be supported by the necessary infrastructure”. Job opportunities within the Berkeley/Sharpness area are limited and a large “garden village” of the suggested size, while probably attracting a few new businesses to the immediate area, is in fact likely in reality to be a dormitory town for workers who will be employed in Bristol and Gloucester. This being the case, the majority of new inhabitants would be commuters.

A large new dormitory development in a relatively isolated area well removed from both employment opportunities and the sort of facilities required for the proposed population size is totally undesirable from the point of view of ecological sustainability. The improvements to local infrastructure necessary to make such a community a success would be massive and expensive. It is not obvious to me where the money will come from to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is delivered. While the maps and texts of the local plan suggest a potential development of approximately 2000 houses, the developer’s own material refers to 5000 houses. This is an enormous variation of over 100% and I think the public need to know what sort of scale is actually envisaged and how the necessary improvements to transport and amenities will be achieved.

In terms of communications, the local plan recognises the need for improvements to junctions 12, 13 and 14 of the M5, but on top of that the local highway infrastructure around Berkeley is already in urgent need of improvement for the current volume and type of traffic. There is no indication that such improvements are going to go ahead and although improved infrastructure should be a fundamental part of any new development, experience shows that such improvements are often slow to materialize and in some cases are never actually addressed at all.

As well as an improved road network, a new development would require significant improvement in local public transport if the whole community is not to be entirely dependent on travelling by car. The detailed proposals for the new development includes a comprehensive system of cycle paths but such a local network is of little use to children wanting to go swimming, adults needing to go shopping or families getting to the cinema when these facilities are all several miles away. I would take issue with the designation in the current emerging strategies document of the Newtown/Sharpness area as having "Good access to key services and facilities elsewhere". The previous version of the document said that access was Poor. I do not know what has changed in the interim, but I am not aware of any improvements which could have led to a change in designation.

I do not oppose smaller scale housing developments – even in my own "back yard". I recognise the need for additional housing both locally and nationally, especially for an increase in affordable and smaller dwellings for first time buyers, downsizers and those on lower incomes. I do however feel that a large scale development of a new community is inappropriate in a relatively isolated rural location which is not adjacent to a significant settlement offering jobs and amenities for those who would be living there.

My fear is that Sharpness and the Vale of the River Severn seems to be an easy target given that so much of the rest of the district is an area of obvious physical beauty but the significance of the Severn Estuary which is recognised internationally by its status as SAC/SPA RAMSAR site is vital. The proposed Eco town development appears to me to be so close to the shores of the Severn that there would surely be an impact on the biodiversity of this extremely sensitive natural environment. Once again the volume of information makes it hard to be sure but the landscape sensitivity assessments undertaken do not even appear to have examined a large area of the proposed development to the South West of the by-pass between Berkeley and Sharpness and I feel there is more that needs to be done before this location could legitimately be included in the local plan.

In short, I very much oppose a large development anywhere in the district and certainly not in the proposed location 5 miles from a motorway junction to the South and 9 miles to the North, at a dead end on the banks of the Severn Estuary. I would suggest that you look again at smaller scale developments closer to existing road networks where the costs of upgrading the infrastructure and improving public transport would be lower and the impact on the locale less harmful.

I look forward to hearing your response.

Kind regards,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.