

Stroud District Council recently launched its proposed strategy for the Local Plan Review which outlines ideas being considered to for housing in our district until 2040. Communities will have the opportunity to comment until January 18th 2019.

The Conservative Group believe the current proposals are a missed opportunity. They do not adequately reflect the wishes expressed in last years consultation, fail to meet the needs and aspirations of residents and threaten the precious communities, landscape, infrastructure, towns and villages that make our district such an attractive place to live and work.

The proposed strategy suggests locating 80% of housing to the south of the district in a few large allocations whilst surrendering the north around Hardwicke and Whaddon for Gloucester City Council to offload their responsibilities into our District. This unbalanced approach is unnecessary. It could harm community cohesion and have a catastrophic impact on infrastructure. Whilst planners appear to favour creating urban estates the opportunity for smaller, rural communities to remain sustainable and create affordable homes for new and young people is shunned. These proposals could be so much more imaginative.

Cllr Haydn Jones said 'Conservatives want the right homes in the right place and believe that build numbers proposed for Cam and Stonehouse could be damaging. A large new settlement at Wisloe is completely out of place. A new town at Sharpness is challenged by the community and promoters have some way to go in order to demonstrate its merits. Whaddon must play a part in providing homes for the people of Stroud and rural parishes should have the opportunity to grow where there is a need to support families and young people'.

The sense of community in our district is a distinct and, perhaps, quirky but valued local characteristic. This unique feel is born from generations of gentle change and organic growth. It is threatened by some proposals contained in the Emerging Strategy. People said they favoured dispersal but a refusal to consider where development can help communities remain sustainable is compounded by an apparent ideological planning dogma that big is always beautiful. Dispersed small scale growth combined with sensible, balanced and accepted concentration has been sacrificed in favour of carving up high grade, pristine, protected, and productive land. In a changing world where food miles count and national self-sufficiency is an increasing priority, development needs should respond by targeting lower grade and brownfield sites. Communities should be empowered to remain sustainable and, where concentrated, strategic growth is proposed, developers must be compelled to provide appropriate infrastructure, community engagement and investment.

The Conservative Group have carried out a preliminary assessment and offer our alternative thoughts to inform open debate. We are aware that other political groups harbour concerns regarding the Emerging Strategy and hope to work in partnership with them to turn proposals for planners into a plan for people.

Draft details of the numbers and locations proposed in the SDC Emerging Strategy and alternative Conservative Proposals are available on our website:

<https://www.gloucestershireconservatives.org/news/labours-local-plan-missed-opportunity-say-local-conservatives>