

Local plan

I write to you today as a Stroud District Councillor with very serious concerns that the emerging local plan has serious issues with the soundness of their plan.

In light of other plans such as the west of England joint spatial plan being rejected at inspection on grounds such as 'reasonable alternatives had not been considered', the plan not being robust or objective and it really does feel as if the strategic sites were found first and subsequent evidence has then been manipulated to fit these sites.

- The CEO at the time of the review held a series of meetings with the landowner's , senior planning officers, the promoter and the developer in order to promote the Sharpness site.
- With the Sharpness site PS36, the local plan 'issues and options' paper in 2017 stated the access to services and facilities were Very Poor but in 2018 it had been rated as Good! What has changed and why have we had no explanation as to why this rating has been changed. Our theory is that the evidence is being made to 'fit' certain sites as it certainly does not reflect 'The views of local communities and those with a stake in the future of the area'.
- With the Wisloe site PS37, land grading seems to have been manipulated to fit with the plan as the ALC test that was commissioned by the developers was not completed to the required industry standard.
- Residents were asked in 2017 what they would prefer to see and the result was that of a dispersal and concentration around existing large settlements BUT Stroud District council has chosen to ignore our residents and go the the least favoured option of a single growth site that both Sharpness and Wisloe both form as per the plan. We have also put to the strategic planning team alternative sites that I do not feel were considered

I am also concerned on a number of points to do with the specific sites themselves.

Sharpness PS36

- Transport - Both J13 and J14 M5 are already/nearing capacity. With the permissions already granted and being built now is putting a huge and much more prominent pressure on these junctions and the surrounding areas that are getting congested. There will be significant pressure put on the Almondsbury interchange and significant growth on the amount of vehicles getting to Bristol. Most people from this area commute to Bristol more than they do to Gloucester.
- Local roads are already inadequate so to put even more pressure on roads that are no more than country lanes would be irresponsible.
- Train - I personally cannot see this working as it will not be going in the direction that most people will require and we already know that to get to Bristol there is little additional capacity to add further train services. If everyone will be using trains does that mean that all stations will need to extend their platforms to cater for all the extra carriages? If not then will we end up putting people back into their cars because of poor train services? This would also affect the Sustainability of the plan. Also what is the cost to the public for getting on a train to Cam, then change to get to Bristol and then the cost of bus or taxi to then get from the station to their place of work versus getting in the car? Convenience and cost will play a massive part in people's decisions. If everyone is encouraged to use the train, then what improvements will be made to cam station as there is already an issue with parking spilling out onto Box road so where will everyone park? We already know that the MD of GWR has no intentions or plans to open up the Sharpness line as a commuter

rail track. A rail line is no more than a pipedream and would therefore push more vehicles onto our already at capacity road networks.

- Busses - The developer is also proposing that if the train link is not viable or available then shuttle busses are to be used - this would need to be a very large fleet of busses going at all times to suit everyone because not everyone will be going to the same place at the same time. Again is it wise to be increasing the number of vehicles on our roads?
- Employment - There is some employment in the area but by no means enough to give all these extra people jobs. There has been land available for employment at Sharpness for over 60 years and very few have expressed interest in the land in that time. If by some miracle someone did, then it is only useful for warehouses that will increase vehicles on our local roads and I'm sure it will also be lower paid jobs. If we want to encourage employment then the jobs need to be mid to high paying jobs so that it contributes to the local economy but in reality we are not going to get that.
- Berkeley - If we are going to have this level of development I really fear for the businesses in Berkeley. That amount of houses will end up having their own shops, cafes etc and will take that trade away from the hardworking business owners in Berkeley. Also if they don't have their own shops Berkeley will become so busy that it will turn people away from going there. Part of the plan explains that development should compliment existing communities and unfortunately for Berkeley it will have the opposite effect.
- Safe communities - After meeting with the Berkeley Vale youth forum (12-18 year olds) I asked them how they felt about it and their response was they didn't want it because at the moment they feel safe in their community. They fear that we will lose our community spirit and that crime will rise, gangs will form and that it will become unrecognisable to them. Again the plan says its to provide safe environments but with this level of housing in one area will have the opposite effect. What additional pressures will be put on our emergency services as a result.
- Coalescence - joining up Berkeley, Sharpness, Wanswell, Brookend to form one huge settlement where at the moment are their own towns and villages in their own rights. In planning terms this goes against Government, local and national policy and is recognised as very poor planning practice.
- Social isolation - This is something that is happening everywhere and increasing all the time especially now after the recent pandemic. It increases the risks of mental health issues not just in young people but to everyone. My fear is that such a big development will carry that risk of people not integrating with the existing communities and then causing social isolation. Depression affects 1 in 4 people and therefore MUST be acknowledged.
- Some land within the plan has been included even though the landowner has pulled out so there is a strong feeling that this is being forced.

- Site is at the furthest point from the anticipated employment growth point between Cheltenham and Gloucester and the 2050 Gloucester Vision
- The whole development is on green fields and no brownfield land will be used. Its absolutely ridiculous to create a farm – on former farmland! In addition the fields can no longer take up CO2 or be used to feed the local population (this contradicts Stroud District Council Policy DCP1)
- Impact on wildlife including internationally protected natural habitats.
- Although just outside a flood risk zone now, have the effects of climate change been taken into account? Once the fields have been built on they can no longer absorb rain water (contradicting Stroud District Council Policy DCP1)

The Environment

- The development will cover over 1,000 acres of greenfields. This is inconsistent with the climate emergency agenda. There is a general lack of evidence regarding the resulting impact on the environment
- Site is in close proximity to the Severn Estuary which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), a Special Protection Area (SPA) and a Ramsar site – all of which should provide the area with protection against negative impacts. Insubstantial evidence provided as to how the adverse impacts will be avoided / mitigated
- The SSSI extends down the mud flats of the Severn as far as Thornbury, and this area should be included in the due consideration of the Plan's soundness
- Site is about 1 mile from the internationally important Slimbridge Wetland Centre
- Likely decline in air quality through increased car use, in the absence of a realistic public transport option. The council rated this site as having no impact on air quality

People in the Berkeley, Sharpness and surrounding areas are not opposed to all housing, they would just like housing to be 'proportional' to the area in order to enhance what we already have.

Wisloe PS37

- Coalescence - basically it would be joining together Wisloe, Slimbridge, Gossington, Cam and Cambridge. In planning terms this goes against Government, local and national policy and is recognised as very poor planning practice.
- AONB - this site is clearly visible from the AONB and will have an effect on it.
- Noise - Being sandwiched between the ever increasing busy A38 and M5 motorway Plus the Railway line will be a huge factor for this site.

- Pollution - Again because of the A38, M5 and the railway it would not be possible to attenuate these pollution hazards for residents. Increased risk in children with asthma and older people developing respiratory problems that will have a knock on effect to our already overloaded NHS services.
- Conservation - The severn estuary is not just national but also internationally recognised and protected for its flora and fauna. Curlew and lapwing, that use the estuary, roost and feed in the fields proposed for this development. These birds are a Red Data list internationally and nationally protected and endangered species that would be displaced by this proposal. The current habitat loss cannot be mitigated as they require wide open spaces.
- We have also put alternative sites forward instead of Wisloe, but again we were met with resistance to even consider the alternatives.
- We know that with both sites that no infrastructure is guaranteed and for sites of these sizes a level of infrastructure should already be in place which neither have.

In conclusion, both of these sites would in essence benefit from some much smaller development (dispersal) just like the Stroud district residents had stated back in 2017. This plan feels like the only people who benefit from this are Stroud District Council Planning Officers and the developers, Certainly NOT the residents, local Businesses and tourists to the area. I am disappointed that residents have been ignored. Stroud District is supposed to be a rural district and I fear that both of these large developments will have a negative impact on rural district status. I respectfully ask that PS36 and PS37 are reconsidered with alternative sites or at the very least with much less numbers of dwellings.

Yours Sincerely

Lindsey Green

Stroud District Councillor for the Berkeley Vale Ward

