

Stroud District Council
Planning Strategy Team
Ebley Mill
Ebley Wharf
Stroud
Gloucestershire
GL5 4UB

Our ref: SV/2018/110073/CS-
01/IS1-L01

Date: 16 January 2019

Dear Sir/Madam

**Stroud District Local Plan Review: Emerging Strategy Public Consultation
(November 2018)**

Thank you for notifying us of the above consultation, which we received on 16 November 2018.

For completeness, we previously made comments to the Local Plan Review Issues and Options consultation in our letter dated 5 December 2017 (reference SV/2010/104083/CS-09/PO1-L01). At this time, we would reiterate our previous comments made in the 'Existing Local Plan Policies' section of the letter. Furthermore, we have reviewed the documents and would offer the following additional comments to assist at this time.

We have also met with yourselves to discuss the evidence base, primarily the production of a new Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) on 16 October 2018.

Draft Statement of Community Involvement

In addition to the above, at this time we are also in receipt of the consultation on the draft Statement of Community Involvement. We welcome inclusion of the Environment Agency on the list of 'specific consultation bodies' for preparing the Local Plan and other policy documents, and as a statutory consultee within the planning application process.

With regards to pre-application advice in the planning application process, it seems timely to outline how we deal with pre-application enquiries. We offer a two-tier service; free preliminary advice and where there are detailed issues to be resolved we offer a charged service. As a result we no longer provide a response to pre-application requests received from Local Planning Authorities but will instead be engaging directly with developers. In the interests of encouraging better quality and more environmentally sensitive development coming forwards and avoid delays, your Council may wish to include mention of the above in the Statement and include our contact details for more information: SHWGplanning@environment.gov.uk

Environment Agency
Newtown Industrial Estate (Riversmeet House) Northway Lane, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, GL20 8JG.
Customer services line: 03708 506 506
www.gov.uk/environment-agency

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We note paragraphs 3.14 and 3.15 refer to decision notices. In accordance with Planning Practice Guidance (PPG (Determining a Planning Application, Paragraph 019)), we request notification of decisions or applications withdrawn, where we have made representation and politely ask that this is done via email within two weeks. Furthermore, we request a URL of the decision notice, or an electronic copy of the decision notice or outcome. This is particularly important for any decision taken on a planning application where the Agency has objected on flood risk grounds.

Flood Risk

We welcome all of the key issues listed. However, your Council should be minded that there may be conflicting issues in certain locations, especially brownfield sites and consideration should be given to how these maybe resolved.

Section 2.4 - Local Green Spaces and Community Facilities

With regards the proposed Green Infrastructure, Sport and Recreation Study we would welcome the opportunity to work with your council on this document to provide a consistent approach/aims on this issue (incorporating and tying into existing policies within the Stroud Valleys).

This would include issues such as restoration of watercourse channels, removal of in channel structures, de-culverting, flood plain creation and the reconnection of river corridor links, which are all encompassed under green infrastructure.

The creation of the mapped GI network will also help identify opportunities going forwards to re-connect green corridors, especially in relation to Stroud's watercourses.

Section 3.2 - Planning for the Future – Strategic Objectives

We recommend Strategic Objectives SO5 and SO6 should be updated to include reference to Green Infrastructure.

Furthermore, we question whether Ham Mill is a good example to use as an exemplar regeneration site. The site failed to deliver an exemplar approach to incorporating an improved green corridor or design principles in relation to flood risk.

Section 5.0 - Making Places

Brimscombe & Thrupp

We consider there to be the potential for significant green infrastructure improvements at all three sites. As outlined above, reference to green infrastructure within the Strategic Objectives will help to ensure it is included within these sites.

We note the majority of alternative sites proposed lie outside of existing areas of Flood Zone 3 (High Risk).

Stroud

We note sites P11 and P13 are located in areas of Flood Zone 3 according to our Flood Map for Planning (Rivers and Sea). We question the appropriateness of such in line with national planning policy and will seek to ensure that the SFRA being produced currently addresses this.

Stonehouse

It is our understanding from discussion that the canal and open space outlined in potential site PS20a was going to be proposed in PS20b instead. On the basis that the majority of PS20b is currently in an area of Flood Zone 3.

Through partnership working these sites offer the opportunity to deliver for significant green infrastructure and environmental benefits, beyond those currently stated as part of the ongoing canal regeneration.

Whaddon

This sites offers potential to help deliver significant environmental enhancements in addition to flood risk benefits to downstream areas of Gloucester associated with the Daniels and Whaddon Brooks, including improvements to the standard of protection offered by existing schemes.

Section 6.0 - Background Studies

The emerging Plan and the Level 2 SFRA needs to take into account the potential impacts of climate change. The results of this work should inform the suitability of sites and appropriate developable areas (quantum of development), following the principles of the sequential test as set out in national planning policy.

Sustainability Appraisal Report

We note our previous recommendations have been included within the sub objectives for SA 12.

It is difficult to ascertain the impacts on flooding due to surface water run-off from sites, though the objective and policies contained within the local plan should include the automatic use of SuDS techniques on all sites with, as minimum, to ensure no change in discharge rates or volumes. Hence this should negate increases in flood risk generated by green-field sites from this source, unless specific catchments have been identified as being sensitive to changes of land use.

5.9 Residential Site options

We do not concur with the statement made in this section of the report, we consider too much weight is being given to the issue of surface water runoff in relation to other sources of flood risk. On many brownfield sites the primary flood risk will come as a result of direct flooding from other sources (principally fluvial), which may have a greater impact, or at minimum equate to potential impacts from greenfield sites, where appropriate policies are put in place within the local plan.

6.55 - The Stroud Valleys

The minor benefits expressed would be better delivered in combination with SA objective 12 which is also key in the growth area. However, this does not appear to have been mentioned within the report. We advise that this is included going forwards. The provision of appropriate sustainable layouts has the potential to deliver benefits for green infrastructure in this area.

6.84 – Potential Sites

Again this sections seems to focus predominantly on flood risk from surface water compared to other potential allocations in the plan that have existing greater direct risks from other sources.

6.132 – 6.134 – SA Objective 12

The plan needs to ensure that all allocations can meet the principles of this objective and current/future national planning policy principles, this is especially relevant on brownfield sites within or partially within areas of Flood Zone 3.

These sites could also provide the greatest opportunities for benefits by the removal of

obstructions within the flood plain, improving flow route, access to the watercourse and increasing flood plain storage.

However this requires realistic allocations to be set to help deliver the most sustainable developments and maximum flexibility in enabling the incorporation of the principles contained within objective 12.

Table 7.1 Proposed Monitoring

This measure should also include any permissions granted contrary to the advice of the Lead Local Flood Authority who are the statutory consultee on surface water discharges which constitutes a significant element of objective SA12.

Through appropriate allocation of sites and realistic delivery numbers, that take account of current and future restrictions, it would be hoped the answer to this would be 0.

Appendix 4 - Table 4.1 & 4.3

We do not fully concur with the impact designation within the assumptions, we suggest the following is more appropriate;

- Sites that are entirely or mainly (i.e. >50%) on greenfield land that is within flood zones 3a or 3b or mainly on brownfield within flood zones 3a or 3b are likely to have a significant negative (--) effect.
- Sites that are either entirely or mainly on greenfield outside of flood zones 3a and 3b, or that are entirely or mainly on brownfield outside flood zones 3a or 3b are likely to have a minor negative (-) effect.
- Sites that are on brownfield land outside of flood zones 3a and 3b are likely to have a negligible (0) effect.

In addition we suggest that all new development **will** incorporate (and not whether) SuDS as part of their drainage strategy irrespective of the current nature of the site in accordance of the general principles of providing benefits contained within national planning policy (all tables).

Appendix 5 & 6

The above change should be fed into the relevant site options e.g. PS11 and 13 should be shown as red as the direct risk is at its worse compared to other sites.

Water Resources – Water Framework Directive (WFD)

Local level actions and decision making can help secure improvements to the water environment. This is widely known as the catchment-based approach and has been adopted to deliver requirements under the WFD. It seeks to:

- deliver positive and sustained outcomes for the water environment by promoting a better understanding of the environment at a local level; and
- encourage local collaboration and more transparent decision-making when both planning and delivering activities to improve the water environment.

This Review provides an opportunity to deliver multi-functional benefits through linking development with enhancements to the water environment. Local WFD catchment data can be obtained from: <http://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/RiverBasinDistrict/9>

Stroud District falls within the Severn River Basin Management Plan and Thames River Basin Management Plan areas. Each Plan highlights key issues and actions for the

catchment that should be of use in developing your Plan. The latest Plans are available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/river-basin-management-plans-2015>).

Development and surface water drainage will need to be carefully located and designed to avoid pollution risks to waters and address potential environmental impact associated with low flows. For example SuDS may need to provide multiple levels of treatment. To address any quantitative issues with the waterbodies, SuDS should be designed so to maximise recharge to the aquifer and can support water levels in receiving rivers. In addition, removal of structures in watercourses and habitat enhancement are also good examples of how to help deliver the WFD aim of 'good' status/potential by 2027. We would also recommend pollution prevention measures are incorporated to protect ground and surface water. More information on groundwater protection can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/groundwater-protection-position-statements>

Water Quality – Waste Water Infrastructure

As part of the evidence base preparation for the current LP, we sought to ensure that the strategic housing growth could be accommodated in consideration of waste water infrastructure. Information on local treatment works and their ability to accommodate housing and employment growth can be found in the 'Refresh Version' of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), November 2014. In addition you should contact the Water Company for further and up-to-date information and advice.

In light of the current LP review and in the interests of meeting strategic objective S05, we recommend your Council identify the receiving sewage treatment works for all new sites emerging and whether the housing and/or any other proposals can be accommodated without impacting upon the receiving treatment works. You should look at physical capacity issues (e.g. network pipes) in consultation with the Water Company; and environmental capacity (quality of treated effluent) issues.

We have previously raised concerns over the adequacy of the current sewage arrangements in Stroud that is causing foul flooding of properties, land and pollution of the river Frome. The particular areas of concern are Wallbridge, Dudbridge and Ebley Meadows. It is envisaged that major infrastructure improvements will be required to deal with the additional growth and we understand Severn Trent Water are aware of the existing problems. The main sewage treatment works serving the Stroud area is Stanley Down.

Where there is an identified constraint (amber or red) you should demonstrate that there is a solution (it may be already programmed, or could be a possible future infrastructure upgrade) to help improve the capacity issue and enable the development to go ahead. This will require consultation with the Water Company and we have developed some general questions to assist this process. The outcome of this may inform a 'phasing' policy within your plan where appropriate. Where necessary the IDP may need to set out key milestones for waste water infrastructure upgrades and improvements. The evidence you produce should give a reasonable degree of certainty to all parties, helping demonstrate development is deliverable, and importantly ensure that your plan is 'sound'.

As previously advised, an updated IDP would be the logical place for this evidence gathering to be undertaken and note that this is identified as a study to be updated in Section 6.0 of the Emerging Strategy Paper.

Note: Government Guidance states that sufficient detail should be provided to give clarity to all parties on when infrastructure upgrades will be provided, looking at the needs and costs (what and how much). The NPPG refers to “ensuring viability and deliverability – pursuing sustainable development requires careful attention to viability and costs in plan making and decision making”. Plans should be “deliverable”.

Water Efficiency

Based on available information, there does not appear to be any existing or emerging water resource issues within Stroud District. However, you Council should include consideration of the following within the updated IDP;

- Provide an overview of the Water environment and potential impacts from the new development proposed. Information can be found using Catchment Data Explorer (use link below) <http://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/OperationalCatchment/3194>
- Consult with the local water company to check for any local water resource concerns
- Outline the proposed water efficiency standards required for new development
- If there are water company concerns about water availability, justify why tighter water efficiency standards are required.

Groundwater, Hydrology and Contaminated Land

The NPPF takes a precautionary approach to land contamination. Before the principle of development can be determined, land contamination should be investigated to see whether it could preclude certain development due to environmental risk or cost of clean-up (remediation).

We note that priority will be given to development on brownfield sites, which we generally encourage. However, the Strategy Paper does not appear to mention groundwater quality or groundwater resources, including within Environmental sections of the Emerging Strategy Paper.

With respect to each Brownfield site, we would expect each site to be fully assessed in terms of its contaminated land status in-line with statutory guidance following ‘The Model Procedures for the Management of Land Contamination (CLR 11) principles for contaminated land assessment. This should include a desk-study of past land-use, onsite investigation and chemical sampling of the ground and groundwater, risk assessment, remediation, monitoring and validation.

As previously stated, there are several authorised landfills within the area, including Colethrop Court Farm, Frampton, Woolgaston Farm, Standle Farm and Hampton Fields. There are also numerous historic landfills mainly concentrated in areas including Stroud, Nailsworth, Dursley, Berkeley and Frampton. Again consideration should be given to the location of these sites when considering development/re-development of land because of the associated environmental impacts both to controlled waters and human health from such sites. Your Council may hold records of historic landfills, in addition to ours.

We note there are Source Protection Zones (SPZs) of key strategic importance located to the south and southeast of Dursley, which should be taken into account when considering site allocations. Reference could be included to our policies on groundwater protection (last updated March 2018):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/groundwater-protection-position-statements>

Ecology

The revised NPPF states *“planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural environment and local environment by... minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity”*. We welcome opportunities to incorporate measures to enhance biodiversity within developments, particularly where this could help to deliver net gains for biodiversity.

Mitigation measures and WFD compliance assessment may be required at the detailed design stage.

Local level actions and decision making can help secure improvements to the water environment. This is widely known as the ‘catchment-based approach’ and has been adopted to deliver requirements under the WFD. At this time we would reiterate the comments made in the ‘Environmental Projects and Partnership Working’, ‘Fish and Invertebrates’ and ‘Other evidence base documents’ sections of our previous letter.

There is a watercourse on the western edge of potential allocation PS33 Northwest of Berkeley. In addition to any potential flood risk, we recommend a buffer of at least 8m or public open space (as suggested) is included from the top of bank of the watercourse to the edge of any built development.

Similar to the above, there is a watercourse present on the western edge of potential

I trust that the above is clear and of use to you whilst progressing the Plan. Should you wish to discuss the above, please do not hesitate to contact me via the details below.

Yours faithfully


Senior Planning Advisor

Direct dial 
Direct e-mail @environment-agency.gov.uk