

25 September 2023

Mark Russell
Head of Planning Strategy and Economic Development

Dear Mark

Stroud Local Plan Review Examination

We write on behalf of Sharpness Developments LLP, the promoters of the Sharpness New Settlement (draft allocation PS36), following the Inspector's letter dated 4th August 2023 to Stroud District Council and the Council's subsequent response dated 29th August 2023.

In the letter the Inspectors have raised two issues relating to Sharpness:

1. Provision of a train service; and
2. Bespoke Mobility as a Service transport scheme (MaaS).

Their concerns can be summarised as follows:

1. Train:

- a. Costs of providing a passenger train service have not been audited or agreed with Network Rail or the relevant train operating company. The costs could change.
- b. The Developer has said that the train will be self-funded, but should cost rise, the service may not be viable.
- c. Subsidy for the railway would end after 3 years after which the service is expected to be self-funding. You consider that this is not a sufficient timeframe for the service to be established.
- d. Service would not go to Bristol.
- e. There has been a lack of recent engagement from Network Rail.

2. Maas:

- a. The Maas proposal does not provide indicative costs for implementation at Sharpness.
- b. Concerns over the likely costs.
- c. How would it be funded.
- d. Will it be viable.
- e. How will it be implemented in the context of a new settlement rather than an urban extension where transport systems are well established.

In response to these concerns, we are able to set out the following to assist:

Train Service

The proposed train service is part of the transport strategy for the proposed new settlement. However, the primary aim of the development has been to design a self-contained new community centred around a network of active travel routes designed only for walking, cycling and wheeling that will be the quickest mode of transport from the residential neighbourhoods to the employment areas and other facilities within the settlement and surrounding area. The train service has been included so that those who want to travel further distances can do so by means other than the private car and thereby providing a genuine choice of transport options. This forms part of the 'vision and validate approach' prescribed by the Department of Transport policy document "Strategic road network and the delivery of sustainable development".

- a. The promoter's costs relating to the delivery of the train service were provided to Network Rail on the 7 August 2023 for their review and comment. The promoters have now entered into a process with Network Rail to agree the capital costs for the delivery of the service. The agreement on costs will be completed within the next 4-8 weeks.
- b. The promoters have made provision for the cost of the delivery of the train service to the site. In the meeting with Network Rail, it has agreed that Network Rail will assess these costs in detail and provide their thoughts on our costings shortly. The promoter is confident in their condition survey and costings and does not anticipate a significant difference in the costs once Network Rail has concluded their examination of the costings.
- c. The promoters can confirm that the funding for the service would be kept under a rolling review to ensure a viable service is delivered. It has been agreed with Network Rail that they would assist in the engagement with a train operating company as part of the PACE process that will be followed by the developer in collaboration with Network Rail. The developer and Network Rail have committed to work together on this process.
- d. A service to Bristol could be achieved by changing at Cam/Dursley station and travelling south.
- e. Engagement with Network Rail is ongoing and the last meeting was held on the 7 August 2023.

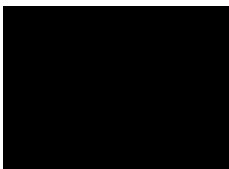
MaaS

- a. MaaS is a combined app-based transport information service to link up different modes of transport. At Sharpness it will provide information on train services, express and demand bus services as well as the location of bicycles, electric scooters and other forms of personal transport. This information service will be provided by the developer as part of the development.
- b. In the transport evidence pack provided to the Examination there is a public transport operating cost model for the train service and the express coaches (DRT). These costs have been based on the actual operating costs of current rail services in the UK and operating costs from a current DRT operator. The developer is confident that the public transport operating cost model is based on realistic operating costs and can be deemed viable.

- c. The costs will be funded by pump prime funding by the developer for a period of time that will be kept under review until the services are viable. This will form part of the contractual agreement with the DRT provider.
- d. Yes, the service will be viable and set out above.
- e. Where developments are located, how they are designed and how well delivery and public transport services are integrated has a huge impact on people's mode of travel for short journeys. The combined transport infrastructure for Sharpness will be far easier to implement as the infrastructure will be delivered from the outset in order to provide transformational change in the way we travel from the outset. Developments in the right places and served by the right sustainable infrastructure delivered alongside or ahead of occupancy must be a key consideration when planning for growth¹. Planned new settlements have a greater ability to successfully provide the delivery of planned new infrastructure.

We support the Council's position that additional supportive work can be carried out well within the 6-month extension proposed, to alleviate concerns related to the strategic road network and Sharpness. The attached table shows the work that will be completed at Sharpness within the next 6 months.

Yours sincerely



Claudia Jones MRTPI
Morgan Elliot Planning

¹ Strategic road network and the delivery of sustainable development – Policy Paper: Department of Transport.