

## Department for Place



Date: 17<sup>th</sup> October 2023  
Reference: sgc/sdclp/examination

Inspectors Lucas and Wright  
Stroud Local Plan Inspectors  
Stroud District Council

By Email

Dear Inspectors Lucas and Wright

Thank you for your letter dated 2<sup>nd</sup> October. South Gloucestershire Council has considered the questions you have raised. In replying our response is based on our understanding of the current situation with J14. We do not offer comments on J12 as this is outside of the administrative boundary of South Gloucestershire.

### J14 of the M5

With regard to questions 1 to 7, we are supportive of the 'exploratory' process that Stroud have now commenced. We held the first meeting of the SDLP J14 Working Subgroup on 12<sup>th</sup> October. We would be happy for a minute note of this meeting to be shared by Stroud DC if you felt that was helpful. Our two Council's Chief Executives and senior political Leadership teams are also meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> October to discuss how both Councils can continue to support the Stroud Local Plan. We would be happy for Stroud to advise you of the outcome of that meeting. We will continue to meet all Stroud's request for meetings and confirm our commitment to this.

In terms of the specified technical work tasks identified in the Action Plan, my Council is not currently directly involved in commissioning these and we therefore defer to Gloucestershire County Council and National Highways to advise on whether these are realistic and achievable.

It is our understanding that the traffic data and forecasting work sufficient to show a strategic intervention level of mitigation for J14 to support the level of growth being proposed by the SDC LP has been completed. We defer to yourselves on what level of detail, be that a 'concept design' or something else, at this stage in the process, that you feel is required, noting your views expressed on pages 2 and 3 while also recognising that a proportionate approach needs to be taken.

We would support the view that it should be realistic for the scheme costs and a budget to be identified by all parties by January 2024, recognising again this would be high level given the formative stage in the process of a preparing a major scheme bid that J14 would have reached by this time.

While it is likely to be possible for a funding and apportionment methodology to be presented to the relevant parties, it is not clear that it will also be possible for agreement to be reached by January 2024 and a delivery scheme agreed by the end of 2023. This is not necessarily due to the constraint of time per se, it is more connected to the formative stage the new South Gloucestershire Local Plan will have reached. In the SoCG agreed with SDC dated 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023 and to the oral evidence given at the EIP Matters 2 hearing session on 23<sup>rd</sup> March we highlighted the uncertainty for my Council being likely to support a scale of growth in proximity to J14 within South Gloucestershire, sufficient to justify developer contributions to support strategic improvements at J14.

Since March matters have progressed further and I can update as follows. Firstly, the Council is aware that an interim solutions led approach is at an advanced stage of development between developer parties and the NH to enable the NH holding objections on the planning applications at Charfield to be lifted. These developments would help to meet the housing needs of South Gloucestershire and ensure the Council can continue to have a 5 year housing land supply. SDC are aware of this.

Secondly, the next stage of the South Gloucestershire Local Plan is due to be considered by our Cabinet on 13<sup>th</sup> November, with a recommendation that a further Regulation 18 consultation is carried out. This will set out the level of homes and jobs needed in the district along with options for how this level of development could be met. The consultation is likely to be testing the proposition that around 7,700 new homes will need to be provided from greenfield sites in the period 2025 to 2040. This next stage of our local plan will test the different ways in which this target could be met. One option will include locating the majority of this new development beyond the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Green Belt in the north of our District, alongside the options of locating development as close as possible to the urban edge of Greater Bristol and utilising the opportunities of our transport corridors. The Council is working on the basis that its new Local Plan will look to manage down the need to extend commuting travel distances from more peripheral locations and any dependency on 'big ticket' infrastructure items to deliver housing led proposals, which have not advanced in pathway delivery terms, or we feel present significant risks to being able to do so.

### Housing supply

We note the Inspectors' request on the matter of assessing the potential for housing supply from sites not impacted by J14. We will continue to work closely with SDC and their technical advisers on any additional information that will be required.

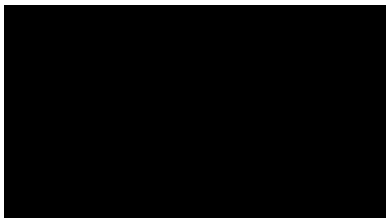
South Gloucestershire Council is working to ensure its planning decisions are plan-led and is taking a pragmatic approach to bringing forward a Local Plan as soon as possible. Our approach is to bring forward a plan which meets identified housing need and is not reliant on 'big ticket infrastructure, where the deliverability of this has not been fully evidenced. As one of our neighbours, we fully support SDC's efforts to bring forward their own local plan without delay. We would hope that as the Inspectors for the SDC Local Plan, you will support this objective and can lead the discussion with SDC to ensure they are able to bring forward a pragmatic plan without further delay. Our

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understanding is that SDC have presented a persuasive case, given the level of housing supply they have available or could potentially make available, that would not be directly reliant on a strategic mitigation intervention at J14. We would therefore ask you to fully explore this as a procedable option with SDC.

Yours sincerely,



Patrick Conroy  
Strategic Planning Policy and Specialist Advice