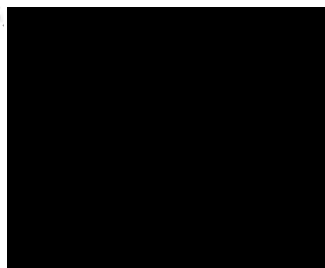


17 JAN 2018



Local Plan review  
Development Services  
Stroud District Council  
Ebley Mill  
Stroud  
Gloucestershire  
GL5 4UB

15 January 2018

Dear Sirs

**LOCAL PLAN – BERKELEY CLUSTER**

I am writing in connection with the above to express my concern at the size of the proposed development in this area relative to the existing landscape, and the lack of infrastructure available to support a development of this size.

**EMPLOYMENT**

Currently there is little employment available in the area, and it is mostly low paid in nature. Therefore a significant proportion of the existing residents commute to Bristol, Gloucester, Cheltenham and Swindon for employment.

I appreciate that new jobs will be created by the building of the development, but these will be short term in nature, and will not be sustainable once the development is completed. It is likely that the area will continue to have largely dormitory status. Any new retail opportunities arising from the increase in the population of the area are likely to provide mostly low paid work.

**EXISTING ROAD NETWORK**

The existing road network in the proposed development area comprises mainly B grade and unclassified roads, which are unsuitable for the increase in traffic which will arise from the additional development.

In particular, the junction at the top of Brookend village is very dangerous. Approaching from Wanswell and turning right in to Brookend village is a blind corner. There is currently a mirror on the junction, but it is regularly misted or frosted over, making the turn extremely dangerous. Notwithstanding the

proposed 2400 home development, the addition of 70 houses at Wanswell, and 300 in Sharpness alone will significantly increase the traffic on the road, making this a potential accident hotspot. This junction should be altered to make it safe.

In considering Sharpness, Brookend and Wanswell it should also be borne in mind that residents parking in the villages reduce the roads to single line traffic in several places, increasing my concern that these roads are unsuitable to carry significantly larger volumes of traffic.

For driver commuting, the A38 is currently under pressure and slow moving at peak times. There are already queues to join and leave the M5 at junctions 12, 13 and 14. For drivers trying to access the M4 and M32 these are already at a standstill and crawling, even outside peak times. It needs to be borne in mind that in addition to the Berkeley cluster there is an additional 3500 homes planned for Buckover in South Gloucestershire, in addition to developments in Falfield, Wooton under Edge and Charfield. A significant proportion of these new residents will probably also look to Bristol for employment, plus residents from Wales and the Forest of Dean now the Severn bridge tolls have been abolished, adding to a network that is already failing to cope with the volume of traffic today.

I commute to Gloucester, and have already stopped using the M5, as exiting the motorway at junction 12 is too dangerous, with drivers regularly stopping in the inside lane to try to force their way in to the queue on the hard shoulder.

I understand that there is a proposal to add another junction to the M5 to alleviate the problems joining and leaving the motorway, but this will not address the volume of traffic currently using the M5, which is under pressure at peak times, and notably in the summer with holiday traffic.

#### **MEDICAL & EMERGENCY SERVICES**

There is a severe shortage of GP services in the Berkeley area. For some time now the Marybrook medical centre in Berkeley has been operating with only 2 locum doctors, which is well below what is required, and insufficient to manage the needs of the existing population. This would have to be addressed before continuing with more development in the area. Building a new health centre would not address this concern when the existing one cannot be staffed appropriately.

All of the emergency service would require significant investment and expansion to cover the additional population. Currently the proposed development area is served by retained fire fighters. The nearest police station is in Dursley, and I have personally experienced delays in getting an ambulance.

#### **FLOODING**

The area for proposed development is regularly seen to have standing water on the fields. The roads frequently flood, notably on the Breadstone road at Oldlands Farm, Halmore corner, and below the nursing home. The water pools below the railway bridge between Wanswell and Berkeley, and the bottom end of Brookend village also floods regularly. On occasions some of these locations have been impassable. With the scale of building proposed, this will significantly reduce the opportunity for the water to disperse or soak away, and without adequate remediation work these will become impassable on a regular basis.

## **AMENITIES & LEISURE**

The proposed development area is not currently well served for shopping. There is a small village shop in Sharpness, and a small supermarket plus other small retail outlets in Berkeley, but with very limited parking. For a population growth that is proposed, as a minimum a supermarket would have to be provided, with suitable access.

Currently the area is very popular for leisure activities, notably cycling, horse riding and walking. The increase in road traffic will be extremely dangerous for cyclists and horse riding, and opportunities for walking will be reduced. Given the current climate of trying to encourage people to be more active this would be a retrograde step.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

Sharpness docks is licenced for the storage of nitrates on the condition that no more than 40 people live within the blast zone. Do the agreed development of 300 houses in Sharpness, and the new homes in the development area still meet that criteria?

It must also be remembered that although the Berkeley nuclear power station has been decommissioned, there is still a storage facility in the area.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS**

Currently the development area is a rural area, with an abundance of wildlife and birds, including migrating birds with the proximity to Slimbridge. Building what is actually not a "garden village" but a small town will impact on this, and will change the character of the whole area. In particular it is home to many wild deer. Reducing their habitat and increasing traffic is a concern from a safety point of view, let alone considering the impact on their population.

In summary, the size of the development proposed is disproportionate to the existing landscape. Sharpness, Wanswell and Brookend currently have fewer than 700 homes, and this proposal will quadruple the exiting population.

I appreciate that there is a need to build more housing, but would request that this plan be abandoned in favour of a more dispersed development, adding smaller developments on to the existing towns and villages in the area to better protect the rural appeal of the county, allow us to continue to enjoy the beauty of the countryside and respect the wildlife that also resides in it.

Yours faithfully

