

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 15 January 2019 17:48
To: _WEB_Local Plan
Subject: Local plan review Berkeley Cluster

To Local plan review Planning strategy team; [REDACTED]@[stroud.gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@stroud.gov.uk)

Dear Sirs,

Berkeley Cluster: Sharpness/Newtown & Slimbridge.

This proposal labelled the Berkeley Cluster, needs to be viewed in context with the similar current and proposed developments of Charfield and Buckover, NrThornbury. Whilst these two latter locations are not within Stroud DC they are very close in geographical terms to the Berkeley Cluster. They also entail some additional 4,000 dwellings.

Therefore, in total the number of proposed dwellings for the area is verging on 9000. That is 9,000 dwellings bringing a potential 35,000 people together with their 12,000 cars and vans.

I am firmly of the opinion that any region, let alone one of spread out villages, rural hamlets and small market towns, could not cope with such a vast increase in population density. Transport infrastructure within the region would be overwhelmed as would inter regional transport links.

Medical services which are already currently very difficult to staff and obtain would be swamped. Even if new facilities are constructed the current evidence is that they would be very difficult to staff with the necessary doctors, nurse and so forth.

The proximity of such a huge new population to a depository for radio-active material and a dock area which has a known blast zone around it would possibly come to the attention of modern day “ne’re do wells”.

I also believe the underlying premise, upon which this ‘demand’ for housing is based, to be fundamentally flawed:

The purported reasoning for this policy is that by increasing housing supply the gap between richer and poorer households would lessen by reducing the overall price of property.

This is relying on the economics law of supply and demand. However, as has been seen in media interviews reported in local newspapers, local estate agencies are seeing unprecedented demand for these properties which start at £350,000, from people currently in Bristol, Gloucester and Cheltenham.

This suggests that the ‘demand’ arm of supply and demand, if far outstripping the supply side, thereby singularly failing in the objective of reducing house prices to ‘affordable’ levels and does not satisfy the

stated aim of Government policy to reduce the gap between the housing needs of the less well off and the ability of the better off to afford to buy houses.

Additional infrastructure and amenities:

Such a huge increase in population would necessitate vast infrastructure development; along the lines of:-
An additional junction on to the M5 motorway to relieve some of the pressure off the existing J's 12, 13 and 14;

Improvements to the capacity of both the A38 and M5 to cope with the additional volume of traffic;
The M5 has difficulty coping now with summer traffic, frequently coming to a stand-still, and it is likely those traffic volumes will become the norm rather than holiday peaks.

ALL current road links from the M5 and A38 to the proposed Sharpness site are either classified as B or unclassified and are totally unsuitable for large traffic volumes, only one road is suitable for heavy traffic.

It has been suggested that the rail line from Sharpness to Cam/Dursley could be utilised to take some of the local traffic, this would necessitate:

A station to be built in Sharpness with attendant car parking facilities as one does not currently exist.

Significant improvements to Cam station to enable it to cope with the extra travellers.

Many additional trains stopping at Cam to service the additional commuter traffic.

Significantly improved onward connections beyond Gloucester, Stroud and Bristol to encourage commuters to use the railways.

Similar rail/tramway facilities would be needed to service the Charfield and Buckover sites.

There is already concern from residents over increasing traffic pressure on the lanes between Buckover and Thornbury. It has been noted at residents meetings that they already experience increased pressure at weekends with cyclists and pedestrians using them for leisure purposes. They are also concerned over the very large cost of delivering infrastructure improvements.

This is evidenced by the West of England authorities are currently preparing a Joint Spatial Plan and a local workshop held for residents and other stakeholders of Buckover area.

Each and every new site will need an adequate new utilities; gas, electricity, water, sewage, broadband, refuse collection and disposal; New sewage treatment plants would be needed; New electric sub stations; Electric vehicle charging facilities; Consideration for emergency services and so forth.

Education:

The use of the land at the FOCUS school in Wanswell for 70 houses, suggests that this (fee paying) secondary/college type school in the Berkeley cluster will close thus necessitating a replacement school/college to be constructed.

Primary school provision in the area will need to be significantly improved by enhancing the existing schools and construction of further schools.

Leisure Facilities:

Currently these are woefully inadequate if you only consider gym's, swimming pools and so forth. There are however, extensive opportunities for walking or cycling in fresh air over fields and along paths and quiet country lanes. These however, will be obliterated by the new development

The roads around Sharpness and Berkeley are already popular with cyclists for leisure and competition purposes which can give rise to conflicts with other road users

Medical Services

Berkeley used to have a small hospital – now replaced by housing.

The current GP surgery is currently experiencing difficulties in attracting staff and is currently staffed by locum GP's.

Given current experiences, just building new medical centres etc, will not necessarily mean it can be adequately staffed.

Current plan v Emerging plan

In the current plan access to services and facilities for Berkeley and Sharpness area was described as being “very poor”, now in the emerging plan, they are described as being “good”. Can you explain what has changed in this area to facilitate such a significant alteration to this assessment?

Previous proposals have maximised the number of dwellings at no more than 1800 limited to a much smaller site. How has the area now become able to cope with a greatly inflated number of dwellings?

Has any consideration been given to creating the necessary infrastructure and community amenities prior to the commencement of house construction?

In the event of the developments going ahead:

It has been shown elsewhere that where the infrastructure needs are met upfront of housing, such sites have been more likely to succeed. Therefore, all and any developers, companies and organisations (including their successors to contracts if they are replaced for any reason) involved in the building of these ‘green villages’ must be legally bound:

To install and build upfront before house building commences the additional infrastructure, including the roads, schools, shopping, medical services.

In conclusion:

This plan requires thorough further consideration. The need for, and the cost of, huge additional infrastructure and amenity facilities would be so prohibitive as to render the proposals non-viable.

The sheer size of the developments would have a severely detrimental affect on resident and migratory wildlife; additionally it would not be possible to temporarily relocate and then return post development completion any sensitive animals or plants as the size of the development would render this exercise impossible.

It is accepted that there is a need for some additional housing in this area. However, it is suggested that smaller, more widely dispersed developments would be better suited to meeting these needs and being more in tune with the character of the area. Smaller developments with a minimum of 40% affordable homes dispersed throughout the site, which would hopefully make them more accessible to families already within the area but in need of a new home.

Thank you

Yours faithfully

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