

To:

17 JAN 2019

Re: The Local Plan Review in specific the Berkeley, Sharpness, Newtown development.

Very little information has been received in Purton regarding the huge development planned hence the late sending of this letter. I was aware of the 300 houses at Sharpness and the consultation meetings regarding this development but not of the Berkeley cluster development. My comments regarding the emerging strategy local plan review are as follows

Of the top 5 key issues quoted in the emerging strategy paper , the first states:

Ensuring that new housing development is located in the right place, supported by the right services and infrastructure to create sustainable development.

I fail to see how the Berkeley cluster plan meets any of these issues.

Conserving and enhancing Stroud District's countryside and biodiversity, including maximising the potential for a green infrastructure network across the District.

Building 2400 houses in one area that is currently green fields cannot meet this second key issue. Rather than enhance the countryside and biodiversity I can only surmise that building this enormous quantity of houses will destroy what is currently undisturbed farmland that has supported a wide range of flora and fauna through centuries. The pure scale of this development no matter what "green networks" might be envisaged by planners cannot possibly *enhance* the countryside. Destroying hedgerows, felling trees and covering over land with concrete and tarmac will destroy habitat for thousands of animals and invertebrates and have a detrimental effect on biodiversity.

Maximising the potential of brownfield and underused sites to contribute to housing supply.

I think that the vast majority if not all of the identified area in the Berkeley cluster is virgin green fields...Another key issue not met.

Developing strategies to avoid, reduce and mitigate the indirect impacts of development on the natural environment.

With a planned development of this scale it would be impossible to meet this key issue in any significant manner. I am sure that there may be included in plans *green corridors* and *green areas* but the reality of this huge development would see an equally if not disproportionately huge decline in the natural environment.

Tackling the acute lack of affordable housing in the District

As far as I am aware the proposed plan is for 1500 houses to be affordable. I am not exactly sure what is meant by affordable but one definition I have heard is that it is 80% of market value. If this is the case there will be very few young local people who would stand a chance of being able to afford any of the current new development 3 bedroom houses being marketed in Berkeley. I believe that it is frequently the case that the developer may say they will provide a set number of "affordable " houses but that this number is often reduced

as the developer will say they cannot afford to provide the total agreed number of houses unless they reduce the number of affordable homes.

The new garden village community proposed would in effect join Sharpness, Newtown, Brookend and Berkeley. In my view this 20 year project would undo the thousands of years of cultural identity that has existed in the area. The peace and tranquillity of the area would be lost. The effect of light pollution would be enormous. We already have street lights that appear to be increasingly close together. A visitor from East Sussex recently could not believe the amount of street lights on the road into Purton compared to the village he lives in of a similar size. What effect might light pollution have on migratory birds coming into Slimbridge? There are various references to the increase in leisure and tourism for the area. I wonder how many people will want to visit an enormous housing estate because that is what is envisaged under the guise of a "garden village community". Newtown, Brookend and Sharpness may be considered villages. I find calling a 2400 housing development a village disingenuous.

I have now done further research into garden villages –a quote from the TCPA document consulted by planners of other garden villages states

"The garden village must be a new discrete settlement and not an extension of an existing town or village. This does not exclude proposals where there are already a few existing homes".

The planned garden village at Wisloe would meet this criteria. The planned development in South Glos at Buckover meets this criteria . I do not see how this proposal meets it as the only separation from Berkeley, Newtown and Brookend would be tarmac of Brookend road and the bypass. There appears to be no green fields left separating areas.

I do not feel that there is adequate infrastructure. There is very little employment currently and I do not envisage a large increase in employment in the future that could in any way meet the needs of this planned "village". In the 2015 plan there is a statement that says it is an aspiration to provide 2 jobs for every house built! It is far easier to aspire to things than to meet ones aspirations in reality. Most people would be commuting by car to the larger urban areas of Gloucester and Bristol. How the junctions on to the motorway would cope does not bear thinking about, let alone the few local roads in and out of the area. I have just discovered that there is already a proposed development of 3000 houses at another "garden village" in South Gloucestershire just north of Falfield. Stroud council must be aware of this. The council appears to be considering Gloucester's housing needs by not considering land at Whaddon and Hardwick in this strategy plan but keeping it available for Gloucester. Thus I am sure it is aware of adjoining South Glos housing plans. Many households have at least one car, often 2. If only one car were to need access to the motorway the enormous increase in traffic at peak times would be horrendous. If there is a problem on the motorway as can happen and traffic is diverted to the A38 there would be major problems of congestion . I am aware of the principles of these so called villages providing employment but the reality is that vast numbers of people will be travelling on

roads. The only road in the Berkeley area that can cope with traffic is the bypass. All other roads out of the area such as the road through Breadstone and the small local lanes are not designed to take heavy traffic. There are already plans to use Oldminster road to take the traffic from the 300 houses at the planned Sharpness development. There is the added issue of the bottleneck at Almondsbury with the expected increase in traffic coming from Wales since the tolls on the Severn bridge have been abolished.

Access to key services and facilities in both Berkeley and Sharpness/Newtown are described as good. In the meeting that was held on December 16th in Sharpness attended by the MP and local councillors it was noted that in 2011 the housing proposal was rejected due to flood risk, infrastructure issues and landscape impact; the proposed area was tier 3 which is supposed to have lesser development I believe and that the access to facilities was poor. I can find no justification for the change in access rating. I am not aware of the scale of the housing proposal in 2011 but I would be surprised if it was as many as this strategy proposes. I did not live in the area then although I grew up and my family lived in Stone for 40 years before moving to Berkeley.

I do not believe that this level of housing is proportionate to the needs of the area. I do not feel that an enormous housing estate joining Berkeley and Sharpness together has really considered interests of the current populations in these areas and villages. I think it will be detrimental to the current population and to future generations, I do not think it meets any of the key issues stated above. I do not think it is sustainable. I think that this scale of development may have a negative impact of the local businesses in Berkeley. It is highly likely that the planned estate would serve as commuter land and people would shop elsewhere. The air quality would worsen due to traffic; potential carbon neutral homes – a good selling point – can hardly be considered beneficial for the environment when people are commuting long distances to work in ever increasing traffic jams. More people use the internet for shopping in spite of the fact that the internet access in some of the local area (Purton particularly) is poor. This results in increased delivery lorries and does not necessarily mean that people don't use their cars to get food items they might have forgotten to order. In my experience even if there was a decent alternative public transport system people generally prefer to use a car if they have one for convenience.

Then there is the flood plain. I do not know if this strategy would impact the flood plain but am aware of it being an issue in 2011. I am aware of the government's dedication to building houses. Of course the area can cope with some building and it has already begun. However, this proposal is not proportionate or sustainable. This plan is wanting to change the essence of the area completely into another Quedgeley. Berkeley is a small market town. Sharpness is a dock area with a small community of locals; Brookend is a village. I do not feel it is possible to increase the number of houses at least threefold without causing untold damage to its current inhabitants. The good access to facilities A GP surgery that recently had only one GP and now advises people who need urgent attention to go to Dursley, no secondary school, primary schools that are full; Wotton's secondary school KLB which currently accepts pupils from this areas saying in a couple of years it will have no

room, no hospital..... How this "good" access to facilities would cope with a further 3000 houses in the area is not easy to imagine.

I really hope that the council reconsiders this strategy and takes into account this proud area and can make a plan that is more in keeping and proportionate to the area, its current infrastructure and the needs of the present community. It appears that this strategy is heavily weighting the number of houses the government say is needed to the south of the area. I believe that the plan should be rethought, that the number of houses is extreme and disproportionate especially considering the other developments in the immediate area of Sharpness and in bordering South Glos. I think that the council needs to be sensitive to the needs and wishes of the present communities and reconsider the number of houses the area and its infrastructure can cope with. I feel that the North of the region should be considered for some of the areas housing needs together with this area. For instance Whitminster has a number of alternative sites identified. It states that access to services and facilities is poor but Whitminster borders the A38 and is a few minutes from a motorway junction with a roundabout and good access (compared to junction 14 at Falfield with its traffic lights). This is not the case for Berkeley and Sharpness.

In your document on page 18 you state that the emerging strategy will seek to deliver *"small scale housing in rural areas in the interests of social sustainability"* and also *"rural exception sites to meet local affordable needs"*.

Perhaps one of the reasons that local people do not get involved in responding to strategy and plans is that it feels its concerns maybe listened to on the one hand but ultimately are ignored. In one statement the strategy appears to be hearing what is preferred by local people and in the next the council planners will do what they feel is the *best, easiest, the course of least resistance, meets the criteria they want it to meet. Delete as appropriate.*

On page 27 of the document option 1 is stated as being the most popular and performing slightly better overall in terms of potential positive effects and slightly fewer negative effects. There is no garden village proposed at Newtown of 2400 houses in this option. You state it could deliver 5570 new homes of the 5700 homes needed. This would leave 130 homes which could easily be added to the existing villages of Brookend and Newtown.

I sincerely hope that I am mistaken on the above but in general there is a cynicism in the surrounding local villages and a feeling that there is no point in saying anything as "It is a done deal, it has already been decided, we are not the Cotswolds so they will do what they want etc etc".

I apologise for not being succinct. The strategy is extremely complicated. I am passionate about the local area. As has been highlighted there are many places to celebrate and share with tourists – the castle, Jenner museum (if it manages to stay open), cattle country, the canal, the wetland – but development needs to be proportionate and respectful of sharing the land space with all creatures great and small not just man at the expense of nature.

Sincerely
