

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN REVIEW:

RESPONSE FROM MINCHINHAMPTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minchinhampton Parish Council is totally opposed to the allocation in the 'Emerging' Local Plan of sites for 'up to' 200 houses in the town of Minchinhampton. The plan clearly states 'The general consensus is that development should be focused on brownfield/derelict areas and within settlement boundaries.' (page 17) and yet this has not been adhered to in these land allocations.

The plan has arbitrarily selected two sites for development, one for 'up to' 100 houses and one for 30. Both sites are outside the settlement boundary, within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and on green fields that offer an important resource for the vital agricultural industry in the parish. Both are almost adjacent to Minchinhampton Common, an internationally-recognised Site of Special Scientific Interest and very close to Rodborough Common, a Special Area of Conservation. Both commons are grazed by cattle that overwinter in the fields selected for development. These cattle are vital for the health of the limestone grassland and that plants and animals that inhabit this precious area.

The road across the common is an unclassified road carrying 60,000 cars a week that use it as a rat run to commute from Cirencester to the M5, killing cattle and endangering those using the common for recreation in the process. This route is highly unsuited to the additional of further traffic resulting from unnecessary development adjacent to the commons.

The revised National Planning Policy Framework of July 2018 (paragraph 172) gives unequivocal protection to landscapes with AONB. It states:

*'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited. Planning Permission should be refused for major developments other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of;*

*a) the need for the development including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy:*

*b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way: and*

*c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.'*

No other AONB land has been allocated sites to develop as part of the Local Plan review. It is very hard indeed to see why our parish has been picked out given its unique landscape status. Furthermore,

as the District Council is aware, the Cotswold AONB is under consideration for National Park status given its unique characteristics.

The Parish Council is aware that the town is in need of a small number of affordable houses for local people adjacent to the settlement boundary or within it and is happy to accommodate those over the next planning period.

If this allocation for Minchinhampton is adopted, it will change the town for ever, from a rural community with an agricultural way of life and strong links to grazing the common to an urban sprawl. We all know how developers work to get as many sites approved as possible once the door is left ajar and how the planning process will continue allocating sites without thought for the local community.

For the similar reasons it is essential that any proposal for small villages or hamlets within Minchinhampton Parish under "*Options for growth - option 3...Dispersion*" maintains respect of their existing settlement boundaries, Conservation Areas and the AONB. Small scale developments of only a few houses would not make any contribution towards the lack of affordable housing stock as the isolation and near absence (or increasingly often complete absence) of both retail and transport services leaves no option other than for residents to be totally car-reliant. Any disregard of the settlement boundary and/or new development within the AONB in such isolated communities would provide an immediate invitation for further speculative proposals for more high cost and unsustainable development, much to the detriment of the villages' heritage value and thus their contribution as a valuable part of the AONB.

The Parish Council, the local representatives of the people within the Parish within the democratic system governing the country, strongly urges the District Council to take heed of their views and remove these allocations from the 'emerging' Local Plan. It will do everything in its power to fight these allocations.