

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 15 January 2020 18:46
To: _WEB_Local Plan
Subject: Stroud District Local Plan Review

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Dear sirs

Please find below my comments on the Review of the Local Plan. I would be grateful if you will confirm receipt of this email and the contents therein... and that my views will be taken into account as part of the Plan Consultation process.

Yours faithfully

[REDACTED]

I wish to object strongly to the Stroud District Council Draft Local Plan, to the proposals to locate 80% of new housing in the rural Berkeley Vale, including at least 1500 houses in a village which currently comprises less than 150 – the ‘Wisloe Garden Village’. Not only is this plan unwise, but it is also unfair. The overall volume of planned housebuilding is excessive, both for national plans and local needs, and destruction of good agricultural land is completely at odds with the green credentials promoted by Stroud District Council and the two landowners. I have set out below some of the grounds on which I base my objection:

Garden Towns and Villages – the concept is becoming discredited because it simply allows developers to bluff their way through planning with the promise of ‘something lovely’ but, because there are no construction densities, no standards for how green space should be distributed, etc. there is no way to hold developers to account. The reality is therefore the old-style, car-based sprawling housing estates. Is this really what Stroud aspire to offer at Wisloe? Neither is it consistent with the strategy or vision of the Ernest Cook Trust.

Noise attenuation – I believe that noise levels on site are currently around 80Db. Because a good proportion of this noise is produced by HGVs and trains, the source of the noise is elevated. So, given that the motorway is on an embankment, noise bunds of 6m, plus noise barriers, will be required, in an area of largely flat topography. This will create something more akin to a moon crater than a Garden Village. Also, given that this is a ‘Garden Village’, I assume the developers will be targeting will be sub-50 Db noise levels (rated as ‘moderately annoying’ by the World Health Organisation) – I look forward to reading about the methodologies proposed for reducing noise levels on this scale and linear pattern.

Building around transport assets – this is a laudable concept, assuming the assets are not already close to breaking point. 3000 new homes across Wisloe, Cam and Dursley are likely to generate 6000 cars and 12,000 peak-hour car journeys, the majority of which will be funnelled towards the A38. Add to this the residential developments at Sharpness, Stone, Thornbury, other smaller infill developments, activities at [M5 Junction 13](#), plus of course, the inevitable housing

development on all land currently under solar panels (when subsidies run out). I look forward to seeing the plans for avoiding gridlock and air pollution in the M5 / A38 corridor – our mental and physical health will depend on them.

Rail services – “most people will catch the train rather than drive..” this is a two-track section so additional ‘stopping / local’ services will require passing loops so that higher speed services can pass the slower trains. Is this requirement reflected in the Network Rail programme of work? Who will be funding the work? The car park at Cam & Dursley Station is already woefully inadequate and, whilst we will aspire for people to walk to the train, additional parking spaces, taxi / public collection points, bus turning circles are essential. Has space been allowed at the station or along Box Road?

Downgrading the land classification – please share the sampling / location-selection processes and survey methodologies used to gather the data which indicate that good arable land is now only fit for construction. I assume that this information will be shared in the spirit of engagement rather than through a Freedom of Information request.

Protected species – several protected species are making a comeback in this area, including protected and endangered birds and mammals. 20 years of construction noise, vibration, dust and water quality issues, plus loss of habitat, increased disturbance from domestic cats, for example, plus public access and recreation, etc will halt this recovery and send the fragile populations back into decline.

Drainage, flooding and water quality – the Environment Agency has already issued two Flood Alerts for the River Cam at Cambridge this winter. This situation will not be improved through construction of at least 1500 houses on the flood plain, either during construction or on completion. The developers have already highlighted potential impacts on water quality – several protected species are in that location and we expect both Stroud District Council and the other enforcement agencies to protect them.

Rural environment – despite the close proximity to the motorway and the rail line, Cambridge and Slimbridge are rural communities. Cambridge comprises around 150 houses – Wisloe ‘Garden Village’ is planned to be at least 1500 houses – how does Stroud District Council anticipate that our community will cope with this influx? What happens when everyone decides to go for a stroll along the canal or in Rosie’s Wood on a Sunday morning? The additional noise, light / air pollution, nuisance and loss of community structure and amenity will affect me and my neighbours significantly. This is really important to local people and it is not just NIMBY-ism – Wisloe, plus the inevitable development of the solar farm in a few years’ time, will destroy our rural village and our community.

Public consultation – this review of the Local Plan has ignored feedback from the earlier stages and the Wisloe site has not gone through the level of scrutiny afforded to other sites. The consultation documents produced by the developers and landowners are no more than aspirational waffle and the few facts presented are loaded with errors and inconsistencies. This inspires little confidence that any of these organisations are truly interested in real, proactive engagement with local communities.

Alternatives – a more-even distribution of smaller developments is more sensible and fairer to the population of Stroud District – this was also the conclusion of the earlier public consultation exercises, which have been ignored. Locating houses near to the main centres of employment would also be more sensible, reducing the impact on transport infrastructure. Nobody likes change, but siting 80% of new housing in the Vale is neither sensible nor equitable, nor is it the will of the people.

Finally, Stroud has the opportunity to do something genuinely sustainable by directing its energy into bringing the 1600 empty houses in Stroud District back into use, re-invigorating existing communities or by remediating and re-using brownfield sites... but I guess building on green fields is easier. I expect better from Stroud District Council.