**CAM PARISH COUNCIL**

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**Open letter regards Stroud District Councils Local Plan Review**

**To whom it may concern**

Cam Parish Council is just one of many Town and Parish councils across the Stroud District extremely disappointed in SDCs proposal to pause its Local Plan Review. We followed the hearings closely so the inspectors’ challenge came as no surprise given the line of questioning and scrutiny that the examiners took.

Cam Parish Council endorse all the comments and evidence submitted by various parties pointing out major concerns around viable infrastructure, soundness of site selection and multiple other compounding issues that contributed to the examiners’ action, effectively giving Stroud District Council the chance to withdraw the plan with grace, rework the document and resubmit for consideration. Many of the points raised echoed responses by many local councils and communities to the various stages of formal consultation.

The letter sent by SDC to the inspectors was a great example of bravado and spin but cannot cover up the shortcomings in the local plan that go beyond the weighty matters of lack of agreement with GCC, Network Rail and National Highways over transport infrastructure, whether it be the limited consultation and lack of willingness to listen and act on advice and concerns from the people living in and representing areas around the district or the imposition of unreasonable delivery of housing in areas totally unsuitable for the numbers and density levels proposed.

This being said, we now find ourselves in the most unfortunate position where the District as a whole faces an uncertain future with the only legal protection relying on an aged existing plan that runs until 2031 which is starting to be outdated and less and less relevant to the needs of our towns and parishes. Sites that were omitted from inclusion in the new plan would have offered better and more sustainable alternatives than many that were presented to the inspectors despite the advice and objections of many local councils like ours. This is particularly concerning for areas like Cam, Slimbridge and Berkeley given the restraints on local infrastructure and continuing heavy reliance on private transport, over pressed medical and education facilities and non-existent **local** employment opportunities.

We have huge concerns that many areas will be increasingly vulnerable and open to being abused by opportunistic developers. SDC must take responsibility for ensuring all towns and parishes are protected and encouraged to work with SDC and other stakeholders to plan for and provide the facilities and infrastructure needed to support any extra housing that is required to meet **local needs** where necessary, while also ensuring protection for its valued open spaces and countryside. We acknowledge the housing stock targets set by central government and believe the numbers can be provided across the district by working with the existing transport infrastructure and less costly enhancements while at the same time better suiting District targets for flood protection areas, sustainable travel, pollution levels, recreation provision and biodiversity targets.

The inspectors’ offer is a valuable opportunity to shape housing and employment development to the needs of the different communities, carry residents and local councils along with the plan with productive 2-way communication, and most importantly take a fresh look at those sites excluded within the proposed local plan which score well according to SDC’s own matrix and may offer better workable and more sustainable alternatives to those currently envisaged. These excluded sites could not be considered under the constraints of the hearing process but could be looked at given a full review of the local plan. We therefore implore the authorities who can still influence development, to stand by their comments and review or oppose any major developments that may come forward citing the inefficient infrastructure of the wider area and in particular Junctions 12 and 14 of the M5 as holistically many of those sites will drive more commuters to the highlighted bottlenecks without greater investment and resourcing within both the private and public transport networks.

Yours sincerely



Jon Fulcher

Chair of Cam Parish Council

**Other considerations:**

Still time to reimagine the plan if no more time is lost. If no agreement has been secured on strategic expenditure in 7 years, 6 months will not be enough and could mean the loss of time that could be better spent altering the vision and phasing of delivery to suit what exists already and giving time for budget planning where necessary at the highest level.

Buffer strips need to be adequate on sites near motorways and rail tracks without leaps in density of

housing.

NDPs, where they exist, are very specific about the shaping of neighbourhoods and local density levels to retain “character”. More attention should be paid to these referendum approved documents.

Green, future proofed energy efficiency homes in attractive landscapes for village and garden style developments should be emphasised for such sites as an aspiration of council.

Strategic level budgets such as for road and rail are subject to long term planning (5 years at a time) and cannot be changed mid-term faced with the levels of expenditure necessary to facilitate the existing proposed local plan and S106 contributions will be insufficient to provide the sort of infrastructure improvements necessary as high tariff items like schools, medical facilities and recreational areas are required within or in close proximity to larger developments rather than contributions to a district “pot”.

Hoped for employment areas will not be adopted by larger employers if more accessible locations

are available elsewhere. Therefore, the ratio of housing to employment needs to be reviewed for many sites.

There **is** a willingness for local communities to work with SDC to provide affordable housing which is the priority need away from the major towns and cities in Gloucestershire, not satisfying a long

housing list such as that faced by Gloucester or even Stroud itself. The type of people able to buy the 3-5 bedroom houses being proposed in most cases, especially away from the existing larger conurbations will not be local people in more rural areas but will tend to be those from towns and cities further away who will continue to commute to jobs elsewhere so exacerbating the commuter town philosophy with all the disadvantages connected such as trip generation, pollution, and consumption of resources without adequate compensatory benefit for the local economy.

The letter above and associated points reflect the feelings and views of our communities.