



# STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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## Members of the Public's Questions to Council.

Questions from Steve Willetts
<p><b>Question 1</b></p> <p><i>Background: The retirement of the Head of Strategic Planning and Economic Development and the answer to the public question and supplementary at the Full Council about resources and impact.</i></p> <p>The retirement of such a senior officer at this critical time must have a huge impact on the progress of responses to the Inspectors' challenges resulting from the Local Plan examination and other priorities. Please explain the interim arrangements made, the expected timeframe to recruit a replacement and update the impact this has, given previous answers.</p>
<p><b>Reply 1</b></p> <p>Following the planned retirement of the Head of Service, responses to questions raised by our Local Plan Inspectors are being co-ordinated by a highly experienced and senior interim manager. The interim manager has played a leading role at all stages of our Local Plan work over the past 2 years, including the examination process, and is working effectively with the relevant partners to ensure that the inspectors' questions are addressed by the deadlines set.</p> <p>A recruitment exercise to replace the Head of Service post on a permanent basis will commence in early 2024 and we aim to fill the post in spring 2024. Operational arrangements are in place with existing members of the team to continue with all other priorities of the service.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Question 1</b></p> <p>It's my understanding that there have been several delays, granted, and so deadlines haven't been met, and I understand there's a further delay from the 12th of November deadline for responses to the end of November. So in light of that answer, what's the problem?</p>
<p><b>Supplementary Answer 1</b></p> <p>The question is not directly related to the answer given for the first question however I can confirm that the inspectors have allowed an extension of time for all parties to respond to them. This was due to other parties requesting an extension of time to the 30 November. This causes no problem for Stroud District Council.</p>
<p><b>Question 2</b></p> <p><i>Background: Council Plan ER3 " Investment: Promote the Stroud district to attract investment in key infrastructure and high quality jobs with a focus on environmental technologies, engineering and manufacturing and creative industries".</i></p> <p>This priority is not included in the update paper. It is very relevant to Cam especially in the light of proposed allocations here, current development and the current status of employment development. Please say how Cam is specifically identified within this priority, provide a status and plan update with respect to Cam including, past trends and future</p>



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expectations of employment development and examples of high quality jobs in Cam created or planned of the type being focussed on and explain the risk to delivery.

## Reply 2

The progress made against each priority area of the Council Plan is focussed on how we support the whole district, rather than any single parish area. Priority sectors include the green economy, retail and hospitality, tourism and the visitor economy, arts and culture, agriculture, agritech and rural diversification and manufacturing and advanced engineering.

The support offered by the District Council seeks to complement the work already provided by private, voluntary and public sector bodies. We continue to use our influence wherever possible to promote private sector investment into the district, which includes Cam, and welcome the diverse sectors and nature of businesses that are considering setting up here. Whilst local authorities of all tiers are keen to attract investment, decisions by any given business to invest are often determined by prevailing market conditions and other economic factors which are outside of direct local authority control. Nevertheless, we will continue to promote the benefits of investing in Stroud District and advocate for a strong and prosperous local economy.

Data collated on economic and employment trends are currently available at a district level from publicly available sources, such as the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

## Supplementary Question 2

The 2015 local plan and the draft plan referred to Cam as a focus for jobs. Why is there nothing specific that can be pointed to with respect to Cam as compared to the overarching answer that you've given? I can't see that that answer responds to the needs of Cam. And I also wonder if we think about the current development that's going on in Box Rd for example, where there are employment development conditions in part. Why can't data be produced to show what the situation is and hence how that condition can be enforced?

## Supplementary Answer 2

SDC does not currently collect data at this level. District level information is available via free sources, including ONS and NOMIS but these do not consider employment data at parish levels.

Whilst delivery timescales for both housing and employment development are dependent on the site promoter and market conditions, latest data demonstrates that current development progress at Millfields (Box Road Development) is in accordance with the phased delivery requirements set out in the s106 legal agreement. The Phasing triggers are all available through the Council Planning Portal.

## Question 3

*Background: The update on ER4 "Champion local businesses of all types and sizes that lead on environmental and social good practice and support them to grow, keeping wealth in the district, strengthening local supply chains and offering rewarding local jobs" and ER4.4 "Work with partners to support the development of skills and training for all ages, including*



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*the unemployed, young people and apprentices, and across key sectors including the low carbon sector and visitor economy".*

How is Cam specifically being promoted as a business destination within this priority, what has been the beneficial impact of the Natural Place programme so far for Cam, what further measures to engage are proposed that are particularly relevant for Cam and please give examples of where the ambassador programme has had an impact in Cam.

### **Reply 3**

The Council promotes the entire district as a business and investment destination. Specific localities can benefit from targeted economic development initiatives, such as the recently launched Rural England Prosperity Fund.

The Natural Place is a web-based promotional prospectus launched in Spring 2023, and references Cam as well as other locations across the district. It is aimed particularly at those businesses, government bodies and other agencies who may not be familiar with the unique offer of the district. The initiative has been very well received and has already attracted approximately 1,000 subscribers and many more visitors to the website.

Moving forward, the Natural Place will continue to be developed as a platform for communication and engagement with the business community, including a regular Newsletter with content and further case studies to promote the excellent businesses that are based here, including in Cam. A business ambassador programme is yet to be launched but will include engagement with businesses of different sizes and sectors across the district.

### **Supplementary Question 3**

My concern is that, I believe that those efforts are not having sufficient impact on economic and employment development in Cam. The Parish Council has said very publicly, with data that they have, that the economic and employment development has been wholly unacceptable and I would argue that there is not sufficient focus on Cam. How can Stroud District Council provide the necessary focus to ensure that Cam doesn't, without wishing to get too emotional about this, just turn into a commuting out dormitory sprawl.

### **Supplementary Answer 3**

Whilst the district council's role in managing wider economic conditions and influencing individual business decisions is limited, it is a priority to allocate suitable sites and bring forward employment opportunities in the district (including in Cam), thereby minimising out-commuting where possible. The example of the Box Road development (in response to supplementary question 2) illustrates this.

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