



# STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council Offices • Ebley Mill • Ebley Wharf • Stroud • GL5 4UB

Telephone 01453 766321

www.stroud.gov.uk

Email: democratic.services@stroud.gov.uk

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

| Questions from Steve Willetts   |
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| <b>Question 1</b>   |
| Proposed Stroud District Local Plan - Budget and Costs<br>What was the budget set to deliver the District Plan, how much has been spent to date and what now is the projected spend for the 6 months pause plan proposed to the Inspectors to try to deliver a sound plan?  |
| <b>Reply 1</b>  |
| There was no budget set explicitly in 2017 to deliver the new Local Plan. There is an annual budget to deliver the range of Planning Strategy services including the Local Plan. That budget for 2023/24 is £103,200 (not including staffing resources). The Council also received £100,000 as part of a former Gloucestershire growth deal with Government to fund traffic modelling. The total costs for preparing the Local Plan to date (2017-2023) are approximately £787,300, including £140,400 covering Inspectors' costs, but not including staffing costs. The costs of the Action Plan will depend primarily upon the costs of further design work on the M5 junction improvement schemes, which have yet to be finalised. |
| <b>Question 2</b>   |
| Proposed Stroud District Local Plan - Resources<br>What additional resource and capabilities (internal and external) were used to develop the pause plan, are proposed to deliver the pause plan and what is the impact of having to carry out the pause plan on other priorities and work plans?   |
| <b>Reply 2</b>  |
| The Action Plan was developed by officers of the Council with support from the Council's transport consultant. The Action Plan identifies those organisations who will be involved in its delivery (see Action Plan second column). As the primary purpose of the Council's Local Plans team is to deliver the Local Plan, and the Action Plan will take place during a pause in the examination process, the delivery of the Action Plan will not impact on other priorities or work plans.  |
| <b>Question 3</b>   |
| Proposed Stroud District Local Plan - Risks<br>Please state the key risks that SDC has considered and explain; the actions that will be taken to minimise those risks both in terms of the plan itself and the ways of working and engagement to deliver a sound plan; the consequences to our communities if the work still does not satisfy the inspectors and what contingency plans and budgets will be put in place to minimise those consequences?  |
| <b>Reply 3</b>  |
| The key risks associated with the preparation of the Local Plan have changed over time, depending upon the specific risks identified at each stage. At the current time the key risk is not achieving a positive outcome from the recent correspondence with the Inspectors and with that the consequential risks associated with not having an up to date policy framework to manage the development management process.   |



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The actions associated with reducing the likelihood of this risk occurring involve seeking to address the Inspectors concerns as set out in their letter of 4 August 2023 and subsequent letter of 2 October 2023 through working with identified partners on a series of actions, as set out in the Action Plan of 12 September 2023. Beyond these actions, other actions include attending reconvened hearing sessions (if allowed) to put forward the Council's case on the remaining matters; agreeing with the Inspectors a list of potential modifications to resolve soundness matters; and undertaking public consultation on these modifications in accordance with regulations and PINS procedures.

Should the Plan be found unsound by the Inspectors, there will be a risk of "planning by appeal" i.e. speculative development being promoted in the absence of a strategic policy framework. There would be two broad contingencies to mitigate the impacts: A programme and budget for commencing a new Local Plan to fill the policy gap; and an approach to managing development in the interim, which will involve a number of actions, including seeking to maintain a 5-year land supply by approving appropriate development through the development management process.

## Questions from Paul Couple

### Question 4

Given the likely outcome of the Government Inspector pausing the plan, can SDC confirm that they will enter into dialogue with parish communities to ensure that amendments considered are community led, and that SDC recognise that with government housing targets now removed, Parish Councils have the opportunity to reconfirm their estimates of required housing, and specifically the numbers required for affordable and social housing needs?

### Reply 4

The Inspectors are currently considering the Council's request for a 6 month pause to address the three specific issues raised in the Inspectors letter of 4 August 2023. These issues include specific concerns with allocations at Wisloe, Sharpness and the issue of impacts on the Strategic Road Network. The Council's Action Plan sent to the Inspectors on 12 September 2023 sets out how the Council intends to address these issues but it will be for the Inspector's to decide what actions will take place next.

Unless the Inspectors decide that the Local Plan should be withdrawn, there is no scope for the Council to enter into the sort of dialogue set out in the question, and whilst the Local Plan remains at examination or is subject to a pause, the only likely engagement envisaged by the Inspectors would be through public consultation on modifications.

The Government has not removed housing targets and examination hearing sessions have already been held on the District's housing requirement. The Inspectors have already stated that they are confident that other matters are likely to be addressed through appropriate modifications, which the Inspectors will agree for consultation. It will be for the Inspectors to determine whether they wish to receive more evidence on housing needs and requirements, which is outside the control of the District Council.

### Question 5

Further to the above, can SDC give parishes an undertaking that revised housing numbers will NOT be developer led on face value viability?

### Reply 5



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If the Inspectors wish to receive further information on a revised housing supply, the Council will seek to provide the specific information requested by the Inspectors. Examination hearing sessions have already been held on the district's housing requirement. Any revised housing supply provided by the Council will be based upon proper planning considerations and will be subject to further examination, with the Inspectors likely to invite the views of others at the appropriate time. However, the views of developers are important in terms of demonstrating viability and deliverability and the Inspectors have previously spent some time at hearing sessions asking developers to provide detailed evidence on viability and deliverability. We would expect the Inspectors to follow the same process if a revised housing supply were to be identified.

## **Question 6**

Will SDC acknowledge the importance of making the NDP for Cam the prime guide to ensure that the character and nature of the village is not further blighted by inappropriate over-development?

I would like to draw SDC's attention to CPC's environmental report in which a strong recommendation was to eliminate PS25 from the local plan as it was considered by both the community and CPC as hugely detrimental to the character and nature of Cam and due to the stated environmental impacts within that report commissioned at great public expense. Residents would far rather work with SDC who will find us far more supportive if these vitally important aspects are properly considered to achieve what is best for our community. Nothing about the current plan is good for Cam in terms of employment, schooling and other important infrastructure support, in solving current highways problems and in the hugely damaging impact on the character and nature of our village.

## **Reply 6**

SDC acknowledges the important role of Neighbourhood Plans (including Cam NDP), in support of the Local Plan. National planning policy states that "Neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies; and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies." (NPPF, para. 13)

Consequently, the Local Plan is the prime determination of the future scale and distribution of development within the district. NDPs, including Cam NDP, have a role in ensuring that the development allocated in the Local Plan is well designed and in managing development that is outside of the Local Plan.