

Spatial Planning Team  
South Gloucestershire Council  
Castle Street  
Thornbury  
South Gloucestershire  
BS35 1HF

8 June 2008

Dear Sir or Madam,

**South Gloucestershire Council's Core Strategy - response by  
South Gloucestershire CPRE**

CPRE shares the concern of South Gloucestershire Council with regard to the levels of growth proposed for this area in the RSS. We continue to question the need for 30,800 new homes which are clearly not to meet local need. We accept that there should be some development and we fully accept the need for more affordable homes, but not on the scale proposed which will entirely change the character of South Gloucestershire.

We are very unhappy that the Council has come up with the Issues and Options before knowing the Secretary of State's proposed modifications to the Regional Spatial Strategy. The Council has illustrated through the Core Strategy that, albeit reluctantly, the growth could be accommodated within the area. We fear that the very action of carrying out this consultation will be interpreted by central government as acquiescence when clearly the residents of South Gloucestershire want nothing to do with it.

We are particularly concerned about the loss of Green Belt in order to accommodate the proposed urban extensions. The Bristol Green Belt has served us well in preventing urban sprawl into South Gloucestershire and helping Bristol retain its identity. CPRE believes that the Green Belt should continue to protect our valuable countryside and we are concerned that the Council has apparently accepted this loss and do not consider it to be a constraint to development.

The value of the Green Belt is in its permanence and it cannot be simply rolled back in the way proposed. We welcomed South Gloucestershire Council's recent assessment of the Green Belt and its conclusion that in the majority of cases it continued to meet its objectives. The RSS rejected proposals for Green Belt extensions in South Gloucestershire, so the Core Strategy options would result in a considerably reduced Green Belt – despite the Government commitment nationally to maintaining Green Belt. We need to know what the exceptional circumstances are that require the modification of the Green Belt boundary as required by PPG2. We request clarification regarding the extent of land to be removed from the Green Belt - is the Council or RSS proposing that the whole of the area of search is taken out of the Green Belt?

We know from the evidence of various parish plan surveys in South Gloucestershire that the overwhelming majority of residents state that protection of the Green Belt is their highest priority and they do not want to see it built on.

Representatives of S Glos CPRE have attended each of the workshops held during the course of the Core Strategy consultation and also the public meetings held by Steve Webb, Member of Parliament, at Yate, Chipping Sodbury and Shortwood. At all of these meetings participants expressed concern about the form of the consultation. Most had known nothing about the proposals until the MP had taken it upon himself to leaflet his constituents. We appreciate that the Council has tried to make the documents easily understood but nevertheless the subject matter is complex.

We are unhappy that the Core Strategy consultation document is only really asking residents if they want options 1 or 2, when some of us believe that either of these options would be unacceptable. In the format of the response booklet provided it is very difficult to say 'no' to the limited options and to get one's own views across. The consultation does not make it easy to communicate the fact that we are opposed primarily to the scale of the proposed development.

At all of the meetings we attended residents expressed concern that the roads are already congested and that the situation would be greatly worsened with an additional 30,800 houses generating another 50,000 cars. Putting on a couple of extra buses or a half-hourly train service from Yate will not be enough to compensate for this lack of transport infrastructure. We note that there is no reference in the Core Strategy to freight or improvements to the road infrastructure for freight.

We share SGC's strong concern about the impact of significant large scale development in and around Yate/Chipping Sodbury.

There is no justification in the Panel's report for the urban extension of 5000 dwellings at Yate and as such we feel that the Panel has overstepped the mark in proposing it. The area has found it difficult to attract 'white collar' jobs and there is likely to be a significant shortfall in jobs for the new residents locally and this will increase commuting traffic into Bristol which is completely contrary to sustainability principles.

We can see no logic in how the Council has identified the specific areas for urban extensions from the broad description of Areas of Search given in the RSS. As an example, the Urban Extension – East of Kingswood – provides two options which are rather like 'spot the difference'. We are asked (question 56) which option will best achieve our objectives for the site? As interested lay people (we are not planners) it is difficult to answer this question with any confidence, all we know is that we do not want the small and close-knit community of Shortwood to lose its character. At the Shortwood meeting we heard residents talking about the abundance of wildlife that they enjoy – deer in their gardens, hares in the fields behind their home– this contributes greatly to their quality of life and they do not want to lose it. At Chipping Sodbury residents are very worried about development to the east of St John's Way which has a very high water table and is prone to flooding.

We strongly share South Gloucestershire Council's concern that the RSS recommends that the level of development should be spread evenly across the whole plan area. We would prefer to see a sequential approach to development continuing. It will be extremely difficult to secure the adequate provision of community facilities such as schools if the development is spread evenly. New housing developments should be phased and not allowed until infrastructure is in place. Ideally, however, we want to see existing communities regenerated and improved rather than urban sprawl eating into the countryside and Green Belt.

Yours sincerely,

Marilyn Palmer  
Chair, South Gloucestershire District CPRE