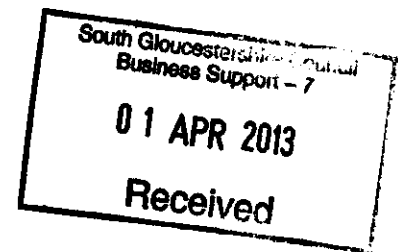




Core Strategy Inspector  
c/o Strategic Planning Policy and Specialist Advice Team  
South Gloucestershire Council  
PO Box 2081  
South Gloucestershire BS35 9BP



30 April 2013

Dear Sir Core Strategy

I am very disappointed the South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) proposal for housing to the east of Morton Way Thornbury has been accepted. The whole Core Strategy process, despite the thousands of hours of work and thousands of pages of numerous assessments and reports, failed in its primary task of providing adequate residential land. SGC, having had their initial Core Strategy rejected, feared the revised version, despite being examined at length, could also be rejected because of a lack of development sites in the first five years – to 2015/16. When pressed SGC had no 'plan B' to fill this gap and in an attempt to remedy this they pulled out the recently submitted Morton Way application from their files and put this forward - although it will probably only yield 109 homes by 2016 which is negligible in relation to the totals involved.

Thus open countryside is to be sacrificed because of lack of a thorough reappraisal of the area – basically looking to update the sixty year old Green Belt - despite the huge changes which have occurred since the early 1950's. Indeed the Morton Way Appeal Inquiry taking place last week seemed to have become solely a debate on the shortage of immediately developable housing land, with Bloor Homes attempting to maximise this shortfall to facilitate much more of Morton Way being developed. SGC appeared to be fighting a desperate rear guard action, having realised the floodgates they have opened by putting forward the Bloor site to salvage their Core Strategy. Not very impressive after four years work.

Thornbury is the true final end of the Greater Bristol conurbation – there are a negligible number of fields and green spaces as one travels from Thornbury to Bristol with the ribbon development and the final field as one approaches Almondsbury. Morton Way is the line marking the end of the Bristol spread and where the open countryside begins. Once this line is crossed suburbia will stretch on with no obvious stopping point. It is difficult to see any logic in allowing development of this land as, although not in the Green Belt, the SGC Strategic Assessment in 2011 indicated it performs four of the five Nationally defined Green Belt purposes and was regarded as an important safeguard in that document.

The Inspector did not like the Morton Way site but SGC could find no other, despite the years of preparation and numerous assessments and reports in the lead up to the

Core Strategy. It is of course the worst possible area of Thornbury to build houses being so far from employment, shopping, recreation and other facilities. Rather than sacrifice this well maintained farmland at Morton Way it would be much more sensible for the scruffy areas around the leisure centre, the Munday playing fields and the golf club to be developed but these are within the Green Belt that the Core Strategy failed to assess in any comprehensive detail.

It is a great pity that a full and proper review of the Green Belt has now been deferred for up to ten years (2023), particularly when the SGC 2010 Housing Land Availability report stated this would be within 5 years, i.e. by 2015 and within the now critical first five years. I believe that in the decades since the last comprehensive review much subsequent development – including new roads, sports facilities, ‘bulking up’ of villages - would allow a number of minor extensions of village boundaries with no detrimental effect to the village or Green Belt principles - although with understandably strident protests from those few whose back garden views would be changed.

Infill of such redundant corners would easily achieve the small number of houses that seem to require the Morton Way site to be developed so urgently and which, if the performances at the Bloor appeal are anything to go by, will soon lead to a large expansion on this side of Thornbury. Short term expediency and a hasty option have replaced proper comprehensive review. The huge amount of work on the Core Strategy produced many grand policies but failed in its prime task of providing an acceptable flow of housing land.

By way of example of harmless village extension I could refer to Almondsbury and site ref. SHLAA084. A detail proposal to SGC at the start of the Core Strategy process was dismissed, despite the site being surrounded by major roads and houses and contributing none of the Green Belt Purposes ascribed to Almondsbury, as it lies outside the village boundary. One wonders how many similar sites have been summarily dismissed because there has been no proper review of the Green Belt and village boundaries and which could have yielded sites without detrimental effect on the Green Belt, and saved much more valuable open countryside beyond Thornbury.

I have little doubt there is now no way the Morton Way proposal will be reversed and so this letter is really a waste of time. However I wish to place on record that this violation of open countryside to produce just 300 houses – and probably 109 in the critical period - will be far more detrimental in the long term than two or three minor infill extensions of Green Belt village boundaries which would achieve the same result. A retrograde and unnecessary step has been taken. I believe there has been a significant failure by SGC.

Yours faithfully

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

A D England