

It is with that in mind that I want to talk about certain planning applications. I will mention six to illustrate the point, but I could talk about a lot more. There are various applications on Baxter's fields, below Summer street in Stroud. The wide range of communities in that location are very much aware of the impact that that development would have on them. There is an application on Rodborough fields, which is famous for historical reasons. Although the application might be appealed, previous to a decision by Stroud district council, it is still a concern. Mankley field is perhaps the most prominent application. The Minister might recall it, because it was the focus of the debate at the public meeting. The development would effectively join two villages together, which would cause some difficulties for both communities—not because they do not like each other, but because they want each other to thrive as separate identifiable communities.

There are applications on Woodside lane in King's Stanley, which is another issue related to Mankley field, and on land off Shakespeare road in Dursley, which is a particularly beautiful place, because of the topography. It is part of my constituency, and there are views that people like to have. As they say, a view cannot be bought, but we can protect the characteristics of towns and villages. That is a case in point with that application in Dursley. The Horsley development elongates a beautiful village, but threatens its natural beauty and offends a large number of existing residents. All those planning applications and others raise a number of issues. Where Stroud district council, led by the Labour party, has gone wrong is in putting too much focus on dispersal, and those applications illustrate that point. They are dispersed all over the place, which is a significant difficulty for our residents.

There is also a problem with housing numbers, which I will go into in some detail. The Localism Act 2011 and the various other documents that have been circulating have always emphasised that projections for housing numbers and land supply have got to be evidence-based. It is no use just plucking figures out of some national statistics arena. The developer needs to demonstrate to the local community that it has thought about the evidence. Stroud has a large number of manufacturing and engineering firms—they account for 24% of existing employment—and my view is that that kind of economic fact needs to be factored into any projections on housing numbers.

Travelling to work is also important, because planning is not only about building houses, but ensuring that people can get out and about. That is why I have focused not only on housing, but on infrastructure. It is why I think it might be worth while to move the Stonehouse railway station slightly north, so that it can access two railway lines, one of which would enable people from Stonehouse and neighbouring villages to get to Bristol without going via