

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

15 October 2024

Item 18 – Members’ Questions

From Cllr David Vigar – Trowbridge Grove Division

To Cllr Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management and Strategic Planning

Question (24-13)

Following the finding of a planning inspector on 30 August that the Council can only demonstrate a 3.85 year supply of housing land against the current target of four years (Decision APP/Y3940/W/24/3340811 relating to Land off Storridge Road Westbury BA13 4HJ), by when does the Cabinet expect the required four year total to be restored?

Response:

We monitor the housing land supply on an annual basis as required by the NPPF. The monitoring process includes the removal of sites from the supply when they are completed or when permission lapses, the addition of new permissions into the supply, and assessing developers’ progress towards delivering committed sites (i.e. either planning permission or allocated in the development plan). Only once this complex process is completed is it able to establish whether the housing land supply exceeds the current four year target.

Factors determining housing delivery are often outside of the Council’s control – as the development industry are tasked with building houses, it is ultimately developers and housebuilders who determine how and when sites come forward, despite planning permissions being granted and sites being allocated within the development plan.

The Government’s recent consultation on proposed changes to the NPPF proposes to abolish the provisions to only require a four-year housing land supply. At present there is no indication from Government as to when the results of that consultation or a revised NPPF might be published.

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From Cllr David Vigar – Trowbridge Grove Division

To Cllr Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management and Strategic Planning

Question (24-14)

Does the Council propose to issue another housing land supply statement before mid-2025?

Response:

Yes – we expect to produce an updated Housing Land Supply Statement in Spring 2025.

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From Cllr David Vigar – Trowbridge Grove Division

To Cllr Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management and Strategic Planning

Question (24-15)

Given that the inspector calculated that the council can demonstrate land supply for around 7,530 homes against a target of 7,820, will the council urgently seek developable land for the shortfall of around 290 homes and issue an interim supply statement to that effect in order to limit the period when promoters of speculative applications will enjoy a presumption in favour of sustainable development?

Response:

The shortage in the housing land supply target required by the NPPF is being factored into decisions taken for housing planning applications in order to improve the housing land supply position. National policy requires the housing land supply review to be produced annually so there is no expectation that an interim position will be released prior to the 2024-based Housing Land Supply Statement anticipated to be next Spring.

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From Cllr David Vigar – Trowbridge Grove Division

To Cllr Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management and Strategic Planning

Question (24-16)

The Cabinet papers issued on 30 September said: “Given the intention to submit the Plan before the end of the year, this will enable it to be examined under the September 2023 version of the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) and any increases in housing numbers and other policy changes would be addressed through a future Plan.” Is the reference to the September plan an error as it was the December 2023 version of the NPPF that provided for councils to demonstrate only a minimum of four years’ worth of housing land supply if they had an emerging local plan that had either been submitted for examination or had reached Regulation 18 or Regulation 19 consultation stage? Or does the Council understand the new Government policy to be that a plan under examination at or within a month of the new NPPF being published is examined under the September 2023 NPPF rather than the December 2023 one?

Response:

Paragraph 230 of the December 2023 NPPF indicates that Plans that have reached Regulation 19 stage before 19 March 2024 will be assessed against the relevant previous version of the NPPF. As the previous version of the NPPF is the September 2023 version, this is the version that the Plan will be assessed against. The NPPF provisions relating to a four-year housing land supply apply to decision-making only, not plan-making.

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From Cllr David Vigar – Trowbridge Grove Division

To Cllr Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management and Strategic Planning

Question (24-17)

If the Cabinet expects to have the Local Plan examined against the December 2023 NPPF, then is its hope that the plan will be adopted with a four year housing land supply requirement?

Response:

In accordance with the NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance, the Plan will need to have a five-year housing land supply at adoption. The provisions relating to a four-year housing land supply apply to decision-making only.

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From Cllr David Vigar – Trowbridge Grove Division

To Cllr Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management and Strategic Planning

Question (24-18)

If the plan is adopted with a four year requirement, by when does the Cabinet expect that the Council will begin the process of drawing up a new Local Plan under the draft NPPF proposed by the Government elected in July – and include a five year requirement?

Response:

See response to 24-17.

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From Cllr David Vigar – Trowbridge Grove Division

To Cllr Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management and Strategic Planning

Question (24-19)

How long does the Cabinet expect that the next Local Plan, ie the one after the current draft, will take to draw up?

Response:

This is currently unclear due to the change in Government and potential changes to national policy. The previous Government released a policy paper in May 2022 indicating that regulations covering plan production would be amended, to require them to be drawn up over a 30-month timescale.

The current Government recently consulted on proposed changes to the NPPF and revisions to the method for assessing the Local Housing Need. This indicated that where there was a significant difference (over 200 dwellings per annum) between the local planning authority’s revised Local Housing Need figure and the emerging housing requirement (as in Wiltshire’s case) we would need to revise our plan in line with the revised NPPF, before submitting the plan for examination no more than 18 months after the publication of the revised NPPF.

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From Cllr David Vigar – Trowbridge Grove Division

To Cllr Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management and Strategic Planning

Question (24-20)

The NPPF that the Government elected in July has proposed includes using a method of calculating housing supply that would raise Wiltshire’s requirement from 1,917 homes per year to 3,476. Given the possibility of the current draft Local Plan being adopted against the December 2023 NPPF requirements, does the Cabinet see any possibility of the new and higher housing targets being part of a Wiltshire Local Plan during the lifetime of the current Parliament?

Response:

See responses to 24-16 and 24-19.

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From Cllr David Vigar – Trowbridge Grove Division

To Cllr Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management and Strategic Planning

Question (24-21)

While the new housing land supply requirement is challenging, does the Cabinet member agree that the county needs to seek out many more suitable sites for new neighbourhoods supported by new infrastructure if its young people are to have better chances of finding their own homes as well as catering for those moving into Wiltshire?

Response:

Should the proposed changes to the NPPF and Local Housing Need be implemented as consulted upon, we will need to assess the appropriate plan-led strategy on how to meet the revised housing need.