

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

14 December 2010

Item 5 – Public Participation Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 – Car Parking Strategy (item 6)

Statement from the Porton Down Tripartite Estates Group

We have recently been made aware that Wiltshire Council has consulted upon the introduction of a Workplace Parking Levy for businesses in the Salisbury Area as part of a wider consultation on parking strategy for Wiltshire. This consultation closed in September this year and is due to be referred to the Council's Cabinet for decisions on 14 December. We would request that the views within this letter be included as part of this consultation process and be specifically referred to the Cabinet at their meeting as an objection from a major employers' group.

It is acknowledged that a Workplace Parking Levy could, if implemented correctly, have a positive impact to deliver behavioural changes in travel in some major city centres. However, it is a totally inappropriate tool to implement in a county like Wiltshire and, in particular, in a rural location such as the Porton Down Campus. Such a levy would be seen by both the employers and employees alike as a direct tax on business. Possible adverse impacts of such a levy would include additional employer costs, taxation issues, loss of goodwill for existing Travel Plan measures and support costs and probable parking displacement onto surrounding residential roads by those employees unable to travel sustainably and unwilling to pay the parking levy.

Due to the specialist nature of the work carried out at this campus, it is necessary to recruit the best staff from a broad geographical area. Any parking levy would make recruitment more difficult and for organisations with staff in multiple counties, would raise problems of fairness of treatment of staff at affected locations.

The Porton Down Campus is a strategic employment site within South Wiltshire, which currently attracts high value science and technology employment opportunities to the area. Historically the campus's poor transport infrastructure has resulted in the majority of employees being forced to commute by car to the site. However, over the past four years the employers at the Campus have invested heavily in sustainable transport solutions to reduce the reliance upon the single occupancy car travel to the site and have implemented a travel plan which is well respected within Wiltshire Council and used as best practice. This is now being increasingly well supported by employees at the site and the threat of such punitive measures would, we believe, undermine much of that goodwill.

The campus employers consider that the introduction of any workplace parking levy that included the Porton Down Campus would be an unnecessary additional financial burden, which would not benefit the campus as the majority of sustainable transport infrastructure solutions is paid for by the campus itself and not by Wiltshire Council. Such a levy could have a significant impact upon the ability of the employers to attract new investment to the site; in particular, Porton Bioscience and Technology Centre will be providing opportunities for major new commercial investment on its land that would generate the scientific and research employment opportunities so valued by Wiltshire Council. The attractiveness of the site would be potentially reduced if the spectre of Workplace Parking Levy hung over the site and thus threatened recruitment and travel of the workforce.

The Campus employers note that the Transport Minister Phillip Hammond MP requires local authorities to demonstrate to him, prior to him authorising a workplace parking levy scheme, that they have properly addressed concerns raised by local businesses in consultations. It is also noted that 62.4% of respondents to the car parking strategy questionnaire were against any form of workplace parking levy. The business community has not been specifically consulted upon any workplace parking levy and we feel that the Cabinet should consider removing it entirely from its plans until it can be reassured that any such levy has the support of the business community. This is something we feel it is unable to do at the present time.

Please ensure that this is brought to the attention of the Cabinet prior to their meeting on 14 December.