

## **Wiltshire Council**

### **Full Council**

**21 February 2017**

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#### **Public Questions**

#### **Questions from Mrs Marilyn Mackay to Councillor Toby Sturgis, Cabinet member for Strategic Planning, Development Management, Strategic Housing, Operational Property and Waste**

##### **Question Ref P17-01**

Where can one find budget allocation for CSAP, Rawlings Green, funding offered in the Council letter to the Inspector, 13 January, 2017:

**“The Council will play a pro-active role in collaboration with the developers to ensure completion of the link road to the A350 and railway bridge. In this regard, it will use its powers, including its ability to resolve any financial imbalances, for example by providing early funding to accelerate the provision of infrastructure”**

While this is expressed as a ‘back-stop’ offer, there is need for it to be anticipated in the future capital budget, since it represents a considerable sum. It does not appear in the Budget Book, or Financial Plan Update for this meeting. Yet within the Budget two other infrastructure budgets are listed, namely a further £0.3 million of revenue will be invested in Highways to provide additional capacity for the Council to drive the improvements to the A303 in the coming years; also, that with SWLEP £8.8m was secured to ease congestion on the A350 in Chippenham, this work is now complete.

Why is the Financial Plan silent on this issue? How much is it estimated it will cost?

This considerable sum is being proposed against a budget full of financial cuts, and was only made on the last day of the EiP, not on the day dedicated to Rawlings Green, so it did not afford an opportunity for public consultation.

##### **Response**

The context for the proposed change is the Inspector seeking reasonable certainty that the Railway Bridge at the Rawlings Green Site is deliverable and that there will be no undue delay to the completion of the link to the A350. The Council’s evidence shows that provision of the Cocklebury Link Road and connection through to the A350 is viable, including the delivery of the Bridge.

The proposed amendment follows a letter from the Inspector on 4 January who was seeking further assurances that the Council will work with the developers to ensure

completion of the link road. The letter to the Inspector dated 13<sup>th</sup> January 2017, summarises the Council's approach that was published in May 2016 ahead of the resumed examination of the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan. (Position Statement, Improving highway network resilience at Chippenham, paragraph 11.7).

At this stage, no funding is being offered by the Council for the development of Rawlings Green. The possibility of intervention by the Council sometime in the future does not necessarily involve expenditure. As explained at the Hearings, only in the unlikely circumstance that financial imbalances do arise the Council will investigate alternative delivery mechanisms.

The road and bridge referred to are just one part of extensive proposals for development by the private sector. The viability of this development has been tested independently and delivery is the subject of legal agreements between the developers and the Council. The statement of intent from the Council is a **last resort** and only a wise contingency to guarantee the timely delivery of road infrastructure in order to minimise adverse traffic impacts.

For all these reasons, providing for the contingency of financial involvement by the Council does not represent committed expenditure and it would be incorrect to treat it as such.

### **Question Ref P17-02**

Also in the CSAP letter from the Council to Inspector, 13 January, 2017, a further additional change was made, not covered at the EiP or in the subsequent Modifications.

“The link road from the B4069 to the A350 must also be open to traffic or a set of **comprehensive transport improvement measure of equivalent benefit** must be in place prior to development commencing beyond the first phase of development of the Rawlings Green site.”

WHAT WOULD A COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENT MEASURE OF EQUIVALENT BENEFIT BE?

This was not open to any public consultation.

### **Response**

The inclusion of the phrase ‘or a set of comprehensive improvement measures of equivalent benefit’ brings the policy for Rawlings Green in line with the same qualification included in policy CH1 in relation to South West Chippenham and the question about coordinated delivery of infrastructure was discussed fully during the hearings.

It is never possible to list a set of detailed measures for a large scale development at this stage of the development process. Predicting the impacts of traffic generated by

new development can only be done later when more detail is known about the composition of development in terms of size and type of houses and other mixed use development. Assessment requires detailed modelling and testing. For developments such as at South West Chippenham and Rawlings Green, mitigation measures can be extensive and involve a variety of improvements.

The extensive modelling work carried out to inform proposals of the Plan has assessed the Plan's pattern of development, including the impact of a link road from the A350 to Cocklebury Road. The performance of the local road network can be measured in terms of average journey times and traffic flows within the town centre. These indicators can also be used to assess and compare the effectiveness of different packages of smaller transport measures. Should it be necessary to consider what measures might be of equivalent benefit ahead of a link from the B4069 to the A350, then there is a sound basis on which to make an informed judgement.