

**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**29 June 2021**

**Agenda Item 6 – Wiltshire Local Plan Review Update**

**Question from Cllr Alex Kay – Bradford on Avon Town Council**

**To Councillor Nick Botterill Cabinet Member for Development Management, Strategic Planning and Climate Change**

**Statement**

I would like to reinforce the position held by Bradford on Avon Town Council concerning the content and quality of the draft of the Wiltshire Council Local Plan as can be found on our website.

<https://bradfordonavontowncouncil.gov.uk/local-plan-rejected-by-full-council/>

I am astounded that no direct notice of this 29th June meeting came to me or others, and that we have had less than 24 hours' notice to consider the extensive summary documentation.

**Question 1 (21-240)**

Will Cllr Clewer now confirm that the 5,000 additional houses have been formally removed from Wiltshire's housing target?

**Response:**

No decisions are being made at this meeting on policies for the draft Plan. As set out in the report (paragraph 5), once the draft Plan has been prepared it will be brought back to Cabinet and onto Council for approval before a further stage of consultation is undertaken.

It is therefore too early to say what the housing requirement should be. Further work needs to be undertaken in response to the consultation on key parts of the evidence base including testing the upper and lower levels of housing need and spatial distribution of growth for the plan period. As set out in the report it is important that the draft plan is based on robust evidence.

**Question 2 (21-241)**

Is the Cabinet aware of Bradford on Avon Town Council's outright objection to all three greenfield sites suggested for development in Bradford on Avon?

**Response:**

Yes, the Cabinet is aware that the Town Council does not support the three sites that comments were sought on through the consultation, instead they consider the proposed growth should be on brownfield sites.

**Question 3 (21-242)**

Does the Cabinet agree that climate change must be an over-arching priority for this Council (and the Government and society) and if so, that destroying carbon sinks and creating large housing estates on greenfield sites is not a viable proposition? How will Cllr Clewer square the circle with pressure from developers and his committed role in the Wiltshire Council Climate strategy?

**Response:**

As set out in the report, the Council recognises its legal duty to prepare a Local Plan that contributes to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change. A Local Plan must also be positively prepared to meet the development needs of its area in line with national planning policy (see paragraph 7 of Cabinet report), which may require greenfield sites to be planned for. However, this should be done in a way that minimises harm to the environment.

**Question 4 (21-243)**

Why has the Blue-Green Strategy consultation been delayed and why was it not integrated with the Local Plan? Why is it only a strategy and not a policy document?

**Response:**

The timeline for the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy is being aligned with the Climate Strategy (see Item on Update on Council's Response to Climate Emergency on [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday 2 February 2021, 10.00 am | Wiltshire Council](#)). The policies within the draft Local Plan will take into account the strategy to ensure it is appropriately integrated with land use planning.

**Question 5 (21-244)**

Shouldn't our residents (not developers) have the major say in what happens in their community (as many towns and parishes are attempting with their Neighbourhood Plan)?

**Response:**

The views of people living in an area are important, but we also must consider the views of other stakeholders also to ensure a fair consultation process and one that is in line with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement that recognises 'our community'

extends beyond the residents who live there.

**Question 6 (21-245)**

What measures are Wiltshire Council taking to support the Neighbourhood Planning process in the light of the significant evidence of strong commitment that has been made by residents across Wiltshire to their Neighbourhood Plan and Local Planning

**Response:**

The Council will continue to support the preparation of Neighbourhood Planning as it has in the past in line with its legal duties.

**Question 7 (21-246)**

How can the Cabinet expect the public to engage on a way forward with these crucial issues without knowing what has been agreed?

**Response:**

The purpose of the Cabinet report is to provide an update on the initial main issues arising from the consultation and to highlight some of the key areas where the evidence based will need to be developed further.

As stated in the response to Question 1, no decisions are being made at this meeting on policies for the draft Plan.

**Question 8 (21-247)**

Why are developers, driven by vested interests and profit, allowed to influence plans across Wiltshire? They should provide affordable housing as an imperative and a significant proportion of any number of houses agreed, and not make it a condition for raising the maximum number of houses calculated and proven very unpopular across Bradford on Avon and even more so, from our neighbours across Wiltshire such as Chippenham, Melksham, Trowbridge.

**Response:**

Developers have a right to comment on Local Plans like anyone else. This is recognised in the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement that defines 'Our Community' as meaning "*residents, businesses, community and interest groups, town and parish councils, developers, adjoining local authorities...*". However, this does not mean they have any undue influence over and above any other stakeholders.

**Question 9 (21-248)**

Will the Cabinet commit to pressure developers to provide sustainable carbon-zero homes including suitable energy-making and water-saving measures?

**Response:**

This point about development being zero carbon has been raised through the consultation and will be given consideration.

The Local Plan will need to be based on evidence and as such further assessments are needed to see whether this is possible.

**Question 10 (21-249)**

The volume of housing across the County is not commensurate with the infrastructure, particularly traffic, health and education. The volume of through traffic in Bradford in Avon is already unbearable now, as we come out of lock down and the recent start-up of the Bath CAZ. The additional housing in neighbouring towns will bring the entire road system to a standstill. Will Wiltshire Council commit to work with BOATC to reduce the through traffic and improve air quality and pedestrian safety in the town as a matter of urgency?

**Response:**

The points you raise about the adequacy of infrastructure have been made through the consultation, alongside many others, and will be given due consideration as the Local Plan is progressed. The transport impacts of new growth will be assessed as part of the Plan making process.

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**Question from Dave Knight**

**To Councillor Nick Botterill Cabinet Member for Development Management, Strategic Planning and Climate Change**

**Question 1 (21-250)**

In light of the recent planning decision to allow the Westbury incinerator to go ahead even when this will work against Wiltshire Council's climate commitments and national legislation to reduce CO2e emissions by 68% by 2030, how will the Local Plan policies be reviewed to check and confirm they are aligned to the objective to work towards getting the county to Net Zero asap (and the council to Net Zero by 2030)?

**Response:**

As set out in the report, the Council is mindful of its legal duty to prepare a Local Plan that contributes to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change. Paragraphs 43 to 45 of the report provide an overview of the type of evidence that will be developed to inform policies in the draft Plan and how these will contribute to climate issues.

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**Question from Janet Giles**

**To Councillor Nick Botterill Cabinet Member for Development Management, Strategic Planning and Climate Change**

**Statement**

The preferred route for a potential A350 bypass has been selected and will be subject to minor amendments to the north before being defined and put forward as the OBC for funding. Whether or not funding is granted and then whether or not the road is progressed could the route be granted protected planning status to prevent any development along the route which would preclude it as a bypass route at some future date. When we have more development in Melksham and may require a road, this may coincide with finally having funds but may be 10/15 years down the line and it would be disaster if we then had no option but build a longer bypass on even more open countryside.

**Question 1 (21-251)**

Can protection be incorporated into the local plan now?

**Response**

Infrastructure planning is integral to any Local Plan. Consideration will therefore need to be given to the evidence for safeguarding land for infrastructure, including transport, in the draft plan.

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**Statement from Marilyn Longden**

**To Councillor Nick Botterill Cabinet Member for Development Management, Strategic Planning and Climate Change**

**Statement**

Having just read this document I would like to reiterate my concerns that environmental and well being issues must not be overlooked.

The old golf course here in Bradford on Avon is a much needed green space and adjoins neighbouring green spaces making a wonderful green corridor for residents to enjoy nature. The other documented issues relating to the use of this site for housing are extremely concerning.

The need for an infrastructure to support green energy and greater consideration of environmental impact is crucial with so much evidence of the negative impact of current provisions.

I welcome further research based on the findings which should include consultation with local (town etc) councils and residents. Please can Wiltshire Council ensure that ALL residents are made aware of consultations.

I would query the statement that:

"Arrangements were also put in place to allow people who did not have access to the internet to have hard copies sent to them by post." Maybe there were arrangements but there was no publicity.

There was nothing visible locally to notify residents of the proposals. The majority of my neighbours are elderly and don't use social media or ICT. They were severely disadvantaged and were only made aware of the plans when we talked to them. Unfortunately many older people were not informed at all.

I hope the genuine and valid concerns of residents will be taken into account.

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### **Statement from Nick Wilkinson**

**To Councillor Nick Botterill Cabinet Member for Development Management, Strategic Planning and Climate Change**

#### **Statement**

1. Appendix 1 attached to your Agenda contains much publicly useful information. It is of great concern that you have now given your Public so little time to reflect and comment.
2. As far as residents of rural large villages (such as Great Bedwyn) are concerned, the Appendix covers us as though 'one-size-fits-all', whereas in reality some villages have major special interests.
3. The median household employed income in this part of Wiltshire is according to your own statistics about £34,000 a year; there are a few significantly wealthier residents, which means, as our recent NDP surveys confirmed, that there are many local families with much lower incomes.
4. The effect of the current pandemic has been that many people living in London and other cities such as Reading want to move to more rural areas, either to work from home or to be able to travel easily and occasionally to their employer's offices.
5. Bedwyn is not only at the centre of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, but unusually for a village also has a railway station and close motorway access which enable travel to major work and population centres. This makes it highly attractive to families from elsewhere who are on generally higher than local median salaries.
6. Bedwyn was also already an expensive housing area for the reasons in 5, because it also has relatively limited housing, despite the regular building of small and medium estates since the 1950s.
7. So, for both reasons market house prices have risen very fast in recent months to a general level at which even those local families on median incomes can no longer consider buying or renting in the area. For example, at the largest local employer, Great Bedwyn Primary School, most of the teaching and educational



support staff now have daily to drive significant distances from elsewhere. The same goes for others in support and service jobs.

8. The situation is made worse by the declining numbers and standard of local social housing (about 20% of local homes), because the principal Housing Associations are for business reasons selling on the market when residents die or move out, and then concentrating any new builds in areas where land and support is cheaper. So even accommodation to rent is becoming much scarcer and less affordable.
9. When NDP work was started locally in recent years, our emphasis was on retaining a balanced community, maintaining the overall AONB environment, and reducing the need to travel to work. The prior Village Design Statement also required development standards which reduced heat loss and increased the use of natural energy sources.
10. We have a suitable potential medium-sized development site for a mix of market and social homes, in an available church-owned field along one side of the current GB Village settlement, bordering the Primary School and an existing estate, and within walking distance of our remaining local services centre and the railway station. There is predominantly supportive local desire for additional 'affordable' market and social housing here.
11. So please produce a Wiltshire Local Plan that includes supporting specific local community needs like ours.
12. And above all please accept, recognise and support that the limited actual financial wealth of some existing Wiltshire **local families and communities** requires at least equal balancing in development and conservation planning, with other more general environmental, business and political considerations.

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**Statement from Shirley McCarthy – Wiltshire Climate Alliance**

**To Councillor Nick Botterill Cabinet Member for Development  
Management, Strategic Planning and Climate Change**

**Statement**

Although I was alerted by Councillor Murry yesterday to the possibility of putting a question to Cabinet, the shortness of the timescale precluded my doing so by the deadline of noon today. I therefore hope that my points will be taken into account despite their arriving after the deadline.

The arguments against the Local Plan Review proposals, particularly as they affect the Chippenham Housing Market Area, have been reiterated by Cllr Murry and I have already commented as part of the consultation, so my focus is why Wiltshire Council is risking a failure in democratic accountability?

- a) the lack of notice that the Cabinet were to consider the LPR on 29/6
- b) recommending progression to the next stage before Councillors have seen a full digest of the massive response to the consultation
- c) giving equal weight to developer and resident input in the summary of responses
- d) omitting reference to critical comments on the way the consultation was carried out
- d) once again, assuring simply that the Global Warming and Climate Emergency Task Group will have its findings "taken into account" instead of making them central to producing the Local Plan.

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**Question from Cllr Derek Walters**

**To Councillor Nick Botterill Cabinet Member for Development Management, Strategic Planning and Climate Change**

**Question 1 (21-252)**

In 2018 Dominic Raab announced changes to the New Towns Act that would see local authorities leading new town developments that would be accountable to their local communities, rather than government ministers.

Does Cabinet think that this would help deliver new housing in communities designed to satisfy the low carbon commitments of our Climate Emergency pledge and thus consigning the HIF, a vote loser and an outdated solution, to Room 101.

**Response:**

The move towards low carbon development should feature in our thinking irrespective of whether it is a new town, urban expansion or other. New Towns themselves would inevitably involve use of greenfield sites and road infrastructure.