

**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**9 June 2020**

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**Question from Bill Jarvis – Extinction Rebellion about Cycling and Pedestrian Network**

**Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation**

**To Councillor Philip Whitehead Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development**

**Statement**

The Covid19 pandemic has highlighted the impact that transport emissions have on the population. It is estimated that two million people in the UK with respiratory conditions such as asthma have experienced reduced symptoms during the coronavirus lockdown, according to the British Lung Foundation.

Additionally, as a part of the support to enable people to stay off public transport, the Government has been encouraging the development of dedicated cycle and footpaths networks, including closing some roads to traffic other than to cyclists and pedestrians.

To this end, as you know, grant funding is being made available, see below

“...Part of government plans is the creation of "low-traffic neighbourhoods" outside of London to double rates of cycling by the 2025.

The Secretary of State for Transport is likely to announce extra funding for local authorities to pay for alterations to the road network to facilitate this move to more active ways to get around.

He is also expected to announce plans to give local authorities new powers to change the road network and designate extra space for cyclists and pedestrians....”

### **Question 1**

Will Wiltshire Council commit to making temporary cycle/pedestrian routes permanent and has Wiltshire Council made any grant application for such funding as is available?

#### **Response**

On 27<sup>th</sup> May, Department for Transport wrote to all Local Transport Authorities advising that £45m was being allocated as part of an 'Emergency Active Travel Fund'. Authorities have been individually awarded an indicative sum – Wiltshire's allocation is £227k.

Use of that fund is narrow – defined as "...promoting cycling as a replacement for journeys previously made by public transport..."

Local Authorities were asked to submit proposals for assessment to DfT by 5<sup>th</sup> June.

A list of eligible schemes has been sent to DfT and we await their response.

A second Tranche of funding was confirmed on 29<sup>th</sup> May, however criteria for spend is not yet known.

Monitoring of schemes will be undertaken to help assess whether any emergency measures can become permanent.

### **Question 2**

The Council is committing significant resource and effort into obtaining highway grant funding that will, potentially, make it more unsafe for pedestrians and cyclists

Will the Council commit to ensuring that all highway improvement schemes, including those already underway, contain proper dedicated routes for cyclists and pedestrians?

#### **Response**

An assessment and appropriate response to the needs of walkers, cyclists and equestrians is an integral part of scheme development and design.

### **Question 3**

Will the Council commit to delivering a dedicated cycle/pedestrian network throughout the County, a budget to provide it and a timescale to do so.

#### **Response**

The Council is currently developing its 4<sup>th</sup> Local Transport Plan – LTP4 - (largely shadowing the Local Plan Review). LTP4 will comprise a core strategy document supported by a number of daughter documents including a review of walking and cycling strategies.

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**Question from Darren Hopkins about the Future Chippenham Project**

**Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation**

**To Councillor Philip Whitehead Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development**

**Question**

Does the Council intend to carry out public consultation on the contract with Homes England for the £75m for the distributor roads before it is signed and reflect the results of that consultation in the contract? If so, when and how? If not, why not?

**Response**

The Council will consult with the public on every matter for which consultation is required, and more broadly about aspects of the Future Chippenham overall when it appropriate and safe to do so. The first such consultation will be in connection with road route options which will take place, as mentioned at Cabinet in March, as soon as we are able to safely carry this out.

The contract negotiations with Homes England proceed as planned, albeit compromised by both parties' Covid impacts, and the final form when arrived at will be presented to and approved by Cabinet before signature.

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**Question from Ian James – Bremhill Parish Council about Chippenham Future Project**

**Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation**

**To Councillor Philip Whitehead Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Councillor Toby Sturgis Cabinet Member for Spatial Planning, Development Management and Investment**

**Statement**

Cllr Sturgis you are very familiar with land to the East of Chippenham, which is part of Bremhill Parish.

**Question 1**

Why is the Council planning to give Council farmers notice to quit farms in September when no planning decision will have been made? Is this the Council being over confident in expecting the planning application to go the way of the Council?

**Response**

The Council has two separate, unconnected roles in relation to the Chippenham Future project. Firstly, the Council, in acting as landlord and landowner, has to make decisions that relate solely to tenancies and potential future development proposals, irrespective of the planning status of the land and property. Any future planning applications on this land will be dealt with separately by the Council as local planning authority, and any such planning considerations cannot include the Council's land ownership status.

**Question 2**

You are aware that there is a Bremhill Neighbourhood Plan in existence, and the Planning Inspector Ann Skippers recommended there should be no development to the east of the Cycle Track. In addition, Wiltshire Core policy 51 Landscape states "Development should protect, conserve, and where possible enhance the landscape character, and have an acceptable impact on the landscape character"

Please inform the public, how driving a road across farmland and building 7,500 is achieving any of the above?

### **Response**

There is no planning application that has been submitted for development east of the cycle track. If such an application is made then this will be assessed against the policies in the development plan, together with any other relevant material considerations. The development of a relief road (irrespective of government funding) would need to be the subject of a planning application.

### **Question 3**

How many brown field sites are there in Chippenham that could be used for development in the next 5 years, which may reduce the need to build so many houses on green field sites?

### **Response**

Brown field site availability in Chippenham will be determined by market factors over that period of time so it is uncertain what the number or the level of deliverability on those sites might be over the time period. The purpose in seeking Housing Infrastructure Funding to deliver a master planned scheme is to reduce the uncertainty of being able to fulfil our growth requirement over the next plan period and to ensure that the infrastructure to support that development is put in place up front.

### **Question 4**

Should Wiltshire Council now change the vision of the future?

### **Response**

The Council has a clear strategy and plan for the future and a thorough regular review process to ensure it is up to date.

### **Question 5**

40% of the work force is now working from home, if this continues do we need a substantial road infrastructure?

### **Response**

Following on from the answer to Q4 above factors such as this will be taken in to account as they develop and as long term trends become more certain, always in balance with other competing requirements affecting the County.

**Question 6**

Land to the east of Chippenham has a disused railway line, why not put electric trams into service for any future development to the east, this could use the railway line and feed the railway station.

**Response**

Ideas such as this will be taken in to serious consideration when consultation is able to take place and will be balanced against other initiatives and priorities at the appropriate time

**Question 7**

The argument put forward that a distributor road is required to relieve Chippenham of traffic, this is clearly incorrect. By building 7500 houses will bring significantly more traffic to Chippenham.

Is the distributor road to be paid for by the taxpayer to provide the Council with the opportunity to become a developer and build many thousands of homes on Council farmland.?

**Response**

Traffic modelling was a significant part of the HIF bid and will be repeated as part of the development process. It demonstrates the benefit that a distributor road will bring to Chippenham town centre as well as distributing traffic from any new development effectively.

Development on Council owned land is an opportunity to build socially inclusive communities in a manner different from commercial developers.

**Question 8**

Do you think the current vision being proposed is out dated since the COVID 19 virus, and we should be thinking fewer vehicles, more electrification, and less noise and pollution? Is it too late to change direction? There is a serious movement of opinion that dictates that this road is no longer needed.

**Response**

All factors, including Covid 19 are being assessed as part of the negotiations with Homes England and internally by the Council. Should they indicate that changes are appropriate they will be factored in at the appropriate time.

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**Question from Ian James – Bremhill Parish Council about Chippenham Future Project**

**Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation**

**To Councillor Philip Whitehead Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and  
Councillor Toby Sturgis Cabinet Member for Spatial Planning, Development Management and Investment**

**Statement**

I note from the Wiltshire website how successful the council has been in registering 100 Neighbourhood Plans, more than any other Council in the country.

Bremhill parish council worked for 5 years creating a sustainable Neighbourhood Plan, it was adjudicated by the Council's choice of Planning Inspectors Anne Skippers.

She made recommendation that there should be no development to the east of the SusTrans cycle route in order to preserve the landscape, and prevent coalescence between Chippenham Town and the conservation village of Tytherton Lucas.

**Question 1**

Why has the Council proposed a planning application which drives a coach and horses through a Neighbourhood Plan which took 5 years to complete, and was agreed overwhelmingly by the 400 members of the parish?

**Response**

Neighbourhood Plans are part of the 'development plan' and are taken into account in any decision making about development proposals when they are submitted for planning permission. The 'development plan' will be a material consideration which guides the consideration of any planning applications that come forward. In applying for a HIF grant the Council has the opportunity to forward fund the main infrastructure for a scheme that will see controlled development over many years. Planning permission will need to be sought for the scheme in the usual way.

**Question 2**

I am afraid it appears that the Council is paying lip service to all the work people do to enhance and support our communities.

Are neighbourhood Plans not relevant in the eyes of Wiltshire Council. Will the Council oppose the Neighbourhood Plan at the planning application for this road and future development?

**Response**

The council has a strong track record in promoting the development and adoption of Neighbourhood Plans with its communities. Our communities' different views and visions are important as they inform plan making. Neighbourhood Plans are part of our 'Development Plan', and are updated to balance and reflect both local circumstances and the strategic policies set out in the Local Plan/Core Strategy.



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**Question from Isabel McCord – Bremhill Parish Council about Chippenham Futures Project**

**Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation**

**To Councillor Philip Whitehead Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development**

**Statement**

The Chippenham Housing Market Area paper presented to Cabinet in April 2019 showed 7 hectares of employment land in Chippenham in the period 2026 – 2036. With plans to develop 7500 houses during this same period this will result in even more out commuting and greater damage to the environment.

**Question 1**

Please confirm how many hectares of employment land are included in the Future Chippenham programme, where the land is located, is it on Council owned land and was it included in the HIF submission.

**Response**

The HIF bid proposed 1 million sq. ft. just short of 10 hectares, of new employment land. It is proposed that this will be a mixture of micro businesses in any new district or neighbourhood centre growing through SMEs to larger businesses at the edge of development in appropriate locations. Master planning has not yet got to the stage of identifying where any specific sites will be located and as we have said before the planning process will have to approve any application that comes forward.

**Question 2**

Who will be carrying out the transport analysis supporting the planning application for the Future Chippenham distributor roads, when will it be concluded and when will it be published?

## **Response**

The Council has a Highways Framework contract with Atkins and it is likely that transport analysis will be conducted under that contract. Specialist firms may also be contracted if appropriate. Timescales are uncertain at the moment but further analysis, to enhance the detailed work already done for the bid, will be undertaken as close to development as possible to align with planning applications that must be made.

## **Question 3**

How many hectares of council land have been included in the Future Chippenham programme for consideration for development, where is this land located and to what use is it being put at present?

## **Response**

The precise nature and location of development has yet to be determined. Much of the land is currently agricultural and is on land owned by Wiltshire Council and several third parties.

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**Question from Steve Perry about the Future Chippenham Project**

**Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation**

**To Councillor Philip Whitehead Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development**

**Question**

You have stated that the Future Chippenham Program Director reports directly to the Chief Executive Officer, Alastair Cunningham.

Can you confirm that the Spatial Planning team also report to the same Chief Executive Officer, presumably through the Director for Economic Development and Planning?

If so, how can the independence of the Spatial Planning process, from Economic Development and Future Chippenham priorities, be publicly guaranteed?

**Response**

The Spatial Planning Team report to the Director of Economic Development and Planning, who is the responsible officer for planning decisions, not the Chief Executive Officer, and from the beginning of July the Future Chippenham scheme will be the responsibility of the Director of Housing and Commercial Development. The governance for Future Chippenham ensures that the correct independence between the Council's commercial operations and spatial planning responsibilities remains in place.

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**Question from Karen Stuckey about the Future Chippenham Project**

**Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation**

**To Councillor Philip Whitehead Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for  
Economic Development and  
Councillor Toby Sturgis Cabinet Member for Spatial Planning, Development  
Management and Investment**

**Statement**

Neighbourhood Plans demonstrate powerful local democracy in action, put together and voted on by the people in the area who best know the housing requirements, sites suitable for development and the need for green spaces. These Neighbourhood Plans while being developed have rightly to take into account the existing strategic plans and housing requirements from the planning authority.

**Question**

Does the Cabinet believe that likewise, new strategic planning, site and housing allocations should take into account already existing Neighbourhood Plans and the wishes of local people?

**Response**

Our communities' different views and visions are important as they inform plan making. Neighbourhood Plans are part of our 'Development Plan', and are updated to balance and reflect both local circumstances and the strategic policies set out in the Local Plan/Core Strategy. The Local Plan is being reviewed, and will cover the period up to 2036. Consequently the strategic policies in the Local Plan will reflect new Neighbourhood Plans as they are updated during this period.

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**Question from Chris Caswill about Chippenham Futures Project**

**Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation**

**To Councillor Philip Whitehead Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development**

**Question 1**

Has the Council now signed a contractual agreement with Homes England which provide it with access to the HIF Grant?

- If so, what are the conditions which have been agreed as part of that arrangement?
- if a contractual agreement has not yet been signed, when do you expect it to be? And will you then make it public?
- Please confirm how many hectares of employment land are included in the Future Chippenham programme, where the land is located, is it on Council owned land and was it included in the HIF submission.

**Response**

The Council is in negotiations with Homes England and has not yet completed a contract with them. With an allowance for Covid 19 impacts both Homes England and the Council would like to see the process concluded by the end of the year. The final form of contract when arrived at will be presented to and approved by Cabinet before signature.

The HIF bid proposed 1 million sq. ft. just short of 10 hectares, of new employment land. It is proposed that this will be a mixture of micro businesses in any new district or neighbourhood centre growing through SMEs to larger businesses at the edge of development in appropriate locations. Master planning has not yet got to the stage of identifying where any specific sites will be located and as we have said before the planning process will have to approve any application that comes forward.

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**Question from Councillor Nick Murry – about Future Chippenham Project**

**Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation**

**To Councillor Philip Whitehead Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development**

**Question 1**

It has been claimed that the benefits of an eastern distributor road in diverting traffic from the town centre of Chippenham would outweigh the disbenefits of the substantial additional traffic that will be generated by the development that the road caters for (including the impact on the town centre of nearby Calne). Can you please make public the evidence/ traffic modelling that underpins this claim, without which it cannot be taken seriously?

**Response**

The Council has promised that it will consult openly as soon as it is possible to do so and such consultation will include elements of traffic modelling that have been used to date. In due course further traffic modelling will be undertaken as the scheme develops and that too will be made public at the appropriate time.

**Question 2**

The countryside to the East of Chippenham, including land on Wiltshire Council's own farms, contains some of the most ecologically valuable habitat and species diversity anywhere in north Wiltshire, as evidenced by recent wildlife survey work. The Council therefore needs to plan very carefully for any development and take account of these valuable natural assets in advance of spending scarce public resources on advancing any scheme. Local knowledge and expertise could be very helpful in doing so. Would the Council therefore please make public information (including maps and current land use data) on the proposed areas earmarked for development (including its own farms) to the east of Chippenham, so that any proposed future plans can be properly informed at an early stage?

## **Response**

The first elements of the overall Future Chippenham scheme on which the Council will consult will be the road route options and we will fulfil our promise to do that as soon as we are able safely to do so. Essentially the Council agrees with the points you make and is conducting its own thorough detailed landscape and ecology surveys to ensure all national, local, statutory and other requirements are accounted for and met in planning and delivery. Plans for specific areas of land have yet to be developed. Once prepared the draft masterplan will be brought forward for consultation as soon as possible.