

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

18 July 2023

Item 10 – Wiltshire Local Plan Review

From Richard Walker, Lightwood Strategic

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

Preamble

This statement and question follows, and is linked to, the statement of Tom Oatley of Paxcroft Farm, Trowbridge that was presented to the meeting of Wiltshire Cabinet on 11th July.

The previous Local Plan consultation understood the pure planning case for setting out a strategic vision for new growth points at the district's key settlements. Delivery was to be phased across plan periods, but an overall framework for co-ordinated change (if change was to happen) was to be established early. Where the Council is a landowner, best practice continues to be followed, yet it has been curiously abandoned for the other locations. As presented, it appears there is an inconsistent approach to the long-term planning of key settlements. There is no distinction within the evidence base underpinning different approaches to the long-term planning of the key settlements, yet there has been a clear decision to treat them differently.

The absence of longer-term certainty, or the requirement for a framework plan for more specific broad locations, could affect the achievement of shorter-term wins and ensuring any initial development is in sync with the wider proposals. The council's approach generates avoidable risks to the successful delivery of long-term growth and increases the risk of unintended consequences.

In this Local Plan, the administration could have secured the following benefits through the more definitive identification of a broad location;

- A deliverable country park east of Paxcroft Farm; a concept introduced to the council by the landowners and their consultants.
- A further strategic green lung south of the Kennet and Avon canal as part of overall green grid enhancements.
- Additional land for Trowbridge Rugby Club and other sports teams in the area.
- Safeguarding and/or a land transfer for a new large secondary school which provides the required flexibility for appropriate investment decisions for Trowbridge, which should be made before any future local plan review.
- A definitive framework plan for the broad location which clearly communicates the infrastructure and facilities that would support intended growth, identifying phasing and the release of community facilities with transparency.

Had more meaningful engagement with landowners, promoters and developers taken place in North Trowbridge, the clarity and certainty provided to the communities of Chippenham could and should have been achieved. The ability of landowners to plan and release major community benefits could have been significantly increased through relatively minor changes to the proposed pre-submission Plan.

Question (P23-20)

Why has the council not applied a consistent approach to the long-term planning of key settlements, and will the Council suggest modifications to the Plan before it is submitted for examination if it clear (including through formal representations) that there are alternative and better ways forward, which promote deliverable, long term, sustainable growth, as the Council intends?

Response:

An inconsistent approach has not been undertaken. The scale of allocations in the Plan for both Chippenham and Trowbridge have been reduced compared with the proposals within the previous 2021 consultation. It is the changes to the numbers in the Revised Spatial Strategy, which has led to a reduction in the allocations at both places.

Both settlements are identified in Policy 3 as Broad Locations for Growth where additional urban extensions will be identified towards the end of the Plan period to meet longer term strategic needs for housing and employment and ensure the delivery of major infrastructure.

At this stage, the council will be consulting on a Plan that is considered to be sound. Only if substantive new information comes to light will consideration be given to making amendments before it is submitted for examination.