

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

24 March 2020

Question from Isabel McCord – Bremhill Parish Council

Agenda Item 13 Future Chippenham Update

To Councillor Philip Whitehead Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development

Statement

The report notes the risk that the timelines for the planning application for the roads does not align with the Local Plan Review timelines and there is a risk that consent will not be granted, and the sites not allocated for housing. HIF Forward Fund Technical Guidance states 'Any development decisions for specific proposals must go through the normal planning process and be guided by development plans'. WC Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) states planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan. The extant local development plan for Chippenham is the Chippenham Site Allocation Plan adopted May 2017. This does not include housing development to the East of Chippenham. The next iteration of the Local Development Plan for Chippenham will not be adopted until early 2023. Therefore, there is no adopted local development plan that supports the development of land for houses and employment land to the East of Chippenham. For the Cabinet to push ahead with the planning application for the roads ahead of adoption of the next local plan runs counter not only to the HIF Forward Fund Technical Guidance but also its own policy as laid down in the Statement of Community Involvement. By pushing ahead with the planning applications for the roads Wiltshire Council has predetermined the allocation of sites for development in the next LDL for Chippenham without public consultation or examination in public.

Question 1

How will the public consultation on the options for the roads be possible in April this year with the developments in COVID 19 and consequent restrictions on movement of people?

Response

The Council across its full range of services is significantly affected by the Corona virus outbreak and its response to the needs flowing from that will take precedence.

Equally the Council will not compromise its intention to consult with the public about many aspects of the Future Chippenham programme and that will take place as soon as it is safe and practical to do so.

The first such engagement will be to seek review and comment on route options for the road to be funded by the HIF award which we had hoped to commence in late April. As you indicate it will not be possible to hold public events at this point in time. As an alternative we are looking at technological methods to begin the consultation process, to be followed up with appropriate events when it is safe to do so.

As you will know a great many factors must be accounted for in determining the route of a new road from archaeology, ground conditions, engineering options suitability for its intended purpose, among many others. Included in these factors are the views of the public and the Council will only determine a preferred route when the public's views have been received. Once every factor has been considered and a preferred route is available that too will be offered for consultation before being finalised and becoming part of the subsequent planning application.

Question 2

Paragraph 4 b ii states "to continue to develop the design of the road together with the master planning of the overall scheme." Does this mean the overall scheme for the roads or for the roads and the development of houses and employment land?

Response

The Council will need to submit a detailed planning application for the new road to be funded by the HIF award. The award is provided by the Housing Infrastructure Fund and is explicitly awarded on the basis that the new infrastructure brings forward land for housing. At this stage the masterplan will do no more than indicate broad outline areas of development for different purposes – housing; community hearts; schools; leisure facilities; open spaces; green corridors; cycleways, among others. This is done to give the road its context but does not yet need to be expressed in detail. All such matters will come forward in the years ahead, assuming the road secures planning permission, and will be subject to all the disciplines and requirements of the planning regime at the relevant time.

Question 3

In the Executive Summary it states town centre improvements in Chippenham yielding an improved experience for residents and visitors alike. As it makes another point about relieving traffic congestion, I assume it means other improvements. What are these, were they included in the HIF bid and how will this be done from £75m?

Response

The HIF award of £75m is for the new distributor road only. It will be a requirement of the contract that the Council is now negotiating with Homes England to secure the grant that, in the years ahead, developers are subject to a separate and distinct charge that recovers the HIF grant. This is in addition to normal CIL contributions and s106 Agreements. The Council will be required in the contract with Homes England to set out the mechanism for such recovery and will be required to recycle it for use to improve other infrastructure and community facilities.

Whilst other work goes on to improve Chippenham town centre additional funds specifically recovered for the HIF grant will be applied in Chippenham and elsewhere when available to do so. Specific projects on which such monies might be spent will be determined at the time.