

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

1 December 2020

From Chris Caswill

To Cllr Toby Sturgis – Cabinet Member for Spatial Planning, Development Management and Property

Item 8 – Consultation to Inform the Wiltshire Local Plan Review

The core underpinning assertion that Chippenham is particularly suited for a large housing expansion due to its proximity to a train station on the London to the West lines and to the M4 needs urgent reconsideration in the light of well argued expectations that (post COVID) much more work will be carried out remotely without the need for daily commuting – hence leading to increased demands for housing dispersed away from tightly packed urban centres.

There is no mention of COVID in the Chippenham Site Selection Report, and the only references to it in the covering paper relate to the timing and delivery of the statutory consultation. The failure to take account of changing work, travel and recreation papers in a set of proposals for the allocation of housing renders this whole exercise invalid and liable to substantial challenge.

These documents are COVID blind and should be withdrawn and revised.

Question 1

Who conducted the Sustainability Appraisal for Chippenham, and when was it completed?

Response

An Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report has been prepared by the Council (Spatial Planning), as is common practice, and it was completed in November.

Question 2

Paragraph 46 of the Chippenham Site Selection Report says that “the sustainability appraisal methodology is provided in a separate report.” This is clearly an extremely important document. Where and when will it be made publicly available?

Response

The Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report will be published alongside all the other supporting material when the consultation commences on the Local plan // in the

new year. Relevant results are summarised in appropriate appendices to the report to Cabinet.

Question 3

There is no mention of COVID in the Chippenham Site Selection Report, and the only references to it in the covering paper relate to the timing and delivery of the statutory consultation. The failure to take account of changing work, travel and recreation papers in a set of proposals for the allocation of housing renders this whole exercise invalid and liable to substantial challenge. Will you therefore agree to suspend this process now, and require the proposals to be reconsidered to take account of changes that are already evident and widely anticipated to continue post-COVID?

Response

The Government has expressly urged all local planning authorities to continue the preparation of Local Plans and not to suspend work. To stop would incur the risk of speculative ad hoc development being permitted outside the Council and communities' control.

It is too early to draw conclusions on what long term effects, if any, the pandemic experience may have on long term needs and future patterns of development. The consultation is an opportunity to add to our understanding on this, amongst other shifting potential influences upon the Plan's content. This is a vitally important part of the process and does not render it invalid.