

**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**2 February 2021**

**Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation and Questions from Councillors**

**Statement and Questions from Melanie Boyle**

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

**Statement 1**

Public consultation on the draft local plan for Chippenham has just started, I am a resident of 39 years who enjoys the countryside on our doorstep, photographing all the birds of prey, owls, birds, kingfishers, small mammals etc. and cycling 7 miles along a cycle path not on a road, but with countryside all around it.

**Question 1 (21-41)**

How can Wiltshire Council destroy this when there are so many brownfield sites?

**Response:**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) must be taken into account when preparing a new Local Plan. The NPPF definition of sustainable development is not exclusively about the countryside. The NPPF says achieving sustainable development has three overarching objectives - economic, social and environmental. These are interdependent and should be pursued in mutually supportive ways.

The 'Emerging Spatial Strategy' and 'Planning for Chippenham' documents, which form part of the Local Plan consultation say that needs for development should be met as far as possible on brownfield sites in order to help minimize the loss of greenfield sites. The Council suggests a target of 240 homes for Chippenham on brownfield sites over the next 10 years. This is far lower than the indicative residual housing requirement of 5100 homes identified for the town, hence why greenfield sites have been identified. The consultation asks whether there should be a brownfield target and if so, should it be higher or lower?

**Question 2 (21-42)**

Where is the detailed evidence of how Wiltshire Council decided 5,000 extra houses than the Government figures were required?

**Response:**

The Swindon and Wiltshire Local Housing Needs Assessment 2019 prepared by Opinion

Research Services contains the evidence for the higher level of 45,600 homes.

**Question 3 (21-43)**

What can we do to stop the road and housing, eg 100 people complete the consultation against it will that be enough? We need to know what we are aiming for?

**Response:**

The purpose of the Local Plan consultation is to seek feedback from the public and other stakeholders about the proposals. The content and substance of comments received will be considered and changes made if considered appropriate. No changes will be decided based on the number of comments submitted, but on the strength of evidence and arguments provided.

**Question 4 (21-44)**

We need the farms for local food, why are Wiltshire Council destroying them when there are so many brownfield sites?

**Response:**

See response to Q1.

**Question 5 (21-45)**

At the meeting it was mentioned about interested companies, we have 32 empty business sites and increasing, why can't they be redeveloped rather than tearing up the countryside?

**Response:**

Our employment land proposals are based on evidence set out in the Employment Land Review report, one of the supporting documents available as part of the Local Plan consultation. If you have any new information or comments to submit about this evidence, then please submit comments directly to the Local Plan consultation.

**Statement 2**

Please put both projects on hold until we know the full extent of the Covid impact, we have a great community using the countryside and helping each other at the moment. Good Energy pulling out of the Sadlers Mead development shows working at home is having a big impact, reducing the need for office buildings, hotels, student accommodation due to remote learning, cars commuting, shops becoming available for housing, Covid deaths, increased deaths due to cancer, heart treatments being delayed will all change requirements, the countryside could be destroyed for nothing?

**Question 6 (21-46)**

We are seeing many decision for Chippenham that are obviously not made by locals eg Sadlers Mead car park development, it is terrible, an eyesore added to the wonderful river and park area, the lights are left on all the time even on sunny days when there is nobody working there on a Sunday, the view of the car park for miles around due to the lighting is terrible, the cost to the tax payer and the environment are unbelievable, **why is there not sensor and zone lighting in a new building?** Photo attached. Good Energy pulled out and we are left with a blot on the landscape while we have a derelict

college site next to it and 4 other car parks adjacent to it?

**Response:**

There is sensor lighting on floors other than ground floor.

**Question 7 (21-47)**

Also why was the Magistrates Court built and demolished with only about 20 years use?

**Response:**

The Magistrates Court building was vacated a few years ago. The site was bought by Lidl and an application for a new supermarket (reference 19/11732/FUI) was approved with conditions in September 2020. Lidl's proposals include the demolition of the existing building.

**Question 8 (21-48)**

Why is more effort not being made to open Corsham and Devizes train stations which would reduce traffic into Chippenham and mean people could walk or cycle to those stations in those towns?

**Response:**

As part of the Department for Transport's (DfT) Restoring Your Railway Ideas Fund, the Council submitted a successful round one bid for a Devizes Gateway station. Officers are now working with the Devizes Development Partnership to develop a Strategic Outline Business Case for submission to the DfT in March/April 2021.

For round two of the Ideas Fund, the Council submitted a bid to restore secondary services on the Great Western Main Line. As well as improving connectivity between Bristol to Oxford (and potentially further east) this would help realise new stations at Corsham and Royal Wootton Bassett / Swindon West. While the bid was unsuccessful, officers are liaising with the DfT and key stakeholders/partners to establish next steps.

**Question 9 (21-49)**

How does this plan fit in with the governments plan to save the NHS billions with green prescriptions, a County Park is not the same as the natural countryside?

**Response:**

A new country park is a good opportunity to provide green infrastructure. The NPPF encourages the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure to enable and support healthy lifestyles and a country park is one example of this.