

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

2 February 2021

Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation and Questions from Councillors

Statement and Questions from Cllr Murry about the Local Plan

**To Councillor Toby Sturgis Cabinet Member for Spatial Planning,
Development Management and Property**

Statement 1

In preparation for the Local Plan Review in 2018 Wiltshire Council's spatial planning team informed Chippenham Town councillors that about 3,000 houses would need to be built in Chippenham for the Plan period 2016-36. Evidence recently gathered in Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) work undertaken by consultants for the Chippenham Neighbourhood Plan using ONS census data (ONS, SNPP 2016) suggests Chippenham's net population growth as equivalent to 2,000 – 2,775 houses between 2016 and 2036, which is consistent with the original Spatial Planning team's 3,000 homes needs assessment cited above. The number now being proposed in the current LPR consultation is over 9,000. This equates to a commuter suburb the size of Calne and 20% of Wiltshire's housing numbers being unloaded onto green fields around Chippenham.

Question 1 (21-58)

Where is the justification for increasing this number threefold?

Response:

There has not been a threefold increase. In 2018, the Town Council were consulted on work in progress suggesting 7,000 dwellings, with 3,000 dwellings remaining to be planned for. This took forward the current Wiltshire Core Strategy. Since then, as explained in the Local Plan Review consultation material, an alternative development strategy has tested as being more preferable, which has a greater focus for growth on the town than the current approach. This proposes around 9,000 dwellings with 5,000 dwellings remaining to be planned for. Views on this proposal are invited.

Question 2 (21-59)

Isn't the fact that since 2018 the HIF bid has led the planning process and effectively forced the Spatial Planning team to retrofit its HNA accordingly?

Response:

No, this is not correct.

Question 3 (21-60)

Isn't the proposed Joint Venture with a Master Developer ahead the Local Plan for Chippenham has even been consulted on, let alone agreed, further evidence of this on-going predetermination?

Response:

There is no predetermination. This cabinet has approved the Future Chippenham project to proceed as outlined in the March 2020 cabinet report. The Joint Venture procurement is being considered as a model to support the work should it come forward.

Statement 2

Given that Wiltshire Council has put forward county wide housing numbers that are:

- unsustainable - unsupported by local employment and set to generate huge quantities of tailpipe greenhouse gas emissions through commuting, and
- undeliverable given that the Council cannot deliver its existing Plan or meet its 5 year housing land supply.

Question 4 (21-61)

Why isn't the Cabinet which is driving this, pushing back and explaining to central Government that this is neither working nor a good idea?

Response:

The proposals in the Local Plan are presented with supporting evidence. The consultation provides the opportunity for the Council to seek feedback and comments on those proposals.

The Council has responded to Central Government with concerns about 5-year land supply in their response to their proposals in the Planning White Paper and Changes to the Current Planning System last year. The 5-year housing land supply is about speed of delivery, rather than deliverability, which is in the control of developers.

Question 5 (21-62)

Why has it decided to take on 5,000 more houses than even the flawed housing algorithm is indicating?

Response:

The Swindon and Wiltshire Local Housing Needs Assessment 2019 prepared by Opinion Research Services contains the evidence for the higher 45, 600 homes housing requirement. This is one of the supporting documents available as part of the Local Plan consultation.

Question 6 (21-63)

How is this supporting localism and how will it enable Wiltshire's local communities and parishes to develop Neighbourhood Plans (for which the Council claims to be an advocate), when the extreme numbers obliterate such Plans (as will be the case for Bremhill) and create the conditions for on-going failure to meet a 5 year housing land supply, thereby allowing developers to build outside the Local and Neighbourhood Plans (as in Malmesbury)?

Response:

When preparing local plans, decisions need to be made about the amount and location of new development. The Council through its Local Plan sets the strategic context for Neighbourhood Plans and in this instance is looking forward to 2036. Neighbourhood Plans like Local Plans will need to be reviewed to ensure they remain up to date.

Question 7 (21-64)

Isn't the emerging Local Plan setting us up to fail and ruin our county's character and irreparably damage its natural capital in the process?

Response:

No, the Local Plan is seeking to make the right choices about where the growth it needs to plan for should go and is asking for people's views on this. Also, it is seeking to achieve well planned developments that incorporates green infrastructure and achieves biodiversity net gain.

Statement 3

Local Plans are required by planning and environmental legislation to be at least consistent with the UK's national climate change commitments, including reducing carbon emissions in line with the UK's net zero emissions target, which under the 6th Carbon Budget [Sixth Carbon Budget - Climate Change Committee \(theccc.org.uk\)](https://www.theccc.org.uk) requires 68% reduction in emissions by 2030 (on a 1990 baseline). This involves setting a carbon reduction framework based on the assessed carbon reduction potential of the proposed Local Plan scenarios, demonstrating how these would cut carbon to meet the national target and putting forward a means of measuring progress.

There is no evidence that Wiltshire Council has done this, or even calculated the potential carbon emissions associated with its strategic site options, some of which seem to be working in completely the opposite direction (e.g. destroying valuable carbon sinks and increasing car dependency and commuting). Either the Cabinet doesn't believe cutting carbon via the Local Plan is a key priority or will now commit to doing this.

Question 8 (21-65)

Which is it?

Response:

Preparation of the Local Plan is still in progress. The Addressing Climate Change and Biodiversity Net Gain Paper which is included in the Local Plan consultation sets the policy themes which will help support the plan's objective in respect of adapting and mitigating climate change and is asking people to provide feedback in order to help develop our evidence.