

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

21 May 2024

Item 7 - Public Participation

From Celia Beckett

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

Preamble:

When we submitted our comments on the Local Plan in November 2023, we were advised that the plan would be submitted to the Secretary of State in the 2nd quarter of 2024. It now appears that the submission date will not be until the 4th quarter (according to the Time Line on the Wiltshire Council website).

Question (P24-14)

- a) Please can you advise the public the reasons for the delay and the implications of this in the event of a change of government?

We understand from an article in the Times Newspaper (3rd May) that a number of local authorities have revised their housing targets for the next 10 years to avoid building on greenfield sites.

Development of greenfield sites are required to be sustainably assessed by the impact on:

- i. The environment and biodiversity
 - ii. Accessibility
 - iii. Flood risk
 - iv. Heritage
 - v. Landscape
 - vi. Traffic
 - vii. Services
- b) Does Wiltshire Council intend to alter the pre submission local plan in North East Trowbridge to reduce the number of houses planned on greenfield sites and meet the sustainability criteria required by Wiltshire Council as outlined above?

Response

In response to (a), we had a huge response to our Local Plan Regulation 19 consultation, which closed on 22 November 2023. Since then, we have been working through more than 10,000 comments from many different stakeholders and all parts of the county.

This is a large and complex undertaking, and we want to be sure that we get it right, so everyone's views have been considered prior to the plan being submitted for examination. We have therefore updated the timeline for submission of the next stage of the Local Plan. The Local Plan will now be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 8 October, followed by Full Council on 22 October.

In response to (b), as explained above, the response to the consultation and submission of the Local Plan will be considered by Cabinet and Council in October. The headline number of new homes identified in the draft Local Plan 2020- 2038 is 36,740 homes, which is considerably lower than the level of 45,630 homes consulted on in 2021. It appears from the changes announced by the Secretary of State that only in a small number of exceptional circumstances (not relevant locally) can authorities determine that they can plan for a lower number of homes than the government's standard method.

Question (P24-15)

Preamble:

Since our comments were submitted in November work has started in Hilperton Parish on a large-scale development alongside Elizabeth Way. This area lies within the Yellow Zone of the Trowbridge Bat Mitigation Policy. Despite this limited protection has been afforded to the protection of hedgerows and there is totally inadequate mitigation for the bat species in terms of the density of the development. We previously have raised our concerns with Cllr Botterill and he assured us that the local plan would not adversely impact on the bats because of the financial provision for bat mitigation, but if this mitigation is purely financial and not in the development area it will not protect these internationally rare species. There has been a substantial public outcry about this development (Wiltshire Times 18.4.24 "Bellway Development destroys ancient hedgerow").

Question (P24-15)

If the proposed further building on greenfield sites for North East of Trowbridge does proceed in the local plan what guarantee can be given that there will be adequate protection for biodiversity. Given the extensive destruction of habitat that is already occurring within the protected zone for bats this should take even greater priority.

Response

The emerging Local Plan is supported by Habitats Regulations Assessment, which assesses the impact of the plan proposals on protected habitats including those associated with the Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Special Area of Conservation. The policy for Land North-East of Hilperton, Trowbridge (Policy 53) makes provision for bats including the protection and enhancement of core bat habitat. The policy refers to a funding contribution to deliver a strategic approach for management, monitoring and off-site measures to protect important wildlife sites around Trowbridge.