

Wiltshire Council

Council

7 February 2012

Councillors' Questions

Questions From Councillor Judy Rooke
Chippenham Lowden And Rowden Division
On Item 9 – Wiltshire Core Strategy

To Councillor Fleur De Rhé-Philippe
Cabinet Member For Economic Development
and Strategic Planning

Question 6

I am extremely disappointed that 800 houses have been proposed to be built on green fields and grade 1 agricultural land around Rowden and Patterdown.

One of the many challenges for this development is going to be traffic from this large estate pouring onto already congested roads in the area.

The Highways Agency supports the use of brown field land wherever possible and suggests amending proposals if suitable additional brown field becomes available. Their general position is that green field development should only take place where suitable brown field sites are not available (para.9.12 Appendix 3, Topic paper 12).

In the recent Wiltshire Core Strategy Consultation Document, (para. 5.1.21) it was made clear from the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment that there were brown field sites in Chippenham that could accommodate housing, a potential of 545 houses.

The breakdown was Langley Park – 250, Middlefield - 55, Hygrade - 55, Cocklebury Road - 25 and 160 on small sites in Chippenham.

The Cabinet Member has responded, in a reply to my question at Cabinet on January 17th 2012, only 150 houses are to be considered for Langley Park as it is an important employment site. I understand that the total area of Langley Park is 20ha and that 250 houses would cover about 7ha. It is clear that Chippenham will have an ample supply of employment land from the proposed sites in the Core Strategy at least 26.2 ha. The Workspace and Employment Land Review 2011, suggests only 13.2ha is required for Chippenham and goes on further to comment that Wiltshire Council will need to carefully consider apparent over supply of land (para 10.8, Appendix 3, Topic Paper 12).

In the light of this evidence, will the Cabinet Member now agree that it would be possible for at least 250 houses to be built at Langley Park, with a plentiful supply of employment land remaining?

Will the Cabinet Member also agree to reduce the development in Rowden and Patterdown by the amount of housing brought forward from the brown field sites in Chippenham?

Response

One of the specific issues to be addressed in planning for the Chippenham Community Area is that *'new employment provision in Chippenham is a priority and will help to redress the existing levels of net out-commuting. New employment provision will be supported on the allocated strategic sites and on identified town centre regeneration/ brownfield opportunity sites.'*

Langley Park is an identified regeneration site, which retains a number employers and its proximity to the railway station and town centre offers potential to secure its long term use as an important employment site for the town. The Core Strategy supports the redevelopment of the site to *"deliver a mixed use site solution for a key redevelopment opportunity area to support the retention of significant business uses on part of the site."* (Core Policy 9).

The Workspace and Employment Land Review (2011) suggests a greenfield employment land figure of 13.2ha employment land at Chippenham. However the Core Strategy provides for a higher figure in order to provide choice and encourage inward investment to help redress the high levels of out-commuting and rebalance employment and employee numbers within the town.

Langley Park is an existing site. The report acknowledges that *"that there is little developable space remaining on the existing sites and limited availability of good quality built premises... There is a requirement for new allocations, particularly around the larger settlements, to meet demand for leaseholds and also to provide space for larger design and built options."*

Therefore, whilst the continued provision of employment land at Langley Park is supported, to ensure that demand from existing and new employers are met, it is necessary to allocate new employment land as part of the strategic sites at Chippenham. The number of dwellings for the site was revised from 250 down to 150 following detailed site assessment which concluded that a lower number of dwellings were more appropriate for the site. However, in bringing forward development on the site, in line with Core Policy 9, it is recognised that the mix of uses may change depending on the viability of differing options. This could result in a higher or lower number of houses being brought forward on the site.

Question 7

Natural England, a government body which advises on the natural environment, noted that one area of the South West Chippenham site was visibly more prominent, and that consideration should be given to this sensitivity and possibly used as additional parkland (para 9.10 Appendix 3, Topic Paper 12).

Did Natural England specify in their comments to the Council where that area was and if they did, could the Cabinet Member give a specific indication of the area?

Response

The comments from Natural England refer to land south west of the site within the Chippenham Community Area. Details of the exact area weren't provided, although the land referred to is **not** included as part of the site. The development template for the South West Chippenham site includes landscaping criteria which are required to be addressed in the masterplanning for the site, one of which will address the concerns of Natural England:

“Development should consider the views from Public Rights Of Way and the high visual sensitivity of the Lacock to Lyneham limestone ridge. Development should maintain the visual integrity, open views and characteristics to the east and avoid harsh urban edges fronting open countryside.”