

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

COUNCIL

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PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – ITEM 7: WILTSHIRE CORE STRATEGY

STATEMENT FROM MRS JENNY RAGGETT

**Statement to the Wiltshire Environment Select Committee
11th June 2012**

The Localism Act, according to the plain English version published by DCLG covers Planning Reform. In this respect the Act:

'places significantly more influence in the hands of local people over issues that make a big difference to their lives'

and:

'provides appropriate support and recognition to communities who welcome new development'

In other words the Localism Act hands over more influence to local people in planning matters and also supports local communities who accept new development, in getting something back in exchange.

The report before Members includes Appendix 3 which looks at the results of public consultation on the Core Strategy. It starts with an admission that the majority of comments from the public have essentially not had any effect.

Members who have read though the various rounds of consultation responses posted on the Web portal will know that people genuinely think there is too much development proposed in the Core Strategy for Wiltshire. People also have real misgivings about the continued 'doughnut' effect whereby expansion of our towns leads to centres dying off, and the deterioration of quality of life and environment in a county under the pressure of so much expansion.

The decision to ignore public pressure for less development in the Core Strategy has no doubt been considered by Members so one must assume they are content that we are to be something of a 'boom-town area' in the north and west of the county. But the question of how communities will benefit if all this proposed development is built remains unanswered. The Localism Act anticipates some kind of advantage to communities for accepting large quantities of new housing. So we might at least ensure that this side of the bargain is fulfilled.

With this in mind, it is surely problematic that the Infrastructure Delivery Plans for the Community Areas are very vague and show large numbers of items marked 'orange' (mid risk of not being delivered) or 'red' (high risk of not being delivered). The report to this committee mentions this as a failing highlighted by consultees.

Before going any further with the Core Strategy process there needs to be a re-visiting of the Infrastructure Delivery Plans with Members and local communities transparently involved.

There is a real risk otherwise that officers and developers will simply seal the deal without communities or even local Members understanding what the Infrastructure Delivery Plans will actually bring forward, with developers having the upper hand. The Localism Act makes it clear that planning is a democratic process and that there should be more influence in the hands of local people. It is surely important for Members to instruct officers on the best course of action in this respect.

Jenny Raggett

Bradford on Avon

Overview of current Infrastructure Delivery Plans for Community Areas

The list below attempts to sum up the situation with regards to the 19 Infrastructure Delivery Plans issued with the Core Strategy final draft

1. In general connections to the **national grid, sewerage system**, and providing **gas and water** to new housing are LOW RISK of not being achieved.
2. In the case of **school provision** for the new residents the solutions are variously to: 'extend the current school', 'build a school' or 'send pupils to other areas'. It is unclear whether such plans have been discussed with the relevant schools.
3. The risk of failure to deliver extra primary school places is thought in general to be LOW (but not always – in a number of cases it is MID RISK); in many cases provision of extra school places at secondary school level is MID RISK. For example, in Bradford on Avon there is a need to build extra capacity into primary and/or secondary schools which has a MID RISK of not being delivered. Secondary age children may not be able to go to school locally.
4. The provision of **new play facilities** and **childcare** is generally MID or HIGH RISK of failure.
5. The provision of **new sport and leisure facilities** is also generally MID or HIGH RISK of failure. It is notable that both the development of a multi-sport hub in Trowbridge is HIGH RISK because of lack of resources/ site and also that enhancements to Southwick Country Park for outdoor recreation, also HIGH RISK - a lack of developer funds. At Westbury the Development of formal outdoor leisure provision in partnership is HIGH RISK.
6. **Public transport provision** for new development is either MID RISK or HIGH RISK of failing, because of lack of certainty of developer funding, and the lack of revenue support for buses which because they are serving small and medium sized towns rather than a city area, are often not fully commercial. The delivery of a new railway station from Corsham is marked as HIGH RISK.
7. **Recreational cycle routes** are generally MID risk of non-delivery because of a risk of lack of developer contributions. The same applies to **town cycling and cycle links to new housing areas**.
8. **Improvements to walking** are better pedestrian safety in towns are financed by developer contributions and generally marked as MID RISK of non-delivery because of insufficient resources. The same applies to new walking routes into towns from the new estates. Malmesbury has a proposal to make an old railway route into a suitable way into town from new housing but the risk of insufficient CIL funding makes this HIGH RISK. The £2,004,929 scheme at Marlborough to upgrade an old railway path as a sustainable transport link has a HIGH RISK associated with it.
 9. **Better cycling and walking links to educational establishments** such as Trowbridge College and Lackham College are MID RISK because of the precarious nature of funding.
10. Improved and expanded **libraries** to cater for growth, with everything from books, PCs, software licenses and furniture listed, is a theme for all towns looked at. Generally MID RISK of non-delivery.
11. **Traffic calming measures** are HIGH or MID RISK. For example, in Corsham traffic calming measure have a HIGH RISK of not being delivered; The Bradford on Avon Historic Core Zone Project is MID RISK of failing with the problem that the developer will only pay for a small part of it,
12. The improvement of **ambulance and fire services** are often HIGH RISK of failing through lack of funding/sites
13. Many **ecological improvements** and **countryside 'enhancements'** such as the protection of the Avon at Chippenham and the conservation and enhancement of Birds Marsh Wood are

HIGH RISK of failing. That said a developer contribution to enhancing River Biss corridor, include walking and cycling routes is MID RISK and the creation of new woodland/ ecological connectivity between Green Lane Wood, Biss Wood and Picket & Clanger Wood also : MID RISK. The Rowden Park Riverside Country Park has a HIGH RISK of not being delivered due to lack of developer contributions. The extension of and buffering to existing Biss Meadows CWS and Country Park has a MID RISK of non-delivery because of shortage of funds. At Bradford on Avon Scheme to offset negative landscape/ biodiversity impact on bats associated with the Bradford and Bath SAC has a MID RISK of no funding from the developer with no contingency plans.

14. On transport, **road construction** takes the lion's share of the money (it is thought by the local authority to be 'sustainable transport'). In Chippenham the Northern Distributor Road is costed at £6,000,000 ; a road link over the railway - £6,000,000 and A350 Improvements at £10,000,000. All MID RISK. For Trowbridge, quite apart from the new distributor road complex and new roundabouts, about £14,000,000 is potentially put forward for A350 improvements and junction improvements to increase road capacity in the area. MID RISK. The roundabout and distributor road for the Melksham site are valued at £1,530,000. Many internal distributor roads are not itemised nor junction improvements costed, but these must be cumulatively very expensive.
15. **Cemeteries** are getting full and the amount of new development planned means more are needed. However the risk of not delivering more space is for many communities HIGH RISK.
16. **Canals are a prominent priority for cash.** There seems to much more infrastructure money apportioned to Kennet and Avon Canal that policy might be expected, and also much apportioned to the re-instatement of the Wilts & Berks Canal. Usually assigned MID priority these ventures are expensive, eg. £3,700,000 from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for Trowbridge (MID RISK) which contrasts, out of interest, with the £1,000,000 needed for the new sports hub (HIGH RISK). Melksham needs £25,000,000 for canal restoration from CIL, but this labelled HIGH RISK.
17. There seems to be a complete absence of consideration regarding walking and cycling routes or public transport to **employments areas**.