

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

COUNCIL

26 JUNE 2012

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – ITEM 7: WILTSHIRE CORE STRATEGY

STATEMENT FROM DOCTOR NICK MURRY, CHAIR OF CHIPPENHAM AND VILLAGES ENVIRONMENTALISTS (CAVE) AND MEMBER OF THE MONKTON PARK RESIDENTS GROUP, AFFILIATED TO CHIPPENHAM COMMUNITY VOICE (CCV)

1. In general, the draft Core Strategy, as it affects Chippenham, would lead to a substantial increase in out-commuting and greenhouse gas emissions, which is contrary to Wiltshire Council's stated policy on both issues. It would also lead to unnecessary destruction of the natural environment.
2. As the Committee is aware, sustainable development does not include repeatedly trading off the natural environment for short term economic gain, which often fails to materialise or ultimately comes at an unacceptably high social and environmental cost. It is about properly respecting environmental limits in order to achieve long term, broad based, economic prosperity and quality of life (which is what the Core Strategy should be focused on).
3. Whilst the housing numbers are in general far too high - and clearly unwanted by the local community - the proposed strategic site at Rawlings Farm is particularly inappropriate and unsustainable. This would involve developing on pristine countryside along the River Avon, which has been described as Chippenham's AONB. Development on this site would:
 - a. Substantially increase out-commuting and greenhouse gas emissions – people moving here would inevitably do so in order to commute to London, Swindon, Bristol or other major employment areas, due to the site's proximity to the M4 (which conflicts with the Council's statements about promoting local employment);
 - b. Increase down-stream flood risk – the excess run-off from development on this scale would inevitably increase the risk of flash flooding (regardless of any sustainable urban drainage mitigation measures) for an area that has already seen an upgrading in its flood risk categorisation by the insurance companies this year;
 - c. Adversely affect the aquifer water quality and pollution of the river (consistently highlighted as a significant adverse impact in the SA report);
 - d. Adversely impact on local ecology and biodiversity – in what is an important wildlife corridor;
 - e. Permanently destroy Grade 1 and 2 agricultural land (the highest quality in the UK) – I have spoken to Defra/ Natural England who informed me they would object to development on this land if the Council were not forcing it through its Core Strategy.
4. Development on this site also introduces a further and very serious threat to the local environment by making further development across the river increasingly likely and difficult for the Council to defend against in future.
5. There are other large sites (e.g. Hunters Moon, Allington) plus numerous smaller (including some brownfield) sites around the town, that could accommodate the proposed numbers of houses without incurring the environmental damage that developing the Rawlings Farm site would incur, which would also produce S106/CIL funds that would benefit the community rather than be used to fund a bridge over the railway line. For

these (and other reasons not stated here) this site should be the last option being considered for development around Chippenham and should be removed from the draft Core Strategy.

I would urge the Committee to carefully consider the environmental implications of, and to question the basis and justification for including this site in the draft Core Strategy