

Questions from Councillor Chris Caswill

To Councillor Toby Sturgis – Cabinet member for Strategic Planning, Development Management, Strategic Housing, Operational Property and Waste

Question

1. With regard to the Chippenham Site Allocation Plan (CSAP) modifications, MM18 adds the following grim and callous forecast: "Inevitably there are shorter term impacts before the (Cocklebury) Link Road is completed". These impacts are forecast as a 30% increase in Cocklebury Road traffic and a 55% increase in delays at the Station Hill junction. "This is expected to be a short term impact". Given that the attached build out rate for houses on Rawlings Green does not expect the 200 house trigger for a northern exit to be reached before 2021 or 2022 and that these calculations do not take construction traffic into account, do you accept that a 'short term impact' could mean five years of traffic misery for Monkton Park residents, parents taking children to school, and rail commuters? And that all this is sad contrast to the pious wording in new section 5.18d about the 'sensitivity of traffic levels to residents' and that careful consideration has been given to 'issues such as congestion'.

Answer

These issues were considered during the Examination process and discussed before the Inspector, who is recommending to the Council that the Plan with modification is sound.

2. Will you take this opportunity to apologise in advance to those communities for the problems you have given them by so determinedly pushing this housing allocation?

Answer

The Council has a responsibility to ensure that sufficient housing can be provided to meet the needs of Wiltshire's communities. The Chippenham Site Allocations Plan is ensuring that the Core Strategy housing requirement for Chippenham can be delivered and has involved an examination of the reasonable alternatives to growth at the Town.

3. The optimistic words about future traffic movements in the covering paper depend on the modelling assumptions of the Council's sign-off traffic consultants, Atkins, which have queried and disputed by at least two other professional traffic experts. Will you take this opportunity to state unequivocally that you, the Cabinet, have carefully considered the modelling advice and that it is your conclusion, as part of today's decision, that the claimed traffic improvements for Monkton park will occur?

Answer

Cabinet is satisfied that this issue has been discussed through the examination process. Cabinet is now considering whether to recommend to Council that the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan (with amendments and Additional Modifications as provided with the report), be adopted as part of the development plan for Wiltshire.

4. Embedded within these documents is a serious dispute between your Council administration and Wavin, one of Chippenham's largest and most important employers, over the Council's insistence on driving the Cocklebury Link Road (and perhaps, in the future, the traffic on a full Eastern Link Road) down Parsonage Way, through the middle of the Wavin operational site. You are even contemplating a Compulsory Purchase Order to forcibly achieve what you want, at the Company's expense. If you succeed, Wavin has said this will threaten the sustainability of their investments in the Chippenham site. As an allegedly pro-business Administration, how can you justify this threat to Chippenham's prosperity and jobs?

Answer

I understand that, as local Councillor, officers have briefed you on this issue. However, these issues were also discussed during the examination process and as with any employer, the Council will continue to work constructively to support businesses where it can.

5. MM 26 addresses the completion of the link between Cocklebury Link Road and the B4069. It however allows that this might not need to be delivered if "a set of comparable transport improvement measures is in place". What on earth does this mean? Presumably the Council and the Inspector have something in mind when agreeing to these word, which offer an excuse for not delivering a northern exit at all?

Answer

This matter was addressed in the response to Questions from Mrs Marilyn MacKay to Council on 21 February 2017.

6. The Council's feeble air quality policy allows the Rawlings Green developer to pay a fine and take no other measures to alleviate the extra pollution that will inevitably occur on Station Hill, affecting the many residents and shop workers there. What will the Council do to help them?

Answer

The matter of air pollution was considered at the examination and the Council will continue to undertake its statutory duties in relation to air quality.

7. MM26 provides for the possibility, for the first time, that the Council, and therefore taxpayers across Wiltshire, will provide funding for the Rawlings Green infrastructure. Which budget(s) would this come from? Does this Cabinet motion alone provide the authority for that expenditure at a future date?

Answer

This matter was addressed in the response to Questions from Mrs Marilyn MacKay to Council on 21 February 2017.

8. MM18 claims that the link between Cocklebury Road and the B4069 will also be assured by conditions on the planning permission. How can that be so when officers recommended, and members supported, a planning application for the site with no such conditions attached? Isn't this therefore an inaccurate and misleading statement which should be deleted?

Answer

The planning application has been deferred pending receipt of the Inspector's report and will come back to Committee for a decision.