

Public Participation – item No. 6 Children's centre services - proposals for future service delivery following public consultation

Question from Mr Jeremy Kent to

Councillor Laura Mayes, Cabinet member for Children's Service

The comments from the public consultation discussed here today are overwhelmingly negative. There are repeated concerns that the closure of Children's Centre buildings will cause numerous issues that overall will result in a reduced level of care for families and their children within Wiltshire. All too often the reply is that 'the new provider will deal with it' with no substance to support this.

At least the proposal is honest that the driver for the proposed closures is financial: I appreciate savings must be made given next year's allocation is being reduced. However, the data to support the claimed savings of £0.5m per year (11.2) is incomplete. No financial data were presented in the public consultation and there is no breakdown of the projected savings or additional costs in the proposal presented here today. I have asked Cllr Mayes for these numbers and the only figures she is able to supply are that the proposed closures will save around £0.4m. There are no projected figures for any further savings and, crucially, no projected figures for the increased costs such as renting rooms in alternative buildings. In short, it's not that the numbers don't add up; they don't exist.

My question to the Cabinet is simple: how can you approve the recommendation to close *any* Children's Centre when it is clear that it is an unpopular decision – with both the public and childcare professionals alike – and no evidence has been presented to show that it will actually result in any financial savings?

Response

Our proposed future model of service delivery of children's centre services (which prioritises retaining staff) was developed following several workshops held with a number of professionals and some parents in the early part of 2015. The public consultation document launched in September was based on discussions at these workshops. Many professionals and parents have also supported the Council's proposals in their responses to the on-line survey and in feedback during the 44 consultation events held in September, October and November. Support is particularly strong amongst parents in rural areas who are currently unable to access a children's centre building and who feel that the new model will mean that services will be more accessible to them in the future.

When the Council starts the tender process in January, the budget available for each geographical cluster of children's centres will be clearly stated in the tender documentation. The total contract value will reduce by £500,000. Due diligence overseen by the Council's Finance Director demonstrates that the proposed future model of delivery for children's centre services is affordable within the reduced contract value. Savings will be made through reduced costs from running fewer dedicated children's centre buildings, clustering of children's centres to reduce management and administration costs and limiting the level of overhead that bidders can charge the Council. Due to the fact that we will be going out to tender in January and asking bidding organisations to set out how they propose to deliver children's centre services in future, we cannot accurately calculate the cost of using other buildings in the community. Bidding organisations will need to set out which buildings they intend to use and how much activity they will undertake in each area. There will be less activity in our more affluent areas as the funding the Council has available will be more targeted towards families with young children in our more deprived areas. The expectation is that organisations that run services in the future will work with local communities to deliver services where they are most needed and most accessible.

Councillors' Questions

Question from Councillor Jon Hubbard to

Councillor Scott of Bybrook, OBE – Leader of Wiltshire Council

Question

Could the leader please tell me the total cost of all payments made to date for the installation and delivery of webcasting of council meetings. Please include all capital costs for the provision and installation of equipment and licensing costs for the system.

How many meetings have been webcast since the equipment was installed.

Please provide all figures broken down by council year, ie 2013/14, 2014/15 and spend to date for 2015/16.

Response

The webcasting equipment was installed in the Council Chamber and Kennet room as part of the refurbishment of County Hall under the transformation programme in the summer of 2014. The capital cost in 2013/2014 financial year for the cameras and the video bridge to enable this was £11,287.

The contract for webcasting is a two year agreement and runs until September 2016. The contract includes the relevant licenses, encoders, 150 hours of live webcast, archive storage, web pages, webcast support and help desk and training. The annual cost of this is £22,252

Council meetings were first webcast in October 2014. To date, a total of 7 council meetings have been webcast. On 2 occasions, the equipment has also been utilised to broadcast the live meetings into an overspill committee room for members of the public who could not be accommodated into the chamber due to high numbers.

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

15 December 2015

Public Participation – Wiltshire Good Neighbours Service (WGNS)

Question from Cllr Bob Jones MBE

To Councillor Keith Humphries, Cabinet member for Health (including Public Health) and Adult Social Care

Question 1

Could you please inform me of the Annual cost of the WGNS and how this is funded including any third party contributions?

Response

The cost to Wiltshire Council of the Good Neighbours Service is £130k per year. This does not cover the total cost of the service and the £130,000 is topped up by Community First by means of a lottery grant and their reserves.

Question 2

I am advised that the WGNS is to be shut down. Please can you advice on the current situation and the way forward including the number of people likely to be made redundant?

Response

The partnership agreement with Community First will expire in March 2016. Up to 8 Good Neighbours who are employed by Community First may be made redundant (there are 9 but 1 has resigned). The nine employees deliver approximately 152 hours per week across the County.

Question 3

If the WGNS is to cease can you inform me of any consultation that took place over this decision?

Response

Adult care Commissioners facilitated a series of workshops in each of the County's Area Boards asking older people what kind of services they felt should be available within their community. Discussion also took place at other Older Peoples Events held by some Area Boards and with other organisations such as Health Watch.

Based on the feedback it was decided responsibility should be devolved to the eighteen area boards and that the Good Neighbours service would no longer be provided when the partnership agreement ended.

Health Watch will work with Area Boards to develop and support Health and Well Being Groups which will report and be accountable to Area Boards This will enable local people to make decisions in promoting wellbeing at a community level.

By promoting links between universal services (including leisure and libraries) and services that support specific customer groups including older adults or those with a disability the Health and Wellbeing groups will be able to respond to local challenges and make the best use of local assets including local knowledge, resources and voluntary organisations.

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

15 December 2015

**Councillors' Questions
Questions from Councillor Chris Caswill**

To Councillor Toby Sturgis, Cabinet member for Strategic Planning (strategic and development management), Property, Waste and Strategic Housing

Council Position Statement:

The Examination in relation to the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan is still open. The proceedings have been suspended by the Inspector, not closed. The Council has been asked to do further work by the inspector. Whilst this work is being undertaken, the Council will not be responding to communications relating to the evidence before the Inspector as in the interests of fairness and openness such an exchange should be considered through the examination process and therefore managed by the Inspector.

The response to these questions must be read in the context of the Council's position.

Question 1.

The Council's latest response to the Chippenham EiP Inspector has once again failed to give any attention, let alone priority, to building on Brownfield sites in the town. Why is this? Does the Council have no regard at all for the rejuvenation of the town centre? Nor for providing homes within easy walking or cycling distance to the town centre? Nor for the opportunity to reduce pressure on greenfield sites around the town?

Response

A scale of requirements for greenfield development is not of the scope for brownfield. The Council's response of 4 December and Schedule of Work Appendix 1 clarifies the nature of the further work and responds to the points raised in the Inspector's letter.

Question 2

Similarly, why does the Council continue to resist making use of the small sites which are being promoted but not included in the Council delivery of the required housing numbers?

Response:

The Inspector recognises that the Core Strategy, identified a strategy for Chippenham based on delivering significant job growth and a requirement for mixed-use urban extensions, incorporating housing and identifying greenfield sites on the edge of town (his letter to the Council dated 5th October 2015). The Council will develop additional strategic site options from the individual Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment sites within Strategic Areas A to E (see paragraph 3.11, Schedule of Work Appendix 1).

Question 3

Why did the Cabinet Member with responsibility for spatial planning not attend the Chippenham Examination in Public? Was this due to a lack of interest in the future of Chippenham, or a complacent assumption that the Council's plans were bound to succeed this second time around? Or perhaps because he did not want to be associated with the embarrassing probability that the Council's draft Chippenham DPD would fail to survive the Inspector's well-advertised questions?

Response:

As with all previous Examination hearing sessions, the Examination in Public is an Officer led process. If in attendance, Cabinet Members would sit with the audience and have no active role in proceedings. To this end, Cabinet Members have to prioritise attendance against other duties, however it was anticipated that the Cabinet Members would have attended if the Inspector had not suspended the hearing session.

Question 4

Similarly, why did neither the Leader or any other Cabinet member attend the Chippenham EiP?

Response:

Please refer to Question 3 response.

Question 5

Do you accept that the absence of any Cabinet members from the EiP means that the Cabinet has no direct awareness of the extent of the problems which the Council plans faced in the public discussions? Given the catastrophic collapse the Council's plans after only one half out of the planned nine days, will the Leader now make a public commitment that at least one Cabinet member will attend each day of the Chippenham EiP, should it be resumed?

Response:

Please refer to Question 3 response.

Question 6

The Leader will recall that I and local residents came before the Cabinet meeting and the July Council meeting with questions and proposals which pointed to the weaknesses in the draft plans. And that in July I proposed an amendment which would have delayed the submission of the draft Chippenham DPD to allow for an two-month independent assessment of the soundness of its evidence base. Given that the EiP is now delayed for at least six months, will the Leader be good enough to admit that it was a mistake not to accept my July proposal as a friendly amendment, and not to have taken the external peer advice which is now being requested, very late in the day?

Response:

Cllr Caswill's amendment to delay submission and undertake an independent review of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) in order to review the assessment of Area D was considered by Full Council and rejected. It is worth mentioning that the Inspector's own initial independent assessment of the Plan, his 'Initial Appraisal (14 September 2015)' did not raise any concerns with the two stage approach and SA, which were later raised in his later letter of 16th November. The Inspector is not requesting any external peer advice but allowing the Council to undertake further work to address his concerns regarding the SA.

Question 7

At the suspended EiP it became clear yet again that the Council's role as the owner of large parcels of land around Chippenham confused and compromised its role as an independent spatial planner. Will the Leader now accept that continuing the dual Cabinet responsibilities of Councillor Sturgis for property and spatial planning is not in the best interests of Wiltshire Council taxpayers and that the portfolio now needs to be divided?

Response:

Officers who attended the EIP have no recollection of discussions relating to confusion or compromise of the Council's role as landowner and Local Planning Authority. I am therefore not aware of any issue being raised that alters my earlier answer namely: -

The adoption of a development plan involves comprehensive steps involving professional advice by officers and consultants, public consultation and examination by the Secretary of State before final adoption by Council. The individual role of the cabinet member with the spatial planning portfolio in this process is as proposer of the plan and oversight during its preparation. The role of both Cabinet and Council is collective decision making on the facts before them.

Question 8

Reading the latest Council response to the EiP Inspector, it is not clear whether the Council is defending the current plan or emphasising its willingness to rewrite it. Will the Leader take this opportunity to make it clear which of these is her preferred option?

Response:

The Council is committed to undertaking further work in response to the Inspector's concerns. It would be wrong to prejudge the outcome.

Question 9

The Schedule of Work recently submitted to the Inspector makes it clear that traffic and transport analysis will only be carried out towards the end of the process. For example "revised Transport and Accessibility evidence" is to be provided as the very last step in that process. Transport evidence is also entirely missing from the published timeline. Does this mean that the Council intends to continue a sad tradition of late delivery of transport evidence, which began with the arrival of a transport strategy in the middle of the Wiltshire for Strategy EiP and continued with the supply of a 75 page Chippenham Transport Strategy a day or two before the Chippenham Examination began? And, more importantly, does it mean that transport evidence is not going to be a serious contributor to site selection in the latest Chippenham exercise?

Response:

The Schedule of Work Appendix 1 to Council's response of 4 December states that traffic impacts will need to be understood as part of Step 6. Step 10 confirms that revised evidence including that relating to Transport and Accessibility will be made available for consultation once the review has been completed.

Question 10

Does Wiltshire Council now intend to commission a revised Chippenham Transport Strategy? If so, will the Leader agree that it should include dualling the last remaining section of the A 350 between the A4 and Lackham College? And if not, why not?

Response:

The Transport and Accessibility evidence will be reviewed and added to as appropriate. Further transport work will be undertaken on the alternative Development Strategies that emerge from Step 6 of the Schedule of work.

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

15 December 2015

Public Participation

Questions from Mr Ian James, Bremhill Parish Council

Question 1 to Councillor Stuart Wheeler, Cabinet member for Hubs, Governance, Support Services, Heritage & Arts and Customer Care

Notification has been received via the Calne Community Network website that meetings are planned to discuss changes to parish boundaries. Firstly the notification date is 7th October, is this the correct date, and if so why has it taken 2 months to notify the public? (Published in December)

Have parish councils been informed of dates for meetings? Wiltshire Council knows that many parish councils do not meet in January, therefore notification of public meetings on such important parish matters in December is not helpful, and may lead to the democratic process of consultation being missed by parish councils which may wish to participate.

Response:

At its meeting on 24th November, the Council approved a number of changes to parish council boundaries as part of the Community Governance Review. Other proposals were deferred for further consideration and consultation, which has not yet taken place. Therefore, no meetings with the affected parish councils have yet been arranged.

Question 2 to Councillor Stuart Wheeler

Is Linda Packard Councillor for Chippenham Town incorrect in her assumption that parish boundaries surrounding Chippenham can be changed at this time? Her article in the Gazette & Herald criticized the Wiltshire Council for the failure to provide a sound Chippenham DPD, and as such this will delay alterations to parish boundaries surrounding Chippenham Town.

Response:

The Council's position is that it would not be appropriate to consider any changes to parish boundaries in the Chippenham area at the moment, whilst the housing site allocation process in the Chippenham DPD remains to be determined.

Council Position Statement:

The Examination in relation to the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan is still open. The proceedings have been suspended by the Inspector, not closed. The Council has been asked to do further work by the inspector. Whilst this work is being undertaken, the Council will not be responding to communications relating to the evidence before the Inspector as in the interests of fairness and openness such an exchange should be considered through the examination process and therefore managed by the Inspector.

The response to these questions must be read in the context of the Council's position.

Question 3 to Councillor Jonathon Seed, Cabinet member for Housing, Leisure, Libraries and Flooding

Please can you confirm the height of the river, at the river Marden EA measuring station at Stanley Bridge on 23rd December 2013?

Response

The Environment Agency information indicates that the maximum level recorded on 23rd December 2013 was 49.879mAOD on 23rd December 2013.

Question 4

Please provide the highest ever recorded height of the river at this location?

Response

The information from the Environment Agency indicates that the highest level was 50.776m AOD (3.451m deep) on 20th July 2007

Question 5

What is the height of the Bund that defends Monkton Park alongside the River Avon?

Response

The height of the bund varies along its length. The average level of the top of bund is 46.857mAOD.

Question 6

What action is the Council taking to repair and reinforce the Monkton Park River Bund, and what will be the cost to ensure that Monkton Park and Chippenham Town does not flood when the river levels are due to rise by 20% over the next 30 years due to Climate Change?

Response

The current modelling being undertaken indicates that in the 1 in 100 year event plus anticipated climate change, and in the 1 in 200 year scenarios, there is no overtopping or bypassing of the bund. No changes to the bund are currently proposed.

Question 7 to Councillor Toby Sturgis, Cabinet member for Strategic Planning, Property, Waste and Strategic Housing

As the lead authority on Flooding for Wiltshire Council, and given the recent flooding in Carlisle and other north west towns, Is it safer to build houses upstream of a large town, or downstream?

Response:

There is no simple generic answer to this question as it will depend on the specific circumstances on individual sites. It would depend on current flood risk, topography, geology, proximity of other settlements, density of housing or development, drainage systems and runoff characteristics. Flood risk needs to be considered in the context of all developments.

Question 8

How can Cabinet be sure that Chippenham Town and the surrounding land will not be flooded to a greater extent should development be permitted?

Response:

Proposals for development will be determined in accordance with national and local planning policy; to permit development only if it ensures flood risk is not increased.

Question 9

We did not reach the flooding evidence in the EIP but what was the Council's answer to the Inspectors point that "has sufficient weight been afforded to the high ranking of the strategic areas (notably B & C) having the most flood risk area and location upstream of the built-up area?"

Response:

The Council's evidence on flood risk is set out in the evidence underpinning the Plan and includes the Position Statement on Matter 5 in relation to Flood Risk Issues. This information is provided on the Council's website under the Chippenham Site Allocations Examination Page.

Question 10

Why was it necessary for Wiltshire Council to sign a memorandum of understanding with the developer Chippenham 2020 to use the developers Flood risk assessment by Waterman, dated 2010?

Response:

Memorandums of understanding, or statements of common ground, are commonly prepared as part of the examination process to assist the Inspector by clarifying areas of agreement and/or disagreement between participants. This particular statement contains the following:

"Chippenham 2020 have provided evidence that engineering works in the flood plain for the River Avon Bridge Crossing can provide betterment by reducing the risk of upstream flooding immediately north of the confluence of with the River Marden."

It acknowledges work done on behalf of Chippenham 2020 by one of their consultants, Waterman.

Question 11

Did the Council have Scott Wilson complete a flood risk assessment for the east of Chippenham in 2011?

Response:

No, see response to Question 6 below. In 2011, Scott Wilson prepared a Surface Water Management Plan - Focussed on Chippenham, Trowbridge and Salisbury, carried out further modelling and produced a number of observations mainly addressing flooding issues in the existing urban areas.

This did refer to potential developments at Chippenham located in greenfield areas and commented:

"These are not served by the public sewer system and flow paths associated with ordinary watercourses (ditches, mainly) are likely to convey water to the River Avon. Surface water management should be considered during the master planning phases to direct development away from potential flow routes and to provide green open space. Site level investigation should be undertaken to identify the suitability of infiltration SuDS due to the presence in some areas of River Terrace Deposits and Alluvial Deposits." (page 54, Wiltshire Surface Water Management Plan – Focussed on Chippenham, Trowbridge and Salisbury, Phase I & II – Final Report 2011)

It also recommends that surface water management should be considered at a master planning stage.

Question 12

Why did the Council consider it appropriate to use the developer's flood risk assessment when one had only been completed in 2011.

Response:

A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) is required to be submitted by developers for planning applications over one hectare. An FRA accompanies a planning application for plan proposals at South West Chippenham (Policy CH1), but no planning applications have yet been submitted for other proposals of the Plan.

Work carried out by Waterman on behalf of Chippenham 2020 represents initial work for a Flood Risk Assessment that would be required as part of the master plan and application stages of a development plan, as is standard practice and envisaged by the Scott Wilson report referred in question 5 above.

Question 13

Is it true that the Scott Wilson ground water flooding report for the River Avon and Marden stated that the Council should not rely on a developer's report, but should undertake several years of hydrological testing during any planning stage?

Response:

As part of work commissioned for a Surface Water Management Plan, Scott Wilson prepared an intermediate assessment of ground water flood susceptibility. It states that a developer's survey of groundwater levels could usefully be supplemented by longer term monitoring. It says:

"It would be advisable for the Council, in combination with the Environment Agency, to begin long term monitoring of the Cornbrash Formation, Kellaways Sand Member and superficial aquifer groundwater levels. This data would also be useful for understanding groundwater / surface water interactions, which is important when considering the design of fluvial flood defences." (para 3.4 An Intermediate assessment of ground water flood susceptibility, Scott Wilson, November 2011)

Scott Wilson's finalised advice does not suggest a requirement for several years hydrological study being required prior to the consideration of development proposals. (See question 5). The Environment Agency do not consider there is an enhanced risk in Chippenham due to ground water flooding."

Question 14

During the consultation process prior to the submission of the Plan to the Inspector you stated on numerous occasions that the Environment Agency had no objection to the Council building to the east of Chippenham. However clarification was made by the EA at the meeting at the Neeld Hall in September that the EA has stated that there will be no objection to building to the east of Chippenham providing a suitable engineering solution can be found to reduce the run off into the River Avon and River Marden from the development. This is an entirely different statement to one being promoted by the Planning department during the consultation process.

Response:

The requirements for development at Chippenham clearly state that surface water discharge resulting from development has to be less than the run off from the area of land prior to the development taking place, given that context, the Environment Agency have no objections the building at the east of Chippenham.

Question 15

In view of the fact that the land is impermeable, and therefore infiltration surface urban drainage systems will not work, what size attenuation ponds will be required to cope with the run off of 2,000 houses, and 20 hectares of commercial land? And taking into account these will have to be built on Flood zone 1 land.

Response:

The design of appropriate sustainable drainage measures forms a part of master planning and planning application process.

Question 16

Before Councillors make a decision to support building to the east they must be satisfied that there is a sustainable drainage system that will support such a large development, and not impact on Chippenham Town and local parishes.

Response:

The design of appropriate sustainable drainage measures forms a part of master planning and planning application process.

Question 17

Will the Planning department provide details of the engineering solution prior to the submission of the Plan to the Inspector to allow Councillors to be confident that the Inspector will pass the plan as sound, as he has already raised concerns of flooding in the current plan?

Response:

The design of appropriate sustainable drainage measures forms a part of master planning and planning application process. The detailed engineering solutions will form part of the any forthcoming planning application.

Public Participation

Question from Mr Richard Hames (Revised questions)

To Councillor Toby Sturgis, Cabinet member for Strategic Planning (strategic and development management), Property, Waste and Strategic Housing

Council Position Statement:

The Examination in relation to the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan is still open. The proceedings have been suspended by the Inspector, not closed. The Council has been asked to do further work by the inspector. Whilst this work is being undertaken, the Council will not be responding to communications relating to the evidence before the Inspector as in the interests of fairness and openness such an exchange should be considered through the examination process and therefore managed by the Inspector.

The response to these questions must be read in the context of the Council's position.

Question 1

In the light of the obvious doubts that were raised at the Hearing why did the council consider the Eastern Link Road was deliverable?

Response:

The Council's evidence underpinning the submitted Plan is provided on the Council's website. The Inspector has set out his concerns from the hearings in his letter of 16th November. As part of the work to be undertaken to address the Inspector's concerns, the Council is preparing a Position Statement to respond to the points he makes regarding the deliverability of the Eastern Link Road. This will be published in due course.

Question 2

What is the total cost of the spatial planning team per annum? Please include Office space, salaries and pensions. What approximate percentage of their time would they have spent over the last two years on the Chippenham site allocation?

Response:

The salaries budget including on costs (including national insurance and pension, excluding office costs) for the current financial year 2015/2016 for the Spatial Planning Service is £743,900. The Chippenham Site Allocations DPD forms part of the work being delivered by one of the three teams within the service. Time is not recorded against projects and given the full extent of responsibilities of the Service it would be difficult to provide a reasonable estimate of time spent.

Question 3

What has Atkins charged the council for work relating to the Chippenham site allocation over the last two years? Are Atkins offering to do further work free of charge in the light of the Hearing?

Response:

Atkins has charged the Council approximately £98,250.00 in relation to the Chippenham Site Allocation Plan over the last two years. This includes the Sustainability Appraisal and Transport and Accessibility evidence. Atkins is not offering to do further work free of charge.

Question 4

The inspector asked the council to provide the names of those on the steering committee and dates of when they met. Could this information please be provided and copies of all minutes made public.

Response:

The Inspector asked the Council for information on the purpose of a steering group in order to understand how the sustainability appraisal influenced the content of the draft Plan. There was no formal steering committee; there were informal meetings to update the Cabinet Member and representatives from each Area Board in the preparation on the Plan. At this time any notes of the meeting are not public since group member discussions were under the shared understanding that the content remains internal to the Council. This question has recently been submitted under the FOI Act and the information was exempt from release under FOI regulations.

Question 5

Please advise the sites the council will be assessing? We assume the council has decided on them by now.

Response:

The Council intends to assess site options in accordance with the Council's response of 4 December, Schedule of Work Appendix 1 provided to the Inspector.

Question 6

The council in their letter to the Inspector asked confirmation that he will proceed with an open mind. Would the council please confirm that they also will proceed with an open mind. There is concern that the council are prejudging the conclusion as they state in para 4 of their letter that there is "no reason to believe that it would lead to fundamentally different Plan or one requiring substantial modification". I am surprised they can say that. If asked I would have thought the only answer was that there was a 50% chance of no substantial modification and a 50% chance of substantial modification as the evidence had not yet been obtained. Has the council already obtained the evidence?

Response:

The statement responds directly to a passage in the Inspector's letter of the 16th November that could be interpreted as anticipating substantial modifications to the Plan. The Council has not stated that there will be no substantial changes to the Plan. The Council does not know the outcome of further work at this stage.

Question 7

When the council review transport would the council please run calculations for the following scenario

- A. Assume Hitchins appeal is successful and that Crest/Redcliffe build 1000 houses in accordance with the Statement of Common Ground between the council and Crest and Redcliffe. Also 300 houses are built on brown field sites.
- B. Assume the following traffic plans are incorporated: Crest/Redcliffe carry out the transport improvements set out in the Statement of Common Ground; the A350 is dualled from Lacock to J17 of the M4; and a southern link road is built.

Further transport work will be undertaken on the alternative Development Strategies that emerge from the Council's response of 4 December, Schedule of Work Appendix 1 Step 6.

Question 8

The council is asking the Planning Advisory Service to assist. Please confirm all they are able to do is to look at the evidence provided by the council and advise whether it has been correctly applied. Will the council therefore arrange for peer review of the evidence.

Response:

The Council is in discussion with the Planning Advisory Service regarding how they may support the further work through the provision of critical friend support.

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

15 December 2015

Public Participation – Chippenham Site Allocations DPD

Questions from Mr Steve Perry

To Councillor Toby Sturgis, Cabinet member for Strategic Planning (strategic and development management), Property, Waste and Strategic Housing

Council Position Statement:

The Examination in relation to the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan is still open. The proceedings have been suspended by the Inspector, not closed. The Council has been asked to do further work by the inspector. Whilst this work is being undertaken, the Council will not be responding to communications relating to the evidence before the Inspector as in the interests of fairness and openness such an exchange should be considered through the examination process and therefore managed by the Inspector.

The response to these questions must be read in the context of the Council's position.

Question 1

In the Council's response documents to the Inspector, there appears to be no reference to any consideration of a Southern Link Road. How can the Council's response and Plan for Chippenham be considered proportionate and fair without considering any alternatives at all to their proposed Eastern Link Road?

It would appear that without assessing a Southern Link Road with the same care and consideration that the Council appears to be intending to apply to the Eastern Link Road, the Council is pre-judging the outcome of their revisiting the Site Selection Process in order to justify their choice of the ELR as their preferred option.

Response:

Particular reference to the Eastern Link Road is made in the Council's letter of 4 December 2015 and accompanying documents in direct response to particular concerns raised by the Inspector, as set out in his letter of 16 November 2015.

Paragraph 3.22 of the Council's response of 4 December, Schedule of Work Appendix 1 clarifies that supporting evidence will be prepared for each alternative development strategy. This will include the assessment of supporting infrastructure.

Question 2

Has the council received any legal type of letter from Chippenham 2020 LLP or its representatives since the enquiry was suspended? If so, will they (and the Council's response) be made public and if not why not?

Response:

The Council has received correspondence from Chippenham 2020's legal representative since the Inspectors 16 November 2015 letter confirming suspension of proceedings regarding the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan. That correspondence relates to a planning application currently before the Council for consideration. This letter is currently being considered by the Council and the letter and the Council's response is likely to be made public as relevant information within the Council's register for the application to which it relates.

Question 3

Have officers met any representatives of Chippenham 2020 LLP since the enquiry was suspended? If so why, and what was the outcome?

Response:

Response Spatial Planning:

Spatial Planning Officers have not met with any representatives of Chippenham 2020 LLP following the suspension of the examination.

Response Strategic Assets & Facilities Management:

On the 8th December 2015, the Council's Strategic Projects & Development Manager, representing the Council in its capacity as landowner, met briefly with Chippenham 2020 at the company's request. The purpose of the meeting was for the company to provide an up-date of its intentions following the examination.

Public Participation – Chippenham Site Allocations DPD

Question from Mrs Anne Henshaw

To Councillor Toby Sturgis, Cabinet member for Strategic Planning (strategic and development management), Property, Waste and Strategic Housing

Council Position Statement:

The Examination in relation to the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan is still open. The proceedings have been suspended by the Inspector, not closed. The Council has been asked to do further work by the inspector. Whilst this work is being undertaken, the Council will not be responding to communications relating to the evidence before the Inspector as in the interests of fairness and openness such an exchange should be considered through the examination process and therefore managed by the Inspector.

The response to these questions must be read in the context of the Council's position.

Question

Given two failed attempts to produce a plan for Chippenham's growth to 2026 and mounting costs, will Council ensure that the third attempt produces a sound Plan for the whole Chippenham Community Area as a place where people live.

AND

- includes and prioritises an up to date plan for the Town Centre where there are brownfield sites for at least 300 houses (taking into account the example of Swindon where the economy collapsed when development on the periphery left a dead centre)
- assesses all the sites including the dispersed sites for inclusion as appropriate
- achieves a Plan that is employment-led where phased housing balances job creation.
- Positively increases opportunities for walking, cycling and public transport to reduce congestion emphasising routes leading to the centre rather than round the periphery

- delivers the required number of affordable houses
- maintains a rural separation between Chippenham and the neighbouring villages in accordance with Core Policy 51.

Response:

The Examination has been suspended to allow the Council to undertake further work in response to the Inspector's concerns.

Signatories:

CPRE Wiltshire
CHIPPENHAM COMMUNITY VOICE
WHITE HORSE ALLIANCE
ACA (A36/A350 Corridor Alliance)
CAMPAIGN FOR A BETTER TROWBRIDGE

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

15 December 2015

Public Participation – Chippenham Site Allocations DPD

Question from Mrs Anne Henshaw – CPRE

To Councillor Toby Sturgis, Cabinet member for Strategic Planning (strategic and development management), Property, Waste and Strategic

Housing

Council Position Statement:

The Examination in relation to the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan is still open. The proceedings have been suspended by the Inspector, not closed. The Council has been asked to do further work by the inspector. Whilst this work is being undertaken, the Council will not be responding to communications relating to the evidence before the Inspector as in the interests of fairness and openness such an exchange should be considered through the examination process and therefore managed by the Inspector.

The response to these questions must be read in the context of the Council's position.

Question 1

The Chippenham Site Allocations Plan Inspector's letter of 16 November referred to long delays for the signing of s106 agreements on two large development sites. What is the reason for these remarkable delays which result in serious consequences for Chippenham?

Response:

Section 106 negotiations are confidential and can become protracted when there are disagreements between parties. However in these instances the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy and the need to re-assess viability, mid-way through negotiations has been a source of delay. The Council is working towards completing both agreements as soon as possible.

Question 2

In the light of comments made in this letter what is the current position of the Cabinet Member for Planning (strategic and development management) property, waste and strategic housing?

Response:

Councillor Toby Sturgis is the Cabinet Member for Planning (strategic and development management) property, waste and strategic housing.

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

15 December 2015

Public Participation – Chippenham Site Allocations DPD

Questions from Mrs Isabel McCord

To Councillor Toby Sturgis, Cabinet member for Strategic Planning (strategic and development management), Property, Waste and Strategic

Housing

Council Position Statement:

The Examination in relation to the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan is still open. The proceedings have been suspended by the Inspector, not closed. The Council has been asked to do further work by the inspector. Whilst this work is being undertaken, the Council will not be responding to communications relating to the evidence before the Inspector as in the interests of fairness and openness such an exchange should be considered through the examination process and therefore managed by the Inspector.

The response to these questions must be read in the context of the Council's position.

Question 1

I note from your letter of 4 December to the Inspector, Patrick Whitehead, that you are in discussion with the Planning Advisory Service. Please can you tell me what services/support you are seeking from it and what will be the cost to Wiltshire Council.

Response:

The Council is in discussion with the Planning Advisory Service regarding how they may support the further work through the provision of critical friend support. There is no charge to the Council for this service.

Question 2

Your own guidance on public consultation in your Statement of Community Involvement Final July 2015 Paragraph 4.1 lists the minimum legal requirements for Community Involvement in the Local Plan. It states that you have to publish a statement including a summary of the issues raised and details as to how those issues have been addressed. You did not address the issues raised in the responses from the public consultation on the CSAP earlier this year but simply passed them to the Inspector. If you had addressed them you could have reworked your plan to make it sound and saved time and public money by avoiding the further work you now have to do. Please will you confirm that you will not make this same mistake when you consult on the outcome of this further work but will consider all responses from the public and where they show unsoundness amend your plan before submitting it to the Inspector again.

Response:

The 'minimum legal standards' are referring to the consultation that is undertaken in relation to the preparation of a Local Plan prior to its submission for Examination. In accordance with the Regulations, the Council has published information setting out who was consulted during the preparation of the Plan and how this consultation was undertaken. This included a summary of issues raised and how these issues have been addressed. The consultation reports prepared in developing the Plan can be found on the Council's website via the following link: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planninganddevelopment/planningpolicy/planningpolicydocuments.htm?directory=Chippenham%20Site%20Allocations%20Plan/11CCON%20Consultation>

As set out in the Council's letter of 4 December 2015 to the Inspector, the Council has committed to undertaking a 6 week consultation on the further work and proposed to submit the response to the consultation to the Inspector on completion in order to meet the 6 month timeline that he had proposed.

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

15 December 2015

Public Participation – Chippenham Site Allocations DPD

Questions from Mrs Marilyn Mackay

**To Councillor Toby Sturgis, Cabinet member for Strategic Planning
(strategic and development management), Property, Waste and Strategic
Housing**

Council Position Statement:

The Examination in relation to the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan is still open. The proceedings have been suspended by the Inspector, not closed. The Council has been asked to do further work by the inspector. Whilst this work is being undertaken, the Council will not be responding to communications relating to the evidence before the Inspector as in the interests of fairness and openness such an exchange should be considered through the examination process and therefore managed by the Inspector.

The response to these questions must be read in the context of the Council's position.

Question 1

Has anyone in the Planning department/Cabinet been held accountable for two failures on Plans presented for Examination in Public regarding the Chippenham area?

An apology to the local community affected by these might be appreciated.

Response:

The Examination has been suspended to allow the Council to undertake further work in response to the Inspector's concerns.

Question 2

Reading Appendix 1, CSAP: Schedule of Work in Relation to Sustainability Appraisal and Site Selection Report, page 2, there is reference to Updated Briefing Note 2.

My question is to ask about the statements in 4.5:

“the wider importance placed upon the A350, which make options for development that involve breaching and building beside it much more difficult to achieve without compromising its strategic role”

and the statement in 4.7:

is a part of the strategic road network that **also functions as a by-pass to the town.**

It is clear from the Briefing Note no sites should be on West of A 350, but since the focus is on this as a bypass, does that rule out other ‘breaching and building beside it’ which may be proposed? The Atkins report on Transport suggested proximity to the PRN (A 350) offered the best opportunity for ‘economic growth’ and had a map to show this and how different areas performed.

Some clarity between a need to be a bypass, with good traffic flows, and good sites for economic growth in the Chippenham area close to the PRN would be helpful, as there appears to be some conflict in this issue.

Response

As set out in paragraph 2.2 of the Council's response of 4 December and Schedule of Work Appendix 1 that accompanied the Council's letter of 4 December 2015 to the Inspector undertaking the Examination into the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan land to the west of the A350 is not considered a reasonable alternative for the allocation of strategic sites in the Plan.

Public Participation – Chippenham Site Allocations DPD

Questions from Ms Helen Stuckey

To Councillor Toby Sturgis, Cabinet member for Strategic Planning (strategic and development management), Property, Waste and Strategic Housing

Council Position Statement:

The Examination in relation to the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan is still open. The proceedings have been suspended by the Inspector, not closed. The Council has been asked to do further work by the inspector. Whilst this work is being undertaken, the Council will not be responding to communications relating to the evidence before the Inspector as in the interests of fairness and openness such an exchange should be considered through the examination process and therefore managed by the Inspector.

The response to these questions must be read in the context of the Council's position.

Question 1

The Council have proposed to provide "greater detail on road infrastructure", including a position statement on the Eastern Link Road. There is no mention of a similar position statement for the alternative Southern Link Road. If one of the anticipated alternative "Development Strategies" is a "southern focus" then surely this equivalent analysis is required for a Southern Link Road including preferred route, nature, cost and funding?

Response

The Position Statement is being prepared in direct response to the Inspector's concerns, as set out in his letter of 16 November 2015, regarding the Eastern Link Road should this link road remain as part of the Development Strategy (see Council's letter of 4 December 2015).

Paragraph 3.22 of the Schedule of Work Appendix 1 of the letter from the Council the Inspector dated 4 December 2015 clarifies that supporting evidence will be prepared for each alternative development strategy. In appraising alternative development strategies, consideration will be given to any road infrastructure on an equitable basis.

Question 2

The 2013 Chippenham Transport Strategy concluded that a package of measures, excluding both an Eastern and Southern link road, would be sufficient to cope with the additional development. Please could the revised Transport Evidence start with this as the baseline? Will all updates include the agreed dualling of the A350 and the link road through Area A? Will the Southern Development Strategy include evaluating dualling the A350 from the Chequers roundabout down to the Lackham roundabout and a Southern Link Road ending at the Lackham roundabout?

Response

The Council will review the Transport and Accessibility evidence as set out in the Schedule of Work Appendix 1 of the letter from the Council the Inspector dated 4 December 2015.

Question 3

The Council have already made their Traffic Model available to potential developers. Please could CAUSE and their transport consultant be granted similar access to the Traffic Models to be able to run their own scenarios as part of the preparation for the next EIP?

Response:

Similar to potential developers, model runs can be undertaken by the Council's consultant using the Traffic Model at a fee to cover the cost of the work.

Question 4

Developers have been discouraged from putting forward strategic sites in Area D since 2009. Please confirm that the evaluation of "Strategic Site Options" for Area D will not be disadvantaged by the lack of recent developer propositions? Will Area D land owned by the Council be evaluated in an equivalent and fair way to Council land owned in Area C?

Response:

The evaluation of "Strategic Site Options" for Area D will not be disadvantaged by the lack of recent developer propositions. Council owned land in Area D is within the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, which will form the basis for the identification of strategic site options (see paragraph 3.11, Schedule of Work Appendix 1 of the letter from the Council the Inspector dated 4 December 2015.).

Question 5

We note that the ranking of criteria has been dropped - does this really mean that all "harm" factors" will be considered as of equivalent value?

Response:

The Council's response of 4th December 2015 clarifies the approach, as follows:

"The selection of a preferred strategy will be based on choosing the alternative with the greatest net benefit for economic growth and settlement resilience when compared to the potential harm against Core Policy 10 criteria 2 to 6. This therefore ensures that the Plan is based on significant job growth, which will help improve self-containment of the town as required by the Wiltshire Core Strategy and replaces the ranking of Core Policy 10 criteria".

The Schedule of Work Appendix 1 provides further information about how the assessment will be carried out.

Question 6

What does the term "Settlement Resilience" mean ? And should the new evidence take account of the Chippenham Master plan so that there is sufficient focus on regenerating the centre of Chippenham?

Response:

The term 'settlement resilience' appears in criterion 1 of Core Policy 10 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy. It formed part of a main modification to that plan introduced by the Inspector who considered its soundness. Settlement resilience is interpreted as a community that can grow and withstand change by being more self-contained, retain more of its own spending power and has a good range of local services and facilities.

The Council's response of 4 December and Schedule of Work Appendix 1 clarifies the nature of the further work and responds to the points raised in the Inspector's letter, which focus on the delivery of mixed use sites on the edge of town. The Master plan will be implemented in accordance with Core Policy 9 and is complementary to Core Policy 10 that provides the policy basis for the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan.

Question 7

The submitted plan comprises 10 steps, many of which can't proceed without the conclusions of the previous step. Will the Council share the key interim conclusions e.g. Strategic Site Options (Step 3) by end December, Reasonable Alternative Development Strategies (Step 6) by end January, and the Preferred Development Strategy (Step 9) by end of February?

Response:

As set out in the Council's response of 4 December and Schedule of Work Appendix 1 Step 10, all the further work will be made available for consultation at the same time. The work will be presented to show the outcomes at each stage of the process.