

**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**13 October 2020**

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**Questions from Andrew Nicolson**

**Agenda Item 10 – Chippenham Housing Infrastructure Fund**

**To Cllr Philip Whitehead – Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development, MCI and Communications**

**Statement:**

Given that,

you have said before that you would like to open all the information about the HIF project up to the public, but that your hands are tied by Homes England, including by oral agreements that you have claimed were made, but you have been unable to give full details of;

in practice, at every opportunity, you have resisted and restricted Freedom of Information and Environmental Information requests to Wiltshire Council and to Homes England by claiming not only that disclosure would affect commercial interests, but also that the harm of disclosure overrides the public interest in transparency and having the facts, and in members the of the public being able to scrutinise the features and effects of this controversial scheme with its hugely significant environmental impacts;

your Stakeholder and Community Engagement Strategy, if it is to be meaningful, will have to disclose information, such as the land to be developed, the route options and much else about the Future Chippenham project, which may prejudice commercial interests including the Council's;

you may be intending to withhold this kind of information, and release it in a managed way as part of the Strategy, but in many cases there can surely be no more harm done by releasing that information now, than in early 2021; and

the public report before you says at 21(L) that "The GDA also contains other provisions relating to communications and confidentiality, freedom of information,

data protection, intellectual property, indemnity, governance arrangements and disputes resolution",

**Question 1:**

Will you please now state the terms of the provisions of the Grant Determination Agreement that commit Wiltshire Council and/or Homes England to either restricting or releasing information, and if not why not?

**Response:**

All parties responsibilities under FOI and EIR remain the same. The GDA provides for a confidentiality obligation, excluding information that is already in the public domain.

**Question 2:**

Will you agree now to review the many requests you have received from members of the public, and release and publish any information now, that you will need to publish for the consultation, and if not why not?

**Response:**

The project webpage will be up and running shortly. We will utilise this platform as the primary source of information pertaining to the project. Documents relating to the project to support stakeholder and community engagement and consultation will be published here.