

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

15 October 2024

Item 8 - Wiltshire Local Plan Review - Submission of Draft Plan

Extract of Cabinet minutes from 8 October 2024

111 Wiltshire Local Plan Review - Submission of Draft Plan

Cllr Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management and Strategic Planning presented the report informing Cabinet of the response to the Regulation 19 consultation on the Pre-submission Draft Plan. The report also sought Cabinet's endorsement to recommend Full Council approve the submission of the Plan for independent examination and sought delegated authority to make appropriate arrangements for the submission of the Plan and associated documents to the Secretary of State and for the independent examination of the Plan.

Cllr Botterill highlighted that the adopted Local Plan (Wiltshire Core Strategy) is nine years old. Many sites have been developed and policies were starting to become dated. This new Local Plan presents an opportunity for Wiltshire Council to update policies and site allocations to align with national policy, setting an ambitious approach to delivering the council's carbon reduction and sustainability ambitions.

He reported that the Plan will become one of Council's most important strategic documents. The Plan has been in development since 2017, with over 10,700 comments being received during the recent Regulation 19 statutory consultation. The comments of which were thoroughly reviewed, and further work carried out to ensure the Plan would be ready for examination. A Regulation 22 statement has been prepared summarising the main issues raised through the consultation and the Council's initial response. Cllr Botterill commended Cabinet for rejecting a proposal at a previous Cabinet meeting to hold a further Regulation 18 consultation as this now enabled the Council to proceed to examination using the housing number within the Plan, rather than the higher housing number being proposed by Government.

Cabinet noted that the Government has recently consulted on changes to the planning system, including changes to the National Planning Policy Framework and the way housing need is calculated. It is expected that transitional arrangements will be in place to allow the Plan to be submitted for examination in its current form.

Eleven public questions were received for the meeting and these were included in the published agenda supplement together with written responses prior to this meeting. In addition, a number of statements were received from Louise Weissel, Simon Hetzel, Jonathan Francis, and Adrian Temple-Brown, all being circulated to Cabinet members prior to the meeting and four were read out by the originators who attended the meeting.

Supplementary questions were received from:

- Brian Firth asked about any discussions held with the Planning Inspectorate prior to submission of the Plan and the process if the Plan was either withdrawn or in need of modification. Cllr Botterill explained that Officers had liaised with the Planning Inspectorate and the Plan is considered ready for examination. Further consultation would be required as part of the examination for those areas where modifications were recommended by the Inspector.
- John Potter asked for clarification on the meaning of reserve sites. The Leader and Cllr Botterill explained that these were sites that were being held in reserve in the event that other sites in the Plan did not come forward as anticipated.
- Louise Weissel asked about the demand for social housing and sought assurances that it would be provided in any new developments. She was concerned that the Local Plan did not indicate the level of demand or number of people on the housing waiting list. The Leader, Cllr Botterill and Cllr Alford explained that they sympathised with the comments being made. Affordable housing is defined by Government policy, 40% Affordable Housing as proposed in the Plan is a large portion of any housing development site and this needed to be of varying types to cater for differing needs. Cabinet members were concerned that the planning process is currently developer led rather than Plan led.
- Colin Gale asked about guidance for maintaining Village Design Statements and the process for periodic re-approval. Cllr Botterill would provide a written response after the meeting.

Cllr Alford commented on the significant investment that flows into local communities, including schools and cycleways from contributions associated with housing developments.

The Leader recognised the issues linked to the Local Plan and this is an experience that most Local Authorities experience. The Local Plan is a route to achieve net zero, economic growth, support for the military and delivery of affordable housing.

Cllr Ian Thorn, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, thanked officers for the effort in producing the Local Plan and acknowledged that it is the most important document produced by the Council in relation to the impact on residents' lives. He agreed with other comments about developer led development and felt this was encouraged by current Government policies, with developers holding onto plots of land in some cases

for many years. He was concerned about the Council being able to defend a 5-year housing land supply and commented on net zero building element of developments, air quality, the availability of health service infrastructure in areas of high development and the impact of the Wiltshire Design Guide on developments. The Leader and Cllr Botterill explained that the issue of land supply lies with developers holding onto parcels of land and not developing them, which then produces issues around housing supply; the building industry is slowly catching up to have a net zero build for new homes, although this needs central government intervention to move it forward; Health service infrastructure is sporadic for new development, although details within the Plan encourages the development of this form of infrastructure; Housing designs should be appropriate to the area of the build.

Members also commented on concerns about the lack of a 5-year housing land supply, especially as it appeared that other Local Authorities had achieved this; the review of Neighbourhood Plans and advice for local communities whether to progress with a review or not.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

- 1. Endorses the submission of the draft Wiltshire Local Plan review Pre-submission Draft Plan at Appendix 1 together with relevant associated documentation for independent examination;**
- 2. Recommends to Full Council that the Wiltshire Local Plan Review - Pre-submission Draft Plan is submitted to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for independent examination together with relevant associated documentation;**
- 3. Directs that submission is accompanied by a request that the Inspector appointed to carry out the examination recommends any modifications necessary to make the Plan sound and legally compliant in accordance with Section 20(7C) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended); and**
- 4. Authorises the Director of Planning to take or authorise such steps as may be necessary for the independent examination of the Plan to be completed, including:**
 - a. Make appropriate arrangements for submission of the Plan and the completion and submission of all documents relating to the Plan;**
 - b. Make all necessary arrangements for examination including – the appointment of a Programme Officer; the undertaking and/or**

commissioning of other work necessary to prepare for and participate at examination; proposing main and/or minor modifications to the Plan and/or modifications to the Policies Map; entering into Memorandums of Understanding and Statements of Common Ground; and the delegation to officers and other commissioned experts to prepare and submit evidence, representations and submissions to the examination and, where necessary, appear at any hearing sessions and represent the council; and

- c. Implement any consequential actions relating to the examination, including undertaking any consultation that may be necessary, and publishing the recommendations and reasons of the person appointed to carry out the examination.**

Reason for decision:

To ensure that progress continues to be made on updating Wiltshire's Local Plan in line with the commitment set out in the council's Local Development Scheme and statutory requirements, and an efficient examination process.