

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

14 September 2021

**Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation and Questions from
Councillors**

Question from Helen Stride - Future Chippenham plans

**To Councillor Richard Clewer, Leader of the Council and Cabinet
Member for MCI, Economic Development, Heritage, Arts, Tourism
and Health & Wellbeing**

Question 1 – (21-314)

What will be the cost of the bridge across the Avon in the southern road?

Response:

The project is still in its preliminary stages and the cost of any aspect of the road is provisional at this stage. This will be further defined once a procurement process has taken place to secure a contractor to build the road should the development come forward as part of the local plan process. Provisional budgets for the scheme, including the southern element are detailed in the OAR report on our website here : [https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/5745/Full-options-assessment-report/pdf/Future_Chippenham - Options Assessment Report January 2021.pdf?m=637463272933430000](https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/5745/Full-options-assessment-report/pdf/Future_Chippenham_-_Options_Assessment_Report_January_2021.pdf?m=637463272933430000)

Question 2 – (21-315)

- a. Regarding the Council's discussions with Homes England about a revised HIF award, what stage has it reached?

Response:

Discussions with Homes England have commenced and are ongoing

- b. When and how will the outcomes of this discussion be made public?

Response:

It is envisaged that an update on the progress/outcome of the discussions with Homes England will be provided to Cabinet in November 2021

- c. How many roundabouts will there be on the southern road?

Response

The preliminary design has allowed for a number of junctions and roundabouts on the southern road as detailed in the Options assessment report previously referenced. These are preliminary assessments of requirements and will be further developed as the detail of the design is progressed to the next stages. To end at this stage, it is unknown the final number of roundabouts that will be in the final design.

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

14 September 2021

**Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation and Questions from
Councillors**

**Question from Andrew Nicolson - Future Chippenham Plans and
Climate Emergency**

**To Councillor Richard Clewer, Leader of the Council and Cabinet
Member for MCI, Economic Development, Heritage, Arts, Tourism
and Health & Wellbeing; and
Councillor Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Development
Management, Strategic Planning and Climate Change**

Statement 1 - Re Minutes 43, 45 and 46, Future Chippenham:

***Note:** extracts from reported "Question 6/Email/letter responses: Theme – Transport" suggest that there is a small amount of support, but also much opposition, to a short A350-A4 southern link road as a Chippenham east-west bypass or relief road. This is not the stated purpose of the distributor road, and would generate induced traffic by temporarily relieving congestion.*

Examples:

"To make the southern element of the road capable of carrying high traffic volumes": 1 response.

"The development of the southern element of the distributor road should be delayed while sustainable transport measures are prioritised": 1 response.

"The only road needed is from A350 (south of Chippenham) to A4, to ease traffic east to west": 3 responses.

"Suggestion that the new road should just provide is a short link road south of the courthouse roundabout to Lackham": 1 response.

"An essential part of this road scheme is crossing the river from Lackham to Pewsham bypass, taking south and west-bound traffic away from the town centre [etc.]": 1 response

"It is not clear what the justification is for the road link from the A4 to the A350 to the south": 1 response.

Question 1 – (21-316)

What evidence was there in the consultation responses, of public support for a distributor road supporting only a "southern scheme" version of Future Chippenham, even though this was not among the road options in the consultation, and does this scheme mean that the Council as Future Chippenham developer is giving up on the eastern part of the development, and will not be pursuing it in the Local Plan Review process?

Response:

As set out in the report to cabinet in legal implications, the consultation on options had taken place and it was not a referendum to indicate support. The Future Chippenham programme will focus on the southern section as agreed in the cabinet report, subject to the outcome of discussions with Homes England

Question 2 – (21-317)

Given that the 2020 Future Chippenham "Stakeholder and Community Engagement Strategy" said the Council would consult on its "Concept Framework proposals for Wiltshire Council land" at the same time as the Road Route options in early 2021, and given that a complete Concept Framework document existed in March, why did the Council not do that, when will it publish and consult on it or a revised version of it for the southern scheme, what is the current estimated target date for its planning applications for the road and the land around it, and can you assure the public that Future Chippenham will not make any planning applications for the road or the land until the new scheme with Concept Framework proposals and revised transport and environmental impact studies have been published and consulted and on and the outcomes published?

Response:

As agreed in the July cabinet report masterplanning will take place including full consultation. Subject to that and the progress of the Local plan review, it is the intention that planning applications will be made supported by the evidence and studies referred to in the question, subject to further cabinet approval.

Question 3 – (21-318) Minute 30, Update on Council's response to the climate emergency:

Is the Council still willing to hold a stakeholder conference at the same time as COP 26?

Response:

The council is currently engaging widely with residents and stakeholders through its climate strategy consultation process, in advance of COP26. This includes public webinars and library drop-in sessions to inform and encourage people to respond to our strategy.

Question 4 – (21-319) Minute 30, Update on Council's response to the climate emergency:

Is Cabinet prepared to Wiltshire Council to treat the climate emergency at least as urgently and seriously as it has the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic emergency, set its climate strategy to aim for a carbon-neutral whole Wiltshire by 2030, and let this drive its Local Plan, transport plan and all other plans and strategies?

Response:

The council is fully committed to this agenda and our track record speaks for itself – we have reduced our own carbon footprint by more than 80% since 2014/15 and are on track for more reductions through a major investment programme, allocating £88m capital and £3.9m revenue so far.

Specific areas of focus for **immediate** action are highlighted throughout our climate strategy with an exclamation mark. Our regular progress updates to Cabinet and Council show that action is already being taken – we are not waiting for this strategy to be adopted to take action.

Page 4 of our climate strategy explains that it is not a statutory document but it will influence other key council strategies and plans such as our Business Plan, our emerging Local Plan and our Local Transport Plan.

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

14 September 2021

**Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation and Questions from
Councillors**

**Question from Mel Boyle - Future Chippenham Plans and Station
Road Traffic Lights - Chippenham**

**To Councillor Richard Clewer, Leader of the Council and Cabinet
Member for MCI, Economic Development, Heritage, Arts, Tourism
and Health & Wellbeing; and
Councillor Dr Mark McClelland Cabinet Member for Transport,
Waste, Street Scene, and Flooding**

Statement:

Further to the extraordinary Cabinet Meeting on 21 July where the public were not allowed to correct misinformation from Cabinet members I would like the below acknowledged. There were also a lot of assumptions that Officers knew/were dealing with items and as so much is being done in private excluding residents mistakes are likely to be made (Sadlers Mead Car Park and Station Hill Traffic Lights are prime examples). As stated previously I am happy to take Officers or Councillors on the 7 mile walk across the full area as it is so important that it is fully understood what is being destroyed unnecessarily as more houses have come forward since 2018 than were anticipated so the half a HIF is no longer required.

Despite the evidence of thousands of houses built and only 123 affordable houses built in Chippenham in the last five years the Cabinet felt that affordable housing by developers was the only option. Deputy Leader Laura Mayes, Cllr Phil Alford, and Cllr Pauline Church all used this as their main reasons for approving the plan.

This is incorrect as Wiltshire Council is bidding for other finance and the UK100 APPG Sustainable Finance Group have trillions of pounds to get into Local Authorities for schemes like affordable housing which is a lot more appropriate than the outdated 2018 HIF funding from before the Climate Emergency was declared and Brexit causing building and material shortages and price increases which will reduce CIL and affordable housing viability.

Councillors were using their own towns as examples, but Chippenham is not Devizes, Salisbury or Newquay so the examples used were not relevant. Cllr Cape and Chippenham Town Council rejecting the motions 3 times and understanding the

town are what should have been taken into account. Cllr Cape also raised the concerns of Pewsham residents that were relevant rather than the Cabinet that raised issues in their areas which as mentioned won't change until policy changes at Government which we have time to wait for when as CPRE says Wiltshire Council have built 40% more houses than allocated and the rest can be built on brownfield sites up to 2036..

Master Planning or Cookie Cutting - given the options at a referendum Chippenham would vote for Cookie Cutting, only destroying wildlife as it is needed, not for 1800 houses not needed until after 2036 according to Wiltshire Council, but the Cabinet seems to be so out of touch with the residents of Chippenham and the existing community feeling (after Wiltshire Council added 5,000 houses onto the allocation and said if they didn't built them Government would and calling a 30mph road with cars parked on it a bypass and using large signs and posters with no mention of the houses to fund the road) The HIF paperwork says it needs community support, Future Chippenham has no community support due to the large existing developments currently being built and some not even started but approved. The Cabinet took no notice of these developments that will be built with high energy costs to the residents and need to be retrofitted, along with any further developments where planning permission is approved before 2025 even if built afterwards.

Cllr Nick Botterill said there was nothing that could be done about empty houses.

This was misleading due to the two year compulsory purchase options. Other Councils such as North East Lincolnshire Council who won the Empty Homes Network Awards 2021 are working on this. Cllr Nick Botterill says the 370 empty homes in Chippenham are insignificant, but when you look at a development the size of Birds Marsh and think half of that greenfield site could have been saved by better use of the current housing it brings it into perspective during a Climate Emergency. Also Wiltshire Council not recording derelict houses so they can be repurposed with infrastructure already in place is not acceptable during a Climate Emergency.

Additional information since the meeting to be considered

Cllr Richard Clewer has recently raised in the papers about the 1,300 empty MOD houses in Wiltshire showing again the best use is not being made of existing houses.

Updated housing forecasts from the House of Lords Built Environment Committee demand for new housing in the UK, 300,000 reduced to 150,000 per year inquiry. Cllr Clewer keeps saying the houses will be built if they don't do it but there is already evidence in place to challenge the numbers.

IPCC report - human activity was "unequivocally" the cause of rapid changes to the climate, including sea level rises, melting polar ice and glaciers, heatwaves, floods and droughts.

The IPCC report hi-lights the importance of local food from the County Farms around Chippenham and saving the wonderful various biodiversity habitats across the site.

Existing Housing projects covering the need until 2025 when policies will be updated for net zero housing.

Current projects not considered

The emerging spatial strategy said we/Chippenham needed 9225 house for 2016-2036 (an unsustainably high number in Chippenham, 20% of the allocation for the whole of Wiltshire) even though we have outcommuting of 67% and allocating land has not brought businesses into the town with career opportunities.

The residual at 1 April 2019 was 5100

Wiltshire Council has implied they will remove the 5,000 they added onto Government figures the proportion for Chippenham would be 1,250 reduced leaving 3,850

1,000 Rowden Park - first of the first 144 gone on sale this week - leaving 2,850 (none of these will have solar panels or be net zero), confirmed by the Estate Agent.

650 Rawlings Green - not started yet - leaving 2,200

750 Birds Marsh - building just started on the next 250 - 1,450

370 Wiltshire Council figures April 2021 - vacant properties 1,080

Derelict Houses numbers not kept by Wiltshire Council but very visible on the approaches to Chippenham

Brownfield sites emerging spatial strategy - 2021-2031 target 240 existing 159 = 359 - leaving 721

450 Hill Top View - first 200 due to be completed September 2021 = 271

The old Police Station

The old Vauxhall garage

The old Ambulance Station

Land allocated for business and not used and various smaller developments numbers not available so will need to be confirmed by Wiltshire Council.

Question 1 – (21-320)

So over the 15 years remaining of the current period, even without the figure to be deducted when supplied by Wiltshire Council it would be 18 houses per year for Chippenham. So why are you entering into joint venture and compulsory purchase of greenfield land for 4,200 houses during a Climate Emergency?

(Why destroy an ideal tourist attraction of a direct walk across fields, meadows, County farmland vital for local food and jobs, river, streams from Chippenham Town Centre to Lacock and then back along the canal?)

Response:

The Council is progressing its assessments of options through a delivery partner for delivery of housing on its owned sites, should the site be allocated as part of the local plan process. The CPO you mention is required to support delivery of the HIF funded distributor road, should agreement with other landowners not be reached and finalised and is not in relation to housing delivery.

Question 2 – (21-321)

Following the return of the college, school and workers the Station Hill Traffic Lights are causing long delays, we have had no feedback following the meeting with Wiltshire Council and our MP? **Please can we have air quality samples taken at the Dorothy House Shop area of Station Hill at peak times eg 17:15 tonight the fumes were terrible (tall buildings trapping pollution at pedestrian level).** Walkers are still not waiting for the lights, if they were changed to crossing only lights and a painted roundabout put back it would be much safer for pedestrians when which was the main aim of the project.

Response:

Following the public meeting further queue lengths surveys are being undertaken to quantify the impact of the return of the College. The results will be included in a full feedback response to be issued shortly. The feedback will also cover the issue of pedestrian behaviour. Air quality measurements are taken by diffusion tube monitoring adjacent to Dorothy House. Results are available on the Air Quality website at www.wiltshireairquality.org.uk

Statement:

Network Rail research shows idling vehicles contribute to asthma, heart disease and even lung cancer and has a negative effect on the environment by contributing to poor air quality. An idling engine can produce up to twice the emissions of a car in motion, churning out sulphur dioxide, particulate matter and nitrogen oxide. One car idling could fill up to 150 balloons per minute with exhaust fumes. Four businesses

tonight had empty tables outside on a very hot evening because it is no longer pleasant to sit out in the fumes with traffic queued back past these establishments.

This was not an issue before Wiltshire Council put in unnecessary traffic lights which they didn't consult properly with residents and businesses including our MPs office.

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

14 September 2021

**Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation and Questions from
Councillors**

**Question from Dr Paul Martin - Station Road Traffic Lights -
Chippenham**

**Councillor Dr Mark McClelland Cabinet Member for Transport,
Waste, Street Scene, and Flooding**

Statement:

I would like to tell you what a bad idea replacing the mini roundabout at bottom of station hill in Chippenham is. The queuing I experienced of late because of the traffic lights is a real pain. It is something that I never experienced very often when the mini roundabout was there. In my opinion the lights need to be taken away, and get the mini roundabout back. To reverse this to the original roundabout configuration is the ONLY way forward.

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

14 September 2021

**Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation and Questions from
Councillors**

Question from Ian James – County Farms

**To Councillor Phil Alford, Cabinet Member for Housing, Strategic Assets and
Asset transfer**

Statement

The Defra minister Victoria Prentis MP answered Parliamentary Questions on County Farms on 17th May 2021, referring to the measures in the Agricultural Transition Plan:

As set out in the Agricultural Transition Plan this Government will be providing funding to create lasting opportunities for new entrants to access land, infrastructure and support to establish innovative businesses. This could include support for local authorities to invest in County farms.

This driven by Defra. “The path to sustainable farming: An agricultural transition plan 2021- 2024..

The total income from agriculture for SW region rose by 46% between 2015 - 2019 to £644m, not many industries can boast this achievement.

Total contribution to the value of £4.1 billion Per annum for the SW of which Wiltshire is one of the largest contributors close to £1 billion. (2021 Defra Figures)

Wiltshire Council has a thriving rural economy.

Question 1 – (21-322)

Has Wiltshire Council engaged with Defra for support for County Farms?

Response:

Wiltshire Council has an Asset Management Framework for the management of its Rural Estate and are in the process of updating the Framework in light of changes to legislation and to establish how the land holding can be used to meet the Council's strategic objectives. During this review period consultation with key stakeholders will be undertaken. As yet, Defra have not been engaged in any discussion but will be key.

Question 2 – (21-323)

Does Wiltshire Council consider farming to be a major contributor to the economy of Wiltshire?

Response:

The Council has a relatively substantial Rural Estate throughout Wiltshire and has a good track record of working with its tenants to make positive contributions to the counties economy.

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

14 September 2021

**Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation and Questions from
Councillors**

Question from John Thorne – Refugees

**To Councillor Richard Clewer, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for
MCI, Economic Development, Heritage, Arts, Tourism and Health & Wellbeing**

Question 1 – (21-324)

What is Wiltshire Council doing to assist Afghan refugees who are coming to the UK?

Response:

Wiltshire Council is committed to do everything it can to help more Afghan refugees settle in Wiltshire. We were already in the process of welcoming three families to Wiltshire as part of the [Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy](#) (ARAP), which started in April, well before the recent crisis in Afghanistan made the situation more urgent.

We are working to provide accommodation and support for at least 20 more families under the Afghan resettlement scheme but we await further information from the Home Office to best assess how we can help.

We are grateful for the offers of accommodation from private landlords who have affordable properties and encourage more to send in details by completing a [survey](#) detailing types of property available or using the government [portal for housing offers](#).

We are also talking to the Ministry of Defence about how we could support them using the 1350 empty MOD houses in the county as another option.

Some people have kindly offered a room in their own homes, but the government has said that shared houses and general lodgings are not suitable for the main Afghan support scheme. However, we are encouraging people making such generous offers to consider signing up with our [fostering](#) or [supported lodgings](#) teams.

Meanwhile people have also been generously offering support and donations. Wiltshire Council is asking people to hold onto these goods for the moment and will say where and when they can be delivered. The government has also set up a [national link](#) for those wanting to offer help in this way. Offers of support can also be emailed to refugees@wiltshire.gov.uk.

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

14 September 2021

Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation and Questions from Councillors

Question from Cllr Martin Smith – Northern Area Planning – Resources Concerns

To Councillor Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Development Management, Strategic Planning and Climate Change

Statement

The council's northern area planning team is under huge pressure at the moment and has been for most of this year. This is probably reflected throughout the county. Through no fault of individual council officers the following problems are being experienced:

- Long delays before planning applications are entered into the public facing planning portal (sometimes taking 3 months)
- Excessive delays in applications being determined – examples available of straightforward cases being submitted in December with no resolution
- Officers have case-loads of 3 to 4 times what is deemed to be reasonable
- Bloor Homes have now taken advantage of the chaos and have gone to appeal for non-determination for a large development outside Malmesbury; more instances are expected
- There are reports of the team being 40% down on resource

The above is having a huge impact on many residents:

- Applicants are stalled with builders lined up but no permission to start work
- Neighbours are stuck with a type of planning blight in some cases
- Large scale developments are likely to be decided at appeal rather than by local planning officers and locally elected councillors
- Large amounts of frustration being caused all round

Question 1 – (21-325)

Could the cabinet please explain via a written answer, how this crisis is going to be resolved and when it is going to be resolved?

Response:

The Council's planning team is facing significant pressures across Wiltshire, which reflects the national position as the number of planning applications submitted across England has increased dramatically. For the last national quarter for which details are available, the number of planning applications received by local planning authorities in January-March 2021 was 20% higher than the same quarter in 2019, pre-pandemic. There have also been increased pressures on the team's workload due to Wiltshire Council also having replaced the outdated planning software system; additional workload arising from the cut in stamp duty, and the diversion of some staff resources to deal with covid grant applications (now completed). Staff resources have also been stretched by a number of senior and junior officers leaving the Council, and others taking maternity leave. There is a national shortage of available and suitably qualified planning officers which has meant we have not been able to replace staff. The shortage of housing land supply across the county has also led to a surge in major speculative applications, increasing the workload of Senior Officers, and where these applications have been refused, the resulting appeal workload has significantly increased.

The Council is taking steps to seek to address these matters. Registration of planning applications had been brought down to two weeks. Some vacant posts have been filled, although due to notice periods, there may be a gap before new recruits arrive. Agency staff have been recruited to help fill some of the senior posts where recruitment is proving more challenging. Consultants have been instructed to help deal with the upsurge in appeal workload (including no less than four public inquiries between October and December). Overtime has been worked to help reduce validation backlogs and deal with some of the older applications. New ways of working, some introduced during the pandemic, are being continued and expanded to seek to create capacity to deal with the increased workload.

The Cabinet Member for Development Management, Strategic Planning and Climate Change, Corporate Director for Place and Interim Chief Planning Officer will continue to develop and deliver an Action Plan to address this matter.

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

14 September 2021

Agenda Item 12 – Evolve Programme – Contract Award

Question from Susan McGill

**To Councillor Pauline Church, Cabinet Member for Finance & Procurement,
Commissioning, IT, Digital and Commercialisation**

Statement

I note that on 27/06/19, the then Council CEO referred to Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 regarding the fiscal duties of the Council in relation to procurement of an ERP package—an entirely superfluous reference, unless the Council makes a habit of disregarding the Act, and needs to reassure tax payers.

The current cabinet agenda proposes to exclude the public from its consideration of the procurement or update of SAP software.

Question 1 – (21-326)

Where may I find the report evaluating the Council's ERP during the last contract period?

Response:

In response to the question above, the Public part (Part 1) of the Cabinet paper considered by Cabinet on 23rd July 2019 to procure a new ERP solution after evaluation of six options can be found at Agenda item 11, pages 149 to 156 within this link: [Choose agenda document pack - Cabinet 23 July 2019 | Wiltshire Council](#). The financial details of the options appraised and outline business case proposed as the basis for the decision to proceed with procuring a replacement solution were contained in the Private (Part 2) paper from 23rd July 2019.

Question 2 – (21-327)

Why has this report not been attached as part of the background to Item 12?

Response:

Agenda item 12 relates to a report that, by virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, is considered Private (Part 2) as it

contains information that is considered commercially sensitive. The Public and Private parts (Parts 1 and 2) of the ERP replacement report from 23rd July 2019 are referenced as background papers in the Agenda Item 12 report for 14th September 2021; however, as that paper is Private (Part 2) the background papers it references are also considered Private (Part 2). The exception to this is the Public (Part 1) part of the original 2019 paper which is already publicly available and to which a link is provided above.