



Minutes of a meeting of an Extraordinary Full Council meeting held virtually on Zoom on 25 February 2021 at 7pm.

Councillors present:

James Adman	Desna Allen
Richard Bambury	Pete Bishop
Jenny Budgetell	Clare Cape
Bill Douglas	Teresa Hutton (Chairman)
Ruth Lloyd	Nick Murry
Mary Norton	Ashley O'Neill
Andy Phillips	Nina Phillips
David Powell	Chris Ruck (Vice)
John Scragg	Sandie Webb

Officers present: Mark Smith, Chief Executive
Matt Kirby, Director of Community Services
Gillian Ballinger, Finance Manager
Heather Rae, Democratic Services Manager
Michael Weeks, Democratic and Civic Officer
Andy Conroy, Planning Officer
Lynsey Nichols, Communications and Customer Services Manager
Paul Harvey, Head of Leisure Services

Public present: There were 27 members of the public present.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There was 1 verbal question and 10 written questions from members of the public, which are appended to these minutes at **APPENDIX A**. The responses to these questions were not part of the meeting but are appended to these minutes at **APPENDIX B**.

69. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Holly Bradfield, Raj Gill, Peter Hutton and Michael Merry

70. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

71. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- i) The purpose of this meeting is to respond to the Local Plan Review Consultation, please note there is a separate Extraordinary Full Council meeting next Thursday 04 March regarding the Future Chippenham Consultation.
- ii) In respect of agenda item 4, I shall give each councillor one opportunity to make a comment or ask a question of officers. You will be called to ask your questions by Heather in alphabetical order. I would ask that those that have already had the opportunity to ask questions, seek clarifications, or make comment at the recent PET meeting to keep your questions brief please. I would also ask that councillors do not attempt to respond to comments or questions raised by other councillors.

72. WILTSHIRE COUNCIL - LOCAL PLAN REVIEW CONSULTATION

The Planning Officer presented the report regarding the Local Plan Review Consultation to Councillors, highlighting the recommendations following the meeting of the Planning, Environment and Transport Committee on the 18 February 2021.

The Chairman thanked the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and the PET Committee for their initial work on the recommendations.

Councillors thanked the Planning Officer for the report and expressed their support for the clear recommendations contained in the report.

A recorded vote was taken on the recommendations in accordance with Standing Order 16.2 & 16.3:

In Favour

Councillor James Adman
Councillor Desna Allen
Councillor Richard Bambury
Councillor Pete Bishop
Councillor Jenny Budgell
Councillor Clare Cape
Councillor Bill Douglas
Councillor Teresa Hutton
Councillor Ruth Lloyd
Councillor Nick Murry
Councillor Mary Norton
Councillor Ashley O'Neill
Councillor Andy Phillips
Councillor Nina Phillips
Councillor David Powell
Councillor Chris Ruck
Councillor John Scragg
Councillor Sandie Webb

RESOLVED that:

i) That Councillors agree PET Committee's recommendations to Full Council on the Wiltshire Local Plan Review Consultation, supported by the responses on Housing Figures and Brownfield Target set out in **APPENDIX A** of the Report, and to inform Wiltshire Council that their case for Chippenham housing numbers and locations has not been adequately made, and is not accepted for the following reasons:

1. The housing target allocated to Chippenham is much too high (at 9,225 and equivalent to 20% of the total number for Wiltshire), bears no relation to Chippenham's actual housing needs and is predicated on substantial numbers of people relocating here, in order to commute back out, causing more congestion and significant damage to the climate;
2. The proposals to develop large suburbs to the East (Site 1) and South (Site 2) would have a severe adverse impact on the town and cause unacceptable damage to the local environment through the destruction of high-quality farmland and wildlife habitat in the Avon and Marden Valley;
3. The Chippenham housing numbers and their location should not be dictated by a grant application for a road, which did not undergo any public consultation, and which serves to predetermine the spatial strategy;
4. Wiltshire Council needs to develop an alternative spatial strategy, which is employment led, "appropriate in scale" and "environmentally sustainable" as stated in the Vision for the Chippenham Neighbourhood Plan;

All of the above as PET Committee's recommendations to Full Council on the Wiltshire Local Plan Review Consultation, supported by the answers provided in **APPENDIX A** of the report, with officers delegated to make minor changes needed to bring **APPENDIX A** of the report fully in support of the resolution.

73. ITEMS FOR COMMUNICATION

Councillors requested that the outcome of the meeting was communicated.

74. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next ordinary meeting of Full Council will take place on Wednesday 24 March 2021 at 7pm. There is an extraordinary meeting of Full Council on 04 March 2021 at 7pm.

The meeting concluded at 8.04pm

These Minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting

Signed on behalf of the Committee as a true record of the meeting

Chairman:

Date:

Public comments and questions

At the invitation of the Chairman residents made the following statements:

Written public questions:

1. I believe Wiltshire Council are misleading Chippenham residents and we need you to stand up for us.

We see 2 large signposts on the cycle path and 6 posters in the town centre for the road with no mention of the housing.

There are 3 webinars for the road and only 1 webinar for the houses.

Having both running at the same time is confusing.

Not to mention the reams of documents the public are supposed to go through while home schooling and working

We are not experts but are going to be judged on the strength of evidence and replies we submit.

We are not being asked if we want 5,000 extra houses over Government figures.

We aren't being told there are over 30 business premises of various sizes available, and 260 houses on one website for sale, many have been on there for over a year.

Due to lockdown most people haven't seen the gigantic building site at Birds Marsh, the new housing will be 10 times bigger.

Or the developments at Methuen Park, Patterdown, Langley Park, the old police station, the old Vauxhall garage on the Causeway and many smaller projects

Give us a break from building and let us regenerate as a town after the pandemic,

Save our community farms for local food, the cycle path through countryside and the wildlife.

Just because there isn't an entrance fee on it doesn't mean it isn't valuable to the residents of Chippenham.

With falling births and deaths rising, we don't know what the updated requirements will be.

All good businesses adapt, and we need Wiltshire Council to do the same.

The gin company that changed to hand sanitiser flourished; Debenhams stores that didn't adapt went under.

The pandemic, home working, exploring our local areas and much more have changed people's priorities.

Can we count on you to stand up for the residents of Chippenham and get this project put on hold until it can be consulted on properly?

2. The Climate Change Commission (CCC) assert that this generation need to be the Victorians of the 21st Century and make a fast but manageable and just transition to net zero in order for our children and our children's children to stand any chance of surviving on planet earth in the future. In February 2019 the council declared a climate emergency and committed to seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030. In February 2021 WC produced an Update on Council's Response to the Climate Emergency with 2 Appendices.

I am therefore at a loss as to why the Future Chippenham Proposal / Local Plan for Chippenham contain no specific details on how Wiltshire's emerging climate strategy is embedded within these proposals, no details on how emissions will be reduced or how progress will be made. The CCC advises Local Authorities to: 'Monitor and report on progress in reducing emissions to local communities and government. Where possible share standardised data, benchmark and provide clear evidence to inform policy.' but with the LP and Future Chippenham proposals there are no targets to monitor or report on.

I also understand it is a requirement of planning legislation that local plans are aligned with the Climate Change Act and the Government's target of net zero carbon by 2050 and 68% reduction by 2030. The 2008 Planning Act requires Local Plan policy to contribute to the mitigation and adaptation to climate change and the recent judgement in the Client Earth v Secretary of State sets an important climate planning precedent for future infrastructure planning. Thus, planning for growth in economic and housing terms is meaningless unless there is certainty that such planning incorporates the mechanisms to deliver these carbon reductions.

I am at a loss to see how members of CTC can ethically agree to the WC plans as they are so far removed from planning for genuine sustainable development ("Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs," World Commission on Environment and Development 1987) and urge them to reject the proposals until the county can put its horse clearly before its cart in relation to its commitment to the climate emergency and clearly embed its Climate Action Plan within all policies and proposals. I appreciate that new homes will be required across Wiltshire and in Chippenham but cannot see that a delay to ensure things are done from a value led perspective and with clear Net Zero choices embedded across all areas of the 7 delivery themes identified in the Update on Councils Response to the Climate Emergency document will do any harm to progress in the wider context of caring for planet earth.

If CTC members are not prepared to do this, please can they how they can justify their actions to their community and future generations?

3. How is the value of Wiltshire's countryside and farmland factored into planning decisions from the point of view of food security, climate change mitigation and public health?
4. Last Thursday I attended and spoke at the Planning Environment and Transport Committee, I was one of many Chippenham residents who spoke about our feelings when discovering Wiltshire Council was planning to impose a road and a large housing development upon us, without making a coherent case for doing so. I was delighted to hear the Amendment made by the PET, which was unanimously agreed.

A development made up of an unsustainable number of houses makes no economic or environmental sense, the number of houses proposed seems to be based upon the amount of farms Wiltshire Council wishes to sell for profit, rather than any real housing need in Chippenham. Does Chippenham have a projected housing need of over 9,000 units? Has anyone seen the research behind this? Are there going to be the employment opportunities for all these new residents? Past experience suggests otherwise, as none of the employment sites on the last plan have been built out.

This proposal is for a speculative commuter estate, with thousands of people commuting to work from Chippenham every day. And what do we get in return for this huge increase in traffic and pollution? We receive the destruction of the county farms of the Avon and Marden valleys, the exact areas that have been so beneficial to Chippenham residents in the past months as they step outside for their daily exercise. How life would have been so different if we were unable to use this beautiful space, and in its place was pollution and destruction.

I am disgusted at the way WC have attempted to predetermine the Local Plan by the HIF bid. They are trying to completely do away with local engagement and scrutiny, preventing proper, and timely, evaluation of options. In its plan they have presented residents with a biased and unsound process to choose from a set of alternatives nobody seems to want. I noted at the meeting last Thursday nobody spoke in favour of the road and housing development.

Wiltshire Council need to go back to the drawing board and come back with a plan that is actually fit for the future. Imposing a road to the East of Chippenham, with all the harm this would cause to our town and to the climate and natural environment, is the wrong way to go. They need to evaluate need, numbers and location, and use a transparent and proper process to collaboratively agree a Plan. The Plan needs to be appropriate in scale and environmentally sustainable as per our Neighbourhood Plan Vision. I was so lucky to be part of the team working on the Neighbourhood plan. All that commitment, time and hard work by councillors and residents needs respect from WC. I whole heartily support the Neighbourhood Plan and its vision, as I am sure councillors do too.

So, I completely endorse the decision of the PET Committee, and hope that Full Council supports the recommendation as the Council's response (with the Appendix as supplementary comments).

5. Chippenham is a small market town with a nice community feel that is surrounded by open countryside, all of which contribute to making it a good place to live. I understand that more houses are needed, but I dispute the figures estimated by Wiltshire Council as they do not reflect local need and also ask: at what cost do we continue expanding our town?

Any proposal that sets out to destroy the things we value must surely be stopped when alternatives, such as brownfield sites, are available. A town centre requires people living in it, and using it, to make it function and feel pleasant, and the development of brownfield sites would revive our town centre which has been devastated by Covid. Changing office, retail, commercial and hospitality spaces into domestic dwellings would provide high density, affordable homes which remove the need for car ownership and leave our countryside intact for us, and future generations, to enjoy.

The risk of allowing a huge development in Chippenham, is that you irreparably damage the character of our town and the quality of life here. You would, in effect, be turning Chippenham into another Swindon, with an accelerated deterioration of the town centre as you create commuter belt communities that have little or no relationship to Chippenham. If you asked every one of the residents of Chippenham whether they wanted to live in a town like Swindon, I am quite sure that 100% of them would say a decisive “no”, and that Wiltshire Council needs to think again.

My question is:

On behalf of the citizens of Chippenham who elected you, will this Committee agree to reject Wiltshire Council’s proposals to build this unnecessary and destructive road and associated 7,500 houses?

6. Thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight to add further support for the recommendations agreed last week by the PET committee.

In communications about the emerging local plan, and the concurrent consultation on road options, Wiltshire Council have used biased, misleading language to ‘sell’ us their already well-established and funded plans, and to stifle mention of the obvious damage these will do. It seems crucial to me that Chippenham’s council speaks on behalf of the many residents who are opposed, and those who might not be aware, but stand to inherit the undesirable effects of these plans.

It seems it’s usually been quite possible for Wiltshire Council to talk the talk on sustainable planning, but do the opposite, as they seem to be intending to do here. But I think the days of them getting away with this are numbered. I’m one of a growing number of members of Wiltshire Climate Alliance, who are joining people together across the county to campaign.

On Monday, their Youth group hosted an impressive conference. Members spoke eloquently to Councillors about their fears for the future. They expressed their frustration about having little power to influence decisions that are made in the crucial window we have now for limiting the extent of climate breakdown. The truth about the uninhabitable warming we could end up with, is made all the more

terrifying for younger people when those in charge seem to wilfully ignore the risks and tell us that their hands are tied.

For those that are cognizant of the scale and urgency of the crisis, as these young people naturally are, the plans for Chippenham stick out a mile as an embarrassing failure to react. Several local young speakers cited them as an example of Wiltshire's mismanagement of its stated aim to reduce the county's emissions to net zero by 2030.

The plans are almost a perfect example of how not to achieve this - ushering in carbon-intensive development whilst destroying life-sustaining carbon sinks. And where is the need? Chippenham already has a bypass, it does not have an urgent housing crisis, at least not one solvable by more executive homes for commuters. And the plans ignore the transformative impacts of the pandemic, which are likely to provide space for some housing and employment in existing sites.

Here in 2021, Councillor Clewer, the lead on Climate at Wiltshire Council, is publicly stating that he doesn't believe in their 2030 goal: it is too difficult to push back on government housing targets, and not to acquiesce to planners who in his words, 'play the system'. But we cannot afford for him to give up so easily... it is an emergency after all!

Cllr Clewer also recently said of the local plan consultation 'Give us some significant local pressure!'. I believe he's getting precisely that in Chippenham and ask that the council fully reflect this in their response.

7. Now is the time for Chippenham Town Councillors to decide where their Values lie in responding to this Planning Officer's Report.

Paragraph 3.3 shows that today, you're looking down the barrel at housing estates between 6400 and 9700 units strong destroying Chippenham as we know it. You also understand that this is just the initial tranche of 22,250 units. That's concrete and tarmac poured over 650 acres of prime farmland through 2036.

You're looking at voting to change Chippenham into a mini-Swindon and if you vote for that, your names will be recorded in the Chippenham Is History Centre.

The root cause of this pain is based in a lie that there is a "housing crisis", which gives the businessmen embedded in the SHMA cover to declare a need for 75,000 new houses.

Economic thinking from the last century still demands continuous GDP growth.

- Productivity in the UK has been flat since 2005.
- The only way to achieve GDP growth when productivity is flat is to get more resource.
- The UK imports Human Resource from abroad - and we've done that since 2005.
- Net migration into the UK is around two hundred and fifty thousand people per year and surprise, surprise, we need two hundred and fifty thousand new houses per year.
- GDP growth deliberately creates a "housing crisis"

When we make the connection between GDP growth and concreting over our countryside, we realise that:
These homes aren't supposed to provide happiness for the people of Wiltshire.
They're not supposed to provide jobs for the people of Wiltshire.
They're not supposed to provide wealth to the people of Wiltshire.
Their purpose is to increase GDP, through the profits of developers and decades of future mortgage payments to bankers.

The only thing big business has run out of is land.

Our land.

Our farmland, our dog-walking land, our running land, our fresh air land, our cycling land, our wellbeing land, our grandfathers land, our Father's land and our children's land.

This land is entrusted to YOU, councillors.

The question for you who support new housing estates is this: "What do I Value" ?
Is it

- National GDP growth, Urban Sprawl and a dead planet

Or is it

- A living, breathing ecosystem of community, farmland, wildlife, countryside and hope for a future?

Don't be spoon-fed with the developer-generated responses that litter this report, they are designed to further the wealth of Sunak, Jenerick, Baker & chums.

Let Chippenham Town Council reject this report Unanimously and tell Wiltshire Council to go back to the drawing board to enhance nature, not destroy it.

8. Having attended the Planning, Environment and Transport Committee meeting last week, I would just like to say how impressed I was that the committee is standing up for its residents and bringing Wiltshire Council's flawed and unevidenced Local Plan proposals into question.

Wiltshire Council's proposals for a distributor road and 7,500 houses are completely disproportionate, damaging and dangerous, and bear no relation to local housing need or the promotion of local employment. Neither do the proposals take account of all the negative impacts they would have on the local population and local environment, including on our river valleys and country farms, which we now need more than ever, and which would be lost forever as a result.

I would therefore like to add my voice of support to the Planning, Environment and Transport Committee's recommended response to Wiltshire Council and urge you to endorse it.

9. I have lived and worked in Chippenham for the last 30 years. I enjoy living here particularly because I can step out for a walk or a cycle most days and almost immediately be enjoying beautiful countryside full of wildflowers and animals, the riverside and woodlands. I am horrified as I watch what is happening with the development of Birds Marsh, and I am even more distressed at the thought that similar, so called, 'developments' could take place on swathes of green field sites

right across the Marden and Avon valley. We will lose such a beautiful part of our natural heritage. I do not want to walk through small 'corridors' of countryside hemmed in by dormitory housing.

Neither in a time of climate emergency and biodiversity crisis when we should be looking to retain and use our natural capital to build a sustainable future and work towards carbon zero, should Wiltshire Council plans to build a distributor road and a giant suburban dormitory town on the edge of the town. There is no evidence of calculated figures in the presentation but the carbon footprint must be astronomical!

Finally the Bremhill neighbourhood plan provides a perfectly good plan to protect our countryside, meet the challenges of climate change, promote healthy communities, and conserve and enhance the natural and historic environments. Why then is this being challenged? What happened to democracy? Surely this should be built on rather than ignored by Wiltshire Council.

So my question to the councillors is what will you say to future generations when asked what you did to preserve our countryside and fight for the future of our small but very beautiful part of the planet?

10. I would like to thank the Planning, Environment and Transport Committee for their considered response and would whole-heartedly endorse their recommendations that Wiltshire Council's case for Chippenham housing numbers and locations has not been adequately made.

I have lived in the town for 40 years and have seen the population grow from just over 19,000 to close on 40,000. That's a staggering 109% increase.

The UK by comparison has grown from 56 Million in 1981 to 68 Million in 2020 . That's an increase of only 21% . From this, it can be seen that the population increase of Chippenham over that period has been disproportionate, relative to the population increase of the UK.

Looking forward to 2036, the Council's projected total requirement of 9225 houses represents a staggering increase of 62% over the number of households within the eight Chippenham Town Parishes in 2011.

By 2036 the population of the UK is predicted to be about 72 Million. That's an increase of 9 million people since 2011. Or to put it another way, only a 14% increase.

Therefore, if 9225 houses are built in Chippenham by 2036, the town's housing stock would have expanded at nearly 4.5 times the expected growth rate of the UK population in the same period since 2011.

Such unsustainable housing growth, in part predicted on the basis of a large growth in suitable jobs in the Chippenham Housing Market Area, will damage the natural environment surrounding the town, for ever. That growth of employment is less than certain. Without employment, it will do nothing to increase the economic wellbeing of the town or its residents.

In the light of economic uncertainty, emerging shifts in working patterns, and climate change, I therefore call on the full council to challenge the predicted growth in housing as set out in the Wiltshire Council Local Plan.

Verbal public questions:

11. The so called consultation on the Local Plan Review, is in my opinion an example of an unhelpful short-term set of tactics on the part of Wiltshire Council prompted by the 75 million pound award in December 2019 by homes England from its HIF. The supposed rationales for reviewing the Local Plan for Chippenham before residents have even had a chance to vote in the referendum on the Chippenham neighbourhood plan are in fact excuses under financial pressure for spending 75 million pounds on roads that have been described as a Link Road a ring road and now a distributor road. If the HIF plan doesn't proceed including the £2 million pound already spent all committed 2019/20 on the project the council risks a loss of at least 6 million pounds. The public consultation on the HIF Road due to start in April 2020, postponed until the 3rd quarter 2020, then to the 4th quarter 2020 and finally began this year running concurrently with the local plan review and makes very clear that Wiltshire Council is acting as landowner, strategic planner, scheme promoter and arguably developer especially given the recent publication of its acquisition of souls farm and its proposed acquisition from Wiltshire College of land forming part of Lackham farm in order to create a road, still claiming to be a distributor road circling Chippenham from the A350 Malmesbury roundabout to the A350 Lackham roundabout. This manifestly comprises serious conflicts of interest if not an example of Wiltshire Council acting ultra vires. In any case the Bid for the HIF award was entirely developer led. The developers of Rawlings Farm were to be responsible for a road from the b4069 over new railway bridge leading to the distributor Road to Rawlings Farm there was no evidence that such a road was needed before developers of acquired Rawlings and hardens county farms from Wiltshire Council. The developers have appeared to lobbied Wiltshire Council for the highway infrastructure they want, a very extensive house building to take place. The proposed housing developments are entirely Road based. Meanwhile the climate crisis in the pandemic has combined to render obsolete Wiltshire Councils ideologically driven and long-standing policies on house building that encourage developers to alight on Chippenham, as a town where the county Planning Authority is very happy to unlock land for building.

The member of publics microphone was muted upon reaching the 3-minute limit.

Written responses to public questions asked at Extraordinary Full Council on 25 February 2021.

Thank you for speaking at the Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 25 February 2021. At this meeting Full Council approved the responses recommended by the Planning, Environment and Transport Committee, the responses can be read in full [HERE](#). This is a Wiltshire Council Consultation therefore your comments have been forwarded to Wiltshire Council for consideration.

DRAFT