

**MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE
HELD ON THURSDAY 2 JUNE 2011 FROM 7.00PM TO 9.30PM**

Present:- David Lee (Chairman), Keith Baker, UllaKarin Clark, Gary Cowan, Matthew Deegan, Julian McGhee-Sumner, Anthony Pollock, Angus Ross, Liz Siggery and Rob Stanton

PART I

17. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence received.

18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

19. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

In accordance with the agreed procedure the Chairman invited members of the public to submit questions to appropriate Executive Members.

19.01 QUESTION NUMBERS EP 1, 2, 23, 25 & 41

Question 1

Ms Gill Purchase had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

The original masterplans were constructed by balancing the professional, technical and stakeholder inputs collated through the master planning exercise and the consultation comments have been carefully reassessed. It is considered that the original principles were sound and there has been no need to modify the overall approach chosen;"

There is an overwhelming strength of feeling against the building on green fields and it is incredulous that the Council could come to such a conclusion

Could the Council make public its analysis of the consultation comments so we can see how they came to this conclusion?

Question 2

Mr Tim Rook had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

In the foreword of the Arborfield SPD, Angus Ross states that
....."the Council aims to protect and enhance the very good quality of life enjoyed in the Borough".

Whilst the Arborfield Garrison Residents Action Group supports some small scale development in Arborfield commensurate with its rural nature, WBC's plan to build 3,500 houses, a supermarket, a District Centre, two primary schools and a secondary school, is totally unacceptable. It will turn the rural setting into an urban mini-town.

How does Mr Ross have the audacity to claim that this huge development will "protect and enhance the quality of life" when the vast majority of local residents believe it will do the exact opposite!?

Question 23

Mr Richard Hider had asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

In the SPD, Angus Ross states that "the Council aims to protect and enhance the very good quality of life enjoyed in the Borough". Whilst the Arborfield Garrison Residents Action Group supports small scale development in Arborfield fitting with its rural nature, WBC's plan to build 3,500 houses, a supermarket, a District Centre, 2 primary schools and a secondary school, is totally unacceptable as it will turn the rural nature of Arborfield into an urban mini town. How does Mr Ross have the nerve to claim that this huge development will "protect and enhance the quality of life" when most local residents believe it will do the exact opposite?

Question 25

Mrs Ruth Dallas had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Section 2 .4.10 of the Arborfield SPD (Page 16) states that "Very few of the consultation responses questioned the principle of development; although many were concerned about the practical implications of this amount of development". This is a totally misleading statement: Many local residents, supported by the Arborfield Garrison Residents Action Group (AG-RAG) do indeed accept the need for some development in Arborfield. However, the vast majority of local residents, again supported by AG-RAG, strongly believe that any development in Arborfield should:

- Be of a scale commensurate with the rural nature of Arborfield – and the huge development proposed by WBC is certainly not commensurate with the area
- Be restricted to brown field sites behind the existing garrison wire ONLY, which affords plenty of room for a suitably sized development
- NOT start until the MOD has physically left the site

Will WBC confirm they will replace their misleading statement with the wording: "Many of the consultation responses from local residents accepted the need for some small scale development in Arborfield but totally disagreed with the size of the proposed development and were very concerned about the practical implications of this amount of development"?

Question 41

Mr Terry Sach had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Section 1.1.2 (Page 1) of the Arborfield SPD states that WBC's "objective is not simply to meet housing targets, but to plan for the long-term delivery of sustainable urban communities, and to avoid the need for piecemeal small scale housing development which may harm the character of well established communities." Do you condone then the decimation of Finchampstead and Barkham countryside which makes up 60% of the Arborfield Garrison SDL with large scale high density urban housing estates and wouldn't better planning of the current small scale developments avoid dramatically changing forever the character of the immediate area?

Answer

It is worth remembering that we consulted over a long period of time where best to accommodate the housing seen as needed over the period to 2026 and after careful consideration we selected the four areas including, Arborfield Garrison and land adjacent. Despite the then current thinking of Mr Prescott and the previous Government and other parties locally, and the developer consortium who wanted 45-60 dwellings per hectare with some areas they asked for 70 dwellings per hectare! What we wanted was comparatively low density – 30-35. This was endorsed by the Inspector at the public inquiry into our Core Strategy that we adopted at the beginning of last year.

The Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) provide guidance to implement the policies of that adopted Core Strategy. The infrastructure items listed in the question are therefore all subject of current policy and it is outside of the scope of the SPD to influence further the number of houses or the infrastructure requirements.

The Executive, on 21 October 2010, re-affirmed the Core Strategy housing numbers. Do nothing or not provide sufficient housing is not an option. In order to meet housing needs and protect existing settlements from inappropriate development, such as backland proposals, we have to build on greenfield sites – this SDL is of course partially brownfield! However, the policy framework and guidance recognises the sensitivity of this and includes such measures as transition zones, protection of trees, hedgerows, wildlife and flood prevention. SDLs allow us to introduce major new infrastructure of benefit not only to residents within the SDL but to the wider population.

Supplementary Question

Mr Richard Hider asked the following supplementary question:

This is not what the vast majority of local residents want. They don't want this development to take place. Therefore when will the Council really start to listen to local residents who feel incredibly strongly about this development you are proposing and they and I wish to protect the quality of life that we enjoy in Arborfield and in the Borough and as you yourself advocate that you want to protect the quality of life. When will you start to listen to what we are saying?

Supplementary Answer

Councillor David Lee responded as follows:

This is one of the difficulties that we face as Councillors who represent you and every other resident in the Borough. We have to build houses. There is a perception that there was a requirement to build no houses if we so choose to do that. The Secretary of State has made it very, very clear in writing, on the radio and the television that not building is not an option and if you do not have a plan of where the building will go then building will be presumed to be allowed wherever it goes. That was confirmed by the Shinfield Glebe application which was turned down and that refusal endorsed by the Secretary of State.

Unfortunately what has happened in the past is that we have traditionally built a small block of flats or a small development in back gardens which has damaged the character of an area and what happens then is that you have a group of residents who live nearby who will complain about that.

Unfortunately by trying to plan for the future, to get the housing where it should go, we have in effect taken on almost the complete Borough. People have said that they are

getting fed up with every back garden, every attractive house being ripped up. I understand your frustrations but this is what we have consulted on. We went out to all the residents in the Borough and this we believe is the best way forward and Arborfield as an SDL has already been accepted.

19.02 QUESTION NUMBER EP 3

Mr Richard Peat had asked the Executive Member for Children's Services the following question:

The Exec Member for Children has previously acknowledged that Emmbrook and Finchampstead parents both want a secondary school close to them but using the excuse that part of Emmbrook is prone to flooding, the whole of the Emmbrook site has to close and a huge new school built in Arborfield as part of the core strategy to take both the existing Emmbrook students and the additional student numbers generated by the proposed developments.

As the local parents campaigning to re-open Ryeish Green as a free school indicate, this strategy of consolidating into bigger schools is not backed by the parents of the borough, parents want schools convenient to their homes that do not require their children to be transported daily miles across the district. Given this evidence it seems likely that if their school is closed parents in Emmbrook will follow the strategy of parents around Ryeish Green in using the free school legislation to get the schooling they want in Emmbrook. Equally if a new school in the south flounders once again, Finchampstead parents could turn to the self same free school legislation to get the school they have long campaigned for. This is in parallel to other Wokingham schools gaining academy status to escape from WBC control. All of this indicates that the WBC education policy is lowly descending into chaos as the parents use new government legislation to get the education they want for their children rather than the education WBC seems unwilling to give them.

Despite all of this, the revised SPD's still indicate that WBC still plans to carry on regardless and blow £40m of the limited section 106 money on a large new secondary school in Arborfield. Given the new realities brought about by the free schools and academies legislation can the executive member for Children confirm that the council will urgently reconsider the educational aspect of the core strategy to provide what local parents actually want – smaller local secondary schools in Emmbrook, Finchampstead and Ryeish Green – rather than wasting S106 money on a single unwanted large school in Arborfield?

Answer

The Council recognises that it is unlikely to be able to satisfy all of the residents' specific preferences in the way it plans for secondary school places right across the Borough. However, it is confident that the planning in train will meet the needs of the Borough's residents for high quality, locally provided education. Wokingham's track record, of course, in this regard is exemplary. It is consistently among the top five local education authorities for attainment in every age group. Something I have to say we are very proud of.

The evidence about the flooding risk on the Emmbrook is clear, and it has been independently verified and is evidenced. It is most certainly not an excuse.

The location of schools in Wokingham is not conducive to our need to minimise travel to school distances. A school in the south of the Borough has been part of the strategy for a

number of years, and remains appropriate and needed. The approach was supported in the report of the Planning Inspector.

A change in Government policy has indeed shifted the landscape. All of our evidence, from Head Teachers and Chairs of Governors, tells us that none of our schools seeking to become academies are doing so to 'escape from WBC control': schools have been autonomous for many years. Academy status simply provides even greater financial independence and flexibility to them. All of the potential academies, and there are some of course, and the single academy we already have are committed to working with each other and with this local authority to achieve the best outcomes we can for our children and young people and that work has already started.

A decision on a Free School in the west of the Borough will be taken by the Department for Education in September. It is prudent for us to wait for that decision. We will, of course, submit our comments to the Department of Education for consideration, as will a number of the schools in the Borough as is their right. When we comment to the DfE on the application we will focus strongly on the viability of the school to provide the high quality, broad and balanced curriculum that we are committed to delivering for students in every part of the this Borough. Any other Free School application will follow a similar course. Evidence of need and demand, economic viability, and any impact on existing schools, are all factors that will be considered by the Department.

In advance of a decision regarding the west of Wokingham, and of any further applications, we believe our existing strategy to be evidence based and informed, robust and appropriate. We continue to monitor the situation closely to enable us to be flexible and responsive to the developing situation, acting in the best interests of all the children and young people of Wokingham.

I would like to add that at the end of the day what is most important when it comes to schools and education is the children. They are the most important people in this and none of us should forget that. They are the future and they are the ones we serve.

19.03 QUESTION NUMBERS EP 4 & 22

Question 4

Mrs A M Forsyth had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Why have WDC not put the information, regarding the changes that will affect the current residents of Arborfield SDL, into a clear, understandable document.

It is inconceivable that local residents are expected to plough through an 88 page document, that has 11 other supporting documents, reading and analysing its content!

What effort, if any, was made by WDC to do this?

And if not why not?

Question 22

Mr Mark J Picken has asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question.

The documents published by WBC on Thursday 26 May 2011 contain the following number of pages:-

SDL Documents - 405 pages

DD DPD Local Framework Document - 207 pages

Exec Meeting Agenda - 72 pages

Background Documents (these are issued with the consultation and need to be read, understood and taken into consideration) - Various Documents - 1411 pages

Total number of pages = 2,095!!

Does the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning think it reasonable and acceptable to publish documents on Thursday 26 May containing 2,095 pages that will be addressed during a publicly held meeting on Thursday 2 June? It is totally impractical and unreasonable to expect every Councillor, local residents groups and other members of the public to read through 2,095 pages of complex and very important information in less than 8 days, yet alone giving proper consideration to their implications. The Arborfield Garrison Residents Action group (AG-RAG) calls on the Executive to defer this Agenda item and the decision to issue the documents for public consultation until a much more reasonable amount of time has been given to read the documents, to note their content and compare them to previous versions. Will the Executive confirm a delay until the end of June?

Answer

The Supplementary Planning Document has to cover a wide range of issues and therefore the length of it is unavoidable. However, the approach has been taken to make it as clear and as user friendly as possible.

A number of the other supporting documents are legally necessary as a result of exacting Regulations to accompany an SPD, i.e. we have no choice if we are to produce legally binding documents. The others have been added to assist in clarifying matters. For example, the track-change documents between the October 2010 and the current documents were put in order to clarify what had changed as a result of previous consultations.

The Executive is being asked to endorse a consultation so that residents will formally have six weeks to read them and give a considered response.

An exhibition is planned to support the consultation which will summarise the main issues and also explain what work has been done and will continue to be done to successfully deliver the new developments.

The actual form of the exhibition hasn't been totally finalised but as I understand there will be one here at Shute End and a copy of that will be sent to all the parishes in the areas that are involved with the SPDs and there is a copy on the web and there will be a copy of all the SPDs in all the libraries, and that includes Crowthorne Library which serves part of the area, and to main supermarkets and the NAAFI at Arborfield. This I believe is the same as we did last time.

Supplementary Question

Mr Picken asked the following supplementary question:

You said that the track document goes back to October 2010, the previous consultation, but that was never consulted on. It should go back to March 2010. Therefore the track document that you have got in the background papers at the moment is not right.

Angus stated earlier, and I find it quite surprising, that he says that it is not essential to have read all of the documents. So can you please tell the public, the press and everybody else how you are expected to vote on those documents if you haven't read them, or had time to read them? We can't understand that as you are voting on certain documents that should be fit for purpose and if you individually haven't been through every document and judged that you can't vote on it.

Supplementary Answer

Councillor David Lee responded as follows:

In terms of reading the documents I have read the documents from cover to cover and have been involved in their production. My colleagues on the Executive may have read it from cover to cover but they will be advised by a Working Party that has been working on these and continues to work on our policy documents. It is exactly the same as any other item that we get involved with. We have professional Officers who advise us, we have working committees which are set up to look at these in detail. It would not be physically possible for every Council Member, whether on the Executive or as a normal Member of the Council, to read every single document. We have documents on winter maintenance that run to many, many pages and we have documents on transport plans for the future. Everybody has been very well brought up to speed on the documents in front of them tonight and they have had the information to make a decision which is based on sound information and professional advice.

Councillor Angus Ross responded as follows:

Just on the point of the track change documents. I accept that you can argue whether the track change document should go back to the original one but we did bring this document forward in October although we didn't adopt it.

19.04 QUESTION NUMBERS EP 5 & 47

Question 5

Ms Karen Brown had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Could WBC explain what flood assessments they have undertaken to address the serious flooding that occurs in areas of Arborfield and why are they considering building on these areas that are already affected by flooding?

Question 47

Mr Ashley Wright had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Has the impact of flooding been assessed within the masterplan as if it has not how can Wokingham Borough Council determine which areas are suitable for development?

Answer

The Council has undertaken a strategic flood risk assessment (SFRA). This was used to help identify suitable sites when preparing the Core Strategy. A refresh of this document in 2010 did not identify any further reasons for concern about the suitability of the Arborfield site. All applications that come forward will need to demonstrate how they will

manage water on their sites and not contribute to an increased risk of flooding off of their sites.

The SFRA is available on the Borough website.

19.05 QUESTION NUMBER EP 6

Mr Robert Briggs had asked the Executive Member for Education Services the following question:

I have been made aware that the Exec Member for Children claims that Emmbrook and Finchampstead parents both want a secondary school close to them but as part of Emmbrook is prone to flooding, the whole of the Emmbrook site has to close and a huge new school potentially built in Arborfield. As the large majority of Arborfield residents do not want a secondary school on their doorstep, the obvious solution would be to retain Emmbrook as a smaller school on that part of the site that is not prone to flooding, build a smaller free school in Finchampstead and support the local parents campaigning to re-open Ryeish Green as a free school.

There is clear evidence of the educational benefit of educating in smaller schools (students do better, more connected with a smaller community, less potential for violence, teachers prefer teaching in smaller schools etc). Furthermore, free schools are directly funded by central government not the local council. So instead of £40m being needlessly spent on a new secondary school in Arborfield as WBC is proposing, a smaller school could be retained in Emmbrook, a new (small) free school built in Finchampstead and Ryeish Green re-opened also as a free school. This solution is financially better for the council tax payers of Wokingham and educationally better for the children of Emmbrook, Finchampstead and Arborfield. Will WBC confirm that they will fully and properly consider this solution and publish the conclusion of their consideration?

Answer

The Emmbrook School is built on a flood plain. The last severe flood, in 2007, caused widespread damage and disruption. Independent expert advice supports the Council's strategy to find an alternative location. The proposed development in the south of the Borough, along with the absence currently of any secondary school provision in the south both support the current strategy being pursued.

The international evidence on school size is more mixed than the questioner suggests. Research suggests that beyond 2000 students a school becomes a challenge to lead, and I can concur with that, manage and govern effectively. Similarly, small secondary schools can also struggle, in terms of financial viability and in being able to provide an appropriately rounded and full curriculum, a key ingredient, alongside effective leadership, in the success of Wokingham's schools over many years and that is about the range of subjects and you would have to have a school of a significant size to be able to afford to do that. It is worth reminding ourselves at this stage that the one academy we currently have is rated by Ofsted as "outstanding" and that is the largest educational establishment in the Borough with 1,750 students by a pretty big margin and it is a highly successful school/academy. There is no evidence to suggest that small schools would produce better results than that.

As national education policy develops and changes, and indeed it has rapidly in the last year, it becomes more important than ever for the Council to maintain its strategic direction while also being prepared, as we are to keep this under review to ensure we go on

delivering education outcomes through our schools that are among the best nationally. As I said earlier this is something that we are incredibly proud of and a gift we can share with all our children.

19.06 QUESTION NUMBERS EP 7, 24, 32 & 54

Question 7

Mr Peter Must had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

With regard to item No 21.00, the Report acknowledges that the majority of respondents to the first consultation on the five SPDs 'were concerned with issues of traffic and highway safety' and recognises that 'this was a legitimate concern and it is fully appreciated why residents want to have as much detail as possible. In many [editorial comment: but not all?] cases these will be dealt with in more detail through the planning application process and will be subject of further public consultation at that time'. There have already been a number of planning applications in relation to the four SDLs and two are going to public inquiries following rejection; for none of these was there public consultation about infrastructure and, if the appeals are successful, there will presumably be none in respect of the locations concerned. Will the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning accept the logic of the many requests made by the local community for details of the road and traffic plans relating to all development locations, including Wokingham Town Centre which we have repeatedly been told are in conformity with the Core Strategy, by publishing the results of the latest analyses (on which the Report states 'considerable progress has been made'), both in detail and in summary, and consult the local community about them now before consortium members start to submit more applications for partial developments, as promised by the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning and the Leader of the Council at the meeting of the Keephatch Area Residents' Association on 11 April 2011?

Question 24

Mr Bill Dallas had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Section 2.2.2 of the Arborfield SPD (Page 9) states that a principal constraint includes "limited capacity and resulting congestion on the A327 through Arborfield Cross and other local roads". If ever there was an under statement!! Just imagine the horrendous congestion in Shinfield, Winnersh, Barkham, Nine Mile Ride, Finchampstead, Park Lane, Eversley and Swallowfield etc during the construction phase with hundreds of articulated lorries and other large vehicles trundling through these villages. What action will WBC take before any development starts to alleviate the congestion and, even more importantly, to reduce the dangers to our children?

Question 32

Mrs J Hayns had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

The 5th bullet point on Page 14 of the Arborfield SPD states that "The SDLs have been traffic modelled and the outputs show that the SDL package once delivered will achieve a nil detriment scenario in 2026".

Despite repeated requests from the Arborfield Garrison Residents Action Group (AG-RAG) and others details of the traffic model used, the input/output data, and the way the results were calculated have not been made available.

When will we have this information? As the model only talks about the completion of the development in 2026 and doesn't mention the huge increase in heavy lorries during the construction phase. How can WBC ensure there is a "nil detriment" to the residents of Arborfield and the many surrounding villages who will be severely impacted during the 15 year construction period?

Question 54

Laurence Heath had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Paragraph (11) on page 7 states "The SDLs have been traffic modelled and the outputs show that the SDL package once delivered will achieve a nil detriment scenario in 2026". This is a remarkably brave statement that I fear will haunt WBC in years to come. Will the outputs of this modelling be made public along with the assumptions used?

Answer

Any major development application is made available for public comment as a part of the planning process and this occurred with the two applications referred to. In addition for the Kentwood Farm development a public exhibition was mounted by the developer. In fact I think it was more than one.

The Borough has carried out a considerable amount of work to improve the quality of the strategic transport model and this includes surveys and model refinement.

The Borough will be presenting further details of the transport model at a series of briefings starting on 13 June. Additional information about the model is already available on the Council's website and this will be added to in the next couple of weeks with the results of the model tests completed so far. I am delighted that we have had this exercise done and of course it will inform everybody including the Council, those that are interested and of course the applications and of course I will be fully briefed on this very soon.

On construction traffic issues these will be dealt with at the detailed planning application stage. Developers are obliged to provide plans setting out how construction traffic will access the site and how the impact of this will be minimised.

Supplementary Question

Mr Peter Must asked the following supplementary question:

In relation to the proposals for road changes including a road across Elms Field. Could I ask that those proposals actually be included in the SPD for the infrastructure since I am always told that those roads, for which there has been no textual justification in any document, are in accordance with the Core Strategy? It would seem to me sensible since this is an holistic plan for roads and traffic that all traffic analyses and discussion should be within the one document.

Supplementary Answer

Councillor Ross responded as follows:

The infrastructure document was meant to accompany the four SDLs clearly we, and yourselves, have to link the two in. My belief is that consideration of that road was included in the discussion when we brought the Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan to the Executive for approval and so I believe it was covered at that stage. For instance one of the changes being made this year is that Strategic Highways now comes under my remit to try and ensure that we do link these because they are so intertwined with the planning development and policy.

19.07 QUESTION NUMBER EP 8

Mr Stephen Bacon had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

With regard to the Garrison SDL, we expect thousands of extra peak-hour movements along the Barkham Road into Wokingham. Bearing in mind that it cannot be bypassed and that there is a level crossing at the far end, has the Council heeded the Planning Inspectors conclusions from the Woosehill Inquiry back in 1974 to limit development that affects Barkham Road until the level crossing has been replaced (and the planned Link Road is regarded as grossly inadequate)?

Answer

The site will have a maximum of 3500 houses. Traffic generation figures for such a site are based on surveys at similar sites and we would expect 2800 additional vehicle movements in the peak hour when fully built out. These trips will be distributed across all the access roads to the development site.

The comments of the planning inspector in 1974 need to be read in light of the changing nature of traffic and development control. Attitudes to travel times and the need to travel have changed considerably. In addition we are working within substantially different planning legislation. Things have moved on in the last 37 years and whilst the comments are noted we would not expect them to carry significant weight in any decision about the current proposed developments.

Supplementary Question

Mr Bacon asked the following supplementary question:

What are the comparative costs and benefits of the Link Road scheme, including the necessary building and maintenance cost of a multi-storey car park, plus the cost of disruption when building the road, versus a road and bridge linking Oxford Road and Reading Road at the station (including time and fuel savings, improved air quality and relative lack of disruption when building, plus savings from staffing and maintaining the level crossing, plus the value of increasing line capacity).

The reason I am asking this is that if we can prove that there is a benefit and it exceeds the costs then we can apply for external funding to eliminate the level crossing. You may know that Network Rail has a pot of funds for improving stations and it also has a pot of funds for eliminating level crossings and if we can prove that there is a benefit to be gained then they can apply for those funds.

Supplementary Answer

Councillor Ross responded as follows:

I take the point that there might be a more ideal solution although I am not personally convinced. It is work that could be done, if we could fit it in with all the rest we have to do, to see if it was practically possible to do it even if it were to be funded.

Your comment about Network Rail doesn't sit easily with me against the fact that we have to share the cost of them even building a new station let alone getting rid of the level crossing. But we will not leave it there and I will be talking to Officers about this after the meeting.

19.08 QUESTION NUMBER EP 9

Mr Wileman had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

The map on Page 60 of the Arborfield SPD shows WBC's previous proposal to open Bramshill Close, Whitehall Drive and the side road of Sheerlands Road as a public transport route.

The roads are not suitable for buses and other large vehicles!!

They are narrow residential roads which would need widening and the felling of beautiful mature trees (so not very green at all!), myself and other residents bought their properties on the grounds that they were quiet cul de sacs and do not want buses trundling outside their houses.

I note with dismay that this issue was the subject of many objections during the (so called) consultation in 2010 and is yet another example of WBC and its Officers totally ignoring local residents' views.

Will WBC please confirm they will remove this proposal from their plans once and for all?

Answer

The roads in question are an option for public transport services only. We have yet to receive any firm proposal from the developer for their being used for bus services. The roads are suitable for public transport services – in fact it should be pointed out that Sheerlands Road is already used by buses for part of its length. The Borough is committed to protecting its mature trees and there are several references to this in the masterplans. Where necessary the Borough is currently issuing tree preservation orders and developers will have to work around existing trees. I would also add that at the moment the Tree Officer Team are currently assessing and will be very shortly issuing Tree Preservation Orders on sites within this SDL.

19.09 QUESTION NUMBER EP 10

Mrs Heather Bacon had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Why is the proposed new SANG for the Arborfield SPD more than 2 miles outside Arborfield? Rather than destroy existing green fields and open spaces around where the majority of local residents live, why don't WBC designate the existing green fields and open spaces a SANG? Surely this is much more sensible?

Answer

The location of the SANG remains as per previous consultations. Natural England (the

responsible Government body) has confirmed the acceptability of this location to serve the new development. Natural England will be reconsulted on the new SPDs and therefore has an opportunity for further comment, as do residents and any other interested parties.

Supplementary Question

Mrs Bacon asked the following supplementary question:

As this green space won't be within a short walking distance of most residents will visitors be required to pay to park their cars as they do at California and Dinton Pastures?

Supplementary Answer

Councillor Lee responded as follows:

That is not something that is being considered at this point but unfortunately as an authority we have to raise money to provide the services that are required of us to provide. Car parking charges are one of those means of raising finance in addition to actually facilitating shopping and trips to other locations. It raises some £500k a year and if we didn't raise it from that we would have to raise it from something else and we believe that our priorities of vulnerable children and adults I am afraid outweighs issues about a small charge for a car park.

19.10 QUESTION NUMBERS EP 11 & EP26

Question 11

Mrs Claire Wileman had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

In several parts of the Arborfield SPD documents you refer to developing a 'townscape' and an 'urban community'. How does that fit with enhancing the good quality of life of us current residents who have chosen to live in Arborfield because of its rural character?

Question 26

Mrs Elizabeth Peat had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

In the documents outlining the Arborfield SPD, much of the detail of what is to be achieved is obscured by the use of meaningless marketing speak. For example, one of the paragraphs in Section 1.3.5 on Page 6 states "Detailing, richness and interest – promoting ornamentation, rhythm, consistent vernacular, richness, and intrigue to the built environment". Please explain what is intriguing and rhythmic about blocks of flats replacing open green fields.

Answer

Meeting housing need requires us to build on Greenfield sites, as we outlined earlier. However, in doing this we cannot lose sight of the need to seek design quality in all new developments. Achieving good design is at the heart of the SPDs and the Council will only accept development that is well designed in terms of siting, layout, form, scale, bulk, height, materials, detailing and its relationship with existing landscape and existing local developments.

I accept that this reference of page 6 is a bit of planning speak, something I can assure you that the developers will understand. More importantly this does not mean blocks of

flats. This will only be an exception, mostly because we will only build what people want to live in but also because we fought for and won that this development would not be high density.

Councillor Lee responded as follows:

These points are borne out by the Inspector in his report where he makes specific comment and recommendation as to what would not be appropriate in these locations because they are semi-rural. So our plan is backed by the Inspector where he talks specifically in one section about the fact that tall buildings would be unacceptable in these locations and that is what the developers wanted to do in the past which was to build up to 70 houses per hectare.

19.11 QUESTION NUMBERS EP 12, 20, 21 & 53

Question 12

Mr Martin Rutter had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

In light of the shocking way that the March 2010 "consultation" (sic) was managed, in particular that not one of the 877 letters of objection or complaint was upheld by WBC and its Officers, why should Arborfield residents and those living in the other SDLs, have any confidence that this consultation will be properly considered, their views listened to and actioned?

Question 20

Mr F A Scott had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

I understand from the agenda that The Executive is being recommended to undertake statutory consultation on the revised SDL SPDs.

The earlier versions of the SDL SPDs went out to consultation in February/March 2010. I was concerned at the way in which the "Consultation Summary" omitted any mention of a number of responses on important topics and I submitted a question about this to the Extraordinary Meetings of the Executive planned for 21 October 2010 and 27 January 2011; neither of these meetings took place and so my question was never considered.

There were many responses to the consultation on the Arborfield Garrison SDL Master Plans from residents, Parish Councils and others. In my own response of 23 March 2010 I commented on a number of aspects: my principal comment concerned access to and from the SDL, in particular that Langley Common Road was unsuitable as a principal access route to the SDL, and that access should be via the old alignment of Langley Common Road (now part of Baird Road) and the Bramshill Roundabout, and I am aware that others commented on the same point; I also made a number of minor comments.

When the Consultation Summary on the Statutory Consultation Responses (20 May 2010) was produced, there was no mention of any concern over the unsuitability of Langley Common Road as an access route either from me or from others; the only references to my own submission were over minor matters. Further, although we were promised a version of that summary incorporating the Officers' comments, and despite searching the Borough website for it on many occasions, I never succeeded in finding that version until 27 May 2011.

In view of the unsatisfactory nature of the summary of the 2010 consultation responses presented to the Council, does the Executive agree that the Officers should be required to give a full summary of the responses to the forthcoming consultation without omitting mention of those responses they do not agree with, and that it would be appropriate to set up a panel of Wokingham residents, independent of either the officers or the elected members, to vet the draft summary and certify it as a fair and comprehensive summary?

Question 21

Mr Adam Gillings had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Please can you detail the complete consultation process. In particular the shameful and frankly disgraceful way that not one of the letters of objection (nearly 900 I believe) were upheld. I am keen to know what is the point of the consultation if there is clearly a massive objection and yet you continue anyway. Do you have any assurances within this consultation process that you will actually take anyone else's opinions on board as going against our views is surely undemocratic.

Question 53

Mr Kevin Mayne had asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

Despite receiving nearly 900 consultation responses to earlier versions of the masterplans we were told a year ago that officers had 'learned nothing new' from that process. Can the Leader assure residents that the Borough is consulting in order to learn things from them, and tell us exactly how the attitude of the Borough to consultation has changed since last year, and how we will see the difference?

Answer

I have to say that we have listened, I really do, and we have made changes. For instance there were major concerns about Area B, and I covered this before we went into the question period, about the existing trees and building right up to existing back gardens. This document clearly shows how we would treat this area, retain the trees and ensure green gaps are built in. We are in the process of ensuring all significant trees across the SDL are protected by Tree Preservation Orders, again as I have just mentioned, and these will be appearing very shortly.

The current SPDs subject to recommended consultation include further amendments, as appropriate, which are set out in the report. The track change version which again we have referred to is available as a background document. A Statement of Consultation, in accordance with Local Planning Regulations, will be prepared prior to adoption.

May I assure everyone that all responses were and will be considered and responses acknowledged and commented on. In addition where it is appropriate we will incorporate explanations or revisions. I would only add that there are some matters which it is not appropriate to tie down at this masterplan stage, and I referred to one about construction traffic earlier. Items were not ignored or forgotten but will be very relevant as planning applications are made and contributions and planning conditions prepared.

Supplementary Question

Mr Rutter asked the following supplementary question:

You have tried to say Angus that you have listened to us in the past. You have not listened to us in the past. The Area B has come out at the very last moment and we have been talking to you about that for over a year. My point is that when we look at your website at the moment and I quote it says “we are currently reviewing our Consultation Strategy which outlines how it intends to carry out consultation, methods of consultation that may be utilised, and the communication of results to stakeholders.” So if your own website is saying that you do not know how you are going to carry out your own consultation then how can you tell us that you are still listening to us?

Supplementary Answer

Councillor Ross responded as follows:

If the question is are we doing it correctly it is not that we are not doing it; there are many areas in which this Council consults and most of the consultation we do in the planning arena is dictated by Government guidance. Nobody and no organisation should ever, ever say that their systems are perfect, and it is perfectly correct and right that we do review how we do things.

That is not to say that we believe we haven't consulted properly but there is always room for review especially as we move to running this Council in a different way.

Supplementary Question

Mr Scott asked the following supplementary question:

My understanding of a summary of consultation is that it should at least mention all the points raised even though it may lump them together with several people raising the same point and not give them at the great length that they were in the original submission. What concerns me is that many people made responses on what they considered to be an important point and they never appeared anywhere in that summary so we have to assume that the elected Members never saw them as they had not been brought to their attention in that summary. Further we were told that we would in due course be able to get on the web a copy with the various responses in the final column and I have been looking on many occasions and only succeeded in getting it a week ago. I consider that to be grossly unsatisfactory.

Will you ensure that the summary covers all points made and doesn't omit those that the Officers don't find congenial with their own way of thinking and will you consider setting up some independent body to look through the summary and the responses and certify whether they consider it to be a fair and comprehensive summary because the last one certainly was not?

Supplementary Answer

Councillor Ross responded as follows:

Yes the documents are now available. I have already committed twice this evening and will say it again that yes we will acknowledge and respond on all the consultation responses that we receive and I can say that the responses to the more recent consultation were independently assessed by a company who we work with so it was done by our Officers and was assessed.

Supplementary Question

Mr Mayne asked the following question:

A significant part of the challenge of the consultation last time was lack of information. Many of the points we made were requesting further information which we did not receive.

How can we effectively respond to a consultation when we cannot get answers to questions such as £3m diverted to road schemes not in the Core Strategy. To this day not one resident in the Parish knows why this money has been diverted to those road schemes. This is just one example, there are many others.

Can you please reassure us that the process will give us the opportunity for our questions to be asked before we respond to the consultation otherwise we will continue to bombard you with as many questions as we did last time?

Supplementary Answer

Councillor Ross responded as follows:

There are meetings set up. I am meeting the Southern Parishes Planning Group on 9 June and I have set up and invited all the towns and parishes to a meeting on 13 June and as of this afternoon, I can confirm, that will be at the Finchampstead Baptist Centre. At that meeting all those attending will be briefed on all items that are there for consultation and we will take questions and there will be Officers present to assist me and any other colleagues who will be there to try and give the best possible answers to inform responses that people may wish to make to this consultation.

19.12 QUESTION NUMBERS EP 13, 31, 38, 42, 43 & 57

Question 13

Mr Daniel Rutter had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

The Arborfield SPD contains no detail regards the proposed phasing of the development, other than a few bland statement of requirements. Phasing of the development is critical and should be addressed specifically and comprehensively.

In particular local residents, supported by the Arborfield Garrison Residents Action Group (AG-RAG), believe that no development should start until the MOD has physically left the site. Otherwise, based on the MOD's lengthy track record of saying they will leave in 2-3 years time but then postponing their departure, local residents could be left with the worst of all worlds: Their green fields and open spaces destroyed and partly built on but the MOD deciding to stay, meaning a large increase in population and traffic but not enough profit generated by the developers to improve the infrastructure.

Will WBC confirm that no development will start until the MOD has actually left the site?

Question 31

Mr Stephen Jones had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

The Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning along with other members of the WBC Exec., have previously and publicly stated on several occasions that the Arborfield SDL is an "all or nothing" development i.e. unless it can be clearly demonstrated - and indeed guaranteed - that the whole of the SDL, including all the listed infrastructure,

can be delivered in the planning window, no Planning Application(s) will be approved. Would Angus Ross confirm this is still the case?

Question 38

Mr Rob Blann had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

The MOD have not currently stated any date by which they will even start to vacate their site, never mind a date by which they will have completely left. Will the WDC confirm that no building work will start until the MOD have fully vacated the site?

Question 42

Mr Jon Hayns had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Section 6.1.2 (Page 72) of the Arborfield SPD states that "... the SDL will need to show how it can be delivered as a whole to reach a critical mass...". As it will be physically impossible to reach the 'critical mass' that WBC refers to if the MOD do not completely vacate the Arborfield site, no development should START until the MOD / SoS for Defence have not just said they will leave the site, but they have actually physically left. Will WBC confirm that the vacation of the site by the MOD will be one of the fundamental requirements before any development can start?

Question 43

Mr Sajjad Abbasi had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Section 6.1.2 (Page 72) of the Arborfield SPD states that "... the SDL will need to show how it can be delivered as a whole to reach a critical mass...". As it will be physically impossible to reach the 'critical mass' that WBC refers to if the MOD do not completely vacate the Arborfield site, no development should START until the MOD / SoS for Defence have not just said they will leave the site, but they have actually physically left. Will WBC confirm that the vacation of the site by the MOD will be one of the fundamental requirements before any development can start?

Question 57

Mrs Angeline Haswell had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Section 6.1.2 (Page 72) of the Arborfield SPD states that "... the SDL will need to show how it can be delivered as a whole to reach a critical mass...". It will surely be physically impossible to reach the 'critical mass' that WBC refers to if the MOD do not completely vacate the Arborfield site, therefore no development should START until the MOD / SoS for Defence have not only said they will leave the site, but have actually physically left. Can WBC confirm that the vacation of the site by the MOD will be one of the fundamental requirements before any development can start?

Answer

The Infrastructure listed in Appendix 7 of the adopted Core Strategy is essential to deliver a sustainable development. Phasing will need to take account of when the Garrison will be vacated. Phasing will be subject of an Infrastructure Delivery Plan. This will ensure both the phasing and the implementation of the infrastructure at the appropriate time. In

order to ensure that the site is sustainable key infrastructure, including the district centre, the secondary school, the Nine Mile Ride extension and bus services for instance, will need to come forward early.

No planning permissions will be granted unless an Infrastructure Delivery Plan is in place. This development requires 3,500 dwellings to make it sustainable. Equally we only require 3,500 dwellings here in the period to 2026. While we await the Secretary of State to finally confirm when the MOD will vacate the Garrison, I can reaffirm that this whole SDL development is 'all or nothing' – no more, no less.

Supplementary Question

Mr Stephen Jones asked the following supplementary question:

I have lived in the Borough all my life, I was schooled in Emmbrook as have all my family members and the supplementary question I have is related to flooding. The family was involved for numerous years in Emmbrook School and I have not once known it to flood. What I would like to know, actually, is over the last couple of decades how often has the Emmbrook actually flooded because in the ten or so years of my family's education at the School not once did it flood and if it does flood on the odd occasion and things have changed since I and my family were at school there surely something can be done with regard to the flow of the river eg money from Environment Agency to sort the issues of flooding out rather than abandon a perfectly good school which to my knowledge has always had a superb reputation in the Borough?

Supplementary Answer

Councillor Stanton responded:

I can't tell you how many times it has flooded in 20 years but I can say that I have been there during two different floods and I have seen the most amazingly extensive damage done on both occasions and we are talking about millions of pounds worth of damage. So I can assure you that I have seen Emmbrook School badly flooded and I have seen an enormous level of damage.

With regard to the flow of the river, which I presume you mean Emmbrook, we have talked to the Department of the Environment about the river but frankly the river is a river and it is a flood plain and there is very little that we can do about that.

The other point you made was cannot something be done there. We have done a fair bit of work to protect the School while it is in that current position and we have spent about £250k actually on that to keep it safe. But there are other issues with Emmbrook School; particularly that it is quite old. Modern education has quite different demands and the opportunity to create a brand new school for 21st Century education is frankly an appealing idea. Schools will, and are, changing rapidly and to bring some of our very old schools up to date costs millions and millions of pounds. It is not good to do that on a flood plain and it is not good to do it where we have four schools all in a row and we have a huge chunk of the Borough where there is no school.

So to be honest there is very little case for leaving Emmbrook where it is in the medium term but there is every case though for a school in the South of the Borough and there is every case for investment in St Crispins which we have already announced to prevent the idea that Emmbrook children would have to be bussed to the South which would be counterproductive. So we do have a plan and I think it is a cost effective answer and it will

provide education for the children, as I said in the beginning they are the most important people when you talk about schools.

The last point is that we do bus nearly 600 children a day from Finchampstead, Barkham and the whole South of the Borough up to Emmbrook or St Crispins. That is very expensive and it is not good practice for the children. We absolutely believe we need to provide a new school, and if you look at a map, to see where the four schools are they are only in one tiny corner of the Borough and you have a huge hinterland without a school.

Supplementary Question

Mr Abbasi asked the following supplementary question:

You stated that no development would start until the MOD vacates so what we the residents are saying is that any development shouldn't start on the brownfield until the MOD vacates, and that is when the last soldier leaves. In relation to the district centre and the supermarket I moved from London into this area some time ago and I don't want a district centre or a supermarket on my doorstep. If I wanted it I would go and live in Earley or somewhere closer and that is what residents are opposing. In fact the major headline on the BBC was about the green belt and how it was benefitting each and every one of us.

Therefore my question is would you confirm that no development, eg the 3,500 dwellings, will start on anywhere outside on the green fields and any development should be done on the brownfield behind the fence?

Supplementary Answer

Councillor Ross responded:

What I have said before and I will say again is that we will not start, or commit to any development, until we know that the whole site is available and that includes the MOD part and the other landowners and that we have received and approved an infrastructure delivery plan so we don't have part of the area developed and then everyone disappears off and you have got roads leading to nowhere.

On your point about the supermarket or the district centre this does come up to an answer to a later question but let me read that answer now:

“The provision of a supermarket as part of the district centre was included, and is included in Appendix 7 of the Core Strategy. This specific issue was considered by the Inspector at the Examination in Public into the Core Strategy. A supermarket of around 4,000sqm is required in order to deliver a sustainable community. The Core Strategy Inspector stated “I consider the Council's suggested change to Appendix 7 clarifying the nature of the retail facility is essential to meet objectives of PPS6 to protect town centres. The retail study supporting a store of up to 4,000sqm would be appropriate”.

So what I am really saying tonight is that is not a subject for discussion as part of this SPD it was already discussed, consulted on with the Core Strategy and stood the test of the Examination in Public.

19.13 QUESTION NUMBERS EP 14, 18 & 28

Question 14

Mrs Anne Rutter had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

The VERY FIRST PARAGRAPH OF SECTION 1 ON PAGE 1 of the Arborfield SPD states that "Arborfield is a major opportunity to deliver an infrastructure on predominantly brown field land".

This claim about "predominantly brown field land" is utter nonsense: Over 60% of the land proposed for THE development is either green field, open spaces, trees or hedgerows.

Local residents would support development on BROWN FIELD inside the wire but NOT on GREEN FIELD land, especially green field outside the wire.

If the VERY FIRST paragraph of the document contains such a material error, how can local residents have any confidence in the contents of the remainder of the document?

Question 18

Mrs Turner had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

The Arborfield SPD Section 3.1.1 on page 21 reads that the 'Arborfield Garrison presents a rare opportunity within Wokingham Borough to redevelop a previously used site for a new community'. However, I fail to understand why the proposed redevelopment is not restricted to the Arborfield Garrison site only if this is your intention. (in other words kept within the existing wire). Can the WBC please explain the reasons why its repeatedly given the label of the 'Arborfield Garrison' in the SPD whilst in reality over 60% of the site is not even part of the Arborfield Garrison? WBC maintain that they are preserving the rural areas yet these are the areas you plan to build on. Examples of such being North Finchampstead, Arborfield Cross and Barkham Hill?

Question 28

Ms Helen Aylett had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Section 3.1.1 (Page 21) of the Arborfield SPD states that "Arborfield Garrison presents a rare opportunity within Wokingham Borough to redevelop a previously used site for a new community...". Then why doesn't WBC restrict the proposed development to only the Arborfield Garrison site i.e. that behind the existing wire? Throughout the SPD WBC talks about Arborfield Garrison. This is totally misleading as more than 60% of the site is not part of the Arborfield Garrison and is the very rural setting which WBC states you want to preserve for other districts such as Barkham Hill, Arborfield Cross and North Finchampstead. Yet your intention is to build on them and decimate this rural location!

Answer

Arborfield Garrison is the only SDL to incorporate a substantial area of brownfield land. Development on greenfield land is a necessity, as we discussed earlier, in order to meet the overall housing needs for Wokingham Borough up to 2026. The SPD recognises the importance of protection of existing public open spaces, trees and hedgerows.

The 'yellow' areas on the Masterplans are not 'wall to wall' housing and will include open spaces, landscaping, trees and hedgerows. I repeat what I said earlier in terms of numbers – it is all or nothing, no more, no less!

19.14 QUESTION NUMBER EP 15

Mr Daren Rutter had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Would the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning confirm if "land equalisation" is a planning matter or is it the responsibility of developers alone?

Answer

The Council is responsible for ensuring that the SDLs are delivered in a phased manner and infrastructure is delivered. 'Land equalisation' is a matter for developers. However, the Council has encouraged developers to form legal consortia as this is an appropriate way to deal with issues of 'land equalisation' between the development parties. Just by way of an explanation what we are really talking about is let us say one developer owned all the land which was already developed and had to be redeveloped and the other was all greenfields essentially they would equalise between themselves the value of those different bits of land.

If this is to be achieved, I see it as essential that each consortium forms a legal entity to ensure for each of them and for all of us that we get the total infrastructure required and I can confirm that the Officers of this Council are getting hoarse saying that to the developers.

19.15 QUESTION NUMBERS EP 16 & 17

Question 16

Mr Michael Boys had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

31. Paragraph 1c(iv) (page 30) of the Arborfield SPD mentions Area B. This area is particularly sensitive as it consists entirely of virgin green fields, a copse and other mature trees, hedgerows, a stream and even a badger run which is currently protected. It is also adjacent to many existing properties and so its proposed development was the subject of numerous and extensive complaints and objections from local residents. At the public meeting held by the Arborfield Garrison Residents Action Group (AG-RAG) in March 2011, the leader of the Council stated that he had instructed the Officers to remove Area B in its entirety from the masterplans. Why therefore is it still included in the latest version published on 25 May 2011?

Question 17

Mrs Sarah Boys had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Section 1c(iv) (Page 30) of the Arborfield SPD states "...To reflect its amenity status, the Draft SPD proposes revisions that reduce land within Area B deemed suitable for residential use". The current plans show the "village residential" density will be used for Area B. If the Council are truly considering the residents in the existing housing why isn't the density at the lowest range of rural interface to lessen the impact?

Answer

The area in question has been reduced in the current consultation document and additional supporting material has been added, as I explained earlier, including an illustrative sketch to show the sensitivity of the site. The details of development are, as noted, only guidance or illustrative and not specific as to layout. They take into account the context including both the natural environment and existing developments.

The SPD emphasises the protection of trees, hedgerows and other natural features. Badgers are a protected species; neither the SPD nor any other planning document can override this protection.

19.16 QUESTION NUMBER EP 19

Mr Mark Turner had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Is Mr Angus Ross in the right position to be the Executive Member of Planning if unable to take into the account the views of local residents? He clearly states in the 'Foreward' of the Arborfield SPD, that their 'has been extensive previous public consultation'. However, this clearly negates to express that the comments made by the local residents were virtually ignored. An example of this being considerable opposition has been raised about the proposed building on 'Area B' (On Green field space immediately adjacent to existing properties). However these concerns have been totally discounted whilst other options are clearly available within the scope of the plans.

Answer

The issues raised in response to Area 'B' in the previous consultation were carefully considered. The latest consultation proposes changes to which the residents have a further opportunity to respond.

With regard to what the questioner said about me personally it is not my decision alone but is a collective Executive decision.

19.17 QUESTION NUMBERS EP 27 & 44**Question 27**

Mrs Maxine Smale had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

The maps refer to improvements to Arborfield Cross junction or new by-pass needed for more than 750 homes. Wasn't that a condition of the development especially as there just isn't room for improvements?

Question 44

Mr Jared McGladdery had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

I have great concerns regarding transport in and around the village. In your document - Section 2.3.3 (Page 11) of the Arborfield SPD states planning permission will not be granted unless..... "improvements to transport capacity along A327 and routes towards Bracknell and Reading and measures to improve accessibility by non-car modes (as supported by Policy CP10 of WCS)...". If there is an increase in families in the area then it would surely follow an increase in the need to support the recreational needs of those

people both in the daily commute and weekend activity, albeit to school, work or areas of play. I expect WBC referring to buses or bicycles here, but looking at bicycles how are you going to introduce safe cycle lanes to very busy narrow A roads. How also do you intend to improve the A327 and at what stage?

Answer

Non car modes of travel does refer to cycling, public transport and walking. Infrastructure will need to be provided that will encourage use of these modes. It is not necessarily the case that cycle and walking routes need to share the same corridor as main roads. We are working with developers to provide these routes and it will be up to the developers to demonstrate adequate facilities for these modes.

The A327 is referred to in the infrastructure SPD and there are planned improvements at the Arborfield Cross roundabout. I would like to see a bypass of the roundabout subject to justification through the modelling and Environmental Assessment processes. There is also to be a new road round Shinfield that will bypass the centre of the village.

Supplementary Question

Mrs Smale asked the following supplementary question:

You have said about the bypass but I am getting the feeling that it may not happen so how are you going to actually to improve Arborfield Cross roundabout, bearing in mind the absolute disaster that it had to be rebuilt and lorries still have to go round and round again to get off it if they are coming up from Swallowfield? What scope is there to improve there without starting to have compulsory purchases and things like that?

Supplementary Answer

Councillor Ross responded as follows:

I think there are two issues here: the first is that I think all the evidence is leading us towards, but as of today I cannot commit to the fact that there will be a bypass, but I think everything is leading us towards this way. I think the other thing that I am very aware of is not only the issue of traffic getting past that roundabout, and I hear your comments about that, but also the environmental impact much increased levels of traffic would have on Arborfield Cross village itself and that to me would need to be very carefully assessed.

Clearly if there was a need to improve the traffic capacity at the roundabout then a scheme would need to be worked up by our Officers and by developers for it, but my personal opinion is that everything is leading us towards the bypass option but there is a lot of work still to be done.

Councillor Lee responded as follows:

In Paragraph 7.7a of the Core Strategy it says consideration should be given to ensuring strategic car movements from Arborfield Garrison to both the M3 and M4 are accommodated and avoid loading further traffic on existing routes through Arborfield Cross. In Paragraph 5.1.2 of the Inspector's report he makes comments about various points but he says specifically here that the detailed amount of funding required for major projects, such as the Arborfield Cross bypass, will be determined at a later stage but there appears to be no major costs that threaten implementation. As far as I am concerned it is quite clear.

19.18 QUESTION NUMBERS EP 29 & 30

Question 29

Mrs Deborah Smith had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Why does WBC insist on calling the development to the west of Wokingham the “Arborfield Garrison SDL” when the majority of land is (i) green field and other open space outside the garrison wire and (ii) falls in the parish of Finchampstead and Barkham? And why haven't WBC written personally to each household in the area informing the occupants of the extent and scale of the development plans. Aren't these examples further proof that WBC is trying to push the development through without many residents in Arborfield, Barkham and Finchampstead being aware of them?

Question 30

Mr Simon Collins had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

A bullet point on Page 12 of the Arborfield SPD states “...responding to the attractive rural setting ensuring that development is absorbed into the landscape maintaining physical separation with Arborfield Cross, Barkham Hill and Finchampstead North”. It is entirely misleading and inappropriate to apply the phraseology of ‘Arborfield Garrison’ to the SDL when over 60% of the proposed development area is currently an attractive and rural countryside setting outside of the garrison wire! Will the council therefore rename the ‘Arborfield Garrison SDL’ to the ‘Arborfield, Barkham and Finchampstead SDL’?

Answer

The SDL is referred to as ‘Arborfield Garrison’ in the adopted Core Strategy. This distinguishes it from Arborfield Village, or Arborfield Cross Village, and since it covers the Garrison from the north to the officers’ mess in the south, it is a reasonable name for the location.

The SPDs have been subject to major consultations and publicity which far exceed anything required by Regulation and the intended consultation continues this approach.

We are all very aware this SDL has parts in Barkham, Finchampstead, Arborfield and in fact Swallowfield parishes, something my colleagues will never let me forget!

19.19 QUESTION NUMBER EP 33

Ms Liz Cannon had asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

WBC have previously acknowledged that TPOs are required in and around The Garrison to preserve at least some of our natural environment.

In Section 1a(i) (Page 27) of the Arborfield SPD states that “A detailed tree survey should be undertaken to inform the master planning exercise”.

Given the amount of time WBC have had to write, and re-write their SDL plans, supposedly taking account of all the feedback during consultation why hasn't a full, thorough and comprehensive tree survey been done already. Please confirm how many comments submitted in the first wave of consultation expressed concerns about trees already received from residents include comments about trees and explain how can WBC

draw up masterplans without having completed such a tree survey? Is this not another disgraceful example of WBC and its Officers failing to do the necessary background work?

Answer

A programme of Tree Preservation Orders for all the SDLs is underway. This will provide the necessary protection in order for the Council to take account of amenity trees.

The SPDs make a number of references to the protection of trees. Nothing in the SPDs implies or authorises the loss of trees. In the case of Arborfield it is recognised that the existing trees form a vital component of the native structural landscape.

It is acknowledged that trees featured in many comments received in relation to previous consultations. In the case of Arborfield Garrison over 70 comments expressly referred to trees.

Supplementary Question

Ms Cannon asked the following supplementary question:

Have they been called new SDLs rather than updates and revisions of the existing SDLs in the hope that most people just wont end up bothering to resubmit the same comments and the same consultations and you will be in a nice position that you have had very few responses.

If that is not what you are hoping for by starting the process again and calling them a new SDL that requires all the residents to come back to you. Will the Council confirm that all of the responses from residents and from parish councils that you have received so far for the Arborfield SDL will be carried forward to the new SDL plans and considered in the same way without requiring resubmission from residents etc?

Supplementary Answer

Councillor Lee responded:

We have learnt and improved from the last time we did a consultation. It is not our intention to make sure that your comments are ignored. We are asking for them. We have to make very difficult decisions and we are also residents in this Borough. One of the issues we talked about earlier was flooding and a lot of flooding in the Borough has been caused because over the last 10-20 years all the developments have been pushed into back gardens and the whole area concreted over. We are sorry that invariably by building on greenfield sites it will cause annoyance and we know that. I would say everybody in this Borough has been subject to that in one form or another. We are doing our level best and it is not our intention to ignore any comments which are made and all comments, as my colleague has said, will be receipted and every single comment will have a written response and it will be a public document and you will see that response.

There is a consultation period and to comply with the law, so nobody can object and the people who would be objecting then would be developers, we would ask that everybody resubmits because we have made amendments to the documents which are going back out for consultation based on the last round of consultation points. So we would ask you please to resubmit your queries and your concerns and they will be receipted and you will have a written response. Therefore, yes we would ask you to resubmit those please within the consultation period so that they cannot be challenged as being incorrectly submitted.

19.20 QUESTION NUMBER EP 34

Mrs Suzanne Sach had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

There are 79 pages of the Arborfield Garrison Strategic Development Location SPD including a whole page devoted to 'solar orientation', yet only three small paragraphs are assigned to principle access constraints i.e. traffic congestion. However, traffic congestion continues to be the major issue concerning Wokingham residents and yet the Council has still failed to address this, even after the last consultation. As an example, Nine Mile Ride is a completely unsuitable route to accommodate a huge increase in traffic, especially when it reaches California Crossroads. But this constraint is not mentioned anywhere in your documents. Why have the Council wasted so much time and money on design details when the fundamental issue of how local roads are going to cope with the increased traffic have been ignored?

Answer

The impact of the developments on the transport network is regarded as a critical issue by the Borough. The Masterplan SPDs need to be read in conjunction with the Core Strategy and the Infrastructure and Delivery SPD. These documents set out a clear approach to ensure that development proposals are delivered with minimal impact on the local transport network. There are several pages of information on transport issues in all these documents and it was a major issue at the Examination in Public; details of which are in the Inspector's report which is also available on the Borough website.

New traffic modelling on all junctions is almost complete as we referred to earlier and will inform work that will be required on junctions. However, it must be appreciated that traffic from the SDLs will not be the only new traffic in this area over this plan period.

Supplementary Question

Mrs Sach asked the following supplementary question:

Having read all the Infrastructure SPD the sections relating to transport were so waffly with some glib statements in it about doing something about the construction traffic. If the project was being run by a commercial company it would have identified the critical factors and how to overcome them. If traffic congestion is not addressed this will affect the whole viability of Wokingham. Rather than hiding behind planning procedures, why have the Executive, who are supposed to be representing the residents of Wokingham, not tackled the problem of traffic congestion by now?

Supplementary Answer

Councillor Ross responded as follows:

I understand your frustration Mrs Sach. There have been a number of stages of this and there are various responsibilities. The first one of course was to convince the Core Strategy Inspector that we had a viable scheme and he looked in some depth at all the transport and road issues and at the end came to his conclusion that the schemes were viable. There has been ongoing work, and an enormous amount of work, on all these issues both by developers and also by the Council and again as I said earlier modern traffic modelling with recent data, which was essential to assess all these junctions, and that work is now coming to fruition over this month and will further inform what works we will expect in detail to be done in points both within the SDLs and, obviously, the impact outside of them in places like California Crossroads.

It will be a perfect world if we could predict everything exactly and cost everything exactly ahead. But that just isn't possible. What we have committed to, and will continue to commit to, is that work will continue so that we can ensure that developers with their proposals meet all the criteria that we have laid down within the Core Strategy. Appendix 7 of the Core Strategy amplifies that and the detail which is coming forward through the masterplans and hopefully soon planning applications.

19.21 QUESTION NUMBER EP 35

Mrs Jan Heard had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

As Chairman of Arborfield Gardening Association I participated in the Public Consultation for the SDL around 18 months ago because residents of Arborfield currently have no Allotment Plots and have shown a demand for these by approaching the Parish Council, who have consequently created a waiting list.

I asked the Masterplanner if a site could be found for Allotment Gardens during the planning process, and understood that the area of open space to the north of the site would be considered as it would allow both the old Arborfield community and the new residents to make use of the planned facility, providing a social hub.

As I understand that the SANG for the development is now to be sited away from the existing settlement of Arborfield, can I please have your assurance that the provision of Allotment Gardens which would both serve and integrate the two communities, has not been overlooked?

Answer

Paragraph 7.5 of Appendix 7 of the adopted Core Strategy requires a network of green spaces including allotments. Therefore it is a policy requirement that developers must take into account in developing their detailed plans for this site.

SANGs, or country parks, serve a specific purpose and would not be a suitable location for allotments. I will be pursuing your point to ensure this matter is given adequate consideration and Para 1c (v) of the Arborfield Masterplan actually does make specific reference to requirement for allotments.

Supplementary Question

Mrs Heard asked the following supplementary question:

When we discussed the idea of SANGs, there were some areas to the North which would have been much more suitable and I was told that it would be possible to have allotments within the SANG where they presumably would have more protection from perhaps competing land demands later on because it was in a SANG rather than just in a green space. But I am very puzzled by your answer because that does conflict with what I was told previously.

It would really need to be in the area where the residents live. The area of allotments is in the wrong place it would be disappointing for everybody because the uncertainty over the development of this garrison site and also the uncertainty over the bypass location is actually currently creating problems for land being found now for people within the existing Arborfield area for allotments and community gardens. In the new developments it would be the right location and would actually solve this problem. So if Wokingham Council

could commit to finding a suitable location now for some allotment gardens it really would solve a lot of problems.

Supplementary Answer

Councillor Ross responded as follows:

I will talk to the Masterplanner about that because it would seem to me that SANGs are for walking your dog and I wouldn't want to be walking my dog over your potato patch but perhaps we can take that up later.

I take your point about where allotments might be placed and that will obviously be essential. There is no point in putting them miles away from where anybody lives.

I would just make one point that any development like this is not meant to cure the weaknesses or lack of facilities that we currently enjoy but is there to mitigate the effects of the developments. But maybe there will be a marrying of those two needs and I take your point.

19.22 QUESTION NUMBER EP 36

Mr Darren Smith had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Paragraph 1c(iv) (page 30) of the Arborfield SPD refers to 'transition areas'. What is a 'transition area'? What exactly does this mean and what are the future implications of a 'transition area'?

Answer

"Transition" areas were added following the first consultation we had on the original Masterplans in February/March last year. They were added as a direct response to comments made by residents, notably in the South Wokingham SDL which I showed earlier and also around Area 'B' in Arborfield Garrison and about the relationship between existing and new developments. They were added in order to emphasise to developers the sensitivity of this relationship. Transition areas have been added to all Masterplans and in the case of Area 'B' and of Clay Lane, sketch ideas have been included as appendices to the draft SPDs to inform debate with both yourselves and developers as to how this sensitivity might be addressed.

Please do be aware that these diagrams are only indicative as to where actual dwellings might be placed. They show we are treating these areas with great care and we are very happy to receive any comments about them.

19.23 QUESTION NUMBERS EP 37, 48, 51, 52, 55 & 56

Question 37

Mrs Hal Dutton had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Policy CP18 of the Core Strategy states that the Arborfield SDL will include "improvements to the transport capacity along the A327 (to both the M3 and Reading)". Towards Reading, proposed improvements include a by-pass for Arborfield as well as the Shinfield Relief Road. What improvements are planned for the route to the M3?

Question 48

Ms Sarah Louise Harper had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Within your Master Plan for Arborfield Garrison under 'Constraints and Opportunities', you state "limited capacity and resulting congestion on the A327 through Arborfield Cross and other local roads". You have identified Arborfield Cross as potentially receiving a bypass in order to help deal with these acknowledged constraints. What opportunities for similar treatment will you be affording the section of the A327 along The Street just over the border, which is actually far more constrained than any other section of the A327, and closer to the development site?

Question 51

Suzanne Andrews had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Numerous concerns raised about the traffic impact of the Arborfield SDL have received the standard response that "the highway measures were discussed at the Core Strategy EIP and found to be sound". In order to be found sound, the Core Strategy would have had to demonstrate "coherence with strategies of neighbouring authorities". Can the Chairman please confirm that Hampshire County Council was involved in the Core Strategy EIP and that the highways measures were indeed found to be coherent with Hampshire's strategy? This is relevant because the access point into the proposed development is 1.5 miles away from the conservation area in Eversley, which is a notorious bottleneck.

Question 52

Beth Quainton had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Having recently moved from Eversley to Finchampstead, I am horrified to learn of the full extent of the planned development at Arborfield. The insistence of WBC to call the development "Arborfield Garrison" is both inaccurate and profoundly misleading, when, according to your Master Plan, the area of land 'behind the wire' at the Garrison represents only a small fraction of the total area up for development. I am unsure as to how it has been possible for WBC to get to this stage of the process without adequately consulting those residents across the border in Hampshire who live much closer (for those in The Street, it is only 0.8 miles away) to the development site than the majority of residents in WBC. When and how are you going to engage with residents in Eversley to address the impact that this development will have on the quality of life for those who live along the A327?

Question 55

Ms Hatty Masser had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

The main access route to and from the proposed Arborfield development would be via the A327 at the junction with Sheerlands Road. 1.8 miles north of this junction towards the M4, the A327 passes through the Conservation Area of Arborfield Cross, where extensive traffic modelling has identified the need for a by-pass to mitigate the adverse impact of traffic associated with the new development. 1.5 miles south of this junction towards the M3, the A327 passes through the Conservation Area of Eversley Street, where the road is already considered to be at full capacity. Can the Chairman (or the most appropriate

member of the Executive) please confirm that traffic modelling has also been carried out to quantify the increase in traffic using the A327 route south of the Arborfield SDL, and describe what mitigation measures are therefore being considered for Eversley?

Question 56

Mr Daniel Craddock had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

As part of the previous consultation exercise on the Masterplan for the Arborfield SDL, Hampshire County Council and Eversley Parish Council both raised concerns about the adverse impact of the proposed development on North Hampshire and in particular on the A327 through Eversley, on the grounds that it is at full capacity and cannot cope with an increase in traffic. Wokingham Borough Council responded that discussions would take place to explore possible mitigation measures. Can the Chairman please confirm what discussions with Hampshire County Council and Eversley Parish Council have taken place to date, and describe what mitigation measures are being considered for Eversley?

Answer

Hampshire County Council (Highways) was a consultee at the Core Strategy stage and in previous consultation on the SPDs and had opportunity to comment and consult within relevant parts of their County. The Core Strategy has taken account of cross-boundary impacts. Of course I do recall that the boot was on the other foot some years ago when Bramshill was a potential site for a similar number of houses.

Modelling works continue to inform the process and will be used to inform bespoke traffic solutions at the planning application stage, with any mitigation being identified.

As to the name, we did cover this in an earlier question I think. We have called it Arborfield Garrison site and I think it has had some validity in that it is the core part of the development. It identifies it as separate to other parts of Arborfield and of course the land, as I said earlier, is in four different parishes.

Supplementary Question

Ms Masser asked the following supplementary question:

I am very surprised to hear that Hampshire has been involved as that has not been the impression we have had from our local councillors in Eversley.

Eversley Bridge and Eversley Street is close to the junction with Sheerlands Road. We are talking about the main junction on the A327. The new development is closer to that than Arborfield Cross. The road is notoriously narrow, has no pavements and is a really, really dangerous junction with other constraints.

I would really like to question the traffic modelling, the Inspector's reporting and everything that has been looked into about Arborfield Cross and the bypass. Why has Eversley not been considered? I cannot believe that this traffic modelling has actually taken place.

Supplementary Answer

Councillor Ross responded as follows:

I think what you have just said makes us pleased that we are a unitary authority at least everything goes on under this roof and not part happening at a County Council and part at

a District Council. That aside I will follow this up, as obviously these questions were only received in the last 24 hrs, as to how much effective consultation has occurred and will continue to occur on the impacts on Eversley and if necessary I will come back to you on that. Your point has been noted.

Supplementary Question

Ms Harper asked the following supplementary question:

There doesn't seem to be much consideration given to Eversley, particularly The Street, so if you don't expect there to be any impact on Hampshire's roads, and the A327 in particular, is this because you will be including a requirement going forward that all construction traffic, all deliveries to the supermarket and all business traffic associated with the new employment area will approach the site from the north using only Wokingham's roads?

Supplementary Answer

Councillor Ross responded as follows:

I will investigate tomorrow what has gone on, what should have gone on, and confirm this in relation to the points you are making about traffic going south from the Garrison. I don't have all the information now so I am not going to speculate.

Supplementary Question

Suzanne Andrews asked the following supplementary question:

Obviously when Hampshire County Council did submit their comments on the last consultation I believe that the response was that it was found to be in line with the Core Strategy Examination in Public but I think we have established today, as you have admitted quite freely, that the modelling hasn't yet been done to date and you are expecting to have it any day. So how could Hampshire County Council possibly have been involved in your Core Strategy if sufficient modelling wasn't actually available? I would ask that you include measures, or mitigations, for Eversley Street in the SDL. If you are prepared to go to the level of including Arborfield Cross then can we include Eversley Street in the SDL as well for consultation?

Supplementary Answer

Councillor Ross responded as follows:

Just to clarify modelling was done before the Core Strategy. What we have done is to update it with traffic, as everybody realises year on year traffic patterns change, and with new developments coming on stream so this is in effect a refresh of the original Core Strategy.

We haven't fully validated and published this data yet but obviously all those that need to know it will receive it in due course.

Councillor Lee responded as follows:

Paragraph 5.9 of the Inspector's report: "from the transport evidence presented at the hearings I see no overriding reason why a solution should not be worked up as part of the masterplanning process" and this is what we are doing. The first stage of that was to get the data fully up to date and I believe that was done up to 2010 and we are currently

modelling all sorts of examples and the one Steve that you have mentioned will also be put in. In fact I believe it is already in the modelling programme. We are therefore complying with exactly what we said we would do.

Supplementary Question

Beth Quainton asked the following supplementary question:

I am sure that if you were more aware of the scale of the traffic problem that we already have in Eversley you may be more considerate of our concerns. So I am wondering if I could offer an invitation to all or any of the Members of the Executive to come and join us and our children on walking to school along the A327? It is less than a mile walk to Charles Kingsley School which is about the same distance as the walk that would be from our house to the southern boundary of the SDL. Would you like to come with us to school one day soon?

Supplementary Answer

Councillor Lee responded as follows:

I will go with you one day as I drive through that road.

It is important to point out here, and I know I keep saying this, over the last 10 years we have had very little, if any, contribution to any highway schemes. This is because they were never triggered by buildings in back gardens: the 5% materiality level which allowed us to get infrastructure. What we are doing is not perfect but we are endeavouring to actually get the best that we possibly can. It will invariably cause issues and you will have concerns and we appreciate that. We also live here and we are trying our best. We are picking up the points that you have made and hopefully you will have seen from the plans tonight that we have already picked up some of the issues that you have raised.

19.24 QUESTION NUMBERS EP 39 & 40

Question 39

Mrs Gill Blann had asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

The following is an extract from the WDC Constitution:- Our Constitution sets out how we operate, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that we are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.

877 letters of response were submitted as part of the first public consultation on the matter of the proposed development at Arborfield. A large number of residents objected to a planned supermarket that will be built on existing green fields and open spaces. This is still in the plans.

Can the Council explain why the words 'transparent and accountable' in the Constitution do not match the actions of the Council, who do not listen to the wishes of the local people when they voice their opinions at public consultations?

Question 40

Mrs Janet Abbiss had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

The opening paragraph of section 4 (Page 52) states that “The district centre should include a food store.....”. The large majority of local residents do not want a new supermarket on their door step, especially one that will destroy virgin green fields, trees and other open spaces. When will WBC listen to local residents views and remove this unwanted store from their plans?

Answer

The provision of a supermarket as part of the District Centre is included in Appendix 7 of the Core Strategy (paragraph A7.12.b). This specific issue was considered by the Inspector at the Examination in Public into the Core Strategy. A supermarket of around 4,000 square metres is required in order to deliver a sustainable community.

The Core Strategy Inspector stated ‘I consider the Council’s suggested change to Appendix 7 (where the needs of each SDL are expanded) clarifying the nature of the retail facility is essential: to meet the objectives of PPS6 to protect town centres. The retail study supporting a store of up to 4,000 sq m would be appropriate.’

19.25 QUESTION NUMBER EP 45

Mr Jim Murphy had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Can each member of the Executive confirm that they have had the draft documents in sufficient time to read them in the detail required to make a decision tonight?

Answer

Yes, I believe that this question has been adequately answered during the meeting.

Supplementary Question

Mr Murphy asked the following supplementary question:

I can certainly sympathise they are long documents and you have to rely on people to give you advice. The Arborfield Garrison maps have changed and when changes happen you haven’t gone back to the original document. Residents have to have confidence in the information they are given and we don’t have.

Supplementary Answer

Councillor Lee responded as follows:

I do my level best, I believe the Officers do and I believe that we are all guilty of mistakes in the past. We are doing our level best to improve that and I think we have shown that very clearly with some of the changes that we have put forward but it wouldn’t matter how many changes we put forward because there is a large group of people specifically in the Arborfield Garrison area who do not want development and I understand that and I can sympathise. The Southern Parishes say that they accept the development and they strongly support a school. The other groups are saying they don’t want a school and we have to make that decision.

I am sorry if you don’t have confidence in us but we have been elected to make those decisions which are difficult to do but we do our best and we will continue to do our best.

19.26 QUESTION NUMBER EP 49

Mr Mike Heard had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

Can the Executive confirm that the design will have regard to the Borough Residential Design Guide?

Answer:

The Adopted Core Strategy requires that design has regard to the Borough Residential Design Guide. This SPD includes substantial design guidance to inform development. The Borough Design Guide is currently under review and will itself be subject to consultation in due course and I hope quite soon.

At any time an application will need to conform with the policies in place at that time. Even a draft document that has been out to consultation will carry some weight.

Supplementary Question

Mr Heard asked the following supplementary question:

The ethos of the SDL is to control development and delivery infrastructure. It is essential that timescales for infrastructure delivery should be controlled by the Council and not left to the developer. What assurance can you give that this will happen?

Supplementary Answer

Councillor Ross responded as follows:

This will come forward as the outline planning application which we are seeking from all the four SDLs as an infrastructure delivery plan. That is not only the content of it but will obviously involve the phasing of it and I think it would be foolish of me to ignore the fact that there will be some very detailed and probably very difficult negotiation going on but as far as we are concerned sitting here today it is essential that we get all the infrastructure that has been defined in the various documents we have referred to and the phasing of the introduction of those is appropriate. Obviously you cant have everything totally front loaded as that would be totally unviable and we would lose at appeal on that.

It is my commitment, and I am sure the whole Executive and the Officers that we do very carefully consider both the infrastructure delivery and the phasing.

Councillor Lee responded as follows:

We understand your concerns, as Angus has mentioned earlier on we have employed a well known firm of legal advisers Trowers & Hamlins to advise us on the best means to ensure that we get the cash to bank and not simply a promise of something that might happen in the future. You have to understand that what we cannot do is to say to them to put the infrastructure in first; unfortunately we do not have the legislative ability to do that. So we have to abide by the proper approach that has to be taken. We will ensure to the best of our ability that we get the infrastructure, which has been confirmed by the Inspector and that is the highest level of authority we can have, and that has been shown with the Shinfield Glebe refusal. We will do our best for our residents; we are not here to do anything else.

19.27 QUESTION NUMBER EP 50

Mrs Claire Gabelli had asked the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning the following question:

On the submitted document note 3 of Page 25 is missing the figure for the "Land for each centre assumed to be up to ?? for the District Centres". Please can you advise what the land for each District Centre will be?

Answer

This is a typo which will be corrected prior to consultation; in fact it was traced by somebody in the Officer core as well. The particular reference should have read 'land for each centre assumed to be up to 6 hectares for the District Centre and up to 1.5 hectares for each Neighbourhood Centre'.

Thank you for pointing out this omission.

20. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

In accordance with the agreed procedure, the Chairman invited Members of the Council to submit questions to appropriate Executive Members.

There were no Member questions received.

21. SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS FOR THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT LOCATIONS OF ARBORFIELD, NORTH AND SOUTH WOKINGHAM, SOUTH OF THE M4 AND INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY AND CONTRIBUTIONS

The Executive considered a report relating to new draft Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) for the Strategic Development Locations (SDLs) of Arborfield, North and South Wokingham, South of the M4 and Infrastructure Delivery and Contributions.

The Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning informed the meeting that five new documents were being proposed for consultation in the period 15 June-27 July 2011, together with a Draft Habitat Regulations Assessment and a Sustainability Appraisal. This document incorporated the Strategic Environmental Assessment, which was something that the Council was called to account about recently. These documents cover the four SDLs, North and South Wokingham, Arborfield Garrison and South of the M4, together with the overarching Infrastructure Delivery and Contributions Document. These documents could not be brought forward earlier because of ongoing legal matters as explained in the report.

In order to protect residents from inappropriate development both inside and outside the SDLs it was essential that the five SPDs were adopted as soon as possible. This was borne out by the Appeal Inspector and Secretary of State's findings on the Glebe land appeal in Shinfield, which was released last week, which states that SPDs are the correct way forward as they do carry weight, especially when adopted. They also help the Council to achieve the best possible development by moving closer to keeping its five year land supply, without which the area would be vulnerable to development across the Borough. Furthermore picking off small areas of the SDLs would not provide the essential coordinated and comprehensive infrastructure which has been lacking in small development over recent years.

Members noted that the Masterplan documents reflected a more extensive Sustainability Appraisal, incorporating Strategic Environment Assessments which were more comprehensive than presented last October when the Executive adopted three of the SPDs. It was noted that these documents would remain in place until such time as new SPDs were adopted. The Council had continued to progress work on all the four SDLs and had worked closely with its Infrastructure Lawyer Partners Trowers & Hamlins, who as well as Counsel, had endorsed the documents.

Councillor Ross clarified that the documents for Arborfield and South of the M4 reflected better many of the issues which had come to light from previous consultations and discussions with interested parties, which included the Development Consortia, statutory service providers, Borough and Parish Councillors and residents. It was also hoped to receive confirmation from the Secretary of State about whether and when the MOD would be vacating the Garrison.

With regard to the forthcoming consultation period it was confirmed that all responses received during that time would be acknowledged on receipt and would be treated with care, studied and where appropriate taken into account in preparing the documents which it was hoped would come back for adoption in September.

In relation to the Infrastructure Delivery and Contributions SPD it was advised that it was expected shortly to have available the results of new traffic modelling which could better inform the document, especially in critical areas such as the A327 through or round Arborfield Cross.

Councillor Ross presented maps of the four SDLs and highlighted some of the changes that had been made to the previous versions including:

- a. North Wokingham – development proposals were identical to those adopted in October;
- b. South Wokingham – highlighted the area behind Priest Avenue, moving down from London Road, and preservation of the green gap between existing housing and the development. The rest of the development was unchanged;
- c. South of M4 – highlighted the areas of open spaces between the three communities of Shinfield, Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross which needed to be maintained. The siting was the same as the document brought forward for reconsultation earlier this year. The neighbourhood centre was highlighted as being coalescent with the existing area where there were some shops, health centre etc. It was hoped to extend these facilities;
- d. Arborfield – highlighted the open space in 'Area B' and to the south of existing housing an identifiable green strip to show that the houses would not be back to back with existing housing. The other sensitive area was at the end of the existing Nine Mile Ride where it would then proceed into the new development to form a separation settlement with the existing part of Finchampstead along this road. This would also form open space associated with that development.

The Executive Member for Environment commented that the last Masterplan that came to Executive was deferred awaiting a statement from the Secretary of State. At that meeting Councillor Cowan had also stated that some changes to the Arborfield Masterplan failed to

take note of the extensive consultation comments submitted by residents and other representative groups and this was supported by the Executive. Councillor Cowan therefore asked if he could have an assurance that all previous comments, along with those that would come in through this consultation, would be given due consideration. In relation to the map Councillor Cowan queried additional words relating to a bypass improvements to Arborfield Cross had appeared because they were in conflict with the Core Strategy.

Councillor Cowan also highlighted the reference on page 6 to greenfield versus brownfield which he felt was a critical issue if development started and the MOD stayed as the development would not be sustainable. He also asked for an assurance that if the MOD did not vacate the site then it would not be developed. Further the report made a reference to the separation of settlements but Councillor Cowan felt it should actually state "Arborfield Cross" not "Arborfield" and also there was no reference to Swallowfield.

In response to Councillor Cowan's comments the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning reiterated that the Planning Inspector had stated that Arborfield Garrison required 3,500 houses in order to be a sustainable development and therefore unless there was the ability to build those houses the process could not be started.

Councillor Ross clarified that by law the current consultation had to stand on its own merits and therefore consultation responses made to previous versions of the masterplans and previous consultations were not valid for inclusion as part of the current consultation response unless they were resubmitted. Councillor Cowan asked that all those who had responded to the previous consultation be written to advising them that their comments would not go forward but that their comments would be welcomed on the new consultation.

The Leader of Council reiterated that the Core Strategy had established the four development locations, assuming the MOD left the Garrison site, and the housing numbers and therefore it was pointless to go over them again. What were required were comments on how the Council could improve the layout and the infrastructure that was required. Councillor Lee therefore urged residents to respond to the current consultation.

The Executive Member for Transport requested clarification about the relationship between the Masterplans that were being consulted on and the current or imminent developer planning applications. Councillor Ross confirmed that the Masterplans were SPDs that the Council had produced with input from all interested parties but it was firmly based on the adopted Core Strategy and other national and local planning documents. Some developers had ignored these documents and put in inappropriate applications.

The Executive Member for Finance welcomed the changes to the S of the M4 masterplan, particularly the fact that the Council had taken into account the views expressed by local residents and local Borough and Parish Councillors, from the previous consultations.

Following on from the comments made about the impact on traffic and bordering local authorities Members wanted to ensure that traffic modelling would not just concentrate on traffic within Wokingham, and particularly the four SDLs, but how it would impact on the borders. Councillor Ross confirmed that it was important to have dialogue with other affected authorities and in fact it was already happening.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the five draft Supplementary Planning Documents and associated environmental statements comprising: -
 - i) Draft Habitat Regulations Assessment for the SDLs;
 - ii) Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment) Consultation Document;
 - iii) Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment) Consultation Environmental Report; and
 - iv) Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment) Consultation Non Technical Summary
be agreed for consultation purposes;
- 2) statutory consultation be undertaken on the documents mentioned in 1) above; and
- 3) the Strategic Director of Strategy and Corporate Affairs in consultation with the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning be authorised to make minor changes necessary to the documents prior to consultation.

22. WOKINGHAM BOROUGH LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – DRAFT OPTIONS FOR THE MANAGING DEVELOPMENT DELIVERY DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT (PUBLIC PARTICIPATION VERSION)

The Executive considered a report relating to draft options for the Managing Development Delivery Development Plan Document (MDD DPD) which, once adopted, would identify and allocate residential sites for the remaining requirements of Core Strategy Policy CP17 (i.e. outside of the Strategic Development Locations). It would also include policies for speculative and unallocated residential sites in line with the vision and policy of the Core Strategy and other Council strategies, set the boundaries for development limits, town centres, employment and retail uses to 2026 and provide more detailed Development Management Policies.

Members noted that the Core Strategy laid down many of the planning policies for the Borough to 2026 however there were many more that were required and this document would incorporate further vital policies and when finally adopted define where smaller development could go, including drawing new settlement boundaries.

The Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning highlighted that the document under consideration was not proposing policies but options for how the policies could be prepared and how the sites and boundaries could be selected. The list of policy areas included within the document were not exclusive and therefore if proposals came back from the consultation eg saying the Council should have more proposals on flooding, these could be added later. Also policies that could be adopted quicker in the upcoming new Borough Design Guide could be given further weight if they went through this more robust procedure. It was noted that it was intended to carry out consultation from 15 June-27 July 2011, which would coincide with the consultation on the SPDs.

Members queried whether the document would enable the “red lines” around the SDL sites to be redrawn once the Masterplans were in place. Councillor Ross confirmed that as the SPDs and the MDD DPD were running in parallel it was hoped that the Council would be informed by the results of the consultations and when the Masterplans came back for adoption it would be possible to indicate the settlement boundaries around the various

housing sites, which was essentially the yellow areas on the Masterplans, so that areas outside these would be further protected against inappropriate development.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the draft options for the Managing Development Delivery Development Plan Document (Public Participation version) for consultation, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be agreed;
- 2) the update to the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement to have regard changes brought about by amendments in legislation be agreed; and
- 3) the Strategic Director of Strategy and Corporate Affairs, in consultation with the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning, be allowed to agree minor changes to the MDD DPD consultation documents.

23. CONSIDERATION OF ADOPTION OF THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD)

The Executive considered a report relating to the adoption of a proposed Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document which would provide further guidance on the Council's requirements in respect of amount, type and size of affordable housing to be provided within the Borough.

The Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning informed the meeting that the document had been through statutory and further consultation and was intended to provide clear guidance to developers and providers of affordable housing in order to ensure that the Council got the best possible developments.

The Core Strategy laid down the high level vision for development to 2026 and the document, and especially CP5, detailed the Council's requirements and approach to affordable housing which was seen by many as one of the greatest needs in the Borough now. It was essential that the Council adopted the document in order that it could work with developers and providers to ensure that the right number, type and quality of housing was provided.

It was noted that since the inception of the document the Council had created a housing company, specifically to deliver much needed affordable housing and also the Government had made changes to how housing associations were funded. Therefore it was suggested that following adoption of the document Overview and Scrutiny review it with a view to looking at how other councils balanced tenure. This would also afford the possibility of taking note of the latest legislation and the aims and ambitions of the new housing company. This was supported by Councillor Ross who felt that it would be worthwhile for Scrutiny to consider the document further.

During discussion of the document Members queried whether the document would enable off-site contributions for Council house regeneration elsewhere in the Borough. It was confirmed that developers were expected to make a provision for affordable housing on site. However consideration would be given, where there was sufficient justification, to a financial contribution towards the provision of affordable housing elsewhere in the Borough eg where it is impractical to include on-site provisions, which could be because of the small number of units proposed. There may of course be other circumstances where it may be appropriate for the Council to consider a commuted sum payment with the

agreement of the developer, which could include progressing strategic housing objectives including regeneration projects within the Borough.

Members also wanted to ensure that the document would allow flexibility of the size and the tenure on a site by site basis. The Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing confirmed that the tenure of any affordable housing, whether it was rental, shared ownership, intermediate rent or affordable rent would be agreed with the Council on a site by site basis following the analysis and consideration of the latest relevant needs and other data. Also affordable housing would be based on the 70/30 split between social rent and intermediate rent as detailed in the Affordable Housing Viability Study.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) it be agreed that the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (as recommended for adoption) is in conformity with the Core Strategy pursuant to Regulation 13(8)(a) of The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 (as amended);
- 2) having considered all the duly made representations on the draft SPD it be agreed to adopt the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (as recommended for adoption);
- 3) it be delegated to the Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning, in consultation with the Strategic Director for Strategy and Corporate Affairs, approval of any minor changes to the document (including those necessary to take account of its adoption).

These are the Minutes of an Extraordinary meeting of the Executive.

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