

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE COUNCIL
HELD ON 24 JANUARY 2019 FROM 7.30 PM TO 9.10 PM**

Members Present

Councillors: John Kaiser (Mayor), Bill Soane (Deputy Mayor), Keith Baker, Parry Bath, Laura Blumenthal, Chris Bowring, Prue Bray, Rachel Burgess, David Chopping, UllaKarin Clark, Gary Cowan, Andy Croy, Richard Dolinski, Carl Doran, Lindsay Ferris, Guy Grandison, Charlotte Haitham Taylor, John Halsall, Pauline Helliar-Symons, Emma Hobbs, Tim Holton, Philip Houldsworth, John Jarvis, Clive Jones, Norman Jorgensen, Pauline Jorgensen, Dianne King, Abdul Loyes, Charles Margetts, Julian McGhee-Sumner, Ken Miall, Philip Mirfin, Stuart Munro, Anthony Pollock, Malcolm Richards, Angus Ross, Daniel Sargeant, Imogen Shepherd-DuBey, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, David Sleight, Chris Smith, Wayne Smith, Simon Weeks and Shahid Younis

81. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Alistair Auty, Kate Haines, Mike Haines, David Hare, Graham Howe, Barrie Patman, Ian Pittock and Oliver Whittle.

82. STATEMENT FROM COUNCILLOR FERRIS

Councillor Lindsay Ferris updated the Council on former Councillor Helen Power who had sadly been diagnosed with incurable cancer. Members wished Helen and her family well. Councillor Ferris also wished Councillors Barrie Patman and Oliver Whittle well as they had both recently undergone surgery.

83. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Tim Holton, as Chairman of the Planning Committee declared a Personal interest in Item 81 Petition Debate, on behalf of himself, Councillors Bowring, Jarvis, Richards, Ross, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Wayne Smith and Soane. He stated that the Council was currently in receipt of a planning application which was directly related to the petition under debate and was due to be considered by the Planning Committee. The Borough Solicitor had advised that should Planning Committee members take part in the discussion of the petition they risked demonstrating pre determination or bias with regards to the application when it came to be considered at Planning Committee.

Councillors Holton, Bowring, Jarvis, Richards, Ross, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Wayne Smith and Soane left the meeting during the discussion of this item and did not vote on this item.

84. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

It was proposed by Councillor Keith Baker and seconded by Councillor Shepherd-DuBey that, in accordance with Procedure Rule 4.2.12n), Procedure Rule 4.2.9.1 be suspended to allow Public Question Time to be extended to 45 minutes.

Upon being put to the vote the Motion was declared by the Mayor to be carried.

84.1 Mark Chatfield asked the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning the following question:

From 2013 onwards we have seen systematically increased housing numbers over and

above the consulted and approved strategic numbers. Housing numbers vary with every new communication, sometimes they even vary within the same document. As an example a Shinfield site was 'offered' by the Wokingham Executive to the landowner to be brought forwards by over 8 years. How can residents trust any planning related information from WBC if it is simply changed behind closed doors without any resident consultation and how do you intend to restore residents' trust in the planning process?

Answer

It is true that housing needs have varied over recent years. This has been caused by the Government changing the way housing need is calculated. I agree that this can be confusing and brings unhelpful complexity to our work on the local plan.

It is clear from the number of homes built, under construction and permitted, that the strategy set out in the Core Strategy is working. More than sufficient homes will be delivered to meet past and current Government expectations.

Notwithstanding doing our part, Government rules around housing supply look at the number of new homes built which is of course controlled by developers. This has meant that the Government rules have worked against us, not because we have not done our part in granting planning permissions, but because developers have not been building fast enough.

To help defend residents against unsustainable, unplanned developments being granted by Government Planning Inspectors, the Executive decided to release allocated reserve sites and invite an application on land which is allocated for development within the Shinfield Strategic Development Location. This boosted our land supply in places where it was already planned.

The decision to release the sites was made through a public meeting of Executive in July 2017 and was not made behind closed doors.

Supplementary Question:

I am not quite sure that I can understand how you say the Core Strategy is working when we are faced with relentless infrastructure, traffic in particular, and so on and so forth. We were actually sold the Neighbourhood Development Plan as the way forward for Shinfield Parish area. That land was not on that plan. It has now been brought forward by yourselves. Can you explain to the public why that is? Why are we sold one thing and then told something else?

Supplementary Answer:

I understand what you are saying and I get the part about congestion. It was a historic thing that happened and we are kind of stuck with that. I think that your Neighbourhood Plan was adopted after this happened, but I do agree with you. We took it up with the Government's Chief Planner, who came to see us recently, that we thought that it was ridiculous that one of the decisions that was made by the Planning Inspectors took no regard to the Neighbourhood Plan at all and we are fighting that hard.

84.2 Jim Frewin asked the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning the following question which was answered by the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement.

Planning applications can receive a large number of objections many of which highlight significant factual inaccuracies in the applicant's submissions. Why does it take residents

to highlight what are seen as obvious inaccuracies and concerning methodologies. For example – multiple reports that were openly stated to be based mainly on desktop research with outcomes based on ‘likely’. Will WBC please assure residents that due diligence is applied to reviewing and assessing developer applications and provide clarity about how this will be applied and enforced?

Answer

I am answering several questions that have been posed to my colleague. All applications are scrutinised by both internal and external technical experts from various service areas including highways, drainage and ecology. Applications can be refused on lack of information or where the information is incorrect or incomplete. However, where information is lacking, the Council will ask applicants and developers to provide this during the application process and this approach is supported by both best practice and government guidance. In addition, planning conditions can be imposed to a planning permission requiring that further details are submitted at a later stage even after the application has been granted. Whichever approach is adopted, the Council always ensures that all planning issues are fully and adequately addressed.

Supplementary Question:

Given the significant factual inaccuracies which are quite obvious to residents that live in the area, the developers are given opportunity to resubmit, so they are given opportunity to go away, resubmit and put more accurate information in that. Is that same flexibility applied to residents’ applications? The other thing with the application process is that developers are actually putting up signs saying ‘Houses for Sale. Please contact this number.’ They are actually going to public consultation meetings and saying if you have got a problem with this application talk to WBC because it has already been approved. This is prior to approval, so why are developers so confident in getting approval? This causes so much mistrust with residents because it is almost a done deal. Can you give us some assurance that this is not the case?

Supplementary Answer:

I can give you that assurance and in fact the second part of the question that you have just posed is actually another question later on this evening that another resident has posed, and I will give that the appropriate answer then, if that is satisfactory.

84.3 Steph Frewin asked the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning the following question which was answered by the Executive Member Planning and Enforcement. The question was asked on her behalf by Mark Chatfield

There are examples of developers erecting ‘houses for sale’ signage and publicly stating that work is due to start in advance of any planning decision. This presupposes approval. Can WBC please provide assurance that applications are fairly assessed and explain why developers should be openly and repeatedly preassuming approval?

Answer

All applications are considered on their own merits with due regard to prevailing local and national planning policies and relevant material planning considerations. There is no certainty for an approval of planning permission until proposals have been thoroughly assessed by us as the Local Planning Authority and permission fully granted in writing. However it is not uncommon for developers to erect signage before sites are granted planning permission and also without the relevant advertising approval. In these cases, the developer is contacted by the Council to request either the removal of the signage or to

submit a retrospective advertising application. A developer's premature decision to pre-empt the planning process has absolutely no bearing on the outcome of the final decision relating to the planning application, so it is very much at their risk.

84.4 Kelly Williams asked the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning the following question which was answered by the Executive Member Planning and Enforcement. The question was asked on her behalf by Mark Chatfield

Recently the Planning Inspectorate 'disallowed' a planning application in Swallowfield as it would be against it being a 'small village'. Can you please clarify why this does not also apply to Shinfield, Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross and Grazeley where WBC have allowed and even encouraged saturation development potentially making these rural villages the biggest housing estate in Europe?

Answer

Firstly, I think it is worth clarifying that Planning Inspectors are not a party that we have any control over, and if they choose to interpret planning rules differently in different cases that is something I am afraid that you need to take up with the Planning Inspectorate because of potential inconsistency.

Where a Council is unable to demonstrate a deliverable housing land supply of five years or more, national planning policy means that something called the 'tilted balance' is applied. This means that the decision taker, in this case you refer to the Planning Inspector, must allow the development unless he or she considers the impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

The Government Planning Inspector considering 'land at Wyvols Field', which I think is the site you referred to, dismissed the application as they found the adverse impacts of the proposed development, and in particular the harm to the character and appearance of the area, significantly and demonstrably outweighed the benefits.

As each application and appeal is judged on its individual merits, decisions can vary. For instance, whilst Wyvols Field was dismissed in November 2017, another appeal 'land to the west of Trowes Lane', also in Swallowfield, was allowed by another Planning Inspector in February 2018.

We robustly defend all our decisions, including resorting to court action where appropriate. I am glad to say that more recent decisions by Government Planning Inspectors have generally agreed with our decisions and they have dismissed speculative and inappropriate developments; however we must and will continue to defend our decisions.

84.5 Sean Sommerville asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question. The question was asked on his behalf by Mark Chatfield:

A large number of residents already complain about the volume of traffic on Shinfield Road at peak times which makes it difficult to get their kids to school and them off to work. Any further development in this area will add further traffic to the Black Boy roundabout and then on to Shinfield Road which will exacerbate the issue. How is this being taken into account for any further development when this will knowingly make the traffic situation worse?

Answer

I understand what you are saying. I use Shinfield Road regularly and know what it is like at rush hour. All applications are considered on their own merits and with due regard to local and national planning policies and material planning considerations. There will be no certainty for decisions until proposals have been thoroughly assessed, which will include the provision of a Transport Assessment and the identification and securing of any required transport mitigation.

84.6 Lorraine Chatfield asked the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning the following question which was answered by the Executive Member Planning and Enforcement. The question was asked on her behalf by Mark Chatfield:

Planning applications can receive a large number of objections many of which highlight significant and multiple factual inaccuracies in the applicant's submissions. Can you please provide detail of how residents' objections to planning applications should be followed up and communicated back to residents?

Answer

Residents' comments and objections on a planning application are given full consideration as part of the planning assessment process. The planning officer will also often have noted the same inaccuracies as the objectors. The comments are summarised in the planning officer report and the assessment section of the report addresses the relevant planning considerations and the reasons for the outcome of the application, so there is a written record of points raised by all commenters and the planning officer's assessment of each of those points. Whilst, the Council considers all the comments received, it does not have the capacity and nor is it practical to respond individually to every representation raised on an application, and that is normal practice across all planning authorities.

84.7 Marcus Cox asked the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning the following question which was answered by the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement. The question was asked on his behalf by Mark Chatfield:

It is difficult for residents to engage with planning related issues and this has especially been made even more difficult now WBC don't even provide a named planner for residents but does provide a developer support service (see planning portal). This leaves residents with the feeling that developer applications are done deals and objections are simply ignored. Can you assure residents that applications are being fully and appropriately assessed irrespective of them being from a resident or a developer?

Answer

Absolutely, I can give you that assurance. The Council consults all effected residents about planning applications and I can confirm any representations received from residents are taken into account during the determination process. For larger schemes such as those within the Strategic Development Locations there are also public forums designed to provide updates to local residents and to give residents the opportunity to voice their opinions about development proposals.

During the planning application process, local residents can also contact the Council's Customer Delivery Officers who are part of the planning team and who can help them with their questions. They will be provided with the case officer name and contact details if they need to talk to a planning case officer about more complex issues.

The Council must determine all applications in line with relevant local and national planning policies and standards. If an application accords with these policies, the Council is unlikely to be able to substantiate refusal.

84.8 Richard Ingram asked the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning the following question. The question was asked on his behalf by Oliver Jones:

Thames Water has highlighted significant concerns relating to foul water and other service infrastructure not being able to cope with additional development in Shinfield. Can WBC assure residents that they are not going to left in the effluent?

Answer

Thames Water are the authority who determine network capacity and the Council consults with them on all major applications for housing growth to identify any capacity issues. Where upgrades are required, this is planned and conditions are imposed on any planning permission to ensure that these are undertaken to enable the development to go ahead. Significant sewage upgrades have been delivered as part of the housing growth in Shinfield.

84.9 Simon Prince asked the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning the following question. The question was asked on his behalf by Mark Chatfield:

In the Shinfield area planning permissions have been given for c.3500 houses yet only a third of these have been built. As a result, we have not seen the total impact on the local area nor have any infrastructure improvements had time to kick in. What is the Council planning to do to address this issue when the overall impact of the existing development on the lives of its residents is not yet known and when the overall impact on the infrastructure is unknown?

Answer

The growth in Shinfield has been planned as part of the Core Strategy and the adopted supporting documents including the Infrastructure Delivery and Contributions SPD which ensures that planning infrastructure is brought forward to meet the needs of the new development secured through planning agreements or the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

The new infrastructure is not all provided up front, sadly, which we would all like, but on a phased basis when the new development is actually in place. Examples of new infrastructure delivered to date include the Eastern Relief Road, sports pitch improvements, a new leisure centre at Ryeish, Shinfield Meadows Primary school and a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace amongst other localised projects. In addition, Shinfield Surgery was built to take into account the planned housing growth although the provision of GPs remains the responsibility of the Primary Health Trust and not the Council. As development is implemented, this will also be supported by further supporting infrastructure.

84.10 Brian Wood asked the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning the following question. The question was asked on his behalf by Mark Chatfield:

The Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan was created to allow the local community to have more of a say in the developments which would take place in the surrounding area. Yet since this plan was formally adopted by WBC in Feb 2017 there have been

developments proposed which didn't feature in it. Why is WBC ignoring the plan and, therefore, the wishes of the local population?

Answer

The Council has never ignored the Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan, and in fact we very much support it and use it to make and support our decisions.

The Neighbourhood Plan was made in February 2017, as you quite rightly said, and forms part of the statutory development plan, alongside Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery local plans, and the minerals and waste local plans. Together these plans form the starting point for assessing planning applications.

A landowner has the right to submit a planning application on any piece of land. The Council must determine all applications received against all relevant local policies and national guidance.

Where we refuse planning permission, the applicant may appeal to a Government Planning Inspector. When this happens, we put up a robust defence, as I explained earlier. I am glad to say that more recent decisions by Government Planning Inspectors have agreed with our decisions and dismissed speculative developments; however there have been a number of extremely disappointing decisions, one I discussed earlier, over the last two years or so where Inspectors have allowed development contrary to our judgement and the adopted Neighbourhood Plan.

84.11 Jenny Cox asked the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning the following question which was answered by the Vice Chairman of the Berkshire Fire and Rescue Authority. The question was asked on her behalf by Mark Chatfield:

Berkshire Fire Brigade have publicly raised concerns about the shortage of fire hydrants and its concerns about access and through routes hydrants across the Shinfield area. How are WBC taking these concerns into account for any proposed further development?

Answer

Berkshire Fire Brigade is consulted on all major planning applications and has not objected to any application for development in Shinfield SDL on the basis that there is a shortage of fire hydrants. Fire hydrants are addressed and secured through the building regulation process and that ensures that there is suitable provision for the new developments.

84.12 Jude Sommerville asked the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning the following question. The question was asked on her behalf by Mark Chatfield.

Rightmove currently shows 1418 houses for sale within a 3 mile radius of Shinfield. Estate Agents are currently stating that sales are less than 1 a week. At this rate the current market conditions mean about a 3 to 5 year housing supply. Can you assure residents that housing market conditions are being taken into account for additional housing number approvals?

Answer

We are aware of the uncertainty in the economy and the influence this might have on housing delivery and sales. No housing developer within the Borough has advised they are slowing their construction rates, despite the fact we all know they are.

Should the housing market slow, we will take this into account in our decisions. However, the Government has made a clear commitment to boosting housing delivery across the country, and sees a solution to delivery simply being to grant further planning permissions.

We do not agree with this and are strongly lobbying Government to change the planning rules to recognise that delivery is controlled by the development industry where decisions are made on a commercial basis. In this, we welcome the support of other political parties and a number of town and parish councils.

The strategy set out in the Core Strategy is working. It is clear from the number of homes built, under construction and permitted, that more than sufficient homes are capable of being delivered to meet past and current Government expectations. In short we have done our part.

84.13 Gail Wood asked the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning the following question which was answered by the Executive Member for Planning and Enforcement. The question was asked on her behalf by Mark Chatfield:

Across the existing development sites in the Shinfield vicinity it is evident that the pace of building completion and resultant sales has dramatically slowed from this time last year. In fact the construction companies have recently moved staff off a number of sites. What is the Council planning to do to address this issue?

Answer

I think it is actually very similar to the last question that you posed that my colleague answered. However, I will add that the Council has no way of compelling developers to build houses. This is simply determined by market forces. As stated, we believe the Government should change the planning rules so that delivery issues outside the control of ourselves as the local authority are not exploited by developers to try and undermine our locally agreed planning strategy. I have personally raised this as an issue of concern in separate meetings here at Wokingham with the Prime Minister, with Sir Oliver Letwin who led the independent review of build out rates and with Steve Quartermain who is Chief Planner for the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government.

84.14 Adam Frewin asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question. The question was asked on his behalf by Mark Chatfield:

Any further development in Shinfield will put pressure on the surrounding roads and major junctions such as Junction 11. What consideration has been given to the additional pressure that will be placed on the junction from all of the additional developments in the surrounding area?

Answer

I think this was largely covered before. All applications are considered on their merits with due regard to local and national planning policies and material planning considerations. All major planning applications are accompanied by a Transport Assessment that needs to review and address any associated highway impacts related to the proposed development. The Transport Assessment, which includes the use of strategic and local junction traffic modelling data, and the use of latest traffic surveys, independently obtained to assist with the validation of traffic data, is fully reviewed by the Council's Highways and Planning teams and in most cases by the Planning Committee also. Junction 11 is a key strategic part of the Strategic Road Network and associated impacts will require assessments and

approval from Highways England also. This process will be the same for any future planning application and ensures that the associated traffic impact is identified and addressed properly.

84.15 Penny Smith asked the Executive Member for Highways and Transport the following question. The question was asked on her behalf by Mark Chatfield:

Occupancy of approved development is around 30% with the completion rate around the same level. The area is already being impacted by the additional traffic with regular long delays and multiple jams. Please clarify how traffic modelling is taking into account the rural type roads and how they will cope with the proposed additional tens of thousands houses.

Answer

I think I will refer you to my previous answer. The rural roads are included in the traffic models.

84.16 Alan Davis asked the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning the following question. The question was asked on his behalf by Mark Chatfield:

There are examples of developers only willing to commit to very low numbers of completions per year due to both market conditions and the shortage of skilled craft persons. This could condemn residents to over 10 years of building disruption. Do Councillors consider this to be acceptable and would they agree to this for their residents?

Answer

The Core Strategy set out the spatial strategy managing development in the period to 2026.

The strategy set out in the Core Strategy is working. It is clear from the number of homes built, under construction and permitted, as I mentioned earlier, that more than sufficient homes are capable of being delivered to meet past and current government expectations. In short, as I said before, we have done our part.

Notwithstanding this, Government rules around housing supply are based not on the actions in the control of a local authority but on actual delivery of homes which of course is controlled by the development industry. Ultimately developers decide whether they wish to develop a site or not, and the rate at which sites are built out. Like many industries, housebuilding is affected by changes in national and local market conditions, with decisions being made on a commercial basis.

We do not agree with this situation and have been strongly lobbying Government on this matter. In this, we welcome the support of other political parties and a number of town and parish councils.

Once the principle of development is established, communities should expect the approved development to be delivered swiftly as it is in the public interest. We also believe that all councils should simply be assessed against the allocation of land and approval of planning permissions. This reflects the true assessment of our performance and disincentivises land banking either through not starting construction or by going slow.

84.17 Julie Headly asked the Executive Member for Business, Economic Development and Strategic Planning the following question which was answered by the Leader of the Council. The question was asked on her behalf by Mark Chatfield:

This petition is one of a series from residents across Wokingham. What assurances can WBC give that they are actually listening or are residents simply wasting their time?

Answer

I can assure you that we do listen to the views of our residents, including the views presented in the form of petitions and through the consultation exercises, and they are definitely not wasting their time.

We always take the views of residents into account when making decisions however given the many factors that may be involved when making a particular decision you must appreciate that it is not always possible to take the course of action that some residents are asking for. The only variation to that is when we have also been governed by planning law.

84.18 James Reid asked the Executive Member for Environment, Leisure and Libraries the following question:

The planned developments for Shinfield which now total in excess of 3,500 homes will mean that the residents of Shinfield will have to cope with an increase in noise pollution as a result of the construction activity over a protracted period of time as the homes are built and air pollution as a result of the additional road traffic which these homes will generate. What analysis has WBC done to show the cumulative impact of the planned developments on the overall level of pollution in the area?

Answer

The Council sympathises with existing residents and understands that noise and disturbance is often generated through the construction of new homes. Unfortunately, government guidance and case law is very clear that councils are unable to use this as a reason to refuse development. Despite this, the Council does routinely apply conditions to planning permissions to control environmental issues though the construction phase of the development. Examples include conditions to restrict hours of working and construction traffic routes, also measures to control dust

Although the Council has not undertaken a single comprehensive assessment of all the environmental impacts of the new housing at the Shinfield SDL, addressing these is at the heart of the planning process. At the plan making stage the Council works closely with its environmental and transport advisers who use the latest study and monitoring for information to ensure that development is allocated in those areas where the environmental impact is the least harmful. Where necessary they identify measures to mitigate the environmental impacts of development. At the planning application stage these expert advisers are again consulted to provide more detailed advice, and schemes that have unacceptable environmental impacts that cannot be mitigated will not be given planning permission.

The Council also routinely measures the level of pollution where it believes that there may be a risk to residents through our Environmental Protection Service.

Supplementary Question:

It is encouraging to hear about the restrictions that have been put on planning applications,

however, there is evidence to suggest that those are being ignored by the developers. Do you have any statistics on how many enforcements have been made against those restrictions?

Supplementary Answer:

I am sorry offhand I do not. I shall have to investigate and come back to you.

85. PETITION DEBATE

The Mayor reminded all who took part in this item that its purpose was to debate the principle of overdevelopment in the general area of Shinfield and as such no reference or comment could be made with regards to any planning application which had been submitted to the Council and would therefore be considered in the future either by Officers under delegated authority or by the Council's Planning Committee. He went on to state that failure to abide by these rules could lead to the petition debate being suspended.

A petition in relation to the matter indicated was presented.

85.1 Petition submitted by Councillor Gary Cowan

The Mayor announced that a petition relating to overdevelopment in the Borough and specifically development in the Shinfield area was submitted at the Council meeting held on 20 September 2018. The petition contained approximately 1,500 signatures which was the threshold to trigger a debate at Council.

Mr Chatfield addressed the meeting and set out the background in the petition. He thanked residents for their support and for signing the petition. He indicated that he hoped to convey the depth and strength of feeling that Shinfield South residents had against the mass, inappropriate and ill thought out housing development in the area.

With regards to the Council's own policies, Mr Chatfield questioned what they meant and what they were used for. It was felt that these policies were often ignored. Mr Chatfield referred to the 2010 Core Strategy which stated 'to maintain and enhance the separation and distinctiveness of Borough settlements' and 'to provide housing in appropriate locations, scales and types to meet the needs of the Borough.' The Vision of the Core Strategy referred to 'improvement in infrastructure is a key to the success of the Strategy. It aims to ensure that everyone has improved access to high quality services such as schools, open space and recreation, health and community facilities to maintain social wellbeing, health and quality of life.' He felt that this had not been applied in the case of Shinfield, Spencers Wood, Three Mile Cross, Arborfield and Grazeley

Mr Chatfield went on to state that residents had been encouraged to support the Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan as a way of protecting the parish from mass inappropriate development. Although adopted, he felt that the Neighbourhood Plan was now ignored. The land south of Cutbush Lane had not been due to be considered for development in this plan.

Mr Chatfield stated that many residents felt betrayed and that enough was enough. There should be a pause in development in the area and time allowed for an independent assessment of the impact of the current approvals and what the impact of what further development would be. He also wanted to see the commissioning of an independent review of the infrastructure and any gaps.

Members discussed the petition. Parry Bath commented that he was pleased to see so

many residents present in support of the petition. He represented Shinfield North and development in Shinfield South also had a direct impact on his residents, particularly with regards to traffic congestion on Shinfield Road. Parry Bath stated that any further development needed to be sustainable and suitable with green spaces and the identity of the villages maintained. It was important that development was strategically rather than developer led. He emphasised that it was vital that a viable Local Plan was in place to protect from the vagaries of Government Inspectors and housing numbers. He went on to comment that the Council had met with senior Government officials to highlight issues faced by the Borough.

Lindsay Ferris stated that a new Local Plan would run until 2036. On current projections the Borough would have an increased number of properties, between 752 and 896 homes per year, between 15-18,000 properties, depending on the formula used. This represented a 30% growth. Lindsay Ferris went on to comment that there would be an impact on the character of the Borough and that he believed infrastructure would struggle to cope. Shinfield was one area that had taken more than its fair share of new properties and its character had changed considerably. He was of the view that the number of properties was unsustainable and that the Council should lobby Government to lower the figure that Wokingham Borough was projected to take.

Charlotte Haitham Taylor indicated that over 10,000 residents had signed petitions objecting to overdevelopment in different areas of the Borough. This provided a clear mandate to tell the Government that although the Council supported economic growth it should not be at the expense of the residents and the ecology of the area. Central Government had assessed their housing projection numbers. She felt that the new figure of 894 should be much lower, below 700. She commented that residents in her ward were already subjected to traffic congestion on a daily basis. Inappropriate development on flood plains had already been approved on appeal leading to poor quality homes and other successful appeals had led to the erosion of settlement gaps. Charlotte Haitham Taylor emphasised the importance of working with residents to build the solid foundations for communities for current and future generations.

Gary Cowan stated that the petition clearly showed the concerns of Shinfield residents and those of the surrounding area around the proposed Local Plan. He indicated that the plan showed over 650ha of green field submitted for proposed development in Shinfield, Grazeley, Arborfield and Barkham alone. The greenbelt in the northern parishes was also threatened. He referred to the three petitions already submitted on the subject of over development and commented that he expected more to come. Gary Cowan expressed concern regarding the process around the submission of Motions following a petition debate.

Simon Weeks stressed that all Governments wanted more houses built. Additionally many employers in the area also wanted houses built for their staff. The South East was a major driver of the economy and the need for new homes inevitable as the population grew. The Council as the Planning Authority had to ensure that the right type of homes were built in the right place, in the right numbers and at the right time. However, supporting infrastructure was a challenge. Simon Weeks stressed that prior to the development of the current Local Plan the Council had surveyed every household explaining the requirement to have a Plan as to where new homes needed to be built. Responses had shown support for several new communities which were delivered as the Strategic Development Locations. The current plan incorporated approximately £0.5bn investment in essential infrastructure and the average developer contribution for each new home was over

£40,000. The Council now had the second highest rates for Community Infrastructure Levy paid by developers or landowners on developments outside London. Simon Weeks emphasised that between 2008 and 2013 the Council had had a target of 3,200 homes but less than half had actually been built and the shortfall had been added to future targets. Build rates in the last three years had surged helped by a variety of Government incentives. Nevertheless, the housing delivery numbers over the Local Plan cumulative period were now back on track. The Council was in a stronger position to refuse and defend speculative applications at appeal.

Andy Croy stated that he was sympathetic to residents' concerns and that there was a real future threat to more of the Borough's communities. He commented that there was too much demand for housing in the area.

Anthony Pollock indicated that Shinfield had seen a large number of houses built over the last few years with more to come as the sites allocated under the Local Plan up to 2026, were completed. Since the approval of the Local Plan there had been an upward drift in the number of houses. The Council had resisted additional houses at planning appeals for Beech Hill House, Stanbury House and Parklands, amongst others. He commented that residents were justifiably upset with the system that had allowed this upward drift in housing numbers and referred to areas of particular infrastructure difficulty. Anthony Pollock emphasised that even if the Planning Authority refused an application the Planning Inspector could override this. It was therefore vital to have a robust Local Plan in place.

Stuart Munro commented that he understood residents' concerns. However, the Council was constrained by the law. It was necessary to take control of more affordable and social housing.

Prue Bray noted that it had been a Member from another ward that had presented the petition rather than a Shinfield South ward Member.

Clive Jones commented that development was a major issue nationally. There was a need for more one and two bedrooms houses and bungalows but developers preferred not to build these as there was less return on investment. He questioned why Wokingham Borough was required to build more homes than other local areas and emphasised that Shinfield had taken more than its fair share.

In summing up Mr Chatfield stated that there had been a slowdown in development in Shinfield. He felt that the Core Strategy was not working and that it was significantly different to the one originally put to residents. He encouraged the Council to say no to further development in the area as residents had had enough.

The following Motion was proposed by Stuart Munro and seconded by Parry Bath.

"This Council recognises that residents rightly feel that the number of houses being imposed on our Borough is currently too high. This Council, as a champion of our community, will continue to robustly make our case to Government to lower the recent housing numbers. The number of houses is determined by a Government formula and has been mandated by successive governments of all major parties.

Further, this Council will continue to challenge inappropriate developments in our Borough, and we are supported in this approach by recent decisions to dismiss several planning appeals.

This Council is currently undertaking a comprehensive consultation across the Borough with residents, to get their views on the sites that have been proposed as part of the statutory Local Plan process.

All sites will be subject to comprehensive assessment and engagement before the Council approves its preferred strategy and site allocations through the Local Plan process.”

A number of Members expressed concern with regards to the process around Motions submitted following a petition debate and requested that this be reviewed by the Constitution Review Working Group.

Upon being put to the vote it was:

RESOLVED: That this Council recognises that residents rightly feel that the number of houses being imposed on our Borough is currently too high. This Council, as a champion of our community, will continue to robustly make our case to Government to lower the recent housing numbers. The number of houses is determined by a Government formula and has been mandated by successive governments of all major parties.

Further, this Council will continue to challenge inappropriate developments in our Borough, and we are supported in this approach by recent decisions to dismiss several planning appeals.

This Council is currently undertaking a comprehensive consultation across the Borough with residents, to get their views on the sites that have been proposed as part of the statutory Local Plan process.

All sites will be subject to comprehensive assessment and engagement before the Council approves its preferred strategy and site allocations through the Local Plan process.

86. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2019/2020

The Council considered a report on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2019/2020 as set out in Agenda pages 5 to 9.

It was proposed by Anthony Pollock and seconded by Parry Batth that the recommendation contained in the report be approved.

Lindsay Ferris stated that he had concerns about the proposals. Whilst he understood the approach taken he felt that the scheme was too punitive on some of the Borough’s poorest residents. He asked that, in future, details of how many residents had problems in paying during the coming financial year, be provided.

Andy Croy emphasised that the Council should be protecting its most vulnerable residents. He stressed that individuals in receipt of child maintenance income would now see a third of that taken into account and their Council Tax reduction reduced. He believed that the scheme should be amended.

Rachel Burgess stated that she believed child maintenance income should not be included as income for the purposes of calculating Council Tax support.

Carl Doran also emphasised the potential impact of the scheme on some of the Borough's most vulnerable residents.

Prior to a vote being held, six Members, in accordance with Rule of Procedure 4.2.15.5, requested that a recorded vote be taken on the proposed Motion.

The voting was as follows:

| For | Against | Abstained |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Keith Baker | Prue Bray | John Kaiser |
| Parry Batth | Rachel Burgess | Bill Soane |
| Laura Blumenthal | Gary Cowan | |
| Chris Bowring | Andy Croy | |
| David Chopping | Carl Doran | |
| John Halsall | Lindsay Ferris | |
| Pauline Helliard Symons | Clive Jones | |
| Emma Hobbs | Imogen Shepherd-DuBey | |
| Philip Houldsworth | Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey | |
| Norman Jorgensen | | |
| Pauline Jorgensen | | |
| Dianne King | | |
| Abdul Loyes | | |
| Charles Margetts | | |
| Julian McGhee Sumner | | |
| Ken Miall | | |
| Philip Mirfin | | |
| Stuart Munro | | |
| Anthony Pollock | | |
| Malcolm Richards | | |
| Angus Ross | | |
| Daniel Sargeant | | |
| David Sleight | | |
| Chris Smith | | |
| Wayne Smith | | |
| Simon Weeks | | |
| Shahid Younis | | |

Upon being put to the vote, the Motion was declared by the Mayor to have been carried.

RESOLVED: That the proposed Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2019/2020 be approved.

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