

## Transcript of Horsham District Council Cabinet Meeting

Thursday 15 July 2021 at 5:30pm

Recording of meeting available at:

<https://horsham.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=132&MID=2010>

[0:00] Chairman (Paul Clarke): I've not received any other apologies. Any other apologies received?

[0:05] Officer: No other apologies.

[0:07] Chairman: Thanks. Second item on the agenda is Declaration of Members' Interests. Are there any Declarations of Interest from members of the Cabinet? Councillor Vickers?

[0:17] Cllr. Vickers: Yes, thank you, Leader. I'd like to declare a personal interest in that my home is close to the boundary of proposed development. Thank you.

[0:29] Chairman: Thank you. Any other Declarations of Interest from cabinet members? No? Third: Announcements. I have no announcements to make. Do cabinet members have any announcements to make? Councillor Circus.

[0:47] Cllr Circus: Thank you very much, Leader. I thought members, and indeed the public, would be very interested to know that following the introduction of curbside collection of small electricals, batteries, and textiles we now have some figures as to how that's gone. Impressionistically, we were convinced that it was a huge success, but I now have some figures to back that up. In the first four weeks – you'll know that this is the bright pink van that tours the district picking up items (I think Councillor Toni Bradnum called it shocking pink; but that will probably do, at least it makes people aware of its existence) – we collected 2.5 tonnes of small electrical items, 3.17 tonnes of batteries – household batteries – and 3.74 tonnes of textiles. So, in other words this has been a very considerable success. It's a service that's been very well received by the public (I'm very pleased we went ahead with this initiative), and what is particularly pleasing is that there have been no reports that we have so far of contamination. So, that shows that our residents use this service responsibly. So, that's very, very good news. Thank you very much, Leader.

[2:37] Chairman: Thank you, Councillor Circus. Any other cabinet member announcements? No? [Sound interrupted for 10 seconds]. At this stage of the meeting we receive questions from, and provide answers to, members of the public in relation to matters in relation to matters in our opinion – in the opinion of the person presiding, which is myself – that are relevant to the business of the meeting. And we will take it by turn; each person can ask a question and then is entitled to ask a supplementary question. These questions have been submitted in writing previously to the meeting. So, the first speaker on the agenda Item 4 is Sharon Davis.

[3:34] Sharon Davis: Good afternoon. Sharon Davis. I represent over fifty households in West Chiltington. I hope you have had the opportunity to examine the statements submitted on Monday. I would like to ask: why is the Smock Alley site being considered, again, for development given the history of the refusals, overwhelming material considerations – as outlined – and significant

departure from Horsham's HDPF and emerging Draft Local Plan? This includes Horsham District Council's Landscape Capacity Study 2020 that states "this area and site has no to low capacity." What would Horsham District Council quantify as "low capacity"? The Strategic Planning team were made aware of new sites that came forward from the Parish Council's call for sites in spring 2020, but did not consider or assess them in the SHELAA. I believe this is a failing that will be questioned at examination. Given all the evidence, I urge the councillors to remove this sensitive and harmful site and consider the more sustainable sites as identified in the independent, robust ACOM [?] site selection document in order to fulfil the required housing numbers. Thank you.

[5:07] Cllr Lambert: Thank you for your question, Ms Davis. I've noted the information in your circulated enclosure. The starting point for assessing sites is the current version of the National Planning Policy Framework, or NPPF, and officers have undertaken their site assessment work based on a strict set of criteria. They've had to consider a wide range of issues, such as landscape, heritage, how the site relates to the existing settlement, and whether the site is viable and deliverable during the plan period. This work has been carried out by qualified planning professionals and other specialists. More details about the site assessment process is set out in Appendix 6 of the cabinet papers. This council is facing an unprecedented housing target, and without a plan the consequence will be more, and uncontrolled, development across the district, which does not provide the infrastructure which meets the communities' needs. The council is, therefore, faced with making difficult choices, including the location for new homes. In any local plan there are always those who do not agree with the site selected by the council. However, there will be an opportunity to raise these issues as part of the Regulation 19 Period of Representation, where you can raise concerns and suggest amendments to the plan. Thank you.

[6:29] Sharon Davis: Thank you.

[6:32] Chairman: Thank you. Right, next speaker public question Richard Cordey [sp?], chair of Billingshurst Tennis Club.

[6:42] Richard Cordey: [Sound interrupted 90 seconds] ... Established part proposal from the significant number of local people that we represent, but it has not been included in the draft Regulation 19 version of the local plan that is before you today. In contrast we note that east of Billingshurst, which offers no real benefits to local people, has been included. So my question is: Why has the east of Billings ... [sound interrupted 5 seconds] ... doesn't offer these facilities, nor would it meet Horsham District Council's own affordable housing requirements, or indeed meet Horsham District Council's requirements on carbon reduction, whereas Newbridge Park would on all those counts. Thank you.

[8:54] Cllr Lambert: Thank you for your question, Mr Cordey. As outlined in my earlier response, officers have undertaken site assessment work based upon a strict set of criteria which consider a range of planning matters to determine whether, in their professional opinion, a site is suitable, available, and deliverable within the plan period. The decision on whether or not to allocate a site is, therefore not based on one single piece of evidence or benefit of a scheme, but on how all the factors combine. Therefore, whilst the Newbridge Park site may perform well in terms of carbon reduction, I notice that the site is separated from the existing village of Billingshurst, is divided into two separate parcels, and faces the challenge of linking any new community with the existing one across the A29. We must consider how this site will form a new cohesive community when

compared with other development proposals, including land east of Billingshurst, where such a border does not exist. Thank you.

[9:58] Richard Cordey: May I ask my supplemental question?

[10:00] Chairman: You may.

[10:01] Richard Cordey: Thank you. Newbridge Park is not the preferred option, you stick with the east of Billingshurst; can we have commitment from the council to release around the £4million that we were due to get on the existing land on Jubilee Fields to allow the improvements and the relocation of the tennis club from existing Section 106 money and new money that you may get from the east of Billingshurst site, bearing in mind that comes short on both your social housing and your eco-standard requirements? That's my supplemental question. Thank you.

[10:33] Cllr Lambert: Thank you, Mr Cordey. By all means the council will look at releasing this money for you. Thank you.

[10:37] Richard Cordey: Thank you.

[10:44] Chairman: Question three, but we may have a technical problem so we'll just let the officers [inaudible]. Okay ... [Sound interrupted 3 seconds] ... the technical solution [laughter]. [Sound interrupted 33 seconds].

[11:32] Unknown: Yes, the microphone is working.

[11:35] Sharon Davis: [Off microphone] Can I just ask a supplementary question, because I didn't ask a one? They didn't answer my question.

[11:41] Barbara Childs: You asked a supplementary question ...

[11:42] Sharon Davis: I didn't.

[11:43] Barbara Childs: Can you speak through the...?

[11:44] Sharon Davis: Yes. I'm sorry, I didn't realise I could ask a supplementary question. [Back on microphone] I did ask a question "what is low or no capacity?" Could somebody answer that for me, please? I'm sorry, Chairman.

[12:00] Chairman: I'm sorry.

[12:01] Sharon Davis: I'm really sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt, but I didn't realise I could ask a supplementary question. I asked in my question to the council "what is no or low capacity?" That's not been answered. I apologise.

[12:17] Unknown (same person as at 11:32): Thank you, Ms Davis. We'll put that in writing for you.

[12:19] Sharon Davis: Lovely. That's perfect, thank you.

[12:26] Chairman: Councillor Owen Hydes.

[12:34] Cllr Hydes: Good evening, councillors. At parish level we have not listened to any support at all for a new town at Buck Barn. A new town quickly planned by a developer and destroying acre upon acre of the Low Weald is not what our communities want, so nearly 20,000 people have signed a petition against Buck Barn. Over 8,000 people have written to the government, and I believe each district councillor has been sent around 2,000 e-mails or letters opposing Buck Barn. Local people have used their voice; now they want to be listened to and to see local democracy actually work. So, how are you going to persuade local people that you properly represent them?

[13:32] Cllr Lambert: Thank you for your question, Mr Hydes. We know from the Regulation 18 consultation held in 2020 that no site that we consulted on was welcomed by the local community, but it is a legal requirement that local authorities prepare a local plan. The government sets housing targets for the district and also requires that the plan contributes to unmet housing needs from other areas as far as is possible. This has led to unprecedented housing targets placed upon Horsham District. We have repeatedly sought to represent the concerns of the council and the community by writing to government about the issues we face. Unfortunately, this has not led to a change in our housing numbers and targets. The council must, therefore, make some very difficult choices about where development goes. Legislation requires that decisions that we make must be based on planning matters and the available evidence. Taking this responsible course of action is the best means of representing the interests of the district; far worse will be the failure to make a plan at all, as this would lead to more development in the wrong place and with fewer services and facilities that we need. Thank you.

[14:51] Cllr Hydes: Thank you. May I ask a supplementary question? Why are you so insistent on saying that HDC must have a local plan, because it seems to me that the awful consequences of a new town at Buck Barn covering acres and acres of Low Weald will be far worse than not having a local plan? So let's take a chance – let developers go on to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate, because the consequences may be far better than this dreadful local plan.

[15:27] Cllr Lambert: If we don't have a local plan, we will not be able to prove a five-year land supply. Developers will crowd in at the door; we will end up with development across the district where we don't want it. We also will not get the benefits of having the infrastructure that we need and require from those developers. Thank you.

[15:55] Chairman: Thank you. Now we have questions for 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and, basically, because they all pertain to the same subject what we will do is we will take the questions one-by-one, and we will ask the relevant people to come and ask their question, and then, basically, Councillor Lambert will answer them all in one response. And then after that we will take supplementary questions in the order that members of the public have asked it. So, it will involve coming and asking the question, reading the question – turn-by-turn – and then we will then answer the questions. Okay? So, the first person on the list is Francis Martin.

[16:42] Francis Martin: Thank you, Councillor Clarke. My name is Francis Martin and I'm a member of West Grinstead Action Group. For Regulation 18 consultation a red-amber-green rating was carried out on the sustainability of the sites presented to the council through the SHELAA. SA587 Adversane identifies only one amber against archaeology, whereas SA716 Buck Barn identified five ambers, the most notable of which was against environmental quality, transport, and economic impact. Furthermore, the support for the inclusion of Adversane was an overwhelming 42 to 20. Given these

assessments, why was Adversane discounted from inclusion in the Regulation 19 consultation?  
That's it.

[17:47] Chairman: Thank you. Meryl Findley.

[18:03] Meryl Findley: Good evening, councillors. My question is: in allocating Buck Barn, what assessments have been made about the impact on traffic and air quality in nearby settlements such as Cowfold, where there is already an air quality concern; and what assurances have been made by the council about the feasibility of the mitigation measures proposed on the highway network? I already find crossing the A24 very frightening, and the queues at McDonald's already run all the way back along the line, blocking the traffic. These are just two instances, but as you surely know with the next-to 3,500 homes at Buck Barn, and the resulting drastic increase in traffic, there will be many more areas of serious concern.

[18:49] Chairman: Thank you. Dave Tidy.

[19:00] Dave Tidy: Good evening. My name's Dave Tidy, I lead the West Grinstead Action Group. I live very, very close to this site. In the light of the information from objectors presented to the council and councillors about distances from strategic sites to nearby transport hubs, does the inclusion of Buck Barn to the exclusion of more sustainable locations for housing risk the local plan being found unsound at forthcoming examination?

[19:32] Chairman: Thank you.

[19:33] Dave Tidy: Thank you.

[19:34] Chairman: Simon Meagan [sp?].

[19:47] Simon Meagan: Good evening, councillors. My question is as follows. In allocating Buck Barn, what weight has been given to the impact that this would have on the natural environment as acknowledged and expressed by the Conservative government's Environment Minister, as well as thirty leading environmentalists? Thank you.

[20:10] Chairman: Thank you. Nikki Pepper.

[20:21] Nikki Pepper: Good evening. In his letter dated the 6th of July, which was sent to all members of the council, Lord Lytton concludes by saying that "on every objective measure, Buck Barn fares less well than the main alternatives". His letter also refers to a crucial District Nature Recovery Network Study, which as yet is not in the public domain. Does the land that is proposed to be allocated at Buck Barn fall within an area of high, or very high, ecological value? And how does this compare to other major strategic sites that have also been promoted as part of the local plan? Thank you.

[21:18] Chairman: Thank you. Sir Charles Burrell.

[21:29] Sir Charles Burrell: Hello, Charlie Burrell here. Knepp Castle Estate next door to the proposed Buck Barn site. The last question was very similar to the question that I was going to ask. Several policies rely upon or refer to green infrastructure strategy, or a Nature Recovery Network. We are aware of the draft Nature Recovery Network document produced and developed in partnership with

Sussex Wildlife Trust. We are also aware that this document is widely available in draft form, and several councillors have seen it. Given the significant emphasis being placed on this document in the local plan, why has it not been included in the council's evidence base? Please confirm whether such a document, plan, or assessment has been used to inform the Regulation 19 draft submission local plan.

[22:24] Chairman: Thank you.

[22:27] Unknown: Chairman? On a point of order, how will the questioners be able to have a supplementary? Can you be organising that, because otherwise it will be helpful –

[22:36] Chairman: It will be organised.

[22:38] Unknown: Okay. Thanks.

[22:42] Cllr Lambert: Thank you all for your questions. As these have raised a number of similar issues concerning the evidence base supporting the preparation of the local plan, and how it has been taken into account, I will answer them all together. As mentioned in response to earlier questions, the local plan must be based on planning matters, including relevant and proportionate evidence. The council consulted on the initial assessment of sites with potential for development in 2020, which is what was referred to by Mrs Martin. These assessments have now been revised to take into account updated evidence and feedback from the consultation. The council will not be making decisions on the content of the previous consultation, but on the revised, updated, and expanded evidence base. This includes transport studies, flood risk, and biodiversity, including the emerging Nature Recovery Network. The relevant evidence base is referred in the cabinet papers this evening, and we will consider whether the plan is an appropriate strategy as required by the National Planning Policy Framework. The draft Nature Recovery Network documentation, referred to by Mrs Pepper and Sir Charles Burrell, is not yet in its final form, but will be made available on the council's website once it's been finalised and agreed. The emerging document has been considered during the development of the local plan. It is important to note, though, that the Environment Bill is not yet enacted and nor has any Nature Recovery Network officially been designated. There is as yet no government guidance on how such designations will work, or who will be the body who defines any NRN, and so there may be differences between any eventual Nature Recovery Network and the work being carried out by the Wilder Horsham District Partnership. The government is very clear about its intention to bring forward both new homes and biodiversity net gain. DEFRA has very recently published the Biodiversity Net Gain Matrix, which provides local authorities with guidance on this process. However, it is clear that development and the delivery of biodiversity net gain cannot be considered to be mutually exclusive. There are no easy choices regarding the location for development, but the concerns raised in the questions you have asked have been considered by the officers. The plan before us this evening is a proposal which sets out a way forward to deliver the unprecedented housing targets we face and, crucially, the necessary mitigation measures and environmental enhancements. As stated earlier, in any local plan there are always those who do not agree with the site selected or evidence base, or feel that other locations for development may be more suitable. However, the issues raised in the questions tonight are examples of matters which can be submitted as part of the Regulation 19 period of representation. The purpose of the Regulation 19 stage is to allow an opportunity for individuals and organisations to set out any concerns they might have and suggest how the plan can be changed to remove those concerns.

These suggestions will be considered by an independent planning inspector, who will hold an examination into the local plan which will include public hearings in due course. Thank you.

[26:26] Chairman: Thank you. As I explained earlier on, now is the time for supplementary questions if people wish to ask supplementary questions which are linked to the initial question. The first person on my list is Francis Martin.

[26:40] Francis Martin: Yes, please. Thank you. My supplementary question rather reflects an issue that was brought up earlier on by one of your speakers. Do Horsham District Council recognise that the Buck Barn development will blight Cowfold with increased traffic volumes and push the already pollution levels even further over the legal limit? And if so, is the council happy with the mitigating plans presented to you by the developer?

[27:23] Cllr Lambert: Thank you. The County Council, who are the Highways Authority, have looked at the mitigation plans proposed and they are happy with them.

[27:34] Francis Martin: Thank you.

[27:38] Chairman: Next person on my list is Meryl Findley. Do you have a supplementary?

[27:49] Meryl Findley: Thank you, Mr Councillor. I understand that the final vote will be taken on the 28th of July, and can you assure me that you will be in possession of all the results of all the relevant investigations that you have just said you are to undergo?

[28:06] Cllr Lambert: Yes, we will.

[28:08] Meryl Findley: Thank you.

[28:11] Chairman: Dave Tidy? If you have a supplementary?

[28:22] Dave Tidy: The red line boundary for the Buck Barn allocation in the Regulation 19 draft includes the area of additional land to the north-west of the site which was not previously included in the Regulation 18 draft local plan. Why has the addition of this area of land not been referred to in the cabinet report? Why is it necessary, and has the sustainability appraisal, site assessment summary, and officer's recommendations considered and evaluated the impacts of this extra land in the allocation at Buck Barn as against other site possibilities?

[29:02] Chairman: That is a different question from the one that you originally posed.

[29:05] Dave Tidy: Well, I believe it follows on, because –

[29:07] Chairman: I don't.

Dave Tidy [continued]: –questioning whether it would go through Regulation 19? Thank you.

[29:18] Chairman: We'll come back to you in writing.

[29:20] [Inaudible comment off microphone]

[29:20] Dave Tidy: Thank you.

[29:33] Chairman: Simon Meagan?

[29:35] Simon Meagan: [Off microphone] I don't have an additional question.

[29:38] Chairman: Thank you. Nikki Pepper?

[29:48] Nikki Pepper: Thank you. Is there going to be an inquiry into the assertions made by Lord Lytton in his letter to councillors that there is a lack of objectivity, and bias, in council decision making before the vote on the 28th of July?

[30:10] Chairman: I'm sorry, but I mean that is a totally different question than you raised originally.

[30:15] Nikki Pepper: I did refer to Lord Lytton's letter and some of the things he said.

[30:19] Cllr Lambert [?]: I think that would have to be an independent assessment.

[30:23] Chairman: Lord Lytton raised many things in his letter.

[30:26] [Inaudible comment off microphone]

[30:27] Chairman: It is a totally different question and I will not allow it. Sir Charles Burrell?

[30:41] Sir Charles Burrell: I'm hoping this does follow on. It's really about biodiversity net gain and Thakeham Homes' submitting of that report. This is following on from really thinking about green infrastructure and nature recovery areas. Thakeham Homes has submitted a BNG report in support of its Regulation 18 consultation process, response, sorry. It's noted that this was based on a smaller site than is currently identified in the Regulation 19 draft. Further, and critically, it reports that despite attributing the highest possible target conditions, only a net gain of 2.7% is identified. Has the council compared this against assessments carried out for other potential site allocations? How does the council justify its acceptance when the Environment Bill and Regulation 19 Plan Policy 30 requires a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain? Note that Thakeham Homes, in its wrapped-around advert for the County Times claims to be able to deliver an incredible 20% biodiversity net gain on site. With no ecological evidence of this back-up, to back this up, are you prepared, councillors, to live with the consequences of this decision in favour of an unsustainable, unpopular, environmentally disastrous development, and allow yourselves to be blemished by such greenwash?

[32:22] Cllr Lambert: Thank you. The site has been inspected by an independent planning inspector, and he states that the biodiversity net gain is 10%, yes.

[32:35] [Inaudible comments off microphone]

[32:39] Cllr Lambert: Yes. And through the examination process it will be inspected again to make sure that this can be achieved.

[32:50] Chairman: Thank you. That's questions from members of the public. [Sound interrupted for 6 seconds]. Item on the agenda is the Local Development Scheme: January 2021 reports in your packs and to consider the report from cabinet member for planning, pages 30 to 34 in the report.

[33:22] Cllr Lambert: It is a legal requirement that all local authorities prepare and publish documents which set out the timetable for the preparation of their local plan and other key planning



documentation. This is known as a Local Development Scheme. The previous Local Development Scheme was updated in March 2021 to reflect the fact that the outcome of work with statutory consultees needed to be progressed in more detail and that more time was required to conclude those discussions. These discussions have been ongoing, but resourcing of third-party organisations, together with the need for HDC to ensure that its emerging local plan evidence base is given the necessary scrutiny. The timetable for the Local Development Scheme for the plan will have to change by a few weeks. The Local Development Scheme has, therefore, been reviewed and updated to reflect these changes. It sets out the periods where the draft plan document will be published for comment, as well as the date when the local plan will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination. I must emphasise that although this documents sets out the local plan timetable, it is not in itself a planning policy document. To ensure that the council meet our legal obligations, I am recommended that the cabinet agree to the publication of this timetable. Documentation will be made available on the council's website to ensure that the timescales which are set out can be viewed by our residents, stakeholders, and central government. I would note that a typographical amendment be made on page 21 of the agenda to reflect that submission to the Inspector will be in January 2022.

[35:07] Chairman: Thank you, Lynn. Any questions from cabinet members? Councillor Circus.

[35:22] Cllr Circus: Well, it's not so much a question as a comment. Incidentally, chairman, can you ... are we going on the small numbers or the big numbers when we're talking about pages? Just so that we can be clear, because I've got page 19 in big letters, big numbers, and page 11 in small numbers. Which one? Just so that we all have the same benchmark in terms of referring to pages.

[35:59] [Inaudible comments off microphone]

[36:02] Cllr Circus: You haven't got either? [Laughs]

[36:04] Chairman: I don't have either of those.

[36:06] Cllr Circus: Oh, right. Well ... Well, okay. Well, I'll refer to the big numbers, which are page 19. I don't know if that ... This is the comment about ...

[36:27] Chairman: My copy has actually got, if you want to borrow it, the page [inaudible – over-speaking voices]

[36:31] Cllr Circus: You haven't got any numbers?

[36:32] Chairman: No, but it's got the big numbers on the bottom.

[36:33] Cllr Circus: Right, okay. It's page 19, then. Legal challenge. I wanted to emphasise the point that's made on page 19 that the risk of legal challenge will be minimised by ensuring that the DPDs are sound, are founded on robust evidence base, with duty to cooperate matters on community engagement that is well audited. I just wanted to make the point that it has been assumed in some quarters that if the Buck Barn site is included there will be a legal challenge, a judicial review application. Well, maybe there will. I think it is only fair to say that I know for a fact that if the Adversane site is included, there will also be a legal challenge and they have somebody of some wealth and position who has the ability to bank roll such a legal challenge. And I have to say, as a

lawyer, given the current state of the evidence I would have thought a legal challenge to the Adversane site being included is much more likely to succeed than if the Buck Barn site is included. But I think it is only fair for the people to appreciate the fact that if they think Adversane is a non-legal challenge option, it isn't. Thank you.

[38:13] Chairman: Thank you, Councillor Circus. Any other cabinet members got any comments, and questions of ...? Councillor Lambert? Other members? Councillor Mitchell.

[38:35] Mitchell: Chairman, a couple of points. In respect of Rookwood, it's very good that that doesn't appear to be within this Regulation 19 consultation, but I think it's regretful that I didn't see in the 500 or so pages of policy to protect it as a green lung. So, between now and Full Council is it possible the cabinet could reflect on that and see if there is a draft policy that could be put before council to protect that in perpetuity within planning policy? And secondly, perhaps picking up on Councillor Philip Circus' point, would it not be better, when we're looking at the sites that are proposed in cabinet's draft regulation consultation document – which if voted on would go to council at the end of this month – would it not be better to put other sites with the evidence base in, and then council can chose, and then if there is or there isn't a legal challenge, at least council will have had all the evidence on all the sites, and then they can a decision rather than have a Hobson's Choice of a narrow. Because there are three or four sites that could equally be put before council I'd suggest. Thank you.

[39:50] Chairman: Well, basically, the cabinet's paper which we're talking about tonight talks about the timetable and, when we look at the contents of the paper, officers have studied all the sites and all the evidence is in the packs and stuff and, therefore, that is why, therefore, cabinet is proposing the course of action that it is. And it is up to cabinet to propose a course of action and not let it be cherry-picked. It is far better to have a definite plan in place and to take it forward. Councillor Bradnum.

[40:25] Cllr Bradnum. Thank you. Can I just ask – I do have a proper question, but can I just ask first of all, please, that now we've seen all of the evidence in the full report from officers on the proposed plan, are we now free to speak without fear of predetermination?

[40:43] Chairman: That's one for the monitoring officer. I'll point out at the moment that, actually, we're not actually talking about predetermination, we're talking about the timetable in the plan, we're not talking about the content of the plan. So, the question doesn't really apply at this point.

[41:04] Cllr Bradnum: Okay, thank you. Can I just ask you a question, then, in that case would be my concern with the Buck Barn proposal is because –

[41:16] Chairman: Councillor Bradnum, are we talking timetable or content? If your question is about the timetable—

[41:21] Cllr Bradmun: I'm talking about the timetable.

Chairman [continued]: –it's fine. Content comes later.

[41:25] Cllr Bradnum: Oh, sorry.

[41:30] Chairman: Thank you. Councillor Chowen.

[41:32] Cllr Chowen: Yes, thank you, Leader. Well, this is really difficult position that you in the cabinet and leadership find themselves in, because you're having to push through a plan that some of you have had perhaps little contact with or involvement. And, actually, it must be very difficult to pick up the baton from a previous leadership, because you haven't been really involved with it in detail and also you probably feel a little awkward in yourselves taking on a new job and making a decision, because collective responsibility and being part of a team sort of drives you into doing these things. But, this is a really very important decision which you are about to make which will affect our district for many years to come. And whereas in a year or two, or even a few months, you will have the confidence and experience to make decisions much easier than you perhaps find yourselves doing at the moment. And so I do have a lot of sympathy for you. It's rather sad that such a big decision is to be driven by a timetable and not by better reasons than that, and I gather the timetable is a concern over the five-year plan, but from what I was told when I was in cabinet the five-year plan is probably very dodgy at the moment, because appeals are in the process and this has drawn out. I thought we were going to be making a decision before Christmas. Then I was told we were going to be making a decision in the spring, and here we are in the heart of summer getting close to finally making a decision. Now, I don't want to blame anyone for that, it's probably just the consequences of the whole process and the additional things that government have asked us, but it just goes to show how difficult the decision that you are going to make as cabinet in recommending this. And I think to be driven – I mean I can't believe any business is always very careful when they are driven by a timetable, because there is a tendency that you will make a wrong decision if you are doing it against the clock.

[43:45] Chairman: Thank you, Councillor Chowen. Thank you for your sympathy. Are there any questions?

[43:51] Cllr Chowen: Sorry about that. Wasn't there no question? No.

[43:54] Chairman: Thank you. Any other questions from members about the timetable? No? Do you want to ...?

[44:08] Cllr Lambert: [Off microphone] Local plan.

[44:10] Chairman: So, all cabinet approves? Yep.

[44:13] Cllr Lambert: [Off microphone] I need to go through the local plan now.

[44:15] Chairman: Okay. So, now we'll do the local plan.

[44:20] Cllr Lambert: As you are all aware, it is a legal requirement that all local authorities prepare a local plan that sets out a strategy to deliver economic, housing, social, and environmental needs. The NPPF, or National Planning Policy Framework, published by the government, sets out the requirements that a local plan must adhere to. This document requires that the council prepare policies which are evidence-based. In addition, we must also identify enough land to deliver against housing targets which are set by the government. In addition there is a legal duty to cooperate with other authorities on cross-boundary matters. The NPPF requires that we also contribute to meeting the unmet housing needs from other areas in so far as this is possible. The documentation before you tonight sets out the recommended approach to meeting the requirements placed upon us by government. The documentation includes the draft text of the plan and an outline of the key

evidence base that has been prepared to support the plan, including the sustainability appraisal, a habitats regulation assessment, transport, viability, and outcomes from the site assessment process, which considers the possible development sites which have been proposed to the council for development. The local plan will have many benefits including policies to bring increased levels of affordable homes than is set out in our current HDPF – up to 45%. The plan will also help first-time buyers get on the housing ladder by providing first homes. The plan also contains a number of policies which require strong protections for the environment. This includes a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain and requirements to ensure that new development deliver net zero carbon targets. Without a plan in place we cannot seek these enhanced requirements. I do, however, recognise that the council is facing an unprecedented housing target, even without the duty to cooperate. Our own housing target is an unprecedented 897 homes a year. Over the course of the preparation of the local plan the council has taken every opportunity to seek to reduce these targets, and has written to central government on numerous occasions. Unfortunately, we have not been successful in reducing these numbers. I realise that by taking the local plan forward we face a very difficult choice in identifying land for development. However, the consequences are clear: without a plan, the council will not be able to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply in the future, meaning that the council will be at risk from speculative housing applications which are difficult to defend at appeal. The result is sporadic development across the district which does not deliver the same level of services and facilities as planned development. This will increase the pressure on the existing infrastructure in our district. By having a plan, the council will be in a position where it can determine applications, deliver the services and facilities we need, deliver environmental benefits, and affordable housing. Although it will not be an easy decision, I recommend that the cabinet agree that the recommendation set out in this report go to a full meeting of the council on July the 28th.

[47:57] Chairman: Thank you, Lynn. Any questions from cabinet members? Councillor Circus.

[48:07] Cllr Circus: Thank you, Leader. I've got some questions and I got some comments. I don't know of what stage you want both; whether you want them together or what. The first question is a point about West Chiltington and the number of ... page 233 it says that "the following sites are allocated for the provision of at least 36 homes". That seems to me to be an increase in the number of homes that we were originally talking about in relation to West Chiltington. I wonder whether that is an increase, and if it is an increase, what's brought that about? Is it because we're no longer including Rookwood within the plan and therefore we have to find room for houses in some of the smaller sites? I don't know, Leader, whether you want me to take these questions one at a time, or I'll just run through them?

[49:25] Chairman: I'll ask my cabinet member.

[49:28] Cllr Lambert [?]: Catharine Howe will answer for you.

[49:31] Catherine Howe: Thank you.

[49:35] Cllr Circus: Do you want me to run through all of them? Sorry.

[49:39] Catherine Howe: It might be easier just to take them one-by-one otherwise I'll be scribbling them all down and have to go back to them. So, I think if I pick that one, I think. So, essentially, as

you know obviously we consulted at Regulation 18 and there was a housing target set at that point. Obviously there was feedback from that consultation from site promoters, from obviously the public, and obviously officers have undertaken further site assessment work as to what sites may or may not be suitable in light of that evidence. In addition, as you highlighted, obviously housing numbers have changed and different proposals have come forward since that time. And, obviously, to meet our housing targets that have been put forward by government I mean, obviously, we need to make sure there are sufficient sites in locations across the district and those sites in West Chiltonton have been identified as ones that, in officers' view, are suitable and available and achievable.

[50:38] Cllr Circus: Thank you very much. If I could go on to the page 322, this is the strategic site assessment for Adversane. Can I ask why – unless I, in doing a little bit of modest speed reading, I missed it – why there's no mention of the fact that the A29 quite regularly – well, I say regularly – does periodically flood, which results in the A29 being closed and traffic having to be diverted. Since you refer to other aspects of the A29, I'm surprised that doesn't appear to be in this analysis. And I think when I raised this before somebody, I think I got the response "I'm sure something could be done about it," which doesn't strike me as really addressing whether, you know, the fundamental issue as to what could be done, and whether it is feasible to address that issue, or whether it is in fact a major minus point in terms on the Adversane site.

[52:22] Barbara Childs (Director of Place): Perhaps I could assist to answer this one. Some issues were raised about flooding on the A29 at Swan Corner with us, which we have raised with the County Council, and they have investigated and it was them that fed back to us that they thought a solution could be had, they're looking into it and they're going to respond to us to see what those are; there are localised flooding issues that they thought was because of the mitigation measures that are already put in, the drainage that exists there, that there was a failure in the existing infrastructure which they are investigating further for us. They haven't come back to us as yet.

[53:10] Cllr Circus: So we don't know what their analysis will show or not show?

[53:15] Barbara Childs: Not at the moment, but they did say that they hadn't got regular incidences of the road being closed, so that's interesting that that's not what you are reporting back to us.

[53:28] Cllr Circus: Well, I'm sure that the Leader can probably vouch for the occasions when the A29 is actually closed. I remember it the last time it was closed it was closed for some time wasn't it, Leader?

[53:44] Chairman: A number of days.

[53:45] Cllr Circus: A number of days, yes. Okay, I wonder whether I could have a view on this: quite a number of people have written to us have spoken about nature corridor, and I looked it up – I did some research today as to what's meant by a nature corridor – and it's quite clear that one of the ways you can achieve a nature corridor which is the construction of a green bridge, which I think has been put forward by the developers in respect of the Buck Barn site. I wonder whether I could have a comment on whether that's an effective way of creating a nature corridor, because I can't see ... I mean people, some of the correspondence seem to be suggesting there is already a nature corridor and I can't see, frankly, how that can exist with the existence of the 272 and the A24. Unless, of

course, the wildlife queues up and presses the button for the pedestrian crossing and waits for the lights to change, which – I'm sorry, I'm being silly – but there isn't a nature corridor there—

[55:17] Unknown [Cllr Chowen?]: [Off microphone] Unbelievable.

Cllr Circus [continued]: –or there is no nature corridor there at the moment, and one is being proposed by the developer. I wonder whether I could get a comment on whether that suggestion has been investigated and to what extent it's felt that addresses the issue?

[55:54] Barbara Childs: The developers have proposed rather late in the day the green bridge, which is being looked at. And your question about whether it can be effective, from the research that we have done it looks in other parts of the world they have been effective, providing that they are in the right place with the right safeguards and the right level of usage and protection of usage of them. So, there are circumstances elsewhere where they have been effective. Whether it would be effective in this particular location is something which that work would still be ongoing. But, obviously any work would be subject to an independent examination by the Inspector in any case.

[56:45] Cllr Circus: Thank you very much. My last question is that it's been suggested that if a period of time elapsed there would be evidence of viability coming forward on the Adversane site. I can't see, personally, how that can be. I can see how some ideas or some proposition can be put forward, or some propositions put forward by the developer, but how can we know now that any evidence brought forward by September, or whatever, will actually pass muster in terms of the investigation that Strategic Planning will conduct into that evidence. Or why are we assuming that not only will the evidence be forthcoming, but it will actually pass an evaluation process?

[57:58] Barbara Childs: I'm afraid that any evaluation of a new site would be considerably longer delay than the September date which you just motioned. And the reason for that is that there are a number of pieces of evidence that are reliant upon on another. So, for example, a transport assessment work would then need to feed into the habitat regulation assessments, which is a legal requirement for any Regulation 19 document. So, there are a number of interdependencies on anything. So, even if the evidence could be found, there are a number of hoops that need to be gone through, and I'm afraid that the timescale would be very much longer than the September date that you suggested.

[58:44] Cllr Circus: So we don't know whether satisfactory evidence will arise at the end of that process?

[58:49] Barbara Childs: The evidence is not simply on the site itself, Councillor Circus, it's on the cumulative impact of this site when it's taken into account for the entire housing strategy. And that evidence simply is not available at the moment; we do not have it and we do not know what that answer would be.

[59:10] Cllr Circus: Yep.

[59:11] Chairman: Thank you, Councillor Circus. Councillor Landeryou.

[59:15] Cllr Landeryou: Thank you, Leader. Just two very simple questions to the officers, please. When Councillor Lambert was talking earlier about the effects of not having a plan, affordable

housing was mentioned and we are looking in our plan for 45% affordable housing. If we have no plan what happens to the 45%? Do we have no control whatsoever the number of affordable houses that are built?

[59:47] Barbara Childs: Yes, thank you for the question. The issue being that the existing Horsham District Planning Framework has a target of 35% affordable housing. The new plan as it's proposed and is in your papers for consideration for council later this month is for significantly higher; it's for a majority of the sites, the smaller sites, to be for 45%, which would make a significant boost to the availability of affordable housing in this district, because we have so many smaller sites come forward. We would not be able in the absence of a Regulation 19 document, any speculative application that came forward we would not be able to apply those affordable housing policies – we would need to use the existing policies in the HDPF, which is 35%.

[60:37] Cllr Landeryou: So we would still be able to pass the 35% and get it?

[60:42] Barbara Childs: We would be able to, but not the significantly enhanced requirements which are in the Regulation 19 document.

[60:51] Cllr Landeryou: Thank you very much. The other question I've got is that last month at council we made ten new Neighbourhood Plans. Without a plan, what happens to all the Neighbourhood Plans?

[61:08] Catherine Howe: Unknown: Neighbourhood Plans will obviously all remain in place if they obviously have their plan period which I believe for the most part is to 2031, sometimes to 2030. The issue that arises is that some of those Plans obviously make allocations for houses, some don't. If there is a situation where there is no five-year land supply where there is no housing allocation in a particular Neighbourhood Plan, then effectively they are at risk of speculative applications in that parish straight away. If there is a three-year land supply and the Plan is less than three years of age, then there is some protection – two years of age, sorry – there is some protection for that period; thereafter then obviously speculative applications could come in irrespective of whether it was three-years or five-years supply.

[62:06] Cllr Landeryou: So if a parish then made a Plan, basically on policy and not on allocating sites, that Plan will be null and void if we have no plan?

[62:18] Catherine Howe: The other policies aren't null and void, so if for example they've got a policy on biodiversity or design, those would still apply to any speculative application that came in, but obviously they couldn't defend those speculative applications in terms of not being able to say, well, if they haven't got housing allocations in there, they wouldn't be able to say "no" to those houses in that particular parish.

[62:42] Cllr Landeryou: So they would be open to speculative [inaudible]? Thank you.

[62:49] Chairman: Thank you, Councillor Landeryou. Councillor Vickers.

[62:52] Cllr Vickers: Yes. Thank you, Chairman. I'd like to begin by thanking the cabinet member for presenting such a clear analysis of where we are trying to get to. Making a local plan is never easy, and this time is no exception; it was always going to be difficult. Horsham District is under enormous

pressure; the government requires us to build a huge number of homes – 897 for our own needs and a significant number to meet Crawley's unmet need and some for our coastal authorities. Last time at examination the inspector required us to add another 150 homes for Crawley under the duty to cooperate. We must again accommodate a proportion of their unmet needs this time. Sadly, we don't have any greenbelt protection, very little AONB and SSSIs, so 1,200 homes a year is shown to be deliverable though our housing market study. As the cabinet member stated earlier, it's a statutory requirement for us to have an up-to-date plan. Without that plan we are at risk of a five-year land supply deficit. And, believe it or not – and I know some people don't believe this – we would lose control and get speculative development which we would find hard to defend. And we have an infrastructure deficit currently and that would add to the problems going forward. There are a number of benefits to having a plan, not least the fact that we don't have a Gypsy and Traveller policy currently, and we're losing lots of appeals. If we have a plan we will allocate enough sites so the Gypsy sites will be safe in other parts of the district. I actually represent a ward where significant development is proposed in this local plan. It's very difficult for me as a local member, but having no plan will not stop that development, so I'm urging everyone to think very carefully and support the proposition. Thank you, Chairman.

[64:52] Chairman: Thank you, Councillor Vickers. Councillor Brown.

[64:56] Cllr Brown: Thank you, Leader. I'd like to ask are we not facing a double whammy? I mean, much has been said about housing, and rightly so, we're facing some extremely difficult choices and unpopular decisions. But, the double whammy that we also face is around economic development and in particular our recovery from Covid and how the district becomes more resilient and successful in the future. And I'd like to thank the officers for their excellent work in the planning work in terms of Chapter 5 around economic development. I'd just like to bring out a couple of points from there if I may. Around the shortage of business space we have – employment space – in our district, not only a shortage, though, but also the quality of it. Much of it's quite poor that we currently have, it's the wrong type, it's out of date. We need to bring in more investment. And is it not true that we have an ambition and a strategy in this council of bringing more inward investment into the area? So we have a situation where 40% of our working, adult-aged workers actually commute out of the district. So we need to think about that carefully. We need inward investment into the district and we need to recover from Covid, and we need to support our businesses and indeed our working-aged people. So, the double whammy that I'm talking about is that if we don't have a plan and we face speculative development from developers all over the district, do we not also lose the benefits that are proposed in this plan in terms of economic development? Would there not be a financial impact, and I'd like to understand a bit more about that. We had a question from a Billingshurst resident tonight talking about the needs of our sports and recreation for example, and I think that raises an excellent point, because there is money already ring-fenced in a lot of cases from development that the district's already taken, and we should use that money wisely, and we should support our districts. But, it's also the case that future development from this plan will also bring further funds, and those funds can be used quite successfully to bring the type of community sports and recreation and other infrastructure projects like the gentleman was talking about earlier. So, I'd like to remind our members of that and make sure that we bear that in mind as we look to support this plan going forwards. So, I'd just like to ask the officers if that's the case that there is a risk in terms of what we would lose should we not have a plan, and is it not the case that we need this plan to bring forward our strategic objectives in terms of economic development and Covid recovery? Thank you.



[68:01] Barbara Childs: Yes, that's absolutely right, Councillor Brown. There are a number of benefits of the policies within the plan, you know, completely separate from the housing strategy. The economic development side is one key strand, and particularly, as you say, as we find our way out of Covid. So, absolutely those benefits are to be had, it's a very strong economic development proposals and strategy within the document, I believe much stronger than in any plan that we have had thus far. It links entirely with the economic development strategy that we have as a district, and would help fulfil those ambitions and objectives in our corporate plan. And you're also correct in terms of new development bringing forward new investment in infrastructure as well.

[68:59] Chairman: Any other cabinet members? Oh, Councillor Vickers again.

[69:02] Cllr Vickers: Thank you. I meant to say there were also a number of good policies in there which we haven't mentioned, not least the climate change policies which I'm sure we're all keen on that green agenda. So if we don't have a plan we won't be able to use those policies as well. Thank you.

[69:19] Chairman: Thank you, Councillor Vickers. Councillor Noel.

[69:23] Cllr Noel: Thank you, Leader. I've got a very, very simple comment to make on this. One of the questioners from the public earlier on was referring to the Nature Recovery Network. This is an incredibly important piece of work and I'm very, very enthusiastic about it and I'm very anxious to get it established, especially in this district which is already rich in biodiversity and cannot afford to lose any more, because we are now losing biodiversity at an alarming rate. It's absolutely essential the Nature Recovery Network is established. At the moment it's an aspirational piece of work and we can't actually complete it until the local plan is put into place. For that reason I believe that the local plan is paramount, because it includes the Nature Recovery Network and, therefore, we have to agree to it as soon as we possibly can. I know that one of the earlier questioners from the councillors was whether or not we were being pushed into this in an untimely manner. I believe we've looked at all the aspects, not just the planning, but all the other aspirations within the local plan, which include an immense amount of attention to the biodiversity problem and the loss of biodiversity problems that we have in this area. And, therefore, I would back the plan as it is, because we need to address all the other items, apart from planning, which are referred to within this local plan. Thank you.

[71:20] Chairman: Thank you, Councillor Noel. I'll open the floor to councillors, other councillors. Councillor Milne. Oh, sorry [inaudible] for Councillor Milne.

[71:33] Cllr Milne: Thank you, Chair. A number of Lib Dem councillors, including myself, are concerned about whether Rookwood has been as comprehensively removed from the plan as we expected. Now, we believe this could be fixed fairly easily either by a few small deletions or text changes in the plan itself, or possibly by a public statement by yourself or a representative of the council. Now, whether or not we're right to have these doubts and questions isn't really the point. The fact is until we are sure of the situation it might affect our ability to support the local plan on the 28th, which I'm sure you would very much like us to do. Therefore, would you be agreeable to an informal meeting with a number of Lib Dem councillors in order to clarify the Rookwood situation and remove all possible doubt from our minds. Thank you.

[72:39] Chairman: Thank you. Well, Councillor Hogben and myself made statements about the use of Rookwood and the possible future uses of the Rookwood piece of land. I'm quite happy for informal discussions to take place over that.

[72:57] Cllr Milne: That would be great. Thank you very much indeed.

[73:02] Chairman: Councillor Bradnum.

[73:05] Cllr Bradnum: Thank you, chairman. I wanted to ask a question about the Buck Barn site. With the adjustment in the number of homes being proposed at Buck Barn from 3,500 down to 2,100 – a reduction of some 40% – will there be sufficient funding for the 94.9 million allocated for the village hall, the neighbourhood hall, the new transport hub, the two primary schools, the new secondary school, the new indoor sports hall, health facility and pharmacy, pubs and restaurants, massive road improvements and the new access points. All this and the green bridge proposal on top. This 94 million equates to £44,950 per house at 2,100, and I wonder if we think that the jobs to be provided on the site will be sufficiently well paid to cover this cost in addition to the building costs. I feel that this is a very, very long wishlist and I'd like to know what assurances can be given that all of these things have been accounted for and I'd also like to know about the medical facilities to be provided, because at the moment people from this site would all have to go to Southwater to see a doctor, Cowfold is full, and Billingshurst do not cover the Buck Barn area – and that is a fact, because I have made investigations with the surgeries. And, finally, should the planning inspector refuse to sanction Buck Barn, is there a Plan B?

[74:54] Chairman: Thank you, Councillor Bradnum. Before we try and answer that very long question, you raised another one initially on predetermination, which I think was a very good question, so I'll hand over on that one first to our Monitoring Officer.

[75:10] Monitoring Officer: Thank you, Leader. As the leader has already said, Councillor Bradnum, you are absolutely right that it was a very valid question with regard to you mentioned predetermination I'm assuming, and the good news is that that with that question you've kept well within the boundaries, but what I was wanting to say before you raised your question I would advise all members really with regard to predetermination that it is right, as you have done so, to raise the concerns of your residents and also those concerns of your own; absolutely that's what you are here to do, but you still do need to be mindful with regard to giving the impression that you have a closed mind and that you are predetermined. And we also need to remember that we will and we are going to full debate on the 28th of July where members will have a chance to have their say. So, I just wanted to clarify that point. But, again, you kept well within the boundaries of predetermination in asking your question. So, thank you, leader.

[76:15] Cllr Bradnum: Thank you.

[76:16] Chairman: Thank you both. And with that I will hand over for the answer.

[76:25] Barbara Childs: Just wait for the feedback to disappear. So the proposal is indeed for 2,100 homes, it was put forward by the developers for a new settlement of some 3,000 to 3,500 homes. However, our assessment of the delivery rates is that 2,100 would come forward within the plan period and, therefore that is what the allocation is recommended for inclusion at that level. All of the proposals for infrastructure which are included on the agenda pages 210, 211, 212 have all been

through a viability assessment by Aspinal Verde [sp?], so it's the independent assessment which is available on the website, which has confirmed that that infrastructure can be provided by the level of development that is proposed. And your specific question about primary healthcare provision, you'll see on page 210 the requirement there of the safeguarding of an appropriately sized and located area of land for the future provision of primary healthcare and, obviously Councillor Bradnum, I know that you are aware that the council doesn't provide such facilities itself, it can only facilitate that provision, and we do that by making sure that the land is available and also some financial contribution, and that's what will be done through this provision, albeit, because we're not the provider of such facilities, obviously we are not able to guarantee what shape or form that might be in.

[78:16] Cllr Bradnum: Chairman, may I ask a supplementary?

[78:18] Chairman: Yes, please.

[78:20] Cllr Bradnum: Just coming back to one of the other promises that have been made in all of these documents I've had from Thakeham Homes on Buck Barn, as I've outlined just now, there are a lot of facilities, schools, all sorts of things in these documents and I would really like to know whether those would be likely to come to fruition? Thank you.

[78:49] Barbara Childs: Whether there is any difference between the promotional material which you have received from the developers and what is actually a requirement in the policy that is before you, I suspect there are some differences, because the developer was looking at a very much larger amount of development within the plan period. However, what we have tested is the provisions that are actually within the policy – draft policy – before you on page 210. And those are what have been assessed and we have got confirmation that all of those provisions can be made, and the development would remain viable and deliverable. But, that will be assessed independently by the Planning Inspector, of course, through the examination process.

[79:38] Chairman: Councillor Mitchell.

[79:40] Cllr Mitchell: A couple of questions if I may, Leader. On page 34—

[79:43] Chairman: Can we do them one at a time, please?

[79:46] Cllr Mitchell: May I ask two, but just on the same—

[79:49] Leader: Yes, that's what I'm saying.

Cllr Mitchell [continued]: Thank you. First one; page 346, which is Appendix 6, once again asking about Rookwood. First of all, Leader and the Chief Executive was nodding to an informal meeting with the Liberal Democrats. The part of Rookwood – a third of the land approximately to just under a half – of course is in the ward that Councillor Peter Burgess and myself represent, so if there's any further discussions going forward about Rookwood I think the local members would also be interested. But, in terms of sharpening up this wording which has been raised, at the very end of that box on page 346 – internal page 30 of the document in question – it says "et cetera, et cetera, in the context of leisure provision on this site, it is not currently available for development and therefore can't be allocated in the local plan". So, really I'm looking for some policies that remove

vagueness about currently, so it's crystal clear that it says it's not available, will not be available, and will be leisure and will be able to be protected. So, that is my first question, please.

[80:57] Barbara Childs: The phraseology used is that that is included within the planning guidance about not being currently available; it's a phrase that is used through that. And what that means is that for a site to be genuinely deliverable it needs to be available, achievable, and, of course, it's made absolutely clear in the statement that you've just read out that this site is not available and, therefore, it would not be able to be put forward by the inspector at examination for example, because it simply cannot be brought forward through the plan; it is not available for development.

[81:39] Cllr Mitchell: Thank you, Leader. Thank you, Director. On another question – this is on policy – Strategic Policy 28 on settlement coalescence, so that's page 146 of cabinet's papers, or internal page 90 of the document in question. Of course, during the last plan process, other councillors – Kitchen, myself, and others – were very concerned we lost our then policy of strategic gaps, which we had between Horsham and Crawley, and Southwater and Horsham. Were cabinet tonight to vote on the papers before it concerning Buck Barn, what I don't see at paragraph 7.26 is any concern that there might be between coalescence of that development, either at 2,100 now or in the future, because of course the aspiration of the developer may be for more – they've mentioned 3,000 or so. But, this particular paragraph seems to highlight concerns particularly with regard to between Horsham and Crawley, Southwater and Horsham, and West Chiltington Common and West Chiltington village. But, I think there must surely be some concern that were that development to be proposed and adopted by an inspector, to avoid some sort of ribbon development going from the north of any development at Buck Barn touching the south of Southwater, and the north of Southwater touching Broadbridge Heath, and Broadbridge Heath touching the south of Horsham, and to north Horsham, and so it goes on almost up to Croydon and into London; so, what I don't see is that. And in the shaded box it talks about protection between hamlets and existing developments – does that apply to buck Barn, or is Cowfold and West Chiltington judged so sufficiently far away from Horsham that that area of agricultural land and landscaping couldn't possibly be considered to be an area that if there were development that could lead to coalescence? Thank you.

[83:53] Catherine Howe: I'll pick that one up. I think with regard to paragraph 7.26, obviously you've highlighted in some of your further questioning that there's other areas in the district that are at risk potentially from coalescence, and really they're identified as examples, but they're not meant to be exhaustive. So, that's that point. And then in terms of the policy itself, again the policy is district-wide, it's not intended to be, you know, between Horsham and Crawley specifically or other settlements, you know, West Chiltington and West Chiltington Common. It's again meant to be district-wide and that's our intention of how that's been read, so this is a policy that obviously is broadly similar to one that's been in the Horsham District Planning Framework that has been used successfully in planning applications to date and we don't see that that couldn't be carried forward as it stands.

[84:51] Cllr Mitchell: Thank you.

[84:52] Chairman: Councillor Burgess.

[84:53] [Sound interrupted for 39 seconds]

[85:32] Cllr K Burgess: ... meeting it was stated that if anybody felt that they couldn't support the local plan they needed to speak to the leader and explain their reasons. How does that affect our predetermination? I'm asking the Monitoring Officer, please.

[85:52] Monitoring Officer: Thank you, Councillor Burgess. With regard to what is, and what goes on at party and group meetings, I have no jurisdiction with regard to that. What I can do is I can advise members when they come to me and they ask those questions. I can also advise the leader of this council, but again what I will say is I will echo what I said before and if anyone has any concerns then they should come to me and raise those questions rather than in possibly a public forum, but, you know, I will echo the advice that I have given. I am aware that ... I'm aware of the e-mails and communications that the Leader, when he asked me, and I'm involved with that. But, when it comes to party political group meetings and what goes on, I have very little jurisdiction in all honesty and, again, I will repeat what I've already said to Councillor Bradnum. It is important for members to come to the meeting with an open mind and it's right, again, for them to raise concerns that they have of their ward residents and their own concerns. And, again, I'm here to advise on that. But, again, when it's party political group meetings, you know, that is not my remit; and if there are concerns, members can come to me and I can advise, you know, at the right time. I think that is probably all I can say, but certainly that it's important that people bear that in mind and they make the right decision. And as from what you have said, it sounds as if the Leader has asked you to go to him and discuss any issues that you do have, so, again, I would support that 100%. Thank you.

[88:11] Chairman: Councillor Fletcher.

[88:15] Cllr Fletcher: Thank you. Our young people, and people who work in our district in lower-paying jobs especially, desperately need to have more affordable housing, but the housing numbers that are being pushed onto us are quite unprecedented and many of those houses will not deliver for local needs. It will cause substantial damage, as well as bringing benefits, so I'm sure that none of us want to commit to higher housing number than we need to, or to end up having to build more houses than we are committed to in order to meet the targets due to technicalities. So, bearing that in mind I note that in the housing numbers within the document that the proposed level of duty to cooperate in the early years in the draft local plan appears to be greater than Crawley's actual need for those years. I also note an intention to confirm a supply and, therefore, build a 10% buffer, but therefore plan for a 10% buffer. Both these things could end up with us delivering more houses than we might technically need to. What opportunity will there be for further member briefing on the details of these numbers, and discussion about them before this comes to council on the 28th? If it is shown that there is still scope to minimise our commitment in terms of total housing number, what could be done about that, both before the Regulation 19 document goes out to consultation and, later on, between that and submission to the inspector?

[90:14] [Sound interrupted for 17 seconds]

[90:33] Barbara Childs: Sorry, Councillor Fletcher. I was just waiting for that feedback to go. The comments you made about the contribution from Crawley's unmet needs, that's something that has been looked at quite carefully in terms of our trajectory, which you will see within the documentation. However, the point you raised about the need for sort of further clarification, we're happy to do that and to have an informal discussion, or to set that out in a note if that would be helpful?

[91:09] Cllr Fletcher: I think it's obviously good to have things written down, but it would also be good to have the discussion.

[91:18] Barbara Childs: Okay.

[91:19] Chairman: Thank you.

[91:20] Cllr Fletcher: And in terms of possible flexibility between now and submission which is, after all, some time away, what are the answers on that?

[91:32] Barbara Childs: The situation there has changed from when we prepared the last local plan. Once the council has agreed its policy, which it is considering on the 28th of July, that cannot be amended – cannot be further amended – unless it were to be reported through cabinet and council process. And by that I mean even minor or indeed factual amendments. But, however, one way of addressing these issues is to prepare a schedule of prepared modification so that the council makes to the inspector, we ask the inspector to consider those and he or she will determine whether they are agreed or not; generally those sort of factual updates are agreed in a straightforward manner, but any changes would need to be agreed through the examination process directly with the independent inspector.

[92:34] Cllr Fletcher: Thank you.

[92:37] Chairman: Thank you. So, Lynn, do you want to ...

[92:40] [Inaudible comments off microphone]

[92:44] Chairman: So, do ... Oh, Jonathan.

[92:46] Cllr Chowen: Yes, Leader. Can't let you off that one easily, not over an issue which I gave, I made a change of my position on. It's interesting listening to some of the responses from the officers, because they talk about us using the current plan at the moment, because we do have 35% affordable homes and if we don't have a new plan from what I gather we won't get the 45% affordable, but we can fall back on the 35%. It would be interesting to know from the cabinet member for housing, of that 35% that we've had in our plan since this plan started, what percentage have we actually built out? And I gather it's quite low, but actually even our low is still a lot better. So, actually upping the stake when we've never achieved it does seem to be admirable, but is it actually achievable? And also, if we've got a current local plan, do we have to be that fearful, because the local plan has currently served us well, and protected us, and we will still have a local plan even if we don't adopt this plan, because we will have the current local plan. And I have a question for, on economic development was that the interesting thing about Adversane was that it does have a business park – which is growing – and does give us the opportunity of expanding in the southern part of the district, which would address those problems that we've had about commuting out and commuting in. And yet, for the Buck Barn one, I found it very difficult to actually find something that achieved anywhere near what the opportunities are at Adversane, which at least has a railway line running through the site – I'm sure we won't get a station, because I think they can be bits of pie in the sky, but I suppose if you've got a railway line you're at least halfway there. But, the important issue that for me that goes back to Buck Barn is the fact that we have a number of issues. But, I'll touch on first is what is essential to us as human beings is probably air and water, and yet the

air quality at Cowfold is appalling. And, in fact, we have a statutory duty, which was just re-enforced in the courts, that we should be – or the government – should be doing something about air quality. But, also I gather we have a duty not to make it worse. but, surely building 3,500 homes along the road from Cowfold is going to add – and we can all do the maths – but at the moment the average house in Cowfold has 2.8 cars – seems quite high to me compared to what happens in urban areas, but that's because it's a dormitory town and a not a commuting town, so you can't go by train from there; you have to commute, use a car. So, 3,500 times 2.8 is 10,000 cars. That will increase by at least 10% the quantity of cars going through Cowfold. And the problem is we have a monitoring station there which says that things have slightly improved in the last few years, but that's thankfully because cars have got better. But, the problem is it measures from 2-point-something metres, which is the statutory monitoring, but actually none of our children who actually walk though Cowfold are over 2m tall; they actually walk at the same height as the discharging cars. And the trouble with the cars in Cowfold is they are stationary; they don't travel through it. Actually, if they kept moving it probably would solve the problem, but they don't; they sit there. And to add to this that the difference between the A272 at Cowfold, where the problem with our air quality is based, is that it's also a Heavy Goods road, and I have been on five years of an air quality committee, with the County Council, and you are telling me they say that can be solved where they've told me in five years it can't be solved. And there you are saying that with the same mitigation that we heard for the last five years that now it can be solved, and you want me to vote to build all these houses just in Cowfold? So, I can't believe that we can literally do this without breaking some sort of rule; but, there again, this government breaks rules all the time, so why shouldn't we join in? And then we come to water. Well, we're told there's not enough water, and they want us to reduce it down to 80 litres, but we're all spending, using over 200 litres at the moment. Are you really saying that we're going to go from 200 down to 8 [sic] by just putting a bit of brown – is it brown water? – just by recycling water off our gutters? I think it's got to be a bit more serious than this. But, of course we can take Southern Water's word can't we? Is this Southern Water whose officers and directors sanctioned, for five years, to pour effluent into our rivers and into our sea, into our drinking water? And we have to take ... and you're asking us to vote on this? I find it unbelievable. And the third thing we can't end up with –

[98:18] Chairman: Jonathan, can you –

Cllr Chowen [continued]: The question is. Well, the question is to the cabinet member for economic development –

[98:22] Chairman: Well, can you wind up?

Cllr Chowen [continued]: The one point I would ask is air quality and to the water quality, and I know that the cabinet member for economic might want to say a few words about the water quality, because I know he's an absolute expert in this and probably has genuine concerns himself, personally. And, also the final thing, and I look at poor old Roger who's taken over this, is that to build 3,500 houses in the middle of a nature recovery, which he is passionately just spoken about and I know believes in very well, is another disaster. I just had a look at the map and for some strange reason there is not a nature recovery corridor over Philip's house – I don't know why, but that's maybe just a coincidence.

[99:04] [Inaudible comments off microphone]

[99:05] Chairman: I think you've had well over your five minutes.

[99:09] [Inaudible comments off microphone]

[99:11] Cllr Chowen: Well, there's a question to Roger, there's a question to the cabinet member for water quality, and economic development.

[99:18] Chairman: Well ...

[99:19] Cllr Chowen: And I [inaudible – several individuals speaking at once]

[99:22] Cllr Noel: Can you repeat your direct question to me, please, Councillor Chowen?

[99:26] Cllr Chowen: Yeah. Are you happy with the ... Sorry. Are you happy with building 3,500 on the, by the Knepp Estate in the middle of a nature recovery site, which is the proposal for the Environmental Bill and for the government at the moment?

[99:44] Cllr Noel: Well, I've just been told by the director in front of me that in fact it's 2,100 houses, but that's by-the-bye. My answer is –

[99:54] Cllr Chowen: Roger, it's 3,000 they're going to build; it's only 2,100 in the plan. If you give –

[99:59] Chairman: Sorry, the cabinet member is trying to answer you, Jonathan. Can you give him a chance, please?

[100:03] Cllr Chowen: [Inaudible comment off microphone] ... something wrong.

[100:05] Cllr Noel: It's actually irrelevant if it's 2,100 or if it's 3,500.

[100:11] Cllr Chowen: [Off microphone] No, it isn't.

[100:12] Cllr Noel: The problem is ... well, it is in relation to Nature Recovery Network, so ... I'm sorry, let me just move this round so I can talk to you at the same time. Nature Recovery Network is an aspirational model that we are desperately trying to establish. There isn't an existing Nature Recovery Network at the moment; it's an aspirational model. We don't have a Nature Recovery Network established in this district. We have a green infrastructure network, which we are looking at very carefully. And you know how much I want a Nature Recovery Network to be established. The thing is that that's an aspirational model. We have a statutory duty, I'm afraid, imposed upon us by this government to provide housing in this area. Wherever the houses go, I'm sorry to say, it's going to interfere with biodiversity and the green infrastructure that we already have. It pains me that we are going to have to put these houses somewhere; we can't walk away from it. We can't walk away from the direction we've been given by government to put these houses in. If we say "no" to Buck Barn, then we get the houses in Adversane, or we get them in Mayfield, or we get more built around Horsham. We have to put the houses in. As I said, I want this Nature Recovery Network to be provided as soon as possible, which is what I said earlier. We have to model that around the houses that are built. And that's the position we're in and we can't change it. So, that's my answer to you, Jonathan. And you know how passionate I am about it, but we have to do what we're told by the government; if we rebel we end up with no plan, and no plan means total disaster for the green infrastructure of this district and total disaster for Nature Recovery Network.



[102:26] Chairman: Thank you, Councillor Noel. Councillor Vickers? Or was it Councillor Youtan whose the question was?

102:32] Unknown: [Inaudible comment off microphone]

[102:33] Unknown [Cllr Chowen?]: I think it was, It was me, Leader.

[102:34] [Inaudible comments off microphone, several voices at once]

[102:36] Chairman: It's okay, I can answer for economic development or you can answer for ... I'll let you answer first, because—

[102:40] Cllr Brown: I'd be happy to. Whatever you prefer, Leader. Sorry, could you condense the question down again, in terms of the business park? Could you reiterate what the question was?

[102:53] Cllr Chowen: Sorry. You quoted as saying what you wanted to achieve and I just thought that at Adversane there was the possibility of a business park and there was opportunities there for preventing the issues you mentioned about commuting out by providing jobs actually in the southern part of the district, because the problem we have in the district is everyone has to commute out, there aren't any jobs in the south, and that was part of the opportunity that we would have in developing at Adversane. It was very vaguely in response to the very important points that you wanted to make.

[103:27] Cllr Brown: Okay. And the question is?

[103:30] Unknown: [Inaudible comment off microphone].

[103:31] Cllr Chowen: Why aren't we building at Adversane?

[103:32] Cllr Brown: Why aren't we building at Adversane? Okay. Well, first of all any economic development strategy in terms of business parks or employment land has to be taken in consideration and taken in and around with the development proposals overall. So, that wouldn't just be the business park at Adversane, that would also include the housing development there. But, even more importantly, as Barbara's already set out in an earlier answer, it would have to be taken in consideration with development across the district as a whole and would affect the transportation assessments and various other pieces of work. So, while yes I agree with you, partly, in terms of there could be possibilities and opportunities in terms of economic development at that particular site, I'd also point to towards the evidence that's in the draft plan that shows the scoring of each site and how, in fact, we've reached the decision that the sites that have been put forward for allocation have been decided on and why they are in that order. Adversane isn't in there – not just for reasons of the business park, but for several other reasons that have already been outlined; and one thing I'd point you towards in terms of business parks at Adversane would be the road infrastructure. So, on the one hand you've commented about the problems of traffic and air quality and traffic problems at Cowfold, but then really you're trying to suggest that Buck Barn would be a worse site in terms of economic development and employment space when it's right next to the A24.

[105:31] Cllr Chowen: [Off microphone] I was saying that Adversane is better.

[105:32] Cllr Brown: So, well, in your opinion; that's your opinion. I've pointed you to the evidence base in the draft plan and then remind you that it's not just about the business park, it's about the economic approach and strategy for the entire district.

[105:48] Chairman: Thank you, Chris. If anyone else wants to chip in, because it was my portfolio before. The issue of the business park or what you are talking about at Adversane is nonsense. Essentially, a number of the sites there are already earmarked for employment, there are people who are planning to move there, except the employment's already existing in the south of the district, because all they're doing is moving from one site to another, because they're going to redevelop their existing site. And I can show you chapter and verse, Jonathan, if you want some of the other sites that have not been included, but from my memory of when I was economic development portfolio holder, quite a number of those sites like Harwood's and the brewery and places like that are already extant. I think we've had enough, kind of, over twelve minutes of debate for one question—

[106:37] Cllr Chowen: [Off microphone] Can I have answers about the air quality and the water, because that's pretty important to everyone?

[106:47] Chairman: Well –

[106:49] Unknown: [Off microphone] I mean, why are you answering a question about water and air quality?

[106:52] Chairman: No, I'm not. I mean ... do you wanna tackle this? Briefly?

[107:05] Barbara Childs: I was just trying to remind myself from my notes that I was taking when Councillor Chowen was talking about his comments on air quality, and water and what he was asking, I think, is whether officers are confident in the evidence that has been provided that air quality, the issues of air quality, can adequately be mitigated, particularly in the pinch-point as you've described in Cowfold. And I think the second point that you were asking was about the water quality and whether we feel that the policies within the Regulation 19 document, in terms of the level of water usage, whether that can be accommodated. And the answer in both occasions is that the officer recommendations are based on the evidence that we have investigated, much of which has been through external experts. But, I would again reiterate that all of that evidence, and any conclusion that the council makes in terms of its policy, is still subject to independent investigation by the planning inspector, who will be looking at other experts to assist him or her in reaching their decision. So, any decision that this council makes in terms of its policy is subject to independent examination. And, indeed, through the Regulation 19 stage, all of those statutory consultees, the water providers and so on, will be asked for their views on the detail of the policies that are proposed, and they, too, will feed into that debate. So, there will be – the Regulation 19, the agreement of a Regulation 19 document is, in a way, certainly not the end of a story, but there's much more further investigation by independent parties, but ultimately by the planning inspector.

[109:17] Chairman: Thank you, Barbara. So, coming back to cabinet members, I propose that we adopt the Horsham District Local Plan Regulation 19 as proposed by the cabinet member. Are all the cabinet members in agreement? Say "aye" or hold your hands up, or whatever ... Thank you very much. So, we'll take this forward to council. Next item on the agenda is to consider matters of

special urgency. I have none. Chief Executive has none. Thank you for coming; I'll draw the meeting to a close. I've been wanting to do this for a while [gavel strike].

MEETING ENDS 109:55