

# Wiltshire Local Plan Review: Royal Wootton Bassett Town Meeting

Date: 11:00-13:00, 29 May 2019

Venue: County Hall, Trowbridge

Attendees: Royal Wootton Bassett Town Council

## Meeting Notes

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

Meeting attended by Geoff Winslow (WC), Henning Totz (WC), Victoria Gee (WC), Gill Welsman-Clarke (RWB- Administration Services Officer), Johnathon Bourne (RWB – Town Clerk) and Paul Heaphy (RWB - Councillor)

### 2. Local Plan Review – what has happened so far?

Introduction of the Local Plan Review work up to this point, including the recent reports to cabinet confirming the HMA boundaries and the housing number ranges. Outlining that at this stage Alternative Development Strategy SW-B is the preferred option, proposing a residual of 1030 homes and 6 hectares of employment land. This is an increase on rolling forward the current Core Strategy. As this is the preferred option it will be tested further by the Council in developing a strategic approach for Royal Wootton Bassett.

### 3. Neighbourhood Plans – what has happened so far and intentions for the future?

Royal Wootton Bassett have a made neighbourhood plan and an active steering group. Future intentions are for an update to the Neighbourhood Plan to reflect the strategic changes through the Local Plan Review and lead to resilience against speculative development.

### 4. Discussion 1: strategic priorities for the town and how to deliver them

#### Infrastructure

This was initially raised as an overarching issue for the town as the rate of infrastructure development has not kept up with housing growth, meaning that there are now gaps in provision of primary schools and roads are operating over capacity (high street and A3102/B4042 to the north).

The town desire a closer relationship between new housing and the delivery of necessary infrastructure.

#### Summary of Infrastructure Required:

- Road capacity issues
- Design
- Infrastructure (most significantly transport)

Council outlined that for certain infrastructure to be delivered there may be a requirement for a certain number of homes. This would likely be beyond the approx. 1000 currently proposed.

Landowner issues and phasing may cause barriers (issues/delays) to delivery. The Council currently experiencing issues in ensuring the infrastructure requirements are met by large scale strategic sites in other areas in the local authority. Additionally, it was suggested that there is a need to be risk averse to speculative development in the approach and often delays in delivery can leave settlements open to planning appeals and tests of the council's 5-year housing land supply.

The town are open minded to delivering well above the 1000 proposed at this stage, if it ensures that the needs they have outlined are met. Worried about tying the town to numbers as what we propose at this stage may not lead to the viability to deliver what they need.

The council outlined the need for the town strategy to be more than just a number, linking up with identified needs/priorities for the town to provide a strategic policy for the town that delivers a package.

Views on J16:

- Do not feel hugely threatened that development in that area has a realistic prospect of coming forward.
- Further pressure on the roundabout is expected with regards to strategic growth that is proposed. (this is despite recent improvements, which were a response to the Wichelstowe development in Swindon.

Alternative suggestions looked at delivering a new M4 Junction and create a linkage/relief road between Royal Wootton Bassett and the M4 to the north west.

Town noted that there appears to be housing needs at Lyneham which could in part be met at RWB, with new transport infrastructure providing linkages between the settlements.

### **Bypass**

A bypass to the south of the settlement was discussed. This is considered an option for relieving the traffic issues on the A road to the north. This would need to be accompanied by a bridge over the railway line. Through a process of eliminating the areas to the west, north, and east from a spatial and infrastructure perspective. The southern site comes out as the preferred by the Town. Development to the north is considered to be a 'no go' area as it would not deliver a bypass in the south to alleviate the traffic issues in the north.

### **Primary School/school places**

Capacity was mentioned as a current issue.

### **Other**

Further interests in delivering shops and health facilities to meet the current needs of the town.

The town has experienced, and continues to face, pressure from speculative developers.

## **5. Discussion 2: respective roles Local Plan/Neighbourhood Plan**

Town sought clarity on the relationship between the Local Plan Review and the Neighbourhood Plan as this was something they faced issues with when producing their 'made' neighbourhood plan. Including the removal of a site for 100 homes. Clarity needed over how the numbers in the two plans relate to one another and the scope of the neighbourhood plan in delivery growth beyond the figures outlined in the Core Strategy/Local Plan Review. And whether the Neighbourhood Plan

should be growing on the numbers in the Core Strategy/Local Plan Review. Particularly where there is speculative development pressure.

The Council outlined how the council are looking to explore the elevated role that neighbourhood plans could have in directing and delivering strategic growth in their town. Further, the council outlined how figures given within a plan are to be indicative and do not expect the Local Planning Review to meet the entirety of the requirement through allocations. Neighbourhood Plans then have a role in defining where the remainder can come forward and introduce flexibility.

A new **train station** was discussed and the town have progressed some of these ideas with Network Rail. This, along with **education, transport** and **renewable energy** were outlined as the broad thinking of the town. With issues regarding **build quality** and **green space** noted, but considered as something that could potentially be covered in a neighbourhood plan, with strategic design policy providing the overarching approach for the Council. This highlights how some areas can be covered in a specific/more detailed way in Neighbourhood Plans.

## **6. Discussion 3: Neighbourhood Plan issues (self-containment, employment needs, infrastructure improvements, sustainable transport)**

Parish council feel that in recent years that a higher figure has been built compared to the requirement provided in WCS CP19, in addition to infill issues and infrastructure problems. Therefore, they want to buck this trend and be able to direct their path. Think that there needs to be strategic thinking for the town to overcome these issues. Desire for smaller scale direction towards well designed, high quality developments. Seen a shift away from greenfield to infill and brownfield first. Embracing the need to build houses. Evidence base for the neighbourhood plan outlined a 'shopping list' of infrastructure requirements for the town – they understand in being able to gain these, houses will have to be built. Town seeking a partnership with Wiltshire Council to develop the best strategy. Including regular meetings to be updated on Council progress and to work with the council to direct growth in the town.

View to the future: outlining desires for renewable energy, including methods incorporating waste management from individual sites. Questioned whether a they could have a town specific goal of being carbon neutral.

Council outlined that these fit in with the Council's overarching goals of carbon neutrality and work is in train to review the climate policies in the WCS. Pointing out that developers can often connect to the grid but there are opportunities for on-site energy generation. Neighbourhood plans can be the appropriate mechanism for adding specifics to the overarching strategic plan, with them being able to look at the detail of what may be suitable/acceptable/viable on sites in their local area.

Relationship with Swindon: Train station would be able to enhance this relationship. Considered to be a high scale issue and there are many stakeholders involved. Could operate as a 'West of Swindon' station. The Town have been exploring some of the options for this with Network Rail.

Council asked whether the Town Council see the dormitory relationship as a risk or opportunity.

The response was that in employment terms, the Town Council feel that the allocated employment sites are difficult to shift. Feel that this is due less demand for formal employment space.

Council outlined that the review will look to take a new approach to employment.

Town Council noted that there is a need for the town to support a diverse work force, and meet demands for smaller units. With policy looking to respond to demands.

The introduction of a new train station is seen as a way of making the town more attractive to employment, reducing the dependency on Swindon through a dynamic employment offering better placed to compete.

Council outlined how WC can look to give the Neighbourhood Planning body tools to produce a more 'strategic' plan. within the most recent planning context, it is vital for the Council to have a hold on viability and timeframes play a key part in this.

Some discussion over **self-build** and the role that innovative solutions could have in leading to increased design quality in the town.

## **7. Next Steps**

The Town outlined a desire to meet the council every 6 weeks. They are open minded to the timeframes, but feel that regular meetings going forward will help develop a partnership for directing the strategy for the town.

Council will need to review the timescales. But follow up conversations are expected to be undertaken as the plan progresses e.g. direction of growth and in developing allocations.

### **Action**

Organisation of a follow up meeting.