

**AT AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL held in the Desborough Suite - Town Hall on Wednesday, 23rd October, 2019**

PRESENT: The Mayor (Councillor Sayonara Luxton), The Deputy Mayor (Councillor Gary Muir)

Councillors John Baldwin, Clive Baskerville, Christine Bateson, Gurpreet Bhangra, Simon Bond, John Bowden, Mandy Brar, Catherine Del Campo, David Cannon, Stuart Carroll, Gerry Clark, David Coppinger, Carole Da Costa, Wisdom Da Costa, Jon Davey, Karen Davies, Phil Haseler, Geoff Hill, David Hilton, Maureen Hunt, Andrew Johnson, Lynne Jones, Neil Knowles, Ewan Larcombe, Ross McWilliams, Samantha Rayner, Joshua Reynolds, Julian Sharpe, Shamsul Shelim, Gurch Singh, Donna Stimson, John Story, Chris Targowski, Helen Taylor, Amy Tisi, Leo Walters and Simon Werner

Officers: Duncan Sharkey, Elaine Browne, Louisa Dean, Andy Jeffs, Jenifer Jackson, John Maniscalco, Helen Murch, Ashley Smith, Robert Paddison, Ian Motuel, Pam Midgley, Terry Ann Cramp, Matthew Smith, Tomas Pugh-Cook, James Carpenter, Gordon Oliver, Chris Joyce, Russell O'Keefe and Karen Shepherd

52. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Price.

53. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Rayner declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest on item 7 as her husband was a trustee of a trust that had submitted land in the original call for sites for the Borough Local Plan. She left the room for the duration of the discussion and voting on the item.

54. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

**a) Tim Veale of Bisham and Cookham ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

Why has Lower Mount Farm greenbelt been included in the plan and the farm itself not been considered instead as this is already used for industrial purposes?

A written response was provided:

*The plan has to be based on evidence, this includes requirements to meet the Borough's need for housing, employment and other uses. The proposed allocation site (AL37) was assessed as making only a moderate contribution to green belt purposes. The farm itself provides important employment floor space.*

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Veale asked what qualified as a modest contribution to the Green Belt and how this was assessed?

Councillor Coppinger agreed to respond in writing as this was a technical question.

Councillor Werner commented that Members needed to hear the answers to the supplementary questions. The Managing Director explained that the public questions did not form part of the report on the Borough Local Plan. It would be wrong to try to give a detailed answer to a supplementary questions that the council had not previously seen; this would be just as risky to do so in terms of decision-making. Members of the public would have the opportunity to provide feedback in the consultation, if the report were approved.

**b) The Mayor, on behalf of Andrew Hill of Boyn Hill ward, asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead**

Paragraph 3.4.6 notes access to hospitals and GP's is often "...a cause for concern in public consultations". Yet the revised plan adds 100+ residences on King Edward & St Marks Hospital sites. With thousands of new residents planned for, and a move away from cars, why is RBWM promoting a plan that reduces the best accessible land for hospital expansion?

A written response was provided:

*The PCT and CCG are responsible for planning for healthcare needs. The Council has worked closely with both organisations in the development of the BLP. The PCT/CCG has provided the following information in reply to your question:*

*For St Marks: 'The part disposal of site will allow the current Health & Social Care activity to be reconfigured and expanded, therefore creating additional jobs in line with the national increase of care.*

*It is planned to retain and expand the current Health & Care activity on a retained part of the site, serving the community, providing jobs and releasing space to reinvest in fit of purpose modern healthcare facilities.*

*For King Edward: 'The part disposal of site will allow the current Health & Social Care activity to be reconfigured and expanded, therefore creating additional jobs in line with the national increase of care. The service transformation plans should mean that health and social care services are considerably enhanced'*

By way of a supplementary question, the Mayor asked the following question on behalf of Andrew Hill:

The same paragraph (3.4.6) also points out that there is no A&E service in the Borough. With such a large increase in population planned, why is there no pressure to add this vital infrastructure locally, and as we are encouraging residents to abandon their cars, why are the travel times to access the 4 hospitals outside the Borough only given as "by car"?

Councillor Carroll responded that A&E services were the responsibility of NHS England in coordination with the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). Plans were being developed as part of the NHS long term plan for an Integrated System of Care. A&E services would be under constant review in terms of locality and response times. He would be happy to discuss the issue again with the CCG but ultimately it would be a decision of NHS England.

**c) Lisa Hughes of Furze Platt ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

BLP Policy HO2(1c) suggests 5% of homes on larger developments should be Accessible and Adaptable. This only provides around 400 homes vs the forecast of 32,000 disabled residents, not nearly enough! What data sources and methodology were used to develop this policy and fulfil RBWM's duty to assess and plan for the housing needs of residents with disabilities?

A written response was provided:

*We recognise the point, could I please encourage you to respond to the consultation with the evidence that you have so it can be considered. I agree that we want a flexible housing stock that will help meet the wide range of accommodation needs including being accessible, adaptable and age friendly supporting the changing needs of individuals and families at different stages of life.*

*The policy expects that a proportion of new housing should meet the higher accessibility standards of Requirement M4(2) of the Building Regulations on sites of over 20 units having regard to townscape, design and amenity. Provision to meet the higher wheelchair user standards M4(3) will be encouraged where it is practicable and viable to do so.*

*The balance is that development has to be viable otherwise it will not come forward. The viability work highlighted a risk to development if the policy seeks to achieve higher proportions.*

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Hughes stated that the evidence the council encouraged people to submit was broadly similar as that which was submitted in the last consultation, therefore why would it make a difference this time?

Councillor Coppinger responded that time had passed and there was a greater understanding of the issues and concerns.

**d) Edward Farish of Bisham and Cookham ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

How does the council plan to accommodate 270 more vehicles, additional traffic, when entry to Cookham at Ferry Lane and Maidenhead Road, both have single one way give way roads under a railway bridge, over the Thames River? Presently, parking in Cookham High Road is almost impossible, due to weekday commuters parking in the village from Marlow and Bourne End.

A written response was provided:

*A strategic transport assessment accompanies the BLP which considers a reasonable worst case of the potential transport impacts on the highway network across the borough as a result of the development in the local plan as well as development taking place in neighbouring authorities. The assessment shows for Cookham that whilst there will be some increase in traffic, the key junctions are expected to still operate within an acceptable level of service. The BLP encourages the use of sustainable modes of transport, such as walking, cycling and using public transport. Great Western Railway is at an advanced stage of developing a scheme to improve the points at Bourne End. When implemented, this will enable two trains per hour between Marlow*

*and Maidenhead without the need for Marlow passengers to change trains at Bourne End as they do now.*

*This will make the branch line service more attractive for commuters and will help to reduce pressure on parking in Cookham Rise. The scheme has already secured funding from the Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership and has provisionally secured additional funds from Thames Valley Berkshire LEP subject to production of a satisfactory business case.*

Mr Farish conformed he did not wish to ask a supplementary question.

**e) The Mayor, on behalf of Liz Kwantes of Bisham and Cookham ward, asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

I understand that the Plan includes a plan to build houses close to the Strande in Cookham. I understood this area is in the flood plain, are you planning to build houses in the flood plain?

A written response was provided:

*The plan includes an allocation for residential development east of Strande Park. Only a very small proportion of the site (6.4%) is affected by flooding and none of the site is in the functional floodplain. All 20 dwellings would need to be built in the areas of the site at lowest risk of flooding.*

Ms Kwantes had not submitted a supplementary question.

**f) Liz Kwantes of Bisham and Cookham ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

The site of the old gas works off Whyteladyes Lane is also the site of an arboretum of 40 native British trees given to Cookham by British Gas. Is it planned to keep these trees? They are actually planted around the edge of the site. The arboretum was opened by Timmy Mallett along with executives of British Gas.

A written response was provided:

*Thank you for bringing the presence of this important biodiversity asset to our attention. I would encourage you to respond to the consultation. The policy for this allocation (AL36) requires the developer to retain mature trees and hedgerows on the site where possible. It does not specifically require this arboretum to be retained*

Ms Kwantes had not submitted a supplementary question.

**g) Jan Stannard of St Mary's Ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

Our Borough has lost species like water voles and turtle doves. Others like yellowhammers are at risk of local extinction. The lack of any Borough-wide approach to the support of species population growth is a serious oversight arising from the notable absence of a Biodiversity Action Plan. Can the Council explain how Borough-wide action will be taken to cover this?

A written response was provided:

*The Council's firm intention is to address biodiversity as an urgent priority, although no decisions have yet been made on the precise mechanisms for achieving this. A Cross Party Climate Change Group has been established. This group will develop the corporate policy that will address climate change issues in the Borough. However this is progressed, we will be working closely with the relevant interest groups in order to benchmark what our biodiversity looks like now, and what we want it to look like in the future, water voles and turtle doves included*

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Stannard thanked Councillor Coppinger for the answer that no decisions had yet been made on precise mechanisms but Wild Maidenhead observed that surrounding councils used biodiversity action plans as their mechanism so she asked why this was not the obvious answer to give?

Councillor Coppinger responded that the cross party working group was due to look at the issue and it may be that the suggestion was what the council decided to follow.

**h) Deborah Mason of Riverside ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

Mitigation for net biodiversity gain on individual development sites may produce an insufficient variety of habitats which would have an impact upon species, and this would only become apparent with strategic oversight. Where in the Plan is the Borough-wide monitoring of mitigation habitats?

A written response was provided:

*The proposed revisions to the BLP include a greater emphasis on protecting and enhancing biodiversity. Development proposals will be required to avoid the loss of biodiversity and to identify where there are opportunities for biodiversity to be improved. The plan includes a monitoring framework, including amount of priority habitat lost and gained and also percentage of development with biodiversity net gain. The level of detail being requested is not proportionate for a high level land use plan.*

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Mason asked whether the council would agree to put in borough-wide oversight to ensure sufficient habitat for a wide variety of species?

Councillor Coppinger responded that there would be a detailed biodiversity action plan which should pick up all the points raised.

**i) Deborah Mason of Riverside ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

Why, in modelling transport times to hospitals, are no figures given for sustainable transport options: bus, bike, walk? Given a move to sustainable transport is part of the overall plan strategy?"

A written response was provided:

*The council has an adopted Local Transport Plan which has as one of its objectives to improve access to key local services through sustainable modes.*

*All the main hospitals in the area, including Heatherwood, St Marks, King Edward VII and Wexham Park, are well served by buses, but there are some particular journeys that do not have a direct service, such as Maidenhead to Heatherwood. We also have the People to Places service and several voluntary transport services that do hospital runs, and the South Central Ambulance Service provides non-emergency ambulance transport. Walking and cycling are less relevant for patient transport, but may be relevant to staff travel. The hospitals are all served by footways and have good crossings on main roads. Cycle networks are less well developed, but RBWM is committed to delivering the Cycling Action Plan, including a number of improvements that would improve access to hospitals.*

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Mason commented that the plan identified that transport to hospitals was an important need and that there had been a deterioration. She asked what were the plans, not policies, to provide disabled transport to hospitals?

Councillor Coppinger responded that part of the work to be done was to look at transport for all needs. There was a lack of buses; this would be looked at in more detail as the plan period progressed.

**j) Fiona Hewer of Bisham and Cookham ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

This Plan proposes only piecemeal mitigation of harm to biodiversity for its approximately 300 hectares of new development on greenfield sites, and does not plan strategically for the cumulative impact on biodiversity. Will the Council agree to create a new nature reserve to fill this strategic gap in provision?

A written response was provided:

*The Council's firm intention is to address biodiversity as an urgent priority, although no decisions have yet been made on the precise mechanisms for achieving this. A Cross Party Climate Change Group has been established. This group will develop the corporate policy that will address climate change issues in the Borough. As this work is at an early stage, it is too soon to commit to the provision of a nature reserve. There is about 200 hectares of new development proposed on greenfield sites in the proposed changes and a greater emphasis on protecting and enhancing biodiversity. Every site allocation, including the many that are not greenfield, will need to bring forward biodiversity improvements – Policy QP2. The Council is proposing 3 sites that are specifically being allocated for green infrastructure and managed for biodiversity enhancement, as well as other functions. Outside of the plan making process, and further demonstrating its commitment to biodiversity, the Council has recently introduced Battlemead Common into the public domain and it is to be managed for biodiversity, amongst other functions.*

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Hewer commented that it was hugely disappointing to Wild Maidenhead that the Plan was not able to recommend a new nature reserve to compensate for losses due to housing development. The Plan did however recognise the importance of local wildlife sites and conservation of species. Many of the local wildlife sites were deteriorating due to lack of conservation management. She therefore asked what action the council would take to ensure local

wildlife sites had conservation management plans and that those plans were implemented?

Councillor Coppinger responded that this would be a main objective for the cross party working group. He pointed out the council had already done this for Battlemead Common, which was a step forward.

**k) Maria Evans, on behalf of Sarah Bowden of Boyn Hill ward, asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

To the best of my knowledge, the Sustainability Appraisal was made available to the public and Councillors late on Friday evening (18th of October), only three working days before this meeting. Could you please advise us if this report has, as recommended by the Local Government Association, been integral to the plan making process?

A written response was provided:

*I can confirm that sustainability appraisal is an iterative process and the work has been integral to plan making. The accompanying SA report to the proposed changes could only be finalised once all of the other work is completed and the proposed changes also finalised: the report documenting the work was uploaded on Friday.*

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Evans commented that she was pleased to hear the SA was integral to the development of the plan but the NPPF stated that the main purpose of planning was to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The SA said the plan would result in a 1% increase in emissions which would exacerbate the impact of climate change. It was a plan that did not offer adequate mitigation or address the climate emergency the council had already declared. This was a plan without a plan. Given that councillors had just received the SA with little time to consider it, how could they be certain the plan was sustainable and sound?

Councillor Coppinger responded that he acknowledged that the document was updated quite late. The cross party working group would be looking at the issues raised.

**l) Harriet Fleming of Bisham and Cookham ward asked the following question of Councillor Stimson, Lead Member for Environmental Services Climate Change, Sustainability, Parks and Countryside:**

The BLP states Climate Change is “inevitable”. It focuses on adaption leaving developers responsible for proposing piecemeal mitigation measures. The trend to 2033 each person will generate 86kg, equivalent to the average man’s weight, per week of CO<sub>2</sub> and with this plan you will not keep the climate change emergency commitment. The plan does not acknowledge nor address this, why?

A written response was provided:

*The proposed changes to the BLP include a much greater emphasis on climate change mitigation and adaptation along with other corporate initiatives, the BLP as*

*amended will help to deliver the Council's climate change emergency declaration. A Cross Party Climate Change Group has been established. This group will develop the corporate policy that will address climate change issues in the Borough.*

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Fleming commented that policy N47 of the SA stated that the Plan would lead to an increase in emissions of 22.5% and that planning policies and site allocations were not expected to mitigate the adverse effects on the climate. There were no plans for renewable energy development, no plans to transport shifts, no plans to do anything to address climate change yet the council believed its residents would instinctively choose to reduce environmental impacts. Ms Fleming asked if the council agreed that without targets and actions at the heart of the plan, the council was abdicating its emergency responsibilities and that the revised plan could not be approved?

Councillor Stimson responded that she had yet to lead a meeting of the cross party working group as she had just taken on her Lead Member role. She welcomed the questions and assured the public that she would do everything she could to get to the 2050 target of zero carbon emissions. The Plan increased emissions because it included new development, therefore mitigation was needed. The council would look at sustainability and biodiversity and identify everything it could to reduce the carbon footprint. The sooner the Plan was approved the sooner the work could start.

**m) Rachel Cook of Boyn Hill ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

Where does the Borough Local Plan ensure that developer mitigations are sustainable, e.g. that wildflower areas don't fail after a few years, trees die or ponds silt up?

A written response was provided:

*The BLP as amended contains a more detailed and demanding set of requirements for development proposals, including the provision of green and blue infrastructure. At the planning application stage, conditions can be attached to ensure that these measures are maintained in the longer term.*

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Cook commented that housing infrastructure could be greened for wildlife and there was a responsibility to ensure that there was not a loss of biodiversity. Conditions in planning were very important and she welcomed the response of the council. She asked who would monitor and enforce the obligations on developers after they had built the housing to ensure there was not a net loss of biodiversity?

Councillor Coppinger responded that residents were brilliant at telling the council when someone had not done what they should.

**n) The Mayor, on behalf of Katherine Price of Bisham and Cookham, ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

270 homes are planned for Cookham and 750 are planned for the Hedsor site Bourne End. What is the exact infrastructure plan for Cookham to support up to 2,000 extra

cars locally, specifically at The Pound, Cookham Bridge and Maidenhead Road railway bridge, which are all single lane or close to?

A written response was provided:

*A strategic transport assessment accompanies the BLP which considers a reasonable worst case of the potential transport impacts on the highway network across the borough as a result of the development in the local plan as well as development taking place in neighbouring authorities. The assessment shows for Cookham that whilst there will be some increase in traffic, the key junctions are expected to still operate within an acceptable level of service. The BLP encourages the use of sustainable modes of transport, such as walking, cycling and using public transport.*

Ms Price had not submitted a supplementary question.

**o) The Mayor, on behalf of Katherine Price of Bisham and Cookham ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

Our Cookham schools are all full, so what is the exact provision for primary school places within the Cookham Rise catchment where all the housing is planned for? In addition, how many extra school places are planned for Furze Platt Seniors?

A written response was provided:

*Children's Services carried out an assessment of the likely impact of the Borough Local Plan on demand for school places. The housing planned for the Bisham and Cookham area could result in a maximum additional demand of 22 children at Reception. Whilst the three Cookham primary schools are currently full, many children attending the schools (about 36%) live outside the Cookham villages. There is, therefore, capacity within those schools to accommodate the additional demand through the normal operation of the school admissions rules. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan sets out proposed expansion plans that would accommodate additional demand across the whole Borough. In addition, the Council is currently carrying out more detailed feasibility work to identify the potential for expansion at all 60 (state) schools in the borough. The outcome of this will be reported to Cabinet in early 2020. Furze Platt Senior School has recently been expanded by 60 places per year group.*

Ms Price had not submitted a supplementary question.

**p) Holly Milburn of Bisham and Cookham ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

Given the passage of time since the last consultation on the Plan, please confirm that the six week consultation period (2019) will allow/take into account representations from residents regarding the *entire* Plan for submission to the Inspector and not just the more recent proposed changes (letters dated 26 July and 7 October 2019 from Ms Jackson and Ms Phillips respectively)?

A written response was provided:

*The forthcoming consultation, if approved by Council, will allow residents and others to comment on the proposed changes to the plan. Through the Examination process the Inspector will consider the BLP in its entirety and will take previous representations made into account.*

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Milburn commented that she was aware the next consultation phase was in relation to the proposed changes only. However, having not got the Plan correct the first time around in terms of legality and in the interests of fairness with the significant changes now being discussed, she asked would the Council not consider it prudent to essentially re-run a Regulation 19 style consultation in order for representations to be made in the context of the entire revised proposed Plan to avoid legal challenge later on?

Councillor Coppinger responded that the Plan was currently in a period of examination. The Inspector had not requested a full re-run therefore the council had not considered one. The Inspector would look at everything if the plan was approved later in the meeting.

**q) Holly Milburn of Bisham and Cookham ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

We remain concerned about the Plan's lack of up to date information/evidence relating to delivery, viability (effectiveness) and consistency with national policy. Councils are encouraged in government guidance to conduct a self-assessment relating to "soundness". If one has been undertaken, will it be made publicly available; if one has not been completed, what is the justification for this?

A written response was provided:

*At each stage of plan making a viability assessment has been completed and published on the Council website. New evidence has been prepared to inform the work requested by the Inspector. This is published on our website. Soundness of the plan, including consistency with national policy, is now a matter for the Inspector appointed to examine the plan and is the purpose of the examination stage.*

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Milburn commented that whilst she appreciated the soundness was a matter for the Inspector, would the council now undertake a self-assessment prior to submission to the Inspector, as she understood this was separate to a viability assessment?

Councillor Coppinger responded that he would provide a written response to the question.

**r) Adam Bermange of Boyn Hill ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

The National Planning Policy Framework states; "The preparation and review of all policies should be underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence...." Could the Lead Member please explain, in the absence of a Biodiversity Action Plan, what evidence the Borough has used to form the basis of conserving and enhancing biodiversity in the Borough Local Plan incorporating current Proposed Changes?

A written response was provided:

*The Council's firm intention is to address biodiversity as an urgent priority, although no decisions have yet been made on the precise mechanisms for achieving this. However this is progressed, we will be working closely with community and environmental groups in order to benchmark what our biodiversity looks like now, and what we want it to look like in the future.*

*In developing the policies on Nature Conservation, the council has used national guidance and planning practice, extensive information held on our GIS system and in-house expert advice, as well as consulting Natural England and the Environment Agency. The NPPF requires the production of an adequate and proportionate evidence base to underpin Local Plans. A Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is not an essential evidence document for the BLP.*

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Bermange commented that he had been encouraged by the earlier answers about a biodiversity action plan and the cross party group. In relation to the SA that had been published the previous evening, he noticed that 30 out of 40 allocation sites had adverse impacts on biodiversity. He realised that policy NP2 was strongly positive about biodiversity but if there was a conflict between NP2 and allocated sites, he asked what was the balance to ensure biodiversity had a proper place in the planning process?

Councillor Coppinger responded that the council would be able to make that appraisal when detailed planning applications were received. He assured Mr Bermange it would be top of the list.

**s) Adam Bermange of Boyn Hill ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

Would the Lead Member please explain why Historic Environment Policy HE3 has been removed as part of the Proposed Changes and can he state whether the Council remains committed to bringing forward a Borough-wide Local List of Non-Designated Heritage Assets?

A written response was provided:

*Policy HE3 is proposed to be deleted as HE1 has been amended to incorporate the requirement to conserve and enhance non designated as well as designated heritage assets. The Council does not have the capacity and resources to produce a Borough wide local list at this time. However, a borough wide Heritage Strategy using Government funding is to be prepared shortly. This will include wide engagement with many stakeholders.*

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Bermange commented that he had seen the excellent work undertaken by the Windsor and Eton Society to create a list of non-designated heritage assets, however this would not cover the whole of the borough. Policy HE1 asked for protection of such assets; he asked how this could be done if there was not a local list?

Councillor Coppinger commented that the council did not currently have the resource to do so at the moment but it would have the resource in future.

**t) Tim Veale, on behalf of Kate Veale of Bisham and Cookham ward, asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

What infrastructure actions will be guaranteed for Cookham / Cookham Rise's future to cope with increased traffic?

A written response was provided:

*A strategic transport assessment accompanies the BLP which considers a reasonable worst case of the potential transport impacts on the highway network across the borough as a result of the development in the local plan as well as development taking place in neighbouring authorities. The assessment shows for Cookham that whilst there will be some increase in traffic and delays, the key junctions are expected to still operate within an acceptable level of service. The BLP encourages the use of sustainable modes of transport, such as walking, cycling and using public transport. Detailed mitigation of the traffic impacts for the proposed allocations in Cookham will be dealt with at the planning application stage.*

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Veale commented that he would like to understand the detail behind the response 'some increase in traffic and delays' at key pinch points. It could take up to 30 minutes at bad peak times to get from Cookham over to Bourne End. He asked if there was anything that was going to happen to help Cookham if development was going to take place in the area?

Councillor Coppinger explained that the modelling had taken account of the worst case scenario. It took no account of the moves the cross party working group would make for example in relation to sustainable transport and buses. When a planning application came in it would be measured against what had been achieved.

**u) Paul Strzelecki of Bisham and Cookham ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

Two years ago, I represented the BLP was 'unsound' regarding site allocations placing 260, now 270, 90% greenbelt homes in Cookham. Still not addressed, the BLPRV remains 'unsound' in justification let alone breaching related 'duty to cooperate' grounds. Will you agree and remove these allocations?

A written response was provided:

*As I have explained the plan is evidence led: the site selection process which the Council has now undertaken in response to a request from the Inspector is a robust and independent process which properly considers flood risk and sequential selection of sites. The resulting proposed allocations are considered to represent a sound approach. The two Green Belt sites (AL37 and AL38) make a moderate and low contribution to Green Belt purposes respectively. Please note that 270 dwellings on sites in Cookham represents only 3% of the total number of dwellings allocated in the plan, which is in accordance with the Spatial Strategy. I suggest that your view is a matter which you might wish to raise through the consultation, if this is agreed by Council.*

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Strzelecki commented that he did not believe the response answered his question or those in his submission 18 months previously. The Cookham proposals would be catastrophic in all aspects of sustainability including green belt, flood plan, grid lock and overloaded services, not to mention the proposals on the Wycombe side of the bridge. The proposals would affect the historic context of Cookham. Given that the Deputy Head of Planning at the council had conceded in writing a month previously that they had not used best practice in a planning decision he asked if the council agreed this was another example of not best planning practice?

Councillor Coppinger responded that the Plan was evidence-led; although he knew that Mr Strzelecki disagreed with the evidence. Changes would come through as a result of the cross-party working group and the situation could be reviewed in light of planning applications that came in down the line.

**v) Paul Strzelecki of Bisham and Cookham ward asked the following question of Councillor Clark, Lead Member for Highways and Transport:**

There is a 2175 dwelling (15%) over identification to target (16435v14260) not present in the original BLP, leading to unknown Borough spatial deployment results. Has a range of viable road and infrastructure scenarios been developed to validate various combinations of optional site developments and if so, why was that report not made available? If not, why not?

A written response was provided:

*In the proposed plan we have undertaken to meet in full our identified housing need. There are also enhanced quality of place policies in the plan, it is a challenge to meet both requirements over the plan period. It is better to have a buffer rather than a shortfall in potential housing delivery. The sites selected meet the criteria set out in the site selection methodology. The impacts of this scale of development have been considered through a variety of evidence studies, including transport modelling, with detailed modelling of certain junctions which need modifying to cope with the increased traffic generated, water quality impacts, SA and SEA, sequential and where needed exception testing for flooding, impacts on a variety of infrastructure including schools. The viability report tests a series of typologies and different underlying assumptions.*

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Strzelecki stated that the Plan had a plus 2000 dwelling over-identification target. Were there scenarios built in the transport plan so that a range of possibilities using the over-identification had been modelled to lead to the most sustainable plan possible?

Councillor Coppinger responded that the numbers quoted were 100% correct. The council had to have a 10% safety margin on top; the council had gone 5% on top of that.

Councillor Clark responded that the written answer clearly identified the transport modelling that had been undertaken used a worst case scenario. As planning applications came through, the utmost care would be taken to consider transport and sustainability issues.

**w) Callista Gormally of Bisham and Cookham ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

Are the 20 proposed residential units on Strande Lane going to be mobile homes or houses?

A written response was provided:

*The Land east of Strande Park was a BLPSV allocation and, following the site review, has been confirmed again as a sound allocation site. The plan is concerned with proposed site allocations: any proposals would need to be the subject of a planning application in future – in terms of mobile homes or dwellings there is no distinction in the term ‘units’ ... this is a level of detail which is not a matter for plan making.*

Ms Gormally confirmed she did not wish to ask a supplementary question.

**x) Callista Gormally of Bisham and Cookham ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

Development proposals for land on the east side of Strande Park have not been successful previously, why has it been this time?

A written response was provided:

*Land to the east of Strande Park was a proposed allocation in the submission version of the plan which was approved by this Council in June 2017 for submission to the Secretary of State. Following the review of site allocations, there is no change to this part of the plan proposed at this stage: so it will be for the Inspector to consider it through the Examination Process.*

Ms Gormally confirmed she did not wish to ask a supplementary question.

**y) Ann Taylor of Clewer and Dedworth West ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

Given the permanent state of gridlock on the A308 at peak times and other, how can the Borough justify conceding that a further 1000 vehicles or more could pour onto this road from a single location, i.e. HA11(L21, 22), Green Belt land on the edge of Windsor, with the resultant catastrophic effects, particularly on air quality from stationary traffic?

A written response was provided:

*A strategic transport assessment accompanies the BLP which considers a reasonable worst case of the potential transport impacts on the highway network across the borough as well as development taking place in neighbouring authorities. This has identified some strategic interventions along the A308 to support the development associated with the local plan*

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Taylor commented that there was a permanent state of gridlock on the A308 and the proposal was to add more than 1000

vehicles. The response referred to 'strategic interventions'; Ms Taylor wanted to know what these were. The policy section on environmental protection and air pollution said that appropriate mitigation must be in place for increases in air pollution. She asked how this would help people sitting in gridlock at peak time breathing in fumes?

Councillor Coppinger commented that this was reasonably theoretical at this stage. Details would be clearer when planning applications were received. Work was about to start on the A308 which would hopefully provide some of the answers Ms Taylor was looking for.

**z) Ann Taylor of Clewer and Dedworth West ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

The Borough has £90,000 to fund an A308 traffic study, which is fundamental in ensuring the soundness of decisions regarding site selection. When completed, will the results of this study be taken into account in this respect? West Windsor is already an Air Quality Management Area as is Holyport/M4 area?

A written response was provided:

*The proposed A308 study will build on the work of the BLP and seek to identify a preferred package of measures to support a wide range of objectives that go beyond just mitigating the impacts of development. Through the study there will be wide engagement with key stakeholders and the outcomes are expected to be incorporated into the council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan. The A308 corridor study does not relate to site selection and that was not its purpose or intent.*

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Taylor asked if Councillor Coppinger thought that simple measures would be effective; was the real solution not completely new infrastructure?

Councillor Coppinger responded that the Infrastructure Development Plan was a live document and would take into account if new roads were required. Everything was done on a worst case scenario at the moment.

**aa) Julia Greens of Bisham and Cookham ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

To allow the planned "Growth for Education", can the Council please detail their intentions of how this can be achieved without the additional use of further virgin or loss of School sports grounds. In particularly in Cookham, school expansion is most likely to have to result in expanding into and over Alfred Manor Recreation Ground?

A written response was provided:

*Children's Services carried out an assessment of the likely impact of the Borough Local Plan on demand for school places. The housing planned for the Bisham and Cookham area could result in a maximum additional demand of 22 children at Reception.*

*The Infrastructure Delivery Plan sets out proposed expansion plans that would accommodate additional demand across the whole Borough. In addition, the Council is*

*currently carrying out more detailed feasibility work to identify the potential for expansion at all 60 (state) schools in the borough. The outcome of this will be reported to Cabinet in early 2020.*

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Greens commented that 22 reception places was woefully underestimated because schools in Cookham took in children from Furze Platt, Riverside and elsewhere. In the past when there were expansion plans in Cookham, Holy Trinity had had to expand into the green fields. She could only see this happening again at Cookham Rise; would the Councillor agree?

Councillor Carroll responded the council was undertaking initial assessments to look at the future demand for places required. The council was liaising with the DfE about what would potentially be required if the Plan was passed. It was the responsibility for the DfE to ensure they supported the borough with funding if the number of places increased. Councillor Carroll stated that he would be happy to meet to go into detail if this was requested.

**bb) Julia Greens of Bisham and Cookham ward asked the following question of Councillor Coppinger, Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

With a clear directive insisting absolutely everything is done to use previously developed land and avoid the use of Greenbelt and virgin land how can the RBWM justify including land at Lower Mount Farm and Strand Park, both in a high flood risk areas with a natural spring above that once built on prevents future natural drainage through virgin soil?

A written response was provided:

*In order to deliver the housing to meet the identified housing need the BLP seeks to provide the correct balance between limited Green Belt release and using previously developed land. Lower Mount Farm is completely in flood zone 1 (low risk) and only a very small proportion (2%) of the land east of Strand Park site is in a high risk flood zone.*

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Greens commented that the Broxtowe letter said councils should do all they could to use previously developed land. Why in the revised Plan had brownfield sites been removed but Green Belt had been included?

Councillor Coppinger responded that Environment Agency flood rules meant some brownfield sites in flood Zones 2 and 3 had to be taken out.

**cc) Katherine Else representing European Property Ventures asked the following question of the Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

Why were the advantages of 'Site HA41 North of Churchmead School' not considered through the Exception Test given its ability to contribute to the School facilities, highly sustainable location and the provision of a link road that would avoid Datchet town centre congestion?

A written response was provided:

*In accordance with the housing site selection methodology explained in the Housing Topic Paper, sites with less than 50% in flood zone 1 were rejected as being not*

*suitable for allocation. Nearly all of this site is within Flood Zone 2 (68%) or Flood Zone 3a (32%) with less than 1% in flood zone 1.*

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Else commented that her client had been disappointed with the assessment because it had been based solely on residential development when it was a mixed use allocation therefore the percentages given in relation to flood zones were incorrect. She asked why the site had been assessed in that way and why had the adjacent site with an equivalent flood risk been retained?

Councillor Coppinger responded that agricultural land was class 1. He suggested the comments should be submitted in the consultation for the Inspector to consider.

**dd) Katherine Else representing European Property Ventures asked the following question of the Lead Member for Planning and Maidenhead:**

Why did the Council not consider engaging with us to remove higher risk Flood Zone areas from residential analysis of Site HA41, so areas affected by higher flood risk could be used for open space, employment given the mixed-use allocation?

A written response was provided:

*The Environment Agency has expressed concerns in relation to flood risk on this site and informally indicated that it supports the removal of the site as an allocation. Under the terms of the Statement of Common Ground agreed with the Environment Agency in October 2018, the Council is using the latest published data for the BLP.*

By way of a supplementary question, Ms Else asked why closed discussions were held with the EA when their opinion affected consideration of the site? Her company had been undertaking ongoing modelling and advising the council. She commented that this was surely not in the public interest?

Councillor Coppinger advised Ms Else to raise the issues of process with the Inspector; the council had followed due process.

55. APPOINTMENT OF PANEL CHAIRMAN

Members considered the appointment of Chairman to the Maidenhead Area Development Panel.

Councillor Johnson thanked the outgoing Chairman, Councillor Stimson, who would now be able to focus on her new lead member role. Councillor Carroll commented he had known Councillor Haseler for two years; he was a robust individual in terms of planning matters. Councillor McWilliams commented that he had worked with his Cox Green colleague for three years on local issues. Councillor Haseler had undertaken exemplary work as a community leader and he would ensure all planning applications would be put through their paces. Councillor Walters also endorsed the appointment.

It was proposed by Councillor Johnson, seconded by Councillor Carroll, and:

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Councillor Haseler be appointed as Chairman of the Maidenhead Area Development Management Panel for the remainder of the municipal year.**

56. APPOINTMENT OF STATUTORY OFFICER

Members considered the appointment of an Interim S151 Officer.

Councillor Hilton explained that Council was required to appoint a S151 office to ensure proper administration of its affairs. Following the departure of the former post-holder, council was being asked to appoint an interim S151 officer whilst a recruitment process to identify a permanent replacement was carried out. Members who attended the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel the previous evening had met the proposed candidate, Terry Neaves. His responsibilities would include working with the finance team, officers and cabinet to develop an affordable revenue budget and capital programme. Another element would be to ensure the finance team were supported to understand the financial position and that there were realistic the expectations about what they could do to deliver sound council finances. He would ensure there was a plan to manage staff vacancies, and develop recruitment and retention plans to stabilise the team.

It was proposed by Councillor Hilton, seconded by Councillor Rayner, and:

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That Council notes the report and appoints:**

- i) Terry Neaves as the Council's Section 151 Officer on an interim basis pending permanent recruitment.**

57. MODERN WORKPLACE PROJECT

Members considered the Modern Workplace Project proposals.

Councillor Rayner explained that this was the second time the item had come before full Council. A thorough debate had taken place at the September meeting and it had been agreed that further clarification was needed. She thanked the Executive Director for his work on the report since then. Councillor Rayner explained that the current desktop environment had been in place for seven years and was at the end of its useful life, with the impact on staff already clear. The proposals would allow a phased replacement by March 2020 with significant benefits as detailed in paragraph 2.3. Procurement would take place under a framework.

Members noted that approval had previously been given for funding of £530,000 including £69,000 for a pilot. The pilot had identified a number of requirements:

- 16GB of RAM
- Larger screens with high definition
- Docking stations at each desk to allow direct network access rather than via Wi-Fi
- More devices (originally it had been assumed that 100 devices could be re-used)
- The addition of 67 Optalis staff
- An increase in basic costs of 30%

## COUNCIL - 23.10.19

The total funding requirements were therefore now £935,000.

Councillor Rayner referred to a number of points that had been raised at the September meeting. Comments about specification had been assessed but it was clear that the pilot had identified an appropriate, revised specification. The council had a policy of depreciation between 4-10 years. It was agreed that a four year period was more reflective for the replacement of IT equipment. The council ran over 300 applications, a number of which required high memory capacity.

Councillor Rayner explained that the current Microsoft Windows version was not supported after January 2020. All licences would be up for renewal in March 2020. If the council carried on under its current licences, this would cost £900,000 more over the next three years.

Councillor Reynolds commented that after his speech at the last meeting he was pleased that other councillors agreed improvements were needed and that some had been made. He believed a different situation could have occurred if a collegiate approach had been taken, however he was only contacted the day before by the Lead Member. Councillor Reynolds accepted that new equipment was needed but felt it could have been done in a better way. The changes did not address the issue of additional borrowing of £403,000. He felt that docking stations, at a cost of £79,560, were nice to have but not if you did not have the money. Monitors, with the same resolution as the current ones, would cost £65,520. The total extra costs could negate the cost savings put forward.

Councillor Reynolds proposed an amendment to the capital funding level in recommendation ii to read:

- ii) Approves additional capital funding of £259,920 in 2019/20.

Councillor Werner seconded the amendment. Members debated the proposed amendment.

Councillor Davey commented that the council was looking for 495 laptops and 72 desktops, which was 567 machines plus 97 for Optalis. The budget started at £250,000. An extra 100 machines were needed at a cost of £50,000 therefore the total was £300,000. There was a 30% increase in price, which meant the total was £390,000. The report therefore requested £603,000, therefore £213,000 or another third, was requested for a bit more RAM.

Finance had changed from a 10 year period to a four year period for depreciation. So instead of £9,072 a year, that was £24,497 a year, which was £7,000 more. The borough then needs to pay back £260,000 a year compared to £102,000 over ten years. Councillor Davey highlighted that CIPFA had been asked to come in and look at the accounts yet the council could now find £150,000 more over four years. He did not think things were being added up correctly and it needed to be looked at again. Personally he would be more confident if an opposition finance team were able to review all finance budgets before they came to full Council.

Councillor Rayner explained that she had spoken to Councillor Reynolds to ensure he knew the report was going to be considered at the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The monitors needed to be replaced as the current screens were combined with thin clients and could not be used on their own. Docking stations allowed

## COUNCIL - 23.10.19

computers to be connected into the network thereby not overloading the Wi-Fi network. The equipment had been recommended by others using mobile devices.

Councillor Werner commented that money had to be key to what the council was doing. Docking stations should not be necessary if a network cable was used instead therefore this was a very sensible saving to make.

Councillor Hilton explained that the minimum revenue position ensured the council recovered the costs of borrowing over the life of the product. When it had been ten years, which he believed was too long, it would have been 10% of the £935,000 per year. If it were four years, it would be 25% per year. Therefore it was exactly the same sum of money.

Councillor Hill stated that he was pleased the recommendations had changed. He accepted the advice from the technical experts that the Wi-Fi system would be overloaded if docking stations were not used as Wi-Fi was dependent on the signal available and this could waiver, however he would like to see the technical details. He also requested confirmation that the Wi-Fi network would be retained.

Councillor Jones welcomed the changes to the report. She was minded to approve on the basis that she was aware many officers struggled with the Wi-Fi and applications they had to use. She asked for Councillor Reynolds' comments to be taken on board and requested that technical evidence for screens and docking stations be provided as a written answer. She would be trusting the IT technicians to get it right.

Carole Da Costa commented that her initial thoughts were to make the saving but she had seen the struggles of officers to get the IT to work. Based on the feedback from Councillor Rayner she was minded to support the recommendations.

Councillor Johnson explained as the new Leader he had requested officers look again at the report and he was pleased that major changes had been made. The administration fully supported the report. He highlighted to Members that the bigger picture was the loss of productivity due to a poor digital infrastructure. He was a fiscal Conservative but there was a time for spending to save through enhanced productivity, and he was therefore pleased to support the report. He welcomed the positive comments from Opposition Members. The council was not in the grip of a financial crisis; work was ongoing to address a mid-year overspend.

Councillor Clark highlighted the need to get moving on the proposals due to the increase in software licence costs if the upgrade did not take place.

Councillor Reynolds commented that he had no issue with replacing equipment as officers were struggling but he did not want to buy equipment that was not needed. Ethernet cables could be bought for 40p, negating the need for docking stations.

Members voted on the amendment by a show of hands. The motion fell and Members returned to debating the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Davey stated that the issue was the way the finances were presented, which did not give a proper picture to enable Members to make an assessment. He would be keen to have Opposition Members involved in finance issues before they were presented to full Council.

Councillor Hilton explained that since the original report the Public Works Loan Board had increased interest rates to 2.6% which explained the difference in figures.

Councillor Hill commented that it was a classic commercial play for software licence costs to increase. The council was well placed to get equipment in place before the relevant date in 2020 and not pay the additional £900,000 costs that would be incurred. This additional cost, if incurred, would knock out the savings Councillor Reynolds had proposed within the first six months.

Councillor Shelim explained that the report in September had been brought in his name as the former Lead Member. The council had not spent any money on IT in the last seven years. The trial feedback had made it clear that a number of devices could not be re-used as had been first hoped. Device costs had also increased by 30%. When he had been elected in 2015 he had the opportunity over four years to spend £1000 through the Member ICT allowance. Following the 2019 elections all Members had been offered an iPad instead as an investment in the long term and beneficial to the environment and efficiency. Officers would be given the same level as a necessity.

Councillor Rayner commented that it was her duty to accept the professional advice of officers. She confirmed the Wi-Fi system would be retained. She would be happy to send a written response as Councillor Jones had requested. She highlighted that a breakdown of financing was included in Table 3 of the report; if Councillor Davey wanted further information he was welcome to let her know. Councillor Rayner thanked Councillor Shelim for his work on the original report.

It was proposed by Councillor Rayner, seconded by Councillor Shelim, and:

**RESOLVED: That Council notes the report and:**

- ii) Agrees to the bringing forward of £140,000 of capital funding from 2020/21 to 2019/20.**
- iii) Approves additional capital funding of £405,000 in 2019/20.**
- iv) Delegates to the Executive Director, in agreement with the Lead Member approval to award a contract for the supply of the new equipment.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9.00pm for a comfort break. The meeting resumed at 9.05pm.

Councillor Rayner left the meeting.

58. RBWM BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN SUBMISSION VERSION – PROPOSED CHANGES

Members considered proposed changes to the Borough Local Plan Submission Version (BLPSV).

Councillor Coppinger stated that he was delighted to put before full Council one of the most important and exciting papers he had ever presented. He explained that the planning system was plan led and making a development plan for a local authority

area was a statutory duty. The current plan dated back to 1999 and in many areas was obsolete.

In June 2019 the Secretary of State for Housing said “The Government wants to see every community covered by an up to date plan for sustainable development meaning that communities are in control of development and not exposed to speculative development.”

There was an enquiry being held this week in Maidenhead for such speculative development in Holyport, because there was not an up to date Plan. Without a current plan the borough was exposed to such attacks.

The submission version was approved by Council in June 2017, submitted in January 2018 and had been subject to examination by a planning inspector Mrs Louise Phillips. A plan had three distinct and sequential stages. The first was preparation, which was controlled by the Local Planning Authority and must include consultation under regulations 18 and 19 of the 2012 regulations. The second stage was examination. The purpose of the examination stage was to determine whether the plan was sound and legally compliant and also whether the Authority had complied with its duty to cooperate.

In this stage the inspector controlled the process, not the council, and she would decide how the examination would proceed. The examination stage ended when the Inspector delivered her final report. The council would expect the inspector to propose major modifications to make the plan sound and legal. The decision whether to adopt the changes would be made by the full Council.

After the stage one hearings in June 2018 the Inspector asked for certain work to be done which the council had been doing in the pause period. The council provided the Inspector with a comprehensive update on 2 July 2019. Proposals included convening an extraordinary Council meeting to secure Members’ endorsement to the proposed changes prior to consultation, which she agreed.

The key work that the Inspector asked the council to do was:

- A review of all site allocations including using the latest Environment Agency data for flooding
- A review of employment evidence
- To explore additional options for Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG)
- Review representations received in the earlier stages

The proposed changes would be subject to a further consultation for six weeks between 1 November and 15 December 2019, clearly avoiding the Christmas period which had upset people in the earlier consultation.

For the current stage representations must focus on whether the proposals were sound and legal.

## COUNCIL - 23.10.19

Councillor Coppinger highlighted the changes that were proposed:

- The borough had many constraints; 83% was Green Belt and large areas were either subject to flooding or were protected Crown Land. In the original plan the council allocated every available brown belt site but still had to give up 1.7% of Green Belt. Now because more sites had become available it had been possible to reduce the amount of Green Belt loss to just over 1% across the plan period which extended to 2033.
- Changes to site allocations included new sites put forward
- Employment space had been significantly changed and increased
- HA11, also known as the triangle site, which was reserved for employment, had now been brought forward to provide a high standard gateway at the entry to Maidenhead from the M4.

Councillor Coppinger commented that it was however not just about sites. The plan was supported by an Infrastructure Development Plan which was a living document and would evolve as the plan progressed. The ambition was also to produce future infrastructure schedules linked to geographic areas of the borough.

Every proposed site had a list of specific requirements before a planning application was received that had to be met. For example the triangle site had 28 to protect the environment, provide sustainable routes and design.

Members agreed to extend Councillor Coppinger's speaking time by one minute given the important subject matter.

Councillor Coppinger continued to explain that specific plans had been produced for two key routes where it was known that traffic was a critical concern for all. Those were the A308 and the A329.

Councillor Coppinger concluded by setting out what has been achieved in the plan:

- It had been shown that the Governments' housing requirement could be met, which would stop speculative developers like the one in Holyport
- The land devoted to employment had increased
- Small employment sites such as Tectonic Place and Grove Park had been protected
- All the Inspector's questions had been answered
- Specific policies on a number of areas had been included
- The loss of Green Belt over the period of the plan had reduced from 1.7% loss to just over 1%

Councillor Coppinger thanked the Head of Planning and her team for the hours put in.

Councillor Walters congratulated officers on producing a professional and well considered version of the plan. It was an improvement on the original version which in part could be explained by the situation and atmosphere at the time of the first submission. Over the plan period instead of building 712 houses per annum, the plan proposed 816 per annum, far exceeding the building requirements. A six year supply had been identified. The borough had a historically high level of windfalls. He therefore hoped that the statistics would fend off the five year supply argument made by

## COUNCIL - 23.10.19

developers. In his personal opinion he hoped that the consultation would give the opportunity to again look at the wisdom of meeting 100% of the objectively assessed need as there was nothing more to compel the council to do so. The borough probably had more constraints than any other in England. Councillor Walters commented that he was pleased to see affordable housing on larger scale sites. He hoped this would be reflected in practice. He had noted that tall buildings would be subject to a strategy which was good news. However he felt at the loss of the triangle site was particularly damaging. Provision of infrastructure was behind schedule, which must be taken seriously, for example the A308 was at capacity. Failure to carry out the consultation would leave the borough in limbo; it was sensible to now take into account public opinion.

Councillor Clark commented that the revised plan had been diligently produced based on an evidence base to allow the consultation to go ahead and enable residents to provide input. The issues of most concern to residents were infrastructure, education, open spaces, climate change, affordable housing and transport. Approving the report would allow these concerns to be properly considered.

Councillor Cannon highlighted that given the potential for flooding in the borough, the council had worked with the Environment Agency to identify all sites at risk and remove them from the plan. Ten had been removed purely based on flood risk.

Councillor Davies commented that, as Sarah Bowden had stated in her question, the first Sustainability Appraisal document was emailed to Members after 5pm the previous Friday. Like most people, she had made her best effort to read and understand it in the time available alongside reading all the other documentation. Then after 6pm Tuesday evening, two more volumes had arrived (the first 168 pages and the second 464 pages). This was the first time that the policy by policy, and allocation site by site analysis was made available to Members. She hoped Members would understand that if she had overlooked anything, this was the reason.

The cross-party working group on climate change had been mentioned numerous times in response to questions from the public as dealing with a diverse range of tasks. As a member of that group, she was slightly concerned as the group had only met twice in four months. If the group was to tackle all these very important tasks then it would need an adequate budget, expertise and resources.

The BLP had been amended to demonstrate commitment to biodiversity and ecological connectivity but that was not possible whilst developing over 176 hectares of previously undeveloped land without setting aside substantial areas for nature, and not amenity spaces such as parks, which were often green deserts. These also needed to be linked by habitat corridors for wildlife. As Fiona Hewer, Jan Stannard and Adam Bermange referred to in their questions, there was a need for a strategic plan for the cumulative impact on biodiversity and for a biodiversity action plan. The difficulty of trying to assess the environmental evidence without having completed a biodiversity action plan was commented on by Wild Maidenhead in their response to the BLP in January 2017, nearly three years previously.

According to the 'State of Nature' report (2019) nature was in severe decline and the UK was one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world with 39% of species having declined over the last ten years and 15% of species being at risk of extinction. Local authorities had a huge role to play. Biodiversity gain and ecological connectivity

were the way forward. Wild Maidenhead was ready, willing and able to help take this forward with the council.

Additionally, according to Nature 4 Climate, nature-based solutions had the potential to provide around a third of the solution to climate change. As the Committee on Climate Change noted, the cost of doing nothing would be far greater than the costs of taking action now. Whilst it was hard to imagine the future in global terms, it was easier to think about specific examples. Wild Maidenhead had identified 20 species for special focus in their Biodiversity Action Plan, including some very common species that were much loved by everyone. Councillor Davies wanted the children and grandchildren of the borough to grow up as earlier generations did, with house martins nesting under the house eaves, with hedgehogs visiting to eat slugs and house sparrows having dust baths in the garden. She wanted them to watch bumblebees buzzing round in the sunshine and bats swooping through the dusk.

Councillor Davies concluded that, given the limited time to consider the SA, and as she could not see the evidence that the current form of the BLP would promote sustainable development she regretfully could not support the Borough Local Plan in its current form.

Councillor Stimson commented that as the Chairman of one of the Area Development Panels she, along with other Members, had felt the frustration of not having an up to date plan as the borough was vulnerable to speculative poor quality development in the wrong places. An adopted plan was needed as soon as possible to get the high quality sustainable places and development needed for the next few years.

The plan took a holistic approach and the green place making focus would help with the regeneration programme and economic development the borough needed. Furthermore, the changes to the plan incorporated many aspects that residents and Members requested be changed. For example, officers had identified new areas of biodiversity and the provision of green and blue infrastructure would be given the highest priority. She was delighted to see that three new sites had been allocated (Deerswood, Land north of Lutman Lane and Braywick Park). The place-making focus would see the provision of large areas of new green space, including the green spine through South West Maidenhead. All of the areas would take an enormous amount of challenge. Coupled with trying to get to carbon neutral by 2050, it was going to be terribly hard work but it had to be started somewhere. The plan was a lot more sound and a lot more from the heart than the first version. The plan outlined how the council would increasingly reconnect residents with nature, recommending green and brown roofs, green walls, and exemplar quality green and blue infrastructure at both ground floor and upper levels. A green and blue infrastructure SPD would be produced as quickly as possible to give more guidance to developers. In the meantime, the government would be introducing new legislation which developers would need to comply with: for example, in 2020 it would be enshrined in law for developers to achieve a net biodiversity gain.

The council had trod a careful and very narrow path between making the enhancing changes to the plan, and creating a new plan. It had been a difficult and lengthy task but she felt a careful balance had been struck and the plan had been enhanced. As the plan was developed some time ago it could only be stretched so far before it broke therefore what could be done in terms of climate change and sustainability had been

## COUNCIL - 23.10.19

done. When the plan was put to bed, the council would start on the new plan as plans were done very five years or so. In the meantime the council would start with the climate change programme. Councillor Stimson announced that by the middle of January the council would have at least three resources, with a fourth in time, who would be full time officers helping with the sustainability and climate change agenda. This was from not having any; the council was starting to have the resources to develop the changes that would be needed.

Councillor Stimson concluded that, as a number of the public questioners would know, she had been working with local groups and people in the council to start to make the changes. She thought the submission version was a super plan and she supported it.

Councillor Brar congratulated the public questioners from Cookham. She commented that when looking at the history and heritage of Cookham it was clearly a very special place. One famous resident, the artist Sir Stanley Spencer, once called Cookham 'a village in heaven' and he painted biblical scenes with the village as a backdrop. Another person who found inspiration in the unspoiled beauty surrounding the village was Kenneth Grahame, author of *Wind in the Willows* who spent his childhood living in Cookham Dean.

Councillor Brar stated that it was not possible to live in the past, it was important to look to the future and accept that some change was inevitable. However, at the centre of the planning system was the idea of sustainable development, ensuring that the plans made now met current needs without causing a burden for future generations. Looking at the Borough Local Plan, including the proposed changes Members were being asked to agree, she had to conclude that the three allocation sites for housing within Cookham, all crammed within Cookham Rise, would lead to unsustainable development.

This was not just her opinion but was a view shared by many of Cookham's residents. Formal objections were made in representations to the original BLP proposals in 2017 on the grounds of heritage, environment, water pollution, sewage issues and traffic gridlock. In the north of the borough Cookham Rise had been allocated 270 new dwellings whilst other villages were left untouched.

Councillor Brar questioned what would all the additional homes mean? Hundreds more children needing education in schools that were full both primary and secondary. Hundreds of additional people requiring a GP; there was only one surgery and already it was oversubscribed and very hard to get an appointment. Hundreds of additional cars on the roads. Cookham had narrow lanes such as Lower Road, Dean Lane and The Pound. Cannondown Road railway bridge was not wide enough to take the extra volume of traffic. There were already problems with sewage and surface water under the bridge.

On the issue of congestion she also believed there had been a failure to comply with the duty to cooperate with Wycombe Council leading to a serious risk to traffic flow on Cookham Bridge, due to the building of 600 new homes in Buckinghamshire. This would have a serious knock-on effect in Cookham.

Site AL37, the land at north of Lower Mount Farm, was a large Green Belt site, now proposed for 200 new homes. Releasing the site went far beyond limited infilling and

## COUNCIL - 23.10.19

represented a major expansion. The proposal was the major driver of the issues she had already mentioned.

AL38, land east of Strand Park, was in the flood plan and liable to flood. She remembered in the last major flood vulnerable people were trapped with carers having to use dinghies to reach them. She believed the 2009 data used for measuring flood risk was out of date. There were also specific concerns for the biodiversity impact of developing on this site which was a grassland habitat for slowworms, toads and badgers.

AL36, the gas holder site on Whyteladyes Lane was a brown field site and Councillor Brar supported the idea of making good use of such sites. The site needed to be cleaned before it could be developed and she was concerned the cost of the clean-up would lead to developers claiming that providing affordable housing on the site was not economical. There were real concerns about sewage capacity as Thames Water had already objected to one application on such grounds. She noted also the proposed housing density had been increased by 25% without an explanation. The issues must be addressed in order to make the development sustainable.

Councillor Reynolds commented that for many years Maidenians had not felt the town was a place they could play, shop or eat; it had been more about making do. The latest plan version would see almost 2500 new homes in the town centre, which was already crowded, under resourced and had poor transport links other than into central London. There was only one train an hour north of Maidenhead, incredibly poor cycle routes and an inadequate bus service. The plan did not provide an answer for Maidenhead town centre. The tall building study had only been made available earlier that day. The summary said that buildings should not be higher than 19 storeys in Maidenhead Residents were rightly worried about tall buildings that were often overbearing and ugly. It was known that Maidenhead needed to get taller but there was a way of doing so. The town centre was not ready for buildings of 19 or more storeys. The town needed attractive buildings that built on the historic assets it already had.

Councillor Reynolds commented that 30% affordable housing was just a pipe dream. He referred to the last two big sites in the town centre that had come to Panel, where the developer had claimed affordable housing was not viable. A developer had told him recently that it was almost impossible to sell a flat in the town without parking yet, the council was saying town centre schemes needed no parking. It was not clear when Crossrail would come forward. The bus service was not reliable. Adequate parking for residents in the town centre was needed and it had to be one space per dwelling at minimum. The plan was not right for the town centre and was not fit.

Councillor W. Da Costa explained that he was going to use some information from the RBWM Climate Emergency Coalition.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change had stated that there were just 11 years left to prevent 1.5 degrees warming; warming beyond 1.5 degrees represented a threat to the future of humanity, and even warming limited to that level would wreak havoc upon the livelihoods of countless people across the world. Nature was declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history and the rate of species extinctions was accelerating, with grave impacts on people around the world now likely. The world was experiencing an emergency as defined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 as “an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare... [and] ... serious damage to the environment ... in the United Kingdom”. An urgent and rapid response was now necessary.

There was a need to put the word emergency back into the council's approach to Climate Change, reducing carbon, reducing greenhouse gases and strengthening biodiversity and green infrastructure. The BLP was a key document to set the expectations for new developments and adjustments to existing developments for the next 10-15 years. The council should be including standards and targets that developers must adhere to but with the language in the plan, the council had put the ball into the developers' court, using language such as 'All developments will demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to and mitigate climate change' and objectives phrased as 'green energy' rather than setting targets that moved over time and promoting that carbon and greenhouse gas emission reductions must be demonstrated in all aspects of the design, build and operation of buildings. The document should be enforcing the law on Climate Change as demonstrated in NPPF Policies 8 and 148 – 154, but it did not.

Councillor W. Da Costa commented that the plan was a key document, probably the key document to ensure the council did its part to tackle climate change and reduce carbon emissions and greenhouse gases but, rather, the Sustainability Appraisal noted that the current BLP would in fact increase local carbon emissions by approximately 22.5%.

Strategic enhancements of biodiversity based on good science was a more difficult proposition as the understanding and methodologies and technologies were still in their infancy. Professors of Biodiversity at the University of Reading, with close connections to Defra, wanted to work with the council and resident groups to help create robust policies; those in the plan were not. They did not allow coherent movement towards a vision and targets and they contained no science-based targets.

As science and technology developed so the policies must, but the council's Climate Change and biodiversity policies did not allow for subsequent change.

Councillor W. Da Costa was glad to hear from Councillor Coppinger's answers to residents that the cross party working group would include in equal priority both reduction in greenhouse gases and strengthening biodiversity, not to mention improving resilience and facilitating residents groups. As Councillor Davies had said, the group was moving too slowly and it was good to hear that resources were coming, but it had wasted 6 months.

To its credit the policy on Green and Blue Infrastructure did refer to upgrading with a subsequent successor document. However, it was also a long way short of best practice such as that of Salford.

In short, notwithstanding his opposition to development on the precious Green Belt on the edge of Windsor, Oakley Green and Bray, Councillor W. Da Costa concluded that the document was lacking in sophistication, lacking in ambition and paid lip service to the emergency that was faced.

Councillor McWilliams referred to South Oxfordshire which had point blank refused to take forward the housing numbers set by government. Any authority that took that position would find that central government would come in and take away its power. The borough had a severe lack of affordable housing. It was important to get the plan in place so that targets in the SHMAA could be achieved. Councillor McWilliams announced he would be bringing forward a housing strategy to set a threshold, demonstrate how to encourage developers to deliver affordable housing, and how to deliver affordable rent through the property company and private landlords. The plan was an opportunity to correct an imbalance in society.

Councillor Johnson highlighted that without a proper plan in place the borough was at the mercy of the markets. The plan before Members was a result of the legal and regulatory framework in which the local authority operated. The plan was not perfect for the end of 2019 but that was why as soon as it was adopted, the council would seek to make further amendments in relation to biodiversity, sustainable development and technological innovation. In relation to climate change the council had declared an emergency. There was now a Cabinet member with responsibility for the issues. The plan would lead to opportunities in the long term for more jobs, economic growth, development to get people onto the property ladder, infrastructure, schools, and health provision. It would also create a set of sustainably linked places. Maidenhead remained a centre of vision and excellence and a place that attracted investment. The potential transformative effect of what could happen to the former Nicholson's centre was key. As one borough, the council was also looking to protect the historic aspects of Windsor and Eton whilst also unleashing the positive, sustainable elements of the good growth agenda. This was growth that delivered benefits to local communities and sustainable outcomes and addressed climate change whilst ensuring the area remained one of economic prosperity. Without economic prosperity the resources to deliver the ambitious agenda would not be available. The Conservative party was committed to addressing climate change including new legislation that would create a new Office for Environmental Protection, a body that would have the powers to enforce environmental legislation.

Councillor Johnson concluded that the plan was not perfect but no long term plan was without the ability to change. The plan was going in the right direction. He saw the borough becoming the Royal Borough of innovation and opportunity.

Councillor Del Campo explained that she usually tried to read the document pack three times over before a meeting, but she had only managed this one twice. Members had been given not nearly enough time to read the many documents, digest, understand, cross-reference and, most importantly, scrutinise them. Members were being asked to take a leap of faith and approve the plan because if it did not, something worse might happen. The problem was that for some of her residents, the plan already presented them with a worst-case scenario, one that had been causing stress and loss of sleep for the last seven years.

Councillor Del Campo explained that she was referring to Spencer's Farm, which should not even be under consideration because in 2012, councillors voted almost unanimously to 'protect the existing greenbelt in the forthcoming Borough Local Plan' and to 'carefully consider the responses received to consultations on the Borough Local Plan'. Councillor Del Campo felt that if either of the pledges had been honoured, that would have been the end of the matter. In September 2013, she understood the RBWM Highways team had ruled out the site over highways issues. That should also have been the end of it, yet it was still included and the same arguments as before, about access via the dangerous bend on the Cookham Road, were being made. She had been told that Highways were now happy with the site, but she was not allowed to know why as the document was not in the public domain. If the document was not in the public domain, it could not be scrutinised so it should not be able to influence the plan.

## COUNCIL - 23.10.19

Councillor Del Campo explained that the site was also known to flood and to have surface water issues. She had been told to trust that the issues would be mitigated but the facts around flooding on Spencer's Farm were alarming. For example, proposed emergency access to the site was over a mixture of Flood Zone 2 and Flood Zone 3 land, and the sequential test document stated any land that was currently Flood Zone 2 could be presumed to become Flood Zone 3 over the next 100 years due to climate change. This change also meant that land to the north and the south of the site currently planned for housing and a school, would also become Flood Zone 3. There had been floods in 1990, 2000, 2003, 2012 and 2014.

She appreciated the offers made the previous day by the Lead Member to meet to discuss concerns and she invited him to come and talk to residents on the Aldebury estate and explain to them how the plan mitigated the concerns of both residents and the inspector over flooding.

Councillor Del Campo also wished to discuss whether appointing an empty homes officer and bringing the borough's 553 empty homes back into use could allow removal of Spencer's Farm in Furze Platt, and Lower Mount Farm and Strande Park in Cookham, a total of 550 homes. She appreciated it was not a simple numbers game, but there were very strong reasons for taking these particular sites out of the BLP.

Another matter her residents felt strongly about was that of housing for people with disabilities. She had received a well-researched email from a residents who had serious concerns about the BLP, and Councillor Bond would speak about this in more detail. The Disability and Inclusion Forum had worked hard to make their views heard, as had the Climate Emergency Coalition and a great number of other local groups, yet they felt that they were being ignored. The plan was already delayed by six years. Councillor Del Campo therefore felt that taking a little more time now to put residents and the environment front and centre of the process would pay dividends in years to come.

Councillor Baldwin stated that he was dissatisfied with the piecemeal release of the papers into the public domain given the Extraordinary meeting was agreed in August 2019. He felt this represented a cavalier approach to consultation with Members and therefore wondered how the public consultees would be treated such as those in attendance at the meeting including representatives of parish councils, neighbourhood forums, Wild Maidenhead and the Climate Emergency Coalition. It suggested such committed residents would be treated as necessary but resented window dressing to give legitimacy to the plan. Residents could take their revenge at the ballot box but this would not be until 2023 which would be too late for many communities. Until then it would be this plan, with all its acknowledged faults, backed up by Development Management Panels with an inbuilt Conservative majority and Overview and Scrutiny Panels rendered useless by overwork and partisan solidarity. Councillor Baldwin encourage the administration to give the full Council the time it needed to scrutinise the plan properly and engage with the Opposition so all could support it. If this did not happen it would stagger out of the door and the Inspector would inevitably reject it. He opposed the motion.

Councillor Werner proposed a motion to defer the item to a meeting at the earliest the week commencing 10 November 2019. The Leader had said it was not a perfect plan

## COUNCIL - 23.10.19

and he wanted a more collegiate approach. Members had heard from the public the adverse effects of the plan on climate change, on the highways of north Maidenhead. Members had received a number of the reports late. The plan was clearly not ready to go to consultation.

Councillor Johnson requested to make a personal explanation. He explained that he did not say the plan was flawed but that it was imperfect in so far as being judged by the Inspector on a national planning framework which had slightly moved out of date. That was not the choice of the council; it was part of the process the council was locked into. It was not the council's plan to rewrite comprehensively. The Inspector had given a clear direction which had been followed in moving to a period of consultation he had faith in the residents that they would engage fully with the process and raise valid concerns which the Inspector would take into account.

Councillor Jones seconded the motion for deferral. Members therefore debated the motion.

Councillor Knowles commented that information had been coming in waves; this had affected all Members. He appreciated the borough needed an up to date plan but it needed to be fit for purpose on as many points as possible. Everyone needed to work together. Some issues may be insurmountable but they needed to be looked at. There was not a lot of trust in the consultation process, for example he was concerned people with cars would be discounted given the track record.

Councillor Reynolds stated that he supported the deferral. He did not believe a deferral would change the timetable. The opposition wanted to sit down and discuss a few key changes that all could agree to. Members had been given 3000 pages to read, some of them only hours before the meeting.

Councillor Hill stated that he supported the motion. The situation had become absurd; it had been difficult to keep up with all the documents being published. He would welcome the opportunity to discuss the issues in his ward.

Councillor W. Da Costa stated that the opposition wanted to work with the administration to benefit residents. It wanted to discuss key issues that were stopping all agreeing the plan. It needed to include clear and robust targets on climate change and biodiversity.

Councillor Davey commented that he expected 95% of the councillors in the room had not read the documents properly. If they then voted, he questioned whether they would be truly representing their residents.

Councillor Walters highlighted that previous speeches had over-exaggerated the council's powers. The power sat with central government who set the target for housing. If the council did not accept the demands of the Inspector, it would be out in the wilderness. Developers were waiting in the wings to see more delays. It was time to give the public the opportunity to say what they thought through the consultation.

Councillor Carole Da Costa commented that she really wanted to approve the plan but had not received the documents in time. There was a need to stop developers doing what they wanted but she requested additional time to read the papers.

## COUNCIL - 23.10.19

Councillor Jones referred to the last letter from the Inspector which clearly stated it was the borough's wish to consult on the changes to the plan before proceeding with the hearings. Therefore a Regulation 19 style consultation was reasonable. Although the council may like the Inspector to include the amendments, she may not do so. She understood the wish of the council to only go to consultation on a plan approved by Councillors but to do this councillors needed time to make evidenced decisions; documents including site allocations had not been available prior to the previous Tuesday. A briefing had been arranged at the last minute but had clashed with a Local Independents' meeting with the LGA. She had not approved the original submission for good reason as it was not based on evidence. New councillors needed to ensure they understood the original plan, and then the changes proposed.

Councillor Jones acknowledged some of the changes were an improvement, but she had concerns about allocation of hospital sites for housing. The A308 was another anomaly that needed to be addressed. She had not seen the fact that the King Edward VII Hospital site was included until the previous Tuesday. She was then expected to do all her research in a week whilst also working. She therefore questioned how she could approve the plan and represent her residents.

Councillor Werner concluded that a two week delay to get the plan right was not too much to ask. It would send a good message to the Inspector if the approval were unanimous.

Members voted on the motion to defer the debate to a meeting no earlier than the week commencing 10 November 2019.

A named vote was taken as at least five councillors made such a request, as per Part 2 C17.3.3 of the constitution. 17 Councillors voted for the motion; 21 Councillors voted against the motion. The motion therefore fell.

<b>RBWM Borough local Plan Submission Version - Proposed Changes - motion to defer (Motion)</b>	
Councillor John Baldwin	For
Councillor Clive Baskerville	For
Councillor Christine Bateson	Against
Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra	Against
Councillor Simon Bond	For
Councillor John Bowden	Against
Councillor Mandy Brar	For
Councillor Catherine del Campo	For
Councillor David Cannon	Against
Councillor Stuart Carroll	Against
Councillor Gerry Clark	Against
Councillor David Coppinger	Against
Councillor Carole Da Costa	For
Councillor Wisdom Da Costa	For
Councillor Jon Davey	For
Councillor Karen Davies	For
Councillor Phil Haseler	Against
Councillor Geoffrey Hill	For
Councillor David Hilton	Against
Councillor Maureen Hunt	Against
Councillor Andrew Johnson	Against
Councillor Lynne Jones	For

COUNCIL - 23.10.19

Councillor Neil Knowles	For
Councillor Ewan Larcombe	For
Councillor Sayonara Luxton	Against
Councillor Ross McWilliams	Against
Councillor Gary Muir	Against
Councillor Samantha Rayner	Conflict Of Interests
Councillor Joshua Reynolds	For
Councillor Julian Sharpe	Against
Councillor Shamsul Shelim	Against
Councillor Gurch Singh	Against
Councillor Donna Stimson	Against
Councillor John Story	Against
Councillor Chris Targowski	Against
Councillor Helen Taylor	For
Councillor Amy Tisi	For
Councillor Leo Walters	Against
Councillor Simon Werner	For
<b>Rejected</b>	

Members returned to debating the motion in the agenda.

Councillor Carroll explained that planning was underway already in co-ordination with the Department for Education (DfE) for additional school places if needed. A number of schools were enthusiastic about the opportunity to expand. In terms of GP capacity, the issue was regularly discussed at the Health and Wellbeing Board and with the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG). It was a requirement under NHS England to ensure an adequate number of GPs and surgeries. The CCG was confident that it could cope with an increase in demand if needed. A Borough Local Plan was required to know what would be needed and to plan for growth. Councillor Carroll commented that he knew Salford well; it provided an example that addressing climate change was not mutually exclusive from regeneration. The council had an ambitious commitment to addressing climate change and would bring forward a number of policies. It was misleading to say the council was not doing anything.

Councillor Carroll highlighted that Key Workers were pivotal for Adult Social Care and Children's Services. The issue of affordable housing was always raised in terms of recruitment and retention. He commented that there had been confusion and misinformation about the hospital sites. He would be happy to forward a statement from the CCG to clarify there was no plan to reduce services.

Councillor Hilton commented that the plan being considered had been on a very long journey. Councillor Christine Bateson and he had started that journey as members of the Local Plan Working Group in late 2010; it would be good to bring the protracted process nearer to a close. The working group had reached the conclusion that against a backdrop of an aging population and housing shortage, in order to maintain an appropriate number of working age residents and economic vibrancy, more new homes affordable for younger people were needed. To achieve this, it became obvious that a modest release of Green Belt would be needed to achieve a balance between the economic, social and environmental priorities. The council could not just stop building the homes desperately need by residents.

In a rapidly changing world such was the process for plan making that it was inevitable that some new thinking was omitted, but rather than being fixed for all time, in today's world the plan would be more of a living document. There was a requirement to review it every five years but the council could add new policies at any time. In the same way as the main plan, the policies would need to go through consultation and examination in public.

Even if collectively Members could not agree on every point, he was sure that all wished to protect the Green Belt and biodiversity. An adopted plan was the only way this could be achieved. Without a plan there could be a flood of planning applications from developers, including those whose land holdings had been rejected for development and some of those would be successful. Members may not like some aspects of the plan but it was by far better than the incoherent sprawl that uncontrolled development could bring.

He highlighted that he was the Lead Member for Finance and Ascot. Ascot was included because it was classified as a growth area. Before boundary changes his ward included some 2000 homes. The pro-forma in the plan would deliver in excess of 700 homes to this area, much of it in the Green Belt. This was a 33% increase which he imagined was as much as any other ward in the borough. Across the whole of the south of the borough there would be 15% growth.

One of the reasons that he had stood in the 2019 elections was to ensure that the rejuvenation of Ascot was delivered such that, once complete, those who complained along the way would say 'well, this isn't so bad, in fact I quite like some of it'. From talking to developers and by using the Ascot Place Making paper, he knew that this was possible.

The provision of more than 14 Hectares of Suitable alternative Natural Green Space to support these developments would add to biodiversity.

Development across the Borough would create opportunities. In Ascot proposals would deliver a double-sided high street, new, smaller and affordable homes close to a community building, a piazza, new retail, cafés and restaurants. His ambition was to attract younger people to the area as a balance to the aging population and create a vibrant Ascot that reflected the international standing of Ascot Racecourse. If he were to achieve his ambition the plan needed to be adopted as soon as possible. Delay would only bring harm so he would be supporting the recommendation and suggested others should too.

Councillor Hill commented that the revised version was a missed opportunity. He felt that the existing plan should have been withdrawn and the areas lacking should have been completed, with the old plan at hand and a new plan re-submitted. There was no full Green Belt Review or Duty to Cooperate. On the upside the employment land allocations were much better and there had been a good re-evaluation of the flood plain. In relation to infrastructure, he questioned why Vicus Way was still listed as a car park when it was clearly employment land and good alternative proposals had been made.

Councillor Hill stated that there was no justification for the development of Maidenhead Golf Club to housing without a comprehensive Green Belt review.

## COUNCIL - 23.10.19

Unless of course it was being used as a cash cow to pay off the £175m debt mountain building up.

Oldfield Ward was set to take circa 3000 addition homes on top of the circa 3500 existing homes. St. Mary's found itself in a similar pattern. With this almost doubling of dwellings in central Maidenhead and no real attention to infrastructure other than the fairly obtuse encouragement to walk or cycle forgetting that most would have to drive. central Maidenhead risked becoming a high rise heavily congested dormitory with associated health and community challenges.

Having read the emails from RBWM Climate Emergency Councillor Hill stated that he agreed entirely. The Borough Local Plan and suggested amendments was the biggest and most devastating failure in the borough for a generation. The most damning evidence of this was the environmental vandalism which was taking place on Maidenhead golf course and the Land South of Harvest Hill Road. This was the eradication of the last remaining green lung in Maidenhead resulting in a dramatic loss of green space, bio-diversity, traffic chaos, air quality degradation with associated pollution and potential ill-health of local residents.

Councillor Hill concluded by referring Members to a speech by the Leader of the Council outside the Royal Courts of Justice six days previously regarding Heathrow Expansion and the reasons to fight it. The speech referred to exposing 'the flawed process', the 'detrimental impact on bio-diversity', exposing 'the flaws surrounding air quality,' the 'huge massive blight of air pollution that not only will affect the Royal Borough'. Councillor Hill commented that these sounded like familiar problems and were very close to home with the Borough Local Plan. The Leader's speech had closed with 'We fight to win, the fight goes on. He therefore closed by asking the Leader to fight to: reduce the ridiculous Objectively Assessed Need for housing in the borough; throw out the flawed Borough Local Plan and re-start (keeping the existing good work of the old plan); and do the process right, fully representing the needs and views of residents and protecting the environment for future generations.

Councillor Targowski commented that there had been a lot of talk about representing residents. The Conservative manifesto in 2019 had committed to defend the Green Belt from speculative development and to build affordable homes. The report was vital to achieve these commitments.

Councillor Larcombe highlighted problems in Datchet, Horton and Wraybury including air craft noise, traffic pollution, parking, floods and air pollution. If areas of land liable to flood were allocated for housing it should be expected that they would be thrown out. In his ward there were two motorways, three railway stations, three working gravel pits and a vast recycling site with a thousand lorry movements per day. He was pleased that two sites had been removed. However he criticised the stakeholder meetings that had been held, in particular the slides that had been presented. Councillor Larcombe had always lived within three miles of his current address therefore he knew the area well. He felt that his ward was 'out of sight, out of mind'. Unauthorised and tolerated development was carrying on at pace. He had no comment on the Traveller local plan. He would vote to put the plan out to consultation although he disagreed with the content and the timing of the consultation as it was important to get it into the public domain. He questioned how much had been spent on the plan to date. Panel members who voted without the emerging plan and were oblivious to the flood plan and Green Belt issues would have a lot to answer for. He

questioned whether the construction of earth bunds without planning permission, the blockages and the failure to maintain drainage were sustainable development. Wraysbury Parish Council had declared a motion of no confidence; he did not have the exact wording but it related to planning. The River Thames Scheme route was meant to be protected but only the previous month councillors had approved a scheme to cover a large piece of land with concrete. This had simply added value for the landowners.

Councillor Bhangra commented that he was glad to see that Boyn Valley Industrial Estate was not a site listed in the revised Borough Local Plan. Councillor Carroll and he had been working closely with the businesses of Boyn Valley Industrial Estate in Boyn Hill assisting them to ensure their livelihoods and businesses were secure for the future. Councillor Carroll had raised issues with the Lead Member for Planning over the last year, as the site was previously included in the Borough Local Plan. They had been working with the businesses of Boyn Valley Industrial Estate as part of their industrial plan. It was a very important and a valuable site for small factories and small businesses which were vital employers to the local area and these businesses were critical. The majority of the residents he had spoken to in Boyn Hill wanted the council to proceed with the Borough Local Plan, whilst being ambitious about the biodiversity plan also. Young people wanted the council to ensure affordable housing, social housing and key worker housing and to combine that with environmental imperatives. He thanked Councillor Coppinger for listening and for taking residents' and business owners' views into consideration in the revised Borough Local Plan.

Councillor Sharpe commented that he was delighted that the plan was about to move to consultation. The impact of recent planning decisions in the south of the borough made it clear that there was a need for greater protection for residents. He felt that the parking plan was not correct as more spaces were needed per property. An approved plan would be crucial in the planning process so all were on the same wavelength. The council should use the opportunity to build communities across the borough that residents wanted. The consultation would therefore be for the benefit of all.

Councillor Bateson commented that she had first been involved in the plan process eight years previously. When the government policy changed it had been a requirement to give up some Green Belt land. The Inspector had come back with a great number of modifications; she congratulated the Head of Planning and her team in dealing with these.

Councillor Davey commented that he was very disappointed. No-one was against the plan as it was a very important thing to have but a two week delay would make no difference. He felt the plan was getting waved through. Last month he had asked a question about the A308 corridor review; yet he had not had any feedback. His suspicion was that it would cause bad news for the 450 housing plan for the areas. He felt that he could not make a decision on the Borough Local Plan without reading, digesting, sharing, discussing, thinking, reflecting, evaluating and mulling it over for a while. He needed to consider what his residents thought, as surely what he thought had to mirror their thoughts?

Google said that a Place Plan was an opportunity for a community to come together and help to play a part in shaping the place that mattered to them. The report had taken over 10 years to take shape, but Members were being expected to digest it in less than seven days and then vote on moving it forward. CIPFA were currently

## COUNCIL - 23.10.19

reviewing how the council operated and are not very impressed. The Inspector had already kicked the plan into the long grass once, he did not want to be there again.

Councillor Davey highlighted that in 2009 people were asked whether they agreed with the following statement:

*“By 2026 the Royal Borough will be a place guided by the principles of sustainable communities where everyone can thrive in a safe and healthy environment, take active part in decisions and continue to learn throughout their lives. It will be a place where the unique character, history and setting is respected in providing a strong economy and meeting the needs and expectations of residents, visitors and those who work in the borough. Development will be carefully planned, maximising the re-use of suitable land within towns and villages”.*

Councillor Davey highlighted sections of the statement and made the following comments:

- Was the council taking climate change seriously in?
- Food banks in 2019 were busier than ever
- Members were being urged to vote the new BLP through before they had had a chance to look at it properly, as they were being warned that the inspector may ‘pull the plug’
- There was a £4m hole in the budget
- Procurement was unable to tell him what the council was actually doing for local businesses
- In relation to the A308 Corridor Review, “They were too busy with other things” was comment reportedly made at Parish meeting.
- 8 million tourists visited the borough yet there was a proposal to close the Tourist Office and the Visitor Management Forum had been canned.

Councillor Davey stated that in 2009 Legoland had said: ‘Would like to see greater reference to the economic benefits brought to the Borough by tourism. The Core Strategy should place a greater emphasis on the retention, enhancement and expansion of existing tourist facilities.’ Councillor Davey explained that the regional economic multiplier effect said that £1 that went to a local business would go to seven or eight more.

The Conservative administration had put forward the following Borough Local Plan with no real consultation with the Opposition.

Councillor Bond commented that it would be good to hear more information from Councillor Carroll on the hospital issue as St Marks was in his ward. He believed there was a covenant on the land that said it could only be used for a hospital. There was a need to ask searching questions. The issue of Children’s Centres was most concerning. When assets were converted into revenue it led to a weaker balance sheet. He was also concerned about often overlooked mental health services. He wondered where the saving came from if some services had to move off hospital sites and pay commercial rates for accommodation. There was an appetite for more detail on all hospital services. He was aware that there was a church with an active congregation in the grounds of St Marks. It was a one of six listed buildings on site.

## COUNCIL - 23.10.19

Only one of the pro-forma stated the building would be preserved which was concerning. Councillor Bond highlighted that very little of the existing housing stock was fully accessible for those with mobility issues. The number of residents with such issues was due to rise from 26,000 to 32,000 yet the plan included a target of just 5%.

Councillor Haseler commented that the submission version was under inspection. The Head of Planning had been in close communication with the inspector and had a very good understanding of what the issues were with the current version. She and her team had been working very hard to address those issues and make proposed amendments. He urged Members to approve the report so that residents could begin to make their views known.

Councillor Jones commented that she had listed to Councillor Bhangra about how he and Councillor Carroll had been able to talk to Councillor Coppinger about the industrial area in their ward. She would have welcomed a similar opportunity to discuss King Edward VII Hospital which was in her ward. Residents had hoped for a minor injury unit as it was a 30 minute drive to Wexham Park. If such inputs were welcome all needed to be included well before seven days before a Council meeting. She had not had sufficient time to ask questions. She proposed a motion to amend recommendation ii) so that only 'minor' revisions could be made under delegation.

Councillor Werner seconded the proposal.

Councillor Coppinger stated that he did not accept the proposed amendment.

The Managing Director referred Members to paragraph 2.18 of the report.

A vote was taken on the amendment via a show of hands; the motion fell.

Councillor Coppinger concluded the debate. He explained that the council had already submitted a plan. The council was now responding to questions by the Inspector therefore it was essential that the public were given an opportunity to provide views. There was no such thing as a two week delay because Christmas was approaching. It was important to approve the report and begin the consultation as soon as possible. Once the plan was in place the work of the cross party working group would continue.

It was proposed by Councillor Coppinger, seconded by Councillor Walters, and:

### **RESOLVED: That Council notes the report and:**

- i) Approves the Proposed Changes to the Borough Local Plan Submission Version (Appendix 1), together with the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment updates, for public consultation.**
- ii) Delegates to the Executive Director, Place in consultation with the Lead Member for Planning, to make such revisions to the Proposed Changes to the Borough Local Plan Submission Version as are necessary and/or appropriate to address responses received to the Proposed Changes public consultation, before it is submitted to the Inspector to progress the Examination of the BLPSV with Proposed Changes.**

COUNCIL - 23.10.19

**(A named vote was taken as at least five councillors made such a request, as per Part 2 C17.3.3 of the constitution. 22 Councillors voted for the motion; 15 Councillors voted against the motion; 1 abstained)**

<b>RBWM Borough Local Plan Submission Version – Proposed Changes (Motion)</b>	
Councillor John Baldwin	Against
Councillor Clive Baskerville	Against
Councillor Christine Bateson	For
Councillor Gurpreet Bhangra	For
Councillor Simon Bond	Against
Councillor John Bowden	For
Councillor Mandy Brar	Against
Councillor Catherine del Campo	Against
Councillor David Cannon	For
Councillor Stuart Carroll	For
Councillor Gerry Clark	For
Councillor David Coppinger	For
Councillor Carole Da Costa	Against
Councillor Wisdom Da Costa	Against
Councillor Jon Davey	Against
Councillor Karen Davies	Against
Councillor Phil Haseler	For
Councillor Geoffrey Hill	Against
Councillor David Hilton	For
Councillor Maureen Hunt	For
Councillor Andrew Johnson	For
Councillor Lynne Jones	Against
Councillor Neil Knowles	Against
Councillor Ewan Larcombe	For
Councillor Sayonara Luxton	For
Councillor Ross McWilliams	For
Councillor Gary Muir	For
Councillor Samantha Rayner	Conflict Of Interests
Councillor Joshua Reynolds	Against
Councillor Julian Sharpe	For
Councillor Shamsul Shelim	For
Councillor Gurch Singh	For
Councillor Donna Stimson	For
Councillor John Story	For
Councillor Chris Targowski	For
Councillor Helen Taylor	Abstain
Councillor Amy Tisi	Against
Councillor Leo Walters	For
Councillor Simon Werner	Against
<b>Carried</b>	

Members congratulated Councillor Targowski on the recent birth of his baby daughter.

The meeting, which started at 7.30pm, finished at 11.14pm.

Chairman.....

Addendum to minutes

Written responses to supplementary questions as promised at the meeting held on 23/10/19

a) *“...By way of a supplementary question, Mr Veale asked what qualified as a modest contribution to the Green Belt and how this was assessed?”*

**Response:**

The original question related to Lower Mount Farm (AL37). The Council's answer stated that “The proposed allocation site (AL37) was assessed as making only a moderate contribution to green belt purposes”.

The Edge of Settlement Part 1 Green Belt Purpose Assessment (July 2016) specifically considered how land currently designated Green Belt on the edge of settlements performed against the purposes of Green Belt as defined in the NPPF. The results of the assessment for each Green Belt purpose was categorised as:

- none or limited contribution
- lower contribution
- moderate contribution
- strong contribution or
- very strong contribution.

Lower Mount Farm lies within parcel C9. The parcel was considered to make a moderate contribution to preventing the unrestricted sprawl of a built up area, preventing settlements from merging and also safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, and does not contribute to preserving the setting or special qualities of a historic place. A fuller explanation is given on pages 169-172 of the [Edge of Settlement Part 1 study](#) (SD\_018).

q) *“...By way of a supplementary question, Ms Milburn commented that whilst she appreciated the soundness was a matter for the Inspector, would the council now undertake a self-assessment prior to submission to the Inspector, as she understood this was separate to a viability assessment?”*

**Response:**

Whilst the Planning Inspectorate encourages councils to conduct a self-assessment using the Planning Advisory Service's soundness checklist, this is advisory and is not a regulatory requirement. The council is confident that the proposed changes that it has now made to the plan do address the Inspector's interim advice and issues raised in the Regulation 20 representations. However, as stated in the original answer, this is now a matter for the Inspector.