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| Meeting | Full Council |
| Date | 27 September 2023 |
| Report Title | Neighbourhood Plan Update |
| Author | Andy Conroy, Head of Planning |

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This Report seeks to update Councillors on the progress of the Chippenham Neighbourhood Plan since the previous update report in June 2023.

2.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 Councillors will recall the previous update report, presented to Full Council on 21 June 2023, also sought approval for the submission of the Neighbourhood Plan to Wiltshire Council (the LPA). At that meeting Councillors approved the Submission Version of the Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents.

3.0 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN UPDATE

3.1 Following approval at Full Council, the Draft Neighbourhood Plan was submitted to Wiltshire Council on 28 June 2023.

3.2 On 14 July 2023 written confirmation was received from Wiltshire Council that they had undertaken a check of the draft Plan along with its process to date against the relevant legal tests in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Wiltshire Council confirmed the draft Plan's compliance with these tests and that it was possible for the Plan to proceed on to the Regulation 16 public consultation and Independent Examination.

3.3 The Regulation 16 Consultation, which was administered by Wiltshire Council, ran from 24 July 2023 - 5 September 2023. The primary method of commenting on the Plan was through Wiltshire Council's Consultation Portal but hard copies of the comments form were made available at Chippenham Town Hall, Chippenham Museum and Stanley Park Sports Ground. Hard copies of the Plan were also made available at these locations.

3.4 All those who commented electronically on the Plan during the first public consultation (Regulation 14 Consultation), together with the hundreds of stakeholders on the Neighbourhood Plan's mailing list, were electronically notified of the Regulation 16 Consultation by Wiltshire Council.

3.5 The Regulation 16 Consultation was advertised via posters displayed in town noticeboards for the duration of the consultation period. News articles to promote the Consultation were posted on the Neighbourhood Plan website and Town Council

website. There were also posts on the Neighbourhood Plan and Town Council social media platforms.

- 3.6 50 comments were received from the Regulation 16 Consultation. These comprised of 9 comments from developers/landowners, 7 comments from statutory consultees or stakeholder organisations (Historic England and the Environment Agency raised no objections to the draft Plan) and 34 comments from the public. 14 of the public comments were specifically in support of the designation of Local Green Space B (Baydons Wood, Baydons Meadow and Long Close) and Local Green Space WW (Open Space Adjacent to Long Close/Hardens Mead).
- 3.7 All of the comments can be viewed in full on the Wiltshire Council Consultation Portal at <https://consult.wiltshire.gov.uk/kse/event/37587>
- 3.8 The main areas of objection were from developers/landowners, with objections made to Policies SCC1 (Net Zero Carbon Development), SCC2 (Sustainable Design & Construction), GI1 (Protecting & Enhancing Biodiversity), GI3 (Green Corridors), GI4 (Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows), GI5 (Green Buffers), H1 (Housing Mix and Types), H2 (Housing Design), CI1 (Community Infrastructure), TC2 (Bath Road Car Park/Bridge Centre Site), TC3 (River-Green Corridor Masterplan) and TC5 (Buildings of Local Merit).
- 3.9 Wiltshire Council Estates continued to object to 10 of the 49 Local Green Spaces proposed to be designated, where they have land interests. Wiltshire Council Spatial Planning objected to LGS WW being designated and to Policy GI5 (Green Buffers). They also suggested some amendments to other policies.
- 3.10 No objections were received to Policies SCC3 (Standalone Renewable Energy), TC3 (Public Realm Improvements to the Upper Market Place), TC4 (Development within Chippenham Conservation Area), TC6 (Design of Shopfronts & Advertisements), T1 (Provision and Enhancement of Cycle Paths), T2 (Access to the Bus Network), T3 (Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure), T4 (Access for Disabled People & Those With Reduced Mobility), T5 (Waymarking Signage on the Footpath & Cycle Network), E1 (Circular Economy) and E2 (Business Incubator Units).
- 3.11 The Steering Group at its meeting of 19 September will review all the comments received from the Regulation 16 Consultation and decide which comments to provide responses to (a two week window in which to respond). These responses, plus the original comments, will then be forwarded on to the Independent Examiner.
- 3.12 Wiltshire Council provided a shortlist of four Examiners from the Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service (NPIERS) who would be available to examine the Neighbourhood Plan in September/October. In consultation with the Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and the Head of Planning, Wiltshire Council have appointed Andrew Mattheson as the Examiner. The Examination will commence on 29 September.
- 3.13 The main duty of the Examiner will be to check that the Plan meets the 'basic conditions'. They will produce a report for Wiltshire Council/the Town Council and may suggest some changes to the Plan in that report.
- 3.14 On receipt of the Examiner's Report, Wiltshire Council will consider it, and decide whether or not to progress the Plan to public referendum. If the Plan proceeds to referendum Wiltshire Council have advised that the earliest likely date this could be

held would be mid-January 2024 (elections/referenda cannot be held between mid-November and mid-January annually).

3.15 A project timeline is attached in **APPENDIX A** of this Report and there are no changes to report.

4.0 CONTRIBUTION TO CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES

4.1 The development of a Neighbourhood Plan will contribute to the following corporate priorities:

- Provide and develop facilities and services that are accessible, inclusive and promote health and well-being.
- Play an active role in the future development of the town through collaboration with partners, stakeholders, and our community.
- Help to create a future that is carbon neutral, environmentally sustainable and resilient to the impact of climate change.
- Maintain and create opportunities to enhance our green spaces and provide a clean and safe environment.
- Provide and develop facilities and services that promote Chippenham as an attractive and vibrant market town and celebrate its rich history, heritage, and culture.

5.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Steering Group continues to be supported by the Head of Planning, Planning Consultant(s) (external support), Administrative Officers, the Council's Communications & Customer Services Manager and Corporate Management Team.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 For the financial year 2023/24, in addition to payroll costs, there is a Capital/EMF budget of £17,000 to cover design, consultant and professional fees, to be charged against Community Infrastructure Levy income, and an additional Income & Expenditure budget of £3,300 to cover other items such as website and print costs.

6.2 £14,767 has been spent to date on consultant fees for the production of a Viability Assessment on the Neighbourhood Plan, including a much smaller amount on planning consultant fees. £1014 has been spent on printing/production of Neighbourhood Plan hard copies, £768 on changes to the Neighbourhood Plan website and £720 on design and formatting the Plan.

7.0 CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The climate and ecological impacts of the Neighbourhood Plan are set out detail in the Environmental Report of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) which accompanies the Plan. It was judged that the Neighbourhood Plan policies would result in '*minor positive effects*' in relation to air quality, biodiversity, climate change, land, soil and water resources.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 That Councillors note the contents of this Report, which is for information purposes only.