

Cllr Broadhead proposal statement Item 11 - BCP Cabinet Meeting, 8 February 2023

This is a paper which really just updates on the changing position of reforms to national planning policy and the implications that that will have for our new, the very first local plan for Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole. Government have announced proposals and we've set out on consultation response and really it was a good opportunity to bring this to cabinet to get approval for that consultation response, as well as look at the, I think, really positive impact that will have on the choices that we would make as part of our new local plan.

Colleagues will surely be fed up with me talking about the local plan, but it has presented – by the old method, the standard methodology that the government were leading on and all the rules around that – with the real issue for the Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole area. We have at the very best of times delivered about 1300 new homes per year across the BCP region, but the government standard methodology figure dictates within that formula that we had to plan for a local plan of around 2800 homes which is over double what we've ever delivered and as part of that it was almost impossible not to have complete and utter widescale green belt release as part of trying, just trying to meet that very, very hard and completely inflated housing target; and we had a plan for that previously, and our plan was multipronged, to may be use the expression.

First of all that standard methodology is riddled with holes, and the reason that our figure was so high was because within that same methodology there was an error in calculating inward migration; so, bluntly speaking, it made the assumption that all of our students that come to the area – bearing in mind we have three universities – don't leave. Well, we know that's not the case, and the Office for National Statistics has done some work on this and, actually, just fixing that error in the standard methodology brought our suggested homes that we have to plan for to about 1600, 1700 – still more than we've delivered before, but much more achievable and coincidentally almost identical to what our independent housing needs assessment of homes that we really need for our internal data suggested that we needed to plan for anyway. We were already trying to work that route. It was a difficult one, but we were making the case with government and I've continued to lobby directly to the Secretary of State on this issue and that's why I was absolutely delighted when Michael Gove made announcements recently, and that's what they are consulting on – to strengthen the protection for Green Belt, and basically take Green Belt off the table. If you do not want to have to release Green Belt you don't have to do; that will now be a local choice as, alongside these proposals, as well as giving much greater emphasis on place-making, character of places and on actual local need – precisely what we were doing anyway. So now we are able to carry on what we were doing, but with the added confidence that both the timetable for our Local Plan is definitively on track, now we're not having to you, know, get our pointy elbows out in the way that we might have had to before, but also now that we can definitively pledge – and I've made that pledge in full council – that certainly as a Conservative administration we make the firm pledge to protect our Green Belt. It's sacred land; we shouldn't be developing on it, and you know the firm pledge of this Conservative administration to protect that Green Belt, something that I've said before and that we tried to do, and now we can absolutely commit and pledge to do.

We heard from some developers recently that who are saying we're kind of pre-empting the consultation by changing direction on this. The argument I would make on this, chairman, is that we're not changing direction – I'd made a commitment to protect as much Green Belt as possible before. We now can definitively make that commitment. So, it hasn't completely and

utterly changed the direction of the Local Plan process. But, you know, this is a very, very firm indication from government – I heard it directly from the Secretary of State: this is what they intend to do. Subject to any changes that come through from the consultation, I think it is completely correct that we look at getting ahead of that and feeding in these new proposals into our process, particularly because it makes such a dramatic difference on what we might have to do if we failed in our previous attempts.

So, the new process enables us protect our Green Belt and open spaces, and you know we face that challenge more keenly than most local authorities. We are an urban area, but we have the sea on one side of us, swathes of Green Belt around the northern part, 22 SSSIs which would make... – and great land, as well, not just terrible Green Belt that you have in some areas. So, we are really keen on avoiding that; we can now avoid it, and we can also keep much more firm handles on place-making as we move forward to a brownfield-led urban development Local Plan as we continue to build the homes that people do very much need. So, really welcome the government's direction on this and really pleased with the work the planning team have done with this consultation response as well. They sent it to me and quite unusually there was very little I disagreed with in the consultation response, which is quite something and shows how aligned we are and shows what a crack team we have in the council. Thank you

Passed without opposition.