

## EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL – 22 SEPTEMBER 2016

### MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

#### Question 1

Councillor C Woodward to ask the Executive Member for Environment and the Public Space:

*Given:*

- *East Herts has three Air Quality Management Areas, one of which, Sawbridgeworth, has no Air Quality Action Plan, and the oldest, Hockerill has exceeded World Health Organisation guidelines since at least 2007 and now fails the EU legal maximum by almost double for Nitrogen Dioxide, (and fails on highly hazardous Particulate Matter pollutants);*
- *the duties placed on East Herts District Council by the Environment Acts 1995 & 2002 to actively reduce emissions and to do so by clearly defined times; and*
- *the AECOM Sustainability Appraisal for the draft District Plan states (p77), "Car borne traffic is likely to be the most used transport" and that there is no hard evidence that modal shift has yet or, will occur (beyond wishful thinking), and that the reliance of the AQAP for Hockerill on a Bishop's Stortford Urban Transport Plan (see AECOM, p79), is now misplaced as HCC have abolished it;*

*would the Executive Member please clarify why the latest official progress report is three years old and report to Members on how many of the actions set in the AQAP have been fully achieved or, wholly or partially failed and the legal risk to EHC and perhaps individual members of approving a draft District Plan with in excess of 4,100 new homes in Bishop's Stortford and 500 in Sawbridgeworth, as well as the health condition and figures for early mortality expectations of residents in the towns affected, in the stated context of HCC's Air Quality Strategy opening comment that our 'residents are dying prematurely due to poor air quality' and AECOM's admission that further development will have a, "residual (minor) negative impact"? I have bracketed 'minor' given recent measures showing that Hockerill is at 76 microns versus the absolute legal max of 40 given doubt that any negative impact from new development isn't legally and ethically acceptable when E Herts have for many years not resolved the current situation or delivered on its own AQAP?*

## **Question 2**

Councillor K Warnell to ask the Leader of the Council:

*In respect of BISH5, I refer to a 6 June 2016 letter from Housing Minister Brandon Lewis, which states:*

*“The Government has put in place the strongest protections for the Green Belt. The Framework makes it clear that inappropriate development may be allowed only where very special circumstances exist, and that Green Belt boundaries should be adjusted only in exceptional circumstances, through the Local Plan process and with the support of local people. We have been repeatedly clear that demand for housing alone will not change Green Belt boundaries”*

*Addressing the contents of this letter I ask the following:*

- 1. The “very special circumstances” statement is a subjective opinion and evidential results of the Neighbourhood Plan survey of every household in BS showed 72.28% were against development here and a further 89.21% were against Green Belt development. Where, when and how the “support of the local people” in the Brandon Lewis letter has been sought and gained in this specific case as no evidence thereof has been presented?*
- 2. Does the Council have any letters or government guidance since the 6 June letter that countermands the government’s position?*

## **Question 3**

Councillor G Cutting to ask the Executive Member for Environment and the Public Space:

*Whilst I welcome the Council’s commitment to requiring developments in Bishops Stortford to mitigate their impact on congestion and air pollution, and the intention expressed in the first draft of the Infrastructure Development Plan to obtain developer funding for cycling, walking, bus and road improvements to improve sustainable transport options in the town, would the Executive Member confirm that the Bishop’s Stortford Town Centre Development Framework will provide further detail on what will be required to demonstrate sustainable transport options in the town and will the Council firm up its commitment to fund the continuing effort*

*required by the Council and its key stakeholders to work with bus companies, local businesses and residents to identify and deliver behaviour change that will reduce existing levels of air pollution, as well as mitigate the impacts of new development, a commitment which I believe must be made in the forthcoming new Action Plan for the AQMA and also be clear in the Infrastructure Development Plan?*

*Would the Executive Member also explain how the Aecom sustainability work suggested that there was no problem with climate change mitigation as the new developments would replace less efficient ones and so “carbon emissions from the built environment will fall over time”. Since all the large scale development in Bishop’s Stortford is on brownfield or greenfield land not replacing existing buildings does the Executive Member agree this is clearly wrong and totally missing the point of a sustainability review?*

#### **Question 4**

Councillor K Warnell to ask the Leader of the Council:

*Why is BISH5/BS South proposed over and above the “land between ASRs 3 and 4” which although Green Belt land, is within the BISH3/BSN development area where there is infrastructure, 2000+ other houses agreed, schools, community centres etc. BISH5/BS South in EH’s own Green Belt review is considered unsuitable as (quote) it is likely to be seen as urban sprawl, makes a major contribution and protects the countryside from encroachment, etc. Land between ASRs 3 and 4 is designated a “Special Countryside Area” and Green Belt but a review of this area is more sensible and likely more palatable to the public than the BISH5/BS South undeveloped farmland site that constitutes urban sprawl and is deeply unpopular with the local people as evidenced in the BS Neighbourhood Plan survey, where 72.28% were against BISH5 being developed as opposed to 50.92% for BISH3/BSN. Evidential data on this can be provided if required.*