

## Chichester District Council

Cabinet

2 March 2021

### Public Questions and Answers Sheet

#### Question from Ian Sumnall:

#### Agenda Item 7 – Local Plan Review

I am disappointed by the officers responses to suggested changes to Policy DM 8 , Transport, Accessibility and Parking, in the report before you, where their reaction to a suggestion that existing footpaths and cycleways should be protected is seen as 'overly restrictive'. Could I suggest that this type response endangers the retention of Centurion Way from the developers of Whitehouse Farm Phase 2, for example. Some of you may recall that in your Local Plan for 1996 to 2006 your predecessors ensured Centurion Way's establishment by a policy which protected its route.

**Q1** - If it was 'Fit for Purpose' then why is it not now?

I understand from correspondence between Mr. Ayling and Councillor Sharp that consideration is being given to a 'digital mapping layer' being appended to the revised Local Plan showing various existing and proposed walking and cycling routes.

**Q2** - Could I ask if such a 'digital layer' will have any legal standing?

**Q3** - Why is it not proposed to include such routes, both existing and proposed in Supplementary Planning Guidance which you intend to use for other land use which would have statutory force?

**Q4** - Finally your officers have previously been supplied with a copy of Policy 80 [ Supporting Sustainable Access to Development] from the approved 2018 Local Plan for Cambridge City. Also of relevance is their Policy 5 [ Sustainable Transport and Infrastructure]. If these policies have passed the test in Cambridge why are they not thought suitable for Chichester?

#### Answer from Cllr Taylor:

*A1 - The response to Policy DM8 in the Preferred Approach Plan consultation in 2018 indicated that existing footpaths and cycleways must be "preserved" suggesting no change. While the principle of protecting cycleways and footpaths is fully supported, there may be occasions when a small change to part of the route could facilitate wider benefits – including environmental, safety or design improvements and as such, it is not appropriate that the policy should prevent consideration of these improvements, i.e. it should not be "overly restrictive". For example, in the course of considering proposed development, should a well-established route be found to jeopardise a protected habitat, species or historic feature, it might be entirely appropriate to suggest a small deviation, as part of the proposals, in the interests of biodiversity or heritage. It is therefore considered*

*appropriate to allow a degree of flexibility in the policy to ensure that proposals consider the social, environmental and economic objectives - sustainable development.*

*While the reference to the 1996-2006 Local Plan is noted, when considering policies in the emerging Local Plan, reference to the current planning policy framework must be the starting point. The National Planning Policy Framework states at paragraph 11 that “plans should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area, and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change”. Therefore, it is considered that the officer’s response to Policy DM8 is entirely in accordance with current national planning policy.*

**A2** - *An interactive, digital layer will allow us to create a “live picture” of the walking and cycling network at any point in time and identify the most appropriate place to direct improvements or funding.*

*The digital layer will be linked from a Local Plan Policy, which will remain as adopted. However, the layer itself will change over time, to reflect additions or improvements to the network. It is therefore a source of information rather than of legal status.*

**A3** - *The Council has prepared a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). which is expected to be adopted by the Council in due course. This will form part of the Local Plan evidence base and will help inform the walking and cycling policies in the plan, as well as site allocation policies where improvements to the existing network will be sought. It is suggested that the LCWIP provides the basis for the digital layer described above. As such, the LCWIP will provide technical guidance and carry weight in the planning process and it is not considered that adopting it as an SPG would provide significantly more weight, given that SPGs are not policy, but guidance.*

**A4** - *Officers are aware of the Cambridge City policies and as stated above, support the principle of opportunities to improve walking and cycling policies in the Local Plan Review. Planning Policy Officers are working with the Council’s Environment Team to ensure plan policies reflect the aspirations of the Council to promote opportunities and for improvements to the network. In drafting policies, officers will often research “best practice” from elsewhere.*

*The officer response to Policy DM8 is an initial response. Work will continue on the wording of all policies to ensure they provide clear and unambiguous direction, but with sufficient flexibility to respond to changing circumstances. We are not rejecting the full text of the Cambridge approach referenced – we are considering this further in the next step of plan preparation.*