

## Chichester District Council

Special Council

24 January 2023

### Public Questions and Answers Sheet

#### Question from Annabelle Glanville Hearson read by Deborah Carter:

*I refer members to Local Plan Appendix B, chapter 4 'Climate Change and the Natural Environment' Policy NE4B East of City Corridors.*

*The Pagham to Westhampnett strategic wildlife corridor (SWC) was defined using information from the South Downs Barbastelle project draft September 2015 part 1. What wildlife evidence was used to change the SWC so significantly in this area?*

*How can we be sure that these rare bats and other rare species are no longer using this woodland? Have any further wildlife surveys been done recently in this area that justify the devastating reduction in the size of the woodland? What remains of the woodland in the latest proposal is mostly made up of residential back gardens and not woodland. Therefore there is no control over this area and it will be influenced by individual landowners, trees could be lost, pets could predate on protected species and there will be no control over garden/house lighting, BBQs/smoke etc.*

*In addition to this, the prevailing wind is from the west, and losing the western half of the woodland will affect the temperature and functionality of the woodland for bats. The western trees are the protecting boundary trees for this woodland and the inner trees will be damaged/lost without this buffer.*

*The cumulative impact of development in this area should also be taken into account; the proposed SWC is vital for an area with so much development and is an important corridor for our wildlife. Surely using land that is devoid of wildlife, sterilised by intensive farming and/or brownfield sites should be the Council's preferred option for housing developments.*

*Please see the attached document and the Local Plan Appendix B which refers to Strategic Wildlife Corridors.*

#### Answer from Cllr Taylor:

Thank you for your question. The evidence base for the Pagham to Westhampnett wildlife corridor does indeed show that it is used by a wide variety of bat species, including the rare and heavily protected Barbastelle species from a maternity colony at Goodwood. That is one of the key reasons why the route of this corridor was altered in 2021 to its current line. We have evidence since 2015 of the continued use of the corridor by many bat species including Barbastelle. Further ecological surveys have been done in 2021 and 2022 by the district council and by the site promoters. Policy A8 is specifically written to protect the corridor for all the species that live there or pass through it.

As you have pointed out in the attached document you sent, the area of the corridor has been reduced compared to the first proposal in order to facilitate a development that has space for the school and open space that a strategic development requires. This does not mean that houses and gardens will be built up to the revised boundary of the corridor. Policy A8 requires a substantial and effective buffer within the allocated site to protect the corridor and by including this within the site allocation rather than the corridor we gain more control over its use, planting, future maintenance layout and light levels. For example, uses that require external lighting would not be permitted in the buffer.

We are aware of the potential for impact on microclimate. The proposed policy states that "The buffer to the corridor should ensure darkness and minimise disturbance in the wildlife corridor and ensure habitats and microclimates of the corridor continue to support a wide range of species and maintain connectivity;"

Paragraph 8 of the policy includes further specifications on light levels and noise. Because of the special protection of Barbastelle bats, the detailed proposals will have to pass a rigorous Habitats Regulations Assessment that will look in more detail at all the potential impacts and must ensure that there is no adverse effect on the SAC bat species.

Finally, this allocation is in large part a brownfield site and it is also in close proximity to the facilities of Chichester so there are good planning reasons for allocating housing here.

**Question from Deborah Carter:**

*In the Local Plan it says*

*"10.12. Relocation of the existing bus depot is likely to be required with the bus station being replaced by new bus stops." Page 214*

*Policy A4 Section 1 "A statement building on the bus station site should articulate a sense of arrival*

*I am a bus passenger with sight loss and frequently take the bus in Chichester. I am really concerned about the potential closure of the bus station which goes against the need to increase bus travel and reduce the reliance on the public car.*

*Why is this Council planning to replace the bus station with bus stops along a busy dual carriageway?*

*Why is the Council not considering the embedded carbon involved with knocking down the bus station? The bus station is an iconic 1950s building of value. Has the Council not considered upgrading it and retrofitting it to modern standards so that it can continue to welcome bus passengers to the City and thereby "articulate a sense of arrival"?*

*Supplementary question Has any other plans been asked for or submitted by more forward thinking developers and has any disability groups included the consultation and planning of the southern project.*

**Answer from Cllr Taylor:**

Whilst the replacement of the bus station with bus stops is likely to be necessary as part of the redevelopment of the bus station land to ensure that sufficient land is available to accommodate the scale of development proposed, this is not an essential requirement. The approach to the detailed development of this land will need to be agreed between the Council and developer at a future planning stage in light of the criteria set out in Policy A4 and other relevant plan policies. As set out in the policy, any re-provided bus stops would need to be in line with the West Sussex Bus Service Improvement Plan and would also need to meet accessibility standards.

The Council, as Planning Authority has not been approached by any further site promoters in relation to Southern Gateway. Officers have engaged with the landowner (in this case the council) to ensure that the sites proposed for allocation in the Local Plan are deliverable. This does not include consideration of any detailed proposals from developers at this stage.

In relation to consulting disability groups, the Local Plan has been out to consultation at Issues and Options stage (2017) and Preferred Approach (2018). The Chichester Access Group were consulted at the Preferred Approach stage. The Local Plan is also accompanied by an Equalities Impact Assessment which concluded that Policies A3 and A4 on the Southern Gateway would have a neutral impact on protected characteristics.