

Supplementary agenda for Council – 22 October 2020

Item 8. Questions from members of the Public

2. Questions from Ms M. Mulowska

- “1. Where does the legal power to release Green Belt land for development reside - is it with the local council, or with central government?
2. What effect does the release of a single Green Belt site for development have on how safe the others are - are they more safe or less safe?”

3. Question from Mr P. Hollingworth

“In the light of post-COVID developments, does the council now recognise that the Local Plan must take into consideration the potential for greater office to residential development in addition to less demand for commercial usage on designated brownfield sites stemming from permanent lower demand?”

4. Question from Mr J. Crooks

"If the green belts sites are developed on, they will no longer provide protection against flooding.

Can you guarantee that the properties built on these sites will be insurable, following the increased risk of potential flooding?"

5. Question from Mr J. Crooks

"Green belt sites perform a vital role in the wellbeing of the climate, as they capture carbon dioxide. They also perform a role in the wellbeing of our citizens: "Recent studies indicate that living near more green space may support mental and general health and may also prevent depression." Following the declaration of a climate emergency, will Spelthorne council now recognise the importance of protecting the green belt sites, regarding their importance to the wider climate crisis?"

6. Question from Mr J. Crooks

"Following the declaration of the climate emergency, will Spelthorne council now provide transparency over the membership and minutes of the climate task group?"

7. Question from Mr A. Woodward

“Following the welcome decision to declare a climate emergency, will the Council now publish the membership and minutes of the meetings of the Climate Task Group and explore ways to engage with local residents to

develop a rigorous plan of action in response to climate change and biodiversity loss.”

8. Question from Mr C. Hyde

“Recent Government consultation on changes to the current planning system included changes to the standard method for assessing housing need. The Government consultation documents note that advice was received from Lichfields, the planning consultancy. Lichfields has compared the results of the new method for housing need with the current method for each local authority and tabulated the figures on their website. For Spelthorne, the annual housing need requirement reduces from 606 to 489 homes per year, which means 1755 less homes over the 15 year period of the new Local Plan.

In documents supporting the consultation for the new Local Plan, Spelthorne Borough Council said that 1649 homes would need to be accommodated on Green Belt. Given that the new figures show that there is no need to build on any Green Belt in Spelthorne, will the Council now remove from the new Local Plan the proposals to release 19 Green Belt areas?”

9. Question from Mr C. Hyde

“The decision by Spelthorne Borough Council to declare a climate emergency is welcome and demonstrates leadership on this important issue. Green land provides a valuable role in carbon sequestration, and studies have also shown that being in or close to green areas is beneficial for the health and mental wellbeing of the local community. Green Belt has a particularly important role to play locally as it represents about half the land area of Spelthorne.

Given this, will the Council establish a new policy which requires land owners to nurture and maintain Green Belt as open green land so that it is fully meeting its potential in helping to address the climate emergency and in providing a health benefit to the community?”

10. Questions from Ms K Sanders

1. “On page 11 of the Consultation Response Document (section 3.4-3.5), the Officer's response states that, "The methodology [developed by consultants ARUP] is considered to provide a robust and logical process for assessing the performance of Green Belt within the context of Spelthorne".

Who else did the Council consider before selecting ARUP as the consultants, and what was the brief?”

2. “Regarding Local Housing Need, and the Officer's response on p.20 of the Consultation Response Document:

Given the fundamental importance of the housing numbers to the Local Plan and that the initial meeting with the MHCLG was nearly a year ago (5th November 2019), and the Officer says they have chased them, please can the Officer say what was the date of the last communication from the MHCLG and when were they last chased for an official answer?"

What further work is being undertaken and what impact is the Officer expecting this work to have?

The Officer states that the planners are having to move forward with the higher figure based on the 2014 household projections (i.e. what is now 606 dpa). Why is the government delay in providing a formal response not grounds enough for delaying the planning process, especially given the events of 2020?"

11. Question from Mrs S. Doerfel

"How can residents get involved with or at least attend the new Local Plan Task Group? It has the word "local" in it and has the impact of any Council Meeting which the public can attend."

12. Question from Mrs S. Doerfel

"Why can't the Council enable those members of the public who wish to, to read out their own questions **in full** like we used to be able to before remote meetings took place? Abridged versions of questions are sometimes read out by the Mayor and this never happened before. It is not COVID19 who is shortening the questions asked, it's the Council and I can see no permission or authority for any abridgment to be made to public questions in Standing Order 14 particularly Standing Order 14.6. There is no reason why the public cannot login earlier to connect with the meeting via Zoom and then unmute themselves to ask their question in full when called if it is not rejected on one of the strict grounds set out in Standing Order 14.4."