

Council – 9 December 2021

Questions from members of the public

Question 1 – Kath Sanders

“Regarding the Local Green Space assessment being carried out as part of the Local Plan process, I understand that the current 71 Protected Urban Open Space (PUOS) sites will go forward for assessment (together with any others suggested in response to Q5 of the Issues & Options consultation in June 2018).

As part of the Call for Green Spaces and given the importance of Open Space identified in the Council's own Open Space Assessment (Nov 2019), will the Council themselves be proposing some or all of the sites with the outgoing Protected Urban Open Space designation for the new Local Green Space designation OR perhaps certain 'functional' categories (such as allotments, cemeteries and churchyards, school playing fields and public parks and recreation grounds), regardless of ownership status? This would hopefully ensure that current levels of provision are at least maintained.

Failing that, and to give many valuable sites the best chance of success, please could the Council make the 'long list' of potential LGS sites public once the Stage 1 "Desktop review and first sieve" has been completed with the opportunity for the community to provide any further evidence required to successfully complete the Stage 2 "Detailed Analysis"? This would again help to ensure that communities don't inadvertently lose out.”

Question 2 – Kath Sanders

“It was really encouraging to see the Spelthorne response to the Climate Emergency and consideration of projects for the Green Initiatives Fund presented at the Environment & Sustainability Committee meeting on 30th June 2021. Please could residents get an update specifically about the 2021/22 Green Initiatives Fund of £747k, how much of the £39k Green Better Neighbourhood Grant element has been allocated as of 30th September and what progress has been made since the June paper in terms of a plan for utilising the remaining funds?”

Question 3 – Kath Sanders

“As you are no doubt aware Michael Gove gave evidence to the House of Commons Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee on Monday 8th November 2021 (Qs 78-87). His answers included the following statements:

- Q80: "We absolutely want to hit that target [of 300,000], but we also want to take account of beauty, the environment, quality, decency, local democratic control and infrastructure"
- Q84: "There is a legitimate concern on the part of local government that the resources have not always been there to help. That is why some of the changes that we can make, not just to provide the resource but to simplify the process, are important"
- Q85: "Yes. My colleague Chris Pincher has made it clear that in developing a plan a local authority can say, "Right, this is the number to which we have been working. However, in this community, in this area, you have to take account of the

fact that we have AONBs here, SSSIs here, green belt there and so on. It would be unrealistic to expect us, consistently with all those factors, to meet the figure that has been produced.”

He also answered questions from MPs on planning rules on 25th October 2021 where he said that he was still considering all the responses to the consultation on the “Planning for the future” White Paper and would make an announcement on next steps in due course. I understand this will be before Christmas.

Michael Gove also stated, "As we take forward our proposals for planning reform, we will be balancing the need for new housing with environmental concerns and also the vital importance of listening to local people."

Given Michael Gove's answers, what further work is now being done internally to either take stock or to build a case for a reduction in the housing target in Local Plan proposals to reduce the imperative to build on Green Belt and to build blocks of tiny flats in Staines?”