

## **The Beaconsfield Society - Save Our Green Belt sub Committee meet SBDC Councillors and Officers.**

Transcript of (recorded) meeting 4<sup>th</sup> April 2019 at SBDC Capswood, Denham

**Present:** Cllr. and Deputy Leader John Read (SBDC), Rachel Prance (officer, SBDC), John Cheston (officer, SBDC), Cllr. Alastair Pike (Beaconsfield Town Council), Cllr. Anita Cranmer (Beaconsfield Town Councillor and Bucks County Councillor), Les Davies (President, The Beaconsfield Society), Peter Foster (The Beaconsfield Society committee) and Alison Wheelhouse (Chairman, The Beaconsfield Society)

AW: Shall I kick off? I've got some questions. The first few questions are really to find out a little bit more about the process of the emerging local plan and I know that there are a few meetings coming up, district council meetings, and we'd like to know a little bit more about these. I think the first one might be the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 29<sup>th</sup>. What is the purpose of that meeting?

JR: The purpose of the meeting is for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to look at the local plan

AW: Okay is that the local plan per se or is it also the evidence base?

JR: One feeds into the other but what we are looking at is moving towards a position where the draft local plan can be published

AW: OK but will that committee actually look at the evidence base documents?

JR: I cannot speak on behalf of the committee. The committee will review and look at what the committee want to review and look at

AW: OK.

JR: I would say I do not sit on that committee, I'm not part of that committee, I'm not included in the decisions that that committee makes

AW: OK and who does sit on that committee?

JR: You will have to look at the website for the membership

AW: okay don't you know?

JR: Not off the top of my Head. If you could have e-mailed these questions earlier, it would have been easier to provide you with more details

AW: I thought that they would have been the sort of questions that you would be able to answer off the top of your head.

JR: I'm sorry I don't know the membership of every Committee

JC: it is a joint committee so that is both councils

LD: So it's a mixture of councillors

JC: It's a mixture of Chiltern District Council members and South Bucks district council members

LD: Do you know who the chairman is?

JC: I don't know I'm afraid. I don't know the composition

AW: okay is Philip Bastiman on that committee?

JR: I can't answer that question

AW: Really? Ok. Can the public attend that meeting and ask questions?

JR: It is a meeting in public

AW: It is a meeting in public?

JR: Yes

AW: Okay so can we ask questions at that meeting?

JR: That would be for a matter for the chairman

AW: OK and then I think there is a joint Committee meeting on 1st May. What's the purpose of that meeting?

JR: That is for the joint committee to consider amongst other things the emerging local plan with a view to moving it towards a draft published plan based on the findings

AW: Ok who is on that committee?

JR: Cabinet members from Chiltern and South Bucks.

AW: Okay

LD: Only cabinet members from the two councils?

JR: Yes.

JC: Essentially it's a joint cabinet meeting so comprises the cabinet members of each Authority.

LD: It's a joint cabinet meeting?

JC: That's right, for some reason it's called a joint Committee

AW: Ok. And can the public attend that meeting as well?

JR: Yes

AW: OK and can the public speak?

JR: That would be again a matter for the Chairman.

AW: OK

PF: Just for clarity so is that decided on the day, can you write to the chairman in advance and sort of say can we ask questions?

JR: It's a meeting in public rather than a public meeting so it would be a matter for the Chairman to decide whether they pause the meeting or

PF: So it's quite feasible the public can sit and watch it but can't ask any questions, okay that's fine. It's this definition thing.

LD: Can I ask does the joint committee meet regularly and it just happens to be considering the plan on that day?

JR: It does meet regularly on matters that relate to both councils

LD: How is the joint committee chaired - does that rotate as well so it's you today, him tomorrow?

JR: It's never me

LD: No no no I mean South Bucks today Chiltern tomorrow so is it alternate or does it not work like that?

JR: Roughly it would depend on the meeting and the location and amongst other things in principle if the meeting was held here it would normally be chaired by the Leader here. If it's in Chiltern it would normally be chaired by the leader there

LD: Do we know the venue yet?

JR: It will be on the website

RP: I will tell you if it's here

AW: Okay well while you are looking that up let's move on. At the full South Bucks District Council meeting which is scheduled for 14<sup>th</sup> of May, can you explain to us what you expect to happen at that meeting?

JR: I would expect the council to consider the agenda

AW: And what do you expect to be on that agenda?

JR: The 14th May is our annual meeting so there is a number of statutory that will be on there. Until such time as the agenda is published it is very difficult to say specifically what will be there

AW: Well it's interesting you say that because on your website under the emerging local plan timescale, this meeting is actually listed so the public would assume that the local plan in some shape or form would form part of that meeting, part of that agenda.

JR: That is the expectation at the moment

AW: Okay so why didn't you say that?

JR: Because until the agenda is published it's difficult to say specifically what a meeting will deal with

AW: But I did ask you what you expected to happen at that meeting - So we expect the local plan to be under discussion at that meeting?

JR: At this point in time

AW: Right, ok. Is there expected to be a vote at that meeting?

JR: Potentially

AW: Ok and so you're assuming that it will be a full Council meeting of all the councillors who will vote on whether to take the plan forward?

JR: Until such time the agenda is published it's not possible to say specifically

AW: Not for sure but that is the expectation, isn't it, as it is listed on the timescale for the development plan at the moment?

JR: Well at the moment the development schedule is to be formalised and the information on the website is indicative to give people as I said to Peter the other day the information that we have available now until such time as things are, agendas are published, it is very difficult to say specifically what will or will not be considered by the meeting

AW: Certainly

JR: it's the same as any other Council meeting

AW: Certainly but from our point of view and from the general public's point of view we are trying to prepare for the progression of this plan so at the moment the expectation is that the full council will vote on whether to take the plan forward at that meeting or at a subsequent meeting if the timescale slips for some reason?

JR: Potentially

AW: Okay and the same thing for Chiltern District Council presumably they will have their own meeting to discuss this?

JR: I can't speak for Chiltern District Council sorry

AW: Okay when the plan does go before the full council for such meeting whether it's on the 14<sup>th</sup> may or a different date can the public attend that meeting?

JR: As with all Council meetings the public are very welcome to attend unless there are elements that are considered under a specific exclusion

AW: Okay, and ask questions?

JR: I believe public questions are a standard part of full council meetings

AW: Okay do we have to submit our questions in advance?

JR: Yes

AW: Okay and who do we have to submit those to?

RP: You submit those to the Democratic services team

AW: Ok, thank you

LD: Can I ask, although you can't commit to the agenda because it's not in your gift, whose Gift is the agenda in? Does that make sense? Who decides what's on the agenda? Is it the chairman? Democratic services? The leader of the cabinet, who decides what's on the agenda?

RP: It depend on what business needs to be considered because obviously the full Council is the end of the process, after all of the various committees that have taken place and sometimes things are presented just before council because they've been agreed or they go there for recommendation, depending on what the item is. If you want to see what is on any agenda at any meeting if you go on our website, look on the 28 day plan you will see it on there.

AW: Ok and when the plan does go before the full committee is the public allowed to speak to address the council?

RP: No you have to contact and say that you want to speak or you want a motion to go forward or you have questions or you want someone to ask a question on your behalf. It's generally the councillors who ask on your behalf

AW: Okay so, sorry is that a definite no the public can't speak or that we can if..

RP: Personally I'm not a democratic services officer and I'm not an expert in the legalities but I've attended many and I have not ever seen a member of the public stand-up and just speak

AW: Okay

RP: It's usually a motion or a question is put forward to the council and then answered

AW: Okay so our best thing to do would be then to approach the Democratic services team to find out the process?

RP: Yes

AW: Okay thank you - when will the result of the call for sites be available do you think?

JC: I can probably best answer that the call for sites which the council undertook from December last year through to about 14<sup>th</sup> of January will feed in to what's called the housing and economic land availability assessment, a sort of appraisal of housing and commercial land for possible future use or allocation in the plan

AW: the "HELAA"

JC: Yes I don't necessarily want to use the jargon, that will be published around about the time that the agendas are compiled for the various meetings you talked about, that will explain how the plan will have been drafted. It's evidence that helps underpin the contents of the plan so we're expecting that to be published in the next few weeks

PF: Can I just ask you because we kind of seem to be a long way down the line and then there was another call to sites, what was the purpose of having another call for sites? It wasn't covered in the HELAA the first time so is this a..

JC: I think the previous HELAA dated from about 2017 but you might know better than I do but I think it was 2017. The government published what is called planning practice and guidance and what that says is firstly that local authorities when preparing local plans should produce these HELAAs and when they do so, they ought to be informed by the so-called call for sites and when we looked at the last call for sites that, I think, was undertaken in January 2015, so four years ago, and therefore not up-to-date so we decided, because we were clearly updating they HELAA, we really ought to follow the government good practice guidance and

PF: Put it out again

JC: Yes do a call to sites

AW: Okay but you think that the results of the call for sites itself will not be available before the updated HELAA figures?

JC: We weren't intending to publish the call for sites separately I'm not sure there's any particular need to

JC: We might produce a summary, how many submissions we received but essentially that's helping us update the HELAA

AW: Okay, now John, you are on the planning and economic development committee?

JR: it's a policy advisory group it's not a committee

AW: Okay and what is your function on that group

JR: I chair it

AW: Okay and what do you actually do

JR: We deal with the policies surrounding planning and economic development

AW: Okay so do you feed into the drafting of the local plan

JR: Not through the planning and economic development team

AW: Okay so how does it work the policies that go into the local plan who's responsible for feeding those in to the plan then?

JR: There's a combination of specialist and expert advisors planning specialists and all members across both councils have input into the plan both in terms of policies etc on an ongoing basis

AW: And who instructs those advisers and consultants and so on?

JR: Primarily that would be dealt with by our planning policy team as part of the local plan

AW: The planning policy team and who is the head of the planning policy team?

JC: I'm the planning policy and economic development manager I have been retained by both councils since October last year replacing Graham Winwright who left the councils in November

AW: Okay.

JC: The team of which I'm the manager has responsibility for drafting the local plan in conjunction with various consultants producing evidence studies for us to support the plan

AW: Ok so what I want to really find out is, for you to go ahead and do your piece of work, who basically tells you what to do? So someone has to presumably say there is this housing need and we need to come up with a plan, these are the issues we want to cover, these are the areas of greenbelt that are under consideration - who would that person or team be?

JC: The local plan has to be prepared within a framework of Central government legislation and planning policy so that clearly defines the scope of the local plan, the sort of things it needs to cover, the type of policies it will include. You mention housing need, we now have a system where the government has a standard methodology for calculating what's called "objectively assessed housing need" so that applies across the whole of England and for any local plan that is going to be submitted for independent examination after 24<sup>th</sup> January this year, they have to first of all to consider what the government's standard methodology figure is for them now, whether there are exceptional circumstances such that a local authority can produce its locally derived assessment of housing needs - but there probably aren't many good cases where the local authority could do that so essentially we are implementing a figure that is being handed down to us from central government so that gives you an annual figure, it's a matter of extrapolating it over the length of the plan period to work out how many homes you would need to provide over the Plan period

AW: Yes but who would be responsible from the council to instruct you to draft or carry out the exercise that you need to carry out?

JC: That's not necessarily instructing, that's our *raison d'être* - we are there to update the planning policy context for both councils and there is a legal requirement now for local plans to be reviewed at least every five years and if local authorities don't do that, then they have Sajid Javid bearing down on them - sorry no it's now James Brokenshire isn't it, it used to be Sajid Javid - a number of authorities have had letters from James Brokenshire the Secretary of State for housing communities and local government and so there is a central government imperative for local authorities to produce plans and as professional planners that's what we do, we don't have to provide plans but we have to do that within the framework, the parameters of central government Legislation and the National Planning Policy Framework and then the Planning Practice Guidance which I mentioned earlier

AW: Yes

LD: I think you said the figures passed down from central government most of the time you have to deal with those and it's very exceptional you can Challenge? Who makes the decision they are challengeable?

JC: Well firstly this system has only applied since January, the standard method - before that you probably know that Aylesbury Vale local plan and the Wycombe local plan are at examination at the moment and those local plans have been prepared on the basis of locally derived assessments of housing need because that was the previous system under the 2012 National Planning Policy Framework

PF: It's an interesting one isn't it because the figure that kind of came out, way back when this was 14,000 homes in South Bucks, but then the decision and now we have sort of ended



up trying to find 8000 homes because we have given 6 to Aylesbury Vale or something like that - so either an area needs 14,000 homes, so clearly the 14,000 is a movable feast it strikes me, because if it is 14,000 but you can give 6000 away, then that would suggest clearly you don't need 14,000 then because if you did, you would have built 14,000. So I'm a bit confused about, I mean I appreciate it's tied up in a central government target, but it seems strange when we explain to people it's 14,000 homes but actually it's only going to be 8 now because we've given some to somewhere else - they're not going to be anywhere near here but we've given them away. So that's what makes people think what's the 14,000 for then because so it's a target, it doesn't look like a proper assessment to an independent..

JC: No I agree yes it is awfully complicated because local plans will often have two housing figures the first figure is the what is the objectively assessed need for new homes over that plan period and the second figure would be the planned response to that and they may not be the same

PF: Right

JC: Some local authorities might plan for growth and they would propose like in Milton Keynes they proposed to exceed slightly what their level of need was. Other highly constrained local authorities for example Stevenage Borough Council or some historic new towns where they built up to their boundaries, Crawley Borough Council, some of the London boroughs, South coast authorities like Brighton and Hove and Worthing, they physically they cannot accommodate the very high levels of needs they have in their areas and hence you have this thing called the duty to cooperate where you talk to the people nearby, such as in our situation because we are 87/88 percent greenbelt, it's a very heavily constrained area to physically accommodate all our housing need would be essentially unsustainable, which is why Aylesbury Vale District Council have, agreed through their plan, to provide 5750 homes of the Chiltern and South Bucks need

AW: The housing need figures are only targets and government has said that in the areas which are heavily constrained, such as our area and the areas you have mentioned, that the figures are to be taken only as targets.

JC: Current version of the National Planning Policy Framework says that as a minimum, local authorities should meet the objectively assessed need of their areas plus any unmet needs of neighbouring areas **unless to do so would result in unsustainable development** so that becomes a minimum target for authorities to meet and they should strive to do that where physically they can accommodate that level of housing need.

PF: I have looked at the National Planning Policy Framework and thought this is a bit convoluted, who's talking about what here - don't build on the green belt but yes you can build on green belt, it's completely confused, I suspect that's deliberate, so it's going to come down to a local decision by inspectors

AW: I think that's right it is tautologous actually because you have housing need on one hand and you have protect the greenbelt on the other hand and the two don't correspond do they?

PF: You can't have both

AW: So how do you liaise with John and his group for instance, well you're part of the same group, I mean how do you work together, that's really what I'm trying to work out, you sort of explained what you do - what would John and his team do, to feed into what you do?

JC: John and John's counterpart Peter Martin in Chiltern are the planning portfolio holders for planning and economic development, so they oversee the plan, we have regular meetings with John and Peter Marti, we've had briefings with leaders of both councils and so the headlines of the plan have been discussed within the seniority team of the joint councils and with senior councillors, that's how you start shaping up your local plan

AW: Okay and would they make suggestions to you?

JC: Yes yes that is the process it's the democratic process we don't have a technocratic situation here, officers would advise and make recommendations **but it is the members of the council who actually make decisions**

AW: Sure

LD: Can I ask has Chiltern and South Bucks done a housing needs assessment of their own to see how that compares and contrasts with the figures coming down from Whitehall?

JC: Yes a local housing need assessment has been commissioned by independent consultants

LD: By the two councils

JC: Yes, yes jointly

LD: Have you got results of that yet?

JC: We have a draft Report, we have a draft local housing needs assessment which was sent to us last week, so we are appraising that, looking through it and we will send comments, we have sent some comments back to the consultants already but it is a draft document not yet finished and not yet ready to be published

LD: Are they broadly compatible with the view of Westminster numbers or are they seriously awry?

JC: Yes at this stage as I say it's a draft document, there isn't any evidence to indicate that it would not be appropriate for Chiltern and South Bucks to not use the governments centrally derived figure for housing need

LD: Is that the 8000 or the 15,000, the ones you've given away to someone else?

JC: As I said that's why you may have two different figures at the moment, when you look at the government standard method for calculating housing need it gives us a figure for both authorities combined of 763 homes a year; that's 432 Homes per year in South Bucks and 331 homes per year in Chiltern, and the proposed plan period which we would recommend to the council is 2016 to 2036, so simple maths dictates you have a 20 year time horizon for the plan multiplied by 763 gives you 15,260, so that becomes the pass mark, that is the objectively assessed need, it is a question of how close we can get to that figure by making provision in the local plan for housing in Chiltern and South Bucks plus the level of unmet need which would be provided by Aylesbury Vale

LD: But the transfer of the obligation to a neighbouring authority it has to be a neighbouring authority you can't offset to Middlesbrough?

JC: Well that wouldn't make a lot of sense

PF: Why Middlesbrough of all place?

LD: Rotherham if you like

JC: Under the previous 2012 National Planning Policy Framework we had a system of housing market areas, so rather than each local authority having to meet its own needs in its own boundaries, where possible we had a situation where the housing needs of the housing market area had to be met and the housing market area might be three or four local authorities and between those, you would look to meet the overall level of need, but now it's every man for himself as it were and now the housing market area concept has disappeared from central government planning policy which is why I say now it is a minimum that local authorities need to meet their own needs within their own areas but clearly where one authority cannot meet its own needs, it makes sense then to have that displaced provision, to provide it somewhere as close as possible to the area because it will be meeting the needs of Chiltern and South Bucks residents.

LD: Okay so this is a hypothetical situation if the councils, two together, decided that they are never going to build on greenbelt we will build wherever else we possibly can and that works out at say 50% of the allocation, you could do that?

JC: It would be possible to draft a plan along those lines but we've been drafting a plan with the guidance of a senior planning QC and we have the knowledge of other local plan inspectors and how they're treating local plans and we know that a plan like that would not be found sound at examination. We've learned from the last few years that for greenbelt authorities to produce any local plans they pretty much have to do a greenbelt review and hence you got Windsor and Maidenhead plan at examination, it's a greenbelt authority, they've had to review their greenbelt, you're not going to get a local plan past an independent examination if you have green belt unless you have actually done a serious review of that green belt unless you are the GLA, in which case somehow or other they have done that with the London plan, they haven't reviewed greenbelt but the planning policy situation in London is very different to that

LD: The Greater London Authority?

JC: The Greater London Authority, they produced a London plan and hadn't actually reviewed the metropolitan greenbelt within Greater London and we and a number of other authorities have put in objections because of that

LD: Because they haven't?

JC: Because they haven't, whereas local authorities outside London have been pretty much compelled to do a greenbelt review because otherwise we would not get our local plans past the independent examination

AW: So do you feel that this really is a political aim, that you're having to comply with Government policy more than anything else?

JC: Its government policy and local plans have to conform with central government policy unless there is exceptional justification to depart, so sometimes you can make a case, you can say in our situation we don't think government policy is applicable but you have to have very strong evidence to convince an inspector that that approach is right

AW: Because our conservative councillors and our MP stood on a ticket to protect the greenbelt so it seems strange that council members who stood on a ticket to protect the greenbelt would vote to release it

JC: I can't comment on the views of councillors, I'm a professional planner, I know a fair amount about planning policy but I can't speak for the views and opinions of democratically elected councillors

PF: Good answer

AW: I can see that. And John when it goes to full committee for the members to vote on it will you have a vote even though you've been overseeing and making suggestions on the plan?

JR: Every councillor will have a vote

AW: Okay do you not think it would have been perhaps a good idea, I'm not aware of you already having done this but perhaps you have, but to declare your relationship, your past relationship maybe with Hall Barn?

JR: I'm sorry what past relationship in particular are you referring to?

AW: Did you live on the Hall Barn Estate for example?

JR: Not since I've been a member of this council

AW: No but you have in the past, that's my point

JR: Not since I've been a member of this council

AW: But you have in the past

JR: Not since I've been a member of this council

AW: Please can you answer the question, in the past?

JR: I am answering the question I have not lived on hall barn estate since I have been a member of this council

AW: But my question is have you lived on the hall barn estate in the past?

JR: With reference to this council I have not lived on Hall Barn since I have been on this council

AW: Are you refusing to answer my question?

JR: I am not refusing to answer your question I am answering your question I have not lived on Hall Barn since I have been a member of this council like every other councillor all of my interests are declared through the register and are publicly accessible

AW: I don't think you are answering **my** question have you lived on the Hall barn estate in the past?

JR: Not since I have been a member of this council

AW: I think we need to record that councillor John Read is not answering my question

PF: I guess it's pretty much on there

JR: I am answering your question

AW: You are not, John

JR: Since I have been a member of this council I have not lived on Hall barn

AW: I know but I am asking about your past and your family relationship with Hall Barn, your father I believe was the estate manager at Hall Barn was he not?

JR: He was.

AW: Yes okay and for how many years was he the estate manager there?

JR: Directly I don't know

AW: Okay roughly

JR: Probably about 15 years

AW: 15 years ok so you have had a familial relationship with Hall barn for about 15 years in the past

JR: My father had the relationship with Hall Barn and the owners for part of my life yes but not for the entire time that he was the agent there

AW: Ok don't you see this as, do you not understand that maybe other people would see this as a conflict?

JR: There is no conflict there, I don't have a direct close relationship with Hall Barn, I neither rent nor live on Hall barn nor have I since I became a member of this council

AW: How long have you been a member of this council for?

JR: Since the last elections

AW: So three years is that?

JR: 2015

LD: Almost 4

AW: So that's really not very long ago, considering that your father was an estate manager for 15 years

JR: My father retired from that position quite a while ago now, since then they have employed others to do the work, that is a matter of my father that is not me and

PF: You can see though can't you that anyone outside would look at that and go you could possibly be a little bit biased actually

JR: Not necessarily

PF. You may not be, absolutely but you can see why somebody from outside will look at that and go, probably from the interests of total transparency, it would have been best to probably recuse yourself from it, from being involved with it, purely because it would prevent any future problem wouldn't it, in the sense that if somebody said well

JR: Just as today I am meeting with yourselves as a key stake holder accompanied by John, in the event that I was to meet with any key stakeholder from across it, there would be a similar set up. The actual decision on the local plan is taken by the council as a whole not me and as I say I, I have no direct relationship with Hall Barn in terms of rental living or Working with in any way shape or form, all my pecuniary interests are declared and publicly available on the website and therefore I don't see that this is relevant

PF: I think the man on the Clapham omnibus would probably disagree with you but can I just ask you something? Debbie Marsden told us that you were an advisor on the charter

fair and your name is copied on minutes on the charter fair which hall barn are heavily involved in organising

JR: The charter fair is organised by the showman's guild of Great Britain I sit on there on behalf of Beaconsfield Town Council

PF: cool

AP: Can I just say I think it's actually quite difficult to be prominent in Beaconsfield and not in some way shape or form come into contact with Hall Barn estate, it doesn't work. I used to be a tenant of hall barn. I have had some issues which are quite well-documented. There are other people who also have contact with Hall Barn and really it's quite innocuous in a way it's inevitable they own so much property

PF: I know what you're saying but also at the same time we've had pressure placed on us by Hall Barn to not do things because it's on Hall Barn land and that leads to, then I go back to the man on the Clapham omnibus would look at that and go I appreciate this is the major landowner and we're all walking on common land they own so we have kind of all got a partial, some form of, relationship, I think it's more the case that when you say yes there's a very distinct pecuniary interest I do know that some of the pecuniary interests which are currently on the district council's website are incorrect but that's a different issue, but I think you can't say it can be totally away from it, the problem is when you get to be looking at something as important to the town as the local plan and the impact the town would have, it's got to be beyond whiter than white, cleaner than clean, as transparent and open as it can possibly be, to avoid getting to the point in the future when somebody says, well wait a minute, you take that out, so the confusion is that people start to look at it and go, I mean I sat in the meeting here when Jacquetta Lowen Cooper was the chair of the planning committee and she said she couldn't talk about something because her daughter had been to the school— Now if she's going to set a standard that says I won't be involved in this planning issue because my daughter went to the school she left it 10 years ago but I will step back because I can't do it, then that's a very different level, it strikes me, as saying when we all kind of touch them a bit, I mean Anita you lease a house from them— So yes there's a whole issue there, that you sort of think, it's got to be at a level of openness that people go well just declare it all. I mean people get suspicious I think where it isn't declared. Now we spoke to the chair of the local Conservative group and he said it really kind of should have been— was the thing I mean strictly speaking there's not a financial relationship— John made clear you don't rent anything from them if you don't get any money from them that's pecuniary: but from an outsider's point of view I'd have declared it, personally I'd have said wait a minute, anyway we probably have covered that one I think

AW: I think many connections with Hall Barn I agree with you Alastair are innocuous; I think in this particular case where we have somebody who is overseeing this plan and feeding suggestions into the plan, who has lived on the estate and whose father has worked for a long time on the estate, I think that's a different level of connection but let's move on from it but thank you

LD: Just coming back to something which John said you said it was the planning and economic development group not a committee

JR: It's a policy advisory group

LD: It's a group so what's the difference between a group and the committee then?

JR: A group is made up of members of the council who consider matters in relation to planning and economic development and advise the relevant portfolio holder whether it be health and communities environmental planning and economic development. Based on that advice that is then taken to the cabinet unless there is a particular delegation in place

LD: So I often explain the difference between chairmen of a committee, there are 3 sorts: - the committee is there to advise the chairman what his decision should be; the committee is there to make a decision and they end up arriving at a consensus; or a decision by votes or the committee is there to listen to what the chairman has already decided am I right in understanding then the group you just talked about is the first one - the committee is there to advise the chairman what his decision should be and they don't actually vote on it?

JR: They are there to advise the Cabinet member on what decisions to take forward to cabinet and it's the cabinet that the decision will generally be taken

LD: That is operating like a committee so is that a voting opportunity?

JR: For cabinet?

LD: Yes

JR: Yes

AW: Okay we were talking a little while ago about how this is politically motivated to the extent that you need to meet the housing target figures - you could do that and save the greenbelt by delaying the plan for a year or so until the unitary authority is up and running, so why would you do that?

JR: I would disagree with your assessment there, as it stands at the moment the plan itself is most likely to be adopted by the new unitary, the decision to actually adopt will be taken by the new unitary. We are progressing the plan to give the option to the new unitary whilst also protecting south bucks and chiltern from unplanned and otherwise development because the best way to have protection over such things is to have an identified five-year land supply and a current up-to-date local plan. At the moment we do not have a five-year land supply and we do not have an up-to-date local plan

AW: South Bucks is actually doing pretty well in relation to its land supply it's not categorised as red, it's not categorised as green but it's certainly not categorised as red and in comparison with many others it's actually doing pretty well on land supply, housing supply and Beaconsfield is also but if you halt this plan so it doesn't come into being and you allow the unitary to come up with its own plan, you could save our greenbelt so why wouldn't you do that?



JR: There is no direct correlation between those statements at all it may very well be that due to unplanned development being brought forward by relevant land owners and otherwise, we actually end up with far more and far less sustainable development that doesn't meet the needs as closely or as well as a properly evidenced and thought through local plan. As I say it is likely that this will be adopted by the unitary authority. The production of this local plan has been done throughout working closely with our neighbours both in Wycombe and Aylesbury and also the county council, they've all put in and fed into the plan regularly throughout, we are looking to progress to a regulation 19 so to put it out to the public and let everybody have their say and based on that, the plan will in due course be independently assessed and as I say it is likely that it will be for the unitary to decide whether to adopt or not to adopt

LD: Is that before or after the inspection?

JR: After

LD: After? Can I ask something if I may, you said that not having an up-to-date plan runs the risk of developers firing in applications and you've no reason to tell them no, because you haven't got an up-to-date plan?

JR: This has happened very recently not too far away from here where due to a lack of land supply and the lack of an up-to-date local plan they were able to put forward a development that wouldn't have been included in that authority's plan

LD: The local authority had no means of opposing that? But they do have here, there's a greenbelt.

JR: That was a green belt site.

LD: So, it was a green belt site?

JR: Yes

AW: What was the development?

JR: It was the development of a number of houses

AW: Whereabouts?

JR: Near Great Missenden

LD: And the Inspector allowed it? Even though it was green belt?

JR: Yes

LD: And the local authority said no?

JR : But this is the problem in South Bucks we have approximately 2.3 year land supply very short of 5 years, our local plan dates back to 1999, a long time before the 2011 NPPF I believe it is that requires up-to-date plans

JC: The five-year land supply has been required for many many years by central government, predates the NPPF 2018

JR: There is a whole schedule of legislation etc that have effectively required a review of greenbelt. Yes it is always preferable to have brownfield sites and redevelopment site opportunities and if you are aware of those please do bring them forward, do let us highlight them, I think everybody would much rather see development and redevelopment on sites, better use of existing land

JC: Part of the reason for the call to sites

LD: Going back to the Great Missenden issue because there was no up-to-date plan, the developer was allowed to build on greenbelt land? I think I understand you to say?

JR: And the lack of five-year land supply

LD: It over-rode the sanctity of the green belt

JR: yes

AW: Well I think somebody didn't do their job very well then in that case because the NPPF clearly sets out to save the greenbelt so I'm astonished that happened - in our authority applications are regularly turned down for applications concerning Greenbelt

PF: Okay let's move on. I think there is a chunk that says to me, it seems like yes there was a challenge, there is a problem with that but I can't see that which I think people would be up in arms if it's a case where you said "we're just going to do what we like, you lot can go hang." I don't think that would happen. Maybe I'm being too about it, let's go to Great Missenden and find out, that would be the best bet

AW: Even if that were to happen I think it beggars belief that Beaconsfield would, over the next year, see 1700 homes and a business Park being developed on greenbelt, I mean that just seems a nonsense to me

JR: It is 5:30 I've got another meeting tonight so

PF: cool

J: Alternatively if you could email the question so we can deal with it

AW: What do you want to do folks?

PF: It's 5:30 you have another meeting we could email them in

JR: Very happy to answer but I do have a meeting coming up shortly so

PR: I think you need to go to the meeting

AW: Okay if you want to leave John that's fine

JR: I set aside an hour for this it would have been very helpful if you could have you know let us know in advance or some of the issues you wish to cover so we could have given you the, in some cases, very procedural answers you were looking for

PF: Hang on John let's be honest if you had said we had an hour and a bit or we've got an hour and we've been chasing you for nine months trying to get round the table

JR: To be fair I've been offering to meet with you since November 2017 so

PF: It's an hour— it would have been nice to know in advance you got an hour I don't think that was covered anywhere but I totally understand

JR: Likewise it wasn't covered from your side that you may need 2,3,4 so we presume an hour is a fairly standard meeting we presumed obviously erroneously that it would be enough as I said if you had perhaps given us sight of the range of topics you wished to cover then we could have etc as I said I do have another meeting this evening

PF: cool you need to dash

AW: Can I just ask one last question? What do you see someone who's earning, or a couple who are on the combined salary of, about £42,000 what do you see them being able to afford on the Beaconsfield greenbelt?

JR: I'm sorry you'll have to express that a bit better in terms of what do you expect them be able to afford

AW: So let's say I am earning £42,000, I want to buy a property on the Beaconsfield greenbelt once it's developed. What do you think I will be able to afford?

JR: I would recommend that they go to talk to their bankers

AW: No, no, in terms of what is to be built there, what do you see as someone who is earning

JR: In terms of the East of Beaconsfield it is an option, it's been looked at it not at this point it is part of the broader consideration, any major site I would expect to come forward with with policy compliant levels of affordable housing, including affordable that you can buy, affordable that you can rent and social housing

AW: Social housing? Do you think there will be social housing on option nine?

JR: I, I couldn't possibly comment specifically but I would expect any major development anywhere across the plan area to be in line with the policies

AW: What would £42,000 buy you on Wilton Park under the current Inland Homes plans?

JR: I couldn't tell you

AW: Don't you think you should be able to tell me?

JR: In all honesty what can £42,000 buy you I don't know by virtue of the fact that without details to what an individual is able to borrow in terms of looking to buy, are they looking to rent, whereabouts in their life are they, are they just starting out, have they recently come together, there are so many myriad options there that it is not really a straightforward a question as you are putting forward. What I would say is that any significant development across the plan area I would expect to be policy compliant.

AW: Wilton Park is not policy compliant have you read the application put in by Inland Homes?

JR: That is a currently active application which I can't specifically comment on. I would say that I would expect a policy compliant application

AW: Have you read the application?

JR: I have read it

AW: Well if you had read it you would know what £42,000 would buy you

JR: I I I I can't comment on an active application, it is currently under determination and it would not be appropriate to discuss

AW: Well I think that shows that you have not read it in great detail

AW: I'll tell you what £42,000 would buy you. It would buy you a 25% share in a small one bedroom flat and that flat would also be subject to a very expensive service charge on a very expensive private estate. Anyway I have no more questions, you have to go, it's a shame we have to curtail this meeting but thank you very much for meeting us.

JR: It's a pleasure

PF: It would be good to keep talking because clearly there's a lot going on. I think there's an element here of, it's worth saying, that I think a reasonable person would look at the system and think it's so bloody complicated that getting to the bottom of it and trying to help people understand, so they can sensibly contribute to any consultation, is dramatic and it is very much a case of I don't think they have a sense of openness around the discussions going on about it to be honest John. I think there is a certain degree of maybe yes a certain process has to be followed, but at the end of the day, ordinary people in Beaconsfield are going to have to actually think about what the consultation means. We're going to have a

really short period of time to consider it. It's all wrapped up and when you ask a questions the answer you get it's not that simple, it's kind of like this, so at the end of the day what we are challenging people to do is to help us in explaining this to people locally, as because the sad fact is that not one of the residents will be able to spare the time to read the stuff and if they do, probably none of them will understand it and the questions that some out of it are a bit strange. The thing that's really weird here is following the rules and making sure you're meeting targets, at the end of the day, its ordinary people's lives will be impacted and as some of them and some of the facts suggest, it's chosen to present this but not that. We are desperately trying to make sure that people see all the facts, both sides of the equation because at the end of the day that is what it really should be about. Not a case of we've got to do this, we can't do that, we might do this and that. Totally understand that you've got various rules and things can't be said, and things can be said, but at the end of the day, we are trying to get to the bottom of a really complicated issue, to explain to folks because otherwise what they're going to do, is make the wrong decisions. And I would encourage everybody here to talk more about this because if this had kind of been done earlier on, people would have a better understanding of what the impacts would be. There's the concept of communication at the heart of this – the best forms of communication usually start sooner

JR: That is exactly why I approached your secretary at the time in connection with meeting after I was appointed

AP: The gentleman at the end, his name I have forgotten, has spoken quite well and I think has been very useful and informative

PF: Absolutely

AP: And I think his input to this meeting has been invaluable

JR: We are looking at having a public exhibition in connection with the consultation coming later this year

PF: It would be very useful to have these meetings in the evening rather than during the day

RP: We did considerable public consultation in the early stages, definitely we stretched them through different times of the day

PF: I'm just saying and I would encourage people to do it in the evening because you need to get as many people to look at it and comment on it. And at the same time I think there is a challenge in the midst of all of this, which is that it is going to come up right in the middle of the school holidays when more people are away, who won't see it, so I think then that's just the way it has fallen

JC: That's not the intention

PF: I would have serious reservations if that was the plan. Bearing in mind where it will land

LD: Is the 6 weeks prescribed?

JC: Yes it is, it's a minimum six weeks

PF: It feels from the outside, and you don't need to comment on this, but it feels like by the time it gets to talking to people about the plan, the obvious exercises will be to get the plan through because you need to deliver a plan and you need to get it through, so that's going to come up. So it feels like the consultation isn't really a consultation, it's we're going to show you what's going to happen. So if everybody in Beaconsfield said "what, no way", it still wouldn't stop it. Is the impression I get, because you've got to deliver a plan and the arguments would be where do we go from there because there is no rail back system

JC: The Council is not required to submit the plan; if the council agrees to publish the plan and the consultation proceeds and then there's the six-week period people can make representations on the soundness of the plan and whether it meets the various legal tests and the council could take stock after that process and decide not to submit the plan. Local authorities are not even bound to adopt their plan, they can choose to withdraw their plan whilst clearly the intention is to publish the plan and to submit it for independent examination, the council isn't wedded to that, the council can take stock and and reconsider

LD: So when the consultation is ready to be open to public inspections, will the compelling reasons about why there has to plan be displayed as well?

JC: Yes we are already thinking about publishing frequently asked questions or something. I agree it's a very complicated technical process and we want to try and find a way of explaining it as clearly as we can do to interested laypeople, such as yourselves, how the process works and why the council thinks is a very good idea to put a plan into place

AW: Who is the council's QC?

JC: Simon Bird of Francis Taylor buildings chambers.

PF: John you've got a meeting, you're late