

## Development Proposals, Boundary Changes & Council Tax

There have been a number of questions raised and media articles about the links between new housing development proposals, boundary changes and council tax recently.

### Development Proposals

New housing developments are planned by Wiltshire Council through the Local Development Framework which includes the Core Strategy and the Wiltshire Housing Sites Allocation Plan.

The **Core Strategy**, which was adopted by Wiltshire Council in January 2015, includes a large allocation at Ashton Park, either side of the West Ashton Road between Leap Gate and Larkrise Farm and extending across the River Biss to the railway line and down to Yarnbrook. Some of this area is in the Trowbridge Town boundary, some is in West Ashton Parish and most of it is in North Bradley Parish. This development is described in Wiltshire Council's Core Strategy as, "an urban extension of the town".

The **Wiltshire Housing Sites Allocation Plan (WHSAP)**, was adopted by Wiltshire Council in February 2020. This followed a public inquiry conducted by an independent planning inspector. The sites meet the need for housing for 'Trowbridge' (and not the villages) as one of Wiltshire's three Principle Settlements (as well as Chippenham and Salisbury), as determined by Wiltshire Council in accordance with government housing numbers. Part of the requirement arises from the delays to Ashton Park and the failure of other sites to be acceptable, including the Castle Mead extension and the Leap Gate/West Ashton Road triangle, both of which are in the town boundary, but too close to Green Lane Woods.

At the inquiry Trowbridge Town Council objected to the allocation of development land between the White Horse Business Park and Woodmarsh at **North Bradley**. North Bradley Parish Council accepted the allocation of this land during the inquiry. The North Bradley Neighbourhood Plan also included development in this area.

Trowbridge Town Council also objected to the allocation at the **Hilperton Gap**, whereas the Hilperton Neighbourhood Plan includes development in this area. Trowbridge Town Council also objected to the allocation between the town boundary and **Southwick Court**.

Trowbridge Town Council did not object to the allocations in the town boundary at Church Lane, Spring Meadows and Drynham Lane. Trowbridge Town Council argued then, and still argues, that Wiltshire Council has not satisfactorily accounted for brownfield sites such as the former Bowyer's factory in its allocations.

### Boundary Changes

There is no automatic adjustment of the official boundaries between town and parish councils when a development site is allocated by the planning authority. As Wiltshire Council is a Unitary Authority, they are the planning authority and also responsible for conducting boundary reviews under a process called a **Community Governance Review (CGR)**.

Trowbridge Town Council has the following in its Strategy for the period 2017 – 2021:

**Trowbridge Town Council will continue the campaign to ensure that Trowbridge can have A TOWN COUNCIL FOR ALL OF THE TOWN, including all the built up urban areas which are not connected to their respective villages and if necessary will seek a further Community Governance Review when Ashton Park urban extension is being built-out or if other areas of development take place on the edges of the current town boundary, but recognises that this is unlikely to take effect before 2025.**

The **Local Government Boundary Committee for England** (LGBCE) conducted a review of the electoral arrangements for Wiltshire Council which concluded in 2019. As part of its response to this review, Trowbridge Town Council objected to proposals to include parts of North Bradley village in the Trowbridge Drynham Division but both Wiltshire Council and the LGBCE proceeded to include the edge of North Bradley village in this division.

Following this, Wiltshire Council commenced a Community Governance Review. As the development sites had by then been allocated (despite the town council's objections), the town council, in accordance with its Strategy, put forward proposals that the areas allocated to be developed as part of the growth of the town by Wiltshire Council and the Neighbourhood Plans, should be transferred to the town. Although, Trowbridge Town Council continued to object to parts of North Bradley village being included in the areas to be transferred, as properties on Woodmarsh Road, Westbury Road and Little Common Lane were clearly more closely connected to North Bradley village.

Wiltshire Council in July 2020 consulted on their boundary proposals, which include all of the development areas currently in North Bradley being transferred to Trowbridge, including most of Ashton Park, the Drynham Lane site and the allocation between White Horse Business Park and Woodmarsh.

## **Council Tax**

The rules governing how Council Tax is applied and which households pay which Council Tax are dictated by the government and Wiltshire Council. All households in the Trowbridge boundary have to be charged the Trowbridge Town Council element of the Council Tax.

Trowbridge Town Council charges a lower Council Tax than most other towns in Wiltshire, including Salisbury, Chippenham, Bradford on Avon, Westbury and Warminster.

Some people, in raising queries about this matter, have suggested that the parish system should be abolished. This appears to suggest that decisions about Trowbridge, North Bradley, West Ashton, Southwick and Hilperton should be made by councillors from Salisbury, Chippenham, Warminster, Westbury and Bradford on Avon, and not by those from Trowbridge, North Bradley, West Ashton, Southwick and Hilperton.

Trowbridge Town Council seeks to serve the interests of the whole town, taking decisions locally about those things that are local. The Town Council's Vision is:

**Trowbridge Town Council will ensure that Trowbridge continues to develop as a place to live, to visit and to do business; by being the best local council; influencing those who make decisions for the town and delivering quality, value and satisfaction. We will continue to;**

- **Invest in facilities and services.**
- **Promote a positive attitude to sustainable housing growth.**
- **Take responsibility for more of those things which are local.**

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