

Charity hits out at authority over roads bid

Council bashed for A350 plans

A CHARITY has criticised Wiltshire Council over its plans for a major new link road in Chippenham.

Countryside charity the CPRE says that the local authority is 'gambling £5m of public money trying to rush through an application for the 'distributor road'.

The council has spent £5m to secure the £75m Housing Infrastructure Fund to pay for the road on the A350 linking the north and south sides of Chippenham.

The road will pave the way for the development of 7,500 new homes and, according to the CPRE, will put an estimated 10,000 more commuters on the road.

CPRE claims the council is doing this without local consultation and without proper process, outside the existing Local Plan and ahead of an upcoming Local Plan Review.

The council denies this and says the consultation will go ahead but was delayed by the Covid outbreak.

By Matthew McLaughlin
Local Democracy Reporter

CPRE Wiltshire chair Anne Henshaw said: "The issue of consultation with Wiltshire Council has been a cause for concern for a long time and is going from bad to worse."

The council says it aims to carry out the consultation in the new year.

Leader Philip Whitehead, leader of Wiltshire Council said: "All the things that CPRE say have not happened, we are committed to do in terms of consultation."

"We have repeatedly stated that we are committed to consulting with local residents, businesses and wider stakeholders on the road route options for the Chippenham relief road."

"This has been delayed due to Covid-19 and we are now aiming for this to take place early in the new year."

"Any engagement and public consultation on behalf of

this project will be carried out independently to that undertaken for the Local Plan Review.

"The review will take place towards the end of the year and there will be an opportunity for stakeholders to take part in this consultation."

"When the project's planning applications are submitted, the council will consider these in line with our planning policies and any other material considerations, as is the case with all other planning applications."

"The council has a budget of £5m to cover costs of developing schemes and that budget will be used carefully to ensure the council maximises the value of its assets within any parameters that exist."

"The issue of consultation has been a cause for concern for a long time"