

## COUNCIL MEETING – 3 December 2025

### CABINET QUESTION TIME

#### **1. Question from Councillor Jeapes to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Property**

You will recall the story in the Daily Telegraph a few weeks ago about a 'Bridge to Nowhere'.

To quote:

*A £52m road through the Amazon jungle is being built using British aid that is intended to help the climate. The road in Guyana goes nowhere other than a tiny village and has long been criticised by environmentalists, though it is celebrated by the oil industry. It is just one among hundreds of schemes funded by taxpayers.*

The City Council has just opened a bridge to the Waterside peninsular which, as shown in the Council's capital budget produced at October's Cabinet, page 38, has cost a total of £45M. This bridge was originally budgeted to cost £15M, again as shown in the Council's capital budget, so it has cost three times the original estimate.

Is it not a similar 'Bridge to Nowhere', as Waterside does not figure in the current consultation on the Local Plan and the City Council has not published details of how this important brown field site is to be developed?

As Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee I plan to put the development of Waterside on to the agenda at its next meeting, but in advance of this:

**Can the Cabinet member explain why the final cost is three times the original budget?**

**Can the Cabinet Member explain why the bridge was built using public money when the cost should have been borne by a developer of this site?**

**Can the Cabinet Member advise us when a Development Agreement will be signed to enable work to start at Waterside?**

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#### **2. Question from Councillor Steel to the Cabinet Member for Greener Chelmsford**

The City Council is consulting on the addition of fifteen new sites to address the shortfall in the five-year land supply in the currently adopted Local Plan, apparently caused by delayed actual and forecast delivery of new homes.

The causes, in addition to the poor economic policies of the Labour Government, are said to be major sites which cannot now meet conditions laid down in the Local Plan, due particularly to the cancellation of the A12 widening scheme and the failure of the company proposing to develop the Meadows site in Chelmsford.

It is clear from the national picture that many councils are suffering similar issues and housebuilding is falling behind the Government's unrealistic target of an extra 1.5M new homes in this parliamentary term.

There is a public perception that this council has too readily accepted these higher targets without publishing why there will be shortfall in Chelmsford's five-year housing supply and vitally needed infrastructure.

**Will the Cabinet Member advise residents why the adding of the additional sites represents a major change in strategy from large strategic sites to smaller sites that apparently require little extra infrastructure.**

These fifteen new sites have been selected mainly on the basis that they can be delivered in the next five years without the need for additional infrastructure. The addition of these new sites is intended to fill a short-term gap.

However, assuming that homes on the existing sites will still eventually be delivered, the new sites would form a permanent addition to the total housing supply.

**Would the Cabinet Member confirm that the additional sites now being consulted on could be removed from the plan or reduced if, for example, the Beaulieu development gains pace because the Junction 19 improvements are met by the developers?**

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