

## **TOWN COUNCIL 'BITTERLY DISAPPOINTED' AT MSDC AAP DECISION**

Town Council Leader James Baldwin reacted strongly in the District Council's vote to accept the draft Area Action Plan as fit for public consultation on April 26.

An attempt to defer debate on the draft papers for a week to allow time for full consideration of such a complex was rejected, although key traffic modelling data had only just been made available to Members. MSDC's Chairman also refused to bring the item forward to the beginning of the meeting; as a result the AAP debate did not start until 8.45pm to the annoyance of a packed public gallery of local people who had been waiting since before 7pm.

Local District Councillors attacked the draft Papers on two major fronts. The first focussed on requests for the removal of Worth Way as a proposed preferred option for the relief road on the grounds of residents' concern and that it had not been worked up fully enough to justify inclusion as a serious option. The second involved a series of amendments. The first, and only one passed, sought more clarity on the traffic relief comparisons in the documents and specifically the consistent use of 2004 data as required by the Structure Plan. Others were all lost. One demanded more comprehensive information on the cost of the housing development scheme and related infrastructure necessary to protect existing and new residents. A further one sought a commitment to encourage the public to table alternative proposals on the relief road and housing numbers and publish details on how the public would be guaranteed full access to the necessary information to make the consultation meaningful.

Town Council Leader James Baldwin was in the public gallery. He said after the meeting 'The Town Council is bitterly disappointed that real and widespread local concerns were not addressed. We are concerned that MSDC has failed to take on board the messages from the rejection of the AAP last time and has failed to provide a document for public consultation that includes the total picture on costs and traffic.'

James ended, 'The Town Council recognises the battle for the Town's future is now on, however inadequate the Area Action Plan being proposed. We have made our position clear throughout: we want a sustainable Plan with less housing, real assurances on infrastructure and traffic relief and based on local consensus. We want the Town to rally round such a Plan for the future as one that respects its needs and wishes. We want to work with the Town to build such a Plan and we want everyone to respond forcibly to this public consultation and will also be hosting a Town Meeting as a key step in that process.'