

The Draft Revised RSS for the South West Incorporating the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes: Summary and Implications for North Wiltshire

The Draft Revised RSS for the South West was published for consultation on 22nd July 2008, and includes the Secretary of State's (SoS) proposed changes to the Draft RSS. This follows the Examination in Public of the Draft RSS held between April and July 2007, and the panel report published in January 2008. The Draft Revised RSS is open for consultation until 17th October 2008. This summary document outlines the proposed changes to the RSS, and highlights the likely implications of these for North Wiltshire. Section 1 of the Draft Revised RSS contains four policies on Sustainable Development (SD1-SD4); these policies have not been changed significantly, and thus are not examined here. Section 2 of the Draft RSS has been deleted in its entirety. This summary therefore begins with an outline of the proposed changes to Section 3.

Section 3: The Spatial Strategy and Guidance for the Scale and Location of Development

Policy CSS: The Core Spatial Strategy

The Draft Revised RSS includes the recommendation that a new policy be included, which sets out the general position regarding development in the region. Policy CSS states that "most new development will be provided for at Strategically Significant Cities and Towns (SSCTs)" and that "Provision for more limited development will be made at market and coastal towns and in small towns and villages where this will increase self-containment and promote stronger communities".

Implications for North Wiltshire: Chippenham is identified in Development Policy A as an SSCT, and thus will be a focus for growth in the district. Development at the smaller market towns in North Wiltshire (Calne, Corsham, Cricklade, Malmesbury and Wootton Bassett) will need to be considered in the light of the requirements that it promotes 'self-containment' and 'stronger communities'.

Paragraph 3.2.3

Paragraph 3.2.3 is amended to clarify the RSS position that Development Policies A, B and C "do not set out a sequential or 'cascade' approach to the location of development", and that the development needs of each class of settlement should be considered separately.

Implications for North Wiltshire: Development needs of Chippenham should not be met in the five smaller market towns, and development needs of these towns should not be met in the villages of the district.

Development Policy A: Development at Strategically Significant Cities and Towns (SSCTs)

This policy is amended to include clarification on the role of the SSCTs in providing "housing, employment, cultural, education, retail, health and other services and facilities" and in acting as "strategic hubs for public transport". Objectives for the SSCTs are outlined, including: "improving the quality of the urban environment"; "promoting social cohesion"; "supporting growth in the economy"; "securing improvements to public transport"; and "making efficient and effective use of land".

Implications for North Wiltshire: The above roles and objectives will need to be considered when planning for future development in Chippenham.

Development Policy B: Development at Market and Coastal Towns

This policy states that certain Market and Coastal Towns will be appropriate locations for development which serves to “increase their self-containment and enhance their roles as service centres”. The wording of the policy has been amended but the content is not significantly altered.

Implications for North Wiltshire: To note the change of wording.

Development Policy C: Development at Small Towns and Villages

Paragraph 3.5.1 is amended to include the statement that “the smaller towns and villages identified in LDDs will be the primary focus for development in the wider countryside away from Policy A and B settlements”. Development Policy C states that “greater self-containment and stronger local communities” will be promoted in the Small Towns and Villages, providing that certain criteria are met.

Implications for North Wiltshire: LDDs will need to identify small towns and villages which are appropriate locations for development outside the Policy A and B settlements, and provide detailed criteria to be met before development is permitted. This may also be relevant in the production of the Development Management Notes, which will assist development control decisions in the district.

Development Policy D: Infrastructure

This policy has been re-written, with a focus on the need to provide essential infrastructure “in step with development”. New supporting text highlights the importance of providing both ‘hard’ and ‘social’ infrastructure, with examples including roads (hard) and community services (social).

Implications for North Wiltshire: Note the change of emphasis in the re-drafted policy.

Development Policy E: High Quality Design

This policy has been amended to remove the requirement that “all new, replacement and refurbished public buildings should be designed to have multiple uses as far as possible”. The distinction between public and private buildings is removed because no justification was provided in the Draft RSS for such a distinction.

Implications for North Wiltshire: To note the change to the policy.

Development Policy F: Planning and delivery of major development

Development Policy F has been re-written to improve clarity and to avoid repetition of content elsewhere in the RSS. Reference to specific development densities has been removed. The new policy requires that the planning of major new development should include consideration of the need for: “high standards of design and access”; adequate provision of services and facilities; “sustainable transport links between urban extensions and city/town centres”; “amenity space and green infrastructure”; and “a range of housing types and tenures”.

Implications for North Wiltshire: To note the changes to the policy.

Development Policy G: Sustainable Construction

The Panel had originally recommended that this policy should be amended to include endorsement of “the accelerated introduction of more demanding standards of building sustainability on a region wide basis”, but this suggestion has been rejected by the SoS. Instead the re-drafted Development Policy G includes the statement that: “When proposing any local requirements for sustainable buildings, local planning authorities must be able to demonstrate clearly the local circumstances that warrant and allow this and set them out in Development Plan Documents”. This is in line with national guidance set out in the *Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change – Supplement to PPS1*.

Other changes to the policy include the removal of references to ‘*Future Foundations the South West Sustainable Construction Charter*, and the *South West Sustainability Checklist for Developments*, in order to avoid delegating “the basis for decision making to documents that have not been the subject of scrutiny through the RSS process”. The requirements for developments to achieve specific levels in the Code for Sustainable Homes have also been removed, in order to clarify the fact that the RSS is not establishing a set of regional regulations.

Implications for North Wiltshire: If the district wishes to introduce sustainable construction standards above those set at the national level, then it will be necessary for this approach to be fully justified in a Local Development Document.

Development Policy H: Re-using Land

Development Policy H has been amended to state that the target for the region will be to locate “at least 50% of new *housing* development on previously developed land (including the conversion of existing buildings)”. This is a change from the Draft RSS where there was no specific focus on housing development. There has also been another alteration to the wording of the policy, in that the reference to ‘local authorities’ has been removed, in order to clarify the fact that all relevant bodies (and not just local authorities) should address the need for the re-use of land.

Implications for North Wiltshire: To note the changes in the wording of the policy.

Development Policy I: Reuse, Redevelopment or Disposal of Land

Development Policy I has been deleted following the panel’s recommendation that it was unnecessary.

Implications for North Wiltshire: To note the deletion of the policy

Development Policy J: Joint Working

Development Policy J has been deleted; issues of joint-working are covered in Section 4 instead.

Implications for North Wiltshire: To note the deletion of the policy.

Section 4: Sub-regional Housing Policies

Section 4 has been completely re-structured, with specific policies focusing on each of the Sub-regional Housing Market Areas (HMA). North Wiltshire falls within the Swindon HMA.

Paragraph 4.09 contains information on joint working which was previously covered by Development Policy J. It is stated that North Wiltshire should work together with Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire County Council when preparing policies and strategies.

Policy HMA2: Swindon HMA

Policy HMA2 states that “In the Swindon HMA provision will be made for: growth of about 42,700 jobs” and at least 53,900 homes. North Wiltshire will need to provide 13,700 homes, including at least 5,500 dwellings in Chippenham, and 3,000 homes to the west of Swindon. About 6,200 jobs should be provided for in the Chippenham TTWA, including provision of about 42 ha of employment land. Policy HMA2 also states that “Action should be taken to improve movement and accessibility” for the West of Swindon – Swindon Town Centre transport corridor; and emphasises the need for Chippenham to “enhance its role as an employment and service centre to meet the needs of a growing population and increase its self-containment”.

Policy HD1: Sub-Regional Distribution of Housing 2006-2026: Managing and Stepping Up Supply

Policy HD1 and the accompanying tables (4.1 and 4.2) state that the Annual Average Net Dwelling Requirement for North Wiltshire is 685 dwellings for the entire plan period (2006-2016), whilst the requirement for Chippenham is 275 dwellings (2006-2026). Policy HD1 states that “Local Planning Authorities should complete Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (SHLAA) as evidence for LDFs” and that they should “ensure a 15 year supply of land for housing, including a 5 year supply of specific, deliverable sites”; and identify broad locations for housing in LDFs.

Implications for North Wiltshire: Policy guidance is needed regarding a direction of growth for Chippenham and the other settlements in the district. The latest *Statement of Five Year Land Supply for Housing* for North Wiltshire was published in April 2008; this document highlights a shortfall in housing land when compared to the increased requirement for 5,000 dwellings to be provided in Chippenham. The deficit in the town will now be greater than that outlined in the Five Year Land Supply Statement, given the requirement for 5,500 dwellings. Work on the Core Strategy has now stopped in preparation for the change over to One Council. A series of Development Management Notes will therefore be produced, to assist Development Control in determining any planning applications that are submitted for Chippenham and the other settlements.

Table 4.3: Gypsy and Traveller Additional Pitch Requirements to 2011

Table 4.3 outlines the additional residential and transit pitch requirements for local authorities to 2011. The requirements for North Wiltshire are:

Residential Pitch Requirement – 48; Transit Pitch Requirement – 12

Implications for North Wiltshire: The Residential Pitch Requirement for North Wiltshire has increased from 24 (Wiltshire and Swindon GTAA, 2006) to 48

(Draft Revised RSS). The Wiltshire and Swindon GTAA also found that there was no requirement for additional transit pitches, whilst the RSS requirement is for 12 pitches up to 2011. This issue remains to be analysed further.

Section 5: Regional Approach to Transport

Section 5 has been completely re-written, and the previous Section 5 deleted. Policies relevant to North Wiltshire are outlined below.

Policy RTS1: Corridor Management

This policy identifies transport corridors of National and Regional Importance. **The National corridor from London-South Wales passes through North Wiltshire, and the district will therefore need to take account of this when producing planning policy.**

RTS2: Demand Management and Sustainable Transport Measures at the SSCTs

This policy states that “Demand management measures should be introduced progressively at the SSCTs to reduce the growth of road traffic levels and congestion. This should be accompanied by a ‘step change’ in the prioritisation of sustainable transport measures serving these places”.

This will be relevant in Chippenham which is identified as an SSCT.

RTS3: Parking

This policy outlines the approach to parking to be taken by local authorities, including the need to have policies for Parking Standards, Parking Provision and Parking Charges.

North Wiltshire will need to note the new policy.

RTS4: Freight and the Primary Route Network

Policy RTS4 highlights the importance of promoting the primary route network for use by HGVs.

The primary route network includes Motorways and Trunk Roads; Policy RTS4 will therefore be relevant with regards to these roads in North Wiltshire.

Section 6: Harnessing the Benefits of Population Growth and Managing the Implications of Population Change

Policy H1: Housing Affordability

The percentage of affordable housing required annually across each local authority is increased from 30% (Draft RSS) to 35% (Revised Draft RSS). It is also emphasised that local authorities should set local targets in Development Plan Documents.

Implications for North Wiltshire: The increase in the affordable housing requirement to 35% will need to be incorporated into future DPDs.

Policy H2: Housing Densities

Policy H2 has been rewritten. It is stated that the following densities should be achieved:

An average net density of 40 dwellings per hectare or above across HMAs
Net density of between 40 and 50 dwellings per hectare for new development in SSCTs

Net densities of 50 or more dwellings per hectare in urban extensions to the SSCTs.

Implications for North Wiltshire: The above densities will be relevant for new development in Chippenham and in the West of Swindon area.

H3: Mix of Housing

This is a new policy which states that “LDDs should include policies which require an appropriate range and mix of housing”. This should be based on evidence regarding the “likely profile of housing types requiring market housing”; “the size and type of affordable housing required”; and “the need to adapt the existing housing”.

Implications for North Wiltshire: To note the new policy.

GT1: Gypsy and Traveller Pitch Requirements

Policy GT1 requires local authorities to provide for additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches, as outlined in Table 4.3. The requirements for North Wiltshire are 48 Residential Pitches and 12 Transit Pitches up to 2011. It is also stated in Policy GT1 that “Where it is appropriate to make provision beyond 2011 and other data is not available, provision should allow for a 3% compound growth in requirements per annum” and that local authorities “should take account of the specific needs of different groups of Gypsies and Travellers in making site allocations”.

Implications for North Wiltshire: As mentioned above, the Residential Pitch Requirement for North Wiltshire is double that found to be required by the Wiltshire and Swindon GTAA, and the Transit Pitch Requirement has increased from 0 (Wiltshire and Swindon GTAA) to 12 (Draft Revised RSS).

GT2: Travelling Show People Pitch Requirements

Policy GT2 is a new policy which requires that local authorities identify appropriate sites for additional plots for Travelling Show People. The plot requirements are outlined in Table 4.4 on a county wide basis, with Wiltshire needing to provide 5 plots by 2011.

Implications for North Wiltshire: To note the new policy.

The Remaining Policies in Section 6

The remaining policies in Section 6 have been amended as follows: HE1 (Planning for Healthcare); HE3 (Promoting Health); SK1 (Education and Skills); and GI1 (Green Infrastructure) all have minor changes only. HE2 (Provision of Additional Healthcare Facilities) and LCF1 (Local Cultural Facilities) are deleted.

Section 7: Enhancing Distinctive Environments and Cultural Life

The majority of the policies in Section 7 are either unchanged, or have minor amendments to improve clarity. However, the following changes may be relevant for North Wiltshire:

Policy ENV1 (Protecting and Enhancing the Region's Natural and Historic Environment) has been extended to provide greater detail on the treatment of N2K sites.

Policy F1 (Flood Risk) has been amended slightly to include reference to the Regional Flood Risk Assessment.

Policies RE5 (Decentralised Energy to Supply New Development) now includes the statement that "Local planning authorities should set targets in their DPDs for the energy to be used in new development to come from decentralised and renewable or low-carbon energy sources where it is feasible and viable, and the development thresholds to which such targets would apply". Before the relevant DPDs are adopted, an interim target of "at least 10% of the energy to be used in new development of more than 10 dwellings or 1000m² of non-residential floorspace should come from decentralised and renewable or low-carbon sources".

Policy RE9 (Air Quality) has been amended to include the statement that LDDs should "include consideration of the potential impacts of new developments and increased traffic levels on internationally designated nature conservation sites".

Implications for North Wiltshire: To note the changes to the above policies.

Section 8: Enhancing Economic Prosperity and Quality of Employment Opportunity

ES1: Sustainable Economic Prosperity

This is a new policy, which sets out the need for Local Authorities to "include measures in their LDDs to promote a switch from employment-led to productivity-led growth". The need to locate development so as to reduce the need to travel is also highlighted.

Implications for North Wiltshire: It will be necessary to incorporate the measures outlined in Policy ES1 within future LDDs for the district.

ES2: Providing for Employment Land and Premises and Policy ES3: Review of Employment Sites

Policies E1, E2, E3 and E4 in the Draft RSS have been deleted and are replaced by Policies ES2 and ES3. Policy ES2 sets out the requirements for local authorities with regards to the provision of employment land. Local authorities should identify "a 20 year supply of employment land, including strategic sites"; and these should support "the ongoing development of the SSCTs"; "a better balance between the location of jobs and housing"; and the achievement of other objectives as listed in Policy ES2. Policy ES3 states that "The supply of land should be critically reviewed ... on a three year rolling basis".

Implications for North Wiltshire: It will be necessary to ensure that sufficient employment land is available across the district, but particularly in Chippenham which is an SSCT. This will be relevant for the Development Management Note series.

TC1: City and Town Centres

This policy has been amended to include the statement that “The central areas of the SSCTs will also be the prime location for office development (B1a), which is not related to other commercial uses”.

TC2: Other Centres

This is a new policy which outlines the position with regards to retail development outside the SSCTs. The general presumption is against development, unless the new retail facilities “complement rather than compete with the retail facilities in the relevant strategic centre”.

Implications for North Wiltshire: Policies TC1 and TC2 will need to be considered when planning development in Chippenham and the other town centres of the district.

TO1: Sustainable Tourism; TO2: Safeguarding and Investing in Tourist Locations; and TO3: Major New Tourism Facilities.

Policies TO1, TO2 and TO3 have all been completely rewritten in the Draft Revised RSS. Policy TO3 states that “Major new tourism facilities should be located within, or close to, SSCTs”.

Implications for North Wiltshire: To note the re-written policies.

Section 9: Addressing Deprivation and Disadvantage to reduce Intra-Regional Inequalities

ADD1: Priorities for Addressing Deprivation and Disadvantage

This new policy outlines the approach to be taken in order to address inequalities across the region. It is stated that “LDDs should identify and seek to address pockets of deprivation at the neighbourhood level in both urban and rural communities”.

Implications for North Wiltshire: To note the new policy.

Relevant Documents:

The South West Regional Spatial Strategy: Schedule of the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes and Reasons. Available at:

http://gosw.limehouse.co.uk/portal/schedule_of_proposed_changes_and_reasons/

The Draft Revised Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West Incorporating the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes. Available at:

http://gosw.limehouse.co.uk/portal/regional_strategies/drss