



Working towards a Core Strategy for Wiltshire

Topic paper 4: Rural signposting tool

Wiltshire Core Strategy
Consultation January 2012

Topic Paper 4: Rural Signposting Tool

This paper is one of 16 topic papers, listed below, which form part of the evidence base in support of the emerging Wiltshire Core Strategy. These topic papers have been produced in order to present a coordinated view of some of the main evidence that has been considered in drafting the emerging Core Strategy. It is hoped that this will make it easier to understand how we had reached our conclusions. The papers are all available from the council website:

Topic Paper

Topic Paper 1: Climate Change

Topic Paper 2: Housing

Topic Paper 3: Settlement Strategy

Topic Paper 4: Rural Signposting Tool

Topic Paper 5: Natural Environment

Topic Paper 6: Retail

Topic Paper 7: Economy

Topic Paper 8: Infrastructure and Planning Obligations

Topic Paper 9: Built and Historic Environment

Topic Paper 10: Transport

Topic Paper 11: Green Infrastructure

Topic Paper 12: Site Selection Process

Topic Paper 13: Military Issues

Topic Paper 14: Building Resilient Communities

Topic Paper 15: Housing Requirement Technical Paper

Topic Paper 16: Gypsy and Travellers

Topic Paper 4: Rural Signposting Tool

Topic Paper 4: Rural Signposting Tool

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Policy and Regulatory Framework
3. Collation of Evidence and Policy Development
4. Rural Challenges and Signposting Tool

Topic Paper 4: Rural Signposting Tool

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This topic paper provides a signposting tool to direct the reader to rural policy development which is spread between the other thematic topic papers produced to inform the development of the Wiltshire Core Strategy Document.
- 1.2 Wiltshire is predominantly rural in character and it is essential that sustainable rural communities are supported and encouraged and that we meet the needs of people who live and work in rural areas. The rural arena encompasses a variety of themes all of which shape the rural environment. This topic paper identifies a number of key challenges under this 'rural' umbrella. The cross-cutting nature of this topic has enabled these challenges to be addressed through other thematic topic papers. However the importance of creating sustainable rural communities is recognised as a key theme for Wiltshire in its own right and this paper provides a sign posting tool to direct the reader to the key issues and policies identified in the other topic papers.

2.0 Policy and Regulatory Framework

National context

Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 (Defra 2007)

- 2.1 In line with the European Union Rural Development Policy¹ there is a national Rural Development Programme. This identifies three key priorities as
- Agriculture, food and forestry.
 - Environment and land management.
 - Rural economy and quality of life.

The Government Response to the Taylor Review of the Rural Economy and Affordable Housing²

- 2.2 Matthew Taylor MP undertook a review of the countryside in 2008 and made a number of recommendations about the economy and affordable housing in rural areas, including recommendations for planning policy development. The Government responded to these recommendations in 'The Government Response to the Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing' (DCLG 2009). The following recommendations were agreed:
- The Government intends to 'rural proof' all relevant domestic policies. This will ensure all policies take account of rural circumstances and needs.

¹ The European Union Rural Development Policy 2007-2013 requires each member state to set out a Rural Development Programme.

² Matthew Taylor MP (2008) Taylor Review of the Rural Economy and Affordable Housing and DCLG (2009) The Government Response to the Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing.

Topic Paper 4: Rural Signposting Tool

- Sustainable economic growth should be encouraged in rural areas.
- Better support is required for home-based businesses and live/work units.
- Increased housing supply is needed in the long-term.
- A degree of flexibility is needed in the approach to exception sites.
- More affordable housing should be secured.

Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7): Sustainable Development in Rural Areas³

2.3 PPS7 sets out the key principles for planning in rural areas apart from guidance on economic development in rural areas which is now provided in Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth⁴. The overarching national objectives for rural areas are set out as:

- To raise the quality of life and environment in rural areas.
- To promote sustainable patterns of development.
- To promote sustainable, diverse and adaptable agricultural sectors.

Planning policy must facilitate sustainable patterns of development and sustainable communities in rural areas. Guidance is split into the following sections which are summarised below:

- Sustainable rural communities and services.
- The countryside.
- Agriculture, farm diversification, equine related activities and forestry.
- Tourism and leisure.

Sustainable rural communities and services

- 2.4 New development should be focused at or near local service centres where housing, employment and services can be provided close together. This should help to ensure these facilities are served by public transport and provide improved opportunities for access by walking and cycling. Villages should also be identified that can receive limited development in or next to rural settlements that are not designated as rural service centres.
- 2.5 People who live and work in rural areas should have reasonable access to services and facilities. This includes ensuring that accessible new services and facilities are planned for in rural areas. A positive approach must be taken towards proposals to improve the viability, accessibility or community value of existing services and facilities. Planning policy should include criteria that will be used to consider planning applications that would result in the loss of important village services.
- 2.6 The needs of all people in a community should be recognised, including those in need of affordable and accessible special needs housing in rural areas. Plans should address housing requirement in rural areas based on up to date assessments of local need. Housing should be strictly controlled in the countryside away from established settlements or areas allocated for housing.

³ DCLG (2004) Planning Policy Statement 7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas.

⁴ The economic development sections in PPS7 have been superseded by Planning Policy Statement 4 Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth.

Topic Paper 4: Rural Signposting Tool

2.7 Good quality design should be encouraged throughout rural areas.

The countryside

2.8 A framework should be provided for facilitating traditional land-based activities and new recreation opportunities that require a countryside location. This includes considering the following:

- Supporting development that delivers diverse and sustainable farming enterprises.
- Supporting other countryside enterprises that contribute to the rural economy and promote recreation in the countryside.
- Taking account of the need to protect natural resources.
- Providing for the sensitive exploitation of renewable energy sources.
- Conserving specific features and sites of value.
- Protecting local landscape designations.

2.9 The re-use of appropriately located and suitably constructed existing buildings in the countryside should be supported. Criteria should be set out for permitting the conversion and re-use of buildings in the countryside for economic, residential or other purposes. Policy should also set out the criteria to apply to the replacement of buildings in the countryside including setting out the circumstances where the replacement of a building is not acceptable and clarifying the appropriate scale of replacement buildings.

2.10 The important and varied roles of agriculture and forestry are recognised. Policies should support proposals that allow farming to:

- Become more competitive, sustainable and environmentally friendly.
- Adapt to new and changing markets.
- Comply with changing legislation.
- Diversify into new agricultural opportunities.
- Broaden operations to add value to primary produce.

2.11 Development plans could include policies that identify any major areas of agricultural land that are planned for development and also policies to protect areas of agricultural land if needs be.

2.12 Forestry operations mostly lie outside the scope of planning controls but do regulate the rate at which land is transferred from woodlands to other rural and urban uses. Local planning authorities should have regard to the England Forestry Strategy⁵ and to forest areas of regional or sub-regional significance. The two main aims are:

- The sustainable management of existing woods and forests.
- A continued steady expansion of woodland area to provide more benefits for society and the environment.

⁵ Forestry Commission (1999)

Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS4): Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth⁶

- 2.13 PPS4 requires local planning authorities to ensure that the countryside is protected so that it may be enjoyed by all. Policy should:
- Strictly control economic development in the open countryside away from existing settlements, or outside areas allocated for development.
 - Identify local service centres and locate most new development in or on the edge of existing settlements where employment, housing, services and other facilities can be provided close together.
 - Support the conversion and re-use of appropriately located and suitably constructed existing buildings in the countryside for economic development.
 - Set out the permissible scale of replacement buildings and circumstances where replacement buildings would not be acceptable.
 - Remedy any identified deficiencies in local shopping and other facilities to serve day to day needs and help address social exclusion.
 - Set out the criteria to be applied to planning applications for farm diversification and support diversification for business purposes that are consistent in their scale and environmental impact with their rural location.
 - Support equine enterprises where appropriate. This includes providing a range of suitably located recreational and leisure facilities and providing for training and breeding businesses that maintain environmental quality and countryside character.
- 2.14 PPS4 also sets the context for tourism in rural areas and requires local planning authorities to support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit rural businesses, communities and visitors and which utilise and enrich, rather than harm, the character of the countryside, its towns, villages, buildings and other features. Policy should:
- Support the provision and expansion of tourist and visitor facilities in locations where identified needs are not met by existing facilities in rural service centres. This includes balancing providing adequate facilities or enhancing visitors' enjoyment or improving the financial viability of the facility with the need to protect landscapes and environmentally sensitive sites.
 - If possible locate tourist and visitor facilities in existing or replacement buildings, particularly where they are located outside existing settlements.
 - Support extensions to tourist accommodation where the scale is appropriate to its location and where the extension may help to ensure the future viability of such businesses.
 - Ensure new or expanded holiday and touring caravan sites and chalet developments are not prominent in the landscape and that visual intrusion is minimised by effective, high-quality screening and examine the scope for relocating any existing, visually or environmentally-intrusive sites away from sensitive areas or from sites prone to flooding.
 - Recognise that in areas statutorily designated for their natural or cultural heritage qualities, there will be scope for tourist and leisure related developments, subject to appropriate control over their number, form and location.

⁶ DCLG (2009) Planning Policy Statement 4 Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth.

Draft National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.15 The Government has recently published the draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for consultation. This sets out the Government's draft economic, environmental and social planning policies for England and will replace the existing national planning policy guidance and statements. The intention is for this new framework to be less complex and more accessible. The public consultation closed on the 17th October 2011. The planning policy guidance and statements remain in place until the final NPPF is published but the proposals in the draft NPPF must still be taken account.
- 2.16 The draft NPPF still intends for development to be 'plan'-led with a long-term vision set for an area. The draft NPPF proposes a more flexible approach to housing in rural areas. In regard to exception sites it now acknowledges that allowing some market housing could facilitate the provision of additional affordable housing to meet local needs and suggests local planning authorities take this into account. It does however still state that housing in rural areas should not be located in places distant from local services. The same restrictions on isolated development in the open countryside remain.
- 2.17 The draft NPPF proposes a positive approach to sustainable rural economic development that supports the growth and diversification of rural businesses and supports rural tourism and leisure developments.

Strategic context

Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016

- 2.18 The statutory strategic development plan is currently the Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan to 2016. Two overarching objectives relate to the rural arena
- "To support economic diversification, social life, facilities and regeneration of rural communities, to enable them to meet more of their needs locally".
 - "To protect and maintain the quality of the rural environment and biodiversity and support management of the countryside, including agriculture, forestry, new enterprises and the control of traffic" (pp19-20)⁷.

Local context

Wiltshire Council Corporate Plan

- 2.19 The Wiltshire Corporate Plan⁸ sets out the priorities and outcomes for the county for the next four years (2010 – 2014). The overarching vision is to create stronger and more resilient communities.

The Community Plan 2011-2026

⁷ Wiltshire County Council and Swindon Borough Council (2006) Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016.

⁸ <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/corporate-plan-2010-2014-wiltshire.pdf>

Topic Paper 4: Rural Signposting Tool

2.20 The Wiltshire Community Plan 2011-2026⁹ 'People, Places and Promises' sets a clear vision and objectives over the next 15 years. This outlines the overall strategic direction and long-term vision for the economic, social and environmental well-being of Wiltshire. It sets three objectives, all of which apply to creating sustainable rural communities:

- Creating an economy that is fit for the future. This recognises that the rural nature of the county is a principal asset but that it can also limit growth. It aims to make the most of what Wiltshire has to offer through encouraging the right kinds of businesses here, improving skills to meet demand and supporting existing businesses.
- Reducing disadvantage and inequalities.
- Tackling climate change.

All three of these objectives directly relate to creating sustainable rural communities.

Wiltshire Local Area Agreement

2.21 The Local Agreement for Wiltshire (LAW)¹⁰ is an agreement between organisations in Wiltshire to take action over the next three years to improve the quality of life in Wiltshire. Included within it is an agreement between Wiltshire and central government - local area agreement (LAA). This sets out targets for improvements that are important to both Wiltshire and central government.

The LAW identifies six main ambitions:

1. Building resilient communities.
2. Improving affordable housing.
3. Lives not services – improving independent living and helping people lead healthier lives.
4. Safer communities which also feel safe.
5. Supporting economic growth.
6. Protecting the environment.

3.0 Collation of Evidence and Policy Development

3.1 As this topic paper is a tool to signpost the reader to 'rural policies' in other thematic topic papers the collation of evidence and policy development is covered in these topic papers. Further to this key rural evidence can be found in the following documents:

State of the Countryside Report 2010

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/crc/documents/state-of-the-countryside-report/sotc2010/>

State of the Countryside Updates:

- Sparsely populated areas.
- Children and education services.
- Housing demand and supply.

⁹ <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/communityandliving/communityplan.htm>

¹⁰ <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/council/wiltshirefamilyofpartnershipsworkingtogether/localagreementforwiltshire.htm>

Topic Paper 4: Rural Signposting Tool

- Financial inclusion.
- Uplands.
- Rural analysis of the index of multiple deprivation 2007.
- Population and migration.
- Benefit claimants in rural England.
- Cash purchase of housing stock.
- Pension credit takes up in rural areas.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/crc/documents/state-of-the-countryside-report/sotc-updates/>

The Rural Challenge – Achieving Sustainable Rural Communities for the 21st Century

This document provides a shared policy agenda for rural areas developed by the Rural Coalition, which comprises Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE), Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), The Country Land and Business Association (CLA), The Local Government Group (LG Group), The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and The Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA)

www.cpre.co.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/item/download/394

Commission for Rural Communities archive

The Commission for Rural Communities archive includes a wide variety of documents on living and working in rural areas:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/2011021511008/ruralcommunities.gov.uk/category/documents/>

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has numerous documents covering rural issues:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/>

Identifying priorities at the community level – Wiltshire Town and Country Themes Report 2010

At the community level an analysis has been carried out of community needs and aspirations outlined in all community area plans, parish plans and village design statements in Wiltshire. This provides essential information at the grassroots level for understanding the aspirations of particular rural communities. The document can be found on the following link:

www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planningpolicyevidencebase

Wiltshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2010-11

This document provides information on the future health and wellbeing needs of people in Wiltshire. It can be found on the following link:

<http://www.wiltshirejsna.org/>

4.0 Rural Challenges and Signposting Tool

4.1 A number of key challenges fall out of the policy framework identified above. It is vital that these challenges are addressed to ensure that the needs of people who live and work in the rural areas of Wiltshire are met and to ensure that sustainable rural communities are maintained and encouraged. The rural arena is broad and encompasses a number of themes. These themes are reflected in the challenges identified in the left hand column of the table below. The challenges are addressed in other thematic topic papers and this table provides a tool for directing the reader to these rural policies. The table below includes the rural challenges, a summary of the policy response and the strategic objective, core policy and topic papers that the challenge is addressed in.

| Rural challenge | Proposed policy response | Addressed in: |
|---|---|---|
| Challenge 1: Rural housing | | |
| <p>New development should be focused at local service centres where housing, employment and services can be provided close together. Outside of these settlements development will be more restricted although villages should also be identified that can receive limited development.</p> <p>Local need in rural areas should be understood and addressed making allowance for affordable housing in small sites where there is demonstrable local need – exception sites.</p> <p>Policy should be developed to permit the conversion and re-use of buildings in the countryside for economic, residential or other purposes.</p> <p>Policy should be developed to allow the replacement of buildings in the countryside. This should include</p> | <p>The settlement strategy identifies a hierarchy of settlements. This includes Local Service Centres that serve a surrounding rural hinterland. Here modest levels of development are acceptable to safeguard their role and deliver affordable housing.</p> <p>It also identifies Large and Small Villages.</p> <p>Large Villages have a limited range of employment, services and facilities. Within the limits of development there is a presumption in favour of development. Development outside of the limits of development will only be permitted where it has been identified through community led neighbourhood plans of a subsequent site allocations development plan document.</p> | <p>Strategic objective 3 – providing everyone with access to a decent, affordable home.</p> <p>Core policy 1 - settlement strategy.</p> <p>Core policy 2 – delivery strategy</p> <p>Topic paper 3 - settlement strategy.</p> <p>Core policy 44 – rural exception sites.</p> <p>Topic paper 2 – housing.</p> <p>Core policy 48 – supporting rural life</p> |

Topic Paper 4: Rural Signposting Tool

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>circumstances where replacement is not appropriate and clarify the scale of replacement buildings.</p> | <p>Small Villages have a low level of services and facilities, and few employment opportunities, and are suitable for infill development only.</p> <p>Outside of these identified settlements new development is restricted.</p> <p>Exception sites – in the Large and Small villages, and those not identified in the settlement strategy, a proactive approach to affordable housing will be sought provided the proposal is within, adjoining or closely related to the settlement, a local need has been identified, environmental considerations are not compromised, housing stays affordable in perpetuity, the site is accessible to employment and services and the size and type of the scheme is appropriate to the settlement.</p> <p>In exceptional circumstances cross-subsidy may now also be considered and a proportion of market housing may be considered appropriate where it can be demonstrated the site would not be viable without cross-subsidy. It should be recognised that in most cases the inclusion of open market housing will not be supported unless the proposal has support from the local community, that the scale of market housing is essential to deliver the site, no additional subsidy is required and that the market housing is for occupation as a</p> | |
|---|---|--|

Topic Paper 4: Rural Signposting Tool

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| | <p>principal residence.</p> <p>Outside of defined limits of development and the existing built up areas of Small Villages, only proposals that meet accommodation needs to enable workers to live, or in the immediate vicinity of their place of work in the interests of agriculture or forestry or other essential countryside employment will be supported.</p> <p>Proposals to convert redundant buildings for residential use will be supported subject to a number of criteria.</p> | |
| <p>Challenge 2: Rural economy</p> | | |
| <p>Support should be offered for countryside enterprises that contribute to the rural economy and promote recreation. Live/work units and better broadband connectivity should be encouraged. The conversion and re-use of appropriately located and suitably constructed existing buildings in the countryside for economic development should be supported.</p> | <p>Proposals that retain or expand businesses located within or adjacent to named settlements, support sustainable farming and food production through allowing farm diversification and that enable the implementation of infrastructure to allow for the provision of broadband in rural areas will be supported provided they meet a number of key criteria.</p> <p>Away from named settlements new employment buildings are only supported if there is also compelling evidence that development is essential to meet a new business need.</p> <p>A number of criteria are set for the</p> | <p>Strategic objective 1 – delivering a thriving economy which provides a range of job opportunities.</p> <p>Core policy 34 – additional employment land.</p> <p>Core policy 35 – existing employment sites.</p> <p>Core policy 48 – supporting rural life.</p> <p>Topic paper7– economy.</p> <p>Core policy 48 – supporting rural life.</p> |

Topic Paper 4: Rural Signposting Tool

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | conversion of redundant buildings for employment use. | |
| Challenge 3: Rural diversification | | |
| Criteria should be set out to support appropriate proposals that allow farming to diversify into new agricultural opportunities and wider uses. | As above. | Strategic objective 1 - to deliver a thriving economy which provides a range of job opportunities. Core policy 34 – additional employment land. Core policy 35 – existing employment sites. Topic paper 7: economy. Core policy 48 – supporting rural life. |
| Challenge 4: Agriculture, horticulture and forestry | | |
| A framework should be set out to support land based activities and allows them to become more competitive, sustainable and environmentally friendly, adapt to new and changing markets, comply with changing legislation and broaden operations to add value to primary produce. | Proposals that support sustainable farming and food production through allowing development to adapt to modern agricultural practises will be supported subject to a number of criteria. | Strategic objective 1 - to deliver a thriving economy which provides a range of job opportunities Core policy 34 – additional employment land. Core policy 35 – existing employment sites. Topic paper 7: economy Core policy 48 – supporting rural life. |
| Challenge 5: Equine activities | | |

Topic Paper 4: Rural Signposting Tool

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Equine activity should be supported where appropriate.</p> | <p>As above.</p> | <p>Strategic objective 1 - to deliver a thriving economy which provides a range of job opportunities. Core policy 48 – supporting rural life. Topic paper 7: economy.</p> |
| <p>Challenge 6: Rural tourism</p> | | |
| <p>A framework should be provided for new recreation opportunities in the countryside.</p> | <p>Proposals that provide suitable tourism opportunities that add value to the rural economy will be supported.</p> <p>Proposals to convert redundant buildings for tourism will be supported subject to a number of criteria.</p> | <p>Strategic objective 1 - to deliver a thriving economy which provides a range of job opportunities. Core policy 39 – tourist development. Topic paper 7 - economy.</p> <p>Core policy 48 – supporting rural life</p> |
| <p>Challenge 7: Rural services</p> | | |
| <p>Accessible new services should be supported in rural areas and deficiencies in local shopping and other facilities addressed to meet people’s needs and address social exclusion. The loss of important village services should be avoided (criteria based policy).</p> | <p>Proposals involving the loss of a community service or facility will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the building is no longer viable for that or an alternative community use. Preference is given to maintaining the exiting use, then an alternative use then retaining part of the building in community use. Only once these options have been exhausted will a non-community use be considered. In such cases</p> | <p>Strategic objective 4 – to help build resilient communities. Core policy 49 – protection of services and community facilities. Topic paper 14 – building resilient communities.</p> <p>Core policy 48 – supporting rural life</p> |

Topic Paper 4: Rural Signposting Tool

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| | <p>a marketing plan will need to be undertaken.</p> <p>Where appropriate to retain a local facility the Council will support the community to take ownership and/or management of local shops, pubs and other services through a number of identified measures.</p> <p>New shops in villages will be supported providing they are small in scale and will not threaten the viability of nearby centres. Farm shops will be supported where they utilise existing buildings, are small in scale and there is no unacceptable impact on nearby village shops or the character of the area.</p> | |
| <p>Challenge 8: Rural transport and accessibility</p> | | |
| <p>New development should be located where it can be served by public transport and provide improved opportunities for access by walking and cycling. New services and facilities should be accessible.</p> | <p>This is addressed through the spatial strategy which ensures new development is focused in locations where homes, jobs and services can be provided together.</p> <p>Proposals that focus on improving accessibility between towns and villages such as transport and infrastructure improvements will also be supported subject to a number of criteria.</p> | <p>Core policy 1 - settlement strategy. Topic paper 3 - settlement strategy. Core policy 60 – sustainable transport. Topic paper 10 – transport. Core policy 48 – supporting rural life.</p> |
| <p>Challenge 9: Rural design</p> | | |
| <p>Good quality design should be encouraged throughout rural areas.</p> | <p>Development is expected to create a strong sense of place through an analysis based, context driven approach which draws upon a</p> | <p>Strategic objective 6 – to safeguard and promote a high quality built and historic</p> |

Topic Paper 4: Rural Signposting Tool

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| | number of identified principles. | environment. Core policy 57 – ensuring high quality design and place shaping. |
| Challenge 10: Countryside | | |
| Account should be taken of the need to protect natural resources and specific features and sites of value should be conserved. Local landscape designations should be considered. Sensitive exploitation of renewable resources must be considered. | Development will be supported where it protects conserves and enhances landscape character. Proposals should be informed by the character areas identified in the relevant Landscape Character Assessment. Proposals for standalone renewable energy installations will be supported and encouraged subject to a number of criteria. | Strategic objective 5 – protecting and enhancing the natural environment. Core policy 51 – landscape. Topic paper 5 – natural environment. Strategic objective 2 - addressing climate change. Core policy 42 – standalone renewable energy installations. Topic paper 1 – climate change. |