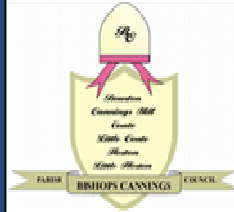


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Town Council

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*Working with the community*

# Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan

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July 2015  
Referendum Version

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# Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan

## Foreword

Devizes is a market town in the centre of Wiltshire. It has a long history, a large number of listed buildings and a thriving and active community.

In recent years the town has grown through piecemeal housing developments to the extent that its infrastructure has been seriously overstretched. The character and future sustainability of the town and its surrounding area are threatened, which has led three local councils to produce a Neighbourhood Plan to guide future developments.

This Neighbourhood Plan is jointly produced by the neighbouring parishes of Bishops Cannings, Devizes and Roundway. These contain the whole urban area centred on Devizes and the rural hinterland. The Plan fits within the broader Wiltshire Council Core Strategy.

The current lack of planning guidance for Devizes has resulted in the development of housing policies ahead of those for transport, leisure, open spaces and employment sites.

Whilst this approach is far from ideal, it is the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group's conviction that having clear guidance for developers seeking to invest in the town is critical.

The Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan sets out a vision for the area with a housing strategy that reflects the vision of local people.

Regard has been given to the impact of developments on the area's road network and air quality, its schools, employment and health facilities as well as leisure and green open spaces. Later iterations of the plan will tackle these issues in greater detail.

To support the ongoing development of the Neighbourhood Plan, a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) process has been carried out. The SA process has been undertaken to meet the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations.

The Neighbourhood Plan is accompanied by an SA Report, which presents an appraisal of the plan and reasonable alternatives. The preparation of the SA Report follows the release of the SA Scoping Report in November 2013 to English Nature, the Environment Agency and Natural England.

Both the SA Report and the November 2013 Scoping Report can be accessed on the Devizes Town Council website at <http://www.devizesareaplan.org.uk>.

## Executive Summary

The Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan, which has been prepared jointly by the parishes of Bishops Cannings, Devizes and Roundway, has drawn on the views of the local community to provide a concise document that will support the current residents' expectations on future housing growth.

This Plan deals primarily with housing related issues and the immediate impact on infrastructure from the development of new housing. The Plan will continue to be developed to take a longer term view on three other subjects: transport, open spaces, including leisure, and employment.

The Plan is split into three sections:

- A Vision for the Devizes Area
- Planning Policies
- Housing Site Allocations

### A Vision for the Devizes Area

This section summarises what we know about our town, where the current challenges are in relation to its growth and how the town should look towards the end of the plan's life.

It is further subdivided into four main topics: housing, getting around, education and environment & sustainability. It is felt that these areas will suffer the greatest threat to their sustainability following any further growth of Devizes.

This section also reviews the town settlement boundary in line with Core Policy 1 of Wiltshire's Core Strategy. The plan recognises that Devizes has a very low building density within the existing settlement boundary, which contains a number of brownfield sites currently ready for redevelopment.

The plan sets out a rationale for the retention of much of the existing boundary, with some small amendments, based on a 20 minute walk from the town centre. This will bring other credible additional sites forward which meet all other policies.

The Plan goes on to set some clear objectives which help to shape the document's policies.

### Planning Policies

This section draws on the information in the 'Vision for the Devizes Area' section to define policies for delivering sustainable and inclusive new housing developments in Devizes, Roundway and Bishops Cannings.

The policies look at the following issues:

- Housing site locations
- Access to education
- Getting around
- Environment, sustainability and design.

### Housing Site Allocation

The final section sets out prioritisation of potential housing development sites. This prioritisation of sites is in the order in which they meet the policies within the Plan.

Although sites are ranked in order it does not represent any priority for development. Consideration is given to the need for a 5 year housing supply and therefore work has been undertaken with landowners to determine their aspirations and timescale for development.

This plan provides guidance to planning officers and developers about the size, location and type of new housing the residents of Devizes want to see in their town.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan is a new type of planning document. It forms part of the Coalition Government's new approach to planning which aims to give local people more influence over planning development in their towns and communities. The principle for this new planning guidance is set out in the Localism Act 2011.
- 1.2. The Plan provides a vision for the Devizes Neighbourhood Area in the period up to 2026 and sets out a clear planning process to realise this vision. These principles fully accord with higher level planning policy as required by the Localism Act.
- 1.3. A "Statement of Consultation" provides an overview of the consultation, demonstrating that it fully accords with the requirements of the Localism Act.
- 1.4. Although the Government's intention is for local people to decide what goes on in their towns, the Localism Act sets out some important rules. One of these is that Neighbourhood Plans must be in line with higher level planning policy, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and local policies such as the Wiltshire Council Core Strategy. Planning policy documents such as the Core Strategy and the Neighbourhood Plan are living documents that can be amended from time to time as circumstances change.
- 1.5. There is a Government requirement that plans should deliver a five year housing supply to stimulate the housing market. However, that requirement applies to the East Wiltshire Housing Market Area rather than specifically to the Devizes Neighbourhood Area where special considerations apply. The Core Strategy recognises that past housing developments have seriously overstretched the Devizes infrastructure to the point where infrastructure developments should now take precedence over further housing. The Core Strategy requires that the Devizes area delivers and additional 333 houses by 2026 (see table 5.6 of the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy). The relevant housing supply data is contained in the Wiltshire Council reference document: Housing Land Supply Statement (April 2014).
- 1.6. The Localism Act allows Neighbourhood Plans to provide more than the allocated number of houses for its area but does not permit any reduction.
- 1.7. Neighbourhood Plans must be in line with European Regulations on strategic environmental assessments and habitat. A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for the plan has been undertaken and has been important in shaping it.
- 1.8. The Plan is intended to give local people the power to decide where housing developments should be located. Without a Neighbourhood Plan the sustainability of the area can be adversely affected by land speculators and developers who have no long term interest in the Area.

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## What is a Neighbourhood Plan

1.9 Although deciding where any new housing should go is an important part of the Plan, it is about much more than this. The Plan is for the Devizes area as a whole and looks at a wide range of issues relating to sustainability including:

- Mobility and transport
- The impact on air quality
- Capacity of local schools
- Access to open spaces
- The suitability of housing

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1.10 This Plan is divided into three sections

- **Section 1:** A vision for the Devizes Area
  - a. A brief description of the town as it is today.
  - b. Issues that have influenced the vision.
  - c. The Vision Statement and Core Objectives.
  - d. The Future Vision for Devizes.
- **Section 2:** Neighbourhood Plan Policies.  
This sets out policies to support the overall vision.

- **Section 3:** Housing Site Allocations Policy Principles

This sets out principles for housing sites

1.11 This entire document forms the Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan. Sections 2 and 3 form the Plan's policies.

1.12 There is a large amount of reference information that has been used to produce this plan. A summary document, Devizes Neighbourhood Plan Evidence Base Summary, is available on the Neighbourhood Plan website. This provides an overview of the key elements of the evidence base.

See Plan One – Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan Area

Section One  
A Vision For The  
Devizes Area



## About The Devizes Area

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### 2.1 Introduction

Devizes remains largely a medieval town in terms of its street layout. It serves a rural community which is, in parts, very remote indeed. Services do not come to the people; in many instances, they have to travel considerable distances to access them. Devizes was considered as a suitable centre for housing development in the past and its population has greatly increased, but its infrastructure has not been developed. Transport and traffic and the effects of traffic, together with the stress on the local infrastructure are therefore significant concerns.

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### 2.2 Devizes Today

A wide range of issues have been considered in producing the Plan. These can be grouped under the following themes:

Housing  
The Local Road Network  
Transport  
Education  
Leisure and Wellbeing

An overview of these five themes is set out below. The overview includes information from background reports along with issues raised by local people.

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### 2.3 Housing

Currently, there is a requirement in the Wiltshire Core Strategy for approximately 2,500 houses to be built in the Devizes Community Area by

2026. Since that figure was released in 2006, construction and dwellings permitted have reduced it to 333.

However, there remains a need for affordable housing which has not been entirely met by developers to date.

Any number of houses in excess of 2,010 risks seriously overloading the infrastructure, and is unsustainable, so building over the next 12 years must not only provide the appropriate type of housing, but also must remain within the limits set out in the Core Strategy.

This plan recognises that house-building is key as its provision affects demand and usage of all services and facilities in the community.

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### 2.4 The Local Road Network

Devizes itself has a medieval street pattern that cannot be altered significantly to accommodate increased traffic flows such as those that have been experienced over the past decade. The surrounding community area is rural in nature, providing little in the way of large highways which could absorb such increases with ease. Providing reasonable communication between the area's settlements and places of employment is therefore challenging, as things stand, and any further increase of traffic, if it cannot be avoided, needs to be carefully managed to ensure that gridlock is not a more regular feature of getting from A to B.

The Wiltshire Council, Devizes Traffic Model is now available to be run to determine the effect of any development within the area.

This has not only demonstrated why certain developments should not go ahead, but can also assess the effects of any changes to the traffic flow that might improve it in any given area. However, a great deal depends on the information used when running the programme, so it remains at best a guideline, rather than definitive proof of the effect of any changes.

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## 2.5 Transport

Private vehicles remain the most widely used form of transport in the area, with the result that there are air quality issues at certain points, particularly in Devizes. These are monitored by the Unitary Council with a view to making any necessary changes to alleviate breaches of European Laws.

Public transport is variable in frequency, dependent largely on subsidies and is relatively expensive, while in some instances, it is non-existent, especially after 6pm and on Sundays. It remains virtually a minimal service, which is a poor second choice after the car, and its inadequacies are a deterrent especially for young people in the villages travelling to evening leisure activities and entertainment.

There is often much congestion on the main narrow country lanes. Although much work is being done to persuade people to walk and use bicycles as alternatives to the car, separating the two modes of transport is difficult, and it remains to be seen how effective these efforts will be in relation to reducing car traffic.

The area has no railway station. The nearest main line stations at Chippenham, Trowbridge or Pewsey are approximately 10 miles away. The nearest railway station, at Melksham, is on a branch line with very limited rail services. Bus services to these

stations are restricted or, in the case of Pewsey, non-existent. In addition, Devizes is in the geographical heart of Wiltshire and is over 15 miles away from the nearest motorway, the M4.

The nearest airport is at Bristol, but the limitations of public transport and the poor road network mean that often it is easier to get to London Heathrow. The whole Community Area is, therefore, somewhat cut off from effective public transport and many people have no option other than to use a car as the best or only option.

[Transport references:  
Wiltshire Council, Devizes Core Strategy  
Sept 2012.]

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## 2.6 Education

There is only one state secondary school in the area and six primary schools. One of the primary schools is a Catholic faith school which does not have a designated catchment area as its admission policy is not based on locality. Due to the lack of choice for secondary education in the Neighbourhood Plan area, many parents choose to send their children out of the area.

Most schools are already either full or almost full, with one or two exceptions, and nearly all entail many pupils having to travel further than is practicable to walk or cycle. In recent years, in Devizes, two new primary schools have been built - Nursteed, and Trinity (a replacement for St Peter's, Bath Road, which was housed in an elderly building). Both were part financed by Section 106 agreements with developers. Rowde School was also relocated and built with similar financial arrangements.

So, while there remains local capacity within the education system, places do not necessarily exist near to where families live, for example, Bishops Cannings School is full, yet demand for places there continues to grow. The increased school travel incurred when schools are not within walking distance, can only add to the stress on traffic flow.

There are no higher education establishments, and further education is limited to certain classes provided by Wiltshire College at the Southbroom Campus.

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## 2.7 Leisure and Wellbeing

Whilst these themes are rightly linked, there are two strands to the topic: provision of leisure opportunities and provision of health services.

Leisure:

Devizes itself has a Leisure Centre with facilities for many activities and sports, and there are many clubs and groups which provide a wide choice of leisure and sports opportunities within the town. Activities at the Wharf include the Canal Museum and the Canoe Club, and it is the site of the start of the canoeists 'Everest': the "Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race" every Easter. The rural hinterland has access to Devizes Leisure Centre and other facilities, and many parishes have their own groups and clubs which help keep activities more local. There are several large cultural events in the Community Area, especially in Devizes, throughout the year, many of which are free, subsidised by the local parish, town and unitary councils. Plans are afoot to create a community arts facility in one of the town's old churches, and an amateur theatre at the Wharf provides regular

productions throughout the year, as well as being a venue for small visiting companies. There is a lot going on!

Open spaces, which are essential for health and well-being, have been continually eroded over the past two decades by developments encroaching on both the AONB and other un-protected areas of open countryside. There seems to be a constant need to justify retaining open spaces to support the health and wellbeing of the population. The few children's playgrounds built by developers in any new housing estate do not really fill that requirement.

The recent redevelopment of Hillworth Park in Devizes, aided by a lottery grant, is proving most successful at providing a beautiful and well-appointed open space with fitness equipment, basketball court, toddlers and children's play areas, a cafe and lawns, and floral displays. Further such parks are needed.

Drews Pond Wood has been managed very successfully by a volunteer group for a number of years now, and has received national recognition from the Britain in Bloom Campaign.

Health Services:

Over the past 13 years, Devizes Community Area has seen drastic reductions in the provision of health services within the area. Devizes Hospital has lost its phlebotomy services, beds, the Maternity Unit, and the Minor Injuries Unit; and whilst X-ray and Physiotherapy remain, they are over stretched, and in the case of the former, often unreliable.

The GP Surgeries are over-loaded, with waiting times of up to three weeks for routine appointments. The long promised

Primary Care Centre, which was to streamline local health services and replace the ageing hospital, has never materialised. Whilst access to the Independent Sector Treatment Centre at Green Lane in Devizes has helped bring certain procedures nearer to the locality, accessing many treatments, including minor injuries, still involves a journey of anything from 10 to nearly 30 miles in a public-transport-poor area.

The new Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group has indicated that it is willing to consider reversing this trend to remove services, but at such early days in their existence, no firm plans have been made to re-provide any.

### 3.Constraints and Opportunities

#### 3.1 Overview

Devizes was selected for housing developments in response to government demands during the previous planning era. Whilst there did exist an established need for affordable housing, Devizes had been perceived as a good centre for expansion as a small, but thriving, market town with a good quality of life. Since then, large new housing developments have been continually permitted, some on a piece-meal basis; others as a part of the strategic plan. However, most of these developments have taken place after refusals of planning permission by the local planning authority and a subsequent successful appeal. In some cases, land included in strategic plans for employment has been approved for housing at an appeal.

Between 2000 and 2010, it appears that inadequate thought was given to the reservation of land, through the planning process, for essential infrastructure such as new public parks, open spaces, new community areas and potential future transport corridors for road links and segregated footpaths and cycleways. The result of the various shortcomings in the planning system is that new estate developments have taken place, as a continuous urban extension of Devizes, which now spreads into the adjoining parishes of Roundway and Bishops Cannings. Large parts of the population of these parishes are effectively within the Devizes conurbation and they rely on the facilities of the town because such services do not exist within those parishes.

There is an imbalance of employment opportunities within Devizes. As the

population has grown, the balance of commuting has changed, and there is a significant commuting outflow in the mornings and an inflow in the evenings. Part of that imbalance is due to the lack of employment opportunity in the Devizes area in relation to the population, and part, due to the need to travel to other towns for better quality, better paid employment.

The town of Devizes is at the very centre of Wiltshire. It is a Wiltshire cross-roads, with five busy A class roads converging onto a medieval pattern of a few narrow streets which has changed little in centuries. Consequently, there are significant congestion and air quality problems.

During the period when the new Wiltshire Council was being formed and the new Core Strategy was being developed, Devizes Town and the two adjoining Parish Councils, together with many local community organisations, took an active part in the planning consultation process. Consequently, the now adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy has recognised that the rate of development in Devizes should reduce compared with recent trends in recognition of the need to improve local infrastructure before significant new development takes place. There are local concerns that the Devizes Area infrastructure is seriously overstretched and that infrastructure development should be a priority over housing development.

The main constraints on development are spatial, congestion, poor air quality, limited access to medical services and increasingly limited employment opportunities. The local quality of life and the character of the Devizes Area, that originally made it attractive to developers and incomers, have been

adversely affected. The opportunities for development are severely limited by these constraints, but some developments can be permitted in a sustainable way if they can be phased-in with improvements to the essential infrastructure.

The aspects of infrastructure which are overstretched and inadequate include:

### **3.2 The Road Network**

The local roads have not been upgraded and modernised to cope with traffic increases created by both local developments and the natural growth in traffic over many decades. There are no alternatives to the limited, narrow routes through the town centre. This had led to traffic congestion at peak times. Not only is the transit time for through traffic and commuters quite long, but the slow-moving traffic has created major air quality problems throughout the town. A large part of the town along the main roads has been declared an Air Quality Management Zone, but there are no realistic solutions in sight.

A few cycle or walking routes have been constructed or enhanced to serve the new housing developments. Many pavements are narrow and cyclists have to share the roads with other vehicles. In some areas there are shared footway and cycleways, which is not altogether a satisfactory practice. The developments have been of high density and no space has been left to install new roads, cycleways or footpaths.

There is a Devizes Traffic Management Plan, which is a sub-section of the Core Strategy, but the best that can be offered is the

retention of the status quo by the end of the plan period (2026). The reason that the Plan is not very effective is that the funding available is only sufficient for some minor road works at junctions and the emphasis is on promoting cycling and public transport. It may be that the only realistic solution is to construct roads that would take traffic out of the town centre.

### **3.3 Green infrastructure.**

No green infrastructure improvements have been included in previous development plans. The continuous expansion of urban areas into green fields on the outskirts of the town has damaged the local quality of life and seriously limited opportunities for the future development of new cycle routes, footpaths and public open spaces.

[Footnote - Quoting from Planning Policy Statement (PPS): Planning for a Natural and Healthy Environment: Consultation 2010:

'Green Infrastructure is a strategic network of multi-functional green space, both new and existing, both rural and urban, which supports natural and ecological processes and is integral to the health and quality of life in sustainable communities. It delivers a broad range of functions and provides vital socio-economic and cultural benefits which underpin individual and community health and wellbeing. These functions include: conserving and enhancing the natural environment; providing wildlife corridors; reducing noise and air pollution; and helping communities adapt to changing climate through water and carbon management. In urban areas, functions include providing routes (e.g. footpaths and cycleways) which link areas of open space within settlements; providing sustainable drainage, flood storage and urban cooling; and providing a wide range of opportunities for engagement and

active citizenship, relaxation and quiet contemplation, sport, recreation and children's play.']

### **3.4 Employment opportunities**

There is an imbalance between population and employment opportunity. This is not fully reflected in the difference between in and out commuting (although there is more out-commuting), but is reflected in the quality of employment available. Generally, people come into the Devizes Area for lower paid service jobs and commute, for example, to Swindon, Bath and London for higher paid and better jobs.

### **3.5 Leisure opportunities**

There are reasonable exercise facilities in Devizes but access to open spaces has diminished as outlying green fields have been developed and no new public parks have been created. People now travel further afield by car for walking and recreation. The Devizes Leisure centre is very well used but its capacity has not increased in line with the population growth.

### **3.6 Public transport.**

There are limited bus services to several larger towns but there are no easily accessible railway services. Some stations can be reached by bus, but the frequency, reliability and timing of the connecting bus services is a significant problem. Journey times are long and most services are infrequent or non-existent in the evenings or at weekends. There are local town bus services connecting some of the outer urban areas to the centre but frequency, inconvenient routes and lack of easily accessible information on routes and time tables limits their value. That problem has been compounded by service changes whenever subsidies are cut, which is a regular occurrence.

### **3.7 Medical services**

The three GP surgeries in the Devizes Area are unable to cope with demand and waiting times for appointments can be several weeks. The GPs cannot offer a casualty service and people have to travel elsewhere for that. Devizes is well over an hour away by public transport from Wiltshire's major hospitals which operate comprehensive round the clock accident and emergency services. For people without their own transport, travel for medical services is a significant problem. Devizes did have a small hospital offering a range of services, including casualty treatment, a maternity unit and some in-patient capacity. Those services have been steadily withdrawn on economic grounds, despite the increase in population. The Primary Care Trust has recognised the need for improved services and had planned a new Primary Care centre, but that plan was dropped, also on economic grounds. The only local services are now specialist clinical services which operate by referral and appointment.

Health may not be a specific planning consideration but it does significantly affect the well-being and the sustainability of the community. Sustainability *is* a planning consideration and the need for the infrastructure of Devizes to take priority over new housing developments is now recognised in the new Wiltshire Core Strategy. The absence of adequate medical services is a significant constraint on further population increases in the Devizes Area.

## 4. Settlement Framework Boundary.

The current settlement framework area for Devizes which was set by the Kennet Local Plan in 2004, is 560.82 hectares. This is the largest for all the 'Market Towns' defined by the Wiltshire Core Strategy. Conversely, it has the lowest level of residential density and the lowest level of combined residential and commercial density of all Wiltshire 'Market Towns' at 15.8 and 17.3 address points per hectare respectively (the highest in Wiltshire is Westbury at 22.52 and 23.6 respectively). This is considered to be a strong indicator that the current settlement framework retains significant scope to absorb further development. This is reinforced by the fact that 18.47 hectares of potentially developable land has been identified by the Neighbourhood Plan site assessment analysis within the existing settlement framework boundary.

The topography of the existing settlement framework is largely dictated both by the geographic contour of the land and by the de facto boundaries of the current built environment. This has given rise to a number of anomalies; firstly, development has tended to spread along the north-eastern corridor defined by the A361. This has created a spur extending from the urban core (defined as a 20 minute walking radius of the town centre or 1600m) that distorts any coherent urban form. This has had the effect of isolating the community in this area both from key infrastructure and from the main social network of the town. To a lesser extent this has also occurred along the south-eastern edge of the urban core. Secondly, possible development land

within the urban core has not had its potential recognised because it lies outside the area where the settlement framework boundary has been too tightly drawn.

Core Policy 1 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy carries forward the previously defined settlement framework boundary but allows for review and change through the mechanism of the Neighbourhood Plan. In order to address the limitations of the existing boundary, the Neighbourhood Plan housing site selection policy expands the terms of the previous limit of development to allow that: *All future development in the Devizes area must be confined to land within the existing settlement framework boundary except where it is a demonstrably sustainable site (as measured by the other criteria and policies of the Neighbourhood Plan) and within the urban core (1600m of the town centre).* The area of the urban core (excluding those areas outside the designated Neighbourhood Area) is 684.4 hectares, which is 22% larger than the existing settlement framework, affording ample scope for additional viable sites within a sustainable distance of the town centre. Development within this core zone will contribute to the enhanced vitality of the town centre together with improved integration of both the built environment and socially cohesive communities. Furthermore, the reduced need to travel will assist with the improvement of air quality and other environmental factors.

See Plan Two – Policies Map



## 5. Vision Statement and Core Objectives

5.1 The vision and core objectives were developed following the review of extensive consultation exercises carried out by the Town Council, the Community Area Partnership and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. They form the foundation of the Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan.

### The Vision Statement

**“Devizes should grow in a manner which enables its residents to live a sustainable lifestyle, with a reduced need to travel; where there is a provision for easy access to open space and the public realm and the scale and ambiance of the built environment promotes wellbeing.”**

5.2 From the consultation it is clear that what people like most about Devizes is that it is an historic market town. Therefore, in developing a Neighbourhood plan, this important characteristic must not be lost.

5.3 What defines Devizes’ visual characteristic as a market town is its central market place, wealth of historic buildings, medieval street plan and small independent shops.

5.4 Bishops Cannings is one of the largest parishes in Wiltshire which is set primarily in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

5.5 The Neighbourhood Area has a diverse social and economic mix, which reflects the types of employment opportunities in the town.

5.6 There is another side to the town’s character which is less visual but equally important. This is its sense of identity developed through its rich cultural and community activities.

5.7 As part of the sense of community, generations of families have called either Bishops Cannings, Devizes or Roundway home.

5.8 From the vision statement and the definition of what makes Devizes, the following guiding principles can be drawn:

- New housing styles must be complimentary to the existing locally built environment.
- Priority should be given to the reuse of previously developed town centre sites to help with localised regeneration.
- Housing developments must be smaller in size, encouraging the spirit of community.
- Affordable housing for local needs must form part of any new development to provide housing for a new generation of local people to maintain community cohesion.

5.9 Looking at these principles in more detail to give them some meaning:

**New housing must integrate into the existing communities and built environments to halt urban sprawl and reduce the loss of village identities.** Devizes is a popular place to live. The 2011 Devizes Community Area Partnership (DCAP) Consultation Survey identified that 81.9% of residents do not wish to move away from the area. The heart of the town and most of Bishops Cannings village are conservation areas.

However, much of the new development in the Devizes area is of a large scale, built on the edge of the town's original built environment. At a public meeting of Roundway Parish in March 2011, the majority of those present had believed that they lived in Devizes not Roundway. There was an absence of any sense of community other than in the village of Roundway itself.

**Priority should be given to the reuse of previously developed town centre sites to help with localised regeneration.** The reuse of previous developed sites closer to the centre of our communities will provide an opportunity to enhance areas of neglect.

**Housing development must be smaller in size.** There are a number of benefits in encouraging smaller scale developments which include:

- Dispersing the increase in population across the whole neighbourhood reduces the pressure on schools and immediate local services.

- Spreading the points of origin of traffic movement helps to ease pressure on individual traffic junctions.
- Providing opportunities for local builders to take on the smaller developments will directly benefit local employment.
- New home owners moving into existing communities improves social cohesion.
- Encouraging the reuse of previously developed sites increases urban density and delivers localised regeneration projects.

**Affordable housing for local needs must form part of any new development.** Whilst the Devizes area has seen significant levels of house building in recent years, the housing shortfall for local people remains almost unchanged. The Devizes Joint Strategic Assessment 2011 identified affordable housing as being one of the major housing issues facing the town. Furthermore, it breaks down the number of applicants on the housing register with 863 single bedroom and 344 two bedroom dwellings being sought. The proportion of Devizes population being of working age is 58%, the lowest in the County. Devizes has a higher percentage of persons of retirement age, and over, than the national average, 23.1% against 19.1%. Over the past 10 years developers have preferred to build the larger houses that generate higher profit margins. This emphasis on larger homes has encouraged better off families to come to Devizes to live, while they retain their better-paid employment in other communities, where they also spend significant elements of their income. This in turn has put local retailers under increasing pressure. In addition, this shift in emphasis has ignored the population demographics and has consequently changed the structure of the community.

There has been a significant growth in the housing register waiting list to 1736 households and empty un-sold, new build larger houses exist on current developments. The Devizes Community Area Plan (DCAP) 2011 Consultation Survey showed that 1 in 6 households were occupied by three or more adults and that the main reason was the cost of housing, yet in 2011 there were 255 building permissions outstanding.

Housing development in the villages is limited and strictly controlled, especially in the AONB. Dwellings in the villages carry a price premium over similar properties in the town and its immediate environs. There are frequent complaints from villagers that their children and the elderly have difficulty finding suitable homes that they can afford without having to leave their villages.

There has been a particular problem with social housing where priority has been given to outsiders whose needs have been judged to be greater.

## Core Objectives

5.10 The core objectives are grouped under 4 headings:

- Housing
- Education
- Getting around
- Environment and Sustainability

The following tables show some comments made by residents about the headings above, followed by objectives to respond to them.

Housing summary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is recognised that the rural market town quality of the area with its neighbouring villages must be maintained.</li> <li>• Reuse of previously developed sites needs to be promoted to support localised regeneration.</li> <li>• Support smaller scale developments to deliver a range of benefits to the Neighbourhood Plan Area.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objective:</b> The design of new buildings will have a tangible characteristic link to existing buildings in the locality in which they will be built.</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> New housing sites will be smaller in size.</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> The number of underused, previously developed sites will be reduced.</p>

Education summary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is limited spare capacity across all schools in the town.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objective:</b> New development will reflect the ability of schools to cope with growth.</p>

Getting Around summary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traffic congestion is a difficulty commuters in Devizes suffer every day.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objective:</b> The location of developments should be chosen to minimise their impact on people's ability to get around the town safely and conveniently.</p>

Environment and Sustainability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The small rural market town quality of Devizes with its separate adjoining villages must be maintained.</li> <li>New housing must be sensitive to the local area.</li> <li>Housing developments should be designed and constructed for longevity, therefore they must be affordable to run and maintain.</li> <li>New housing must conform to high standards of sustainability.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Objective:</b> Protect and enhance Conservation areas.</p>
<p><b>Objective:</b> Develop guidance for the built environment to ensure both future construction and changes to existing buildings integrate with the existing character of settlements.</p>
<p><b>Objective:</b> Protect and enhance the rural character of the town through the control of green space.</p>

## **6 Future Vision for the Town**

### **6.1 Housing**

By 2026, the community would hope to see an adequate supply of affordable housing which meets sustainable design principles situated in small clusters within walking distance of most amenities and services around the community, thus fulfilling the Core Strategy's remit of providing 2,010 houses without causing undue stress to the infrastructure.

### **6.2 The Local Road Network**

Improvements to the road network to enable the inevitable increased flow of traffic to be absorbed and managed properly are essential. Some plans are already underway, but major changes are needed to deal with the growing number of cars on the roads. Ideally, improved infrastructure should lessen the need for car use by providing services and amenities nearer to people's homes, thus obviating the necessity to use private vehicles and making walking, cycling and using public transport the more attractive alternatives.

### **6.3 Transport**

Public transport availability should be increased by 2026 with more frequent and affordable services, including those provided during the evening, and to and from rural communities. Use of walking and cycling as alternatives to the private vehicle would have expanded to the extent that it would have a genuine impact on diminishing road traffic.

### **6.4 Education**

Any new development within the Devizes Neighbourhood Plan Area is highly likely to

bring an increase in demand for school places.

### **6.5 Leisure and Well-being**

- **Leisure:**  
The cultural life of the town will be enhanced by the completion of a new Arts and Conference venue at St Mary's Church. The skate-park will be in use at Green Lane, and Devizes Football Club will have moved to a new location with enhanced facilities available for the benefit of all the community.
- **Health:**  
Health services, in particular, minor injuries provision, will have been returned to and capacity increased in the community in keeping with the new Clinical Commissioning Group's vision to provide care for the 'whole' patient rather than just considering the disease and its symptoms. There will be increased capacity in GP Surgeries, possibly even entailing a new practice, and a new productive relationship between Health Authorities and the community.

## Section Two Planning Polices

## 7 Housing Site Locations

### 7.1 Air Quality and Housing

Devizes is a popular place to live. The Devizes Community Area Plan (DCAP) 2011 Consultation Survey identified that 81.9% of residents do not wish to move away from it. The heart of the town is a conservation area with a medieval street layout – there is no bypass or ring road so all traffic travels through the town. The Devizes Transport Strategy notes that through traffic accounts for 28% of all traffic. There are few actions that can reduce this through traffic so it can be expected to increase as the UK economy recovers and grows. Consequently it is incumbent on the Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that housing development does not add further to the air quality and congestion problems. As the Area of Air Quality Management extends along the A361, developments that require travel on the A361 are to be discouraged until acceptable levels of pollutants have been established. This Neighbourhood Plan shows how this can be achieved by identifying developments that are close enough to the town centre for walking and cycling to be realistically feasible and by giving priority to small developments distributed throughout the town.

### 7.2 Devizes Area Community

Over the last decade Roundway has seen most of the large scale developments in the Devizes Area and it is both unfortunate and significant that the residents on these developments believe that they live in Devizes, not Roundway.

This is also true of Bishops Cannings, where a large number of houses have been built in the Cannings Hill area. Although these developments now contain the majority of the population of the Parish it is proving difficult to engage many residents in the life of the community, particularly after children have left Bishops Cannings primary school.

### 7.3 The Need for Housing

Over the period between the Census of 2001 and the 2011 mid-year, the population growth in the Devizes Community Area has been 16.1% (4,460 persons) - well above the Wiltshire average of 9.6%. This high growth has been a major contributory factor in the traffic congestion and air quality issues now present in the Town. Consequently many residents favour a complete ban on further housing development, but the high level of applicants on the Devizes Housing Register must be tackled.

The Joint Strategic Assessment for Devizes Community Area 2014 identified affordable housing as being one of the major housing issues facing the community. Its social rented accommodation is above the average for Wiltshire: 20.4% of all Devizes households compared with 14.7% in the County. The proportion of Devizes population being of working age was 59.8%. During the period between the census of 2001 and that of 2011 the retirement-age population increased by 33.8% (1,880 persons to 7,440 persons) - well above the Wiltshire average of 24.4%. The delivery of affordable housing, 280 homes between 2010 and 2013, has not kept pace with demand. At the end of the fourth quarter of 2012/13 there were 1,736 households on the housing register. Developers have elected to build larger houses and as a result there has been an undesirable increase in commuting from Devizes. The competing needs of building more houses whilst reducing pollution, demand careful balancing. This can be achieved by building multiple small scale distributed developments. More large developments would only repeat the mistakes of the past 10 years and worsen air quality further. The Core Strategy sets parameters for the provision of affordable

housing. These should be considered as the minimum provision as the Housing Register shows that there is a demand for both rental and 'for sale' affordable properties.

#### **7.4 Limits of Development**

Whilst the countryside that borders the Plan area has not been officially designated as Green Belt, the community believes that the existing limits of development set in the Kennet Local Plan 2004 (as now set out in the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy at Core Policy 2) should be maintained. The North Wessex Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty extends into Bishops Cannings and the Roundway Down Historic Battlefield lies across both Bishops Cannings and Roundway. The community considers that the land between these sites and the current limits of development should also be protected. The Wiltshire Core Strategy shows that in the Neighbourhood Plan Area 333 additional dwellings are needed at Devizes to contribute towards the overall Community Area total requirement of 543. Analysis based on the April 2014 Housing Land Supply Statement and augmented by windfall permissions given since 2011 has shown that there is sufficient land available to provide this number of homes using previously developed land, possibly augmented by land to the west of Hartmoor Road. This will minimise the additional traffic volumes that need to use the Area of Air Quality Management to access the town centre and primary schools.

#### **7.5 Devizes Housing Heritage**

Devizes' architectural heritage is significant. It has more than 500 listed buildings and these play a major role in establishing the character of the town. The NPPF puts great store on the design of buildings. In the context of developing housing in or near the conservation areas, building design must complement these listed buildings.

#### **7.6 Sustainable Housing Construction**

Records show that the average temperature of the planet is rising and is a cause for concern. The Core Strategy (e.g. Core Policy 41) is committed to reducing greenhouse emissions through improving the quality and efficiency of new buildings<sup>1</sup>. Although the Government have recently signalled their intention to streamline the regulations governing the design of new buildings, until replaced or superseded by either new policy and / or primary legislation, the Government's Code for Sustainable Homes remains in force and will be implemented through the application of Core Policy 41. The Code has the twin objectives of reducing the energy used to construct buildings as well as that consumed when they are occupied. These policies will also contribute to making housing more affordable in the longer term. Developers may incur additional construction costs, but these can be offset by the savings that will accrue from reductions in energy consumption. All building development must be constructed to the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 as a minimum, to be consistent with CP41 requirements.

#### **7.7 Development Site Identification and Prioritisation**

The Wiltshire Council Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) was used as the basis for site identification. The sites are listed in the Site Prioritisation Matrix which can be found under 'Reference Documents' in Section 3. The SHLAA identification number has been used. Four additional, significant sites that have become available since the SHLAA was published have been added to the Matrix: 4001 – Kathleen McNeil Clinic, 4002 – St Peter's School, 4003 – Browfort and 4004 Wadworth's Warehouse. A total of 38 sites

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/planning-update-march-2015>



were assessed. The Site Prioritisation Matrix was created to aid understanding of the sites and their strengths and weaknesses. Each site was analysed for its compliance with the Neighbourhood Plan Site Selection policies using quantitative criteria that measured the key characteristics of the site. Ten criteria were used:

- a. Is the site within the proposed Settlement Framework?
- b. Is it within 10 minutes' walk from the Town Centre (Market Place)?
- c. Is it within 20 minutes' walk from the Town Centre?
- d. Has the site been previously developed?
- e. Is the site within 20 minutes' walk from a public open space?
- f. Is the site within 10 minutes' walk of public transport?
- g. Is the site within 20 minutes of a primary school?
- h. Does the site use the A361 to access the school in 'g' above?
- i. Does the site use the A361 to access the Town Centre?
- j. Would the site provide less than 40 dwellings?

Each site was awarded 1 point for every criteria with which it conformed. At the public consultation held in The Brittox, Devizes and in Bishops Cannings Parish, resident's preferred sites were sought. These have been expressed as a percentage of the total preferences expressed and used to modify each of the sums of conforming criteria to give a Rating Score.

All of the sites were then ranked in descending order using the Rating Score. Finally columns were added to the Matrix showing whether they were likely to be developed within 5 or 10 years.

During the course of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan two owners of

previously developed land have declared that they will not develop it: Site 12, The Walled Garden and Site 356 Rotherstone.

## 7.8 2026 Site Requirements

In February 2014 the 2026 housing requirement was increased to 2,010 whilst the Completions and Specific Permitted Sites had almost kept up with the increase.

Devizes Area		
Requirement 2006 -2016		2,010
Housing Already Provided for	Completions 2006-2014	1,316
	Specific Permitted Sites	361
Housing to be identified	Strategic Sites	0
	Reminder to be identified	333

These updated figures include 25 new homes at Bureau West following a successful appeal and show that 333 dwellings remain to be identified, an annual rate of approximately 28 properties to be developed. On this basis these revised figures give the 5 year housing to be identified as 140 dwellings. Allowing a 5% contingency margin the requirement becomes 147 dwellings.

## 7.9 5 Year Site Prioritisation

Although not a requirement at the Community Area level it is considered wise to monitor a 5 year requirement. The number of additional sites required to meet a 5 year housing requirement fluctuates as sites are given planning permission and are subsequently completed. The Site Prioritisation Matrix is a useful tool that indicates preferred sites. It showed that 11

sites were are either within the current settlement boundary or within 20 minutes' walk from the Market Cross will provide more than sufficient housing to meet the 5 year requirement with a 5% margin.

During the process of examining the draft Plan, the Examiner concluded that 10 of these sites should be carried forward for inclusion in Policy H3.

### **7.10 2026 Site Prioritisation**

On current projections of 333 dwellings to be identified, and allowing a 5% margin, approximately 350 dwellings are required to meet the new Core Strategy Housing allocation for the Neighbourhood Area. This can be achieved from the delivery of the top 18 sites of the Prioritisation Matrix.

### **7.11 Conclusions**

Analysis of the Site Prioritisation Matrix shows that the 5 year and 2026 housing allocations can be achieved with a minimum impact on Air Quality and traffic congestion and without any further major development to the East of Devizes in either Roundway or Bishops Cannings.

## Housing Objective - Settlement Framework Boundary

All new housing must be built within the existing settlement framework boundary or within a zone extending 1600m from the town centre - equivalent to a 20 minute walk.

## H1 Strategic Policy Intent - Settlement Framework Boundary

For the purposes of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Settlement Framework Boundary defines the limits within which sustainable development should take place. The area within the boundary will provide sufficient land capacity to accommodate the housing growth projected for the plan period.

The boundary will contain the growth of the settlement and enable development to take place in a coherent manner, maintaining the structure and form of the existing settlement geography.

In addition, the boundary will protect the landscape setting of the settlement and represent the transitional edge between urban and rural environments. In the peripheral area adjacent to the outer edge of the boundary, housing style and layout will be required to blend sympathetically with the surrounding landscape.

The Settlement Framework Boundary for Devizes remains that defined by the Kennet Local Plan in 2004 and more recently carried forward into the Wiltshire Core Strategy. This will be enhanced by allocating land within that bounded by a circle of radius 1600m, centred on the Market Cross. Land outside the designated Neighbourhood Area is excluded.

- **The Settlement Framework Boundary is shown on the Policies Map. It equates with the 'limits of development' for the purpose of Core Strategy Policy 2 and is drawn to enclose the housing allocation listed on policy H3.**
- **Development will be graduated from the town centre towards the edge of the settlement framework boundary with higher densities towards the centre and lower densities around the urban fringe.**

## Consideration of Reasonable Alternative

In framing this policy, consideration has been given to the alternative of retaining the limits of development set by the Kennet Local Plan. This has been amended for the following reasons:

- Suitable land within walking distance of the town centre would otherwise be excluded.
- Land capacity to meet future growth would be severely constrained.
- The irregular topography of the existing boundary creates a number of anomalies with regard to potential expansion of the settlement.

## Policy Context

Wiltshire Local Plan - Core Policy 1.

## Housing Objective.-.Environment & Sustainability

New housing sites will be smaller in size.

The number of underused, previously developed sites will be reduced.

The design of new buildings will have a tangible characteristic link to existing buildings in the locality in which they will be built.

## H2 Strategic Police Intent – Built Environment & Sustainability

In the recent past, growth in the Devizes Neighbourhood Area has been achieved mainly through new large housing estates built on the periphery of the town. This has resulted in homogenous and bland developments that do not reflect or add to the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area. Creating large, new isolated communities has not fostered social cohesion and has resulted in a reduction in the sense of belonging and civic pride. This policy seeks to redress this problem.

Future housing growth is to be managed in an incremental manner, utilising land distributed throughout the settlement so as to avoid any quantum change in population focussed in any one location.

All new housing must be capable of being readily assimilated within the existing built environment and the social fabric of the settlement.

**All proposals for residential development, on the allocated sites listed under policy H3 and on any other sites within the limits of development shown on the Policies Map, should ensure that the development would be truly sustainable. In particular, such proposals should meet the provisions of all the policies in this plan and should:-**

- **Be limited to clusters of no more than 65 dwellings.**
- **Demonstrate that access to health, education, retail and leisure facilities has been designed in such a way as to minimise dependence on the private car.**
- **Be designed so as to be related to the character of the surrounding area.**
- **Wherever practicable, contribute to the regeneration of the built environment in those areas of the settlement that would benefit.**
- **Enhance the public realm and connect to the green infrastructure of the settlement thus positively contributing to its development.**

### Reasonable Alternative

In framing this policy consideration has been given to the alternative of concentrating developments into fewer, larger sites. This has been rejected as not being achievable in a manner consistent with the vision for the future of the Devizes area.

### Policy Context

Wiltshire Core Policy 43 – Providing Affordable Houses.

Wiltshire Core Policy 51 – Landscape.

### Housing Objective - Site Specific Allocations

- New housing sites will be smaller in size.
- The number of underused, previously developed sites will be reduced.

### H3 Strategic Policy Intent - Site Specific Allocations

The purpose of this policy is to translate the number of dwellings required for the Devizes Neighbourhood Area into tangible sites that can deliver this level of new housing. These specific sites having been identified as consistent with the sustainability criteria defined in Housing Policies 1 and 2.

The ten sites in the first table are considered capable of delivery in the period 2014-2019 and the eight sites in the second table are capable of delivery in the period 2019-2026.

The requirement for housing in the Neighbourhood Plan Area within the plan period, based upon the position at 1 April 2014, is given by the following tables:

The ten sites in the first table are considered capable of delivery in the period 2014-2019 and the eight sites in the second table are capable of delivery in the period 2019-2026.

:

Requirement 2006-2026	Housing Already Provided For		Housing to be Identified
	Completions 2006-2014	Specific permitted sites	
2,010	1,316	361	333

On the basis that growth occurs at an even rate across the plan period, for the purposes of calculating a five year allocation of the residual housing to be identified, including a 5% contingency margin, equates to 147 dwellings.

Land is allocated for residential development on the following sites, as shown on the Policies Map:

SHLAA No.	Site Name	Potential Dwellings
15	Stonebridge House, Nursteed Rd	14
362	26 Northgate Gardens	8
713	Railway Cuttings, Hillworth Road	9
714	North Arakan Road	35
1088	Land Adjacent to Elm Tree Gardens	10
4001	Katherine McNeil Clinic, Byron Rd	42
4002	St Peter's School, Bath Road	27
4004	Wadworth Warehouse, Northgate St	30
532	Land Off Hillworth Road	47
		<b>222</b>

Sites for delivery in period 2014 - 2019

Eight preferred sites have been identified that are developable within the next twelve years:

SHLAA No.	Site Name	Potential Dwellings
9	Bath Road Business Centre	13
358	Garage & Old Dairy off New Park St	5
361	Magistrates Court, Northgate St	8
367	The Meadow, Hartmoor Road	18
540	Garden Trading Estate	38
4003	Browfort, Bath Road	60
		<b>142</b>

Sites for delivery in period 2019 – 2026

### Reasonable Alternative

In framing this policy, consideration has been given to the alternative of concentrating developments into fewer, larger sites. This has been rejected as not being achievable in a manner consistent with the vision for the future of the Devizes area.

### Policy Context

Core Policy 45 Set out the requirements to meet Wiltshire’s housing need.

Paragraph 47 of the NPPF has particular regard to the supply of housing.

## 8. Access To Education

### 8.1 Introduction

Any new development within the Devizes Neighbourhood Plan Area is highly likely to bring an increase in demand for school places.

### 8.2 Catchment Schools

The table below shows the capacity of the five catchment primary schools in the Neighbourhood Plan Area as of May 2013.

At this time St Joseph's Roman Catholic School has not been included as its admission criteria is not based on locality. It therefore takes a large number of pupils from outside the Neighbourhood Plan Area.

In addition, although Rowde School is not a catchment school for the neighbourhood area, it has to be recognised that significant numbers of parents choose it because of its proximity to the western edge of the town.

See Plan Three – Devizes primary school catchment area

See Plan Four – Bishops Canning Parish, with a list of catchment roads

See Plan Five – Rowde primary school catchment area

School	Number of Places	Children in Mobile Classrooms	Number on Register 2013 educational year
Nursteed	210	0	209
Bishops Cannings	210	0	204
Trinity	210	0	133
Southbroom Infants	270	0	200
Southbroom Junior	361	60	193
Wansdyke	210	0	231



## Educational Objective

New development will reflect the ability of schools to cope with growth.

### E1 Strategic Policy Intent – Education

Additional housing will inevitably bring an additional need for school places. Given the spread of schools and the capacity they have, housing growth needs to ensure that all schools carry this additional burden.

Applications for residential development should include an assessment of the effect of the proposal on the capacity of the primary school in which catchment the site is located, as indicated in map 3, 4 or 5 attached to this plan. The capacity of the school and the potential for any expansion will be taken into account in the determination of the application.

Developers should ensure that provision is made for non-private car travelling to primary schools.

### Reasonable Alternative

An alternative policy would be to accommodate all children from new developments into one school. However, if we considered this as an alternative policy the concerns would be:

- There would be a lack of community cohesion making it difficult for families from the new developments to integrate into the town.
- All housing would need to be built immediately adjacent to the new school, otherwise it would concentrate high numbers of car movements at critical times of the day.

### Policy Context

This Neighbourhood Plan Policy is in line with Core Strategy Policy 60 - Sustainable Transport, which requires sustainable transport alternatives to the use of the private car.

This Neighbourhood Plan Policy is in line with the NPPF which promotes healthy communities through opportunities for meeting.

Paragraph 72 of the NPPF has particular regard to sufficient choice of school places where development will widen the choice in education.

## 9. Getting Around

### 9.1 Introduction

This section of the Neighbourhood Plan deals with all methods of surface travel. The issues are walking, cycling, public transport, private cars, railways and parking on both public and private land.

The Neighbourhood Plan is supplementary to the Wiltshire Council Core Strategy, which has specific policies for the Devizes area, and the associated Transport Strategy for Devizes, which has specific proposals for the existing transport infrastructure.

The use of the term 'highway' is intended to include all public transport routes: roads, bridleways, cycleways and footpaths. The Kennet and Avon canal is excluded as it does not have any significant use as a means of travel, but the canal towpath is part of the National Cycle Network and as such, is a key component of the proposed Cycle Network.

Planning for travel and highways should be carried out in conjunction with spatial planning for housing, employment, all other infrastructure facilities and an overall long term vision. This part of the Neighbourhood Plan sets basic planning principles within which the spatial planning of roads, cycleways, footpaths and parking will be developed in detail as a continuous, on-going process. Detailed highways plans will be developed together with the detailed plans for infrastructure, employment and housing.

Public transport will require a separate set of proposals, not within the Neighbourhood Plan, because public transport requires some commercial activity and part of the system operates

over a much wider area. Nevertheless, it is an essential component in reducing local traffic and therefore the fundamental policies necessary in achieving the principal objective of increasing patronage of public transport have been included within this plan.

A significant issue for Devizes, recognised in the Core Strategy, is the infrastructure deficit. The deficit has developed over several decades because of the way in which the planning system has operated. The practice of permitting incremental housing developments on a piecemeal basis, without addressing the long term cumulative effects and sustainability, has allowed the population to grow in both size and location significantly beyond the capacity of the infrastructure. In particular, no spatial planning for possible new road, cycleway or footpath routes has been considered within an overall vision for the area. The result is evident in the overloaded local highway system in the Devizes area and the serious air pollution along the major roads. This is now a serious health issue which has resulted in a large part of Devizes becoming an air quality management area. Specific proposals for reducing air pollution are being developed by a sub-committee of the Devizes Community Area Board and may require modifications to both this Plan and the Devizes Transport Strategy.

There are two aspects of highway planning that have to be considered in this Neighbourhood Plan:

- a. Possible modifications to the existing highway network.
- b. Principles for planning any new highway developments for the future. The Wiltshire Council Transport Strategy for Devizes, which supplements the Core Strategy, deals with the existing

developed area and highways, but not potential new development areas. It contains proposals for reducing the current traffic congestion problems, mainly by encouraging local travel by walking, cycling and bus rather than by car. Whilst it also contains proposals for improvements to some road junctions, it recognises that these will have a limited impact. The whole package is estimated to provide sufficient improvements in the traffic situation so that congestion at the end of the strategy period, in 2026, will be similar to that prevailing today, despite the anticipated natural growth in traffic. There are no contingency provisions in case the Transport Strategy fails to contain traffic problems.

The Wiltshire Council Transport Strategy for Devizes is based on the population growth and demographics envisaged in the Core Strategy. It concludes that the best that can be hoped for is to hold the current position with regard to congestion and it follows that additional development, beyond that proposed in the Core Strategy, is likely to have serious congestion consequences. Traffic volumes and congestion are the cause of the air pollution problem and it also follows that increased congestion will make that situation worse. This Plan lays down the principles that should be applied to any new developments and they should also be followed where possible in the existing developed areas.

## **9.2 The Growth of Traffic and the Economy**

Government forecasts indicate that traffic volumes will continue to increase for the foreseeable future. This is partly due to economic growth and partly due to population increases, both of which show a long-term upward trend nationally and

locally. In Devizes, that long term population trend has been exacerbated by previous policies of directing a disproportionate amount of the growth in new housing to Devizes in pursuit of previous regional policies. Traffic growth has followed in proportion. Economic growth is encouraged at all levels of government and is desirable locally in order to address the current imbalance between inward and outward commuting. Even if the development of new housing can be limited, as proposed in the Core Strategy, traffic growth will continue. Reducing traffic and its effects on the town is essential for the long term health and sustainability of the community.

## **9.3 Traffic Strategy for the Existing Highway Network**

Given the traffic growth forecasts referred to above, it is clear that the capacity of the current highway network will be unable to cope unless the volume of traffic can be stabilised at current levels. The consequences of failure to do so for the local economy and public health will be adverse. Both the Community Area Transport Plan and the Devizes Transport Strategy put the main emphasis on reducing local car use by cycling, walking and public transport. Whilst such a strategy offers a degree of relief from traffic problems at an affordable cost, it is only part of the solution and not the whole solution. There is a limit as to how much modal shift is possible for older people and families with young children. Through commercial traffic and much of the local commercial activity, which relies on cars and goods vehicles, cannot be diverted onto buses and cycles.

This plan supports the proposals to induce modal change away from the motor car, particularly for short journeys. The

essential components of such a policy include:

#### Safe Cycling and Walking Groups

A comprehensive cycle network should be established using as many "off-road" pathways as possible to create safe cycling routes suitable for children. This network must connect housing areas to the town centre, to the employment areas and the schools. Particular attention must be paid to the quality of these routes, with good surfaces and clearly segregated cycling areas.

Similarly, a network of safe walking routes should be established, again connecting places of work, shops and homes. These must be clearly signed, well lit, kept clear of vegetation and gritted in icy conditions. Routes for vehicles, cycles and footpaths should be segregated whenever possible. Not only are vehicles a hazard for cyclists but cyclists are also a hazard for pedestrians. The sharing of footpaths by cyclists and cycle lanes on roadways are basically unsafe and undesirable. Separate cycle routes are important within industrial estates because of the prevalence of heavy goods vehicles, which are a particular hazard for cyclists, and the benefits of encouraging the workforce to cycle to and from the workplace.

#### **9.4 Traffic Strategy for Future Development.**

This Neighbourhood Plan Strategy is intended to focus on the longer term solutions to the basic underlying cause of the traffic problem and provide a firm

framework for the future planning of developments.

#### a) Residential Areas.

Through roads are to be segregated from dwellings to avoid noise nuisance. Roads should be separated from housing by buffer areas such as commercial areas, cycleways, footpaths, green verges and tree strips.

Residential roads should not form through routes wherever possible. Through routes tend to have higher traffic speeds, particularly if they become "rat runs". Roads that give access only to smaller groups of residential property over short distances naturally have lower traffic speeds and obtrusive features for speed control should not be necessary.

Some developments such as medical centres, leisure centres and schools create relatively large amounts of local traffic. Access to such developments should not be through residential areas.

#### b) Green infrastructure.

Transport routes provide opportunities for the creation of a part of the green infrastructure that is essential for health and well-being. Roadside verges with trees actually absorb noise and traffic pollution as well as being visually desirable. Roadside verges also provide natural habitats, encouraging biodiversity, and routes for wildlife to travel between areas.

## Getting Around Objective

The location of developments should be chosen to minimise their impact on people's ability to get around the town safely and conveniently.

### **T1 Strategic Policy Intent - Getting Around**

Delete the whole of the text under the heading 'T1 Strategic Policy Intent - Getting Around' and replace it with the following (in bold text):

Applications for residential development should include an assessment of the effect of the proposal on the local transport network, in particular any impact on the A361 arterial route. Such an assessment shall demonstrate how any adverse impact on the network might be successfully be mitigated.

In order to facilitate the use of sustainable transport modes, the nearest point from a new housing development to a bus stop should be within a 5 minute walk of that stop and, wherever possible, walkways suitable for children and the less mobile, should be provided "off road" with safe, segregated cycle routes linked, where it exists, to the town's cycle network.

Wherever possible, residential roads should not be through roads open to private and service vehicles. A residential road is defined as one that gives access wholly or mainly to domestic homes and through roads is one that links two locations of a town and can be used as an alternative route

### **Reasonable Alternative**

An alternative policy would be to take no action:

- Current increases in traffic flow through the neighbourhood plan area, resulting from recent growth in housing already causes significant delays for car users. Further increases in traffic flow from additional housing will be unsustainable even with mitigation measures.

### **Policy Context**

This Neighbourhood Plan Policy is in line with Core Strategy policy 62, which requires developers to provide mitigating measures to offset any adverse impact on the transport network and Core Strategy Policy 60, which promotes sustainable transport.

This Neighbourhood Plan Policy is in line with NPPF sections 29 to 32 which again promote sustainable transport.

## **10.Environment, Sustainability & Design**

### **10.1 Introduction**

This section of the Neighbourhood Plan deals with the legacy of new development and includes issues such as the provision of open space, urban drainage, sustainable buildings and how developments will reinforce the character of the town and relate well to their surroundings.

## Environment & Sustainability Objective

- Protect and enhance Conservation Areas.
- Develop guidance for the built environment to ensure both future construction and changes to existing buildings integrate with the existing character of settlements.
- Protect and enhance the rural character of the town through the control of green space.

## ESD1 Strategic Policy Intent - Environment & Sustainability

Additional housing should cause no significant harm to the Neighbourhood Plan Area's identity or the environment and be pleasant places where residents can lead active and healthy lives. This will be achieved as follows:

- Design and Access statements for new developments should demonstrate how they will reinforce the character of the area. Drawings should provide sufficient detail for the proposals to be thoroughly understood.
- All existing open spaces should be protected from development.
- New developments should either include open spaces within the site, in accordance with the Wiltshire Open Space standards, or where the site is too small, developers should make a proportional contribution, subject to viability considerations, to the enhancement of any nearby open space requiring such treatment.
- An assessment on the impact to Devizes' drainage system for both pluvial run-off and sewage should be made for every new development and where necessary mitigation measures must be put in place before development commences.
- Residential roads should not be through roads.
- Development proposals, particularly where the site is on the edge of Devizes or adjoining the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, should maintain a visual context with the countryside, consistent with the Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment and the impact on views from the countryside must be minimised.
- Car parking should be designed so that it fits with the character of the proposed development.
- Developments should preserve and enhance the conservation areas.
- All green infrastructure recommendations for the Devizes area contained in the Wiltshire Landscape Character Assessment should be implemented.



## Reasonable Alternative

An alternative policy would be to leave any decision about how a development impacts on Devides within the responsibility of developers.

- Maintaining the character of a town and its rural hinterland is a fragile process and therefore The Steering Group believe that some guidance must be in place.

## Policy Context

This Neighbourhood Plan Policy is in line with Core Strategy objective 5 which deals with the protection and enhancement of the natural, historic and built environment.

This Neighbourhood Plan Policy is in line with NPPF, paragraph 57 & 58, which supports developments adding overall quality to an area and responding to the local character and history.

This Neighbourhood Plan Policy is in line with NPPF, paragraph 74, which recognises the importance of managing open spaces.

This Neighbourhood Plan Policy is in line with NPPF, paragraph 32, which requires an assessment on the impact of developments on the transport network.

This Neighbourhood Plan Policy is in line with NPPF, paragraph 35 which encourages a safe layout to minimise conflict between traffic and cyclists or pedestrians.

Intentionally Blank

Section Three

Housing  
Allocation

## 11. Devizes Area Neighbourhood Plan: Housing Site Allocation Policies Principle

This sections sets out the Neighbourhood Plans prioritisation of potential housing development sites that will deliver the housing required by the Wiltshire Core Strategy. The ranking is intended to support decision making rather than represent an order in which development should take.

The underlying approach is to analyse each site for its compliance with the Neighbourhood Plan policies. Each site receives 1 point for each compliance. The total number of compliances is multiplied by a percentage derived from resident's preferences expressed during the public consultations held in April 2013.

In the Prioritised Site Scores Master the first site is St Peter's School. It is in compliance with 8 policies, scoring 8 points. At the public consultation 61% of respondents favoured the site. The rating score is derived by multiplying the score of 8 by 61% to give a Rating of 4.88.

The site immediately below St Peter's School is Railway Cuttings, Hillworth Road. It complies with all 10 of the policies. It scores 10. However, at the public consultation the site was only favoured by 42% of respondents. The score of 10 is modified by 42% to give a rating of 4.2. This ranks it below St Peter's School. The Prioritisation Matrix was reviewed by the Housing Scrutiny Group who welcomed the approach and suggested that it should be subjected to Sensitivity Testing which can be found in the remaining worksheets.

### Policy Principles

- I. To make the most efficient use of land.
- II. To minimise urban sprawl.
- III. To secure a strong and complementary relationship with existing infrastructure.
- IV. To minimise the impact on urban form.
- V. To mitigate the impact on the local environment.
- VI. To reflect the views and preferences of the local community.

## Plans Appendix

Appendix 1 - Site Allocation Policies

Appendix 2 - Suggested Improvement to  
Existing Highway Network

Plan One – Devizes Plan Area

Plan Two – Policies Map

Plan Three – Devizes Primary School  
Catchment Area

Plan Four – Bishops Canning  
Primary School Catchment Area

Plan Five – Rowde Primary School  
Catchment Area

## Appendix 1

### Site Allocation Policies

#### 1. Pattern of development.

All allocable sites will be within the Devizes settlement framework boundary defined by the Wiltshire Core Strategy. Three zones will be established. The central zone will encompass all land within 10 minutes' walk of the town centre. The intermediate zone will extend from the boundary of the central zone to a radius of 20 minutes' walk of the town centre. The third outer zone will encompass all land between the intermediate zone boundary and the settlement framework boundary.

Allocable sites should contribute to the regeneration of areas of urban decline and the improved vitality of the town centre.

#### 2. Housing Density.

The permitted housing density on allocable sites will vary across three zones. The Housing density will taper from the town centre with the highest concentrations of development, to the boundary of the settlement framework, where at the urban fringe, lower density housing will be more appropriate.

#### 4. Connectivity.

Allocable sites will, to the greatest extent possible, be situated within 20 minutes' walk of public open space and 10 minutes' walk of access to public transport. Insofar as capacity allows, a primary school should always be within 20 minutes' walk. Allocable sites should provide opportunities to reduce the need to travel and promote more sustainable modes of transport, through proximity to public transport and a good network of walking and cycling routes. Wherever possible, sites should be located to take advantage of under-utilised infrastructure.

#### 3. Allocation Priorities.

Precedence will be given to those proposed sites which re-use previously developed land. Greater weight in selecting allocable sites will be given to those locations that have the highest community preference expressed in the NP consultation exercise.

#### 5. Housing Types.

The preferred housing for the higher density central zone will be one and two bedroom town houses and apartments suitable for single people or retired couples. Limited parking provision will be made for these dwellings. The intermediate and outer zones with lower density development will be more suitable for three or more bedroom properties for family living. In all zones, a mix of tenures should be provided in order to conform to the ideal housing mix defined by the

Wiltshire Core Strategy. Design of new housing should contribute to the improvement of the built environment and the removal of inappropriate and decaying buildings.

#### 6. Integration.

Allocable sites for new developments should be readily integrated into the existing built environment and the established social fabric and should encourage the development of mixed and cohesive communities. This will be facilitated if sites are limited to smaller housing clusters of 40 dwellings. Such sites should be dispersed throughout the area defined by the settlement framework boundary in order to mitigate the impact of growth on both environmental factors and on existing urban form. Allocable sites should have no adverse effect on protected landscape character.

## Appendix 2

### **Suggested Improvement to Existing Highway Network (These are not policy statement that are contained with this plan)**

#### **Improved Public Transport**

Increasing the use of public transport is difficult to achieve in a rural area where the passenger densities are generally low and subsidies are required. In the long term, anything relying on subsidies is probably not sustainable and recent years have seen subsidies for buses steadily reduced under financial pressures. Frequency and reliability of bus services and lack of late evening and weekend services is a major concern. Family groups find that car travel is more affordable and reliable than public transport.

The task may be difficult, given the above, but by no means impossible. Bus usage has been shown to increase appreciably with good, active travel planning and where comprehensive travel information is readily available. An initial success allows improved services for the same subsidy, which in turn drives a further increase in passengers, allowing more service improvements.

Devizes is poorly served by buses. Although there are buses to Swindon, Salisbury, Trowbridge, Bath and Chippenham, most are slow because they do not follow direct routes. Routes to other towns and villages are infrequent and indirect. The town bus service is irregular throughout the day and follows two circular routes in one direction only. This creates extended journey times for those getting on near the beginning of the loop, or getting off near the end.

Devizes has no easy access to train services. The bus to Swindon makes a reasonably direct trip to the railway station, but it takes about an hour. The bus to Salisbury generally takes well over an hour.

The bus to Chippenham takes a roundabout route and connections to Westbury and Pewsey, the two closest stations, are poor to non-existent. None of these bus routes is designed to connect with particular trains, and, whilst through tickets are available via Swindon, they cannot be bought in Devizes. All buses stop running too early for a day return trip to London.

A National Express bus links Devizes to London once a day, but the journey time is long and return within the day provides very limited time in London.

The bus services have built up piecemeal over the years, and are run by at least seven different operators. The starting point for service improvement must be a thorough review, aimed at rationalising the routes, optimising and regularising the service frequency. In order to attract those currently using cars, these buses need to be more comfortable and all should be fully accessible for pushchairs and the disabled. A determined effort is required to market the bus services and to provide clearer and more easily accessible information, including real time information in the Market Place on anticipated timings and delays.

#### **Travel Planning**

The purpose of Travel Planning is to provide reasonable and affordable alternatives to the car. The aim of travel planning is to target large employers and employment areas, to research the travel needs of those that work there and ensure that the Local Authority, public transport operators and local employers cooperate to bring about a shift from car to sustainable travel.



Information should also be made available to assist individuals with their own travel planning. The plan will seek to ensure that there are:

- safe cycling and walking routes for those who live within the town.
- an active car sharing system on each industrial estate which will be estate-wide so as to embrace as wide a ridership as possible.
- a bus service appropriate to employee working patterns.
- dedicated work buses provided by the larger employers.
- full advantages from the Bike to Work Scheme.

Funding for the services of a professional travel planner will be required to ensure that the sustainable alternatives are fully recognised and are taken up as widely as possible. Comprehensive travel plans have been shown to be effective in significantly reducing traffic problems.

### **Demand Management**

The number of people bringing cars into Devizes can be manipulated using demand management methods. Some of these measures such as Congestion Charging and Workplace Parking Levy are not suitable for such a small town, leaving Parking Management as the main tool.

The current parking controls tend to generate traffic rather than reduce it. Free on-street parking encourages motorists to "cruise" around the central area looking for a free space rather than driving straight to a car park. Commuters seeking free parking in residential areas are a current problem in parts of the town. As well as causing congestion, they cause problems for residents who lack off-street parking.

Demand Management should also operate in favour of the shopper, not the commuter.

Currently there is a high demand for spaces in the central car parks whilst Station Road and the Wharf Car Parks remain half-empty. Season tickets should be withdrawn from the town centre car parks, forcing more commuters into the Wharf and Station Road, thereby freeing premium spaces for shoppers. In this regard, it must be borne in mind that one space previously occupied by a commuter all day provides space for between four and eight shoppers.

Parking charges can be used to deter commuters from using their cars but should not be so punitive that commuters are forced into residential areas. Charging schemes should discourage long term parking in central shopping areas and all free on-street parking should be limited to one hour. Residents' parking schemes should be introduced in central areas initially and extended if this results in displacement of commuter parking to the outer areas of the town. Coupled with this must be an effective enforcement regime to deter would be offenders. The provision of seventy 30 minutes parking slots in the Market Place ensures a considerable increase in traffic movements in the town centre (up to 400 vehicles/hour). This is both highly undesirable and unnecessary. The West Central Car Park could be turned into a short term "shoppers" car park which provides easy access to the Market Place, including Market Days, and the Market Place itself could become a car free area, apart from some carefully positioned disabled parking bays.

Employers should be encouraged not to provide free parking for staff. Where the employer pays for an employee's season ticket or rents parking space from a third party they should ensure that the cost is declared as a benefit in kind and taxed.

### **Road Development.**

Devizes is at the junction of several main routes for traffic crossing Wiltshire from North to South and East to West, and for which there are no reasonable alternative routes. Also, through traffic in the town centre will not be reduced by the proposals in the Wiltshire Council Transport Strategy for Devizes. The town centre road system is inadequate for current traffic volumes and there are no effective alternative routes for the major part of the traffic. The only certain and logical way to reduce the unwanted effects of through traffic in the town would be to develop a system of relief roads to take the major part of the traffic out of the town centre bottlenecks. A series of relief road routes should therefore be researched and planned to allow through traffic and local traffic to avoid the congested town centre. Such roads need not be very costly, long distance by-passes, but a series of relatively minor improvements, such as the existing Windsor Drive which takes both through traffic and local traffic away from the town centre bottlenecks.

Relief road routes should be reserved with adequate space for separate cycle tracks and, where appropriate, for upgrading in future to dual carriageway standards.

Finance for an effective system of relief roads and other forms of highway may not be available in the near future and most proposed routes will be controversial, but the spatial planning must be carried out and route corridors reserved and protected from other forms of development as a priority to avoid a repeat of past planning errors. Spatial planning for potential new highways and improvements to existing highways has to be integrated with spatial planning for housing, employment and other infrastructure.

Where practicable, existing routes should be brought up to the standards proposed for new highways by, for example, developing new segregated cycle routes and adding

bus lay-bys. If, in the future, relief roads are developed that significantly reduce traffic in the town centre, some roads could be converted to segregated cycle and pedestrian routes.

To achieve adequate segregation of routes, separate systems of pedestrian footpaths and cycleways are to be provided for any new housing, employment, commercial, leisure or medical facility developments. Such routes should be integrated with existing urban routes where possible.

Rail travel is a separate strategic issue. Rail access points should have good interchange facilities for passengers delivered by bus and car, and car parking areas, to encourage the use of rail travel.

### **Employment Areas.**

The creation of employment opportunities is a priority because of the significant net out-commuting from the Devizes Area. No new employment development within the urban, built up area which requires the regular use of larger commercial vehicles over 7.5t should be approved within the Neighbourhood Plan area in order to minimise the use of larger vehicles in the town centre.

Employment sites which are likely to require larger commercial vehicles should be sited where the vehicles can avoid the town centre when travelling to and from the primary routes - the M4, A350, A34 and A303. This may require such sites to be located in greenfield areas or outside this Plan area. Consideration is to be given to employment locations with good access to potential new rail access points, such as the former branch line junction with the main line at Lydeaway.

