

Wiltshire Council

Council

22 February 2011

South Wiltshire Core Strategy – Review Of Housing And Employment Requirements

**Questions From Councillor Ian Mclennan
Laverstock, Ford & Old Sarum Division**

**To Councillor John Brady, Cabinet Member For Economic
Development, Planning And Housing**

Question 1

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Page 30 Strategic Objective 2

The requirements for South Wiltshire have dropped by 20%. There is a will in Government and amongst rural councillors, to permit some local building to house the young of their community.

Why does the document still insist that “Well over half the number will have been built in or around Salisbury”?

Answer

The role and function of Salisbury in terms of its level of services, employment and cultural facilities clearly indicates that it is the most sustainable location for growth within South Wiltshire, particularly when considered against the more rural nature of the other settlements within South Wiltshire.

A considerable level of growth is focused to the area outside of Salisbury (3,900 dwellings), which will enable housing development to take place in the more rural parts of the area.

Question 2

The first desired outcome states that the local character will be respected.

Why is the Parish of Laverstock & Ford not included in this desired outcome and why is a previously essential strategic gap separating two communities within the parish and part of a Conservation zone, now not worthy of retention at all?

Answer

The recommended changes within the document to the Development Template for Hampton Part (SWCS, Appendix A, Page 143) place greater emphasis on the need to ensure an appropriate strategic gap between Ford and Salisbury, in order to respect the local character of Ford.

Salisbury City is a constrained environment with its administrative boundaries not covering the full extent of its urban area. Some of the future housing will need to be provided on the edge adjacent to its urban area. This means that development may need to take place in the neighbouring parish of Laverstock. The sites selected for growth have been subject to a rigorous appraisal process and are based on clear and credible evidence. These reasons must be based on sound planning reasons rather than the administrative boundary of the parish where they are located.

It is appreciated that any development could have an impact on local character but it is important that through sensitive design and landscaping local character is respected as much as possible.

Question 3

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Desired outcomes – Relocation of businesses from Churchfields Estate to more unconstrained locations.

Why has the ideal relocation site for Churchfields – namely Netherhampton Road, been deleted entirely and the remote site of Longhedge – in the rural parish of Laverstock & Ford – been allocated 8 hectares of additional land, when none of the employment land allocated to Old Sarum (Next door), in the current Local Plan, has been used?

Answer

The review does not propose to change the employment land allocation of 8 hectares at Longhedge. In addition, available employment land currently exists in the Netherhampton area as well as at Old Sarum. The business community has clearly stated that a range of choice of decant sites is required, including land to the north of the City.

The 'review' clearly sets out the reappraisal of the sites and the rationale why the Netherhampton Road site is not the best option (see section 11 of the Topic Paper 20 review on site comparison). This process looks at a number of criteria cumulatively and there is no single reason which would explain why a site is ranked in the order it is.

Question 4

Why has the 'TOWN/ancient Capital' Wilton been drastically cut from an allocation of 950 to 220, when representatives were calling out for development to save the town?

Answer

The review concludes that because of the strategic growth to the west of Salisbury (Fugglestone Red – 1250 dwellings, 8 hectares employment), together with the UKLF site at Wilton (450 dwellings, 3 hectares employment), Salisbury and Wilton are best considered together (see paragraphs 9.8 to 9.14, Topic Paper 20). Simply put, Wilton and Salisbury have a special functional relationship and while it is important to recognise their individual characteristics, the relationship should be acknowledged.

There was local concern that the proposed housing numbers suggested for the Wilton CA Core Strategy and the reduction also recognises that outside of Wilton the Community Area is extremely rural in nature and with few larger villages has limited scope to accommodate modest new development.

Question 5

Why are Alderbury, Coombe Bissett, Pitton, Whiteparish and the Winterslows depicted as having Downton as a service centre, when there is no natural relationship at all? Why is Laverstock & Ford Parish not mentioned in its own right and described only as "Settlements located in the northern part of the community area"?

Answer

This is based on the established Community Areas. The functional relationship of settlements is mentioned in paragraph 9.2 of the draft Core Strategy (submission draft) which mentions the strong functional influence of Salisbury on this Community Area. It should be borne in mind that the review has a narrow focus based on assessing implications of locally derived growth figures, a remit agreed with the Inspector. The role of Downton, as a Local Service Centre, has not therefore been reconsidered through the review. However, the settlement hierarchy was discussed at EIP and the Inspector will draw his own conclusions on this matter.

Question 6

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Page 49 Core Policy 2 Strategic Allocations

There are only four major greenfield sites allocated in the whole of South Wiltshire. How can having two allocated in one rural parish (Laverstock & Ford) be either fair or justifiable?

Answer

This has been justified through the objective scrutiny of the alternative options available to identify the best (least worse options) for development. Salisbury is a highly constrained environment and sound planning reasons, based on evidence, have been used to determine, which sites should come forward during this plan period (see response to question 2 above). The location of two sites in one parish is not in itself a reason that can be used to justify the reduction in the level of growth in an area.

The sites identified in Laverstock and Ford Parish will serve Salisbury. While this is unfortunate it is a consequence of the relationship between the Parish and the City. Furthermore, this strategic growth will not impact on Laverstock village itself.

Question 7

As a result of the proposed allocations Laverstock & Ford Parish – largely rural until the last Local Plan – is targeted for 950 dwellings + 8 hectares of additional Employment land and the removal of most of its green space. This is in addition to the 850 dwellings and several hectares of Employment land, absorbed in the current Local plan. Given that 474 of the dwellings are yet to be built and none of the Employment land has been used, this burden is far to great for a single parish to be allocated. Given the complete unfairness and blatant disregard for local representation, will the cabinet member explain how he is able to support this undoubted rape of a single parish and loss of its entire character?

Answer

The dwellings are planned as urban extensions to Salisbury, which has insufficient land within its restricted boundary. The site identification process has been based on an objective assessment of the landscape and constraints around Salisbury. Although two of the new sites fall within the Parish, the evidence is clear that they represent two of the best of the few options open to us. Careful design of the proposed developments and securing the planning gain (such as the large area of open space to be gifted to the community at Hampton Park), will be important to ensure that high quality outcomes can be delivered, including much needed affordable housing.

Question 8

Apart from an orchestrated petitioning by people living, in many cases, miles from the site, what are the reasons that the ideal expansion of Netherhampton Road to accommodate dwellings and Churchfields relocation has been removed from the Core Strategy?

Answer

As mentioned (see response to question 3) the sites were selected using an evidence based approach and have been reviewed and ranked using objective criteria, as set out in the review document. That document sets out the reasons why Netherhampton Road was in environmental terms the least best of the sites. As the revised housing figures suggest that we do not need all of the strategic allocations at this time, it was logical to remove this one and identify it as a reserve site to come forward in the longer term if required. The evidence did not correlate with your view that the site represents an 'ideal expansion'.

Question 9

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Page 145-7 Core Strategy Hampton Park Development

Place Shaping Requirements:

"Defining the Strategic Gap between the development and the settlement of Ford"

How can that statement be meaningful, whilst the numbers remain at 500 and used virtually all the existing Strategic Gap?

Answer

The review and proposed changes have reinforced the need to plan appropriately for a strategic gap. There may be some misunderstanding about this gap with the map within the draft Core Strategy making the gap look narrower than it is. By its nature a strategic gap is an area of undeveloped land between built up areas. For this purpose, the total open area that would be maintained between Ford and the built edge of the new development including the existing fields outside of the strategic allocation site would represent the strategic gap. At its narrowest this gap would provide a buffer of some 172 metres and at its maximum 208 meters. The design of the site will need to be subject to appropriate structural landscaping which will help soften

the impact on views from Ford. I recognise that the gap, albeit a reduced one, must be maintained into the future.

Question 10

“A community forum be established to help steer the development for the site and ensure that outcomes meet local needs”

How can the virtual elimination of the existing narrow strip of land separating Ford & Hampton Park (both in the Parish of Laverstock & Ford) permit any local needs? Surely, these needs should have been met by deleting the allocation, as local need and fair play dictate?

Answer

In addition to the answer to Question 9, I would point out that there has been a constructive dialogue with community representatives over this site. I recognise that some of the community were reluctant to accept the principle, but they also took the view that if it did happen then they would enter into engagement and seek the best outcomes for the community. This has revolved around such things as the future use of the large area of land to be given to the community as part of this application (known as the ‘country park’), and an appraisal of existing and complimentary community facilities in relation to the existing development.

We must be mindful that if we did delete a site without sound evidence on which to base that judgement, that the Inspector would not be likely to accept it.

Question 11

Given the rejection of 500 additional dwellings at Hampton Park, at the Strategic Planning meeting of 16th February and the comments by councillors from the rest of Wiltshire, that the site was unsuitable for development, owing to the impact on Ford (due to the loss of the strategic gap) and Old Sarum Ancient Monument (development could be seen), can the will of the local people and the unanimous verdict of the councillors be upheld and the whole of the strategic gap be retained as an essential ingredient to the setting of Salisbury and the Parish of Laverstock & Ford?

Answer

The reasons for refusal by the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) generally related to the need for further information before the authority could determine the application. It is recognised that an additional reason was added, which considered the application to be contrary to the existing development plan (saved policies C7, H23 and G1 - Salisbury Local Plan). In considering this particular application, the SPC gave little weight to the emerging policies within the draft South Wiltshire Core Strategy.

When making new planning policy, we must ensure that it is based on robust and credible evidence. Officers cannot find robust evidence on which to conclude that the site is unsuitable. Indeed we must bear in mind that the SWCS was originally submitted by a unanimous vote of Full Council. The Core Strategy does not seek to remove the gap and indeed the review reaffirms the importance of retaining a gap, which we will retain in the long term.

There is no wish to compromise the setting of Old Sarum. Work has been undertaken with English Heritage and their consultants on a Landscape Heritage Appraisal, to try and mitigate impacts wherever possible. The confinement of the Hampton Park development to the south east of the wider development site and the retention of the green space ('country park'), would help mitigate any potential impacts and help ensure that future development does not encroach into the setting of Old Sarum.

Salisbury itself is visible from the ramparts of Old Sarum and to embargo new growth from its view, would prevent any growth future development taking place in this side of the City.