

Wiltshire Council

Council

7 February 2012

Councillors' Questions

Questions From Councillor Chris Caswill
Chippenham Monkton Division
On Item 9 – Wiltshire Core Strategy

To Councillor Fleur De Rhé-Philippe
Cabinet Member For Economic Development
and Strategic Planning

Question 1

- a) What assumptions have been made about population growth in the Chippenham community area for the Core Strategy period?
- b) Given the well-known uncertainties about in- and out-migration flows to a local area of this kind, what locally researched data has been drawn upon for the Chippenham population and housing projections in this Core Strategy draft?

Response

Wiltshire Council has projected the population and resulting housing requirement for Wiltshire as a whole assuming four different policy scenarios (natural change, population led, economic led and job alignment led). This is summarised within Topic Paper 15. These scenarios were used to inform the development of the requirement for 37,000 homes over the plan period.

These scenarios were also applied to the Chippenham Community Area and produced the following results:

- (i) The natural change from 2009 scenario assumed that births, deaths and headship rates (persons per household) would align with the national projections (i.e. the trends from the recent past would continue) and that there would be no migration in or out of the area. This is unrealistic in a free market economy, as migration will continue and cannot be prevented. If the number of dwellings resulting from this scenario were built, they would not cater to a local need, but rather to more affluent in-migrants (largely from the South East), requiring the local population to find accommodation elsewhere. Nevertheless this scenario is considered useful as it provides a baseline. This produces a requirement for 3,100 homes.

- (ii) The population led scenario assumes that births, deaths, migration and headship rates align with the national projections. This produces a requirement for 5,600 homes.
- (iii) The economic led scenario assumes that births, deaths, and headship rates align with the national projections, and places a further requirement that the future population should be sufficient to support a proportionate growth of jobs (according to the Cambridge Econometrics economic projections) assuming that the 2001 proportionate commuting flows are maintained. This produces a requirement for 4,900 homes.
- (iv) The job alignment led scenario assumes that births, deaths, and headship rates align with the national projections, and places a further requirement that the future population should be sufficient to support a proportionate growth of jobs (according to the Cambridge Econometrics economic projections) assuming that there will be no net commuting flows to or from the area (so that local jobs provide for local residents and vice versa). This produces a requirement for 2,600 homes.

These scenarios, when considered at the Community Area level should be used with caution, as projections are inherently less robust at a smaller geography.

Nevertheless, on balance, the identified requirement for 4,500 homes for the Chippenham Community Area provides sufficient homes to support economic growth, but would not allow for recent levels of migration to continue. This level of growth is considered appropriate as it ensures the sustainability as well as the economic prosperity of the area.

Question 2

It appears that the Council not reduced its housing requirement for Chippenham by a single dwelling relative to the proposals put forward in the last consultation. This appears to be based on a failure to recognise a current and predicted decline in in-migration into North Wiltshire. Should that decline prove to be substantiated, would the Council agree that these housing numbers should be significantly reduced downwards in order to avoid the damaging consequences of over allocation, such as an unnecessary loss of high quality Grade 1 and 2 farmland, green open space and, more formally, an environmental and infrastructure deficit?

Response

The housing requirement identified in the June consultation was based upon the most recent national population projections and no further evidence has come to light that would negate these. These most recent national projections (2008 based) actually identify an increase in both in-migration and net in-migration to North Wiltshire. The housing requirement for the Chippenham

Community Area (4,500 homes) already assumes that in-migration will decrease, in order for the area to become more sustainable. The plan will be monitored and reviewed, as and when substantive evidence arises to demonstrate that existing policies are not achieving their objectives.

Question 3

With reference to the Rawlings Farm site, to the North East of Chippenham:

- a) Does she accept that Wiltshire Council's own Sustainability Appraisal highlights a number of key 'significant adverse environmental impacts' in relation to this, for which "there are no mitigation or inadequate mitigation has been proposed or for which mitigation is considered unachievable."
- b) Why does the latest Core Strategy draft not acknowledge that proposed development on this site is in direct conflict with Wiltshire Council's out-commuting and climate change policies, and would generate more congestion and carbon emissions than alternative sites to the north and west of Chippenham of which in recent months several have come forward with a more rational basis for local employment.
- c) Given the lack of evidence as to how the Sustainability Appraisal has informed the appraisal of reasonable alternatives, which is required by the SEA Directive under Article 5(1), should not the Council reconsider the overall costs and benefits of this site, relative to more sustainable alternatives?

Response

The Sustainability Appraisal has considered the social, environmental and economic effects of developing the strategic sites identified in the Core Strategy. Where significant adverse impacts have been identified, mitigation and enhancements measures have been suggested where appropriate.

The more significant strategic sites within the Core Strategy, including those in Chippenham, have been assessed as likely to lead to significant adverse effects against particular sustainability objectives where mitigation is considered difficult. This is by virtue of the scale of these developments and the fact that they need to take place on greenfield sites on the edge of the settlement rather than more sustainable brownfield sites. Inevitably growth will also lead to increased demands on energy use in the construction of the houses, through their occupation and as a result of residents' travel. This is an inherent consequence of growth and as such will be identified within the Sustainability Appraisal.

The Rawlings Green site is not in conflict with out-commuting and climate change policies. Indeed the site provides for employment land alongside housing, community uses and greenspace achieving a sustainable pattern of development in alignment with the Core Strategy's objectives.

Alternative employment sites to the west and north of Chippenham do not form part of a sustainable mixed use urban extension to the town and therefore are less able to contribute to achieving a sustainable pattern of development in order to reduce carbon emissions (paragraph 2.13, Pre-Submission Draft Wiltshire Core Strategy).

A Sustainability Appraisal Report will be published alongside the Pre-Submission Draft Core Strategy to enable the soundness of the document to be considered. The Appraisal has considered all reasonable alternatives as required by the SEA Directive.