

Wiltshire Council

Council

7 February 2012

Public Participation

Question From David Scane, On Behalf Of Curtin & Co, Acting For Bloor Homes

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

Question 1

Issue 1

Today the Council will be asked to vote on the Cabinet's recommendation to support the Pre-Submission Draft Wiltshire Core Strategy Development Plan Document for delivery of up to 37,000 homes over the next 14 years.

We would firstly point out that the proposed plan period to 2026 is inadequate. PPS3 requires development plans to identify specific sites and broad locations to enable the continuous supply of housing for at least 15 years from the date of adoption. This would suggest a plan period of at least until 2028.

Response

The Core Strategy plans for a twenty year period from 2006 to 2026, as with many Core Strategies the changes to the planning system has influenced the timing of their preparation. Although the draft National Planning Policy Framework, which will replace PPS3 in due course, states that it is preferable to cover a 15 year period, this is not a requirement and 14 years is considered reasonable. The Council will have the option to undertake an early review.

Issue 2

For several years, our clients Bloor Homes have made representations to Wiltshire Council to support the delivery of a sustainable strategic site on the southern side of Chippenham at Hunters Moon.

This site offers a number of significant advantages for both the Chippenham area, and wider core strategy process, which our clients feel are in danger of being discounted should members see fit to approve the document before them today.

- The Hunters Moon site has already been tested at examination – it was assessed as being suitable for mixed use development by the Planning Inspector in the North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011 inquiry in 2005.

Response

The Hunters Moon site was considered for inclusion in the North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011. Although the site wasn't allocated, the Inspector did conclude:

“The site is undeveloped and consists mainly of rough grazing land. If there were a need to consider the allocation of greenfield urban extension sites in order to provide sufficient capacity to meet the agreed housing capacity, I accept that the objection site, in conjunction with other land in the wider ‘Hunters Moon’, is in principle appropriate for mixed-use development. It is located on the edge of the principal town within the District and the land is well-contained by clearly defined physical boundaries. There are no significant constraints in terms of agricultural land or landscape features. Development would, in my view, be seen as a logical extension of the Methuen and Turnpike employment estates and the Cepen Park development to the north of the A4.” (Paragraph 9.111 Inspectors Report)

Old-style local plans are being replaced with Local Development Frameworks, which includes Core Strategies. PPS12 states that “Core strategies may allocate strategic sites for development. These should be those sites considered central to achievement of the strategy” (paragraph 4.6), therefore it is not appropriate for the North Wiltshire Local Plan Inspectors comments to be given precedence in determining whether this site should be allocated in the Core Strategy. The Site Selection Process set out in Topic Paper 12 has assessed all the promoted sites including Hunters Moon at Chippenham against a number of factors including the delivery of the overall strategy for the town and for Wiltshire.

Issue 3

- Unlike the large sites currently identified for strategic housing growth around Chippenham, our client's site is not reliant on significant infrastructure which can delay the delivery of housing.
- The site could start to deliver housing within 2-3 years to help meet the council's short term housing requirement and protect it from unplanned development.

Response

For all strategic sites included in the Core Strategy, work has taken place to ensure they are viable and deliverable. Templates have been prepared for all strategic sites setting out criteria to be met as part of the masterplanning for the sites.

The strategic sites identified in the Core Strategy including for Chippenham will help to deliver the housing requirement in the short term. Trajectory information has been obtained for all the sites to ensure this is the case.

The deliverability of sites is not the only consideration in determining how a settlement should be developed.

Issue 4

- Our site is not located in an area of flood risk, or ecological sensitivity; points which have understandably led to widespread local opposition and objection from local people at other sites in the Chippenham area which remain as locations for large-scale housing growth.
- Our clients recognise the council's commitment to promotion of mixed-use development to encourage job creation, and are eager to work with Wiltshire Council if some employment use is considered to be desirable at part of a mixed use allocation at the Hunters Moon site.

Response

Part of the site is an outstanding employment allocation in the North Wiltshire Local Plan 2011. There haven't been any detailed proposals or planning applications for employment on this site. In 2005 employment provision was promoted as part of a mixed use development. More recently, the site been promoted for housing only.

The employment site was reviewed as part of the Workspace and Employment Review 2011. The report concluded that "*Hunters Moon, Chippenham, is located close to Methuen Business Park. It is unsuitable because it is currently accessed via narrow roads, is sloping and is relatively detached from the town. Even with significant investment on road links and site levelling it is only likely to be seen as a secondary business location which will not generate sale and rental levels to make development viable for employment uses. The site owner has not demonstrated any intention to develop this site for employment use in the last 10-15 years.*"

The delivery of employment land to enable jobs to be provided is an important part of the strategy for Chippenham. Alternative sites now included in the Core Strategy at Chippenham offer better opportunities for employment provision early in the plan period with housing and community uses alongside.

In the Wiltshire Core Strategy Consultation Document (June 2011), it was considered that the Hunters Moon site could provide an opportunity to deliver housing and contribute to meeting the strategic housing requirement for the town. This was on the basis that the strategic employment provision at Showell Farm is located nearby and it was felt that that the site could be included as part of a sustainable urban extension linking Showell Farm and Patterdown with the town centre.

Following the consultation, further consideration has been given to this issue. The Hunters Moon site topography is in particular very challenging as it contains a hill which presents a physical, visual and perceived barrier from the western side. Access to the site is currently poor and it is considered that the railway line and road to the east create barriers to the connectivity of Hunters Moon and Saltersford Lane sites with Showell Farm/Patterdown/Rowden and the Methuen park employment site and A4 to the north create barriers to connectivity with Cepen Park and the town centre. Therefore, it is now considered that the site is separated from the remainder of the area of search.

Although the Hunters Moon site could help meet the strategic housing requirement for Chippenham, it is unclear as to what other benefits this will have for the town, the strategy set out in the Core Strategy and the vision objectives. Therefore, it is considered that Hunters Moon and Land at Saltersford Lane should not be taken forward as part of the South West Area of Search at present.

Issue 5

In short, our clients feel that their site at Hunters Moon is able to provide the Council and Chippenham with a more balanced strategy for housing growth than is currently being considered. The submission Core Strategy currently relies on large strategic sites dependant on significant infrastructure projects, but excludes Hunters Moons in spite of its acknowledged potential to deliver housing and employment uses in a sustainable location.

Response

Work has taken place to ensure that all strategic sites in the Pre-Submission Core Strategy are viable and deliverable. The proposed sites for Chippenham will ensure that the community has a better balance of jobs, services and facilities and homes.

Issue 6

We would urge the council to reconsider the sites put forward in the latest Core Strategy draft document for consultation and examination by an Inspector as a result of today's meeting, and would ask in respect of Agenda Item 9: "Pre-Submission Draft Wiltshire Core Strategy Development Plan Document":

- a) Given the inspector's comments at the Local Plan review and its inclusion in all previous rounds of the Wiltshire Core Strategy; when was it decided, by whom and on what basis to exclude the Hunters Moon site from the Core Strategy put before members today?
- b) Given that the council has indicated the intense public opposition to development to the north, east and southwest of Chippenham, whilst acknowledging that there is comparatively little opposition to

development at Hunter's Moon, why are the views of local people not being listened to?

- c) Do councillors not agree that it would be sensible to have Hunters Moon included in the core strategy, as a site that could come forward in a short time frame, to help the council to maintain a 5-year housing supply?

Response

As explained above, the views of the Inspector expressed in his report regarding the North Wiltshire Local Plan are not a consideration which can be given any significant weight in the site selection process for the Core Strategy. The site selection process for Chippenham is set out in Topic Paper 12 and has had regard to previous consultations and evidence gathered as part of the core strategy process. This fully explains why the site is not included in the Pre-Submission Draft Wiltshire Core Strategy. The inclusion of Hunters Moon is not necessary to meet the 5 year housing supply.

The development of Chippenham has been the subject of significant public consultation including a number of workshops. The Strategy as now proposed takes a balanced view of the consultation and evidence underpinning the merits of the different sites. Cabinet has endorsed the Core Strategy at its meeting on 17th January 2012 and recommends that Council approve the document for consultation.