

Wiltshire Council

Extract from the Minutes of the Environment Select Committee on 11 June 2012

10 **Wiltshire Core Strategy**

Public Participation

Dr Nick Murray spoke regarding the Core Strategy.

Mr Andrew Birch spoke regarding the Core Strategy.

Mrs Jenny Raggett submitted a statement regarding the Core Strategy.

Mr T Boxall, South Wiltshire Association of Council Taxpayers, submitted a statement regarding the Core Strategy.

The Wiltshire Core Strategy has been in development since early 2009, taking forward the work started by the former district councils. It was presented to the Environment Select Committee in January 2012, and then approved for further consultation by Council in February 2012, without receiving endorsement from the Environment Select Committee.

Following the consultation, a number of minor changes are proposed to the Wiltshire Core Strategy Pre-Submission Document (draft Core Strategy). Once approved they will be submitted to the Secretary of State alongside the draft Core Strategy.

The Environment Select Committee was asked to consider and scrutinize the draft Core Strategy, and to make recommendations and comments to Cabinet ahead of Council on 26 June 2012.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Strategic Planning, Cllr de Rhé-Phillipe, was in attendance along with Alistair Cunningham, Service Director (Economy and Regeneration), and Georgina Clampitt-dix, Head of Place Shaping. They presented a report outlining the last consultation, summaries of the extent and type of comments received, and appendices listing examples of comments as well as proposed changes to the draft Core Strategy.

The Committee was then addressed by members of the public as detailed above.

A discussion followed, in which the Committee discussed various aspects of the final consultation and the draft Core Strategy, making comments including the following:

- Clarity on the Community Infrastructure Levy was requested, and it was explained that the Council was awaiting publication of regulations from Central Government.
- Air Quality in particular locations was discussed. Core Policy 55 of the draft Core Strategy refers to the Air Quality Strategy giving it policy status and the need for decisions on development to take this into account., Recognition of the importance of other strategies has been made during the production of the draft Core Strategy.
- The amount of Member involvement was raised, and it was clarified that Members had been involved throughout the process including through signing off the consultation documents, with the last stage approved by Council. In addition, all Area Boards had received presentations on the emerging Core Strategy during the course of its preparation.
- The Committee then raised that in the appendix summarising the consultation document, representations from Members had not all been included, and it was firmly recommended that it would be appropriate and preferred to do so. In response it was stated that more detailed consultation responses were available on line.
- Clarity on renewable energy policies, such as wind farm separation distance, was raised.
- Core Policy 47, 'Meeting the needs of Gypsies and Travellers', was raised as regards public perception of specialized treatment securing sites in the countryside, which was clarified as a governmental direction.
- The use of artificial administrative boundaries such as the Trowbridge Community Area as a basis for planning and development strategies was raised.
- The status of the Regional Spatial Strategies was sought. It was stated that they were still in place until formally revoked, which the government could do at any time, but officers felt they had diminishing weight attached to them ahead of abolishment due to the more up to date evidence on which the Core Strategy is based. Irrespective of revocation, the Core Strategy when adopted would carry greater weight.
- With regards to references to Area of National Beauty (AONB) within the Core Strategy, it was suggested that the draft was not always clear in differentiating which AONB was being referenced.
- The companion Infrastructure strategies referred to within the draft Core Strategy was discussed. It was suggested that the strategies did not provide extensive solutions to potential infrastructure concerns, and that either they should be developed further, or the Core Strategy clarify where solutions were not to be contained within the Infrastructure Strategies. In response, it was stated that the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) is a live document and would continue to be

developed and inform decision making as new evidence is prepared including the detail within Transport Strategies for the Principal Settlements. Officers stated that the infrastructure work underpinning the Core Strategy had shown that there were no showstoppers to development proposed.

- Consistent treatment for potential sites for railway stations was raised with reference to Core Policy 66, and it was suggested each Area Strategy includes reference to aspiration for development or improvement of railway stations, rather than specific reference of only a few within Core Policy 66. It was agreed that where stations are included within Core Policy 66 they should also be referred to in the Community Area Strategies.
- The increase in out-commuting as a result of plans within the draft Core Strategy in locations such as Chippenham was raised. It was stated in response that although the intention is to address out-commuting for the county, it is acknowledged that commuting will still happen although the level can be influenced through the level of jobs and housing provided.
- In response to queries, it was stated that officers consider that predicted levels of transport increase should be able to be absorbed within those areas, but some Committee members expressed scepticism at this.
- In response to queries, the Cabinet Member stated that the Core Strategy would encourage developers to bring site allocations forward for particular uses and would hope that developers would not sit on sites for years.
- The identification of sites at Chippenham which have raised local objection, as against alternative local sites, was discussed. The Cabinet Member and Service Director stated it would be very difficult to reconsider other sites at such a late stage when the judgement of officers is that the sites identified are still the most appropriate. All sites for development had been considered, and that concerns/objections were presented for all sites. Specific discussion of the Hunters Moon site in Chippenham as an alternative to Rawlings Green took place. The Cabinet Member promised to inform the Committee of the details of objections to the Hunters Moon site at the earliest opportunity.
- The designation of Principal Employment Areas (PEA) within the Strategy was questioned, specifically in respect of Mere, where the local member felt a recent major development merited note, and also regarding provision of one bedroom homes for Mere. It was clarified that the site in question in Mere did not meet the technical definition for a PEA, but that other encouragement within the place would support the retention of employment at the settlement.
- The impact of the consultation and response to views of the public was raised.
- Concerns were raised about the development of former and current agricultural buildings within the draft Core Strategy, and it was agreed that the title of Core Policy 48, 'Supporting Rural Life', was not reflective of its policy objective and that Core Policy 2 also provided for development to take place within villages in the rural area supporting rural communities and should be revised.

- Comments were made about inconsistent classifications of settlements as single urban entities or separate communities. Specific reference was made to the need to put in protection for the land between Wilton and Salisbury to maintain separation, and querying of the status of Seend and Seend Cleeve as separate entities, but Melksham and Bowerhill as a single urban area.
- Concerns were raised regarding the vulnerability of communities when the Core Strategy was approved before neighbourhood plans were in place, resulting in lack of protection from unwanted development. It was stated that it was hoped neighbourhood plans would be commenced in place the market towns (where strategic sites are not allocated) and local service centres within the calendar year. Officers acknowledged that funding of neighbourhood planning within communities is an issue and that provision is also made for the Council to prepare a site allocations develop plan document if necessary to help manage growth appropriately.
- The definition of Brownfield sites within the draft Core Strategy was queried. It was clarified the definition as contained in the National Planning Policy Framework had been utilized and would be distributed to Members.
- The Committee referenced the recent presentation of a long term climate change projection report and potential impacts for the county, and raised whether the Core Strategy should make reference to the predictions as they impacted on strategic plans. It was noted that there remained scepticism regarding the long term climate change predictions by some members and officers stated the Core Strategy responds to the issue of climate change.

At the conclusion of the discussion, it was debated whether the recommendation to Cabinet should include mention of specific sites and community areas as raised, or a more generalized noting of concerns and issues raised.

It was,

Resolved:

To offer general endorsement of the Wiltshire Core Strategy Pre-Submission Document (draft Core Strategy), while asking Cabinet to take into account and consider the reservations and suggestions, as contained in these minutes, ahead of submission to Council.

(Cllr Jon Hubbard and Cllr Stephen Oldrieve requested their votes in objection be recorded)