

REPORT

Cllr Noeken : Cabinet Member for Planning & Economic Development

Wiltshire Structure Plan 2016

1. Report Summary:

The following report sets out the revised proposals that will be taken forward into the Deposit Wiltshire Structure Plan 2016 as they relate to Salisbury District. The alterations were agreed by the Joint Swindon and Wiltshire Structure Plan Working Party on 2nd September and approved by Wiltshire County Council on 25th September. The alterations to the original proposals were made following a pre-deposit consultation exercise undertaken in the spring which attracted around 5,400 representations.

The original proposals of the Pre-Deposit Consultation Structure Plan (PDCSP) were reported to Cabinet on 25th June, 2003 at which time the Council's response was agreed as set out below.

- a) That the distributional strategy proposed for the county is broadly acceptable.*
- b) That there is some concern that a significantly reduced rate of housing development in the district could lead to increasing problems of affordability in the housing market.*
- c) That the evidence of windfall provision (as a proportion of the total amount of housing development proposed) needs to be more clearly justified.*
- d) That the level of strategic employment land proposed is low but considered acceptable subject to flexibility being built in to allow for a choice and range of sites to be made available.*
- e) That the District Council endorses the specific reference in the plan to the Brunel Link, Harnham and Wylde Valley Relief Roads, and the support for the reopening of Wilton and Porton Stations.*

2. Key Changes:

There are three main areas where changes have been made to the Structure Plan's proposals with regard to Salisbury District.

a) Housing Provision.

The PDCSP proposed that Salisbury District Council should provide in the region of 1500 new homes, in its future planning for the period from 2011 to 2016. Of this total, research predicted that 1000 would need to be provided on greenfield sites in the form of larger allocations. The remainder, an estimated 450 units, was predicted to come forward from windfall sites largely of a brownfield nature – typically in the form of redevelopment and changes of use.

The consultation exercise has led the County Council to reduce the amount of new housing provision expected in Salisbury District in the period 2011-2016 to around 1000 new homes, half from new allocations and half from unidentified windfall sites. This reduction was made as a consequence of an increase in provision for Swindon Borough whose growth, it was argued, had not been sufficiently focused on terms of accommodating the majority of new development in line with its status as a PUA. [see c) below].

b) Employment Land

The PDCSP's original proposals made an allowance of 10ha of strategic employment land in Salisbury District to provide for demands between 2011 and 2016. Following the consultation exercise, this allowance has been doubled to 20 hectares.

c) Settlement Hierarchy

The PDCSP originally proposed that Swindon would be classified as a Principal Urban Area (PUA) making it the focus for the majority of future development in the county as set out in Regional Planning Guidance. Below Swindon, named settlements were arranged into a hierarchy of two further tiers where appropriate levels of development should be focused in line with available services, facilities and employment opportunities. Responses to the consultation exercise commented that away from Swindon, the settlement hierarchy was too rigid and that this would restrict opportunities for larger scale housing development in modest sized settlements where it was appropriate and served the needs of the surrounding rural catchment. This view was accepted and the revised proposals allow for local plans to define their own directions for new development, subject to criteria aimed at reducing commuting, encouraging local employment and making better use of local services.

3. Officer Comment:

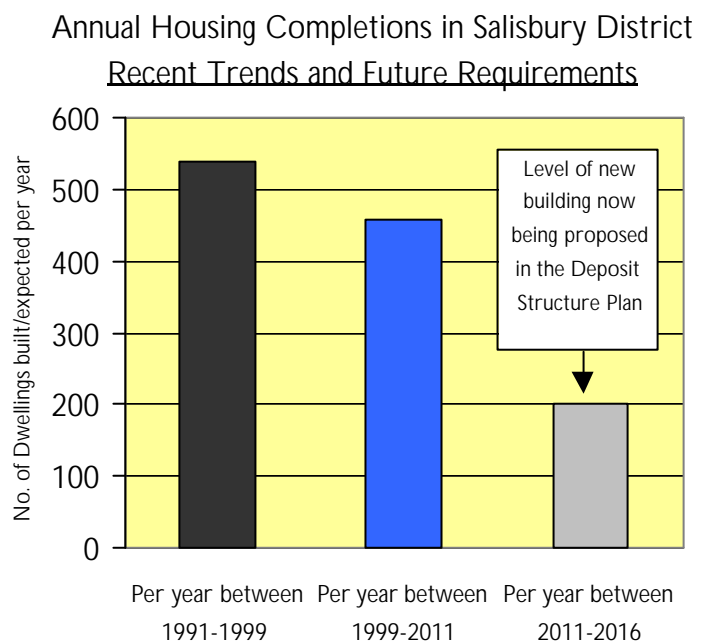
Housing : Members will be aware of the concerns expressed by officers in the previous report on this matter which related to the potential impact of reduced housing supply on affordability in the local market for residential accommodation. Officers at the County Council noted this concern in their report, yet they have further reduced housing supply to the district.

The diagram opposite attempts to show the significant drop in building rates in comparison past and current trends. From an environmental perspective this reduction can be welcomed, however, socially and economically a decline in annual building rates from a current level of around 450 per year to a level as low as 200 units per year may exacerbate current problems amongst key workers and those on lower incomes.

A further point of note is that the increased employment opportunities forthcoming from an increased supply of employment land (see following section) may not be matched by available housing. The effect of this is that commuting from other areas may increase which conflicts with the Structure Plan's overall strategy.

As a result of these concerns and further objections likely to be raised by housebuilders, this level of development is unlikely to be supported at a future Structure Plan Examination in Public (EIP).

Employment : Given the concerns expressed over the supply of employment land in the Council's consultation submission, the decision to increase employment land provision in the Structure Plan to 20ha is welcomed by Planning and Economic Development officers.



Settlement Strategy : With regard to the changes to the settlement hierarchy set out in the Draft Structure Plan, Officers are more comfortable that a locally defined listing of settlements provides a more flexible means to allocate new housing development. The criteria associated with the policy will ensure that new development is focused towards the creation of more sustainable communities.

4. Next Steps:

The Structure Plan will be placed on Deposit for formal consultation over a 6 week period from the 27th October to 8th December. Given the outstanding concerns over the level of housing requirement for the district, Officers consider that representations should again be made during this formal consultation period.

5. Recommendation:

That members note the content of this report and delegate to officers the submission of appropriate representations to Wiltshire County Council concerning the undersupply of housing proposed in the Deposit Structure Plan as set out in this report.

6. Background Papers:

"Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan - Deposit Alterations" - Wiltshire County Council Cabinet Report (25th September, 2003)

7. Implications:

- **Financial:** The proposals will precipitate the need for a future review of the Local Plan, although such a review is required in the normal plan making cycle.
- **Legal:** No comments at this stage
- **Human Rights:** The Structure Plan Review has to undergo a prescribed statutory process, which must be human rights compliant
- **Economic Development :**
- **Personnel:** None
- **Community Safety:** None at this stage
- **Council's Core Values:** Excellent service, thriving economy, fairness & equality, willing partner, communicating with the public, supporting the disadvantaged, protecting the environment.
- **Ward(s) Affected:** All Wards