

CABINET
16th SEPTEMBER 2005

REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY FOR THE SOUTH WEST 2006 - 2026:
DISTRICT HOUSING ALLOCATIONS AND SWINDON JOINT STUDY
FIRST DETAILED PROPOSALS

Purpose of Report

1. To:
 - (i) Inform Cabinet of the results of supplementary work to the Swindon Joint Study regarding the level and strategic direction of growth up to 2026.
 - (ii) Seek approval for the First Detailed Proposals on the Swindon Joint Study Area and District Housing Allocations (2006-2026) to form the Council's advice to the South West Regional Assembly to inform the draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).

Background

2. The South West Regional Assembly (SWRA) is in the process of preparing the first RSS which will replace the former County Structure Plan. At this stage in the development of RSS, the SWRA has invited the County Council to give 'advice' on two matters:-

- The Swindon PUA Joint Study
- District Housing Allocations for Wiltshire

Further information on the role of the County Council in this process is included in **Appendix 1**.

3. Following Cabinet approval in May 2005, the County Council (jointly with Swindon Borough Council) forwarded interim advice to the SWRA on the conclusions of the Swindon Joint Study. In response, the SWRA requested further information. A Supplementary Swindon Joint Study Report has now been prepared. (Further information is included in **Appendix 1**).
4. In June 2005, the SWRA published a series of Reports which, for the first time, documented the emerging thinking behind RSS and the strategy for housing distribution. For Wiltshire, two key issues emerged:-
 - The Assembly appeared to reject the County Council's interim advice on the Swindon PUA Joint Study considering that Swindon should accept higher housing numbers than the study proposed.
 - That in the 'north' of the Region (which includes Swindon and much of Wiltshire) approximately 85% of all development should be in the 'significant towns'. The only 'significant town' identified in Wiltshire at that time was Swindon.

5. This proposed concentration of growth in Swindon (thereby excluding development of any significance in the 'rest' of Wiltshire) caused great concern to Wiltshire Councils and prompted a series of meetings and correspondence with the SWRA through the Summer.
6. In July 2005 the SWRA invited the County Council to submit advice, by 13th September 2005 on the District Housing Allocations for Wiltshire. The SWRA subsequently provided advice on their expectations for housing numbers on a District by District basis. The extremely short timetable allowed by the SWRA has limited the amount of consultation time available to the County Council. However, officers at the District Councils have been consulted and involved in the technical work as far as the timetable permits.

Main Considerations for the Council

7. The Executive Summary (**Appendix 1**) provides additional information on the main considerations set out below and makes specific reference to **Appendices 2, 3, 4 and 5**.
 - **Appendix 2** contains a Project Plan briefly setting out the methodology for the District Housing Allocation process;
 - **Appendices 3, 4 and 5** form the First Detailed Proposals on:
 - The District Housing Allocations (**Appendix 3**);
 - Regionally Significant Settlements of Chippenham, Salisbury and Trowbridge (**Appendix 4**); and
 - Swindon Joint Study Area (**Appendix 5**).

These together with technical reports available in the **Members' Room** form the advice to the South West Regional Assembly.

The General Approach

8. The strategic Structure Plan Policies (for the period 1996 to 2016), endorsed by Members and Government Inspector following rigorous testing in Public Examination (despite objections by the SWRA) may simply be expressed as:-
 - Focus future housing development in the Swindon PUA, Chippenham, Salisbury and Trowbridge; and
 - Accommodate steady growth in the market towns and other rural communities to enable them to change and prosper.
9. Members have wished to see this general approach embraced in emerging RSS (for the period 2006 to 2026).

The Supplementary Swindon PUA Joint Study

10. The findings of the Supplementary Study support the County Council's interim advice that the lowest of the three levels of housing development tested (32,000 dwellings for the period 2006 to 2026) should be adopted. (Further information is included in **Appendix 1**). A proportion of this allocation (up to 2,000 dwellings) may be distributed to North Wiltshire District, subject to the outcome of further consideration by the District and Borough Councils.

District Housing Allocations - Wiltshire

11. The proposed advice to SWRA on the levels of RSS housing growth (for the period 2006 to 2026) are set out in the following Table (together with the Structure Plan levels of housing growth for the period 1996 to 2016 for comparison purposes).

Area/Settlement	Proposed advice on No. of Dwellings (Net) 2006-2026	Current Structure Plan Proposals No. of Dwellings (Net) 1996-2016
Kennet District	5,000	5,250
North Wiltshire District		
Chippenham Urban Area	4,500	3,000
District Remainder	4,500	6,000
Salisbury District		
Salisbury Urban Area	5,000	3,900
District Remainder	4,000	4,100
West Wiltshire District		
Trowbridge Urban Area	5,000	5,000
District Remainder	5,500	6,750
Wiltshire Total	33,500	34,000

12. The proposed RSS 'advice' District housing totals (for the period 2006 to 2026) are roughly the same as the housing totals proposed in the Structure Plan (for the period 1996 to 2016). The main differences at the District level are at West Wiltshire and Salisbury Districts. West Wiltshire has 1,250 less dwellings, although the level of provision for Trowbridge has been maintained. Salisbury District has been increased by 1,000 although this additional provision is distributed to the Salisbury area. The proposal for North Wiltshire seeks a higher level of the proposed growth at Chippenham with a corresponding reduction for the remainder of the District.
13. If the SWRA accepts this 'advice' then Wiltshire will continue to develop at the general level experienced in recent years.
14. For comparison purposes, in summary, the proposed RSS 'advice' on housing development for Wiltshire and the Swindon PUA for the period 2006 to 2026 is approximately a 50:50 split as follows:-

Area	Draft RSS Proposal No. of Dwellings (Net) 2006-2026
Wiltshire	33,500 (50%)
Swindon Principal Urban Area ¹	32,000 (48%)
Swindon Borough Remainder ²	1,000 (2%)
TOTAL	66,500 (100%)

¹ Up to 2,000 dwellings could also be provided within North Wiltshire District on the edge of Swindon (see paragraph 9)

² Source: Swindon Borough Council

Summary - Housing Allocation

15. The proposed 'advice' to the SWRA has been derived from robust technical assessments based upon an approach which has already been tested in Public Examination and supported by a Government Inspector. This 'advice' is likely to be outside the range that the SWRA currently has in mind. In the event that the SWRA rejects this 'advice', officers are confident that a very strong case can be argued at a subsequent Public Examination of RSS in front of an independently appointed Inspector.

Other Issues - Affordable Housing and Tidworth

16. During consultation with District officers, a common issue raised by all the Districts was the potential need to maximise housing growth in order to provide affordable housing, and in the case of Kennet, the Tidworth issue: the ability to promote a balanced community in Tidworth to reduce levels of exclusion and improve social cohesion through additional planned civilian housing growth. Both these issues have been addressed in detail within the Technical Report available in the **Members' Room**. The Appendix of that report sets out affordable housing issues and paragraphs 17-21 of the report address the Tidworth issue which is discussed below.
17. The concerns of the District are recognised and flexibility has been provided in the figure for Kennet District to allow for the possible allocation of up to 500 dwellings at Tidworth. However, it should be a matter for the District Council to determine, through its Local Development Documents, an appropriate split of housing provision between Tidworth and the District market towns. The SWRA has been encouraged to develop a suitable policy framework within emerging RSS to cover such 'special' cases and it will be important to consider the Tidworth issue when considering the County Council's response to the formal consultation on the draft RSS when it is published early next year.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

18. The first detailed proposals set out advice on the strategic planning policy for the Swindon Joint Study Area and District housing allocations for Wiltshire, which could be incorporated into the RSS for the South West. This will have considerable environmental implications. The methodology used in undertaking the work incorporates environmental considerations. Consultation has been built into the preparation of the Swindon Joint Study to understand stakeholders' concerns regarding environmental issues.

Risk Assessment and Options Considered

19. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 has introduced a new method of working to produce strategic level policies. Wiltshire County Council has a statutory role in the production of a RSS. In accordance with the Act, the South West Regional Assembly has provided a brief and timetable for this work that needs to be complied with.

Financial Implications

20. In accordance with the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the County Council has a duty to provide strategic planning expertise. Resources that were traditionally devoted to Structure Planning are available to carry out sub-regional work.

Reasons for Proposal

21. As set out in the report, the SWRA has requested that Wiltshire County Council in partnership with Swindon Borough Council produce first detailed proposals for the Swindon Joint Study Area and District housing allocations by 13th September 2005. A copy of this report has been submitted as an Officer response subject to the outcome of this Cabinet meeting.

Proposal

22. That the Cabinet be recommended to agree that:
- (i) The South West Regional Assembly be informed that the first detailed proposals for the District Housing Allocations as set out in **Appendix 3** and 'Wiltshire District Housing Allocation First Detailed Proposals - Background Technical Report (September 2005)' is the Council's advice as a strategic planning authority;
 - (ii) The South West Regional Assembly be informed that the first detailed proposals on the role and capabilities of Chippenham, Trowbridge and Salisbury in meeting the objectives of the Integrated Regional Strategy as set out in **Appendix 4** is the Council's interim advice as a strategic planning authority;
 - (iii) The South West Regional Assembly be informed that the first detailed proposals for the Swindon Joint Study as set out in **Appendix 5** and the 'Swindon Joint Study Supplementary Advice (September 2005)' report is the Council's final advice as a strategic planning authority; and
 - (iv) The Director of Environmental Services be authorised to undertake further technical work in consultation with the District Councils and other stakeholders on the role and capabilities of Chippenham, Salisbury and Trowbridge to meet the requirement of the Assembly's Brief.

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report:

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