

CABINET
15 JULY 2009

SOUTH WILTSHIRE CORE STRATEGY – SUBMISSION DRAFT

Executive Summary

The South Wiltshire Core Strategy has been in development since 2006 and has involved considerable work with partner bodies and the community to produce the proposed Submission Draft. The Council has reached the final stage of consultation where representations will be invited on the soundness of the document. At this stage in the process, the Council should be publishing what it considers to be a sound document and be able to proceed straight to the Submission stage.

The final stage involves submitting the Core Strategy to the Secretary of State who will appoint an Inspector to undertake an examination in public into the soundness of the document. In examining the document, the Inspector will consider representations received on this final stage of consultation and set out his/her findings in a report that will be binding on the Authority.

Publication of the Submission Draft South Wiltshire Core Strategy for a final stage of consultation to start by the end of July will ensure that the Council meets the timescales set out within the Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS), and adoption of the Core Strategy can be achieved by April 2010. Adoption of this Strategy in the period prior to the Wiltshire Core Strategy being adopted will enable housing land supply in the Salisbury Housing Market Area to be maintained and plan led sustainable growth to be delivered.

Proposal

To request that the Cabinet:

- (i) Approve the South Wiltshire Core Strategy Proposed Submission Draft for publication for a final eight week statutory consultation period, commencing as soon as is practicable but by the end of July.
- (ii) Endorses the South Wiltshire Core Strategy Proposed Submission Draft and recommend that Full Council, at its meeting on 15 September 2009, approve the document for the purpose of Submission to the Secretary of State subject to there being no representations which, in the opinion of the Director for Economy and Enterprise in consultation with the Cabinet Member, raise fundamental issues on the soundness of the strategy.

- (iii) Authorise the Director for Economy and Enterprise, in consultation with the Cabinet Member, to make any necessary amendments to the Core Strategy in the interests of clarity and accuracy before it is published, and to make the arrangements for consultation.

Reason for Proposal

To ensure that progress continues to be made on preparing an up to date planning policy framework for Wiltshire in line with the timetable set out in the Council's Local Development Scheme and statutory requirements.

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Service Director, Economy and Enterprise

SOUTH WILTSHIRE CORE STRATEGY – SUBMISSION DRAFT

Purpose of Report

1. To:
 - (i) Seek Cabinet approval for the ‘South Wiltshire Core Strategy - Proposed Submission Draft’ to be published for a final statutory consultation period, commencing as soon as is practicable during July.
 - (ii) Request Cabinet to endorse the ‘South Wiltshire Core Strategy - Proposed Submission Draft’ and recommend that Full Council approve the document for the purpose of Submission to the Secretary of State.
 - (iii) Set out the arrangements for the final submission and examination stages.

Background

2. Core Strategies are the principal Development Plan Document (DPD) in the Local Development Framework (LDF) setting out the long-term vision for the ‘area’ and providing strategic policies and proposals to deliver the vision. Subsequent DPDs prepared as part of the LDF must conform to the Core Strategy. The South Wiltshire Core Strategy is an important document, setting out a spatial strategy for the former Salisbury District area. This is the first step in updating the policies in the Salisbury Local Plan. Together with the emerging South West Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), national planning policy and saved policies from the Local Plan, its policies will form the basis of planning decisions in the south of Wiltshire.
3. The Implementation Executive agreed the first Local Development Scheme (LDS) for Wiltshire Council at its meeting on 10 December 2008. The LDS sets out the timetable and priority documents to be produced that will form new planning policy for the area. The continuation of the South Wiltshire Core Strategy, alongside a new Core Strategy for Wiltshire as a whole, was agreed to enable new housing sites to be identified before the Wiltshire Core Strategy is in place and ensure that a five year supply of land for housing can be maintained. This is particularly important in south Wiltshire as housing delivery has fallen short of the Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016 requirements. Efforts therefore need to be made to improve housing delivery and increase overall levels of supply. The situation is further exacerbated in the Salisbury Housing Market Area (HMA) by the step change in housing delivery that is required by the emerging (RSS).

4. The South Wiltshire Core Strategy will in effect be superseded by the Wiltshire Core Strategy, which is programmed for adoption August 2010. The spatially distinctive elements of the adopted South Wiltshire Core Strategy will be integrated into the Wiltshire Core Strategy and should remain unchanged, as they will be based on robust and sound evidence.
5. The LDS states that the Core Strategy will be published for consultation in the week commencing 20 July 2009 and will be submitted to the Secretary of State on 28 September 2009. This timescale allows for a 6 week consultation period in line with statutory requirements.

Main Considerations for the Council

6. The proposed submission draft South Wiltshire Core Strategy is the result of substantial work undertaken by Salisbury District Council prior to the formation of Wiltshire Council. Significant consultation has been carried out to inform the preparation of the document including three formal stages of public consultation:

- Issues and Options (June 2007)
- Preferred Options (February 2008)
- An additional phase to the Preferred Options (September 2008).

The final stage involved consulting every household in South Wiltshire and overall more than 150 public meetings. A high level of community participation with around 8,500 representations has been achieved. Alongside this, officers have also worked closely with key bodies including Parish and Town Councils to build the evidence and develop the Strategy.

The Submission Draft Core Strategy

7. The document sets out a spatial planning framework for the long-term development of South Wiltshire, ensuring that investment decisions are not made in isolation, but are properly co-ordinated, and that growth is accommodated in the most sustainable way. It has been prepared taking into account the views of all sections of the community, as well as maintaining consistency with national and regional policy. In particular, the Proposed Submission Draft Core Strategy sets out how the growth in the emerging RSS for 12,400 new homes and 13,900 jobs over the period 2006 to 2026, to meet local needs and to deliver economic prosperity of the area, should be accommodated. In an area such as South Wiltshire there are limited options due to its environmental constraints.
8. The document sets out a clear strategy for delivering growth in a managed way, which balances meeting growth with the protection of the environment. In summary the document comprises:
 - (i) An overall vision which sets out how the area and the places within it should develop;
 - (ii) Strategic objectives for the area focussing on the steps necessary to make the Vision a reality;

- (iii) A delivery strategy for achieving these objectives, which sets out how much development is intended to take place where, when and by what means it will be delivered; and
 - (iv) Clear arrangements for managing and monitoring the delivery of the strategy.
9. The document includes a Spatial Strategy for each Community Area. Within each Community Area, the approach is to plan as far as possible for self-contained settlements. This means focusing growth around settlements with a range of facilities, where housing and employment can be delivered in a sustainable manner. This has resulted in the identification of a hierarchy of settlements, which provides the basis for how the vision and objectives of the Spatial Strategy will be achieved.
10. The Strategy sets out, on a Community Area basis, how housing and employment needs will be met. There is an emphasis on delivery in the first five years in order to address an existing shortfall, particularly in terms of affordable housing. The manner in which needs would be met from the following sources is explained:
- Allocation of single and mixed-use strategic sites.
 - Existing commitments and completions.
 - Outstanding Local Plan allocations.
 - Future non-strategic sites.
11. Members should be aware that in order to deliver the growth at Salisbury sufficient commitment will need to be given to a demand management approach in relation to transport, in particular to address issues on the A36 trunk road. Potential solutions are being considered through development of the Salisbury Transport Strategy.
12. The type of housing needed in each area is also explained, in terms of both affordability and numbers of bedrooms. This is to ensure a continued supply of both affordable and private housing at the right tenure mix and range of sizes. A Housing Trajectory shows how the housing growth will be provided through a strategy of releasing development sites in a timely manner.
13. The Strategy has been produced working in partnership with infrastructure providers, who have scoped the measures required to support the identified growth levels. The timing of delivery essential to support the Strategy is identified, as agreed in the forward plans of the partner organisations.
14. A series of development templates for strategic sites are included in Appendix A of the Strategy, setting out the specific issues including infrastructure requirements that need to be addressed through development of the site.

15. The strategy also sets out measures to:
- Help people feel safer in their communities.
 - Provide a good access to a range of services and leisure opportunities.
 - Maintain and, where possible, enhance the natural environment.
 - Ensure the effective conservation of the built environment.
 - Develop South Wiltshire's economy.
 - Enhance Salisbury's place as a retail and cultural centre.
 - Ensure essential infrastructure is in place to support communities.
 - Address climate change.
 - Deliver new buildings which complement vernacular traditions and enhance visual appeal.
 - Provide a viable range of transport choices.
16. The Core Strategy is focused on ensuring that the desired outcomes can be delivered through tangible actions. An Integrated Delivery Plan, included at Appendix E to the Strategy, sets out detailed measures for the management, monitoring and delivery of the Strategy.
17. The Core Strategy is an important document that will guide development in South Wiltshire to 2026. Rather than produce a full summary of it in this report, which would give an over-simplistic view, it is important that the proposed submission South Wiltshire Core Strategy is fully considered. The document can be found accompanying the Agenda papers for this meeting on the website and at www.wiltshire.gov.uk/southwiltshirecorestrategysubmissiondraft.htm

Publication of the Submission Draft Core Strategy Stage and Next Steps

18. At this stage in the process, the Core Strategy is published for a final 'consultation' period to allow representations relating to issues of soundness to be made. The Council should therefore be publishing what it considers to be a sound document. To be sound, the Core Strategy must be:
- **Justified** - founded on a robust and credible evidence base and the most appropriate strategy when considered against the reasonable alternatives;
 - **Effective** - deliverable, flexible and able to be monitored; and
 - **Consistent** with National policy.
19. The Council is required to publish all its proposed submission documents as follows:
- (i) The DPD as proposed to be submitted.
 - (ii) Changes to the Proposals Map (Appendix F of the Submission Draft Core Strategy)
 - (iii) Sustainability Appraisal Report.

- (iv) Statement setting out who was invited to be involved in the Strategy preparation, how they were invited to be involved, a summary of the main issues raised through consultation and how they have been addressed.
- (v) Other supporting documents relevant to the preparation of the DPD including background papers to clarify why the Strategy is justified and effective.

(i) - (iv) of the proposed submission documents are available for inspection in the **Members' Room** and all documents are available on www.wiltshire.gov.uk/southwiltshirecorestrategysubmissiondraft.htm

- 20. At the same time that the proposed submission documents are published for consultation, the Council must also make a request to the Regional Planning Body for the South West for an opinion on the Strategy's in conformity with the RSS for the South West.
- 21. All representations received will need to be summarised and submitted to the Secretary of State alongside the other Submission documents set out in paragraph 19 and statement of conformity with the RSS. Following Submission, the Secretary of State will appoint an independent Inspector to conduct an Examination into the soundness of the Core Strategy.
- 22. The Council will not, in effect, have the ability to make any amendments to the Proposed Submission Draft following this final consultation period, as this will be a matter for the Inspector to address through the Examination of the representations received. The exception to this is where fundamental issues relating to the document's soundness are raised and the Strategy needs to be reconsidered. It is likely that the appointed Inspector will hold Public Hearings as part of the Examination Process allowing objectors to make their case to the Inspector and the Council to defend its position. At the end of the Examination Process the Inspector will, on behalf of the Secretary of State, issue the Council with a binding report.
- 23. The consultation should not normally result in any changes being made to the Core Strategy prior to Submission to the Secretary of State. It is, therefore, considered that a recommendation should also be made by Cabinet to Full Council in September 2009 for approval to be given for the submission of the Core Strategy as soon as possible following the end of the consultation period. This approach will avoid any unnecessary delay and ensure good progress continues to be made in line with the timetable within the LDS. However, proceeding straight to submission will depend on whether representations raise any fundamental issues relating to soundness that would justify delay in submitting the Core Strategy.

Consultation Arrangement

24. A new Statement of Community Involvement for Wiltshire that will set out how Wiltshire Council involves the community in developing planning policy is being prepared. In the interim period the Council needs to comply with statutory requirements in undertaking any consultations. In applying these, the Council should consider the former Statement of Community Involvement adopted by Salisbury District Council in 2006. As such, the following techniques are proposed to be used:
- 'Specific consultation bodies' will be invited to make representations. Each 'body' should receive a copy of the proposed submission documents.
 - 'General consultation bodies', including those who have responded to the previous consultation rounds, will be invited to make representations. Each 'body' will be sent a statement of the representations procedure and invitation to make representations, together with a statement advertising the documents availability and setting out where and when the proposed submission documents are available for inspection.
 - Generally representations will be invited through advertising with formal notices in newspapers circulating in the area and via the Council's website. Documents will also be made available within the Council's main offices and in the libraries.
 - Public Exhibitions to take place from 1.00 pm to 7.00 pm will be held in August at the start of the consultation period (dates to be confirmed) within each Community Area at Tisbury, Salisbury, Amesbury, Downton, Mere and Wilton. The exhibitions will use display boards and provide the opportunity for the public to look through the proposed submission documents and officers will be available to answer any questions.
25. The Area Boards relating to the south Wiltshire area should also be involved as part of this process, but due to the timetabling of their meetings the only ones that are close to the consultation period are the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Area Board meetings on 23 July 2009. Discussion is therefore taking place with the Director for Community, Leadership and Governance in consultation with the Chairs of the Area Boards in order to make appropriate arrangements for the Boards to be involved. It is proposed that these special arrangements are planned to take place at the start of September to enable discussions with the Area Boards. These meetings would allow for engagement with the Town and Parish Councils.

26. Following discussions with Members, rather than the six week consultation period scheduled in the LDS, an extended eight week period is proposed due to part of the period taking place during August.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

27. Spatial Planning has implications for the physical, economic and social environment. A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment has been undertaken for the Core Strategy. The SA has been undertaken iteratively at all stages of preparation and has been a key driver in appraising the options and the evolution of this Strategy. A Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) has also been undertaken. Both have helped shape this strategy significantly and will ensure that negative environmental impacts are avoided and sustainable development can be delivered.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

28. The South Wiltshire Core Strategy aims to positively manage growth and development in South Wiltshire. The consultation processes and community involvement has ensured that everyone has had the opportunity to inform the preparation of the Core Strategy. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out for the Core Strategy and will be available on the Council's website when consultation commences.

Financial Implications

29. Financial provisions have been made within 2009/10 budgets for consulting on the proposed submission draft document, submission of the Plan and the Examination in Public. Costs associated with the adoption and publishing of the South Wiltshire Core Strategy will need to be met from the 2010/11 budget when it is set.
30. Any significant delay in submitting the South Wiltshire Core Strategy is likely to effect the Council's Housing and Planning Delivery Area Allocation for 2009/10.

Legal Implications

31. Preparation and ultimately adoption of the South Wiltshire Core Strategy would meet the statutory obligations of the Council to have an up-to-date Development Plan in place.

Options and Risks Considered

32. The South Wiltshire Core Strategy has reached the final preparatory stage. The options considered are:
- To continue with the publication of the proposed submission draft and its subsequent submission to the Secretary of State.
 - To continue with publication but to report back to Cabinet on all the issues raised through the consultation before submitting to the Secretary of State.
 - To stop the process.
33. In order to meet the timescales within the LDS it is considered that the Council should publish the proposed Submission Draft South Wiltshire Core Strategy and that the Director for Economy and Enterprise be authorised, following agreement with the Cabinet Member, to make the necessary arrangements to proceed straight to Submission following the consultation period.
34. In addition, it would have been preferable for both Cabinet and Full Council to have approved publication of the Submission Draft Core Strategy prior to the start of the consultation period. In order to move forward expediently in line with the timetable within the LDS and in line with legal advice the minimum requirement is being followed.
35. Proceeding with the South Wiltshire Core Strategy through final consultation and examination phases will ensure that there is a clear Strategy in place for this part of Wiltshire by April 2010, and that sustainable, plan-led growth can be delivered which is supported by the right infrastructure. The risk of not progressing with the South Wiltshire Core Strategy would expose the Council to speculative proposals for housing that it will not be well placed to defend or develop in a way that maximises benefits for local communities.
36. Government is requiring that all Core Strategies be completed to agreed timescales, with key milestones being reached.

Conclusion

37. Publication of the Submission draft South Wiltshire Core Strategy for a final stage of consultation starting as soon as practicable in July will ensure that the Council meets the timescales set out within the LDS, and adoption of the Core Strategy can be achieved by April 2010. Early adoption of this Strategy in the period prior to the Wiltshire Core Strategy being adopted will enable housing land supply in the Salisbury HMA to be maintained and plan led sustainable growth to be delivered.
38. Considerable work and consultations have been undertaken by the former Salisbury District Council in preparing the Strategy, resulting in the proposed Submission Draft Core Strategy. Significant resources have already been committed to reach this stage.

39. At this stage in the process, the Council should be publishing what it considers to be a sound Core Strategy. As such, it is proposed that a recommendation should be made to Full Council to approve the Strategy at its meeting on 15 September 2009 for Submission to the Secretary of State subject to there being no representations that raise fundamental issues of soundness on the Plan. Submission should take place as soon as possible after the representation period ends in order to broadly comply with the timetable in the LDS.

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

None.