

Report

Report subject: Consultation on the LDF Core Strategy Preferred Options

Report to: Western Area Committee

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1.0 Report Summary

Responses to the Issues and Options consultation "*Our Place in the Future!*" which took place in the summer of 2007 have now been analysed by officers and used to inform the Core Strategy Preferred Options. Members are asked for their views on the Preferred Options put forward.

2.0 Purpose of the Core Strategy Preferred Options

- 2.1 The new planning system of 'Local Development Frameworks' that is replacing the old system of local plans is divided into a series of documents. One of the key documents is the Core Strategy. This is a strategic document that sets out a spatial planning framework for the long term development of South Wiltshire, with a focus on promoting the principles of sustainable development. The new planning system requires local authorities to undertake several stages of public consultation. The first of these stages of consultation called "*Our Place in the Future!*" took place during the summer of 2007 and was the 'Issues and Options' stage. This consultation was extremely successful, as over 6000 responses were received.
- 2.2 These responses have now been analysed and can be viewed at www.salisbury.gov.uk/ourplace. The Core Strategy Preferred Options has been prepared taking into account the responses received as well as ensuring consistency with national and regional planning policy guidance, and accordance with sustainability objectives. It provides a spatial expression of the Community Strategy (*Making a Difference Together – Community Strategy for Salisbury and South Wiltshire*), as well as other key strategies, including the Salisbury Vision. The issues and options consultation exercise consulted on options for the Salisbury Vision and responses to this have also been used to inform the preparation of the Core Strategy Preferred Options, thereby providing the benefit of greater synergy between the strategies.

- 2.3 The purpose of the Core Strategy Preferred Options is therefore to ascertain whether the Council has correctly interpreted the consultation responses and to assess if the Preferred Options represent what the general public and stakeholders think should happen in the Salisbury district over the next 20 years or more.
- 2.4 The Forward Planning Team is seeking Councillors' views on the Core Strategy Preferred Options for consultation. A copy of this document can be found at www.salisbury.gov.uk/ourplace, although all Members have also been sent a copy in advance as part of the consultation process.

3.0 Public Participation

- 3.1 The public participation on the Core Strategy Preferred Options is taking place for a statutory 6 week period beginning on 28 February 2008. During this time there will be many consultation events, including exhibitions and public meetings in each of the six community areas; direct notification; focus groups and on-line discussion forum; consultation with area committees and planning and economic development scrutiny panel; consultation with citizens' panel and visits to schools. The consultation arranged is in accordance with the council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

4.0 Key Issues

- 4.1 The Core Strategy Preferred Options sets out a spatial planning framework for long term development of South Wiltshire, with a focus on promoting the principles of sustainable development. It is a strategic document that provides broad guidance on the scale and distribution of development across the district and the provision of supporting infrastructure.
- 4.2 The Core Strategy Preferred Options establishes the nature of the problems and challenges faced by the district and sets out a spatial vision and objectives. The "vision" looks forward to what the district should be like in the future and aspires to meet the needs and aspirations of the people who live, work or visit South Wiltshire:

By 2026 south Wiltshire will be thriving and vibrant, where people can learn and develop their skills, enjoy a good quality of life and good health in a safe clean neighbourhood, appreciate a superb environment which makes the most of the natural landscapes and historic buildings and compliments them with exciting new buildings. It's a place where the economy is thriving and holds a consolidated place within the wider region, and where people, irrespective of their background, can realise their potential and enjoy their lives.

- 4.3 The Preferred Options document then sets out the strategic actions that we need to take in order to address the challenges faced by the district and thereby make the vision a reality:

(a) A place with a sustainable future, which has made great progress in addressing the causes of climate change.

This will need a co-ordinated approach which underpins all of our land-use decisions. It will encompass the regulation of the location of new development, planning for the provision of meaningful choice in transport modes, the construction of truly sustainable new buildings, encouragement of retro-fitting of energy saving measures to our existing building stock, the use of renewable energy and doing what we can to minimise waste.

(b) Where south Wiltshire has agreed to the role and functions of its settlements and is comfortable with how places are evolving and are related to each other.

We need to define the role which each of our settlements provides for our communities and indeed the roles they would wish them to fulfil in the future. We also need to define the functional relationship between settlements and communities to ensure growth is located in sustainable locations which affords the maximum benefit for housing, jobs and access to services.

(c) Where everyone has access to a decent, affordable home.

We will need to find 12,400 new homes in south Wiltshire to meet demand up to 2026. This will include ensuring that there is an appropriate mix of types, sizes and tenures, particularly to address affordable housing needs. This entails some very tough decisions to be taken, but the key strategic areas of growth is an issue that will not be avoided and will be set out and allocated in the Core Strategy, where the tough decisions should rightfully be taken.

(d) The economy is thriving, providing a range of job opportunities to match a growing population and where traditionally strong sectors, such as scientific research and development, continue to be world leaders.

This will entail the allocation of enough employment land to deliver 14,000 new jobs up to 2026. We will need to plan for a range of employment types and space requirements and make decisions on the sustainability credentials of potential sites. There is a need to nurture growth sectors specific to south Wiltshire such as the work at Porton Down and Boscombe Down, as well help maintain and develop the rural economy

(e) Where ongoing liaison through the Community Strategy tells us that people feel much safer and have good access to a range of services and leisure opportunities.

We need to ensure that we can contribute to safety by ensuring new developments are designed to minimize crime and steps are taken to make existing settlements feel safer. We also need to try and address hidden pockets of deprivation and social exclusion, especially access to essential services in the rural areas, by carefully planning where services are safeguarded. We should also ensure that growth is located to provide access to range of sport, leisure and cultural activities.

(f) Where we have maintained and in places enhanced our natural environment and improved managed access for the benefit of all.

This represents a real challenge to balance the sustainable growth that we are seeking regarding housing, jobs and services, while ensuring we don't compromise what respondents consider our greatest asset. This will need strong policies which robustly manage and protect the environment so that change is facilitated in a manner which does not compromise the most highly valued asset.

(g) Where our heritage assets have been shown off to their full potential such as Stonehenge and Salisbury Market Place, and we can proudly hand on our built heritage in a better state than when we inherited it.

This will require both a proactive response to enhance some of our heritage assets, such as Stonehenge and a regulatory approach which seeks to carefully control changes to our historic built environments to ensure their quality is not eroded.

(h) Where tourism is a major sector of our economy, with much higher visitor numbers and longer stays in the area, facilitated by upgraded and improved visitor facilities and greater choice of accommodation.

We need to plan carefully to ensure that we can attract greater numbers of tourists to make a growing contribution to the economy of south Wiltshire. There is a need to allocate new sites for accommodation of all kinds, but especially at the upper end of the market, together with improved quality of visitor attractions, especially at Stonehenge. We need strategic policies which address the conflict we have witnessed in our City and some of our

towns, between the growth of the night-time economy and the concerns of residents over the amount of anti-social behaviour.

(i) Salisbury's place as a retail centre that offers something different from the mainstream has been enhanced and cemented.

It is clear that Salisbury has an important role as a retail centre and that is based on the balance it provides between supplying the everyday needs of people and the niche or specialist retailing experience for which it has a good reputation. Our evidence and consultation feedback shows that it needs to develop in a sensitive manner to attract more 'high street' names while also protecting its unique character. Policies will be framed which will allow the evolution and growth of the retail sector in a manner which strikes this balance. We will also develop policies which aim to provide a good range of retail choice in convenient locations throughout south Wiltshire.

(j) Where developers accept a transparent and equitable means of making a contribution to a "Community Chest" which helps them pay their fair share for the additional demands their development will place on infrastructure and services.

We will develop policies based on a tariff system which will represent a fair and equitable means of ensuring that developers make a reasonable contribution to the added pressure that their development may place on local services and infrastructure. This will be developed in line with latest government guidance.

(k) Where high quality design is expected and delivered as a matter of course and new buildings which complement the south Wiltshire vernacular traditions enhance the visual appeal of the district.

A proactive policy framework will be put in place which will ensure a consistent delivery of high quality designed buildings through the planning process, based on 'frontloading' by publishing advice and giving help to prospective applicants through to the robust scrutiny of planning applications.

(l) A place where challenges such as flood risk, waste and reducing pollution and providing transport choices have been tackled head-on and no longer represent a major difficulty for the area.

We will ensure that a planning policy framework is in place which delivers the essential infrastructure improvements and environmental mitigation measure necessary to keep pace with the levels of growth.

4.4 The Preferred Options goes on to identify specific actions and policies that can make the vision a reality. It broadly identifies two groups of actions and solutions which are wholly dependent on the nature of the problem they are seeking to solve. These are:

- district wide solutions - From the analysis of responses, it is clear that there are a number of issues which are common right across the district and will need a single and consistent approach to addressing them.
- area specific solutions – Salisbury district is a large and diverse one where a “one size fits all” solution to challenges is not always going to be appropriate. The nature of challenges we face varies in nature and degree from place to place.

4.5 Therefore, as well as a suite of policies and actions to address the district wide, there will be a set of policies to address area specific issues. The document sets over 70 preferred options which set out the beginnings of policy development which will guide the Council in delivering the spatial vision.

5.0 Sustainability Appraisal and Appropriate Assessment

- 5.1 Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is a systematic process undertaken during the preparation of a plan or programme. Its role is to assess the extent to which the emerging policies and proposals will help to achieve relevant environmental, social and economic objectives. In doing so, it provides an opportunity to consider ways in which the plan or programme can contribute to improvements in environmental, social and economic conditions. It is also a means of identifying and addressing any adverse effects that draft policies and proposals might have. The SA must also meet the requirements of the European Union's Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive 2001/42/EC.
- 5.2 All of the options that emerged from the consultation have been tested against sustainability objectives and only those which are in accordance with these objectives have been taken forward as a preferred option. A draft Sustainability Appraisal has been prepared which comprises a detailed assessment of the preferred policies and proposals in the Core Strategy against sustainability objectives and this will be consulted upon alongside the Preferred Options document. This can be found as a background paper to this report. It is a requirement that the Council consults the four key environmental consultation bodies (Environment Agency, Countryside Agency, English Heritage and Natural England) on the draft SA.
- 5.3 Appropriate Assessment (AA) is also required to be undertaken to assess the impacts of a land-use plan against the conservation objectives of nature sites protected under European Law (directive 92/43/EEC – the Habitats Directive) and to ascertain whether it would adversely affect the integrity of those sites. There are several of these nature sites across the district and in close proximity to the district which means that an Appropriate Assessment will have to be undertaken. The draft AA will be consulted upon alongside the Preferred Options document with key stakeholders such as Natural England. This draft AA can be found as a background paper to this report.

6.0 Next steps

- 6.1 When the consultation period finishes, the Forward Planning team will read and analyse all responses received. These will be used to review the Core Strategy Preferred Options accordingly and prepare a submission version for the Secretary of State which will be subject to a further six week consultation.

7.0 Recommendation

- 7.1 That Committee make any representations on the preferred options to be taken into account by Cabinet when final decisions are taken.

Background Papers:

Draft Sustainability Appraisal
Draft Appropriate Assessment
Interim Equality and Diversity Report
Planning Policy Statement 12: Local Development Frameworks (DCLG)
Salisbury Vision Report and Sustainability Appraisal
Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents (DCLG)
Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report
Topic Paper 1 – Climate Change
Topic Paper 2 – Housing

Topic Paper 3 – Settlement Strategy
Topic Paper 4 – Supporting Communities
Topic Paper 5 – Biodiversity
Topic Paper 6 – Flooding
Topic Paper 7 – Agriculture, Farm Diversification and Rural Economy
Topic Paper 8 - Retail
Topic Paper 9 – The Economy and Employment
Topic Paper 10 – Tourism, Leisure and Night Time Economy
Topic Paper 11 – Planning Obligations
Topic Paper 12 – Waste and Pollution
Topic Paper 13 – Conservation
Topic Paper 14 – Design
Topic Paper 15 – Transport
Topic Paper 16 – Inclusive Design

Topic Paper Addendums:

Addendum to Topic Paper 1- Climate Change
Addendum to Topic Paper 2 - Housing
Addendum to Topic Paper 3 - Settlement Strategy
Addendum to Topic Paper 4 - Supporting Communities
Addendum to Topic Paper 5 – The Natural Environment
Addendum to Topic Paper 6 - Flooding
Addendum to Topic Paper 7 - Agriculture, Farm Diversification and Rural Economy
Addendum to Topic Paper 8 - Retail
Addendum to Topic Paper 9 - The Economy and Employment
Addendum to Topic Paper 10 - Tourism, Leisure and Night Time Economy
Addendum to Topic Paper 11- Planning Obligations
Addendum to Topic Paper 13 - Conservation
Addendum to Topic Paper 14 - Design and Inclusive Design
Addendum to Topic Paper 15 - Transport

Implications:

Financial: All costs relating to this consultation are planned for, and can be contained within existing budgets. Once consultation is finished, if additional work is required which cannot be contained within existing budgets, then a further report will be brought before members at that time.

Legal: Comments incorporated.

Human Rights: Article 6 (the right to a fair hearing) may apply. The consultation process contributes to compliance with this.

Personnel: None at this stage

IT: None

Community Safety: None at this stage

Council's Core Values: Excellent service, thriving economy, fairness & equality, open council & willing partner, communicating with the public, supporting the disadvantaged, protecting the environment.

Ward Affected: All.