

Wiltshire Council

Council

7 February 2012

Councillors' Questions

Questions From Councillor Chris Caswill
Chippenham Monkton Division
On Item 9 – Wiltshire Core Strategy

To Councillor Jane Scott
Leader Of The Council

Question 4

With reference to the designation of Chippenham as a Wiltshire 'Principal Settlement:

- a) On what basis was Chippenham designated as a Principal Settlement rather than a Market Town?
- b) Does this not have its origins in the assessments of the regional development process and the Regional Spatial Strategy proposals, which I hope she will agree were flawed and unhelpful to Wiltshire?
- c) Given the implications of this designation, not least in terms of expansion in the built environment that seems to follow from this designation, should not the residents of Chippenham have been consulted and their aspirations listened to?
- d) Will she acknowledge that the shortfall in that consultation has contributed significantly to the extensive and widespread opposition to developer-led expansion of the town that has emerged in every consultation that has since been carried out.
- e) Taking all this into account, should the Core Strategy not be adapted to take account of the stated preferences of local people for Market Town status?

Response

Chippenham is commensurate in terms of employment, housing, facilities, infrastructure and potential for sustainable development with the other Principal Settlements of Salisbury and Trowbridge. It is significantly better served than the largest Market Town identified in Core Policy 1. For example:

- Chippenham provides employment for 16,000 persons (the third highest in Wiltshire after Salisbury), which is some 55% greater than the largest Market Town.
- Chippenham is well served in terms of facilities – it has the third largest number of schools of any settlement in Wiltshire (some 60% greater than the largest Market Town); it has the third highest comparison retail turnover; it has the second highest number of comparison retail units;

its mainline railway station, with direct access to London and proximity to the M4 makes it one of the most attractive location for investment, which should be maximised.

- Chippenham is only one of three settlements of this scale in Wiltshire.

The designation of Chippenham within the RSS as an SSCT did not in itself influence the designation within the Core Strategy. The Settlement Strategy (Core Policy 1) has been developed in the national policy context (as was the RSS), with development being focussed at the most sustainable settlements. The identification of Chippenham as a Principal Settlement arises from its role and function which holds true irrespective of the planning framework. The strategic importance of Chippenham was also identified in the adopted Structure Plan, which was locally derived planning policy.

It is recognised that concerns have been raised by the local community regarding the scale of growth at Chippenham. Extensive consultation has been undertaken with the local community and the level of growth revised with a reduction from the 5,500 new homes proposed for the town in the RSS and Wiltshire 2026 (October 2009) to 4,000 new homes now proposed. Chippenham is one of the few Wiltshire settlements where growth has been reduced. Core Strategies must be based on robust and credible evidence and there is no compelling evidence to justify a lower scale of growth at the town.

Question 5

I believe we are in full agreement about the need for the Wiltshire Core Strategy to be “employment-led”. If so, will she outline the steps that are being, and will be, taken to embed this within the draft Core Strategy?

Response

The Core Strategy is employment led, this is reflected within the strategic objectives and a significant number of Core Policies within the document, particularly the Delivery Strategy (Core Policy 2) which priorities the release of employment land and at mixed use strategic sites ensures that employment land is phased for delivery at the early stage of a site’s development. The new Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership will work alongside the Wiltshire Strategic Economic Partnership and the Council to ensure successful implementation of the Core Strategy.