

**Councillors' Questions**

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

**To Councillor Fleur De Rhé-Philippe**  
**Cabinet Member For Economic Development**  
**and Strategic Planning**

**Question 1**

- a) What assumptions have been made about population growth in the Chippenham community area for the Core Strategy period?
- b) Given the well-known uncertainties about in- and out-migration flows to a local area of this kind, what locally researched data has been drawn upon for the Chippenham population and housing projections in this Core Strategy draft?

**Response**

Wiltshire Council has projected the population and resulting housing requirement for Wiltshire as a whole assuming four different policy scenarios (natural change, population led, economic led and job alignment led). This is summarised within Topic Paper 15. These scenarios were used to inform the development of the requirement for 37,000 homes over the plan period.

These scenarios were also applied to the Chippenham Community Area and produced the following results:

- (i) The natural change from 2009 scenario assumed that births, deaths and headship rates (persons per household) would align with the national projections (i.e. the trends from the recent past would continue) and that there would be no migration in or out of the area. This is unrealistic in a free market economy, as migration will continue and cannot be prevented. If the number of dwellings resulting from this scenario were built, they would not cater to a local need, but rather to more affluent in-migrants (largely from the South East), requiring the local population to find accommodation elsewhere. Nevertheless this scenario is considered useful as it provides a baseline. This produces a requirement for 3,100 homes.

- (ii) The population led scenario assumes that births, deaths, migration and headship rates align with the national projections. This produces a requirement for 5,600 homes.
- (iii) The economic led scenario assumes that births, deaths, and headship rates align with the national projections, and places a further requirement that the future population should be sufficient to support a proportionate growth of jobs (according to the Cambridge Econometrics economic projections) assuming that the 2001 proportionate commuting flows are maintained. This produces a requirement for 4,900 homes.
- (iv) The job alignment led scenario assumes that births, deaths, and headship rates align with the national projections, and places a further requirement that the future population should be sufficient to support a proportionate growth of jobs (according to the Cambridge Econometrics economic projections) assuming that there will be no net commuting flows to or from the area (so that local jobs provide for local residents and vice versa). This produces a requirement for 2,600 homes.

These scenarios, when considered at the Community Area level should be used with caution, as projections are inherently less robust at a smaller geography.

Nevertheless, on balance, the identified requirement for 4,500 homes for the Chippenham Community Area provides sufficient homes to support economic growth, but would not allow for recent levels of migration to continue. This level of growth is considered appropriate as it ensures the sustainability as well as the economic prosperity of the area.

## **Question 2**

It appears that the Council not reduced its housing requirement for Chippenham by a single dwelling relative to the proposals put forward in the last consultation. This appears to be based on a failure to recognise a current and predicted decline in in-migration into North Wiltshire. Should that decline prove to be substantiated, would the Council agree that these housing numbers should be significantly reduced downwards in order to avoid the damaging consequences of over allocation, such as an unnecessary loss of high quality Grade 1 and 2 farmland, green open space and, more formally, an environmental and infrastructure deficit?

## **Response**

The housing requirement identified in the June consultation was based upon the most recent national population projections and no further evidence has come to light that would negate these. These most recent national projections (2008 based) actually identify an increase in both in-migration and net in-migration to North Wiltshire. The housing requirement for the Chippenham

Community Area (4,500 homes) already assumes that in-migration will decrease, in order for the area to become more sustainable. The plan will be monitored and reviewed, as and when substantive evidence arises to demonstrate that existing policies are not achieving their objectives.

### **Question 3**

With reference to the Rawlings Farm site, to the North East of Chippenham:

- a) Does she accept that Wiltshire Council's own Sustainability Appraisal highlights a number of key 'significant adverse environmental impacts' in relation to this, for which "there are no mitigation or inadequate mitigation has been proposed or for which mitigation is considered unachievable."
- b) Why does the latest Core Strategy draft not acknowledge that proposed development on this site is in direct conflict with Wiltshire Council's out-commuting and climate change policies, and would generate more congestion and carbon emissions than alternative sites to the north and west of Chippenham of which in recent months several have come forward with a more rational basis for local employment.
- c) Given the lack of evidence as to how the Sustainability Appraisal has informed the appraisal of reasonable alternatives, which is required by the SEA Directive under Article 5(1), should not the Council reconsider the overall costs and benefits of this site, relative to more sustainable alternatives?

### **Response**

The Sustainability Appraisal has considered the social, environmental and economic effects of developing the strategic sites identified in the Core Strategy. Where significant adverse impacts have been identified, mitigation and enhancements measures have been suggested where appropriate.

The more significant strategic sites within the Core Strategy, including those in Chippenham, have been assessed as likely to lead to significant adverse effects against particular sustainability objectives where mitigation is considered difficult. This is by virtue of the scale of these developments and the fact that they need to take place on greenfield sites on the edge of the settlement rather than more sustainable brownfield sites. Inevitably growth will also lead to increased demands on energy use in the construction of the houses, through their occupation and as a result of residents' travel. This is an inherent consequence of growth and as such will be identified within the Sustainability Appraisal.

The Rawlings Green site is not in conflict with out-commuting and climate change policies. Indeed the site provides for employment land alongside housing, community uses and greenspace achieving a sustainable pattern of development in alignment with the Core Strategy's objectives.

Alternative employment sites to the west and north of Chippenham do not form part of a sustainable mixed use urban extension to the town and therefore are less able to contribute to achieving a sustainable pattern of development in order to reduce carbon emissions (paragraph 2.13, Pre-Submission Draft Wiltshire Core Strategy).

A Sustainability Appraisal Report will be published alongside the Pre-Submission Draft Core Strategy to enable the soundness of the document to be considered. The Appraisal has considered all reasonable alternatives as required by the SEA Directive.

**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.

**Questions From Councillor Judy Rooke**  
**Chippenham Lowden And Rowden Division**  
**On Item 9 – Wiltshire Core Strategy**

**To Councillor Fleur De Rhé-Philippe**  
**Cabinet Member For Economic Development**  
**and Strategic Planning**

**Question 6**

I am extremely disappointed that 800 houses have been proposed to be built on green fields and grade 1 agricultural land around Rowden and Patterdown.

One of the many challenges for this development is going to be traffic from this large estate pouring onto already congested roads in the area.

The Highways Agency supports the use of brown field land wherever possible and suggests amending proposals if suitable additional brown field becomes available. Their general position is that green field development should only take place where suitable brown field sites are not available (para.9.12 Appendix 3, Topic paper 12).

In the recent Wiltshire Core Strategy Consultation Document, (para. 5.1.21) it was made clear from the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment that there were brown field sites in Chippenham that could accommodate housing, a potential of 545 houses.

The breakdown was Langley Park – 250, Middlefield - 55, Hygrade - 55, Cocklebury Road - 25 and 160 on small sites in Chippenham.

The Cabinet Member has responded, in a reply to my question at Cabinet on January 17th 2012, only 150 houses are to be considered for Langley Park as it is an important employment site. I understand that the total area of Langley Park is 20ha and that 250 houses would cover about 7ha. It is clear that Chippenham will have an ample supply of employment land from the proposed sites in the Core Strategy at least 26.2 ha. The Workspace and Employment Land Review 2011, suggests only 13.2ha is required for Chippenham and goes on further to comment that Wiltshire Council will need to carefully consider apparent over supply of land (para 10.8, Appendix 3, Topic Paper 12).

In the light of this evidence, will the Cabinet Member now agree that it would be possible for at least 250 houses to be built at Langley Park, with a plentiful supply of employment land remaining?

Will the Cabinet Member also agree to reduce the development in Rowden and Patterdown by the amount of housing brought forward from the brown field sites in Chippenham?

## Response

One of the specific issues to be addressed in planning for the Chippenham Community Area is that *'new employment provision in Chippenham is a priority and will help to redress the existing levels of net out-commuting. New employment provision will be supported on the allocated strategic sites and on identified town centre regeneration/ brownfield opportunity sites.'*

Langley Park is an identified regeneration site, which retains a number of employers and its proximity to the railway station and town centre offers potential to secure its long term use as an important employment site for the town. The Core Strategy supports the redevelopment of the site to *"deliver a mixed use site solution for a key redevelopment opportunity area to support the retention of significant business uses on part of the site."* (Core Policy 9).

The Workspace and Employment Land Review (2011) suggests a greenfield employment land figure of 13.2ha employment land at Chippenham. However the Core Strategy provides for a higher figure in order to provide choice and encourage inward investment to help redress the high levels of out-commuting and rebalance employment and employee numbers within the town.

Langley Park is an existing site. The report acknowledges that *"that there is little developable space remaining on the existing sites and limited availability of good quality built premises... There is a requirement for new allocations, particularly around the larger settlements, to meet demand for leaseholds and also to provide space for larger design and built options."*

Therefore, whilst the continued provision of employment land at Langley Park is supported, to ensure that demand from existing and new employers are met, it is necessary to allocate new employment land as part of the strategic sites at Chippenham. The number of dwellings for the site was revised from 250 down to 150 following detailed site assessment which concluded that a lower number of dwellings were more appropriate for the site. However, in bringing forward development on the site, in line with Core Policy 9, it is recognised that the mix of uses may change depending on the viability of differing options. This could result in a higher or lower number of houses being brought forward on the site.

## Question 7

Natural England, a government body which advises on the natural environment, noted that one area of the South West Chippenham site was visibly more prominent, and that consideration should be given to this sensitivity and possibly used as additional parkland (para 9.10 Appendix 3, Topic Paper 12).

Did Natural England specify in their comments to the Council where that area was and if they did, could the Cabinet Member give a specific indication of the area?

## Response

The comments from Natural England refer to land south west of the site within the Chippenham Community Area. Details of the exact area weren't provided, although the land referred to is **not** included as part of the site. The development template for the South West Chippenham site includes landscaping criteria which are required to be addressed in the masterplanning for the site, one of which will address the concerns of Natural England:

*“Development should consider the views from Public Rights Of Way and the high visual sensitivity of the Lacock to Lyneham limestone ridge. Development should maintain the visual integrity, open views and characteristics to the east and avoid harsh urban edges fronting open countryside.”*