

1. The adoption of a Core Strategy, as well as other planning policy documents, is fundamental to realising the overarching aims of the Business Plan 2013-2017 of delivering stronger and more resilient communities. In particular, it will help deliver the following key outcomes:
 - People work together, solve problems locally and participate in decisions that affect them by developing a neighbourhood plan with a shared vision for delivering the sustainable development they need.
 - Everyone lives in a high quality environment through a new suite of policies to guide the quality of new buildings and conserve the most sensitive areas.
 - There is a thriving and growing local economy through introducing an economy led policy document which facilitates inward investment and provides a sustainable framework for economic growth.
 - Communities are inclusive where everyone can achieve their potential.
 - People have healthy, active and high quality lives, through setting a policy framework for the promotion of recreation, healthcare, enhancement of open space, introduction of a Green Infrastructure Strategy and protection of such facilities from loss.
 - People feel safe and are protected from avoidable harm as a result of good design.
2. The Core Strategy is also central to delivering land use elements of the Wiltshire Council Business Plan 2013-2017, including those relating to the Local Enterprise Partnership, affordable housing and tackling climate change. It is also the basis for service and infrastructure investment by a wide range of business interests, government departments and public agencies beyond the Council itself.

Background

3. On 26 June 2012, Full Council resolved that the Wiltshire Core Strategy Pre-Submission Document together with proposed changes, be submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination. The document was submitted on 10 July 2012, following which the appointed Inspector requested that focused consultation be undertaken on the proposed changes (including those affecting Core Policy 42 in relation to wind turbine separation distances), changes made to the Sustainability Appraisal, publication of the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Policy for Traveller Sites. The consultation response was submitted to the Inspector for his consideration. Formal hearing sessions (examination in public) took place between 8 May and 19 July 2013.
4. Following these sessions, as requested by the Inspector, the Council published proposed changes to the Core Strategy that had arisen during the

course of the examination. Public consultation took place from 27 August to 9 October 2013.

5. As part of the examination, the Inspector sent a procedural letter to the Council on 2 December 2013 requesting the Council's response on a number of matters that he had identified with the Core Strategy relating to: Wiltshire's housing requirement, level of affordable housing, Gypsy and Traveller accommodation, strategic allocations at Chippenham, settlement boundaries and town centre boundaries. The Council considered all matters raised by the Inspector and in response produced an additional schedule of proposed modifications to the Wiltshire Core Strategy, together with a revised Local Development Scheme (LDS).
6. These proposed modifications were subsequently published for public consultation over the period 14 April 2014 to 27 May 2014 together with the Inspector's own modifications on the following:
 - (i) Core Policy 42 'Standalone Renewable Energy Installations' and its supporting text;
 - (ii) Core Policy 48 'Supporting Rural Life'; and
 - (iii) Replacement of 'Saved' Policy T1a 'Westbury Bypass Package' by Core Policy 66 'Strategic Transport Network'.

At the same time, public consultation was undertaken on those proposed modifications made by the Council to address issues raised during the previous public consultation (August - October 2013), as well as the implications of the Government's Planning Policy Guidance for the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

7. The response to each public consultation was sent to the Inspector for his consideration.
8. Prior to the report being issued, the Inspector held a supplementary hearing session on 30 September 2014. The agenda was limited to matters relating to housing land supply.
9. The Inspector issued his Report to the Council on 1 December 2014. This is attached at **Appendix 1**.

Main Considerations

10. The Wiltshire Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD), forms part of the development plan for Wiltshire. The process for the preparation of DPDs is prescribed by statute and regulation, including the examination stage by an independent Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State. The Inspector's Report, as set out at paragraph 1:

"...contains the Inspector's assessment of the Wiltshire Core Strategy in terms of Section 20(5) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

(as amended). It considers first whether the Plan's preparation has complied with the duty to co-operate, in recognition that there is no scope to remedy any failure in this regard. It then considers whether the Plan is sound and whether it is compliant with the legal requirements. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework, paragraph 182) makes clear that to be sound a Local Plan should be positively prepared; justified; effective and consistent with national policy."

11. This means that under Section 38 of the planning regulations the council should take planning decisions in accordance with the provisions of the Core Strategy unless there are material; considerations which merit setting policy aside in any given case.
12. In summary the key modifications to the plan made post the EIP, as highlighted by the Inspector in his 'Non-Technical Summary', are:
 - An increase in the minimum number of houses to be provided over the plan period (to 2026), from 37,000 to at least 42,000 and revisions to their distribution;
 - A commitment to partially review the Core Strategy to enable an adequate development plan basis for decision making over the plan period to 2026;
 - A commitment to produce additional Development Plan Documents to ensure the effective delivery of necessary development. Such documents will include a Housing Sites Allocation DPD, a Gypsy and Traveller DPD based upon updated needs evidence and a Chippenham Site Allocation DPD;
 - The creation of two different affordable housing targets across the county to reflect development viability;
 - Clarification of the approach to be taken towards renewable energy to be consistent with national policy;
 - Clarity of the approach to be taken towards natural and heritage assets to be effective and consistent with national policy.
13. The Inspector's own modifications do not alter the overall substance of the plan and its policies or contradict the conclusions of the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment, both of which have been updated during the examination and take into account the Council's proposed modifications to the Core Strategy.

Next stages – the Local Development Scheme and further Development Plan Documents

- 14 An important part of the Inspector's considerations is the Council's commitment to the preparation of the DPDs as well as the Partial Review of the Core Strategy (to replace all saved policies and update town centre policies) that are all included in the Council's Local Development Scheme January 2014 (LDS). In addition, the Inspector, in his report, has drawn particular reference to a further commitment to partially review the Core Strategy in due course following a review of the SHMA.

15. As part of the examination, the Inspector sent a procedural letter to the Council on 2 December 2013 requesting the Council's response on a number of matters that he had identified with the Core Strategy relating to: Wiltshire's housing requirement, level of affordable housing, Gypsy and Traveller accommodation, strategic allocations at Chippenham, settlement boundaries and town centre boundaries. The Council considered all matters raised by the Inspector and in response produced an additional schedule of proposed modifications to the Wiltshire Core Strategy, together with a revised Local Development Scheme (LDS).
16. The LDS has been updated and approved by Cabinet in January 2015 on adoption of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.
17. The LDS sets out a timetable for production of the following policy documents (DPD's) which will also form part of the statutory development plan for the county.
 - Gypsy and Traveller Plan (site allocations and review of level of provision)
 - Chippenham Site Allocations Plan (mixed use strategic sites)
 - Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Plan (settlement boundary review and new housing allocations)
 - Core Strategy Partial Review (to replace all saved policies and new policies on town centres)
18. These Draft Plans to be in place during 2015/16 subject to local consultation