

**Wiltshire Council**

**Council**

**22 February 2011**

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**South Wiltshire Core Strategy**  
**Review of Housing and Employment Requirements**

**Summary**

Following approval of the draft South Wiltshire Core Strategy (SWCS) by Council in November 2009, the SWCS proceeded straight to the Examination in Public (EIP) stage. In July 2010, around the time the Inspector was due to publish his report, he suspended the EIP to allow the Council to undertake a review of the housing and employment figures in light of the Government's stated intention to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS). This review has now been completed, in the context of the Wiltshire-wide review of housing requirements, and as a result 'focused changes' (as defined by guidance published by the Planning Advisory Service) to the SWCS should be put forward to the Inspector for his consideration. As a consequence of the 'focused changes' other changes will need to be made elsewhere in the document. These 'consequential' changes will also be submitted to the Inspector.

At this stage, in order for the Inspector to complete the EIP, any proposed changes to the Strategy must be 'focused'. Completion of the Examination will help ensure that there is a clear strategy in place for South Wiltshire and that sustainable, planned growth is delivered supported by the right infrastructure. The risk of not continuing the SWCS would be to expose the Council to speculative proposals for housing that it will not be well placed to defend or develop in a way that will maximise benefits for local communities.

The review shows that the housing and employment requirements for south Wiltshire should be reduced from the 12,400 net additional dwellings and 13,900 jobs identified within the RSS, to 9,900 homes and 10,400 jobs. In addition, it confirms that the underpinning strategy of the SWCS to focus growth at Salisbury and Amesbury and the need to bring forward new strategic site allocations early in the plan period is still sound. However, in redistributing the lower levels of housing growth, reductions are proposed to the levels at Salisbury and Amesbury (6,000 and 2,100 dwellings, respectively), which has led to the allocations at Salisbury being reviewed. As a result of the review, land at Netherhampton Road (allocated for 400 dwellings and 10 hectares of employment land) and land at Longhedge (Old Sarum) for 350 dwellings is no longer needed during the plan period but instead has been identified as a strategic reserve with development potential in the longer term. No other changes are proposed to the level of employment land in the SWCS.

Changes are also proposed to the levels of housing distributed in the rural areas to allow for more modest growth of 1,800 dwellings, with the Local Service Centres of Downton, Mere and Tisbury accommodating 300, 200 and 200 dwellings respectively. The Localism Bill in its current form will enable local communities, through neighbourhood plans and the community right to build, to consider whether further growth would be appropriate in these areas.

## **Proposal**

That Council:

- (i) approves the proposed changes to the draft South Wiltshire Core Strategy, as set out in **Appendix 2** (both focused and consequential), arising from the review of housing and employment requirements set out in the draft South West Regional Spatial Strategy; and
- (ii) delegates to the Director for Economy and Enterprise, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Planning and Housing:
  - authorisation to undertake minor amendments, in the interests of clarity and accuracy, to the review documents prior to submission to the Inspector; and
  - submission of the review documents to the Inspector, appointed by the Secretary of State to examine the Core Strategy, for consideration and any associated steps as directed by the Inspector in order to comply with required procedures.

## **Reason for Proposal**

To ensure that a sound planning framework is put in place as soon as possible for south Wiltshire to allow the authority to manage the growth necessary to ensure homes and jobs are provided in the most sustainable way that best conserves the natural environment and maximises benefits for local communities.

To ensure that progress continues to be made on preparing an up to date planning policy framework for Wiltshire.

**Mark Boden**  
**Corporate Director, Neighbourhood & Planning**

**Wiltshire Council**

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**South Wiltshire Core Strategy**  
**Review of Housing and Employment Requirements**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To:
  - (i) Set out the findings of the review of housing and employment requirements included within the draft South Wiltshire Core Strategy, as submitted to the Secretary of State.
  - (ii) Seek approval for the proposed amendments to the draft South Wiltshire Core Strategy arising from the review;
  - (iii) Delegate to the Director for Economy and Enterprise, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Planning and Housing, the submission of the review documents to the Inspector, appointed by the Secretary of State to examine the Core Strategy, for consideration and any consequential actions as directed by the Inspector.

**Background**

2. The South Wiltshire Core Strategy (SWCS) has been in development since 2006 and involved considerable consultation with partner bodies and the community. Once adopted it will ensure a sufficient supply of housing land and plan led sustainable growth to be delivered, providing certainty to both local communities and those investing in the area. The SWCS will be merged into the Wiltshire Core Strategy at the appropriate time in its preparation to ensure delivery of a single Core Strategy for Wiltshire.
3. With the intended abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) through the Localism Bill, the Bill as it currently stands requires that a strategic development plan should be in place. The SWCS would satisfy this requirement. In addition, the Bill as currently drafted proposes the introduction of the statutory requirement for applicants of significant developments to undertake consultation on their proposed application and publicise this in a manner that reaches the majority of the local community affected. This would, if enacted, enable local communities to have a greater say in the design and shape of new proposals that come forward, such as the strategic sites within the SWCSy. Enactment of the Bill in its current form would also enable local communities through neighbourhood plans and community right to build to consider whether additional growth beyond that in the Core Strategy may be appropriate.

4. On 10 November 2009, Council resolved that the SWCS Submission Document be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination. The formal examination hearing sessions took place during March and April 2010. Prior to the Inspector issuing his report, the Government announced its intention to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS). As a result the Inspector agreed to a suspension of the examination in order for the Council to undertake a review of the housing and employment requirements in the SWCS.
5. The SWCS was based on the housing and employment figures contained within the latest published version of the RSS for the South West (12,400 net additional dwellings and 13,900 jobs).
6. In light of guidance issued by the Government in response to the stated revocation of RSS, Cabinet on 19 October 2010 resolved to undertake a comprehensive review of the housing requirement for Wiltshire and to progress this through the Core Strategy process. This guidance, issued to all local planning authorities, stated that *“Local planning authorities will be responsible for establishing the right level of housing provision in their area, and identifying long-term supply of housing land without the burden of regional housing targets”* (Communities and Local Government, 6 July 2010). The Wiltshire-wide review of the housing numbers provides the context for the review within the SWCS.
7. The lawfulness of the decision to revoke RSS has been successfully challenged in the High Court since Cabinet made its decision to undertake the review. However, given that there still remains a clear intention by the Secretary of State to formally revoke RSS it is considered important that locally derived housing and employment targets, based on up to date evidence, form the basis of the SWCS.
8. Due to the time that has now lapsed since the suspension of the examination, the Inspector held a procedural meeting on 28 January 2011 to determine how the SWCS examination should proceed. The Inspector made it clear at the meeting that in order for the examination to continue, any changes to the document would need to be focused rather than extensive. In the event that he considered the changes to be extensive, the Council would be asked to withdraw the SWCS.

### **Main Considerations for the Council**

9. As a responsible planning authority, particularly given the intention to revoke RSS and regionally imposed targets, Wiltshire Council needs to have an understanding of the level of homes and jobs that Wiltshire should plan for in order to ensure that its communities are vibrant and sustainable places in which to live and work. Wiltshire’s Community Plan ‘People, Places and Promises’ sets out three priorities, which are directly related to the need to plan for new homes and jobs:
  - (i) Creating an economy that is fit for the future - includes the need to ensure an appropriately skilled workforce that is less reliant on the public sector, and provide support for local business.

- (ii) Reducing disadvantage and inequalities - includes addressing the lack of affordable housing by building new homes and bringing empty homes back into use.
  - (iii) Tackling the causes and effects of climate change - includes the ambition to reduce transport emissions.
10. In line with the Cabinet resolution to undertake a comprehensive review to determine a new housing requirement for Wiltshire and progress this through the core strategy process, initial work has now been undertaken. A summary of the methodology is provided in **Appendix 1** and a full technical paper provided on <http://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=130&Mid=944&Ver=4> This identifies a range that can be used to determine a draft housing requirement for Wiltshire. In order to ensure the sustainable development of south Wiltshire, the level of homes to be planned for should contribute towards: supporting the self containment of settlements; helping address housing needs; create an economy that is flexible, adaptive and competitive; and safeguard the natural and historic environment where possible by ensuring the impacts of development are capable of mitigation.
  11. Outside of South Wiltshire, targeted consultations with representatives of local communities are being undertaken to help develop our understanding of the appetite for growth. This information, together with other evidence, will help inform appropriate distributions of housing for each community area that can then be balanced against the Wiltshire wide range identified (35,900 to 43,200, which reduces to a level of approximately 18,800 to 26,100 new dwellings if existing completions and commitments are taken into account) to inform an overall draft housing requirement for Wiltshire. This will be widely consulted on in the spring this year.
  12. For South Wiltshire, it is possible to derive a figure for the area (former Salisbury district). From the work undertaken it is clear that a reduction in figures can be justified, which results in a requirement for the SWCS to plan for 9,900 net additional dwellings in the period 2006 to 2026, rather than the 12,400 net additional dwellings required by the RSS for the South West. Paragraphs 2.17 to 2.20 of **Appendix 1** set out in more detail how this figure has been derived. The distribution of this new housing requirement for south Wiltshire and implications for the draft SWCS is discussed in detail in the technical report accompanying the Agenda papers for this meeting on the website at <http://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=130&Mid=944&Ver=4>. The key findings are summarised below.
  13. The review takes into account new evidence and gives further consideration to the representations that were received during the extensive consultation processes that were undertaken in the development of the SWCS. This has meant that a balance needs to be found between the growth required to meet the challenges faced by south Wiltshire with the ability of the local environment to accommodate growth in a sustainable manner. The findings of the review have been used to determine how the SWCS, as submitted to the Secretary of State, should be amended.

14. The key findings of the review can be summarised as follows:

- The SWCS should be planning for 9,900 net additional homes in the period 2006 to 2026, rather than 12,400, which although lower is still challenging and ambitious compared to historic rates.
- The SWCS should be planning for 10,400 jobs, not the 13,900 within draft RSS, which means the provision of 50 hectares rather than 60 previously proposed.
- Growth should be focussed on Salisbury/Wilton and Amesbury as the most sustainable places.
- Provision should be made to allow for modest growth to take place in the smaller rural communities to support their vitality.
- The need to develop new strategic sites early in the plan period to deliver new homes and jobs, supported by the appropriate infrastructure, remains an important part of the SWCS.
- Not all of the growth proposed to be delivered through the Strategic Site Allocations (SSAs) is justified given the lower levels of growth.
- A systematic appraisal of the SSAs has identified land that should not be brought forward at this time but instead be identified as a strategic reserve with development potential in the longer term.
- In South Wiltshire, the environment is the overriding constraint to growth. The need for affordable housing and economic growth must be balanced with the environmental capacity of South Wiltshire.

15. The proposed focused changes to the SWCS, in light of the review, generally relate to Core Policies CP1 and CP2 together with consequential changes. These are set out in **Appendix 2** and can be summarised as:

- 6,220 dwellings to be delivered in the Salisbury and Wilton Community Areas, with 6,000 focused at Salisbury and Wilton (of which 1,900 is already completed or committed) - compared with 8,050 dwellings in the SWCS.
- Strategic site allocations (SSAs) to deliver 3,950 dwellings at Salisbury and Wilton - compared with 4,700 in the SWCS.
- SSA at Netherhampton Road (400 dwellings and 10 hectares employment land) to be deleted from Policy CP2 and referred to as a long-term strategic reserve within the text.
- SSA at Longhedge (Old Sarum) to be retained but reduced from 800 to 450 dwellings (employment to remain unchanged) and the potential for the additional 350 dwellings to be referred to as a long term strategic reserve in the text.

- The development template for the Hampton Park SSA will be revised to require a larger strategic gap with Ford and flexibility over the future function of the green open space, with the establishment of a community forum to guide development.
  - 2,395 dwellings to be delivered in the Amesbury Community Area with 2,100 of this focused at Amesbury - compared with 2,650 dwellings including 1,960 at Amesbury in the SWCS.
  - Local Service Centres (LSCs) of Downton, Mere and Tisbury to deliver 300, 200 and 200 dwellings respectively - compared with 190, 270 and 160 dwellings respectively in the SWCS.
  - Outside the LSCs in the rest of the Southern, Mere and Tisbury Community Areas 365, 0 and 220 dwellings respectively to be delivered - compared with 550, 20 and 280 dwellings respectively in the SWCS.
16. A full copy of the SWCS, incorporating proposed changes (focused and consequential), accompanying the Agenda papers for this meeting is on the website at <http://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=130&MIId=944&Ver=4>. This includes tracked changes to set out the focused changes and associated consequential changes necessary to the document in light of this review.

### **Environmental Impact and Climate Change Considerations**

17. 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 and its review. 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. All strategic sites within the SWCS are required to deliver 10% renewable energy as detailed in the development templates of the SWCS.

### **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

18. 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. The Inspector will determine the need for further consultation following submission of any proposed focused and consequential changes. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out for the Core Strategy and is available on the Council's website.

## **Risk Assessment and Options Considered**

19. The Inspector has only agreed to the review in order to allow the Council to consider the housing and employment requirements. Council agreed to submit the SWCS in November 2009 and the proposed changes to the document are now necessary in light of new evidence on the level of housing and employment growth that south Wiltshire should plan for and the clear intention to revoke the RSS. Further changes to those proposed within the report could lead to the Inspector concluding that the proposed changes are no longer 'focused'. In such circumstances, he could either recommend that the SWCS be withdrawn or issue his report based on the SWCS as submitted in 2009.
20. As reported to Council on 9 November 2009 it remains important, if not more so given the time that has now lapsed, that progress continues to be made on the SWCS, for a number of reasons:
  - (i) The Salisbury District Local Plan, originally only intended to cover the period up to 2011, is becoming increasingly out of date. It is a statutory requirement to prepare a Core Strategy.
  - (ii) The Core Strategy once adopted will create the right framework to deliver economic growth, ensuring South Wiltshire is well positioned to attract investment as the economy improves.
  - (iii) New housing land needs to be identified in order to ensure that an appropriate amount of housing supply is available, and economic growth is supported. The Core Strategy will provide a clear strategy for where, how and when new housing should be provided in South Wiltshire. Without a supply of suitable land, Salisbury is vulnerable from speculative applications and at risk of the appeal process and associated costs.
  - (iv) Wiltshire Council will lose the ability to ensure developers and service providers deliver the necessary infrastructure to support communities and future growth.
  - (v) Delay would mean that the evidence base underpinning the SWCS will become increasingly out of date, which places the risk of its policies being found unsound when it does reach examination leading to increased costs and abortive work.
21. The Localism Bill, as currently drafted, requires a strategic plan to be in place and the SWCS would fulfil this requirement in this part of the area.

## **Financial Implications**

22. Financial provisions have been made within 2010/11 budgets for completing the examination of the SWCS. Costs associated with the adoption and publishing of the SWCS will be met from the planned 2011/12 budget.



23. Any further delay in taking forward the SWCS, particularly the strategic site allocations, could affect the Council's ability to claim the proposed New Homes Bonus on new dwellings.

### **Legal Implications**

24. Preparation and ultimately adoption of the SWCS would meet the statutory obligations of the Council to have an up-to-date Development Plan in place.

### **Conclusion**

25. The review of the number of homes and jobs to be planned for within South Wiltshire in the period 2006 to 2026 clearly indicates that lower levels of growth are justified. It has confirmed that the underpinning strategy to bring forward strategic sites early in the plan period is still valid and deliverable given the proposed reduction in housing numbers, although less land for strategic site delivery will be needed. It has also confirmed that the focus for growth should still be on Salisbury and Amesbury, while ensuring the more rural areas have a modest level of growth to support the vitality of rural communities.
26. Proposed changes (focused and consequential) to the SWCS should be submitted to the Inspector in light of the review. The Inspector will then consider how he wishes to respond and may require the Council to undertake further consultation before reopening the hearing sessions and finally issuing his report. Completion of the examination will help ensure that there is a clear Strategy in place for South Wiltshire at the earliest opportunity and that sustainable, plan-led growth can be delivered which is supported by the right infrastructure.
27. The risk of not continuing with the preparation of the SWCS would be to 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.

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

None

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Wiltshire Housing Requirement  
Appendix 2: Proposed Changes to Submission Draft South Wiltshire Core Strategy