



Chippenham Site Allocations Plan

Briefing Note 2: Definition of the Chippenham Strategic Areas

(updated January 2015)

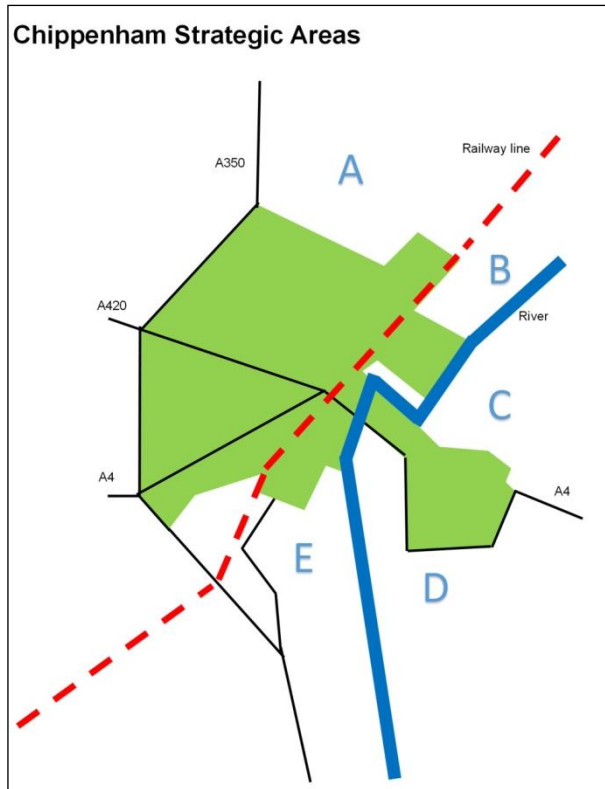
Wiltshire Council is preparing the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan, which will set the long term pattern and direction of growth for the town's expansion. This briefing note is one of a number of papers which have been/will be created to support the progress of the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan. This note explains the definition of the Chippenham Strategic Areas.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper updates 'Briefing Note 2: Definition of Strategic Areas' published in October 2014 and was produced following receipt of the Inspector's 'Report on the Examination into the Wiltshire Core Strategy (December 2014)',
- 1.2 The Wiltshire Core Strategy¹ includes a diagrammatic representation of Chippenham showing 'strategic areas' around the urban edge in the countryside, south and east of the town. The text within the Core Strategy (as proposed to be adopted on 20th January 2015) summarises the rationale behind this as set out below.

"5.54a Core Policy 10 identifies a need to identify at least a further 2625 dwellings (once existing completions and commitments have been taken into account) and 26.5ha of land for employment development on land adjoining the built up area. The Chippenham Site Allocation DPD will identify mixed use land opportunities necessary to deliver at least this scale of growth. In this context there are a number of strategic areas where large mixed use sites could be located and directions for growth are shown diagrammatically below:

¹ Wiltshire Core Strategy Proposed Adoption Version (January 2015)



5.54b These broad ‘strategic areas’ for growth are indicated by barriers such as main roads, rivers and the main railway line. The A350 may be considered as one such barrier to development. The Chippenham Site Allocations DPD will assess how each of these areas performs against criteria contained in Core Policy 10.”

- 1.3 The Core Strategy Inspector’s Report clarifies the wording in paragraph 5.54b in relation to the A350 and states:

”The Council’s proposed changes include a basic diagrammatic indication of where future mixed use strategic sites could be located within the text of the CS (Core Strategy). The diagram, which is informed by earlier evidence, should be considered as merely indicative and until such time as further preparatory work upon the Site Allocation DPD [Development Plan Document], including SA [Sustainability Appraisal], is undertaken it should not be interpreted as specifically including or excluding potential reasonable locations for necessary development; for this reason and without any prejudice to the Council’s plan making process, I amend the specific reference to the A350 within my recommended modifications to ensure adequate flexibility within the plan.”²

- 1.4 While accepting the Council’s approach to selecting strategic sites, the Inspector did not wish to prejudge the consideration of alternative locations around the town which could be expected to form part of the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan process, or come to any particular view on the strategic areas.
- 1.5 This paper prepared, as part of the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan process provides detail about how the strategic areas in the Wiltshire Core Strategy have been defined and specifically why no areas have been identified west of the town. It reviews and summarises

² Report on the examination into the Wiltshire Core Strategy, The Planning Inspectorate, 2014, paragraph 230

earlier evidence developed through the preparation of the Wiltshire Core Strategy as well as further evidence gathered in the preparation of the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan.

- 1.6 The purpose of strategic sites and the process of identifying land to accommodate them are each explained in separate briefing papers³.

2. The Definition of Strategic Areas

- 2.1 The strategic areas show areas of search for strategic sites, to meet the needs of Chippenham as identified in the Wiltshire Core Strategy. Selecting a preferred area(s) and then site options within the strategic area will set the long term pattern of the town's future growth.
- 2.2 Main roads, rivers and the main railway line define the boundaries to strategic areas. These components represent barriers to development. They are not necessarily insurmountable barriers preventing development beyond, however their significance and their role does affect how the town's growth can proceed in terms of costs, linkages and constraints.
- 2.3 For instance, the river and the areas at risk of flooding alongside, represent a corridor of land which should be left undeveloped. Crossing this corridor involves additional costs, influences how new development could link to the existing town and constrains where development can be located.
- 2.4 Main transport infrastructure in the form of railway lines and main roads also influence how links are made to the existing town and crossings; bridges and junction improvements can also involve significant costs. These too affect the feasibility of different patterns of development and how the town can grow.
- 2.5 Together these elements have influenced how the town has grown in the past and they will continue to do so. They therefore represent an appropriate foundation for a broad brush framework to consider the town's long term growth.
- 2.6 The land to the south of Chippenham between the railway and the A350, known as Hunters Moon has not been included as a strategic area because development has already been accepted in principle here and it is a physically contained area. A planning application (reference N/13/01747/FUL) for 450 homes and 2.5 ha of employment land was permitted subject to the signing of a Section 106 legal agreement in January 2014. A planning application (application reference N/ 12/00560/OUT) for land at North Chippenham was also permitted subject to the signing of a Section 106 legal agreement in April 2014. However, as this site forms part of a wider strategic area and has a relationship with other strategic areas, which will need to be considered holistically, it is still included.

3. West of Chippenham

- 3.1 The Core Strategy shows strategic areas east of Chippenham (strategic areas A - E). Each of the strategic areas is being assessed to see how they perform against criteria contained in

³ Chippenham Site Allocations Plan Briefing Paper 1: Chippenham Strategic Site Selection Methodology and Briefing Paper 5: The Role of Strategic Sites, August 2014

the core strategy as well as the sustainability appraisal (see Section 5 below). This will culminate in a preferred area(s) being selected.

- 3.2 No strategic areas have been identified west of the A350. This is a continuation of a previous approach utilised by both North Wiltshire District Council and Wiltshire Council⁴. Preparation of the North Wiltshire Core Strategy included consideration of broad directions for growth. Preparation of the Wiltshire Core Strategy reviewed this as well as other evidence and proposed specific strategic site allocations to the east of the A350⁵. However, all strategic sites at Chippenham were removed from the draft Core Strategy at the suggestion of the Inspector examining the plan's soundness.
- 3.3 The former North Wiltshire District Council's 'North Wiltshire Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation document'⁶ proposed options for growth at Chippenham. It consulted on options for growth in an eastern and southern direction, but did not suggest options west of the town. It was thought that the 'Chippenham Western bypass', with its opportunity in the future for becoming a dual-carriageway, was a serious constraint to linking any new expansion into the town⁷.
- 3.4 The 'Wiltshire 2026 Strategic Sites Background Paper 2009'⁸ originally prepared to inform the Wiltshire Core Strategy, excluded potential strategic sites to the west of Chippenham as they were adjacent to the A350 and are separated from the rest of the town. The A350 is part of the County's National Primary Route network and has safeguarded land for dualling⁹ (the role of the A350 and its importance is discussed further in Section 4 below). This position was confirmed following consultation stages and a reassessment of strategic site options as reported in 'Topic Paper 12 Site Selection Process'¹⁰. The diagram in the core strategy was led by this evidence and continues this approach since no new factors had emerged necessitating a different view. Successive Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments have shown overwhelming land owner and developer interest east of the A350 and no alternative mixed use strategic sites to the west of the A350 have been promoted by developers in the same way as elsewhere.
- 3.5 Some responses to the consultation carried out on the suggested change to Core Policy 10 (March to April 2014) as part of the Core Strategy process queried why no strategic areas were identified west of the A350. However, they did not provide any substantive evidence as to why this area was suitable for strategic mixed use sites at Chippenham. Informal consultation with stakeholders on the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan has not substantiated disagreement with the strategic areas that have been defined. With the preparation of the Plan several potential developers and land owners have come forward looking to develop detailed proposals and submit planning applications for significant scales

⁴ North Wiltshire Council was the Local Planning Authority for the Chippenham area responsible for preparing a statutory development plan (the North Wiltshire Local Development Framework) until its abolition and the replacement by Unitary Authority for Wiltshire in 2008. Previous work by the District Council contributed to the preparation of the Core Strategy.

⁵ Core Policy 10, Wiltshire Core Strategy Pre-Submission Document, February 2012

⁶ Core Strategy Second Issues and Options Consultation, North Wiltshire District Council, May 2007 (paragraphs 8.189 - 8.200)

⁷ Core Strategy Second Issues and Options Consultation, North Wiltshire District Council, May 2007 (paragraph 8.200)

⁸ Wiltshire Core Strategy Strategic Sites Background Paper, Wiltshire Council, December 2009 (pp 13 - 28)

⁹ Wiltshire Core Strategy Strategic Sites Background Paper, Wiltshire Council, December 2009 (p 27)

¹⁰ Topic Paper 12: Site Selection Process, Wiltshire Council, January 2012, Appendix 3 (pp 46 -123)

of development¹¹. No developers or land owners have come forward promoting land in their control west of the A350 claiming it has the potential to accommodate a strategic site involving large scale residential development. Preparatory work involved in the preparation of the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan thus far confirms the previous conclusion that identifying one or more strategic sites west of the A350 does not represent a realistic or reasonable option for detailed investigation.

- 3.6 The definition of the set of strategic areas therefore encapsulates a long standing understanding of Chippenham's realistic growth options.
- 3.7 More recently landscape setting assessment work has reviewed the role and character of the area west of the A350 and describes it as follows:

"To the west of Chippenham beyond the A350 the landscape is open with often expansive views over long distances. Hedgerows are typically low and there are relatively few hedgerow trees, although this varies with a greater degree of enclosure closer to the railway, around farmsteads and properties and around smaller fields and watercourses. Westerly views include woodland around Corsham Park and distinctive blocks of woodland on rising ground around Sheldon Manor and also White Wood, Hay Wood and Grubbins Wood. Frequent long distance views towards Chippenham are possible from many of the rural roads through this landscape. Compared with the northern, eastern and southern edges of the settlement these are some of the more open views towards Chippenham and include housing and commercial development at Chippenham Retail Park (near Bristol Road and West Cepen Way) , the white clad buildings are often the most discernible elements of the views of this edge. The churches (St Paul's and St Andrew's) are discernible but due to distance they are not prominent and often backgrounded by the limestone ridge which forms a prominent backdrop to Chippenham to the east."¹²

- 3.8 Significant and extensive mixed use development in this area would be likely to have a considerable impact upon a wide area and fundamentally change the town's setting. In particular from the south west of the town across the A350 there is Corsham Park, a registered Park and Garden, and this extensive area is afforded particular statutory protection. Particular reference is made in the landscape assessment, as follows:

"Historic parks and gardens are a fragile and finite resource, they can easily be damaged beyond repair or lost forever. The Registered Park and Garden and grade II listed status of Corsham Park affords it appropriate protection and is a material consideration in the planning process. However, some of the areas outside are also sensitive and contribute to the setting. The most sensitive area is land north of the A4, which can be viewed from the vista from Corsham Court. The attached plan recommends that this land is safeguarded. Land to the east of the park providing separation with Chippenham is also sensitive. Any future growth and expansion of Chippenham to the west will need to respect the setting of the park. The conservation area associated with Westrop located to the south eastern edge*

¹¹ Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), Wiltshire Council, 2012 & monitoring of SHLAA sites up to January 2015

¹² Chippenham Landscape Setting, TEP, December 2014, paragraph 4.27

¹³ Chippenham Landscape Setting, TEP, December 2014, paragraph 4.37

*of the Park, also provides an appropriate buffer and should help safeguard the landscape setting”.*¹³

- 3.9 Further evidence therefore shows the west of the A350 to be visually prominent and that it performs poorly if judged against criterion 5 of core policy 10 of the core strategy. There are potential visual impacts on the locality and character and appearance of the landscape in a range of views, particularly in respect of views from the south and west.
- 3.10 The area also contains several other heritage assets. Allington Conservation Area is located west of the A350, north of the A420. West of the A350 is also an area of known archaeological interest. Further work is establishing that there are potentially significant Roman remains and other potential Iron and Bronze Age archaeological sites of interest.

4. The role of the A350

- 4.1 The A350 at Chippenham forms part of the national primary route network linking M4 to A36 and is a strategically important route for Wiltshire. As such it does not have equivalent status as a barrier to development when compared to the other main roads in and around Chippenham (with the exception of the A4 to the west of Chippenham up to the A350), which is significantly less. Core policy 66¹⁴ provides specific emphasis upon maintaining the strategic transport network along the A350 corridor to support development growth at Chippenham, Melksham, Trowbridge, Westbury and Warminster. Therefore the A350 has greater weight as a barrier. Transport studies supporting the preparation of the Wiltshire Core Strategy refer to the fact that the A350 forms the town’s connection to the national strategic network¹⁵. The A350 runs to the west of the town and roughly forms its western boundary.
- 4.2 The A350 is a key part of Wiltshire’s Primary Road Network, around Chippenham it is currently a single carriageway two-way road with at-grade junctions, with land reserved to allow for its dualling in the future. To the north the A350 connects with the M4 at Junction 17, en route to Malmesbury and Cirencester north of the M4. To the south, it provides a strategic link through Wiltshire, connecting with settlements such as Melksham, Trowbridge and Westbury, before joining the A36(T) at Warminster. The A36(T) connects the Bristol and Bath area with the south coast and the ports of Portsmouth and Southampton.
- 4.3 The A350 carries the highest volume of traffic and HGV movements on Wiltshire’s non-trunk road primary routes and has experienced locally significant traffic growth¹⁶. Growth in Chippenham over the plan period is likely to lead to increased use of the A350 to the west of Chippenham. Major development by the allocation and delivery of mixed use strategic sites west of the A350 would add a far greater burden on its capacity, directly undermining the roads higher strategic role to Chippenham and Wiltshire.
- 4.4 Transport studies have concluded that it is considered essential to protect the strategic role of the A350 within Wiltshire’s road network. Mitigation schemes at key junctions on the A350

¹⁴ Wiltshire Core Strategy Proposed Adoption Version (January 2015)

¹⁵ Chippenham Transport Strategy Development: Final Report, SKM , May 2013 and Chippenham Transport Strategy Development : Land Allocation Report, January 2012

¹⁶ Chippenham Transport Strategy Development: Final Report, SKM , May 2013 p25

may be necessary so that the planned growth in Chippenham can be accommodated without detriment to strategic traffic¹⁷.

- 4.5 The Strategic Economic Plan (SEP)¹⁸ prepared by the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Partnership has been developed. This notes that a large number of Wiltshire's most innovative firms are located around the renowned high tech M4 Corridor to the north and along the A350. It is therefore a key economic artery through the west of Wiltshire¹⁹. The SEP has successfully submitted transport investment bids to the Government. These have the aim of ensuring the A350 positively contributes to the economy through improvements that can provide reliable journey times for business in Wiltshire²⁰ and are discussed further below. This evidence reinforces the understanding that the A350 has a particularly important wider strategic role. The SEP confirms the wider importance placed upon the A350, which make options for development that involve breaching and building beside it much more difficult to achieve without compromising its strategic role. The A350 therefore represents a barrier to development and a logical boundary to the town.
- 4.6 The Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Partnership secured £129.3m from the Government's Local Growth Fund to support economic growth - with £12m of new funding confirmed for 2015/16 and £50.1m for 2016/17 to 2021. This includes a provisional award of a further £55.9m of funding for projects starting in 2016; one of which is dualling the A350 north of Chippenham from Badger Roundabout to Chequers Junction²¹.
- 4.7 The A350 unlike all other roads in the Plan area is a part of the strategic road network that also functions as a by-pass to the town. This role is reinforced by its imminent enlargement to dual carriageway the majority of its length around the western side of Chippenham. A dual rather than single carriageway creates a barrier that separates off more firmly still the town from the countryside beyond. It is a clear and logical boundary to the town which should not be breached unless other options are exhausted.
- 4.8 In addition to the A350 representing a physical barrier disconnecting land west from the town, the area also falls within a source protection zone for Chippenham boreholes and its water supply complicating design issues and increasing potential costs, as well as increasing, inevitably, risks of groundwater contamination as a result of urbanisation.

5. Sustainability appraisal

- 5.1 The strategic areas are also being assessed using sustainability appraisal. Sustainability appraisal is an assessment that reports on the likely environmental, social and economic effects of growth options in order to inform decision making and is an iterative part of the development plan process. This work is being carried out independently to the Council. Due to the reasons set out above land west of the A350 does not constitute a reasonable

¹⁷ Chippenham Transport Strategy Development: Final Report, SKM , May 2013 p63

¹⁸ Aligning Local Innovation With Government Ambition, Strategic Economic Plan, Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Partnership, March 2014

¹⁹ Aligning Local Innovation With Government Ambition, Strategic Economic Plan, Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Partnership, March 2014, p46

²⁰ Aligning Local Innovation With Government Ambition, Strategic Economic Plan, Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Partnership, March 2014 p11

²¹ Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Deal, Cabinet Office and Deputy Prime Minister's Office, 7 July 2014

alternative to the other locations for the identification of strategic mixed use sites, strategic areas A to E, that are indicated in the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The assessment undertaken to develop the Diagram in the Core Strategy to inform the identification of mixed use strategic sites in the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan indicated that land west of the A350 did not merit further investigation. This evidence has been reviewed and together with further evidence gathered in the preparation of the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan has confirmed earlier evidence developed through the preparation of the Core Strategy that it is unreasonable to investigate allocating one or more strategic sites west of the A350.

Further information:

For further information in relation to the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan visit the Council's web site:

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planninganddevelopment/planningpolicy/chippenhamsiteallocationsplan.htm>

Or contact Spatial Planning via email: spatialplanningpolicy@wiltshire.gov.uk or telephone: 01225 713223.

Other Briefing Papers:

Briefing Paper 1: Chippenham Strategic Site Selection Methodology

Briefing Paper 3: The Housing Requirement for Chippenham

Briefing Paper 4: Relationship with Neighbourhood Plans

Briefing Paper 5: The Role of Strategic Sites