

General Members Forum Wednesday 6th June 2007
(Forum 1 at 3.30pm and Forum 2 at 6pm)
Monkton Park
Chippenham

- 1) Question regarding what sort of jobs and the location (referring to the 6,300 jobs outlined in the Draft RSS).
 - **This is what the consultation process strives to address**

- 2) What does the West of Swindon have to do with North Wiltshire?
 - **The 1000 homes form an extension to the West of Swindon but will be situated within North Wiltshire's Administrative boundary.**

- 3) Where do the housing numbers in the RSS come from?
 - **Stressed that the figures presented are a minimum figure and there is a good chance that these figures will increase.**
 - **The RSS has a legal function to direct how much development should be in the region.**
 - **There is an on-going debate about the likely increase in these numbers and the original figures did not take into account population figures.**
 - **The calculation for the figures is based on the economic prospects disaggregated across the region. Housing need is then based on this figure.**
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- 4) How much lobbying did NWDC do for the RSS and in particular how did the Council argue for the housing figures for the District?
 - **NWDC actively lobbied to promote Chippenham as a Strategically Significant Town.**
 - **If not, it would have meant that the District could have been marginalised in terms of the direction of growth.**
 - **This would have serious implications for the health of the District.**

- 5) There is concern that the speed of housing development will result in lots of homes without enough jobs.
 - **The housing is not going to come in a single block and employment should breed housing growth.**
 - **Studies suggest that Chippenham is likely to receive the required economic growth to satisfy housing proposals. E.g Basildon Barracks in Corsham.**

- **The Employment Land Study indicates that North Wiltshire is experiencing good levels of growth, which may mean that we do not need to allocate a great deal more land for employment.**
 - **The RSS is eager not to create a situation where jobs are diverted from Swindon to Chippenham.**
- 6) How is the infrastructure supposed to deal with the predicted growth?
- **This is exactly the question that the Core Strategy strives to address.**
 - **One should carefully look at the Issues and Options that have been presented.**
- 7) Concern that there has not been enough focus on communities.
- **This was a key aspect of the First Round of Consultation on the Issues and Options.**
 - **It is the case that locally, focused opinion ultimately prefers more growth in villages across the District than is outlined in the emerging Core Strategy.**
 - **There are clashes between the even spread of development versus the concentration of growth promoted in the RSS.**
 - **All planning guidance and experiences of other local authorities show that the Core Strategy has to reflect the intentions of the RSS.**
 - **This is the practical reality of the system in which we operate. Failure to do so will mean that the Core Strategy will not be approved.**
- 8) Is the reason there is not as much focus on villages as some would like because not all villages are sustainable? And therefore, should NWDC focus more on villages than the RSS suggests, in order to make them sustainable?
- **Refer to the response give to 7).**
 - **The Core Strategy does give a realistic range of options.**
- 9) How would the removal of Framework Boundaries work when there is a windfall allocation?
- **The removal of Framework Boundaries would in most cases result in less development being permitted as it would be classed as development in the open countryside.**
- 10) Should we look at the overheads of providing the provision of services to decide where growth should be direct?
- **There is some difficulty in defining sustainable communities.**
 - **The regional approach is very simplistic in the sense that it assumes the bigger the settlement the more sustainable it must be.**
 - **It may well be that we have to define sustainable communities at the local level. This could then help us decide what approach to take.**
- 11) Concern that the 8-week consultation period is too short to make such important decisions.
- **The Core Strategy has been an on-going process for some 15 months, although we appreciate that this is of no help to new Members.**
 - **This Issues and Options stage is not the only opportunity to have your say.**
 - **We are obliged to stick to the timetable that was agreed by the Council.**
- 12) Questions asked about when the Structural Plan and Local Plan expire.

- **Structure Plan 2016 (In reality this will expire with the adoption of the RSS).**
 - **Local 2011 (In reality this will expire with the adoption of the Core Strategy).**
- 13) Do we have a model to assess the likely impact of future development?
- **No, NWDC has and will continue to engage in detailed discussions with service providers, such as PCT's, Highways Agency and specific consultants.**
 - **There is no "magic model".**
 - **The important factor is to continue with a strategy of engagement with service providers.**
 - **Some likely impacts of development can be obvious, e.g. the need for schools and surgeries etc.**
- 14) It is difficult to choose between the options when we can not be sure of the likely impact.
- **We are realistic and we do not expect Members to know the consequences.**
 - **We have an extension LDF database and through the process of engagement and consultation we can minimise unexpected consequences.**
- 15) We must consider issues such as falling birth rates and that change happens, economic and social) and what we need today maybe become surplus to requirements tomorrow.
- **It is important to understand that the figures are for 2006-2026 and they reflect the current levels of growth already present in Chippenham and outside of Chippenham the building will drop considerably.**
- 16) Concern that Malmesbury should not be considered in the Tier 2 Settlements, rather it should be in Tier 3. Classifying Malmesbury the same as Calne is not appropriate.
- **The hierarchy of settlements does not mean that all the settlements are the same or that they will receive the same levels of growth.**
 - **The position of a settlement within the hierarchy also concerns the level of resources that the settlement is likely to receive.**
 - **Dropping Malmesbury down to Tier 3 could lead to less attention being paid to the town and a diversion of resources.**
- 17) What do "attention" and "resources" mean?
- **It must be understood that Malmesbury serves a much wider area than just the town itself.**
 - **Refer to the Vision for the area in the Core Strategy.**
- 18) Is it the case that the removal of Framework Boundaries is designed to negate in-fill and it will act as a freeze on villages? This seems to be a rather drastic measure.
- **The villages that will retain a Framework Boundary have the provisions and services, which are identified in the RSS.**
 - **The villages that could lose their Framework Boundaries do not and their potential for sustainable growth is limited.**
- 19) Villages are organic and under the proposal to remove the Framework Boundaries it would give such place little or no options. It should not be a

complete “No” to developments in villages, the needs of the community must be considered.

- **This does not make all villages sustainable; concentrating in the larger villages has more opportunities for sustainable development.**
- **There has been a natural expansion in population and the RSS wants this expansion to be focused in the main towns. Proposals have to be in line with Government Policy and the RSS in order for it to be approved.**
- **Villages grow and die; it has been this way for many years.**

20) What if there is strong support within a village for a particular development?
Removing Framework Boundaries is akin to Listed Building status – they can't be touched.

- **Tell us how you think we should define villages by getting involved Core Strategy process.**

21) Should we encourage villages to produce Village Design Statements and then use these as a way to define villages?

- **Village Design Statements are not always the best approach, Kington St. Michael dropped their aspirations for such a document, as it did not provide the direction they wanted.**

22) Villages need to sign up to the process (not necessarily the one advocated in the Core Strategy).

- **We hope that villages/parishes will take up the opportunity to get involved.**
- **Without their participation it creates an element of randomness to future development policy.**

23) The approach that the Core Strategy adopts towards villages will cause more upset and anger amongst the villages of the District as they feel like they are being dictated to. Villages should have the opportunity to put forward a “bid”, an element of self-determination.

- **The Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper is the perfect opportunity to express their views.**
- **These cannot compromise our requirements to produce a Core Strategy that will be approved by the Inspector.**
- **Many of those present have not even looked at the document.**

24) Do the sites that are promoted for development including sites for employment?

- **Yes, the promoted sites included everything that would be required to support housing development.**
- **It is important to understand that growth is not just about the number of houses.**
- **NWDC will be looking to get everything we can from Developers.**
- **It is important to note that previous policies mean that we do not have to allocate land until 2011.**

25) What is the current status of the land that has been promoted for development?

- **Most is agricultural land.**

26) Do developers own all of this land or are they looking to get options on the land?

- **Both**

27) Are there similar constraints for any potential growth in the West of Swindon?

- **The West of Swindon has a number of possible constraints that would have to be considered, the same NWDC would have to consider for any developments with the District.**
- 28) If a development obtains planning permission but does not build all of the homes that it requested permission for, would this figure affect the requirements outlined in the RSS?
- **No, NWDC has a system to regular monitor the number of houses that have been built or have received permission.**
 - **We do not have the authority to force planning applicants to complete their development.**
 - **NWDC can adjust the future housing numbers based on any shortfall that is identified in the monitoring process.**
 - **The production of Allocation DPDs can allow us to be more specific on the requirements of particular sites, e.g. the density and levels of affordable homes.**
- 29) Concern that the principals and need of affordable has created the situation where developers have the upper hand in the relationship between them and planning authorities.
- **This is countered to some extent by a phasing policy, which can mean that developers are forced to divide proposals.**
 - **It is very difficult for NWDC to control development given the size of the towns in the District, especially when you compare use to somewhere like Bristol.**
- 30) Concern that the focus is on affordable housing at the expense of recognising that there is still a need for good quality market housing.
- 31) Can we use S106 agreements in main town centre developments to allow for affordable housing in rural areas?
- **Research has shown that the focus for affordable housing is in the town centres, we have to get the right development in the right place.**
- 32) Who/What drives the RSS?
- **The final decision on housing and employment numbers for Strategically Significant Towns has not been taken.**
 - **The RSS is currently in the Examination in Public (EiP) stage/**
 - **The decision is expected around November 2007 with formal adoption in spring 2008.**
- 33) How do we respond to employment, retail and town centres issues?
- **The Retail Needs Assessment Study is due to be published in the next few weeks. Confirmation will be sent to all Members.**
 - **The Core Strategy has specific chapters where views can be expressed.**
- 34) What is the balance between a “Spatial Strategy” Vs “Demographic Strategy”?
Would planners like more of a demographic strategy?
- **The line between the two is very fine, development is not just about houses; it is about employment and the provision of services.**
 - **The Core Strategy needs to be holistic and understand the change happens.**
 - **E.g. Elderly people chose to stay in their homes more than ever, rather than down-sizing to another location. – This has implication for the availability of homes.**

- 35) Concerns that forcing growth in some areas and not in others amounts to “social engineering” and NWDC should not try and manipulate where people should live. We should not tell people where to live
- **The Core Strategy is not about “Social Engineering”.**
 - **The number of houses is relatively small (10,000 new, 150,000 existing) and therefore we are limited in our options.**
 - **We have to create the conditions for self-containment but we cannot force self-containment.**
- 36) Should NWDC change its approach so that the focus is on providing excellent services, such as schools, which will ultimately attract growth?
- **This is one possible way to manipulate growth.**
- 37) What is the role/brief of the Inspector in approving the Core Strategy? Does he have the power force changes on us without consultation.
- **The Inspector now has to test the Core Strategy against a specified Test of Soundness.**
- 38) Have the Spatial Planning considered the current promotion of a Chippenham 2020 vision?
- **Yes and it is acknowledged that working in partnership will have considerable benefits.**
- 39) Will future housing developments be Eco-friendly and what level would we expect?
- **Yes, the level would have to be above the current Building Control standards in order for such a position to have any impact.**
 - **The Core Strategy presents the Options from which we will make the decision.**
- 40) What does the Core Strategy say about renewables?
- **There is a great deal of very clear national guidance and this is likely to become more detailed, therefore the Core Strategy does not repeat clear national policy.**
- 41) General criticism about the size of the document, the documents is not user friendly to the “average” person. The Spatial Planning Team could do more to take the information to the villages/parishes etc etc. The Core Strategy is a dry subject presented in a document that immediately turns people off.

END