

CORE STRATEGY FAQs

What is the South West Regional Spatial Strategy?

The South West Regional Spatial Strategy (“RSS”) sets housing figures for the region based on projections produced by the Government. It also sets out the number of jobs to be provided across the region, based on an analysis of economic growth requirements and technical forecasts. Specific numbers of dwellings and jobs are identified for individual areas and large settlements.

What is the Local Development Framework and how does the Core Strategy fit into this?

The Local Development Framework (“LDF”) is an emerging system, which will provide the guidelines and policies to control development, eventually replacing those currently contained in the Local Plan.

The new system has been designed to allow planning policies to be prepared and consulted upon on an issue by issue basis – providing much more flexibility. The LDF is therefore like a folder – issues can be reviewed through shorter, separate processes and as policies become outdated, they can be replaced quickly and seamlessly. This differs significantly from the current system, where the Local Plan is a single document prepared through a single process.

The first document to be produced as part of the LDF is the Core Strategy. This provides an overview of development patterns and allocates strategic sites for future development, as well as setting out key objectives that the council will seek to achieve through subsequent detailed Development Plan Documents (“DPDs”).

Are there any serious implications for the Council not having an LDF?

There are a number of implications of stopping work on the LDF process:

- The Council would not be meeting its statutory planning obligations;
- Whether or not an LDF is in place, the RSS will form part of the Statutory Development Plan for the area and housing and job numbers for south Wiltshire will be set by this;
- The current Local Plan for south Wiltshire will expire in 2011 and, without an adopted Core Strategy, there would be not be any sites allocated to deliver the RSS requirements. The result of this might not be no new houses or employment, but rather could result in development of inappropriate sites;
- There would be less control over the delivery of affordable housing, due to there being no policy in place;
- Assessments of impact of all land use decisions on sustainability and environmental protection would not be undertaken;
- The LDF will allow the physical delivery of the Community Strategy. By not progressing with it we would be ignoring the voice of our communities;
- The delivery of projects such as the Salisbury Vision would be stifled, which could undermine Salisbury’s role as a retail centre;

- Important local projects, such as planning for the future of Wilton once the MOD leave the UKLF HQ, would not be put in place thereby (in that case) placing at risk the future well being of the town.

What quality control measures have the council employed in preparing the Core Strategy?

The Council has been fortunate to be chosen for a new Planning Inspectorate initiative, whereby a Senior Planning Inspector has spent time with us and assessed the soundness of key parts of the Core Strategy process at two stages, including the production of the submission document.

We have also been liaising closely with the Government Office for the South West who have acted as a 'critical friend' and given advice at every stage. Soundness testing has also been undertaken at various stages, in accordance with Planning Advisory Service guidelines to ensure that the document is sound. The outcome of this testing will be available on our website.

In-house and Landmark Chambers legal advice has also been sought at each key stage in the production of the Core Strategy.

How has the timetable for the production of the Core Strategy been decided?

The Core Strategy has been produced to a timetable agreed by the former Salisbury District Council ("SDC") Cabinet and Wiltshire Council's Implementation Executive.

This timetable, as set out in a document called the Local Development Scheme ("LDS"), has also been agreed with the Government. It sets out a clear timetable for document production and adoption, which accords with Government Regulations. The LDS has itself been the subject of consultation and is available on our website.

How effective were previous consultations?

Previous consultations included sending letters and magazines to every household and business in the district and attending over 50 events along with Area Committees, Parish Council meetings and exhibitions.

In terms of engagement the consultations were a great success and the Council received detailed and engaging responses from a wide range of people, interest groups and stakeholders: almost 9000 representations were received from more than 2000 individuals.

In comparison, for example, Southampton City Council received 200 responses to their consultation at this stage. Thurrock District Council, which has been cited as a national exemplar, received 800.

How will the Council consult on the Core Strategy?

The consultation will take place between 10 August and 30 September 2009 and be publicised by way of notices placed in the local press. The Core Strategy will be

sent to all statutory and non-statutory consultees and direct notification letters will also be sent to all those who responded to previous consultations.

How has the length of the consultation period been decided?

The two-month consultation period is in excess of that required by legislation, the Statement of Community Involvement (“SCI”) adopted by SDC in December 2006 and the emerging Wiltshire Council SCI.

The SDC SCI is available on our website, was itself prepared in consultation with the local community and Councillors and has been the subject of a formal public examination led by an independent inspector. Details of the Wiltshire Council SCI process are also available on our website.

Where will the Core Strategy be available for inspection during the consultation period?

Hard copies of the Core Strategy and the evidence base will be available at the Council’s offices in Wyndham Road, Salisbury. The Core Strategy and the evidence base will also be available on our website.

Hard copies of the Core Strategy will be available at the following Council offices:

- County Hall, Trowbridge
- Milford Street, Salisbury
- Monkton Park, Chippenham
- Browfort, Devizes

Hard copies of the Core Strategy will also be available at the following libraries: Salisbury, Amesbury, Downton, Durrington, Mere, Tisbury, Warminster, Wilton.

Why is the Core Strategy not being sent to all addresses in south Wiltshire, in the same way the last consultation document was?

Unlike the last document, the Core Strategy is, by necessity, a bulky document incorporating many maps. Therefore, whilst ample copies will be made available to facilitate the public consultation, it is simply not considered to be a prudent use of public money to print and post in excess of 50,000 copies of the document.

Will officers be available to discuss the Core Strategy proposals?

Spatial Planning Officers based at the Council's Offices in Wyndham Road, Salisbury and County Hall, Trowbridge, will usually be available during normal office hours to answer queries regarding the Core Strategy.

An exception to this will be on the dates of the following Public Exhibitions, as they will be attended by the officers normally based at Wyndham Road (all the exhibitions will be held between 12.30pm and 7.00pm):

- 1 September 2009: Guildhall, Salisbury
- 2 September 2009: Victoria Hall, Tisbury
- 3 September 2009: Antrobus House, Amesbury
- 7 September 2009: Michael Herbert Hall, Wilton
- 8 September 2009: Grove Buildings, Mere
- 10 September 2009: Memorial Hall, Downton
- 22 September 2009: Guildhall, Salisbury

When will Council Members debate the Core Strategy?

The Council's Cabinet authorised the consultation on the Core Strategy at its meeting of 15 July 2009. The Core Strategy will be presented to specially arranged meetings of the Area Boards for Salisbury, Amesbury, Southern Wiltshire and South West Wiltshire, during the consultation period.

How can comments be made on the Core Strategy?

Legislation requires that, at this stage, comments can only be accepted if they are submitted using a prescribed form, copies of which will be made available alongside the document and on the Council's website. The comments form can be submitted by post (or personal delivery to a Council office), fax or e-mail.

What comments can be made?

It is important to note that comments should only be made on the 'soundness' of the Core Strategy at this stage. For example, it is not enough to simply say X number of dwellings on Y site is too many: where the respondent is of such a view, there needs to be a supporting explanation as to why the Council's reasoning and/or evidence for allocating the site and the level of growth is flawed.

What will happen to the consultation responses?

In contrast to previous stages of consultation, the Council will not be making any further changes to the Core Strategy: it will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate as drafted. However, copies of all responses to this stage of consultation will be forwarded to the Inspectorate for consideration, together with a summary of the issues raised.

Will there be any further opportunities to have a say after 30 September 2009?

There will be no further opportunity to submit written representations on the Core Strategy. However, there will be an option on the representations form to ask to be heard by the Inspector at the Examination In Public. The Inspector will consider all such requests and invite persons to make personal representations at his discretion.

Subsequent DPDs, dealing with specific topics or geographical areas, will be subject to further consultation in due course.