

Topic Paper 5



Addendum

Revisions to take account of Issues and Options Consultation results

Natural Environment



TOPIC PAPER – The Natural Environment

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

1.0 Executive summary

- 1.1 This paper is supplementary to the original Settlement Strategy topic paper produced at the Issues and Options stage of the Core Strategy. That paper set out a broad draft approach for defining a settlement strategy in the district and made suggestions as to how that might manifest itself locally in terms of a hierarchy. This supplementary paper has been produced as a continuation of that work, reporting on and reflecting the responses received on this topic area during the “Our Place in the Future” consultation in summer 2007.
- 1.2 This topic area was primarily covered under Issue 6 of the document – entitled “Making the most of our beautiful natural environment” though related elements featured throughout the document.

2.0 Introduction, purpose of document and context.

- 12.1 This document is the second element of the series of topic papers that were published in order to present a coordinated view of the assessment of the evidence upon which we based our Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation. In order to make it easier for stakeholders to understand how we had reached our conclusions and as a key part of identifying the challenges facing our district and feasible options for addressing them, a series of 16 topic papers were written. These were as follows:

- [Topic 1 - Climate Change](#)
- [Topic 2 - Housing](#)
- [Topic 3 - Settlement Strategy](#)
- [Topic 4 - Supporting Communities](#)
- [Topic 5 - Biodiversity](#)
- [Topic 6 - Flooding](#)
- [Topic 7 - Agriculture](#)
- [Topic 8 - Retail](#)
- [Topic 9 - Economy](#)
- [Topic 10 - Tourism & Leisure](#)
- [Topic 11 - Planning Obligations](#)
- [Topic 12 - Waste & Pollution](#)
- [Topic 13 - Conservation](#)
- [Topic 14 - Design](#)
- [Topic 15 - Transport](#)
- [Topic 16 - Inclusive Design](#)
- Topic Paper 17 - Infrastructure
- Topic Paper 18:- Water

- 2.2 The Issues and Options that were identified within the topic papers formed the basis for the consultation document, “Salisbury and South Wiltshire, Our Place in the Future”. This document represented a ‘joined up’ consultation exercise incorporating questions relevant to the Community Strategy and Salisbury Vision, as well as the LDF Core Strategy Issues and Options. This document was the subject of consultation for 10 weeks between the 26th July and 5th October 2007. Over 50 public events were undertaken, to promote the process, and several thousand responses were received.

3.0 Review of Original Topic Papers

3.1 The next stage in the process is to review the initial evidence base in the topic papers and update where necessary and analyse the results of the consultation to formulate a set of preferred options. Where factual errors, anomalies or areas requiring clarification have been highlighted by the consultation, then these changes have been indicated on the original topic papers to show their evolution.

4.0 Analysis of Results of the Issues and Options Consultation

4.1 The next stage in the process is to review our analysis of the evidence base within the topic papers to take account of the outcome of the consultation and also update them where there has been a change in the evidence available to us since their publication. This review of the topic papers is an essential step on the road to producing the Core Strategy Preferred Options paper, which builds on the response of stakeholders to the issues and options we presented in the 'Our Place in the Future' paper.

4.2 Assessing the Local Need - Why Are We Developing Policies on The Natural Environment?

4.3 The need for this topic to be included within the emerging Local Development Framework has emerged clearly from an analysis of national and regional planning policy and an appraisal of the growing body of specialist literature and guidance given to local planning authorities. Furthermore original work that has formed part of the base of evidence which will inform the Local Development Framework process has highlighted that there is a need for a new and effective set of policies to help meet our objectives.

4.4 What are we trying to achieve - what are our overall objectives?

4.5 The core objectives as envisioned at the outset of this project were to develop a set of planning policies, which contribute to the following patterns of land use:

- a) social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
- b) effective protection of the environment
- c) prudent use of natural resources
- d) maintenance of high economic growth and employment

4.6 On a more specific level the desired outcomes at the outset of this project were:

- objectives identified in the original topic paper (this should be a simple task of transposing them from the executive summary of the original)

4.5 Taking A Spatial approach

It would be a crude mistake to develop a set of policies which are based on a 'one size fits all' premise. South Wiltshire is a rich and varied part of the Country and the issues and challenges within it vary from place to place. For example, is it the case that the demand for affordable is uniform across the area or does it vary between settlements and should our policies reflect this. We feel that they should and this way we should produce spatial strategies that are rooted in the distinctive character of specific places and are tailored to solving their particular sets of problems. This is in a nutshell for us, what spatial planning is all about.

- 4.6 One of the drawbacks we have encountered in the past is that of plans and strategies being delivered over disparate areas, when it makes much more sense from the customers perspective to have them coordinated and covering the same areas. This is often called co-terminus service delivery and is based on joining up services and policy solutions so that they are more tailored to where they are needed.
- 4.7 To align our policy solutions to the areas where the issues are arising, we have taken a detailed look at how the diverse character of our district and assessed if there are broad areas which share similar characteristics and present similar sets of challenges.
- 4.8 The Wiltshire community areas were defined in the early 1990's in response to a review of local government boundaries that set greater store by 'natural' communities, i.e. areas that described real patterns of local life (shopping, employment, schooling, etc.) as opposed to administrative boundaries.
- 4.9 A number of dimensions were used to define these areas of local life including:- secondary school catchment areas, local convenience shopping patterns, postcode town boundaries, pre-1974 urban and rural district council boundaries, housing market areas, journey to work catchment areas, a historical study of patterns of local life by local historian, Dr. John Chandler, and the local geology/topography of the county.
- 4.10 Six of Wiltshire's twenty community areas are in Salisbury district, namely:
- City community area
 - Four Rivers community area (also known as Wilton area)
 - Mere community area
 - Nadder Valley community area (also known as Tisbury area)
 - Southern community area (also known as Downton area)
 - Stonehenge community area (also known as Amesbury or Northern area)
- 4.11 On analysis the justification for the Community areas appears just as valid today as it did when they were formed, being as they were based on a sound understanding of the hierarchy and function of settlements and how communities view their sense of place. Furthermore the issues and challenges identified do reflect the similarities within these existing areas and also the diversity between them.
- 4.22 However there is lilted point in rigidly sticking to a spatial pattern of interpreting the District if it is not appropriate to certain issues or challenges. For example the Military issues reach outside of the District to the north of the plain and similarly there is a huge synergy between Wilton and Salisbury. Therefore while, where appropriate the Community Plan areas will form the basis of our spatial model, it will not be pursued dogmatically so, and where the functional relationship between places dictates we will promote a flexible approach. In other words the areas defined by the community plans should best be considered as soft verges rather than cliff edges.

5.0 FINDINGS OF THE 'OUR PLACE IN THE FUTURE' CONSULTATION ON THE CORE STRATEGY ISSUES AND OPTIONS

5.1 What did we ask?

5.2 Under Issue 1 we asked respondents to what degree they agreed/disagreed with this statement

“Climate change and global warming should be a top priority for action”

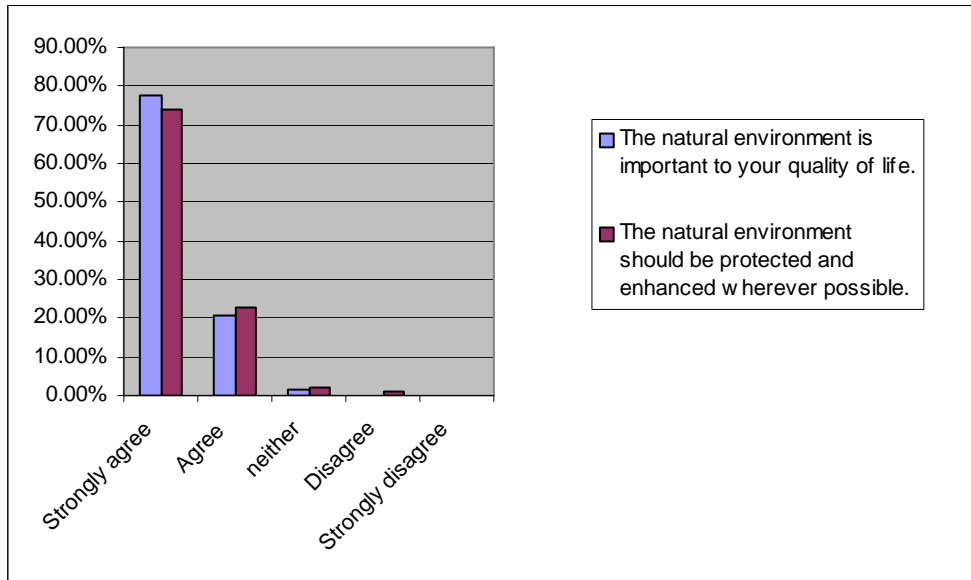
Under Issue 6 we asked respondents to what degree they agreed/disagreed with the following statements

- The natural environment is important to your quality of life.
- The natural environment should be protected and enhanced wherever possible.
- We should implement additional controls, over and above existing designations, that would further protect the natural environment.
- We should identify, promote and protect locally important landscape and nature sites.
- We should improve access to the countryside for everyone through improved footpaths and cycle tracks.
- We could place a lesser importance on the natural environment when considering the need for important new development.
- We should ensure that nature conservation measures are incorporated into all new development to ensure that developers address the ecological impact of new building.

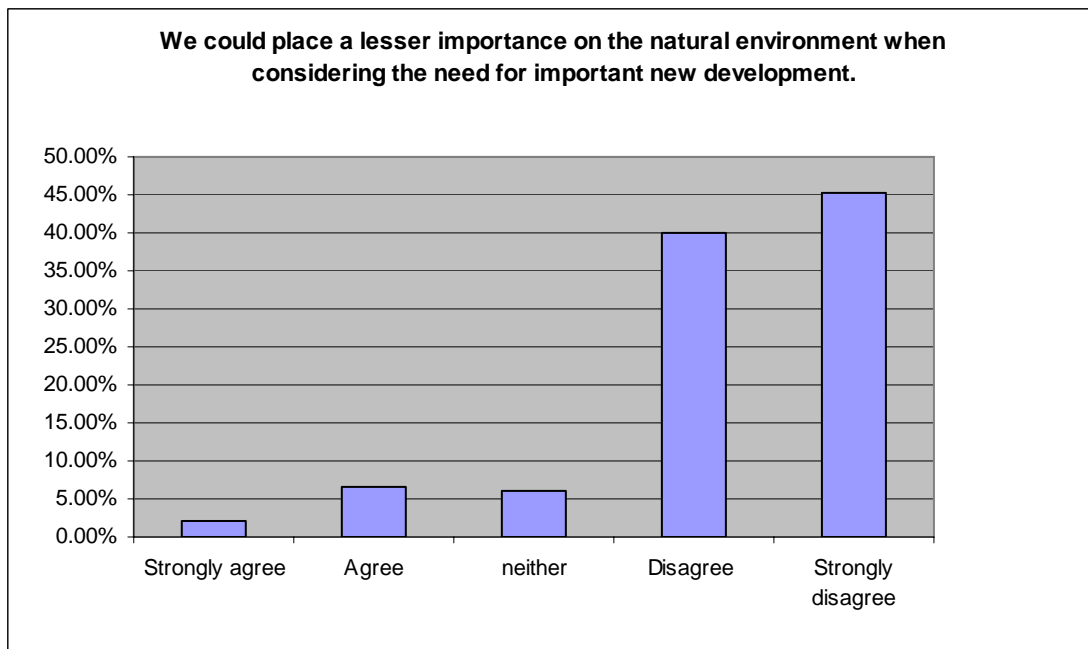
5.3 Summary of responses

5.4 Overall principles

5.5 The first two questions within Issue 6 (option 31) were broad and strategic and there was an extremely high level of agreement with the principle of placing a very high value on the quality of the natural environment, and that it is important to quality of life.

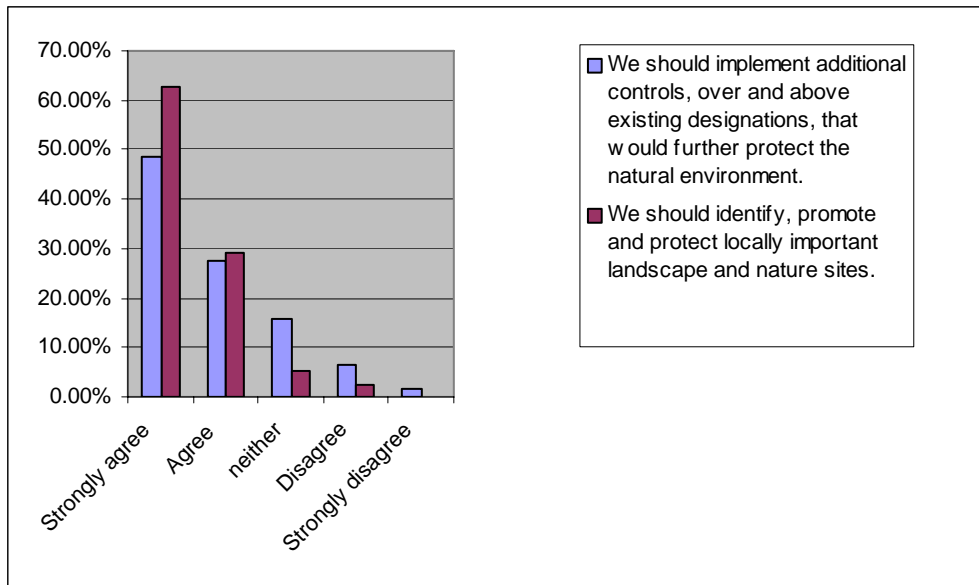


5.6 A contrasting option, suggesting a more laissez-faire approach was strongly opposed with over 85% disagreeing with the statement.



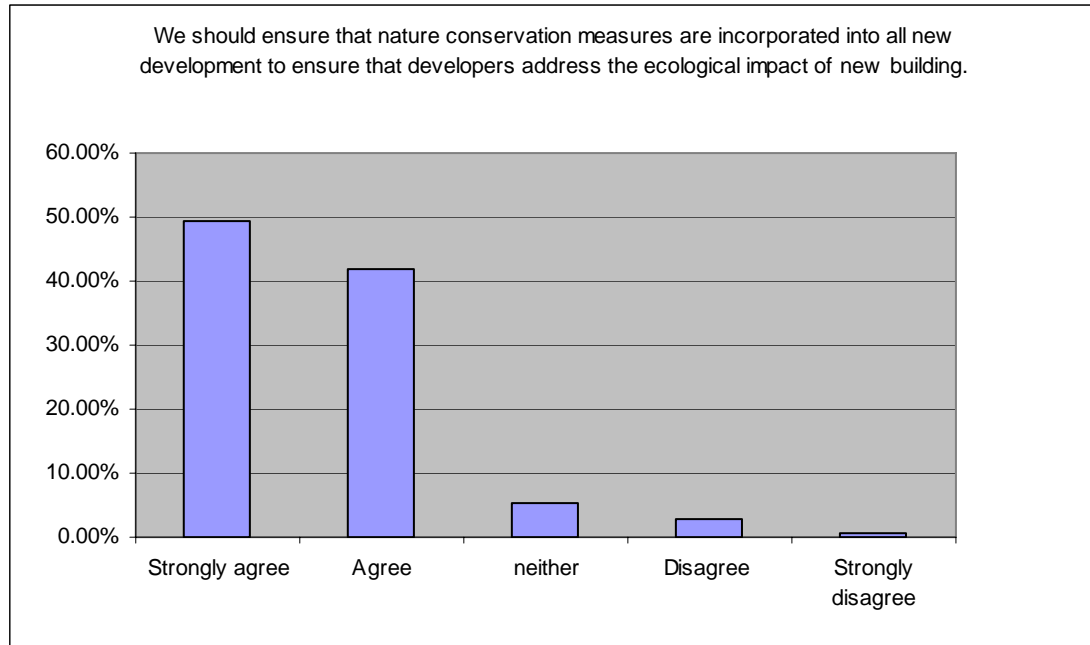
5.7 Sites and designations

- 5.8 Reflecting the particularly high quality of the natural environment in this district and the number of sites of national and international importance, most respondents agreed that as a general rule we should go beyond the bare minimum in our controls in protecting the natural environment.
- 5.9 Equally it was generally agreed that locally important landscapes and sites of nature conservation interest should be identified, promoted and protected.



5.10 Mitigating the impact of development

5.11 There was strong agreement with the “polluter pays” principle, ie that the ecological impact of new development should be counterbalanced with measures to meet nature conservation interests.



5.12 Spatial analysis of results

5.13 Implications on a district-wide or wider area

- a) Protecting the environment goes beyond planning policy and involves social action and involvement of communities
- b) Large-scale development frequently seen as incompatible with nature conservation objectives and the environment generally.
- c) The nexus between quality of life and the natural environment is felt strongly in this district and opportunities to strengthen this should be taken
- d) We should utilise Planning Gain to mitigate the impact of development on the natural environment.

5.14 Implications for the six community areas

5.15 Mere and District

- 5.16 Mere lies in the southwest corner of Wiltshire, with the higher land of the Salisbury Plain to the north and east, low-lying pasture land of Dorset to the south and the wooded, gently rolling hills of Somerset to the west. Mere is at the confluence of several varied landscapes, including rolling clay vale, greensand hills, greensand terrace, chalk downland and chalk escarpment. The environmental conditions in and around Mere have played a fundamental role in the development and character of the village.
- 5.17 Mere is an area of exceptional importance for wildlife and natural features, with many sites of national or international importance. There are a range of Sites of Special Scientific Interest and County Wildlife Sites within the area, including lowland meadows, calcareous grasslands, neutral grasslands and wet woodland; which reflect the region's diverse landscape and underlying geology. The chalk escarpment at Whitesheet Hill is particular feature, which form a dramatic backdrop to the north of Mere. Its scarp slopes are considered to be of outstanding landscape and ecological importance, particularly where they have retained their species-rich chalk grassland habitat (Whitesheet Hill SSSI). Other important wildlife habitats include ancient and semi-natural woodland. Areas of woodland vary in size and species throughout the landscape setting, with large swathes at the base of the nearby Greensand Hills, west of Mere. These hills support a large proportion of woodland, both deciduous and coniferous, along with other woodland habitats, such as wet woodland and acid woodland. Charnage Down Chalk Pit, which was once quarried for agricultural purposes, is now a geological Site of Scientific Interest, located east of Mere.
- 5.18 A network of public rights of way (footpaths, bridleways and byways) cover the setting to Mere, including routes along ancient trackways and several routes traversing rolling clay vale south of the village. Monarch's Way long distance footpath passes through Mere in an east-west direction. Access to areas north of Mere is limited; partly as a result of the construction of the A303, which hinders north-south permeability.
- 5.19 Mere comprises a particularly distinctive and varied landscape setting, situated at the confluence of several landscape. The level, simple and open topography on which the village lies, strongly contrasts with the dramatic backdrop of the chalk escarpment and the enclosed rolling wooded hills.
- 5.20 The high quality of the surrounding landscape is a major constraint on development. The Local Planning Authority considers the landscapes that surround and flow through Mere to be of a high quality, reflected in its current designation as a Special Landscape Area. In addition, the

Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB covers much of the landscape north and east of Mere.

5.21 Nadder valley

- 5.22 The village of Tisbury lies nearly 20 kilometres east of Salisbury, set amongst rolling clay vale, on the northern slopes of the river Nadder. The environmental conditions in and around Tisbury have played a fundamental role in the development and character of the village.
- 5.23 Tisbury is an area of exceptional importance for wildlife and natural features, with many sites of national or international importance. The Nadder river valley is a particular feature, which meanders in an easterly direction, immediately south of Tisbury. The river system and its floodplains are considered to be of outstanding landscape and ecological importance and the valley itself is broadly correlates with Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), County Wildlife Site designations, as well as Special Areas of Conservation, a European designation for habitats of rare or endangered species. The river system joins the River Avon Valley near Salisbury; both are noted for their exceptional aquatic plants, diverse fish fauna and range of aquatic invertebrates.
- 5.24 There are a range of SSSIs and County Wildlife Sites within the area, including floodplain grazing marsh, species-rich grasslands, neutral meadow and wet woodland; which reflect the region's diverse landscape and underlying geology.
- 5.24 Other important wildlife habitats include ancient and semi-natural woodland, to the north and south of Tisbury. The historic quarries at Upper Chicks Grove and Chilmark, located east of Tisbury, represent geological SSSIs due to their exposures of Portlandian rocks and remains of fossil vertebrate. Tisbury and its surrounds are wholly covered by the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The varied landscape within the area is directly related to its underlying geology, which spans approximately 150 million years of geological history, from the upper Jurassic Period to the present day. The environmental conditions in and around Tisbury have played a significant role in its historical development. The topography closely reflects the underlying geology, which is characterised by rolling clay vale and greensand hills. The river Nadder has eroded a narrow deep valley through the clay to form low-lying land between the greensand hills, providing an important context and landscape setting to Tisbury. The village is mainly located on the northern ascending slopes of the Nadder, comprising a semi-enclosed landscape. The setting includes several shallow valleys containing tributaries of the Nadder, including Oddford Brook, which create a gently undulating landform rising to levels well over 150 metres within the greensand hills.

5.25 Stonehenge

- 5.26 Amesbury lies on a meander of the River Avon, nearly thirteen kilometres north of Salisbury, at a point where the main road from London to Exeter bridges the river. The chalk downlands of the Salisbury Plain surround the town, richly dispersed with the remains of earlier civilisations.
- 5.27 Similar to Amesbury, Bulford evolved from the gravel bed beside the Avon and Nine Mile rivers. Located 2.5 kilometres north of Amesbury, Bulford spills across the lower slopes of the chalk downlands, up to the foot of Beacon Hill, with chalk outcrops all over the parish.
- 5.28 Comparable to Amesbury and Bulford, Durrington lies on an eastwards meander of the River Avon, within chalk downlands of the Salisbury Plain. Durrington and its surroundings have been inhabited since Neolithic times. The Parish is rich in archaeological remains, containing sites of two large henge monuments, Durrington Walls and Woodhenge. The town evolved from two north-south aligned streets by the river, which represent the location of manors.
- 5.29 The landscape setting of Amesbury, Bulford and Durrington is rich in wildlife and natural features, with many sites of national or international importance. Two substantial areas of land to the northeast and northwest of the settlements are wholly covered by statutory designations, including Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Special Sites of Scientific Interest. Forming part of the Salisbury Plain, these areas are rich in ecological value and offer a range of habitats for a range of wildlife species; especially birds.
- 5.30 There are a range of Sites of Special Scientific Interest and County Wildlife Sites within the area, including species-rich chalk grassland habitat, unimproved wet grassland and water meadows; which reflect the region's diverse landscape and underlying geology. The river Avon is the principal river system that winds through the area. Its floodplains are a particular feature and considered to be of outstanding landscape and ecological importance, particularly where remnants of unimproved water meadows still exist. Furthermore, its grasslands are renowned for supporting populations of breeding waders and wintering wildfowl. The Avon river system, which broadly correlates with the AHEV designation, is recognised as being of international importance to nature conservation, reflected in its numerous Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Environmentally Sensitive Areas and its candidate for Special Areas of Conservation²⁵, a European designation for habitats of rare or endangered species.

5.31 Four rivers: Ebble, Nadder, Wylye, Till.

5.32 This Community Area is split between Salisbury Plain and West Wiltshire Downs character area in the north, the Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour area in the centre and Dorset Downs and Cranborne Chase in the centre.

5.33 Major natural features of this area include:

- Floodplain grazing marsh.
- River Avon SAC on Nadder Wylye and Till (not Ebble)
- Prescombe down SAC
- CWS and SSSIs connected with Grovely Wood
- Chalk downland between the different valleys
- Approx $\frac{3}{4}$ within AONB

5.34 A series of linear 'springline villages' along the River Ebble, with patterns related to their origins and development, form a distinctive feature within the chalk river valley landscape south of Salisbury and Wilton. Such villages include Nunton, Odstock, Homington and Coombe Bissett. Netherhampton and Quidhampton are also historic linear 'springline villages' located along the Nadder River valley floor between Salisbury and Wilton, each with its own historic core and a largely intact water meadow landscape setting. Each settlement possesses its own inherent character, and their vernacular buildings reflect the surrounding landscape in their use of local materials.

5.35 Southern

5.36 The village of Downton straddles the Avon valley about 11 kilometres south of Salisbury. Downton is at the confluence of two varied landscapes, including chalk river valley and chalk downland. The environmental conditions in and around Downton have played a fundamental role in the development and character of the settlement. Downton is an area of exceptional importance for wildlife and natural features, with many sites of national or international importance. The Avon river valley is a particular feature, which meanders in a southerly direction, through the village. Its floodplains are considered to be of outstanding landscape and ecological importance and the valley itself is historically important, particularly where remnants of the water meadow system still exist. The Avon river system, which broadly correlates with the Areas of High Ecological Value (AHEV) designation, is recognised as being of international importance to nature conservation, reflected in its numerous Site of Special Scientific Interest and its candidate for Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), a European designation for habitats of rare or endangered species.

5.37 There are a range of Sites of Special Scientific Interest and County Wildlife Sites within the area, including species-rich grasslands,

floodplain grazing marsh and neutral meadow, which reflect the region's diverse landscape and underlying geology. Large areas of ancient woodland and 19th century broadleaved and coniferous plantations dominate eastern parts of the landscape setting to Downton, including Langley Wood and Homan's Copse (SSSI).

- 5.38 The majority of land in and around Downton is wholly covered by a locally defined and recognised landscape planning designation (Special Landscape Area) which ensures that only developments with particular regard for the high quality of the landscape will be considered in these areas. In addition to the land within the Special Landscape Area, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty wholly covers the majority of land to the west of Downton. Furthermore, the open landscape setting to the east and south of Downton, is covered by a locally defined and recognised landscape planning designation (New Forest Heritage Area) which ensures that any new development assimilated within these areas will not be of detriment to the overall character, natural beauty, ecology, historic importance or functioning of the New Forest landscape.

5.39 Salisbury City and Wilton

- 5.40 Salisbury and Wilton is an area of exceptional importance for wildlife and natural features, with many sites of national or international importance. Environmental designations cover a range of habitats with many different reasons for designation. The river systems that wind through the area are a particular feature, including the River Avon and its tributaries. The floodplains are considered to be of landscape and ecological importance and the valleys are also of historic importance, particularly where remnants of the water meadow system still exist. The Avon river system, which broadly correlates with the Areas of High Ecological Value (AHEV) designation, is recognised as being of international importance to nature conservation, reflected in its numerous Site of Special scientific Interest and is a candidate Special Areas of Conservation - a European designation for habitats of rare or endangered species. There are a range of Sites of Special Scientific Interest and County Wildlife Sites within the area, including water meadows, neutral grasslands, species-rich chalk grasslands and ancient woodland; which reflect the region's diverse landscape and underlying geology. Other important wildlife habitats include ancient and semi-natural woodland and unimproved river valley meadows.
- 5.41 The majority of land to the south and west of Salisbury and Wilton are wholly covered by an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In addition to the land within the ANOB, the majority of land to the north and east of Salisbury and Wilton are wholly covered by a locally defined and recognised landscape planning designation (Special Landscape Area) which ensures that only developments with particular regard for the high quality of the landscape will be considered in these areas. Furthermore, the open landscape setting to both settlements are

wholly covered by a locally defined and recognised landscape planning designation (Landscape Setting of Salisbury and Wilton) which ensures that any new development assimilated within these areas will not be of detriment to the visual quality of the landscape.

- 5.42 The area is rich in historical and archaeological features, including barrows, hillforts, field systems and water meadows. Scheduled Ancient Monuments are dispersed throughout the area and represent archaeological sites from Prehistory onwards. Old Sarum is a particularly important and prominent Iron Age earthwork to the north of Salisbury, overlooking the city and River Avon.
- 5.43 There are two large historic park and gardens in the area. One to the south of Wilton, including Wilton House and grounds, Wilton Park, Warren Down and Hare Warren; and one south east of Salisbury, including Longford Castle and Longford Park. A network of public rights of way (footpaths, bridleways and byways) cover the setting to both settlements, including routes following ancient trackways, alongside the river valleys, across chalk downland; with numerous links to the core of Salisbury. Two long distance footpaths (Avon Valley Path and Clarendon Way) provide a bridge to the countryside from Salisbury city centre, and link to the southern and eastern landscape setting to the town. In addition, Monarch's Way long distance footpath passes through countryside north of Salisbury.

5.44 Follow-up work required as result of consultation

5.45 Further follow-up work has taken place since the Our Place in the Future consultation around

- Joint working with other districts in Wiltshire and the County Council, alongside the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and the Biological Records Centre, around means of more effectively sharing data, research and streamlining work for effective monitoring of LDF policies in this area.
- Discussions with the above organisations (in addition to Natural England) around means of improving Planning Gain in the area of the environment and nature conservation.

6.0 THE IDENTIFICATION OF PREFERRED OPTIONS FOR THIS TOPIC AREA

	Preferred Option from Stakeholder feedback	Sustainability Appraisal*	Alignment with national and regional policy**	Deliverability***	Other and action****
6.1	<p>OVERALL PRINCIPLES Place a highest-level priority upon protecting and enhancing the outstanding natural environment of the district, including sites of significance for nature conservation (habitats and species), in the context of the holistic landscapes characteristic of the district. Wherever possible, growth must be delivered in a fashion that contributes to local, regional and national biodiversity objectives, and in a manner consistent with the character of the landscape.</p>	Positive	PPS1, PPS7, PPS9, RSS	Yes subject to rigorous appraisal of sites and the delivery of effective conditioning and S106 agreements. Yes subject to delivery of housing and employment allocations within locations that ensure least detrimental impact.	Take preferred option forward.
6.2	<p>CLIMATE CHANGE The overall approach to development in the LDF through allocations, and criteria for making planning decision must be explicitly conscious of climate change issues and act both to reduce the causes of climate change through CO2 and other emissions, as well as where possible mitigating its impacts including on biodiversity, flood zones, and the landscape.</p>	Positive	PPS1, PPS7, PPS9, RSS	Yes	Take preferred option forward.
6.3	<p>NATURE CONSERVATION Development in line with PPS9 should be diverted away from designated sites of importance for nature conservation as well as networks of sites and “corridors”. Afford every high level of protection of County Wildlife Sites.</p>	Positive	PPS1, PPS7, PPS9, RSS	Yes	Take preferred option forward.
6.4	<p>LANDSCAPE Development and allocations must take full</p>	Positive	PPS1, PPS7, PPS9, RSS		Take preferred option forward.

	Preferred Option from Stakeholder feedback	Sustainability Appraisal*	Alignment with national and regional policy**	Deliverability***	Other and action****
	account of the landscape character appraisal and be located and integrated into the landscape in a way which respects and where possible enhances the landscape				
6.5	GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE Through development, particularly large allocations, the council will require inclusion of appropriate Green Infrastructure wherever possible which links to wider landscape and nature conservation objectives and contributes to quality of life.	Positive	PPS1, PPS7, PPS9, RSS		Take preferred option forward.
6.6	PLANNING GAIN Beyond merely mitigating any detrimental impact of development, planning gain should be utilised to enable local projects to be funded to meet BAP objectives.	Positive	PPS1, PPS7, PPS9, RSS	Yes	Take preferred option forward.
6.7	QUALITY OF LIFE The natural environment must be encompassed within an overall "quality of life" agenda in the Core Strategy that has regard to factors including education, interpretation and access to the natural environment.	Positive	PPS1, PPS7, PPS9, RSS	Yes	Take preferred option forward.

***With the Sustainability Appraisal rank from Positive, neutral or negative**

**** does it accord with strategic policy say yes or no**

***** Is it a realistic goal?**

****** Any other influencing factors and given the assessment should it be pursued as a preferred option**