

**WILTSHIRE COUNCIL  
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK  
SOUTH WILTSHIRE CORE STRATEGY REVIEW  
DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT  
INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION  
ISSUE 2: EVIDENCE SUPPORTING REVISED  
HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT FIGURES  
ON BEHALF OF  
PERSIMMON HOMES AND  
THE WILTON ESTATE**

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## **Q2.1 Evidence supporting revised housing and employment figures**

*What evidence is there to support the revised housing and employment figures now being proposed by the Council?*

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- 2.1.1 Persimmon Homes and the Wilton Estate note that the evidence to support the revised housing and employment figures, now being proposed by the Council, is set out in the Council's Core Strategy and locally derived evidence base Topic Papers. However, this evidence is supported by other evidence sources, such as the most recent Government (2008 Based) Household projections.
- 2.1.2 Persimmon and the Wilton Estate consider that the South Wiltshire Core Strategy, revised as necessary following the Examination, should progress to adoption, without further delay, to achieve a timely and up-to-date Core Strategy and establish greater certainty and predictability for emerging development proposals in the former Salisbury district, as sought by PPS 1<sup>1</sup> and PPS12<sup>2</sup>.

### *Housing*

- 2.1.3 It is noted that the emerging South Wiltshire Core Strategy (2011) now proposes 9,900 dwellings during the plan period 2006 – 2026, compared to the Pre-Submission Draft Core Strategy (2009) which sought to deliver 12,400 dwellings between 2006 – 2026, in accordance with Policy HMA 11 of the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy (Proposed Changes) (2008). Wiltshire County Council, as a Section 4/4 authority, recommended to the South West Regional Assembly the dwelling figure that was considered appropriate for the South Wiltshire HMA, at that time. The Deposit Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (2006) proposed 9,200 dwellings (460 dpa), including 5,000 at Salisbury SSCT. The Examination in Public Panel recommended that the South Wiltshire HMA provision be increased to 12,400 dwellings, having regard to the implications of the DCLG 2003 Based Household projections. The Secretary of State accepted the Regional EIP Panel's recommendations for South Wiltshire (Salisbury) and included provision for 12,400 additional dwellings in the RSS Proposed Changes. However, it should be noted that in response to the consultation on the RSS (Proposed Changes) in 2008 Wiltshire County Council

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<sup>1</sup> PPS 1 Delivering Sustainable Development (2005) paras 8 & 9

<sup>2</sup> PPS12 Local Spatial Planning (2008) para 4.55

objected to the proposed level of housing at Salisbury and sought a reduction for South Wiltshire.

- 2.1.4 It is clear from the above that the scale of housing provision in South Wiltshire (formerly Salisbury District) has been controversial and unacceptable locally. The figure now proposed by the Council is higher than the Deposit Draft RSS (9,200) and proposes a greater urban focus on Salisbury than previously envisaged. (ie 6,060 dwellings compared to 5,000 dwellings in the RSS). Whilst the overall numbers are proposed to be reduced, the spatial strategy of the RSS has been embraced. Furthermore, the impacts of the reduced dwelling numbers will be experienced at relatively less sustainable locations and at the end of the plan period.
- 2.1.5 The Section 4/4 advice to the South West Regional Assembly was based on a range of demographic, economic, social and environmental considerations. Whereas the EIP Panel appear to have given weight to the latest household projections prevailing at that time, in accordance with PPS3 Para 33.
- 2.1.6 The South West EIP Panel noted that under the DCLG 2003 based projections the figure of 9,200 dwellings would need to rise to about 12,400 or to 11,400 under the DCLG 2004 based projections. (The Panel were unclear as to the precise reasons for the difference between the two projections)
- 2.1.7 Persimmon Homes and the Wilton Estate note that the latest DCLG projections are the 2008 based projections, published in November 2010. The latest household projection for the former Salisbury District (now South Wiltshire) for the period 2006 – 2026 is only 8,000 households. When converted to a dwelling figure, the latest projections alone suggest an overall dwelling provision of circa 8,400 dwellings. However, this figure does not take account of the other economic and social considerations which underpin the revised dwelling figures or the need to address the previous 'backlog' in delivery. Therefore, Persimmon and the Wilton Estate do not suggest that the dwelling provision in the South Wiltshire Core Strategy be further reduced.

### *Employment*

- 2.1.8 The revised Core Strategy plans for the delivery of 10,400 jobs in South Wiltshire during the period 2006 – 2026. The total number of jobs to be planned for has been

reduced from 13,900 jobs, equating to a reduction of approximately 25%. The figure of 13,900 jobs is derived from RSS10 Policy HMA11. It is noted that some 13,500 jobs were to be provided for in the Salisbury Travel to Work Area. The Deposit Draft RSS10 (Policy SR30) proposed between 11,000 and 13,500 jobs in the Salisbury Travel to Work Area.

2.1.9 Persimmon and the Wilton Estate note that the Council has undertaken a review of both the housing and employment figures, although the evidence to support the economic forecast is less clear. It is noted that Wiltshire Council instructed Cambridge Econometrics to produce more up to date economic projections, for Wiltshire as a whole, including South Wiltshire, in 2010. Cambridge Econometrics applied their Multi-Local Area Local Economy Forecasting Model (LEFM) to Wiltshire to produce a new jobs forecast for Wiltshire as a whole of 27,570 jobs by 2026. It is estimated that some 36 hectares of employment land will be required, including 20.4 ha in South Wiltshire.

2.1.10 Persimmon and the Wilton Estate note that the revised lower employment forecast seeks to take account of the diminished economic prospects of South Wiltshire having regard to the recession, the economic downturn and recovery in the first half of the plan period. It is noted that the RSS10 Proposed Changes was based on more ambitious economic forecasts for the South West Region during the period to 2026, which justified the higher jobs forecast at that time. Therefore, in light of recent economic events and the uncertainties associated with economic recovery Persimmon and the Wilton Estate accept a pragmatic economic forecast for South Wiltshire would be more realistic and robust. However, in the context of the lower growth figures the policy emphasis remains on the delivery of new jobs at Salisbury, which is supported.

### *Conclusions*

2.1.11 The evidence to support the revised housing and employment figures, now being proposed by the Council, is set out in the Core Strategy and the accompanying evidence base Topic Papers. This locally derived evidence is consistent with other national sources of evidence.

2.1.12 It is noted that the evidence, which underpinned part of the demographic case for a higher dwelling provision at the former Salisbury District, has been superseded by

more recent evidence. PPS 3 Housing (June 2011) para 33<sup>3</sup>, amongst other things, requires the Government's latest published household projections to be taken into account when determining the local level of housing provision. Thus, the level of housing now proposed by the Council is sufficient for the South Wiltshire Core Strategy to progress to adoption.

2.1.13 The revised lower employment forecast seeks to take account of the economic prospects of South Wiltshire having regard to the recession, the economic downturn and recovery in the first half of the plan period. It is noted that the RSS10 Proposed Changes was based on more ambitious economic forecasts for the South West Region during the period to 2026. Persimmon and the Wilton Estate accept the proposed more pragmatic economic forecast for South Wiltshire and note that the emphasis remains on the delivery of new jobs at Salisbury.

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<sup>3</sup> PPS3 Housing (June 2011) Para 33

## Q2.2 Evidence supporting revised housing and employment figures

*How robust is that evidence as compared to the evidence supporting the emerging Regional Strategy?*

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2.2.1 Persimmon Homes and the Wilton Estate consider that the evidence to support the revised housing and employment figures contained in the emerging South Wiltshire Core Strategy is sufficiently robust for it to justify the revised levels of growth proposed compared to the evidence supporting the emerging Regional Strategy, given the continued urban focus on Salisbury and the imperative to secure an up-to-date Core Strategy for South Wiltshire.

2.2.2 It should be noted that the comments expressed in this Statement relate solely to the South Wiltshire Housing Market Area and should not be interpreted as being an acceptance by Persimmon or Pegasus of the Council's evidence base for the remainder of Wiltshire, which has been the subject of recent consultation and is due for independent examination in 2012.

### *Housing*

2.2.3 Persimmon Homes and the Wilton Estate consider that the evidence to support the revised housing figures contained in the emerging South Wiltshire Core Strategy is sufficiently robust to justify the revised housing figures compared to the evidence which supports the emerging Regional Strategy. Persimmon and Wilton recognise the justification for the proposed reduction. The dwelling figure proposed broadly reflects the latest 2008 Based Household Projections, once adjusted to a dwelling requirement and taking into account backlog and prevailing economic conditions.

2.2.4 As stated above, the evidence base which supports the emerging RSS10 is becoming somewhat dated and has been superseded by more recent locally derived evidence. The more recent local evidence should be used to inform the Core Strategy, having regard to the up-to-date national projections.

2.2.5 However, it is acknowledged that some aspects of the regional evidence base remain relevant to the consideration of change in South Wiltshire but should not be the prime determinant to determine the dwelling provision in the South Wiltshire Core Strategy.

- 2.2.6 The former Wiltshire Council, as a Section 4/4 authority, assisted the South West Regional Assembly with the evidence base gathering to inform the emerging RSS10. The initial Section 4/4 advice pre-dates the Deposit Draft RSS10, published in June 2006. The Examination in Public was held between April – July 2007. The process took place before the banking crisis, the economic slowdown/recession and the current period of economic recovery.
- 2.2.7 Whilst it is important that a long term view is taken, which acknowledges the economic cycle will fluctuate during the overall plan period, it should be acknowledged in the case of the South Wiltshire Core Strategy that the economic slowdown, coupled with changed demographic projections, justify a more pragmatic approach being adopted in the South Wiltshire Core Strategy rather than simply seeking to rely on out-dated evidence, produced for the emerging RSS.
- 2.2.8 The Council's local derived evidence, including the South Wiltshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2010), is broadly in line with the Government's 2008 based household projections. Allowing for vacancies, second homes, demolitions and losses to stock, the proposed dwelling figure is considered sufficiently robust to justify inclusion in the Core Strategy. Whilst the evidence base for the emerging RSS 10 was robust and appropriate at the time of the Examination in Public and the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes, in the case of South Wiltshire it is replaced by better more up-to-date evidence that should be relied upon to determine the South Wiltshire housing figures.

#### *Employment*

- 2.2.9 The economic evidence to justify the emerging RSS10, pre-dates the banking crisis, the recession and economic slowdown and recovery. It appears over optimistic, in the short term, to continue to plan for 13,900 jobs in South Wiltshire and a lower, more pragmatic figure is considered realistic. Clearly, this matter should be closely monitored and if an increased number of jobs are being created in South Wiltshire, the Council could undertake a partial or full review of the Core Strategy to increase the amount of employment land provided and consider the implications of the increase on other policies in the plan. It is noted that some new jobs will be created by existing employers at existing premises and are not dependent upon the Core Strategy to bring forward new employment land.

2.2.10 The evidence to support the revised employment figures is less robust, reflecting both the economic uncertainties and the implications for local job creation of a reduced dwelling provision, having regard to the ageing population.

2.2.11 However, the Council has used Cambridge Econometrics to address this issue on a Wiltshire-wide basis. The amount of new employment land to be provided in South Wiltshire is generous and exceeds the figure recommended by Cambridge Econometrics for South Wiltshire, thereby incorporating a degree of flexibility and choice and would allow for the redevelopment of the Churchfields employment area.

2.2.12 Persimmon and the Wilton Estate acknowledge that the urban focus remains upon Salisbury and employment growth is to be planned for at the city during the remainder of the plan period. Whilst the employment target is significantly below the emerging RSS10, it is reasonable for the Council to have regard to recent economic conditions, which post date the RSS10 EIP and the RSS Proposed Changes, rather than simply carrying forward the RSS10 evidence.

2.2.13 Persimmon and the Wilton Estate note the Coalition Government's Planning for Growth initiative and support the objectives of this policy. The South Wiltshire Core Strategy is sufficiently robust, compared to the RSS10 evidence base, to enable the plan to proceed to adoption. Without an up-to-date Core Strategy, the Government's aspirations to achieve growth will not be achieved in South Wiltshire, as the revised Core Strategy seeks to bring forward a number of new employment areas and provide a positive policy framework to encourage economic growth elsewhere in South Wiltshire.

#### *Conclusions*

2.2.14 Whilst it is accepted that the Ministerial statement and the letter to Chief Planners made the point that the evidence base which supported the emerging Regional Strategies may be material in some circumstances, the issue to be addressed at the South Wiltshire Examination is whether this is the case in South Wiltshire and, if so, what weight should be afforded to the RSS evidence base relative to the locally derived evidence.

2.2.15 In the case of both housing and employment, the Council has sought to produce more up-to-date and local derived evidence base to supersede the evidence base relied upon to justify the emerging RSS. This approach is welcomed and supported.

2.2.16 It is clear that realisation of the Coalition Government's 'Planning for Growth' agenda can only be achieved if local authorities, such as Wiltshire, press ahead, without delay, in preparing up-to-date development plans and take the opportunity to be proactive driving and supporting the growth that the Country needs. Therefore, as the evidence for the proposed level of housing and employment is sufficiently robust, up-to-date and locally relevant, compared to the emerging RSS evidence base, the Inspector is urged to endorse the overall soundness of the Core Strategy in this regard.