

**SOUTH WILTSHIRE CORE STRATEGY
EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC**

**MATTER 2: CORE POLICY 1
THE DISTRIBUTION OF DEVELOPMENT
SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY**

ON BEHALF OF CHOLDERTON AND DISTRICT WATER COMPANY LIMITED

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This objection to the Core Strategy is prepared on behalf of The Cholderton and District Water Company Ltd, and should be read with their original submission to the Council. The Water Company is part of the Cholderton Estate, which straddles the Hampshire/Wiltshire borders at the point where the A303 trunk road passes across the County boundary. The Estate wraps around the northern, eastern and western sides of Cholderton village and extends beyond the north side of the A303, towards Bulford Camp.
- 1.2 The Estate was assembled in Victorian times, and as a surviving Victorian Estate, complete with its original buildings, it is unique as an important exemplar of Victorian land management on scientific principles, similar to other more ancient Estates, such as Highclere and Beaulieu. The Estate is also the custodian of the oldest Stud of Cleveland Bay horses in the world and the oldest flock of sheep, the Cholderton Hampshire Down Sheep. The Estate currently employs some 15 to 20 people, and intends to develop a visitor centre in connection with the running of the Estate.
- 1.3 Cholderton as a village has a regular bus service along the A338, a church, village hall, sports ground, pub and farm shop. There are also employment facilities in the village which will shortly be expanded by the construction of a new factory, creating a further 8 to 10 jobs.

2.0 Q2.1 Why a Six Tier Settlement Hierarchy?

- 2.1 No objection is raised to the proposed settlement hierarchy, subject to reservations as set out further below in relation to the remaining questions.

3.0 Q2.2 The Choice of Settlements

- 3.1 Objections are raised to the allocation of future housing development to settlements solely on the basis of the number of basic facilities. This results in a settlement category of “Other Settlements and the Countryside” where no further housing development is proposed in the Strategy. Cholderton is included in this category as it is defined as

having only one basic facility i.e. journey to work public transport service. Under the terms of the Core Strategy, no further housing development will be allowed in the village.

- 3.2 The categorisation of settlements using the basic facilities approach is considered to be too crude and simplistic. For example, it excludes consideration of easy access to such facilities in other nearby villages. In the case of Cholderton, this relates to access to the primary school at Newton Tony. Similarly, no account is taken of the availability of existing employment sites in villages, which potentially reduce car journeys.
- 3.3 The Council originally considered the concept of cluster villages whereby selectively, villages became more sustainable by virtue of their close proximity to each other, and by sharing services. For the Cholderton area, the cluster suggested was Winterbourne Dauntsey/Earls/Gunner, Hurdcott, Idmiston, Porton and Gomeldon. Objections were raised at the time by the Water Company to the preferred options statement produced by the Council, containing these clusters, that Cholderton should be included in such a cluster.
- 3.4 The cluster concept has been excluded by the Council for reasons as set out in the Addendum 2 to Topic Paper 3 (3.44 onwards), where the comment is made that no analysis was available of the functional relationship between the component settlements. It is not clear what this statement means, and why such an analysis could not be carried out. There is reference also to a risk of additional pressure on a single settlement to accommodate too much housing in relation to its provision of basic facilities, but the Council could control this in the future.

4.0 Q.2.3 Why Choose this Distribution Strategy?

- 4.1 The Water Company supports the Spatial Strategy in terms of overall level of growth and distribution, subject to the reservations as set out above, and further described below.

5.0 Q.2.4 Proposed Levels of Growth in Settlements

- 5.1 The proposed levels of growth allocated to various settlements are supported, subject to the comments as set out above, and further described below.

6.0 Q.2.5 Removal of Housing Policy Boundaries

- 6.1 Objections are raised to the exclusion of villages such as Cholderton from the allocation of housing in the future. Cholderton is one of a number of villages located in the Bourne Valley, including Porton, Allington and Newton Tony. These villages have largely been cocooned since the War, with the effect that their populations are dominated by older people, and there has been a progressive erosion of facilities. Cholderton has, for example, lost its village shop/Post Office, and school. Newton Tony lost its village shop/Post Office recently, and the school is under threat, with only a small number of pupils, despite enjoying a first class reputation. Cholderton, along with a number of other Bourne Valley villages, has the potential to accommodate additional housing, albeit on a relatively small scale.
- 6.2 PPS7 encourages planning authorities to adopt a positive approach to planning proposals designed to improve the viability, accessibility or community value of existing services and facilities in villages, such as village halls and rural public houses, which play an important role in sustaining village communities (para. 7). It is noted also that PPS7 seeks to focus most new development in or near to local service centres, but that these centres can include “a group of villages” (para. 3).
- 6.3 The basic facilities’ approach adopted by the Council also ignores the potential advantages that new housing can bring to villages. As previously referred to, the Cholderton Estate has a number of unique features, currently employs some 15 to 20 people, and trades with over 100 local businesses. It is thus not an insignificant contributor to the local economy. It is looking to create a new visitor centre project, which will provide a tourist attraction, together with additional employment, but this requires funding, which could be provided via new housing in the village.
- 6.4 Such a proposal would be in line with other goals of the Core Strategy such as the maintenance and development of the rural economy (3.4(g)). The Core Strategy notes that changes in agriculture over recent decades have resulted in a decline in farm related

jobs, but “jobs within the countryside are very important”, with nearly half of the 6,000 businesses in South Wiltshire located away from major settlements or local centres.

6.5 Similarly, the Core Strategy seeks to identify barriers which prevent tourism making a bigger contribution to the economy (para. 3.5). It is noted in the Strategy that tourism is important to the South Wiltshire economy, which has a wealth of natural and heritage assets to attract visitors. The proposals, therefore, of the Estate in relation to a new visitor centre, would be in line with these intentions.

6.6 Similarly, and as set out in the Water Company’s original representations to the Core Strategy, the Company supplies drinking water to the villages of Cholderton and Shipton Bellinger, using ground water derived from bore holes. The Company is a statutory Water Company set up by an Act of Parliament in 1904. Currently nitrate pollution poses a threat to this supply, and investment is needed to mitigate these effects, estimated at between £500,000 and £1,000,000. Rather than increase water charges to villages, the most equitable way of financing the future of public water supply to the villages would be by permitting housing development in the village which could realise capital to finance the necessary infrastructure works.

6.7 The basic facilities’ approach adopted by the Council in categorising settlements does not recognise these examples of the need for housing which might exist in villages such as Cholderton, and elsewhere, and which can benefit such settlements. Rather, the Council’s approach to villages such as Cholderton will consign them to a future whereby the only remaining facilities will gradually disappear, to the detriment of the community generally.