

Core Strategy Examination      Matter 2      Distribution is Unsound and Unrealistic

1A      The Core Strategy is unsound because it is founded on a fundamental fallacy. It assumes that just by building lots of houses Salisbury and District can be converted into an industrial centre capable of providing thousands of new, value creating employment opportunities.

1B      12000 new houses implies a population increase of about 30000. That is a 25% increase on the current population. The only practical way to support such an increase would be establishment of sizeable manufacturing activities i.e. factories creating wealth by importing raw materials and exporting finished goods.

1C      The Core Strategy makes great use of the word "retail" but there is no indication, even in outline, as to what kind of work 12000 breadwinners could undertake. It is obvious that only a minority can be employed in the wealth consuming activities of retail, distribution or office services.

2A      Salisbury is a city because it has a splendid Cathedral, not because it is a big place with a developed infrastructure and communications. Over a thousand years it has evolved into a regionally important market and commercial town. Industrial manufacturing activity is small in scale because of unavoidable constraints on expansion set by the geography of this part of Wiltshire (and Hampshire and Dorset). It lies at the junction of five significant rivers and to the north west is separated by Salisbury Plain from the larger part of Administrative Wiltshire. The road network has no choice but to follow the various river valleys and the same applies to the railways.

2B      The dysfunctional nature of the road system in and around Salisbury is well known and the source of continuous grumbles at all levels. In the city the street layout is very convoluted, as might be expected for an old market town. Outside, in the suburbs, roads are narrow, constricted by parked cars (essential for many in the absence of bus services). There is a conspicuous lack of free space. The fact that Salisbury needs no less than FIVE Park & Ride services simply to get people into the town says a lot about the street system.

2C      I commend the Inspector's intention to make an unaccompanied tour of the area. Several traverses will be necessary to gain any perspective on the amount of available space. He will find that much of the free space consists of water meadows or public parks.

2D      There is a report "on the table" proposing £15 million expenditure to do something about bad features in today's Salisbury infrastructure. It seems to conclude that some improvement of the present situation is possible but skirts round the question of how to incorporate the proposed extra 30000 inhabitants.

3A      One of the many disturbing things about the Core Strategy is its failure to understand what sort of town Salisbury is. This is because it has been prepared as a theoretical construct by "Administrative Wiltshire" i.e. people living and working 50 miles away on the far side of Wiltshire. There has not been a proper input from people "on the ground" in Salisbury.

3B      In the absence of local manufacturing many of the 12000 breadwinners will complicate the environmental issue by being obliged to commute long distances by car or public transport.

4      If 12400 habitations are to be imposed on the area by government and county politics then the least bad way forward must be to locate a compact new industry based town on a greenfield site for which at least there will not be so many historical or geographical constraints.