



South Wiltshire Core Strategy

Matter 9

Core policy 6, 10, 11, 14, 16 and 17

Housing Needs

Ref: JC/SWCS/M9

January 2010

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Question 9.1. *Core Policies 6, 10, 11, 14, 16 and 17 set out in some detail the size and type of affordable housing and the size of private sector housing that will be needed for the various community areas. What is the evidence base for these policies?*

- 1.0 The evidence base for these policies is the Local Housing Needs and Market Survey 2006 (STU/03) prepared by David Couttie Associates (DCA), as set out in Appendix 1 of the Survey.
- 1.2 Core policies 6, 10, 11, 14, 16 and 17 make clear that any variation to them will need to be justified through the production of new, sound evidence from either an updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment or other credible evidence source, which could include Viability Assessments, Parish Plans, or other market demand information. At the time of writing, the Local Housing Needs and Market Survey is currently being updated and should this result in a different size and type of housing for each community area, then the policies as written allow for these new mixes to be taken into account.

Question 9.2. *Has the effect of Core Policies 6, 10, 11, 14, 16 and 17 on the economic viability of schemes been considered?*

- 2.0 The Strategic Sites Viability Overview (STU/48) prepared on behalf of the Council by Adams Integra considers the likely financial viability of residential development on the strategic allocations. The study considers viability and the key variables and risks likely to be associated with viability and is based on a number of assumptions.
- 2.1 Section 2.4 refers to assumptions made with regards to overall / indicative dwelling mixes and dwellings sizes. The dwelling mixes have been based on those set out at proposed Core Policy 6 regarding Salisbury area sites, Core Policy 10 regarding UKLF at Wilton and Core Policy 11 regarding the Kings Gate site in Amesbury.
- 2.2 Section 2.12 sets out the affordable housing dwelling mix assumptions. The affordable housing dwelling mix target requirements have been based on those set out at proposed Core Policy 6 regarding Salisbury area sites, Core Policy 10 regarding UKLF at Wilton and Core Policy 11 regarding the Kings Gate site in Amesbury.
- 2.3 The overview concludes in paragraph 5.1.1 that, bearing in mind a 40% affordable housing assumption and assuming a suitably active property market and development climate, all sites are or have the potential to be viable.
- 2.4 The Strategic Affordable Housing Economic Viability Study also by Adams Integra (STU/04) assesses the economic viability of potential housing developments in order to formulate the policies in the Core Strategy in relation to affordable housing thresholds and proportions. This study tests a range of scenarios taking into account, amongst other things, variations to dwelling mix to consider the impact of various dwelling types on development viability (see Appendix 1).
- 2.5 An affordable housing tenure mix of 75% affordable rent and 25% low cost home ownership/other intermediate model has been applied in this study.

This study looked at hypothetical scenarios/notional schemes using different development variables rather than actual sites in particular community areas. Hence it was more appropriate to base the affordable housing tenure mix on the strategic district-wide basis of 75% affordable rent and 25% low cost home ownership/other intermediate model.

- 2.6 This district-wide split is based on the DCA Local Housing Needs and Market Survey (STU/03) as set out on page 7 of Appendix 1. That represents a view taken across the various mixes in accordance with the above strategic position, so reflecting an overview. The approach enabled like for like comparisons to be made on development viability – crucial for that type of study which is informing strategic policy targets – but whilst also respecting the fact that actual dwelling mixes will vary with site specifics.
- 2.7 In terms of the size of both market and affordable housing, the mix used in the Economic Viability study has been based on the mixes set out in Core Policies 6, 10, 11, 14, 16 and 17.
- 2.8 The policies also allow a variation to the size and type of affordable housing and the size of private sector housing where this can be justified by a credible evidence source, which could include a viability assessment, or evidence regarding local market and tenure balance.

Question 9.3. *Are Core Policies 6, 10, 11, 14, 16 and 17 sufficiently flexible or are they too prescriptive?*

- 3.0 Strategic Objective 2 (paragraph 4.3, page 30) of the Core Strategy (CS) seeks to provide everyone with access to a decent, affordable home and to plan for an appropriate mix of types, sizes and tenures. To help meet this objective the Core Strategy uses as its basis the need for a range and mix of dwellings in terms of tenures, size and type to meet the varied needs of the community and the changing composition of households. By providing the mixes as set out in Core Policies 6, 10, 11, 14, 16 and 17 it offers developers certainty over the type of units they will be expected to provide. This reflects guidance in PPS1 (NPP/01, paragraph 8) and PPS12 (NPP/12A, paragraph 4.14) which emphasise the importance of certainty in the plan-led system.
- 3.1 Paragraph 23 of PPS3 (NPP/03) states that developers should bring forward proposals for market housing which reflect demand and the profile of households requiring market housing, in order to sustain mixed communities. Proposals for affordable housing should reflect the size and type of affordable housing required. This is the information that is contained in Appendix 1 of the Local Housing Needs and Market Survey (STU/03) and reflected in Core Policies 6, 10, 11, 14, 16 and 17.
- 3.2 However, it is recognised that these mixes represent a snap shot in time and may not reflect the situation at the time of future negotiations on any given site. It is therefore important to adopt a flexible approach – market and affordable housing need will change over time. Each of these policies recognises this by making clear that the size and tenure will be negotiated on a site by site basis with the *starting point* being the evidence provided in the SHMA. Use of the term “starting point” is clearly a flexible approach and not a rigid requirement.

- 3.3 Each policy also allows variations to the mix of size and tenure justified through the production of new, sound evidence from either an updated SHMA or other credible evidence source. It is reasonable to require that any variation is justified through new, sound evidence from either an updated SHMA or other credible evidence base which could include viability assessments, forecasts for future households and other relevant market information.
- 3.4 Therefore, these policies do retain flexibility, which apply to both affordable housing mix and private sector mix requirements whilst reflecting PPS3 guidance (page 7, NPP/03) which makes clear that the SHMA should be taken into account when preparing Local Development Documents.

Question 9.4. *Why is no mention made of housing density?*

- 4.0 The density policy that applies to south Wiltshire is set out in Policy H2 of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West incorporating the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes (RSS) (RPP/02). This seeks a target net density of 40dph averaged across all new housing, 40-50dph within SSCTs with higher densities in the most accessible locations, and 50dph or more overall in planned urban extensions to SSCTs and adjacent new communities. PPS12 (NPP/12A) makes clear at paragraph 4.30 that the Core Strategy should not repeat or reformulate national or regional policy, hence housing density is not referred to in the Core Strategy.
- 4.1 In applying this policy, it is important that reference is also made to the Supplementary Planning Guidance "Creating Places" (LPP/17). This guidance is clear that new development must respect the character of existing places. For example, on page 32 it advises that "In both towns and villages...it is critical to the success of any new development that care is taken in the design process to protect and enhance both the important spaces between buildings and also the structures and landscape features that occupy them. Inappropriate and ill-conceived schemes of new development can irrevocably damage the essential character of our settlements."
- 4.2 Appendix 2 page 130 of "Creating Places" also emphasises the importance of considering the existing framework of routes and spaces and ensuring that proposals are in keeping with the general pattern that prevails in the area. Density influences the intensity of development and in combination with the mix of uses can affect a place's vitality and viability. However, all sites have their limits. Overdevelopment can have a damaging impact on the appearance of a settlement, similarly bland low-density units may be inappropriate in an area characterised by high density development such as the centre of Salisbury (Appendix 2, LPP/7).
- 4.4 Therefore, in applying the densities set out in Policy H2 of the RSS, this needs to be done in the context of the local character.