

**SOUTH WILTSHIRE CORE
STRATEGY**

EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC

**Statement of Common Ground as
agreed between
Wiltshire Council
and the Government Office of the
South West**

19 FEBRUARY 2010

Plan reference: Paragraph 1.30

Representation Number: 9758

Issues Raised

The intention is that this core strategy is incorporated within the emerging Wiltshire-wide core strategy. The plan should say a little more about why the South Wiltshire section is proceeding ahead of elsewhere and how it will be incorporated within the Wiltshire core strategy.

We support the preparation of the South Wiltshire Core Strategy. Its adoption ahead of the rest of the County responds quickly to the need to address historic under provision for new housing in the plan area, in readiness for economic recovery. The plan area is consistent with proposals for the Salisbury Housing Market Area proposed in the emerging RSS. Preparation was overtaken by Local Government Reorganisation in Wiltshire and, on balance, it is appropriate to avoid unnecessary delay to plan preparation and continue the work to completion.

We do continue to be concerned that, in effect, embedding the core strategy within the County-wide one will re-open debate on the merits of strategic sites around Salisbury when it in turn is examined. However, we have discussed the merits of keeping the South Wiltshire strategy separate and respect your wish to see it incorporated within and superseded by a Wiltshire-wide core strategy. You might emphasise that you imagine it will be unnecessary to wholly review strategy for south Wiltshire and say a little more about how South Wiltshire will be considered in the process of preparing the county-wide strategy.

Wiltshire Council Response

In order to provide clarity to all stakeholders and a clear picture of the overall spatial strategy for its whole area, Wiltshire Council is committed to producing a single Core Strategy for its administrative area. Due to pressing needs and the potential exhaustion of strategic housing land, it has been expedient to progress the South Wiltshire Core strategy in advance of that for the rest of the Council area.

Continued/...

The content of the South Wiltshire Core Strategy will be incorporated into a single Wiltshire Core Strategy in due course. It will in effect become a section of the wider strategy. It has been stressed that further debate on the South Wiltshire Core Strategy will not be re-opened during the production process of the single Core Strategy, but will be clearly signposted throughout, and this will continue to be the case.

The merging of the Core Strategies will be facilitated by focussing the spatial expression of the strategy on the established Community Plan areas for Wiltshire, as is shown by Fig 1 on page 8 of the Core Strategy document.

Agreed position

Add new sentence between second and third sentence of paragraph 1.30:

'Due to pressing needs and the potential exhaustion of strategic housing land, it has been expedient to progress the South Wiltshire Core strategy in advance of that for the rest of the Council area'.

Add new paragraph:

'The merging of the Core Strategies will be facilitated by focussing the spatial expression of the strategy on the established Community Plan areas for Wiltshire, as is shown by Fig 1 on page 8 of the Core Strategy document'.

Plan reference: Paragraph 5.4

Representation Number: 9759

Issues Raised

The Core Strategy makes several references to a future 'site allocation DPD'. This should not be used as a means to defer difficult decisions. Overall, we have the impression that this DPD would allocate quite a considerable range of sites. Such a range of issues, if taken forward with one document, would seem a difficult, cumbersome and slow process to manage. The need for further DPDs should be considered against the guidance in PPS12, and we suggest a more systematic approach to further plan preparation that corresponds to the issues and focus of the Core Strategy. There should be clarity about what any potential DPDs are being expected to deliver. We will want to discuss this when rolling forward your Local Development Scheme.

Wiltshire Council Response

The choices over growth in the smaller settlements, while critically important in seeking to strike a balance between growth to meet housing and employment needs and conserving their intrinsic character, is considered too fine grain for a Core Strategy, which are by their nature strategic documents (see PPS12, Chapter 4, 'Nature of Core Strategies'). Deciding how best to accommodate growth in smaller settlements to meet the overall spatial distribution of development clearly set out and justified through the Core Strategy, is detailed work better suited to alternative mechanisms of delivery.

While a significant vehicle will be the Site Specific Allocations DPD, drawing on advice in Chapter 5 of PPS12, 'Other Development Plan Documents', there may be a number of other methods that lead to the identification of growth. Market conditions may bring forward planning applications that are appropriately located and designed in a manner that accords with the Development Plan. Furthermore, a review of the settlement boundaries, which will be carried out in conjunction with the Site Specific Allocations work, may also identify appropriate opportunities.

Agreed position

Paragraph 5.35 on page 57 of the Core Strategy will be revised to read:

"The purpose of the Site Specific Allocations DPD will be set out in the LDS for Wiltshire and may in summary be defined as a document that may allocate smaller growth sites, especially in strategically important local service centres in the rural areas, where it is clear that other sources of delivery may not supply the homes and jobs that are needed. It will only be used to encourage growth in those areas, which comply with CP1 and where the market or saved allocations do not bring forward development in accordance with the Core Strategy, in a timely manner".

Plan reference: Paragraph 5.31

Representation Number: 9745

Issues Raised

Paragraph 1.3 refers to the role of the core strategy 'ensuring that investment decisions are not made in isolation, but are properly co-ordinated...' Paragraph 5.31 says that 'there are no major works that require the delivery of all or part of the strategy to wait for its completion'. There appear to be quite detailed discussions with developers and infrastructure providers about measures and facilities needed to support the development of each of the strategic sites. The general approach appears to be for the necessary infrastructure to be secured on a site by site basis, in large part by negotiating developer funding contributions.

The core strategy, probably by referring to some appropriate evidence, should be able to demonstrate that the levels of funding sought from developers will still allow for viable private development. In so doing, the spatial strategy might include more reference to the strategies and investment plans for the local authority and other organisations to reassure the reader there is a reasonable prospect of delivery.

Wiltshire Council Response

Viability work has been carried out on behalf of the Council, which has not identified any insurmountable barriers to the delivery of development on the strategic sites.

Agreed position

Add sentence: 'Viability work has been carried out by the Council, which has not identified any insurmountable barriers to the delivery of development on the strategic sites arising from the infrastructure requirements'.

Add footnote cross-referencing Viability Assessment.

Plan reference: Paragraph 5.31 and Appendix A

Representation Number: 9747 and 9749

Issues Raised

There appears to be some confusion about what improvements are needed to local transport networks. Development templates appear to raise the possibility of 'major transport requirements'. However, based on the core strategy itself, we are under the impression that there are no major capital schemes, but rather a mix of much more modest measures. If the latter is the case then the core strategy should say so more explicitly and frame the development of the transport strategy in ways that avoid raising expectations about its content.

Wiltshire Council Response

This is a question of context (i.e. the scope of works might be 'major; in relation to an individual site, but not when considered across the board).

However, acknowledge that use of the word 'major' might lead to raised expectations as to what transport infrastructure would be delivered.

Agreed position

Remove references to 'major' transport infrastructure in Development Templates.

Plan reference: Paragraph 5.31

Representation Number: 9750 and 9751

Issues Raised

There needs to be more explanation of how other infrastructure will be provided. It would be helpful to describe what process and by when there will need to be decisions about a new secondary school and what the process will be for delivering additional primary school capacity. Similarly, there should be some explanation of how fire services will be improved.

We're aware of discussions between the Environment Agency, Natural England, Wessex Water and yourselves about protecting the River Avon SAC. This is clearly a fundamental issue for the strategy to tackle and a mitigation strategy appears an essential part of a solution, but we're unclear about what is involved for the preparation of the strategy and, since there is no measure yet of how much mitigation may cost, there needs to be some evidence to ensure S106 funding from developers will be fair and effective and therefore that an adequate strategy can actually be delivered. Paragraph 5.31 indicates responsibility for preparing a strategy lies with the Environment Agency and Natural England. It would be useful to include a timescale for the preparation and implementation of the strategy; to elaborate on the form measures are likely to take in order to be assured that they are affordable; and indicate who will be responsible for delivering them.

Wiltshire Council Response

Describing this process in the detail suggested would be far too cumbersome within the context of a Core Strategy document.

However, Topic Paper 17 (Infrastructure) goes into detail on the matters summarised in paragraph 5.31 – as well as other infrastructure requirements – and it is acknowledged that a footnote directing the reader to this evidence would be beneficial.

Agreed position

Revise Core Policy 20 under sub-heading "targets" to read:

Production of a phosphate management plan produced and funded in accordance with Natural England's document, "South Wiltshire Core Strategy: River Avon SAC Phosphate Management Plan" (ref HS/Natural England/124/12); maintenance of the River Avon SAC in favourable condition.

Regarding Education provision:

Revise page 202 of the Core Strategy at Appendix E, Integrated Delivery Plan under education: add under target:

Additional Secondary School Capacity for Salisbury including a new Academy at Salisbury High School (West Salisbury Academy)

Delivery mechanism: Funding from DCFS

Timescale: Salisbury High will open as Academy within existing buildings in September 2010 with new buildings opening September 2013.

Indicator: Delivery of academy

Plan reference: Paragraph 6.19

Representation Number: 9754

Issues Raised

The redevelopment of the Churchfields area of Salisbury is a central element of the strategy. The core strategy says it currently hosts around 300 different businesses and therefore their relocation seems a significant challenge. Churchfields is identified as a strategic site and its development template envisages that it will be developed in the early part of the plan period.

The Core Strategy should include some detail of how this proposal will be taken forward since it depends upon fresh land being made available and existing businesses being relocated to several of the other planned strategic sites at Salisbury. The core strategy should say more to substantiate how this proposal will be delivered.

Wiltshire Council Response

The Council fully recognises the complexity of the constraints and land assembly issues associated with this allocation and is making a full commitment to its delivery.

This project will be delivered through the Salisbury Vision. In support of this an implementation team has been established for the delivery of this project to be led by the Salisbury Vision Director. The team has extensive regeneration and development expertise and the ability to draw upon further external support where this is required.

Salisbury Vision is a special purpose vehicle established to provide a private sector led approach to the regeneration of Salisbury. It has a Board comprising both private and public sector representation including Wiltshire Council and representatives of the local business community and organisations with an important stake in the success of the city. The Board is Chaired by Sir Christopher Benson.

Wiltshire Council itself is a key landowner on the Churchfields Estate. These landholdings will form part of the redevelopment project. The Council's position as landowner, provides important impetus to the project, and will facilitate the delivery of phased development on the site. Discussions with other key landowners and occupiers of the site have been progressing alongside the development of the Core Strategy. To some extent the delivery of the site will depend on the allocation of the other sites in the Core Strategy, as this will provide both the physical capacity and the geographical flexibility for which the decanting businesses have expressed a desire.

This commitment remains under the new Unitary Authority and is demonstrated both through Wiltshire Council's formal decision-making processes and its continued commitment to provide both officer support and financial resources to the project. Wiltshire Council's Implementation Executive on 16th March 2009 resolved to note the progress towards and the next steps required to deliver the Churchfields Project (Item 239

By the time of the Examination in Public in March 2010, the implementation team will be in the process of appointing advisers to support it in the preparation of a masterplan.

Agreed position

Add paragraph: Discussions between landowners and occupiers of the site have been progressing alongside the development of the Core Strategy and to some extent its delivery will depend on the allocation of the other sites in the Core Strategy, as this will provide both the physical capacity and the geographical flexibility for which the decanting businesses have expressed a desire.

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Plan reference: Paragraphs 8.20 and 8.22

Representation Number: 9735 and 9736

Issues Raised

Paragraph 5.46 discusses the scale of employment land provision at Amesbury and refers to a current planning permission for 64 ha of employment development. It comments that this scale of development will be subject to review since it is out of step with strategy which now aims to focus growth at Salisbury. However we are not convinced that the implications for both the settlement and the spatial strategy have been fully considered if or when this permission is built out. For example, the strategy might suggest a mix of business, or possibly other uses, that might reduce conflict with strategic objectives or at least minimise the harm. The core strategy should give clear guidance on the future of this site; ideally to reduce the conflicts with strategic objectives that this development apparently represents.

The strategy includes the strategic site allocation called 'Kings Gate'. This includes a new district centre, which presumably will provide additional community facilities although exactly what is not specified in the development template. It is clear from the core strategy's description of Amesbury that there are issues such as pockets of deprivation and how to providing better local retail choice. We recognise these schemes at Kings Gate and Solstice Park are a legacy of the current Local Plan. We also recognise that significant decisions on planning applications for retail development have been reached since publication. In our view there needs to be a better explanation of how all these proposals can enhance the role of the town as a service centre and promote settlement self-containment. In particular there needs to be a better explanation of how the strategic site allocation at Kings Gate, the recent retail planning permission, together with existing facilities provide for better, more accessible shops and services necessary to meet local needs.

Wiltshire Council Response

The submission of the Core Strategy included the following change to address this issue:

Add the following text after paragraph 8.20: 'The strategy for Amesbury seeks to make the town a more self-supporting community. The implications of implementing the planning permission at Solstice Park mean that balanced growth will be delivered in Amesbury, alongside the housing at Kings Gate. The development can add diversity in the scale, range and choice of jobs on offer, help to attract further development at Solstice Park by giving confident messages to the market that Solstice Park is a location to invest and help in contributing to the wider economic strategy at the local and wider Regional level'.

Agreed position

One additional change agreed to address the retailing position as resulting from the call in decision on the new Tesco supermarket. Add to paragraph 8.23 of CS ('Providing Retail Choice in the Amesbury Community Area'):

" The vitality of the existing town centre will be protected by ensuring that the local centre at Kings Gate is commensurate with the day-to-day needs of the Archers and Kings Gate areas. Future policy proposals for the settlement will focus on assisting the existing town centre to continue to thrive, taking into account the impact of the recent approval of out of centre retail development."

Plan reference: Core Policy 5

Representation Number: 9737

Issues Raised

Core Policy 5 seeks to prevent alternative forms of development of existing employment sites and allocations, whilst elsewhere the document indicates that the Amesbury employment allocation should not be retained. The position seems ambiguous and likely to create uncertainty.

Wiltshire Council Response

The Amesbury allocation is in some ways falling between two plans.

The allocation has an extant consent and, if this is implemented and built out, this employment use will be protected by virtue of Core Policy 5.

However, as explained in paragraph 8.18, in order to comply with the RSS the allocation is not carried forward. Therefore, if the extant consent site is not implemented the land will cease to benefit from the allocation.

It is not accepted that this brings ambiguity and uncertainty to the Core Strategy as a whole.

Agreed position

No changes necessary.