Dear Mr Cunningham,

Wiltshire Core Strategy (CS)

Thank you for your letter dated 29th January 2014. As referenced, I would also wish to bring the ongoing Examination to a timely and robust conclusion.

I note the enclosed Local Development Scheme (LDS) and the revised details of the intended new development plan documents (DPDs), summarised in Table 2. The expedited production of such documents is to be welcomed albeit I recognise the practical challenges such a work programme may bring. With regard to the Core Strategy, my report is clearly yet to be finalised and a conclusion upon its soundness reached. Based upon an assumption of potential soundness, I consider it unlikely that this document could be adopted during the spring of this year due to the necessary work which is underway and the need for consultation, in line with the Council’s SCI, upon both its content and the changes to the CS which will likely arise. A summer 2014 target would appear to be the earliest reasonable adoption date. The early review of the CS and the Housing and Chippenham DPDs targeted for 2015 would also appear to be the earliest realistic opportunity for their production and adoption whilst the 2016 date for the Gypsy and Traveller DPD would also appear to be a pragmatic ambition. I have no further comment upon the LDS at this stage other than note your delegated authority to alter it further if necessary.

I note the proposed approach towards Gypsy and Travellers. I look forward to receiving any revised evidence on this matter, including an updated Topic Paper 16 and consequent revisions to Core Policy 47. As previously mentioned, the details will be determinative on this matter albeit I appreciate that they will be set within the context of the proposed DPD as set out in the LDS.

Once again, I welcome your intentions to provide a full response to the matters at hand by the end of February. Your bulleted list appears to cover the
matters previously raised. I will be endeavouring to alter my work programme to ensure I am available to consider its content so would be grateful if you could give an early indication of any slippage in the production of this evidence.

The general approach of the proposed ‘disaggregation methodology’ appears logical. However and by way of observation, the distribution of the proposed 42,000 homes should take into account the intended housing trajectory and the links with the proposed Housing Site Allocations DPD.

I anticipate the likely need for some flexibility in how individual housing sites are to be identified across each HMA, particularly in the latter part of the plan period. Thus, whilst the intention to disaggregate the housing provision at the level of each Community Area would provide useful clarity of the Council’s intentions, particularly in the knowledge of likely constraints, such disaggregation should not be so prescriptive as to be inflexible and potentially ineffective in delivering the identified level of housing for each market area. The details within the Core Strategy should not fetter the subsequent function of the Housing Sites Allocation DPD which, based on the profile provided, is intended to provide a level of specific detail of where housing sites will be identified across the county and when they may be brought forwards for development.

For the purposes of the ongoing Examination, I am interested in a proportionate level of evidence that supports the Plan’s intentions and I am ever mindful of the content of the National Planning Policy Framework in such respects, for example Section 6 including paragraph 47.

As noted above, public and stakeholder consultation on matters which affect the soundness of the Core Strategy will be necessary. I will be in a more informed position to advise upon the form/extent of such consultation after receipt of the additional evidence and the changes which are proposed to the plan. Ideally for reasons of clarity and efficiency, such consultation should encompass all relevant matters in one process; this may need to include the potential effect of the National Planning Practice Guidance if finalised. If it is feasible to incorporate any main modifications that I may wish to recommend then I will make such information available at that time. I will be able to advise further upon this point when I have seen and considered the evidence currently under production.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Seaman

Senior Housing and Planning Inspector