



Chippenham Site Allocations Plan

Briefing Note 3: The Housing Requirement for Chippenham

Wiltshire Council is preparing the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan, which will set the long term pattern and direction of growth for the town's expansion. This briefing note is one of a number of papers which have been/will be created to support the progress of the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan. This note explains the housing requirement for Chippenham.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The overall scale of growth to be provided in the Chippenham Community Area and at Chippenham town for the period 2006-2026 is included in the draft Wiltshire Core Strategy¹. It is proposed that approximately 5,090 new homes should be provided in the Chippenham Community Area and that 'at least' 4,510 of these should be at Chippenham. For planning purposes for all principal settlements and market towns, reference to a place means the continuous urban area of that place and often involves more than one parish area. In relation to Chippenham the continuous extent of the existing urban areas and/or proposed urban extensions, fall within more than one community area².
- 1.2 For Chippenham town, the proposed level of housing is expressed as 'at least' 4,510 dwellings. This note summarises the reasons for this course of action.

2. Background

- 2.1 On 10 July 2012, Wiltshire Council submitted the draft Wiltshire Core Strategy to the Secretary of State for independent examination. The draft core strategy proposed that a minimum of 37,000 homes should be built from 2006 to 2026 within Wiltshire.

¹ EXAM/34b Wiltshire Core Strategy Pre-submission Document, Tracked Changes Version, Wiltshire Council, April 2014

² EXAM/34b Wiltshire Core Strategy Pre-submission Document, Tracked Changes Version, Wiltshire Council, April 2014 paragraph 5.2

- 2.2 The Inspector, carrying out the examination into the soundness of the draft core strategy, wrote to the council on 2 December 2014³ suggesting an increase to the housing requirement for Wiltshire to approximately 42,000 new dwellings.
- 2.3 He noted the evidence suggests the broad acceptability of between 35,800 and 42,100 new homes over the plan period and he was minded to find that the Wiltshire Core Strategy housing requirement should be expressed as a minimum figure towards the upper end of this range, effectively an increase of 5,000 homes.
- 2.4 One aspect, clear in his letter, is that the Wiltshire Core Strategy should be ‘aspirational but realistic’. Setting a housing requirement that is undeliverable may compromise the ability of the plan to effectively deliver sustainable forms of development supported by adequate infrastructure.
- 2.5 Later, the Inspector also indicated a need for the Plan to be flexible⁴:

“... 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.”

3. Disaggregation to Community Areas and Towns

- 3.1 Disaggregation of the additional housing requirements used a methodology based on the distribution of the additional growth to community areas and towns on a proportionate basis⁵. This was carried out in order to retain the current balance of growth between each area and therefore the integrity of the spatial strategy. The starting point therefore was that each part of Wiltshire should receive a proportionate, pro-rata, increase in the amount of housing it should accommodate, according to the initial scales proposed.
- 3.2 However, reflecting on the Inspector’s advice about the need for realism and the need to recognise constraints a strict pro-rata increase needed testing in each area and settlement against three questions:
- Is the increased rate of house building unrealistic?
 - Are there insurmountable infrastructure barriers to growth?
 - Are there insurmountable environmental constraints to allocating the proposed scale of development?
- 3.3 On the first of these, a proposed level of new homes was considered unrealistic if the implied rate of house building for the remainder of the plan period was expected to more than double what has been achieved in recent years.

³ EXAM/75 The Inspector’s 10th Procedural Letter, December 2013

⁴ EXAM/82 The Inspector’s 12th Procedural Letter, February 2014

⁵ EXAM/84 Wiltshire Core Strategy Addendum to Topic Paper 15 Housing Requirements Technical Paper (February 2014)

3.4 A strictly proportionate increase in housing requirements for Chippenham would result in a requirement for 4630 dwellings⁶. However, this did imply average house building rates more than doubling those in recent years. Hence the suggested change was to moderate this figure and propose 4510, double recent averages. For this exercise, an assumption that a higher rate could be sustained over the remainder of the plan period was not considered 'realistic'.

4. 'At least'

4.1 Chippenham has an economic potential that has not been reflected in recent rates of housing development. Compared to elsewhere in Wiltshire, Chippenham has an existing concentration of manufacturing businesses and the town's access to the M4, as well as national main line rail services, offers good links to markets.

4.2 Housing completions have been lower than might have been anticipated for several years. Figure one shows annual dwellings completions at Chippenham since 1983. This shows recent rates of housing development at their lowest for thirty years and shows the rate of housing development required at Chippenham by the Wiltshire Core Strategy compared to rates achieved in times past.

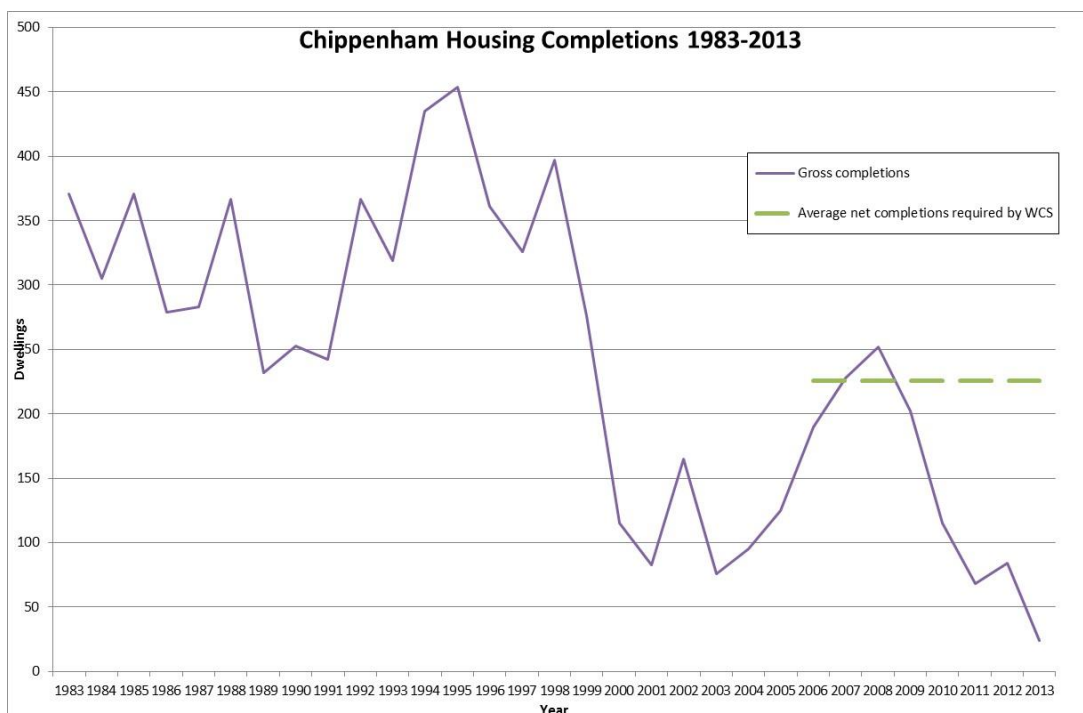


Figure One: Chippenham Housing Completions 1983-2013

4.3 The strategy for Chippenham is based on delivering significant job growth for local people. Housing development at Chippenham is set to increase over the plan period hand in hand with this economic growth, as will demands on infrastructure (e.g. roads, schools, health services). Framed as 'at least', the core strategy provides the opportunity to consider future rates of house building to reflect the town's potential. Nevertheless, this is not an open door to unfettered development, as most of all, the rate of development needs to strike a

⁶ EXAM/84 Wiltshire Core Strategy Addendum to Topic Paper 15 Housing Requirements Technical Paper (February 2014) p17

sensible balance between being 'aspirational yet realistic'. Maintaining this balance is the role of the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan.

- 4.4 Chippenham is set apart from the other Principal Settlements by having no allocated strategic sites but a substantial requirement for greenfield development. The Chippenham Site Allocation Plan is to be prepared using evidence which will identify the most appropriate locations for growth at the town. This evidence will provide guidance on the essential infrastructure needed to support long term growth and enable Chippenham's economic potential to be realised. To effectively deliver this long term development strategy for Chippenham, an allocation could be justified that exceeds the scale of development proposed in the Wiltshire Core Strategy (always mindful of the need to be realistic given the remaining time period of the plan). Therefore rather than present housing proposals as an indicative requirement (which can also mean less, as well as more, housing), provision has been framed as a minimum.
- 4.5 In summary, the scale of housing requirement for Chippenham is expressed as a minimum, reflecting the further work needed to identify a pattern of development that can best realise the town's economic potential and provide strategic infrastructure that may be required. A balance will need to be struck between this aim and the need for the Plan to be realistic and deliverable.

Further information:

For further information in relation to the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan visit the council's web site:

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planninganddevelopment/planningpolicy/chippenhamsiteallocationsplan.htm>

Or contact Spatial Planning via email: spatialplanningpolicy@wiltshire.gov.uk or telephone: 01225 713223.

Other Briefing Notes:

Briefing Note 1: Chippenham Strategic Site Selection Methodology

Briefing Note 2: Definition of the Chippenham Strategic Areas

Briefing Note 4: Relationship with Neighbourhood Plans

Briefing Note 5: The Role of Strategic Sites