Wiltshire Local Plan Review

Scale and Distribution of Growth (Regulation 18 consultation)

Report of Informal Consultation with Town and Parish Councils

Event:
October 2018

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Wiltshire Council
Where everybody matters

1   Introduction

1.1   The purpose of this report is to record the discussions that took place with local Wiltshire Council elected members, representatives of town and parish councils and neighbourhood plan groups in October and November 2018 to consider an appropriate scale and distribution of development in Wiltshire.

Background

1.2   In November 2017 Wiltshire Council began the review of the Wiltshire Core Strategy (renamed the Wiltshire Local Plan). A consultation took place between Tuesday 7 November 2017 and Tuesday 19 December 2017 in accordance with Regulation 18 ('preparation of a local plan') of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. A report of this consultation is available on the web site here: http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planning-policy-local-plan-review

1.3   The consultation included Housing Market Area (HMA) Profiles which highlighted the strategic issues facing each of the county's principal settlements and market towns[1].

1.4   The purpose of the consultation in October 2018 was to further develop the discussion in relation to where growth should take place and what was an appropriate scale of growth at those places.

Town Based Workshops

How can approximately 44,000 homes be distributed across Wiltshire, with a focus on Wiltshire's market towns and principal settlements, to maintain the role and function of those places and promote sustainable development?

Rural Based Workshops

How can policies within the Local Plan support proportionate housing growth outside named market towns and principal settlements (the rural area) and support the role of neighbourhood plans?

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[1] The Swindon and Wiltshire Joint Spatial Framework Housing Market Area profiles can be found online at: http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planning-policy-sw-joint-spatial-framework

1.5 Representatives of town and parish councils and neighbourhood plan steering groups were invited to attend along with elected Wiltshire Councillors. Invitees were made aware of the events via the Wiltshire Council Members Bulletin (**Appendix 1**) and a letter to every town and parish clerk (**Appendix 2**).

2 Overview: Town Based Workshops

2.1 The Swindon and Wiltshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2017[2] proposed four housing market areas (HMAs) within Wiltshire as illustrated in **Figure 1**. [3]

Figure 1: Proposed housing market areas (HMA)

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[2] The Strategic Housing Market Assessment can be found online at:
http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planning-policy-sw-joint-spatial-framework
[3] Cabinet on 26 March 2019 agreed minor amendments to the HMAs illustrated in Figure 1. This report relates to the HMAs proposed at the time of the consultation.

2.2 The town based workshops are listed in **Table 1** and were held in Chippenham, Trowbridge, Salisbury and Royal Wootton Bassett and focused on information in relation to the relevant HMA. The workshops were designed to encourage a discussion about each principal settlement and market town and consider their capacity for growth. Each followed the same format. A sample agenda is included at **Appendix 3**. **Appendix 4** identifies which town and parish councils and Wiltshire Division Members were present at each event while **Appendix 5** includes a sample presentation as each was adapted to the places being discussed.

Table 1: Town Based Workshops

Geography	Venue	Date and time
Chippenham HMA part (Devizes, Malmesbury, Melksham)	Cotswolds Space, County Hall **Trowbridge**	6.30 – 8.00 pm Monday **8 October** 2018
Salisbury HMA (Amesbury (including Durrington and Burford), Salisbury (including Wilton, Tidworth and Ludgershall)	Salisbury City Hall, Alamein Suite **Salisbury**	6.30 – 8.00 pm Wednesday, **10 October** 2018
Swindon HMA (Royal Wootton Bassett, Marlborough)	Memorial Hall **Royal Wootton Bassett**	6.30 – 8.00 pm Monday **15 October** 2018
Chippenham HMA part (Calne, Corsham, Chippenham)	Monkton Park **Chippenham**	6.30 – 8.00 pm Thursday **25 October** 2018
Trowbridge HMA (Bradford on Avon, Trowbridge, Warminster, Westbury)	Cotswolds Space, County Hall **Trowbridge**	6:30 – 8:00 pm Monday **29 October** 2018

Prepared material

2.3 In advance of the workshops, officers had summarised comments made during the November 2017 Scope of the Plan consultation which directly related to individual places or individual housing market areas. These were made available to attendees as they arrived and are included at **Appendix 6.**

2.4 In advance of the workshops officers had also spoken to internal colleagues to create a brief SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis for each principal settlement and market town to identify key features which could inform the

debate. These were made available to attendees as they arrived and are included at **Appendix 7**. The workshops provided an opportunity to 'sense check' the information that had been gathered and add local knowledge to the information through discussions on the night.

Arrivals Exercise: Urban Potential

2.5   At each town based workshop there was an arrivals exercise to consider what sites there were with development potential within each town. It is important to understand if there are any significant sites which could, through policy direction, be redeveloped to improve the town centre and contribute to the need for housing locally.

2.6   Maps were provided which identified urban potential that the Council was already aware of, principally through the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA).[4] Other sources of information included:

- Housing Land Availability / Brownfield Register

- Masterplans & other regeneration projects eg Trowbridge Master Plan

- Social Housing estate renewal

- Council assets available for redevelopment

- Planning applications with housing, either expired or withdrawn

- 2017 Local Plan Review Reg 18 consultation

2.7   The exercise simply asked:

1. Do you have any comments/local knowledge about the sites included on the list as having some housing potential?

2. Are you aware of any other brownfield sites which could have some housing potential? Please identify them on the map provided and provide a description of the site in the table below.

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[4] The Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) provides information on the suitability, availability and achievability of land for both housing and economic development. It can be found online at: http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planning-policy-monitoring-evidence

Planning for Growth Exercise

2.8 The Planning for Growth exercise was a theoretical exercise to gain a better understanding of the constraints and opportunities at individual places.

Following the arrivals exercise, each table was presented with an illustrative map (**Appendix 8**) and an activity sheet (example shown in **Appendix 9**) both relevant to the market town or principal settlement. The activity sheets outlined the residual number of homes which would need to be planned for over the period to 2036 to reach a theoretical housing requirement for the settlement, based on distributing growth on a proportionate basis as the Wiltshire Core Strategy. The maps displayed:

- Wiltshire Core Strategy settlement boundaries

- Permitted land (including adopted allocations and planning permissions)

- Sites identified in the SHELAA 2017

- Environmental constraints

- Local facilities

- Infrastructure

3   Overview: Rural Workshops

**3.1** The dates of the rural workshops are listed in **Table 2** and were held in Pewsey and Trowbridge.

Table 2: Rural Based Workshops

Geography	Venue	Date and time
Rural parishes	Cotswolds Space, County Hall **Trowbridge**	6.30 – 8.00 pm Thursday **18 October** 2018
Rural parishes	Bouverie Hall **Pewsey**	6.30 – 8.00 pm Monday **22 October** 2018

3.2 These workshops were designed to encourage a discussion about current housing policy for the rural areas, the impact of the revised National Planning Policy Framework published in 2018 and the role of future neighbourhood plans. A sample agenda is included at **Appendix 10**. **Appendix 11** identifies which town and parish

councils and Wiltshire Division Members were present at each event while **Appendix 12** includes the presentation given to stimulate debate. A number of case studies of rural housing delivery were included in the presentation and representatives from selected parishes reported their experience on the delivery of rural housing.

3.3   Attendance at the events was self-selecting. Representatives of totally rural parishes were encouraged to attend the rural based events but some parishes, particularly those adjacent to main settlements, had an interest in the town and rural based events. As a consequence, there was often a discussion about rural housing policy at some of the town based workshops. On these occasions, activities which aimed to prompt a debate about rural housing policy were undertaken on specific tables. **Appendix 11** therefore also identifies the town and parish councils and Wiltshire Divisions which took part in the discussions at the town based workshops and their comments are incorporated in the summary of each event provided below. **Figure 2** provides a geographical representation of those town and parish councils who took part in the rural housing workshops.
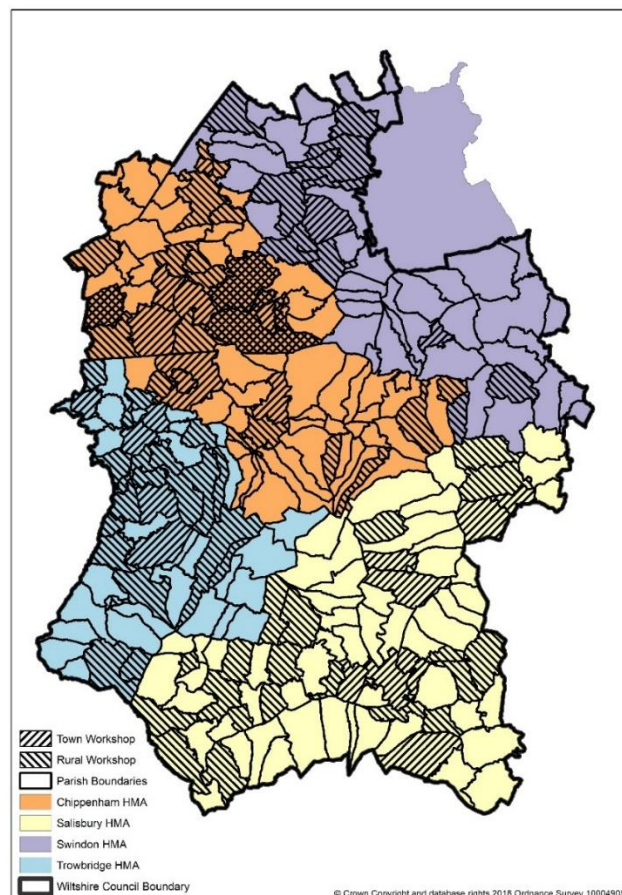
Figure 2: Visual representation of attendance at the Town Based and Rural Parish workshops

4   Outcomes: Town Based Workshops

4.1   A full write up of the town based workshops can be found in **Appendix 13.** A sample of the annotated maps from the meetings are shown in **Appendix 14.** Not all places recorded notes on the maps relying instead on the written comment submitted. Provided below is a summary of the general discussions which were held regarding the scale of growth in each principal settlement and market town.

Chippenham Housing Market Area

Calne

4.2   The exercise emphasised a general consensus to prioritise employment growth given recent failures to deliver this alongside housing. In terms of new housing, concern was voiced that it may add to current infrastructure constraints without providing any solutions. Options for higher growth were discussed to enable the delivery of road infrastructure to relieve congestion in the town centre and AQMA within the town. Options for lower growth were also discussed to try and avoid a worsening of the current situation. (The indictive requirement discussed was about 2255 homes with a residual of about 1280 homes to allocate).

Chippenham

4.3   Potential for significant growth supported by strategic road investment that could form a new boundary to the town on the east and south was recognised by some as an opportunity; integral to this was high quality design with green infrastructure and recreation routes linking existing community to the countryside. Areas were identified that could accommodate the residual level of growth identified at this stage. (The indictive requirement discussed was about 7060 homes with a residual of about 3300 homes to allocate).

4.4   There was a broad move to place development towards the south and south east of the town with the remaining numbers being accommodated by smaller sites around the periphery of the settlement boundary along with a significant number within the town itself in the form of brownfield development.

4.5   A number of potential constraints were highlighted in attempting to accommodate the level of growth being proposed including the loss of agricultural land, impacts on air pollution, building in flood risk zones (and the impact of climate change on this

constraint), traffic congestion, the capacity of the road infrastructure to adapt and accommodate this level of growth along with concerns over the viability of proposed solutions to the current levels of congestion within the town.

4.6 There was more support for a southern link road which was seen as a more viable solution to relieve current congestion.

Corsham

4.7 Discussions identified that the proposed level of growth could be accommodated so that new housing was close to town centre facilities, supporting existing public transport and was a reasonable distance to primary schools. (a requirement of about 1910 homes with a residual of about 1260 homes to allocate). However, it was also identified that the proposed growth may lead to existing facilities and road infrastructure becoming increasingly under pressure, with the Corsham Train Station considered unlikely.

4.8 There were concerns that the community feel and quality of life of the town would be worsened due to the potential development of open space and large housing estates.

Devizes

4.9 The exercise identified a concern over infrastructure capacity, specifically road infrastructure. It was also identified that when accommodating housing growth, new facilities should be delivered alongside the development, namely but not exclusively, road infrastructure, medical and education provision.

4.10 Concerns that the indicative housing requirement that was discussed was too high. (a requirement of about 3150 homes with a residual of about 2400 homes to allocate).

Malmesbury

4.11 Participants thought that the housing figure identified for Malmesbury was appropriate for the town given the number of constraints that were highlighted (a requirement of about 1400 homes with a residual of about 850 homes to allocate). Land was identified within Malmesbury, using a combination of brownfield sites and SHELAA sites, to accommodate the indicative figure used in at the event. Concerns were voiced over the capacity of education, impact on abbey views and the need for better transport infrastructure including car parking provision.

Melksham

4.12 It was felt that the town had taken significant growth in recent years with a lack of infrastructure including medical provision. The importance of delivering infrastructure before any large scale future growth could be accommodated was emphasised. This included a specific focus on the provision of an eastern bypass, without which it was felt development would be difficult to accommodate. (The indictive requirement discussed was about 3500 homes with a residual of about 2400 homes to allocate).

4.13 Other constraints included education provision (and the need for a new secondary school) and the improvement of transport infrastructure, not only roads but also sustainable transport options and the improvement of the railway station.

Salisbury Housing Market Area

Salisbury

4.14 There was thought to be limited scope for development at the principal settlement in the HMA. Odstock Hospital area *inter alia* was mentioned, with the opportunity to provide specialist accommodation at that location. A general consideration was around how the evening economy might be expanded / maximised. Under higher growth scenarios, the question raised was around how the Hospital might cope. (The indictive requirement discussed was about 4150 homes with a residual of about 440 homes to allocate).

Amesbury/New Settlement

4.15 A lot of the discussion was focused around a new settlement - therefore a higher growth scenario - and that such a proposition could benefit from self-containment, possibly also aiding a rail station at Porton (or that vicinity). Conversely it was suggested that the A303 might be put under pressure, perhaps in spite of imminent duelling west of Amesbury. Concerns were expressed about the value of biodiversity and landscape at the locations identified. (The indictive requirement discussed for the town of Amesbury was about 1670 homes with a residual of about 570 homes to allocate).

4.16 A second discussion raised the prospect of a new settlement at Lopcombe Corner – some distance from Amesbury - which would afford good access to Porton Down and Salisbury; however environmental constraints were once again noted.

Tidworth and Ludgershall

4.17 It was believed that land might exist for 500-600 new homes across the two towns. This would constitute a higher growth scenario. However, such growth levels would require attention to job and retail provision. (The indictive requirement discussed was about 1200 homes with a residual of about 315 homes to allocate).

Swindon Housing Market Area

Marlborough

4.18 The outcome of discussions regarding Marlborough identified a requirement for housing which met local need. In this instance, a need was identified for affordable and social housing, with a lack of need for retirement homes and large homes. It was also identified that by accommodating housing growth, new facilities should be delivered alongside the development. (The indictive requirement discussed for Marlborough was about 595 homes with a residual of about 230 homes to allocate).

Royal Wootton Bassett

4.19 A higher growth figure than that proposed was discussed with the assumption that it would help to ensure the delivery of improvements to road infrastructure, including a bypass, school and health facilities and improvements to bus services. (The indictive requirement discussed was about 940 homes with a residual of about 680 homes to allocate).

West of Swindon/Rural

4.20 A key area of discussion for rural parish representatives attending the event were concerns relating to traffic. Discussions on the location and amount of housing that could be accommodated in the area were mainly led by how to minimise traffic impacts and improve the use of public transport.

Trowbridge Housing Market Area

Bradford on Avon

4.21 The main concerns that were raised regarding housing growth in Bradford on Avon related to transport issues and subsequent air quality issues. However, it was also noted that housing growth could bring employment, retail and regeneration

opportunities. (The indictive requirement discussed was about 680 homes with a residual of about 455 homes to allocate).

Trowbridge

4.22 A consistent point of discussion regarding Trowbridge was the need for a review of the Green Belt to enable the most suitable sites for housing growth to be released. Furthermore, it was considered important that future housing development is directed at locations that minimises the impact on road infrastructure, or otherwise, housing should have road infrastructure developed alongside it. (The indictive requirement discussed was about 7800 homes with a residual of about 4290 homes to allocate).

Warminster

4.23 The outcome of the discussions regarding Warminster suggested that representatives were prepared to take the proposed level of housing growth, but that a higher level of growth would not be suitable due to accommodating high levels of growth in the past. (The indictive requirement discussed was about 2200 homes with a residual of about 165 homes to allocate).

Westbury

4.24 In Westbury, the discussions were focussed predominantly on infrastructure provision. There was a strong desire from representatives for sustainable transport links associated with new development, and better cycle and walking connections.

4.25 Participants annotated on maps where development was unsuitable because of landscape and other constraints. An area close to the railway station was a favoured location for development. (The indictive requirement discussed was about 1720 homes with a residual of about 650 homes to allocate).

5   Outcome: Rural Based Workshops

What are the main challenges facing rural villages in Wiltshire?

5.1 On arrival participants were asked what were the main challenges facing rural areas. The comments recorded are summarised in the table below.

Table 3: Summary of Main Challenges in Wiltshire's Rural Areas

Location of development	- Lack of suitable sites - Lack of resources to prepare neighbourhood plans - Policies too restrictive - Settlement boundaries don't allow for expansion - Small villages classed as 'unsustainable' - Land availability an issue if owners not willing or have too high expectations on land values
Sustainability	- Poor public transport - Should affordable housing be promoted where no public transport? - Lack of access to employment - Lack of local facilities (GPs, schools) - High house prices and low wage economy - Preservation of natural environment
Type of housing	- Housing being built doesn't reflect local need eg too large - Lack of affordable housing for young people - Lack of housing for the elderly and disabled - Loss of smaller homes as properties extend - New housing is large and expensive which encourages commuters - Design quality - Population too small to enable diversity of provision (e.g. elderly / disabled)
Housing Delivery	- Need mix of large and small sites - Delivery is slow - Is there appetite for a 'garden village'? - House prices too high (national issue) - Second homes - Community Land Trust a slow process - Mismatch between local aspirations and commercial development
Traffic and roads	- Increase in traffic. In particular traffic volume, congestion, HGVs, in small villages - Car parking - Road infrastructure not maintained

Solutions

5.2 Following the short presentation and discussion with neighbourhood plan groups participants were asked to think about solutions to the issues noted at the beginning of the evening. A summary of the ideas recorded is noted below. A full note of comments recorded is available at **Appendix 15.** The summary table highlights the

tensions between those who wish to enable more growth in the rural areas and those who wish to retain strict policies such as the return of settlement boundaries for small villages. Generally, participants were concerned that current policy does not enable villages to respond to the challenges noted.

Table 4: Summary of Ideas to respond to Challenges in the rural areas

Location of development	- Allow small greenfield sites on edge of village – not just affordable - Can settlement boundaries be brought back for small villages? - About 10 is about right - Look at options to grow villages - Allow well related parts of village in settlement boundaries - Include gardens in settlement boundaries and allow infill in gardens - Promote the availability of land for affordable housing take-up – incentive policies - Review green belt boundaries eg Colerne - Redefine villages to allow expansion and lots of infill - Existing policies too restrictive
Sustainability	- Maintain gaps between villages - Consider buffer zones around villages - Strengthen consideration of sustainability of a site - Availability of employment should be a consideration - Clearer definition of what is sustainable in a rural location needed.
Type of housing	- Allow starter homes as part of rural exceptions site - To be led by evidence of local housing need to combat commuting, dormitory roles - Can affordability be linked to local house prices? - Can Housing Need Survey be amended to also target need for starter homes and low cost market? - Allow specialist accommodation in rural areas for older people to downsize. - Include a policy to manage the size of homes delivered eg limited to 2 or 3 bedrooms. - Policies to keep small houses small - Promote high density in villages
Housing Delivery	- Lower the threshold for when affordable housing required - Better communication with Housing Associations - Affordability threshold should not be too high - Should not enforce thresholds in rural locations – link to local need instead - Need maximum figures not 'at least' - Allow small groups with % discount housing and starter homes

	- Affordable housing exceptions policy should only apply to towns - Greater clarity on what is 'affordable housing' needed - More flexible rural exception policy to allow small proportion of market housing - Housing Associations should work together more - Enable self-build housing for starter homes - Consider larger scale at villages, including the development of additional facilities alongside the housing provided with 2 miles of primary school.
Traffic and roads	- Developer contributions to fund sustainable transport - Infrastructure should be provided ahead of development - Local Transport Plan should support the Local Plan Review - Clearer visions of where CIL/S106 to be spent on transport - Don't continue to build in locations dominated by traffic
Employment	- Better localised employment provision: rural start-ups - Re-use of agricultural buildings for employment - Encourage home working to reduce the need to travel - Westbury a good location for business - Consider housing on old employment sites - Concern that employment land will be changed to housing
Community	- Better understanding of why development is needed - Simple summary of village policies - Sites should have parish and neighbourhood plan support - Capture increased land value for community benefit - Consider community area neighbourhood plans
Other	- Can a third tier of CIL be introduced? - Parish councils ignored in the planning application process – their views should carry more weight - Rural Housing Needs Survey is too long and often has a low return rate - Lack of broadband - Towns and villages face similar problems eg dormitory status and out commuting - Local connection register - Clarity needed on how settlement boundaries defined - Clearer understanding of 'affordable housing'

6   Next Steps

6.1   The knowledge gained at the town and rural workshops will be used to inform both the emerging development strategy and the review of current local plan policies which control development in towns and the rural areas.

6.2   Comments which do not relate specifically to the use of land, for example the availability of broadband and the suggestion for a local connection register will be referred for consideration by other services within the council.

6.3   It is also proposed to continue informal dialogue with town and parish council's and neighbourhood plan groups to inform the local plan process and the selection of sites for allocation in the plan.