

Adopted Local Plan - Introduction

Introduction

1.1

In an attractive area like Salisbury District it is important to balance the need for new development against the desire to conserve the natural environment and historic fabric of the area. This Local Plan has been produced in order to achieve a balance between these pressures and to provide detailed guidance concerning the use and development of land up to the end of the year 2011. Accordingly it embraces the concept of sustainable development, in terms of endeavouring to reconcile the need for growth with the protection of the natural and built environment, for the benefit of future generations.

1.2

The Planning and Compensation Act 1991 places a duty upon local authorities to prepare such Local Plans and once adopted this replacement Salisbury District Local Plan will have full statutory status.

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This Local Plan covers the whole District. The total area is 388 square miles and the estimated population in 1996 was approximately 111,000. The focus of the District is the historic city of Salisbury itself (population approx. 39,400) which provides many of the services for the surrounding area and is therefore an important commercial centre. Amesbury is the second largest settlement in the District and offers a range of services and facilities. A number of smaller settlements provide local services. The majority of the District is however, rural, varying in character from the New Forest in the south-east to the extensive, sparsely populated area of Salisbury Plain in the north and the remote rolling countryside of Cranborne Chase to the south west, all linked by lush valleys of the River Avon and its tributaries. There are many attractive villages and these, together with the countryside, historic towns, sites of exceptional nature conservation importance and archaeological remains of international significance (including Stonehenge) form a District of exceptional environmental quality. Part of the District is a Rural Development Area.

Relationship with the Structure Plan

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The policies of the Local Plan must conform with the policies of the Wiltshire Structure Plan. The current version of the Structure Plan, adopted in 2001, contains strategic policies for development in the County to 2011 and forms the basis for development proposals in this Local Plan.

1.5

The Structure Plan and the Local Plan together form the development plan. The documents set out the Local Planning Authority's policies and proposals for the area, having regard to national policies and regional guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The Planning and Compensation Act 1991 requires decisions on planning applications to be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Aims of the Local Plan

1.6

The aims of this Local Plan are:

- To promote the principles and practice of sustainable development.
- To promote a healthy economy that provides standards of living at least equal to that currently enjoyed by the people of the District.
- To protect and enhance the natural and built environment.
- To promote a high quality of life for the people of this District without compromising the quality of life for others.
- To provide a level of certainty to all interested parties about where development is to take place, and what kind of development it is to be.

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The achievement of these aims is dependent on a variety of factors, of which the availability of land is the most fundamental as it provides the space for development (of whatever kind) to take place and through its natural features contributes greatly to the quality of life.

1.8

Land is a finite resource. The use that the land is put to should contribute to achieving sustainable development. Salisbury District Council supports the concept of sustainability. There are various definitions of sustainability and sustainable development but all centre around the concept that the resources of the earth should be used and managed in such a way that they meet the needs of the present but provide for future generations to enjoy. This plan, through its policies and proposals, seeks to ensure that the use of the land is undertaken in a sustainable manner.

1.9

The strategy for development in this Local Plan, taking into account the above aims, seeks to promote a sustainable strategy for Salisbury District. The strategy comprises three main elements:

1. Concentration of the majority of development in Salisbury and Amesbury;

2. Medium/large scale development allocations and alterations to Housing Policy Boundaries in a limited number of other main settlements which have a good range of facilities; and
3. Minor alterations to Housing Policy Boundaries in settlements which have a reasonable range of facilities, but less than the range of facilities in group (2).

1.10

This strategy will assist in the provision of a sustainable pattern of development by concentrating development in the larger settlements, but providing some scope for limited development in villages in order to assist in supporting and sustaining rural communities.

1.11

In taking forward this strategy, the Local Plan identifies a number of settlements for housing and employment development. Salisbury provides the main focus for development, being the major shopping, employment and cultural centre in the District. The City's historic character and high quality environment, together with its rail and road links to London, the south coast, the west of England and South Wales, offer the opportunity to provide development where public transport can be promoted and reliance on the use of the private car reduced.

1.12

Amesbury also acts as a focus for development within the Local Plan. It is the second largest settlement in the District and, together with Durrington the two settlements have a combined estimated population of approximately 15,000. In addition the town serves a wider population providing for many of the service needs of the communities on the southern edge of Salisbury Plain. The town's proximity to Stonehenge and the A303 (a main route to the west country) generates a significant number of visitors from the UK and abroad. The presence of Boscombe Down airfield and other military establishments in the area have provided much of the local employment opportunities. However, recent Governmental reviews of the nation's defence requirements have resulted in significant job losses in the area and one of the aims of the Local Plan is to assist in promoting economic growth in the town by the provision of substantial land for new employment opportunities. The promotion of the town for both major housing, employment, retail and leisure growth has two main advantages. Firstly, it will help make the town a self-supporting community, thereby reducing the need to travel to larger urban centres such as Salisbury and Andover, and secondly, it will help relieve

development pressure on Salisbury which has a number of environmental constraints.

1.13

It is therefore proposed that the 2 main settlements in the District will accommodate about 80% of the proposed housing development in the District to 2011 and will act as a focus for employment and social activities. The District Council acknowledges that significant housing development has already taken place on the eastern edge of Amesbury without the creation of a satisfactory infrastructure to promote the high quality of life which is an aim of this Local Plan. In view of these concerns and the promotion of the town for future development, it is intended to ensure that such issues are addressed in the form of vision statement for Amesbury on the way forward. It is therefore important to ensure that the infrastructure and facilities which are needed to achieve this aim are taken into account in the master planning and timing of the proposed development sites.

1.14

In addition to Salisbury and Amesbury, 5 other of the larger settlements in the District have a role to fulfil in meeting housing needs whilst taking into account the opportunity to use and/or improve public transport.

1.15

In the previous Local Plan, land for both housing and employment was provided in Mere with the intention that the development would help support the general level of services in the western part of the District. Not all this development land has been taken up and this plan therefore carries forward two previous housing allocations and the employment allocation. Similarly, land previously allocated for housing in Durrington is also carried forward into this Local Plan.

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Wilton has the advantage of being close to Salisbury and already well served by public transport. With local employment opportunities and a range of shops Wilton offers a good location for new development. However a range of constraints effectively limit opportunities for development and only limited new housing is proposed.

1.17

Downton which acts as a local centre for the villages to the south of Salisbury and provides a number of job opportunities, secondary schooling, shops and a sports centre, has a role to fill in providing for a limited amount of housing and employment growth.

Environmental Appraisal

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To measure, as far as possible, that the policies and proposals contained within the Local Plan are in accordance with the sustainable strategy for development, the Local Planning Authority has undertaken an environmental appraisal of the plan's policies and proposals. The Department of the Environment has produced a Good Practice Guide on this to ensure that all Local Plans are appraised to an equal standard or bench mark set of criteria. This has been used by the Local Planning Authority to guide the above appraisal. A policy or proposal may have a positive, negative or neutral result in terms of sustainability. Many will have a mixture of all three. To be acceptable, however, the policy/proposal's negative effects must be outweighed by the positive or neutral effects. The complete appraisal is published in a technical supplement.

Monitoring, Review and Enforcement

1.19

It is imperative that the policies and proposals put forward by the Local Plan are monitored to ensure their continued appropriateness, effectiveness and relevance in the light of changing circumstances. The Local Planning Authority will monitor the performance of the Local Plan against a range of indicators and, where necessary, will seek to review and amend it.

1.20

The District Council considers it important to ensure that development is in accordance with the plan's policies unless material considerations indicate otherwise. As such the Local Plan policies will be a major consideration in assessing whether enforcement action is required in connection with unauthorised use or development. The District Council will generally try to resolve breaches of planning control by negotiation. However, where negotiations are unsuccessful or unduly protracted, enforcement action will be vigorously pursued and appropriate enforcement action taken. Further details of the Council's procedure on enforcement matters are available in supplementary guidance from the Planning Office.