

APPENDIX FIVE

Regional Policy Context

5 REGIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

- 5.1 The assessment of retail needs and provision in North Wiltshire should be placed in the context of existing and emerging development plan policy.
- 5.2 The development plan comprises the combination of:
- *Regional Planning Guidance for the South West (RPG10)*, which was approved in September 2001;
 - *the Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016*, adopted in April 2006; and
 - *the North Wiltshire Plan 2011*, adopted in June 2006.

Regional Policy, RPG10

- 5.3 Section 3 of RPG10 sets out the Spatial Strategy for the region. Policy SS1 states that '*Northern Sub-Region*', in which Chippenham is located, '*will continue to be the main focus for growth in the South West*'. Policy SS2 provides a broad hierarchy for development (in general terms) and it states that the 11 Principal Urban Areas (PUAs) - which, in the Northern sub-region, are Bristol, Bath, Cheltenham, Weston-super-Mare, Gloucester and Swindon (but not Chippenham or the other North Wiltshire towns) - '*offer the best opportunity for accommodating the majority of development in the most sustainable way. The aim should be to concentrate most development at the PUAs*'.
- 5.4 The objectives for the Northern Sub-Region, which are outlined in Policy SS3, reiterate the primacy of the PUAs and the policy seeks a more sustainable pattern of development than in the past by strengthening the roles of the PUAs and fostering urban renaissance. Policy SS3 also aims to encourage '*appropriate housing, employment, retail and social facilities in sustainable locations to reduce social exclusion and rural need*'.
- 5.5 Paragraph 3.65 of RPG10 says that '*market towns* (which in this context, we take to include Chippenham, Calne, Corsham, Malmesbury and Wootton Bassett) *have grown up over the centuries as the market and service centres of rural areas. More recently, they have become increasingly important centres for business and employment and for the provision of housing opportunities for rural areas. They will continue to play a leading role in the economic and social development of the rural parts of the South West and plans should provide for development to maintain and reinforce those roles. The scale of household and business/employment growth should generally be lower than that of the PUAs and other larger towns*'
- 5.6 Paragraph 3.64 says that '*village shops have closed and service delivery has become confined to larger towns. Remote rural areas, particularly in the far south west, experience difficulties in accessing jobs and services.*'
- 5.7 Therefore Policy SS19 says that '*market towns should be the focal points for development and service provision in the rural areas and this role should be supported and enhanced. Outside market towns, development should be small scale and take place primarily within or adjacent to existing settlements, avoiding scattered forms of development.*'
- Local authorities in their development plans should:*
- '*locate development to support the rural areas primarily in market towns, identified and designated in development plans through a balanced mix of homes, jobs, services and facilities suitable to the scale and location of such settlements*';
 - '*seek ways of providing for essential shops and services to serve the rural areas*';

- *'promote improved and integrated public transport, communications and service delivery and support innovative community based solutions to public transport and communications, in order to increase access to jobs, housing and facilities'.*
- 5.8 Policy EC6 of RPG10 outlines a range of more specific provisions in relation to town centres and the location of retail development. In particular, Policy EC6 advises that local authorities should:
- *'seek to locate developments which attract large numbers of people, including retail, leisure, commercial activity and public facilities, in the centres of the PUAs and in other designated centres for growth specified in the spatial strategy';*
 - *'encourage town centre developments of an appropriate scale in the market towns and larger settlements elsewhere in the region in keeping with their size and function';*
 - *'ensure that such development is located where it will contribute to the regeneration and environmental improvement of town centres, can help to reduce the need to travel and encourage journeys by modes other than the private car';*
 - *'ensure that the vitality and viability of existing centres, including suburban centres, is protected and enhanced, notably by assessing the need for new development and by applying the sequential approach in PPG6 to site selection for new retail and leisure developments';* and
 - *'ensure that development is located where it can help to reduce the need to travel, encourage journeys by modes other than the private car and contribute to the regeneration and environmental improvement of town centres'.*

The Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016

- 5.9 The Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan 2016 was adopted in April 2006 and it provides strategic land use and transport policies for the four Wiltshire authorities, plus Swindon. Policy DP3 of the Structure Plan sets the overall development strategy, proposing that most new development should take place in Swindon, Salisbury, Chippenham and Trowbridge - indeed it directs future development towards Swindon, the only Principal Urban Area in Wiltshire, stating that *'development should be primarily focused at the Swindon Principal Urban Area to support and enhance its role and function and the regeneration of the central area'*. However, appropriate opportunities are also needed for the growth of local employment and services in other towns and villages to help reduce the need to travel to more distant locations and further assist in diversifying the rural economy.
- 5.10 Although Chippenham is identified as a Strategic Service Centre in Policy DP3, the Policy only encourages 'smaller scale growth to serve the needs of the rural area beyond the hinterland of the principal urban areas'. Policy DP3 also indicates that in terms of priorities for the Strategic Service Centres, 'particular emphasis should be placed on the provision of employment land to attract new economic activity and meet the needs of existing employers'.
- 5.11 In relation to other, smaller centres, Policy DP3 says:
'Elsewhere, local development documents should:
- *'Identify towns as local service centres to accommodate smaller scale development to meet local needs and to make services available to the wider rural areas;' and*
 - *'Identify small towns and villages to meet local needs only'.*
- 5.12 Small towns and villages, where limited additional housing development may be appropriate, as a minimum, should possess or have good access to a range of services and facilities, including most of the following:
- *primary school, church, hall where community activities can take place,*

- *food shop, post office, pub, and*
 - *recreation field.*
- 5.13 Policy DP5 confirms the sequential approach to the location of all shopping, leisure, service and employment uses which attract large numbers of people, and such development should be concentrated in existing town centres and other main settlements (as listed in paragraph 4.16 of the Structure Plan).
- 5.14 Policy DP6 proceeds to establish the hierarchy of retail centres. Sub-regional centres are identified in Swindon and Salisbury; Chippenham is included in the *'Other Town and Main Settlement Centres'* category; District Centres in Swindon form the third tier; and *'Other Local Shopping'*, including Neighbourhood Centres and Village Shops" form the fourth - thus the centres of Calne, Corsham, Malmesbury and Wootton Bassett are considered as *'Other Local Shopping'*.
- 5.15 The Policy notes that *'the role of each centre should be maintained and enhanced by provision for shopping development which is consistent with the role of each centre and which will promote its vitality and viability'*.
- 5.16 Although Policy DP6 does contemplate the scope for out-of-centre retail development, it is notable that this is only considered permissible where:
- provision is needed and cannot be made in a centre, or adjoining a centre;
 - it would not affect the vitality and viability of nearby centres (either by itself or with other provision); and
 - access is readily available or can be provided for means of transport other than the private car.
- 5.17 Thus, Policy DP6 emphasises the role of existing shopping centres and paragraph 4.55 explains that the aim of the policy is to *'provide confidence in their future, by resisting development that would threaten their future or future enhancement'*.
- 5.18 The Plan notes that *'enhancement of shopping centres requires more than the addition of retail floorspace. The quality of development is an important consideration, particularly in the many town and other main centres which have historic street patterns and high concentrations of historic buildings. Shopping centres will also continue to require good access by the private car, so that they can meet needs and compete effectively with more dispersed retailing. However, they can also be enhanced by improving accessibility and facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and those using public transport and by offering car-free areas. Management initiatives may need to be taken to enhance the environment and attractiveness of shopping centres, to underpin their key role in the revitalisation of urban areas'*.

North Wiltshire Plan 2011

Retail Policies

- 5.19 On the 27th of June 2006, North Wiltshire District Council adopted the North Wiltshire Plan 2011. The Secretary of State issued a Binding Report on the Plan and the required changes to the Plan have been incorporated into the Adopted Plan which now forms part of the development plan for the area of North Wiltshire District Council. The Retail Topic Area of the Local Plan sets out policies which were examined in some detail at the Inquiry stage.
- 5.20 The plan states (in paragraph 11.2a) that *'in line with Government guidance contained within PPS6 (Planning for Town Centres) a network of six town centres is proposed, with large-scale development directed towards Chippenham'*.
- 5.21 The town centres identified are: Chippenham, Calne, Wootton Bassett, Corsham, Malmesbury and Cricklade. These six town centres are considered in the Local Plan to

be of a sufficient size to provide a broad range of facilities and services, including the retailing of convenience and comparison goods, financial and professional services and restaurants/ pubs to serve local residents, shoppers and visitors. The town centres can provide a range of uses which have benefits for the environment, where the need to travel is reduced by creating combined trips.

5.22 Paragraph 11.1a provides further description of the hierarchy of centres and it states that:

'Specifically, Chippenham is a market town and is classified as the major retailing centre within the district area. In general terms it is performing well as a town centre, with a nominal vacancy rate. Malmesbury and Calne are also market towns. The shopping in Malmesbury is dominated by comparison goods and the provision of services, with a similar position being presented in Calne although there are also two large central supermarkets present. Corsham is an attractive town centre, linear in nature. The centre attracts both locals and visitors with this being reinforced by the presence of numerous niche retailers. Wootton Bassett is again linear in nature and is anchored by two small shopping centres/ arcades and three primary supermarkets. Finally, Cricklade is the smallest of the centres in the district, providing predominantly day to day services.'

Draft Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West, 2006-2026

5.23 The draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) was submitted to the Secretary of State in June 2006 and the Examination in Public commenced in April 2007. However, the Panel Report on the Examination is not expected to be published until the autumn and only limited weight can be given at this stage to the emerging RSS as the confirmed policy may be different from that currently drafted. Notwithstanding this important observation, there are a number of policies in the draft RSS to which we seek to draw attention because they may prevail, and will set an important strategic context for development in North Wiltshire; these are:

- i) Development Policy A, which identifies Chippenham as being one of 21 *'Strategically Significant Cities and Towns'* (SSCTs). The SSCTs will be the primary focus for development in the South West, because these are the places *'which offer the greatest opportunities for employment, and the greatest levels of accessibility by means other than the car to cultural, transport, health, education and other services'*.
- ii) Policy SR22, which has an aspiration for Chippenham to become more self-contained through provision of job growth in its travel to work area and housing provision within Chippenham of around 225 dwellings per annum.
- iii) Policy TC1, which requires local authorities to seek to *'ensure that the vitality and viability of the region's existing network of towns and city centres is maintained and enhanced...'*; that *'...such centres are not adversely affected by inappropriate development elsewhere...'*; and that *'...provision is made for a mix of uses within town centres, including retail, cultural facilities, offices, other employment and housing'*. Policy TC1 also states that the SSCTs *'...will be the main focus for new investment in retail and other major facilities requiring high levels of accessibility to the communities they serve, recognising their function as focal points for extensive catchment area populations'*.

5.24 Thus, the policies in the emerging RSS firmly support the sequential approach to the location of retail development and other town centre uses, as set out in PPS6.

