

An Open Letter to Wiltshire Council **opposing its plans for the future of Wiltshire**

Address for reply:
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To Mr Andrew Kerr
Chief Executive
Wiltshire Council
County Hall
Trowbridge
Wilts BA14 8JN.

Wiltshire Council's draft Core Strategy

Dear Mr Kerr

We the undersigned organisations have studied Wiltshire Council's draft Core Strategy and have concluded that it does not represent a coherent plan for the future of West and North Wiltshire to 2026 and beyond.

Last year we were led to believe that the abolition of regional allocations for building new homes in the county would allow us to decide how much development we wanted in Wiltshire and where we wanted it. Today we find that the massive housing estates and retail parks have not shrunk back from the green field sites where the developers would like to build them. Twenty thousand new homes and something like a square kilometre of industrial estates are planned for North and West Wilts by 2026 – homes and jobs for another 50,000 people.

We question fundamentally whether this model of expansion can bring the economic growth the council expects, while also meeting the needs of existing communities in an area where transport, education and health services are already struggling to meet demand. Clearly, past planning policies have not worked, yet the Council's Core Strategy is proposing *more* of the same:

- *More* decline of town centres
- *More* characterless car-based suburbia
- *More* traffic, congestion, noise and pollution in both towns and villages
- *More* damage to the natural environment and loss of agricultural land
- *More* overloaded services

Rather than reproduce these outdated policies in the blueprint for the next 15 years, we ask the council to think again and give us:

1. An overall reduction in the housing numbers it has proposed for West and North Wiltshire, seizing the opportunity offered by the scrapping of regional allocations and fulfilling the promise of a new 'localism' in planning policy;
2. A more honest consultation that provides real data and maps on the traffic implications of proposed growth in our area;
3. Much stronger policies to ensure that people will have real opportunities to switch from driving to walking, cycling and travelling by bus or train - a key objective of the Wiltshire Community Plan;

4. A better and more informed appraisal of our real needs for new jobs and new homes; the relationship between these needs and the skills we want to develop and attract in coming years; a more direct way to meet the urgent need for affordable homes in towns and villages;
5. The channelling of developer funds away from building more roads and towards developing and improving town centres, creating 'green infrastructure' and supporting better public transport;
6. The clear prioritisation of Trowbridge and other town centres for office development to bring vitality back to central areas;
7. Fewer new employment areas on the fringe of towns – less 'tin shed land' in the open countryside; support for rural employment, farm-based enterprises, local food and working villages;
8. A sustainability appraisal that genuinely examines the environmental consequences of hot-housing Western Wiltshire, and looks at other options for development in the coming decades of climate change, peak oil, and shortages of food and water;
9. A Core Strategy that is understandable to the ordinary person rather than hiding its objectives in planning jargon and evasive verbiage;
10. The publication of accurate maps to show the proposed locations of housing and employment areas and the roads and other strategic infrastructure and services that the council is planning to provide for them.

We consider that the present draft of the Wiltshire Core strategy is not fit for purpose. This letter has focused on North and West Wiltshire, where some of the most damaging effects of excessive growth would be felt, but the council's plans are causing widespread concern in East Wiltshire and South Wiltshire as well. We ask the Council to think again.

Yours sincerely

George McDonic MBE, Past President of the Royal Town Planning Institute

On behalf of the following organisations:

Wiltshire CPRE – George McDonic, Chairman
 CPRE West Wiltshire Group - Nigel Williams, Vice Chairman
 CPRE North Wiltshire and Swindon Group – Anne Henshaw, Chairman
 CPRE Kennet District Group – John Kirkman, Chairman
 CPRE South Wilts Group - Peter Wicks, Chairman
 Dorset CPRE – Richard Nicholls, Chairman
 CPRE North Dorset Group – Stephen Howard, Chairman
 The Trust for Devizes - Edward East, Chairman
 Association of Kennet Passengers – Steve King, Chairman
 North Wiltshire Friends of the Earth – Stephen Eades, Chairman
 Chippenham Community Voice - Peter J Humphrey, Chair
 Showell Protection Group – Tony Peacock, Coordinator
 Climate Friendly Bradford-on-Avon – Richard Craft, Chairman
 Trowbridge Civic Society – Glyn Bridges, Chairman
 Campaign for a Better Trowbridge – Ken McCall, Coordinator
 North Bradley Parish Council – Roger Evans, Chairman
 North Bradley Peace Memorial Trust – Pauline Baxter, Committee member/Funding Coordinator
 West Ashton Parish Council – Richard Covington, Chairman
 Westbury Bypass Alliance – Penny Stirling, Coordinator
 Campaign for Better Transport Bristol & Bath Travel to Work Area - Jenny Raggett, Coordinator
 The White Horse Alliance – Kate Le Grice Mack, Chair
 A36/A350 Corridor Alliance – Chris Gillham, Coordinator
 Western Wiltshire Transport Concern – Andrew Nicolson, Coordinator
 South West Transport Network – David Redgewell, Chair