

Salisbury Campaign for Better Transport

Response to Salisbury District Council's "Our Place in the Future" Consultation September 2008

Salisbury Campaign for Better Transport (formerly Salisbury Transport 2000) welcome the opportunity to make a further contribution to the emerging Local Development Framework. We have the following comments to make in respect of the questions which are posed in this consultation:

Q1 Should we take the suggested steps to meet the identified needs (for more housing)? If no, which steps should we leave out and why?

1.1 We fully support proposals to increase the supply of affordable housing and of housing to accommodate the needs of an increasing elderly population. It is important that new housing is located with access to services and facilities such that the need to travel, particularly by car, is reduced.

Q2 Do you agree with the 'dispersed growth' approach (to new housing)? If no, what other approach would you suggest?

2.1 As a general principle we would agree that new housing should be focused around Salisbury and Amesbury since they have the best range of services and facilities. However, while accepting that villages need more time to consider the location of more housing in their areas, it is a well known fact that smaller settlements lose their resources (shop, post office, pub, bus service, job opportunities etc etc) because there aren't enough people living there to keep them viable. Also, that provision of affordable housing in villages is the only way to enable young people to remain in their home villages. So, whereas Salisbury and Amesbury should take the first wave of new housing, the future lies in the idea contained in the "Core Strategy Preferred Options" document of February 2008, of creating a hierarchy of settlements with main villages providing adequate facilities and employment opportunities to support the surrounding areas. This would reduce the need to travel and serve to revitalise rural communities.

2.2 We would like to stress the following points in relation to housing developments:

- (1) There is a particularly bad record locally of failure to provide facilities on new estates and this can lead to social problems as well as an increased need to travel. If a large amount of new housing is added adjacent to existing development (as proposed at Fugglestone Red, Archer's Gate, Old Sarum and Hampton Park) then it is vital that additional services and facilities (e.g. local shops, doctors' surgery, primary school, leisure facilities, bus services) are provided for these new residents. Otherwise these will become car-dependent suburbs and the extra traffic generated will add to the already high levels of traffic and pollution in Salisbury city centre and throughout the district. All too often in the past, developers have argued (successfully) that their individual sites are too small to support a shop or other facilities. Yet the proposed total number of new houses runs into thousands.

- (2) When considering housing developments, whether in Salisbury or Amesbury or elsewhere in the district, transport infrastructure and the potential for the development of further sustainable transport links should be a key consideration. For example thought should be given to a 'virtual rail link' to Grateley from the expanding town of Amesbury, such that there is a bus link to all rail services which stop at Grateley station. It is also important to put high quality walking and cycling infrastructure into place from the outset, and to ensure that walking and cycling links connect to existing facilities across a wider area (leisure facilities, schools, bus and railway interchanges etc) as well as providing links within a new development.

- (3) It is unreasonable to exclude Firsdawn and the area around the Pheasant Hotel from the debate on where new housing is to be located over the next 20 years. Given the employment growth expected at Porton Down, this could be an eminently sensible location.

Q3 Do you agree that these sites are appropriate to meet our needs? If no, can you suggest any alternative sites?

See our earlier responses to Q1 and Q2.

3.1 As we have already proposed in our response to the ‘Core Strategy Preferred Options’ and as called for in the Salisbury Vision document (p.32), Salt Lane and Brown Street car parks should be mixed use developments.

Q4 Do you agree that these sites are appropriate to meet our employment needs? If no, can you suggest any alternative sites?

“A major new business park on land between the Harnham Business Park and the Livestock Market, to the south of Netherhampton Road.”

4.1 We are **very concerned** about proposals for a major new business park for Harnham, particularly taken in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce view that Churchfields businesses should all be kept together. We note also the support for this proposal in the ‘Identification of Strategic Growth Areas: Paper 1’ dated 2007, which states that *“The south of Salisbury is potentially a good location for a strategic employment site because of its location close to the city and its relatively easy access to Southampton and Bournemouth.....A strategic employment site at this location will also provide the opportunity to deliver junction improvements at the Harnham gyratory and Park Wall junctions, based on modelling in the Salisbury Transport Plan ...A strategic site here would allow existing Churchfields businesses to relocate while still being on the same side of the city. This will address the current constraints on Churchfields, particularly in terms of access and the negative impact it has on city centre congestion, air quality and highway safety.”*

4.2 There has been no consideration of the origin and destination of Churchfields traffic in Paper 1. The ‘relatively easy access to Southampton and Bournemouth’ which is mentioned does not take account of what proportion of traffic might want to travel in these directions, nor does it take account of the impact that traffic would have on residential areas in Harnham. The following points are of relevance:

- (1) When Wiltshire County Council were considering the Brunel Link as a ‘solution’ to the problem of Churchfields traffic they conducted an Origin & Destination (O&D) survey to see where traffic for Churchfields was coming from or going to. They found the following:

Origin & Destination of traffic using Churchfields Industrial Estate		
Source: Letters from WCC to Salisbury T2000 7.6.01 & 20.7.01, reflects O&D survey conducted 9.97		
	All traffic	HGVs
North & North East	45.2%	37.3%
West	11.9%	15.4%
City Centre	14.5%	14.5%
South	16.9%	12.2%
South East	8.1%	18.5%
Churchfields	3.4%	4.0%

This shows that at the time of this detailed survey most traffic for Churchfields was from the north side of the river, and less than 17% of the traffic came from

the south. If Churchfields businesses were relocated to Harnham then nearly 85% of the traffic might be expected to come around the Harnham gyratory and through Harnham – all the traffic except that coming from the west which would come around the A3094 from Wilton/Park Wall. There would inevitably be much more traffic on the southern sections of Salisbury's ring road and coming across New Bridge into Harnham.

- (2) When the Salisbury Transport Study was considering options for Churchfields it was considered that 'traffic along the Harnham Road is already causing problems' and that 'additional traffic would make these unacceptable'. ('A Transport Strategy for Salisbury' exhibition leaflet). It was therefore suggested that the Brunel Link would only be constructed with a Harnham Relief Road to keep the traffic out of Harnham. It is now being suggested that Churchfields could be relocated across to the Harnham/Netherhampton Roads but without any new roads to relieve Harnham. If this was considered unacceptable at the time of the Salisbury Transport Study there seems no reason why it should be deemed acceptable now.
- (3) We are well aware of developers' reluctance to fund major road improvement schemes. We can therefore expect to hear new calls to the Highways Authority, from the champions of this new business park, for the ill-fated Harnham Relief Road to be revived. This will merely displace the traffic problem to Britford, afford minimal relief for the Harnham gyratory and do nothing for Park Wall junction. Will the lessons of Churchfields (too large and too close to the city centre) ever be learned?
- (4) In addition to the traffic impacts through Harnham, on the Harnham Gyratory and on the Ring Road, there would also be concern that major business/industrial development on this side of the city would impact on the New Forest. Traffic from the south and south east would want to avoid potential traffic jams on Southampton Road and the Salisbury ring road and would look at traffic routes which avoid this bottleneck. There is now an HGV ban across the Forest itself, but cars and light goods traffic cause significant problems – e.g. accidents involving ponies after dark.
- (5) There are current defined employment sites at Harnham Business Park (3.4 hectares/1 business), Harnham Trading Estate (3.73 hectares/19 businesses) and Netherhampton Road (3.4 hectares/9 businesses) [site sizes and business numbers taken from SDC's 'Employment Land Review', April 2007]. There is some scope for further development within these existing sites, but they are not suitable locations for businesses which generate a high volume of traffic or HGV movements due to the residential nature of the Harnham/Netherhampton Road and the existing congestion issues on the Harnham Gyratory.

Strategy for relocating Churchfields' businesses

4.3 We do **not** believe it makes sense to try and keep Churchfield's businesses together when/if they are relocated. We would make the following points:

- (1) The nature and type of traffic generated by each business is relevant to where it should be sited. Those with high volumes of HGVs - such as the HGV testing centre - must be located with easy access to the trunk road network.
- (2) The choice of businesses must be right for each specific location. Harnham could be suitable for businesses with minimal transport needs and with sound green travel plans supported by a regular bus service and cycle links. Businesses generating high levels of traffic movement should logically go on the north side of the city, with direct access to and from the major road network, proximity to new housing developments and minimal impact on existing residential areas.

- (3) It is being proposed that Churchfields should be a mixed use development. Quite a number of the existing businesses should be able to remain on the site, although they may get moved into higher density (& hopefully better designed) accommodation more in keeping with the new vision for this part of the City.
- (4) There has been no consideration of where to re-site the re-cycling centre or the SDC depot – both of which generate significant volumes of traffic, together with various other types of business activity, including automotive retail and its car transporters. See our response to Q5 below.

Alternative employment sites

4.4 We believe that it is crucial that employment is sited with regard to its transport needs. In general we believe that employment land in the Amesbury – Porton – Old Sarum triangle (including Solstice Park) is better placed for the road network than Harnham. There is no need to relocate Churchfields businesses to sites "close to the city centre", as advocated by the Vision. Many Churchfields employees already live in the Amesbury area, some because they can't afford to live in Salisbury. The key to our economic prosperity lies in the high-tech, high value added activity at Boscombe Down and Porton Down, not regional distribution centres in Solstice Park or supermarket shelf-stacking in Salisbury and Amesbury.

4.5 There are also possibilities of redeveloping the site at High Post and the Land Command site at Wilton.

4.6 In respect of **High Post** we note that (according to a Salisbury Journal article (May 8th 2008) the site comprises some 20 acres/8 hectares). While there are sensitivities about developing here this is a brownfield site and reasonably well screened from surrounding countryside. Also the A345 gives access to and from the A303 without passing through residential areas. We would suggest that this could continue to be used for employment purposes, but a strong Green Travel Plan is vital due to the relatively remote location. There should be shuttle buses from Amesbury/Salisbury to serve this employment site, as well as cycleways to both these towns.

Q5 If these sites are developed what type of business activity would you like to see?

	Offices	Research & Development	Light Industry	General Industry	Warehouses
Harnham Business Park	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Churchfields	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
UKLF, Wilton	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Solstice Park, Amesbury	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓(*)
Fugglestone Red	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Old Sarum	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hampton Park	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Archers Gate, Amesbury	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗

(*)Warehousing at Solstice Park of a reasonable scale only, it is not a suitable location for a Regional Distribution Centre which itself covers 22 hectares.

5.1 The table supplied does not seem to cover all possible business types. We understand that one of the 'offices' heading should read 'warehousing' (& have modified our response table to take account of this). Even so there is a poor match with the various categorisations used e.g. in the Churchfields Report (October 2004) when businesses were categorised as follows (numbers of each business type in Churchfields in brackets after each categorisation):
- Construction (15); Finance, Insurance & Real Estate (4); Manufacturing (32); Retail (21); Services (43); Wholesale Trade (32); Transportation, Communications & Sanitary Services (8) [from Table 1, SDC A Review of Churchfields Estate, October 2004]

5.2 There is a later table in that same report offering a different categorisation:
- A1 – Shops (18), A2 – Financial and professional services (2), A3 – Food and drink (1), B1 – Business (51), B2 – General Industrial (B2) (58), B8 – Storage and distribution (11), C2 – Residential institutions (2), Builders Merchant Yard (SG) (4), Construction Hire Centre (SG) (2), Automotive Retail (SG) (11), SG (Other) (5) [from Appendix 5 Planning Use Classes, SDC A Review of Churchfields Estate, October 2004 - SG = Sui Generis]

5.3 A key omission in the table supplied in Q5 is that it does not cover the issue of where retail – and in particular automotive retail – might be located.

Q6 Do you wish to make any other comments, including on any of the other issues discussed in this magazine or the previously published Preferred Options document ('The Black Book')?

Yes we do, under the following headings :

Public Transport.

6.1 The topic hardly receives a mention in this latest document. In earlier versions we became tired of phrases such as "choice of transport modes" and "providing transport choices", together with a liberal sprinkling of words such as "support", "encourage" and "foster", without any indication being given as to how such aims are to be achieved. The grim reality is that bus services are offered on routes which can be operated at a profit and on other routes on receipt of a public subsidy (part of which ends up in the pockets of Wilts & Dorset shareholders). Why can't this be stated?

6.2 Earlier public comments cited "difficulty in accessing services as being a key distinguishing feature of South Wiltshire with the majority of people thinking (that) the local bus service is inadequate for most people". David Milton's report to Cabinet of 5 July 2008 admitted that "... transport is very contentious and needs to be further debated". And yet here we are considering a document which proposes the introduction of 12,400 new dwellings and 14,000 new jobs into Salisbury District and the only mention of public transport is "improved bus services" along Netherhampton Road. In the case of all new employment and residential sites, a bus service should be available (if necessary subsidised by the developer) from the day the first occupant moves in. Any delay will encourage car use, which may become a habit which is hard to break.

Housing Density.

6.3 SDC is correct to "seek higher (housing) densities in and around Salisbury City Centre and (in) other areas with good transport links". However, we would prefer their policy statement to be the corollary of this, namely that "good public transport links, particularly by bus, are crucially dependent on achieving high densities in new housing developments." Much greenfield land has already been wasted by failing to meet this objective. We continue to allow "bland, low density developments on the suburban fringe", while we have an example in our own "historic chequers in Salisbury, which are high density (and) are widely accepted as having more character and sense of space".

6.4 It is claimed that we have very little brownfield land in Salisbury District and yet, even in Salisbury city centre (and elsewhere) there is much under-used space above shops and offices, which could be converted into living accommodation. Not wishing to live over a shop and a reluctance to use buses are both peculiarly English prejudices, unknown in European cities, from which many of Salisbury's traffic problems stem.

Tourism.

6.5 Good bus services are important in the promotion of tourism. There are many attractions for visitors, not only in Salisbury but also in the surrounding area. There is an excellent leaflet available (free) in the Bus and Tourist Offices. Just take a bus out of town in any direction for a few miles and walk back (something that car drivers can't do). This needs to be done in the fairly near future, before Salisbury's landscape setting is lost for ever to new building development on the city's periphery. One problem with trying to do this on a summer's evening is lack of buses. The other is the closure of the W&D enquiry office on Sundays and Bank Holidays, in what claims to be a major tourist destination.

6.6 To "enhance Salisbury Market Place ... which capitalises on the quality of the built heritage" won't be easy all the time there is a continuous stream of traffic from Minster Street (a pollution black spot) to Castle Street and Blue Boar Row. Which also makes a mockery of the Vision's "link" between the Market Place, the Cheese Market, Market Walk and the proposed "Fisherton Square" beyond.

Natural Environment.

6.7 Much of the text on p.18 is self-evidently incorrect, since it repeats that at the top of the page. It should read :

"This issue has received strong support during past rounds of consultation. We have a real challenge in balancing the growth that we are seeking, while ensuring that we don't harm what respondents consider to be our greatest asset. One of the main ways of ensuring this objective is through the use of a process known as Appropriate Assessment under the Habitat Regulations. You are welcome to view and comment on this document using the link below. This assessment evaluates the potential impact of proposed growth on important nature designations and is used to inform our choices."

6.8 In the interests of both aesthetics and pollution reduction, we look forward to the "greening of Salisbury through the implementation of the Salisbury Vision projects", with extensive tree planting, not only along the ring road but also along many of the streets within it.

6.9 And protect our bridleways from the ravages of 4X4's.

Pollution.

6.10 While fully agreeing the urgent need to combat world-wide climate change, we also need vigorously to address problems closer to home. The implementation of a number of provisions within (p.111) the (first) Salisbury Transport Plan 2001/2 – 2006/7, designed to address the problem of traffic pollution in Salisbury city centre, has not even been started. These include :

"A gradual reduction in the number of public on-street parking spaces."

"An incremental decrease in the number of public off-street parking spaces provided in the city centre phased in conjunction with the introduction of P&R sites such that the total number of public off-street spaces (city centre plus P&R sites) remains the same."

"An annual increase in public off-street and on-street parking charges of 10% plus inflation."

6.11 If SDC has no intention of implementing these measures, it should issue a public statement to that effect. However, it would need also to explain why we have changed from the original four discrete AQMA's within the city centre to declaring the whole of the city centre to be one big AQMA. City centre residents can be forgiven for assuming that the situation is getting worse.

Second Homes and Empty Properties.

6.12 Aggregated nationwide, these add significantly to the alleged shortfall of housing and force more houses to be built in the countryside, thereby depriving us all of a valuable and increasingly scarce resource. Steps should be taken to reduce the numbers of both by upward adjustments of the applicable council tax rate.

Salisbury Campaign for Better Transport
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www.salisburybettertransport.org.uk