Dear Ms Burkey

PROPOSED MIXED USE URBAN EXTENSION
‘Rowden Park’, Patterdown Road, Chippenham

We would like to make comments on the above planning application.

The National Trust acts as the custodian of the picturesque and historic village of Lacock, to the south of Chippenham. This comprises around 131 hectares of land and over 100 individual buildings, many of which are listed, including Lacock Abbey (grade I listed) as the centrepiece of the estate. The Abbey lies within a registered historic park, while the whole village has Conservation Area status.

The Trust has previously raised concerns regarding the prospect of large scale urban development extending Chippenham southwards, into Lacock parish, and into the wider landscape setting of Lacock village itself. These were set out in our response dated 2 April 2012 to the emerging Core Strategy.

Since that time, the Council has resolved to grant planning permission to employment use of land at Showell Farm. The Core Strategy has now at last been adopted, although the strategic sites for Chippenham – including the South West Chippenham allocation that the Trust objected to – were withdrawn, to be taken forward in the forthcoming Chippenham Site Allocations DPD.

We are now in a position of commenting on the current planning application in the absence of knowing what will be proposed in the draft DPD, the consultation on which starts shortly (but after the planning application deadline for comments). Nonetheless, we would ask that the Council gives full and proper consideration to the points raised overleaf in respect of the current proposal, should it be determined before the DPD is adopted.
Firstly, the proposed development area extends further south than that proposed within the SW Chippenham strategic site, well into Lacock parish, and wrapping around the built-up part of the Showell Nurseries site. A better option might be to keep the housing to the north of the Nurseries site, which could be wholly retained for employment use going forwards (including providing jobs for all the new houses).

Secondly, our experience is that developments in the wider area around Lacock, including the expansion of Melksham, have led to traffic taking short-cuts through the village. The effects of this have been eased by the closure of the High Street to through traffic. However, the prospect of 1000 new houses at ‘Rowden Park’, along with 450 at Hunters Moon, suggests traffic through the village and Bowden Hill might increase, particularly given the pressures on the existing A4. We would ask the Council to ensure that developments on the south side of Chippenham are made as sustainable and self-contained as possible in terms of traffic generation.

Thirdly, we previously raised concerns that large scale urban development near the River Avon upstream from Lacock could increase flooding and water pollution affecting the village. We would ask that this is again considered in respect of the current proposed development.

Finally, notwithstanding the above concerns, we would support the provision of public open space, allotments, areas for wildlife and opportunities for walking and cycling as part of any new development proposals.

We trust that the above comments can be taken into account when a decision is made on the current planning application, and look forward to being able to see the content of the draft DPD in due course.

Yours sincerely

Mark Funnell BSc(Hons) MSc PGDip MRTPI
Planning Adviser – South West Region

cc. Strategic Planning Policy, Wiltshire Council