

Wiltshire's Core Strategy designates the rural villages of West Lavington and Littleton Panell collectively as a 'Large Village', their boundary now being blurred to form virtually one continuous community. Both villages can trace their histories back to the Bronze Age, were mentioned in the Domesday Book, and have a well-documented social history, including the influence of principal agricultural landowners and their tenanted workers.

Taken together the two villages form the Parish of West Lavington, which sits astride the A360 north/south corridor linking Devizes with the south of the county. The parish, covering approximately 2395 hectares and with a population of approximately 1200, sits on the northern escarpment of Salisbury Plain. Substantial parts of the parish area are open farmland within the MoD Salisbury Plain Training Area, which itself has large areas of rare chalkland and Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Crossing the parish along the length of the escarpment is the B3098 'corridor' linking the villages of Erlestoke, Great Cheverell, Little Cheverell, Market Lavington and Easterton, before linking further east to Urchfont and the more easterly trunk route of the A345.

The adjacent Market Lavington is identified in the Core Strategy as a 'Local Service Centre', and whilst West Lavington has an old village hall, a primary school, a private boarding school, a small shop, a doctors surgery, and (currently) two pubs, the 'Local Service Centre' has a variety of shops, several pubs, primary and secondary schools, small businesses, a modern community centre, pharmacy and doctors' surgery and a Post Office. The two villages are separated by green field and woodland. This Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) will seek to identify potential for some limited non-strategic development both inside and (subject to consultation) outside the current West Lavington settlement boundary that adds to the current 534 properties, but within the parish boundary. It is intended that a locally distinctive policy framework be established that will permit retention of substantial tracts of open space within the parish, whilst maintaining the essential independent character of the two 'Lavingtons'. It is appropriate therefore that the larger but well-established and recognisable parish boundary, rather than the settlement boundary, be regarded as the designated area for Neighbourhood Planning. It is intended to enter into detailed consultation with Market Lavington Parish Council and other stakeholders such as schools, to ensure development plans of both communities are fully consistent with each other. This will ensure that each is able to capture the differing needs and aspirations of two very different communities in a form that is suitable for them, and which would not be practicable in a joint Plan.

The smaller villages of Erlestoke and the Cheverells have very few facilities but none the less a very strong sense of their own community, valuing their rural setting, spatial separation, and character. By confirming our own settlement boundary in an NDP a clear position limiting westward development of our community towards Little Cheverell can be set out, and again full consultation between our communities will be managed within the Plan process. Indeed, it is considered that constructive liaison with both the neighbouring parishes, which is necessarily an essential component of the process, would best be achieved through bilateral discussions with each parish, taking account of the specific issues and differences across each parish boundary.

The Parish of West Lavington can be regarded as a 'gateway' to Salisbury Plain and its significant environmental attributes. Much is also within a Conservation Area. Despite this, public meetings have already demonstrated that the community wants some limited development of sustainable housing and be able to provide affordable homes for local people some of whom are more elderly residents who wish to remain near their families but may now prefer smaller properties. The area is serviced by strategic bus routes to main towns, and Pewsey rail station is not far distant, although Plan and Core Strategy objectives are to encourage the longer term development of a rail station at Lydeaway or similar accessible location. Such developments, and the attendant community infrastructure levy contributions, are intended to sustain and enhance the vibrancy and diversity of the community, whilst placing the community itself in control of how that development is managed.

Development also brings issues of traffic and congestion, both of which are already controversial issues, with high and heavy vehicles taking inappropriate routes through narrow lanes and encountering the low-height railway bridge. This Plan will take into account the impact on transport more generally, as well as seek to influence routing of through traffic away from the area.

The community, led by a strong Parish Council of eleven Members, already has experience of producing a well-consulted Village Design Statement, being adopted by the then District Council in September 2004. Work is already well-established to put in place similar structures and representation across the many interests in the community to prepare for the new Neighbourhood Planning and referendum process.