



Conservatives

OUR PLANS FOR WILTSHIRE'S FUTURE

FROM MAY 2025 & BEYOND



The Conservative manifesto for the 2025 Wiltshire Council elections

Promoted by Richard Clewer on behalf of Wiltshire Candidates, both at Wiltshire Campaign HQ, EWCA, 23-24 The Parade, Marlborough, SN8 1NE.

THE WILTSHIRE CONSERVATIVE MANIFESTO

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*An introduction from
Richard Clewer,
Conservative Group Leader...*



I am delighted to share our Conservative manifesto with you. Our plan will demonstrate how we are going to build on our track record of delivery and continue to improve Wiltshire.

Under the continued sound and effective financial management of Wiltshire Conservatives, Wiltshire Council has had a hugely successful last four years, bucking the trend in local government. Sound finances, which are the platform on which everything else depends, do not occur on their own but require constant attention and nurturing. We are committed to continually transforming and improving the delivery of services, so that your money is spent as wisely and carefully as possible, ensuring we don't tax residents a penny more than is necessary.

Wiltshire has been rated as 'Outstanding' by OFSTED for Children's Services, received the top rating for our Special Educational Needs (SEND) review and a 'Good' CQC rating making us the only large council in the country with such great outcomes. We have increased Council reserves, ensuring we are able to deal with potential future emergencies whilst boosting our spending on highways resurfacing, pothole repairs, flooding, fly-tipping, gully clearing, enforcement and many other areas.

All of this has been done at a time when many other councils have reduced their services and are using their reserves to fund day to day spending. Many are now on the edge of bankruptcy, requiring Exceptional Financial Support from government just to keep going (basically selling assets and borrowing money to fund day to day expenditure). Liberal Democrat controlled Somerset and Labour controlled Swindon councils being just two local examples of failing authorities needing exceptional support to be able to keep the lights on.

Wiltshire Conservatives have charted our course through a combination of measures. We have focused on the long term, looking to identify problems in advance and take early action to deal with issues before they become a financial drain. This not only saves money by preventing problems but also leads to a better quality of life for our more vulnerable residents. Finally, we have avoided 'populist' schemes and made sure

that everything that we do is not only cost effective but also improves services and delivery for Wiltshire's residents.

As a result all our libraries and leisure centres remain open and we continue to invest in them, boosting usage and controlling costs. We have increased our recycling rates, cracked down on fly-tipping and invested in preventative highways maintenance and flooding schemes whilst significantly increasing our expenditure on pothole repairs and maintaining our drainage systems.

I don't want to pretend that we are perfect, there is always more a council can do, but we are significantly improving services in Wiltshire as shown by the external evidence. If we are re-elected we will continue to build on this work, running one of the most effective councils in the country ('Best Performing Council in the South West' and '7th Best Performing Council in the UK' based on research by Impower). We will continue to control our finances, to solve our own problems without waiting for government bail outs that will never come. We have delivered against every action in our last Manifesto from 2021 and if re-elected will continue to deliver on every item in this one.

In politics it is very trendy to offer 'change', to make undeliverable promises to the electorate. We will never do that. We have demonstrated over the last 4 years what competent Conservative government looks like in Wiltshire. We are not just telling you we have delivered, we have the data to prove in area after area that we have delivered, measured by external bodies and that we have bucked the trend when so many other councils are failing.

We have delivered on everything we promised to do in our last manifesto and we can deliver on everything we commit to in this one; we are not making unfunded promises but clear commitments.

If you want Wiltshire to continue to thrive, to get even better, you need to re-elect a Conservative administration for Wiltshire Council.



Richard Clewer
Conservative Group Leader & Leader of Wiltshire Council





OUR PLANS FOR THE ECONOMY



THE ECONOMY

“ We will protect Wiltshire’s thriving, diverse and highly varied local economy based around our City and Market Towns.

The British Armed Forces are our largest employer, even more significant if you include those who work alongside the Army. We also have the world leading biomedical research centre at Porton Down and a significant wider life sciences sector including Salisbury Hospital. We have invested in our high streets through our £4 million towns programme, seeing 61 new shops open and empowering our town councils to put on events.

”

To support our High Streets and economy we will:

- Continue to develop our hugely successful Market Towns programme – our high streets have **fewer vacant shops and higher footfall** than the South West and Country as a whole because of this work. We will work to ensure our high streets are vibrant, supporting more new shops to open through our Vacant Units Fund.
- Expand our Explore Wiltshire and Events Wiltshire apps to give people from neighbouring areas, as well as Wiltshire residents, **reasons to explore our market towns and wonderful countryside.**
- Support and expand the Wiltshire Marque, **supporting our farmers and local producers** alongside their wonderful products.
- Use our new Local Plan to **force developers to provide employment land** and not just housing, as well as supporting the building of new small industrial units in suitable locations in our villages.
- Continue to build on our expanding Porton Down Science Park and other **support for the military** by ensuring the industrial locations are available for the private sector to work with the Army and Airforce.



THE ECONOMY

- Expand Tourism through the development of a tourism strategy and Local Visitor Economy Partnership for Wiltshire. When a Mayoral Authority is created by the Labour Government, we will look to make this more effective by linking it into a wider Wessex tourism offer. It is important that we **support our hospitality businesses and visitor attractions** as they are a key part of what make our communities vibrant places to live.
- Encourage and continue to work with our town (and city) councils, creating **clear future plans for our town centres** built on specific, deliverable ideas which can be delivered as and when funding is available.
- Use the new policies in our Local Plan to support the creation of small business units in our towns and villages, **supporting people who start businesses** to expand. It is too hard to find smaller units and they are key to business growth.
- Continue to **champion the expansion of high quality, high speed mobile coverage** following our work with network providers which has delivered a 4% increase in the percentage of homes with 5G phone signal since 2021.
- Continue our plan to **extend fibre to all households** which has already helped 3% more Wiltshire residents gain ultrafast broadband.
- Work with our larger towns to consider the creation of Business Improvement Districts, bodies that can **significantly boost the vibrance of a town centre** but need wider business support to setup.
- Hold business themed public events in all our community areas to create a more effective route for communication with business and a **better support network for business owners and entrepreneurs**.



A young woman with long brown hair and sunglasses is sitting in the back of a car, smiling. A young child with blonde hair and sunglasses is sitting next to her, also smiling. They are both wearing casual clothing. The car's interior is visible, including the seats and windows.

OUR PLANS FOR TRANSPORT



Conservatives

Keep Wiltshire In Safe Hands

TRANSPORT

“ We understand that Wiltshire is a large rural county and half our population live in rural communities. We will protect those who have no option but to use a motor vehicle.

Whilst we are improving our bus provision through Wiltshire Connect, we understand that we cannot rely on public transport for our residents to get around to the same degree as a large city.

We have invested an extra £22 million into road maintenance which is seeing our road network improve (based on DFT data) whilst most of the UK is seeing the state of their roads decline. We have also invested heavily in extra pothole repair teams and gully tankers/flood repairs to keep our drainage system flowing.

We have delivered major improvements to the A350 over the last few years, addressing a significant congestion problem around Chippenham. We now need to find solutions for several key points in the county including Westbury, Yarnbrook, West Ashton, Warminster and potentially the proposed Melksham bypass. The A36 through Salisbury is also a congestion spot which desperately needs National Highways to develop a solution to. We are expanding our cycle network connecting it to more of our communities with dedicated cycle paths.

”

To ensure Wiltshire keeps moving we will:

- **Build on the extra investment we have put into road repairs and re-surfacing.**
We can only do this because of our strong financial position and can only maintain it if we keep control of our finances. Because of this extra resource and a more effective approach we were able to repair almost twice the length of road last year than we had initially anticipated repairing.
- **Ensure that our drainage systems and gullies are cleared regularly**
maintaining the funding at the increased levels we have achieved in the last four years through sensible financial management.



TRANSPORT

- Start a programme to **ensure that all new schools have 20mph zones operating during pick up and drop off times**, during term time only, using flashing lights outside of schools to make drivers aware. We will set up a programme to introduce these to existing schools depending on site suitability and budget availability.
- **Carry out a speed limit review across the entire county**, identifying, assessing and resolving issues in line with national guidance and local conditions.
- Continue a **£1 million a year investment into fixing more serious issues around blocked or collapsed drains** on or near our roads.
- Protect drivers, not penalise them. Wiltshire is a large rural county and cars are essential to our ability to work and get around. **We will not impose Low Traffic Neighbourhoods or Emissions Zones**. We will work with residents to address local safety concerns and tackle air quality issues by gathering detailed evidence and working with people, not against them.
- **Focus on further improvements for Westbury and south of Melksham**, following improvement to the A350 North-South Road corridor around Chippenham. Whilst reliant on government funding, heavy lorries must be discouraged from travelling through built up residential areas causing congestion and poor air quality. **A review of designated freight transport routes through the county will be undertaken** and measures explored which protect our local towns and rural villages from lorries travelling along inappropriate roads and not adhering to designated routes.
- Work with Government and lobby them to **deliver improvements to the A303** to resolve the county's worst traffic hotspot.
- Build on the successful Wiltshire Connect bus service, using demand responsive smaller buses to improve the public transport offer in our villages. The last 4 years have seen bus use in Wiltshire increase and we need to **ensure that public transport is a viable alternative for people** who don't have access to a car in our towns and villages.
- Continue to invest in dedicated cycling routes as part of a strategic solution aimed at connecting all our communities. This will need Government funding but we have to be ready with sensible schemes which **keep cyclists on safe routes, not mixing them in with cars** whenever possible.



TRANSPORT

- Continue our extra **£800,000 funding for improvements to our footpaths** and bridleways.
- Work with train operators, neighbouring authorities, Government, (and the new Mayoral Authority when the Labour government creates it) to lobby for and then **deliver improvements to Wiltshire train stations and routes**, developing a strategic plan to boost rail use and services in the county.
- Continue to **deliver a sensible plan for the introduction of infrastructure for electric vehicle charging points** based on patterns of behaviour and usage, in conjunction with government programmes and the grid capacity in the South West.
- Ensure **new footpath signs** include destinations, distances and approximate walking times. Upgrade existing footpath signs in the same way when budgets allow.





OUR PLANS FOR HOUSING & PLANNING



HOUSING & PLANNING

“ **There is a demonstrable need for new housing in Wiltshire if individuals and families are not to be priced out of the county. We will balance this need with the protection of our countryside and infrastructure from over development.**

The lower the supply of new housing, the less effective control the council has over where housing goes, and the more contentious prospective developments become. At the moment the insanity of the 5-year Housing Land Supply system is leading to the issuing of planning permissions but not the actual building of new houses.

We have started a new Council House building programme delivering over 368 properties to date, focusing on ensuring affordable housing in our villages. A further 418 are in the pipeline and we will exceed our 1,000 home target. We have also set up a council owned housing company, Stone Circle, to provide affordable housing to specific groups that we cannot support through council housing but which need our support. We are also purchasing housing to address specific areas of need, providing temporary accommodation or dedicated housing to support our looked after children, keeping them close to their support networks.

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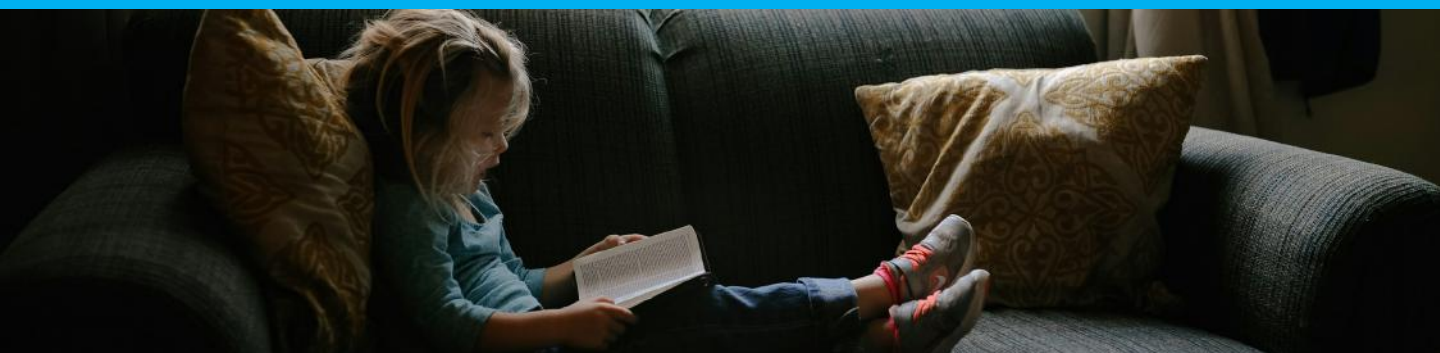
To ensure Wiltshire delivers on its housing targets and our communities continue to thrive we will:

- Deliver on our new Local Plan (assuming it is approved by a Planning Inspector) which will see **sensible, controlled development in Wiltshire**.
- Develop a new plan based on the exorbitant housing targets set by Labour (although even these gigantic targets are **lower than the Liberal Democrat targets in the last election**). This will be challenging but we will deliver a revised plan towards the end of the next council term as the alternative will be a continuation of planning free for all and development by appeal.



HOUSING & PLANNING

- Work to help shape national policy to **ensure developers are forced to build existing planning permissions** before they can apply for more planning permission on green field sites.
- **Continue to build council housing, wherever possible at social rent** (50% of market rent) and to a zero-carbon standard. This provides a safety net for the most vulnerable residents in Wiltshire.
- Continue to expand the work of Stone Circle to **provide housing that fills a gap in the rental market** (which is close to broken now) for those who don't qualify for social housing.
- Deliver our Local Plan that will **provide greater support for nature, better design of estates and higher building standards** (reducing carbon emissions and more importantly saving people money on their energy bills), even in the face of opposition from developers.
- **Ensure more affordable housing is built** in both our villages and towns through a range of planning policies. Affordable housing is critical to keeping different generations of families together and ensuring our communities remain vibrant multi-generational living places.
- **Build on the excellent work carried out by our tenancy sustainment officers** who have brought in more than £1 million a year in extra income for our most vulnerable families, ensuring they get the support they need.
- Continue our hugely successful work to **support people who are at risk of homelessness** to find new accommodation before they are forced to leave their current home. We have a network of temporary accommodation, and we need to expand this to ensure Wiltshire continues not to use B&B accommodation for those who do end up homeless; people need to be housed in homes!





OUR PLANS FOR COMMUNITIES



COMMUNITIES

“ **Our strong communities have been at the heart of everything the Conservative administration has done since the creation of Wiltshire Council.**

We first created Area Boards to ensure more decisions are made at a local level. Area Boards work closely with the Council's overall priorities, focusing on tackling deprivation and work around community engagement and prevention. Communities and community groups play a key role here. Alongside this we have maintained all our Libraries and Leisure Centres and delivered new campus facilities in Salisbury, Tisbury, Corsham, Melksham and Pewsey with more coming, including a brand new leisure centre in Trowbridge.

”

To continue supporting our communities we will:

- Further **develop our Community Safety Partnership**, linking it in with Public Health and wider enforcement. This approach is delivering - tackling anti-social behaviour in Downton, Devizes and Salisbury and by making it business as usual we will stop more problems before they arise.
- Continue to **tackle speeding in our villages and towns** through Speed Indicator Devices, continuing close working with the police and an appropriate use of 20mph zones where there is community support and safety guidelines are met.
- **Deliver a county wide speed limit review**, identifying and addressing problem areas across Wiltshire.
- Promote more close working with the police through Neighbourhood Tasking Groups, to **ensure that residents' priorities are clearly communicated to the police**.
- Build on the use of **Public Space Protection Orders to target specific localised anti-social behaviour** problems.
- Continue the programme of transferring assets to our towns and villages where they want them, to **enable communities to have greater control over delivering the priorities of their residents**.



COMMUNITIES

- Continue to improve our library service, adding a wider range of services (especially working with the NHS) to **deliver the critical role of access to books and a much wider range of community benefits**. Visits to our libraries have steadily increased over the last 4 years and we will work to continue that trend.
- Deliver the new Trowbridge Leisure Centre whilst continuing the renovation and modernisation of other centres. Leisure is critical to the provision of health and wellbeing and encouraging wider community use. **We will not cut leisure services but invest in them** and this approach has already seen significant increases in the number of residents using our leisure centres.
- **Continue to fund the arts and museums in Wiltshire** and work with our partners to deliver an increasing range of reasons to visit our town centres.
- Continue our ground breaking 'Community Conversations' approach to **ensure we are listening to communities**, working with them to deliver solutions that work in their neighbourhoods.
- Build on the integration of public health outcomes with the priorities of Area Boards to **deliver more active, connected communities, with greater access to our countryside and greater support for local groups**. The aim is to link Area Boards into the delivery of health prevention work when the Integrated Care Board fully develops its approach.
- **Build on the outreach work of our leisure centres**, providing activities across a wider footprint including for our most disadvantaged young people through our 'FUEL' programme.





OUR PLANS FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE



ADULT SOCIAL CARE

“ **The percentage of our population aged over 85 in Wiltshire is forecast to grow over the next 30 years. This makes Adult Social Care an increasingly important priority for Wiltshire Council.**

We have made significant improvements in transforming this service to one that meets the needs of our residents with an ever-increasing focus on prevention and keeping people healthy and active in their own homes for as long as possible. This has been backed up by our Care Quality Commission inspection which rated our services as ‘Good’.

”

Over the next four years we will:

- Continue to **build on our extremely successful Shared Lives programme**, helping people who need care to live with a family who can support them, whilst also giving them a greater sense of independence.
- Maintain our excellent Reablement Service, to **ensure people leaving hospital get prompt support** to maximise their ability to keep living an active and enjoyable life. This prevents the need for care and leads to a better quality of life. Over 86% of the people supported by this service are still in their own homes 90 days later - a great result.
- Continue to **work closely with our hospitals to ensure when patients are ready to leave they move quickly into the right accommodation**. This can be challenging and involves close co-operation with the Integrated Care System (the NHS in Wiltshire, Swindon and BANES).
- Work with our care home providers and residents to **ensure Wiltshire has an appropriate range of up-to-date care homes to cater for the needs of the most vulnerable**. We need to enable all Wiltshire residents who need support to live with dignity.
- **Build increasingly close working relationships with the NHS** through partnership working at every level in the Council.





OUR PLANS FOR EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES



EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

“ We all want the best for our children - to see them thrive, get a first-rate education and have a safe environment to grow up in. Wiltshire Council is no different. We have been awarded the highest grade of ‘Outstanding’ for our Children’s Services by OFSTED and the highest grade of ‘Good’ for our Special Educational Needs provision.

Whilst many of our schools are academies, Wiltshire Council has an important role to play in ensuring all schools have appropriate buildings and enough school places in the right locations, in particular in supporting provision for children with Special Educational Needs. We have built the new Silverwood Special School and have an extensive programme of replacing older school buildings.

The Council also supports targeted work with young offenders and children at risk of offending, along with a wider youth service offer tailored for the specific needs of our communities. We provide wider support for Wiltshire’s young people through our Area Boards where over the last 4 years we have delivered projects involving 40,000 young people and £5 million of investment.

”

To continue to support our young people we will:

- Build on the success of our new Special School provision in Silverwood and **support all schools in the county** to create the environment of a Special School where it is needed.
- Build capacity in our existing schools to **provide support to young people with less severe special needs in a mainstream education setting**. Where this is appropriate for a young person, it has been shown to deliver better outcomes for their future lives.



EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

- Continue to **develop our Youth Services model**, providing funding through Area Boards to decide what provision is best suited for our communities, working closely with the voluntary sector and NHS to make this both evidence based and as effective as possible.
- **Work with all our schools to help them achieve the best possible results** providing assistance where needed.
- Look to **maximise the opportunities provided related to training and skills** through devolution, as and when we find out from the Government what our devolution footprint is and when we will see a devolved authority set up. Surety around skills funding for both sixth forms and young adults will enable us to create more effective, long-term training designed to the needs of business and those looking to start careers.
- Ensure that our **mental health provision for young people** continues to improve. We have seen steady improvements in this area despite the post Covid demand and we need to work with partners, particularly the NHS/Integrated Care System to ensure this improvement continues.
- Continue our programme to **recruit more foster carers** to prioritise our children in care staying in Wiltshire and avoiding out of county placements.
- Continue to **purchase properties to provide small homes for our looked after children** to keep them in the county and near to their family and support networks.





OUR PLANS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT



THE ENVIRONMENT

“ We need to preserve Wiltshire’s natural environment to ensure wildlife can thrive. We also need to rise to the challenges of decarbonising our economy to address the issues of climate change in practical, evidence based and economically affordable ways.

Wiltshire contains some truly wonderful natural assets. From our National Landscapes (formerly AONBs), the New Forest National Park (about 10% of which is in Wiltshire), the rolling chalk downlands of Salisbury Plain, some of the world’s best chalk streams and ancient woodland like Savernake Forest.

”

To protect and enhance our environment we will:

- **Continue to support our farmers**, campaigning for the most productive agricultural land to remain in use for farming and not being converted to other uses through the new Government’s land use framework.
- Continue our work to **crack down on fly-tipping and litter**. We have already reduced fly-tipping by 40% through our zero-tolerance approach. We will do more to make Wiltshire a place where you face prosecution if you dump waste on our green fields or anywhere else.
- Do everything within our power to **target individuals dropping litter**, especially along our roads, calling for powers to ensure they can be fined. Litter harms the environment and is expensive and time consuming to clear up.
- Ensure all **new housing is built to a zero-carbon standard** (as is already the case with Wiltshire Council Housing) as laid out in the draft Local Plan. This is subject to approval by the Planning Inspectorate. This means that new homes will be much cheaper for residents to heat and light.
- **Deliver a Nature Recovery Strategy** tied into our work with Biodiversity Net Gain. This will involve working with partner organisations as well as making some Wiltshire Council land available to assist with Nutrient Neutrality issues and freeing up space in which nature can connect and thrive.



THE ENVIRONMENT

- Continue our **extensive programme encouraging wild flowers** along our rural road verges and on open ground. The longer this programme runs, the greater the variety of wild flowers, insect pollinators and butterflies we will attract. We will continue to expand this in appropriate areas, linked into our Nature Recovery Strategy.
- Introduce a new weekly **food waste collection** service, alongside improvements to recycling services to **boost our recycling rates**. The new Environment Act sets ambitious national targets and we are well placed to see recycling levels increase over 60% with minimal waste ending up in landfill, down from the current 12%.
- Continue to support sensible decarbonisation of the county, designed to **save residents money whilst improving the environment**, along the lines of our Climate Strategy. This has delivered 1,400 new solar schemes on private houses through Solar Together. We will continue this costed, rational approach to reducing carbon emissions in the county in a way that works for Wiltshire. We will support the move to electric vehicles rather than try to force cars off our roads.
- Achieve a **carbon neutral Wiltshire Council by 2030**, thereby saving tax payer money. We have already reduced Wiltshire Council's carbon emissions by almost 90% saving nearly £3 million a year from our revenue budget in the process.
- Continue to **add to the 670 acres of new woodland** already planted in Wiltshire, making sure it happens in the right areas.
- **Stimulate the development of a new retrofitting industry** for our existing housing which will ensure the appropriate skills and businesses are available to support our residents in retrofitting their own properties. Starting to retrofit all our council houses to an EPC-B rating has already helped initiate this.





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**KEEP WILTSHIRE
IN SAFE HANDS**

**Vote for the Conservatives
on Thursday 1st May 2025**

Promoted by Richard Clewer on behalf of Wiltshire Candidates, both at Wiltshire Campaign HQ, EWCA, 23-24 The Parade, Marlborough, SN8 1NE.