

VALP Scrutiny
29 July 2015

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE GREEN BELT REVIEW

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To inform VALP Scrutiny Committee of the background and methodology for the Buckinghamshire Green Belt Review

2 Recommendation

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| 2.1 To note the content of the report |
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3 Supporting information

- 3.1 Substantial parts of South Bucks, Wycombe and Chiltern Council's areas are designated as part of the Metropolitan Green Belt whereas only a small amount of Aylesbury Vale is part of the Green Belt, mainly around Wendover with smaller areas near Aston Clinton and in the Ivinghoe area. As set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) "once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan". With all four Councils preparing new Local Plans a review of the Green Belt is being undertaken. The exceptional circumstances justifying the review is the lack of capacity for new development in South Bucks, Wycombe and Chiltern's areas for new development. This situation means that all potential options for locating new development must be examined before areas outside the plan area are considered.
- 3.2 The purpose of the Green Belt Review is to firstly identify those areas which do not perform well in relation to the five purposes of Green Belts as set out in the NPPF. These are:
- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
 - to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 3.3 Following a tendering process undertaken by South Bucks on behalf of the four Councils the ARUP consultancy were appointed to undertake the review. The proposed timetable will see the first phase of the study completed by the end of August in time for the output to be considered in relation to the proposed VALP Issues and Options Consultation in October. There has recently been some slippage on the timetable due to increases in the number of parcels being assessed, but the consultants are aiming to make up the time that has been lost.

- 3.4 The first phase of the study will only consider how parcels of land perform against the purposes set out above. Only if a parcel performs poorly against the purposes will a second phase be initiated which will determine a parcel area's suitability for development. However the output from the first phase will give an indication of the potential for development in the Green Belt in each Council's area. This information can then be fed into the capacity work being undertaken to give an indication of the level of unmet need which may be generated in other Council areas.
- 3.5 The methodology being used involves the area of Green Belt being split up into general areas bounded by long term boundaries such as rivers, main roads and railway lines. These general areas are then split further using other durable boundary features where there are major non-Green Belt settlements to provide finer grain analysis of areas where changes in an area's character are more likely to have affected performance against the purposes. On the furthest edge of the Green Belt some land not currently in the Green Belt is to be assessed to check whether it would meet the purposes and could be made part of the Green Belt. Each parcel is then scored against 4 of the 5 purposes out a score of 5 without weighting with some specific variations in scoring to address the difficulties of applying the purposes to different locations. The fifth purpose on urban regeneration as this purpose as there was no evidence of urban regeneration being inhibited.
- 3.6 The methodology is being slightly revised to reflect some minor issues uncovered while carrying out the review. Also the methodology has not been signed off by all the Councils involved. The methodology has therefore not been made public yet. The methodology is expected to be finalised shortly and then published prior to the meeting. When this occurs a link to the methodology will be circulated to the members of the VALP Scrutiny Committee. At the time of writing the ARUP team have completed their site visits of the parcels and are working on their assessments.

4 Resource implications

- 4.1 Funding of the Green Belt Review is being derived from existing budgets.

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Background Documents	None