

# Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan Scrutiny Committee

11 MAY 2016

**PRESENT:** Councillor C Poll (Chairman); Councillors A Cole (In place of M Collins), P Cooper, M Edmonds, S Jenkins and L Monger

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillors C Adams and R Stuchbury

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors B Russel and M Collins

## 1. TEMPORARY CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP

Councillor A Cole substituted for Councillor M Collins.

## 2. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2015 be approved as a correct record.

## 3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were none.

## 4. SUMMARY OF COMMENTS ON VALP ISSUES AND OPTIONS

A Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan Issues and Options consultation was undertaken in 2015 which resulted in 700 replies containing over 4,500 response to the questions posed in the consultation. These were summarised and the summary put on the Councils website. A further summary of the main issues raised had been attached as an appendix to the report.

The responses largely focused on the amount of housing being proposed and the role of unmet need in that figure.

The main response was that the number should be lower without any unmet need, however some responses suggested that any unmet need from the south of the county should not be accommodated in the north of the Vale. Any comments on the content of the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) were passed to the council's consultants. There had also need a significant number of comments on the implications of the village hierarchy.

It was noted that under the duty to co-operate it was important that the comments of adjacent authorities were taken into account. A summary of the responses were set out in appendix 2 of the report. The Vale was a potential location for unmet need from several adjacent council areas and this formed a significant part of the responses.

Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) had also made significant comments in response to the consultation and their responses were set out in appendix 3 to the report, together with the reply to these from AVDC officers. On the whole BCC considered that the overall strategy should be reconsidered to direct more development away from the smaller settlements to Buckingham and the southern part of the Vale, and that Haddenham could be a location for a new settlement.

Members made a number of comments on the summary and put questions to the officers. These can be summarised as follows:-

- It would have been helpful for the Scrutiny committee to have had sight of full reports on what Forward Planning were doing in response to comments and the Draft Plan before the meeting rather than just a summary of responses.
- Members were concerned that Bucks County Council (BCC) were trying to influence AVDC in its decision on where strategic settlements should be. Members referred to the comments made on pages 55 and 56 of the report including BCC's comments on "Urban Sprawl" (Option D comment). Members were also concerned that BCC would restate the same views at the Draft Plan stage.
- Although Winslow will get a railway station in future, most travel there at present is by car, unlike Haddenham which already has a station.
- There seemed to be a mixed response to the issue of unmet need. Developers were reporting there was not enough and individuals saying there was too much. There was concern regarding AVDC "having" to take unmet housing need from other Local Authorities.
- How were the figures for unmet need put in by neighbouring authorities to be challenged and would London's be included.
- Neighbourhood Plans (NP), including those completed or in the pipeline, should be taken into consideration. It was suggested that communities with NPs should help decide where additional growth should go in their community and then revise the NP.
- Had the impact of HS2 on any development been taken into consideration?
- It was felt that infrastructure should be put in place before any major development was undertaken.
- Chiltern/South Bucks DCs had welcomed the recognition of need to accommodate 10,000 dwellings for unmet need. How would the figures change if they came up with more development.
- It was felt that there would be more support for pro-rata development of sites rather than going for very large development areas. These would likely to be objected to during the consultation stage of the Draft Plan.
- There had been recent changes in planning with regard to gypsy and traveller sites (*Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS)*). How were they now classified under planning and what affect would there be on pitch numbers? There were a number of sites that were mostly in other authorities, such as Central Bedfordshire but had an impact on settlements in AVDC. A clear understanding would be needed on where responsibility for the sites lay.
- The settlement hierarchy had been criticised, particularly with the parishes. It was suggested that a minimum percentage growth figure tailored for each settlement be used instead. Although there could be exceptions to the rule.
- The Forward Plans team were to be congratulated on their work on the Draft Plan.

In reply to the comments above it was confirmed the committee would have site of the Draft Plan by 31 May. Bucks County Council were Statutory Consultees but AVDC's Council would have the final say on the Draft Plan before submission. However, it was recognised that similar views could be expressed during the consultation for the Draft Plan. Officers were continuing to look at figures produced by other authorities with regard to unmet need. London's unmet need would not be considered in this Local Plan but could be included in a future updated plan.

If there was more development in adjoining authorities then it was hoped the figure of unmet need would decrease. However, other authorities were also looking at AVDC's figures to make adjustments to theirs.

The impact of HS2 had been incorporated into the Draft Plan as had any infrastructure.

AVDC still liaised with the Oxon and Bucks Gypsy and Traveller Service, but it was acknowledged that this would not help with Central Bedfordshire sites. There would be a need to look at the 52 temporary permissions in the Vale and whether these could be made permanent.

The option of minimum percentage growth could be looked into and a revised settlement hierarchy would be in the draft plan.

The Draft Plan would be published on 7 July 2016 and out for consultation for a period of over eight weeks ending on Monday 5 September 2016.

RESOLVED –

1. That Members noted the contents of the report, and its attachment, accepted the Summary of Comments on VALP Issues and Options in principle and requested that officers act in accordance with their comments and concerns.

## **5. REVIEW OF GREEN BELT - PHASE 1**

An assessment of the Green Belt was being undertaken as part of the evidence base for the emerging Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP). Part 1 of the work was being undertaken jointly with Wycombe District Council, Chiltern District Council, South Bucks District Council and Buckinghamshire County Council. The assessment would be used to inform the emerging Local Plans in the area including AVDC's. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) permitted the review of Green Belt areas when local plans were being prepared.

In March 2016, Part 1 of the Buckinghamshire Green Belt Assessment, undertaken by consultants Arups, had been published and had been made available on AVDC's website.

The assessment looked at how areas of land within the Green Belt, and some areas adjacent, performed against the five purposes of the Green Belt as set in the NPPF. These were:-

- 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.

Arup had identified some parcels of land which perform weaker against these purposes and other parcels which had areas within them which were likely to perform weaker if assessed on their own. There were three areas identified within the Vale and the recommendations for them were attached to the report as an appendix. A map produced by Arup showing areas for consideration at stage 2 had also been attached as an appendix. Aylesbury Vale's areas were RSA-1, 2 and 3. Only a small proportion of RSA-1 fell within AVDC's area. The majority of RSA-3 (Halton) was already built on. Part of

the land assessed in the Green Belt had previously been a listening station during the cold War and since the removal of the aerials on it, was now just a green field.

Stage 2 consideration of the review would assess constraints on the sites to see whether they were potentially suitable for development (similar to the way sites were assessed in the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment – HELAA) and whether there were exceptional circumstances to justify the release of Green Belt land. The review would also look at whether permanent and defensible boundaries could be identified if the Green Belt were to be amended. Any sites which were proposed for removal or additional to the Green Belt would be consulted on as part of the draft VALP.

It was acknowledged that the Green Belt Assessment would also form part of the capacity assessments of the other Buckinghamshire Councils and be part of determining what their unmet need would be. Chiltern and South Bucks DC's had already consulted on the suitability of sites to be removed from the Green Belt ahead of the phase 2 work. This had shown more land as being considered for removal than had been indicated in the Arup study and would be progressed through their local plan preparation process.

Members commented on a number of issues including the public's perception of Green Belt land. It was acknowledged that Green Belt zones contained a number of different types of land uses, and they weren't restricted to attractive green field sites. Initially Green Belts were set up under the Town and Country Planning Act, 1947 as buffers around cities to prevent urban sprawl.

It was expected that Wycombe DC would be producing its Green Belt review at the end of May/beginning of June 2016 and Chiltern/South Bucks by the end of the Summer/early Autumn. The Forward Plans team were working on an agreed methodology with the other councils but this wouldn't be finalised until later.

RESOLVED –

Members noted the content of the report.

## **6. HELAA REVIEW SITES**

The Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment report had been published for consultation in October 2015 which considered 617 sites for the potential development of various land uses.

The report had identified capacity on 190 of these sites considered 'suitable' or 'part suitable' that could deliver 22,593 homes and 636,770sqm economic development (A, B and D land uses).

Since January 2016, AVDC officers had assembled 159 new sites for HELAA to find potential additional capacity on top of the sites already identified in the October 2015 first draft report. Of these 108 required a Forward Plans officer site visit and 'internal' consultation with Development Management, Landscape, Heritage, Biodiversity and Buckinghamshire County Council. On the remainder the Council had already given a formal opinion on the likelihood of planning permission being granted for development and that conclusion on the principle of development would feed into HELAA.

The new sites for the HELAA report (May 2016) comprised sites granted planning permission in 2015 but not started or fully completed, sites in a submitted neighbourhood plan since October 2015, sites sent in the Call For Sites process from 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015 and sites sent in as Call for Sites since the original

Call (May 2014) at smaller villages. The total site list in HELAA (including sites completely remote, unsuitable sites, sites in the green belt and AONB) being promoted for various land uses is 776 sites as at 25 April 2016. The new sites comprised:

- 10 at strategic settlements
- 45 at larger villages
- 53 at smaller villages

The sites in the urban areas were all quite small scale 'infill and rounding off' or isolated small scale agricultural/forestry land. There were a large number of smaller rural sites on the edge of villages which would not generate significant capacity if found to be suitable. However there were larger sites at the former Little Horwood airfield, Turweston Aerodrome and parcels of land in green fields near the railway line north of Stoke Hammond. The list of 108 sites currently being considered in the latest work of HELAA had been set out in the report to committee. The maps for the sites were available on the Council's website.

It was confirmed that HELAA would be published at the end of May with increased capacity. Members would have site of this before it was published publically. It was imperative that the Council demonstrated to the Inspector that the assessment had been comprehensively undertaken. Sites being available did not mean that planning permission would automatically be granted.

Members felt that the call for sites could be perceived as being developer driven and where landowners were happy to sell.

HELAA would need to be updated every year.

RESOLVED –

That Members noted the report.

## 7. LOCAL PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

It was reported that following the completion of the issues and options consultation work had focussed on summarising the comments received. A summary of those responses had been attached to the agenda with the first item. Work had then focussed on the preparation of the detailed policies for inclusion in the plan. A significant number of these were now drafted and being discussed with Development Management.

A significant issue for the new plan was the degree of unmet need that AVDC may be requested to accommodate from adjacent Councils. Work had therefore been undertaken to establish the level of unmet need which may flow from other areas. Their positions were set out in the responses to the issues and options consultation. In summary a small amount of unmet need may be requested from Luton and Dacorum, but there was no indication what the figure would be. The total unmet need from Wycombe, Chiltern and South Bucks had been estimated at 10,000 dwellings for the issues and options consultation. With the advent of a joint plan for the unmet need from the other Bucks councils would increase. However it was not yet possible to be definitive about the figure as capacity work, such as phase 2 of the Green belt Review and consideration of sites in the AONB was not due to be completed for Chiltern/South Bucks until their preferred options consultation took place in October 2016. Joint working was underway to establish the most accurate estimate and agree the way forward for a definitive figure to be established.

The following bullet points summarised the latest position on the preparation of VALP supporting evidence.

- A revised Buckinghamshire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) report had been prepared by ORS to inform the production of the relevant Local Plans. This had established the overall housing need for Buckinghamshire at around 50,000 with a requirement of 21,300 for Aylesbury Vale.
- A revision of the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) was underway. This involved over 100 site visits, consultations regarding constraints and application of the joint HELAA methodology. The revised HELAA would provide the source for further capacity
- A Landscape Assessment from LUC was consulted on at issues and options and comments had been taken into account. The revised assessment had been published on the Council's website and would be utilised in considering planning applications.
- A revised Bucks Housing Market Area (HMA) report had been published following the decision by Chiltern and South Bucks to prepare a joint Local Plan. It concluded that the combined Local Plan area fell within the 'best fit' Bucks HMA.
- Phase 1 of a joint Green Belt Review involving the Bucks Councils and including the County Council had been completed and published. A separate report on the review had been prepared for the committee.
- Cooperative work on traffic modelling had commenced between the County Council and the District Councils to inform the preparation of the respective Local Plans. Work had also commenced on the preparation of an Aylesbury Transport Strategy.

- A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Water Cycle Study had been commissioned and work to gather data from the respective stakeholders was underway.
- Work by consultants to prepare a report on the potential for a new settlement in Aylesbury Vale was continuing. The current focus was on determining the potential landscape and traffic impacts of the most suitable locations.
- As part of efforts to reduce the over supply of employment land which amounted to 77 ha. against a requirement of 20 ha. is underway. The potential for land to be reallocated for housing development was being explored as part of the work.
- Sustainability appraisal work is continuing following the preparation of a Reasonable Alternatives report for issues and options consultation, work was now focussing on the appraisal of potential development sites.
- Following the production of new government planning policy on travellers which included a revised definition of travellers for planning purposes a update of the joint Bucks traveller needs assessment was underway. The implications of initial results were currently being discussed between the respective councils.

The draft plan was currently being finalised and would be presented to Members at a seminar on Tuesday 31 May at 6:30pm. The draft plan would then be considered by VALP Scrutiny Committee on 13 June, Cabinet on 15 June and Council on 28 June. The draft plan would then be published for public consultation on Thursday 7 July, for a period of over eight weeks (due to summer holiday period), ending on Monday 5 September. The consultation would include a series of public exhibitions and a more streamlined online system for submitting comments. A Town and Parish Councils event would take place on 13 of July.

Following the public consultation on the draft plan, work would continue on finalising the key pieces of evidence and drafting the final plan. The final plan would be published for comment in early 2017, following consideration again by VALP Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and Council. This was likely to be in December 2016. Following the consultation on the final 'proposed submission' plan, the plan would be submitted for independent examination in March, which fits with the government's deadline. Once submitted, the timetable would be led by PINS and is therefore out of AVDC's control, but it was anticipated the examination would start in the spring, and adoption by summer 2017.

Members commented on the small amount of unmet need from Luton and Dacorum and what the figure may be. They also queried the oversupply of employment land. There was the major employment site, ARLA, currently identified; Westcott and Silverstone also both have enterprise zones.

RESOLVED –

That Members noted the report.