

## Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan Scrutiny Committee

13 JUNE 2016

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

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillors C Adams, M Bateman, N Blake, J Brandis, B Foster, S Renshell, R Stuchbury and W Whyte

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor B Russel

### 1. TEMPORARY CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP

Councillor A Cole substituted for Councillor B Russel

### 2. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meetings held on 11 and 18 May be approved as correct records, subject to the inclusion of Cllr C Paternoster in the attendance for 11 March 2016.

### 3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Cllr P Cooper declared a Personal interest in item 5 as a Member of the Silverstone Racing Club.

### 4. DRAFT VALE OF AYLESBURY LOCAL PLAN

As reported previously AVDC does not have an up to date local plan. The current adopted plan dated from 2004 and did not take account of current government policy. The most recent attempt to produce a replacement plan was withdrawn following an examination in public in 2014. Since then the Council had been working to produce a new local plan for adoption by mid-2017. The Government required submission by early 2017.

As outlined in the officer's report, the initial scoping consultation on the new Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) and call for sites took place in 2014. An issues and options consultation took place in 2015 which had looked at how 31,000 houses could be accommodated in the vale by 2033. The summary of the responses had been made available on the Council's website. Where possible the content of the responses had also been taken into account in the preparation of the draft plan. It was acknowledged that any comments received on the draft plan would also be taken into consideration before the plan was finalised for pre-submission consultation.

The Council had undertaken a Buckinghamshire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) in conjunction with the other Buckinghamshire councils. This had established that to meet the Vale's own housing needs, VALP needed to deliver 21,300 new homes and 22 hectares of Class B1/B2/B8 employment between 2013 and 2033.

Following a revision in 2016 to add new sites and revised conclusions, a Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) had concluded that there was potential capacity for 25,882 houses. If Aylesbury had to meet its own needs then the

potential supply healthily exceeded the requirement. However, Government planning policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) stated that the assessment of housing need must be based on assessment across a Housing Market Area (HMA). Aylesbury fell within four HMAs – they did not have to conform to local plan boundaries. A best fit HMA had been drawn up which showed that the local plan areas with the strongest connections to the Vale were Wycombe and Chiltern/South Bucks. The total need for the best fit HMA was for 50,000 new dwellings.

The officer's report also referred to unmet housing need in relation to constraints such as Green Belt. This could mean that Councils cannot find enough land to meet their own housing needs. This was the case for the two plan areas mentioned above. Their current estimate of unmet need was around 12,000 houses.

This meant that Aylesbury Vale was being asked to accommodate 12,000 houses on top of the Council's own need of 21,300. The draft VALP therefore included an overall requirement for 33,000 houses over the 20 year period. The figure had increased as Chiltern and South Bucks were working on a joint local plan. The figure did not include any unmet need from other councils as no other council had requested a contribution to meeting the need within their HMA. The figure for unmet need could still be adjusted as outlined in the officer's report. A table was also included in the report showing the current situation on unmet housing need across neighbouring authorities.

In order to determine how the housing development would be distributed the Council had developed a settlement hierarchy. Following the issues and options consultation the hierarchy had been revised with a new category of medium villages and percentage requirements for all settlements being included. The percentage requirements meant that each settlement had a specific figure relative to its size. The percentages varied according to the category of settlement with the larger settlements getting the larger percentages.

A table outlining the categories, settlements and amount of housing had been included in the report to committee.

An estimated contribution from the villages had been included in the housing figures but there were currently not enough sites to meet the requirement in a number of villages.

Further work would need to be undertaken with the parish and town councils concerned to meet capacity requirements in a number of villages. These sites would then be included in the local plan as potential allocations which would then be released 12 months after the local plan was adopted. As outlined in the report this would enable parish and town councils to review or draw up neighbourhood plans.

There were a large number of neighbourhood plans either made or in preparation. The new local plan could not override the non-strategic policies in those plans and the current site allocations could only be altered if there were good reasons to do so. However, VALP would be setting out new settlements requirements and these could be higher than those already within neighbourhood plans.

As mentioned earlier in the minutes, the forecast requirement for employment land was 22ha whilst the committed supply of such land was 72ha which did not include the Woodlands development of the Aylesbury Vale Enterprise Zone. The established approach was to reduce employment provision or housing be allocated to provide for the necessary workers. As the allocation of further housing was not appropriate the employment provision would need to be reduced. An internal review of employment sites had been undertaken and sites identified but it was considered that discussions should take place with landowners before any decisions were made. Therefore a further

report would be made to VALP Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in due course once discussions were concluded on how to reduce employment supply.

A planning application had been submitted for the Woodlands element of the Aylesbury Vale Enterprise Zone which included 1,100 new homes. The site included a large area at risk of flooding. Until this issue was resolved by the Environment Agency, the site could not be confirmed as a potential housing allocation on the Council's land availability assessment. However, it was shown as a potential housing/employment site in the policies map inserts.

Retail need evidence was prepared by consultants in 2015 but based on evidence from 2014 which did not support retail development in Aylesbury or the other strategic settlements. As this evidence was prepared before the scale of development envisaged in Aylesbury and the Vale and before the improvement of the economic situation, new evidence would need to be sought. This would not be available before the draft plan was subject to consultation. In the meantime a site had been identified for retail development and the new evidence would need to be made available prior to submission.

As had been set out in the Issues and Options consultation document, a new settlement had to be considered as an option to be able to deliver the amount of new housing required. Consultants (GL Hearn) had been commissioned to carry out a study. As no stipulations about potential locations were given to the consultants their conclusions were entirely independent. The consultants came to the conclusion that only two locations were suitable; Haddenham and Winslow. Haddenham was currently the preferred option as it had better employment prospects and closer proximity to the motorway network. The new settlement section (4.27) in the draft plan attached to the officers report set out the locations which were assessed.

Due to the amount of development envisaged at Aylesbury, the need/potential for improved transport links, continued development of the town centre, potential to link existing areas and creation of significant green infrastructure, the Council considered that Aylesbury could qualify as a Green Town and a specific policy had been included in the draft VALP. The Council would pursue an application to Government for Garden Town status. If the designation was achieved it could lead to additional Government support for the delivery of the proposed housing, employment, infrastructure and new green space in Aylesbury.

Government planning policy required the Council to include provision for traveller sites in its plan. Recent changes in planning policy with regards to the definition of travellers had resulted in an update of the joint Bucks traveller needs assessment. The implications of initial results were still under discussion between the respective councils but initial analysis suggested that the need had risen since the previous assessment. It was suggested that suitable temporary traveller sites could be made permanent. Forty six pitches could be delivered from temporary sites. It was also suggested that further provision would be needed and it was proposed that larger housing sites would be required to include a provision for a small number of pitches. A table setting out which sites could be considered for permanent status had been included in the officers report.

The Council had undertaken a Green Belt review to determine whether any areas did not need to be retained in the Green Belt. An area to the north east of Wendover had been identified which after further consideration could be considered for housing. The site was being included therefore as a potential housing allocation site subject to exceptional circumstances. The review had also suggested that an element of Halton Camp should be excluded from the Green Belt, that a new area could be designated to the west of Leighton Buzzard and an area east of Dagnall could be removed. The Council was proposing to implement the first two proposals but not the third as this area is outside the Vale and in Central Bedfordshire.

The draft local plan contained a full set of development management policies for consultation. It was noted that they did not carry any weight at present and could be revised prior to the submission version of the plan being prepared. It was also noted that any Government planning policy requirements would be included prior to submission, including the new starter homes requirement which had only just received Royal assent.

In order to become an adopted Local Plan the Inspector who undertook the public inquiry would need to be convinced that the evidence supporting it is robust. The Council would therefore be producing a broad range of evidence. Some evidence had been completed such as the land availability study, definition of housing market areas, forecasts of housing and employment need, revisions to landscape designations, a new settlement hierarchy and the new settlement study.

A range of other evidence would need to be finalised before submission. These were:-

- Conclusions of the housing numbers of the Buckinghamshire Councils;
- Phase 2 of the Green Belt Review;
- Flooding and water usage to be evaluated through a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Water Cycle Study;
- Traffic modelling of impacts of the proposed development and how impacts can be addressed;
- The implications of the Traveller Needs Assessment needed clarification;
- The potential for releasing employment land needed refining and publishing;
- Further assessment of land availability needed carrying out in relation to larger and medium villages; and
- An infrastructure delivery plan was needed and the viability of policies needed assessing which would help inform the proposed Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule.

Some other information would also need updating prior to the publication of the pre submission draft. These included:-

- The new retail evidence;
- Additional sites to be included in the Land Availability Assessment, or facts about existing sites could change;
- New population information would mean that the housing and employment forecasts would need revising;
- Revisions to site suitability could lead to more sites being allocated;
- Further work to align plans with other local authorities may also need to be undertaken to meet the duty to co-operate;
- The Council would need to monitor development activity to determine its housing land supply; and
- New Government requirements would have to be taken into account.

It was confirmed that as soon as any further evidence was available it would be published on the Council's website and the evidence used to inform the submission version of the plan.

It was also confirmed that another important piece of work was the preparation of Sustainability Appraisal report. This was required under European and Government legislation and had to assess the sustainability implications of the proposals and policies in the new plan.

Although it was usual for a map to accompany the local plan which identified areas to be allocated and designations which needed to be taken into account in applying policies,

at this stage the Council was not producing an overall map but was concentrating on area maps. These showed the places where the Council would be allocating development in the draft plan or other important changes such as those proposed to the Green Belt.

After consideration at this committee, there would be a Cabinet meeting on 15 June, and Council on 28 June. Following any minor changes made by Members the draft plan would then be published for public consultation on 7 July for an eight week period, ending on 5 September. During the public consultation period a series of public exhibitions would take place and an online system for submitting comments would be established. A seminar for Town and Parish councils would take place on 13 July. A meeting of the VALP Scrutiny would take place during the consultation period on 18 July.

Following on from the public consultation, work would continue on finalising the key pieces of evidence and drafting the final plan. The VALP Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and Council would meet again in December 2016. Following a consultation on the final 'Proposed Submission' plan, it would then be submitted for independent examination in March 2017. Once the plan had been submitted the timetable would be led by PINS, but it was anticipated that the examination would commence in the spring with adoption by summer 2017.

Prior to the start of the meeting officers gave a short presentation on the draft plan. Three Members, Councillors Mrs Brandis, Stuchbury and Whyte were given the opportunity to make statements to the committee.

Members of the Committee made comments and sought clarification on a number of points in the draft plan and the officer's covering report. These included:-

- The uncertainty of where the new settlement would be.
- Coalescence between existing settlements and the new settlement, whichever site was chosen.
- The possibility of a new settlement being in a rural area rather than adjacent to existing settlements.
- The delay in getting GL Hearn's report.
- Aylesbury Garden Town, a bid to Central Government and how this would affect the Draft Plan.
- Traffic modelling and flooding issues particularly around Aylesbury.
- The affects on existing Neighbourhood Plans and those being made.
- Gypsy and Traveller sites including those not listed in the officers report.
- Changes to Permitted Development rights with regard to office buildings.
- Major Employment sites.
- Unmet demand from other authorities and the Green Belt.
- Potential growth in the north east of the Vale particularly near to Bletchley and Milton Keynes.
- The percentage ratings in the settlement hierarchy.
- Saved policies, NPPF policies and new policies in the draft plan; and
- The Duty to co-operate.

RESOLVED –

That the committee noted the contents of the Draft Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan and the accompanying maps and requested that their comments on the Plan be forwarded to Cabinet at its meeting on 15 June.