

1. Purpose

- 1.1 For the VALP Scrutiny Committee to consider the draft Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) and make recommendations to Cabinet. This report is also being submitted to Cabinet on 15 June which will be asked to determine the recommendations to be made to full Council.

2. Recommendation

<p>1. The Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider the comments it might wish to make to Cabinet in relation to the draft Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP)</p>
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Background to the production of the draft Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP)

- 3.1 Currently Aylesbury Vale does not have an up to date local plan. The adopted local plan dates from 2004 and does not take account of recent changes in Government planning policy. The Council has tried a number of times to produce a replacement plan and the most recent attempt was withdrawn following an examination in public in 2014. Since then the council has been working towards delivering a new Local Plan to a self imposed deadline of adoption by mid 2017 and to a government imposed deadline for submission by early 2017.
- 3.2 An initial scoping consultation on the new Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) and call for sites took place in 2014 which led to a large number of development sites being suggested across the District. This was followed by an issues and options consultation in 2015 which looked at how 31,000 houses could be accommodated in the district to 2033. The council received over 700 responses to the issues and options consultation which contained over 4,500 comments, many of which were very detailed. These have been summarised and that summary is available on the council's website. Where possible the content of those responses has also been taken into account in the preparation of this draft plan. Similarly, comments received on the draft plan will be considered before the plan is finalised for pre submission consultation

4. Content of the draft VALP

- 4.1 A Local Plan has to set out where development can take place, where it should be prevented and what form development can take. To determine how much development is required in the Vale the council has undertaken a Buckinghamshire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) in conjunction with the other Buckinghamshire councils. This has established that to meet the Vale's own housing needs VALP should deliver 21,300 new homes and 22 hectares of class B1/B2/B8 employment over the plan period of 2013 to 2033.
- 4.2 At the same time the council has prepared a Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment which examines the suitability of the available development sites in the Vale which were submitted in response to the call for sites referred to above as well as sites from other sources. Following a 2016 revision, which has added new sites and revised conclusions on existing HELAA sites, the latest assessment has concluded that there is potentially capacity for 25,882 houses
- 4.3 If Aylesbury had to meet its own housing needs then the potential supply healthily exceeds the requirement. However, government planning policy set out in the

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that the assessment of housing need must be based on an assessment across a Housing Market Area (HMA). Aylesbury Vale falls within four HMAs - they do not have conform to local plan boundaries. Accordingly, and to provide a sensible basis for preparing a local plan and determine which HMA is most closely related to Aylesbury Vale a best fit HMA has been drawn up which shows that the local plan areas with the strongest connections to Aylesbury Vale are Wycombe and Chiltern/South Buckinghamshire. The total need across this best fit HMA is for 50,000 new dwellings.

4.4 In relation to meeting housing need the NPPF also states that “the plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development” (paragraph 182). Unmet housing need can arise when constraints such as the Green Belt mean that councils cannot find enough land to meet their own housing needs. This is the case for the two plan areas that are most closely associated with Aylesbury Vale and their current estimate of unmet need is around 12,000 new homes.

4.5 They are therefore asking that Aylesbury Vale accommodates 12,000 houses on top of our own need of 21,300 houses. The draft VALP therefore includes an overall requirement for around 33,000 houses over the 20 year plan period.. The figure has increased because Chiltern and South Buckinghamshire are cooperating on a joint local plan. It should be noted that this figure does not include any unmet need which may be identified from other councils as no other council has requested a specific contribution to meeting the need with their HMA. The unmet need figure is not set in stone and cannot be refined more exactly just yet because of further work that the other councils need to do on their exact capacity and how much can be met within their areas. This council will also be robustly challenging the level of unmet need that we are being asked to accommodate. Also, as set out in the NPPF, Aylesbury Vale can refuse to accept unmet need if it would be unreasonable or unsustainable to do so. Nevertheless at this moment in time the VALP has to be based on an overall requirement for 33,000 new dwellings. The table below sets out the current situation on unmet housing need:

Location	Need	Supply	Shortfall
Chiltern/S Bucks	13,100	6,600	6,500
Wycombe	15,100	10,000	5,100
Luton	18,000	7,000	11,000
Dacorum	Still to be defined		
Milton Keynes	Still to be defined		

4.6 To determine how this amount of housing development will be distributed the council developed a settlement hierarchy. At issues and options stage the hierarchy was criticised for the blanket requirements for villages, the size of those requirements relative to the size of villages and how the strategic settlement requirements had been arrived at. As a result of the issues and options consultation the hierarchy has been revised with a new category of medium villages and percentage requirements for all settlements being included. Those percentage requirements mean that each settlement has a specific figure which is relative to its size. The percentages vary

according to the category of settlement with the larger settlements getting the larger percentages. It is hoped that these changes will resolve many of the objections made at issues and options stage

Category	Settlements	Amount of housing
Strategic settlements 50% (Wendover 25%)	Aylesbury, Buckingham, Haddenham, Wendover and Winslow	19,167
New settlement	Haddenham or Winslow	4,500
Sites adjacent to Milton Keynes	Sites within the parishes of Whaddon, Stoke Hammond and Newton Longville.	3,924
Larger villages 22%	Aston Clinton, Edlesborough, Ivinghoe, Long Crendon, Pitstone, Steeple Claydon, Stoke Mandeville, Stone (including Hartwell), Waddesdon (including Fleet Marston), Whitchurch, Wing, Wingrave	2,389
Medium villages 18%	Bierton (including Broughton), Brill, Cheddington, Cuddington, Gawcott, Great Horwood, Grendon Underwood, Ickford, Maids Moreton, Marsh Gibbon, Marsworth, Newton Longville, North Marston, Padbury, Quainton, Stewkley, Stoke Hammond, Tingewick, Weston Turville	1,850
Smaller villages 5%	Adstock, Akeley, Ashendon, Aston Abbots, Beachampton, Bishopstone, Buckland, Calvert Green, Chackmore, Charndon, Chearsley, Chilton, Cublington, Dagnall, Dinton, Drayton Parslow, East Claydon, Ford, Granborough, Great Brickhill, Halton, Hardwick, Ivinghoe Aston, Little Horwood, Ludgershall, Mentmore and Ledburn, Mursley, Nash, Northall, Oakley, Oving (including Pitchcott), Preston Bissett, Shabbington, Slapton, Soulbury, Stowe and Dadford, Swanbourne, Thornborough, Turweston, Twyford, Weedon, Westbury, Westcott, Whaddon, Worminghall	447
Other settlements (with a population of over 100)	All remaining settlements with a population of over 100 (listed in the Settlement Hierarchy document)	The plan will not allocate housing at these settlements
All other settlements	All settlements not listed in the settlement hierarchy	Not a sustainable location for further development

- 4.7 Although an estimated contribution from the villages has been included in the housing figures there currently are not enough suitable sites to meet the requirement in many villages. To ensure that there is capacity further work will need to be undertaken with the cooperation of the parish or town council to identify suitable sites to meet the capacity. These sites will then be included in the local plan as potential allocations which will be released 12 months after the local plan is adopted. This will enable parish and town councils to review or draw up neighbourhood plans to allocate the reserved sites or other sites that will meet the requirement for the relevant settlement. Where there is a surplus of suitable sites they will be divided into those which are currently suitable and those to be held in reserve. Should the expected housing delivery in the Vale fall below expectations the reserve housing sites will be released. This will still leave some highly constrained settlements without enough provision but this shortfall will not be redistributed across the other villages.
- 4.8 The Vale has a large number of neighbourhood plans either made or in preparation. The new local plan cannot override the non strategic policies in those plans and the current site allocations could only be altered if there were very good reasons to do so. However, the new local plan will be setting out new settlement requirements and these are likely to be higher than those currently contained within the neighbourhood plans. As set out above there will be an opportunity to update neighbourhood plans to meet the new targets and whichever sites are chosen in the neighbourhood plan will form the supply for the relevant settlement provided that the housing requirement is met or exceeded by those sites. Surplus suitable sites will however be retained as reserve sites against any future shortage of housing supply.
- 4.9 As set out at 4.1 the forecast requirement for B1/B2/B8 employment land is 22ha whilst the committed supply of such land is 72ha which does not include the Woodlands element of the Aylesbury Vale Enterprise Zone. In such situations the established approach is that the employment provision is reduced or housing is allocated to provide the necessary workers. As the allocation of further housing is not appropriate the employment provision will need to be reduced. An internal review of employment sites has been undertaken and sites have been identified but it is considered that discussions should take place with landowners before any decisions are made. A further report will therefore be made to VALP Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet once these discussions are concluded to determine how the employment supply will be reduced. The reallocations will then be reflected in the submission local plan. In the meantime the over supply of employment land will need to be taken into account in development control decisions where new employment land is being proposed.
- 4.10 In relation to the Woodlands element of the Aylesbury Vale Enterprise Zone a planning application has been submitted which includes the proposed development of 1,100 new homes. Whilst the proposed development is broadly supported by this council, because of the new road and new employment that will be provided, the site includes a large area at risk of flooding. Until the flood risk issue is resolved by the Environment Agency the site cannot be confirmed as a potential housing allocation in the councils land availability assessment. Nevertheless the site is shown as a potential housing/employment site in the policies map insets.
- 4.11 Retail need evidence prepared by consultants in 2015 but based on information obtained in 2014 does not support significant retail development in Aylesbury or the other strategic settlements. However this evidence was prepared before the scale of development envisaged in the Vale and at Aylesbury and the economic situation has improved since 2014. New evidence is therefore being sought to inform the local plan. This will not be available before the draft local plan is being subjected to

consultation. In the meantime therefore the council is taking a progressive approach to the future development of Aylesbury town centre in the context of the very significant expansion of the town and has identified a site for retail development. The new evidence will need to be available prior to submission to support the allocation.

- 4.12 As set out in the issues and options consultation document to deliver the amount of new housing required a new settlement has to be considered as an option. To determine where a new settlement could be located consultants were commissioned to carry out a new settlement study. No stipulations about potential locations were given to the consultants so their conclusions are entirely independent. After an extensive assessment of alternative locations for a new settlement across the Vale looking at the potential impacts of each location and the viability of a new settlement in those locations the consultants have come to the conclusion that only two locations are suitable at Haddenham or Winslow. Because of the current availability of sustainable transport links, which are not yet in place at Winslow, better employment prospects and closer proximity to the motorway network Haddenham is currently the preferred location. Consideration of transport impacts was ongoing at the time of writing this report so a verbal update will be given at the meeting. The council is however indicating its current preference in the attached document with both options included in full recognition that further work needs to be done (including consultation responses received at this stage) before a final decision is made. The new settlement section of the local plan sets out the locations which were assessed.
- 4.13 Due to the amount of development envisaged at Aylesbury, the need/potential for improved transport linkages, continued development of the town centre, the potential to link existing areas and create significant green infrastructure the council considers that Aylesbury can qualify as a Garden Town and has included a specific policy in the VALP. The council will also pursue an application to Government for Garden Town Status, which the Government have a live application process for. If we achieve this designation it would hopefully lead to additional government support for the delivery of the proposed level of housing, employment, infrastructure and new green space in Aylesbury. This has been included as a provision in the draft local plan so that public opinion can be gauged.
- 4.14 As required by government planning policy the council has to include provision for traveller sites in the local plan. 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 undertaken. The implications of initial results are currently being discussed between the respective councils but initial analysis suggests that the need has risen since the previous assessment. There will therefore be a need that the plan will have to satisfy. One way of doing this is to make suitable temporary traveller sites into permanent ones. An analysis of temporary traveller sites has been undertaken an enough temporary sites have been identified to deliver 46 pitches. The suggested sites are therefore being included in the draft plan so that community comments can be taken into account before any final decision is made. Further provision will be needed on top of this and it is proposed that larger housing sites will be required to include a provision for a small number pitches to deliver the required supply. A table setting out which sites are suggested for permanent status is set out below.

Site	Current pitches	Planning history	Commentary	Capacity
Willows Park, (Green Acres) Slapton	5 permanent 3 temporary	Application in to make the 3 permanent.		3
Marroway, Weston Turville	7 permanent		Has been some sub division on site	5
Dun Roaming Park, Biddlesdon	11 permanent 10 temporary	Application in to make the 10 permanent		10
Oakhaven Park, Gawcott	21 permanent	Appeal recently approved for further 3	There is another unauthorised pitch	4
Oaksview Park, Boarstall	13 temporary	Application in for 19 permanent		19
Land at Swan Edge, Wendover	2 approved subject to S106			2
Land opposite Causter Farm, Nash	11 temporary	Application in to make the 11 permanent		11
The Old Stables, Weedon	1 temporary			1
Total				55

- 4.15 The council has also undertaken a review of the Green Belt to determine whether there are any areas which do not need to be retained in the Green Belt. This has identified an area to the north east of Wendover which, after further consideration of its suitability, some part of it could be allocated for housing. Without this provision it is likely that Wendover will have virtually no new housing despite it being a sustainable location for development and strategic settlement. The site is therefore being included as a potential housing allocation subject to exceptional circumstances being identified to justify its inclusion as a housing site. The review also suggested that an element of Halton Camp should be excluded from the Green Belt, that a new area of Green Belt could be designated to the west of Leighton Buzzard and that an area east of Dagnall could be removed from the Green Belt. The council is proposing to implement the first two proposals but not the third as the main area of weakness in the Green Belt designation relates to Whipsnade ZOO and is outside the Vale in Central Bedfordshire.
- 4.16 The draft local plan also contains a full suite of development management policies for consultation. It is important to note that these do not carry any weight at present and can be revised prior to the submission version of the plan being prepared. Officers will continue to work on the policies in the meantime and any government planning policy requirements will be included prior to submission. This will include the new starter homes requirement which has only just received royal assent. Of particular interest are the affordable housing policy (S6) which will be requiring 31% affordable housing in accord with the evidence, the inclusion of the county council's parking

standards (T1), policies to protect town and village centres (D10) and the inclusion of an overall design policy (BE2).

- 4.17 To become an adopted local plan the inspector who undertakes the public inquiry into the new plan will need to be convinced that the evidence which supports it is robust. The council is therefore producing a broad range of evidence to support the plan. Some of this has 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.
- 4.18 This still leaves a range of other evidence that will need to be finalised before submission. Conclusions will need to be reached on the housing numbers of the Buckinghamshire councils. Phase 1 of the Green Belt Review has been completed but phase 2 has to be completed. Flooding and water usage have to be evaluated through a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Water Cycle Study, and these will be finalised for submission. Traffic modelling of impacts of the proposed development is being prepared and has partly informed this draft plan, but will need finalisation and will need to lead onto how and impacts can be addressed. The traveller needs assessment has reached some conclusions but the implications of the study will need to be clarified. The potential for releasing employment land will need to be refined and published. Further assessment of land availability will need to be carried out in relation to the larger and medium villages. As stated above an infrastructure delivery plan is needed and the viability of our policies will need to be assessed which will help inform the proposed Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule.
- 4.19 In the build up to the publication of the pre submission draft of the local plan some information will also need to be updated. This will include the new retail evidence, additional sites will be included in the land availability assessment, or facts about existing sites will change, and new population information will mean that the housing and employment forecasts will need to be revised. Revisions to site suitability because of new information 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 cooperate. At the same time the council will need to monitor development activity to determine its housing land supply. On top of this there will be new government requirements which the plan will have to take into account.
- 4.20 As soon as any further evidence is available it will be published on the councils website and the evidence will be used to inform the submission version of the local plan. The evidence will all have to be in place to accompany the submission version of the plan during the pre submission consultation on the local plan and the council is confident that the evidence will be in place to allow consultation and submission in accord with the expected timetable.
- 4.21 Another important element of work to support the local plan is the preparation of a sustainability appraisal report. This is required under European and government legislation, and has to assess the sustainability implications of the proposals and policies in the new plan. The legal requirement is for a report to be prepared to accompany the pre submission consultation version of the plan but as it is a process which works alongside the production of a local plan reports are generally prepared for every stage of plan preparation. A sustainability appraisal report is therefore being prepared to accompany this draft plan.
- 4.22 A key element of the local plan is the map which accompanies it and is referred to as a policies map, but has also been known as a proposals map. This map identifies the

areas to be allocated for development and designations which need to be taken into account in applying policies. At this stage the council is not producing an overall policies map but is instead concentrating on area maps which show the places that where the council is allocating development in this draft plan or other important changes such as changes to the Green Belt. An overall map and detailed inset maps will be prepared to accompany the pre submission consultation version of the plan, but in the meantime the existing proposals map for the current local plan shows many of the designations which will be replicated on the new overall policies map and detailed insets. The local plan policies map will not replicate the existing proposals and designations from the made neighbourhood plans and the proposals/policies maps that accompany them will need to be consulted separately.

5. Proposed work future work programme

- 5.1 After consideration by VALP Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet the draft plan will be considered by Council on 28 June. The draft plan will 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 will include a series of public exhibitions and a more streamlined online system for submitting comments. A Town and Parish Councils event will take place on 13th of July.
- 5.2 Following the public consultation on the draft plan, work will continue on finalising the key pieces of evidence and drafting the final plan. The final plan will be published for comment in early 2017, following consideration again by VALP Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and Council in December. Following the consultation on the final 'proposed submission' plan, the plan will then be submitted for independent examination in March, which fits with the government's deadline. Once submitted, the timetable is led by PINS and is therefore out of our control, but it is anticipated that the examination will commence in the spring, and adoption will occur by summer 2017.

6. Resource implications

- 6.1 Funding of Local Plan preparation is being derived from existing budgets.

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Background Documents VALP Issues and Options consultation document
Buckinghamshire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment
Buckinghamshire Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment
Buckinghamshire Green Belt Review
National Planning Policy Framework