

Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan Scrutiny Committee

18 JULY 2016

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors N Blake, J Brandis, C Branston, B Foster, P Irwin, c Paternoster, D Town and W Whyte

APOLOGIES: Councillor A Cole

1. TEMPORARY CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP

Councillor K Hewson substituted for Councillor A Cole

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2016 be approved as a correct record.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were none.

4. VALP SCRUTINY RESPONSES TO DRAFT LOCAL PLAN

It was reported that following consideration by the VALP Scrutiny Committee on 13 June, Cabinet on 15 June and Council on 2, the draft VALP had been approved for consultation commencing on 7 July. The closing date of the consultation was 5 September 2016. [Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan \(VALP\) | AVDC](#)

A pre submission consultation draft VALP would be considered at the VALP Scrutiny Committee on 19 December, Cabinet on 21 December, 2016 and Council on 16 January 2017. The plan would be subject to six weeks formal consultation and would be submitted for Examination during March 2017.

A number of significant issues had been identified in the draft VALP.

Unmet Need

The Buckinghamshire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) had established that to meet the Vale's own needs, VALP should deliver 21,300 new homes between 2013 and 2033. However, the NPPF stated that "*The plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development requirements, including unmet need requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development*" (paragraph 182). Councils to the south of the Vale had reported they could not meet their need due to constraints such as the Green Belt and the AONB. Their unmet need was around 12,000 new homes which would bring the total need for Aylesbury Vale to a potential 33,300 dwellings.

Achieving Expected Capacity

In order to determine how this amount of housing could be distributed the Council had published a revised settlement hierarchy and had also prepared a Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) which examined the suitability of development sites in the Vale. Combining both, the resultant capacity came to 31,642 houses. As there were not enough suitable sites to meet the settlement hierarchy requirement in many villages or in Aylesbury, further work would have to be undertaken with parish and town councils to identify suitable sites to meet capacity in the villages. These sites would then be included in the Local Plan as potential allocations to be released 12 months after the Local Plan was adopted. This, in turn, would enable parish councils to review or draw up their Neighbourhood Plans. Potentially the Woodlands site would meet the shortfall in Aylesbury.

Employment Land over provision

The forecast requirement for B1/B2/B8 employment land was 22ha whilst the committed supply was 72ha which did not include the Woodlands element. As the allocation of further housing for the necessary workers was not appropriate, the employment provision would need to be reduced. Although an internal review of employment sites had taken place, discussions should take place with landowners before any decisions were made.

Green Belt

A review of the Green Belt had identified an area to the north east of Wendover that could be allocated for housing. Without this, Wendover would have virtually no new housing despite it being a sustainable location for development and strategic settlement. The review had 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 an area to the east of Dagnall be excluded. The Council was proposing to implement the first two proposals.

Gypsies and Travellers

Government Planning Policy required the Council to include provision for traveller sites in the local plan. A revised definition of travellers for planning purposes had been produced by Government, and an update of the joint Bucks traveller needs assessment had been undertaken. Initial analysis suggested that the need had risen from the previous assessment of 57 pitches. There were currently enough temporary sites to provide for 55 pitches. The suggested sites were included in the draft plan but further provision would be required and it had been suggested that the larger housing sites would be required to include a provision for a small number of pitches.

Neighbourhood Plans

It was acknowledged that the Vale had a large number of neighbourhood plans either in place 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 very good reasons to do so. As the new local plan would be setting out new settlement requirements there would be an opportunity to update neighbourhood plans to meet new targets for housing requirements. Any surplus suitable sites would be retained as reserve sites against any future shortage of housing supply.

Retail Development

Evidence prepared by consultants did not support significant retail development in Aylesbury or the other strategic developments. However, this evidence had been prepared before the scale of development envisaged in the Vale and at Aylesbury. New

evidence was being sought to inform the local plan, but would not be available before the consultation period of the draft plan. In the meantime, the Council had been taking a progressive approach and had identified a site for retail development. The new evidence would be available prior to submission of the local plan.

New Settlement

Two options for the new settlement were being considered; Haddenham and Winslow. Further work would be undertaken in relation to matters such as traffic impacts before it could be determined which option would be selected for inclusion in the pre submission VALP. The consultants report set out some options for further consideration.

Garden Town

The Council considered that Aylesbury could qualify as a Garden Town due to a number of factors including the amount of development envisaged, need/potential for improved transport links and continuing development of the town centre. A specific policy had been included in the draft local plan. The Council had been pursuing an application to Government for Garden Town Status.

Development Management Policies

The draft local plan included a full suite of development management policies for consultation. They did not carry any weight at present and could be revised prior to submission including any Government planning policy requirements. This would include the new starter homes requirement which had just received Royal Assent.

The following policies were noted as being of particular interest:-

- Affordable Housing Policy (S6) – this would require 31% affordable housing.
- The County Council's parking standards (T1).
- Policies to protect town and village centres (D10), and
- The inclusion of an overall design policy (BE2).

Supporting Evidence

The Council needed to ensure that all supporting evidence was sufficiently robust in order to convince the inspector that the local plan could be adopted. The Council had been producing a broad range of evidence to support the plan. Some of this had already been completed and consulted on. Other new and supporting evidence had been published and this included:-

- Revised HELAA
- New Settlement Study
- AVDC Green Belt sites assessment
- Green Belt Phase 2 methodology
- Traveller Sites Assessment
- Sustainability Appraisal of Sites
- Traffic Modelling

However, this still left a range of other evidence that needed to be finalised before submission. These included:-

- Housing numbers from the Buckinghamshire Councils
- Further work on the new Settlement Study
- Phase 2 of the Green Belt review

- Flooding and water usage to be evaluated through a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Water Cycle Study
- Mitigation of traffic impacts of the proposed development
- Clarification of the impacts of Traveller Needs study
- Potential release of employment land
- Further assessment of Land Availability in relation to larger and medium villages.
- Assessment of policies to help inform the proposed Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule.

In the build up to the publication of the pre-submission draft some information would need further updating. This would include:-

- New Retail Evidence
- Additional sites to be included in the land availability assessment, or facts about existing sites changing
- 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 on the duty to co-operate
- Monitoring of development activity to determine housing land supply
- New Government requirements, and
- An overall map and detailed map inserts to be prepared to accompany the pre-submission consultation version of the plan.

Councillors J Brandis, C Branston, B Foster, P Irwin, D Town and W Whyte attended the meeting and made statements concerning the following:-

- Concerns regarding the 50% uplift for Buckingham in the settlement hierarchy
- Policy D10 of the draft VALP – concern there was only 1 policy relating to retail development
- Why the plan was being done at all; why not let Government step in and compile it
- A need for an alert when new evidence published
- The increase in the unmet needs from other authorities and whether the figure could continue to go up
- Temporary Gypsy and Traveller sites
- Developers identifying other sites
- New settlement at Haddenham – whether a new settlement or an urban extension
- The Transport Modelling Plan
- Westcott – consider its use for a new settlement
- Cuddington being classed as a medium village but not having any facilities in comparison to other villages
- Traffic concerns throughout the Vale and acknowledgment of AVDC and BCC working together on this; and
- Praise for the staff in compiling the draft plan

It was explained that if the Council did not produce its own plan and allowed Government to produce it, then the Council would have no control over any planning issues or policies and would have to rely entirely on the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). At the same time the Council would still have to meet the expense of Government producing the plan.

If a settlement could not reach the figures given in the settlement hierarchy then these would not be spread over to other settlements. However, this would need justifying at examination stage.

If it hadn't already been suggested in the draft plan that a temporary Gypsy and Traveller site be made permanent then it wouldn't be added at a later stage.

Any site with more than 50% expansion was defined as a new settlement whether it was "attached" to an existing settlement or entirely separate.

The transport modelling plan had just been published on-line. Unfortunately it was acknowledged that some documents would not be available until after the consultation period ended.

Westcott had been looked at as a possible site for a new settlement, but had been ruled out.

It was confirmed that as soon as further evidence became available it would be published on the council's website.

The figure of 33,000+ houses included any permissions granted between 2013 and April 2016. Figures would be constantly adjusted up until submission regarding any additional housing figures arising from applications granted since April 2016.

Members of the committee raised significant concerns regarding the figures of unmet need from other authorities, particularly the figures given by Wycombe DC <https://www.wycombe.gov.uk/uploads/public/documents/Planning/New-local-plan/Draft-Wycombe-local-plan-summary-leaflet.pdf> and they referred to the Memorandum of Understanding. Before responding to Wycombe the Committee should meet with the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth. The other main area of concern was the new settlement, which again should be discussed with the Leader and the Cabinet Member.

Members also proposed that another public event take place in Aylesbury during late afternoon/evening. It was confirmed that although people were being encouraged to comment on the consultation through the Council's website, written comments would also be taken into consideration. Anyone who was unable to download all or part of the documents or couldn't afford to buy a copy, could obtain a copy on a memory stick at any of the public events.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Committee considered the information contained in the officers report and agreed that they would formulate a response regarding unmet need and the new settlement.
2. They also agreed that another public event should take place on an evening in August in Aylesbury.