

VALP SCRUTINY RESPONSES TO DRAFT LOCAL PLAN

1. Purpose

- 1.1 For the VALP Scrutiny Committee to consider the published draft Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) along with the published supporting evidence and make its responses to the consultation.

2. Recommendation

1. The Scrutiny Committee is invited to consider the responses it might wish to make in relation to the published draft Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) and supporting evidence.

3. Background to the publication of the draft Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP)

- 3.1 Following consideration by VALP Scrutiny Committee on 13 June and Cabinet on 15 June the draft VALP was approved for consultation at Council on 28 June. A copy of the draft VALP and the amendments proposed at Council has been supplied to all members. Subsequently the draft plan and supporting evidence was published for consultation on 7 July. The draft VALP can be seen at <https://www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk/vale-aylesbury-local-plan-draft-plan> . The closing date for consultation responses is 5 September. A pre submission consultation draft VALP will then be prepared for consideration by VALP Scrutiny Committee on 19 December, Cabinet on 21 December, 2016 and Council on 16 January, 2017. The plan will then be subject to six weeks formal consultation and submitted for Examination during March 2017

4. Significant issues in the draft VALP

- 4.1 Unmet need - The Buckinghamshire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) has established that to meet the Vale's own needs VALP should deliver 21,300 new homes over the plan period 2013 to 2033. The NPPF 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). Councils to the south say they cannot meet their need due to constraints and their estimate of unmet need is around 12,000 new homes. Total need for Aylesbury Vale is potentially 33,300 dwellings.
- 4.2 Achieving expected capacity – To determine how this amount of housing development will be distributed the council has published a revised developed a settlement hierarchy. The Council has also prepared a Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) which examines the suitability of the available development sites in the Vale. Combining the two the resultant capacity is 31,642 houses. There are currently not enough suitable sites to meet the settlement hierarchy requirement in many villages or in Aylesbury. Further work will need to be undertaken with the cooperation of the parish or town council to identify suitable sites to meet the capacity in the villages. 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. Potentially the Woodlands site will meet the majority of the shortfall in Aylesbury and further capacity may be delivered via further work

- 4.3 Employment land over provision – 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.
- 4.4 Green Belt - 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, 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 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.
- 4.5 Gypsies and travellers - 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 which found a need for 57 pitches. An analysis of temporary traveller sites has been undertaken and enough temporary sites have been identified to deliver 55 pitches. The suggested sites are therefore 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.
- 4.6 Neighbourhood Plans – 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.
- 4.7 Retail development - 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.

- 4.8 New settlement – Two options for a new settlement are being considered as part of the consultation as a result of work by consultants to determine where a new settlement could be located. 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. Further work will need to be undertaken in relation to matters including traffic impacts and viability together with the results of consultation to determine which option is to be selected for inclusion in the pre submission VALP. A specific site will also need to be chosen and the consultant’s report sets out some options to be considered further.
- 4.9 Garden Town – 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 is also pursuing 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.
- 4.10 Development management policies – 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).

5. Supporting Evidence

- 5.1 To become an adopted local plan the inspector who undertakes the public examination 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 and consulted on such as the land availability study, definition of housing market areas, forecasts of housing and employment need and revisions to landscape designations.

5.2 To support the consultation on the draft VALP new or revised supporting evidence has been published at <https://www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk/supporting-evidence> . This includes:

- Revised HELAA
- New settlement study
- AVDC Green Belt sites assessment
- Green Belt Phase 2 methodology
- Traveller sites assessment
- Sustainability appraisal of sites
- Traffic modelling

5.3 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. Further work in relation to the new settlement study will be undertaken. Phase 2 of the Green Belt Review has to be completed. Flooding and water usage have to be evaluated through a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Water Cycle Study. Mitigation of traffic impacts of the proposed development will need to 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.

5.4 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. An overall map and detailed inset maps will be prepared to accompany the pre submission consultation version of the plan

5.5 As soon as any further evidence is available it will be published on the Council's website and the evidence will be used to inform the pre submission version of VALP. 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.

6. Resource implications

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

Contact Officer

Peter Williams (01296) 585208

Background Documents

Draft VALP consultation document

Buckinghamshire Housing and Economic Development
Needs Assessment (HEDNA)

Buckinghamshire Housing and Economic Land
Availability Assessment (HELAA)

Buckinghamshire Green Belt Review
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

New settlement study

AVDC Green Belt sites assessment

Green Belt Phase 2 methodology

Traveller sites assessment

Sustainability appraisal of sites

Traffic modelling