

Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan Scrutiny Committee

7 NOVEMBER 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 J Brandis, B Foster, K Hewson and D Town

1. TEMPORARY CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP

There were none.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2016 be approved as a correct record.

3. DRAFT VALP RESPONSES, PROGRESS AND UNMET NEED

The draft Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) had been approved for consultation at Council on 28 June 2016, with the closing date for responses being 5 September 2016.

A pre-submission consultation draft VALP would be prepared for consideration by this committee, Cabinet and Council in March 2017.

During the consultation period around 1,600 responses were received, containing over 5,000 representations. Council officers had been considering the responses and emerging evidence to be able to determine the content of the pre-submission version of VALP. They were also revising the local plan's policies and proposals. The results of this work would be available when the pre-submission draft VALP was published for the Scrutiny Committee in March 2017. A summary of the responses was being prepared by outside consultants.

The main issues raised were:-

- The overall level of housing;
- Meeting unmet need from other areas;
- The possible new settlement;
- Provision of infrastructure such as schools and roads;
- Removal of land from the Green Belt;
- Distribution of development; and
- Development in the villages.

Housing need figures were also central to the preparation of the new local plan. Since the production of the draft VALP, the Buckinghamshire Councils had commissioned an update to reflect the latest Government projections. A copy of the draft report had been published on AVDC's website [Link to Document](#) Members were advised that housing figures had been revised and that AVDC's housing need had been reduced by 2,000 dwellings. Overall, the reduction of dwellings for the Buckinghamshire authorities was around 5,000 (Wycombe District's need had reduced by just under 2,200). This had been shown to be due to a number of factors including a decline in household size; people were not moving from larger to smaller properties as quickly as had been anticipated and despite people living longer overall, which would have prompted a need

for new builds, this is not anticipated to happen as quickly as previously projected therefore more existing homes were being “recycled”.

Officers had also sought to reduce the unmet need from Wycombe, Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils through the continuing Duty to Co-operate. Both Wycombe and Chiltern/South Bucks had been able to find capacity for another 1,200 homes each. Overall this meant that AVDC would now be working to a figure of 26,800 homes and the Strategy would need re-writing. Therefore the timetable for submission had been pushed back by 8 weeks and the DCLG had been informed.

Work was also continuing to finalise a range of evidence that would be required before submission. These included:-

- Conclusions on the unmet housing needs of the other Buckinghamshire councils;
- Flooding and water usage to be evaluated through a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Water Cycle Study;
- Mitigation of traffic impacts on proposed development;
- Clarification of the traveller needs assessment study;
- Potential for releasing employment land;
- Further assessment of land availability in relation to larger and medium villages; and
- An infrastructure delivery plan had been drafted and work to assess the viability of the policies and proposals had commenced.

New retail evidence was also under development. Additional sites in the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HEELA) were being addressed and revisions to site suitability could lead to more sites being found suitable. A Habitat Regulations Assessment screening had also been commissioned, alongside Sustainability Appraisal. An overall map and detailed inset maps would be prepared to accompany the pre-submission consultation version of the plan.

It was noted that central to the responses received had been the question of un-met need. Representatives of both Chiltern and South Bucks District Council and Wycombe District Council were in attendance to discuss this issue.

It was reported that 71% of Wycombe’s area was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and 48% Green Belt. During Wycombe’s Draft Plan Consultation it had been indicated that 10,000 homes were required and that AVDC would be required to take 5,000 of these through unmet need. Wycombe had received 3,000 individual responses during their consultation. GL Hearn’s report had since identified more areas in Wycombe where supply could be found. A workshop had taken place in October between the Bucks authorities and GL Hearn to share emerging findings and Wycombe had since responded to AVDC on the updated position. The HEDNA update now revealed that Wycombe’s housing need figure came in at 12,900; a reduction of 2,200 homes and alongside additional capacity work reduced the unmet need to 1,700 homes.

It was noted that discussions were ongoing with Chilterns Conservation Board and Natural England regarding major development in the AONB. It was also noted that Wycombe’s employment land supply was very different to AVDCs. Among a number of things that Wycombe had reviewed had been the scope for development at Great/Little Kimble, Longwick and Princes Risborough. The proposed growth for Princes Risborough to 2033 was 2,600 dwellings, an increase of 72% to the existing settlement; Longwick an additional 300 dwellings, an increase of 54% and Great and Little Kimble an additional 160 dwellings, an increase of 37%.

As Wycombe had not yet been tested on appeal with regards to its 5 year housing land supply, it was reliant on Counsel's advice. A number of reserve sites such as Abbey Barn North and the Gomm Valley and Ashwells had been reviewed. However as well as constraints on the land such as being AONB/SSSI, much of the land in Wycombe's area was not suitable for building on due to it being very steep or within a flood plain.

Members asked questions regarding over the number of sites already with planning permission for development and the density of housing.

Chiltern/South Bucks had received 5,000 individual representations during its previous consultation which took place earlier this year. Densities had been reviewed and were now comparable to Wycombe's and AVDC's. Similarly, the amount of housing required to 2033 had also been reduced, and the unmet need figures were now lower.

Significant issues for Chiltern were infrastructure, such as new transport links and schools which would take up available land. BCC's Replacement Minerals and Waste Local Plan had also identified mineral sites in the south of the County through its Call for Sites. The effects of the third runway at Heathrow need assessing as well as HS2 and the Western rail link. 450 sites had been looked at, 402 of which were not considered suitable to come forward as part of the Local Plan process.

Members were concerned that a number of sites such as land south of Beaconsfield, at Old Amersham, Stony Lane Little Chalfont, and at Fulmer Green had been reviewed but were still not being put forward for inclusion as potential sites. Other sites not being put forward included Pheasant Rise Chesham, Farnham Common, and Iver. It was explained that Chesham was not included for GB reasons, Farnham Common was an exclusion zone because of its close proximity to Burnham Beeches and Iver was Grade 1 agricultural land. Land at Pinewood was also mentioned. Members also felt that in comparison the infrastructure in the south of the County was far superior to AVDC's. It was pointed out that much of this infrastructure was already at capacity.

Overall though it was hoped that the district councils could continue to work together and the representatives of Wycombe and Chiltern/South Bucks were thanked for taking the time to address the committee.

It was confirmed that as soon as any further evidence was finalised it would be published on the AVDC's website and be used to inform the pre-submission version of VALP.

Members sought clarification and made comments on the following with regard to VALP:-

- How the revised figures would affect the areas struggling to find capacity, and would villages be looked at individually;
- The possible need for all communities/villages to take some development to mitigate any "them and us" situation;
- Whether the need for a new settlement could be removed from the plan;
- How the proposed application for Verney Junction would affect this plan or the next one;
- Whether the announcement of the third runway at Heathrow would have any affect;
- The effect of the Oxford – Cambridge Expressway in the next plan should it pass through the Vale;
- The need to respect Neighbourhood Plans, including those already made and those still to be confirmed;
- The five year land supply figures;

RESOLVED –

1. The Committee noted the progress made so far on the pre-submission version of the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan and noted the information received during the consultation phase on the draft plan. It also noted the discussions regarding unmet need.
2. That officers summarise main issues to be addressed and the main points of the GL Hearn reports, and bring back to the next meeting of the VALP Scrutiny Committee on 19 December 2016.