

Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan Scrutiny Committee

19 DECEMBER 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, N Blake, J Brandis, B Foster, D Town and W Whyte

1. TEMPORARY CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP

There were none

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2016 be approved as a correct record.

3. VALP UPDATE - UNMET NEED AND MAJOR ISSUES

Before the start of the formal part of the agenda, the Chairman allowed 2 Members, Cllrs J Brandis and W Whyte, to address the committee with regards to the new settlement and demand arising from Milton Keynes, the loss of identity to Haddenham, challenging unmet housing need, the distribution of development across the Vale, the implications of the Oxford/Cambridge Expressway and cross border impacts of development.

At the last meeting of the VALP Scrutiny Committee held on 7 November 2016, Members had requested that officers summarise the main issues to be addressed and the main points of GL Hearn's reports and bring back to this meeting for discussion.

It was noted that following AVDC's response to the draft Wycombe Local Plan, a workshop had been undertaken involving representatives of the Bucks Councils to evaluate the potential extra capacity. As a result of discussions at the workshop and a response on the report from Wycombe DC, GL Hearn had now concluded that the unmet need figure of 1700 dwellings "*represents a reasonable basis to progress with in terms of the scale of unmet need at the current time*". A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) had now been agreed with Wycombe DC to formalise acceptance of the figure based on current evidence. However, the figure of 1700 dwellings could still be subject to change if other evidence were to be put forward.

In addition GL Hearn had been commissioned to prepare a report to consider the potential for further housing need to be met in the Chilterns/South Bucks area. Their unmet need had been estimated to be 5,800 dwellings. A workshop had also taken place with Chiltern/South Bucks DCs and a draft confidential report had been supplied to them. The report did not identify a specific figure for further potential capacity but stated "*It is unlikely that the current unmet need figure will remain at 5,800 dwellings*". The actual figure would be arrived at through further cooperative working. It was hoped that the MOU with Chiltern/South Bucks would be agreed soon and be on AVDC's website in due course. It was also hoped to have the figures on AVDC's website by January 2017 and certainly before the Scrutiny Committee met again in March 2017. If this was not to be the case, it was suggested that information could be supplied as a confidential part of the agenda.

Milton Keynes were considering their next plan and it was hoped that all their housing needs could be kept within MK's boundaries. A representation had been made to the London Plan emphasising the need to consider Green Belt (GB) land for development as in this area. Members were concerned that the Vale could be seen as a "dumping ground" for other authorities who didn't want to release GB land. They were particularly concerned with Bucks CC's views regarding GB land in the south of the county. However, it was pointed out that BCC were only a consultee and had no final say in the matter. Chiltern/South Bucks had indicated that GB land could be released in their area and were still in discussion with AVDC. Members also felt that the principle of Housing Market Areas (HMAs) should be challenged with the Secretary of State. There may be more news in the White Paper due in January 2017. It was reported that a couple of recent cases elsewhere in England showed that the release of GB land was acceptable.

There were a number of factors that would have to be taken into consideration for AVDC's next plan including the London Plan, Unitary status, Heathrow expansion plans and Berkshire's plans. If the new settlement was not to be included in VALP then it would have to go forward to the next plan

It was confirmed that a summary of the consultations received had been prepared and published on AVDC's website, together with spreadsheets detailing the content of the responses.

The main issues raised were:-

- The overall level of housing – this had now reduced from 33,300 in the draft VALP to 26,800 because of a reduced forecast of housing need and reductions in unmet need. Unmet need may reduce further, but a total absence of any unmet need falling on Aylesbury Vale was unlikely.
- Meeting unmet housing need from other areas – unmet need had now been reduced from the councils to the south and may be reduced further, but a total absence of any unmet need falling on Aylesbury Vale was unlikely.
- The possible new settlement – none of the options were deemed acceptable by all and with the need to reduce supply significantly, the option of removing a new settlement from the Local Plan was one that had to be considered. However, it was likely that a new plan would be needed soon after VALP was finalised and a new settlement option would have to be considered for the longer term. Also a further option had been suggested at Verney Junction.
- Development on the edge of Milton Keynes – sites on the edge of Milton Keynes had to be considered as potential development options and could only be removed if suitable alternatives could be identified. Given their scale this would be difficult to achieve.
- Provision of infrastructure such as schools and roads – detailed discussions were ongoing with all infrastructure stakeholders, particularly health organisations and the County Council to identify the necessary infrastructure for inclusion in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
- Removal of land from the Green Belt – with the reduction in housing need the exceptional circumstances justification had been weakened for removing land at

Wendover and alternative sites had been suggested. May however need to identify the land as a potential site for development in the longer term.

- Distribution of development across the District – it had been suggested that because of unmet need arising to the south, development should be focussed in the south of the District, but the capacity of Aylesbury could not be significantly increased. So pursuing such an option would probably require a new settlement at Haddenham
- Level of development in the villages – the justification for the percentage approach had been queried. Alternative approaches were now being considered based on the capacity of settlements to accommodate development.

A spreadsheet regarding settlement figures was distributed to the committee. This showed commitments and completions, including reserved sites and HELAA suitable capacity that hadn't already been committed for the strategic, large and medium settlements. It was confirmed that the Whaddon development was included in the Milton Keynes figures. As overall figures for housing in the Vale had changed, officers were now looking at capacity figures for individual settlements rather than percentages and were liaising with individual villages regarding their needs

Reference was also made Housing and Planning Minister's statement which indicated that Neighbourhood Plans would gain extra strength in areas where there was not a 5 year housing land supply, but applied only to made NPs. This was not a concern at present for AVDC as a 5 year supply could be achieved. Again, it was hoped that the situation would be made clearer in the forthcoming White Paper.

It was confirmed that Hampden Fields had been included in the capacity figures for Aylesbury.

Although it had not been raised as a significant issue during the consultation, the over supply of B1/B2/B8 employment land was a major issue as a significant reduction was necessary to avoid further housing being sought to support economic development. The revised HEDNA had raised the need to 26ha and Wycombe had indicated that they wished to transfer employment land need to AVDC which would reduce the employment oversupply. Further work was being undertaken to identify locations where other uses may be appropriate.

Central to the preparation of VALP were the housing need figures, These depended on the HEDNA for Buckinghamshire. Since the production of the draft VALP, the Buckinghamshire councils had commissioned an update to reflect the latest Government predictions. This report had been finalised and published on AVDC's website. (See above).

Work was continuing on finalising a number of other evidence:-

- The Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Water Cycle Study was in draft form and being discussed with stakeholders, including BCC;
- Modelling and mitigation of traffic impacts from proposed development was almost completed and consultation had been started on the transport strategies for Aylesbury and Buckingham;
- The joint traveller needs assessment had been revised but the implications of the study still needed to be clarified;

- Further assessment of land availability was also being carried out in relation to the larger and medium villages. It was noted that a number of villages had responded with site suggestions;
- New retail evidence had been received in draft;
- New additional sites in the land availability assessment were being assessed and revisions to site suitability could lead to more sites being found suitable;
- New consultants had been appointed to carry out a full sustainability assessment alongside the revisions to the draft VALP strategy;
- A Habitat Regulations Assessment screening had been commissioned. Although there no relevant sites within the Vale, all sites up to 10 km away were being looked at;
- An overall map and detailed inset maps were also being prepared to accompany the pre-submission consultation version of the plan and were being published on the website.

All the evidence would have to be in place to accompany the submission version of VALP during the pre-submission consultation.

Members also noted that further information was required regarding the future of RAF Halton.

RESOLVED –

That the committee noted the progress made on the draft VALP and the up to date information received. They agreed that a capacity led approach was the preferred option for settlement figures and that a new settlement should be deferred until the route of the Oxford/Cambridge Expressway was clarified and work on the next plan commenced.