

Haddenham Village Society Comments on the Vale of Aylesbury Draft Plan - Summer 2016 Consultation

Extracts from and references to the draft plan are shown in **blue**

Draft Plan Reference: Para 1.8 – National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Commitment

Particularly significant in the NPPF is the Government's commitment to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth and the requirement that councils should boost significantly the supply of housing. Government DRAFT Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan 12 policy is to deliver 250,000 houses per annum nationally. At the same time, the NPPF also states that 'the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment and that there should be a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment'.

HVS Comment – para 1.8: Haddenham is a historic village with a large conservation area. The NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment and that there should be a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. This laudable aim should not be forgotten for Haddenham has a real sense of community and caring for each other is evidenced by the number of supportive organisations and activities, which are a valued part of village life. This is rarely found after major developments, for significant increases in size lead to a lack of a sense of identity. Social considerations are as important as economic ones, and village life is an important aspect of our national heritage.

Draft Plan Reference: Para 2.4.j

A new settlement, (the first in Buckinghamshire since Milton Keynes in the 1960's), will be under development, creating a new community which will be appropriately located and supported by a range of facilities. New infrastructure and employment opportunities will be in place to allow the residents of this new community to live, work and recreate in and around the new settlement.

HVS Comment – para 2.4.j: The Haddenham Village Society accepts that there is an urgent need for additional housing provision, but the need for a new settlement is challenged. The Society believes that a rigorous examination is needed of the assumptions underlying the proposals of neighbouring authorities. If the ultimate proposals are to command public assent, it is essential that it is clear that all areas are taking their fair share of the assessed demand and are working on common assumptions

concerning density of development and load on transport and other infrastructure. Conservation areas, for example, are an essential part of our heritage and require equal protection to Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Para 2.5 in the Consultation Document mentions those latter protections but should give equal weight to conservation areas and their protection. Thus,

- The unmet needs from neighbouring districts should be challenged and common density standards adopted.
- The allocation of new builds should take account of the impact on Conservation areas and the strategic aims of the National planning Policy Framework. At present the potential impact of the proposals affecting Haddenham actually violates these strategic aims.
- The housing build plan should be accompanied by a commensurate employment development plan and, if necessary, some land allocated for employment development should be re-allocated for housing.
- The time necessary to do this work should be allocated. The excuse to rush this through to meet Government timescales is unacceptable, for peoples' well being could be potentially at risk if a final version of this plan is published without being informed by the necessary investigation. Unrealistic timescales should be challenged.

Policy S1- Sustainable development for Aylesbury Vale:

Draft Plan Reference: Para 3.3

Sustainable development is about positive growth making economic, environmental and social progress for current and future generations. To achieve this, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly as they are mutually dependent.

Draft Plan Reference: Para 3.4

In line with this, the council has adopted a positive approach to development and the VALP provides a clear framework of policies to guide development that creates positive and sustainable growth. Policy S1 therefore seeks to ensure that all development is sustainable and follows the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This policy will be at the heart of decision making when assessing planning applications.

HVS Comment- paras 3.3-3.4: The VALP should be based on an explicit policy of developing the whole of the Vale, providing both housing and employment sites for this purpose. It is vital, for this purpose, that housing development is not concentrated in the southern and south-

western sectors of the Vale, on the basis of a short-term policy of taking advantage of existing transport and other infrastructure. Instead, there should be an integrated approach to the development of every part of the Vale and to the necessary infrastructure required for this. The attractions of the Chiltern Line and the proposed east-west rail line through Winslow are likely to make areas close to these routes the foci of development but there may therefore need to be more housing in other areas to counter-balance this, even at the cost of a larger overall figure. In order to ensure that train capacity keeps in step with demand, the Chiltern Railways should be consulted about their plans for development and increased passenger capacity. The planning proposals should then be confirmed or amended accordingly. As discussed under paras 4.33 etc. below, there is growing evidence that Chiltern Railways is nearing its maximum passenger carrying capacity. It therefore might not be able to cope with the projected increases in population not only at Haddenham but at other places along the Chiltern Line or served by Parkways, such as Bicester, Thame, Princes Risborough and High Wycombe.

Draft Plan Reference: Paras 3.7-3.16 – Housing and Economic Needs (Policy S2 - Spatial strategy for growth) and 5.58-5.67 – Housing Mix (Policy H6 - Housing mix)

HVS Comments – paras 3.7-3.16 and 5.58-5.67:

Social Housing: The requirement for social housing should be higher and should make an explicit allowance for additional social housing for rental and shared ownership. Areas such as Haddenham are already essentially parts of the London housing area, with further pressure from Oxford, and this is already pricing many local young people out of the market. This situation will worsen unless developers are required to provide a mix of dwellings, for both purchase and rent and unless local authorities and housing associations are involved in providing far more social housing.

Housing for the Elderly: Haddenham has a high proportion of elderly residents and the Village Society supports any policy which requires developers to make provision for both independent and dependant housing for the elderly. The situation is being made worse by the piecemeal conversion of bungalows into two-storey dwellings and, if this cannot be prevented, it is essential that provision of accessible dwellings of various sizes should be incorporated in housing developments in compensation for this loss of suitable housing. This also requires that section 106/CIL allocations should incorporate expenditure to enhance transport, pedestrian and other infrastructure to meet the needs of an ageing population.

Employment: The Haddenham Neighbourhood Plan, supported by the Village Society, identified the need for small-scale starter units for local entrepreneurs who have begun their business activities but need space for expansion. Unless this need is addressed, economic growth will be stifled and areas such as Haddenham will be colonised by commuters. It is therefore crucial that the VALP addresses the nature, rather than just the area, of employment land and develops policies to meet the actual needs of local communities.

Policy D2 - Delivering a new settlement:

Draft Plan Reference: Para 4.33

Haddenham was identified with potential for a large-scale extension to this existing settlement, taking account of the settlement's existing infrastructure and particularly its relative accessibility. Haddenham and Thame Parkway station and the A418 provide a strong level of transport accessibility, and public transport access to a range of larger employment centres.

Draft Plan Reference: Para 4.34

Winslow was also identified as having potential for a large scale extension taking account of the range of services the settlement offers, the improved accessibility which East-West Rail will deliver on opening of a new station (currently anticipated in 2020) and physical potential to grow. Options for growth include extensions to the existing urban area, as well as the potential for growth to the north of the rail line including on the old airfield site.

Draft Plan Reference: Para 4.35

Both of the shortlisted options provide suitable locations for a new settlement based on current information. None of the other sites appraised are considered to perform as strongly as the two shortlisted options in terms of overall suitability. At present it seems that the site at Haddenham is marginally preferable to the site at Winslow because it already has a railway station with a good service, including to London, whereas the station and railway service at Winslow are not in place yet. In addition to this consideration Haddenham is close to the higher-order services provided by Thame, is closer to a range of employment location and to the motorway network than Winslow. Another consideration is that Haddenham is closer to the source of unmet housing need which the Vale has to try to accommodate (unmet needs are coming from Districts to the south of Aylesbury Vale).

Draft Plan Reference: Para 4.42

The council and other stakeholders will create a new settlement which will be a great place to live, work and grow. It will be built to high sustainable design and construction standards and the development will provide a balanced mix of facilities to ensure that it meets the needs and aspirations of new and existing residents.

HVS Comments - paras 4.33-4.35 and 4.42: The Haddenham Village Society does not agree that Haddenham should be equated with Aylesbury, Buckingham, Winslow and Wendover as a strategic settlement. Haddenham is a large and vibrant village, but it is not a town. It has only an exiguous and insufficient village centre, with a small range of shops and an inadequate village hall; it has no secondary school; although it has good transport links these mean that it relies heavily on neighbouring settlements for shopping and social facilities, with associated undesirable reliance on car journeys. In all these ways, Haddenham is unsuitable for the level of additional housing that is currently proposed, let alone as the location of a new settlement. Haddenham should, therefore, be reclassified as a larger village. The validity of the settlement hierarchy analysis is challenged in note inserted at * below.

The suggestion to put a new settlement in the vicinity of Haddenham shows a lack of awareness of the traffic infrastructure problems developing in Haddenham. The Forecast Modelling Report by JACOBS commissioned by Buckinghamshire County Council produces in para 5.2.1.5 some horrendous projected increases in travel times should the settlement go ahead. This would undoubtedly destroy the ethos of the village with its extensive conservation areas stretching throughout the village to the southern boundary.

Another key factor is the growing evidence that Chiltern Railways is nearing its maximum passenger carrying capacity. This is not only due to limitations in carriage capacity in the face of already rising demand but also platform capacity limitations at Marylebone Station. A good example of the effect of limitations in platform capacity was the necessity to increase the number of platforms at Reading Station to enable speed increases on the SW line.

Thus, the proposal for a new settlement of 4500-6000 houses in the vicinity of Haddenham should not be further considered. The proposal appears to have been developed in ignorance of proposals for a large development north of Princes Risborough, just outside the Vale boundary, and for similar proposals for new settlements in South Oxfordshire, all of which are predicated on the existence of the same transport links - in particular Haddenham and Thame Parkway station. In addition, the proposal relies on Thame and Aylesbury to provide shopping, educational and social facilities for the residents of the settlement, putting further pressure on those neighbouring areas and on road links to them. Within

the planning period, this would all be exacerbated by the construction of HS2. In other words, there has been a complete lack of “joined-up” planning which would be required to justify a proposal of such magnitude.

*** Start**

Scrutiny of the Selection of Haddenham as a Strategic Settlement

References:

- A. Settlement Hierarchy Assessment for the Vale of Aylesbury Plan Strategy September 2012.
- B. The Vale of Aylesbury Plan Haddenham Fact Pack July 2011.

Introduction

1. Reference A was a key document in the development of the strategy for Aylesbury Vale planning. The assessment was informed by documents such as Reference B.

Analysis

2. As a result of this hierarchy assessment, Haddenham was categorised as a strategic settlement along with Aylesbury, Buckingham, Wendover and Winslow. The details of the assessments are shown in Annex A to Reference A. Haddenham apparently scores well for transport and connectivity and both key and non-key services. However, as shown in the critique below, the qualitative assessment is inconsistent and insufficiently refined. Its conclusions are therefore questionable.
3. It is arguable that the set of strategic settlements should be split into two groups of more comparable size, namely Aylesbury and Buckingham on the one hand and Haddenham, Wendover and Winslow on the other – perhaps called respectively **strategic settlements** and **small towns/larger villages**.
4. This would then allow a more realistic and detailed comparison of the pros and cons for future development. For example, Wendover has a significant amount of designated green belt in its vicinity, Winslow has a disused airfield potentially available for development and Haddenham is surrounded by high grade agricultural land and has lower capacity

roads with a growing traffic problem because of the Chiltern Railway area Parkway service.

Conclusion

5. In short, the process by which Haddenham, Wendover and Winslow have been categorised as “strategic settlements” is of questionable validity and is therefore challenged.

Criticism of the Strategic Settlement Assessment Methodology (data taken from Reference A above)

Population – comparative descriptions are inconsistent with the comparative values

Name	Population Range	Qualitative Description
Aylesbury	56,392 to 65,428	Very large population
Buckingham	10,445 to 11,572	Large population
Haddenham	3,651 to 4,834	Large population
Wendover	7,237 to 7,619	Very large population
Winslow	3,818 to 4,519	Very large population

Facilities – the crude scoring system suppresses some of the comparative strengths and weaknesses. For example, although Haddenham is shown being served by 3 bus routes, in reality the 200 route is a variation of the very frequent 280 route and the third one, the 112 route, runs once on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Name	Rail?	Bus Routes	B Class Units	Key Services	Score (out of 11)	Non-Key Services
Aylesbury	Y	21	979	64	11	49
Buckingham	N	9	248	38	10	12
Haddenham	Y	3	85	19	11	6
Wendover	Y	2	73	23	11	8
Winslow	Y (P)	3	42	17	10	5

Omissions – aspects such as the capacity local roads, the impact of local railway Parkways, the effect of capacity limitations of rail transport, and the continuing need for high grade agricultural land were omitted from the assessment.

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Policy D4 – Housing development at strategic settlements (excluding Aylesbury):

Draft Plan Reference: Paras 4.55-4.57 - Role of the Housing and Economic Development Land Availability Assessment (HELAA)

HVS Comment – paras 4.55 – 4.57 - HELAA: It is extremely disappointing that the discussion of the HELAA does not refer to the involvement of neighbourhood plans in the identification and prioritisation of potential development sites. Unless this occurs and the local communities are involved, at every stage, in site identification, the process will be driven by owners and predatory developers and will not command public assent.

Policy D10 - Town, village and local centres to support new and existing communities:

Draft Plan Reference: Para 4-104 - Town, village and local centres to support new and existing communities

To support economic, retail and leisure activity in the centres within the other strategic settlements of Winslow, Wendover and Haddenham, the council will encourage a mix of uses services as well as resisting the loss of essential provision. The policy seeks to create a positive framework to support economic growth and diversity in town and local centres with a mix of uses which can include retail, leisure, services and employment.

HVS Comment – para 4-104: It is difficult to see how any further planned development can be achieved without destroying the village ethos and seriously overloading the road network. This could result in road safety issues.

Policy T1 – Vehicle parking:

Draft Plan Reference: Paras 7.1 – 7.5 – Vehicle Parking

HVS Comment – paras 7.1 – 7.5: Extant parking issues due to Chiltern Railway area Parkway facilities are not addressed.

Policy T2 - Footpaths and cycle routes:

Draft Plan Reference: Paras 7.6 – 7.7 – Footpaths and Cycle Routes

HVS Comment – paras 7.6 – 7.7: It is difficult to envisage the implementation of improved footpaths and safe cycle routes if the proposed new settlement is created with its undoubted implication for heavy traffic through the centre of the village, with its extensive conservation area.