

**HADDENHAM PARISH COUNCIL
REPORT OF PUBLIC MEETING
DRAFT VALE OF AYLESBURY LOCAL PLAN
THURSDAY 28TH JULY 2016 7.30PM
HADDENHAM VILLAGE HALL**

Panel:

David Truesdale (DT) - Vice Chairman of Haddenham Parish Council (Chairman of the meeting)

Professor Sir Roderick Floud (RF)- Haddenham Village Society

District Councillors: Judy Brandis (JB), Michael Edmonds (ME) and Brain Foster (BF)

Tracey Aldworth (TA) - Director of Planning, AVDC

Charlotte Stevens (CS) - Forward Plans, AVDC

Also present:

Haddenham Parish Cllrs: Tim Armitt, Amanda Capp, Steve Sharp, Gerry Weetman, and Chris Young.

Thame Town Cllr: Mike Dyer

Winslow Town Cllr: Roy Van De Poll

Clerk Sue Gilbert and Assistant Clerk Jane Allman

202 members of the public

After introductions David Truesdale gave a brief presentation on the draft Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) and its implications for Haddenham. There followed a Q&A session.

Roderick Floud opened the questioning on behalf of the Village Society with 2 questions

To the Officers:

The Council is under a duty to co-operate and has to meet a forecast housing need. What has AVDC done to challenge the way other district councils are working? How realistic are the net migration figures, particularly taking into account the predicted reductions in migration following the Brexit? Have you challenged the density of neighbouring authorities?

To the Councillors:

The members are responsible for the ballot to adopt these plans. The VALP Concentrates too much on housing and employment and ignores the wider development of AV. A new settlement at Haddenham would be in the most prosperous and congested area of AV rather than in the north of the Vale near to Winslow / Milton Keynes. Should all development go to Milton Keynes as economic / social drivers would make this location in the north of the district more suitable?

TA - the district council follows a nationally set planning policy framework. The government focus is on housing and it is an almost impossible mission to meet the government's expectations. The population numbers are driven by people living longer and having more children so the predicted decrease in migration is unlikely to have a significant effect. Aylesbury Vale's own need has been assessed as 21,500 and this is not going to be changed by spring 2017 when the plan has to be adopted.

Not all local authorities are at the same stage in the development of their plans which makes negotiating complicated. WDC has released some data which can be compared to AVDC's. An independent consultant has been appointed to review the data for neighbouring authorities. Green belt assessment is being challenged.

With no local plan in place development is appeal and inquiry led and driven by developers so it is important to have a local plan. The VALP will need to pass inspection by a government appointed inspector and will be scrutinised by the development industry.

Princes Risborough residents are extremely concerned about the impact of 2,600 homes proposed for them in the WDC local plan, if this is altered it would have an impact on AV.

There have been 2 previous attempts at making a local plan for AV, with the failure of these plans being due to lack of duty to co-operate and failure to meet AV's own needs. It is important that this 3rd attempt does not fail otherwise the government will step in.

The Milton Keynes suggestion is interesting but it is likely the inspector would challenge its sustainability. The unmet need that has to be accommodated is from other districts bordering on the south of the district so it is more sustainable to meet this need close to those areas.

JB- I have raised the point at the VALP scrutiny meeting that the development should be in the north to create a northern powerhouse along the Oxford - Milton Keynes - Cambridge line.

BF -AVDC is managed by a leader and a cabinet with back benches. There are 3 scrutiny committees with a new 4th scrutiny committee set up for the VALP to challenge the plan. At the first VALP scrutiny committee meeting members were given the opportunity to address the committee. The committee has set 2 priorities:

- (1) Do we need to have a new settlement at all?*
- (2) Challenging the unmet needs from other districts.*

At last Wednesday's full council meeting it was agreed to appoint a consultant to drill down into the figures from other districts to ensure AV only accepts a minimum overspill.

ME - This is not an easy process at all. AVDC runs a leader led cabinet system. Carol Paternoster as leader is responsible for steering the officers. I have been involved in planning for many years. The scrutiny committee is only there to scrutinise and will kick up a fuss about the unmet need and requirement for a new settlement. A consultant has been appointed to address this and if the unmet need number can be reduced it has been agreed that the new settlement will not be needed. At the inquiry the inspector will require evidence, in particular of the unmet need. I have publically stated that I cannot support this plan in its current form. This may be irresponsible as if all members took this approach we could end up with no plan but it is important to take a stand. The draft is not fair, for example Wendover is only allocated a 25% expansion due to AONB / Green Belt.

The floor was opened up to questions from members of the public. Below is a summary by topic.

Duty to co-operate

To what extent have other authorities been consulted? Thame is the main centre for use of facilities locally can they cope?

TA - yes AVDC have spoken to SODC to co-ordinate the combined impact of planning. SODC will comment on the VALP. An over-arching traffic impact assessment will be carried out to assess the cumulative impact.

The requirement to co-operate on unmet need is understood due to previous failures, however there is a 50% increase in demonstrable need for the plan. AVDC seems to take a different approach to other authorities who seem to start from the bottom up looking at available sites. It is likely that developers will pile in and in 7-10 years all the houses will be built and we will have a fait accompli.

TA - It is rather technical but duty to co-operate rules have changed and now work in Housing Market Areas (HMA) which are defined by travel and work patterns. AVDC, WDC and Chiltern are in the same HMA and work together on the basis of what each can accommodate, there is further work to do here. The original 10,000 has increased to 12,000 as South Bucks and Chiltern decided to do a joint plan, therefore the South Bucks unmet need also comes in to the mix. It is difficult not to have a fait accompli as it is a real issue to meet the Vale's own needs and the unmet needs of others. It is necessary to demonstrate green belt, density, employment and residential requirements. The duty to co-operate is a big issue for AVDC and other authorities are aware that there will be a strong challenge. Developers wishing to build in other areas will

(for once) do us a favour as they will be pushing for their sites to be included. There is an issue with capacity, to go up to 31,000 would mean using sites that we currently do not want to use. There is also the possibility of another 11,000 unmet need from Luton that may have to be included.

JB - I was prepared to go out the all the sites excluded from the other districts plans to assess if this seemed fair, however this will be carried out by the consultant AVDC has just agreed to appoint.

New Settlement

Where is the information on the scoping exercise that compared potential new settlement sites?

TA - the report by GL Hern is available on the AVDC website. They provided expert advice and were given no restrictions on which sites to consider. If there is a need to accommodate 33,000 new homes a lot more work will need to be done before the submission stage of the VALP.

Why was the detailed analysis not prepared for the draft plan?

TA - Timelines set by the government are extremely tight which restricts the amount of work that can be done. There is a meeting with government representatives in a couple of weeks' time to check if the plan is on track to be delivered within the timelines. If the plan is rejected the government will step in and is highly unlikely to undertake any consultation exercise.

BF - the 'policy to follow awaiting further evidence' statement in the draft VALP is very frustrating.

Haddenham is a village, the other strategic settlements are towns with a defined centre. Haddenham will end up as 2 communities separated by the railway line and serving as a parking area for commuters

JB - Quote from VALP "individual identity of villages - coalescence (check with Judy exact quote)

Resident from Longwick - Ilmer Parish: WDC plan includes the doubling in size of Longwick. If VALP proposal of 6-7,000 new homes at Aston Sandford goes ahead it would result in development as far as the eye can see across what is currently open countryside. Thames Water have also included a reserved space for a reservoir between Towersey, Ilmer and Sydenham which would further remove green fields in that area. Take the development elsewhere please.

Resident from Aston Sandford - an application for a single dwelling on land just outside Aston Sandford was refused last year on the grounds that it was intrusive development in the countryside. How then can it be acceptable to build 6,000 homes in that same area?

TA - each application is assessed on its own merits, this application will have been considered prior to the writing of the VALP.

There is insufficient information on how the new settlement location has been whittled down to Haddenham or Winslow.

Principles in VALP section 2.4 '...well designed developments that are sensitive to the district's local character and are well integrated with existing communities...' the proposals for Haddenham cannot possibly integrate with the existing village.

There should be a strong case to locate a new settlement at Winslow to promote the new station there. The land at Winslow is a non-descript disused airfield, building there would be far less intrusive than on the attractive, productive farmland adjacent to Haddenham with its views to the Chilterns. More analysis and justification is required.

TA- Winslow will of course have their own opinions and there will be similar discussions with them.

Traffic

The key documentation for an infrastructure delivery plan is missing. Only option 3 of the new settlement options has any traffic analysis done and this has been based on Google map shots from 2008. The Thame roundabout is key and the proposals made are to maintain it as bad as it currently is. Is this the kind of quality analysis we can expect?

TA - an Infrastructure Plan will be required to match development and will be funded by developers. Further work is underway currently on detailed traffic analysis.

Railway

The re-opening of the railway station in Haddenham was the nail in the coffin for Haddenham. There are other locations further up the line where new stations should be considered.

Westcott is a large brownfield site which will be served by Quainton station which is programmed to be re-opened. Why not use this brownfield site for development as this very rural area needs shops and other amenities and could have access to Waddesdon secondary school?

TA - The consultants were given a free rein to consider all possible options and this one was not viable. The station is not yet open and the land is designated as employment land with plans to expand the site further. This could be a potential site for the plan after the 2033 plan as work will have to start on the next plan as soon as this one is complete.

What are future plans for expansion on the Chiltern Rail line?

Not known but they will be consulted on the VALP.

Haddenham as a strategic settlement

The designation of Haddenham as a strategic settlement is what has brought all this development. Haddenham has a station and good road links but remains a village without a focussed village centre, it is not a town with a town centre like the other strategic settlements so what has made it one of the strategic settlements?

CS - The assessments were based on key criteria such as population, pubs, shops, schools, proximity to other service centres, village hall. Haddenham's population is similar to those other towns and it has good facilities, comparable to the other strategic settlements. It has been a strategic settlement for some time.

Deliverability

It is known that it is difficult to get building work done in this country so how confident are you that the building won't start and end up half finished?

TA - currently 1,400 homes are built each year in the Vale and in order to fulfil the VALP this would have to increase to 1,800 per year. This is obviously more of a challenge but is achievable. Once building work has started builders need to complete to make their profit.

Rosemary Lane site (HAD007)

Why is this in the plan if there is no application on the site? It is unfair to the Rosemary Lane resident's to have this hanging over our heads. Why not build further north on the Airfield Site where it will not impact on the existing village? Or alternatively on land between the health centre and Bradmoor Farm (east of Stanbridge Road)?

RF- these sites were assessed during the neighbourhood plan process. The flight path for the glider club prevents building further on the Airfield Site. The owners of the land east of Stanbridge Road did not want to put it forward for development.

CS - The owner of the land at Rosemary Lane put it forward for development when the call for sites went out so it went into the assessment. Land north of the Airfield and east of Stanbridge Road both have landscape impacts. The conclusions of all site assessments are available in the Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA).

My lounge window is 5ft from the development site and I have responsibility for a wychert wall on the boundary. A development here will have a big impact on my home. Milton Keynes wants to expand so it makes no sense to develop here.

TA - the impact of any development on neighbouring properties would be resolved within a planning application.

Green Belt / AONB

Wendover's AONB was not considered worth protecting when the government made its decision about HS2 so why is it so important now?

Are AONB & green belt sacrosanct? Why not give up 20 acres of green belt in High Wycombe to save Haddenham?

TA - I agree about HS2 -it was a government decision and it was their rules. The government do see green belt as sacrosanct so it will be an uphill struggle to demonstrate that those sites can be fulfilled. The current circumstance could be considered abnormal so government could perhaps reduce the status to cover the unmet need.

- ***Send comments to Bucks County Council asking it to review its position on the green belt and include the consequences to Haddenham of preserving the green belt.***
- ***Respond to WDC local plan consultation with regard to housing density and its green belt review. By 8th August 2016***

Methodology

Constraint based planning 'we can't' do this because of that' approach leads to a focus on Haddenham and Winslow. A much more adventurous and vibrant approach is required based around 'what we can do' and 'what people want'. Currently the Tag 'Your Plan is Our Plan' doesn't apply to Haddenham. We had our own Neighbourhood Plan which said what we want.

The pressure from government to speed this through is a great concern.

The plan lacks vision for what makes a place a nice place to live and how it can grow.

Are there any precedencies for the government intervening? If officers are making the decisions our electoral process is being over-ruled. Why are we afraid and not standing up to the government?

TA - there is no fear of the government. Developers continue to submit planning applications whether or not there is a local plan. In order to have a plan led rather than developer led system we need to have a local plan approved by the government.

Aylesbury Garden Town

At the recent roadshow there was mention of an application to government for Aylesbury to be designated a Garden Town. If this status was awarded it would result in additional funding from government. Is this being seriously considered?

TA- An application is being made to the government for additional support based on the 15-16,000 additional homes proposed for Aylesbury to enhance what is already planned, it would not allow more to be accommodated in Aylesbury which will be maxed out by this plan. Coalescence with villages such as Weston Turville prevent further expansion of Aylesbury.

AVDC - Aylesbury Vale District Council

WDC - Wycombe District Council

SBDC - South Bucks District Council

SODC - South Oxfordshire District Council

Consultation process

The issues and options consultation was carried out over the Christmas and New Year period and the current consultation is taking place during the summer holiday season. Whilst time constraints are accepted there is a lack of allowing a reasonable time to respond. The online process of submitting a response is difficult.

Affordable housing

There is no policy to provide homes that first time buyers can afford.

TA - There is a policy to supply affordable housing and to some extent supply and demand will deal with this issue.

Impact on Thame

Thame Town Cllr Mike Dyer: Thame has similar and shared issues. The number allocated for Thame and the surrounding cannot be supported by the infrastructure. Chalgrove has been proposed as first option for a new settlement by SODC but the second option is much closer to junction 7 of the M40 and Thame. Thame will be potentially be sandwiched between 2 substantial new developments. A duty to co-operate is good but should not be interpreted as a duty to capitulate and I am glad to see AVDC make a robust defence of the unmet need from other districts. Have SODC really been engaged? At a meeting with John Cotton and the Director of Strategic planning neither were aware of the new settlement proposal at Haddenham. It is not sufficient to just give an invitation to consult. Cllrs and Officers from Thame and Haddenham will be working together. Thame Town Council will respond to the VALP. There is natural empathy with our neighbours and concern about the impact on Thame.

District Councillors final statements

Michael Edmonds - Tracey is a good officer with many years of planning experience. Rosemary Lane is only a potential site so residents can comment on the suitability of that site. Additional sites are still coming forward. Tony Barker has made some good points tonight thank you. Please everyone put pen to paper and send in your comments.

Brian Foster - referring to notes for Scrutiny Committee. The Hern report was designed to accept the negative impact of proposals in a single hit. What should be looked at is all the potential options to make up the shortfall. There is dispute over the exact number of available sites. Currently the costs in terms of harm outweigh the benefits. The number of new homes is the only thing driving the new settlement. There are a number of new settlements in the Thame area, we must have sound planning as the damage to Haddenham would be irreversible.

Judy Brandis - I have always impressed upon officers that Haddenham is a village NOT a town. We have already taken a large number of new homes. The scoping report did not select Haddenham over Winslow it assessed the viability of each site. The increased number of homes proposed for Princes Risborough, Thame and Haddenham will all impact on Thame which cannot support this. The smaller stations closed by Beeching should be re-opened. We are in an Area Attractive landscape, not brownfield like Winslow's site and we have the golden thread of the conservation area which has been thus far protected by AVDC. It would be lost in the middle of new development - who is aware of the old town in Aylesbury, it would become just like that. I encourage everyone to respond to the consultation, talk about it to your friends. Do something and save our village.

David Truesdale thanked everyone for such a good turn out and their support. In particular he thanked the District Councillors and Tracey Aldworth and Charlotte Stevens for their contributions and the Clerk and Assistant Clerk for organising the meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.35pm