

Inspector's question 89

In my question 51, I identified point (x) seeking the Council's views on the apparently disparate treatment of housing and employment allocations in relation to the proposed Oxford-Cambridge expressway. Whilst recognising that the preferred route of this project is not likely to be identified until the end of the year, I would welcome the Council's observations on the representations including 2184 by Heather Pugh of David Lock and Associates on behalf of O & H Properties, 1893 from Chris Dodds of Planning Prospects on behalf of Amarillo Ltd and Scandale, 2626 and 2639 from Christopher Wayman and Councillor Robin Stuchbury of Buckingham Town Council to the effect that the plan would be unsound without including some greater provision for the potential routes of the road than that of the final clause of policy T3.

Summary of Representations

1893 from Chris Dodds of Planning Prospects on behalf of Amarillo Ltd and Scandale

Considers that the central option represents the preferred option and should be taken forward through the VALP. The central option is closely linked to another key infrastructure priority of the East-West rail link which itself will bring significant benefits to the District. By undertaking both projects through a cohesive approach there will be less disturbance to a wider spread of settlements and residents and to the surrounding countryside and there could be significant cost savings if a 'shared' approach can be agreed. Moreover, the central option would provide greater benefit to the District as a whole as it would be readily accessible to the entire District rather than just the north or the south of Aylesbury Vale only.

2626 and 2639 from Christopher Wayman and Councillor Robin Stuchbury of Buckingham Town Council

Argues that there should be protection afforded to possible routes, which can be lifted as appropriate once a final decision is reached. The allocation of BUC046 may in fact have an impact on the potential route as BTS Figure 7.4 gives an indicative route for a southern A421 by-pass for Buckingham, which lies very close to this allocated site. It may be that such a major expressway would not be sited so close to the town, but it indicates the inherent dangers of the "do nothing" approach, where one preferred option may be lost due to intermediate development. The development on BUC046 has a phasing allowing almost immediate start to the site.

2184 by Heather Pugh of David Lock and Associates on behalf of O & H Properties

The Proposed Submission Version (Policy T2) fails to provide sufficient protection for the route of the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway in the current plan once adopted. O&H is concerned that the reliance on a local plan review to provide protection for the route has removed any such protection in the Proposed Submission Plan. Under the Proposed Submission Plan, should a proposed allocation encroach on the route

(once defined), there is no clear policy protection against development that could jeopardise the delivery of the strategic infrastructure. It is on this basis that O&H considers that Policy T3 should be amended to ensure that it is sound. The following amendments are sought:

- Wording of T3 to be amended to make it clear that the strategic importance of safeguarding and delivering the Expressway overrides proposed allocations (reflecting that set out in para 7.11), and that in the event that an allocation has the potential to encroach on the proposed route that allocation will be reviewed to ensure that it does not hinder the delivery of the Expressway;
- Amendment of the last sentence of T3 to read “The scheme is supported by the Council and once the agreed route is confirmed and further information is made available the scheme route will be protected in any review to the VALP and subsequent local plan review”.
- Once a route has been confirmed Policy T3 (or a separate strategic plan policy) should commit Aylesbury Vale to review the direction of growth to make effective use of the infrastructure to be provided (reflecting Government’s position outlined within the Housing White Paper
- Policy T3 (and Policy S8 on Neighbourhood Plans) should be amended to include a requirement for Neighbourhood Plans to take account of and accommodate proposed (and committed) strategic infrastructure (East-West Rail and Expressway) to ensure that Plans do not inadvertently or deliberately frustrate or prejudice the delivery of such infrastructure.

AVDC’s Response to Inspector’s question 89

The Council acknowledges the representation from Chris Dodd. The preferred route option of the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway is not included in the VALP as it is not within the scope of the local plan. The preferred route is a decision that will likely involve a number of actors, but the final decision would not be made by the Council. The current three broad options can also be delivered without consequence to the allocations in VALP, nor do any of the allocations in VALP mean that any of the route options cannot be delivered. The council has also suggested in response to Highway England consultation that a more sophisticated approach than a single road may be more appropriate so even the three options suggested may not be the final solution. It is considered that an early review of the plan is a more effective and pragmatic approach to the Expressway than trying to guess its route and plan on the basis of that guess. As such, no amendments are proposed in regards to this representation.

The representations from Christopher Wayman, Councillor Robin Stuchbury and Heather Pugh all argue that the VALP should afford more protection to the routes of the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway to ensure that development on site allocations does not jeopardise the delivery of the Expressway. This is acknowledged by the Council. Paragraph 3.77 of the VALP states that “[...] it is envisaged that the Plan

will need to be reviewed soon after adoption. Regional, national and international connectivity schemes such as the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway and Heathrow expansion will potentially have a significant impact on the district in the future, and therefore will inevitably influence future planning.” Paragraph 7.20 states that *“Subject to information forthcoming, any line for the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway may need to be included as a safeguarded line in the VALP as it progresses through to adoption. Implications of the route for growth in Aylesbury Vale will be taken into account in an early review of the Plan.”* These paragraphs make clear the Council’s ambition to address the potential need for safeguarding of the Expressway route in an early review of the plan. It is envisaged that at this stage there will be more detailed information available as to the preferred route option and more detail as to its exact route.

While the Council has some sympathy with the essence of the changes proposed by Heather Pugh, it is not at this stage justified nor effective to include further detail on safeguarding the Expressway route options as there is not enough information available for the Council at present. As stated above The current three broad options can also be delivered without consequence to the allocations in VALP, nor do any of the allocations in VALP mean that any of the route options cannot be delivered. As such, this is proposed to be dealt with in a planned early review which is a more effective and pragmatic approach to the Expressway than trying to guess its route and plan on the basis of that guess. No amendments to the VALP are proposed in regards to this.