

VALP 2013 – 2033 Frequently Asked Questions

VALP Timeline 2017/2018

We hope that the Inspector's report will be with us within 2018 and we will be able to adopt the plan before the end of 2018. However, once the Plan is submitted in January, the timeline after that is beyond our control. Usually an Inspector is appointed within two weeks of a plan being submitted and he/she will announce the timings for the public examination. Until the Inspector has determined whether the new local plan is sound or not its content will carry no weight in planning decisions.

What is the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan?

The new Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan is an important document which will determine the way forward for Aylesbury Vale District. It will provide the strategy for the growth of our district by setting out what development will take place and where until 2033. Once adopted, the new Local Plan will replace the District's existing local planning policies (the Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan, AVDLP, 2004 saved policies) and will be the basis for all planning decisions. The new Local Plan sets out a vision for the District by establishing the long term aims and aspirations going forward.

Why do we need a new Local Plan?

- Our current Local Plan was adopted in 2004 and needs replacing as it is now mostly out of date compared to national planning policy..
- An updated Local Plan increases certainty, makes decisions harder to overturn and avoids planning by appeal.
- A new Local Plan will enable the council to direct development toward the most sustainable locations and prevent development happening in less preferable locations.
- It will help to achieve the appropriate level of infrastructure required to meet the needs of new residents.

Who wrote it and how long did it take?

VALP has been prepared mainly by the Planning Policy Team, with the assistance of many other organisations. It follows the previous Vale of Aylesbury Plan (VAP), which was withdrawn in 2014 on the advice of the Planning Inspectorate. We took the content of VAP, as well as responses to its consultations to help develop Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP). Initial stages involved:

- a 'Scoping' consultation in Spring 2014 which collected views on the content and scope of the Plan.
- a 'Call for Sites', also in Spring 2014, where we invited landowners and developers to promote potential sites to us for any use.

These were then followed by:

- An 'Issues and Options' consultation in autumn 2015, consisting of nine potential options for development distribution being presented for comment alongside supporting evidence studies.
- A Draft Plan and a further consultation which interested parties were able to comment on in summer 2016. This Plan took into account everything we had gathered from the previous consultations.

What stage are we at in preparing the new Local Plan?

Over the last year we have revised the VALP Draft Plan of summer 2016 by taking into account the received representations, making significant alterations, preparing further evidence and adding more detail to the VALP strategy, vision, policies and proposals.

We have now reached the Proposed Submission stage, which is the final stage in which the public can comment on the Plan before it is submitted to Government for examination. The Proposed Submission Plan was firstly published as part of committee papers in September 2017.

What has changed since the Draft Plan of summer 2016?

The most significant change in the Plan is the fall in housing targets, which has been reduced from a gross 33,300 homes to 27,400 and no longer includes a proposal of a new settlement. Due to this reduction in housing delivery numbers, a number of site allocations that were in the Draft Plan are no longer required but some new ones have been included.

Another change is the method of identifying housing distribution to settlements from percentage based approach to a capacity based one. This is due to the feedback received from consultations about how arbitrary the responses were and by the fact that the new method is more appropriate for the Vale's specific housing needs and available sites.

The Proposed Submission Plan also gives more detail on how the Aylesbury Garden Town will be planned and delivered.

Will the Vale ever get a new settlement?

Although we have decided a new settlement is not needed for this plan period, we will be suggesting that this consideration should be deferred for an early review of the VALP (post adoption) once we know the route of the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway.

Other growth options such as at south or west of Milton Keynes or within the Green Belt next to Wendover, have also not been included in the Plan. Nevertheless any suitable sites not included in the Plan will also need to be reconsidered in the early review of the plan that is proposed to address future pressures which are currently not specific enough to plan for.

What is Aylesbury 'Garden Town'?

The name 'Garden Town' comes from the Garden City movement of urban planning, created back in the 19th and early 20th century. That aimed to create settlements which were halfway between dense urban development and the countryside. The Government has awarded Aylesbury 'Garden Town' status, along with three other towns. This status gives AVDC the

opportunity to develop Aylesbury and the surrounding area with Government support in a truly visionary and sustainable way.

The Government has committed more than half a million pounds initially to help improve the long-term plans for the town and develop infrastructure proposals. The money will be spent in areas such as developing the longer term masterplan for the town, which will look at improving transport links and green infrastructure. The funding and support that comes with being a Garden Town will help the whole Vale become a greener, more connected and vibrant place to live, work and visit.

Please see [Aylesbury Garden Town](#) for more information.

How does Aylesbury Garden Town work with VALP?

The successful bid provides additional funding to support delivery of homes and infrastructure at Aylesbury identified in the VALP. Aylesbury Garden Town will be supported by policies within the Local Plan.

Does the new Local Plan currently have any weight?

At its current stage, VALP carries no weight and all current planning decisions are based on the policies of Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan 2004 any neighbourhood plans that are made and national planning policy. Unlike Neighbourhood Plans, which carry some weight as they are emerging, VALP will only become effective upon its official adoption in late 2018.

Will VALP override a Neighbourhood Plan?

National planning policy requires local plans to address strategic planning matters, and says that neighbourhood plans should reflect those policies and plan positively to support them. Neighbourhood plans are not based on the strategic assessment of housing need that the District Council is required to undertake. It is our responsibility to ensure that enough land is allocated to meet that housing need. Therefore, to meet that need, the Plan has allocated further land at some strategic settlements beyond the existing Neighbourhood Plan allocations.

Non-strategic policies and existing allocations in neighbourhood plans will, however, remain in force. Should a community wish to see a different site allocated, this could be achieved by a revision to a made neighbourhood plan and the Local Plan site could then be disregarded.

Why are we taking unmet need from neighbouring authorities?

The districts to the south of Aylesbury Vale (Wycombe, Chiltern and South Bucks) are highly constrained by national designations of Green Belt and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and so their available land for housing does not match their need. They therefore have unmet housing need and cannot meet the Government's requirement that an area should ensure its housing need is met.

We do not have the constraints on development that apply in the adjacent plan areas and therefore have the capacity to take on this need. Government planning policy says that unmet requirements from adjacent areas should be met where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development. The council also has a formal 'Duty to Co-operate'

(paragraph 182 of the National Planning Policy Framework) with other councils and relevant bodies over strategic issues that cross our boundaries, which includes housing and employment growth.

Following discussions and assessments/reviews of constraints and capacity in all Central Buckinghamshire authorities, an agreed figure of 8,000 homes in unmet need that AVDC will take on was included in a [Memorandum of Understanding](#).

There are other, better sites that should be allocated.

The Council has reviewed all the sites that have been suggested to them on the basis of a wide range of criteria including flood risk, effect on the landscape and access arrangements. The sites which were most suitable and matched the hierarchy of settlements were selected to meet the predicted need for housing, employment, retail, etc. Other sites which were considered have not been included because they are not demonstrably superior to the sites included in the plan. The independent Examination will however determine whether we have chosen the most appropriate sites.

Why is a site at RAF Halton allocated for development?

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) has confirmed that RAF Halton is to close in 2022 and because it is a brownfield site in reasonable walking and cycling distance of Wendover's services and facilities, it is appropriate that it be redeveloped for housing and other associated uses even though it lies within the Green Belt. National planning policy allows brownfield sites in the Green Belt to be redeveloped providing open areas are retained. Due to RAF Halton's proximity to Aylesbury and the good linkages between the two by rail and road, the development at RAF Halton should follow the same principles as Aylesbury Garden Town. The Council believes that approximately 1,000 homes can be achieved during the Plan period at RAF Halton Camp after its closure in 2022. This is considered to be a realistic and somewhat conservative estimate based on the constraints that apply to the Camp, but the figure could increase as detailed master-planning is developed.

How will development come forward in the 'smaller villages' where the VALP doesn't allocate any sites?

Where there is no made neighbourhood plan in place, small scale new housing developments at smaller villages of around five houses will be supported where it contributes to the sustainability of that village and is in accordance with all applicable policies in the Local Plan. The Council will seek to preserve the character and identities of neighbouring settlements or communities. The Council will resist development that would compromise the open character of the countryside between settlements, especially where the gaps between them are already small.

Why are you allocating Gypsy and Traveller sites?

Government guidance sets out that councils should assess and meet Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople's accommodation needs and provide suitable sites in the same way that we are required to provide for other accommodation needs.

The 2017 assessment sets out the future net requirement for the district as eight pitches from those who are known to meet the new Gypsy and Traveller definition and up to 76 pitches from

those who are not known whether they meet the new definition. The most suitable sites have been proposed as allocations to meet the need for the next 10 years. No need has been identified for transit sites as there is little evidence of travelling through the area.

What about infrastructure?

We are taking all possible steps to ensure that necessary infrastructure, such as new roads, public transport, schools and health facilities arrive alongside housing development. Whilst AVDC is not the provider of services in many cases, we are working closely with all providers to ensure they're aware of our proposed growth and are making arrangements for it. This has led to the preparation of an [Infrastructure Delivery Plan \(IDP\)](#) which sets out what and when infrastructure is required to support the proposed growth. The site allocation policies in the Local Plan also list infrastructure requirements on a site by site basis, with development being phased to ensure infrastructure comes along as needed.

What about roads? We need a bypass around Aylesbury

We have worked with Buckinghamshire County Council as highways authority to address this issue as part of transport evidence and infrastructure planning. Where new roads have been proven to be needed, they form part of the VALP site allocations and/or the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. VALP also contains a transport strategy, vision and objectives.

County wide Traffic modelling has been undertaken to assess the proposed VALP growth impacts on the highway network, and what mitigation measures will be required to ensure that traffic impacts are minimised. The mitigation identified to support the proposed growth has included a series of outer link roads that will provide more efficient traffic flows around Aylesbury in order to segregate those travelling through Aylesbury and those travelling into and out of Aylesbury.

An Aylesbury Transport Strategy and Buckingham Transport Strategy has also been prepared to and adopted by Buckinghamshire County Council. These studies have looked at the impacts of the proposed VALP growth will have on a wide spectrum of transportation and have identified a series of options for improvement.