

Housing growth at Bourne End and Wooburn

In June-July 2016, Wycombe District Council consulted on a draft new local plan for the District, which included specific proposals for 3 sites at Bourne End and Wooburn (Slate Meadow, Hollands Farm and Northern Heights). We do not currently propose to continue with Northern Heights as a proposed allocation. Please note: We have also set out detailed information about how the Council is meeting the need for homes right across the District in a separate document which is on our website:

‘Background to housing numbers and distribution in the new Local Plan’

Floodplain.

The new Local Plan ‘allocates’ two sites: Slate Meadow (which has already been released for development under the 2008 Core Strategy,) and Hollands Farm.

The ‘allocation’ of a site in a plan establishes the general principle of development on that site. The plan will also include detailed policies which are specific to that site. These site specific policies establish a framework against which future detailed planning applications are assessed. In addition to site specific policies, the local plan has a number of other general development policies relating to issues such as flood risk.

In terms of flood risk, you can find out more about the guidance we follow on all flood risk issues at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-and-coastal-change>. Both local and national planning policy aim to direct all development, wherever possible, to the lowest risk area.

The risks from river flooding are assessed and mapped by the Environment Agency in 3 zones (Zone 1 Low probability, Zone 2 Medium, Zone 3 High). Quite a large part of Slate Meadow and a small part of Hollands Farm lie in zones 2 or 3. The site specific policies in the local plan will make it clear that the planning applications must include a flood risk assessment. This will take the Environment Agency data, and make sure it is fully up to date for the site, for the Environment Agency to sign off. No homes will be permitted in areas that are shown to be at unacceptable risk of flooding in this assessment.

There are other forms of flooding, such as surface water flooding (from storms), and ground water flooding (from the water table reaching the surface). These are also taken into consideration – and the solutions to these forms of flooding also have to be signed off by the Environment Agency, and by the County Council which has some flood responsibilities.

Slate Meadow: When the Council released the site for development about two years ago, it established a liaison group, made up of local representatives who would help us to work with local people and establish a framework for the future development of

the site. The developer's hydrology experts used current data to update the flood risk model, which it agreed with the Environment Agency. This has established that the amount of land at risk of river flooding at Slate Meadow is less than is shown on the Environment Agencies flood zone maps. The new housing proposed on the site will be outside the area at risk of river flooding shown in this assessment. This data was presented to and discussed with the Liaison Group and the presentation is on our website, where you can find out more about this:

<https://www.wycombe.gov.uk/uploads/public/documents/Planning/Reserve-sites/Slate-Meadow-flood-risk-drainage-presentation.pdf>

Hollands Farm: As with Slate Meadow, we know that a small part of this site are at risk of flooding. Again, a detailed assessment will be made to check the extent of this flooding. No homes will be built on those parts of this site.

Will building affect flooding for properties near these sites?

Solutions to flooding cannot be at the expense of surrounding land and property. In signing off any flood mitigation proposals, the Environment Agency will be making sure that the existing situation is not made worse. Sometimes works on a development site can help to resolve existing issues – but this is not always the case.

Traffic

New development has an impact on local traffic. We work with the local highway authority, Buckinghamshire County Council on traffic and transport issues. The County has undertaken traffic modelling. It identifies that Bourne End suffers congestion, but does not conclude that the impact of new development will make a severe change to the existing situation.

At Bourne End, one of the options on Hollands Farm is to include a new through road from Cores End to Ferry Lane/Hedsor Road. This option was included in the consultation on the new Local Plan that took place in the summer of 2016. This new road would not solve all the traffic problems of Bourne End and it will create some problems of its own – such as how to connect to the Cores End roundabout. We are currently looking at more detailed traffic modelling to assess whether this road would help alleviate traffic. This work is part of an overall assessment to identify what improvements will be needed at Bourne End and High Wycombe.

GP surgeries

We work with the NHS, through the local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG). We ask them what additional capacity – if any – is needed to handle any extra demand for services such as GP surgeries.

In Bourne End, the Chiltern Area CCG has acknowledged the need for improvements and has submitted practice plans to NHS England to develop a new surgery to house both Hawthornden and Pound House practices (together with their branch surgeries) in a modern, state-of-the-art building with sufficient capacity to absorb expected population growth from Abbey Barn South (on the south side of High Wycombe) as well as development plans in Bourne End.

The Council collects a 'land tax' called the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), from developments. This provides funding towards new GP surgeries.

Schools

We share our Local Plan with the Local Education Authority (LEA) which is Buckinghamshire County Council, to advise on the need for new schools. The proposed development needs a new one form entry primary school. There are different options about what is the best way of accommodating this school, which are still in discussion. The development at Hollands Farm will be required to pay towards this school provision.

Coalescence or 'sprawl'

While the new Local Plan proposes releasing Hollands Farm from the Green Belt, it does not propose any other changes to the Green Belt around Bourne End or Wooburn. So the current protection will stay in place. Most of the land between Bourne End and Marlow is in the Green Belt. If speculative applications for housing or business were made on any of this land the Council would refuse them for failing to comply with Green Belt policy.

Green Belt policy is set nationally and local planning authorities have to review Green Belt land as part of the Local Plan process. One of the key purposes of designating land as Green Belt is to stop towns from merging into one another. For this reason the land between Bourne End and Marlow will remain in the Green Belt because it is there to protect the distinct identities of Marlow and Bourne End and prevent them from merging. Green Belt boundaries are only reviewed exceptionally – they are not required in every local plan review. The review just undertaken was the first comprehensive review of the Green Belt in Buckinghamshire for over 30 years.

Balancing development across Wycombe District

Please see our separate briefing note: "The background to housing numbers and distribution in the new Local Plan"