

REPRESENTOR ID WDLP19 0917

WYCOMBE DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF MPAC (FORMERLY MOLINS PLC) IN CONNECTION WITH MATTER 3 - HOUSING PROVISION, SUPPLY, AFFORDABILITY AND GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION.

This document is part of the response by Mpac (formerly Molins plc) to the Inspector's request for further written statements on questions identified by her in the Schedule of Matters, Issues & Questions.

Need Assessment (Questions 1 and 2)

1. Wycombe faces a challenging situation in bringing forward development sites to meet housing demand, particularly in an area where the general needs for housing are pressing from both local people and London. The House Builders Federation and other individual house-builders¹ have expressed concerns in their representations submitted to the Council in November 2017 that housing needs (13,200 additional dwellings over the plan period (660 dwellings per annum) have been underestimated and will not be met. We share, but do not repeat, those concerns.

Meeting the Unallocated Demand (Question 3)

2. The NPPF places very significant emphasis on a LPA, when plan-making (and, indeed, in all aspects of its planning function), seeking to meet the assessed needs of its area:
 - paragraph 14 insists that "*local planning authorities should plan positively for opportunities to meet the development needs of their area*"; and
 - paragraph 17 identifies as a key principle that "*every effort should be made objectively to identify and then meet the housing ... development needs of an area.*"

Failure to do so can only be justified where constraints and the adverse effects of breaching them clearly and decisively indicate that there is no further capacity

3. The Council accepts (paragraph 14 of the Local Plan) the importance of meeting as much of its OAN as possible within its own boundaries. The Council's approach has been too restrictive by ignoring the significant contribution to housing development that could be made by allocating suitable sites **without** causing "*significant harm*" (see our detailed comments on this in connection with Matters 2, 5 and 6).

¹ For example, see the Responses to the Wycombe District Local Plan by the House Builders Federation (ref WDLP19-0911), by Halsbury Homes Limited (ref: WDLP19-0918) and Berkeley Strategic Land Limited (ref: WDLP19-0966).

4. Policy CP4 allocates land within Wycombe for 10,925 dwellings (550 per annum) to be constructed over the Plan period. The balance of the OAN – 2,275 dwellings (114 dwellings per annum) - are proposed to be provided within Aylesbury Vale. Therefore 20% of Wycombe’s housing requirement is intended to be exported to Aylesbury Vale (see paragraph 4.41 of the Local Plan).
5. Consequently, the Plan should be allocating the sort of sites identified in paragraph 3 above.
6. As we say below in our response on questions 4 to 6, there is a real risk that some of the 10,925 units which the Plan claims to provide, will not in the event be built within the Plan period. So, the shortfall in provision is likely to exceed 2,275 units.
7. In respect of the 2,275 units that Wycombe wishes to export to the AVDC area, there are several significant reasons to doubt whether and to what extent they will be provided. In summary, those doubts relate to
 - the AVDC Local Plan being found to be adequate and sound;
 - the practicalities – even if the AVDC Local Plan is adopted – of the AVDC area producing, year on year, the numbers of units required;
 - the potential for the AVDC Local Plan not meeting Wycombe’s un-met housing need due to the Habitats Regulations Assessment being found non-complaint.²
8. Wycombe’s strategy to meet its OAN is reliant on the Aylesbury Vale Local Plan going through the statutory process and being found both sound and a means of accommodating the requirements of 3 neighbouring authorities - Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe. Wycombe has no control over this. The Aylesbury Vale Local Plan³ is seeking to provide for an additional 27,400 dwellings between 2013 and 2033. 19,400 dwellings are for the District’s own needs (including 7,800 dwellings in the proposed Aylesbury Garden Town⁴), 2,275 for Wycombe and 5,275 for Chiltern and South Bucks who are undertaking a joint Local Plan⁵. It is by no means certain that, at the end of its statutory processes, the Aylesbury Vale Local Plan will have allocations sufficient to address fully the exported needs of **all** of those authorities. Indeed, the House Builders Federation⁶ in their representations to the Aylesbury Local Plan have made, inter alia, the following points:

² See Aylesbury Vale District Council’s response to Local Plan Inspector’s Questions 105 and 108 (ref: ED107) which states that “AVDC has commissioned its consultants LUC to undertake a revised stage 1 HRA Screening Assessment on the Submitted VALP, based on the implications of the Sweetman judgement. AVDC has also asked LUC to carry out an Appropriate Assessment (the Stage 2 of an HRA) based on the Submitted VALP”

³ The Aylesbury Vale Local Plan was submitted on 28 February 2018. The Examination Hearings commence on 10 July 2018

⁴ The South West Milton Keynes Consortium made representations (ID ref: 2324) to the AVDCLP which casts doubt on the soundness of the Aylesbury Garden Town policy. The Consortium suggests the evidence for likely delivery is very flimsy and more studies are needed. AVDC acknowledges that some of the required infrastructure is dependent on HS2 coming forward.

⁵ The joint Chiltern & South Bucks Consultation Local Plan Regulation 19 is due to be published June/July 2018 with submission to the SoS expected in December 2018.

⁶ See response by the House Builders Federation to the Regulation 19 consultation on the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (Representation ID 1911)

- A clear need for AVDC to consider increasing its housing requirement in order to address the growing level of unmet need given the constraints expressed by the other LPAs.
 - The potential for the level of unmet need from the other LPAs to be higher leading to a more significant degree of unmet needs.
 - Delays to the delivery of strategic sites for any number of reasons could lead to the LPA not being able to meet its housing requirement⁷.
9. The Chiltern & South Bucks Local Plan is behind in the statutory process. There may well be a requirement for these two LPAs to increase their housing requirements given the imminent publication of the new NPPF incorporating the standardised housing need methodology.⁸
10. The 27,400 dwellings proposed in the Aylesbury Vale Local Plan equates to an annual completion rate of 1,370 dwellings. Table 7 of the Aylesbury Vale Local Plan shows how delivery in 2013-18 has already accumulated a shortfall of 638 dwellings.⁹ The AVDC Local Plan itself recognises that its hope of significantly increasing delivery rates for the period up to 2033 to the level required for the strategy to be achieved is “ambitious”. That is an understatement in light of Section 2.6(6) of their Compliance Statement¹⁰ which states:
- “The task of moving from a certain level of housing delivery to a permanently higher level of delivery is a major challenge given the complexity of the housing development process and the number of different parties involved. Aylesbury Vale’s Local Plan is planning for a step change in housing delivery from its current delivery levels albeit already delivering high volumes of new homes”.*
11. Even if the allocations within the AVDC Local Plan are made, Wycombe’s need will not be met unless developers in Aylesbury Vale develop dwellings at an unprecedented rate. There is no reason to have any confidence that it will be either practicable or in the interests of developers to produce such high rates of development in such a concentrated area.
12. AVDC are relying on, inter alia, 2 major development areas¹¹ in the early years of the Plan period. These in part have been developed. In the longer-term AVDC are reliant on the large allocations to come forward. There is a risk (e.g. see paragraph 8 and footnote 6 in relation to Aylesbury Garden Town), however, that the Aylesbury Vale Local Plan has provided insufficient housing allocations and the knock-on effect will be to adversely impact on the housing needs of Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe. This places a particular stress on the release of sites in the Green Belt (or within the

⁷ This applies equally to the Wycombe Local Plan (see below).

⁸ Guidance states that any Local Plan brought forward for Examination within 6 months of publication of the final new NPPF will be dealt with under the current NPPF and OAN methodology.

⁹ Indeed, paragraph 3.80 below that table acknowledges the risk that such shortfalls may result in the imposition of a 20% buffer on 5-year supply figures.

¹¹ Berryfields 1,184 dwellings still to be developed (paragraph 4.82 of AVDC Local Plan) and Kingsbrook 2,450 dwellings to be developed in 3 over-lapping phases over 16 years: 770 dwellings years 1 to 7, 780 dwellings years 2 to 10 and 900 dwellings years 5 to 16. Kingsbrook has outline permission plus reserved matters for 1,353 dwellings with 300 complete (see paragraph 4.91 of AVDC Local Plan)

13. AONB), which are readily developable within 5 years and which, given the lack of harm that would follow from sensitive development, **should** be released to assist Wycombe meeting its OAN.

Supply/Allocations (Questions 4, 5 and 6)

14. Table 4¹² of the Wycombe Local Plan sets out the “Main Sources of Housing Land Supply” in Wycombe – 4,556 (41.7%) of the OAN is expected to be provided by the Princes Risborough expansion, the “former reserve sites”¹³ and the Green Belt Review sites.
15. Wycombe released (in November 2014) the 5 strategic development sites identified in the adopted Core Strategy (2008) as Reserve Locations for Future Development (“former reserve sites”) ahead of production of the new Local Plan to contribute towards meeting the Council’s housing needs and, in particular, its then parlous 5-year land supply position. However, since that time – over 3.5 years ago - no planning permissions have been granted on any of these sites. There are currently outstanding applications on 2 of the sites¹⁴ both of which are subject to technical and other objections that need to be resolved. There are no planning permissions or outstanding applications for development at the other 3 “reserve sites”.
16. In the circumstances, there is significant doubt on the prospects of development commencing on any of these sites in the foreseeable future. The issues that have caused delay on the deliverability of these 5 sites are seemingly unresolved. Therefore, it is very likely that whilst the “housing trajectory” suggests that these “reserve sites” will provide 1,330 dwellings between 2018 and 2025 the reality is that this figure will be much lower and the timescale for completion will be longer (see paragraphs 23 to 25 below).
17. The Local Plan envisages that the Green Belt Review sites will provide between 1,139 (Table 4) and 1,171 new dwellings (the sum of the dwellings identified on a site by site basis). The Council is relying on two major Green Belt releases to provide 817 dwellings or 69% of the provision from Green Belt Release sites.¹⁵
18. All of these sites (“former reserve sites” and Green Belt release) have not yet shown that they are capable of being developed for the number of dwellings identified, even in the 2 cases where planning applications have been made. This raises a variety of deliverability issues that will have to be resolved for example access, ecology, flooding and potentially land ownership.
19. Deliverability of the proposed urban expansion of Princes Risborough (Policy PR3) is long-term. There is a very real potential that it will be materially longer than the 6 to 10 years envisaged in the housing trajectory - given delays to the development plan

¹² Table 4 provides the Main Sources of Housing Supply – previously developed land in towns/settlement – 5,611; former reserve sites – 1,755; Princes Risborough Expansion – 1,662; Green Belt releases – 1,139 and “other greenfield” 760.

¹³ Abbey Barn North (High Wycombe), Abbey Barn South (High Wycombe), Gomms Valley & Ashwells (High Wycombe), Slate Meadow (Bourne End) and Terriers Farm (High Wycombe)

¹⁴ Planning application 18/05363/FUL for up to 550 dwellings plus 120 extra care units on land at Abbey Barn South and planning application 18/05597/OUT for up to 150 dwellings on land at Slate Meadow

¹⁵ Land at Hazelmere and Hollands Farm

process and various other constraints that need to be overcome. These potential reasons for delay include:

- different parcels of land will be subject to different constraints and delivery timescales;
- the deliverability and financing of the infrastructure required;
- development will be subject to the release of infrastructure;
- separate developer interests that means that applications are likely to come forward separately, the timing of which will not necessarily be at the Council's choosing or as envisaged in the Housing Trajectory;
- the Environment Agency¹⁶ have questioned deliverability on the basis that the strategic flood risk assessment is not sufficient to be sure that the relevant sites pass the second part of the exceptions test; and
- Natural England¹⁷ consider the new road section within the AONB is major development, while at the same time commenting that insufficient evidence has been provided to undertake the major development test.

20. In light of the above the proposed urban expansion of Princes Risborough will not provide for the town's immediate housing need (including for affordable housing).

The Plan's Supply (Questions 4 and 5)

21. In a range of recent appeal decisions¹⁸ in Wycombe the appointed Inspectors and where relevant, the Secretary of State, have concluded (on admission from the Council) that there was an absence of a 5-year land supply.

22. Local Plan Topic Paper 2 – Housing (October 2017) – indicates a 6.2-year housing land supply (paragraph 7.9) against the Local Plan provision of 10,925 dwellings. Table 7 identifies the main components of this supply as the delivery of the “reserve sites”. The delays in, inter alia, the “reserve sites” coming forward for development will undoubtedly impact on the Council's ability to have a deliverable 5-year land supply.

23. Table 3.1 of the Monitoring Report (March 2018)¹⁹ shows actual dwelling completions (1,065) between 2013 and 2016 were well below the target (2,184). However, 788 dwellings were completed in 2016/17²⁰ but the table shows that only 494 dwellings are estimated to be completed in 2017/18 which is below the 550 (Wycombe District) target and the Council OAN target (664 dwellings pa). To meet the OAN completions for Wycombe between 2013 and 2018 should have been 3,984 as opposed to 3,466 - there is already a shortfall of 376 dwellings allowing for the estimated completions for 2017/18

24. Aylesbury Vale District Council has indicated to Wycombe that **all** the “reserve sites” have a lot of restrictions and therefore less than half of the site areas are suitable for

¹⁶ See p94 Summary of Responses to Regulation 19 Consultation October – December 2017

¹⁷ Ibid p108

¹⁸ Mill Lane, Monks Risborough (APP/K0425/W/15/3011900); Land off Barn Road, Longwick (APP/K0425/W/15/3018514); Former Molins Sports & Social Club, Mill Lane, Monks Risborough (APP/K0425/W/16/3149747); Land at Ivy Farm, Lower Icknield Way, Longwick (APP/K0452/W/17/3166948) and Summerhill, Heavens Lea, Hedsor (APP/K0425/W/16/3160690).

¹⁹ Document HELS7 - Wycombe Monitoring Report Monitoring Period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2017

²⁰ Paragraph 20 of Document HELS7 explains that the “high completion rate” for 2016/17 was due to office to residential PD conversions and 4 large sites being developed

building, making the use of this land inefficient²¹. In essence these sites may only provide 665 dwellings (as opposed to the 1,330 envisaged by Wycombe – see paragraph 15 above)

25. On this basis the Council's housing land-supply, which is heavily reliant (26.77% of dwelling provision within Wycombe District) is not supported by robust evidence because it assumes larger numbers from specific sites that are unlikely to be achieved. Therefore, there is a real risk that the 5-year housing land supply will not be met.²²

Allocations (Question 6)

26. The site assessment methodology is not comprehensive – see our submissions on Matter 2. It is also not robust. As our previous comments indicate, a number of the Plan's key allocations are **not** free from significant development constraints; both their timing and their yield are doubtful. In addition to the potential reasons for delay to the proposed Princes Risborough expansion there are also matters that need thorough assessment with some of the other sites that have been allocated – for example:

- HW4 – Abbey Barn North – Natural England have commented that the site is “ecologically rich”²³
- HW6 – Gomm Valley and Ashwells - this site includes the Gomm Valley SSSI and lies within the Gomm Valley Biodiversity Opportunity Area
- HW7 – Terriers Farm and Terrier's House²⁴ - Scottish and Southern Electricity have indicated a requirement for “multiple distribution substations due to the size of the development” and Thames Water have referred to the need for strategic drainage infrastructure to ensure sufficient capacity is brought forward ahead of the development

Mechanism (Question 7)

27. As indicated by our previous comments (and our submission on Matter 2) there is a real risk that the actual number of dwellings delivered during the plan period will be materially below Wycombe's stated target of 10,925. Therefore, as it stands, the Plan will not be an effective mechanism for delivering the housing requirements of Wycombe. Additional allocations are required.

²¹ See, inter alia, p58 - Summary of Responses to Regulation 19 Consultation October – December 2017

²² See paragraph 2.5 of the representations submitted by Halsbury Homes Limited (WDLP19 0918)

²³ See p57 Summary of Responses to Regulation 19 Consultation October – December 2017

²⁴ See p69 Summary of Responses to Regulation 19 Consultation October – December 2017