

## 2.0 Wycombe District – The Big Challenge

### The Big Challenge

#### The Sustainable Development Challenge

- 2.1** The big challenge is to achieve sustainable development – meeting the needs of today without compromising our ability to meet the needs of tomorrow. We need to provide more homes and jobs, and these need more supporting infrastructure – such as schools, roads and green spaces. We need to make sure the patterns of new development reduce our reliance on the private car; reinforce our town centres to ensure they remain vibrant places; and ensure the District retains its strong green infrastructure, particularly the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, for future generations.

#### The Homes Challenge

- 2.2** The work we have done with other authorities shows that there is a need across Buckinghamshire as a whole for 46,200 homes in the period 2013 – 2033. This is called the objectively assessed need for housing (or OAN). The need within Wycombe District is 13,200 homes for the same period (that is 660 homes per year)<sup>12</sup>. However, not all these homes will be built in the District. Wycombe is proposing to accommodate 10,925 homes. Aylesbury Vale District Council has agreed, through a Memorandum of Understanding, to take Wycombe’s ‘unmet need’. This gives a figure of about 550 homes a year. This compares with the housing target in our current plans of just over 400 homes per year.
- 2.3** Many of those homes, around 3,100 of the District total, will need to be affordable homes – homes for rent, with housing associations, and shared ownership for example. We will also need to make provision for older people

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<sup>12</sup> Buckinghamshire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment Update 2016 – Addendum Report (September 2017, Opinion Research Services and Atkins)

and other groups in society. This includes planning for the needs of the travelling community.

### The Jobs Challenge

**2.4** Forecasts suggest that there will be a growth of just over 7,650 full time equivalent jobs<sup>13</sup> in Wycombe District in the period 2013-2033, across a range of different sectors. This includes growth of around 5,000<sup>14</sup> jobs in the “B use class” sectors of office, industrial and warehousing, generating a requirement for an additional 54,000 sqm floorspace<sup>15</sup>. However this masks variations across sectors with forecast growth in offices and warehousing, but decline in manufacturing.

**2.5** These forecasts have to be considered alongside other factors. For instance, this forecast job growth is in contrast to the decline in jobs and business floorspace experienced in the District in the previous 10 years. Also the views of the commercial property market and other evidence suggest, contrary to the forecasts, that demand for office space is weak but demand for industrial is stronger. Market intelligence also indicates that only certain locations in the District are attractive for new business development. A further challenge is to ensure that there is a broad balance between the growth in jobs and the growth in the number of workers to take up those jobs.

### The Infrastructure Challenge

**2.6** Providing housing and jobs will bring with it additional pressure on infrastructure. Integrating infrastructure provision with new development is a key challenge and it is a key issue that has been highlighted to us. In

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<sup>13</sup> The figure for all jobs, not just full time equivalents is 11,000 - see the Buckinghamshire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment Update 2016 Report of Findings (December 2016, Opinion Research Services and Atkins)

<sup>14</sup> This is the Full Time Equivalent figure (FTE) – total jobs will be higher

<sup>15</sup> Buckinghamshire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment Update 2016 – Addendum Report (September 2017, Opinion Research Services and Atkins)

drawing up this Plan we have worked closely with various infrastructure providers to identify what is needed and when.<sup>16</sup>

- 2.7** Providing transport infrastructure is a particularly important issue given existing issues on the transport network, and we have been working with the County Council to identify measures to mitigate the impact of new development. We have also been working with Highways England on how to improve access into High Wycombe from the M40. This involves Highways England considering improvements to the M40 between junctions 2 and 5 as feeder roads into High Wycombe. Unfortunately, this will not result in a funded programme in time for the submission of this Plan and so may require an update to the Plan in due course.
- 2.8** There is also uncertainty around the route of the proposed ‘expressway’ between Oxford and Cambridge being developed by the National Infrastructure Commission. Whilst it is not expected to be within the District it will have an impact on the District as part of the strategic road network.
- 2.9** The expansion of Heathrow will also have impacts on the District.
- 2.10** Ensuring the provision of superfast broadband is also a key infrastructure requirement not only for new homes and business locations – but existing homes too.

#### The Town Centres Challenge

- 2.11** A good plan is not only about homes, jobs and infrastructure. Forecasts<sup>17</sup> show an increase in demand for retail space, despite the fact that people are using the internet more for shopping. It is important that our town centres remain vibrant and attractive places. Concentrating services in town centres also helps to make bus services more viable, because many people need to make the same journey.
- 2.12** In 2013 Wycombe District Council adopted the Delivery and Site Allocations Plan (DSA). This sets out the Council’s policies in relation to town centres,

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<sup>16</sup> Local Plan Publication Version Infrastructure Delivery Plan (September 2017, Wycombe District Council)

<sup>17</sup> Wycombe Town Centres and Retail Study – 2017 Addendum (March 2017, Lichfields)

and identifies a number of sites for new retail development to help meet the identified demand. All but two of these policies are up to date<sup>18</sup> and are not being reviewed as part of the Local Plan. This Local Plan will, however, provide the strategic context for the existing town centre policies.

### The Sense of Place Challenge

- 2.13** All these elements – homes, jobs, infrastructure, town centres – need to come together in a way that helps our health and wellbeing, mentally and physically. Providing greenspace, opportunities to walk and cycle, space for wildlife and attractive new housing are part of this. But so too is recognising, protecting and enhancing the existing characteristics that give the District its unique identity, the historic and built environment and the natural environment including its landscape setting in the Chilterns. Making sure that the new places we build, and the way we change existing places to improve them, achieves that ‘sense of place’ that makes us proud to live in the District, is an important issue that the Plan must address.

## Addressing the Challenges

- 2.14** The scale of the challenge means that we have had to look at difficult options. We consulted on these in 2014 and in 2016. The National Planning Policy Framework sets the expectation that each Council meets its objectively assessed needs for development. However, it also recognises that this may not be possible everywhere without causing harmful adverse impacts on important planning and environmental constraints.
- 2.15** Sections 3 and 4 of the Plan set out how we have sought to address these challenges by setting clear locally relevant objectives and having a clear strategy to deliver sustainable development in Wycombe District.

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<sup>18</sup> The Delivery and Site Allocations Plan was examined and adopted after the National Planning Policy Framework was issued in March 2012.