

# 1.0 Introduction and Context

- Introduction
- Why is a Plan being prepared now?
- What does the Plan cover and how does it relate to other plans?
- The National Context
- Preparing the Plan

## Introduction

- 1.1** This is the new Local Plan for Wycombe District. It sets out how the area will change and grow over the next 15 years or so up to the year 2033. In conjunction with the 2013 Delivery and Site Allocations Plan (DSA) it provides the planning policy framework for day to day planning decisions to help deliver sustainable development and ensure that our communities are sustainable in environmental, economic and social terms.
- 1.2** The Plan covers the period 2013-2033 ensuring that it looks around 15 years ahead from when it is examined and adopted. It is a local plan prepared under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

## Why is a Plan being prepared now?

- 1.3** It is important that we plan ahead for the future to ensure that the needs of the District are properly addressed and planned for in a coordinated way, and to ensure that important areas of the District are protected. This is the best way to help deliver sustainable development, rather than react to development proposals as they come forward. The Government has also made it clear that local plans are the key to delivering sustainable development that reflects the vision and aspirations of local communities.

## **What does the Plan cover and how does it relate to other plans?**

**1.4** This new Plan sets out:

- Our Vision and Objectives for the District up to 2033;
- The Strategy for the growth of the area - how much development should be provided, where it should go and where it shouldn't go;
- What is proposed in your area, including sites that are allocated for development and areas to be protected from development;
- How the strategy will be delivered, included detailed policies to guide development.

**1.5** This new Plan will replace all remaining policies in the current Wycombe District Local Plan (2004) and the Wycombe Core Strategy (2008). Appendix J sets out the policies to be deleted.

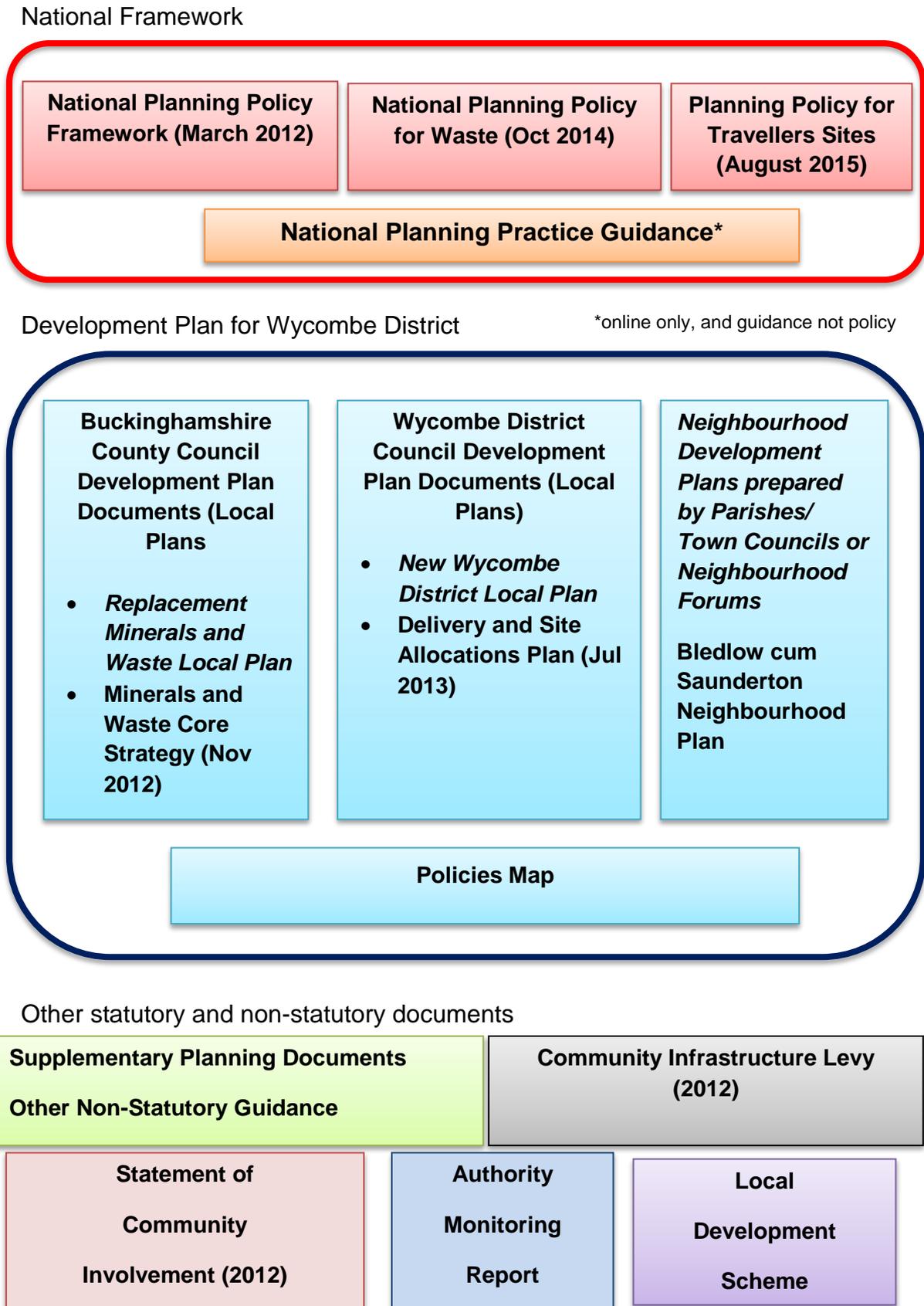
**1.6** It will sit alongside the Delivery and Site Allocations Plan (2013) which sets out proposals for the three town centres in the District together with a number of policies to guide development. This is an up to date Plan. A full schedule of the retained policies is given at Appendix J.

- 1.7 There are, however, four policies from the Delivery and Site Allocations Plan which are replaced by this new Local Plan.

*Table 1 Delivery and Site Allocation Plan Policies replaced by this Plan*

Deliver and Site Allocations Policy to be deleted.	Replacement policy in the new Local Plan
PR3 Land fronting New Road Princes Risborough	PR13 – Town Centre Site: Land Fronting New Road (Back Lane)
PR4 Land south of Horns Lane Princes Risborough	PR14 – Town Centre Site: Land South of Horns Lane
DM17 Planning for Flood Risk Management.	DM39 Managing Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage Systems
DM18 Carbon Reduction and Water Efficiency	<p>Renewables and district heating: DM33 Managing Carbon Emissions: Transport and Energy Generation – (parts 1(g) and 1(h))</p> <p>Water efficiency – DM41 Optional Technical Standards for Building Regulation Approval (part 1))</p> <p>Carbon targets – not replaced, now dealt with through Part L of the Building Regulations, as amended April 2016</p>

Figure 1 Relationship between different plans in Wycombe District in 2018.



- 1.8** Our plans not only provide a framework for considering planning applications but also provide the strategic context within which neighbourhood development plans can be prepared by local communities. To date we have “made” or adopted one Neighbourhood Plan for Bledlow cum Saunderton Parish Council<sup>5</sup>, but there are a number of other parishes and areas who have also embarked upon the process of producing a plan for their area. An up to date list of ‘made’ Neighbourhood Plan in the District can be found on the Council’s website.

### **The National Context**

- 1.9** This Local Plan cannot be prepared in isolation. It has to take account of the Government’s National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that sets out the Government’s overall approach to planning and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) which provides more detailed guidance on how to implement the NPPF.
- 1.10** At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking. For plan-making this means that local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the housing and economic development needs of their area. More specifically its states that:

*Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change, unless*

- *Adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or*
- *Specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.*

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<sup>5</sup> Bledlow-cum-Saunderton Neighbourhood Plan includes new or revised settlement boundaries policies for the main villages in the Parish area, and detailed development management policies around design, rural diversification and employment, environmental protection, community facilities, broadband and renewable and low carbon energy. The Neighbourhood Plan also includes a policy for the redevelopment of the former Molins site at Saunderton.

- 1.11** Ultimately local plans have to be ‘sound’, meeting a number of ‘tests of soundness’ set out in the NPPF. This includes considering meeting unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development.
- 1.12** The Government published the Housing White Paper - “Fixing our broken housing market” in February 2017. This consulted on a wide range of proposals. If implemented these proposals would have implications for the production of local plans. At this stage it is unclear what and when any of these proposals will be implemented. This Plan is not based on any of the proposals in the white paper and as such a view will be taken on the implications of any proposals as the plan progresses, once final decisions are taken by the Government on them, for instance through final changes to the NPPF.

### **Preparing the Plan**

- 1.13** Key elements of preparing a plan include:
- Planning strategically through the Duty to Cooperate;
  - Working with local communities to understand their concerns about how Wycombe District Council meets its obligations in planning for growth;
  - Planning on the basis of a robust but proportionate evidence base.

#### Planning Strategically

- 1.14** There is a legal duty on the Council to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis when preparing local plans with other local authorities and a range of other key agencies to maximise the effectiveness of plan preparation in relation to strategic issues – this is called the Duty to Cooperate. As part of preparing this Plan, the Council has been actively involved in fulfilling this duty.
- 1.15** The Council has worked proactively with a range of local authorities and other “Duty to Cooperate” bodies to identify and address the key strategic issues. The starting point however was to identify the right geography for addressing housing and economic needs. A study was commissioned by the

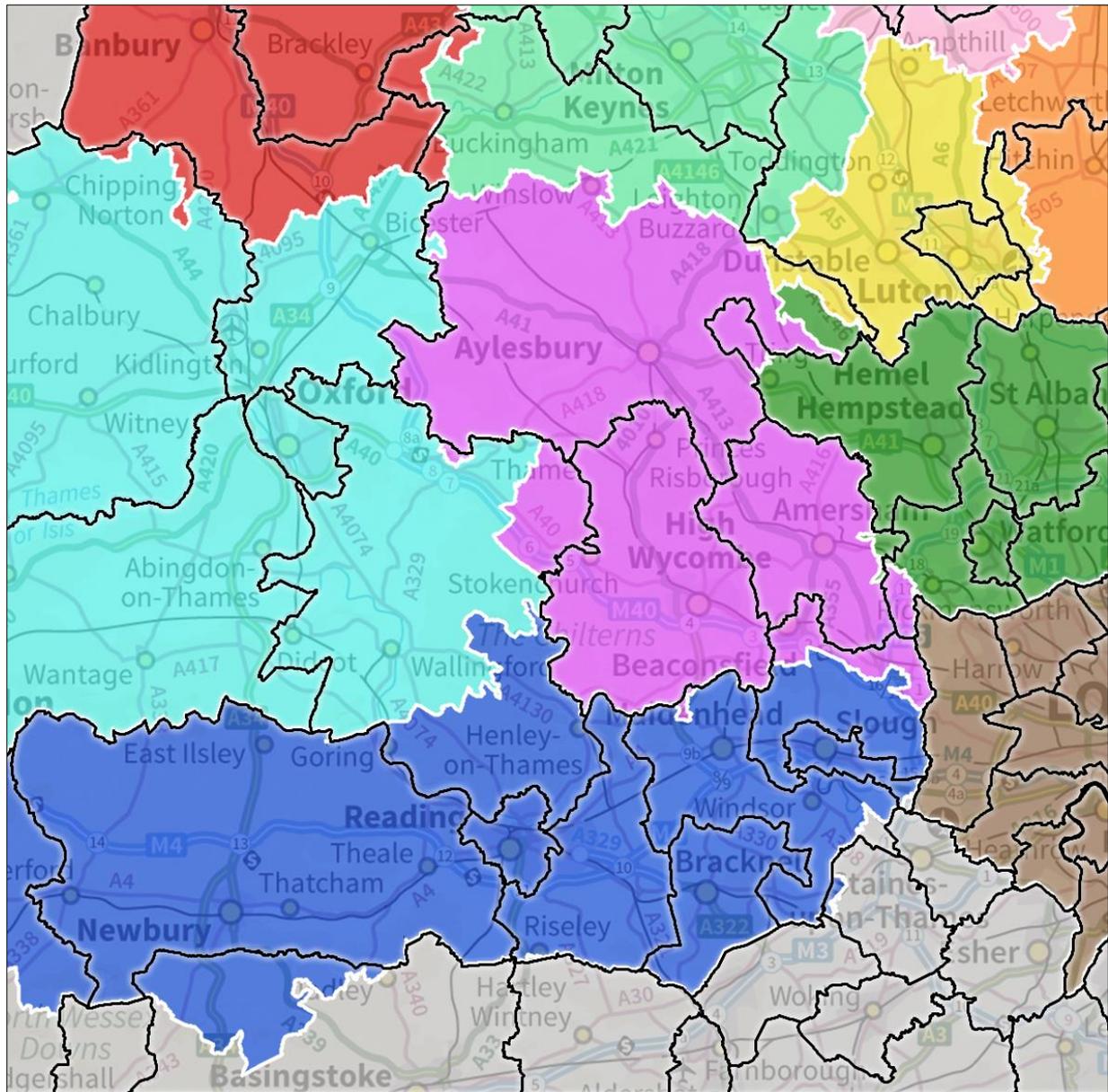
four Buckinghamshire Districts<sup>6</sup> to identify the housing market area and functional economic market area. The area shown in pink in figure 2 is the housing market area and functional economic market area that Wycombe District falls within. This area does not always follow local authority or local plan area boundaries so from a practical point of view a best fit to local plan areas was identified as Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks<sup>7</sup> and Wycombe Districts.

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<sup>6</sup> HMAs and FEMAs in Buckinghamshire: Updating the Evidence (June 2016, Opinion Research Services and Atkins)

<sup>7</sup> Chiltern and South Bucks Districts have decided to prepare a joint plan and so the best fit relates to the joint plan area.

Figure 2 Housing Market Area/ FEMA



 Buckinghamshire Housing Market Area / Functional Economic Market Area

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**1.16** As part of the Duty to Cooperate, a number of strategic issues have been identified and a significant amount of joint working has been undertaken, particularly amongst the Buckinghamshire authorities that make up the housing market area. These issues and studies include:

*Table 2 Joint studies undertaken among the Buckinghamshire authorities during the preparation of the Local Plan*

Strategic Issue	Joint Working
Housing	Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) Joint Methodology on Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessments (HELAA) Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment (GTAA)
Economy	HEDNA HELAA methodology
Infrastructure	Traffic modelling
Green Belt and Environment	Green Belt Assessment (Part 1) Joint work on methodology for Part 2 assessment Assessment of Major Development Flood risk assessment Water quality

**1.17** The joint working aims to address these issues and reach agreement wherever possible with the relevant authorities and agencies on the way forward. In publishing and submitting this Plan the Council considers that it has complied with the Duty to Cooperate.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Wycombe District Local Plan and the Duty to Cooperate draft report (September 2017, Wycombe District Council)

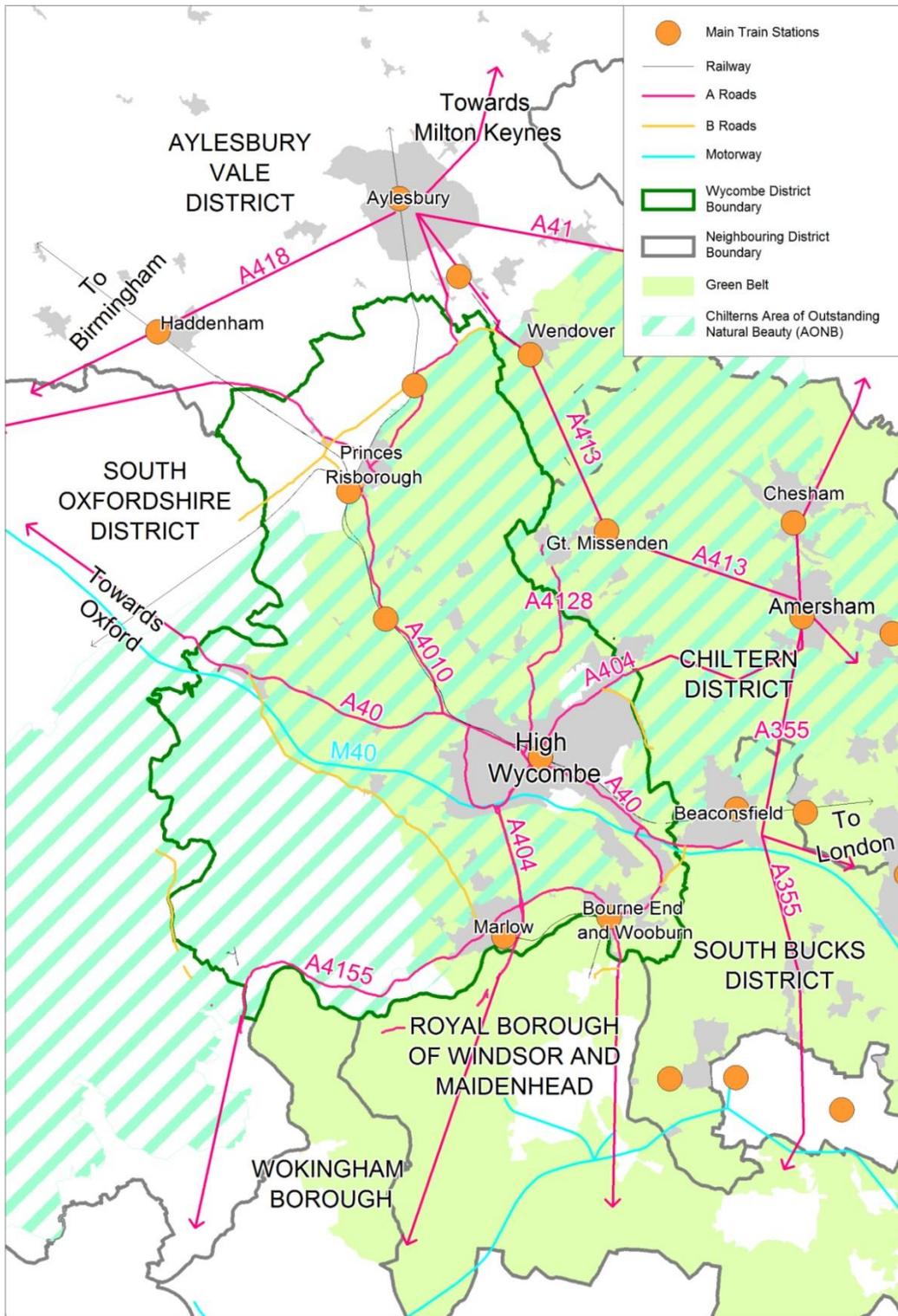
**1.18** In addition to preparing evidence on key strategic issues, there are a range of other strategic plans and projects that may affect the District. These include:

- The Strategic Economic Plan – prepared by the Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership which puts forward proposals to deliver increased prosperity and jobs for Buckinghamshire
- The Buckinghamshire Infrastructure Investment Plan – aiming to support growth in the county through new infrastructure provision;
- HS2 – which cuts through the very northern tip of the District;
- East West rail project – which will improve rail links from Princes Risborough to Aylesbury and provide a new direct connection on to Milton Keynes;
- Crossrail – improving connections to central London from Maidenhead
- Buckinghamshire Local Transport Plan 4 – which identifies a number of strategic transport issues affecting the District, including the poor north/south road links across the county;
- Highways England work feeding into the next Route Investment Strategy (RIS2), including looking at improving access to High Wycombe and improvements at junctions on the A404 south of High Wycombe.
- The Bucks Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Authorities surrounding Buckinghamshire are at various stages of preparing their local plans, although local plans in Buckinghamshire are running on similar timescales. Figure 3 illustrates the District in its strategic context.

As can be seen, there are a number of matters at a strategic level that remain uncertain. These could lead to the need for an early review of the Plan.

Figure 3 Plan of the District in strategic context



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### Planning Locally

- 1.19** In preparing this Plan we have sought to both gather the right evidence to justify the plan’s policies and proposals and involve local people and stakeholders at the right stages.
- 1.20** The evidence base to support the Plan is available on the Council’s website<sup>9</sup>. It ranges from studies to assess the need for different types of development, to assessing the impact of development options on key environmental constraints such as the landscape and flooding issues, to assessing the infrastructure requirements of new development including for new transport provision, schools and other community facilities. This evidence has all helped to shape the Plan.
- 1.21** We have also prepared a sustainability appraisal which assesses all the reasonable alternatives we have considered in preparing the Plan, ensuring that the potential environmental, economic and social impacts of the proposals have been systematically taken into account. It plays a key role throughout the plan-making process.
- 1.22** Local input has also been very important in shaping the Plan. There have been three key stages. In 2013, residents told us what the key issues were in their area that the Plan should be addressing, both through written comments and through a series of “Community Conversations”<sup>10</sup>.
- 1.23** In early 2014, residents responded to a major “Issues and Options” consultation where the potential scale of development needed and the options for meeting that need were explained. It was presented as “The Big Challenge Plan” because of the scale of development required and the challenges in trying to provide for that development whilst providing new infrastructure and protecting the environment.
- 1.24** In 2016 we produced a draft plan for consultation so that we could show how and where we were proposing to plan for growth across the district. This

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.wycombe.gov.uk/newlocalplan>

<sup>10</sup> Community Conversations Report (August 2013, Wycombe District Council)

provided an opportunity for the community and to comment both on the draft plan and the evidence that we had produced to support the Plan.

**1.25** Over 3000 people and organisations responded to the 2016 consultation raising nearly 10,000 individual comments/issues<sup>11</sup>. Some of the key messages from the 2016 consultation included:

- The importance of providing new infrastructure to support new growth;
- A large number of comments expressing concerns about releasing greenbelt land for development;
- Concerns about the scale of development proposed at Princes Risborough and the route of any new road associated with the expansion of the town
- A range of comments about individual sites;
- There was also a range of comments on the proposed development management policies.

#### Princes Risborough

**1.26** Initial work on the Local Plan included assessing the opportunity to expand Prince Risborough, this was first considered in 2014. In response to increasing development pressure from speculative planning applications the Council took the decision in 2015 to progress the expansion of town as a separate Area Action Plan.

**1.27** The development of planning policy for Princes Risborough has been guided and informed through a number of engagement activities in 2014 and 2015, including setting up a Steering Group, chaired by the Town Council, with a range of community representation.

**1.28** In February to March 2016, the Council consulted on a draft plan document for Princes Risborough. More than 300 responses were received. These responses indicated that further work would be required on the Plan,

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.wycombe.gov.uk/pages/Planning-and-building-control/New-local-plan/Draft-Wycombe-district-local-plan-consultation-all-comments.aspx>

including a more refined assessment of the options for the southern alignment of the proposed relief road.

- 1.29** As a result of the timetables becoming closely aligned a decision was taken to incorporate the expansion of Princes Risborough into the main Plan.