

REFINED ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION – VALLEY PARK PARISH COUNCIL RESPONSE  
 Valley Park Parish Council appreciates the opportunity to comment on the TVBLP refined issues and options consultation.

We support the priorities of the Corporate Plan and fully support the emphasis of greater scope and detail on climate change.

We also understand the legal implications that Test Valley is required to prepare a Local Plan which is up to date with its policies reviewed at least every five years post adoption.

#### Answers to consultation questions 1 – 18

*We support paragraphs 2.5 in annex 1 and this must be relevant to the next BLP to 2036 paragraphs 2.19 and paragraph 2.20 are also welcomed.*

*The landmass of Test Valley is predominately rural and the next local plan should consider a scale of growth of homes for most villages in order to maintain sustainable communities, either through community led Neighbourhood Plans or through a Borough Council allocation scheme.*

*5.14 © We agree an additional HMA should be created in Stockbridge or the Mid Test area.*

*We also agree with paragraphs 5.16 & 5.19.*

#### Comments on other aspects of the consultation document

The consultation document invites respondents to comment 'on other planning policy matters that will help shape the next Local Plan.'

#### **Local Gaps**

- The Parish Council strongly supports the retention of the Local Gaps, as specified in the current local plan.
  - Given the close proximity of Valley Park to its neighbouring communities there is a high risk of coalescence, which would result in a loss of a sense of place and identity currently afforded by the countryside that separates these communities.
  - Infrastructure in the area is already under significant pressure from the past high level of development, which will be further exacerbated by additional large scale planned development (e.g. North Baddesley). For example, the road network is already at capacity, impacting air quality and quality of life of residents, and local schools are oversubscribed.
  - Valley Park has one of the highest population densities in the Borough and has lower than required open space for its population, which is why not just the local nature reserves but also the surrounding the countryside afforded by the local gaps are of high value to the community.
- The Issues & Options document suggests that local gaps could be achieved through either 'criteria based policy options', defining 'specific areas' or a combination of both. The Parish Council believes that only a 'specific areas' approach should be used as this would provide greater certainty, whereas a 'criteria based policy option' risks inviting challenge in relation to individual development proposals.

#### **Indoor/Outdoor Leisure Facilities and Recreation Areas**

- Knightwood leisure and recreation facilities are well used by the community and will continue to be important in enabling residents to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Given the next local plan will cover a period though to 2036, as part of the local plan development a review is required of how needs for these facilities may change in the future and therefore what further investment will be required by the Borough.

### **Transport - Climate Change and Air Quality**

- Reducing dependency on private cars as a means of transport for Valley Park residents can only be achieved through a combination of actions, supported by the required investment.
  - The Parish Council strongly believes that significantly greater investment in public transport is required if the Borough's climate change ambitions are to be realised. It needs to be improved to a level whereby it is seen by residents to be a convenient, affordable and more sustainable alternative to travelling by car. The Parish has recently been in a position of having to campaign to avoid a *reduction* in bus services, which would have resulted in further road traffic.
  - The pedestrian and cycle ways within Valley Park are well used and provide good access to local facilities, schools, etc., however, these need to be maintained and periodic awareness campaigns undertaken to encourage their continued use, which would also help alleviate parking congestion near facilities and schools. Whilst increased cycling and walking are important in reducing dependency on cars, they are not always a practical alternative for journeys outside the Parish in terms of commuting distance/time or feasibility (e.g. elderly residents or those with young children), which is why public transport has to be significantly improved.
  - The installation of public Electric Vehicle charging points in Valley Park centre. The Community Centre car park owned by Test Valley Borough Council.
  - Whilst Valley Park has good local facilities (convenience store, pub, health centre, etc.), as part of the local plan development, analysis could be undertaken to understand whether journeys by car outside Parishes could be reduced by the addition of further facilities (e.g. post office, café).

### **Green Infrastructure**

- The Parish will be looking for support from the Borough for a program of planting of mature trees in strategic locations within Valley Park area. As well as providing amenity and wellbeing to the community, the increased tree coverage will bring benefits in terms of carbon sequestration and biodiversity.

### **Youth Club/Youth Support Services**

- There are a large number of young people within the Valley Park area that are of an age to benefit from the Knightwood Youth Club and its program of activities. The Parish Council would ask that Borough join it in continuing to assist and support this successful and active youth club.

### **Crime/Anti-Social Behaviour & Safety of the VP Community**

- Valley Park has had little or no community policing for a number of years. The Parish Council and the Valley Park community would therefore welcome the reintroduction of a more visible and active level of community policing.