

25 August 2020

Planning Policy and Economic Development Service  
Test Valley Borough Council  
Beech Hurst  
Weyhill Road  
Andover  
Hampshire  
SP10 3AJ

Dear Sir/Madam

**Next Local Plan: Refined Issues & Options Consultation 2020**  
**Representations on Behalf of Inspired Villages**

Pegasus Group is instructed to respond to the current consultation on the Test Valley Borough Council Next Local Plan: Refined Issues & Options document published in June 2020, on behalf of Inspired Villages (IV).

The Refined Issues and Options document raises specific questions in relation to a number of topics; however we also note some key considerations that are raised by the content of the document, but do not have corresponding questions. We have responded to the following topics/question as relevant to IV's interests:

- **Section 5: Living in Test Valley (Housing and Communities)**
- Settlement Boundaries
- *Question 8*
- *Question 9*
- *Question 10*
- *Question 11*
- *Question 12*
- Housing Mix and Affordable Housing
- **Section 7: Enjoying Test Valley (Environment and Quality of Life)**
- Local Gaps

Further, we note some key planning related issues affecting (or likely to affect) Test Valley that are not covered in the document and we comment on these accordingly.

**We have also enclosed a Local Plan Representations document**, prepared by Inspired Villages, which provides IV's evidence based position on important considerations for the preparation of Local Plans generally, supporting 8 key recommendations for LPAs progressing Local Plans. Relevant points are referred to in this letter.

## **Section 5: Living in Test Valley (Housing and Communities)**

### Settlement Boundaries

#### *Question 8*

*In updating the settlement boundaries to reflect recent development which has been built and development with planning permission, should we also include new allocations?*

IV strongly supports the updating of Settlement Boundaries to incorporate recent development and proposals which have planning permission, but have not yet commenced. It would be illogical for land which has been confirmed as acceptable to accommodate development not to be identified as such in policy.

For the same reasons, amended Settlement Boundaries should include new allocations. The Council will need to identify allocated land as suitable to deliver its development requirements, which will have been determined to be acceptable in principle. It would therefore be inappropriate for this land to be identified as countryside on the Proposals/Policy Map(s).

The Council has suggested different options for allocating land for development, and if there is potential for this to be done, or added to, through later documents to follow on after the Local Plan, it will be important for development of land that is confirmed as acceptable in principle not to be delayed. New allocations included within amended Settlement Boundaries in the next Local Plan will assist in achieving delivery without delay, with the detailed considerations dealt with via the application process.

#### *Question 9*

*How should we define settlement boundaries? What types of land uses should be included, such as public open space?*

#### *Question 10*

*Should the approach to using whole curtilages for defining settlement boundaries be retained, or should we take account of physical boundaries which extend beyond curtilages, or limit settlement boundaries to only parts of curtilages?*

#### *Question 11*

*Should settlement boundaries be drawn more tightly or more loosely, and perhaps reflecting which tier settlement is within the settlement hierarchy?*

#### *Question 12*

*Should settlement boundaries provide further opportunities for further limited growth beyond infill and redevelopment?*

In response to questions 9, 10, 11 and 12, it is important that Settlement Boundaries do not preclude development on suitable land based purely on existing ownership or physical boundaries and/or current existence or lack of built development.

Housing delivery could be improved if Settlement Boundaries are considered more closely to ensure that land associated with settlements, and appropriate to deliver development



(with due regard to the settlement's position in the hierarchy, accessibility and proximity to services and facilities), is not excluded from Settlement Boundaries.

Alternatively, if Settlement Boundaries are kept relatively tight to existing developed sites, associated policies could be more flexible to allow for appropriate development on sites adjacent to Settlement Boundaries in certain circumstances. For example, where a demonstrable unmet need for a type of development is identified, and that development is appropriate for a settlement location.

The enclosed IV document provides examples of policies which take a similar approach at page 18. In these examples, the policies are permissive of specialist housing and supported accommodation on sites within Settlement Boundaries, and sites adjacent to Settlement Boundaries or in the countryside, provided a number of criteria are met. The criteria relate to the proximity to services and facilities and the demonstrable need for such development.

Although the appropriateness of this type of policy is not necessarily limited to developments providing specialist housing, this is where IV's specialist knowledge and experience lies.

The delivery of a suitable housing mix to meet different needs is discussed further in the following section; however, the related information included in the enclosed document demonstrates why the delivery of particular types of specialist housing may warrant a policy that deals with Settlement Boundaries differently. Paragraphs 2.12 and 2.22 of the enclosed document explain that there is a minimum scale required for certain types of specialist housing for older people, which is also a type of accommodation most appropriately located in close proximity to existing services and facilities. For this reason, criteria-based planning policies that allow such development beyond Settlement Boundaries, where it meets identified need, is otherwise locationally suitable, and does not conflict with other policies, should be progressed. The planning application process will filter out those that are unacceptable for other reasons, based on conflict with other detailed policies.

Without this type of approach, it is difficult to see how authorities will deliver specialist housing to meet residents' needs, along with all its associated benefits (as discussed in the enclosed document).

We note that existing retirement communities within TVBC (LifeCare at Nursling and Audley at Stanbridge Earls) are in very rural locations. Although the preference is for this type of facility to be positioned in close proximity to services and facilities, within Settlement Boundaries site size often precludes this, making edge of settlement locations appropriate for delivery.

#### Housing Mix and Affordable Housing

First and foremost, we highlight the absence of content relating to the delivery of specialist housing. Although the document acknowledges that there is a need for housing an ageing population, and confirms that a new Strategic Housing Market Assessment will inform housing policies, it does not make any suggestions, or raise any questions, relating to delivery.

The current adopted Local Plan acknowledges the need for housing to suit specific groups of people, including older people, in the current SHMA. However, there are no related policies for delivery. This should not be repeated in the next Local Plan.

We refer to the recent **report, 'Unlocking Potential for Senior Living Development' (enclosed)**, which highlights that more than half of the England's local authorities still don't have clear policies in place to support housing for seniors, despite the critical need identified in Planning Practice Guidance in 2019. The report states that:

*"This represents a crisis in planning policy with regards to seniors housing which needs to be addressed immediately to deliver age-appropriate housing. Moreover, this report shows a misalignment between local planning policy and the rate of demographic change, which is exacerbated in larger cities. This should not be allowed to happen any longer."*

IV's enclosed document has been prepared to highlight this exact issue, whereby Local Plans must go further than acknowledging the ageing population, and take positive measures to support delivery through the planning process.

As is described in the enclosed document:

- Retirement village operators searching for suitable accessible sites will normally be in competition with residential developers for allocated sites. There are far greater costs, as well as long-term ownership and management commitments, associated with delivering a retirement village. Uncertainty caused by a lack of specific policies results in delay to delivery and reduces investor confidence, meaning that residential developers are far more likely to be successful in securing (or being in a position to promote) allocated sites.
- There are unlikely to be other sites of a suitable scale available within Settlement Boundaries to deliver viable retirement villages;
- Specialist housing for older people now comes in a variety of forms, a direct response to the need for flexible options to cater for the different or changing circumstances people find themselves in, or are planning for;
- The majority of these types of development are focused on retaining independence, but this is generally achievable as a result of the supporting services available on-site.
- The residents do not bring additional requirements for health and social care services in to an area, they generally already reside in the area, but are looking to make a positive change to support themselves and reduce the need for GP visits or hospital appointments. In doing so, they usually release under occupied family-sized housing back to the market.
- Retirement village developments generate substantially less traffic movements and parking requirements than standard housing, and usually have a certain level of on-site facilities, meaning an edge of settlement location can sustainably be supported.

There are significant benefits to this type of development, which require the appropriate support of Development Plans to be viably delivered.



The release of under-occupied family housing back to the market is a key consideration for local authorities. Within the **County Councils Network's 'Planning for Retirement' report (enclosed)**, Recommendation 10 is that retirement community housing should be counted as double against delivery targets. We note that Hampshire County Council are members of the County Council's Network.

We suggest this should be intrinsic to the consideration of Settlement Boundary related policies.

## **Section 7: Enjoying Test Valley (Environment and Quality of Life)**

### **Local Gaps**

Section 7 includes a sub-section on Local Gaps, however no questions are raised on this topic.

IV agrees that if the authority intends to continue to identify Local Gaps in the next Local Plan, there would need to be evidence based justification for doing so. Where Settlement Boundaries and countryside related policies provide the basis for decision making in appropriate locations to avoid the coalescence of settlements, there would need to be clear justification for an additional layer of policy relating to Local Gaps.

We note the lack of any national policy or status relating to Local Gaps, as well as the recent Court of Appeal Decision, *Liverpool Open and Green Spaces Community Interest Company v Liverpool City Council and Redrow Homes Ltd [2020] EWCA Civ 861*. Taking account of these factors, it is important that, if Local Gaps are brought forward within the next Local Plan, policy wording allows for the balanced consideration of proposals for development by the decision maker.

If they are progressed, it is extremely important that Local Gap boundaries and the associated policies are reviewed. Where land does not contribute to the purpose or attributes of a Local Gap, it should not be retained within the designation simply as a result of rolling forward existing policies and boundaries.

This is true of the land with the benefit of planning permission ref. 17/01615/OUTS, Chandler's Ford, as well as the land adjacent to it (SHELAA site 295). This site represents an isolated and visually contained piece of land, adjacent to existing development, which makes no contribution to the purposes of the Local Gap. This site is physically separated from the rest of the Local Gap by Trodd's Copse SSSI to the northwest and the railway line and embankment to the south, which physically prevent any expansion. It is otherwise surrounded by existing development. A review of Local Gap boundaries should result in the removal of this site and others like it from this designation.

## **Issues not Raised in the Refined I&O Document**

### **Nitrates in the Solent**

The Refined Issues & Options document does not mention this significant issue, which is having a substantial impact on housing delivery, with the lack of a solution resulting in an inability to issue planning permissions for otherwise acceptable development.

While we imagine the authority is hopeful that a strategic solution will be agreed on at a higher level, the Development Plan and its evidence base cannot afford to be silent on the matter if this does not occur. We would therefore expect that working with partners on a solution to this issue should be a critical matter of consideration in progressing the Next Local Plan.

#### Government's Proposed Standard Method

We note that under the proposed standard method recently published for consultation, Test Valley's housing need figure would be increased by 46% over the current standard method figure.

While it is fully acknowledged that the consultation on the proposed standard method was commenced after this consultation on the Refined Issues & Options document, this only serves to highlight the importance of a flexible approach to housing delivery to ensure a robust and long-standing Local Plan.

#### Encs:

1. Next Local Plan - Refined Issues and Options Consultation Comments Form
2. Inspired Villages: 'Representation by Inspired Villages for a Local Plan that will support the practical delivery of much-needed specialist accommodation to meet the needs of an ageing population'
3. Irwin Mitchell: 'Unlocking Potential for Senior Living Development'
4. County Councils Network: 'Planning for Retirement'

# Test Valley Borough Council Next Local Plan - Refined Issues and Options Consultation

## COMMENTS FORM

Test Valley Borough Council has published for public participation its Refined Issues and Options document. This is the second stage of preparing the next Local Plan, which follows the Issues and Options consultation in 2018.

You can respond to our consultation by filling out the form below. Further information can be found on our website at: [www.testvalley.gov.uk/nextlocalplan](http://www.testvalley.gov.uk/nextlocalplan)

The consultation period runs from Friday 3 July 2020 to 4.30pm on 28 August 2020. Please respond before the close of the consultation period.

Once the form has been completed, please send to

If you are unable to send via email, please send a postal copy to our address below.

### Contacting us

We are happy to help. If you have any queries, please contact us at:  
Planning Policy and Economic Development Service  
Test Valley Borough Council  
Beech Hurst  
Weyhill Road  
Andover  
SP10 3AJ

Tel: 01264 368000

Website: [www.testvalley.gov.uk/nextlocalplan](http://www.testvalley.gov.uk/nextlocalplan)



## Part A: Your Details

Please fill in all boxes marked with an \*

Title*		First Name*	
Surname*			
Organisation* (If responding on behalf of an organisation)			

If you wish your comments to be acknowledged and to be kept informed of progress, please provide your email address below:

Email Address*	
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If you don't have an email address and wish your comments to be acknowledged and to be kept informed of progress, please provide your postal address.

Address*			
	Postcode		

If you are an agent please give the name/company/organisation you are representing:

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### Personal Details and General Data Protection Regulation

Please note that representations cannot be treated as confidential. If you are responding as an individual, rather than as an organisation, we will not publish your contact details (email/postal address and telephone number) or signatures online, however the original representations will be available for public viewing at our offices by prior appointment. All representations and related documents will be held by the Council for a period of 6 months after the next Local Plan is adopted.

The Council respects your privacy and is committed to protecting your personal data. Further details on the General Data Protection Regulation and Privacy Notices are available on our website

<http://www.testvalley.gov.uk/aboutyourcouncil/accesstoinformation/gdpr>



## Part B: Your Comments

Please use the boxes below to state your comments and questions. Please make it clear which paragraph or question your comments relate to where possible.

Paragraph / Question Ref	Comments
	Please see comments provided in the attached letter.

*Please use next page if necessary*

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**What happens next?**

All valid responses will be acknowledged and you will be given a reference number. Please quote this number when contacting the Council about the next Local Plan. If you have an agent acting on your behalf, correspondence will be sent to your agent.

All response received will be taken into account as part of the preparation of the next Local Plan.