



North Bucks

Sherrington. Earlier in the year, the planning inspectorate approved 36 homes immediately north of the village. Now two applications to build in the same area have been rejected. Planning inspector William Fieldhouse rejected plans for nine greenfield houses saying: “The site’s inappropriate location would mean that the proposal would detract from the rural character of this part of the countryside and the setting of the village” ^{Appeal Case Report}. The same inspector dismissed an appeal for another 14 houses north of the village. His reasons were that: “The substantial harm that the proposal would cause to the character and appearance of the area, together with the limited harm that would arise from the loss of agricultural land and the fact that the proposal would fail to contribute to the creation of a sustainable pattern of development” ^{Appeal Case Report}.

Milton Keynes council is consulting on 21 development sites across the borough ^{MKC}. Attempts to reduce public participation in the planning process failed to get backing from councillors at a heated meeting of the council in September ^{MKC}. Badminton England is in conflict with the Parks Trust over expansion of its training site at Loughton. The trust is insisting that if it gives up green space at Loughton, an equivalent area must be transferred to it, perhaps at Emberton. Badminton England is threatening to pull out of MK altogether ^{MKC}. The 50-hectare Stanton Low Park near Stantonbury has been transferred to the Parks Trust ^{MKC}. New plans for a waste transfer centre on the edge of Willen Lake have been withdrawn after neighbourhood objections ^{MKC}. A planning inquiry has taken place into plans by retail conglomerate Intu to expand into public open space on Midsummer Place. Campaigners say the proposal is contrary to the business district neighbourhood plan ^{MKC}.

Milton Keynes appeals. Proposals for 15 market and 6 affordable homes at Calverton Road, Stony Stratford have been rejected on appeal. The inspector concluded that the development would intrude into the linear park alongside the River Ouse and could cause significant harm to local wildlife ^{Appeal Case Report}. Another inspector approved 350 homes at Church Farm, Wavendon. Councillors had turned down the scheme despite the site being allocated in the Milton Keynes core strategy. They said the access arrangements would put pedestrians and cyclists at risk. The inspector disagreed and awarded costs against the council ^{Appeal Case Report}.

Wingrave with Rowsham. The neighbourhood plan received 78% support on a 40% turnout ^{Info99}. The plan allows for 100 homes on three sites, 35% affordable, sets design standards and designates six local green spaces.



Wingrave housing sites (red) and local green spaces

VALP. More than 1,600 responses have been received to the draft Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan ^{Info99}. In common with councils around the country that lack an up to date local plan, Aylesbury Vale council must submit its draft plan for examination by March 2017. The draft plan proposes building 30,000 homes by 2033. For comparison, Buckingham has a population of 12,000.

Aylesbury Vale

Bierton. Councillors rejected plans for 23 homes off William Hill Drive on the edge of Bierton against officers’ advice. The plans had received 129 objections. The councillors said: “The development is of a scale and nature on a green field site which would represent an obtrusion in to open countryside and result in significant adverse impacts on the rural character and appearance of the site and would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the adjacent designated conservation area” ^{Info99}.

Watermead crematorium. The parish council has been given leave to appeal a high court decision in favour of building a crematorium. Allowing the hearing, the judge said: “I accept that all three of the appeal grounds have a real prospect of success... and also that the questions... relating to the interpretation and application of NPPF policy for the presumption in favour of sustainable development and for development in areas at risk of flooding provide a compelling reason for the appeal to be heard” ^{Info99}.



Proposed crematorium at Watermead

Green belt addition backed. Leighton Buzzard councillors and Andrew Selous, MP for South West Beds, are supporting an AVDC plan for designating land at Valley Farm, Linslade as green belt. A developer is currently appealing a housing plan for the site .

Link road “will not work”. The Hampden Fields Action Group has commissioned a traffic report which claims proposals for 3,000 homes near Weston Turville and Bedgrove would create havoc on the A41 and A413. Phil Yerby, chairman of the action group, said: “Everyone seems to think a link road will help – I thought that too before I looked at the facts. The unique way Aylesbury has developed with all its infrastructure in close proximity in the centre means placing so many houses around the outside will be devastating”  .

Arla is proposing an anaerobic digester and a materials recycling facility next door to its dairy near Aston Clinton. The digester would process 50,000 tonnes of waste food a year to power the dairy .

Seven Aylesbury Vale Appeal Wins

Aylesbury Vale is under unprecedented development pressure. Housing policy has been in disarray for some while after the draft Vale of Aylesbury Plan was withdrawn under pressure from the planning inspectorate at the beginning of 2014. The replacement draft plan is aiming for 33,000 new homes by 2039. Some 12,000 of these will be built for neighbouring councils that are unable to meet their housing need due to green belt constraints. It is recognised that the Vale does not have a five-year land supply for housing. Despite this, seven recent appeal decisions have blocked greenfield housing developments. In all, 1,710 dwellings have been rejected since the beginning of September because of the damage the proposals would cause to the character of the landscape or villages.

Appeal 1) Stoke Mandeville. A planning inspector rejected plan for 18 homes at Hideaway Farm, near Stoke Mandeville . He said the site, which is occupied by redundant buildings, trailers and other unplanned uses, “has a cluttered and unkempt appearance which detracts from the open and rural character of its surroundings.” But: “It is inevitable that the dwellings, together with the associated estate road and domestic boundary treatments would completely change the open character of the land.” The inspector also cited the lack of public transport in his reasons for refusal before concluding:

“[The development] would impose a considerable extent of discordant built development upon the landscape contrary to the Framework’s aspirations for planning to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and to promote local distinctiveness and high quality design. The dwellings would also be sited in an area remote from shops, services and community facilities leading to unsustainable travel patterns.”

Appeal 2) In Slapton, near Leighton Buzzard, a planning inspector rejected plans for 18 houses and bungalows. She said the layout would bear little relation to the development pattern at the edge of the village. “It would appear as a suburban estate tacked onto the side of the village” .

Appeal 3) Watermead housing. Sajid Javid, secretary of state for communities, has thrown out plans for up to 1,560 dwellings, together with a primary school, nursery, a mixed use local centre for retail, employment, healthcare and community uses, green infrastructure and new link road on the edge of Aylesbury  . He agreed with a planning inspector’s report that the development would lead to “blurring of the distinction between Aylesbury and Berton”. Javid continued:

“The proposals would result in a fundamental and adverse change to the character of the landscape, and that the visual impacts of the proposal would be especially marked by extending the influence of Aylesbury into the open countryside and onto land which currently provides containment to the built up area.”

Rejecting the appeal, Mr Javid said the development would lead to the loss of 55 hectares of best and most versatile agricultural land and the scheme would not amount to sustainable development.



Rejected plans for Watermead housing

Appeal 4) Great Horwood. The secretary of state has refused planning permission for 42 homes near Milton Keynes . He said that even though AVDC had not identified a five-year land supply, the proposed development would only make a “minimal” contribution to the supply of housing. Noting the limited facilities in Great Horwood village, poor public transport and lack of affordable housing, he concluded the scheme would be unsustainable development.

Appeal 5) Whitchurch. An outline application for 59 homes on agricultural land on the edge Whitchurch, north of Aylesbury was refused at appeal . The site falls in a designated Area of Attractive Landscape. The inspector said: “The residential development of the appeal site would markedly change the character of the appeal site both in itself and for those using the public rights of way network on the site and on either side. This urbanisation would be significantly harmful to the character and appearance of this section of the countryside.” The plan for four rows of development would be “significantly and harmfully out of character and historic form with the majority of development both in the vicinity of the appeal site and Whitchurch more generally.” Despite acknowledging that Aylesbury Vale does not have a five-year land supply, the inspector dismissed the appeal by Rectory Homes.

Appeal 6) Bierton. An outline application for 25 homes at Bierton, near Aylesbury was rejected by a planning inspector. He concluded that the development would not though damage the Bierton conservation area but: “The proposal would appear as uncharacteristically suburban intrusion into this open rural area to the detriment of the character and appearance of the area and the general settlement pattern of the village” Appeal Cases Portal.

Appeal 7) Worminghall. An outline application for five dwellings at Coldstream Farm was rejected. The planning inspector said: “The proposal would result in a significant encroachment of overly dominant and compact built form that would set itself apart from adjoining development and not integrate well with it... The development would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area” Appeal Cases Portal.

Mid Chiltern

Conversion blocked. A planning inspector blocked conversion of an agricultural barn into a house at Daisy Lee Farm, Marlow. He said there would be a substantial increase in floor area from the original building and the alterations would be inappropriate development in the green belt. He also said the proposed design would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area Appeal Cases Portal.

Marlow. Plans for a modern house on historic St Peter Street have been rejected by a planning inspector Bucks Free Press.

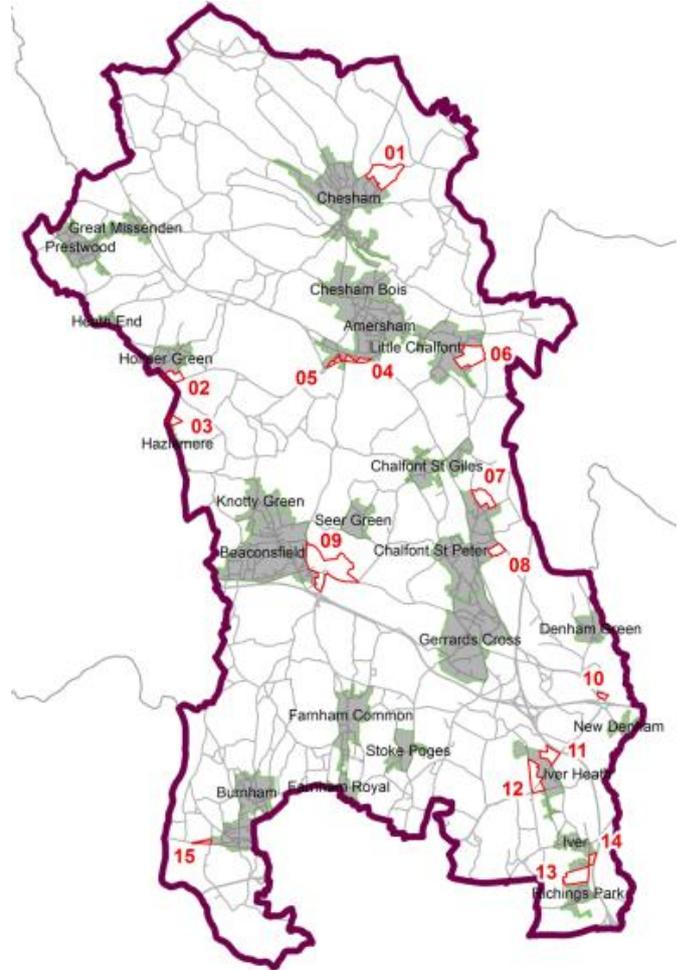
Wycombe council is to consult on plans to build 125 homes and a hilltop park at the Ashwells reserve site between High Wycombe and Tylers Green Bucks Free Press 



Gomm Valley and Ashwells reserve sites

South Bucks Green Belt Threatened

Chiltern and South Bucks councils have issued a Green Belt Preferred Options document for consultation as part of the emerging Chiltern and South Buckinghamshire Local Plan. An earlier consultation attracted 5,500 responses, many opposing development in the green belt. The councils are now proposing to remove 15 sites from the green belt including a 117-hectare area east of Beaconsfield and a 57-hectare site north east of Chesham. The consultation closes on 12 December PEi.



Proposals to remove 15 sites from the green belt in South Bucks and Chilterns

Penn Country

Green belt appeals. The planning inspectorate has allowed an appeal for a 14.5m long greenhouse at Penn Meadow Farm, Bayleys Bottom, Forty Green. The farm is in the Chilterns AONB and the green belt. The inspector concluded that the greenhouse would not be inappropriate development within the green belt Appeal Cases Portal. Plans for a coach house, with six apartments, at Crown House, Farnham Royal have been rejected by the planning inspectorate. The brownfield site lies in the green belt. Crown House was formerly offices and is being converted into housing. The inspector said that the proposed coach house would damage the openness of the green belt and would be inappropriate development Appeal Cases Portal.

Pub saved. Plans to convert the White Lion in St Leonards into housing have been dismissed by a planning inspector. He said the pub’s “decline and closure seems to have been the result of poor management and lack of commitment rather than as a result of competition.” The pub is on popular walking routes including the Chiltern Way. It had been registered as an asset of community value and residents had raised £370,000 towards purchasing the premises. The owners, who had been using the pub as a house, must now remove all furniture and paraphernalia not associated with the ground floor of a pub within 12 months. 

Neighbourhood plan reinstated. The residents of Chalfont St Peter had to vote on their neighbourhood plan again at the beginning of September. The second vote was necessary after a successful judicial review by the owners of Winkers Nightclub, who had objected to the building being included in a list of facilities to be protected by the neighbourhood plan. Chiltern council said the court decision also meant that the first referendum decision, which saw 79% of voters back the plan, was quashed. References to Winkers Nightclub were removed and the plan was otherwise unchanged. The turnout dropped from 21% in the first referendum to 16% and 86% of voters backed the plan. 

The East West Corridor

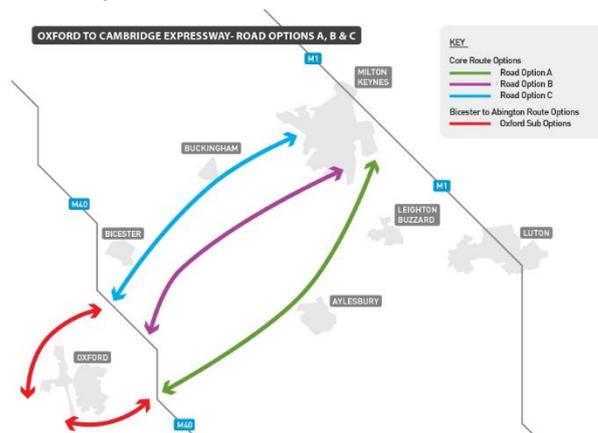
East West Rail. It’s mixed news for the ‘Varsity Line’ rail project. Buckinghamshire council has purchased the site for the planned Winslow station . The Heartland Strategic Alliance of councils is calling for the line from Oxford to Cambridge, Norwich and Ipswich to be prioritised by the government for its economic benefits . Council leaders along the proposed route are seeking a meeting with Network Rail chiefs to discuss concerns that the eastern phases of the project could be postponed beyond 2024 . Rail supporters are also concerned that the government is reacting with enthusiasm to proposals for upgrading the east west road corridor while not committing to completion of the Varsity Line, which could eventually link Oxfordshire and Bucks to Norwich and Ipswich.

East West Expressway. The transport department has published a strategic study of the case for the Oxford to Cambridge expressway . The report said that a new link will improve journey times by up to 30 minutes along the length of the route and support economic growth in the towns and cities on the expressway. Part of the case for the road is the limited rail connectivity between Oxford and Cambridge, including the lack of a government commitment to the link between Bedford and Cambridge. This stretch requires the construction of an entirely new rail line as the previous line was closed in the 1960s and much of the land has been developed for other uses. High levels of housing and employment growth along the Oxford Cambridge corridor and an increase in traffic of up to 40% by 2035 are also part of the case. The corridor has higher levels of car ownership and a higher level of employment, especially in ‘knowledge jobs’, than the national average, along with a younger population. The study says that at present the number of workers commuting along the east west corridor is low.

East West Expressway... An upgraded road “could address this by reducing the unattractive journey times between Cambridge and Oxford.” The study predicts that journeys in Aylesbury Vale and Milton Keynes will grow 21% by 2041. The report concludes:

Without strategic transport interventions, the forecast increase in travel demand and traffic growth will significantly increase delays and congestion on the primary east-west route, constraining economic growth of the communities within the study area and the key growth areas of Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge.

The government is considering three corridors between Milton Keynes and Oxford.



Expressway route options

If approved, work on the expressway is expected to get underway after 2020.

High Speed 2

Commitment. Transport Secretary Chris Grayling has insisted that High Speed 2 will go ahead. Speaking to the Conservative Party conference, he said  **P:**

“We need to get more freight off the roads and onto rail. So how do we do that? Easy. We create more space on our railways. And how do we do that? We build a new railway that links our major cities – so we’ve got more space for freight trains and commuter trains on our other busiest lines. That is why we need to press ahead with HS2...”

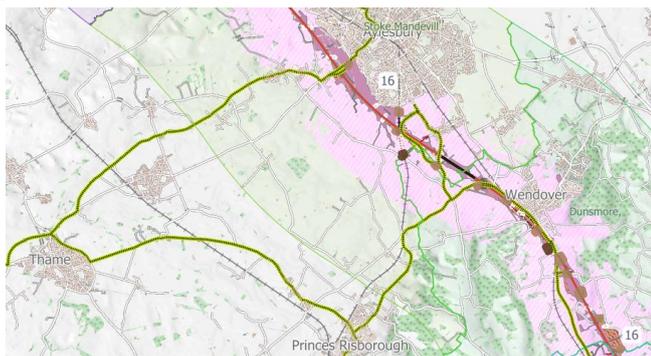
“And if we need to build a new railway, why on earth wouldn’t we build a new, state of the art one for the coming century.”

Mitigation. More than £1 million will be spent on road improvements in Chalfont St Peter and Great Missenden ahead of construction of HS2 . Bucks council leader, Martin Tett said:

“Securing mitigation from HS2 Ltd can quite frankly feel like pulling teeth, so winning this new package of measures, which will make a real difference to local residents, is a testament to the hard work of the County Council and its partners. I’ve made no secret of my opposition to this vanity project – and it would be far better if the Government stopped at the £2bn it has already wasted on HS2 without a single piece of track being laid, rather than spend a further £53bn on it. The decision to expand Heathrow makes the case for HS2 even weaker, as the line was originally justified as an alternative to the third runway.”

MPs John Bercow and Cheryl Gillan called on the government to reconsider the HS2 project, a request firmly rejected by Chris Grayling .

CPRE Bucks has published an updated briefing on progress with HS2 in the county . CPRE's national team have published maps of the construction routes for the rail line. Ralph Smyth, senior transport campaigner for CPRE said: "Our maps show that much more needs to be done so that the process of constructing HS2 does not disrupt rural communities and destroy country roads. They also suggest how the final design of HS2 can be improved so that the new railway, if it is built, is something the country can be proud of in decades to come" .



Constructions Routes south of Aylesbury

Outdoor centre threat. The department of transport has refused to relocate the Hillingdon Outdoor Activities Centre. The high speed line will cross the Colne Valley on a viaduct. Plans to move the facility to Dinham Quarry have fallen through on cost grounds. It is now expected that the outdoor centre will close before construction work begins on the viaduct .

Heathrow Wins

Third runway. Announcing that the government supported a building a third runway at Heathrow, transport secretary Chris Grayling said   .

The step that government is taking today is truly momentous. I am proud that after years of discussion and delay this government is taking decisive action to secure the UK's place in the global aviation market – securing jobs and business opportunities for the next decade and beyond. A new runway at Heathrow will bring economic benefits to passengers and the wider economy worth up to £61 billion. Up to 77,000 additional local jobs are expected to be created over the next 14 years and the airport has committed to create 5,000 new apprenticeships over the same period.

Councils. Martin Tett, chairman of the Heartland Strategic Alliance and leader of Buckinghamshire council, welcomed the scheme  .

"With Heathrow located on the doorstep of the Heartland area, its good news for improving our access to global markets, helping our businesses remain competitive and remaining an attractive location for inward investment. Clearly, we expect that sufficient safety and environmental protection measures will be included within the plans and that delivering improved public transport connectivity to the airport will be integral to the proposals as they emerge."

Business groups also welcomed the plans for a third runway . Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership said: "We are delighted with today's announcement, which will have a significant impact on the local economy and will continue to support the global recognition of Buckinghamshire as an excellent location for business and for national and international investment."

MPs. Cheryl Gillan, MP for Chesham and Amersham, also welcomed the expansion plans. She asked for an assessment to be made of the cumulative and detrimental effect on the Buckinghamshire economy of having two major infrastructure projects being built in the same time frame and in proximity, namely HS2 and the expansion of Heathrow . Beaconsfield MP Dominic Grieve has doubts over the scheme:

"The announcement that the Government intends to support a third runway at Heathrow, will be met with very mixed feelings in the Beaconsfield Constituency.

"Many will welcome the economic advantages which it can bring. But it also has the capacity to create a profound adverse environmental impact on parts of my constituency and in particular in the Iver and Richings Park area. This is already under great strain from pollution and excessive vehicle movements linked to poorly or unplanned developments over past decades.

"No scheme will be acceptable that does not include the proper infrastructure investment that is required to reconcile growing economic activity with the needs of local residents."

Steve Baker, MP for Wycombe, has previously supported the **Heathrow Hub** proposal . On Twitter, he has expressed support for new runways at Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted and Luton . Aylesbury MP, David Lidington, had previously called for a limit on flights at Heathrow but has not made a recent statement. North Bucks MPs John Bercow, Mark Lancaster, Ian Stewart have also not commented.

Unitary Bucks

Unitary dispute. A report from consultancy Deloitte for the district councils concludes that either a two-unitary or a three-unitary council model would be the best option for simplifying local government south of Milton Keynes. The two-council model would see a unitary authority for Aylesbury Vale and another combining Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe councils. The three-council model would create unitary authorities in Aylesbury Vale and Wycombe and merge Chiltern and South Bucks councils. The county council would be abolished in both models  . The county council favours a single unitary authority for all of Bucks except Milton Keynes  .

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Views expressed in the eBulletin and its editorial approach are those of its editor and not any part of CPRE. You can keep up-to-date with planning and the environment in Bucks on the **CPRE Bucks website**.