



Frequently Asked Questions

Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan 2036

Examination in Public



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Local Plan 2036 - FAQs

[What is the Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan 2036?](#)

The Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan 2036 sets out how the south and east areas of Buckinghamshire will develop over the next 16 years.

The Local Plan 2036 proposes new policies for determining planning applications; includes new retail, employment and housing allocations and makes changes to some existing land use designations.

It will establish how the Council will provide positively for south and east Buckinghamshire's needs; put in place the necessary infrastructure to support development and protect the environment and the character of the towns and villages.

[Why do we need one – and why don't we withdraw the current one?](#)

The Local Plan Regulations 2012 (as amended) sets a legal requirement for local authorities to review their Local Plans at least every five years. In March 2020, the Government announced that it will require all councils to have up-to-date Local Plans by December 2023 and that it will be prepared to intervene where councils fail to meet this deadline.

The reason for this stance from Government is that Local Plans are critically important to ensure that the Council can plan for development and avoid or mitigate the impacts from such developments. Without a Local Plan the Council cannot achieve a five year supply of housing sites. Without a five year supply of housing sites the Council is in a weaker position to refuse speculative applications with ill-thought through design and mitigation measures.

The Local Plan 2036 sets out how the south and east areas of Buckinghamshire will provide for 15,260 new homes; 5,725 of which will be located in the north and central areas of Buckinghamshire in the former district of Aylesbury Vale; and all the infrastructure and associated mitigation measures to support these homes.

Withdrawing the Plan now would mean that Council would fail to meet the 2023 deadline and also fail its communities by not being able to secure sustainable growth as its current policies for south and east Buckinghamshire are out of date.

How has the Local Plan been developed so far?

Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils worked on a joint Local Plan from 2015. This has included evidence gathering and public consultations.

Both Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils approved the Local Plan 2036 for publication and submission at their Full Council meetings on 14 and 15 May 2019. The Plan was consulted on from 7 June to the 23 August 2019 and was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for Examination on the 26 September 2019.

Preparations for Stage 1 of the hearings took place through the submission of written statements on the matters, issues and questions raised by the Planning Inspectors. Hearings for the examination were to take place from 17 March 2020 but were cancelled due to Covid-19. Instead the Planning Inspectors invited an exchange of written statements on Matter 1 - Issue 1, the Duty to Cooperate.

The Planning Inspectors delivered their initial findings on 7 May 2020 and stated:

Whilst we have sought to be pragmatic in our approach, Section 20(7A) of the Act requires that the examiners must recommend non-adoption of the Plan if they consider that a Council has not complied with the DTC. We will not reach a final conclusion on this matter until the Council has had the opportunity to consider our findings and respond to this letter. However, it is important that we point out that there is a strong likelihood that the only option will be for the Council to withdraw the Plan.

On 12 May 2020 the Council responded to these initial findings through an initial response:

The Council in its (full) response to your letter will demonstrate that when the correct test is applied to the proper context, the only proper conclusion is that the duty was discharged. The significant weaknesses in your initial findings have demonstrated that this is not an issue which can appropriately be dealt with exclusively on paper and the Council therefore requires that the matter and the substance of its response now be dealt with at a hearing. We anticipate being in a position to submit our full response, once the arrangements for that hearing have been fixed.

On 20 May 2020 the Planning Inspectors responded to the Council's initial findings confirming that they were amenable to the request to have a hearing in person regarding the Duty to Cooperate.

What happens next?

The Council and the Planning Inspectors are in the process of setting a date for the hearing, subject to Government advice on when such a public gathering will be permissible.

Why aren't we co-operating with Slough Borough Council?

The Council has been cooperating with Slough Borough Council (Slough) in the preparation of the Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan and the preparation of the Slough Local Plan since September 2016. Slough's preparation of its Local Plan slipped considerably from this point and the two Plans then became out of kilter. This meant that, while the Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan was moving forward, no evidence was received from Slough to confirm the level of unmet housing needs to be taken into consideration within the Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan. This was recognised in the Cabinet report which authorised Slough's representation to the Chiltern and South Bucks Publication Local Plan consultation in July 2019 which stated that:

"it is not considered that Chiltern and South Bucks have failed the Duty to Cooperate, because they are participating in the joint Wider Area Growth Study¹ which is seeking to resolve some of the outstanding issues."

This participation is on-going and includes a joint study on future growth called the Wider Area Growth Study'. The results of this study are expected towards the end of 2020 and can inform the evidence of emerging Local Plans at that time.

Local Plan preparation includes engagement with neighbouring local planning authorities on shared strategic issues. A Statement of Common Ground can be used to record this cooperation.

A draft Statement of Common Ground was submitted by this Council to Slough on 10 December 2019 following an agreement to update the existing Memorandum of Understanding (which served a similar purpose). This followed email and face-to-face discussions which had taken place since April 2019, as a result of which it was understood that Slough would be revising and updating a memorandum of understanding from 2017 and converting it into a statement of common ground. The statement of common ground provides information on meetings and correspondence which have taken place between the authorities. The key area of disagreement between the authorities are that many of the sites which Slough wish to use to promote their

¹ A Government funded study which is intended to address issues arising from growth that is anticipated across the area.

'Northern Extension' to help to address their own unmet need involve the release of highly performing Green Belt land in the former South Bucks district.

[Why aren't we waiting for the Buckinghamshire Council Local Plan?](#)

Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils had been working on producing a Joint Local Plan since 2015 which has involved extensive evidence gathering and three public consultations.

Not having a Local Plan leaves the area vulnerable to speculative planning applications.

The other former districts in Buckinghamshire are Aylesbury Vale, whose Local Plan is at an advanced stage of preparation through the analysis of the representations to their Main Modifications consultation, whilst Wycombe has adopted its new Local Plan. The Chiltern and South Bucks Plan is also well advanced as it has reached the examination hearing stage by March 2020.

This provides for an up-to-date suite of Local Plans in the new Council's five planning areas:

- North and Central – Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan
- South and East – Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan
- West – Wycombe Local Plan

This means that the whole of Buckinghamshire should be in a position to meet the Government's target to have plans in place by 2023. It also means that effective decision making can take place based on up to date planning policies and rigorously tested allocations.

This also provides a strong basis for the preparation and adoption of the Buckinghamshire Local Plan by 2025.

[Can we wait until the Buckinghamshire Local Plan is in place and then build in some of our housing requirements to the north of the county?](#)

The Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan 2036 already does this – it meets the housing requirements through:

- a third of homes either built since 2016 or from available brownfield land
- a third of homes from land which least meet the purposes of the Green Belt; and
- a third of homes through the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan.

Does the Local Plan include releasing Green Belt land?

Government planning policy requires local councils to review Green Belt boundaries when considering how to accommodate the development needed in their areas.

The districts need to provide for 15,260 new homes and propose to accommodate over 11,000 homes within the Plan area.

This is an average of 763 net new homes a year for the next 20 years. To achieve this, the focus is on built-up areas, on previously developed land, an exported proportion of need to the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan and by Green Belt releases where sustainable built area extensions can be achieved without unacceptably harming the purposes or integrity of the Green Belt, which currently makes up approximately 87% of land in the east and south planning areas of the Council.

The Local Plan seeks to maximise meeting development needs within the context of environmental, policy and other constraints such as the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Green Belt, areas subject to flood risk, and heritage and wildlife assets.

The Green Belt review resulted in the identification of just 13 of over 500 possible Green Belt sites for potential development. Even with these 13 sites this would only reduce the extent of land in the Green Belt by 2.7%, leaving approximately 85% of the planning areas remaining within the Green Belt.

Have you listened to residents and stakeholders to develop this Local Plan?

Local residents, local groups, businesses, partner organisations, landowners and developers have all contributed to the preparation of the plan.

The last consultation took place from 7 June to August 23, 2019 this followed two earlier consultations on issues and options for the Local Plan in 2016.

The Council has taken account of the representations. As a result, it is considered that this Local Plan can be found sound and will deliver growth in a sustainable way.