

Draft Consultation Statement for RAF Halton – Allocation D-HAL003 RAF Halton of the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan

1. Introduction

Buckinghamshire Council has been working closely with relevant stakeholders to develop the RAF Halton Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This draft consultation statements sets out a high-level summary of the engagement that has been undertaken to inform the SPD.

2. The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) requirements

The SCI says we will produce a draft statement of consultation setting out who we have engaged with in preparing the draft SPD, the issues raised and how we have addressed those issues.

The SCI also says after the consultation we will update the statement of consultation document, setting out the main issues raised and how we have addressed those.

3. Who have we engaged with in preparing the draft SPD (and SEA)

There has been an ongoing process of engagement with key stakeholders and the local community representatives in the preparation of the SPD. Engagement and collaborative working has taken place with the DIO and their appointed consultants for the disposal of the site, as well as with technical specialist officers from Buckinghamshire Council, including those from ecology, landscape, urban design, heritage, archaeology and highways.

As a currently active RAF base, with limited to no public access, the engagement process has provided an opportunity to describe the site and its assets to stakeholders whilst also considering its future use and redevelopment.

Organisations we have engaged with include the following:

- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Buckinghamshire Council's Strategic Sites Working Group (including local ward members for Buckinghamshire)
- The Buckinghamshire Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration
- Halton Parish Council
- Other local Parish Councils (including Aston Clinton, Weston Turville and Wendover)
- Local Buckinghamshire Council Ward members.
- The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)
- The Buckinghamshire Museum Trust

- Forestry England
- The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Board

In addition to the specific engagement with many of the above bodies three stakeholder workshops were held to which representatives of the above bodies were invited. The workshops involved representatives from the local parish councils, specialist officers from the Buckinghamshire Council and representatives from the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) and their own specialist team of consultants, local Buckinghamshire Council Ward members were also invited to attend the workshops. Attendees from the list of engagement groups varied between workshops and the parish councils were able to bring at least two representatives to each workshop.

4. What issues have been raised and how have they been addressed?

Three workshops were held. Stakeholders, parish councillors and local members were invited.

[Workshop 1](#), held in October 2022, shared the findings of the baseline review of the site's constraints and opportunities. Attendees discussed their aspirations and vision for the site, setting out their thoughts as to the look, feel and function of the site could be by 2023. Points raised by Parish Councils and local members:

- Needs of an ageing population locally and therefore housing mix on site
- Need for and location of affordable housing
- Health requirements and provision, especially capacity and accessibility of existing GP practice at Westongrove to serve the additional population
- Concerns that Perch Bridge near Halton village is used as a 'rat-run' and is unsuitable for increased traffic
- Boundary treatment between Halton House and site allocation boundary – how would the boundary work and how to limit public access to the House if it is to be privately owned?
- expressed a desire to take on the existing RAF sports facilities

[Workshop 2](#) took place in February 2023. The emerging development principles for the key elements of landscape, heritage assets, movement, the location of community facilities, and character in the new development were presented and feedback requested on these and two draft concept masterplans for the site. Points raised by Parish Councils and local members:

- Landscape: broad agreement of the land swap proposal that would consolidate green space and developable land to create more logical developable areas whilst maintaining the openness of the Green Belt.
- Heritage: the workshop discussed treatment of the large parade ground at the listed Groves and Henderson Barracks in the north-eastern part of the site. Using the parade ground as some form of formal open space was supported to be the way forward. It was noted that there would be a need to accommodate some car parking in the vicinity of the

parade ground and that a high-quality design solution would be required to incorporate this parking without detracting from the attractiveness of the area as open space. The principles of retaining nationally listed buildings and of retaining locally listed buildings unless there was clear justification for their removal was supported, as was the creation of a heritage hub and visitor centre on site.

- **Movement and access:** the workshop discussions supported the principle of connecting the site to the wider strategic walking and cycling network and to the establishment of an easy walking and cycling network within the new development, including the creation of north-south and east-west avenues across the site. There was support for the opportunity for a bus route through the eastern part of the site, although the need to take care with gradients and vision splays at junctions was noted. The need to design-in opportunities for surveillance and overlooking along the green corridors was emphasised in the interests of safety.
- **School and local centre:** two possible options for the location of the primary school and the local centre were proposed to the workshop. Overall, it was felt that the provision of a new school located on Chestnut Avenue provided the best approach and would allow for future expansion. The local centre location at the crossroads of Chestnut Avenue and the Upper Icknield Way was, on balance, felt to provide the best opportunity for accessibility for residents as well as passing trade.

[Workshop 3](#) was held at the end of March 2023. the draft SPD was presented, outlining the broad content of each chapter and the concept plan. How the key principles and development framework evolved was explained, reflecting the feedback from earlier workshops and technical advice from stakeholders. A key land use issue has been the location of the local centre and new primary school, and this was discussed further at the workshops, as well as the approach to character areas across the site.

[Issues raised by the DIO](#)

Regular liaison meetings were held between the Buckinghamshire Council Planning Policy team and the DIO officer team in addition workshops were held between the DIO and their team of specialist consultants and Buckinghamshire Council Planning policy team other specialist council officers and the DIO officers and their own specialist team of consultants. The following key issues were raised.

Evolution of site design

The evolution of the DIO design masterplan was discussed; specific issues were raised about the retention of the railway station building. The SPD plan has evolved to retain station building and link avenue through the site by series of green spaces.

Listed Buildings and Non designated heritage assets

Concerns raised about numbers of listed buildings on site and possibility of more and additional local listing affecting viability and overall numbers of housing units to be provided. Only one building has been listed and more buildings locally listed. Work has shown the site can still deliver between 1000 and 1200 dwellings. Different ways of converting protected buildings while too detailed for SPD show there may be viable alternatives.

Housing Mix

The proposed housing mix was raised as an issue. Detailed housing mix will be a matter for the planning application and does not need to be resolved for the SPD

Car parking at listed Barracks and generally

The issues around fitting in car parking for residents of the listed barracks were discussed. Various options for car parking solutions have been suggested. Wider parking issues have also been raised, however. SPD will not go into specific detail on car parking provision.

Listed barracks Parade Ground

What to do with the parade ground serving the listed barracks was raised. It was suggested that a housing square could be built in the parade ground. or open area could be retained with some parking around the edges. The SPD describes potential options which will be firmed up in any planning application.

Retirement home provision

The possible inclusion of a retirement home was raised. Its been suggested a retirement home could feature in the proposed local centre location. Again, precise details would be a matter for any planning application

Existing onsite museums

The retention of the two onsite museums, the possible combination with the Buckinghamshire owned Museums trust collections store and the need to provide a community building on the site was mentioned. Precise detail of what museum provision may be made on site will be a matter for the planning application

Density of development

This was discussed – generally it's been accepted that higher density development will be needed for the workshops area of the site while redevelopment elsewhere needs to fit within the current developed areas and not increase impact on openness of the green belt.

SPD Programme and Government Changes to SPD Status and planning application process

The Scope of SPD programme and future government changes to planning and SPDs were raised as an issue. It has been explained how the SPD relates to the future Buckinghamshire Local Plan. SPD will be a material consideration. Cannot look at site beyond red line and cannot create new policies. one option would be to save policy and take forward into new Local Plan. There was

agreement that due to constraints on site a master plan led planning application across the whole SPD and reserved matters for future site would be the best route.

Local centre Location

Two options were proposed for the local centre - Local centre corner of Upper Icknield Way or north side of Chestnut Avenue. The DIO team considered their location was more commercially viable and would allow a denser form of development. The council saw advantages in linking the centre to the school and this would free up the upper Icknield way site for a denser form of development. The SPD work and input from wider expertise has focused the position of local centre on the Chestnut Avenue location

Transport Modelling

Query was raised whether transport modelling was required for the SPD. It was agreed that transport modelling was not required for the SPD.

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG)

This requirement had been established since the Local Plan policy for RAF Halton had been written. All new development was required to show how the impact of new resident's recreational needs could be reduced on designated landscape areas. One part of this mitigation was the provision of a SANG. Detailed discussions and ongoing work have been undertaken to agree a suitable SANG that meets the requirements for SANG provision and which would meet the needs of the new residents. This has been progressed with agreement from both the DIO and the Council and involvement of the Statutory agency Natural England.

Wider RAF Halton Site – relationship with SPD area

Although site allocation only covers the main barracks/former workshop areas of the base – RAF Halton is for DIO the entire site not just the site allocation area. While the SPD is focussed on the site allocation the council is aware of the wider RAF site.

RAF Halton Disposal Strategy

The DIO have confirmed the disposal strategy is developing work – looking at whole of RAF Halton. Duty to deliver best price in achieving that also looking at environmental and community value. Working with BC on SPD and looking to promote other sites. Potential market developer route for disposal. Focus in achieving a successful community and connected community.

Existing sports pitches – future ownership

Halton Parish Council expressed a desire to take on the existing RAF sports facilities, some of these fall outside the SPD area. DIO indicated they would sell the whole RAF site to a developer and so the parish would have to work with developer on any transfer. It was agreed that a reference to this would be made in the SPD.

Issues raised by local Parish Councils and Ward Members

At the request of Halton Parish council, a site visit and meeting were undertaken on the 15th of August 2022

Halton Parish Council area covers the RAF Halton site and the Parish made detailed comments about the allocation during the preparation of the VALP and at the VALP examination.

Halton Parish were preparing a Neighbourhood plan – the neighbourhood plan has been referenced in the SPD.

Reference was made to the airfield site which is adjacent to the village. DIO had promoted this site for further development in the future. It was explained that the current SPD could only relate to the VALP site allocation/policy and not the wider area.

It was mentioned that the neighbourhood plan if progressed could cover issues across the parish including the airfield site.

At request of DIO the village had undertaken an allotment potential site survey. Potential sites for new allotments are included in the SPD masterplan.

During discussion it was mentioned that all are keen to retain the heritage of RAF Halton. The heritage aspects of the site are fully referenced in the SPD

Additionally, it was mentioned that there is an existing footpath link through the edge of the site to Wendover woods although a bit steep at the woods end. - the SPD references connecting to routes out of the site allocation.

Cricket pitch. No longer used by RAF – Village keen to purchase the cricket pitch in advance of base closure/re-development to provide open space. This was not a matter for the SPD

The Nuffield Pavilion and all-weather Hockey pitches. The parish would like the pavilion as a community centre/parish office with suitable amendments and provision of a lift. The adjacent hockey pitches could provide an income to the parish. Transfer of assets would be a matter for the future developer of the site and cannot be a requirement of the SPD.

The tree lined avenue from the running track field up and past the pavilion and towards the workshops was noted as a feature to be retained. The master plan aims to retain tree lined avenues within the site area.

The parish would like to obtain the open space between Chestnut Avenue and the tree lined avenue. The Sergeants Mess Building discussion centred on the height of this modern building and the scope to lessen the impact by perhaps spreading lower development across the adjacent car park. The parish's ambition to develop a sports village was mentioned. This again was a matter to be decided by the future developer of the site.

Mention was made of the potential to improve access to the Grand Union canal path for walkers and cyclists and the possibility of re-opening the canal to navigation. The canal is spanned by the Rothschild blue bridge. The parish had contacted the MOD about its upkeep. The bridge was in

need of re-painting to preserve it. The canal is outside the SPD area although the SPD does refer to making connections from the site to the wider footpath network

The majority of the sites visited on the parish walk fall outside the SPD area but evidence the complexities of this wider RAF site and the issues of seeking to retain parts of the area via the SPD while other pitches and associated facilities lie outside the SPD boundary.

Member Halton Parish Council workshop 11/05/2023

Purpose of update meeting to build on Stakeholder workshop.

- Cllr Richard Newcombe showed his support for the SPD. Discussion took place about the location of the local centre and level of assessment needed to determine the economic viability. Questioned whether new evidence should be commissioned. It was agreed that at this SPD stage this would be too detailed but something for the planning application; the need to upgrade Perch Bridge if the school and local centre is on Chestnut Avenue; What would be an appropriate density for the different character areas within the site?; Impact on the view from Halton House and how the SPD can best enhance this and the relocation of the Trenchard Museum into the existing County Records Centre.
- Cllr Steven Bowles gave his views on the SPD overall - no significant issues. He agreed with the suggested location for the village centre and supported the suggested tree-lined avenues and the parkland walk. When considering density, he considered it would have to be exceptional to get a 4-story building on the site. He likes the use of the Parade ground as green space with car parking. He identified Perch bridge, with more traffic moving towards the bridge, as an issue.

The parish raised the following issues

- Traffic lights. BC highways say only safe solution is to have traffic lights. - At the planning application stage, transport modelling would be required, this modelling would say whether traffic lights would be required. SPD would cover general traffic issues not specifics.
- Whether there would be a master developer? They were told that ideally yes. DIO can decide to sell to different developers across the site, SPD can promote one developer but cant require it.
- High density buildings – the plans shared didn't show any 4 storey buildings did that mean 4 story buildings would be too high for the area. They were advised that the scheme doesn't need to have 4 storey buildings to reach required numbers. The SPD would say 4 story only in appropriate areas of lower height or at entry buildings (key buildings at entrances to the site).
- They were supportive of the proposed location of the local centre but added they would like the Perch Bridge problem solved.
- They asked about Sports fields transferred to village and whether this would be referenced in be in the SPD. They were advised that the SPD would refer to this

- They pointed out that the proposed name of the development 'Halton Woods' was actually already an area on the other side of Wendover Woods. It was agreed to consider the naming issue. However, the eventual name would be determined by the developer and not the SPD

