

Test Valley Borough Council

Local Plan-2020

Living in Test Valley (Housing and Communities)

Commuter Villages

TVBC have long pursued a policy of concentrating growth on Andover, and to a lesser extent Romsey, while maintaining a virtual *de facto* ban on new housing development in the other villages, both large and small, within the borough.

The result of this is a growing urbanization of Andover in particular which has involved a small market town growing in uncoordinated spurts with little consideration of infrastructure (e.g. schools) or for livability. Andover has become a "poster-child" for poor development. So bad is the situation that the generalized attitude now is that the town "can't be any more ruined than it is" so therefore anything goes.

The "build it and they will come" attitude to towards housing in Andover will no longer work if there is not allocated space for office park or industrial development.

- Andover should not be added to in terms of sprawl but rather subject to infill, higher density and redevelopment of derelict low-quality housing estates from the 1950-60s. Several thousand new residents could be added to the town within its current confines WITHOUT alienating public space by pursuing such a policy.
- We advocate a "string of pearls" policy for the northern half of Andover. This consists of using the railway as the spine for the future development with the addition of "new villages" at

Weyhill (on a reopened Andover-Ludgershall railway line) and at Grateley/Palestine, which is currently a standard stop on train services from London to Salisbury, but which has been maintained as little more than a village.

- Thus the progression would be Basingstoke, Overton (3,000 residents), Whitchurch (4,000 residents), Andover (45,000+ residents), Weyhill, Grateley and Salisbury.
- Both Weyhill and Grateley should be targeted for containing 3-5,000 residents each in planned communities (in the model of Poundbury, below, in Dorset). These would be commuter-oriented communities. There is a glaring gap in the absence of virtually any population/settlement of consequence along the rail route between Andover and Salisbury (nearly 24 miles). This is EXCEPTIONAL in the south of the country.



Rationale

This proposal goes beyond Andover itself and grapples with the long-term “loading” of new development onto the town that has long been promoted by Test Valley Borough Council.

Social Housing

Whilst TVBC is meeting its housing targets, it is not reducing the Council’s Housing Register waiting list for Social Rent and/or Affordable Rented Housing. TVBC needs to go beyond its targets and develop an aggressive plan to build more social rent/affordable rent housing, which will deliver real year-on-year reductions of the Housing Register waiting list. This may require TVBC to establish its own in-house Affordable Housing Provider, similar to its current in-house private rental company.

Housing Unit Distribution

Development in Andover has been dominated by developer considerations. The tendency has been towards multi-bedroom houses and apartments this has created a situation where single occupants are forced into house shares or couples (without children) are forced to take on two-bedroom units when they only need one bedroom. These two demographics are important components of new societal trends and an important part of the commutersphere.

Recommendation:

- Ten percent of all units should be single bedroom units
- Goal of driving out housesharing and HMOs

Working in Test Valley (Town Centres & Local Economy)

Job Creation

It is KEY to note that TVBC has concentrated development in Andover to the northeast of the town which is the area most distant from the Andover railway station which is located at significant distance from the town centre in any case. There is inadequate parking at the station as the commuter population grows (even despite increase the parking from the deck), the station has very poor accessibility in terms of roads, and bus access is also poor and services do NOT run across town but rather into the bus station in the town centre. Thus as developments oriented to commuters the evolution of Picket Piece and Augusta Park fly in the face of the logic of accessibility to the railway station. There has been a stubborn refusal to countenance construction of a station at Anton East.

Current Status:

- The "industrial base" of Andover is low-skill, low employment (per square footage) logistics facilities, primarily on two fully-built up industrial estates
- The office employment base is limited to three or four major firms and no new office space is planned (though there is land to put more office buildings in place)
- There is a growing commuter base in the town which is oriented to the railway and vectors towards the four towns at the compass points (Basingstoke, Winchester, Salisbury and Newbury) and beyond that to London.
- The current TVBC Corporate and Local Plans have almost ZERO regard for the railway and its users

Recommendations:

- Development in TVBC should be strongly oriented towards job (and thus transport)

considerations

- The town needs stronger white-collar job creation and thus needs office facilities (with the space in the Anton Business Park, behind ASDA and the ex-Switch and Rank Hovis sites at the railway station offering strong locations for office park construction)

These are key point because development has to follow (or closely precede) jobs and there is minimal job creation in Andover or indeed the borough. The town's "industrial base" is primarily logistics where large warehouses are managed by small workforces of labourers and forklift drivers. This does not constitute a large potential source of future jobs while the office sector COULD grow but is not. The poor quality of schools in Andover is a significant deterrent to middle-class managerial class evolution and thus in turn effects the evolution of white-collar employment.

Enjoying Test Valley (Environment and Quality of Life)

The protection and retention of the current Local Gaps is essential to maintaining the identity of rural settlements and preventing them from being absorbed into their urban settlement neighbours.

The designation of local green spaces to protect areas of particular importance to communities, is considered extremely important. The Local Plan should ensure local green spaces are identified for those settlements that do not have an NDP and support those that do have NDPs.

Infrastructure and Community Facilities

Road Patterns

The most significant change to the historic road patterns of Andover was the construction of the Ring Road in the 1960-70s. There are in fact two Ring Roads, the outer one and an inner one. The inner one consists of the Western and Eastern Avenues and insects/overlaps with the outer Ring Road between the Folly Roundabout and the Enham Arch roundabout.

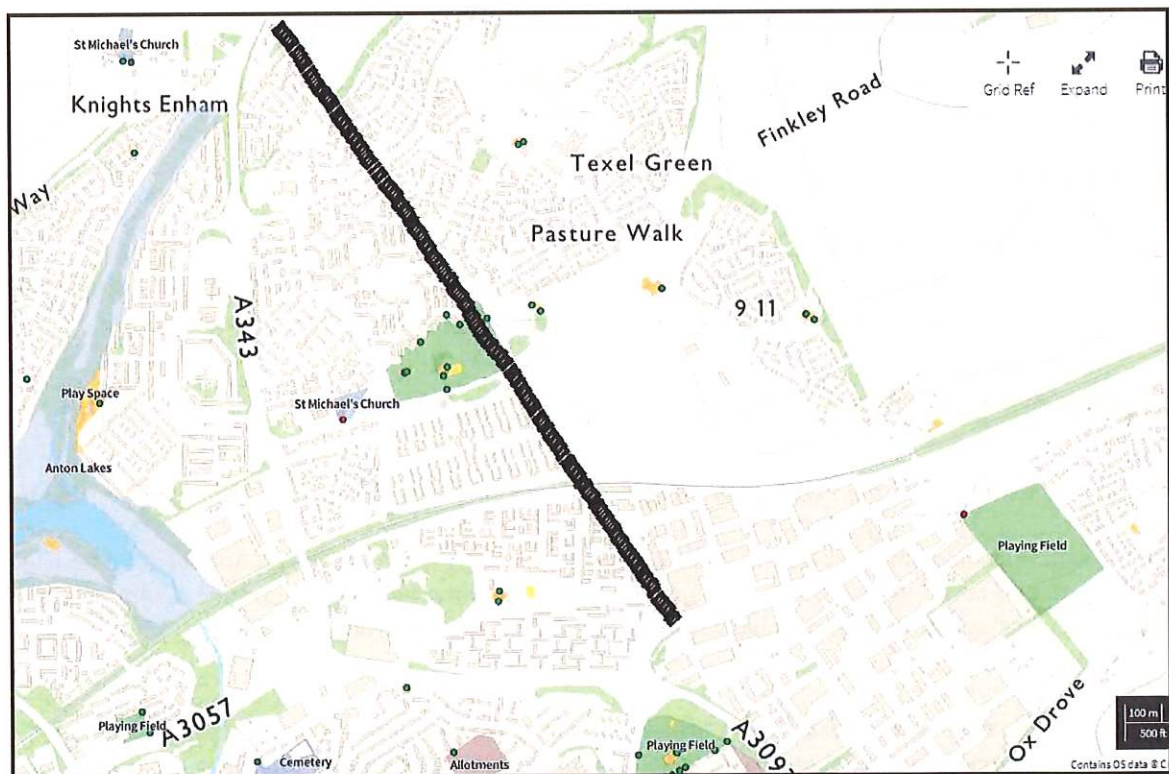
This arrangement appears to be an attempt to replicate the disastrous soul-destroying roundabouts and "beltway" that afflict Basingstoke to this day. The inner Ring Road acts as a stranglehold on the Town Centre creating physical and psychological barriers within the town. It is 1960s urban planning at its worst.

Fortunately the new regime at TVBC have recognized the futility of (and damage caused by) the inner ringroad, at least as far as Western Avenue is concerned, and is attempting to have this reduced in width/lanes and attempting to integrate the town centre on its Western side with the town's suburbs.

The Western Avenue follows the line of the old railway. However, on the Eastern side of the town the effect is even more barbaric for the town centre was brutally severed from its suburbs that were contiguous by the construction of Eastern Avenue, with concomitant destruction of the historic buildings (e.g. the Western side of East Street). Plans exist to retake the roundabout at Vigo Park and reattach it to the park. However these measures do not go far enough.

Recommendations:

- Reopen London Street at Eastern Avenue in a westbound-direction with a 20 mph limit. This would NOT become a rat-run as hose using it would only get as far as Winchester Street before having to re-exit the town centre
- Close Eastern Avenue between London Street and Vigo Park. Reinstating the historic street pattern and developing the George Yard (as per the masterplan) as a residential zone stretching without break between the town centre and its traditional Eastern hinterland
- Reopen London Road under the ring-road for more than just buses, but with no commercial traffic
- Eliminate the blockage on East Anton park Road at the shops/community centre
- Restore Icknield Way (see below) as a fully functioning road between Newbury Rd and Walworth Rd, with a rail underpass. Again this would be banned to commercial traffic. Rename the relevant parts of River Way and Cricketer's Way to reflect this change.
- Restore Old Winton Road under the A303 to functioning status. Again no commercial traffic



Recreational Provision

Sections 8.9 and 8.10

We strongly support Test Valley Borough Council in its stated policies to encourage

“....opportunities for cycling and walking in the Borough, particularly for shorter journeys and as an alternative to car journeys is a key objective in helping to maintain healthy lifestyles, improving air quality and in reducing carbon emissions.”

The recent dramatic increase in recreational walking and cycling through the local rural areas is welcome, but has also highlighted some significant road safety issues. Most country lanes have no dedicated pedestrian footpath, whilst at the same time being subject to speed limits no less than the national limit of 60 mph. There are many locations, such as on Watery Lane in Upper Clatford, where pedestrians cannot walk safely without some urgent action to calm traffic speeds. We would strongly support any initiative to identify such dangerous locations across the Borough and to take action either to reduce speed limits or introduce other traffic calming or traffic separation measures.

Secondary Schools

The failure to allocate and construct a new secondary school on the Eastern side of Andover is a timebomb. The distance from East Anton to John Hanson or the Harroway school is over three kilometres and unwalkable. Cross-town traffic is being boosted by parents dropping off their children and there are no direct bus routes from one side of the town to the other.

Recommendations:

- Land must be allocated (again) to this priority in future plans for the Eastern areas or
- a major plan of expansion of the Winton Academy (bringing it back into the HCC-controlled category) must be a *sine qua non* of ANY expansion of the town to the east in the future.

Responses to Specific Questions

Q1. Should we maintain the existing two HMAs, or use a single HMA, or should additional HMAs be created?

We believe that there should be a minimum of four HMAs, with two focussed on Andover and Romsey and the other 2 covering rural areas, and furthermore we identify the villages surrounding Andover and Romsey as rural settlements and would wish to see them included in a rural HMA.

Q2. In determining HMAs how should wider relationships with settlements beyond the Borough's boundaries, be taken into account, including with Southampton, Salisbury and Winchester?

Wider relationships should be acknowledged as potentially being able to provide service and facility support to settlements but should not be taken into account when considering HMA housing allocations.

Q3. Should an alternative approach to using parish boundaries be used for HMAs?

HMA boundaries should fully respect existing Parish boundaries, and under no circumstances should a Parish be split between HMAs.

Q4. Should the number of steps of the settlement hierarchy be increased, for example by sub-dividing the 'rural villages' into two separate tiers?

No, the current settlement hierarchy works well and where they exist, the adopted Village/Town Design Statements and NDPs allow for sustainable future development.

Q5. How should we decide which settlements to include within each step of the settlement hierarchy?

We should continue to use the existing criteria, which is based on the settlements' current characteristics, population, and access to a range of services and facilities.

Q6. Should we consider groups of rural settlements together, where these are closely related to each other and/or share facilities and services?

No, each rural settlement should continue to be considered separately, taking into account their Village Design Statements and NDPs.

Q7. How should we treat rural settlements which are close to other larger settlements and can therefore also easily access their facilities and services?

They should be treated no differently to other rural settlements. All rural settlements are dependent on larger settlements, some within Test Valley Borough and some within neighbouring Boroughs/Counties. The only difference being, is the time it takes to travel to them.

Q8. In updating the settlement boundaries to reflect recent development which has built and development with planning permission, should we also include new allocations?

No. Regard should be had to NDPs where they are in place or before the examiner. Unless there is support within the relevant plan underpinned by the neighbourhood questionnaire to extend settlement boundaries this should be resisted. This approach would directly reflect views of the people directly affected and should be reflected in the local plan.

Q9. How should we define settlement boundaries? What types of land uses should be included, such as public open space?

Areas of existing public place such as commons, play parks etc are already reflected in settlement boundaries. Unless supported by NDPs there should be no alteration.

Q10. 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?

Great care needs to be taken in relation to extending the boundary to include physical features outside the curtilage or equally restricting the curtilage. Either could result in unintended consequences: eg garden of a listed building being divided from its house or a farm in a village having its farm land included or conversion of farm land to domestic gardens.

Q11. Should settlement boundaries be drawn more tightly or more loosely, and perhaps reflecting which tier settlement is within the settlement.

Settlement boundaries will have been considered as part of NDPs and any alteration should be congruent with those plans. Where there are areas with no NDP, alteration of settlement boundaries should only be made after full consultation with the residents directly affected.

Q12. Should settlement boundaries provide further opportunities for further limited growth beyond infill and redevelopment?

No. The current settlement boundary is a settlement boundary reflecting where the existing physical boundary is. Any alteration of that boundary unless supported by the relevant NDP is opposed. Within a settlement boundary any development needs to be considered in the light of that NDP and where relevant the characteristics of any conservation area. Drawing a settlement boundary to encourage growth/ development is appropriate where there is a clear defined local need reflected in the appropriate NDP. The alteration of a settlement boundary in that context would be supported by the NDP as set out in answers to earlier questions.

Q13. Should we have a specific policy for self-build homes?

Yes.

Q14. Should we have a policy for large housing sites to include a proportion of serviced plots to be made available for sale to those seeking to build their own homes?

Yes.

Q15. Should self-build housing to be delivered as part of community led development?

Yes but not limited to community led development proposals.

Q16. Could the introduction of a self-build housing policy also be an opportunity for the Council to tackle the issue of climate change?

All houses should be subject to climate change policies.

Q17-18. Revised tourism policy

In principle yes, although a revised tourism policy or innovative proposals cannot be supported without knowledge of its detail. Consequent effects could impact upon biodiversity, traffic flows, important views, landscape character, pollution and the Local Gap.