

Bedford Borough Draft Local Plan 2035

Briefing Note

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Introduction

Bedford Borough Council published a proposed Submission Draft version of the Bedford Local Plan 2035 (the draft Plan) on 3rd January 2018, ahead of the Executive Committee which is due to take place on 10th January 2018.

The draft Plan sets out the Council's vision and framework for future development, particularly with regard to housing, the economy, the delivery of infrastructure and environmental matters.

When adopted, the draft Plan will replace the existing development plan which comprises the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2002, the Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan 2008 and Bedford Town Centre Area Action Plan 2008 and the Site Allocations Plan 2013.

The draft Plan was published along with a number of supporting documents and technical reports that form the evidence base. Consultation on the draft Plan is proposed to run from 22nd January until 5th March 2018.

Proposed Settlement Hierarchy

The proposed settlement hierarchy for the Borough is as follows:

Key service centres:

- Bromham
- Clapham
- Great Barford
- Sharnbrook
- Wilstead
- Wootton

Rural service centres:

- Carlton
- Harrold
- Oakley
- Milton Ernest

- Roxton
- Shortstown
- Stewartby
- Turvey
- Willington
- Wixams

Housing Numbers

The most notable part of the draft Plan is the housing numbers that have been proposed which are reduced from the earlier drafts and take no account of the higher figures highlighted by Government in 2017, or the levels suggested by the Infrastructure Commission in its report on the 'Oxford-Cambridge Arc', which the Council acknowledges. These figures differ also in their distribution with a greater proportion of land being allocated to the urban area.

The housing numbers proposed, which are expressed as a minima are as follows:

| Draft Local Plan 2035 | Number of dwellings |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Urban area | 2,420 |
| Edge of urban area | 210 |
| Stewartby Brickworks | 1,000 |
| Colworth garden village | 2,500 (in the plan period) |
| Bromham (Group 1 Village) | 500 |
| Clapham (Group 1 Village) | 500 |
| Great Barford (Group 1 Village) | 500 |
| Carlton (Group 2 Village) | 25-50 |
| Harrold (Group 2 Village) | 25-50 |
| Milton Ernest (Group 2 Village) | 25-50 |
| Oakley (Group 2 Village) | 25-50 |
| Roxton (Group 2 Village) | 25-50 |
| Turvey (Group 2 Village) | 25-50 |
| Total | Minimum of 7,820 |

Contact us:

4 Abbey Court, Fraser Road, Priory Business Park, Bedford, MK44 3WH
t 01234 832 740 f 01234 831 266 e bedford@dplconsultants.co.uk

www.dplconsultants.co.uk

Of the Group 1 Villages and Group 2 Villages only Roxton has specific site allocations for housing, whereas the rest are to be allocated through emerging Neighbourhood Development Plans. The Council will only step in and allocate sites in these locations if a Neighbourhood Development Plan or Neighbourhood Development Order (Regulation 16) has not been submitted by December 2019, or 12 months after the adoption of the Local Plan; whichever is the later.

Other smaller settlements may be appropriate for development, if needed and supported by the community. This will allow for development in context with their structure form and character.

Growth Strategy

The Council's preferred strategy is as follows:

- The creation of a new settlement at Sharnbrook - Colworth Garden Village - is proposed to provide a new focus for strategic growth. In total this proposes 4,500 dwellings, however, only 2,500 will be developed in the Plan period up to 2035.
- The development of Colworth Garden Village also requires the delivery of a new parkway rail station, which will require agreement with Network Rail; this is to be completed before first occupation and substantial new road investment to create links to the A6.
- Regeneration of the large brownfield site at the former Stewartby brickworks site. This will provide 1,000 dwellings.
- Regeneration sites in Bedford and Kempston, together with limited urban extensions, providing for housing, employment, retail and other facilities, providing for 2,630 dwellings.
- Development in villages at a scale that takes account of existing commitments and infrastructure capacity/potential.
- Growth in the key service centres of Bromham, Clapham and Great Barford will provide primarily new homes (500 in each village) but also services for the local community.

- Growth in the rural key service centre villages will be more limited to help support local services and will provide 225 dwellings in total. Some development may also be appropriate in smaller settlements if needed and supported by the community but this is not allocated in the draft Plan.
- Maintain a living, working countryside and improve the rural area's self-reliance by supporting opportunities to diversify the rural economy while conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

The Rationale for this Approach

The Sustainability Appraisal prepared alongside the draft Plan states that the results showed that the Colworth Garden Village site at Sharnbrook was the most sustainable location in comparison to the other sites that were promoted. This however, whilst not supported by the 'wider testing' of the proposed sites against a range of criteria, is reliant upon the delivery of the railway station which is seen as serving new residents and also diverting users of the A6 onto public transport, to reach Bedford or beyond.

No information is provided as to how rail services may be altered to allow for this and there is limited information on the viability of the project, notwithstanding its importance to the overall strategy.

Conclusion

The draft Plan seeks to provide for an additional 7,820 dwellings in the Plan period up to 2035. This is a reduction on previous development levels but is a minima figure. A considerable proportion of this figure is to be provided by Colworth Garden Village, with the rest being provided on proposed urban sites and in Group 1 Villages and Group 2 Villages.

The consultation period for the draft Plan is proposed to run from 22nd January to 5th March 2018. If you would like further information and advice or wish to make a representation please get in touch with DLP.