

BROMHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Our ref: BPC /P13 /KJB
2 December 2015

Planning Policy Team,
Bedford Borough Council
4th Floor Borough Hall
Cauldwell Street
Bedford
MK42 9AP

Dear Sir/Madam

Local Plan 2032 - Public Consultation

Bromham Parish Council, at its meeting last night, considered the consultation on the emerging Bedford Borough Local Plan 2032. Parish Councillors, at the meeting, expressed real concern at the impact of the level of growth proposed in the rural area.

The meeting emphasised that the consultation report itself makes it clear that the most sustainable location for growth is the urban areas of Bedford and Kempston where most facilities are available. The significant growth identified for the rural area of between 2,870 and 4,540 new dwellings is regarded as totally unacceptable. It is clear, from the strategy proposed, that Bromham and the other Key Service Centres will be taking the brunt of the development and this approach cannot be supported.

It is unreasonable to continue to destroy well respected and valued rural communities (referred to as Key Service Centres), by imposing a level of development that will vastly change the dynamics of these communities. The huge scale and impact of developments that have occurred in the past (such as at Wootton, Elstow and Great Denham) should be resisted in the future and only a realistic scale of growth expected for these rural areas.

It is also relevant that some smaller rural areas could achieve a more reasonable level of growth to support and enhance the sustainability of the existing area. These areas could deliver in excess of the numbers envisaged in the consultation, an average of 15 new homes, and further consideration should be given to establishing more realistic allocations that has regard to local aspirations, local need and sustainability.

Significant future housing growth is inevitable to meet assessed needs (according to the Government) and significant forward planning will be required in order to develop new sustainable communities rather than destroy existing ones thus improving the future prospects for established rural areas. Whilst the current identified need is for circa 4,500 houses, further growth in subsequent Local Plan periods is inevitable and this requires effective forward planning to avoid further unacceptable growth in existing rural areas.

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The Parish Council are firmly of the view, therefore, that an alternative approach should be considered such as creating a new settlement area in the east/north east of the Borough, with good access to the A1 Motorway. This would avoid creating a super conurbation of Bedford, Kempston, Wootton, Bromham, Clapham which is going to be the inevitable result from the chosen strategy outlined in the consultation.

A separate consultation seeks confirmation of the Parish Council intentions regarding the allocation of sites in its area for development as part of the Neighbourhood Planning process. Bromham has commenced the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan and, in liaison with the Borough Council, would envisage taking responsibility for allocating the development requirement in accordance with the emerging development strategy. A very good relationship with the Borough Council is envisaged during the preparation phase to ensure that the Neighbourhood Plan is properly aligned to the Local Plan and that land is allocated following a proper and robust assessment.

The Parish Council urges the Borough Council to reconsider its position on the proposed allocation of land to meet housing needs and to further review the unacceptable level of growth it is expecting existing rural communities to deliver.

Yours faithfully

K J Betts

Julie Betts
Parish Clerk
Bromham Parish Council

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