

Draft Housing Strategy Review 2015 Consultation Document Briefing Note

2nd February 2016
Ref No. 228

Introduction

Bedford Borough Council is in the process of preparing a new Local Plan to guide development up until 2032. As part of this process the Council has produced a draft review of their Housing Strategy, effectively extending the life of the existing housing strategy 2012-2017 to 2020. **This Strategy is out for consultation until the 29th February 2016.** This review seeks to establish a framework for the extended Housing Strategy and place it in the context of national and local strategies.

Housing Delivery

The document identifies developments currently in progress or having the potential to come forward within the lifetime of the Strategy. In terms of urban land, this review notes that the amount of underused or unused previously land is quickly diminishing, with a review of employments sites having the potential to generate a further supply of previously developed land for residential development.

Within the rural area, the review states that the Borough has met its Local Plan target for housing to 2021, with the level of housing to be provided in the rural area to meet the borough's needs as a whole, to be determined through the Local Plan 2032. It is noted that Council is considering taking a more proactive in supporting the delivery of schemes that will serve the needs of a number of parishes, using a cascade mechanism to assess the housing needs across a group of parishes, therefore permitting the development of (larger) more viable schemes.

In terms of sustainable urban extensions and new settlements, this review identifies the potential delivery of over 10,000 dwellings across 10 strategic sites within the Borough; namely Wixhams, Land west of Bedford and Land north of Bromham Road, Biddenham. The council does note however, that additional urban extensions, extensions to key settlements or a new settlement could be identified to meet the requirements of the Local Plan 2032.

Council highlights a number of mechanisms through which they can work to increase housing supply within the Borough, including:

The Planning System:

- The production of Local Plans and effective Development Management, including Pre-application advice to provide clarity about development opportunities to land owners and the development industry.
- The production of Development Briefs and the development of Supplementary Planning Documents to, in some cases provide the basis for Compulsory Purchase Orders where land assembly to bring forward development is blocked by the unwillingness of individual owners to bring support development on timely and reasonable terms.

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- Council states that the study for CIL identified five areas within the borough within which it was appropriate to set different levels of CIL for housing developments. Settlements were placed within these five areas and this forms a quick guide to viability across the borough. The areas in ascending order of viability were:

1. Cotton End, Shortstown west, Elstow
2. South Bedford, Kempston, New Shortstown east and Stewartby
3. Bromham, Cardington, Carlton, Clapham, Cople, Great Barford, Oakley, Milton Ernest, Ravensden, Renhold, Riseley, Roxton, Stagsden, Stevington, Swineshead, Stewartby, Thurleigh, Turvey, Upper Dean, Wilden, Wilstead, Wixams, Wootton, Wyboston, Wymington, Yelden
4. North Bedford and Biddenham
5. Sharnbrook, Pavenham, Felmersham, Harrold, Bletsoe, Souldrop, Hinwick, Podington, Bolnhurst, Keysoe, Colmworth, Little Staughton, Staploe

- Options to improve viability and delivery include:
 - Focus new development on those areas where schemes are typically more viable
 - Adjust CIL, Affordable Housing and other policy requirements to improve viability
 - Invest in infrastructure to improve viability
 - Promote the improvement of services to improve sales values; schools are particularly important
 - Bring forward environmental improvements to raise values; the quality of the public realm is significant

Self-Build and Custom Build Housing

- The Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 received Royal Assent on March 26th 2015. This places a duty on Local authorities to create a Register of self-builders and custom builders. The Council launched its register in November 2015.
- The Council is reviewing the availability of sites which might be suitable and could be considered for self-build or custom build housing. Another option being considered by Council is to identify a plot where a developer creates the road and services and markets self-build plots.

In response to this consultation DLP can make representations on your behalf including the assessment of Objectively Assessed Need (OAN), against which to calculate 5 year land supply and the extent of affordable housing need that would be considered to be sound upon Examination of the Development Plan.