



Growth, Infrastructure & Housing Select Committee agenda

Date: Thursday 6 October 2022

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF

Membership:

D Carroll (Chairman), T Hogg (Vice-Chairman), A Baughan, N Brown, S Chapple, Q Chaudhry, I Darby, C Etholen, T Hunter-Watts, M Hussain, N Marshall, C Poll, S Rouse, D Town and S Wilson

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Agenda Item	Time	Page No
1 Apologies for Absence/Changes in Membership		
2 Declarations of Interest		
3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting		5 - 10

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th July 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

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| 4 | Chairman's update | 11 - 14 |
| 5 | Public Questions
Public Questions is an opportunity for people who live, work or study in Buckinghamshire to put a question to a Select Committee. The Committee will hear from members of the public who have submitted questions in advance relating to items on the agenda. The Cabinet Member, relevant key partners and responsible officers will be invited to respond.

Further information on how to register can be found here:
https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/your-council/getinvolved-with-council-decisions/select-committees/ | |
| 6 | Local Plan for Buckinghamshire Update
Members will receive an update on progress with the development of the Buckinghamshire Local Plan.

Contributors:
Cllr Peter Strachan, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration
Darran Eggleton, Head of Service, Planning, Policy and Compliance
John Cheston, Planning Policy Manager | 10:15

15 - 22 |
| 7 | National Model Design Code Pilot Update
Buckinghamshire Council was chosen as one of 16 local authorities to pilot the National Model Design Code, which has been introduced to encourage quality design and to allow some local influence over design to preserve local character. The Select Committee will receive an update on how this pilot is progressing and review any key findings.

Contributors:
Councillor Peter Strachan, Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration
Rebecca Hart, Natural Environment Manager | 10:50

23 - 36 |
| 8 | Affordable Housing Update
Members will receive an update on the Council's approach to delivery of Affordable Housing, following Cabinet's | 11:30

37 - 50 |

adoption of an Interim Affordable Housing Position Statement in May 2022. This statement set out the Council's plans for encouraging more Affordable Housing in the county including the possibility of delivering affordable residential properties on Council owned sites.

Contributors:

Councillor John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources

Nigel Dicker, Service Director, Housing and Regulatory Services

Michael Veryard, Head of Housing

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| 9 | Work Programme
The Committee will discuss and note the Work Programme for future meetings. | 12:10 | 51 - 52 |
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| 10 | Date of Next Meeting
The next meeting will take place on 6th December 2022 at 10.00 a.m. | | |

If you would like to attend a meeting, but need extra help to do so, for example because of a disability, please contact us as early as possible, so that we can try to put the right support in place.

For further information please contact: Tom Fowler on 01494 732009, email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.

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Growth, Infrastructure & Housing Select Committee minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Select Committee – Communities & Localism and Growth, Infrastructure & Housing held on Wednesday 13 July 2022 in The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF, commencing at 10.00 am and concluding at 12.29 pm.

Members present

M Harker OBE (Chairman), D Carroll (Chairman), P Drayton, S Barrett, M Hussain JP, M Knight, F Mahon, C Oliver, M Stannard, L Smith BEM, S James, S Chapple, Q Chaudhry, I Darby, N Marshall, C Poll, D Town, A Waite and S Wilson

Others in attendance

K Sutherland, P Batting, T Fowler, L Michelson, S Payne, M Tett and L Dowson

Agenda Item

1 **Apologies for Absence/Changes in Membership**

Apologies for Absence had been received from Councillor Carl Etholen.

Councillor Sarah James was in attendance substituting for Councillor Tom Hunter Watts.

2 **Appointment of Vice-Chairman for Communities and Localism Select Committee**

The Chairman of the Communities and Localism Select Committee confirmed their appointment of Councillor Ashley Waite as Vice-chairman of the Communities and Localism Select Committee.

RESOLVED: that Councillor Ashley Waite be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Communities and Localism Select Committee for the ensuing year.

3 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

4 **Minutes of the Previous Communities and Localism Select Committee Meetings**

The minutes of the Communities & Localism Select Committee meetings held on 26th April 2022 and 18th May 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

5 Public Questions

No public questions had been received.

6 Visitor Economy in Buckinghamshire

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Martin Tett, Leader of the Council, Philippa Batting, Managing Director for Buckinghamshire Business First, Lucy Dowson, Tourism Development Manager for Visit Buckinghamshire, Bill Morris, Co-Chair for Buckinghamshire Culture, Lisa Michelson, Service Director, Economic Growth and Regeneration, Sophie Payne, Service Director, Culture, Sport & Leisure and Shabnam Ali, Head of Economic Growth, to the meeting.

The following points were highlighted during the presentations:

- Buckinghamshire had a wide variety of attractions for Visitors, placed in an ideal location with 20 million people living 90 minutes from Aylesbury. These included well known Historical and National Trust properties, as well as film and television locations and beautiful natural environments. In 2019, the Visitor Economy in Bucks was worth £900million.
- Covid had affected the Tourism industry heavily, Buckinghamshire Council had been relatively quick to provide support to affected businesses compared to other Local Authorities. The perception of the sector had shifted with the stability of working in the tourism sector along with long working hours now perceived more negatively.
- Staff retention was challenging for those employed in the Visitor Economy. Some village based businesses were closing on alternating days of the week due to shortages in staff. High cost of living in Buckinghamshire was a contributing factor to this.
- The positive impact on the local area was just not just economic. There were large social benefits and increases to quality of life. Cultural programs promoted education and the employment opportunities which allowed a wide range of skills to be developed.
- For the top 10 attractions for the Visitor Economy in Buckinghamshire, it was noted that the most popular were National Trust properties (i.e. Cliveden and Waddesdon Manor).
- The visitor economy was more concentrated in the South of the county, with the majority of this in the Beaconsfield Constituency.
- 9% of Bucks workforce was in the Visitor Economy (compared to 10% in England). There was a £1.2 billion contribution to Bucks GVA (Gross Value Added). This accounted for 9.8% of Bucks total GVA (higher compared to surrounding LEP areas. Herts 9.5%; Oxon 9.2%; Berks 7.4%).
- The accommodation supply for the Visitor Economy was focused around the Chiltern Hills for leisure use. For business use, it was concentrated around the Milton Keynes area. The accommodation capacity was split 72% non-serviced and 28% serviced accommodation. Notably 85% of the non-serviced accommodation were AirBnB properties.
- Visit Bucks was the DMO (Destination Management Organisation) for Buckinghamshire. It supported the promotion of the geography and its key constituents, including accommodation, restaurants, attractions, events,

transportation, guided tours and any other retailers catering to travellers.

- The Visitbuckinghamshire.org website received 30,000 visits per month, and had wide reach on Social media. The organisation worked in partnership with over 300 tourism businesses.
- As well as promoting the visitor economy via newsletters to subscribers and weekly themed content on the website, Visit Bucks also attend industry events and encourage businesses to collaborate and develop their offer. They also help businesses to identify possible funding opportunities and support them with grant applications.
- The Council currently provide Visit Bucks with £15k funding per annum which was further topped up by Bucks Business First.
- It was noted that 93% of visits to Buckinghamshire are day visitors so it would be useful to encourage more people to stay, as overnight visitors tended to spend more money locally. It might be useful to promote itineraries whereby visitors could take in several attractions over a weekend or a week, perhaps with different themes.
- Improved transport links could help to boost the visitor economy, as it would help staff and visitors alike to reach attractions. Often it is the last mile or two that proves challenging.
- Visit Buckinghamshire Boost was a programme ran in collaboration with Buckinghamshire Business First and various partner organisations, designed to accelerate tourism, hospitality, and leisure businesses and the wider visitor economy in Buckinghamshire.
- The programme covered various topics with packages aimed at boosting Green Credentials, Accessibility, Digital Skills, Workforce and Growth.
- Buckinghamshire Culture was initially developed from Buckinghamshire County Council and became a separate charity registered October 2021. The organisation aimed to nurture cultural development in Bucks.
- Buckinghamshire lacked a particularly large international tourist attraction that defined it, however it had plenty of medium and small sized attractions. The County's particular strengths were identified as it's Literary Heritage, Sports Heritage, Places of Historical & Cultural Interest, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Cultural & Creative Economy.
- Several events had been held, such as the Summer of Stories, Bucks in 100 Objects, and an Open Weekend (2022 theme was trees and green).

During discussion, comments and questions raised by the Committee included:

- Work had been undertaken to look at work done in surrounding counties to emulate their successful approach to the Visitor Economy.
- Chiltern Hills was considered the strongest brand due to attraction based on an active lifestyle and for family holidays
- More work should be done to establish Buckinghamshire as the home of the Paralympics. However, a recent visit from Sophie Morgan, tv presenter, demonstrated that accessibility around Bucks was disappointing for wheelchair users, so improvements in this area could help to attract more visitors. Accessibility was not just about catering for people with mobility

problems – adjustments for visually or hearing impaired people also needed to be considered.

- A Member felt the National Trust attractions were primarily contributing towards the National Trust. Furthermore, the National Trust properties didn't need further advertisement from Council/DMO resources as they were already a part of the National Trust network.
- An accommodation guide for visitors to Bucks was suggested, as well as leaflets available in Council Offices for visitors to peruse. It was noted that accommodation Guides were in danger of going out of date quickly. Some local towns/villages have produced these in the past. An online version might be easier to keep updated.
- Given the value of tourism to the Buckinghamshire economy, the Chairman questioned whether more investment was available from the Council. The Leader explained there were pressures in the Council budget, as BC was facing increased costs due to the ongoing inflationary challenges. It was suggested leveraging volunteers would help increase utility in the Visitor Economy.
- The development of a Visitor Economy Strategy was strongly encouraged, as recommended in the report. It was felt the Council could offer a comprehensive approach to combine and maximise the resources available across the county. Lisa Michelson, Service Director, Economic Growth and Regeneration would be leading on the development of the Visitor Economy Strategy for Buckinghamshire.
- Any strategy would need to have a practical Action Plan alongside it, identifying 'quick wins' for the short term and then perhaps 5 year and 10 year goals. It would also be important to have clear performance indicators in the strategy to enable its success to be measured.
- It was also noted that a renewed evidence base for Buckinghamshire's Visitor Economy was needed as the landscape was different post-Covid and this would help to inform the direction for the strategy.
- Leaflets and information should be made available in Council offices to promote attractions across Buckinghamshire. The Leader agreed this would be useful and would look into its implementation. Visitor information was also available to the public from libraries in Buckinghamshire.
- The identity for Buckinghamshire with regards to the visitor economy was difficult to establish. Storytelling was considered due to the rich literary and cultural history.
- Staffing challenges in the hospitality sector were prevalent throughout the country and there was a global shortage. Buckinghamshire faced a shortage exacerbated by a lack of affordable accommodation.
- A Member suggested a 'Bucks Card' that could include entrance to visitor attractions and public transport and maybe discounts at restaurants or other local businesses. This could also be done via an App.
- Several Members expressed their support to establish a business case for increased spending on the visitor economy. This could then be used to justify a budget increase towards tourism initiatives and the Destination Management organisation.

- 7 Work Programme - Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee**
The Work Programme for 2022-23 was agreed. Members were advised to contact the Scrutiny Officer for the committee with any additional topics they wished to be included in the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing work programme.
- 8 Work Programme - Communities and Localism Select Committee**
The Work Programme for 2022-23 was agreed. Members were advised to contact the Scrutiny Officer for the committee with any additional topics they wished to be included in the Communities and Localism work programme.
- 9 Date of Next Meeting - Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee**
The next meeting of the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee would be on 6th October 2022 at 10am.
- 10 Date of Next Meeting - Communities and Localism Select Committee**
The next meeting of the Communities and Localism Select Committee would be on 5th October 2022 at 10am.

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Agenda Item 4
Leader of the Council

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Cllr Mimi Harker OBE
Chairman
Communities and Localism

Cllr David Carroll
Chairman
Growth, Infrastructure and Housing

22 September 2022

Dear Mimi and David

**Joint Select Committee - Communities & Localism and Growth, Infrastructure & Housing
13 July 2022**

Thank you very much for the supportive letter of 20 July regarding the Select Committee discussion on the Visitor Economy and I am really sorry for the delay in this response. I would agree that it was a very engaging conversation, and it was great to hear the thoughts of the Committees as well as our key partners from Buckinghamshire Business First, Visit Buckinghamshire and Buckinghamshire Culture on how we can all consider the best way to take things forward.

It was clear from discussion that there is real support and enthusiasm to develop a Visitor Economy Strategy and Action Plan that can identify key opportunities as well as how each Visitor Economy partner can help to deliver it. As reported to the Committee, the Council will take this forward in the coming months in conjunction with all the key partners for this sector; having an up-to-date strategy will support the better co-ordination of activities in promoting Buckinghamshire's tourism and place promotional activities.

Lisa Michelson and her team in Economic Growth and Regeneration will commence this work on the Visitor Economy Strategy immediately and she is already in the process of identifying experts in this sector who can support this work. We expect that a draft strategy will be completed by the end of this year with discussions at Cabinet and with key partners happening in the new year.

Having an evidence-based strategy will be key to understanding the likely benefits/impact that new initiatives and interventions could bring and will support discussions on potential financial decisions. As we talked about in the Committee, we will have significant pressures on Council funding so will need a robust rationale to increase spending in this area. The clarity that comes

from a new strategy can also identify new ways we can maximise impacts from our existing resources and bring in external funding where needed.

Thanks again for the Committees' consideration of this important issue and I look forward to updating you in due course regarding the next steps of the strategy and consultation process.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Martin Tett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Martin Tett
Leader
Buckinghamshire Council



Councillor Mimi Harker OBE
Councillor David Carroll

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Councillor Martin Tett
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20 July 2022

Ref: Joint Select Committee - Communities & Localism and Growth, Infrastructure & Housing 13th July 2022

Dear Martin,

We would like to begin by thanking you and the other contributors to our Joint Select Committee meeting last week, Philippa Batting, Bucks Business First, Lucy Dowson, Visit Buckinghamshire and Bill Morris, Buckinghamshire Culture and the Council officers, Lisa Michelson and Sophie Payne. It was a very interesting and informative meeting on the Visitor Economy in Buckinghamshire and Committee Members were incredibly engaged, with lots of suggestions and questions about how the Council can support the growth of the Visitor Economy going forward.

It was obvious that there has been lots of good work going on across all the partners in Buckinghamshire and the synergies between Buckinghamshire Culture, the Council and the County's Business community are clear to see. It was also interesting to understand the visitor data from 2019 and to reflect on the impact of the pandemic on visitor numbers and behaviour. Members understood that the meeting was about scene setting and early engagement on the proposal to develop a Visitor Economy Strategy for Buckinghamshire.

The Joint Select Committee are very supportive of the Council developing a Visitor Economy Strategy with an associated Action Plan, in order to provide strong direction, enhanced co-ordination and renewed vigour to this agenda. It would be helpful to understand the timeline for the development of this strategy and to identify further opportunities for the Select Committees to be involved in scrutinising the details and the delivery of the strategy in the future. Please can you advise us of when it is envisaged that a Visitor Economy Strategy would be agreed?

During the meeting, you emphasised that the Council's budget is under pressure and Members recognise this. However, if a robust business case, supported by credible evidence, demonstrates that a modest increase in investment would lead to a significant upturn in visitor numbers and their associated spending locally, then Members feel that this would merit serious consideration during the Medium Term Financial Planning process.

Best wishes

Councillor Mimi Harker OBE
Chairman
Communities & Localism

Councillor David Carroll
Chairman
Growth, Infrastructure & Housing



Report to Growth, Infrastructure & Housing Select Committee

Date:	6 October 2022
Title:	Local Plan for Buckinghamshire update
Cabinet Member(s):	Cllr Peter Strachan
Contact officer:	Darran Eggleton/John Cheston
Ward(s) affected:	All
Recommendations:	To note the progress made and current position in relation to the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire.
Reason for decision:	To ensure the Select Committee is kept up to date with the progress of the Plan.

1. Executive summary

1.1 This report provides an update on the progress of the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire (**LP4B** or **Plan**) to the Growth, Infrastructure & Housing Select Committee. The key topics covered are:

- a) Planning reforms and their consequences for the LP4B
- b) Current recommended timetable for the LP4B
- c) Update on technical work

2. Content of report

2.1 This report updates the Committee on progress to date on the Plan and the current position concerning the preparation of the Plan.

2.2 As previously reported to this Committee, the Council has a statutory duty to prepare a new Local Plan for Buckinghamshire and adopt it by April 2025. More

importantly, however, the Plan provides a major opportunity to shape the growth of Buckinghamshire over the next 15 years and beyond. The Plan will complement the work of the Buckinghamshire Growth Board on the Vision for Buckinghamshire and also the Recovery and Growth Proposal, setting out the spatial vision and proposals for the growth of the area up to 2040. It will also be critical to the day to day planning application decisions that the Council takes as the local planning authority, as once adopted (or significantly progressed), the Local Plan is the prime consideration in those decisions. It shapes in detail not just where development takes place but also the quality of the development and secures the infrastructure (or funding for infrastructure) to support it.

- 2.3 Previous reports to members, member briefings and this committee have highlighted the significant uncertainty that the Government's current planning reforms have created in the preparation of the LP4B.
- 2.4 There continues to be uncertainty at the highest levels of Government since the resignation in July 2022 of the Prime Minister Boris Johnson and the appointment of his successor, Liz Truss, on 6 September. The new Secretary of State for Levelling Up is Simon Clarke and we wait to hear how the new Government will take planning reforms forward.
- 2.5 Since we last reported to the Committee, the Government has published the [Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill](#) ("LURB") and we set out here the key considerations arising from this for the LP4B. The Government was also expected to have published a Prospectus setting out further details of its proposed planning reforms in July, but we are now unlikely to see this until later in the autumn once the new Prime Minister, Cabinet and Ministerial teams have been established.
- 2.6 Key points to note from the LURB for plan-making include:
 - a) Much of the detail is left to secondary legislation, which is at the discretion of the Secretary of State (i.e. it may not be scrutinised by Parliament).
 - b) Local Plans will have to be prepared within 30 months. This statutory period is likely to include stages that are fixed in length and purpose.
 - c) The Government will set out National Development Management Policies (NDMP). It seems that there will be limited scope for Local Plans to include their own local development management policies. Planning decisions will be made in accordance with both the NDMP and the Local Plan, with the NDMP taking precedence.
 - d) A 'plan timetable' – in a standard format – replaces the Local Development Scheme.

- e) The process of environmental assessment of Plans will change, with the Government setting the key outcomes.
- f) The Duty to Cooperate will no longer be a legal test, but will remain as an 'alignment' [with neighbouring authorities' plans] soundness test. This allows the Planning Inspector to modify the Plan to align it, rather than the Plan failing at the outset of the Examination.
- g) There will be two opportunities for the public to comment on the Plan. In the Planning White Paper these were described as the 'Call for Suggestions' stage and the Publication stage (which will be simultaneous with Submission of the Plan to the Secretary of State).
- h) New 'Local Plan Commissioners' may be appointed by the Secretary of State to support or ultimately takeover plan-making if local authorities fail to meet their statutory duties.
- i) Recognising that the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans can be a very significant effort for parishes, qualifying areas can produce a 'neighbourhood priorities statement' which the local planning authority must take into account when preparing local plans.
- j) An Infrastructure levy (IL) will replace the Community Infrastructure Levy in England. Authorities will prepare local charging schedules, which will be subject to public examination. Authorities will be required to charge IL on development. Section 106 planning obligations will be retained for the largest sites and narrowly focused on on-site infrastructure. We await further detail on the operation of the new Levy. We do know that the Government proposes to introduce it over time, to allow a 'test and learn' staggered approach to IL regulations.

2.7 It will take significant time for the LURB and for secondary legislation to progress through Parliament, and for national planning policy and guidance to be revised to align with the new legislation. At present, our best estimate for a new system being fully in place is the first quarter of 2024.

2.8 If we follow the 30-month timetable from the first quarter of 2024, we could be submitting the LP4B to the Secretary of State in quarter 2 of 2025. The Plan is then in the hands of the Planning Inspector appointed to examine it and adoption could follow in mid-2026. This programme would demonstrate to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities that the Council is committed to preparing a new plan in good faith.

2.9 We considered whether it would be possible to progress the Plan under existing legislation so that it could be incorporated into any transitional arrangements. To do this, we would have to be ready to submit the Plan by quarter 1 of 2024. This would

not be a realistic timetable, particularly given the commitment to consult on a draft Plan in our [Statement of Community Involvement](#).

- 2.10 The LP4B work programme is therefore focusing on evidence gathering that is at less risk of being abortive until there is more information on key issues such as assessing housing need. Perhaps most important, we are gathering as much information as we can on land supply from different sources.
- 2.11 We have completed two Calls for Brownfield Sites, and our wider Call for Sites closed on 11 September 2022, although we may still consider sites submitted after this date. We received around 700 submissions in the wider Call and we are currently analysing these returns. We are also reviewing the land supply evidence from the legacy plans to see what continues to be relevant.
- 2.12 The calls for Brownfield sites received nearly 300 submissions though a small proportion of these turned out not to be brownfield sites. Work is in progress assessing their availability, suitability and capacity. However, it is evident at this stage that they will only provide a modest contribution towards meeting Buckinghamshire's total housing need as currently calculated. In view of this, the LP4B will have to determine the most appropriate growth strategy for the Council area to accommodate any remaining housing need. We have published more information about the sites that were submitted on the Council website [here](#).
- 2.13 We are about to commission a study to review land currently in use for employment and retail purposes, to assess whether it is still fit for these uses or could be repurposed for housing.
- 2.14 Early in 2023 we expect to publish our findings from the various calls for sites and other work to identify land supply across the Council area. We will be transparent and publish all submissions. It does not necessarily follow, however, that all sites published will be included in the Plan: this depends on much more work, discussion and engagement with Members, the public and wider stakeholders that will need to happen. It's likely that some site suggestions will be in the Green Belt but it is worth repeating here that the Council is committed to ensuring strong protection of the Green Belt from inappropriate development.
- 2.15 Other work in progress includes the following studies / integrating earlier studies from the legacy areas:
- Early environmental assessment scoping
 - Climate change and renewables
 - Review of Landscape Character Assessment
 - Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Water Cycle Study
 - Sports and Playing Pitch Facilities
 - Gypsy and Traveller Assessment

- Green Infrastructure, Open Space and Green Space Study
- Settlement review

2.16 We will develop further evidence workstreams as we gain greater clarity on the planning reforms.

2.17 Earlier this year, we invited views from the public with our [Attitudes survey](#) and have published the [key findings](#) on the Council website. We shared feedback on this engagement exercise with all Members in May this year.

2.18 Our response to key messages from the survey included reaffirming commitments to:

- Identify housing needs in Buckinghamshire including the number and types of houses needed, for example, family homes and first-time homes.
- Include policies for affordable housing and other specialist housing such as homes for older people. We will also refer to housing waiting lists when identifying different housing types and tenures.
- Consider how to deliver homes for key workers.
- Recognise the support for brownfield development and for redeveloping sites within existing built-up areas.
- Recognise the importance of the natural environment and include policies to improve the natural environment and ensure biodiversity net gain. The Local Plan will seek opportunities to connect green infrastructure and environmental assets.
- Seek to protect employment sites and find suitable locations for economic growth. It is recognised that good accessibility and infrastructure are important for new employment sites.
- Consider policies to support and develop local businesses, including how the Plan can support town centres and high streets.
- Fully embed the mitigation of, and adaption to, climate change into the preparation of the strategic and non-strategic policies of the Plan. It will seek to include a range of new policies that collectively will reduce carbon dioxide emissions and encourage renewable and low carbon energy assessment.
- Work proactively with infrastructure providers to understand the future infrastructure needs of the area. This includes the Integrated Care Board, utility providers and other service providers such as for schools and highway infrastructure. An Infrastructure Delivery Plan will be developed to support the delivery of the Local Plan.

- j) Encourage sustainable development, supported by services and infrastructure, while protecting our natural environment.
- 2.19 The Council continues to develop dialogue and collaboration on strategic planning issues with other local authorities and key agencies to ensure that the Council can satisfy the current statutory “Duty to Cooperate” and later, the proposed alignment test.
- 2.20 The detailed longer term programme for preparing the Buckinghamshire Local Plan will ultimately depend on the detail of planning reforms and subsequent changes to national planning policy. As is often the case with major legislative or policy change, there may well be transitional provisions, and careful account will need to be taken of these when they are available. The Council will need to be prepared to be flexible and adapt its approach to preparing the Plan in response to further changes.

3. Other options considered

- 3.1 Not applicable at this stage.

4. Legal and financial implications

- 4.1 There continues to be considerable uncertainty about the legal basis for preparing the LP4B. At present, local plans have to be prepared within the legislative framework provided by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the relevant associated regulations, but this may change.
- 4.2 Our own internal legal advice has indicated that there are no formal penalties if the Council does not have an adopted Plan by April 2025. Nor are we aware of any sanctions which are likely to be imposed by the Government. The policies in the Council’s existing Plans will continue to apply, though they will carry less weight in determining planning applications as they age or become inconsistent with national planning policy.
- 4.3 A £3m budget has been included in the MTFP to fund the preparation of the plan (£750k pa from 2021-22 to 2024-25). Only a small amount of this budget has been spent to date, but this is set to increase significantly in 2022/23 as work on the technical evidence base increases. We think £3m is still a sufficient budget to deliver the Local Plan, but we continue to keep it under review pending future planning reforms.

5. Corporate implications

- 5.1 There are wide-ranging corporate implications of preparing the Local Plan. In particular, it will help to deliver the key priorities in the Corporate Plan 2020 -2025

on increasing prosperity, strengthening our communities and improving our environment.

- 5.2 It also provides the opportunity to develop the spatial expression of the Council's Vision for Buckinghamshire. Moreover, it provides the opportunity to embed issues of climate change mitigation and adaptation, and sustainability into our planning decisions through the development of new policies and proposals. There may well be implications for the Council's property assets, too.

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

- 6.1 The report highlights that we have undertaken early engagement on the Plan and our report on the responses that we received is published on the Council website [here](#).

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

- 7.1 The report refers to early engagement already carried out. The Planning Policy team plans to engage further on options for the Plan in the first part of 2023.

8. Next steps and review

- 8.1 To analyse the sites put forward in the various calls for sites, assessing their suitability, availability and deliverability. Not all sites will necessarily be included in the final Plan: this depends on much more work, discussion and engagement with Members, the public and wider stakeholders that will need to happen.
- 8.2 To develop and agree objectives for the Plan; to develop a range of spatial options that will enable the Plan to deliver against these objectives.
- 8.3 To continue to develop the various evidence studies that we need to prepare a sound and legally compliant plan.

9. Background papers

- 9.1 [Buckinghamshire Local Development Scheme](#)
[Statement of Community Involvement](#)

10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

- 10.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the Cabinet Member to consider please inform the Democratic Services team. This can be done by telephone [] or email []

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Buckinghamshire Design Code

Review of the project & update on progress and next steps

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Growth Infrastructure & Housing Select Committee

6th October 2022

Agenda Item 7



Buckinghamshire Council Design Code Pilot

- What are Design Codes
- Why we need one
- Scope of work & policy context
- Progress to-date
- Next steps

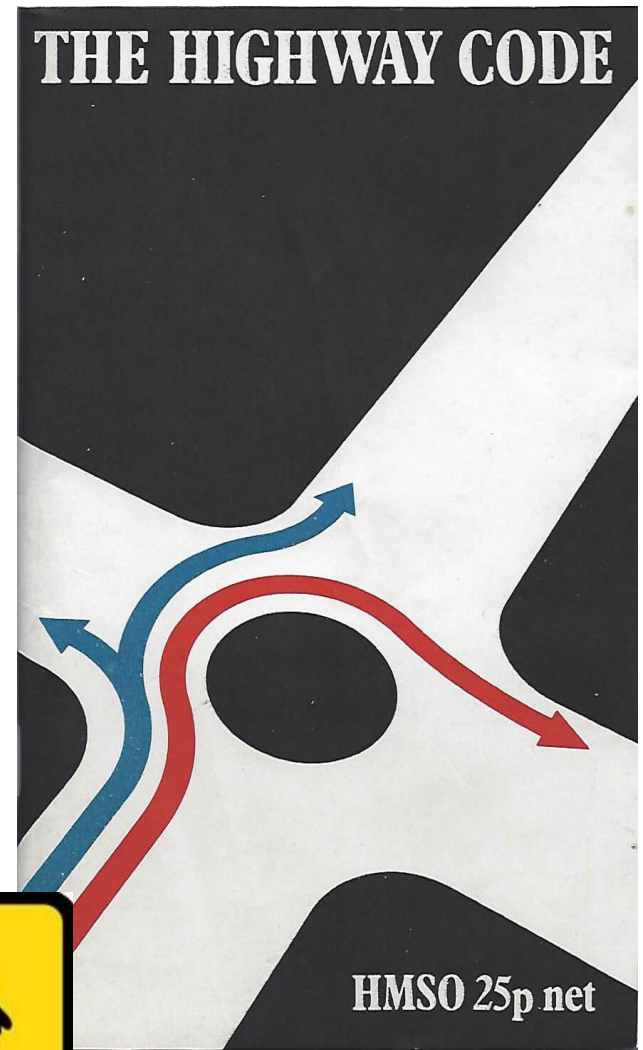
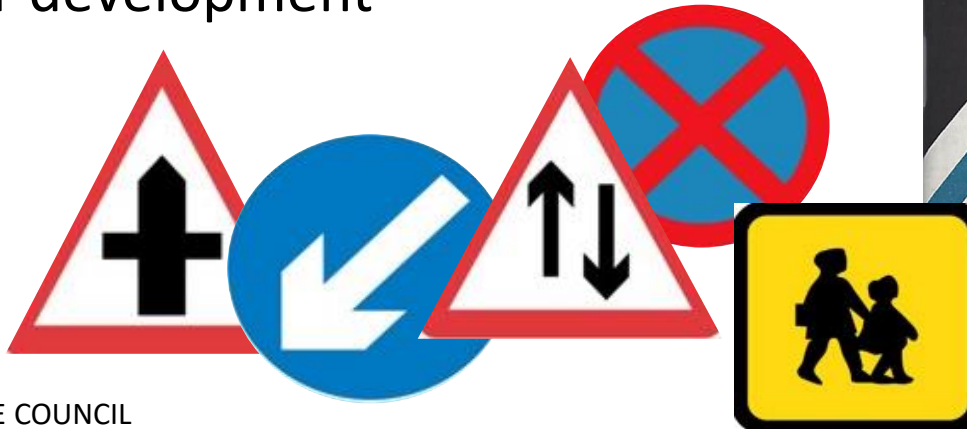
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What are design codes

A good design code is like the highway code:

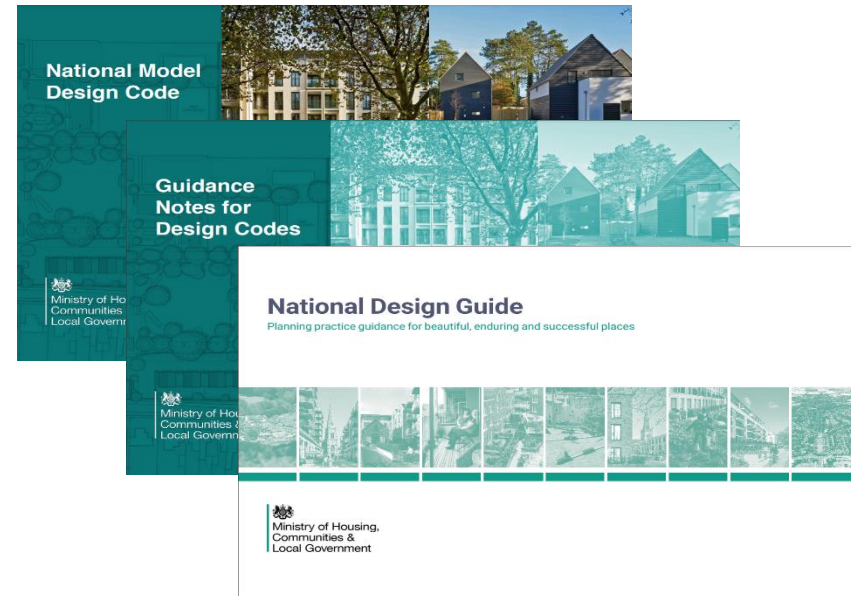
- A set of simple, concise, illustrated design requirements
- Visual and numerical wherever possible
- Provide specific, detailed guidance for development



National Model Design Code

The National Model Design Code expands the ten characteristics of good design as set out in the National Design Guide

In the absence of local design guidance, local planning authorities will be expected to defer to the National Design Guide, NPDC, & Guidance Notes



The current local policy context for design

Aylesbury Vale

- Adopted Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan 2004
- Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan 2013-2033 (expected to be adopted in 2021)
- 23 Neighbourhood Plans.
- Aylesbury Garden Town Vision to 2050, and Masterplan 2020.
- SPD adopted or planned following adoption of the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (programme currently under review).
- Conservation Areas SPD (2011)
- Aylesbury Garden Town Framework and Infrastructure SPD.
- Aylesbury South (D-AGT 1) Masterplan.
- RAF Halton SPD.
- Aylesbury Design Guidance.
- Biodiversity and Geodiversity SPD.
- Shenley Park, North East Aylesbury Vale (D-WHA001) Masterplan for the site to ensure comprehensive.
- A wide range of site briefs.
- SPGs including the Buckingham Design Guideline and Safety Through Design, and Parking.
- A wide range of topic-based guidance including new buildings in towns and villages, new buildings in the countryside, residential extensions, appropriate building materials, and shop fronts.

Chiltern

- Chiltern Adopted Local Plan (1997)
- Chiltern Adopted Core Strategy (2011)
- Residential Extensions and Householder Development SPD.
- Sustainable Construction and Renewable Energy SPD.

South Buckinghamshire

- South Bucks Adopted Local Plan (1999)
- South Bucks Adopted Core Strategy (2011)
- Mill Lane Taplow SPD.
- Wilton Park Development Brief SPD.
- Residential Development Design Guide SPD.
- 10 Neighbourhood Plans.
- Chiltern and South Bucks Townscape Character Study 2017
- DRAFT Chiltern and South Bucks Heritage Strategy 2016

Wycombe

- Wycombe District Local Plan August 2019
- Wycombe District Delivery and Site Allocations Plan 2013.
- 4 neighbourhood plans
- SPDs covering topics such as Canopy Cover, Householder Planning and Design Guidance, Housing Intensification, and Residential Design Guide SPD.
- Village Design Statements for Downley, Ellesborough, and Lacey Green and Loosely Row.
- A wide range of site briefs.
- A wide range of topic-based guidance including the planting of native hedgerows, tree pits and parking.

Buckinghamshire County Council

- Buckinghamshire Minerals and Waste 2016-2036

Cross boundary

- Chilterns Buildings Design Guide.
- Wide range of Conservation Area Appraisals.
- Biodiversity Accounting SPD (in production).

The pilot

Buckinghamshire Council awarded £50k because we:

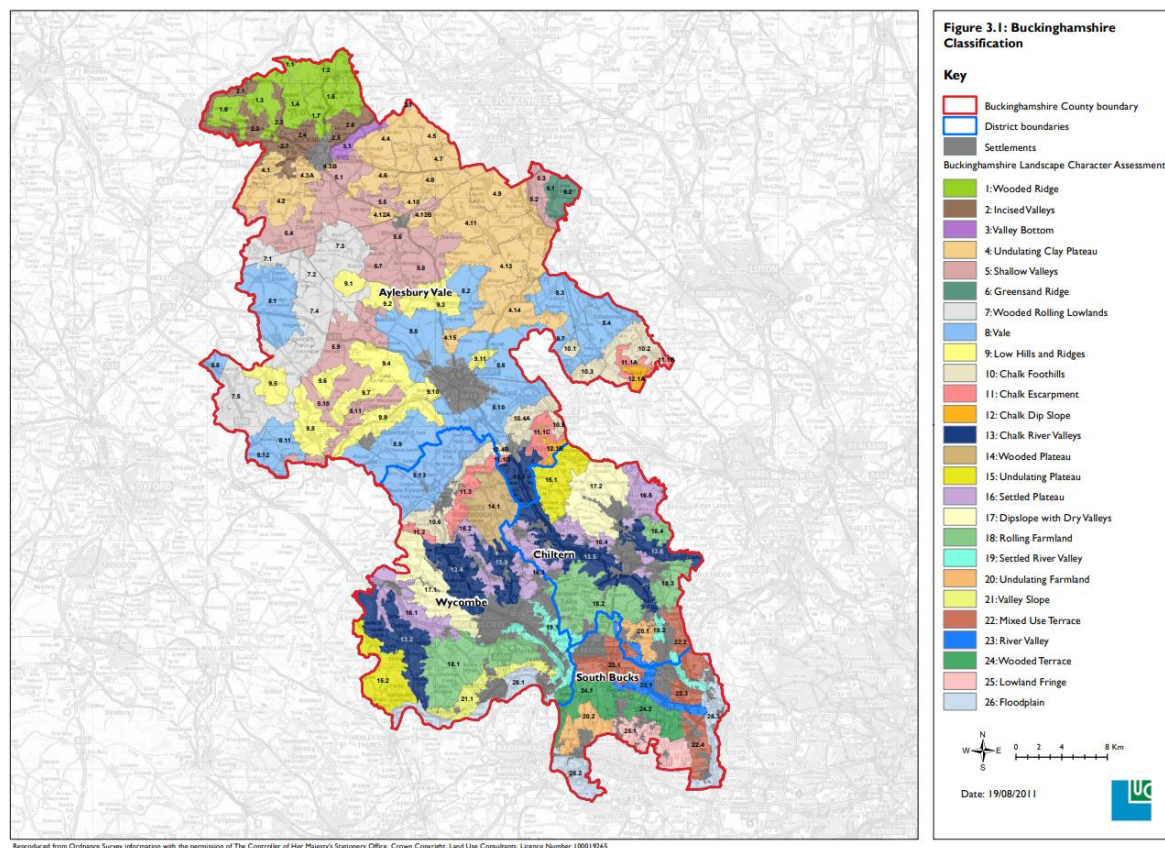
- Proposed to write a code for the whole of Buckinghamshire
- Proposed a two-tier approach to coding
- Proposed an innovative method for engagement via website & app
- Assembled an industry-leading team with significant experience drafting design codes.



Two-tier coding

The
Buckinghamshire
Design Code –
working title the
'A Code' - will
cover structural
issues

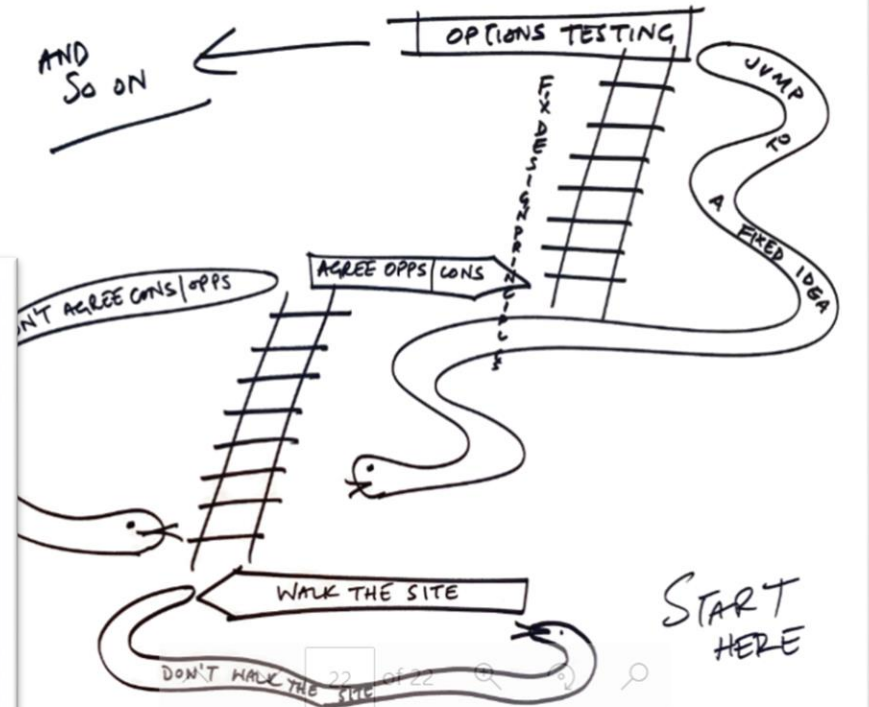
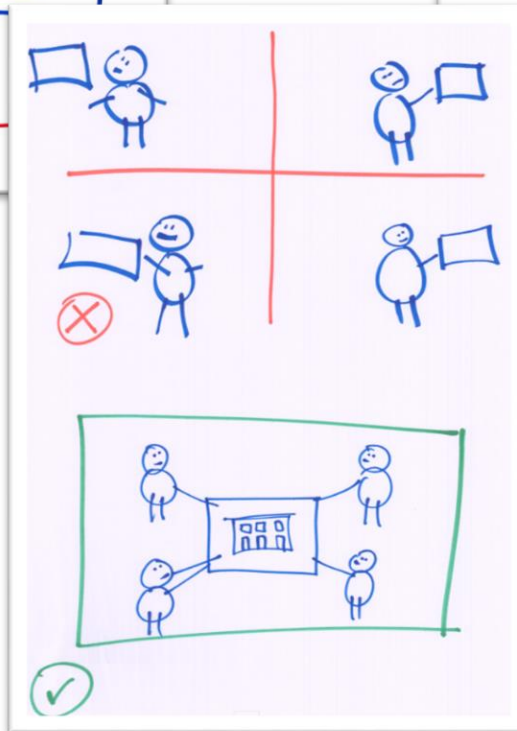
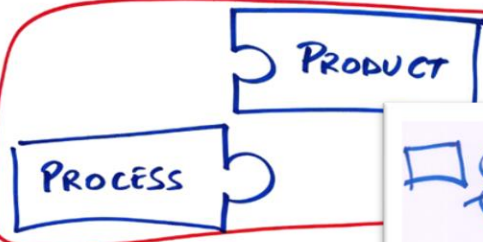
More localised 'B
Codes' will cover
locally distinctive
issues



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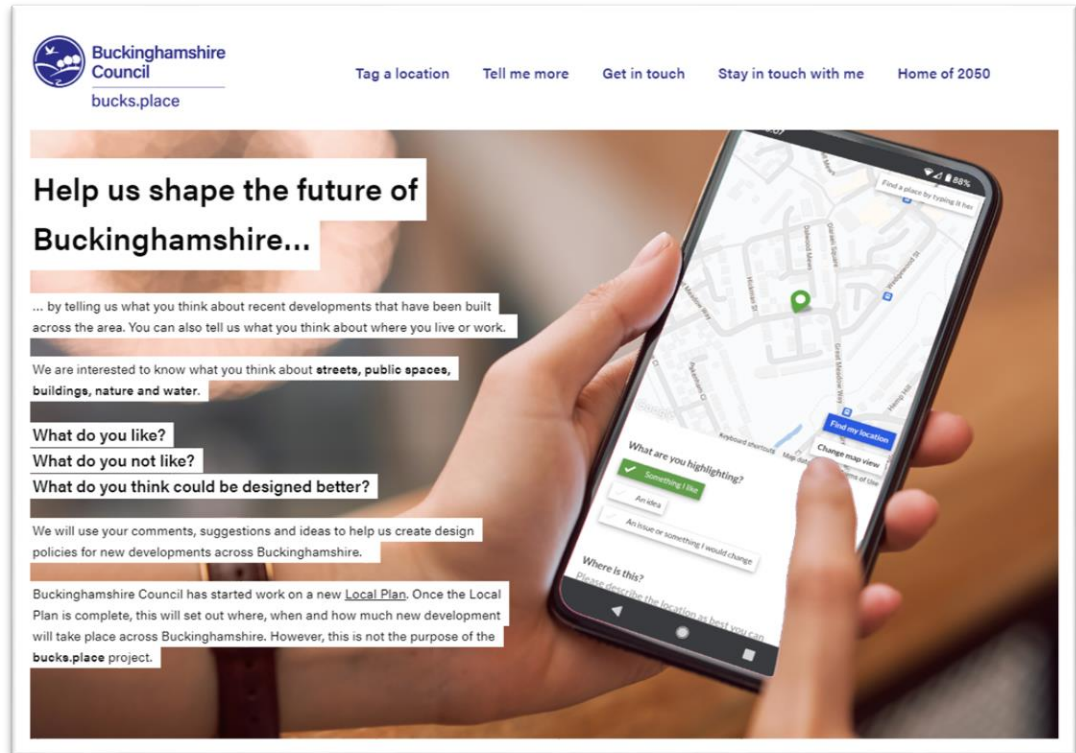


Engagement

Testing innovative
engagement
methods

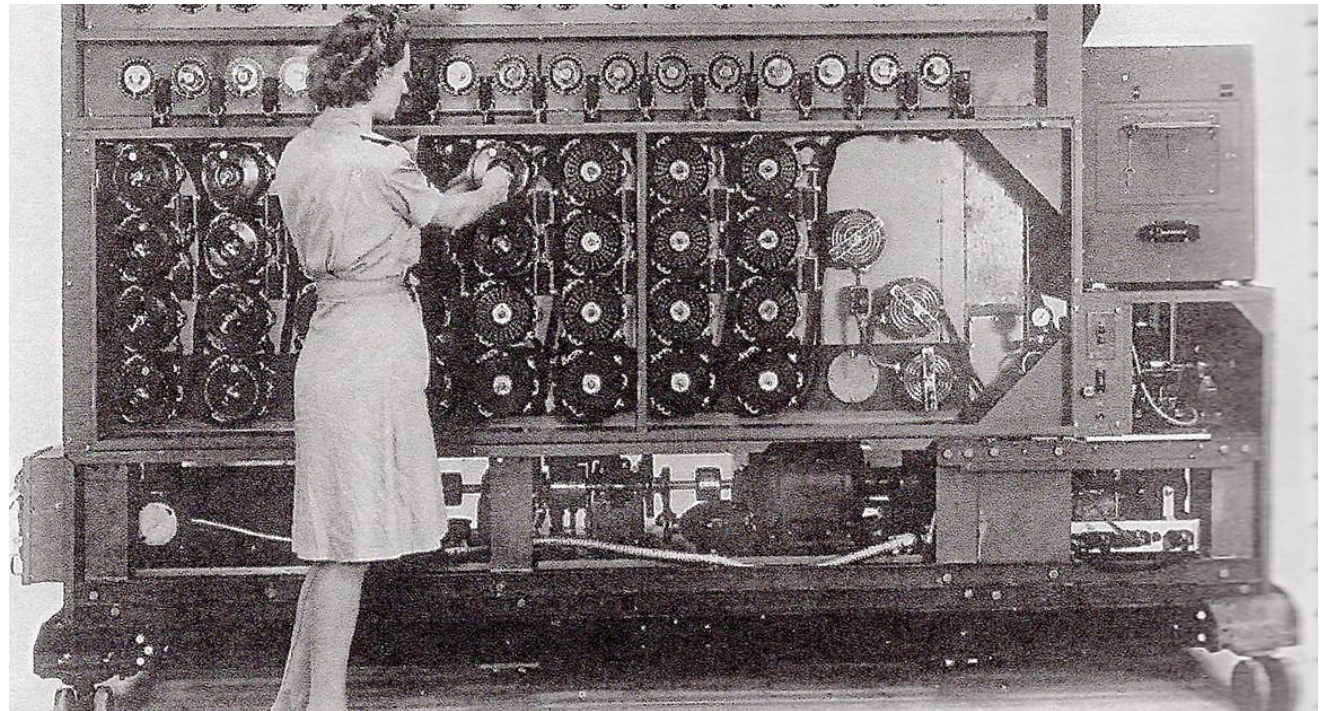
bucks.place

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Next steps

- Code-breaking
- Iteration
- Consultation



Status of the Buckinghamshire Design Code

Options include:

- Full-adoption as SPD
- Partial adoption as SPD
- Guidance only, albeit with some weight
- Further iteration and eventual inclusion in the Buckinghamshire Local Plan

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Watch this space



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Report to Growth, Housing & Infrastructure Select Committee

Date:	6 th October 2022
Reference number:	N/A
Title:	Affordable Housing Update
Cabinet Member(s):	Councillor Mark Winn/Councillor John Chilver
Contact officer:	Nigel Dicker
Ward(s) affected:	All wards
Recommendations:	That the update report is noted
Reason for decision:	To monitor progress on the delivery of the Interim Affordable Housing Position Statement.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update to the Council's approach to the delivery of Affordable Housing following Cabinet's adoption of an Interim Affordable Housing Position Statement in May 2022. This statement set out the Council's plans for encouraging more Affordable Housing in the county including the possibility of delivering affordable residential properties on Council owned sites. The report updates the actions being taken against each of the commitments set down in the Position Statement.

2. Content of report

- 2.1 A Member Task and Finish Group was initiated in August 2021 and led by the incumbent Cabinet Member for Housing, Homelessness and Regulatory Services. The group met on a number of occasions to discuss the issues and challenges around the delivery of affordable housing in Buckinghamshire and to develop an Affordable Housing Position Statement for reporting back to the Leader and Cabinet.

- 2.2 On 10th May 2022, Cabinet received a report on the outcomes of the Task and Finish Group and adopted the interim Affordable Housing Position Statement that was put forward by the Group. The Position Statement was intended to set out the Council's interim approach and immediate commitment to bringing forward a development on a Council owned site that provided affordable housing, potentially with an element of specialist affordable and key worker housing.
- 2.3 This interim approach was intended to cover the period while the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping and overarching Housing Strategies were being developed and was expected to provide early tangible progress for the key Council priority of increasing the delivery of affordable housing. A copy of the adopted Position Statement can be found at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.4 Section 2.1 of the statement set down seven immediate commitments to increasing the delivery of affordable and key worker housing over the subsequent 12 month period. The table in **Appendix 2** provides an update on the progress to date against each of these commitments.
- 2.5 Work has now started on the development of a single Housing Strategy for Buckinghamshire that will consolidate and replace the previous legacy Council strategies. The development work includes engagement sessions with Members and key stakeholders (September 2022) along with wider consultation to produce a single Housing Strategy for the delivery of affordable housing. A draft of the strategy is expected before the end of the calendar year. The strategy will then be brought forward for consideration by the full Council.

3. Other options considered

- 3.1 This is not applicable.

4. Legal and financial implications

- 4.1 There are no general legal and financial implications associated with this update. Any implications for specific items mentioned in the update will be dealt with under the governance process for the item concerned.

5. Corporate implications

- 5.1 This report relates to the Corporate Priorities for "Strengthening Our Communities" and "Protecting the Vulnerable".

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

- 6.1 Not applicable

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

7.1 Not applicable

8. Next steps and review

8.1 The Council will continue to monitor actions against the Affordable Housing Position Statement commitments.

9. Background papers

9.1 None

10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

10.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider please inform the Democratic Services team.

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Appendix 1

Buckinghamshire Council Affordable Housing Position Statement**1.0 Current Conditions in Buckinghamshire**

- 1.1 With around 4800 (as of September 2021) households on Bucks Home Choice seeking social housing, yet with only around 1500 lettings made annually, the Council recognises that Buckinghamshire has an acute shortage of housing in terms of socially rented housing, affordable rent and rented key worker accommodation.
- 1.2 This shortage is largely driven by high rents and property values, which put even properties defined as 'affordable' in government guidance (e.g. rented at up to 80% of market rent or sold as shared ownership or discounted purchase price) out of the reach of many residents.
- 1.3 Symptomatic of this is the fact (column 7, table 1 below) that the proportion of Buckinghamshire residents in work and claiming housing benefit is higher than in the South East and significantly more than in England. This demonstrates that lower income working households often need welfare support to afford to rent in both social housing and private rented sectors in Bucks.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	Average (mean) house prices in 19/20	Mean annual earnings in 19/20	Ratio house prices/ income 19/20	Income for 80% mortgage 19/20	Mean monthly private sector rent 19/20	Unemployment 2019/20	Housing Benefit claimants total in employment %	HA affordable homes 18/19
England	£309,678	£30,248	10	£70,784	£843	3.9%	17.3%	2,753,583
South E	£388,040	£32,162	12	£88,695	£999	3.1%	19.4%	392,396
Bucks	£480,356	£35,526	14	£109,796	£1,160	3%	23%	31,394

Table 1 - National Housing Federation - Home Truths. The housing crisis in the South East, August 2021

1.4 The challenges faced in the delivery of affordable housing

- 1.5 To effectively tackle the shortage of affordable housing in Buckinghamshire is clearly a significant challenge. High land values mean there is a shortage of suitable modestly priced sites available for building, making the supply of a good number of truly affordable homes near to employment and amenities difficult.
- 1.6 Housing supply has a major influence on economic development and it impacts upon economic performance - a lack of supply can place an area at a competitive disadvantage. Essentially, a good supply of affordable housing is an enabler, bringing access to jobs, education, it underpins economic growth, the ability to recover from the economic effects of the pandemic, and health and wellbeing.

1.7 **The 'cost' of affordable housing**

1.8 However, it must be recognised that the delivery of affordable housing has to be subsidised in order for the rent level or sale price to be truly affordable to those people who cannot afford renting or buying on the open market. This can be through direct subsidy via financial grants or indirect subsidy whereby a landowner (perhaps the Council) or developer has to accept a lesser capital receipt, or lower income from the scheme.

1.9 Table 2 below shows housing need in the former district areas in Buckinghamshire, in terms of bedrooms for households on Bucks Home Choice, as of September 2021.

Bed need	Chiltern Area	Wycombe Area	South Bucks Area	Aylesbury Area	Totals
1 bed	345	736	271	1614	2966
2 bed	113	238	113	334	798
3 bed	161	272	92	349	874
4 bed	16	44	14	76	150
5 bed	1	3	3	4	11
Totals	636	1293	493	2377	4799

Table 2 - Housing need in the former district areas in Buckinghamshire, September 2021

2.0 The Council will be reviewing homelessness in its area and producing Homelessness & Rough Sleeping and Overarching Housing Strategies in 2022. These will set the scene for the next 5 years, examine the issues in Buckinghamshire and set key priorities for how the Council will work with others to tackle homelessness, rough sleeping and strategic housing challenges in Buckinghamshire. The strategies will identify the need for the delivery additional general, specialist and key worker affordable housing across a range of tenures.

Our immediate commitment

2.1 The Council is committed to increasing the delivery of affordable and key worker housing. Therefore, over the next 12 months;

- a) The Council will work closely with house builders, through planning obligations, to maximise delivery of general needs affordable housing. On average, this system has delivered 643 new affordable homes in Buckinghamshire each year. The Local Plans across Buckinghamshire set targets for new developments to deliver affordable housing. These targets range from 25% to 48% (as a proportion of the new dwellings built). Given the high land values in the county and the increasing cost of development it is likely that fully meeting these targets will remain a challenge.
- b) The Council will work closely with Registered Social Landlords to support them to deliver their development plans, and also to encourage them to work in partnership with the Council to use s106 funds and other enabling grants to make nomination rights for affordable rented accommodation available to those on the Bucks Home Choice system.

- c) *The Council will agree a local definition for 'key workers'.*
 - d) *The Council, through its housing company 'Consilio Property Ltd', may engage with private house builders to explore the viability of acquiring homes to accommodate key workers. Provided this is a viable option, and subject to business case and governance requirements, will seek to deliver at least one scheme in 2022.*
 - e) *The Council will identify at least one Council owned asset in Buckinghamshire on which to potentially deliver (subject to planning) affordable and key worker housing, possibly of a specialist nature. The sites identified to be assessed are:*
 - 1. *Stoke Mandeville former Sports and Social Club*
 - 2. *Horns Lane, High Wycombe*
 - 3. *Tatling End, Denham*
 - f) *The Council will agree a position statement on the new national 'First Homes' product for first time buyers and ensure that First Homes delivered in new Buckinghamshire housing developments are prioritised for Buckinghamshire residents and key workers. An interim position statement on First Homes has already been developed.*
 - g) *Empty homes in Buckinghamshire will be reviewed and catalogued and the Council will explore if these can be brought back into use. Council Tax charges for persistently empty homes will be reviewed.*
- 2.2 *Whilst the forthcoming Homelessness & Rough Sleeping and Overarching Housing strategies will emerge in 2022, the approach embodied in this statement will offer an opportunity to deliver tangible benefits in the shorter term whilst not replicating wider general housing market activity. The approaches will also inform strategy and pilot some of the potential future delivery models on Council owned sites i.e. whether the Council is the developer, an RSL, or a combination of the two)*

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Affordable Housing Update

Appendix 2

Affordable Housing Position Statement – Update on Commitments

	Commitment	Update
a	The Council will work closely with house builders, through planning obligations, to maximise delivery of general needs affordable housing. On average, this system has delivered 643 new affordable homes in Buckinghamshire each year. The Local Plans across Buckinghamshire set targets for new developments to deliver affordable housing. These targets range from 25% to 48% (as a proportion of the new dwellings built). Given the high land values in the county and the increasing cost of development it is likely that fully meeting these targets will remain a challenge.	<p>The planning service continues to require house builders to deliver planning policy compliant schemes that meet Local Plan affordable housing requirements.</p> <p>Between 01/04/2022 and 30/06/2022, 186 units of affordable completions were recorded.</p>

b	<p>The Council will work closely with Registered Social Landlords to support them to deliver their development plans, and also to encourage them to work in partnership with the Council to use s106 funds and other enabling grants to make nomination rights for affordable rented accommodation available to those on the Bucks Home Choice system.</p>	<p>An internal stakeholder group (including officers from Housing, Planning, Legal and Property and Assets services) has been established to review working practices and identify opportunities to improve partnerships with RPs (Registered Providers). Initial outcomes from this group have included setting up Single Points of Contact within the Council for RP partners and working with RPs to get a clear picture of proposed affordable housing schemes that they have in the pipeline (to provide an over-view of proposed schemes across Buckinghamshire and promote strategic conversations at an early stage).</p> <p>On 6/7/22 the Council held an in-person Development Workshop with RPs to look at the future of partnership working and the current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The workshop focused on the areas of Planning, Property and Housing Enabling within the Council. The workshops highlighted that RPs were positive about their relationship with the Council, but highlighted the need to continue harmonising key policies, processes and points of contact following the transition to becoming a unitary authority. Timely engagement and turnaround of enquiries between both sides was also seen as an important factor. Overall, the RPs felt that there were many opportunities going forward to maximise affordable housing delivery in Bucks, but also highlighted the threats arising from increased construction costs and potentially unrealistic expectations from land and property owners.</p>
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		<p>The outcomes of this workshop are being reviewed and used to develop an Action Plan to deliver effective partnership working and encourage RP affordable housing development.</p>
c	The Council will agree a local definition for 'key workers'.	<p>The First Homes Interim Position Statement agreed by Cabinet on 10/5/22 (see Commitment (f) below) included the following definition of Key Workers for Bucks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinical staff employed by the NHS to include ambulance drivers, paramedics, healthcare workers • Providing care services (including those working in care homes) • Police officers, community support officers, and frontline police staff • Uniformed staff in the Fire & Rescue Service • Prison officers, and frontline prison staff • Probation officers • Public sector employed teachers, social workers, planning and building control officers, environmental health officers, occupational therapists, speech therapists and educational psychologists • Or such other critical workers that the council acting reasonably shall approve. <p>This definition is being kept under review as the Council continues to explore and develop Key Worker housing options.</p> <p>1/8/22 – a draft definition has been agreed with the Cabinet member and is now being taken through governance processes for adoption.</p>

d	<p>The Council, through its housing company 'Consilio Property Ltd', may engage with private house builders to explore the viability of acquiring homes to accommodate key workers. Provided this is a viable option, and subject to business case and governance requirements, will seek to deliver at least one scheme in 2022.</p>	<p>Initial work to look at this option has raised questions that it may not be cost effective for Consilio to directly acquire homes for key workers in view of high local housing market costs. Officers are continuing to explore the viability of this option.</p> <p>31/08/22: Recent developments in respect of increasing homelessness pressures in Buckinghamshire will be kept under review and the viability of Consilio's involvement will be re-assessed.</p>

e	<p>The Council will identify at least one Council owned asset in Buckinghamshire on which to potentially deliver (subject to planning) affordable and key worker housing, possibly of a specialist nature. The sites identified to be assessed are: 1. Stoke Mandeville former Sports and Social Club 2. Horns Lane, High Wycombe 3. Tatling End, Denham</p>	<p>On 7/6/22, Cabinet authorised the submission of an Outline Planning Application for the former Bucks County Council Community Sports and Social Club site in Stoke Mandeville (identified as site 1 in this commitment). The Cabinet decision was called in and the call-in and pre-planning consultation document was considered at a meeting of the Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee on 5/7/22. The Select Committee referred the decision back to Cabinet for further consideration.</p> <p>On 12/7/22, Cabinet authorised the submission of an outline planning application for up to 100 residential units including 30% affordable Housing, a new road link between Booker Park School and Lower Road, an increase in size of the existing access road to Lower Road and the provision of a sports and leisure area for community and school use. Cabinet highlighted that this was Council owned land and provided an opportunity to provide services to the benefit of Buckinghamshire residents (such as affordable and keyworker housing in excess of statutory requirements and homes for clients of adults and children's services) that cannot be imposed on privately owned development sites.</p> <p>If the outline planning permission is granted for the site, then a proposed detailed development scheme will be brought forward for further consideration by Cabinet.</p>
f	<p>The Council will agree a position statement on the new national 'First Homes' product for first time buyers and ensure that First Homes delivered in new Buckinghamshire housing developments</p>	<p>The First Homes Interim Position Statement was agreed by the Cabinet on 10/5/22. This includes a requirement for developers</p>

	are prioritised for Buckinghamshire residents and key workers. An interim position statement on First Homes has already been developed.	of First Homes to prioritise sales to households with a local connection to Buckinghamshire and to key workers.
g	Empty homes in Buckinghamshire will be reviewed and catalogued and the Council will explore if these can be brought back into use. Council Tax charges for persistently empty homes will be reviewed	<p>The council tax base figures as of October 2022 for Buckinghamshire were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total number of empty dwellings is 4,432. • Total empty for more than 6 months is 2,140. <p>The number of households that are empty and being charged an empty homes premium on Council Tax was 512 (the empty homes premium is 2-5 years = 200% / 5-10 years = 300% / 10+ years = 400%)</p> <p>We have not yet moved forward with a review of the empty homes. Homes can be empty long term for a variety of reasons including major improvement works and probate issues. Previous experience has shown that there can be significant challenges in the Council intervening to return properties into use, with long timescales and associated costs.</p> <p>The review will be progressed when resources are available across the Housing and Revenues and Benefits teams.</p>

Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee (Chairman: David Carroll, Scrutiny officer: Tom Fowler)

Date	Topic	Description & Purpose	Lead Officer	Contributors
1 December 2022	Local Plan Update	Members will receive an update on progress with the development of the Buckinghamshire Local Plan.	Darran Eggleton	Peter Strachan, Darran
	Member Engagement in Planning – 6-month progress update	The Select Committee will review the progress of work on implementation of the 6 recommendations made in the Member Engagement in Planning review which was presented to Cabinet on 1 st March 2022.	Steve Bambrick/Chrissy Urry	Peter Strachan, Steve Bambrick
	Regeneration Framework Update (TBC)	An opportunity for members to be updated on progress with the Regeneration Framework.	Lisa Michelson	
	Aylesbury Garden Town (TBC)	The Select Committee will receive an update on progress with Aylesbury Garden Town.	Lisa Michelson	
16 February 2023	Local Plan, LTP and Infrastructure Plan – How do these crucial plans link together?	An opportunity for members to understand and discuss the synergies between the emerging Local Plan, Local Transport Plan and Infrastructure Plan.	Steve Bambrick, Darran Eggleton, Richard Lumley,	Peter Strachan, Steve Broadbent, Martin Tett?
	Planning Enforcement Plan review and update	The Select Committee will review the effectiveness of the Planning Enforcement Plan in light of an up to date performance report.	Darran Eggleton	Gary Hall, Darran
6 April 2023	Member Engagement in Planning – 12-month progress update	The Select Committee will review the progress of work on implementation of the 6 recommendations made in the Member Engagement in Planning review which was presented to Cabinet on 1 st March 2022.	Steve Bambrick/Chrissy Urry	Peter Strachan

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