



# **BLETSOE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

**Our Parish – Our Plan – Our Future**

## **Basic Conditions Statement**

Published by Bletsoe Parish Council as part of the evidence base for Bletsoe Neighbourhood Plan

August 2019

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement has been prepared to accompany the submission of the Bletsoe Neighbourhood Plan (BNP) in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning General Regulations 2015 (as amended) and as required by Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by the Localism Act 2011 and other legislation) and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
- 1.2 BNP has been prepared by Bletsoe Parish Council (BPC), as the qualifying body, for the Neighbourhood Plan Area (NPA) which covers the whole of the Parish of Bletsoe, as designated by Bedford Borough Council (BBC) on the 1st July 2014. It covers the period 2017 to 2035.
- 1.3 Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) sets out the basic conditions which a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) must comply with. This Statement addresses each of the basic conditions set out within the Regulations<sup>1</sup> and explains how BNP meets the requirements of paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Town & Country Planning Act 1990 as applied to neighbourhood plans by Section 38A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004).
- 1.4 Paragraph 8(2) Schedule 4B to the 1990 Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) states that a Neighbourhood Plan will be considered to have met the basic conditions if:
- having regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State, it is appropriate to make the neighbourhood development plan;
  - the making of the neighbourhood development plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development;
  - the making of the neighbourhood development plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan for the area of the authority (or any part of that area); and

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<sup>1</sup> Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

- the making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The decision to proceed with a Neighbourhood Plan was made by BPC in 2014. The Neighbourhood Plan relates only to Bletsoe NPA and no other Neighbourhood Plan is in place for Bletsoe.
- 2.2 A Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was formed by the Parish Council, comprising parish councillors and members of the local community as a delegated authority to make day-to-day decisions on BNP and its preparation. However, as the qualifying body, the Parish Council itself must approve the publication of the draft versions of the pre-submission Neighbourhood Plan and any supporting documents and then the submission Neighbourhood Plan (subject to amendments arising from any consultation).
- 2.3 There has been considerable community engagement on the preparation of BNP. This is set out in detail in the separate Consultation Statement, which is published by the Parish Council as part of the submission documentation. BPC have liaised with the relevant officers of BBC during the preparation so as to ensure the relationship between BNP and the adopted policies within the BBC Development Plan, together with any relevant information and evidence for the emerging Local Plan to 2030, has been understood.
- 2.4 The Neighbourhood Plan contains 8 policies and a Policies Map, together with non-policy actions for which the Parish Council will aspire to achieve. BPC has deliberately sought to focus policies and non-policy actions on the key issues that matter to the local community and to avoid policies that duplicate national planning policies and/or development plan policies which are already effective as material considerations in determining future planning applications.
- 2.5 As a result of Screening Opinion, Bedford Borough Council considered a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required for the Neighbourhood Plan, primarily due to the effect the policies would have on heritage assets, as defined by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.
- 2.6 In its formal screening opinion of 4 July 2017, Bedford Borough Council stated:

*“As a result of this screening and consultation, it has been determined that a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required based on the submitted documentation“*

- 2.7 Following the screening opinion, BPC sought an opinion on the scope of the SEA where it was agreed it should be focussed on the effect BNP would have on heritage assets, also confirmed by Historic England in an email dated 13 March 2018.
- 2.8 As a result a SEA Report has been prepared and forms part of the evidence base supporting BNP.

### **3 National Planning Policy**

- 3.1 The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared with regard to national policies as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 and is mindful of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) in respect of formulating neighbourhood plans.
- 3.2 Within the NPPF there are three specific paragraphs that provide general guidance on neighbourhood planning, to which the Neighbourhood Plan has directly responded.
- 3.3 The Parish Council believes BNP is planning positively for future development in the Parish within the environmental constraints that apply to Bletsoe NP area and that is consistent with the provisions BBC plan. The Parish is very rural in character and remote from the larger populated areas of the district such as the main town of Bedford. Bletsoe village, for the most part, is designated a Conservation Area, with a number of listed buildings and a Scheduled Ancient Monument. As a designated ‘small village’ (Category 3) in the BBC’s settlement hierarchy, there is no real expectation for development of a major scale in or around the village. However, Policies 2 and 3 allocate small sites for minor-scale residential developments in suitable locations outside of, but adjacent to, the existing Settlement Policy Area boundary to contribute towards meeting the housing needs of present and future generations.
- 3.4 The Neighbourhood Plan establishes a clear vision and objectives for the Parish that reflect the views of the of the local community as far as practicable. It has sought to simplify the objectives into a modest number of coherent planning policies that supplement other adopted development plan policies for managing development proposals.
- 3.5 The Parish Council believes BNP is in general conformity with all the relevant policies of the adopted BBC Local Plan and with the strategic focus of the emerging Local Plan 2030 and this has been confirmed by the Officers of the Borough Council. The

Neighbourhood Plan is considered to strike a positive balance between the policy constraints of the Parish and the need to support a degree of change within the village over the plan period.

- 3.6 Set out within Table A below is a brief summary of how each policy within the Neighbourhood Plan conforms to the NPPF. The particular paragraphs referred to in the table are those considered the most relevant to each policy but are not exhaustive.

#### **4. Contribution to Achieving Sustainable Development**

- 4.1 The basic condition of ‘contributing to the achievement of sustainable development’ requires a broader scope of assessment to meet the social, economic and environmental objectives. Paragraph 8 of the NPPF set out the three objectives of sustainable development as being economic, social and environmental.

- 4.2 BNP contributes to meeting the three elements of sustainable development as explained below:

*Economic objective:*

BNP seeks to encourage new and support local existing facilities and services to safeguard their future retention. The allocation of sites for small scale housing developments will bring new residents to the area who will also contribute towards the viability of the facilities and services. The Plan also seeks to improve the telecommunication infrastructure, which may facilitate home working, through improved broadband services. There would also be localised provision of jobs in the construction industry, albeit for a temporary period.

*Social objective:*

BNP will contribute towards meeting the housing needs of current and future generations through providing a mix of housing types, as identified in the Bletsoe Housing Needs Survey, to ensure the village remains and vibrant and mixed community. The Plan will safeguard and, where possible support new services available to residents, although it is accepted this will be limited given that Bletsoe is a small village.

*Environmental:*

BNP seeks to preserve the existing and valued green open space within the village to encourage biodiversity and protect the rural character of the village. The Plan also promotes support for improved accessibility to surrounding villages through enhanced footpaths and a desire to promote access to public transport services reducing the need to travel by car, although it is recognised there is limited scope for a regular bus service due to the rural nature of Bletsoe.

4.3 In short BNP will contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development through:

- planning positively for small scale housing growth to meet the needs of present and future generations by identifying sites to meet the local housing need;
- protecting valued community assets which both enhances the quality of life in the village and reduces the need to travel to obtain these services elsewhere;
- locating new development within easy walking or cycling distance of existing village facilities;
- protecting and enhancing the built and historic environment of Bletsoe by encouraging high quality development which responds to the distinctive village character of Bletsoe and by protecting existing open spaces within the built-up area.
- supporting the provision of new and enhanced infrastructure provisions including improvements to public rights of way, parking facilities and the Village Hall.

## **5 General Conformity with Bedford Borough Council's Development Plan**

5.1 BNP has been prepared to ensure it is in general conformity with the adopted development plan. The emerging Local Plan to 2030 will replace a number of existing development plan documents once it is adopted and this may mean a new strategic framework for which BNP will need to be in conformity with. It is acknowledged that BNP will need to be reviewed in accordance with current guidelines, once the new Local Plan is adopted.

5.2 BNP seeks to avoid direct duplication of development plan policies by focusing on policies that will not only support the general requirements of the development plan

and other adopted supplementary planning guidance, but will also provide credible and effective policies for the parish. Once made, the Neighbourhood Plan will naturally sit alongside the development plan and any other material considerations in determining planning applications.

- 5.3 Table A below considers conformity with the relevant adopted policies of the adopted Bedford Borough Council Local Plan.

## **6 Compatibility with EU Legislation**

- 6.1 BNP has regard to the basic rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights and complies with the Human Rights Act.
- 6.2 As set out above, a screening opinion was issued by Bedford Borough Council, which confirmed that, in the Council's opinion, the Neighbourhood Plan could have significant environmental effects and that SEA is required in accordance with EU Directive 2001/42. Following a scoping exercise, a SEA Report has been prepared as part of BNP evidence base.
- 6.3 A Habitats Regulation Assessment: Screening Report (HRA) has been prepared as part of the evidence base supporting BNP. The Report provides an assessment of whether BNP would result in significant effects on a European site. Screening of the Bletsoe Draft Neighbourhood Plan (September 2018, Consultation version) identified no likely significant effects on the two European sites identified in the Bedford Borough Local Plan to 2030. Appropriate assessment (AA Stages 2 and 3) was therefore not necessary.
- 6.4 The HRA concluded that Bletsoe Neighbourhood Plan can proceed as it will not have adverse impacts on any European sites, the qualifying features and/or the integrity of those sites, itself or in combination with other plans that have currently been adopted.

## **7 Conclusion**

- 7.1 Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) sets out the basic conditions which a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) must comply with. It is suggested that Bletsoe Neighbourhood Plan meets the basic conditions and therefore complies with the above legislation.

<b>Table A</b>				
<b>BNP Policy</b>	<b>BNP Objective</b>	<b>Local Plan Policy</b>	<b>NPPF</b>	<b>Reason for Policy</b>
BNP1	1,2, 3,4,5	BBLP Policy H24; ADLP AD1; CSRIP Policies CP2, CP7, CP8, CP12, CP13, CP14, CP16	Section 2,5,8,11,12,15, &16	To achieve Sustainable Development while recognising the need to protect the intrinsic value of the countryside.
BNP2	1	CSRIP Policies CP7, CP8, CP14, CP16	Section 2,5,12 & 16	To achieve Sustainable Development and provide housing while recognising the need to protect the intrinsic value of the countryside.
BNP3	1	CSRIP Policies CP7, CP8, CP14, CP16	Section 2, 5, 12 & 16	To achieve Sustainable Development and provide housing while recognising the need to protect the intrinsic value of the countryside.
BNP4	1, 5	BBLP Policy BE9, BE11, BE29, BE21, BE32; CSRIP CP21	Section 2 and 12	To achieve high quality design for all development.
BNP5	6	BBLP Policy BE29, BE30; CSRIP CP21	Section 9	Ensuring appropriate provisions are made for the parking of vehicles
BNP6	2	BBLP Policy T6; CSRIP CP23; ADLP AD39	Section 9	Exploiting opportunities for sustainable transport modes.

BNP7	2	BBLP Policy BE15, H24, H25, ADLP Policy AD40; CSRIP CP22		To protect the environment by conserving green open space.
BNP8	1, 4		Section 10	Ensuing adequate communication facilities