

# COPE PARISH COUNCIL

Our ref: CPC/FILE/JP  
7 December 2015

Bedford Borough Council  
Local Plan 2032 Consultation  
Planning Policy Team  
Borough Hall  
Cauldwell Street  
Bedford  
MK43 9AP

Dear Sir/Madam

## **Local Plan 2032 Consultation**

Cople Parish Council has considered the consultation in respect of the emerging Bedford Borough Local Plan 2032 and would like to respond as follows to the various questions raised in the response form.

### **Q1 Do you have any comments on the draft vision and or objectives?**

There is concern about the mention of the Bedford River Valley Park as this was originally proposed as an enabling development and included additional housing development in its plan. If this additional housing was to go ahead in this area it would result in a ribbon development along the A603 and effectively cause considerable impact on the rural area.

### **Q2 Do you have any comments on the study 'Objectively Assessed Need for Bedford: As Evidence Base for Establishing Overall Housing Need', the requirement for new dwellings 2012-2032 (17,367) or the way that the number of dwellings to be included in the plan to meet Bedford Borough's housing need has been established?**

Need is very difficult to predict as it is very much tied to migration and things may change unpredictably over the next 15 years, however the approach used in this study is as good as any.

### **Q3 Do you have any comments on the study 'Economy and Employment Land Study' or the requirement for new jobs 2012-2032 (15,500)?**

No comment.

### **Q4 Do you have any comments on the Bedford Retail Study or the Town Centre Topic Paper?**

There does not appear to be any mention of improving the parking in the Town Centre which is not good now and will get worse with the present developments let alone more development. In addition to this, increased development will cause greater congestion on

Town Centre roads, therefore the local infrastructure would also need to be improved alongside further development. There are Park & Rides shown in this paper and Bedford has talked about these before but nothing has ever happened. If they are to be put in place consideration should be given to make them cost effective, particularly for families.

**Q5 Do you have any comments on the Commercial Leisure Needs Study?**

No comment.

**Q6 Do you have any comments on the 'Settlement Hierarchy' background paper and the way that the settlements have been grouped together?**

There is a need for some form of hierarchy but the treatment of the groups is quite different as some locations must be border line especially between groups 2 and 3.

**Q7 Do you have any comments on the Development Strategy and Site Selection Methodology background paper or the summaries?**

The methodology is very much broad brush. There appears to be no account taken of the quality or location of 'assets'.

**Q8 Do you have any comments on the Addendum to the Sustainability Appraisal?**

Sustainability is very important to the future especially of villages. This does not appear to have been taken into consideration in determining hierarchy.

**Q9 Do you have any comments about the way growth has been apportioned?**

There is a big difference in the proposed development of group 2 (50-150) and group 3 (10-20). There must be some that were border line between the two groups; therefore the ranges should have been much closer at the extremes. Looking at the changes that have occurred over the last 30 years, whilst villages have built more properties and extended many existing properties, their populations have in many cases actually reduced. There is a basic problem with villages in that they are becoming affordable mainly to wealthier people and often not affordable to young families, who would support a local school or sports facility. To overcome this, villages would have to build more low cost housing that cannot be enlarged at a later date, but this ends up with villages becoming larger and certainly more than the proposals for group 3.

We feel that local Neighbourhood Plans should be given more scope to decide what is necessary to sustain the local services and to develop local needs rather than be tied to the Borough local plan.

**Q10 Do you have any comments on the draft Local Green Space Selection Methodology?**

No comment.

## **Q11 Do you have any other comments?**

The use of Neighbourhood Plans will play a key part in identifying where development should take place in villages, as well as the type of development required in order to retain the character of the area. This will also enable those villages to continue to thrive.

Any developments undertaken in the rural areas must give due consideration to the local road infrastructure to ensure that small village roads do not become dangerous rat runs to avoid congested main roads.

The Borough Council should seek to identify problem areas and install appropriate traffic calming measures where necessary.

For any rural area to continue to retain its character, even the larger areas, greater thought must be given to retaining local green spaces, improving these and making them more accessible to people. In addition to this some sort of 'buffer' between communities should always be retained to avoid villages merging into one and ultimately just becoming part of the Bedford area.

The Borough Council must ensure that it supports and guides communities when they are drawing up Neighbourhood Plans, not only to meet the development need but also to retain the rural feel of communities.

Yours faithfully

Jeanne Pope  
Clerk  
Cople Parish Council