

Message to ES&BG Residents following Woodside View Decision and Public Meeting on 14th December 2022

Last week's decision by Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council (B&D BC) Development Control Committee (DCC*) on Woodside View was disappointing given the level of local objection and the advanced state of our Neighbourhood Plan.

As we communicated in an email on December 8th, we have had concerns over how this decision might affect our Neighbourhood Plan which is about to go into formal examination. We have taken advice from our consultants and from the Basingstoke & Deane Planning Policy Team.

We shared our findings and thoughts on the way forward with a group of residents who joined a public meeting just before the Parish Council Meeting on 14th December. At that meeting, there was unanimous support for continuing with the Neighbourhood Plan in its current form given that this will be our best chance to defend the parish against inappropriate and unwanted development. Following the public meeting, the Parish Council unanimously agreed to communicate this position to Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council (B&D BC).

The purpose of this document is to share with all residents the information that was tabled at the meeting and invite you to send any comments you may have to myself (CLlrDain.ESBG@outlook.com) with a copy to the Parish Clerk (clerk@ecchinswell-pc.gov.uk)

Marian Dain

Chair, ES&BG Parish Council

*(The DCC is the body within B&D BC that decides significant and/or contentious planning decisions. Its members are primarily elected councillors. For each planning application, a review of the proposal is put forward by a Case Officer from the Planning Team with a recommendation to approve/reject. The Committee then decides whether to accept or over-rule the recommendation).

Some background to the Woodside View Approval

- The borough remains short of its 5 year land supply target which is based on central government housing targets. The Borough has to be able to show a credible pipeline of new housing development for the next 5 years in line with the target they have been given. Despite many approvals and forthcoming developments like Manydowns, the current status is a 4.5 year supply.
- This situation means that the current Local Plan for 2011-2029 adopted in 2016 is considered “out of date”. This means that the National Planning Policy Framework “presumption for sustainable development” overrides the Adopted Local Plan policies and developers have been successful in getting approval for projects that would normally get rejected as being against Local Plan Policies. Many such planning applications have initially been rejected by Local Councils but then taken to appeal and granted. One recent local example of this was the successful appeal for a proposal to build 7 homes near the Darling Buds of May site on Hyde lane.
- Although there has been much recent debate/publicity about changes to the governments approach to housing targets, none of this has yet been translated into legislation so all the current rules apply.
- B&D BC have a significant history of rejecting proposals and then losing the subsequent appeals. This history gives a risk that B&D BC may lose the power to review major developments with Central Government making the decisions.
- This seems to have meant that B&D BC are now “minded to approve” applications despite being against current Local Plan policy, the emerging policies for the Local Plan Update and objections from residents and even some statutory consultees.
- This is some of the background to the DCC decision to approve Woodside View.
- The intention of our Neighbourhood Plan is to ensure there is an “up to date” approved plan for the parish that will ensure appropriate planning decisions are made despite the B&D BC Local Plan being “out of date” and the Local Plan Update not ready.

What is status of our plan? We saw it months ago – why is it not yet approved?

- We are a long way through a long complex process – if you look at the diagram below you will see that we are a long way through but not yet there. Successful Examination requires the plan to have been properly developed and documented – any flaws/short-cuts will result in failure. Thanks to strong support from the community, we got through this much faster than many parishes, some of whom take 5 years+.
- You will see from the picture that our plan is just about to start gaining weight and power....

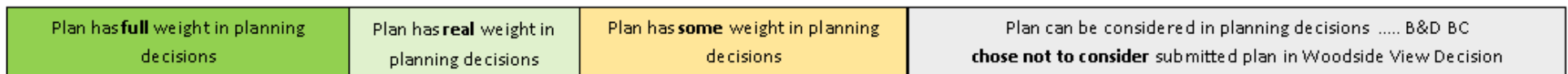
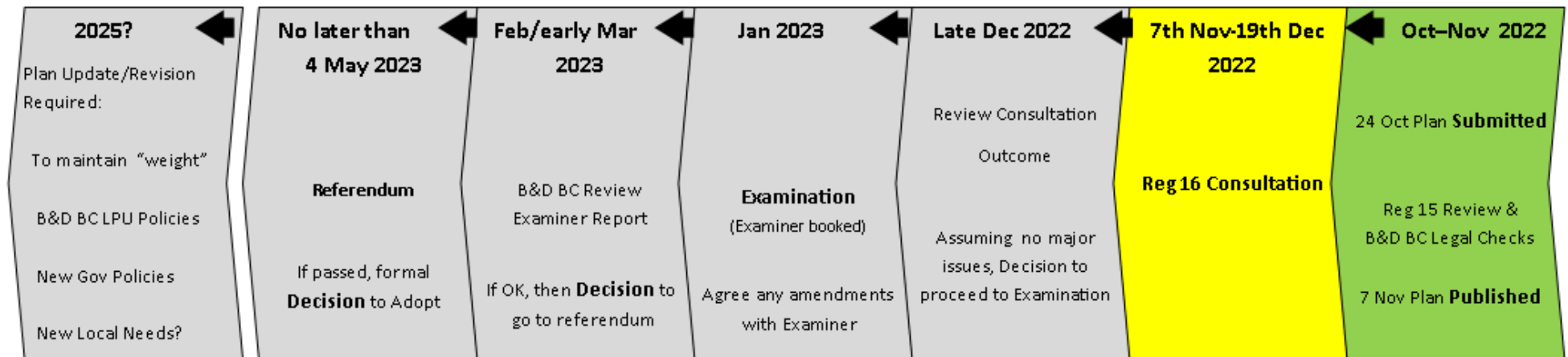
Don't forget.... our plan is much more than a housing number

- If you look at the text below the arrows diagram, you will see an overview of the plan – a few months ago, this overview was distributed to the community in the form of a leaflet.
- Put simply, the plan is a comprehensive vision & objectives for the parish delivered via a wide range of policies/projects.

Creating our Neighbourhood Plan has been a long complex exercise. Examination is a tough test of process integrity & policy compliance. Real weight only after successful examination. Full weight after referendum.



Plan has no weight in planning decisions



What is the Neighbourhood Plan?

It is a formal view of how the local community sees the future of the parish of Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green up to 2039 in the context of National/Borough plans and policies. It is the result of extensive community consultation and has been developed for the Parish Council by a team of volunteers with support from statutory bodies and specialist advisors.



The essence of our plan

What we value:	➤ Our rural setting,
	➤ Access to green spaces,
	➤ Our heritage assets.
What we want to do:	➤ Protect our rural environment & heritage assets,
	➤ Improve sustainability,
	➤ Improve biodiversity.
Any more homes should be:	➤ In limited numbers based on modest local growth,
	➤ Affordable to buy,
	➤ In keeping with rural setting,
	➤ Providing more options for young families, the elderly & less mobile.

The plan is much more than a number of extra houses – it comprises:

- the **Vision** for the parish
- a set of **Objectives** that will deliver the vision
- **17 “land-use policies”** that provide a framework for Planning decisions that ensure delivery of the vision and objectives alongside National and Borough policies
- a number of projects and programmes that lie outside the scope of Planning decisions but are required to complete the vision.

The **Vision** and **Objectives** were developed from the first wave of community consultations in September 2021 and then endorsed by residents in May 2022

The bulk of the plan is made up of the **17 land-use policies** and supporting evidence; these are summarised as follows:

1. **Settlement Boundaries** – a single core “built area” is defined for each of Bishops Green and Ecchinswell; the rest of the parish is “countryside” – different planning rules apply inside and outside the boundaries.
2. **Overall Housing Supply To Meet Local Needs** – this is the basic strategy – “**some but not a lot**” of extra housing to meet local growth – specifically:
3. **Housing in Bishops Green** – a plan for ~ 15 homes on a designated site in Bishops Green – and;

4. **Housing in Ecchinswell** – a plan for ~ 5 homes on a designated site in Ecchinswell.
5. **Design Quality in the Parish of Ecchinswell, Sydmonton and Bishops Green** – a set of “rules” for appearance and materials to preserve the rural feel of the parish.
6. **Design Quality in the Ecchinswell Conservation Area** – to reinforce our heritage.
7. **Community Engagement in Planning** – to drive greater involvement in decisions.
8. **Support For Rural Businesses & Workspace** – an enabler for new businesses provided they are suited and scaled to our rural parish.
9. **Support For Home Working** – facilitates change to homes as this grows.
10. **Broadband & Mobile Communications** – stimulates/mandates improvement.
11. **Community Facilities** – supports existing and encourages new.
12. **Green Infrastructure Network & Nature Recovery** – sets direction for improvement with green corridors etc to protect/improve habitats etc.
13. **Valued Landscapes & Key Views** – secures and protects our highly valued rural environment.
14. **Local Green Spaces** – protects and enhances these important assets
15. **Dark Skies** – retains what we have – seeks improvement
16. **Zero Carbon Buildings** – seeks construction standards fit for the future
17. **Encouraging Active & Sustainable Travel** – seeks improvement on traffic management/parking/alternative modes etc – linked projects vital in this area

These Policies provide **guidrails and defences** to be applied in any future planning decisions – the Parish Council and the community need to actively promote the policies in all response to planning questions/applications.

The plan also creates a comprehensive agenda for Local Infrastructure improvement that the Parish Council and residents will need to champion with relevant stakeholders – this has limited weight but it enables us all to tell a clear and coherent story.

A number of projects needed to deliver the overall vision and objectives are defined. These fall outside formal planning processes – but provide a clear agenda for the PC to champion with the community and relevant stakeholders.

What now after the Woodside View Decision? How does this affect the neighbourhood Plan? What about the much bigger Catesby Estates proposal for 350 homes in Bishops Green and the new proposal by Sedas – will the plan be any use against these?

We have taken advice and see a number of things that could happen.

- Our situation seems unprecedented according to our consultant. They have never seen/heard of a proposal like Woodside View getting approval with a Neighbourhood Plan at this stage. We are now weeks away from it gaining real weight and it is arguable it should be considered in any decisions now.
- We are advised by the B&D BC Planning Policy Team that we can proceed into Examination with the plan in its current form.
- The Catesby application has been in play for more than 12 months - Recent additions mean it could go to DCC soon possibly as soon as the 11th Jan or 8th Feb meetings. **We do not know when and we also do not know whether B&D BC will be minded recommend approval** despite sustainability considerations, all the objections, existing and emerging policies and the status of our Neighbourhood Plan.
- Sedas have just started public consultation on another proposal for 25-30 homes for Bishops Green – an application is expected soon.
- If you look at the table below, you will see 4 potential events or decisions and potential outcomes

Outside our control... Catesby could come to DCC for decision as early as the Jan 11th meeting ... if it was approved then, our NP is dead...

Remember ... if Catesby is refused by the DCC then it is very likely there will be appeal – by the time this happens, a completed NP should then block the appeal.

Following the Woodside View Decision, the Community could decide to

- a) **drop the NP completely** – likely to result in a huge expansion of Bishops Green (B-G)
- b) **pause and develop a revised NP** – time required for such revision could let in Catesby and we also understand the potential revisions would most likely not produce a robust plan.
- c) **proceed with plan in current form** to maximise near term defence against Catesby etc provided examination is successfully completed soon

As stated above, residents at the meeting on the 14th December unanimously gave their support to continuing with the plan – this was formalised at the Parish Council meeting that followed. Having read the above, please let us have any comments and/or your support.

Way forward after Woodside View approval? Discussion points.

Event/Decision	Implications and Issues		Potential Outcome
<p>Catesby could go to DCC for decision as early as 11th Jan 2023. (around the time Examination of our plan starts).</p> <p>(There has been much recent development of their proposal—we will only find out in early Jan if on agenda and B&D BC recommendation)</p>	<p>B&D BC continue “policy” of approving major developments in order to retain control vs losing right to review to DfLUHC.</p> <p>B&D BC again choose not to consider our NP in decision as examination not far enough along.</p>	<p>Potential that Catesby is approved regardless of lack of sustainability, our objections and the advanced state of our NP.</p> <p>Could a “call-in” to the SoS help deliver rejection?</p>	<p>NP is dead. Sedas & others could then be approved meaning total of 500 extra homes in B-G.</p> <p>Totally new plan needed via fresh mandate/new team.</p>
<p>B-G has just had 42 homes approved and NP would add more.</p> <p>No community support for continuing with current NP.</p>	<p>Plan is withdrawn before Examination</p>	<p>Likely that Catesby, Sedas & others will be approved.</p>	<p>Bishops Green likely to see +/- 500 extra homes.</p> <p>Totally new plan needed via fresh mandate/new team.</p>
<p>“42 homes just approved in B-G, so no need for 15 more”.... NP is withdrawn before examination & revised— 3 potential options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BGI site “reserved” vs “allocated” • BGI site explicitly delayed to 2030+ • ESBG3/BGI allocation removed 	<p>How will the 42 be treated vs B&D LPU indicative allocation for our NP?</p> <p>These levels of revision require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal community consultation, • Amendment of plan & supporting documents, • Re-run of Reg 15/16 submission for Publication/Examination. 	<p>Complications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time— minimum 3-4+ months • Money—Locality grant spent • People—current team cannot commit at recent level • Removal of allocation option takes longer/adds more cost 	<p>Reserve/delay options may not be allowed vs LPA land supply shortfall.</p> <p>Plan without allocation provides little NPPF §14 protection vs developers.</p> <p>Extends period without protection so Catesby (& Sedas) could be approved.</p> <p>Revision is not a robust option.</p>
<p>Proceed with current Plan</p> <p>Push B&D BC to progress through examination & referendum ASAP despite the Woodside View approval.</p> <p>Technically our NP <i>should</i> pass examination with minimum significant alterations.</p>	<p>Risk that B&D BC allow/create delay</p> <p>Possibility that Woodside View approval complicates/delays successful examination.</p> <p>Plan will need review/update when LPU complete (2025?)</p>	<p>BG could ultimately get 42+ 15 extra homes.</p> <p>Catesby could still get through esp. if there is any delay.</p> <p>Will the community support the plan at referendum?</p>	<p>Best chance that we have an NP to defend against unwanted development.</p> <p>However, despite “good words” on NPs and Localism by Gove et al, there are understandable concerns over their real power.</p>