

**RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION TAKEN BY AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER**

This form **MUST** be used to record any decision taken by the Elected Mayor or an individual Executive Member (Portfolio Holder).

The form must be completed and passed to the Chief Officer Democratic and Registration Services no later than NOON on the second working day after the day on which the decision is taken. No action may be taken to implement the decision(s) recorded on this form until 7 days have passed and the Chief Officer Democratic and Registration Services has confirmed the decision has not been called in.

**1. Description of decision**

To secure the necessary agreements so that the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan can progress to the referendum stage of the neighbourhood plan making process, it is agreed:

- To make modifications to the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan in line with the recommendations set out in the examiner's report (Appendix A) and that as modified (Appendix B), the Plan meets the basic conditions
- That the formal Decision Statement (Appendix C) be published to inform those interested about the Council's decision
- That arrangements to progress the Plan to the referendum stage of plan preparation are made
- That the designated Stevington Neighbourhood Area represents the appropriate geographical area to be covered by the referendum

**2. Date of decision**

3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020

**3. Reasons for decision**

The purpose of this report is to provide information about the examination of the Stevington neighbourhood plan; to explain the examiner's recommended modifications to the plan and to set out the Council's response to those modifications. The Council must decide whether to progress the plan to referendum and in doing so, decide the area over which the referendum should take place.

**4. Alternatives considered and rejected**

Consideration has been given to the need for modifications not proposed by the examiner. It has been determined that no such modifications are required in order for the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan to meet the basic conditions. Consideration has also been given to the need to extend the referendum area beyond the neighbourhood area but it has been determined that this is not necessary.

**5. How decision is to be funded**

Once the date for the referendum is published, a claim for £20,000 from MHCLG can be made in the next available claim window. This represents a contribution towards the Council's costs associated with fulfilling its duty to assist the Parish in the preparation of its plan, and the costs associated with the examination process (including the examiner) and the referendum. Any costs in excess of £20,000 will need to be borne by the Council, though it is not anticipated that the examination process and the referendum combined will be more than this amount. Costs associated with assisting the neighbourhood plan group to prepare their Plan are funded from the Plans and Strategies Reserve.

**6. Conflicts of interest**

Name of all Executive members who were consulted AND declared a conflict of interest.	Nature of interest	Did Standards Committee give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and date of dispensation)	Did the Chief Executive give a dispensation for that conflict of interest? (If yes, give details and the date of the dispensation).

The Mayor has been consulted on this decision

Signed:



Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020

Name of Decision Taker: **Mayor Dave Hodgson**

**This is a public document. A copy of it must be given to the Chief Officer Democratic and Registration Services as soon as it is completed.**

**Date decision published: 3 December 2020**

**Date decision can be implemented if not called in: 15 December 2020**

**(Decision to be made exempt from call in: NO)**

**Bedford Borough Council – Report to the Mayor**

**Date – December 2020**

**Report by the Chief Officer Planning & Infrastructure Development**

**Subject: STEVINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

**1. Executive Summary**

Neighbourhood plans are statutory development plans produced by parish/town councils or neighbourhood forums. Stevington Parish Council has produced a neighbourhood plan for the Stevington parish area.

The Plan was submitted to Bedford Borough Council on 20 May 2020 and, in line with regulatory requirements, was subject to a six-week consultation (10 July to 24 August 2020). It has since been formally examined by Wendy Burden who is an independent examiner.

The examiner has produced a report (Appendix A) which recommends that the Plan is modified in order to meet legal requirements and is then progressed to a referendum of people who live within the designated neighbourhood area.

Bedford Borough Council must decide:

- whether to progress the Plan to a referendum and
- whether to modify it (in the ways recommended by the examiner or otherwise) or
- whether to refuse the Plan.

The Council must consider each of the examiner's recommendations on the content of the Plan and decide what action to take. If the Plan is to progress to referendum, the council must also decide whether the referendum area should be extended beyond the neighbourhood area, which in this case is Stevington Parish.

## 2. Recommendations

The Mayor is asked to consider this report and if satisfied agree:

- To make modifications to the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan in line with the recommendations set out in the examiner's report (Appendix A) and that as modified (Appendix B), the Plan meets the basic conditions
- That the formal Decision Statement (Appendix C) be published to inform those interested about the Council's decision
- That arrangements to progress the Plan to the referendum stage of plan preparation are made
- That the designated Stevington Neighbourhood Area represents the appropriate geographical area to be covered by the referendum

## 3. Reasons for Recommendations

To give information about the outcome of the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan examination and to secure agreement to progress the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan to referendum, which is the next stage of the plan-making process.

## 4. Key Implications

### (a) Policy

Neighbourhood plans are examined to ensure that they meet the 'Basic Conditions' which are set out in Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). The 'Basic Conditions' ensure, amongst other things, that appropriate regard has been had for local and national policies. In order to meet the Basic Conditions, the neighbourhood plan must:

- Have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area (in this case saved policies in the Local Plan 2002, continuing policies in the Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013 and the Local Plan 2030);

- Be compatible with and not breach European Union (EU) obligations; and
- Meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.

Regulation 32 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) prescribes a further Basic Condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the making of the neighbourhood plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

**(b) Legal Issues**

The scope of a neighbourhood plan examination is set out in Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). The examiner must consider:

- Whether the plan meets the Basic Conditions;
- Whether the plan complies with provisions under s.38A and s.38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). These are:
  - it has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body, for an area that has been properly designated by the local planning authority;
  - it sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land;
  - it specifies the period during which it has effect;
  - it does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development';
  - it is the only neighbourhood plan for the area and does not relate to land outside the designated neighbourhood area;
  - whether the referendum boundary should be extended beyond the designated area, should the plan proceed to referendum; and
- Such matters as prescribed in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

The examiner must also consider if the neighbourhood plan is compatible with the Convention on Human Rights.

On receipt of the examiner's report, the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 require that a Local Planning Authority must publish a decision statement setting out what actions will be taken in response to each of the examiner's recommendations.

If the authority proposes to accept the examiner's recommendations, a decision statement must be published and arrangements for the referendum must then commence.

If the authority proposes to make a decision which differs from that recommended by the examiner, it must notify relevant people and invite representations for a period of 6 weeks. The local planning authority may, if it considers it appropriate to do so (for example if the Council's proposed changes are significant or controversial), refer the issue to further independent examination and receive a further report. Once any period for further representations is over, the local planning authority must issue its final decision within 5 weeks and proceed to referendum.

In this case it is recommended that the examiner's proposed amendments are accepted. If this is agreed, the decision statement relating to the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan will be published.

The neighbourhood plan passes the referendum of local voters if it achieves a simple majority (i.e. 50% +1 or over). No minimum turnout is required. If a plan passes referendum, the council must 'make' (adopt) it as soon as reasonably practicable unless the Council considers that the plan breaches EU obligations or human rights legislation. If there is a majority 'No' vote or a tied vote then the neighbourhood plan will not come into legal force.

The Council must normally hold a referendum within 56 working days from the date that the decision to take the plan forward to a referendum is published, however due to Covid19 restrictions, Neighbourhood Planning Referendums cannot be held before 6 May 2021. This is outlined in the Local Government and Police and Crime Commissioner (Coronavirus) Postponement of Elections and Referendums (England and Wales) Regulations 2020. The Council must publish notice that the referendum will take place not fewer than 28 days before the referendum date.

The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 (as amended) cover all aspects of organising and conducting polls.

The Referendum question is 'Do you want Bedford Borough Council to use the neighbourhood plan for Stevington Parish to help it decide planning applications in the Neighbourhood Area'.

Decisions to proceed to referendum and to 'make' the neighbourhood plan are taken by Bedford Borough Council's Executive rather than Full Council.

Bedford Borough Council can be challenged on the making of the plan by way of judicial review. Challenges must normally be made within six weeks of the making of the plan.

**(c) Resource Implications**

The Government provides funding to assist councils to fulfil their neighbourhood planning duties. Once the date for the referendum is published, a claim for £20,000 can be made in the next available claim window. This represents a contribution towards the Council's costs associated with fulfilling its duty to assist the Parish Council in the preparation of its plan, and the costs associated with the examination process (including the examiner) and the referendum. Any costs in excess of £20,000 will need to be borne by the Council, though it is not anticipated that the examination process and the referendum combined will be more than this amount. Costs associated with assisting the neighbourhood plan group to prepare their Plan are funded from the Plans and Strategies Reserve.

When the neighbourhood plan is formally 'made', the percentage of community infrastructure levy (CIL) receipts payable to the Parish Council arising from development within the parish will increase from 15% to 25% resulting in Bedford Borough Council's percentage decreasing to 75%. National Planning Practice Guidance explains that parish councils must use the CIL receipts passed to them to support the development of the parish council's area by funding the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure; or anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on the area.

**(d) Risk Implications**

The recommendations in the examination report are not binding, but if the Council chooses not to agree with the examiner's recommendations without a sound reason, there is a risk of legal challenge which could lead to reputational damage and financial costs. Whilst there is also a risk of legal challenge if the Council does follow the examiner's recommendations, it must be considered that the risk is lower.

Any modifications made to the content of the plan should be done so only in order to make the plan meet the basic conditions and other legislative requirements. Making modifications for any other reasons (other than formatting or spelling corrections) could lead to a legal challenge.

**(e) Environmental Implications**

The Stevington Neighbourhood Plan was screened for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) by Stevington Parish Council with assistance from Bedford Borough Council. The SEA screening concluded that it was unnecessary to undertake SEA. The examiner supported this conclusion.

The Plan was further screened to determine if Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) was necessary. The HRA was carried out by specialist consultancy Bodsey Ecology. It concluded that the Plan would not have a significant effect on European sites either alone or

in combination. Natural England, which was consulted on the Plan, did not dispute this conclusion. The examiner found no reason to disagree.

Both the SEA screening and the HRA have been reviewed in light of the proposed modifications to the Plan. The conclusions of both remain unchanged.

**(f) Equalities Impact**

In preparing this report, due consideration has been given to the Borough Council's statutory Equality Duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, as set out in Section 149(1) of the Equality Act 2010.

A relevance test for equality has been completed. The equality test determined that consideration as to whether the Stevington Neighbourhood Development Plan should progress to referendum has no relevance to Bedford Borough Council's duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. An equality analysis for this decision is not needed.

However, the development of the Stevington Neighbourhood Development Plan is relevant to Stevington Parish Council's General Equality Duty. The Parish Council is responsible for discharging their duty. An equality analysis will be carried out by the Parish Council and the findings of the equality analysis will be reported to Bedford Borough Council, prior to the making of the Neighbourhood Plan, if the Plan is supported at the referendum.

**5. DETAILS**

**General background**

Neighbourhood planning was introduced through the Localism Act 2011. New powers allow qualifying bodies (parish or town councils, or neighbourhood forums in areas without parish or town councils) to produce neighbourhood plans which enable communities to set planning policies for their area. Once adopted, neighbourhood plans become part of the Council's statutory development plan and must be taken into account alongside Bedford Borough Council's local plans and national policy when planning applications are determined.

Producing a neighbourhood plan allows parish and town councils to increase the amount of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds they receive from developments within their area from 15% to 25%, incentivising the production of plans, especially those that propose growth.

The stages of preparation of a neighbourhood plan are similar to those for the preparation of a local plan. They are summarised in the following table.

<b>Preparing a neighbourhood plan</b>		
<b>Stage</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Neighbourhood Area Designation	Application by parish council, publicity & decision by BBC	Complete
Prepare draft neighbourhood plan	NP group/parish council with assistance from others	Complete
Pre submission consultation (Regulation 14)	NP group/parish council (6 weeks minimum)	Complete
Finalise plan in light of comments made	NP group/parish council	Complete
Submit plan to the local planning authority	NP group/parish council	Complete
Pre-examination consultation(Regulation 16)	BBC (6 weeks minimum)	Complete
Examination	Examiner appointed by BBC (agreed by NP group/ parish council)	Complete
<b>Consider examiner's recommendations</b>	<b>BBC and NP group/parish council</b>	<b>We are here</b>
Referendum	Organised by BBC	
Plan 'made' (part of the development plan)	BBC	

### **The examination**

Neighbourhood plans must be examined by a suitably qualified independent person, appointed by the Council and agreed by the qualifying body.

The neighbourhood plan examiner's role is limited to considering whether the neighbourhood plan meets the basic conditions and other relevant legal requirements. The examiner does not consider whether the plan is sound. The examiner also considers whether the referendum area should be extended beyond the neighbourhood area.

Most neighbourhood plan examinations will not require a hearing session to be held though this is an option if the examiner considers it necessary.

Legislation requires that the Council considers each of the recommendations made by the examiner in his/her report and decide what action to take in response. This decision must be published within five weeks of the receipt of the examiner's report.

However, if the authority proposes to make a decision which differs from that recommended by the examiner, it must notify relevant people and invite representations. This is further explained in the 'Legal Issues' section above.

If the plan proceeds to referendum and passes by a simple majority, Legislation does not allow any further amendments to be made to the plan. Therefore, the stage between examination and referendum (this stage) is the only point at which further amendments can be made.

## The referendum

Anyone who can usually vote in a local election and who is resident in the referendum area can vote in a neighbourhood plan referendum. The referendum area is usually the neighbourhood area, but the examiner may recommend that it be extended if there are matters that are of interest to nearby communities. The plan must pass by a simple majority and there is no minimum turnout. If a simple majority is achieved the Council will be required to 'make' (adopt) the plan unless it breaches EU or human rights legislation.

The decision on when to hold the referendum falls to the Council's returning officer. The Council must normally hold a referendum within 56 working days from the date that the decision to take the plan forward to a referendum is published, however due to Covid19 restrictions, Neighbourhood Planning Referendums cannot be held before 6 May 2021. The Council must publish notice that the referendum will take place not fewer than 28 days before the referendum date.

The qualifying body (the parish council or neighbourhood forum) can withdraw a plan at any time.

## The Stevington Neighbourhood Plan

<b>Progress of Stevington Neighbourhood Plan</b>	
Neighbourhood area designated	28 November 2013
Draft plan consultation (Regulation 14)	9 December 2019 to 27 January 2020
Post submission consultation (Regulation 16)	10 July to 24 August 2020
Submitted for examination by BBC	26 August 2020
Examiner's report received	1 October 2020

The following extract from the examiner's report summarises her findings. The full report can be found at Appendix A.

### **Main Findings - Executive Summary**

From my examination of the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan/SNP) and its supporting documentation including the representations made, I have concluded that subject to the policy modifications set out in this report, the Plan meets the Basic Conditions.

I have also concluded that:

- The Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body (QB) – the Stevington Parish Council;
- The Plan has been prepared for an area properly designated – the Parish of Stevington as shown on page 10 of the Neighbourhood Plan;

- The Plan specifies the period to which it is to take effect: to 2035; and
- The policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood area.

I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum on the basis that it has met all the relevant legal requirements.

I have considered whether the referendum area should extend beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates and have concluded that it should not.

The examiner proposes recommendations as follows:

<b>Proposed modification number (PM)</b>	<b>Submitted Neighbourhood Plan Para no/ other reference</b>	<b>Examiner's Recommended Modification</b>	<b>Reason for recommendation</b>
PM1	Front cover	Insert under Heading "2020-2035".	In the interests of clarity.
PM2	Page 39	Delete Policy DH2.  Delete heading "DH2 Interpretation" and insert new heading "Non-designated heritage assets".  In the second sentence of the first paragraph under the new heading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change "the policy" to "national policy as set out in NPPF paragraph 197".</li> </ul> Delete "a significant factor" and insert "taken into account".	To have the necessary regard to national policy.  To reflect the deletion of Policy DH2.
PM3	Page 50 Policy EN2	In 2.: delete "remain as open green spaces" and insert "be managed in a manner compatible with their designation".	To clarify that Local Green Spaces should be managed in a manner compatible with their designation.

PM4	Page 53 Policy CF1	Delete “a. Almshouses, Park Road”.	As private residences, it is inappropriate for the Almshouses to be included in the list of community facilities.
PM5	Page 57 Policy TI1	In 1.: delete “made to ensuring” and insert “paid to”. In a.: delete “existing problems of traffic capacity are not exacerbated, especially on existing pressure points” and insert “whether there is adequate highway capacity to support the proposal, in particular”. In b.: delete “there is no adverse” and insert “the”. In c.: delete “there is no significant adverse” and insert “the”.	To ensure that the criteria will endure over time, are clearly drafted and will provide the opportunity for the objective assessment of proposals having regard to issues of local concern.
PM6	Page 58 Policy TI3	Rename: “Sustainable Drainage Systems”. In 1. Delete “sustainable urban drainage” and insert “Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)”.	In the interests of clarity and to meet the requirements of the local water authority.
PM7	Page 61 Policy BE2	Delete Policy BE2 and the subsequent text.	In order to avoid the repetition of policy.

These recommendations serve to ensure that the plan meets the basic conditions. Officers therefore recommend that they are agreed and the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan be amended accordingly.

The examiner explains that it is open to the Parish Council to make minor modifications to the Plan such as attending to typographical errors (para 4.4 of the examiner’s report). A small number of these have been identified. Officers recommend however that no further changes are required in order for the Plan to meet the basic conditions and therefore if agreed, no further consultation is necessary before proceeding to referendum.

The Stevington Neighbourhood Plan incorporating the examiner’s proposed modifications and other minor modifications can be found at Appendix B.

## **Examination area**

The examiner considered whether or not the referendum area should be extended beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates. She concluded that the Plan as modified would have no policies or proposals which she considered significant enough to have an impact beyond the designated Neighbourhood Plan boundary. As a result she recommends that the boundary for the purposes of any future referendum on the Plan should be the boundary of the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area. Officers agree with this conclusion and recommend that the neighbourhood area as designated should be agreed as the referendum area.

## **Next steps**

Bedford Borough Council must publish a statement (Appendix C) setting out with reasons its decision on each of the examiner's recommendations. Preparations must then be made to hold the referendum.

## **6. Summary of Consultations and Outcome**

The Plan has been the subject of two statutory consultations. The neighbourhood plan group carried out pre-submission consultation on a draft plan, known as Regulation 14 stage, and the Council undertook post-submission consultation; the Regulation 16 stage. Details of the Regulation 14 responses are posted on the neighbourhood plan web site. The Regulation 16 responses were provided to the examiner of the Plan who considered them during the examination. They can be found on Bedford Borough Council's web-site on the neighbourhood planning pages.

The following people have been consulted in preparing this report:

Management Team  
Team Leader (Governance, Property, Planning, Litigation)  
Chief Officer for Corporate Finance and Pensions  
Chief Officer for Financial Control

No adverse comments have been received.

## **7. Ward Councillor Views**

Not applicable for this report.

Report Contact Officer: Gill Cowie

File Reference: Neighbourhood Plans

Previous Relevant Minutes: None

Background Papers: None

Appendices: Appendix A - Examiner's Report  
Appendix B - Stevington Neighbourhood Plan showing modifications  
Appendix C – Decision Statement



# **Report on Stevington Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2035**

**An Examination undertaken for Bedford Borough Council with the support of Stevington Parish Council on the June 2020 submission version of the Plan.**

Independent Examiner: Wendy J Burden BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

Date of Report: 01 October 2020

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## **Main Findings - Executive Summary**

From my examination of the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan/SNP) and its supporting documentation including the representations made, I have concluded that subject to the policy modifications set out in this report, the Plan meets the Basic Conditions.

I have also concluded that:

- The Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body (QB) – the Stevington Parish Council;
- The Plan has been prepared for an area properly designated – the Parish of Stevington as shown on page 10 of the Neighbourhood Plan;
- The Plan specifies the period to which it is to take effect: to 2035; and
- The policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood area.

I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum on the basis that it has met all the relevant legal requirements.

I have considered whether the referendum area should extend beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates and have concluded that it should not.

## **1. Introduction and Background**

### *Stevington Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2035*

- 1.1 The Neighbourhood Plan Area comprises the Parish of Stevington, which covers an area of some 678 hectares (1676 acres) about 6 miles north-west of Bedford, within Bedford Borough Council (BBC). The Parish contains several small settlements with a combined population of some 580 people. The main settlement of Stevington is a historic rural village with some 285 dwellings first mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. It is set within the limestone landscape of the River Great Ouse valley comprising mainly working arable farms with an extensive network of footpaths and bridleways.
- 1.2 Stevington has an older age profile than Bedford Borough as a whole with 56% of residents aged over 50 in 2011 (Borough 33.9%); 27% of residents aged over 65 (Borough 15.8%); and only 13% aged 0-15 (Borough 20.1%). By 2021, the population who are 75 or over in Stevington are projected to form 21% of the village population.
- 1.3 Self employment and working from home are relatively high within Stevington, with a number of small businesses and a range of professional services located within the village. Bedford, Milton Keynes and

Northampton are key work destinations and a higher than average number of residents commute daily to London.

- 1.4 The village benefits from a Community Shop run by volunteers and two public houses, otherwise there are no schools, GP surgeries or clinics, Post Office or banking facilities. Residents are dependent on nearby larger towns or villages and, in particular, Bedford for shopping and other services. With limited public transport, residents are largely reliant on the use of the car to access these.
- 1.5 There is an active community life, with a well-used Village Hall with adjacent sports field and children's play area, a number of clubs and societies, two churches with halls, the two public houses (the Royal George and The Red Lion) and a popular Cinema Club.
- 1.6 Stevington is served by narrow, rural roads from the north west, south west and south east, which converge on the 13th Century Stevington Cross in the centre of the village. These roads provide access to local highways, primary routes and rail travel. The A422 connects Bedford and Milton Keynes; the A6 which runs north to south links Bedford to Rushden and Luton; the A428 leads to Northampton and Olney; and the A421, a "strategic route" from west to east (which links the M1 via the south of Bedford to the A1) provides access to south Milton Keynes.
- 1.7 There are some 62 listed buildings of which 49 are individual dwellings. The village has the cruciform layout typical of an Anglo-Saxon village and many of the listed buildings lie within the Conservation Area designated in 1970. To the south east of the village is located the Stevington Windmill, listed as Grade II\*, which was built in 1770 and is the only complete windmill left in the county.
- 1.8 The preparation of the SNP coincided with the emergence of the Bedford Borough Local Plan (BBLP). The BBLP 2030 was adopted by BBC in January 2020. The draft SNP was prepared generally in accordance with the several different BBC development plan documents which had effect in 2019. Nevertheless, in accordance with Government policy guidance, the SNP has been reviewed and updated to conform with the now adopted BBLP 2030.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.9 The SNP is required to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the statutory development plan, which is now the BBLP 2030 and the Bedford Borough Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013 (BBADLP). I address the matter of general conformity of the SNP with the strategic policies of the Development Plan throughout my report.

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<sup>1</sup> PPG Reference ID: 41-009-20190509.

### *The Independent Examiner*

- 1.10 As the Plan has now reached the examination stage, I have been appointed as the examiner of the SNP by BBC, with the agreement of Stevington Parish Council (SPC).
- 1.11 I am a chartered town planner and retired government Planning Inspector, with more than 45 years of experience in the private and public sectors. I am an independent examiner, and do not have an interest in any of the land that may be affected by the draft Plan.

### *The Scope of the Examination*

- 1.12 As the independent examiner I am required to produce this report and recommend either:
- (a) that the neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum without changes; or
  - (b) that modifications are made and that the modified neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum; or
  - (c) that the neighbourhood plan does not proceed to a referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.
- 1.13 The scope of the examination is set out in Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) ('the 1990 Act'). The examiner must consider:
- Whether the Plan meets the Basic Conditions;
  - Whether the Plan complies with provisions under s.38A and s.38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ('the 2004 Act'). These are:
    - it has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body, for an area that has been properly designated by the local planning authority;
    - it sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land;
    - it specifies the period during which it has effect;
    - it does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development';
    - it is the only neighbourhood plan for the area and does not relate to land outside the designated neighbourhood area;

- whether the referendum boundary should be extended beyond the designated area, should the Plan proceed to referendum; and
- Such matters as prescribed in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) ('the 2012 Regulations').

1.14 I have considered only matters that fall within Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act, with one exception. That is the requirement that the Plan is compatible with the Human Rights Convention.

### *The Basic Conditions*

1.15 The 'Basic Conditions' are set out in Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act. In order to meet the Basic Conditions, the neighbourhood plan must:

- Have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area;
- Be compatible with and not breach European Union (EU) obligations; and
- Meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.

1.16 Regulation 32 of the 2012 Regulations prescribes a further Basic Condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.<sup>2</sup>

## **2. Approach to the Examination**

### *Planning Policy Context*

2.1 During the early preparation of the draft SNP, the Development Plan for BBC, not including documents relating to excluded minerals and waste development, comprised the following documents:

- Saved Local Plan 2002 (LP 2002) policies;

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<sup>2</sup> This revised Basic Condition came into force on 28 December 2018 through the Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2018.

- The Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan (CSRI) 2008 (to 2021); and
  - The Allocations and Designations Local Plan (ADLP) 2013.
- 2.2 In its initial drafting, the SNP was prepared to be in general conformity with the strategic policies in these BBC Development Plan Documents (DPDs), which had effect in 2019. Nevertheless, as the emerging BBLP was being drafted, the SPC sought to ensure that the SNP reflected the reasoning and evidence informing the local plan process. The SPC recognised the importance of minimising any conflicts between those policies in the Neighbourhood Plan and those in the emerging Local Plan during its preparation.
- 2.3 The BBLP 2030 was adopted by BBC in January 2020 and largely replaces the policies in the LP 2002 and the CSRI 2008. It does not replace some policies in the ADLP, which remain a part of the Development Plan.<sup>3</sup>
- 2.4 In view of the close attention paid to the BBLP emerging policies during the preparation of the SNP, and the opportunity for review and updating of the SNP prior to its submission towards the end of May 2020, the submitted SNP has been prepared to be generally in conformity with the most up to date Development Plan policies.
- 2.5 The planning policy for England is set out principally in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) offers guidance on how this policy should be implemented. A revised NPPF was published on 19 February 2019 and has been subject to further amendment. All references in this report are to the 2019 NPPF and its accompanying PPG.<sup>4</sup>

### *Submitted Documents*

- 2.6 I have considered all policy, guidance and other reference documents I consider relevant to the examination, including those submitted in May 2020. These comprise:
- Stevington Neighbourhood Plan, June 2020;
  - Stevington Parish Map;
  - Basic Conditions Statement, April 2020;
  - Consultation Statement, February 2020;
  - Strategic Environmental Assessment screening report, October 2018;
  - Habitat Regulations Assessment for the SNP, January 2019;
  - Regulation 16 consultation responses;
  - Stevington Parish Council Local Green Space Submission 2016;
  - Housing Capacity Study: Urban Vision July 2018; and

<sup>3</sup> See BBLP 2030 Appendix 1.

<sup>4</sup> See paragraph 214 of the NPPF. The Plan was submitted under Regulation 15 to the local planning authority after 24 January 2019.

- Responses from SPC dated 7 September 2020 to my questions of 28 August 2020.

All the above documents are available on either the Borough Council or Parish Council websites.<sup>5</sup>

### *Site Visit*

- 2.7 I visited the Neighbourhood Plan Area unaccompanied by any interested party on the 7 September 2020. I carried out a general review of the area in terms of its setting and character in order to familiarise myself with it and visited relevant sites and areas referenced in the Plan and evidential documents.

### *Written Representations with or without Public Hearing*

- 2.8 This examination has been carried out on the basis of the written submissions (written representations). The Regulation 16 consultation responses clearly articulated the objections to the Plan and presented arguments for and against the Plan's suitability to proceed to a referendum. As noted, I have received further clarification from the QB in response to my letter of 28 August 2020.<sup>6</sup> As a result, in terms of the appropriate level of scrutiny for the SNP, I consider that hearing sessions are not necessary.

### *Modifications*

- 2.9 Where necessary, I have recommended modifications to the Plan (**PMs**) in this report in order that it meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. For ease of reference, I have listed these modifications separately in the Appendix.

## **3. Procedural Compliance and Human Rights**

### *Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area*

- 3.1 The Stevington Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by SPC, which is the qualifying body for an area that was designated by BBC on 1 October 2013.
- 3.2 It is the only Neighbourhood Plan for Stevington Parish and does not relate to any land outside the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

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<sup>5</sup> View at: <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy-its-purpose/neighbourhood-planning/Stevington-neighbourhood-development-plan/> and <http://www.stevington.com/>

<sup>6</sup> See footnote 5.

### *Plan Period*

- 3.3 The Plan specifies the period to which it is to take effect in section 1.1, which is to the year 2035. Although the SNP covers a period beyond the term of the BBLP, this does not in my assessment raise any issues of compliance. It may however be necessary to review the SNP when the BBLP is carried forward beyond 2030. In the interests of clarity, it would be helpful for the Plan to state the date prominently on the front cover [PM1].

### *Neighbourhood Plan Preparation and Consultation*

- 3.4 A resolution to create a neighbourhood plan was passed on 17 September 2013. SPC was assisted by the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group (SNPWG), which carried out extensive consultation with the people of Stevington, landowners and others with an interest in the Parish and has taken their views into account in the preparation of the SNP.
- 3.5 A launch event for the preparation of the SNP was held in May 2015. The Consultation Statement sets out a summary of the consultation exercises which were then undertaken in the preparation of the SNP. The programme of consultation included updates in the quarterly Stevington Magazine, the creation of a dedicated website with regular updates throughout the Plan preparation process, the distribution of information leaflets and of questionnaires, and a community engagement exercise to consider the draft policies in November 2015. There was a “soft launch” consultation exercise which was completed in October 2018, with a “full document” consultation exercise from April to July 2019 before the Regulation 14 6-week consultation from 9 December 2019 to 27 January 2020.
- 3.6 The Submission Version of the Plan was then the subject of a further round of consultation, as required by Regulation 16 of the 2012 Regulations, which commenced on 10 July 2020 and closed on 24 August 2020. I have considered the representations that were made at the Regulation 16 stage in preparing this report. I am satisfied that a transparent, fair and inclusive consultation process has been followed for the SNP. Due regard has been had to the advice in the PPG on plan preparation and the SNP is procedurally compliant in accordance with the legal requirements.

### *Development and Use of Land*

- 3.7 The Plan sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land in accordance with s.38A of the 2004 Act.

### *Excluded Development*

- 3.8 The Plan does not include provisions and policies for ‘excluded development’.

## *Human Rights*

- 3.9 No issues have been raised in relation to any potential for a breach of Human Rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998). From my independent assessment, I see no reason to find otherwise.

## **4. Compliance with the Basic Conditions**

### *EU Obligations*

- 4.1 The SNP has been screened for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The conclusion was that it is unlikely that there will be any significant environmental effects arising from the SNP and that SEA is not required. The screening report was sent to the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England for comment. All three Agencies responded to confirm that SEA was not required. I have read the SEA screening report and have no reason to disagree with its conclusion.
- 4.2 The recently adopted BBLP does not allocate any growth in housing numbers for Stevington. To meet local need, the SNP aims to deliver between 11-15 new dwellings during the Plan period. The Housing Capacity Study (July 2018) considered five alternative options for meeting this need. It also identified sufficient capacity for that level of new housing to be delivered through infill and redevelopment within the Settlement Policy Area (SPA) as defined in the BBLP. I am satisfied that the SPC has taken an appropriate and thorough approach to the consideration of reasonable alternatives in accordance with the requirements of SEA in the assessment of housing sites in the preparation of the SNP.
- 4.3 A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) was carried out for the BBLP 2030 which identified the potential for likely significant effects on two European sites, The Ouse Washes and Portholme, downstream of Bedford. Although the policies within the Local Plan should protect the European sites if followed, detail was not available from the other emerging neighbourhood plans in the authority area to confirm this for all developments. Further screening of the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan has been carried out to ensure that there were no unforeseen likely significant effects.
- 4.4 This screening of the SNP identified the same likely significant effects on the two European sites as the Bedford Borough Local Plan to 2030 but at a reduced scale. Following Appropriate Assessment of the SNP (AA Stage 2) some rewording of the policies of the SNP has been undertaken to provide protection to the European sites. The policies provide the framework to avoid or mitigate against any likely significant effects, with the exception of the threat from non-native invasive plants, which by its nature cannot be eliminated entirely.

- 4.5 The HRA concludes that the Stevington Neighbourhood Development Plan can proceed as it will not have significant effects on any European sites itself or in combination with other plans, on the assumption that other plans avoid or have mitigated against the likely significant effects. Based on my own independent assessment, I agree with this conclusion.

#### *Main Issues*

- 4.6 I have approached the assessment of compliance of the SNP with the remaining Basic Conditions as two main matters:
- General issues of compliance of the Plan, as a whole; and
  - Specific issues of compliance of the Plan policies.

#### *General Issues of Compliance of the Plan*

##### Regard to National Policy and Advice

- 4.7 The SNP sets out the background and context to its preparation and provides a broad description of the character and appearance of the Plan area, with its historic village and attractive rural setting. A vision statement to reflect the development aims for Stevington is identified in Chapter 2. Below this are listed 7 development aims for the area, which are based upon the feedback and support received from local people. The objectives include the protection of its special characteristics such as the green open spaces, its distinctive landscape setting and the historic assets within the Parish; whilst seeking to allow for some new housing of appropriate design and scale to meet the needs of residents of the Parish.
- 4.8 These objectives have regard to the advice in NPPF paragraph 28, which identifies matters to be delivered through non-strategic policies in neighbourhood plans. The SNP is positively prepared, with an aspirational but deliverable approach to the development of the Parish, and it has been shaped through early, proportionate and effective engagement within the local community.
- 4.9 In general, the policies of the SNP are clearly written and unambiguous<sup>7</sup> and I recommend modification where necessary to achieve this requirement. Where there is some duplication of the policy set out in the BBLP 2030<sup>8</sup>, I recommend deletion where appropriate.
- 4.10 An assessment has been carried out to indicate that there is capacity within the SPA to meet local needs for housing without the allocation of new housing sites. With the range of policies formulated to meet its development aims, the SNP demonstrates a positive approach to an appropriate level of growth within the Parish. Subject to the modifications which I recommend, the SNP has had regard to national policy and advice.

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<sup>7</sup> See PPG Reference ID: 41-041-20140306.

<sup>8</sup> See NPPF paragraph 16 f).

### Contributes to the Achievement of Sustainable Development

- 4.11 By taking a positive approach to the delivery of residential development to meet local needs, the SNP provides for sustainable development through its housing and other development policies. Whilst the Plan provides for new housing in the village, in doing so it has regard to the economic, social and environmental needs of the local community. The SNP accords with paragraph 29 of the NPPF since it complements the strategic policies for the area.
- 4.12 The three overarching objectives of sustainable development are integral to the core objectives of the SNP. Together with the policies of the BBLP 2030, the policies and proposals of the SNP contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in accordance with national policies and advice.
- 4.13 Subject to the detailed comments and modifications which I set out below for individual policies, I am satisfied that the Plan makes a positive contribution to the achievement of the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development.

### General Conformity with Strategic Policies in the Development Plan

- 4.14 I set out the planning policy context for the SNP in section 2 above. The SNP was prepared alongside the emerging BBLP 2030 and the policies, as submitted in the SNP June 2020, seek to be in general conformity with those in the BBLP 2030 as adopted in January 2020.
- 4.15 The village of Stevington is identified in the BBLP 2030 as being within the rural areas of the Borough. In considering the location of development in rural areas in the BBLP, the distinction between settlements and areas of countryside is established by defining SPAs. The aim of the Local Plan for the rural areas is to direct development to within the defined SPA boundaries in accordance with Policy 5S.
- 4.16 Stevington is listed in the BBLP as a settlement with a SPA. There is no requirement in the BBLP 2030 for the SNP to allocate land for housing in order to meet Borough wide needs, but the provision of new housing may be brought forward through the neighbourhood planning process. Policy 5S of the BBLP 2030 allows for development in villages with a SPA, provided that it is consistent with the other policies of the Development Plan. The SNP makes no proposals to alter the SPA as defined in the BBLP Policies Map Inset 32. This map is reproduced at page 9 of the SNP.
- 4.17 Within the village there are sites which were designated as Village Open Space in the BBADLP (Policy AD40). The BBLP designates areas for Local Green Space (LGS) in accordance with national policy but does not designate any LGS in Stevington. SPC has carried out its own assessment of proposals for LGS designation as part of the preparation of the SNP.

This approach is appropriate since LGS can only be identified in Local or Neighbourhood Plans.<sup>9</sup>

- 4.18 The SNP has been developed with proper regard to the strategic direction and policies of the BBC DPDs, which I identify in Section 2 above. In addition, with some modifications which I recommend below, the SNP demonstrates general conformity with the recently adopted strategic policies of the BBLP 2030. BBC has been involved throughout the preparation of the SNP and is generally supportive of its policies. Subject to some detailed comments and the modifications which I make to the Plan's policies below, I am satisfied that the SNP is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Development Plan.

### *Specific Issues of Compliance of the Plan Policies*

#### Housing Policies

- 4.19 To reflect the need identified by the SPC and the views expressed by the local community during the consultation process, Policy HO1 gives positive support for proposals for new housing within the SPA subject to certain criteria. These criteria identify the detailed matters to be addressed in any planning application. They reflect local concerns and the specific issues which require addressing within Stevington, and as such comply with national policy relating to the content of non-strategic policies appropriate in neighbourhood plans.
- 4.20 Policy HO2 seeks to ensure that new housing will meet the particular needs identified for Stevington as a result of its population profile and in response to the views of the local community. Having regard to the rural character of Stevington, and the limited opportunity for new housing to be provided, I consider this policy to be justified.
- 4.21 To enable the change of use of existing buildings to dwellings outside the SPA, Policy HO3 sets out the criteria to be applied in the consideration of such proposals. The criteria address issues relevant to the locality. They are clearly set out in the Policy and justified in the explanatory text.
- 4.22 Policy HO4 supports the subdivision or demolition of existing dwellings within the SPA but generally outside the Conservation Area. It lists the detailed criteria against which any proposal would be considered. The Policy is clearly set out and fully justified in the particular circumstances of Stevington.
- 4.23 I am satisfied that the Housing Policies of the SNP meet the Basic Conditions.

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<sup>9</sup> See NPPF paragraph 99.

## Design and Heritage Policies

- 4.24 The text and policies in this section reflect the importance of the character and appearance of the village and its surrounding landscape to the community of Stevington. There are no issues of compliance raised by Policies DH1 and DH3.
- 4.25 Policy DH2 deals with non-designated heritage assets. In the NPPF paragraph 197 sets out the approach which should be taken when considering such proposals. Policy DH2 requires that new development does not cause harm to the significance of the asset, that it preserves its historical and architectural interest and that extensions do not dominate the original building. As a result, the policy imposes a more onerous requirement in the assessment of development that affects a non-designated heritage asset than that set out in national policy. There is no clear justification set out to justify this more onerous approach.
- 4.26 National policy<sup>10</sup> sets out the criteria through which any proposals for the development of non-designated heritage assets should be assessed. In the absence of any clear evidence to justify a more restrictive set of criteria in the SNP, I recommend Policy DH2 should be deleted in order for the SNP to have the necessary regard to national policy. I also recommend changes to the explanatory text to the policy to reflect the deletion of Policy DH2 [**PM2**].
- 4.27 Subject to the modifications which I recommend in the Appendix, the Design and Heritage Policies meet the Basic Conditions.

## Environment Policies

- 4.28 Policy EN1 sets out criteria which aims to protect the particular qualities of the environment of Stevington. The Policy raises no issues of compliance.
- 4.29 Stevington has a number of Village Open Spaces (VOS) which were designated in the BBADLP 2013. In the preparation of the BBLP consideration was given by BBC to changing the designation of VOS to Local Green Space (LGS) in accordance with the criteria set out in national policy and advice. Because Stevington was preparing a neighbourhood plan, the SPC took on the task of reviewing green spaces within the Parish to identify potential LGS designations.
- 4.30 Policy EN2 identifies two former VOS (LGS1 and LGS3) to be designated as LGS, and two additional sites which had not previously been identified. Having regard to the importance to the community of the Village Playing Field (LGS1) and the Meadow opposite to Manor Farmhouse (LGS3) I consider the designation of these sites as LGS to be fully justified.

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<sup>10</sup> NPPF paragraph 197.

- 4.31 LGS2 is the site of the Stevington Windmill together with the strip of land which provides access to the site. The Windmill is an important local feature and the approach is clearly well used and maintained. It does not enjoy any protection as a public right of way. Having regard to the historic, amenity and wildlife importance of the site I consider that the designation as LGS is justified.
- 4.32 With regard to LGS4, this is formed by a strip of woodland which runs from Park Road and widens out into a small spinney adjacent to the bank of the River Great Ouse. There are paths through the woodland and along the river bank which appear well used by walkers. A Public Footpath (19) runs along the south east of the woodland. The wooded strip provides a visual screen between Oakley and Stevington, it is used for informal recreation with access to the riverbank and is a valuable wildlife habitat. Although the woodland is protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), I consider that the designation as LGS is justified.
- 4.33 The four sites designated in Policy EN2 as LGS meet the criteria in national policy and advice, and the Policy raises no issues of compliance. However, clause 2 of Policy EN2 provides that "*Designated Local Green Space must remain as open green spaces*". This ignores the exceptional circumstances test in NPPF paragraph 136, as policies for managing development within a LGS should be consistent with those for Green Belts.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, in order to have regard to national policy, I propose a modification to clause 2 of Policy EN2 to clarify that LGSs should be managed in a manner compatible with their designation. [PM3]
- 4.34 Subject to the modification which I recommend in the Appendix, the Environment Policies meet the Basic Conditions.

### Community Facilities

- 4.35 Stevington has experienced the loss of community facilities as a result of lack of viability and cost saving. The community understandably seeks to retain those community assets which remain. This approach complies with NPPF paragraph 92c) which states that planning policies should guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services. In the BBLP, Policy 99 addresses the loss of existing sports and community facilities and sets out the circumstances in which their loss or replacement will be permitted.
- 4.36 The criteria in Policy CF1 (1–4) generally accord with national and local plan policy. In the "List of Community Facilities", all the buildings have public access and are used for community meetings, clubs or events apart from the Almshouses in Park Road. These are the responsibility of a charity which provides low cost accommodation for up to 5 beneficiaries at a time and are effectively in use as private residences. As private residences, I consider it is inappropriate for the Almshouses to be included

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<sup>11</sup> NPPF paragraph 101.

in the list of community facilities and recommend that it should be deleted from the list. [PM4]

- 4.37 Subject to the modification which I recommend in the Appendix, the Community Facilities Policy meets the Basic Conditions.

#### Transport and Infrastructure Policies

- 4.38 Policies T11 deals with traffic impact from new developments. As currently drafted the policy identifies matters of concern to the local community which is appropriate for a neighbourhood plan. However, I recommend some modifications to ensure that the criteria will endure over time, are clearly drafted and will provide the opportunity for the objective assessment of proposals having regard to issues of local concern. [PM5]
- 4.39 T12 raises no issues of compliance.
- 4.40 In the interests of clarity and to meet the requirements of the local water authority, I recommend a modification to Policy T13 to refer to the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). The use of SuDS would help to reduce the risk of surface water and sewer flooding and have wider benefit in terms of water quality enhancement. [PM6]
- 4.41 Subject to the modifications which I recommend in the Appendix, the Transport and Infrastructure Policies meet the Basic Conditions

#### Business and Employment

- 4.42 The SNP seeks to provide an attractive environment for businesses and services to locate and flourish. Policy BE1 sets out the criteria against which new business, employment and tourism related development will be considered. The Policy raises no issues of compliance.
- 4.43 Policy BE2 seeks to ensure that new development incorporates provision for high speed internet connectivity. However, BBLP Policy 94 sets out the requirement for the installation of infrastructure to support fibre optic broadband technology in both residential and non-residential development. In order to avoid the repetition of policy, I recommend that Policy BE2 and the subsequent text be deleted. [PM7]
- 4.44 Subject to the modification which I recommend in the Appendix, the Business and Employment Policies meet the Basic Conditions.

#### *Factual and Minor Amendments and Updates*

- 4.45 There are some typographical errors in the text of the SNP. I have not identified them unless they would affect the Basic Conditions. Minor amendments can be made consequential to the recommended

modifications, alongside any other minor changes or updates, in agreement between SPC and BBC.<sup>12</sup>

## 5. Conclusions

### *Summary*

- 5.1 The Stevington Neighbourhood Plan has been duly prepared in compliance with the procedural requirements. My examination has investigated whether the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements for neighbourhood plans. I have had regard to all the responses made following consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan, and the evidence documents submitted with it.
- 5.2 I have made recommendations to modify some of the policies to ensure the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum.

### *The Referendum and its Area*

- 5.3 I have considered whether or not the referendum area should be extended beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates.
- 5.4 The Stevington Neighbourhood Plan, as modified, has no policy or proposals which I consider significant enough to have an impact beyond the designated Neighbourhood Plan boundary and which would require the referendum to extend to areas beyond the Plan boundary. I therefore recommend that the boundary for the purposes of any future referendum on the Plan should be the boundary of the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

### *Overview*

- 5.5 The production of the SNP has undoubtedly required a high level of commitment and hard work by a group of volunteers from the local community. I commend the Parish Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group for producing a well written and effective Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.6 The Plan has achieved the difficult task of setting out positive proposals to enable Stevington to accommodate new housing. The SPC has consulted with and taken into account the views of the local community, whilst seeking to allow for a level of new homes which will benefit the community and protect the character and setting of Stevington as an attractive and historic village within the countryside. As a result, the SNP meets the Basic Conditions. With the recommended modifications

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<sup>12</sup> PPG Reference ID: 41-106-20190509.

appended to my report, the SNP should provide an effective Plan for the management of the future planning of Stevington.

*Wendy J Burden*

Examiner

## Appendix: Modifications

Proposed modification number (PM)	Page no./ other reference	Modification
PM1	Front cover	Insert under Heading "2020-2035".
PM2	Page 39	<p>Delete Policy DH2.</p> <p>Delete heading "DH2 Interpretation" and insert new heading "Non-designated heritage assets".</p> <p>In the second sentence of the first paragraph under the new heading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change "the policy" to "national policy as set out in NPPF paragraph 197".</li> <li>• Delete "a significant factor" and insert "taken into account".</li> </ul>
PM3	Page 50 Policy EN2	In 2.: delete "remain as open green spaces" and insert "be managed in a manner compatible with their designation".
PM4	Page 53 Policy CF1	Delete "a. Almshouses, Park Road".
PM5	Page 57 Policy T11	<p>In 1.: delete "made to ensuring" and insert "paid to".</p> <p>In a.: delete "existing problems of traffic capacity are not exacerbated, especially on existing pressure points" and insert "whether there is adequate highway capacity to support the proposal, in particular".</p> <p>In b.: delete "there is no adverse" and insert "the".</p> <p>In c.: delete "there is no significant adverse" and insert "the".</p>
PM6	Page 58 Policy T13	<p>Rename: "Sustainable Drainage Systems".</p> <p>In 1. Delete "sustainable urban drainage" and insert "Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)".</p>

PM7	Page 61 Policy BE2	Delete Policy BE2 and the subsequent text.
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# Stevington

## Neighbourhood Development Plan

### 2020-2035



June 2020

*Modifications recommended by the examiner. Strikethrough for deletion and bold underlined for new text.*

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**Photographs**

Cover - John O’Reilly  
 All other photos by Roger Day and Heather Eadie  
 Open and Green Space maps produced by Robert Eadie

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**Stevington from the air**

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Why the Neighbourhood Development Plan is important

1.1.1 The *Localism Act 2011 (as amended)* introduced new rights and powers to allow local communities to shape new development by working together to prepare neighbourhood development plans. A Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) is a powerful tool for shaping the development and growth of a local area, based on evidence and the community's views. The Stevington Neighbourhood Development Plan provides a vision for the future of Stevington, and sets out clear planning policies to realise this vision.

1.1.2 As required by the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) these policies meet the basic conditions. These include:

- Having regard to national policy and guidance including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
- Being in general conformity with adopted strategic local policies
- Helping to achieve sustainable development
- Not breaching EU obligations.

1.1.3 In addition, the plan meets the requirements of human rights legislation.

1.1.4 Stevington Neighbourhood Development Plan forms part of the statutory development plan for the area, together with the new Bedford Borough Council Local Plan 2030 adopted in January 2020. Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the policies of the statutory development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

1.1.5 At the time of inception it was intended that the Stevington Neighbourhood Development Plan would run concurrently with the second emerging Bedford Borough Local Plan and would be effective for the same period 2018 to 2035.

1.1.6 The recently adopted Bedford Borough Council Local Plan is now scheduled to run only to 2030, however the working group felt that as our plan evidencing and development estimates have been based to 2035 then the original plan period should remain.

1.1.7 For this reason, the Stevington Neighbourhood Development Plan will cover the period **2020 to year end 2035**; however, the Parish Council will monitor the effectiveness of the plan and, if necessary, consider revising and remaking the Plan during this period.

## 1.2 Governance

1.2.1 Stevington Parish Council will proactively monitor the Neighbourhood Development Plan for the duration of the period that it is in force. The Plan will be reviewed against its objectives on a rolling basis, every five years from the date it is adopted. This will act as a check to ensure that the Plan remains relevant to the most recent planning legislation and policies, but also that it continues to deliver the housing and related planning needs of the village.

1.2.2 Monitoring of the Plan will remain the responsibility of the Parish Council who will appoint a Councillor to act as Portfolio Holder for the Neighbourhood Development Plan. The Portfolio Holder will be responsible for tracking and evidencing the delivery of the Plan, and on a period of not less than every twelve months provide an update to the Parish Council on the Plan's progress and effectiveness.

**1.2.3** At the end of the appropriate five-year period the Portfolio Holder will also be responsible for initiating a full review of the Plan testing against relevance and delivery and provide a recommendation to the Parish Council as to whether the Plan should roll in its current form for the following five-year period, or whether an amendment or rewrite should be considered. The Parish Council will then review and vote on the recommendation and if necessary will be responsible for resourcing and implementing any suggested amendments.



**Park Road looking towards centre of Stevington**

## 2 Aims

- 2.1 At the inception of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group it was agreed that it would be appropriate to create a vision statement that would reflect the development aims of the area. The following vision was agreed upon:

**Stevington is a historic settlement, full of character, within a tranquil, environmentally significant, rural landscape. Future development should meet agreed housing and economic needs, enhancing infrastructure, facilities and amenities, be sustainable, whilst being sensitive to Stevington’s distinctiveness and valued features, enabling the village to sustain its vibrant and thriving community.**

- 2.2 By analysing the wealth of community and business feedback we received through the launch and “question and answer” events and using the evidence obtained through the Plan creation process we were able to identify the following primary planning aims as being those most appropriate and those which also received the strongest support from our residents:
- ensure all generations have easy access to community facilities and green open spaces encouraging participation in leisure and recreation activities by protecting and enhancing local amenities
  - protect and enhance our green space, our distinctive rural landscape views whilst protecting the biodiversity of our local flora and fauna and enhance habitats, links between wildlife habitats, sites of special interest and our conservation area
  - maintain the separation between local villages to avoid urban creep
  - preserve and enhance the historic built environment of our Village, our heritage assets and distinctive end settlement pattern by supporting sensitive development which protects and enriches the landscape and built setting
  - provide new housing which is high quality in design, size and materials, is of appropriate type, proportionate scale and is sited in a suitable location
  - deliver a housing growth strategy that is tailored to the needs and context of Stevington
  - to sustain the vitality, health and safety of the community so as to ensure that the disabled, elderly and infirm are able to remain part of it.

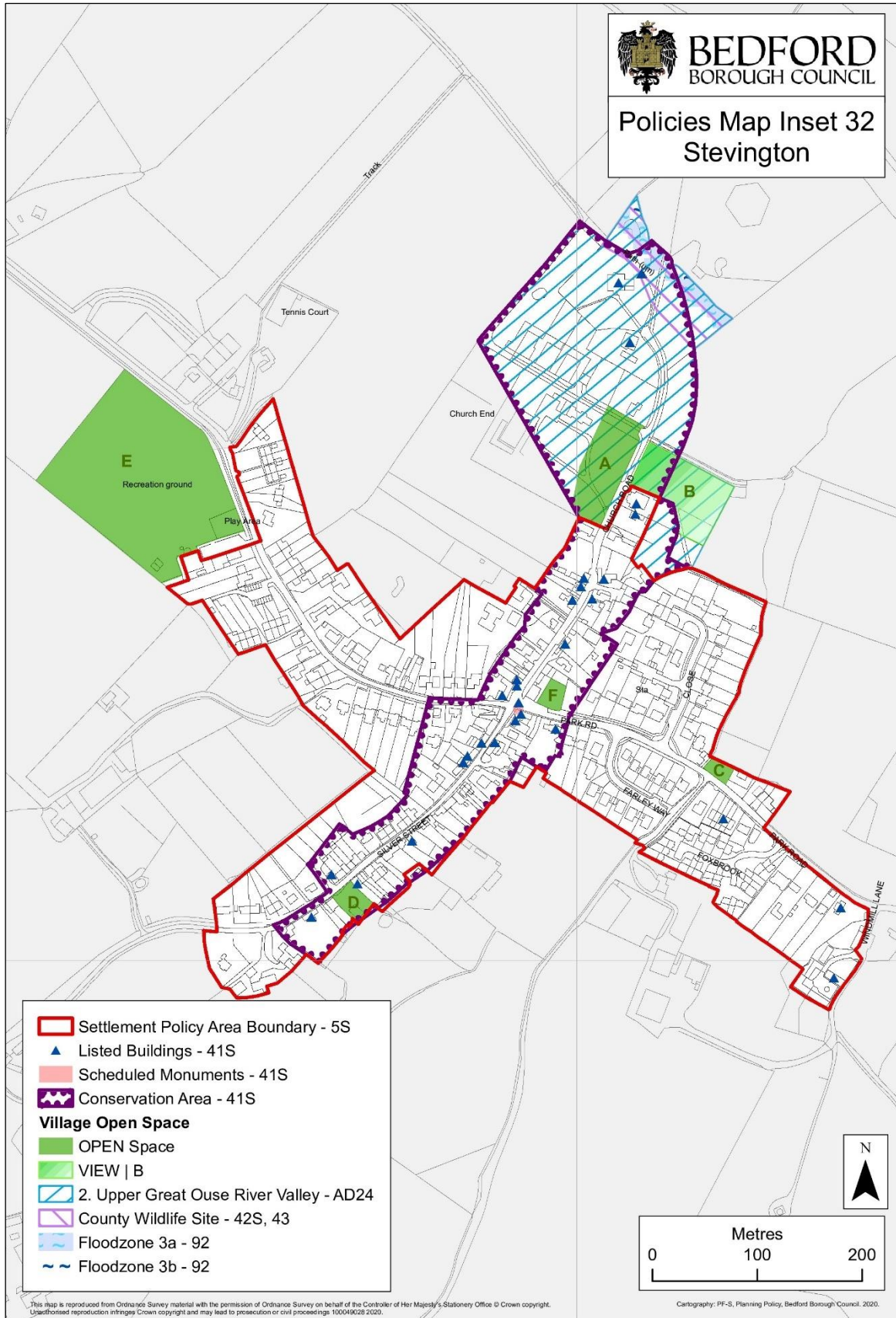


**Looking North from North side of West End**

## 3 The Neighbourhood Development Plan Strategy

- 3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at paragraph 8 states “Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):
- a. an economic objective - to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
  - b. a social objective - to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and
  - c. an environmental objective - to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy”.
- 3.2 In order to achieve this it is desirable that the Neighbourhood Development Plan encourages positive cooperation between residents, landowners and developers in order to ensure a continuing interest in the future of the Village.
- 3.3 This is the approach adopted in the Plan and based on this the Parish Council will look to engage positively with developers and the statutory planning authority to help guide future development in the village. Planning applicants will be strongly encouraged to meet with the Parish Council prior to submitting development plans to allow all parties to be in agreement that the proposals meet the aims and policies of the Neighbourhood Development Plan and ensure the Parish Council can fully support the application.
- 3.4 Stevington Neighbourhood Development Plan recognises that the key development opportunities for the Parish for the duration of the plan can adequately be supported within the current Settlement Policy Area when taken in conjunction with exception agricultural conversions (see SPA section for further details and capacity evidences).
- 3.5 The Neighbourhood Development Plan policies take account of the need for growth and look to ensure that all future development is sustainable.
- 3.6 New housing must deliver homes of quality which contribute to the character of the Village and which meet the local needs identified within this plan. It must be more than an exercise in meeting the latest housing ‘targets’ by the addition of characterless estates on the rural fringes of the village, more typical of suburban developments.
- 3.7 Housing growth is to be accommodated in a sensitive way and is defined within the Housing and Growth Policies section of this document. This Plan will support modest scale development within the defined Settlement Policy Area, with support also being given to those proposals that are situated on existing brown field sites, or revitalise derelict or redundant buildings.
- 3.8 Important green spaces are to be protected and green wildlife corridors are to be promoted and supported. Our historic environment is important to Stevington as it is a key contributor to our local distinctiveness, development must not detract or compromise this heritage asset.

3.9 Our Plan is supportive of new employment development of appropriate scale within the village and will actively promote additional recreational facilities that encourage a healthier lifestyle.



- Settlement Policy Area Boundary - 5S
- ▲ Listed Buildings - 41S
- Scheduled Monuments - 41S
- Conservation Area - 41S
- Village Open Space**
- OPEN Space
- VIEW | B
- 2. Upper Great Ouse River Valley - AD24
- County Wildlife Site - 42S, 43
- Floodzone 3a - 92
- Floodzone 3b - 92

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Cartography: PF-S, Planning Policy, Bedford Borough Council, 2020.

**HO1 BBC Policies Map - this map details the current Bedford Borough Council Local 2030 Plan Policy areas, each have key material considerations for potential planning applications.**

# 4 The Stevington Neighbourhood Development Plan Area - Evidence and Data

## 4.1 Designation

4.1.1 The Plan relates to the Parish of Stevington and the Qualifying Body that created the Plan is Stevington Parish Council. Bedford Borough Council formally designated the Plan Area on 1st October 2013.

4.1.2 The majority of the evidence and policies in the Plan concern the built Village of Stevington. It is recognised, however, that a significant area of the Parish is lent to agricultural uses and that there are also dispersed individual dwellings outside of the village envelope.



BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Parish of Stevington

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1:16,500

## 4.2 Land Map of Stevington Parish

### 4.2.1 Stevington’s location within Bedford Borough

4.2.1 Stevington is an historic rural village situated within the Borough of Bedford. It is first mentioned in the *Domesday Book* of 1086<sup>1</sup>. It is located in the distinctive limestone landscape of the River Great Ouse Valley, approximately six miles north-west of Bedford. It is a small parish of some 1676 acres with approximately one third of the Parish being arable land; most of the balance is pasture and grassland, with about 17 acres of woods, plantations and marshland<sup>2</sup>.

4.2.2 Bedford Borough lies within the East of England region and includes the county town of Bedford, the town of Kempston and a large rural area. Approximately 66% of the population (estimated at 171,000 in 2018) live in the Bedford/Kempston area that accounts for only 8% of the land of the Borough as a whole.

4.2.3 Many of the Borough’s rural parishes, such as Stevington, contain several small settlements with a combined population of fewer than 600 people. Most of Stevington’s neighbouring parishes, however, are larger in population: Bromham (5,000)<sup>3</sup>, Oakley (2,500)<sup>4</sup>, Turvey (1,225)<sup>5</sup>, Carlton and Chellington (874)<sup>6</sup>, Pavenham (712)<sup>7</sup> and only Stagsden (363)<sup>8</sup> being smaller<sup>9</sup>.

## 4.3 Wider social/economic/environmental context

4.3.1 The population of Stevington is approximately 580, with about 285 dwellings in the village<sup>10</sup>. Fifteen per cent of the inhabitants are under 18 years of age and twenty seven per cent are of retirement age<sup>12</sup>.

4.3.2 Self-employment (14%) and working from home (15%) are both high. Apart from several farms, a number of other businesses including building services, business consultancies, plumbing and heating, health practitioners, cleaners, food marketing and caterers, jewellery designers, a range of domestic services, florist, garden maintenance and designers, security consultants, photographer, sign writers and a range of other professional services are all based in the village<sup>13</sup>.

4.3.3 Bedford, Milton Keynes and Northampton are key work destinations and a higher than average number of residents commute daily to London<sup>14</sup>. This is in line with other rural parishes within the Borough where residents mostly travel between 0 and 20 km to work<sup>15</sup>.

4.3.4 There are no schools, GP surgeries or clinics, Post Office or banking facilities in Stevington; the nearest are in the adjacent villages of Bromham (2.5 miles) or Harrold (4 miles). The only retail facility located in Stevington, apart from the public houses, is the Community Shop, run by volunteers, which stocks a range of basic provisions.

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1	Stevington, The Village History by Stevington Historical Trust	8	2011 census
2	Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment 2007	9	2011 census
3	2011 census	10	2011 census
4	2011 census	11	Bedford Borough Planning Portal
5	2011 census	12	2011 census
6	2011 census	13	Adverts in the quarterly Stevington Magazine Dec 2017
7	2011 census	14	2011 census
		15	2008 Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan

4.3.5 Residents are dependent on adjacent towns and larger villages, particularly Bedford, with several supermarkets mostly located to the east of the town, two traditional markets a week, and a range of shops. Use of a car or the very limited public transport is needed to take advantage of these. Milton Keynes (16 miles) and Northampton (18 miles) are the nearest centres offering other large Department stores and supermarkets.

4.3.6 Stevington has a very active community life, including a well-used Village Hall with adjacent sports field and children's play area, many clubs and societies, two churches with halls and currently two public houses the Royal George and The Red Lion, which has recently reopened following substantial renovation. The Cinema Club, formed in 2015, has proved very popular with its monthly film showings and live-streamed performances from national venues.

4.3.7 Facilities, such as the Paula Radcliffe sports centre at Sharnbrook (6 miles) and others in Clapham (5 miles), Bedford (7 miles), Wellingborough (16 miles), Northampton (18 miles) and Milton Keynes (16 miles) offer additional cultural, sporting, and other leisure facilities.

#### **4.3.4 The Immediate surrounding area**

4.3.8 Stevington lies within an area characterised as the Pavenham Wooded Wolds and most of the parish sits within the limestone river valley of the Great Ouse<sup>16</sup>. Overall, the landscape character of the Pavenham Wooded Wold is judged to be of high sensitivity due to many elements of the landscape that are sensitive to change such as the rural roads, the blocks of scattered woodland, the small-scale limestone villages, the largely intact hedgerows and historic parks and earthworks.

4.3.9 The River Great Ouse is a prominent feature of the landscape, meandering through the broad, shallow valley in characteristic broad loops sometimes lined by riverside vegetation such as willows and alders. It has a traditional agricultural landscape encompassing a combination of arable fields on higher land, and wet meadow and pasture on the floodplain.

4.3.10 Parkland occurs on opposite sides of the river at Oakley and Stevington Park End<sup>17</sup>. The River Great Ouse is of significant ecological interest and represents one of the most natural sections of river remaining in the Borough. Some areas of significant botanical interest are present, including Stevington Marsh SSSI Landscape Character Sensitivity, where the naturalistic, meandering course of the River fringed by wetland vegetation including marshland and open water bodies are of high biodiversity interest<sup>18</sup>.

4.3.11 The many footpaths and bridleways allow the community and visitors to enjoy the varied scenery and its rich pattern of flora and fauna<sup>19</sup>. Also in close proximity are Bromham Lake Nature Reserve (2 miles)<sup>20</sup> and Harrold-Odell Country Park (4 miles)<sup>21</sup>. Small rural roads cross the river valley often carried over narrow limestone road bridges. Raised pedestrian walkways are also a feature providing pedestrian access during periods of flood<sup>22</sup>.

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16	Stevington, The Natural History of a Bedfordshire Parish by Stevington Historical Trust	20	<a href="https://bromham.bedsparishes.gov.uk/visit-bromham/bromham-lake/">https://bromham.bedsparishes.gov.uk/visit-bromham/bromham-lake/</a>
17	Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment 2007	21	2008 Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan
18	Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment 2007	22	Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment 2007
19	Stevington, The Natural History of a Bedfordshire Parish by Stevington Historical Trust		

### **4.3.2 Stevington's location within Bedford Borough**

**4.3.12** Bedford Borough lies within the East of England region but is also adjacent to the East Midlands and the South East regions. Part of the Borough had previously been designated as being within the Milton Keynes and the South Midlands Sub-Region (MKSM), one of four potential major growth areas established in the government's Sustainable Communities Plan of 2003<sup>23</sup> and is also included within the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Growth Area.

### **4.3.3 Significant transport links**

**4.3.13** Stevington is served by narrow, rural roads from the north west, south west and south east, which converge on the 13th Century Stevington Cross in the centre of the village. These roads provide access to local highways, primary routes and rail travel.

**4.3.14** The A422 connects Bedford and Milton Keynes; the A6 which runs north to south links Bedford to Rushden and Luton; the A428 leads to Northampton and Olney; and the A421, a "strategic route" from west to east (which links the M1 via the south of Bedford to the A1) provides access to south Milton Keynes.

**4.3.15** Stevington is not well served by public transport and is dependent on Bedford as a transport hub for access to national bus and train services. A direct bus service from Stevington to Bedford provides five buses a day, Monday to Friday and four buses on Saturdays. In addition, the Villager Community minibus provides a regular service to Milton Keynes, Olney, Peterborough and Northampton, typically once or twice throughout the month. Bedford Borough Council provisions school buses during term time to transport Stevington children to their designated local schools<sup>24 25</sup>.

**4.3.16** Bedford Borough is strategically located mid-way between London to the south and Birmingham in the Midlands. The university cities of Oxford and Cambridge are respectively west and east of the area whilst the former new town of Milton Keynes, a major growth focus, lies immediately to the west and Northampton to the north. The strategic location is highlighted by key transport infrastructure including the M1 and A1, three major rail routes and London Luton Airport<sup>26</sup>.

**4.3.17** Bedford is linked to the north and south by rail, providing commuting and travel options to Stevington residents. Trains to Milton Keynes are by Silverlink County Marston Vale services. London St Pancras station is approximately 40 minutes away by train using East Midland trains, although this service is now off-peak only. There is an additional longer, but more frequent, service provided by Thameslink to various through stations in the capital, also many destinations as far south as Brighton. Rail links to London Euston and Birmingham are accessible from Milton Keynes.

**4.3.18** To access the national transport routes and international gateways that cross the region, personal transport is essential<sup>27</sup>. 38% of Stevington households have two cars, and 18% have three or more. Although most people travel to work by car (71%), commuting by train (6%) is high, and 3% of those in employment cycle to work<sup>28</sup>. Only 1% use public transport and 3% walk to work<sup>29</sup>. The level of households without a car (10%) is slightly above the average for all Bedford Borough rural parishes, probably a reflection of the higher than average proportion of the Village population who are elderly and/or disabled.

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23 Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy  
24 [www.bedford.gov.uk](http://www.bedford.gov.uk) > Transport and Streets > Public Transport  
25 [www.carberry.co.uk](http://www.carberry.co.uk)  
26 2008 Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan

27 East of England Plan 2031  
28 2011 census  
29 2011 census

#### 4.3.4 Population

4.3.19 The South East Midlands Sub-Region's largest urban centres are Milton Keynes (population 255,700 in 2013<sup>30</sup>), Northampton (population 212,000 in 2013<sup>31</sup>), Luton-Dunstable-Houghton Regis (population 258,018<sup>32</sup>), and Bedford-Kempston (population 171,000<sup>33</sup>).

4.3.20 Bedford Borough is home to approximately 160,000 people in 65,000 households. Almost two thirds of the population live in the urban area of Bedford and Kempston and only 35% in the surrounding rural parishes, such as Stevington<sup>34</sup>. Total population numbers in Bedford are forecast to grow to more than 175,000 by 2021, with a general increase in the population of the older age groups<sup>35</sup>. Based on historical trends, it is unlikely that the population in Stevington will follow the Bedford growth pattern.

4.3.21 The demographic profile and growth rate of Stevington is significantly different from the wider Borough and, in particular, the urban area of the Borough and wider Sub-Region. The 2011 census shows Stevington has a population of 552.

4.3.22 Stevington has a much older age profile than Bedford Borough as a whole with 56% of residents aged over 50 in 2011 (Borough 33.9%); 27% of residents aged over 65 (Borough 15.8%); and only 13% aged 0-15 (Borough 20.1%). By 2021 the population who are 75 or over in the Borough is expected to have increased from nearly 8% for the period 2001-2006 to over 14% in 2016-2021<sup>36</sup>; a similar projection for Stevington suggests the over-75s will form 21% of the village population.

4.3.23 The proportion of Stevington residents with a long-term illness or disability, 19% (Borough 16%), is among the highest of all parishes, and the proportion of residents providing unpaid care at 16% is also high (Borough 10%)<sup>37</sup>.

4.3.24 In contrast, Milton Keynes is a young, fast-growing town: the population grew by over 20% in the decade up to 2013 (8.9% for England); 22.6% of the population was under 16, with 65.3% under 65 and only 12% were over 65<sup>38</sup>. In line with a younger population, only 6.4% of the population reported long-term illness or disability.

4.3.25 There are several other contrasts in respect of population between Stevington and the wider Borough. The non-white British population (4%) in Stevington is among the lowest of all parishes<sup>39</sup>. With over 60 different ethnic groups represented in the area, Bedford Borough is one of the most cosmopolitan in the country (28.5% from black and minority ethnic groups). In addition, the Borough includes significant Italian, Irish and Polish communities<sup>40</sup>.

#### 4.3.5 Population profile and incomes

4.3.26 Stevington is small and data on residents' income has not been collected and analysed, however the ONS Rank of Deprivation of all English Neighbourhoods classifies Oakley Ward, of which Stevington is part, as ranking 25,274 out of 32,844<sup>41</sup>. Within the wider Borough, there are huge disparities in income between wards. Average gross weekly household income in 2011/12 (latest available modelled data) in Bromham and Biddenham ward (£1,184) was far higher than Harpur (£614), Kingsbrook (£652) and Cauldwell (£702) wards. In 2001-02, the most recent statistics available, weekly household income in Oakley Ward was above the national average and comparable to Bromham and Biddenham wards.

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30	2011 census	38	Milton Keynes Council population statistics: <a href="http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk">www.milton-keynes.gov.uk</a> > Your Council and Elec... > Statistics
31	2011 census		
32	2011 census		
33	Bedford Borough Council	39	2011 census
34	2008 Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan	40	2008 Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan
35	2008 Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan	41	ONS Neighbourhood Statistics
36	2008 Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan		
37	2011 census		

4.3.27 In May 2015, there were 10,532 Housing Benefit claimants in the Borough, a reduction from 11,057 in May 2014. Of these 7,324 (69.5%) were Social Rental and 3,208 (30.5%) Private Rental. 7.4% of Stevington residents live in privately rented accommodation and 9.3% in social rented accommodation<sup>42</sup>; the great majority of Stevington residents, over 83%, own their own homes.

4.3.28 Online comparison website U-switch summarises the Borough position: “Bedford has high overall employment rates, with 79% of its inhabitants employed, but only 41% employed full time. Incomes are above average in Bedford with the gross weekly income of the average person there in 2015 at £493.70.

4.3.29 Disposable income is also slightly above average with the average Bedford household having £17,465 available to spend for a year. House prices are on the high side, though not exceptionally so for the South of England. The average Bedford home sold for £285k in 2019 (December). Rent is very high compared to average values at £84 per week<sup>43</sup>.

### 4.3.6 Employment

4.3.30 The percentage of Parish residents who are self-employed (14%) or working from home (15%) are both relatively high compared to the Borough average<sup>44</sup>. Agriculture has traditionally been important in the economy of the rural parts of the borough<sup>45</sup> and continues to shape the village environment. Apart from several farms, a number of other businesses including builder services, business consultancies, plumbing and heating, health practitioners, cleaners, food marketing and caterers, jewellery designers, a range of domestic services, florist, garden maintenance and designers, photographer, sign writers and a range of other professional services are all based in the village<sup>46</sup>.

4.3.31 The numbers employed as managers, directors and in other professional occupations (47%) are among the highest of all the rural parishes. The proportion of residents aged 16+ with degree-level qualifications (43%) is well above the average for rural parishes, and only 15% have no qualifications.

4.3.32 Apprenticeships have been completed by 6% of those aged 16+ and 9% work in skilled trades. Bedford Borough has a much larger proportion of working age population with a degree or a higher qualification (i.e. NVQ 4+) than the rest of Bedfordshire and the East of England. In addition, a much smaller proportion of the working age population in the Borough has no formal qualification compared with national and regional averages<sup>47</sup>.

4.3.33 The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings indicates that Bedford Borough residents who are employed outside the Borough earn more than people whose workplace is within<sup>48</sup>. This is a reflection of the large number of highly educated borough residents, including a significant proportion of the working population of Stevington, who commute to areas such as London, Cambridge, Northampton and Milton Keynes where higher salaries are available.

4.3.34 In Bedford Borough, the traditional economic base, centred on engineering and related manufacturing, has declined in recent years. The top employment sectors are currently education and health, followed by finance and business, wholesale and retail and manufacturing.

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42 2011 census  
43 [www.uswitch.com/place-to-live/bedford](http://www.uswitch.com/place-to-live/bedford)  
44 2011 census  
45 2008 Core Strategy and Rural Issues Plan  
46 Advert in the quarterly Stevington Magazine Dec 2017

47 Bedford Borough Demographic Forecasts 2012-2032 by Edge Analytics  
48 [www.ons.gov.uk/searchdata?q=Annual%20Survey%20of%20Hours%20and%20Earnings](http://www.ons.gov.uk/searchdata?q=Annual%20Survey%20of%20Hours%20and%20Earnings)

- 4.3.35 In 2001, nearly 20% of the residents of the Borough worked in education and health. In addition to the many schools, including maintained, academies and independent schools, there are several universities within easy travelling distance of Bedford. Bedfordshire University has campuses in Bedford and Luton; and the Universities of Buckingham, Cambridge, Cranfield, Northampton and the Open University at Milton Keynes are all within 35 miles of Bedford.
- 4.3.36 Most employment sites and centres of excellence in the Borough are located in or near to Bedford Town; however, there are also important sites at Wyboston, Thurleigh Airfield and Colworth House, Sharnbrook. Potential key future employment sectors are likely to be found in higher-value manufacturing, research and development, computing and related activities, hotel and catering, recreation, cultural, sporting and education.
- 4.3.37 The MKSM sub-region is one of four strategic growth areas with a framework, which focuses most of its development in certain key towns. These include Aylesbury; Bedford (including Kempston and Marston Vale); Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough; Luton; Milton Keynes and Northampton.
- 4.3.38 About the Bedford Growth Area, the MKSM states that the emphasis should be on strengthening the role of this key sub-regional centre through economic regeneration. Other strategic priorities identified for the area include urban renaissance and improved economic performance<sup>49</sup>.
- 4.3.39 The previous East of England Development Agency had identified Bedford as an Urban Priority Area with Bedford Town Centre as one of the pilot Business Improvement Districts. One priority is developing the local economy to provide a significant increase in employment by identifying and fostering a range of growth sectors, particularly in high value knowledge-based sectors. Similar priorities are identified for Milton Keynes and Northampton<sup>50</sup>.

#### **4.3.7 Parish Amenities**

- 4.3.40 With very limited amenities remaining in the Village, residents are heavily dependent on larger neighbouring villages and adjacent towns, particularly Bedford Town and Milton Keynes.
- 4.3.41 Stevington has a very active community with a good social mix and vibrant social life. The well-used Village Hall has been substantially improved in recent years with funds raised from within the village and from a generous legacy from a former resident. It, the adjacent sports field, and children's play area are used by a wide range of village-based sporting, cultural and social clubs as well as being a popular hired venue for private functions. The annual Stevington Road Race, which starts and finishes at the Village Hall, draws a wide range of runners competing along its 12k course.
- 4.3.42 Kathy Brown's garden attracts many visitors, both local and from the wider area, to enjoy a beautiful garden and homemade refreshments.
- 4.3.43 Recreational facilities, such as the Paula Radcliffe sports centre at Sharnbrook (6 miles) and others in Bedford (7 miles), Wellingborough (16 miles), Northampton (18 miles) and Milton Keynes (16 miles) offer additional cultural, sporting, and other leisure facilities. Access to these is difficult without personal transport.

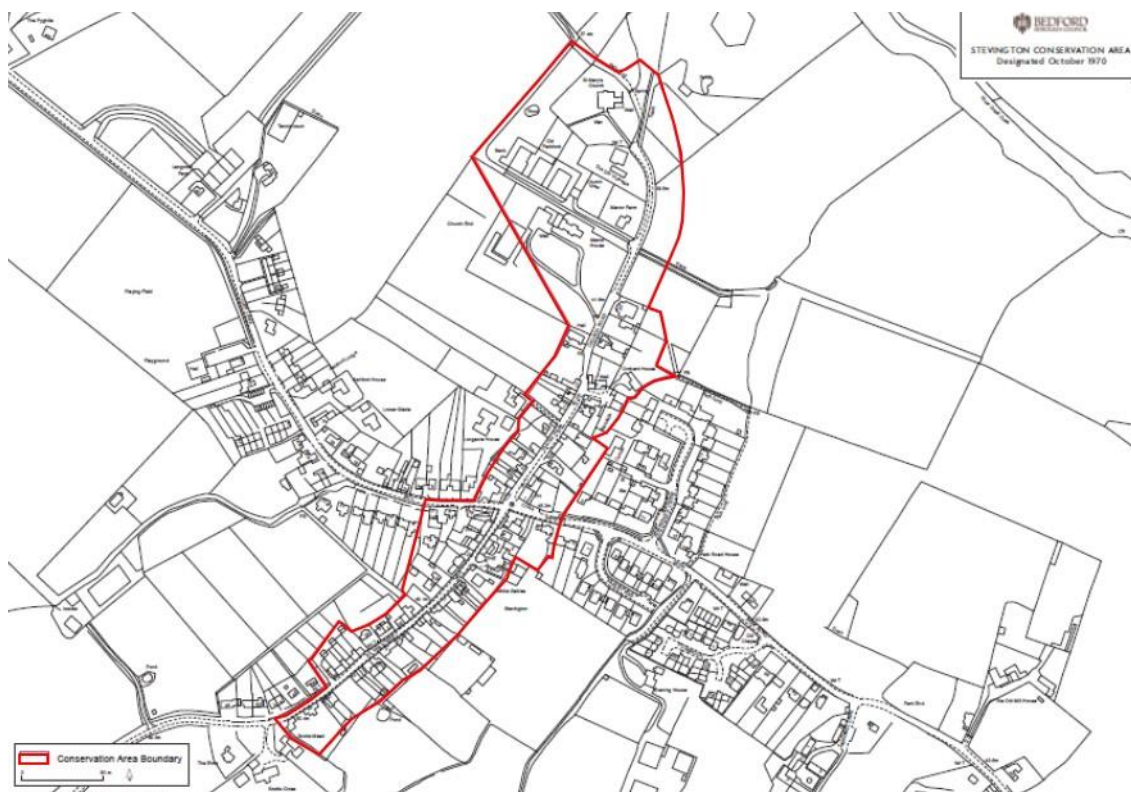
### 4.3.8 Built Environment

- 4.3.44 Stevington is situated above the flood plain on the south west side of the River Great Ouse, which forms its north eastern boundary<sup>51</sup>. It was first mentioned in the *Domesday Book* of 1086 when it was one of the richest manors in the County after the Royal Manors of Houghton Conquest and Dunstable.
- 4.3.45 The appearance of the Village has changed greatly since the Middle Ages. The field pattern was radically transformed by the Enclosure Award of 1806. Nevertheless, the pattern of the traditional North Bedfordshire village remains for all to see<sup>52</sup>: the layout is cruciform, typical of an Anglo-Saxon village, and has the characteristic scattered “ends”: Duck End, Park End, West End and Church End.
- 4.3.46 The limestone dwellings of the 17th and 18th centuries, with their warm roof colours of thatch and clay tiles and wide eaves do much to lend the Village its character. The centre of the Village is a designated conservation area (1971).
- 4.3.47 Sixty percent of the housing is post-1920s and most of the development has taken place since the Second World War.
- 4.3.48 The iconic Stevington windmill draws visitors from across the country and is an active attraction, participating in the annual Heritage Day event. The mill may be the last windmill in Britain working with four common (cloth covered) sails. Constructed around a central post so that it can be turned to face into the wind, this impressive post mill was built in 1770 and is the only complete windmill left in the county<sup>53</sup>.
- 4.3.49 The windmill was identified by residents as the predominate symbol for the village and as such should have specific protection to ensure that it remains as a working example of the village’s heritage’; it is currently listed as Grade II\*.
- 4.3.50 The Cross at the centre of the Village, situated almost in the middle of the road, was probably erected by Hugh II, Bishop of Lincoln, at some time between 1207 and 1227. It may originally have stood at the Hospice.

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51 Stevington, The Natural History of a Bedfordshire Parish by Stevington Historical Trust

52 Stevington, The Village History by Stevington Historical Trust  
53 Bedford Borough Council, Local History and Heritage



**Stevington Village Conservation Area- Designated October 1970**

**4.3.51** The most prominent historic monument on the edge of the river valley is the Parish church of St Mary the Virgin which retains significant architectural features such as the Anglo Saxon tower and its medieval pews. The original fabric of the church dates from the early 11th Century but most of the it dates from the Decorated period in the 14th and 15th Centuries. It sits on a prominent outcrop of the oolitic limestone with views across the River valley below, from the base of which springs the Holy Well (see below).

#### **4.3.9 Special designations**

**4.3.52** Stevington has 62 listed buildings or structures under the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 of which 49 are individual dwellings, many of which lie within the Village Conservation Area designated in 1970. Many of these buildings date from the 17th and early 18th Centuries when increased prosperity led to a major rebuilding of the village in stone.

**4.3.53** St Mary's Church is a listed Grade I building, the Cross is designated as a Scheduled Monument and the Windmill is listed Grade II\*; all other listed buildings are Grade II. St Mary's is undoubtedly the earliest building in the Village followed by the Old Vicarage, part of which dates from the 15th Century<sup>54</sup>.

#### **4.3.10 Other structures and areas of notable landscape value**

- 4.3.54 To the north of the Church is the Grade II listed Holy Well that has never been known to freeze or to fail in times of drought<sup>55</sup>. The Holy Well is of international interest being a site of pilgrimage, the only physical site in Bedfordshire<sup>56</sup>.
- 4.3.55 A former Vicar of Stevington, Thomas Orlebar Marsh (1776-1831), wrote that in the Middle Ages miraculous powers were attributed to the well water, particularly in respect to curing ailments of the eye.
- 4.3.56 Stevington was a location for much non-conformist activity, prominent because it is exactly 5 miles (8 km) from Bedford, allowing Baptist activities to occur under the laws of the 17th and 18th centuries. At the West End of the Village is a fine Baptist Chapel constructed in 1721 with a stained glass window depicting John Bunyan in Bedford Prison where he wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678).
- 4.3.57 Situated on the present site of The Barns to the west side of Church Road was a medieval hospice, an offshoot of Harrold Priory. The Nuns of Harrold owned Stevington church and adjacent land. The old Manor House was built onto the Hospice, probably in the late 15th or early 16th Century. Both were demolished by the Duke of Bedford in the 1870s along with the Great Tithe Barn, which straddled what is now Church Road approximately at the entrance to The Barns.
- 4.3.58 The Almshouses fronting Park Road are Grade II listed and were constructed in 1639 by the trustees of the late William Barringer. He was a Stevington man who made his fortune as a printer in London. In his will of 1631 he instructed his trustees to construct Almshouses for "poor men in the Town of Stevington". They were partly rebuilt in 1841.

#### **4.3.11 Natural Environment**

- 4.3.59 Stevington straddles the Pavenham Wooded Wolds and the Oakley-Great Ouse Limestone Valley. It is an agricultural landscape comprising arable fields on the higher land, and wet meadow and pasture on the floodplain. There is parkland at Park End.
- 4.3.60 Much of the Pavenham Wooded Wolds area has sparse settlement of a few scattered farmsteads, with settlement concentrated in the villages of Turvey, Stevington and the more extensive Pavenham. These villages are characterised by the architecture of the limestone houses and boundary walls. Although the village cores are characterised by historic limestone buildings, brick 20th Century housing is present at the settlement edges.
- 4.3.61 There are many popular walks traversing Stevington, notably The Stevington Country Walk, an important recreational route crossing through the landscape. This three-mile walk along the former Bedford - Northampton railway running between Bromham and Stevington has good views over the Ouse Valley and of Stevington Windmill. Stevington parish has an unusual extent of bridleways and footpaths. Once serving the needs of agricultural workers, they now provide an enviable recreational facility.
- 4.3.62 Other well-known walks are The Bunyan Trail and the Ouse Valley Way. The Bunyan Trail is a 79 mile circular path running from just north of Luton to just northwest of Bedford. The route visits many sites associated with John Bunyan and passes close to St Mary's Church.
- 4.3.63 The Ouse Valley Way also runs close to the Church. The trail passes through the picturesque Ouse valley with its meandering tree-lined river, historic villages and abundant wildlife. A 7 mile section starts in Stevington and passes through Bromham Park before finishing in the historic centre of Bedford.

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55 Stevington, The Village History by Stevington Historical Trust

56 Britain's Holiest Places (May 2011), Nick Mayhew-Smith

4.3.64 The Bedford Landscape Character Assessment (May 2014) developed a strategy to protect the character of the area. The Borough overall landscape strategy for the Pavenham Wooded Wold character area is to conserve the rural landscape of rolling arable farmland with its largely intact hedgerow network, its limestone villages and farmsteads, historic parklands and earthworks, and woodlands of high biodiversity value while enhancing elements of the landscape that are in decline such as some hedgerows.

#### **4.3.12 Limestone Valleys**

4.3.65 In the Oakley-Great Ouse Limestone Valley, the River Great Ouse meanders across the flat, wide-open floodplain. It is of significant ecological interest and represents one of the most natural sections of river remaining in the county.

4.3.66 An Assessment of Landscape Character Sensitivity<sup>57</sup> identified several ecologically vulnerable areas and resulted in development of an overall landscape strategy for the Limestone Valleys. This is designed to conserve and enhance the distinctive floodplain landscape and habitats with areas of marshland, wet meadow, riverside pasture and features such as mature willows.

4.3.67 Specific issues are to:

- conserve the natural river course of the Great Ouse and associated wetland biodiversity
- conserve enclosure boundaries, the hedgerow and hedgerow trees
- enhancing the network of hedgerows and hedgerow trees where these have become degraded or lost
- safeguard the landscape settings of the bridges and other monuments
- conserve the rural character of the network of minor roads, discourage the introduction of suburban style materials e.g. kerbs and extensive lighting
- conserve and protect the form and setting of the limestone bridges crossing the River Great Ouse
- consider scale and integration of open water bodies arising from mineral extraction, within this enclosed valley landscape
- conserve the nucleated stone-built villages and avoid linear extension along roads which may threaten the individual identity of the villages
- improve settlement edges where these form an unsympathetic relationship with the open countryside - planting of floodplain woodland is a key opportunity
- conserve views to church towers<sup>58</sup>.

#### **4.3.13 Key Streets and Spaces**

4.3.68 The layout of the Village is cruciform, the centre of the Village is a designated conservation area<sup>59</sup> as shown on the map **Stevington Village Conservation Area** above. Conservation areas give additional protection to an area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Development proposals within a conservation area have to be carefully considered in terms of whether they preserve or enhance the character or appearance of that area<sup>60</sup>.

4.3.69 Several roads have narrow or non-existent pavements along part of their length and there is no street lighting. In regular reviews, the idea of street lighting was generally deplored<sup>61</sup>.

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57 Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment 2007  
58 Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment 2007

59 Stevington Parish Plan 2007  
60 Bedford Borough Council, Local History and Heritage  
61 Stevington Parish Plan 2007

4.3.70 Beyond its settlement boundary, Stevington is surrounded by open countryside and agricultural land.

#### **4.3.14 Green Spaces**

4.3.71 Stevington has an extensive network of public rights of way through high quality green countryside, the importance of protecting green spaces and the value to public health of access to these is explicitly recognised in The Government’s public health strategy - Healthy Lives, Healthy People (2010). In line with this, Bedford Borough specifically states that “Both on site and off site provision/ enhancement will be made with regard to the priorities identified in the council’s Green Space Strategy”<sup>62</sup>.

4.3.72 The Borough Council completed work on their Allocations and Designations Local Plan in 2013, which, as well as identifying new sites for development, has designated areas where specific protection policies are needed; for example to protect gaps between settlements and safeguard the network of important open space in urban and rural areas<sup>63</sup>. The Local Green Spaces contained within this plan aim to contribute to this in identifying and providing supporting evidence for the importance of these local sites.

#### **4.3.15 Built Character**

4.3.73 There is considerable variety in the character and appearance of the built environment. Throughout the settlement, older buildings of red brick and stone build are interspersed with development that is more modern.

4.3.74 Many buildings date from the 17th and early 18th Centuries however, sixty percent of the housing is post-1920s and most of the development has taken place since the Second World War.

4.3.75 The built form varies in size and type from small terraced houses to larger detached dwellings, thatched and period properties and more modern development. The different architectural styles in this broad range of buildings sit comfortably beside each other and contributes significantly to the varied character of the village.



**View South from church tower**

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62 Borough of Bedford Green Space Strategy  
2012-2021

63 Borough of Bedford Green Space Strategy  
2012-2021

# 5 Community and Stakeholder Engagement

## 5.1 What was done

- 5.1.1 The residents of Stevington appreciate the special qualities that the Village and its surrounding area possess, with a significant majority having no plans to leave the Village<sup>64</sup>. The Village is regarded as a special place in which to live and in accommodating appropriate levels of housing development it will be essential that the qualities that make Stevington successful and desirable are protected.
- 5.1.2 The current residents accept that more people are likely to want to live in Stevington and that this would be desirable in order for the community to continue to thrive and evolve. A resolution to create a village Neighbourhood Development Plan to enable this aim was passed by the Parish Council on 17th September 2013.
- 5.1.3 The Parish Council has been assisted by the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group (SNPWG) comprising ten volunteers drawn from the residents of the Parish. The SNPWG has undertaken extensive consultation with the people of Stevington, landowners and others with an interest in the Parish and has considered their views in preparing this Plan.
- 5.1.4 The Parish of Stevington has a very strong community spirit and has previously produced documents to influence the overall development of the area, including a Parish Plan in 2007. This level of community involvement and interest has been a sound basis for the development of the Plan.
- 5.1.5 The following section details how the community has been kept well informed about the progress of the creation of the Neighbourhood Development Plan and how residents, employers, employees, business owners and landowners in the Parish could engage with the Plan process.
- 5.1.6 Communication has been through quarterly articles in the village magazine, which is delivered free to every household and business within the Parish, on display boards throughout the village, targeted leaflet drops, again to all households, for Neighbourhood Development Plan events, updates and a dedicated Plan website at [www.stevington.com](http://www.stevington.com).
- 5.1.7 Extensive consultation has been the foundation of the development of the Plan. Three open public engagement meetings were held with residents, businesses and landowners during May 2015 to test support for a Neighbourhood Development Plan, to gather opinion on the aims and objectives and to recruit members for the Working Group.
- 5.1.8 Comprehensive feedback was received on a wide range of subjects from each event, this came in the form of comments directly appended to our interactive floor map, drop box comments cards, an exit survey, online comment submission form and comments boxes strategically placed around the village after the event.
- 5.1.9 All comments were reviewed, documented and analysed by the SNPWG before being sorted loosely into the appropriate Plan category(s) they best aligned to. Those comments that did not fall within the remit of the Plan were passed to the Parish Council for assignment to a councillor for further action and feedback to the village.
- 5.1.10 The information gathered enabled the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group to exercise planning judgement in formulating the most appropriate Aims and Strategies for the Plan that best met the evidenced requirements of the village.

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64 Stevington Neighbourhood Plan  
Questionnaire Jan 2016

5.1.11 Further community engagement events were held in November 2015 where the Village residents, business owners and landowners were presented with the initial findings of the SNPWG and asked to confirm, via feedback and interactive prioritisation sessions, that they broadly supported the Aims, Strategy and draft Policies of the Plan.

5.1.12 Each event ended with a Question and Answer session to allow attendees the opportunity to express their opinions, request additional detail or discuss any element of the Plan foundations.

5.1.13 After further analysis of the information obtained from the later sessions, a questionnaire was created to establish the priority and scope of the objectives that the Village would like to be included in the emerging Neighbourhood Development Plan.

5.1.14 Based on the results of the questionnaire the Plan was further refined with help of our consultant Urban Vision Enterprise before a final review was offered to the Village in July 2018, prior to the Parish Council triggering the necessary Regulation 14 notification.

## **5.2 Outcomes and Issues Identified**

5.2.1 The following were the key outcomes and issues identified:

- Residents agreed that Stevington was a desirable place to live because of its tranquil rural location but were concerned that over development may lead to the loss of that special quality
- Residents understand the need for and are supportive of small scale appropriate development, especially of smaller housing that would be affordable to first time buyers and young families
- Respondents were also concerned at the lack of smaller or more elderly focused housing within the village, the desire to remain within the village but to be able ‘downsize’ was a common theme from retiree residents and those approaching retirement
- Villagers value the expansive natural corridors and open green space around village for recreational purposes and for their visual amenity, there was very strong support for retaining and enhancing Stevington’s rural amenity
- There was concern of the urbanisation of local villages such as Bromham which have been increasingly impacted by urban creep with the distinctions between Bedford, Biddenham and Bromham now becoming almost completely blurred. There was strong support not to allow this to happen to Stevington
- The form of the current Village settlement pattern is recognised as being historic and provides a significant contribution to the character and distinctiveness of Stevington Parish and should be retained
- It was felt that garden space was an important element of rural living and a healthy lifestyle
- Residents felt it was important that new development did not impact on neighbours in terms of access, overlook, light and privacy
- There was strong support for the conversion of redundant permanent agricultural buildings to residential property
- Many residents questioned the viability of development within the Parish, and the wider rural area, given the narrowness of the road network around Stevington. There was considerable concern that no development should add to the vehicle congestion and parking issues experienced in Silver Street in particular
- Residents acknowledged that the Parish has a significant number of listed and historic structures and expressed a strong desire to protect and enhance these assets and their settings

- Community facilities were acknowledged as being critical to the health and prosperity of the village and support was very strong to protect, retain and enhance these as part of the plan process
- Good design was a key consideration for many respondents who were keen to ensure that new development was complementary to its surroundings and was proportionate in size, scale and finish to near neighbours
- The windmill was identified as the predominate symbol for the village and as such should have specific protection to ensure that it remains as a working example of the village's heritage.

### 5.23 Regulation 14

5.3.1 In summary the following key areas were highlighted for further review and consideration and have formed the basis of the revisions made to the Regulation 16 Plan version:

5.3.2 Phase One:

- Local Green Space (full review)
- Recommendations for minor Policy wording revisions.

5.3.3 Phase Two:

- Revisions to recognise Local Plan 2030 adoption
- Update NPPF 2019 references
- Minor clarifications on Policy wording and/or interpretation sections.



River Great Ouse at Stevington Sailing Club

## 6 Policies

6.1 The following set of policies have been formulated to shape the future development of the Village of Stevington, to deliver the vision, aims and strategy of this Neighbourhood Development Plan. The Neighbourhood Development Plan is part of the statutory development plan for the area, and this means that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the policies of the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.2 In order to reflect the results of the consultation events conducted during the Plan's preparation and analysis of evidence, the following policies have been separated into themes that best reflect the issues and characteristics identified. These are:

- Housing and Growth
- Design and Heritage
- Environment
- Local Community
- Transport and Infrastructure
- Business and Employment.

6.3 To aid interpretation, for planning decision makers and applicants, each policy includes a statement of purpose, rationale and evidence, the policy itself and interpretation. The rationale section includes references to national and local policy, relevant evidence and feedback from community engagement undertaken as part of the process for preparing the plan. All policies have been framed within the context of meeting the basic conditions. This includes achieving sustainable development, having regard to national policy and guidance, being in general conformity with strategic local policy and not breaching EU obligations.

### 6.1 Local Policy

6.1.1 The previously adopted and revised Bedford Borough Local Plan 2002 had formed the basis for consideration of strategic local policy when formulating the initial draft version of this Neighbourhood Development Plan. The (then) emerging Bedford Plan and the evidence underpinning it have also formed part of the evidence base for the neighbourhood plan, with the document being reviewed and updated to confirm to the now adopted Local Plan (January 2020).

### 6.2 Bedford Borough Council Local Plan 2030 (Jan 2020)

6.2.1 Bedford Borough Council recently made a new Local Plan (2030) which was adopted in January 2020. As part of the analysis phase of the plan creation process, BBC have devised a comparison model that ranks individual settlement areas against each other based on several criteria that includes local services, infrastructure and community assets.

6.2.2 The Local Plan (2020) refers to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment showing that sites to build 14,550 homes would be needed during the lifetime of the plan.

- 6.2.3** Once existing and windfall sites have been accounted for, there remains 3,636 homes which are required to meet the target by 2030, although it should be noted this target does not match the stated number of homes in the detailed table which is actually 4,355 new homes (Local Plan, 2030, Policy 3S). Although BBC identify new settlements and regeneration as a high priority, “some development may be appropriate in the smaller settlements if needed and supported by the community”<sup>65</sup>.
- 6.2.4** The Local Plan (2030) states that “in considering the location of development in rural areas, the distinction between settlements and areas of countryside is established by defining Settlement Policy Areas. The aim of the local plan is to direct development within the defined Settlement Policy Area boundaries and specific site allocations. Within the countryside it is the intention to maintain the existing open nature, prevent the coalescence of settlements and resist the encroachment of development into the countryside. The countryside is therefore subject to a more restrictive policy”<sup>66</sup>.
- 6.2.5** In 2012 the Council signed the Climate Local Commitment on climate change reflecting its commitment to reducing carbon emissions. It is also participating in the Carbon Trust’s Carbon Management Programme and has produced a Carbon Management Plan.
- 6.2.6** The 2011 Census for Stevington shows an ageing population and one of the highest rates of long-term illness or disability of all the parishes.
- 6.2.7** “Located in the west of Bedford Borough, Stevington has a much older age profile than the Borough with 27% of residents aged over 65, and only 13% aged 0-15. The non-White British population (4%) is among the lowest of all parishes. There are a high proportion of one-person households (28%), and almost one-third of all households are pensioners.
- 6.2.8** Stevington has high home ownership (83%), with 9% of households renting from social landlords and 7% renting privately. Residents with a long-term illness or disability (19%) are among the highest of all parishes, and the proportion providing unpaid care (16%) is also high. Self-employment (14%) and working from home (15%) are both high. Employment as managers, directors and in professional occupations (47%) is among the highest of all 1450 parishes.
- 6.2.9** The level of households without a car (10%) is slightly above the average for all parishes, but 38% of households have 2 cars, and 18% have 3 or more. Though most people travel to work by car (71%), commuting by train (6%) is high, and 6% of those in employment also cycle or walk to work”<sup>67</sup>.
- 6.2.10** For these reasons Stevington residents would support smaller developments designed for the needs of the elderly, disabled or younger families.

### **6.3 Bedford Borough Council Strategic Policies**

- 6.3.1** Bedford Borough Council has confirmed that the following are considered to be the strategic policies of the current Local Plan (confirmed January 2020). Each strategic policy has been reviewed against the relevant Neighbourhood Development Plan policies and are confirmed as being either aligned or having no known conflicts.
- 6.3.2** Bedford Local Plan 2030 Adopted Policies:
- 1 Reviewing the Local Plan 2030
  - 2S Healthy communities
  - 3S Spatial strategy

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65 Bedford Borough Council Local Plan, 2030.  
6.17

66 Bedford Borough Council Local Plan, 2030.  
6.18

67 2011 census

- 4S Amount and distribution of housing development
- 5S Development in villages with a Settlement Policy Area
- 6 Development in Small Settlements
- 7S Development in the countryside
- 8 Key development sites in St Paul's Square
- 9 Land at Duckmill Lane / Bedesman Lane, Bedford
- 10 The station area, Ashburnham Rd, Bedford
- 11 Greyfriars, Bedford
- 12 Land at Ford End Road, Bedford
- 13 Land at Borough Hall, Bedford
- 14 Land south of the river, Bedford
- 15 Town centre uses
- 16 Bedford High Street
- 17 Riverside development
- 18 Land at Gold Lane, Biddenham
- 19 Land at 329 Bedford Road, Kempston
- 20 Land at Mowbray Road, Bedford
- 21 Land north of Beverley Crescent, Bedford
- 22 Land at Lodge Hill, Bedford
- 23 Land to the rear of Bromham Road, Biddenham
- 24 Land at Grazehill, Bedford
- 25 Former Stewartby Brickworks
- 26 Opportunity Sites
- 27 Land north of School Lane, Roxton
- 28S Place making
- 29 Design quality and principles
- 30 The impact of development - design impacts
- 31 The impact of development - access impacts
- 32 The impact of development - disturbance and pollution impacts
- 33 The impact of development - infrastructure impacts
- 34 Advertisements
- 35S Green infrastructure
- 36S Forest of Marston Vale
- 37 Landscape character
- 38 Landscaping in new development
- 39 Retention of trees
- 40 Hedgerows
- 41S Historic environment and heritage assets
- 42S Protecting biodiversity and geodiversity
- 43 Enhancing biodiversity
- 44 River Great Ouse
- 45 Local Green Space
- 46S Use of previously developed land and use of undeveloped land
- 47S Pollution, disturbance and contaminated land
- 48 Minerals and waste restoration policy
- 49 Waste
- 50S Water resources
- 51S Climate change strategic approach
- 52 Water demand
- 53 Development layout and accessibility

- 54 Energy efficiency
- 55 Renewable energy - district heating
- 56 Renewable energy - broad locations suitable for renewable energy development
- 57 Renewable energy - general impact
- 58S Affordable housing
- 59S Housing mix
- 60 Specialist housing
- 61 Provision of Gypsy and Traveller pitches and Travelling Showpeople plots
- 62 Kempston Hardwick Gypsy and Traveller site
- 63 Proposals for Traveller sites on unallocated land in the countryside
- 64 Design of Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites
- 65 Reuse of rural buildings in the countryside
- 66 The replacement and extension of dwellings in the countryside
- 67 Affordable housing to meet local needs in the rural area
- 68 Accommodation for rural workers
- 69S Amount and distribution of employment development
- 70 Key employment sites
- 71 Other employment sites
- 72S Additional strategic employment development
- 73 Wyboston Lakes
- 74 Employment skills
- 75 New employment development in the countryside
- 76 Improvement and provision of new visitor accommodation
- 77S Hierarchy of town centres
- 78 Out of centre development
- 79 Kempston district centre - new retail development
- 80 Kempston district centre - changes of use
- 81 New shops in local centres
- 82 Local centres (including rural key service centres) - changes of use
- 83 Neighbourhood centres and individual shops - changes of use
- 84 All shop units
- 85 Impact of town centre uses
- 86S Delivering infrastructure
- 87 Public transport
- 88 Impact of transport on people, places and environment
- 89 Electric vehicle infrastructure
- 90S Transport infrastructure and network improvements
- 91 Access to the countryside
- 92 Flood risk
- 93 Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)
- 94 Broadband
- 95 Domestic equipment
- 96 Communications infrastructure
- 97 New sports and leisure facilities
- 98 New community facilities
- 99 Loss of existing sports and community facilities.

Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013 - Saved/continuing policies:

- AD1 Sustainable Development Policy
- AD3 Land at Hall End Road, Wootton

- AD4 Land at Old Ford End Road, Queens Park, Bedford
- AD7 Land East of Eastcotts Road, Bedford
- AD10 Lansdowne Road, Warwick Avenue and Dynevor Road, Bedford
- AD11 Land at Medbury Farm, Elstow
- AD12 Land at Bell Farm, Kempston
- AD13 Marston Vale Innovation Park Phase 2, Wootton
- AD15 Manton Lane Reservoir Site, Bedford
- AD16 Land West of Manton Lane, Bedford AD17 Land West of the B530, Kempston
- AD18 Land North of the A6-A428 Link Road, Bedford
- AD19 Land at Manton Lane, Bedford
- AD20 Land at Bedford Road, Great Barford
- AD21 Land at Chawston Lake, Roxton Road, Wyboston
- AD22 Land North of Ravensden Road, Salph End, Renhold
- AD23 Bedford River Valley Park Enabling Development
- AD24 Green Infrastructure Opportunity Zones
- AD26 Bedford River Valley Park
- AD27 Bedford to Milton Keynes Waterway Park
- AD28 Provision of Open Space and Built Facilities in Association with New Development
- AD36 Pedestrian Routes
- AD38 Commercial Vehicle Parking and Motorists Facilities
- AD39 Cycling
- AD40 Village Open Spaces and Views
- AD41 Urban Area Boundary
- AD42 Local Gaps
- AD43 Urban Open Spaces and Gaps
- AD44 Former Land Settlement Association Area.



**Owl flying in the fields around Stevington**

# 7 Housing and Growth

## 7.1 Purpose

To enable housing growth within the built settlement to meet local need whilst maintaining the rural character of the village and its setting.

## 7.2 Rationale and Evidence

### 7.2.1 National Policy

7.2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework Paragraph 61 requires that “the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies”.

7.2.2 Furthermore, paragraph 68 confirms that “small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area” and paragraph 69 encourages “Neighbourhood planning groups should also consider the opportunities for allocating small and medium-sized sites (of a size consistent with paragraph 68a) suitable for housing in their area”.

### 7.2.2 Local Policy

7.2.3 The following plans, documents and strategies were considered in the formulation of the housing growth policies:

- Bedford Borough Council Local Plan (2002, previous)
- Bedford Borough Council Local Plan (2030, adopted January 2020)
- Bedford Borough Council Local Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2016, revised 2018)
- Bedford Borough Council Objectively Assessed Needs Report (April 2015)
- Bedford Borough Council Green Space Strategy (2012 to 2021)
- Bedford Borough Council Allocations and Designations Local Plan (2013).

7.2.4 A key supporting element of Bedford Borough Council Local Plan 2030 Policy on Housing Mix<sup>68</sup> is the acknowledgement that “achieving an appropriate housing mix is an important element in seeking to create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities”. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (October 2016) “recognised that households of different ages and different compositions will have differing needs”.

7.2.5 The Local Plan further acknowledges “The growth in the number of older persons’ households is a key feature in the population and household change which is expected to occur in the period to 2030. During the Local Plan period over half (50%) of the overall population growth (12,300 persons) is projected to be aged 65 or over and almost a third projected to be 75+ (7,800 persons, equivalent to 31%). This is particularly important when establishing the types of housing required and the need for housing specifically for older people”.

7.2.6 Stevington is noted as having a significantly higher proportion of older residents than the Borough average, with the 2011 census stating that the village “has a much older age profile than the Borough with 27% of the residents being over 65, with only 13% aged 0-15. There is also a high proportion of one-person households (28%) and almost one-third of all householders are pensioners”.

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68 Bedford Borough Council Policy on Housing Mix 10.11.

7.2.7 When identifying the most suitable Housing Mix policy for the Neighbourhood Development Plan, due consideration and importance was given to the over-whelming desire demonstrated by residents to be able to remain living in the village after retirement (80% of respondents to the village questionnaire indicated they have no plans to move from the village) and also the need to plan to accommodate the further increase in older person households as forecast by Bedford Borough Council within the SHMA report (as revised 2018).

7.2.8 Further consideration has also been given to the statistically low number of younger people resident (to the age of 15) in the village, which is only 13.0% against a Borough average of 20.1%. The Plan looks to encourage appropriate development that will encourage younger families into the village.

7.2.9 By opting to focus development in the Parish to smaller dwellings the Neighbourhood Development Plan looks to enable an appropriate building supply that will best meet these two considerations and which also aligns with the recommendation from BBC that delivering a balanced housing mix for the village would help “create (a) sustainable, inclusive and mixed” community.

7.2.10 These desires have informed the formation of Policy HO2 and have been based on the following key considerations:

- the Parish Council is planning positively to address an overall increase in older aged households in the Parish, as identified within the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030, and development within the village should reflect this future need
- as the age demographic of the village shifts to an increasingly elderly population future housing mix should be cognizant and reflect this demand, which statistically would be predominantly for one or two-bedroom properties<sup>69</sup>
- with single occupancy accounting for 28% of the households in the village and the average dwelling in the village having 3.3 bedrooms already<sup>70</sup> increasing the supply of smaller houses would allow current residents the opportunity to downsize. This would have the potentially beneficial side effect of releasing additional housing capacity in the village, especially for families where demand for bedroom space is traditionally higher
- provision for dwellings with a smaller number of bedrooms would be proportionally cheaper to buy which should stimulate demand from younger families.

### **7.2.3 Other evidence**

7.2.11 The following documents have been used to help evidence community support for the Housing and Growth policies:

- Stevington Parish Council Local Green Space submission (2016)
- Stevington Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire (2016).

### **7.2.4 Settlement Policy Area (SPA)**

7.2.12 The Village of Stevington has a development envelope that was defined by Bedford Borough Council under a Settlement Policy Area outlined within the previous Local Plan 2002, reviewed under the Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013 and brought forward under Local Plan 2030.

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69 Based on the Office of National Statistics standard occupancy methodology referenced within the SHMA report section 4.18 p74

70 Stevington Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire Jan 2016

- 7.2.13 **H01 BBC Policies map** (see end of **Neighbourhood Plan Strategy**, section 3) shows the complex interaction of the SPA, conservation area, views and open spaces, wildlife sites and floodplain. While there is evidence that the SPA boundary is well established and supported by local planning policy, there is an understanding that boundaries can be moved.
- 7.2.14 Based on the recommendations of the SPA Capacity Review, Stevington Parish Council are not seeking to change the current SPA boundary (please see SPA Capacity Review section below).
- 7.2.15 The essential purpose of SPA boundaries is to distinguish between the main built-up part of settlements and the surrounding countryside, thereby providing clarity as to the application of planning policy. This will enable development needed to sustain rural communities to be focussed on the built-up area of villages, whilst restraint policies consistent with BBC Local Plan 2030 will apply in the countryside beyond.
- 7.2.16 Such an approach is a vital ingredient in securing a sustainable pattern of development across the Borough in line with the spatial strategy for the area and national planning policy.
- 7.2.17 In undertaking the review of SPA boundaries (July 2013) the Borough Council has followed a clear methodology. The DCLG inspector noted that “In particular thirteen principles (Principles A-M, see Appendix C) have been used in the definition of the boundaries. These principles are reasonable and, for the most part, have been applied consistently across all villages. Given the thoroughness of the Council’s overall approach to the definition of SPA boundaries it merits strong support”<sup>71</sup>.
- 7.2.18 Bedford Borough Council Planning Department has confirmed that “the existing SPA boundaries in the borough are not being reviewed because they were so recently reviewed for the Allocations and Designations Local Plan. When sites are allocated in the Local Plan or neighbourhood plans which are not currently within the SPA boundary, then the boundary will change to reflect that allocation”<sup>72</sup>.
- 7.2.19 The Local Plan 2030 reiterates the desire of the Borough Council to continue with the SPA policy, with sections 6.18 defining the approach to development in the rural area, and Policy 5S Development in villages with a Settlement Policy Area defining the approach.
- 7.2.20 It should be noted that West End, Stevington is not contained within the Settlement Policy Area, and is not defined as a “small settlement” within the Local Plan 2030 (January 2020) under Policy 7S Development in the countryside would therefore be applicable.
- 7.2.21 Although the newly adopted Local Plan (2030) does not allocate growth in Stevington, the Parish is planning positively to meet identified local housing needs and will respond to the supply of these new homes by supporting the addition of a further **11-15 dwellings** over the lifetime of the Plan. This is the median number most widely supported by the residents<sup>73</sup> and can be supported within the capacity<sup>74</sup> of the current SPA envelope.

### SPA Capacity Review

- 7.2.22 In order to meet future development demands in the Village, the Parish Council wanted to ensure that there was sufficient capacity within the current SPA to meet our Plan aspiration of delivering 11-15 new dwellings through to 2035.

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71 Examination of the Allocations and Designations Local Plan Inspectors Report 28th June 2013

72 email from BBC Planning Department, 9th June 2017

73 Stevington Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire Jan 2016

74 Capacity Study, Urban Vision, July 2018

7.2.23 The Parish Council commissioned independent planning consultants Urban Vision Enterprises to review the current SPA capacity and requested them to produce a report confirming the likely development capacity of sites within the SPA that could reasonably be considered as being commercially viable for delivery over the plan period.

7.2.24 The report was received in July 2018 and confirmed that, when taken in conjunction with the proposed Housing Policies, that there would be sufficient capacity within the current SPA to meet the delivery of 11-15 new homes over the lifetime of the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

7.2.25 A copy of Urban Vision Enterprises full report is included within the supporting documents pack.

### **7.2.5 Other Rationale**

7.2.26 The Parish of Stevington is characterised by its historic natural and built environment, being located in the Ouse Valley that is a flood plain of outstanding natural and environmental importance.

7.2.27 The best villages have developed through incremental growth that harmonises with the existing character of their setting and building and it is essential that this continues to be the case in Stevington. The supply of new homes in the village and wider parish must be realised in accordance with the distinctive features, scale and grain of the local area.

7.2.28 Delivering a choice of high quality homes is essential to support a sustainable, mixed and inclusive community. In Stevington this will underpin a well-balanced population that is vital to the ongoing viability of local services and prosperity of the Parish, particularly in light of the community's ageing population trend.

7.2.29 Housing developments must therefore provide a mixture of housing to meet the needs of the community. There is strong support amongst residents for smaller one, two or three-bedroom starter or retirement homes and for that reason proposals that meet these needs are more likely to be supported.

7.2.30 Housing sites must be carefully considered and will only be acceptable where they reflect these principles and are consistent with the Neighbourhood Development Plan taken as a whole. It is envisaged that under the current rate of development of new dwellings in Stevington, over the duration of the life of the plan, it would not be necessary to identify specific sites for new housing.

7.2.31 The form of the current Village settlement pattern is historic and provides a significant contribution to the character and distinctiveness of Stevington Parish and should be retained.

## **7.3 Community Feedback**

7.3.1 There is a strong desire within the Village to support the addition of smaller houses that will be available for first time buyers, young families or retirees requiring smaller homes. With the age population profile of the village rising it is essential that housing supply is focused, where possible, to first time buyers and young families to help maintain the vitality of the village.

7.3.2 Consultation on the emerging Neighbourhood Development Plan revealed the following key issues in relation to this topic:

- development should sustain the vitality, health and safety of the community so as to ensure that the disabled, elderly and infirm are able to remain part of it - 97.8% agree
- the historic cruciform layout of the village should be protected by the SPA - 91% agree

- the number of new dwellings to be permitted up to 2035 to be limited to 11-15 - 31% agree (79% in total support the 5-10 and 16-20 ranges either side)
- dwellings should be single sites or small cluster developments of 2-5 units - 92% agree
- developments of small and medium sized houses should be encouraged - 86.9% agree
- properties should be one or two bedroom to meet the needs of first-time buyers, young families or retirees - 81% agree.

## 7.4 Policies

### Policy H01: Development Sites

1. New dwellings will be supported where they are located within the village Settlement Policy Area (see Plan H01 BBC Policies Map). This is subject to:
  - a. being proportionate in scale and number to the site and its setting;
  - b. having no significant adverse impact on the amenities of existing dwellings in terms of light, overlooking and privacy;
  - c. incorporating functional garden spaces for both existing and new dwellings which is sufficient in size to allow for leisure activities, child's play and practical uses such as drying washing etc;
  - d. suitable provision for off road parking;
  - e. preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and preserving the setting of heritage assets.

### H01 Interpretation

- 7.4.1 The policy is intended to allow single dwellings or small groups of dwellings within the existing built area of the village, providing such development integrates with the existing character.
- 7.4.2 Impacts on the amenities of existing dwellings could include overlooking, loss of daylight or being in such close proximity that it makes access for maintenance difficult.
- 7.4.3 In considering "character", regard should be made to the scale, massing, height, set back and pro-portion of the site developed and left open as garden space. Comparisons should be made with the surrounding context. This requirement should be considered with reference to Policy DH1.
- 7.4.4 In dealing with planning applications, consideration may be made to imposing conditions to restrict permitted development rights for the extension of new dwellings, where necessary in the interests of protecting character or amenity. Consideration will also be made towards the special interest of the Conservation Area and the impact of development on the significance of heritage assets, including listed buildings.
- 7.4.5 Although there are no European sites designated under European Directive (92/43/EEC) within the Parish or within Bedford Borough there are European sites downstream on the River Great Ouse (Portholme SAC, The Ouse Washes SAC/SPA/Ramsar) that are vulnerable and these sites should not be compromised"<sup>75</sup>.
- 7.4.6 This policy supports the demolition and replacement of existing dwellings within the Village Settlement Policy Area but not generally within the Conservation Area. This policy relates to potential development sites that are sufficient in size to allow demolition to occur whilst retaining sufficient garden amenity space and vehicular access to each existing and/or new dwelling(s).

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75 Habitat Regulations Assessment for Stevington Neighbourhood Plan - Bodsey Ecology Limited 5th October 2018

Note: Demolition within the Conservation Area will almost always require planning permission.

## Policy H02: Housing Need

1. New housing must address local need by comprising predominantly either or both of:
  - a. smaller housing (1, 2 or 3 bedrooms);
  - b. housing suitable for the elderly.

### H02 Interpretation

- 7.4.7 This policy seeks to ensure that new housing caters for local need. Smaller housing caters for first time buyers and those wishing to downsize.
- 7.4.8 In dealing with planning applications, consideration will be given to imposing conditions to restrict the extension of new dwellings, where necessary, in the interests of maintaining a stock of smaller housing to meet local need.

## Policy H03: Change of Use to Dwellings

1. The conversion of existing, redundant agricultural and commercial buildings to new dwellings will be supported, subject to:
  - a. the proposal involving a permanent structure;
  - b. suitable services and transport infrastructure being in place to support the new residential dwellings;
  - c. the proposed residential use not compromising or restricting nearby commercial or agricultural uses;
  - d. having suitable provision for off road parking;
  - e. evidence is provided to demonstrate that the building(s) is redundant for agricultural or commercial purposes;
  - f. the change of use would not harm the significance of a heritage asset, particularly in the case of agricultural buildings which may be statutorily listed or considered a non-designated heritage asset.

### H03 Interpretation

- 7.4.9 This policy enables residential conversions outside of the Village Settlement Policy Area. The policy relates to permanent existing agricultural or commercial structures, but not semi-permanent structures such as sheds, outhouses, prefabricated buildings and glasshouses.
- 7.4.10 Nearby commercial or agricultural uses should not be compromised where locating residential uses in close proximity would be likely to lead to complaints by the occupants of those residential properties in relation to the activities of nearby commercial or agricultural uses, for example on grounds of noise or disturbance.
- 7.4.11 Care should be taken to protect species living within the buildings to be converted or demolished.
- 7.4.12 Service provision includes standard utilities such as mains water, mains drainage, mains electric, telephone & broadband, transport infrastructure should meet or exceed current standards on safe entry, exit and visibility splays etc.

## Policy H04: Subdivision of existing buildings

1. The subdivision of existing buildings to new dwellings will be supported, subject to:
  - a. sites are of sufficient size to support more than one dwelling with sufficient curtilage and incorporating garden spaces for both existing and new dwellings;
  - b. having no significant adverse impact on the amenities of existing dwellings in terms of light, overlooking and privacy;
  - c. suitable services and transport infrastructure being in place to support the new residential dwellings;
  - d. the change of use would not harm the significance of a heritage asset, particularly in the case of agricultural buildings which may be statutorily listed or considered a non-designated heritage asset;
  - e. having suitable provision for off road parking.

### H04 Interpretation

- 7.4.13 This policy supports the subdivision or the demolition and replacement of existing dwellings within the Village Settlement Policy Area but not generally within the Conservation Area. This policy relates to potential development sites that are sufficient in size to allow subdivision or demolition to occur whilst retaining sufficient garden amenity space and vehicular access to each existing and/or new dwelling(s).
- 7.4.14 Sites that disproportionately reduce the garden amenity compared to existing dwellings of a similar size in the village will not be supported. Demolition would only be supported where a valid planning application has been submitted at the same time, detailing the replacement dwelling or planned redevelopment of the site.
- 7.4.15 The redevelopment of buildings within the conservation area will need to consider impact on the special interest of the conservation area as well as the significance of surrounding heritage schemes. Schemes which would result in harm will not usually be supported.
- 7.4.16 Care should be taken to protect species living within the buildings to be converted or demolished.
- 7.4.17 Service provision includes standard utilities such as mains water, mains drainage, mains electric, telephone & broadband, transport infrastructure should meet or exceed current standards on safe entry/exit and visibility splays etc.



Centre of Stevington looking down Church Road

## 8 Design and Heritage

### 8.1 Purpose

To ensure new development is well designed and sustainable and preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the village, heritage assets and distinctive end settlement pattern.

### 8.2 Rationale and Evidence

#### 8.2.1 National Policy

8.2.1 National planning policy is set down in the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance. Within the overall aim of supporting sustainable development, there are policies protecting the historic environment throughout the NPPF and a particular section about conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

8.2.2 NPPF Section 16 Paragraph 184 recognises that “(heritage assets are) an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations”. NPPF Paragraph 185 emphasises “the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation”.

8.2.3 National Planning Policy Framework Paragraph 195 states that “Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss or significance of) a designated heritage asset, Local Planning Authorities should refuse consent” “Paragraph 185 states that in conserving and enhancing the historic environment they should take “opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place” and in Paragraph 192 that they should take account of “the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality”.

8.2.4 NPPF paragraph 125 confirms that “Neighbourhood plans can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development” and have “an understanding and evaluation of <an area’s> defining characteristics”. Additionally, according to Paragraph 127, development should be “sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting”; and “establish a strong sense of place, using streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit”.

#### 8.2.2 Local Policy

8.2.5 The following plans, documents and strategies support the design and heritage strategies:

- Bedford Borough Council Local Plan (2002, as revised)
- Bedford Borough Council Local Plan (2030, adopted January 2020)
- Bedford Borough Council Objectively Assessed Needs Report (April 2015)
- Bedford Borough Council Green Space Strategy (2012 to 2021)

8.2.6 Stevington has a high proportion of listed buildings which are mainly stone built structures and these heavily define the streetscapes of both Church Road and Silver Street in particular. The new Local Plan (2030) notes that it is the Borough’s ambition to generate a positive and, as far as possible, a distinctive sense of place.

8.2.7 The landscape surrounding Stevington retains a significant historic character: Richard Muir in “The Shell Guide to Reading the Landscape”<sup>76</sup> comments that “Stevington still displays many of the tangible properties of the archetypal Domesday Village”.

8.2.8 Much of the village is also designated as a Conservation Area (see **H01 Bedford Borough Council Policies Map**) and is well defined radiating out from the central crossroads. It has the typical Bedfordshire pattern of a nucleated, linear village with scattered “Ends”, small-dispersed settlements separated from the main village by open countryside.



**Stevington from the air**

8.2.9 The most prominent historic monument on the edge of the River Great Ouse Valley is St Mary’s Parish Church at Stevington, which sits on an outcrop of the Oolitic limestone, from the base of which springs the Holy Well, known since medieval times. The church has a well-supported and active ‘Friends Of’ society who stage events throughout the year to aid in the upkeep of the fabric of the building. Stevington Parish Church is a grade I listed building whilst the windmill and village cross are both grade II\*, with the cross being a Scheduled Ancient Monument. There are 49 listed dwellings and a further 13 listed structures within the parish, such as farm barns and the Baptist Chapel.

8.2.10 These features contribute to our local distinctiveness and the retention and protection of their qualities is a key element in ensuring the village character is retained for future generations to enjoy.

8.2.11 Stevington windmill is the last remaining example of a working windmill in the County. The windmill was restored in 1958, again in 2004 and most recently in 2018, with the sails being set occasionally. The Parish Council has instigated discussions with the Borough Council to have the sails set on a regular basis and for a group of local residents to be involved through a “Friends Of” society. The windmill is a symbol of the village and has been previously used widely by the Borough on its publicity material.

### **8.2.3 Other evidence**

8.2.12 The following documents have been used to help evidence community support for the Design and Heritage policies:

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76 Shell Guide to Reading the Landscape (1989)  
By Richard Muir. Publisher: Michael Joseph;  
First Edition (23 July 1981)

- Stevington Parish Council Local Green Space submission (2016)
- Stevington Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire (2016).

### 8.3 Community Feedback

**8.3.1** The qualities of landscape, setting and character provide an essential and cohesive thread to the nature and identity of Stevington. It is a village that is passionately proud of its heritage and preservation of the Parish’s heritage appearance and conservation area is considered very important, whilst also looking to the future.

**8.3.2** There is strong support within the Village that the historical Anglo-Saxon form of a nucleated settlement with dispersed “Ends” should be retained with 91% of respondents affirming this objective. Consultation on the emerging Neighbourhood Development Plan revealed the following key issues in relation to this topic:

- the Neighbourhood Development Plan should identify and protect the distinctive views and heritage assets which the village values and which define and contribute to the historic and natural character of our local area - 95% agreed
- all identified Heritage Assets and their settings should be conserved and enhanced for their historical significance and their contribution to the character of the Village - 95% agreed
- any modernisation, renovation or alteration to buildings identified as Heritage Assets should be designed sensitively and with careful regard to the structures’ historical and architectural interest and setting - 97% agreed
- demolition of buildings and structures that contribute to the rural or historical character and appearance of the village should be resisted - 95% agreed
- the Green Spaces at the Windmill and Windmill Lane should be conserved and protected - 94% agreed.

**8.3.3** Any new development should fully consider the context within which it will sit and the opportunities to enhance the character and quality of an area and local distinctiveness, this is reflected in the policies below.

#### Policy DH1: Design and Character

1. New development must complement the local surroundings and demonstrate high standards of design, including:
  - a. designing buildings, spaces and landscape to respond to the specific site and context to create a safe and well-functioning environment with a sense of place;
  - b. complementing the distinctive character of Stevington in terms of scale, massing, height, degree of set-back from streets and spaces;
  - c. complementing the context in terms of the proportion of any site developed and left open as garden space;
  - d. incorporating high quality and durable materials to complement those used in the surrounding area;
  - e. creating attractive, safe and convenient environments for pedestrians, overlooked by active frontages;
  - f. retaining trees and hedgerows and providing high quality planting;
  - g. ensuring that car-parking does not dominate the streets;
  - h. new parking provision does not lead to surface run-off to water courses;
  - i. providing convenient, well-screened storage space for bins and recycling;
  - j. preserving or enhancing the special interest of the Conservation Area as well as the significance of heritage assets;
  - k. ensuring new dwellings have considered access for people of all abilities.

## DH1 Interpretation

- 8.3.4 The policy seeks to promote sustainability by addressing public safety, character, amenity, landscape protection, pedestrian convenience and local character.
- 8.3.5 Development should be designed following thorough analysis of the site and surrounding context.
- 8.3.6 Active frontages mean development elevations containing windows and doors so as to overlook streets and spaces.
- 8.3.7 Providing a mix of car parking helps to ensure that the public realm is not dominated. This may include a mix of garage space, driveway spaces and other kinds of provision.
- 8.3.8 The need to complement Stevington's character does not imply stylistic imitation, but does require site-specific design to complement the surrounding context. Creative design is encouraged.
- 8.3.9 The policy avoids any kind of stylistic prescription, as required by the NPPF. Innovative designs that incorporate low or zero carbon use are encouraged.
- 8.3.10 It should be noted that Transport Infrastructure Policy T12 also requires new dwellings to include secure, covered storage for cycles within their curtilage.
- 8.3.11 Surface run-off should be prevented in order to prevent additional water or polluted water reaching the River Great Ouse via its tributaries or directly.
- 8.3.12 High quality planting is encouraged using native species or garden species that are known to be non-invasive. Invasive non-native species are strongly discouraged and should be prevented from entering the wider countryside where they could have adverse impacts on designated species and habitats.
- 8.3.13 Access for all abilities should consider both physical access to the dwelling as well as access across the site for those who rely on aids such as wheelchairs to support their mobility.

## Policy DH2: Non-designated Heritage Assets

- ~~1. New development affecting buildings or structures of local architectural or historic interest will be supported, providing:~~
- ~~a. it does not cause harm to the significance of the asset;~~
  - ~~b. any proposed alteration to an asset preserves its historical and architectural interest;~~
  - ~~c. extensions do not dominate the original building in terms of scale and prominence.~~

## DH2 Interpretation Non-designated heritage assets

- 8.3.14 The special statutory duties applying to designated heritage do not apply, unless the building of local interest in question is within a conservation area or the setting of a listed building. However, the intention of ~~the policy~~ **national policy as set out in NPPF paragraph 197** is to require the architectural and historic interest of buildings and structures of local interest to be a significant factor **taken into account** in decision-making.
- 8.3.15 Heritage assets can be of archaeological interest (above and below-ground remains) and any development should look to avoid, minimise and mitigate impacts upon these. If harm is justified, then the negative impacts on aspects of significance should be offset by enhancing others through recording, disseminating and archiving archaeological and historical interest of the important elements of the heritage assets affected.

**8.3.16** New development must not block or compromise vehicular or pedestrian access to buildings of local interest. Alterations and extensions should be designed to retain original features, so as to preserve or enhance architectural or historic interest.

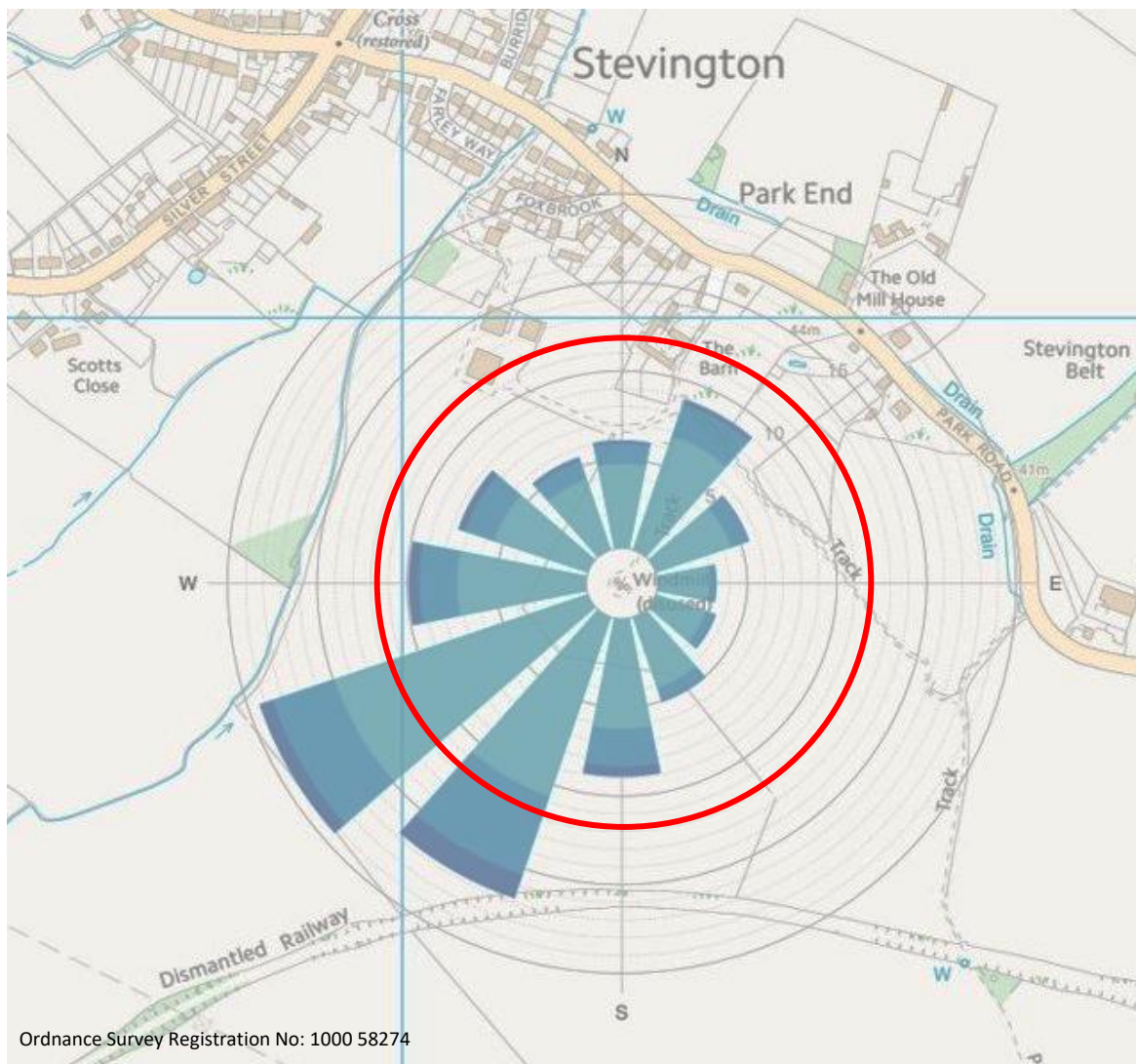
**8.3.17** The Traffic Impact Policy TI1 also deals with heritage impacts, including on non-designated and designated heritage assets.

### Policy DH3: Windmill Wind Corridor

1. Development will not be permitted within the wind corridor (see plan WWC1 Wind Rose Pattern) of Stevington windmill, unless it is proven not to impede or otherwise interfere with the winds required to power the mill sails.

#### DH3 Interpretation

**8.3.18** This policy precludes most built development, such as housing, within the wind corridor highlighted by the red ring on the wind rose pattern plan **WWC1 Wind Rose Pattern**, unless it can clearly be proven that there would be no adverse impact on wind flows.



**WWC1 Wind Rose Pattern** - Stevington Windmill average direction and speed from Jan 1997 to Dec 2016 (data supplied by the Met Office Ltd Jan 2018).

## Methodology

- 8.3.19 Using the Danish Wind Industry Association's standard wind shade methodology the apparent turbulent effect of a single two-storey property, when assuming an average residential dwelling height of 8m, would have the potential impact of wind energy loss to the windmill out to a distance of not less than 220 m<sup>77</sup>. Development closer than this distance would be required to demonstrate no impact on the windmill wind corridor.
- 8.3.20 This distance represents potential wind loss at the statistically significant 5% level of a single average size residential building, larger developments would have a greater impact and this would need to be considered at a wider range.



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77 <http://drøgstørre.dk/wp-content/wind/miller/windpower%20web/core.htm>

## 9 Environment

### 9.1 Purpose

- 9.1.1 To ensure all generations have easy access to our local natural environment and green open spaces by encouraging participation in leisure and recreation activities, and to protect the biodiversity of our local flora and fauna and enhance habitats, links between wildlife habitats, and sites of special interest.
- 9.1.2 To protect and enhance our distinctive rural landscape views and maintain the separation between local villages to avoid urban creep.

### 9.2 Rationale and Evidence

- 9.2.1 Stevington is a typical North Bedfordshire village. The Village enjoys wide views across the river plain and is characterised by the surrounding fields and woodland, where the medieval ridge and furrow pattern is often visible and many field boundaries defined by hedgerows. The Stevington Country Walk runs along the western border of the parish following the path of the old Bedford to Northampton railway line.
- 9.2.2 The community wants to conserve this landscape setting and ensure that the rural valley appearance of the village is maintained and enhanced. The landscape setting of Stevington will be an important consideration in deciding the location of new development.

#### 9.2.1 National Policy

- 9.2.3 National planning policy is contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Policy Guidance. The Natural Environment and Communities Act (2006) and Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystems services; UK National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA), 2011 are also relevant. Stevington Neighbourhood Development Plan refers to existing planning and environmental law and policy but is cognisant of proposed changes.
- 9.2.4 NPPF Paragraph 96 recognises that “access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities” and, underpinning this is NPPF Paragraph 98 “planning policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access”.
- 9.2.5 NPPF Paragraph 170 states that “Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by
- a. Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes;
  - b. Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside;
  - c. Minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures”.
- 9.2.6 Paragraph 171 further dictates that “Plans should allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework”.
- 9.2.7 A key part of this strategy as outlined in NPPF Paragraph 99 is that “The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development”, thus preserving an amenity valued by the local community.

- 9.2.8 The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan 2018 Chapter 3 further states "Spending time in the natural environment - as a resident or a visitor - improves our mental health and feelings of wellbeing. It can reduce stress, fatigue, anxiety and depression. It can help boost immune systems, encourage physical activity and may reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as asthma. It can combat loneliness and bind communities together".
- 9.2.9 NPPF Paragraph 171 states that Plans should "take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure". Linked to this is NPPF Paragraph 174 which states that to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity plans should "identify, map and safeguard components of the local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation".
- 9.2.10 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) establishes an independent body - Natural England - responsible for conserving, enhancing and managing England's natural environment for the benefit of current and future generations. It states that "Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity".
- 9.2.11 Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act places "a duty to conserve biodiversity on public authorities in England". It requires "local authorities and government departments to have regard to the purposes of conserving biodiversity in a manner that is consistent with the exercise of their normal functions such as policy and decision-making. "Conserving biodiversity" may include enhancing, restoring or protecting a population or a habitat".
- 9.2.12 Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystems services states its mission as "to halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people". Paragraph 17 outlines a key action as "Working with key stakeholders to consider how the nature conservation sector can engage the public even more effectively in future and how government might support this". Our Neighbourhood Development Plan policies address these issues to meet the national strategies.
- 9.2.13 A stated government priority for local and regional development is the supply of infrastructure to support more and better livelihoods. Yet there is also an obligation to avoid or reduce the impact on the environment of such infrastructure. UK National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA), 2011 Section III "builds on the fact that the National Planning Policy Framework recognises both the importance of green infrastructure and the "duty-to-cooperate" with statutory bodies (government agencies, NGOs, etc.), rather than to simply consult with them.
- 9.2.14 Taking an Ecosystems Approach would not only cover formal planning requirements and neighbourhood plans, but would also connect with catchment planning, in particular, exploring how land use change might achieve multiple benefits for nature and people".

## **9.2.2 Local Policy**

9.2.15 The following plans, documents and strategies support the environment policies:

- Bedford Borough Council Local Plan (2030, adopted January 2020)
- Bedford Borough Council Green Space Strategy 2012-2021
- Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment 2014

**9.2.16** Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 Policy 75 establishes clear rules for development in the countryside: “Development outside defined Settlement Policy Areas and the built form of Small Settlements will be permitted if it is appropriate in the countryside in accordance with:

- Policy 65 - Reuse of rural buildings in the countryside
- Policy 66 - The replacement and extension of dwellings in the countryside
- Policy 67 - Affordable housing to meet local needs in the rural area
- Policy 68 - Accommodation for rural workers
- Neighbourhood Development Plans which have been “made” by Bedford Borough Council”.

“In addition, exceptionally development proposals will be supported on sites that are well-related to a defined Settlement Policy Area, Small Settlements or the built form of other settlements where it can be demonstrated that:

- It responds to an identified community need; and

All development in the countryside must:

- Protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside; and
- Not give rise to other impacts that would adversely affect the use and enjoyment of the countryside by others”.

**9.2.17** H01 Bedford Borough Council Policies Map shows Stevington SPA.

**9.2.18** The importance of Stevington’s characteristic landscape and historic layout in giving the village its distinctive sense of place is recognised in Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 Policy 37 on landscape character. This states that: “Development proposals will protect and enhance the key landscape features and visual sensitivities of the landscape character areas identified in the Bedford Borough Landscape Character Assessment May 2014 (or as subsequently amended).

**9.2.19** Proposals will be required to: where appropriate, incorporate and implement the landscape management guidelines and development guidelines laid out in the BBLCA; and protect and enhance the character and qualities of the local landscape through appropriate design and management; and make provision for the retention and enhancement of features of landscape importance; and safeguard and where possible, enhance key views and vistas, and protect the landscape setting and contribute to maintaining the individual and distinct character, and separate identities of settlements by preventing coalescence, and where appropriate, provide landscape mitigation”.

**9.2.20** The importance of protecting the biodiversity and geodiversity of the rural areas is recognised in Bedford Borough Local Plan (2030) 42S - Protecting Biodiversity and Geodiversity:

- “Planning applications for development are required to assess the impact of the proposal on the biodiversity and geodiversity value of the site and its surroundings. This should be carried out by a suitably qualified professional in accordance with industry standards.
- A proposal which is likely to have an adverse effect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) will not be permitted unless there are exceptional reasons that outweigh the harm to the site.
- Development should be designed to prevent any adverse impact on locally important sites, species and habitats of principal importance contained within the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. However, in these circumstances where an adverse impact is unavoidable, the application shall demonstrate how the harm will be reduced through appropriate mitigation.

- Where protected species and priority habitats of principal importance are adversely affected, the application will need to demonstrate how the proposed mitigation will reduce the adverse effects. If adequate mitigation is not possible, the application will need to demonstrate that the overriding reasons outweigh the impacts on the biodiversity and geodiversity of the borough otherwise the development will be refused.
- Developments with potential to have an adverse impact, either alone or in combination, on the integrity of a European Designated Site will be assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Habitats Regulations”.

9.2.21 Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 Policy 43 Enhancing Diversity builds on this, recognising that enhancing biodiversity is crucial in sustaining ecosystems “Development proposals should provide a net increase in biodiversity through the following:

- Enhancement of the existing features on the site.
- Creation of additional habitats on the site.
- The linking of existing habitats to create links between ecological networks and where possible, with adjoining features”.

9.2.22 Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 Policy 35S states that “The existing green infrastructure in the borough shall be protected, enhanced and managed for the future benefit of the environment, people and the economy. Development shall provide a net gain in green infrastructure, while seeking to provide a high quality multi-functional green infrastructure network in accordance with the Bedford Green Infrastructure Plan. ....”.

9.2.23 The vital role of open spaces, particularly within the built environment and in maintaining separation between settlements, is recognised in the Borough’s Green Space Strategy, published in 2013. It provides a framework to guide future planning, management and investment in high quality publicly accessible green space in the borough over the period 2012-2021.

9.2.24 Paragraphs 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 of the Bedford Borough Green Space Strategy 2012-2021 are clear that “High quality publicly accessible green space delivers a range of important social, environmental and economic benefits to local communities”. The Executive Summary provides a synopsis of the issues covered in detail in the document: “Socially, such green space improves people’s physical and mental health and wellbeing, reduces health inequalities between rich and poor, breaks down social barriers and builds community cohesion.

9.2.25 Environmentally, it improves water quality and supply and supports flood control, moderates extremes of temperature, raises air quality and provides contact with nature. Economically, it boosts tourism, leisure and cultural activities and associated visitor spend and makes areas more attractive for investment. Finally, it is developing an increasingly important role to play in helping communities mitigate for and adapt to the impact of climate change”.

### **9.2.3 Other evidence**

9.2.26 The following documents have been used to help evidence community support for the Environment policies:

- Stevington Parish Council Local Green Space submission (2016)
- Stevington Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire (2016).

9.2.27 This Neighbourhood Development Plan designates four Local Green Spaces (LGS). These designations meet the criteria contained in NPPF Section 10 Promoting Healthy Lifestyles Paragraph 99.

9.2.28 Stevington has a number of Village Open Spaces already designated under the Allocations and Designations Local Plan (2013). These spaces are protected under Policy AD40 which prevents development on them, unless the reasons for designation are not compromised or other material considerations outweigh the need to retain the Village Open Space or View undeveloped.

9.2.29 In this Plan two of the Village Open Spaces (Playing Field and the Meadow) have become Local Green Spaces in order to provide added protection.

9.2.30 Stevington has a County Wildlife Nature Reserve near the Holywell and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) - Stevington Marsh between Stevington and Pavenham, which already have protection.

9.2.31 To ensure local involvement and to help identify community value, local people were asked for their views on the importance of these spaces to the community, as part of an exhibition and questionnaire. These views have been taken into account whilst applying the NPPF 2019 criteria.

#### **LGS1 Village Playing Field - Site A**

9.2.32 Designated Village Open Space under AD40 criterion A and E. In this Plan the Village Playing Field is designated as a Local Green Space.

- Situated in the middle of the village, the village playing field is one of the most popular recreational facilities in the village. Containing a children's play area and as well as a multi-sports equipment, it is in almost constant use including home to two football teams.
- Whilst being used by people of all ages, it is particularly popular with young people and young families who use it as a place to relax and to play sport such as football and cricket.
- The playing field is used for the annual Firework Night and is attended by residents from Stevington and neighbouring villages.
- The playing field is used for the annual 12k Stevington Road Race being the start and the finish of the race and this involves a significant number of residents.
- The playing field is used for Stevington Fun Day in the summer months.
- As the location of the Village Hall it is used for a series of events throughout the year.



### LGS2 Stevington Windmill and Windmill Lane - Site B

- The Windmill is the immediately recognisable symbol of Stevington and listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. List entry number 1310161.
- The 18th century post mill is historically significant as it is the only complete windmill remaining in the County and, along with the adjacent mature oak tree, is the most photographed area of the village. Access is only possible up Mill Lane.
- The site has important amenity value: an annual walk is held between Stevington Windmill and the old Bromham Watermill. Events held by the Borough Council attract many visitors, especially when the Windmill is operational.
- The site is noted for barn owls, which are reportedly nesting in the Windmill, and red kites and bats are often seen.
- Village support from questionnaire responses: 98.5%.



**LGS3 Meadow opposite The Manor Farmhouse, east side of Church Road - Site C**

9.2.33 Designated Village Open Space under AD40 criteria C and E. In this Plan the Meadow is designated as a Local Green Space.

- A publicly accessible meadow that is used regularly by walkers as part of a village circular walk.
- The gap formed by the meadow provides a view of the Old School reflecting its past history.
- Allows views towards the Church and the Manor House from the Ouse Valley Way.



**LGS4 The Stevington Belt and Park adjacent to the River Great Ouse - Site D**

- The Stevington Belt has a TPO 7/190/2/81 which shows the whole of Stevington Belt and several trees in the Park have protection under the TPO.
- The Park is an historic part of the identity of Stevington as it was part of the former deer park of the Lords of the Manor.
- It provides attractive open views of the River Great Ouse and the rural landscape.
- The site has important amenity value as FP19, a public footpath that runs beside it allows connection to a highly regarded walk along the river between Stevington and Oakley. A track through the Park leads to Stevington Sailing Club on the River Great Ouse, one of the only places that residents, including anglers, can access the riverside. The Sailing Club is well used for water sports and village social events.
- The Stevington Belt, which runs along the western boundary and the spinney in the centre of the Park are important wildlife habitats, including the nesting site of a rare pair of Hobbies.
- Village support from questionnaire responses: 95.2%.



#### **9.2.4 Local Environment**

**9.2.34** The geology of Stevington Parish is rich and varied with a mix of alluvium, gravels and bands of sticky Oxford clay on limestone. Most of the Parish is within the limestone Ouse Valley flood plain that has outstanding national and environmental importance.

**9.2.35** The River Great Ouse is of significant ecological interest and represents one of the most natural sections of river remaining in the borough. Bedfordshire and Luton Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre (BRMC) particularly noted the following sites within the Parish or adjacent to Parish sites which have protected status:

1. River Great Ouse County Wildlife Site (CWS)
2. Stevington Marsh County Wildlife Site (CWS)
3. Holywell Marsh County Wildlife Site (CWS)
4. Stevington Meadow County Wildlife Site (CWS)
5. Turvey to Bromham County Wildlife Site (CWS)
6. Stevington Turn Roadside Nature Reserve (RNR)
7. Stevington Marsh Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

**9.2.36** A borough wide assessment of the Borough's current publicly accessible green space resource is provided comprehensively in the Borough of Bedford Green Space Strategy 2012-2021. A "district" level Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) was completed for Bedford Borough in 2007 and updated in 2014.

**9.2.37** The 2014 landscape character assessment provides technical guidance and evidence to underpin planning and landscape management decisions in the borough. This document describes the borough "as having a varied landscape character: the clay vale, Greensand Ridge and Ouse valley all contribute to giving the borough its sense of place. For example, the underlying limestone geology of the Ouse valley gives rise to the distinct character of the stone villages in the north west of the borough.

**9.2.38** The North Bedfordshire landscape is characterised and dominated by the river Great Ouse, with a network of small villages that have evolved in close proximity to the river course and that are connected by winding country lanes".

**9.2.39** Green infrastructure is vital to a rural environment in providing a natural life support system for people and wildlife. This network of both public and privately owned land and waterways supports native species, maintains natural and ecological processes, sustains air and water resources as well as contributing to the health and wellbeing of people and communities.

**9.2.40** Stevington has an extensive network of high quality and accessible public open spaces, green spaces and public rights of way, including promoted walks, footpaths and bridleways. These are detailed in the EN2 Local Green Space section of this Plan.

### **9.3 Community Feedback**

**9.3.1** Consultation on the emerging Neighbourhood Development Plan revealed the following key issues in relation to this topic that the policy seeks to address:

- The pattern of open spaces surrounding the village SPA (Settlement Policy Area) should be retained in any future development - 80% agreed
- New development should respect the natural contours of the site and protect natural features such as trees, hedges and ponds - 93% agreed
- Proposals for development which could result in the loss of an area of identified green space will not be permitted other than exceptional circumstances for essential utility infrastructure - 86% agreed

- Gardens are an important characteristic in a large part of the Neighbourhood Development Plan area and as such should be protected from harmful development - 86% agreed
- All new development should maximise the biodiversity of the site - 89% agreed
- New development should prioritise the retention of native species, particularly in locations adjacent to wildlife corridors - 91% agreed
- New planning proposals should demonstrate how they incorporate appropriate measures to safeguard the connectivity of any impacted local wildlife corridors - 91% agreed
- Strategic views across the Parish should be protected by ensuring the visual impact of any new development is carefully controlled - 94% agreed
- Open views either towards the countryside or across open spaces must be maintained from existing routes into the village - 88% agreed
- Development proposals that reduce the separation between Stevington and adjacent villages or the sense of openness created by these gaps would not be supported - 91% agreed.

## Policy EN1: Natural Environment

1. New development must preserve and enhance and have no significant adverse impact on Stevington's natural environment. This includes:
  - a. respecting the natural contours of any site and protecting natural features such as hedges, ponds, ancient trees and trees of arboricultural value in or around the site;
  - b. maintaining the biodiversity of any site and prioritising the retention of native species, particularly in locations adjacent to wildlife corridors;
  - c. incorporating appropriate measures to safeguard ecological networks;
  - d. where development includes unavoidable impact a plan for mitigation or compensation with a positive environmental balance must be detailed within the application;
  - e. particular regard will be made to impacts on local and national designated sites and sites which contain priority habitats and species;
  - f. the European sites, Portholme Special Areas of Conservation and The Ouse Washes Special Areas of Conservation/Special Protection Area/Ramsar Convention are connected to Stevington in the wider landscape and their integrity will not be compromised.

### EN1 Interpretation

- 9.3.2 Assessing impacts on the natural environment would include consideration of hedgerows, ecology, flora and fauna, wildlife and views through open landscape and would be performed by a suitably qualified professional such as an ecologist.
- 9.3.3 Other policies in this plan ensure that housing is provided primarily within the Stevington Settlement Policy Area. However, even sites in the existing built area can have ecological and wildlife value and can contain natural features that should be retained.
- 9.3.4 A tree would be considered to be of arboricultural value where it is a healthy specimen that is not disproportionate in size to its siting, where it is considered to be providing visual relief to the streetscape or is deemed to be of value by local residents. Where trees are to be removed, a tree survey should be undertaken by a suitably qualified professional.
- 9.3.5 For the purposes of this policy, an ecological network is defined as being a representation of the biotic interactions in an ecosystem, in which species (nodes) are connected by pairwise interactions between various locations.

- 9.3.6 The policy also applies to other uses that make use of extensive open landscape, outside of the Settlement Boundary, such as some recreational uses.

## Policy EN2: Local Green Space

1. The following sites are designated as local green space:
  - LGS1 - Village Playing Field, Court Lane, Stevington, MK43 7QT
  - LGS2 - Stevington Windmill and Windmill Lane, Stevington, MK43 7QZ
  - LGS3 - Meadow opposite The Manor Farmhouse, Church Road, Stevington, MK43 7QB
  - LGS4 - The Stevington Belt and Park adjacent to the River Great Ouse, Stevington, MK43 7QD.
2. Designated Local Green Space must ~~remain as open green spaces~~ **be managed in a manner compatible with their designation.**
3. Small-scale built development may be allowed, providing:
  - a. the open and green character of the space is maintained and not compromised;
  - b. the new development comprises facilities to support the community use of space;
  - c. the community, wildlife, amenity and other values as a Local Green Space are preserved or enhanced.

### EN2 Interpretation

- 9.3.7 This policy protects the open character and community value of Local Green Space, but does allow specific kinds of small-scale development. Examples of small-scale development or redevelopment that could be allowed include:
- a sports pavilion, to support the use of sports pitches;
  - storage facilities for tools and equipment used for maintaining green space;
  - a small refreshment kiosk to support the recreational use of space;
  - the relocation/expansion of an existing community asset where the change is designed to extend the support of recreational activities and/or enhance the wellbeing of the village community such as an expanded or relocated village hall.



Fields and woodland around Stevington

# 10 Community Facilities

## 10.1 Purpose

To ensure all generations have easy access to community facilities and green open spaces encouraging participation in leisure and recreation activities.

## 10.2 Rationale and Evidence

### 40.2.1 National Policy

10.2.1 The National Policy Planning Framework Paragraphs 91-101, “Promoting healthy and safe communities”, provides a comprehensive backdrop against which to measure community facilities and aspirations in Stevington. The NPPF promotes community cohesion through planning decisions which enable meeting in communal spaces and mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts that allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods, and active street frontages (Paragraph 91) Communities should, “plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments” and “guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community’s ability to meet its day-to-day needs” (Paragraph 92).

10.2.2 The NPPF Paragraph 96 also promotes “Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation [that] can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities”.

10.2.3 It is seen as important that, according to Paragraph 98, “Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access”. It is also seen as important, according to Paragraph 99, that the designation of Local Green Spaces “allows communities to identify and protect green spaces of particular importance to them”, especially where the Local Green Space is “in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves” and “demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife”.

### 40.2.2 Local Policy

10.2.4 The following plans, documents and strategies support the Community policies:

- Bedford Borough Council Local Plan (2030, adopted January 2020)
- A corporate policy and strategy document, adopted (2009) as the Sustainable Community Strategy for the new unitary Borough of Bedford
- Bedford Borough Council, “Empty Shops Strategy 2014-2016”.

### 40.2.3 Other evidence

10.2.5 Stevington, like other small rural villages, has seen a loss of facilities which have centralised for efficiency and cost saving. The village school (1983), Post Office (2009), the commercially run village shop (1997) and The Manse children’s nursery (2014) have all closed. Increased personal mobility has also undermined the viability of traditional rural services such as public transport.

- 10.2.6 As the Census 2011 shows, the population of Stevington is predominantly retired and elderly, with a mixture of commuters using car or rail travel to access the main sites of employment, or self-employed and working from home. The proportion of young people is lower and the proportion of disabled residents is higher than the national average.
- 10.2.7 Despite these circumstances, Stevington has made an asset of its rural service deprivation and provides a range of community and social opportunities for residents and visitors to the village, all of which are provided by volunteers.
- 10.2.8 Stevington continues to be a close-knit community with a good social mix and a vibrant social life. The Village Hall, which has been substantially improved in recent years with funds raised from within the village and from a generous legacy from a former resident, is used by a wide range of village-based sporting, cultural and social clubs as well as being a popular hired venue for private functions.
- 10.2.9 The Village Hall is equipped to support a Cinema Club and National Theatre Live streamed performances as well as social events including a Burns Supper, Hostess Supper, Fireworks Night and 12k road race affiliated to AAA. The space is well used by other groups in the village, for example, Stevington Guitar Concerts that draws national and international artists to appreciative audiences and can be hired to hold larger events such as weddings, parties and St. Mary's annual Christmas Concert.
- 10.2.10 In addition, there are further social venues provided by the Church Room and the Baptist Church Hall. The Community Shop, run by volunteers, provides a range of produce and a popular meeting place for light refreshments.
- 10.2.11 The Carpet Bowls Club is based in the Village Hall and a successful Football Club plays a major role in grounds maintenance of the sports pitches. Yoga and Pilates classes are available weekly.
- 10.2.12 The Football Team is sponsored by the one of the public houses, The Royal George, which serves lunches and evening meals, hosts live music events and craft fairs, quiz and bingo nights. The second pub, The Red Lion recently re-opened after extensive refurbishment and has a bar and restaurant service as well as newly added B&B rooms. It is now open seven days a week.
- 10.2.13 There are two active churches in the village, one Anglican and one Baptist, who co-operate well and hold joint services for Remembrance Day. The Church Room is the base for the Community Shop that is open 6 days a week and also provides a meeting space for choir practice, the Women's Institute and Stevington Writers.
- 10.2.14 An active Friends of St. Mary's Church group hosts fundraising events, child friendly Baking Days and Bat Prowls. It is used as a craft workshop space or pop-up tearoom, and hosts Lent Lunches and the Harvest Supper. Similarly, the Baptist Chapel hall hosts tea afternoons, craft groups, the bi-annual Scarecrow Festival dinner and a Railway Modellers Club.
- 10.2.15 Bedford Sailing Club has a compound with river access from Park Road where boats can be stored. It welcomes both social and active members, hosts a summer barbeque, regular rowing lessons and has a small number of craft available for loan. Stevington Book Club meets once a month in members' houses and hosts a winter dinner and a summer barbeque.
- 10.2.16 The community also benefits from access to a network of footpaths and bridleways where residents can enjoy dog walking, horse riding, rambling and foraging. The open aspect and spectacular views mean that these paths are also used by Rambling Clubs, Duke of Edinburgh expeditions, Scouts and Nordic Walkers.

10.2.17 The Village is popular with visitors to The Windmill, Holy Well, Bunyan Trail and Kathy Brown's Garden. Except at the Windmill, there is no provision for the extra car, minibus and coach parking this entails. Overall, Stevington resists the loss of existing community facilities and wishes to promote new community facilities, subject to amenity and traffic impact.

10.2.18 Baptist Chapel Hall, West End proposed to be included within the Neighbourhood Development Plan as frequently used for Baptist Chapel meetings and social events, such as coffee mornings and is available for hire for residents, club and other social events providing a valuable village resource and focal point.

10.2.19 Church Room, Church Road proposed to be included within the Neighbourhood Development Plan as the Parochial Church Council meets there, it houses the community shop, provides an important meeting place used by various village clubs, organisations and for private events providing a valuable village resource and focal point.

10.2.20 Primitive Methodist Chapel (former), Park Road proposed to be included within the Neighbourhood Development Plan as it has previously housed small enterprise arts, crafts and jewellery business that supported localised village employment and has the potential to do so again in the future. More recently the Non Designated Heritage Asset status of the building has been confirmed within planning appeal decision APP/K0235/W/18/3218957 on 17th July 2019. "The Bedford Borough Historic Environment Record (HER) acknowledges the building for its local heritage significance. In addition to its high-quality design and the use of local building materials, the building is recognised for its religious and social history in the village".

10.2.21 The following plans, documents and strategies support the Community policies:

- Stevington Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire (2016).

## 10.3 Community Feedback

10.3.1 Consultation on the emerging Neighbourhood Development Plan shows the strongest support for the following key issues in relation to this topic that the policy seeks to address:

- all developments should seek to retain or improve existing listed Community Assets - 97% agreed
- any development proposal that would remove an existing Community Asset should provide an equal or better alternative - 95.2% agreed
- ensure all residents have easy access to community facilities and green open spaces for leisure and recreation - 95.8% agreed.

### Policy CF1: Community Facilities

1. Development proposals affecting existing community facilities will be supported, providing the community use is retained and there is no significant adverse impact on the community value of the facility.
2. Development proposals involving the loss of existing facilities will only be supported if it can be demonstrated that the facility is no longer required or if an equal or better facility is proposed nearby as part of the scheme.
3. New community facilities will be supported, providing there is no significant adverse impact on the amenities of nearby residential properties or on road capacity and safety.
4. Where replacement community facilities are proposed, planning permission resulting in the loss of an existing facility should be conditional on the replacement facility first being provided.

### List of Community Facilities

The following community facilities are of particular importance to the area:

- a. ~~Alms houses, Park Road~~
- b. Baptist Chapel Hall, West End
- c. Church Room, Church Road
- d. Defibrillator (Phone Box), Church Road
- e. Primitive Methodist Chapel (former), Park Road
- f. The Red Lion, Park Road
- g. The Royal George, Silver Street
- h. Village Hall, playing field and contents.

### **CF1 Interpretation**

**10.3.2** This policy allows community facilities to adapt, but ensures that the community value of the facility is not diminished or extinguished. Community value should be considered against how the facility is used and the benefits it provides to the community.



**Village Hall**

# 11 Transport and Infrastructure

## 11.1 Purpose

To seek ways to ensure that any development does not exacerbate problems of traffic congestion on our roads.

## 11.2 Rationale and Evidence

### 11.2.1 National Policy

11.2.1 National Planning Policy Framework Section 9 Promoting Sustainable Transport Paragraph 102 states that “Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals so that:

- a. the potential impacts of development on transport networks can be addressed;
- b. opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage, are realised - for example in relation to the scale, location or density of development that can be accommodated;
- c. opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued;
- d. the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account - including appropriate opportunities for avoiding and mitigating any adverse effects, and for net environmental gains; and
- e. patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality places”.

11.2.2 The transport system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes, giving people a real choice about how they travel. However, the Government recognises in paragraph 103 that “opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making”.

11.2.3 A key part of this strategy for Stevington is an acknowledgement that any developments in this rural community must take account of the current limitations in the highways around the village. NPPF Paragraph 103 recognises that “Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health. However this needs to take account of policies set out elsewhere in this Framework, particularly in rural areas”. This includes in NPPF Paragraph 108 the need that in any development “safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users”.

11.2.4 In addition any development of the transport infrastructure must include consideration of the impact this may have on the heritage assets as set out in NPPF Section 16 Paragraph 184 “heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations”.

### 11.2.2 Local Policy

11.2.5 The following plans, documents and strategies support the Transport Infrastructure policies:

- Bedford Borough Council Local Plan (2030, adopted January 2020)
- Sustainable Drainage Systems Supplementary Planning Document (February 2018)
- Bedford Town Centre Transport Modelling 2015

- Parking Standards for Sustainable Communities: Design and Good Practice (Interim Policy and Supplementary Planning Document Adopted September 2014).

- 11.2.6 Bedford Borough prepared a local plan that sets out how much growth there should be in the borough in coming years and where it should take place. The Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 was adopted on 15th January 2020.
- 11.2.7 A key consideration in any development of the transport infrastructure will be the need to conserve or where opportunities arise, enhance heritage assets and their settings and to consider measures to avoid impact, reduce or mitigate impacts on the historic environment. Stevington is a small village with an ancient Cross in the centre of the road infrastructure and any increase in traffic will impact on this ancient monument.
- 11.2.8 In LP31 Policy Impact of Development - access impacts it states “Development proposals should not have any significant adverse impact on access to the public highway. Planning applications should give particular attention to all of the following considerations: Highway capacity, parking provision, safety or general disturbance to the area”.
- 11.2.9 Policy LP37 Landscape Character supports this strategy of minimizing traffic congestion and its impact on the village “Protect and enhance the character and qualities of the local landscape through appropriate design and management”.
- 11.2.10 Policy LP41S Historic Environment and Heritage Assets states that “where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset or non-designated heritage asset of archaeological interest of demonstrably equivalent significance to a scheduled monument, consent will be refused unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm”.
- 11.2.11 Owing to the cruciform road system and historic terraced houses with no off-road parking there is a significant amount of parking along the roadway. The roads are winding and narrow with poor visibility, especially at junctions, and unsuited for high traffic volumes and large vehicles.
- 11.2.12 In several places, the roads are reduced to a single carriageway by obstructions, including on-road parking. Along several stretches of Stevington’s roads there are no footpaths, which means pedestrians have to share the roads with traffic<sup>78</sup>. This creates significant hazard due to very limited visibility around bends.
- 11.2.13 Silver Street, which runs from Stevington to the A428 is an unclassified road<sup>79</sup> but is the scourge of large goods vehicles encouraged into the Village by Satnav systems, despite warning signs as to the unsuitability of the narrow roads.
- 11.2.14 Our strategy reflects the Standards for Sustainable Communities Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2014. “This SPD, is entirely consistent with current government guidance set out in the NPPF (2019) includes standards which form a consistent basis for discussion between developers and planners, allowing greater certainty when planning applications are submitted thus reducing the time taken to determine parking. In addition, this document also looks at the provision of cycle, coach, motorcycle and disabled parking and electric vehicle infrastructure. In addition, it provides some commentary on design guidance”.

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<sup>78</sup> Stevington Road Survey (5th June 2017)

<sup>79</sup> Guidance on Road Classification and the Primary Route Network, UK Government

11.2.15 We have taken account of the Bedford Borough Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) adopted in February 2018 in determining the requirements of future development in respect of the need for sustainable drainage to minimise the impact of flooding on the infrastructure. Any new development in Stevington will be required to identify any flood risks and to incorporate sustainable drainage in the plans.

### **11.2.3 Other Relevant Evidence**

11.2.16 Stevington is a rural Village and there are no major roads within it. There is a single-track road, Silver Street, which gives access to the busy A428; other access to a major road is via the villages of Bromham or Carlton.

11.2.17 Road safety, speeding, parking and traffic congestion are major concerns for village residents. The village has four roads converging in the centre of the village at the Cross, a historical monument, which is scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

11.2.18 Its position at the crossroads narrows the road carriageway and therefore any increase in traffic impacts on its safety. In keeping with its rural nature, the roads are winding and narrow with poor visibility, especially at junctions, and unsuited for high traffic volumes and large vehicles.

11.2.19 The narrowness of Silver Street is a major concern: although heavy goods vehicles are discouraged by way of signage at the turning off the A428, there is no physical restriction on any size vehicle entering the village by this route. Silver Street exits at the main crossroads in the village that is further narrowed by the Cross, making turning either left or right very problematic for vehicles longer than a standard car or van.

11.2.20 The following documents have been used to help evidence community support for the Environment policies:

- Stevington Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire (2016)
- Stevington Road Survey (June 2017)
- Stevington Road Impact Assessment (June 2017).

## **11.3 Community Feedback**

11.3.1 Consultation on the emerging Neighbourhood Development Plan revealed the following key issues in relation to this topic that the policy seeks to address:

- No new development requiring access to or from Silver Street should be permitted - 74% agreed
- No development which will increase on street parking should be permitted - 94% agreed
- Street furniture and signage to be modest and in keeping with surroundings - 96% agreed
- New development should not restrict visibility for ingress/egress of existing dwellings - 95% agreed
- New development should include provision of pavement between dwellings - 84% agreed
- To sustain the vitality, health and safety of the community so as to ensure that the elderly, disabled and infirm are able to remain part of it - 79.9% agreed.

## Policy TI1: Traffic Impact

1. In considering planning applications for new development or the intensification of development, particular regard will be ~~paid to~~ ~~made to~~ ensuring that:
  - a. ~~existing problems of traffic capacity are not exacerbated, especially on existing pressure points~~ whether there is adequate highway capacity to support the proposal, in particular in Silver Street and Church Road;
  - b. ~~there is no adverse~~ the impact on the character, appearance or setting of heritage assets by reason of traffic disturbance or congestion or the impact of necessary highway works;
  - c. ~~there is no significant adverse~~ the impact on traffic safety, including ensuring there is no restriction on the visibility for ingress/egress of existing dwellings.

### TI1 Interpretation

- 11.3.2 This policy recognises and requires consideration of existing pressure point on the highway network. In addition, it requires the impacts of traffic on the area's historic environments to be given careful consideration. This includes consideration of the impact of highway improvements necessary to allow development to take place.

## Policy TI2: Cycling and Walking

1. New dwellings must:
  - a. include secure, covered storage for cycles within their curtilage;
  - b. front an existing pavement or include provision of a new section of pavement linking to the wider pavement network where appropriate.

### TI2 Interpretation

- 11.3.3 This policy ensures that all new dwellings cater for the needs of cyclists and pedestrians, ensuring a balanced approach to transport and avoiding a narrow focus on car users only.
- 11.3.4 It also ensures that new dwellings front existing pavements or include new pavements, linking into the existing network.

## Policy TI3: Sustainable Drainage Systems ~~Urban Drainage~~

1. All new development must incorporate ~~sustainable urban drainage~~ Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), designed as part of the surfacing, garden space or landscaping giving due consideration to reducing rate and volume of surface water drainage.

### TI3 Interpretation

- 11.3.5 The policy requires sustainable ~~urban~~ drainage systems to be considered. For small-scale development, this would be focused on permeable hard surfaces and localised water collection.



**Stevington Windmill**

# 12 Business and Employment

## 12.1 Purpose

To create an environment that is attractive for small businesses and services to locate and flourish in the area.

## 12.2 Rationale and Evidence

### 12.2.1 National Policy

12.2.1 National planning policy is contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Policy Guidance. NPPF Section 6 Paragraph 80 states: “Planning policies should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development”.

12.2.2 According to NPPF Paragraph 83, to support a prosperous rural economy planning policies and decisions should enable:

- the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings
- the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses
- sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and
- the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship”.

12.2.3 NPPF Section 10 Paragraph 112 supports high quality communications infrastructure “Advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being”.

### 12.2.2 Local Policy

12.2.4 The following plans, documents and strategies support the Business and Employment policies:

- Bedford Borough Council Local Plan (2030, adopted January 2020).

12.2.5 Stevington is a rural settlement and is outside of the Bedford Town Area or the Key Service Areas as identified in the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030. The statement in the Local Plan 2030 Policy 75 New employment development in the countryside applies to our policy on business and employment needs in Stevington. “New employment development...will be supported in the countryside in the following circumstances:

- Where it is within a defined employment area; or
- For the reuse of land in use or last used for employment purposes within the “B” use classes or for the reuse of existing buildings; or
- For the expansion of an established business within its existing operational site; or
- For the diversification of agricultural and provision for other land based rural businesses.

In all instances applicants will be required to demonstrate all of the following:

- If a new building is proposed, there are no existing buildings that could be used for the proposed use;

- The proposed use needs to be in the rural area and cannot be located within a Settlement Policy Area or within a designated Small Settlement;
- Open storage is ancillary to employment buildings and is located in well contained and screened areas of the site with an appropriate height restriction;
- The proposal would not generate traffic movement and volume that would lead to unacceptable environmental impacts or detriment to highway safety objectives;
- The proposal would not have a significant and demonstrable harm to the established character of the area and the local amenities and adjoining land uses and accords with Policy 41S;
- There would be no adverse impact on biodiversity including Natura 2000 sites in accordance with Policy 42S”.

### **12.2.3 Other Evidence**

12.2.6 Historically, farming has been the key driver behind the prosperity of the Parish. However, consistent with most other rural parishes the Village has seen a significant socioeconomic shift as the number of arable employment opportunities has fallen due to increased mechanisation.

12.2.7 At the same time, a rise in car ownership and resultant personal mobility has meant that the majority of the village working population now seek employment outside of the village boundaries.

12.2.8 Stevington has developed a thriving range of local businesses, many of which are home based.

12.2.9 There is limited availability of workspace and jobs in rural communities such as Stevington and this further encourages local people of working age to leave the area, and discourages people of working age from moving in. This loss of the working age population has social as well as economic consequences.

12.2.10 Census Data 2001 and Census Data 2011 show that there was a decline in the working population living in Stevington from 63.2% in 2001 to 58% in 2011. Communities where there is a daily exodus of people can also struggle to provide the viable conditions for many community services and facilities. This is especially true of Stevington where a large majority commute to work outside of the Parish.

12.2.11 It is important that the Parish encourages and supports a thriving local economy in order to enhance and ensure the sustainability of the community. Our policies will support proportionate growth of all types of sustainable business and enterprise in the Parish: rural tourism and leisure facilities that benefit local businesses, residents and visitors, and which respect the character of the countryside will be encouraged.

12.2.12 The following documents have been used to help evidence community support for the Environment policies:

- Stevington Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire (2016).

## **12.3 Community Feedback**

12.3.1 Consultation on the emerging Neighbourhood Development Plan revealed the following key issues in relation to this topic that the policy seeks to address:

- new developments should be designed to support working from home - 98% agreed
- the redevelopment of redundant commercial or farm buildings for small business use will be supported - 87% agreed

- planning applications for the conversion or extensions to shops and leisure facilities, including public houses, which are designed to improve their viability will be supported - 89% agreed
- planning applications for the conversion from residential to business use will be supported in isolated cases where they provide additional local employment opportunities - 82% agreed
- suitable development that improves the quality and diversity of existing facilities, attractions and infrastructure should be supported - 88% agreed
- development that has a detrimental effect on Village attractions should be resisted - 96% agreed
- tourism development that generally benefits the local community through the provision of local employment, or improvement of local service provision should be supported, providing the proposal is in keeping with the Village character - 93% agreed.

## Policy BE1: Business, Employment and Tourism

1. New business, employment and tourism-related development, or the adaptation or extension of existing business, employment and tourism sites and premises, will be supported where it comprises:
  - a. the redevelopment of redundant farm buildings;
  - b. extensions to shops and leisure facilities, including public houses;
  - c. conversion of isolated residential buildings;
  - d. additional facilities within existing local businesses.
2. New business, employment and tourism related development must have no significant adverse impact on:
  - a. traffic safety or capacity;
  - b. residential amenity;
  - c. local tourist and visitor attractions;
  - d. the character of the village.
3. Development that improves the quality and diversity of existing tourism and visitor facilities, attractions and infrastructure is particularly encouraged.

### BE1 Interpretation

12.3.2 The policy seeks to enable business, employment and tourism. The policy enables development, subject to consideration of impacts on traffic, amenity, existing tourist facilities and local character.

12.3.3 The term “isolated residential buildings” refers to single dwellings, not located in a group or row of dwellings.

## Policy BE2: Broadband

1. ~~New housing or business development schemes must incorporate High-speed Internet connectivity and not impact negatively on the functionality of the existing telecommunications infrastructure.~~

### BE2 Interpretation

~~The purpose of this policy is to ensure that new development is capable of benefiting as faster services are provided in the area. This supports business development and enables home working.~~

- ~~———— The government’s Broadband UK office defines “high speed” as services with speeds of greater than 24 Megabits per second.~~
- ~~———— Developers are advised to work with telecommunication providers to ensure digital infrastructure forms an integral part of their proposed development.~~
- ~~———— A connectivity statement should be included with relevant planning applications to demonstrate broadband access and speed will be sufficient.~~



# **Bedford Borough Council Stevington Neighbourhood Plan POST- EXAMINATION DECISION STATEMENT**

## **Regulation 18 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended)**

This document is the decision statement required to be prepared under Regulation 18(2) of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (as amended). It sets out the response of Bedford Borough Council (“the Council”) to each of the recommendations contained within the independent examination report of the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan (“the Plan”) by independent examiner Wendy Burden, which was received by the Council on 1 October 2020.

This decision statement, the independent examiner’s report and the submission version of the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents can be viewed on the [neighbourhood planning pages](#) of the Council’s website.

## BACKGROUND

Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), the Council has a statutory duty to assist communities in the preparation of neighbourhood plans and to take plans through a process of examination and referendum. The Localism Act 2011 (Part 6, Chapter 3) sets out the Local Planning Authority's neighbourhood planning responsibilities.

This statement confirms that the modifications proposed in the examiner's report have been considered and accepted and that subject to making the recommended modifications (and other minor modifications) the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan may now be submitted to referendum.

The Stevington Neighbourhood Plan relates to the area that was designated by the Council as a Neighbourhood Area on 28 November 2013. This area is coterminous with the boundary of the parish of Stevington and is entirely within the Local Planning Authority's area.

Between 9 December 2019 and 27 January 2020, Stevington Parish Council undertook consultation on the draft Plan in accordance with Regulation 14.

Following the submission of the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan to the Council in May 2020, the Council publicised the draft Plan for a six-week period and representations were invited in accordance with Regulation 16. This consultation took place between 10 July to 24 August 2020.

## INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION

The Council appointed Wendy Burden, with the agreement of Stevington Parish Council, to undertake the independent examination of the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan and to prepare a report of the independent examination.

The examiner examined the Plan by way of written representations supported by an unaccompanied site visit of the Neighbourhood Plan Area on 7 September 2020.

The examiner's report was formally received by the Council on 1 October 2020. The report concludes that subject to making the modifications recommended by the examiner, the Plan meets the basic conditions set out in the legislation and should proceed to referendum. The examiner also recommends that the referendum area should be the same as the designated Neighbourhood Area, which is the same as the administrative boundary for Stevington parish.

Following receipt of the examiner's report, legislation requires that the Council considers each of the modifications recommended, the reasons for them, and decides what action to take. The Council is also required to consider whether to extend the area to be covered by the referendum.

## DECISION AND REASONS

Having considered each of the recommendations made in the examiner's report and the reasons for them, the Council has decided to accept all of the examiner's recommended modifications to the draft Plan. These are set out in Table 1 below.

The Council considers that, subject to the modifications being made to the Plan as set out in Table 1 below, the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan meets the basic conditions explained in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), is compatible with the Human Rights Convention and that the requirements of paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) have been met.

The examiner recommended that the Plan should proceed to a referendum based on the designated Neighbourhood Area. The Council has considered this recommendation and the reasons for it, and has decided to accept it. The referendum area for the final Stevington Neighbourhood Plan will therefore be based on the designated Stevington Parish Neighbourhood Area.

These decisions were made by the Mayor on behalf of the Council's Executive on **date???**.

As a consequence of the required modifications, the Council will alter the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan in order that it can proceed to referendum.

The Neighbourhood Plan document will be re-titled **Referendum Version**. The date for the referendum and further details will be publicised once a date is set by the Council.

**Table 1: Decisions on the Examiner’s Recommended Modifications to the Stevington Neighbourhood Plan**

<b>Proposed Modification Number</b>	<b>Stevington Neighbourhood Plan Reference</b>	<b>Examiner’s Report Reference</b>	<b>Recommended Modification and Reason</b>	<b>Bedford Borough Council Decision/reasoning</b>
PM1	Front cover	Para 3.3 page 10	Insert under Heading “2020-2035”.	Agree with the modification for the reasons set out in the examiner’s report
PM2	Page 39	Para 4.26 page 15	<p>Delete Policy DH2.</p> <p>Delete heading “DH2 Interpretation” and insert new heading “Non-designated heritage assets”.</p> <p>In the second sentence of the first paragraph under the new heading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change “the policy” to “national policy as set out in NPPF paragraph 197”.</li> </ul> <p>Delete “a significant factor” and insert “taken into account”.</p>	Agree with the modification for the reasons set out in the examiner’s report
PM3	Page 50 Policy EN2	Para 4.33 page 16	In 2.: delete “remain as open green spaces” and insert “be managed in a manner compatible with their designation”.	Agree with the modification for the reasons set out in the examiner’s report
PM4	Page 53 Policy CF1	Para 4.36 page 17	Delete “a. Almshouses, Park Road”.	Agree with the modification for the reasons set out in the examiner’s report

PM5	Page 57 Policy TI1	Para 4.38 page 17	<p>In 1.: delete “made to ensuring” and insert “paid to”.</p> <p>In a.: delete “existing problems of traffic capacity are not exacerbated, especially on existing pressure points” and insert “whether there is adequate highway capacity to support the proposal, in particular”.</p> <p>In b.: delete “there is no adverse” and insert “the”.</p> <p>In c.: delete “there is no significant adverse” and insert “the”.</p>	Agree with the modification for the reasons set out in the examiner’s report
PM6	Page 58 Policy TI3	Para 4.40 page 17	<p>Rename: “Sustainable Drainage Systems”.</p> <p>In 1. Delete “sustainable urban drainage” and insert “Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)”.</p>	Agree with the modification for the reasons set out in the examiner’s report
PM7	Page 61 Policy BE2	Para 4.43 page 17	Delete Policy BE2 and the subsequent text.	Agree with the modification for the reasons set out in the examiner’s report

November 2020