



BEDFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Bedford Borough Council Bletsoe 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 Bletsoe Neighbourhood Plan (“the Plan”) by independent examiner Wendy Burden, which was received by the Council on 11 March 2020.

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

Paper copies of this decision statement and the independent examiner’s report will also be available for inspection during normal opening hours when Coronavirus related restrictions are lifted, at the Bedford Borough Customer Service Centre, Horne Lane, Bedford, MK40 1RA.

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 Bletsoe Neighbourhood Plan may now be submitted to referendum.

The Bletsoe Neighbourhood Plan relates to the area that was designated by the Council as a Neighbourhood Area on 1 Jul 2013. This area is coterminous with the boundary of the parish of Bletsoe and is entirely within the Local Planning Authority's area.

Between 15 September and 31 October 2018, Bletsoe Parish Council undertook consultation on the draft Plan in accordance with Regulation 14.

Following the submission of the Bletsoe Neighbourhood Plan to the Council in August 2019, the Council publicised the draft Plan for a seven-week period and representations were invited in accordance with Regulation 16. This consultation took place between 27 November 2019 and 19 January 2020.

INDEPENDENT EXAMINATION

The Council appointed Wendy Burden, with the agreement of Bletsoe Parish Council, to undertake the independent examination of the Bletsoe 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 18-19 February 2020.

The examiner's report was formally received by the Council on 11 March 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 Bletsoe 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 Bletsoe 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 Bletsoe Neighbourhood Plan will therefore be based on the designated Bletsoe Parish Neighbourhood Area.

These decisions were made by the Mayor on behalf of the Council's Executive on 6 April 2020.

As a consequence of the required modifications, the Council will alter the Bletsoe 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 shortly once a date is set by the Council.

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

| Proposed Modification Number | Bletsoe Neighbourhood Plan Reference | Examiner’s Report Reference | Recommended Modification and Reason | Bedford Borough Council Decision/reasoning |
|-------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|---|--|
| PM1 | Front cover | 9 | Insert prominently the Plan period “2017 – 2035” above “Our Parish – Our Plan – Our Future”. | Agree with the modification for the reasons set out in the examiner’s report |
| PM2 | Appendix C | 14 | Replace Appendix C of the submitted BNP with the version updated in February 2020. Update and replace the small text under each policy box in so far as it relates to the newly adopted Development Plan policies. | Agree with the modification for the reasons set out in the examiner’s report |
| PM3 | Page 22 BNP Policy 1 | 15 | Amend the second paragraph as follows: “In order to maintain the intrinsic value of the countryside development proposals located outside of the defined SPA will be permitted if it is appropriate having regard to the policies of the adopted development plan, or where it can be clearly demonstrated that the proposal is sustainable development which seeks to enhance the vitality of the village, the historic environment and rural economy.” Insert footnote after “development plan” as follows: “In particular Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 Policy 7S.” | Agree with the modification for the reasons set out in the examiner’s report |

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| PM4 | Page 24 BNP Policy 2 | 15 | <p>Add to the list of criteria:</p> <p>“</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposals for the development of the site will include a scheme for surface water drainage using sustainable drainage systems which will achieve development run off rates at greenfield equivalents. <p>It can be demonstrated that opportunities to improve water quality, amenity and biodiversity benefits would be realised.”</p> | Agree with the modification for the reasons set out in the examiner’s report |
| PM5 | Page 25 BNP Policy 3 | 15 | <p>Add to the list of criteria:</p> <p>“</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposals for the development of the site will include a scheme for surface water drainage using sustainable drainage systems which will achieve development run off rates at greenfield equivalents. • It can be demonstrated that opportunities to improve water quality, amenity and biodiversity benefits would be realised.” | Agree with the modification for the reasons set out in the examiner’s report |
| PM6 | Page 27 BNP Policy 4 | 15 | <p>Add to the list of criteria:</p> <p>“</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposals for development which would materially increase surface water run off should include a scheme for surface water drainage using sustainable drainage systems | Agree with the modification for the reasons set out in the examiner’s report |

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| | | | <p>which will achieve development run off rates at greenfield equivalents.</p> <p>It can be demonstrated that any opportunities to improve water quality, amenity and biodiversity benefits would be realised.”</p> | |
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April 2020