**Biddenham Society**

March 2017

As Tony Wood has written his final piece for The Loop, it is important that The Biddenham Society does not lose its voice to keep the residents of Biddenham in touch with updates on developments in and around our beautiful village. I have therefore picked up the pen (or rather the keyboard) and trust you will forgive my more minor contributions both in volume and style but I hope to keep you in touch with things as they evolve on the planning front. This will be where it affects individual plots or houses where proposals are not in keeping with the look and feel of the village and also, most importantly at present, how the Local Plan 2035 will affect us.

*Stand by for a little background that I hope doesn’t lose your interest – 2 paras only.*

Bedford Borough Council has prepared the local plan that will set out how much growth there should be in the borough in coming years (housing, jobs and associated infrastructure) and where it should take place. While current planning policy documents look ahead to 2021, this new local plan will extend the period that development is planned for beyond that date and they are about to go into consultation with the public on this. The 2017 consultation offers an opportunity for residents and others with an interest to comment on a preferred development strategy. It includes one or more new settlements to accommodate a significant proportion of the Borough’s growth over the next 20 years and beyond. Comments will also be invited on draft Local Green Spaces.

On 22nd February 2017 the council’s Executive agreed the consultation should go ahead but subsequent to this, the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee (ESCOSC) decided to consider this Executive decision and is now due to consider this at its meeting on 30 March 2017. Once the outcome of the ESCOSC meeting is known and when final approval has been given to proceed to public consultation, arrangements for the consultation will be put in place. Current preliminary dates of Tuesday 18 April to Friday 2 June 2017 are still the target.

*Are you still with me because this is where it gets important?*

This will be your chance to respond to the outlandish proposed sites being put forwards for development in and around our village. The adjoining map shows those areas that have been offered up as sites for development (shaded black). This does not mean they ***will*** be developed upon but they might be. Let me put a little bit of this into context:

In 2014 the evidence available indicated that around **815 dwellings a year** would need to be completed to cater for the Borough’s population growth. Based on the latest Government statistics this number had risen to **950** dwelling completions a year. That represented 19,000 new dwelling completions over the 20 year Plan period 2015-2035.  With current commitments amounting to 11,000 dwellings, that left around 8,000 dwellings to allocate in the new Local Plan.

And that’s what these sites might be used for: Gold Lane – 160 houses; the rear of 94-122 Bromham Road, Biddenham – 27 houses; the land to the right of this – maybe 50

… and so it goes on. As for the land within the village, behind Church End, Vicars Close, the orchard off Days lane, the development may continue, filling up the village with more and more houses and reducing its greenery, spacing and wildlife.

So please, when the consultation does come out, please log your concerns around the loss of the countryside that surrounds our village and the urbanisation of it. There are a number of ways of doing this including via the Borough’s website. A direct link to the Local Plan area can be found at <https://goo.gl/D7CJir> (I have set up this abbreviated link so you don’t have to type in very much!). The online consultation forms and templates are not yet available as I write this but I expect them to become so when the formal period opens.

Alternatively email planningpolicy@bedford.gov.uk, call them on 01234 718070 or write to them at Local Plan 2035 Consultation Planning Policy Team, Borough Hall Bedford, MK42 9AP.

I’ll provide more updates moving forwards.

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