

Basingstoke District Association of Parish & Town Councils

Meeting & AGM - 29 September 2022

Local Plan Update

Simon Bound

Council Leader, BDBC

Joanne Brombley

Planning Policy Manager, BDBC

[Slide deck](#)

Cllr Bound referred members to **Slide 2 – Cabinet Decision: 27 September 2022** and stated:

Everybody would be aware that the Council has been going through the preparatory work for a Local Plan Update and wanted to thank all those who had participated, which had been really valuable for the process.

Via EPH, the Council had been trying to create a set of standard documents based on a fixed time period – which was the standard method.

Cllr Bound summarised the slide which confirmed what was agreed at Cabinet on 27 September 2022 –

The decision was to undertake further work so that the draft Plan was right for the Borough, looking at the previous level of house building (which had been described by some as ‘eye watering’).

- The Council rejected the housing standard method for calculating housing need
- Widely held local concerns
- High levels of previous housebuilding
- Local position in terms of environmental constraints, infrastructure, climate emergency
- Uncertainty at national level – had had several false starts (eg the abandonment of a new Planning Bill, waiting for anticipated directions from Secretary of State to Planning Inspectors, caught in trying to deliver very high levels of house building but not being able to meet a 5 year land supply calculation, local borough councillors at DC having their decisions overturned by the Planning Inspector which calls in to question the quality of the original decision making by the Department of Levelling Up and the need to update the Local Plan)
- Publication of update to date census information – whole set of data needed from the ONS following the recent Census, expected to be available by May 2023.

Referring to slide 3

Cllr Bound explained:

- The creation of a full set of Standard method documents could now be banked.
- BDBC could now do all the work required to look at the position of what it needed to be in terms of the true housing number and the big number.
- This could be impacted if there were any changes nationally, but would be looking to advocate changes to the national planning system to reflect the local circumstances.

- Needed to roll out a new timetable for delivery of an updated Local Plan – likely for Regulation 18 in Autumn 2023 and adoption in 2025.
- Take positive approach to suitable and sustainable development proposals to address the 5 Year Land Supply
- Think about how the 5 Year Land Supply situation could be addressed without having updated the Local Plan.

Cllr Bound explained that there had been new announcements around Investment Zones – which appeared to be focussed on areas of growth which was not necessarily where Basingstoke needed to move to.

Cllr Bound explained that over the next few months options needed to be considered – balancing the numbers that the evidence demonstrates to be the true local need vs the level of risk of those who would wish to challenge (eg developers and land promoters)

Over the probability of success, Cllr Bound suggested it would be difficult to predict as there hadn't been many other Councils who have been successful (nationally)

Cllr Bound thanked everyone from the Parish & Town Councils for their patience with the process.

Cllr Bound explained that everybody was watching because there were likely to be multi million pound deals wrapped up in some of this. Some people were prepared to pay enormous amount of money to demonstrate something had not been done correctly in Basingstoke. He recognised the sensitivity of how highly politically charged the whole process was

Cllr Bound acknowledged that it was likely to be difficult for Parish & Town Councils to understand how they could help going forward and he, himself, was frustrated about trying to get things like an acceptance that 'brownfield first' was an appropriate position to take.

Cllr Bound was acutely aware of it being a very tricky process that had all sorts of 'pitfalls' and 'traps' along the way.

He explained that BDBC had agreed to investigate absolutely everything to improve the position it is in, in the short to medium term but was still concerned that people / developers would continue to submit opportunistic, speculative developments.

Comments from the Parish & Town Councils:

Peter (Old Basing & Lychpit) suggested that Investment Zones would be highly dangerous to the environment that would undercut the objectives of the Borough. He asked whether there were any plans for Basingstoke being put forward as an Investment Zone.

Cllr Bound responded that the Council should always be open minded; he explained that the Council could opt in but not opt out of an Investment Zone. He suggested that the Council would be interested in exploring the terms and conditions so see whether, rather than it be for loads of new housing, it could be used for something that was more useful for us ... eg a Science Park.

Julian (Dummer) thanked Cllr Bound for the efforts to reduce the housing number and reiterated the earlier point that Basingstoke should not be pushed in to an Investment Zone.

He made the comment that building so many houses, the Council does not have a good method for forecasting the demographic split of the population, including the provision of schools (HCC), water sewerage (Thames Water) etc.

Tracy (Whitchurch) was concerned that many of the parishes were facing building that was not currently part of their neighbourhood plan and questioned whether houses that were not included before the update of the LPU would be included in / counted towards the future numbers – otherwise it will result in far more numbers than the original plan.

Cllr Bound explained that it was important to get this right. The Cabinet had decided to reduce the housing number. It isn't without risk and compromises.

Alan (Ashmansworth) raised a point about water availability explaining that Southern Water were now refusing to supply any new development as they didn't have sufficient water to go round. Also there were nitrate and phosphate problems for disposing of used water and questioned whether Cllr Bound had any comments?

Cllr Bound confirmed that the issue with Southern Water was absolutely on their radar – lots of conversations about water challenges. He stated that Statutory bodies like the Environment Agency or Water Companies were taking 'interesting positions' which were often in conflict. So, it was to be hoped there would be some guidance issued so that local authorities would be really clear on what they needed to do.

Charles – (Upton Grey) – stated that his MP, Ranil Jayawardena, Secretary of State for the Environment was totally against giving any support to the reduction of housing number in Basingstoke, whilst Maria Miller seemed to be working hard to help.

Charles asked whether Cllr Bound was co-ordinating the governmental approach with Maria?

Cllr Bound prefaced his response explaining that he had to separate himself from his responsibilities as the Council leader, his responsibility to the local plan and the cabinet versus what he is expected to do as a ward councillor and what residents need to do when.

Cllr Bound explained that he was very supportive of residents expressing their view and was therefore very supportive of Maria's petition, suggesting that the petition would have more weight if it had 20,000 people sign it than if it only had 1,000 people sign it. That would be part of the evidence base needed to support at the Local Plan Inspection.

Cllr Bound explained that we shouldn't shy away from some of the consequences of trying to reduce the housing number by thousands of units may be painful for us. He suggested that it could be that a speculative development got through somewhere where it would be preferable not to have it.

Su – reconfirmed that by signing Maria's petition, which should be seen as cross party (even though being led by a Conservative MP) that this would carry more weight.

Cllr Bound suggested that getting as many people to sign the petition would be really helpful. He suggested that for Ranil Jayawardena, as the Secretary of State for Environment, it would be very difficult for him to be seen to be doing something that was in conflict with his government position. He suggested that time would tell and there may be a different message from Ranil if/when a different position becomes clear from central government.

Cllr Bound suggested another powerful way of sending evidence of support would be if Parish/Town Councils could pass motions within their meetings and email local.plan@basingstoke.gov.uk. This could then be included in the evidence base support for the Inspector / KC cross examination.

Malcolm (Bramley) suggested that over the next period rural areas are going to continue to face ad hoc developments where rural councillors will be opposing developments on grounds of sustainability, but where the Council Officers will be working to the NPPF guidance suggesting they are sustainable.

Cllr Bound responded that quality of decision making was very important. He understood the level of frustration felt waiting for Development Control Committee making the right decision and Parish / Town Councils getting very disappointed when the appeals are turned down. He warned though that the more this happened, the more likely it was the local decision making would get taken away.