



Minutes of the presentation given by Ruth Ormella, Head of Planning, Sustainability & Infrastructure at Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council to BDAPTC – 30 July 2020

Ruth explained that she had taken over from Matthew Evans (who had recently retired) as Head of Planning, Sustainability and Infrastructure at the Borough Council, joining during 'Lockdown' which had made it an extremely interesting time to join the Authority. She explained that she hadn't worked from the Council Offices as yet because of the nature of the Coronavirus situation.

Ruth explained that she was going to give an update in relation to the Local Plan - explaining BDBC were looking to do a Local Plan Issues and Options consultation in the autumn, hoping to actually get that through cabinet in September and then hopefully be consulting with us all before Christmas. She explained that in the autumn during the consultation stage that we could help to shape how strategies that were then going to become key in relation to the future policy direction for the new local plan. Ruth explained that she hoped to be able to come back to our group at a future meeting to discuss in much more detail and more fully.

Ruth went on to explain that one of the things that's really affected most planning authorities but which has definitely been something that's impacted in Basingstoke and Deane is the 5 Year Housing Land Supply - which has placed a lot of pressure in terms of communities and planning decisions because of the difficulty of sustaining decisions in the absence of a 5 Year Land supply.

Ruth explained that BDBC were still working on a '4.86 year' housing land supply. In December of this year BDBC would be publishing the Annual Monitoring Report update which would refresh that figure. She was unable to give any confidence that it was going to be 'five years' but she confirmed that they were working with the Hampshire County Council policy officers. Ruth explained that she was not entirely sure what impact COVID will have had on the 5 Year Land Supply, explaining that different planning authorities across the country have been looking to see whether they could make the case that the impact of COVID has meant that they have been unfairly affected in their five year land supply.

Ruth explained that Basingstoke and Deane had been working really positively in relation to housing delivery and there was a Housing Delivery Action Plan - there had been really strong focus around issuing some really large permissions with Manydown & the Golf Course recently and she knew that members would all be familiar with the size and scale of those proposals.

Ruth went on to explain that keeping the actual housing supply in check was really important and Manydown & the Golf Course were already factored into those calculations as to what benefit that

they would bring. She explained that Manydown & the Golf Course don't instantly turn around the issue that we have in terms of the five year supply.

Ruth explained that Neighbourhood Plans were really important because they were the planning level which enabled us, as local communities, to be able to identify and allocate sites and actually help shape our communities. She appreciated that many of the Councils had put a lot of time and effort into the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans. She confirmed that they were really important and she valued the contribution that they make.

In terms of Neighbourhood Plans that have the three year benefit in terms of decision making – Ruth confirmed that they were in that situation with Kingsclere and hopefully once Burghclere made it through the referendum and adoption process they should also have the same.

Ruth reminded the meeting that whilst the authority had actually progressed to determine Manydown, the Section 106 process and the whole process of delivering some houses on site it could be at least a further two years 2 1/2 years before you see homes at Manydown.

Ruth went on to refer to 'Planning in Principle' to give some updated statistics:

- In the 12 months that ended in March 2020 there had been 10 'Planning in Principle' applications, 5 approved and 5 refused.
- In the first quarter of 2020 there had been 9 'Planning in Principle' applications, of which 8 had been refused and the other had been withdrawn.

Ruth explained that she wanted to share what had happened in the Planning Service over March, April & May due to the pandemic. She explained that the decision making process in the planning service had been really tested but she was really proud to say that the officers had really stepped up to the mark – explaining that they had actually transitioned the majority of decision-making really effectively to a workforce working from home.

She then talked to the number of actual planning decisions – looking back 12 months for comparison.

	2020	2019
MARCH	117	120
APRIL	116	111
MAY	81	162

Ruth explained that the greatest impact had been in May because the planning officers couldn't get out on site and as they needed to observe all of the social distancing issues, BDBC had been unable to provide the staff with personal protective equipment to enable them to do those site inspections.

Ruth summarised that she felt proud of how the officers had transitioned to the new way of working and with Planning Committees moving to online. She was proud that the team had been able to continue to ensure that they were securing planning for people who were investing in developing in the borough.

Before finishing to take questions, Ruth explained that she wanted to talk about the planning application for land – Glebe Close – in Dummer which was a planning application for 17 homes with access. She explained that originally it had come into the planning authority and the officers recommended refusal under delegated authority.

They had refused it for the reasons of impact by way of dwellings in the countryside and a lack of a section 106 agreement. The application subsequently went to appeal. At the same time as it was going to appeal the developer submitted another planning application with the authority which the planning committee called in. The planning committee officer was at that point seeking to recommend approval and the planning committee not only refused it for the same reasons as the original refusal but actually also for additional reasons in relation to the impact on the listed buildings in the conservation area.

Ruth explained that the reason she was sharing the story was to make the point that we all had a role in relation to decision making and in this instance the Planning Inspectorate identified the fact that the local members actually got it right. The inclusion of 'impact listed building' and 'conservation area' was right to being given weight and in their planning balance and consideration they overturned the proposal. Clearly the application was dismissed and no permission was granted. Ruth explained that, in simple terms, the planning committee got it right.

Ruth explained that, in telling that story, she wanted to make the point that we all have a role in relation to making those representations in our communities. The planning committee had a role in relation to getting the balance right with decision making and then the professional officers also had a role in terms of their assessments.

Ruth finished this part of her meeting by explaining she was really looking forward to working with the Councils and meeting members again very soon, hopefully delivering some training via this sort of platform in the future Ruth moved on to take questions from the Council representatives – see separate notes of the Q&A.