

BUGBROOKE PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman: Mr P. Bignell

Clerk: Mrs C. Parry

BUGBROOKE PARISH COUNCIL – PLANNING MATTERS FEBRUARY 2010

The Parish Council thought that it would be useful to set out below the current planning policies and proposals which the district and county councils are adopting or suggesting, and which might affect the village. We are in the process of arranging a meeting at which members of the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit and South Northants District Council will be present to answer questions. When a date has been settled, this will be publicised. **In the meantime, the Parish Councillors would like to make the following points:**

- **Posters have been put up around the village, and delivered to houses, which have given some parishioners the impression that they have been published by the Parish Council. This is not correct, and some of the information which they contain is also incorrect.**
- **Leaflets which imply that the Parish Council is supporting proposed developments and/or is somehow involved in promoting them, are also incorrect. The Parish Council's position is set out below.**
- **The Parish Council had no prior knowledge of the inclusion of the 5 Bugbrooke sites in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and is unhappy with the fact that purely speculative sites have been published in this document without any discussion with local councils.**

Below, you will find some definitions and explanations which might prove helpful:

1. West Northants Joint Planning Unit ("JPU").

This consists of representatives from Daventry District, Northampton Borough, South Northamptonshire Council and Northamptonshire County Council. Its purpose is to prepare plans which will cover West Northants, including the Joint Core Strategy. However, each borough and district council will remain responsible for preparing its own plans covering local planning matters, and the JPU does not make decisions on planning applications.

2. West Northamptonshire Emergent Joint Core Strategy

This document was published for consultation last year. It set out the JPU's thoughts about how West Northamptonshire should be developed over the coming years. It was a strategy document and did not contain detailed planning proposals. There was large scale public opposition to the contents of the document and the JPU therefore decided that the consultation timetable should be extended.

3. South Northants Council Interim Rural Housing Planning Policy

There is a shortfall in the housing land supply in our district. This policy aims to deliver sufficient housing sites to ensure **at least** a 5 year supply and to monitor and manage the provision of housing land. South Northants Council ("SNC") is formulating its new planning policy documents. These will eventually form the "local development framework". Until the local development framework is adopted the council will consider planning applications by reference to some of the old local plan policies and to this interim housing policy. The interim policy will not form part of the new development framework but it will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

The “saved” local plan policy relevant to Bugbrooke, as far as the present planning issues are concerned, is **H5 – small groups or conversions or infilling is normally acceptable within Restricted Infill villages**. Bugbrooke is restricted infill, also Gayton, Rothersthorpe and Kisingbury, Pattishall and Nether Heyford.

The interim policy aims to promote a flexible approach to managing housing supply. In section 4, it states that the existing village confines will be in place until at least 2012 and that the focus on development will still be on Towcester and Brackley, with village development being permitted if there is local need. It does, however, state that away from larger urban areas, development should be concentrated on “local service centres”. These are larger villages with more employment and services, which mean that people do not have to travel far to access schools etc, and they are seen as being more “sustainable”. Bugbrooke is a local service centre.

There is a requirement for a 5 year land bank. Studies have shown that there is a shortfall of 1.73 years in this land bank, and this has to be made up.

The policy document states that locations of new rural housing developments will follow government guidance in being concentrated in “sustainable villages”. These are larger villages, with services sufficient to benefit additional dwellings. Bugbrooke is a sustainable village and has been allocated 111 houses within the policy (based on a percentage of 10% of the present number of houses in the village). These would be located on land on the edge of the village and would be in addition to any houses permitted as infill development within the village. An application has already been approved by SNC for 31 houses in Peace Hill, although the Parish Council persuaded them to change the access arrangements to alleviate the impact on the existing access point, to avoid any of the new properties overlooking existing bungalows, and to keep the boundary hedge.

The additional 111 houses is a SNC policy and, although the Parish Council strongly suggested a significantly lower figure when this policy was first proposed, now that it has been adopted as a policy by SNC it cannot legally be challenged. Applications for suitable development within this limit are likely to be approved. This is a fact, and the Parish Council is committed to dealing with it pragmatically, rather than just objecting to all applications on the grounds that we want Bugbrooke to stay the same. The Parish Council is seeking to influence development proposals to minimise the impact on the village. When the 111 target has been met, then the chance of objecting to other large scale developments will be greater.

4. **Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment**

This document has been issued by the Joint Planning Unit for comment recently. It is a technical site assessment which has been published to seek any further information or evidence about the sites mentioned in it. The explanatory notes on the JPU website state that: “The inclusion of a site in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment DOES NOT decide if it should be allocated for development. The Assessment has NOT taken into account, nor applied, any policy considerations; this will come later in the plan making process”.

The parish council has responded to the sites in Bugbrooke which are included in the SHLAA. Its comments were, briefly:

1. The Wharf (33 theoretical units) – this site should be retained for light industrial use and should not be allocated for housing.
2. Camp Farm (37 potential units) – this site could be developed sensibly, provided that infrastructure and other planning considerations were addressed. It is within the village confines and would be less likely to create another separate community than the larger identified sites.
3. Land by the Grand Union Canal (371 potential units) – this site is wholly inappropriate for development, being too large to be incorporated within the village. It would create a separate community, and would also overload village facilities, such as the schools.
4. Land at Johns Road (200 potential units) – this is also inappropriate for development, for the same reasons as the land at 3 above.

5. Land in Church Lane (14 potential units)– this could not be developed viably, since there are public sewers crossing it. Also, there are other drainage problems.

Parish councillors have been asked what the Parish Council is doing about the threat of development. The answer is that, within their limited legal powers, they are active in trying to ensure that Bugbrooke's interests are made known to the district and other authorities which create planning policy. They respond to consultation exercises and are seeking to encourage early consultation, where sites are the subject of planning applications.

The parish council welcomes input from parishioners at its monthly meetings and is grateful for any constructive suggestions about how communication within the village can be improved.

Philip Bignell – Chairman

David Harries – Vice Chairman.