



BRAMLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Member of the Hampshire Association of Local Councils

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To: Economic, Planning & Housing Committee Members, Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
Cllr Simon Bound, Cabinet Member for Communities, Planning & Infrastructure, Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
Ruth Ormella, Head of Planning Sustainability and Infrastructure, Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
Cllr Ken Rhatigan, Leader, Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council

Cc: Cllr Chris Tomblin, Ward Member for Bramley, Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
Cllr N Robinson, Ward Member for Bramley, Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council

Response to EPH on LPU recommendation requested by Cllr Simon Bound

Dear All

We trust this mail finds you well.

Bramley Parish Council has always taken the subject of development seriously and the following will give you background to our community's very real concerns. Before the recent Economic, Planning & Housing Committee (EPH) meeting we sent you all a six-point summary of our main concerns regarding the unsustainable nature of Bramley to absorb yet more expansion in housing stock. This document adds "more flesh to the bones" for your consideration.

Let us begin with a few headlines.

Since 1981 Bramley Parish has experienced over **a five-fold increase** in both housing stock and population. Amongst the highest, if not the highest, rate of expansion in the Borough.

You may well think that those rates of expansion would have been supported by appropriate infrastructure increases and improvements. Regrettably, nothing substantial has been done to sustain this expansion. There has been a capacity increase at the Surgery and the School; however, as is detailed below these increases are now at capacity because, as you know, infrastructure always plays catch up and never quite gets there!

The railway station - This has been used by Officers and the Government to determine that Bramley is a local sustainable hub. That is a myth and if you lived here, you would see the downsides to sustainability.

- It links Bramley to Reading, Basingstoke and beyond. Here ends the benefits.
- The level crossing cuts the community in two for nearly 40 minutes out of every hour.
- The fares to Basingstoke are not affordable for everyone.
- It creates significant log jams of road traffic, thereby increasing pollution at the very point children cross the roads to school.
- There is no dedicated parking as there is at other settlements with stations, so the side streets fill up with commuters' vehicles making life very difficult for residents. Parking is therefore free which attracts commuters from outside the local area (from as far away as Andover).

This brings us to our road or part of the "extensive" transport network officers believe exists in Bramley. Our road is the C32, a poorly maintained narrow winding road that links the A33 and the A340. This link

is the only one north of Basingstoke and south of the M4, and it is fed by 29 junctions and a large number of private driveways that access the road directly. Yes, it is very busy with through traffic in addition to the increasing numbers of residents and delivery vehicles. The network of small rural narrow roads to the north of the Settlement Policy Boundary (SPB) are very busy “rat runs” particularly as the crossing is down so often. Walkers beware on these roads! Two independent traffic studies have been provided to officers and your fellow Councillors on a number of occasions demonstrating the significant volume of traffic using this unsustainable link road.

Our pathetic transport network catalogue continues with the number 14 bus. If you see one, photograph it because it is almost as rare as the dodo. Residents must use cars or become isolated.

The sewage system - The cumulative impact of unsustainable development has manifested itself in a most disgusting way for residents. The sewage and drainage systems between Bramley and the Sherfield treatment centre cannot sustain even the current demands. Thames Water has stated in writing that “we would request a planning condition that no further development took place upstream of No1 SPS ahead of any [essential] works taking place. The timescale would be 2-3 years from approval”. This excludes upgrades required at the treatment works in Sherfield. Further unsustainable development around the A33 will further damage the Loddon River; thus without the water study data how can the EPH committee pass a judgement on this plan?

Do you need more proof that this is a showstopper for further expansion?

The Surgery - This was expanded following the development at Minchens Lane of 200 homes which occurred at the beginning of the plan period. This 200 is part of the “.. at least 200” demanded by the adopted Local Plan. Contrary to the officers’ statements, the surgery is already at capacity in respect of buildings and staff. This was confirmed by the Senior Partner, Dr N Fisher, on 27th August 2021, who says “This is to state that the Clift Surgery is at full capacity not only as a building but also as a workforce”. Do you need more evidence that there is NO capacity? Future possible expansion is now restricted as the adjacent land was given Permission in Principle for yet more housing. We believe a technical application for the development has now been submitted to the Planning Department. If approved, then expansion of the surgery has nowhere to go. Another showstopper.

The school - Again, the Officers statement that it has capacity is more than stretching reality.

On 27th August 2021 school representatives stated that investment in buildings, requiring more land, and more staff would be needed to support increases in capacity demanded by the catchment area. This statement was confirmed by the Executive Head Teacher on 3rd September 2021. Although there is some capacity, if it is utilised the facility would be “bursting at the seams” resulting in no meeting rooms, no interventions, and an inability to deliver practical curriculum subjects.

In addition to the above, Bramley has flooding issues, considerable anti-social behaviour, drug and crime levels which have significantly increased since completed developments since 2010 and beyond.

Bramley Parish Council have provided officers and Borough Councillors with a number of independent studies confirming that Bramley has significant barriers to further development.

The officers’ contention that Bramley is a “local centre” is mis-leading. It may have some of the criteria, but as you can clearly see from the above the argument by officers that Bramley is sustainable in that or any capacity melts away when confronted by fact and reality.

We also ask you to consider that Bramley has already delivered or has permission for 349 properties, which by anyone’s one standard is “at least 200”, delivering way above that needed for its local needs. Consider also that Basingstoke annexed Razors Farm as it shared a very small boundary with Basingstoke and then annexed Upper Cufuade Farm because it bounded Razors Farm. It now seeks to further annex the area West of Cufuade Farm (BRAM 0011) which is bounded by Upper Cufuade Farm and Sherborne St

John. A tenuous link with the Basingstoke boundary, I think you will agree. In total these three sites will add approximately 1200 (700 already delivered and/or approved) dwellings to the Parish and fulfil only Basingstoke's needs. These sites if and when developed will use Cufaude Lane (via Chineham) and Bramley to access the north of the Borough and beyond as the A33 and the "Red Man Roundabout" will be at a standstill! Specific to BRAM0011, the proposed 500 dwellings we are told will access the Borough via Razors Farm and into Chineham to reach the A33. It will damage the setting of Vyne House, open countryside, historic woodland and SINCS. As HCC Highways cannot improve the A33 then the Upper Cufaude Farm development is being asked to contribute to the Rapid Transport System. Will this stretch to BRAM0011 if accepted?

Bramley has two remaining small Conservation Areas with important views and historical significance to the rural character of Bramley. The context of these areas is vital to the rural setting of Bramley and must be protected as they have been in other areas (for example, Sherfield and Dummer).

We ask that Bramley, certainly within and adjacent to the SPB be given respite in this plan period to allow infrastructure deficiencies to be addressed before considering further expansion.

Option 2 favoured by officers merely persists with the current strategy of building where building has relentlessly continued before. Existing infrastructure, already overstretched, cannot easily or speedily be increased or improved to meet more pressure. Starting with a clean sheet is more efficient, sustainable and deliverable in every way than further destroying existing communities by taking the easy route to meet Government generated one size fits all targets. Hitting building targets is not the only duty the Borough Council has to meet.

We therefore propose that Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council take on board option 5 and include larger sites, north and south of the M3, including Upper Swallick in the plan; with even a small contribution in the plan period they will ease pressure on other rural sites. These larger sites will then be in process for the next plan period; otherwise, the burden will again fall on the north and northeast of the Borough.

As a general comment on whether the Government's plan numbers and dictates on a rolling five-year land supply is reasonable - whilst the national need for housing may be a genuine requirement it is surely extremely unreasonable to expect local councils to constantly balance the land supply and timing. Except where Borough/District and County Councils own land they are not in control of land availability, they are not in control of developers building once permission is given, and they are not in control of the market. These facts are clearly demonstrated in Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council's current plan attainment. Given these facts surely there is greater than reasonable doubt that would support a valid reason to push back on the slavish demands of a rolling five-year land supply requirement? Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council can demonstrate that across the plan period the overall number could be met through already allocated sites, with the inclusion of Popham, Upper Swallick, Basing, and maximising Manydown. It is unrealistic to have a rolling five-year land supply when the Council has little or no control over the key elements of delivery. The consequence of trying to meet the one size fits all Government numbers means small rural communities with hungry landowners will always be easy targets, and Bramley is a case in point. Small "in fill" rural sites may well be low hanging fruit for officers to meet numbers, but without infrastructure and recognition of real barriers to sustainability then communities will be blighted, and every aspect of infrastructure will fail as it is doing now.

On behalf of Bramley Parish Council

Further information and references can be found at www.bramley-pc.gov.uk/planning-applications/bramley-infrastructure-report-october-2019/ where there are reports on infrastructure and housing, a flood study, traffic reviews, air pollution, and sewerage information. A more recent update on the sewerage issues can be found here: www.bramley-pc.gov.uk/sewerage-issues-update-march-2021/