

Urban Vision Enterprise CIC
Biggleswade Neighbourhood Plan
Basic Conditions Statement
January 2021 (V1.1)

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Report

This is a Basic Conditions Statement, prepared to accompany the submission of the Biggleswade Neighbourhood Plan.

The statement explains how the Neighbourhood Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements.

2. Meeting Legal Requirements

2.2 General Legal Requirements

Qualifying Body

The draft plan proposal is being submitted by Biggleswade Town Council, which is the qualifying body for neighbourhood planning.

The Neighbourhood Plan

The draft plan proposal relates to the use and development of land and has been prepared in accordance with the statutory requirements and processes set out in planning legislation, policy and guidance.

Period of Effect

The draft plan proposal Introduction chapter states the period for which it is to have effect (until the end of 2035).

Excluded Development

The draft plan proposal does not deal with mineral extraction, waste development, nationally significant infrastructure or any other matters set out in Section 61K of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Neighbourhood Area

The draft plan proposal relates to the Biggleswade Neighbourhood Area and to no other area. There are no other neighbourhood plans relating to the Biggleswade Neighbourhood Area.

2.1 The Basic Conditions

The basic conditions that neighbourhood plans must meet are as follows:

- must be appropriate having regard to national policy
- must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development
- must be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan for the local area
- must be compatible with EU obligations

In addition, the plan must meet requirements of human rights law.

Regulations specify an additional basic condition that a plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, which set out the habitat regulation assessment process for land use plans, including consideration of the effect on habitats sites.

The following chapters of this statement deal with the basic conditions in more detail.

3. Sustainable Development

3.1 Dimensions of Sustainable Development

The National Planning Policy Framework states that sustainable development has economic, social and environmental dimensions.

The draft plan proposal takes a balanced approach to enabling growth, but also considering economic, social and environmental sustainability.

3.2 Delivering Growth

The Biggleswade Neighbourhood Plan seeks to achieve sustainable physical and economic development and growth. **Policy BSP1: Sustainable Development and Growth**, forms a basis for growth and is augmented by policies on employment, residential development and the development and diversification of the Town Centre. More specifically, these related policies are:

BTC1: Development in the Town Centre

BEM1: Employment

BEM2: Community Facilities

BRD1: Residential Development

The Plan does not undertake housing site allocations, leaving this to the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan. However, it does seek to increase the residential population of the Town Centre, improving its vitality. Potential future housing development sites were identified to the east of Biggleswade, but it is premature to allocate them at this stage due to infrastructure and other considerations.

Policies to ensure that growth is sustainable (see 3.3) are also positive in achieving growth. To achieve effective economic development, the attractiveness of the area must be maintained or enhanced, as a place to live, work, visit, and invest. Environmental quality is a key factor in achieving sustainable growth.

In addition, anthropogenic climate change is arguably the greatest threat to the future prosperity of the area. This is addressed in practical and local ways by the various policies referred to in 3.3.

3.3 Ensuring Growth is Sustainable

The growth policies referred to previously also set parameters to ensure that growth is sustainable, for example requiring amenity, standards, environmental constraints and matters like flood risk to be considered.

The plan seeks to protect biodiversity and wildlife, green infrastructure including The Green Wheel, Biggleswade Common and open landscape separating the Town from

Sandy and Langford. Local Green Space designations are also made. Policies relating to the green environment and outdoor activity are:

- BGS1: Biodiversity and Wildlife**
- BGS2: Strategic Green Spaces**
- BGS3: Local Green Space**
- BGS4: Footpaths and Rights of Way**
- BSP1: Sports, Recreation and Allotments**

Design is afforded high priority to ensure that development is sustainable, locally distinctive and pedestrian focused. Good design is not just about ensuring development is sustainable, but also recognising the relationship between quality of place and the area's attractiveness as a place to live, work, visit and invest. Design policies are:

- BPD1: Sustainable Design**
- BPD2: Shopfronts**
- BPD3: Extensions**

Policies are included to protect Biggleswade's designated and non-designated heritage and to encourage sensitive reuse of buildings. Policies are as follows:

- BH1: Biggleswade Conservation Area**
- BH2: Local Heritage**
- BH3: Scheduled Monuments**

The plan promotes a balanced and sustainable range of transport, including facilities for cycling, walking and public transport. This is important in creating more sustainable live/work patterns but also in making Biggleswade attractive as a place to live, work, visit and invest. Transport and movement policies are:

- BTM1: Sustainable Transport**
- BTM2: Highways and Footways**

3.4 Achieving Sustainable Development

The policies have been prepared against the context of increasing awareness of the impacts of anthropogenic climate change and the urgent need to address the causes. The aim of policies is to create sustainable mixed-use neighbourhoods, with green infrastructure, local facilities and good connections, including for pedestrians and cyclists.

The combination of policies enabling growth and addressing economic, social and environmental sustainability mean that the plan will help to achieve sustainable development. This takes account of the needs of current and future generations.

4. National Policy and Guidance

4.1 Having Regard to National Policy and Guidance

The draft plan proposal has had regard to the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

Chapter 2 of the NPPF deals with achieving sustainable development. Sustainable development has economic, social and environmental objectives, set out in Paragraph 8.

Paragraph 11a) states:

all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects;

This principles has underpinned the draft Neighbourhood Plan, which has the following vision and aims:

“Our vision for Biggleswade is that it should be a thriving and sustainable market town with a range of community facilities, providing quality of life and economic opportunity to meet the diverse needs of the community and a high-quality environment, including green spaces, to promote healthy lifestyles”.

The aims for Biggleswade are:

- 1. To support the development and diversification of Biggleswade Town Centre as a place for shopping, leisure, culture and recreation.*
- 2. To create sustainable, mixed-use, well-connected neighbourhoods.*
- 3. To support housing development that encourages sustainable living in and around Biggleswade Town Centre and meets diverse local needs.*
- 4. To protect and enhance Biggleswade’s natural environment and green spaces for their nature, amenity, and recreational value.*
- 5. To ensure that development is well-designed and sustainable.*
- 6. To conserve and realise the cultural and economic potential of Biggleswade’s historic buildings and places.*
- 7. To promote walking, cycling and other sustainable forms of transport.*

The vision and aims are translated into the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan (see 4.2).

Chapter 3 of the NPPF deals with plan-making. Paragraph 16 requires plans to be prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development, to be aspirational but deliverable; to be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement and contain policies that are clearly written and unambiguous.

The policies have been written to provide a clear framework for decisions.

The neighbourhood plan is based on a range of evidence, in line with planning practice guidance. This includes evidence on housing need, the natural and historic environments, assessment of potential housing sites, transport, flood risk, and other economic, social and environmental factors.

4.2 NPPF Policy Areas

The NPPF was revised in July 2021 and contains a number of policy areas. The following table details the policy areas that are most relevant to the Biggleswade draft plan proposal.

NPPF Policy	NP Aim	NP Policies
<p>Chapter 5: Delivering a sufficient supply of homes</p> <p>Supply of homes, mix and affordability.</p> <p><i>... to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed ...</i></p> <p><i>... that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed ...</i></p>	3	<p>Policy BSP1 promotes sustainable development and growth. Infill residential development for gaps in existing built frontages is supported, in accordance with Policy BPD1 (relating to sustainable design).</p> <p>Policy BRD1 seeks to ensure that that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed.</p> <p>Policy BTC1 supports residential uses and other uses for upper floors and sites within the Town Centre.</p>

<p>Chapter 6: Building a strong, competitive economy</p> <p>Create conditions for businesses to invest, expand and adapt.</p> <p>Includes consideration of economic and investment strategy, infrastructure, and flexibility to changing practices.</p> <p><i>planning policies should ... set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth ...</i></p>	<p>1</p>	<p>Policy BSP1 supports sustainable development and growth.</p> <p>Policy BTC1 supports growth and diversification of the Town Centre.</p> <p>Policies BEM1 and BEM2 respectively support employment-related development and new and expanded community facilities.</p>
<p>Chapter 7: Ensuring the vitality of town centres</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>Policy BTC1 supports growth and diversification of the Town Centre.</p> <p>Policy BEM1 supports employment-related development, but seeks to protect the viability of the Town Centre.</p>

<p>Chapter 8: Promoting healthy and safe communities</p> <p>Planning policies should aim to achieve ‘healthy, inclusive and safe places ...’. This includes promoting social interaction, being safe and accessible, and enable and support healthy lifestyles.</p> <p>Policies should also make provision for shared spaces and community facilities and guard against loss of valued facilities and services.</p>	<p>2, 4, 5, 7</p>	<p>Policy BEM2 supports new and expanded community facilities and seeks to safeguard existing community facilities.</p> <p>Policy BGS2 protects key green spaces, for their amenity value and to protect the open setting of different settlements. Policy BGS3 designates Local Green Spaces</p> <p>Policy BGS4 protects footpaths and cycle paths, and requires careful consideration of impacts of development around them. This includes all greenways and rights of way.</p> <p>Policy BPD1 promotes development that is convenient to pedestrians and capable of supporting social interaction. The layout of development must create good pedestrian permeability and safe routes for cyclists within the site, and convenient connections to surrounding paths, facilities, public transport services and routes to the Town Centre.</p> <p>Policy BTM1 requires development to address pedestrian convenience and sustainable modes of transport in its design and layout.</p> <p>Policy BTM2 states that where new layout is being created, pavements, pathways and public spaces must be suitable for people with varying degrees of mobility.</p> <p>Footways must be of sufficient width to allow for easy passage for personal mobility vehicles.</p> <p>Policy BSP1 provides support for new sports pitches or allotments in sustainable locations.</p>
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<p>Chapter 9: Promoting sustainable transport</p> <p><i>“transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals ...”</i></p> <p>This includes consideration of impacts of development, existing and proposed infrastructure, promotion of walking, cycling, and public transport, environmental impacts, and movement, streets, and parking in the design of schemes.</p>	<p>2, 5, 7</p>	<p>Policy BTM1 requires development to address pedestrian convenience and sustainable modes of transport in its design and layout.</p> <p>Policy BTM2 states that where new layout is being created, pavements, pathways and public spaces must be suitable for people with varying degrees of mobility. Footways must be of sufficient width to allow for easy passage for personal mobility vehicles.</p> <p>Policy BGS4 protects footpaths and cycle paths, and requires careful consideration of impacts of development around them. This includes all greenways and rights of way.</p>
<p>Chapter 11: Making effective use of land</p> <p><i>“Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions” ...</i></p> <p>This includes promotion of mixed use to achieve environmental net-gain, using undeveloped land for alternative uses, using brownfield land and under-utilised land and buildings, use of airspace.</p>	<p>1, 3, 5</p>	<p>Policy BSP1 promotes sustainable development and growth on brownfield sites in existing built areas, in accordance with Policy BEM1. Infill residential development for gaps in existing built frontages is supported, in accordance with Policy BPD1 (relating to sustainable design).</p> <p>Policy BEM1 supports appropriate offices or light industrial uses, including co-working space or flexible workspace, for brownfield sites, including sites within the Town Centre and sites close to residential areas or as part of a mix of uses in new residential development.</p> <p>Policy BTC1 supports residential uses and other uses for upper floors and sites within the Town Centre.</p>

<p>Chapter 12: Achieving well-designed places</p> <p>Design considerations include function, adding to the quality of the area, visual attractiveness, effective landscaping, being sympathetic to local character and history, not discouraging innovation and change, maintain strong and distinctive sense of place, optimise site potential, and making safe, inclusive and accessible places.</p> <p><i>... “Neighbourhood Planning groups can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development”</i></p> <p>The National Model Design Code (2021) establishes that well-designed places have ten characteristics. These are context, nature, identity, use, resources, movement, built form, public space, lifespan, homes and buildings.</p>	<p>2, 3, 5, 6, 7</p>	<p>Policies BPD1, BPD2 and BPD3 all seek to ensure that development is well designed, sustainable and complements Biggleswade’s distinctive identity.</p> <p>Policy BPD1 promotes development that is convenient to pedestrians and capable of supporting social interaction. The layout of development must create good pedestrian permeability and safe routes for cyclists within the site, and convenient connections to surrounding paths, facilities, public transport services and routes to the Town Centre. It must also be designed to create safe environments, including provision of active frontages (with windows) to overlook streets and public spaces and provide natural surveillance.</p> <p>Policy BPD2 seeks to maintain shopfronts in the Town Centre and to complement the building and townscape character where new shopfronts are proposed.</p> <p>Policy BEM1 requires development involving large-scale industrial or warehouse buildings must be designed to minimise their prominence.</p> <p>Policy BRD1 states that room sizes within dwelling units should meet national standards.</p> <p>Policy BTM1 requires development to address pedestrian convenience and sustainable modes of transport in its design and layout.</p> <p>Policy BTM2 requires pavements, pathways and public spaces to be suitable for people with varying degrees of mobility.</p>
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<p>Chapter 14: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change</p> <p><i>“The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change”...</i></p> <p>This includes consideration of flood risk, resilience to climate change, and promoting a low carbon economy.</p>	<p>2, 3, 5, 7</p>	<p>Policy BDP1 requires that development must include positive design and landscape features to reduce carbon impact. Creative and innovative design that incorporates superior environmental performance and design and landscape features to reduce carbon impacts is supported. Hard surfaces should be designed and landscaped to provide good visual quality and should be permeable to allow surface water to soak into the ground.</p> <p>Development must be convenient to pedestrians and capable of supporting social interaction. The layout of development must create good pedestrian permeability and safe routes for cyclists within the site, and convenient connections to surrounding paths, facilities, public transport services and routes to the Town Centre.</p> <p>Policy BSP1 confirms that new-build development would generally be unsustainable and would therefore not be supported within high flood risk areas, or within medium flood risk areas unless essential to meet local housing need and adequate mitigation measures are designed into the scheme.</p> <p>Policy BGS4 protects footpaths and cycle paths and requires careful consideration of impacts of development around them.</p> <p>Policy BTM1 requires development to address pedestrian convenience and sustainable modes of transport in its design and layout.</p> <p>Policy BTM2 states that pathways and public spaces must be suitable for people with varying degrees of mobility.</p>
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<p>Chapter 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment</p> <p>Planning policies should protect and enhance valued landscapes, intrinsic character and beauty of the landscape, habitats, and provide net gains in biodiversity.</p> <p>This includes consideration of protection of valued landscapes, intrinsic character, biodiversity net-gain, pollution, mitigation.</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>Policy BSP1 confirms that new-build development will not be supported within strategic green spaces and Local Green Spaces, as set out in policies BGS1 and BGS2. Development leading to the loss of Biggleswade’s remaining agricultural land will only be supported where alternative sites, including brown field sites, cannot be identified.</p> <p>Policy BGS1 provides general protection to Biggleswade’s green and natural environments. All development must achieve biodiversity net gain.</p> <p>Policy BGS2 protects key green spaces, for their amenity value and to protect the open setting of different settlements.</p> <p>Policy BGS3 seeks to designate land as Local Green Space.</p> <p>Policy BRD1 promotes green infrastructure within residential developments.</p>
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<p>Chapter 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment</p> <p><i>“plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats” ...</i></p> <p>This includes consideration of sustaining or enhancing heritage assets, wider social, economic and cultural benefits, contribution of new development, and character of place.</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>Policy BH1 seeks to address the problem of mediocre design in and around the Biggleswade Conservation Area.</p> <p>Policy BH2 relates to the need to consider the impacts of development on heritage assets.</p> <p>Policy BSP1 encourages appropriate sustainable development and growth, including the demolition and redevelopment of buildings but excluding listed buildings or conservation area buildings that contribute to the special architectural or historic interest of the area.</p> <p>Policy BEM1 supports employment-related development, subject to there being no significant adverse impact on Biggleswade’s historic environment.</p> <p>Policy BPD1 outlines that higher buildings of exceptional design quality may be supported in appropriate locations around the Town Centre, but outside of the Biggleswade Conservation Area.</p> <p>Policy BPD2 supports the reinstatement of historic shopfronts in historic buildings and areas. Contemporary shopfronts in historic buildings will be supported where they are of high quality and complement the building and wider townscape.</p>
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5. Local Policy

5.1 Strategic Policies

Strategic objectives are contained within the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2015-2035, adopted July 2021. These strategic objectives, and the adopted local plan policies relevant to each for the purpose of meeting the basic conditions, are:

Strategic Objective	Local Plan Policies
<p>SO1 Ensuring sustainable growth and associated infrastructure including the continued regeneration of town and neighbourhood centres to deliver the annual target for new homes and the provision of integrated health and care hubs.</p> <p>SO2 Delivering enough homes and jobs to meet our needs. Promote and demand good urban design practices throughout all types and scale of development across Central Bedfordshire.</p>	<p>SP1, SP2, SP5, SP7, R1, R2, R3, T1, EE12, HQ1, HQ2, HQ5, HQ9, HQ11</p>
<p>SO3 Conserve and enhance the area's historic environment by ensuring new development, including changes to the public realm, are of high quality design, appropriate to the significance of the heritage asset, and seek to maintain and enhance the contribution of built, landscaped and buried heritage. Seek to encourage developments that will result in a reduction in the number of heritage assets on the national Heritage at Risk Register (HAR).</p> <p>SO4 Create high quality neighbourhoods that have regard for local character and use sustainability principles which are sensitive and responsive to the significance of the local environment, are distinctive, safe, functional and accessible and which reinforce the identity of the area's townscapes, landscape and public spaces.</p>	<p>SP3, SP4, SP5, EE4, EE5, EE6, EE7, EE8, EE9, HQ1, HQ7, HQ8, HQ9, HE1, HE2, HE3, DC1, DC2, DC3, DC5</p>

<p>SO5 Provide a minimum of 24,000 new jobs by 2035, accommodating new economic growth along strategic and sustainable transportation routes, new mixed use developments and existing established sites.</p> <p>SO6 Recognise the contribution of land for employment uses to meet the needs of different sectors of the economy and manage the release of surplus employment land for other uses where appropriate.</p> <p>SO7 Link deprived areas with employment benefits arising from the development of major sites and existing key locations.</p>	<p>SP1, EMP1, EMP2, EMP3, EMP4, EMP5</p>
<p>SO8 Address housing needs in Central Bedfordshire using appropriate affordable housing targets and policies to encourage quality and choice.</p>	<p>SP1, SP8, H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, H7, H8, DC3</p>
<p>SO9 Reduce the reliance on the use of the car by improving facilities at bus and train stations, delivering transport interchanges and by promoting safe and sustainable forms of transport, such as improved walking and cycling routes.</p> <p>SO10 Ensure a reliable network of east/west and north/south public transport routes to improve access to local services and facilities, especially for those without a car, through well planned routes and integrated public transport. Encouraging the shift from road to rail freight to reduce demands on the highway network.</p>	<p>T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, EE11, HQ1, HQ2</p>
<p>SO11 Promote healthier and more active lifestyles by improving the quality of, and accessibility to, the area's open spaces, as areas for sports, recreation, visual interest, biodiversity, education, health and wellbeing.</p> <p>SO12 Encourage the development of wildlife corridors and networks to support objectives of the Central</p>	<p>SP3, EE1, EE2, EE3, EE4, EE5, EE6, EE7, EE8, EE9, EE10, EE11, EE12, T6, CC1, CC2, CC3, CC4, CC5, CC6, CC7, CC8, HQ1, HQ10, DC1, DC2, DC4, DC5</p>

<p>Bedfordshire Nature Conservation Strategy, the NIA, AONB and Green Infrastructure Plans, and provide new open spaces in line with the requirements identified in Central Bedfordshire’s Leisure Strategy.</p> <p>SO13 Support the necessary changes to adapt to climate change by minimising emissions of carbon and local air quality pollutants, protecting and enhancing biodiversity.</p> <p>Improving and protecting air and water quality, reducing flood risk and adverse impacts from noise including the safeguarding of quiet areas and reducing the impacts of contaminated land.</p>	
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5.2 General Conformity

It should be noted that general conformity relates to the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan taken as a whole, considered against adopted strategic local policies taken as a whole.

The draft plan proposal has been drafted against the context of the strategic objectives of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan and, taken as a whole, does not undermine and helps to achieve the spatial strategy set out in the Local Plan.

More detailed comparison of Neighbourhood Plan policies to strategic local policies is contained in 5.3.

5.3 Policy Comparison

The following table sets out the relationship between relevant strategic local policies and the policies of the Biggleswade Neighbourhood Plan.

It demonstrates the complementary nature of the Neighbourhood Plan's policies, which generally add detail and local focus compared to the Local Plan policies.

Strategic Objective and Policies: Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2015-2035	Biggleswade Neighbourhood Plan Policies
SO1 SP2, SP7, R1, R2, R3	Policies BSP1, BTC1 and BEM1 promote sustainable development and growth, support the growth and diversification of the Town Centre and seek to protect its viability.
SO2 SP1, SP2, SP7, R1, R2, R3, HQ1	Policies BSP1, BRD1 and BTC1 contribute to the aim of delivering enough homes and jobs to meet the needs of Central Bedfordshire. Policies BPD1, BPD2, BPD3, BEM1, BRD1, BGS4, BTM1 and BTM2 promote and demand good urban design practices throughout all types and scale of development.
SO3 HE1, HE3	Policies BH1, BH2, BSP1, BEM1, BPD1 and BPD2 seek to conserve and enhance the area's historic environment by ensuring new development, including changes to the public realm, are of high-quality design and appropriate to the significance of heritage assets.
SO4 HQ1	Policies BPD1, BPD2 and BPD3 all seek to create a high-quality neighbourhood that has regard for the local character of Biggleswade and use sustainability principles which are sensitive and responsive to the significance of the local environment, are distinctive, safe, functional and accessible and which reinforce the identity of the area's townscape, landscape and public spaces.
SO6 EMP2, EMP3, EMP4	Policy BSP1, BTC1, BEM1 and BEM2 recognise the contribution of land for employment uses to meet the needs of different sectors of the economy.

SO9 T2, T3, HQ1	Policies BTM1, BTM2 and BGS4 seek to reduce the reliance on the use of the car by promoting safe and sustainable forms of transport, such as improved walking and cycling routes.
S011 EE1, EE2, EE3, HQ1, HQ10	Policies BSP1, BGS1, BGS2 and BGS3 promote healthier and more active lifestyles by improving (and safeguarding) the quality of, and accessibility to, the area's open spaces, as areas for sports, recreation, visual interest, biodiversity, education, health and wellbeing.
S012 EE1, EE2, EE3, EE4, HQ1, HQ10	Policies BSP1, BGS1, BGS2 and BGS3 encourage the development of wildlife corridors and networks to support the objectives of the Central Bedfordshire Nature Conservation Strategy. They seek to provide new (and safeguard existing) open spaces, in line with the requirements identified in Central Bedfordshire's Leisure Strategy.
S013 CC1, CC3, CC5	Policies BDP1, BSP1, BGS1, BGS4, BTM1 and BTM2 support the necessary changes to adapt to climate change by minimising emissions of carbon, protecting and enhancing biodiversity and reducing flood risk.

6. EU Obligations and Human Rights

6.1 Screening (SEA and HRA)

The plan has been screened for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) by Central Bedfordshire Council. This included consultation with national statutory bodies. Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England.

The screening concluded that the neighbourhood plan would not have significant environmental impact (see Appendix 1). Full SEA or HRA are not required.

6.2 EU Obligations

Given the above screening outcomes, which take account of the responses of national statutory bodies, the draft plan proposal meets the basic conditions relating to not breaching EU obligations and Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

6.3 Human Rights

The draft plan proposal is a result of extensive engagement with the local community and stakeholders, from the earliest stages of the process. This has informed the content of the draft plan.

Statutory consultation (Regulation 14) was undertaken and this took account of consultation case law, including compliance with Gunning principles.

An equalities assessment is included at Appendix 2. This indicates that the plan would have positive impacts for people with protected characteristics.

The draft plan proposal meets human rights requirements.

Appendix 1

Screening Outcomes

Central Bedfordshire Letter 17/08/2021

Central Bedfordshire Screening Determination Statement August 2021 (extract)

Clerk to Biggleswade Town Council
The Old Court House
4 Saffron Road
Biggleswade
BEDS
SG18 8DL

Your ref:

Our ref: BIGG/SEA/21

Date: 17/08/2021

Dear Mr. Tarrant

SEA Screening Determination of Biggleswade Neighbourhood Plan

In accordance with Regulation 9 of the SEA Regulations 2004, Central Bedfordshire Council, as the responsible authority, has determined on **17th August 2021** that a **strategic environmental assessment (SEA)** of the emerging Biggleswade Neighbourhood Plan is **not required** as it is unlikely to have significant environmental effects.

As part of this SEA screening, Habitat Regulations screening was undertaken because plans that are likely to have significant impact on European Sites require a Strategic Environmental Assessment in addition to an Appropriate Assessment (Habitat Regulation Assessment). This screening concluded that the Biggleswade NP is unlikely to have significant impact on European sites and therefore the **Biggleswade NP does not require a full HRA to be undertaken.**

In making this determination, the Council has had regard to Schedule 1 of the Regulations and has carried out consultation with the statutory consultation bodies. An assessment against Schedule 1 of the Regulations and comments made by the consultation bodies are set out in the attached SEA Screening Determination Statement.

The above determination was made based on information provided by Biggleswade Town Council on the content of the emerging Plan, in this instance: the draft Biggleswade Neighbourhood Plan submitted to the Council on 16th July 2021.

Should the content of the final Submission Plan be revised and/or there is a material change in the environmental characteristics in the locality (e.g. any new or any changes to nature conservation designations), then the screening process will have to be reviewed and determination reconsidered to take account of the changes.

Central Bedfordshire Council
Priory House, Monks Walk
Chicksands, Shefford
Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ

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Email customers@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

This may result in changes to the above determination. It is Biggleswade Town Council's responsibility to inform Central Bedfordshire Council about any changes before the final submission of their Neighbourhood Plan.

A copy of the statement will be available in due course for inspection at the Council website at:

https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/45/planning_policy/473/neighbourhood_planning/3

It will also be available on request at: Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, SG17 5TQ.

Yours sincerely

Tom Price

Neighbourhood Involvement Officer

Direct telephone 0300 300 6784

Email tom.price@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

CC:

Environment Agency

Historic England

Natural England

Central Bedfordshire Council
Priory House, Monks Walk
Chicksands, Shefford
Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ

Telephone 0300 300 8301
Email customers@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

7. Screening Outcome

- 7.1 The screening assessment undertaken in Sections 5 & 6 concludes that, it is unlikely there will be any significant environmental effects arising from the Biggleswade NP. **As such, Biggleswade NP does not require a full SEA to be undertaken.**
- 7.2 The Council consulted on its findings with three statutory consultation bodies: Historic England, Natural England and Environment Agency. The consultation period was from 20th July to 17th August 2021. The consultation email stated that if a response was not received it would be assumed that the consultee agrees with the Council's findings and conclusions.
- 7.3 The Council received a response from each statutory consultee, noting that they agreed with the Council findings that the Biggleswade NP does not require a full SEA to be undertaken. The received consultation responses can be found in Appendix 1.
- 7.4 Following the screening process and consultation, the Council determines that **Biggleswade NP does not require a full SEA to be undertaken.**
- 7.5 As part of this screening, Habitat Regulations screening was undertaken because plans that are likely to have significant impact on European sites require a Strategic Environmental Assessment in addition to an Appropriate Assessment (Habitat Regulation Assessment). This screening concluded that the Biggleswade NP is unlikely to have significant impact on European sites and therefore the **Biggleswade NP does not require a full HRA to be undertaken.**
- 7.6 Although SEA is not required, Biggleswade Town Council may wish to consider voluntarily undertaking a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) that covers all three aspects of sustainable development: environmental, social and economic. The advantage of undertaking an SA is that it can assess the impact of the NP on the environmental, social and economic factors and therefore demonstrate to an examiner how sustainable development has been considered in the preparation of the Plan and that the Plan as prepared is the most sustainable compared with any reasonable alternatives.

Appendix 2

Equalities Assessment

i. Diversity

The Neighbourhood Plan needs to cater for the widest range of needs, for all of the population. Planning should be inclusive and rigorous engagement has taken place as part of the process of creating the plan.

Equally, there is evidence to suggest that diversity is an important factor in achieving sustainable growth.

ii. Legal Requirements

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on all public authorities in the exercise of their functions to have regard for the need to eliminate discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity, and to foster good relations between persons who have a “protected characteristic” and those who do not. Protected characteristics are defined in the Equality Act as age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

An Equalities Assessment is a systematic analysis of a policy or policies in order to scrutinise the potential for an adverse impact on a particular group or community, in particularly those with a protected characteristic.

An assessment has been made on whether the Neighbourhood Plan has a positive, negative or neutral impact on each of the protected characteristics. If the impact is negative, this is given a high, medium or low assessment. The following table describes these:

Impact	Description
High	A significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place etc.
Medium	Some potential impact exists, some mitigating measures are in place, poor evidence.
Low	Almost no relevancy to the process, e.g., an area that is very much legislation-led.

iii. Biggleswade General Population Characteristics

Sourced from the 2011 Census key statistics the following tables illustrate the age structure and ethnic characteristics of residents who live in Biggleswade Parish (nomisweb.co.uk, accessed 11-11-21).

Age Structure

	Count	%
All usual residents	16,551	100.0
Age 0 to 4	1,109	6.7
Age 5 to 7	573	3.5
Age 8 to 9	378	2.3
Age 10 to 14	1,041	6.3
Age 15	229	1.4
Age 16 to 17	434	2.6
Age 18 to 19	376	2.3
Age 20 to 24	900	5.4
Age 25 to 29	1,076	6.5
Age 30 to 44	3,675	22.2
Age 45 to 59	3,375	20.4
Age 60 to 64	937	5.7
Age 65 to 74	1,276	7.7
Age 75 to 84	816	4.9
Age 85 to 89	238	1.4
Age 90 and over	118	0.7
Mean Age	38.7	
Median Age	39	

Ethnic Group

	Count	%
All usual residents	16,551	100.0
White	15,802	95.5
English/Welsh/Scottish/Norther Irish/British	15,193	91.8
Irish	107	0.6
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	44	0.3
Other White	458	2.8
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	261	1.6
White and Black Caribbean	99	0.6
White and Black African	31	0.2
White and Asian	77	0.5
Other Mixed	54	0.3
Asian/Asian British	313	1.9
Indian	108	0.7
Pakistani	23	0.1
Bangladeshi	19	0.1
Chinese	58	0.4
Other Asian	105	0.6
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	148	0.9
African	72	0.4
Caribbean	58	0.4
Other Black	18	0.1
Other ethnic group	27	0.2
Arab	9	0.1
Any other ethnic group	18	0.1

iv. Impacts on Protected Characteristics

Equalities assessment requires consideration of each of the protected characteristics. However, it should be noted that the needs, attitudes and opinions of people within any of these groups is as diverse as in the population as a whole, including sometimes very polarised views.

The plan will achieve a range of benefits which potentially benefit all of the local population, including creation of local economic opportunities, town centre recovery, and creation of housing and community facilities to meet a range of needs. In addition, the plan protects green infrastructure or promotes high quality design, with an emphasis on ease of movement and pedestrian convenience. The plan addresses climate change through a range of practical requirements.

More specifically against protected characteristics, the following are of particular relevance.

Age:

Age can have implications for mobility, access to cars (especially older and younger groups), reliance on local facilities, housing needs and health, among other matters.

The plan seeks to create local economic opportunity, in the Town Centre and other locations, helping young people and people of all ages. In addition, it seeks to provide housing to meet a range of needs, with local community facilities.

The plan protects and enhances the green, historic and built environment. The plan supports ease of movement, sustainable transport, walking and healthy lifestyles.

The impact on all ages will be positive.

Disability:

Disability can have implications for accessibility, housing needs, access to employment, access to facilities and other factors.

The plan seeks to create environments convenient to pedestrians and to support ease of movement and healthy lifestyles. It also promotes housing suitable for a range of needs.

The impact on people with disabilities will be positive.

Maternity and Pregnancy:

Maternity has implications for numerous factors, including ease of movement, changing housing needs, and access to local facilities.

The plan seeks to provide housing to meet a range of needs, supported by a range of local community facilities. It seeks to create environments convenient to pedestrians and to support ease of movement.

The impact on pregnant women will be positive.

Race:

Race and culture can be factors in housing needs, community facilities, safety and a range of other planning matters.

The plan cannot directly address the social attitudes that underpin prejudice and hate crimes. However, it does seek to provide local economic opportunity, high quality housing and a well-designed and safe built environment for all.

The impact will be positive on people of all races.

Sex (Gender):

The benefits created by the plan apply to people of all genders.

The impact will be positive for all genders.

Religion, Gender Re-assignment, Sexual orientation:

Religion or LGBT+ status may have implications for housing, community facilities, safety and a range of other planning matters.

The plan cannot directly address the social attitudes that underpin prejudice and hate crimes. However, it does seek to provide local economic opportunity, high quality housing and a well-designed and safe built environment for all.

The impact will be positive on all people, regardless of religion or LGBT+ status.

v. Conclusion

The Neighbourhood Plan provides a strategy for the development of the neighbourhood area, and a range of policies, which will result in positive benefits for the local community, including those with protected characteristics.

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