

# **Edlesborough Newsletter Buckinghamshire Councillors Report for 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024**

## **Buckinghamshire Council responds to Government consultation on planning proposals**

Buckinghamshire Council has submitted its formal response to the Government's consultation on proposals to make changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), amidst significant concerns about the potential and far-reaching implications for the county should the proposals go ahead.

The consultation is a complex exercise with more than 100 questions that seek views on the proposed amendments to the NPPF. This is the framework by which local planning authorities determine planning applications and form local plans. The NPPF includes setting out how local housing need should be met, and specifically how many homes should be built in a certain area.

The council's response answers all 106 questions of the consultation, which seek opinion on the various areas to the policy where changes are proposed. While the council agrees with some of the proposed amendments, its formal response records some grave and significant objections to the proposed policy changes due to the negative implications it would have for Buckinghamshire.

The main areas the council has raised concerns over in its response are:

- The proposed changes to the way in which local housing need is to be calculated, which would lead to a 42% increase in the figure for Buckinghamshire
- The proposed changes to Green Belt policy, particularly a new definition of 'grey belt' land which has the potential to lead to large-scale sporadic developments across a wide area of the Buckinghamshire Green Belt
- The proposed changes to the requirements relating to maintaining a five year supply of housing land which are likely to lead to more speculative planning applications being granted permission, and
- The lack of a strategic approach to funding and providing essential local infrastructure when existing facilities are already overwhelmed

## **Full steam ahead for the South-East Aylesbury Link Road**

Buckinghamshire Council is pleased to announce this key infrastructure project is progressing well, with a new contractor now appointed to complete the remainder of the biggest section of the scheme.

The South-East Aylesbury Link Road (SEALR) is being built in two sections with work well underway. The two sections will link to form 1.1 miles of new dual carriageway, including three new roundabout junctions and a new bridge across the

railway line to London. Both sections are well on track and due to complete within the next two years.

The Lower Road and Wendover Road roundabouts, part of the longer section of new road, are progressing well with constructors Galliford Try now appointed to complete the remaining works for this phase; namely the section between Wendover Road and Lower Road including the bridge over the railway. It's anticipated that that this link should be open during the latter part of 2026. The section linking HS2's new Stoke Mandeville Relief Road to Lower Road is expected to be open sooner, during the next 12 months.

Once complete, the South-East Aylesbury Link Road will form a crucial part of a new Orbital Link Road around Aylesbury providing a new route around the town, significantly easing congestion through the town centre and delivering new cycling and walking routes.

## **Calling Bucks pensioners – can we help reduce your energy bills?**

Buckinghamshire Council has extended the eligibility criteria of one of its key programmes to help lower heating bills, following the government's decision to remove the Winter Fuel Payment from the majority of Buckinghamshire pensioners.

The council's 'Energy Doctor' scheme involves a home visit from one of their Energy Doctors to assess 'easy interventions' to lower energy bills, funded by the council, such as fitting LED light bulbs and draught proofing.

Now the council has extended the scheme to include all residents of State Pension age whose homes have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rated D-G.

It's part of a range of help the council wants local pensioners to access if losing their Winter Fuel Payment leaves them struggling to meet heating costs. The Winter Fuel Payment will only be made this year to pensioners receiving Pension Credit or another related benefit. It means some 95,000 pensioners in Buckinghamshire will no longer receive this payment so Buckinghamshire Council is working hard to remind those residents about what other support is available.

The council's Energy Doctors have visited more than 800 Buckinghamshire homes in the last 18 months, and the energy saving measures they have put into those homes are saving each household on average an estimated £129 on annual energy bills.

The Energy Doctors use low-cost 'retrofit' measures to reduce energy costs, such as:

- draught proofing
- installing LED lightbulbs
- installing secondary glazing
- providing heated throws
- installing aerated shower heads and shower timers

Thomas Broom is Buckinghamshire Council's Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment. He said:

"As a council we have made clear our extremely strong objections to the government removing this critical support for pensioners and have written directly to the Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to ask that this policy is reversed. We are also doing all we can to support our local pensioners as we move into the colder months and expanding our Energy Doctor scheme is one way we can help.

"Please find out from our team if you're eligible for a visit as our Energy Doctor could make a real difference in helping to make heating the home more affordable. I also urge family and friends of local pensioners to make sure they're aware of our Energy Doctor scheme which has already helped so many local households – please spread the word!"

## **Bucks History Festival returns to celebrate our history and heritage**

Buckinghamshire History Festival returns next month for its ninth annual celebration of the county's history and cultural heritage.

The festival, organised by Buckinghamshire Archives, sees the Archives team come together with partner organisations from across the county to present a huge range of events to see and do throughout November. Buckinghamshire's past will be brought to life and the untold stories of its people and places will be uncovered.

## **Council welcomes new £2.4m funding boost to support struggling households**

Buckinghamshire Council has welcomed the news that it will continue to receive Government funding until March 2025 to help support households and residents in Buckinghamshire who are struggling with cost of living pressures.

The funding has been allocated through the Government's Household Support Fund and enables local authorities to use the money to directly support low-income households and those experiencing financial hardship with energy costs, food costs, and other household essentials.

The Household Support Fund is provided by the Department for Work and Pensions and has been used in Buckinghamshire to support residents via the Council's [Helping Hand](#) service, which processes applications for financial help. The money has also been used to support local organisations including charities and other schemes to target priority groups who are struggling the most.

Please check if you or someone you know is eligible by going to:  
[www.gov.uk/pension-credit/eligibility](http://www.gov.uk/pension-credit/eligibility)

Councillor Derek Town