

Buckinghamshire Councillors' report, February 2026

Buckinghamshire Cllr Chris Poll

My report to you this month is all about the Buckinghamshire wide Local Development Plan.

We, as a planning authority are required by central government, to develop a plan for the next period, in this case 2025-2045, for housing and employment development. This will be the first of its type for Bucks as a whole, since the creation of the Unitary Authority. We have in this area an existing plan, known as the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan, but as a county we do not.

The “Call for sites” revealed proposals with enough land for 600,000 dwellings which does give us options. It is proposed that no development should happen within the Green Belt at all and that the new “Grey Belt” designation can be almost completely discounted.

Work has been going on by officers at Bucks Council as required by order from central government and we are now at the stage of having site specific proposals across the county. The interactive map can be viewed at:

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/4551b49742e846a4a4f0dad74e08635e>

The key for the map is:

Red outline but otherwise empty are sites which have been discounted.

Green shaded areas would go forward unless there are good reasons to not do so.

Blue shaded areas are due to have further analysis and may not necessarily go forward.

Under the last government it was successfully argued that this should be a needs-based assessment which had a figure of 65,000 dwellings over the plan period. Since the new government came to power in 2024 this has been changed to a central directive of 95,500 dwellings, an increase of 43%. Disappointingly this comes with no evidence other than a desire to build more homes. Furthermore, there will be no funding from central government for infrastructure. It is suggested by those that have given this figure, that infrastructure will come from the charges to developers upon completion of individual sites or projects.

From a personal point of view, I have always argued that infrastructure should come before significant development even if costs are then reimbursed to government or local authority. Experience teaches us that developers may agree to a certain level of funding for affordable housing, foul and fresh water connection, electricity grid and transport infrastructure, health services and education provision for example, but that too often they successfully negotiate down after the fact due to economic constraints. To build so many new dwellings within Bucks with no infrastructure plan in place and funding secure could lead to many problems in the future.

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Please do look at the online map for your area of work, home and leisure and comment via the Your Voice Bucks portal at:

<https://yourvoicebucks.citizenspace.com/planning/2aa4b313/>

Finally, you may have seen a letter written to Bucks Council and published by the Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government appearing to reprimand Bucks Council for a lack of progress in developing its plan. This is entirely inappropriate and inaccurate as Bucks Council are following the timetable set out by and agreed with the government. We must however keep to this timetable as failure to do so will mean government will take over the process and this will inevitably lead to even greater numbers being required.