

Buckinghamshire Councillors report to Parish Councils' September 2026.

As we return to the day-to-day business of the council after the summer break, there are some upcoming changes particularly within the planning sphere.

Changes to public participation in the planning process

From the 31st of October 2026 the government will, as expected, be making rule changes (The National Scheme of Delegation) to our ability to have scrutinised any planning application which falls into one of two categories. These will affect householder development, minor residential development (up to 10 dwellings), minor commercial development and a range of supplementary and technical consents.

What this will mean for us is that the ability to have applications scrutinised at committee will be removed from your elected Buckinghamshire Council representatives and Parish Councils'

Whilst it has become harder to have a planning application "called in" to committee in recent years, this will remove completely our ability. Instead, it will be the Chairman in agreement with the senior planning officer at Bucks to agree. In practice I suspect there will be very few applications heard going forward.

Where an application would raise significant planning, economic, social or environmental issues for the local area it could still be heard, but it will require agreement by others and not your representatives. There will be legal tests that it must undergo before that can happen though, and in practice will mean a senior officer disagreeing with their own staff for this to happen.

Buckinghamshire Local Plan 2025-2045

Thank you to all residents that took time out of their busy summer schedules to attend one of our meetings or contact us with regard to the proposed local plan. We had a great deal of engagement across all the parishes where we could explain the process and gain feedback on your views. Naturally the overwhelming view was that so much development would be inappropriate for this area due to the lack of existing infrastructure. Peter and I have placed individual responses as your representatives in which we reflected your views. We worked together to ensure we covered all aspects. Worryingly though, just a few days after our submissions were presented, Bucks Council released some further documents which, had we known at the time, would have changed our representations. We were then invited to comment, as was any resident or business to comment, but only on these four documents.

We must also thank the various groups formed around the ward for their work. Many hundreds of hours have been spent by volunteers researching and summarising their responses. Of course, many residents have also contributed on an individual basis, we thank you all. This has been the most engaging subject I have encountered in 18 years as a representative.

There are Gypsy and Traveller assessments, (we are required to accommodate nearly 600 pitches (places) over the plan period), two strategic transport documents and a Green Belt assessment covering irreplaceable habitat.

The omission of these documents does, in our view, demonstrate that the plan was submitted for consultation before it was ready. This being done after significant pressure from government to proceed as quickly as possible. The consequence of this though is that our view of the plan not being properly prepared is demonstrable. It is therefore possible to argue that it is unsound.

The Green Belt document though lays bare the omission of suitable land contained within the south of the county in preference for developing in our area. It is unarguable that infrastructure is more developed there, (transport links, jobs etc) and that to develop here would require significantly more infrastructure. This is borne out by the apportioning of affordable housing figures being 40% in the South and just 25% in the North. We will be holding urgent meetings with the council leadership and officers before responding as such. I would also encourage any resident or organisation to do the same.