



The Buckingham Society

Campaigning for a better Buckingham

Newsletter February 2023

View From the Chair – Ian Orton



Buckingham's population growth in perspective

Population growth has been an endemic feature of life in Buckingham for most of the past 50 years. Over the past decade and a half, however, the rate of growth seems to have accelerated.

By just how much is illustrated by the latest census data. Between March 2011 and March 2021, the population of the parish of

Buckingham grew by 2,261 from 12,043 to 14,304, an 18.9 percent increase, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

This is a staggering increase on the preceding decade when the population grew by just 3.0 per cent between April 2001 and March 2011. It is also a much bigger increase relative to the rest of Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes, the southeast and England as a whole. In Buckinghamshire the population grew by 9.5 percent from around 505,300 in 2011 to 552,100 in 2021. Milton Keynes, one of the UK's fastest growing local authority areas, recorded population growth of 15.3 percent over the same period. The southeast sustained a 7.5 percent increase while England's population grew by 6.6 percent.

Since 2021 Buckingham has almost certainly grown further with the prospect of more to come. The census data almost certainly excludes most of the St Rumbold's Fields development which could add another 1,000 or so people on completion. Meanwhile work has just commenced on the site bounded by Gawcott Fields and Osier Way which could boost the population by around the same magnitude.

Moreover, there is a likelihood that an application for planning permission will be submitted shortly to develop a site to the south of the current Wipac factory on London Road for

housing. Although this site is planned to accommodate commercial and industrial development it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that this could accommodate further additions to Buckingham's housing stock. With further housing development likely in Maids Moreton parish population growth in "greater Buckingham" could be given an additional boost over the coming decade.

Does all this matter? Within limits The Buckingham Society is agnostic as far as growth, and especially housing growth, is concerned. Our view is that provided it is properly planned, the buildings concerned are well-designed and supported by the necessary physical and social infrastructure, growth can be supported. This is especially the case if brownfield, rather than greenfield, sites are developed.

Therein lies the problem: Buckingham is almost certainly facing an infrastructure deficit. In terms of physical infrastructure capacity may have reached as far as sewage treatment is concerned while Buckingham's roads are becoming increasingly congested, especially in the town centre, with its mediaeval street pattern. Meanwhile, social infrastructure is being increasingly pressured in a number of areas, not least education and healthcare.

The reality is that unless infrastructure provision increases the current population growth rates will probably be unsustainable. But who will provide the infrastructure spending necessary to support further growth? And how is the Buckinghamshire Council proposing to handle this increasingly explosive issue, one which if not handled with energy, imagination and money, could result in real hardship in North Buckinghamshire?

Answers on the back of a £50 million banknote please.

What next for the M&Co building?

The demise of M&Co will mean that the amount of vacant retail property in Buckingham's town centre will substantially increase. Moreover, given the travails of the retail sector it could remain vacant for a considerable period if the current owners market the site for retail use.



Given that the rest of the building, i.e. the upper floors, will almost certainly be converted to residential units, it is very likely that a change of use application will be made for the former retail areas to follow suit. This may not be an inevitability however, especially if a developer could be persuaded to take a risk by using more enlightened thinking.

What about converting the area currently occupied by M&Co into an indoor trading area along the lines of Oxford and Shrewsbury's covered markets? These support a wide range of retailers ranging from butchers, fishmongers and greengrocers to cafes, clothing outlets and specialist retailers. Some are permanent. Others operate on a pop-up variety. More pertinently they still seem to be prospering, unlike a considerable portion of the retail sector, especially town centre retailers.

Of course, a covered market site available to prospective retailers will not automatically ensure success. There are still plenty of other factors that will have to be overcome. Nevertheless, all those consultants and "experts" charged with "revitalising" town centres, and especially Buckingham's town centre along with local authority and developers should at least consider these alternatives instead opting for the residential development default.

What do members think?

Great news for the old Town Hall – Ian Orton



Restoring an uninterrupted view of the frontage of the former Town Hall, a longstanding aim of the Buckingham Society, has become a step nearer.

Buckingham Town Council (BTC) has secured funding from the Buckingham and Villages Community Board, to hire planters to prevent vehicles from parking on the paved area immediately in front of the old Town Hall, which is now part of Villiers Hotel.

The planters, some of which will be movable, to enable vehicles that must have access to this area, such as Openreach maintenance vehicles, hotel suppliers and wedding limousines etc., will match the design of all the other planters used throughout the town centre. Villiers Hotel will cover the costs of planting and maintaining the planters.

It was the Society, and especially Kathy Robins, that first proposed the project and did much of the initial spadework, as previous editions of the Newsletter will confirm.

Well done Kathy for providing the catalyst to what could turn out to be a great improvement to the townscape as well as making it easier for wedding parties and other users to access Villiers Hotel's ballroom.

Planning – Carolyn Cumming

Yellow Planning Notices - Historically, it has been the duty of Buckinghamshire Council (formerly AVDC) to display yellow notices adjacent to property that is the subject of a planning application. They are often late, resulting in neighbours not being aware of proposed changes until the deadline has passed. The Buckinghamshire Council has notified the Town Council that it intends to replace the yellow notices with individual letters to neighbouring properties. It is unclear how this might overcome obvious pitfalls; e.g. rented properties or absent residents. We think a more straightforward solution would be to put the onus on the applicant to display a notice on their property and have put this suggestion to the planning department.

22/01498/AOP Land Off Osier Way - Initial work on this site, set to deliver 420 dwellings over the plan period, appears to have started. The first Phase of 120 dwellings is now at the detailed planning stage. A number of conditions have been applied to the application, which deal with Energy supply, Noise levels, Biodiversity, Design, & Landscaping. Except for Biodiversity, all of these are yet to be signed off.



Although a noise impact assessment has been submitted, Environmental Health do not believe that this proposal meets the Condition set by the planning authority as to how noise mitigation measures will work in practice.

In order to comply with 2021 targets, set by Government, there is a need to reduce energy by 31% (compared to 2006 levels). The applicant has submitted a detailed report in which the approach to a 31% reduction is with a 'Fabric First' approach. Basically, orientate houses towards sunlight, shelter from wind, provide air tightness, energy efficient ventilation, heating and light. There still seems to be a reliance on gas boilers, however.

The Buckingham Society submitted detailed comments on the lack of local distinctiveness in the Design Codes back in August of last year. We have yet to see any further response to these criticisms from either the planning officer or the applicant. We remain concerned that, without scrutiny, the beneficial aspirations for this development will be lost and will continue to press for clarity on this issue.

Bourton Meadow beyond the Bypass - At a Town Council meeting in January, Manor Oak Homes presented a series of very pretty “storyboards”, showing their proposals to develop the land adjacent to the Canal to the east of the bypass road. They emphasised its biodiversity credentials, claiming that it had enormous potential to attract tourism while (to pay for the proposals of developing it as an attractive wildlife and wetland meadows with visitor centre) an unspecified amount of housing was proposed at the northern end! The Society’s view is that, from a biodiversity point of view, the site would be better left alone as an informal recreational area. It seems likely that an application will be submitted later this year despite all the reservations that were expressed.

Starbucks - In case Buckingham was in danger of running out of cafes, Starbucks are about to rescue the former Little Chef next to the A421 beside the Shell Garage. “Rescue” might be the wrong word for in order to accommodate the drive through proposals and additional parking, several trees will be lost along their boundary to the east. Bizarrely, they have proposed to offset the loss of trees and achieve net biodiversity gain by planting trees in the parish of Leckhampstead. This, in our view, is unacceptable and we hope that the Officer in charge will ensure that any net biodiversity gain is carried out within the parish of Buckingham. Surely, the Bourton Meadow site is a heaven-sent opportunity to do just that.

23/00178/AOP “Site Q” Neighbourhood Plan - Even more alarmingly, a planning application has been submitted for this site, which was allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan for Employment, along with a requirement for an extensive landscape buffer overlooking the Padbury brook valley.

The application from Rainer Developments Ltd is for 300 dwellings and a small employment zone adjacent to the A413 in the North East Corner. There appears no evidence to support their view that the site has not attracted potential employers and the report from Economic Development Team at Buckinghamshire Council would expressly refute this.

The whole concept is premature to say the least. Since 2015, Buckingham has seen an increase of approximately 1100 dwellings with little, or no associated **major** infrastructure. By which we refer to schools, waste, sewage and health facilities. It is yet another example of a speculative foray into residential development sites. Anticipating where future housing might be allocated has a disagreeable habit of becoming a reality, regardless of the site’s suitability.

Green and Open Spaces – Ian Orton

The winter usually tends to be a bad season for our treescape. Many trees, including some of the best, have been lost during previous winters, especially because of gales. This winter doesn’t look as if it will be as bad in this respect. But we are still likely to lose more trees because of ongoing development.

Work has recently started on a new development bounded by Osier Way and Gawcott Fields. This will take its toll as far as trees are concerned along with several hedgerows. The latter are probably of greater importance as far as biodiversity is concerned and their removal to facilitate more housing to be built will have obvious consequences for wild life.

For example, an ecological survey of the Osier Way/Gawcott Road site identified an important dormouse colony. Although the original development plans will almost certainly have been amended to mitigate any potential damage doubts will inevitably be raised about the ability of these and other fauna to survive, let alone prosper near humans. Ground nesting birds are also likely to be adversely affected.

Winter is also the season for planting new trees. Thanks to Buckinghamshire Council (BC) additional new plantings have been made on The Heartlands to augment those made in previous years. Most of these, including the flowering cherries appear to be prospering despite recent summer droughts and the attention of vandals.

Despite fears that the black poplars planted in January 2022 may have succumbed to vandalism the likelihood is that these will reshoot and recover. A recent inspection showed that most of the whips planted at the same time were still alive. A more significant tree planting initiative may soon take place in Bourton Park.

Buckingham Town Council (BTC) will be working with a charity called Earthwatch to plant clusters of dense fast-growing native woodland to create a “tiny forest” based on the ideas of Dr Akira Miyawaki, a Japanese botanist. BTC is currently looking for volunteers to plant and help maintain more than 550 trees. If you would like to help, please contact Nina Stockill at BTC.

Vandalism in the town remains a problem. Graffitists, and especially one called “Oliver”, seem to have been particularly active along the railway walk. Our interpretation board on the site of the former railway station has been attacked on several occasions as have the viaducts that carry the railway walk over Hunter Street and Bath Lane. BTC has become increasingly concerned about what appears to be a vandal mini-epidemic which is absorbing time and money to remedy the effects on council-owned land and premises.

Research and experience have shown that the best way to deal with graffitists is to adopt a zero-tolerance approach and remove graffiti as soon as it appears, something I have done on at least four occasions over the winter as far as our interpretation board is concerned as well as keeping a beady eye on BC’s board on Bertie’s Walk.

On other green space-related matters BTC received a positive response in January to their consultation about the new cemetery and associated outbuildings which is planned to be developed on a site near to the A421/Tingewick Road roundabout. Respondents were not so keen on a rise in the BC precept to cover the costs, however, so it is likely that the development will occur through phases rather than on a one-off basis.

Ed Grimsdale:

LAND ARMY GIRLS IN LEAFY BUCKS Transcribed from the Daily Mail, 1940,

I'm Prudence, the girl with the plough,
I work on a farm down in Bucks.
I love all the hens and the lambs and the cow,

And I think that the ducks are just ducks.

I wouldn't deceive, I've the failings of Eve
- I like an occasional spree—
Yet, I struggle and toil just for love of the soil,
But, fall for farmer? Not me!

I'm Prudence, the girl with the rake,
At rooting up weeds, I'm the goods,
And though I have tried to get eggs from the drake
I'm a knock-out at lifting the spuds.

The farmer's wife's green with an envy I've seen,
Which gives me a kick, I'll agree.
The lads say I'm worth all the fruits the earth,
But, fall like an apple? Not me!

I'm Prudence, and farming's my kink.
They say I've unusual views -
I asked if a phosphate was something to drink
And thought they made hedges of ewes.

The pigs, I must own, smell of Eau-de
Cologne
It makes them more pleasing to me!
The Boss, with a sigh, says he knows that
I try ...
But, fall for a Land Girl? NOT HE!



The Buckingham Advertiser and many local farmers did not welcome the arrival of Prudence and her pals in 1940. Our paper thought that land workers, like poets, were born and not made. But it accepted that there was a role for female clerks and typists from the city even if they couldn't do what 'old Garge' or even 'young Garge' easily managed. Of course, some farmers had Jealous Wives who fretted over the impact of Eau de Cologne Pru' on her hubby or some of her litter of strapping lads. In conservative North Bucks, foreign-speaking Prisoners of War from local Internment Camps who arrived daily by bike or bus and returned nightly to Shalstone or wherever, seemed a safer bet.

Credits and Strapline for photo. Image from the Museum of English Rural Life 'Pru'and Pals enjoying a Hoedown.'

Transport – David Child

Buckingham & Villages Community Board projects - The Society have approached Buckingham Town Council to see if they would apply for funding from the Buckingham & Villages Community Board for any of the 4 projects below that the Society consider would be of community benefit. In no particular order:

The bus stand in the town centre



There are several improvements from levelling the road at the bus stop to improving the road and kerbing of the road where the buses exit so that it reduces the need for the buses use both sides of the road. There have been instances where the bus doors have jammed on the kerb.

For a full report see the link

<https://buckinghamociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/BusStation20150919.pdf>

Path on Stratford Road

Create a path from the defined path BUC/27/7 (Lower Wharf) to the footpath at the entrance to the football club.

For a full report see the link



<https://buckinghamociety.org.uk/wp->

[content/uploads/2020/10/OuseValleyWalk_StratfordRd.pdf](https://buckinghamociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/OuseValleyWalk_StratfordRd.pdf)

Island Refuge on the A413



To provide a safer crossing point by installing a pedestrian refuge at the A413 Buckingham bypass near the Bourton Meadow School – This crossing point links the BCC definitive paths - on the east of the A413 paths - BUC26/1 - 27/1 - 26/2 and on the west side paths - BUC30/1 & 27/2

For a full report see the link

<https://buckinghamociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/BurleighPiece.pdf>

West Street crossing



Provide a crossing outside 27 West Street. At this location there is a high volume of vehicular traffic throughout the working day and carries a large amount of HGVs - also it is on a slight bend. The road is wide at this point and crossing the two vehicle streams where the time from when the vehicle can be seen to

when the vehicle is upon you is very short. Pedestrians have difficulty negotiating to cross West Street.

For a full report see the link

<https://buckinghamssociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/WestStreet2.pdf>

PS Two projects that have come to completion that preceded the formation for Buckingham & Villages Community Board are the refuge island on Moreton Road near the Old Gaol and the pathway linking the bus stop at Bradfield Avenue and Whitehead Way.

Local Bird Observations - Mary Melliush

The winter in Buckingham has been mild for our birds. I heard tawny owls calling from October onwards as they paired up. Redwings have been seen across the area from Paige Hill to the trees around here. I spotted a group of fieldfares near the river at Radclive. The ducks are back on the river and woodpeckers sighted too. I saw a kingfisher in January in the same area as one seen by Jackie and myself a few weeks earlier. She saw a jay. They are colourful wary birds. Again it was in the river area.



In my garden I had a good collection of small birds including a wren, long tailed tits, goldfinches and a couple of collared doves. It is some time since I saw a nuthatch. They used to be regular visitors.

A sparrow hawk sat in the garden for a few minutes in December. He was an awesome sight but every other bird had popped into the thick hedge so he was robbed of a snack.

Flying over here have been egrets, a heron and lapwings. The lapwings puzzled me but they can be seen not too far from Buckingham in a farm area. It is worth watching groups of starlings going homewards in the evening. The same direction can indicate a murmuration building.

Now birds are pairing up, investigating nest sites and spring is coming.

Forthcoming events

12th April time to be announced – Another chance to hear the 2021 talk on Secret Organisations in North Bucks 1939 to 1945 by Bill Robins, Auditorium Vinson Building

24th May at 11.00 - Tree Walk lead by Michael Hunt Winslow Arboretum. More details to follow and booking essential.

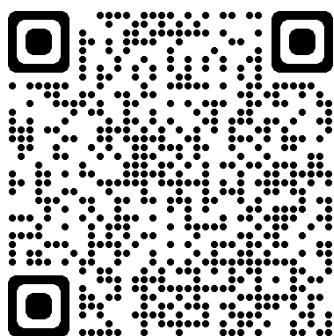
20th July at 6.30pm – Summer Lecture by Dan Winter, Head Gardener Evenley Wood Garden, followed by the Annual Garden Party,

28th July – Launch of the Swan Trail. Buckingham Town Council are introducing a second temporary public art sculpture trail which will run throughout the summer holidays of 2023.

Executive Committee:

Ian Orton	Chair, Green and Open Spaces, planning
David Child	Treasurer, transport, website, and planning
Carolyn Cumming	Planning
Ed Grimsdale	Planning and Society Historian
Gill Jones	Membership secretary
Belinda Morley-Fletcher	Secretary
Roger Newall	Planning
Russell Popee	
Anthony Ralph	Planning
Kathy Robins	Newsletter Editor, Planning
Mary Simons	Planning

We should like to hear from you!



Please give us some feedback - tell us what activities you would like The Buckingham Society to prioritise, any ideas for social events (once they are again allowed) or simply write to us on any Buckingham related matter. If you have any ideas, questions or comments please address them to: kathyrobins@walnutyard.co.uk Tel: 07834 484762. If you would like to become involved in any of our activities or attend a meeting of the executive committee, just contact us and come along. www.buckinghamssociety.org.uk