



The Buckingham Society

CAMPAIGNING FOR A BETTER BUCKINGHAM

Newsletter - December 2025

Chairman's Notes – Ian Orton



Welcome to the Winter 2025 edition of the Buckingham Society's Newsletter.

2025 has been a very busy year for the Society. We underwrote, helped organise and participated in the "Buckingham Ablaze" commemoration back in February and March; we have cleared, replanted and maintained the large flowerbed outside the Community Centre; have participated in events organised by Buckingham Town Council, such as the annual "Celebrate Buckingham Day", and organised a number of events for both Society members and the general public, such as the recent talk given by Bill Robins.

We also continue to monitor and comment on every planning application that covers the town as well as contributing to various consultations commissioned by a plethora of organisations. The Society continues to act as a facilitator to help resolve a plethora of day-to-day problems affecting our members and the town community.

Next year is likely to become busier still, however because we are returning to our campaigning roots to press the case for a **"yes"** vote in the forthcoming referendum on the latest iteration of the Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan. This will take place on 22 January. Let's start with that.



BUCKINGHAM

NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Neighbourhood Development Plan “NDP” or “The Plan”

And a referendum in January which needs YOUR support

Anthony Ralph, a member of the Society’s executive committee, has helpfully summarised the Plan at page 7. Its key features are immediately below.

The Plan sets out the parameters that will underpin land-use planning policy up to 2040 within the Parish of Buckingham. It also identifies the sites where expected developments can be accommodated, along with the associated land-use class.

In delivering this, it encapsulates the efforts of many organisations and individuals within Buckingham, including Buckingham Town Council (BTC) and Buckingham Society members, coordinated by a steering group.

It aims to provide more certainty about what the next 15 years hold for the future of Buckingham. More importantly it provides the context in which decision makers and participants within the planning process will be required to operate. For example:

- Prospective developers will not normally be permitted to build or develop land outside the sites identified within the Plan.
- Nor will they normally be able to develop a site that has been allocated to a specific use-class, such as commerce or industry, to housing or to any other purpose.

The Plan has been approved by both BTC as well as by an independent examiner appointed by Buckinghamshire Council (BC), our local planning authority, to ensure that it meets its legal obligations.

However, it will not become effective as the Statutory Plan unless it secures a majority of the votes cast in the referendum on 22 January 2026.

If the Plan doesn’t achieve this then it will fail. Moreover, there will be NO second chance to tweak the plan to make it more acceptable to voters. It is very much a case of “take it or leave it.”

Even if the NDP is not adopted, the UK’s statutory planning system will remain in force and so the Town will not be completely unprotected. But we have seen how weak statutory protection has been in the past. The protection afforded by an approved NDP will be give us added protection against unwanted development.

There are **two** other reasons for registered voters in Buckingham to vote “**Yes**” in the referendum on 22 January 2026:

- **First**, as noted above, the Plan is very much the outcome of local initiative and effort. It reflects the expertise of local organisations and individuals rather than planners in Aylesbury. For example, the design code accompanying the Plan (which was especially commended by the independent examiner) was produced by **Roger Newall**, one of our members. It reflects his commitment to Buckingham and his decades of local knowledge and planning experience in urban design. This is something that Aylesbury cannot offer.
- **Second**, the referendum enables those voters not directly involved in the plan-making process as members of the steering committee to nevertheless participate in the way in which Buckingham develops and evolves over the next 15-years. This is good for democracy. Voting in the referendum will help to reduce the democratic deficit.

The neighbourhood planning process is the **only** mechanism that facilitates this. Future plans that cover Buckingham produced by BC will NOT be subject to a referendum.

Finally, as noted above, if the NDP fails on 22 January, it is unlikely that BC will persist with neighbourhood plans, certainly for Buckingham. And that could make it easier for developers to ride roughshod over valid local concerns for years to come.

So please vote “yes” and encourage your friends and family to do so as well. And please participate in the Society’s campaign to vote “yes”.

More details about how to engage and how to find out more about the Plan are on page 7.

Vote YES on 22 January for the Neighbourhood Plan!

The Annual General Meeting

We will shortly be circulating the notice for our next AGM which will be held on 28th January in the **Vinson Auditorium at the University of Buckingham**. As usual the meeting will be preceded by drinks and other refreshments.

One of the items of business will include the election of office bearers along with an executive committee.

In previous years both the Society’s office bearers and its executive committee have been elected almost by default. This cannot go on, however. We need new members of the executive committee.

The reality is that we are all getting older. But the Society’s aspirations, as well as its workload continues to expand. We need more active executive committee members to help share the load.

We also need new active executive members to fill positions currently vacant, or which are likely to become vacant in the very near future. One such position is that of the Society’s newsletter.

Kathy Robins, the current editor, will now stand down after holding the position for 15 years (along with many other positions concurrently, including the chairmanship).

Kathy has performed brilliantly during her sojourn and has helped expand the coverage and scope of the Newsletter, which is the main medium through which the Society communicates with its members. This is her last Newsletter.

The Newsletter is now published three times a year. The aim is to publish three editions a year on a regular basis, covering the spring, summer and winter. It is published online, although a small number of members still receive a print version.

If you have editorial aspirations and would like to take on the editorship, please let me or another member of the executive committee know, preferably before the AGM.

And thank you Kathy for all your efforts in keeping the Newsletter going over the past 15 years. It can seem to be a thankless task, as I know from my experience from writing and editing publications that focus on private banking and wealth management.

Communications

We have good news on the communications front. Thanks, once again, to the efforts of **Anthony Ralph**, the Society has belatedly moved into the 21st century.

As part of our longstanding ambitions to improve both internal and external communications to help support our campaigning initiatives as well the activities of the Society generally, we have re-established a Facebook Page and added an Instagram account to provide a social media presence.

Both are at an early stage of implementation and will be augmented over time. Due to the vagaries of the Facebook universe, we cannot use the name of our old account which Ed Grimsdale oversaw.

Our new identifier on both Facebook and Instagram is Buckingham Civic Society. This has the advantage of emphasising the civic roots of the Society, which is perfectly commendable. The coordinates for the Facebook Page are <https://www.facebook.com/buckcivicsoc>. Those for Instagram are Buckingham Civic Society (@buckinghamcivicsociety).

And finally - Have a Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year!

Planning Report – Carolyn Cumming

Consultations

Recently, there have been what seems like an unprecedented list of various consultations. A Review of Buckingham's Conservation Area; a first dab at the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire; currently another Government one on Statutory Consultees.

Conservation Area Review

A review of existing Conservation Areas (CA) takes place every decade or so. This review was outsourced by Bucks Council to a specialist organisation within Essex

Local Authority. Although there was very little publicity about it in the town, the draft document was presented to the public by Buckinghamshire Council Heritage Officers on two occasions in the town.

By and large, we strongly agreed with the proposals. The boundary of the existing CA was extended to include new areas, encompassing some notable examples of 1930s domestic dwellings and parts of the Railway Walk. (Stowe Avenue, Gawcott Road, Moreton Road being three such). We supported all of these suggestions and asked that the Review might also look at Bourtonville, a 1920s model development.

In addition, we asked that there should be many more restrictions on the number of HMOs allowed within the CA. Although having listed building, (or CA status), gives added protection from unsuitable development, the main problem as we see it is the lack of active enforcement on the part of Buckinghamshire Council.

Equally, if Officers are not informed of breaches, taking action is either impossible or too late. There is a regular slot on Town Council agendas to report any breaches so do let us know if you spot something untoward.

Local Plan Consultation

There were no detailed site allocations in this first draft but rather a broad indication as to how and where land should be identified to accommodate future development. Bucks Council has been set a target of 90,000 dwellings to be built by 2045. In our long narrow county with expansion taking place on the boundaries and designated protected landscapes south of Aylesbury, it does appear that greenfields north of Aylesbury will come under increasing pressure for more housing.

There will be an emphasis placed on sites with sustainable transport, particularly in relation to the Enterprise Zones of Westcott and Silverstone. Three sites for new towns had been suggested, none of which were adopted by the New Towns Task Force. They came up with 12 sites nationwide. Milton Keynes expansion and Upper Heyford being the closest to Buckinghamshire.

Our response asked that Neighbourhood Plans should play a key role in future policy and that there must be a step change in the provision of supporting infrastructure before development commences.

Government Consultation

In a never-ending stream of legislative papers on reforms to speed up the planning system, the latest one is on the role of Statutory Consultees. It looks likely that some of these will be swept away in the interests of “efficiency”, which we see as code for less consultation, regardless of the consequences. We will respond to highlight the importance of civic societies and other local organisations in responding to local developments.

Development at Manor Farm, Bourton

We await the outcome of the Appeal by the Developer against refusal.

The Community Centre Border – Mary Simons

Several of our members have been very busy throughout the summer helping to plant, water and weed this mini garden. With an emphasis on the watering! On this latter point, Waitrose have been indispensable, allowing us to fill our cans from their tap – luckily relatively close by on the wall by the trolleys.

The autumn flowers on Aster 'Little Carlow' and Persicaria 'Fat Domino' were especially admired by passers-by and the whole border seems to have been much appreciated by everyone who walked past it.

It is galling now to witness the awful muddy mess that, unfortunately, has been the result of the scaffolding erected to mend the Community Centre roof. The contractors could not have started at a worse time, as it seems to have rained every day since the scaffolding went up. Happily, as we go to press, the scaffolding appears to have come down. With a bit of luck and some dry weather, we will be able to repair the damage and rescue the plants. Daffodil shoots were spotted emerging through the quagmire today, 6th December!



Oxford Bridge at Stowe – Roger Newall



THE NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN (NDP)

How to help Buckingham to ensure success in the NDP referendum

Notes by Anthony Ralph

How the NDP Referendum Works

Question on the ballot. Voters will be asked whether they want Buckinghamshire Council to use the Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) when deciding planning applications in the area.

Eligibility. Anyone registered to vote in the referendum area (the parish of Buckingham) can take part.

Counting rules.

Only valid ballot papers are counted.

Spoiled or invalid papers are excluded.

If more than 50% of valid votes are in favour, the plan is “made” (adopted) and becomes part of the statutory development plan.

And you can vote by post, just as for local and national elections but you must register to do this. Here’s how.

Postal Voting in the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) Referendum

The referendum to approve the Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan is scheduled to be held on 22nd January 2026 and will follow the same rules for voting as a council by-election. This will include the opportunity to use a postal vote if you have registered for one.

If you aren’t currently registered for a postal vote and would like to register for one, the process is very simple and straightforward. Just use the link below and follow the instructions, which include a PDF ‘easy to use guide’. It only takes a few minutes.

For the referendum, applications for a postal vote must be made by 7 January 2026.

<https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>



The Buckingham Society will be keeping you up-to-date with all the details over the coming weeks

Find out more by visiting the link to the Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP):

<https://www.buckingham-tc.gov.uk/your-town-council/council-plans/buckingham-neighbourhood-development-plan-2/>

KEY POINTS IN THE NDP

Purpose and Scope of the NDP

The NDP sets out a locally driven framework for Buckingham's development through to 2040, aiming to:

- Counter speculative development
- Deliver infrastructure and housing aligned with community needs
- Ensure legal parity with Buckinghamshire Council's Local Plan

Features

- **1,254 new homes over 15 years**, with 35% designated as affordable housing
- **Design Code** embedded as enforceable policy
- **Education:** Land reserved for a Sixth Form Centre and a new primary school
- **Health:** Support for expanded or new healthcare facilities
- **Green Space:** Inner and Outer Green Rings, protected local green spaces, and private green space requirements
- **Environment:** Urban greening, flood risk mitigation, and retrofitting in conservation areas
- **Infrastructure:** Support for theatre space and sports/recreational facilities
- **Employment:** Retention of 1.7 ha of employment land and support for University of Buckingham development

Planning and Legal Status

- Equal legal status with the Buckinghamshire Local Plan
- Must conform to national policy and BC planning framework
- Enables Buckingham Town Council to receive 25% of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) when adopted

Community Engagement

- Developed with input from residents, businesses, and local groups
- Referendum: if over 50% vote "Yes," the Plan becomes binding

Development Sites

- Canalside (CLH2): 90 homes + visitor/community centre
- Land near cemetery (HP3): 800 homes + primary school
- Brownfield-first approach, but insufficient to meet housing targets

Infrastructure Challenges

- Sewage: National policy limits local control
- Flooding: Requires site-specific assessments and mitigation
- Health & Wellbeing: New developments must support essential services

TIME-WARP: PERSPECTIVES ON THE COLD WAR

A talk by Bill Robins

Bill Robins gave a presentation on the Cold War to the Society and guests in the Vinson Center of Buckingham University on 20 November 2025.



He outlined the balance of terror between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, starting in 1945, when the massive forces of the Second World War stopped fighting and stared each other out across a divided Europe. The Cold War froze Europe and Russia in a time-warp but encompassed the globe with vicious proxy wars. It brought the world to the brink of nuclear extinction more than once.

History rarely repeats itself, but it often rhymes. After the talk, discussion focused on the complex and toxic world we now live in, one which rhymes significantly with the more precarious moments of the Cold War. That tense period of history repays study, if only to understand the fragility of peace and the need to take good care of it.



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Ian Orton	Chair, Green Spaces, Planning
Carolyn Cumming	Planning
Russell Popee	Membership Secretary
David Child	Treasurer
Sarah Goodrum	Flowerbed
Belinda Morley-Fletcher	Secretary
Anthony Ralph	Planning, rep on NBPPC
Kathy Robins	Newsletter Editor, Planning
Mary Simons	Planning and Flowerbed

We would like to hear from you

Please give us some feedback - tell us what activities you would like The Buckingham Society to prioritise. Comments to kathyrobins@walnutyard.co.uk Tel: 07834484762

If you would like to be involved in any of our activities or attend a meeting of the Executive Committee, then contact us or just come along.

www.buckinghamssociety.org.uk