

Bedford Local Plan 2040 – Call-for-Sites Submissions

Bedford Borough Council (BBC) began a review of its long-term housing plan “LP40” during the summer last year with the aim of creating a new plan for housing development across the borough for the period ending in 2040.

In order to identify sufficient suitable sites for new housing BBC launched a “Call-for-Sites” seeking proposals from landowners and developers.

At the recent meeting of the parish council, residents asked for more information about the potential impact of new housing on Colmworth created by LP40. The Call-for-Sites responses included eight proposals of varying size within the village:

Call-for-Sites Responses for Local Plan 2040	
Site Location	Number of Houses
Land Between Colmworth and Wyboston	10150
Field at Chapel End, east of Church Road / north of Mill Road	300
Field at Chapel End, west of Church Road	150
Chapel Farm, Church Road	52
Field south of Honeydon Road, behind St Denys church	50
Field at corner of Church Road and New Road	30
Field adjoining Little Staughton Road, near Queens Street	Not stated
Field next to Village Hall, Church Road	8

Note, all proposals can be viewed online via BBC’s interactive map which can be accessed at the following web address:

<https://bluefoxtech.co.uk/demos/bedford-published-sites/#/center/-0.465,52.1458>

To complete the LP40, BBC will need to identify approximately 15,000 housing plots, additional to those already allocated within the current plan. The Call-for-Sites returned over 440 responses totalling in excess of 70,000 plots, i.e. almost five times as many plots as are required. Whilst it is clear, therefore, that only a relatively small number of the proposals will be accepted, there is no information available at this stage to suggest how allocations will be made. BBC is currently working through the proposals to determine which are feasible and considered suitable to be incorporated within the LP40 but this process will take some time to complete.

BBC is aiming to produce a first draft of the LP40 incorporating site allocations by summer this year, at which time there will be a public consultation period enabling you to express any opinions and concerns.

Based on the current planning policies of BBC it is unlikely that significant housebuilding will be allowed within the confines of small villages such as Colmworth and the mayor confirmed only recently that that position remains valid for the present. This means that our most significant concern from the Call-for-Sites responses is the proposal for a new garden village at Wyboston, which would stretch from the A1 at Eaton Socon to the edge of Colmworth.

The importance to BBC of a very large site such as this means that it could take precedence over other planning policies such as those protecting small villages and rural areas.

Our key objections to the Wyboston proposal include:

- There will not be adequate green space between the development and Colmworth, the proposed site extends to the Country Park and Channels End. It would create a town the size of Biggleswade between the A1 and Colmworth.
- The submission shows that the developers expect construction traffic on the site for over 25 years, that is an unacceptable burden on neighbouring communities.
- Wyboston has comparatively poor access to Bedford, many people will favour St Neots which adds further economic damage to Bedford town centre which is in serious decline.
- Apart from the far end of the Wyboston site near St Neots, the only exits from the site are unclassified roads incapable of handling the traffic volume. The central road (Mill Road) is a single-track road. Assuming that that road is improved, that will then lead traffic on to the Wilden and Great Barford unclassified roads which are unsuitable for large traffic volumes. Wilden Road is classified as “Unsuitable for HGVs” presenting a clear risk of unsuitable traffic using local access privileges, elevating accident risk.
- There is no shortage of alternative high quality development opportunities for inclusion in the LP40. There is no need to consider something as large and destructive as the Wyboston proposal.

Way Forward

The Parish Council has submitted detailed comments to BBC opposing the Wyboston proposal but we also know other parishes have taken similar steps to protect their own areas. We have also approached a planning consultant for advice on how to develop the argument against the proposal further, recognising that such a development would effectively erase Colmworth as a separate community, create significant traffic congestion on our narrow and twisting roads and dominate the local environment with heavy construction traffic for the next 25 years and more. If this approach proves promising we will need to raise additional funding to cover fees and we would sincerely appreciate your help with this step.

If you value the relative peace and tranquility of Colmworth and neighbouring communities, if you share our concerns for the future of the village, we ask you to support our objections to this proposal:

- Please respond to the public consultation this summer objecting to the Wyboston scheme, and
- If you can afford to support us financially, please pledge a financial contribution to help with the cost of our consultant, we are looking to raise around £7,500.

For more information please contact us at:

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