



The countryside charity  
Bedfordshire

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## Briefing Document

### **Bedford Borough Council's (BBC's) Local Plan 2030 housing numbers for the Key Rural Service Centres of Bromham, Clapham, Great Barford and Sharnbrook.**

**500 new homes to be built in each village**

## **Total 2,000 new homes - completely unnecessary!**

Towards the end of the Examination of BBC's Local Plan by government appointed Inspectors, BBC was obliged for the first time to release data on the number of new homes that had been constructed in the Borough over the last 3 years.

CPRE Bedfordshire volunteers were present during the Examination and were able to obtain copies of this information.

**It showed that approximately 1,300 new homes were built in each of the last 3 years.**

This is a much higher number than BBC had previously admitted to publicly.

### **Why is this information so important, what are the reasons and what are the implications for housing numbers in the Key Rural Service Centres (KRSC's)?**

**1. Bedford Borough Council has been building far more new homes than their Local Plan 2030 requires** i.e. around 1,300 new homes per year for the last 3 years compared to a Plan figure of 970. So, a total of around 1,000 new homes more than Plan requirements over the last 3 years - or, +35% more than required in each of the last 3 years. The principle reasons for this are:

**A. New Homes Bonus** – BBC's funding from government for local services e.g. Children's Services, Adult services, libraries etc. has been slashed in recent years and so BBC are using New Homes Bonus (fixed amount paid by government for every new home built) as a way of offsetting to some degree these funding reductions. New Homes Bonus for BBC will amount to almost £7m in the year 2020/21.

**B. Oxford – Milton Keynes – Bedford - Cambridge Arc Development. Agreement with Government.**

BBC have been building as many homes as possible not for local people but to encourage large numbers of people to migrate into the borough from elsewhere in the UK as part of the Agreement they have entered into with government for development across the Ox-Cam Arc (+1million new homes equivalent to 20 cities the size of Cambridge across an Arc only 85 miles long!).

**This Agreement has been entered into without consulting the residents of the Borough – BBC has received no mandate from local residents to enable them to take such action.**

The housing needs of all the people of Bedford Borough can be met with 60% of current Local Plan housing numbers and building huge numbers of new homes in excess of Plan requirements for the last 3 years has not made them any cheaper for local people.

**See News Release on CPRE Bedfordshire website regarding secret meetings**

**here:** <https://www.cprebeds.org.uk/news/sham/>

**Also:** <https://www.cprebeds.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2020/07/CPRE-Statement-to-Arc-Leaders-Beds-version.pdf>

### **C. Why 1,300 new homes per year?**

**It is no surprise that BBC have been trying to build around 1,300 homes a year. It is not coincidental that this is also the figure demanded by the government's current and highly criticised Standard Method for calculating Housing Need** which is based on outdated 2014 housing data. They are doing this for fear of not being able to demonstrate a 5 year forward land supply if the government demand that the current Standard Method figure should be included in the new Local Plan Review. They say that if they cannot demonstrate this then the Borough could be opened up to speculative planning applications from developers as we saw across the Borough before the Local Plan 2030 was approved. We do not agree with their assessment.

### **2. Large reserves of new homes – 2,000 new homes in KRSC's completely unnecessary!**

**The data demonstrates that BBC has built up very large reserves of new homes and that there is absolutely no need for the Council to carry on with their plans for 500 homes in each of the Key Rural Service Centres (KRSC's) of Clapham, Bromham, Sharnbrook and Great Barford – which will total 2,000 new homes.**

**They can reduce numbers by around 50%!!**

The impact of these new homes, not just on the KRSC's themselves but also on the surrounding villages, on the countryside and biodiversity (already in crisis!), will be immense. It will lead to an increase in commuting and is environmentally unsustainable.

As far as Sharnbrook and Great Barford are concerned, an additional 500 homes will represent a +50% increase and for Bromham & Clapham it will represent around + 25% increase in homes. It will not be long before additional large infrastructure projects such as supermarkets etc. will be developed to take advantage of these significant new housing hubs.

**All the proposed new housing and additional infrastructure will be built on open countryside!**

**CPRE Bedfordshire has been campaigning against these unsustainable development proposals for the last 2 years, asking BBC to "come clean" on housing numbers (see the last 2 editions of our newsletter, Bedfordshire Matters) and this data has proved our case.**

**Now, the Lichfield Planning Consultancy, which has been advising Government on planning matters, has independently confirmed the fact that BBC have been building these huge numbers of new homes.**

**As part of their work for government on the new Standard Method they have released data which confirms that BBC have built on average 1,300 new homes over the last 3 years. The following link gives data for each Local Authority in England:**

<https://lichfields.uk/grow-renew-protect-planning-for-the-future/how-many-homes-the-new-standard-method/>

**CPRE Bedfordshire urge the Parish Councils of Sharnbrook, Great Barford, Clapham and Bromham and those surrounding PC's adversely impacted by this proposed development, to urgently request that Bedford Borough Council think again and substantially reduce the 500 new homes that they have been told to include in their Neighbourhood Plans.**

**We are also suggesting that Parish Councils should discuss the matter with their local Borough Councillors asking why they have signed up to the Agreement with government on development across the Oxford – Milton Keynes – Bedford – Cambridge Arc without consulting them?**

**And why there is so much pressure on the KRSC's to plan for housing which is far in excess of Local Plan 2030 requirements?**

**Parish Councils should make their MP aware of their concerns.**

**Note that:**

The current BBC Local Plan 2030 uses a Housing Need figure of 970 homes per year which has been agreed by the Inspectors of their Local Plan. The proposed new Standard Method for calculating Housing Need which is currently being consulted on by the government will, if adopted, give a figure of around 1,153 homes/year according to the Lichfield data – whilst this is less than the 1,300 new homes required by the current Standard Method calculation, this still represents a massive +19% increase compared to the current Local Plan 2030 which is already extremely high.

**CPRE BEDFORDSHIRE**

**30 September 2020**