

Basingstoke Transition Network
Response to Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council's Plan for 2020-2024
7th December 2019

General comments

There are few concrete commitments to beneficial change in the plan document, which is disappointing but unsurprising. The budget 2020-21 accompanying it gravely predicts a £5M deficit by 2024, and proposes raising service charges by 3%, which is above inflation. The budget from 2020 on includes no support grant from central government, only the bonus for building new houses, about £2-3M per year for five years, which is a drop in the ocean of infrastructure needs for the new housing in the Local Plan. We should be pleased to know what approaches to central government the Council has made or plans to make, to argue its case for a greater than zero support grant. Can we help, e.g. by organising a campaign directed at our MPs?

Specific points

1. We endorse the points made in the detailed response submitted by Paul Beevers on the conservation/biodiversity aspects of the plan;
2. We have already advocated the appointment of a dedicated full-time climate change officer. We now suggest that you need a team of experts to deliver the responses you have promised to the climate emergency. Part of its remit needs to be to get businesses, householders and service providers (e.g. hospital, trains, buses) into line with the climate emergency response and the 2050 vision for the Borough;
3. To make the Council's own operations zero-carbon by 2025 requires decommissioning all gas- and oil-fired space heating. You need a definite and costed plan now for this to work by 2025; and for older buildings you might need to include asbestos removal;
4. We have recommended for many years that you insist on higher standards of insulation in new homes and other buildings. We believe you will not reach a target of decarbonising the Borough as a whole by 2050, let alone 2030, without both this and an aggressive programme of upgrading existing buildings. If fossil-fuelled central heating is to be removed from homes without harmful substitutions (e.g. coal or unsustainable wood burning) then you need new and existing buildings to be "passivhaus" in practice. How about immediately requiring all new build dwellings (including self-builds) with expected market price greater than £400k to be "passivhaus", then progressively lowering the price threshold?;
5. What about encouraging community solar electric generation projects on both Council and other corporate buildings?
6. (a) Maintaining the weekly grey-bin collection will not help to improve the embarrassingly low recycling rate. Why not institute a weekly food/compostable waste collection and make the grey bin fortnightly? Burning less wet food in the incinerator will improve its efficiency: the heat generated should be used more extensively in community space-heating projects.
(b) Raising the service charge will also deter recycling by encouraging inappropriate use of the grey bin and fly-tipping. What is the Council doing to encourage the County Council to provide more Household Waste Recycling Centres to offset these trends, and an end to

the unreasonable restrictions on site use by residents in neighbouring counties? Also what will the Council do to help small businesses with waste disposal and recycling?

7. Air quality will not improve much unless the use of polluting vehicles is cut. In particular do the new schools at Manydown, as well as existing schools, have plans to reduce or prevent the "school run"? For new schools these could be included in the design, e.g. no parking close to the school, practical support for staff to use low-emission forms of transport and hence set a good example, safe separated cycle paths and walking routes, and space for school buses. Could all the school buses be required to be ultra-low-emission by 2024?

8. While a modern hospital is desirable, is the outskirts of town the best place to put a site to which thousands have to travel daily? Shouldn't a town centre site, deliberately with minimum parking, be selected and acquired now? The hospital can then be designed with public transport, walking and cycling planned in as the main means to reach it? All planning, not just the hospital, should contain the reasonable assumption of reduced car use to meet national climate commitments already made by central government. Proximity to the motorway at the expense of other transport links will thus cease to be a reasonable plan;

9. Railway improvements are essential, but the hard target of a route to Heathrow Airport is totally contrary to decarbonising aspirations. Instead, stations at Chineham and Manydown should be given high priority, and help sought directly from central government if the various railway companies won't co-operate.

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Some useful references

Recent article on health benefits of reducing air pollution: "**Dramatic health benefits following air pollution reduction**"

(<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/12/191206173634.htm>)

Twenty Actions for Parish and Town Councils to address climate emergency – Friends of the Earth - <https://policy.friendsoftheearth.uk/reports/20-actions-parish-and-town-councils-can-take-climate-and-nature-emergency>