

Question from Examiner for Bedford Borough Council	Bedford Borough Council response
1. The National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) in Paragraph Reference ID: 41-009-20190509 (Neighbourhood Planning section) advises that 'where a neighbourhood plan is brought forward before an up-to-date local plan (i.e. the Local Plan Review) is in place the qualifying body and the local planning authority should discuss and aim to agree the relationship between policies in the emerging neighbourhood plan, the emerging local plan and the adopted development plan'. Could the Borough Council confirm that such discussions have taken place and summarise any conclusions that were drawn?	The Council has provided comments on the neighbourhood plan throughout the process and identified where applicable, if there were any conflicts with the adopted development plan and the then emerging Local Plan 2030 (now adopted). The Local Plan Review is still at an early stage and a decision has not been made on the development strategy at this time. This will be determined after the planned consultation in summer 2021.
2. Can the Council confirm that the Development Plan for the Borough (as it applies to Milton Ernest) comprises the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 (BBLP30); the Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013; saved policies of the Bedford Local Plan 2002; and the Policies map?	The development plan is made up of the documents listed and the Minerals and Waste Local Plan Strategic Sites and Policies 2014.
3. Can the Council confirm the current timetable for the publication of the draft Bedford Local Plan Review?	Please see appendix 5 of the local development scheme
4. Bearing in mind paragraph 33 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) advises that policies in local plans should be reviewed at least once every five years, can the Borough Council confirm that a review of the settlement policy area boundaries (including at Milton Ernest) will be undertaken as part of the review of the Local Plan?	It is not the council's intention to change the way that settlement policy area boundaries are determined as part of the plan review (Local Plan 2040), however after the adoption of Local Plan 2040, consequential changes will be made to the Policies Map based on the principles in the Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013 (ADLP) chapter 13.
5. Can the Council confirm that it is satisfied with the site selection process undertaken by the Parish Council, primarily as summarised in the Site Assessment Report (updated January 2019)?	Troy Planning and Design had been appointed by the Parish Council to help with site assessments and support the development of their Neighbourhood Plan. Council officers were not involved in that process and did not carry out any appraisal of the assessments completed by the consultants. Site assessment work carried out by the Borough Council for local plan purposes was however shared to assist the preparation of the NP.

6. Can the Council confirm that it is on target to meet the housing allocations as set out in policy 4S of the BBLP30, in particular with regard to those settlements where the requirement is between 25 and 50 dwellings?	All of the neighbourhood plans that include a requirement for 25-50 dwellings have now been submitted. Two plans have been made, one is awaiting referendum and the others are currently under examination. Of the parishes with a requirement to allocate 500 dwellings in Neighbourhood Plans, one has passed examination and referendum, two have been submitted to the Council and one is to be submitted shortly.
7. Can the Council confirm that the fact that the allocation at Milton Ernest is for 25 dwellings (at the bottom of the stated range of 25-50 dwellings) will not have any significant consequences in terms of the Borough Council meeting its overall housing need?	We can confirm that the allocation of 25 dwellings in Milton Ernest would not impact on borough wide housing needs. Local Plan 2030 assumed an average of 33 dwellings in the 8 villages which are to allocate 25-50 dwellings – some have allocated nearer the top of the range.
8. Can the Council confirm that it is satisfied with the extent and thoroughness of the public consultation undertaken?	The details of public consultation are explained in the Consultation Statement. From this it can be seen that at both Regulation 14 and Regulation 16 stage, information was delivered to every household in the parish in order to inform residents of the progression of the plan and the opportunity to get involved. The consultation measures explained in the statement are consistent with those employed by groups in other parishes where neighbourhood plans have been/are being prepared, and for the Council's part, the approach to the Regulation 16 consultation process was identical to that carried out for other neighbourhood plans during the Covid pandemic. We are confident of its thoroughness.
9. Can the Borough Council confirm that it has provided constructive comments on the emerging MENP prior to submission and that in its opinion the MENP meets the Basic Conditions (see PPG Paragraph Reference ID: 41-067-20140306 of the Neighbourhood Planning section)?	The Council has provided comments at the draft plan stage and the Regulation 14 consultation stage. We have also provided informal advice and support as required throughout the preparation of the neighbourhood plan. The basic conditions statement was not shared by the Parish Council prior to submission so no specific officer comments have been given on it.

In particular one of the Basic Conditions¹ relates to development contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. Is the Council satisfied that the policies in the MENP will appropriately achieve that objective?	At no time have officers advised that in their view the MENP is in danger of failing any of the basic conditions.
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¹ See Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and County Planning Act 1990 (as amended).