

Bedford Borough Local Plan 2035 Plan for Submission January 2018 Guidance notes for respondents

Introduction

Bedford Borough Council has published the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2035 Plan for Submission for consultation from Monday 22nd January until 5pm Thursday 29th March 2018. We would encourage consultees to make their representations via our online consultation platform as this will enable the Council to deal with your representations in a more efficient way and will assist the examination process.

If using the online system, all consultees must ensure that personal details are completed in full, as this is a legal requirement. Failure to do so will result in your representation not being accepted.

The Plan has been published in order for representations to be made prior to submission of the documents to the Planning Inspectorate for independent examination. All accepted representations will be examined by a planning Inspector who will decide whether the Plan can be adopted.

The purpose of this stage of the Plan and subsequent examination is to consider whether the Plan complies with the legal requirements and whether it is legally sound. This document outlines the definitions of these obligations.

If you wish to comment on the Plan for Submission, this can be done using our online consultation portal at: www.bedford.gov.uk/localplan2035

Alternatively there is a response form which can be downloaded from our website and returned by email or post. This can be found at: www.bedford.gov.uk/localplan2035

The response should be emailed to: planningforthefuture@bedford.gov.uk

Paper copies of the response form are available from the Customer Service Centre in Horne Lane or borough libraries. Paper forms should be posted to:

Local Plan 2035, Planning Policy Team,
Bedford Borough Council, Borough Hall,
Bedford MK42 9AP.

All responses must be returned by 5pm on Thursday 29th March 2018. Late responses will not be accepted or considered by the Inspector as part of the examination.

Part A. Personal details

Please note that it is not possible for representations to be considered anonymously. Representations will be published on the consultation website and included as part of the submission to the Inspector. Address and contact details will be removed from published responses.

The Council reserves the right not to publish or take into account any representations which it considers offensive or defamatory. When submitting hard copy or email responses please supply an email address where possible, as this will allow us to contact you electronically. Everyone who submits a representation will be added to the local plan consultation database (if not already included) so that we can keep you up to date with the Plan.

If an agent or consultant has been engaged to act on your behalf, please fill in both sets of details in full when registering online or on your form. Correspondence will be sent to the agent.

Part B. Representations

Please specify which part of the Plan you are responding to and use one form for each section or policy that you wish to comment on. Whether making your representations online, by email or by hard copy, please ensure that you include the section or policy number of the Plan that your representation relates to.

The Council considers that the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2035 Plan for Submission satisfies the legal requirements and the tests of soundness set out below, and is the most appropriate strategy for the future development of the borough. However, if you consider that the authority has not met the legal requirements or that the local plan is unsound against one or more of the tests of soundness, you should explain why and what changes you think should be made to rectify this. If possible you should provide evidence in support of your representations. Representations should cover succinctly all the information and evidence necessary to support/justify the representation and the suggested change, as there will not normally be another opportunity to make further submissions.

Legal compliance

This concerns whether the process of preparing the local plan has met the relevant legislative requirements. The Inspector will check that the Plan meets the legal requirements. You should consider the following before responding on its legal compliance:

- Has the programme for preparing the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2035 Plan for Submission followed the programme set out in the Council's most recent Local Development Scheme?
- Has the process of preparing the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2035 Plan for Submission been in accordance with the Council's most recent Statement of Community Involvement?
- Does the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2035 Plan for Submission meet the requirements for content and consultation set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012?
- Has the Council complied with the requirements arising from the duty-to-cooperate on strategic and cross-boundary issues introduced by the Localism Act 2011?
- Does the Sustainability Appraisal Report accompanying the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2035 Plan for Submission form a suitable assessment of the sustainability of the Council's proposals and follow the relevant legislation and guidance?

Soundness

This concerns the actual content of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2035 Plan for Submission. Soundness is explained in the National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 182. The Inspector will check that the Plan is positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy in accordance with section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). You should consider the following before responding on its soundness:

- **Positively prepared** - This means that the Plan should be prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements, including unmet requirements from neighbouring authorities where it is reasonable to do so and consistent with achieving sustainable development.
- **Justified** - The Plan should be the most appropriate strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives, based on a proportionate, robust and credible evidence base.
- **Effective** - The Plan should be deliverable over its period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic priorities.
- **Consistent with national policy** - The Plan should be consistent with national policy, enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework. Any departure from this must be clearly justified.

If you think the content of the Plan is not sound because it does not include a policy where you consider it should do, you should go through the following steps before making representations:

- Is the issue with which you are concerned already covered specifically by national planning policy? If so, it does not need to be included in the Plan as well.
- Is what you are concerned with covered by any other policies in the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2035 Plan for Submission?
- If the policy is not covered, in what way is the Plan unsound without the policy?
- If the Plan is unsound without the policy, what should the policy say?

General Guidance

The Inspector will have to deal with a large number of responses in a limited amount of time, and may be unable to deal with responses which are not made in the correct way:

When making your representations please give details of why you think the Plan for Submission is or is not legally compliant or sound having regard to the legal compliance and the four soundness tests, as set out above. You should try to support your representation by evidence and identify how the Plan should be modified.

Representations should succinctly cover all information, evidence and supporting information necessary to support the representation and any suggested modification.

The Planning Inspectorate asks that where you are part of a group with a common view, the group submits a single representation form outlining its concerns, rather than having a large number of individuals send in separate representations which repeat the same points. The group should make it clear how many people it is representing and how it has been authorised.

All of the accepted formal representations received during this stage will be submitted to and considered by, the appointed independent planning Inspector at the public examination of the Plan. The process is likely to include public hearings. The Inspector will determine the most appropriate procedure to adopt to hear those who ask to participate at this stage.

If you would like to appear and speak at the hearings, please state this and explain in the space provided why you consider it is necessary that you participate. The Inspector will determine what will be discussed at the examination and who should attend.