

Barton Stacey Parish Council (BSPC)

Response to Test Valley BC Next Local Plan – Refined Issues and Options June 2020

BSPC appreciates the expertise and hard work that has gone into the TVBC Local Plan. It recognises, too, the tensions that arise when attempting to reconcile often mutually exclusive objectives – such as achieving economic growth and development, meeting housing targets while protecting our environment and all the things that make Test Valley a desirable place to live. Clearly this is recognised by Test Valley in para 2.6.

It is likely that these tensions will increase.

We encounter these tensions immediately when we talk about nimbyism. This can be considered a negative concept. It arises when a group of residents feels that they cannot rely on others to protect and preserve their own back yard. They feel therefore that they must do it themselves, that they are the only people who care enough to defend and preserve the character of the area where they were born, brought up a family or retired to. Often, residents, parish and local authorities will have the same objective and oppose a development, especially one that could be imposed by central government. Waste Incinerators, for example, are often a unifying force with eloquently and very well-argued objections coming from myriad sources.

Some comments on specific paragraphs:

Para 2.15: Some of the tensions alluded to above can be alleviated provided that “the community gets the right kind of development in the right place.”

Para 2.29: There is a groundswell of opinion that Covid-induced change will be significant and long-lasting. A phenomenon has been the number of people who will continue to work from home for the foreseeable future and/or who may go to their regular place of work only once per week and those who say that they want to leave cities and live in a rural environment. Large cities may well not be the jobs magnets that they once were. This will have implications for the number of houses that will be required as well as schools and health infrastructure. Many workers and companies have demonstrated that working from home is not only a long-term viable option without any drop in productivity or efficiency but also a highly desirable option in terms of work/life balance and quality of life. For example, the expense and stress of commuting by train or by car could become a thing of the past for many.

5.2: A key phrase in this paragraph is “associated infrastructure”. In Barton Stacey, residents who moved into a new development in the summer/autumn of 2015 found they had to wait several weeks for a broadband connection. Had Covid or similar occurred then, working from home would not have been an option. It is recognised that the Rural Gigabit Connectivity programme is a central government initiative, but rural communities such as those in Test Valley will not function well without it.

In the last five years, BSPC believes four new developments have contributed ~34 new dwellings to Barton Stacey with a corresponding increase in population. There have been no improvements to infrastructure.

Question 3: An interesting concept. We believe Parish Councils would like to know the implications of this.

Para 6.4: A vibrant evening economy is a goal of many towns. In many cases, an evening economy consists of young people and alcohol. This in turn can lead to an intimidating atmosphere for older people and for those with a young family who may simply want to enjoy a meal in town. The paradox is that the more “vibrant” the economy, the less attractive it may be.

Para 6.5: Building more homes in town centres could well be an attractive Covid-related change.

Para 6.6: It would be helpful have an illustration of what is meant by this paragraph.

Question 17: The hospitality sector would be delighted to have more tourists, especially after the tough times it has been through. However, we have seen recently in popular tourist areas damage and problems such as overcrowding, littering and public defecation caused by excessive numbers of tourists. An example of the tensions mentioned above. We are aware of a neighbouring parish which has experienced problems with a high number of visitors to a local beauty spot leaving empty bottles, food containers and portable barbecues.

7.26-7.30: It is assumed the Building Regulations as implemented by central government are the key to environmentally friendly homes. It is galling that new developments, including some in Barton Stacey, do not have solar panels, rainwater harvesting, or, perhaps, more controversially, heat pumps. All these items fitted as original equipment can be supplied at a minimal increase on the price of a new house while bringing lower utility bills. What can local authorities do to ensure new homes have a lower carbon footprint?

8.23: Superfast Broadband is key. It is as essential a utility as water or gas and electricity and is all the more important as many people have already abandoned landlines and rely on their broadband connection for all telecommunications.