

Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet Neighbourhood Plan update

The Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet Neighbourhood Plan is progressing well, and a great deal of work has been done behind the scenes over the last 12 months. Progress has been minuted at Parish Council meetings which are open to the public to attend and where possible residents kept update on the Parish Council web site.

The Parish Council and BGNB Steering Group have continued to meet. The various relevant larger site land interests have been contacted and their site proposals discussed.

Financial support has been obtained from Basildon Council for the Parish Council to carry-out a Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment which would normally be undertaken by Basildon Council themselves but they agreed for the Parish Council to undertake the work required. This has enabled the Parish Council's consultant to carry-out essential Site Assessments of over 100 sites within the Parish and compile a Report on each of the sites to put forward for consideration. Protocol then dictated that a six – week consultation was then undertaken with statutory consultees, all during the Covid -19 pandemic. All consultees responded with their comments on the draft report and these are currently being considered and various reports compiled using the information provided

The early signs are that the 1350 homes target, which has been set in Basildon Council's Local Plan , can be met without compromising the separate identify of the village from Basildon and South Benfleet. The sites which are being considered to be available, are spread around the edges of the village and not only in one or two locations, as this was considered to give a fairer spread of development across the Parish and keep the aim and vision of “ One Village”

The new houses will be a wide range of all types to make our village a desirable place for all sections of the community and the sites should enable us to create a 'Green Ring' of existing and new footpaths, cycleways, woodlands, public open spaces and natural green space to encircle the village and preserve the rural aspect of the village for decades. The “Green Ring” will not just have recreational value for the community but will also make our contribution to tackling climate change with its new woodlands.

There will be a new primary school on Pound Lane at Hall Farm and new community facilities shops in a number of places to serve the new, larger village and hopefully a doctors' surgery.

All developers will be expected to make contributions to managing traffic on Pound Lane and London Road to make our roads safer and more attractive for pedestrians and cyclists. There is also potential for developing around 200 currently vacant plots in the Plotlands over the period of the Local Plan.

The Parish Council are also investigating new ways of encouraging high standards of design across the whole village by setting design codes and using a Neighbourhood Development Order to grant automatic planning permission for schemes that meet all of those high standards and a further £10,000 has been secured via a grant from Locality , a government funded Neighbourhood Planning Organisation, to fund the work required to put together a plan that will create new and affordable homes for sale and which meet the needs of our community. We are also looking to encourage builders to use the 'PassivHaus' standard wherever possible – the standard offers the very highest energy efficiency and is by far the best way of tackling climate change and making houses very much cheaper to heat.

The Parish Council is aiming to undertake a six-week public consultation on the progress so far at the end of September/beginning of October 2020 in preparation for Basildon Council's Local Plan Examination which is anticipated, on information currently available, will take place in the Autumn .

Further updates will be given as and when available