

# DESK-BASED ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

FOR ONEILL HOMER  
BUCKINGHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN  
MARCH 2024  
FN23-109 VERSION 1



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**Document Control**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 BACKGROUND

Future Nature WTC, as part of the Wildlife Trust Consultancies (WTC), was commissioned by Oneill Homer to undertake a desk-based Ecological Assessment to inform the developing Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan Review.

This report presents the methods used to gather an understanding of the habitats and species present within the interest area and displays the results with the use of maps and written descriptions. Suggestions are made on how opportunities for biodiversity can be maximised through policies in the neighbourhood plan with a summary of policy options provided at the end of the report.

## 1.2 STUDY AREA

The study area comprises the town of Buckingham in Buckinghamshire and an area around it that has been identified as the potential future expansion area for the period covered by the Neighbourhood Plan Review (the plan boundary). In addition to this, a wider study area has been used when considering habitats and species that have a wider zone of influence and could therefore be affected by activities within a wider area.

To inform the assessment, data was gathered from the following sources:

- Aerial imagery and Ordnance Survey mapping;
- A search of the Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website<sup>1</sup> for:
  - statutory designated sites such as Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within 5km of the plan boundary;
  - priority habitats (comprising those listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006) within 2km of the plan boundary;

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<sup>1</sup> Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside ([www.magic.gov.uk](http://www.magic.gov.uk))

- details of European Protected Species licences within 2km of the plan boundary;
- A data provided by Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Environmental Records Centre (BMERC) for records of protected and notable species, invasive non-native species (INNS) and local non-statutory designated sites within the plan boundary.

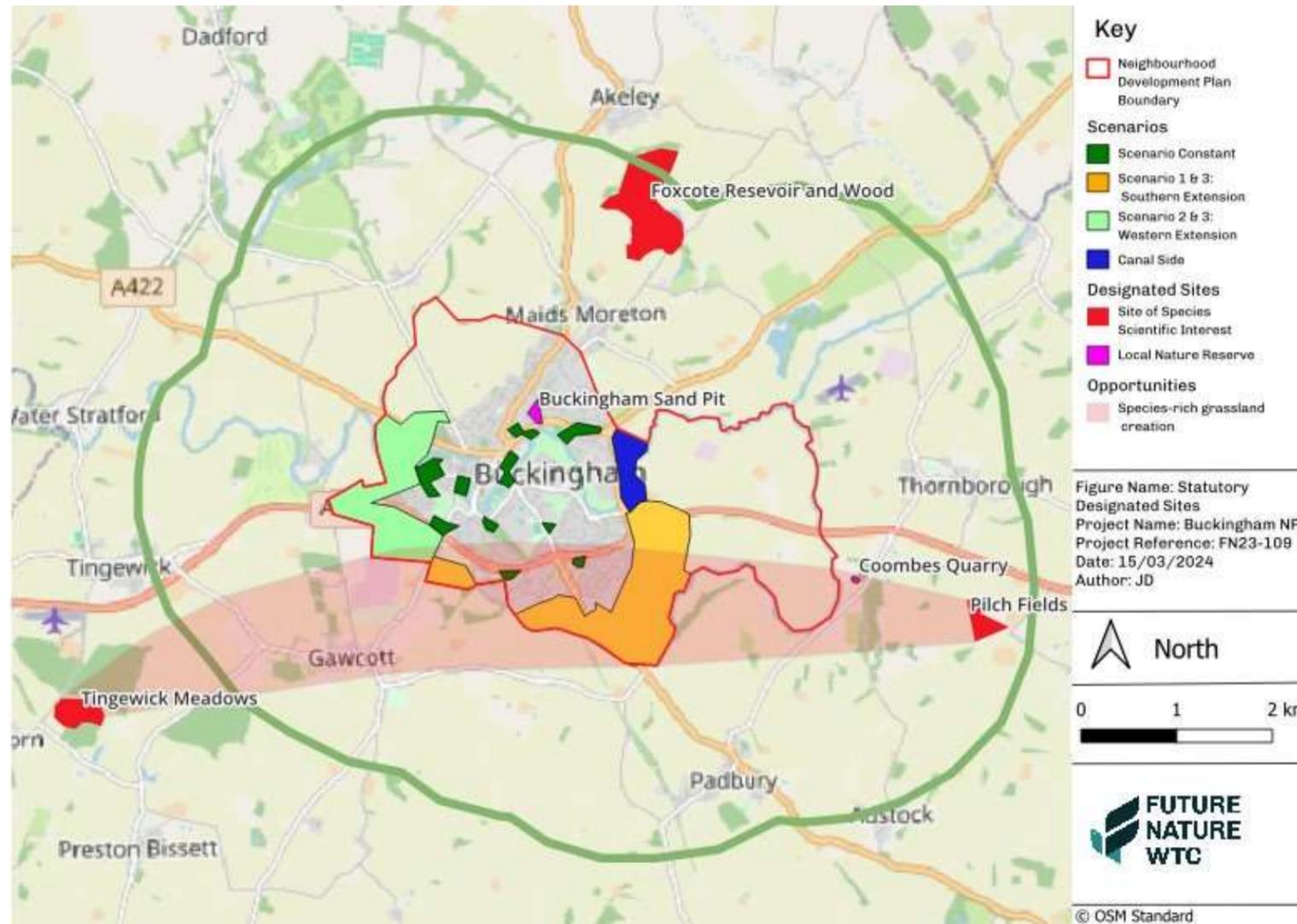
### **1.3 OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the assessment are to:

- Identify opportunities for improving connectivity between designated sites and priority habitat through the Neighbourhood Plan Review;
- Identify opportunities to create new habitat for protected and notable species through the Neighbourhood Plan Review;
- Identify the key green infrastructure goals for the existing town;
- Identify the key green infrastructure goals for each proposed expansion area; and
- Identify suitable policies for developments achieving a biodiversity net gain.

## 2. CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Figure 1: Statutory designated sites within 5km of the Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan Boundary



### 2.1 STATUTORY DESIGNATED SITES

#### Foxcote Reservoir and Wood SSSI

- 1,092m from plan boundary.

This unit consists of a reservoir and surrounding grassland. The key interest feature is the overwintering waterfowl specifically Bewick's swan and shoveler, although Bewick's Swan has not been recorded since 1975. The water body is fringed by wetland habitats including fen and reed bed.

#### Pilch Fields SSSI

- 1,534m from plan boundary.

A lowland neutral grassland and fen in very good habitat condition and supporting a very higher diversity of flora. Such high plant diversity places this site alongside the highest quality lowland grassland sites in England.

#### Tingewick Meadows SSSI

- 3,230m from plan boundary.

A lowland neutral grassland and spring-fed fen. Such grasslands are exceptionally rare in North Buckinghamshire. The variation in habitats and transitions between the grassland and fen and areas of scrub and the bordering woodland creates excellent supporting habitat for a range of birds, insects and other fauna.

#### Coombes Quarry LNR

- 134m from plan boundary.

Designated for its geological interest but with areas of biological interest. It is managed by the Thornborough and Coombs Woodland Trust

#### Buckingham Sand Pit LNR

- Within plan boundary.

This site is designated for its geological interest

#### Constraints:

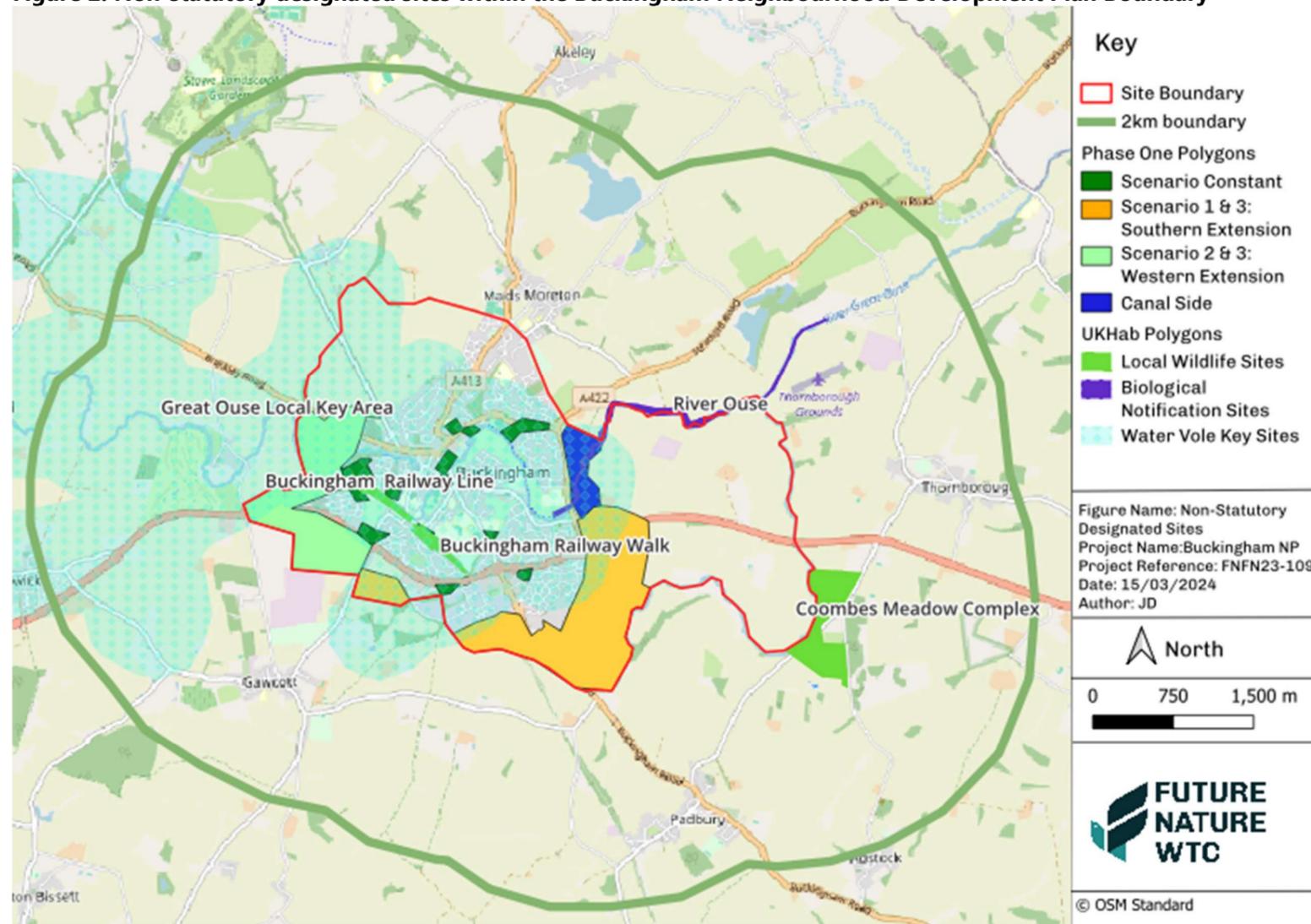
- Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan<sup>2</sup>, Policy NE1: Biodiversity and Geodiversity states "Development proposals that would lead to an individual or cumulative adverse impact on an internationally or nationally important Protected Site or species, such as SSSIs, will be refused unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated..."
- Buckingham Sand Pit LNR is within the Development Plan boundary, The Neighbourhood Plan should have a policy to protect this site.
- The other statutory designated sites are outside of the plan boundary but have the potential to be effected by development within it. The Neighbourhood Plan should have policies that ensure these sites are considered in future developments and potential negative effects mitigated against.

#### Opportunities:

- Lowland neutral grassland is exceptionally rare in North Buckinghamshire with only two small sites of SSSI quality identified within the 5km search area. There is an opportunity to build resilience to these fragile and isolated habitats by creating new areas of habitat that can build the overall resource and improve connectivity through creating 'stepping stones.' Unimproved grassland is very difficult to create and it may not be feasible to attempt to create it within the extension areas. However, semi-improved, species-rich grasslands are a realistic habitat creation option that would increase the overall local resource of species-rich grassland. Figure 1 shows the areas which could be enhanced to improve connectivity between high quality grasslands. There is an opportunity for the Southern Extension to deliver this.
- Fen is also a rare habitat that is very difficult to create. However, the extension areas should be encouraged to create wetland habitats that may support similar species to those found in fens.

<sup>2</sup> Buckinghamshire Council (2021) Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan 2013-2033 Adopted Plan. Available from: [Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan \(VALP\) \(buckinghamshire.gov.uk.s3.amazonaws.com\)](https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/s3.amazonaws.com)

**Figure 2: Non-statutory designated sites within the Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan Boundary**



**2.2 NON-STATUTORY DESIGNATED SITES**

**Buckingham Railway Line Local Wildlife Site (LWS)**

This is a complex linear site, which contains several different habitat types. The four main habitats are scrub/semi-natural woodland, wet woodland, rough grassland and standing water.

**Buckingham Railway Walk (North) LWS**

Buckingham Railway Walk (North) is similar in character to the southern section described above. It is a disused railway line, which has scrubbed over on its banks with areas of woodland and open glades.

**Combes Meadow Complex LWS**

A site of unimproved and semi-improved meadows and pastures that supports a variety of habitats from limestone grassland to flood meadow, pond and hedgerow. The rich diversity of plants across all these fields and the rarity of an intact, unimproved grassland farming system combine to make this a very unique site.

**River Ouse Biological Notification Site (BNS)**

The section of river from the western extent of the town to the north-east corner of the plan boundary (and beyond) is designated a BNS.

**Water Vole Key Areas - Great Ouse Local Key Area**

The Great Ouse Local Key Area forms a large area starting east of Brackley and extending across to Buckingham. Areas in the north, south and east of the plan boundary are outside of this area. It represents a key area for water vole.

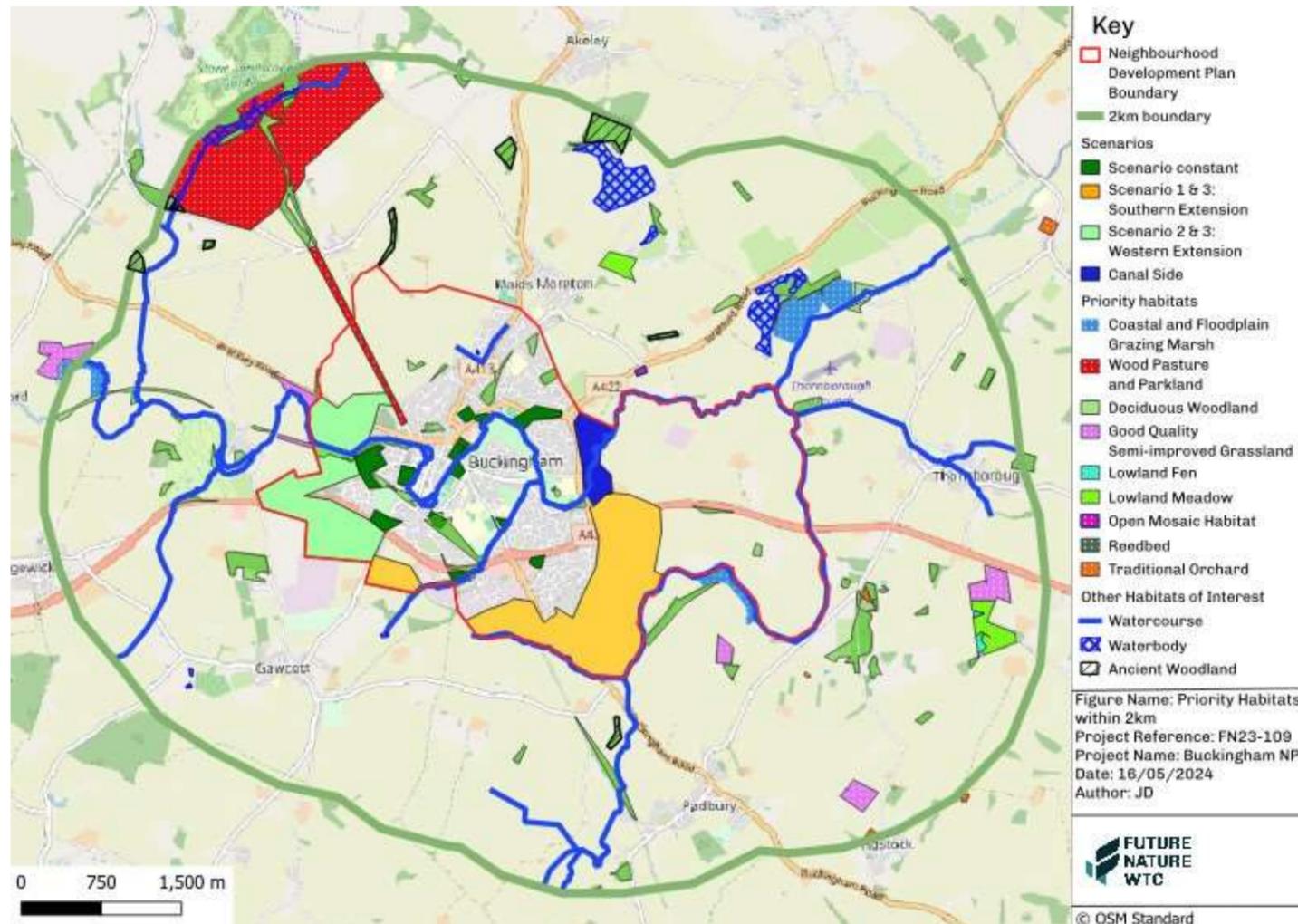
**Constraints:**

- The non-statutory designated sites provide a constraint to development. Policy NE1: Biodiversity and Geodiversity sets out that: *“Development which would result in damage to or loss of a site of biodiversity... value of regional or local importance (such as Local Wildlife Sites...) will not be permitted except in exceptional circumstances where the need for, and benefits of the development significantly and demonstrably outweigh the harm it would cause to the site, and the loss can be mitigated and compensation provided to achieve a net gain.”*
- The Neighbourhood Plan should have a policy to protect the LWS and BNS and to consider the key areas of suitable habitat within the Water Vole Key Area. This should include the provision for a suitably sized buffer (circa 50m) around LWS/BNS that adjoin extension areas within which habitats that complement the LWS/BNS would be provided.

**Opportunities:**

- The Combes Meadow Complex LWS comprises species-rich grassland between the two SSSI grassland previously identified and therefore contributes to the overall distribution of this habitat. There are further opportunities to create additional grassland to add to the overall resource and improve connectivity, particularly within the Southern extension.
- The route of the former Buckingham Railway continues through the plan boundary outside of the existing LWS designations. There is an opportunity to enhance this route within the southern and western extension areas to increase the overall length of valuable habitat through the plan boundary.
- There is an opportunity to enhance existing and create new habitats for water voles. The area has already been identified as a key area for the species and opportunities to further expand its range should be sought. There is an opportunity to do this within the Western extension and Canal Side extension.

**Figure 3: Priority Habitat and other habitats of interest within 2km of the Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan Boundary**



**Constraints:**

- The areas of priority habitat provide a constraint to development. Policy NE1: Biodiversity and Geodiversity sets out that “Development which would result in damage to or loss of... Priority Habitats... will not be permitted except in exceptional circumstances where the need for, and benefits of the development significantly and demonstrably outweigh the harm it would cause to the site, and the loss can be mitigated and compensation provided to achieve a net gain”.
- Policy NE1 also states: “Development proposals that would lead to an individual or cumulative adverse impact on... irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland... will be refused unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated...”
- NE2 River and stream corridors states: “Development proposals must not have an adverse impact on the functions and setting of any watercourse and its associated corridor. They should conserve and enhance the biodiversity... Development proposals adjacent to or containing a watercourse shall provide or retain a 10m ecological buffer (unless existing physical constraints prevent) from the top of the watercourse bank and the development, and include a long-term landscape and ecological management plan for this buffer.”
- It is recommended that the Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan reflects these policies to protect these features.

**2.3 PRIORITY HABITATS**

**Deciduous Woodland**

There are over 30 parcels of deciduous woodland within 2km of the plan boundary, eight of which are ancient woodland. Seventeen parcels sit within the plan boundary, none of which are ancient woodlands.

**Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh**

There are three parcels of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh at 1.937 and 0.43km away and one hugging the southeast plan boundary.

**Lowland Fen and Reedbed**

Three small parcels of lowland fen are scattered within the 2km boundary, none of which lie within the plan boundary. One very small parcel of reedbed sits near to the northern extent of the 2km buffer.

**Lowland Meadow and good quality semi-improved grassland**

Two good sized parcels of lowland meadow are situated to the north and east of the plan boundary. There are four variable sized parcels of good quality improved grassland within the 2km buffer, none lie within the plan boundary.

**Traditional Orchard and Wood pasture & Parkland**

Three parcels of traditional orchard lie within the 2km buffer, none of which sit within the plan boundary. Wood pasture and parkland occurs in the north-west of the survey area, outside of the plan boundary.

**Rivers and open water**

The River Great Ouse flows through the survey area and plan boundary from west to east with tributaries joining from the north and south. A number of ponds and lakes occur within the survey area including within the plan boundary.

**Opportunities:**

- Deciduous woodland is the most abundant priority habitat in the search area. There are multiple opportunities available to create new areas of deciduous woodland that would either directly connect to these areas or provide stepping stones between thereby providing an overall larger habitat resource that is better connected making it more resilient to change. The Southern and Western extension areas provide the most opportunity for woodland creation.
- The majority of other priority habitats are currently under represented in the survey area and particularly within the plan boundary. There are opportunities to create new priority habitats or enhance existing habitats so that they contribute to the overall habitat resource available. This could include:
  - The creation of wet grassland and wetland habitats along the river corridor (Canal Side and Western extension)
  - The creation of good quality semi-improved grassland to increase the size of the overall network (Southern Extension)
  - The creation of traditional orchards using fruit trees of local provenance (southern and western extension)
  - The creation of new ponds (Canal Side, Southern and Western extension areas)

## 2.4 PROTECTED AND NOTABLE SPECIES RECORDS

### Plants

A total of 25 protected or notable plant species have been recorded. This includes one protected species; bluebell. A total of 18 are Red Data listed (based on IUCN criteria) of which one is endangered, six are vulnerable to extinction and 11 are near threatened. A further four are on national red data books with one being nationally rare and three being nationally scarce. Others are rare at the County level. A number of records are from along or near to the disused rail line in the south west of Buckingham. Others were recorded within the town at a cemetery and Buckingham Sand Pit in the north of the town. Further records were recorded outside of the town to the east and west, within the plan boundary.

### Invertebrates

A total of 43 protected or notable invertebrates have been recorded, most of which were moth species but with beetles, butterflies, dragonflies, snails and a wasp also recorded. Stag beetle and roman snail are partially protected by the WCA<sup>3</sup>. The remaining species are notable with the majority being priority species<sup>4</sup> and some being on red data lists due to being rare locally. The majority of records are from within the town with the majority being on the western side. Other records were from the east of the town, within the plan boundary and were predominantly moth records.

### Birds

A total of 79 protected or notable birds have been recorded. A total of 16 birds were listed on Annex 1 of the Birds' Directive and/or on Schedule 1 of the WCA and the remaining species were priority species and/or species of conservation concern<sup>5</sup>. The species recorded include birds of prey, wetland species and an assemblage of farmland birds. A number of records were associated with the river corridor with others scattered throughout the town.

### Amphibians

A total four amphibians have been recorded. Great created newt (GCN) is a European Protected Species<sup>6</sup> and listed under Schedule 5 of the WCA. One record was provided in the south of the town. A further four GCN records have been obtained from protected species licence returns (as shown on Figure 4) in the south and north of the town and in the north-east corner of the plan boundary. Common frog. Common toad and smooth newt have also been recorded which are all partially protected by the WCA and common toad is also a priority species.

### Reptiles

A total of three reptiles have been recorded, all of which are partially protected by the WCA and are priority species. Adder has been recorded at Buckingham Sand Pit in the north of the town. Grass snake has been recorded twice in the survey area; once in the south and once in the north. Common lizard has been recorded in the same location in the south of the town.

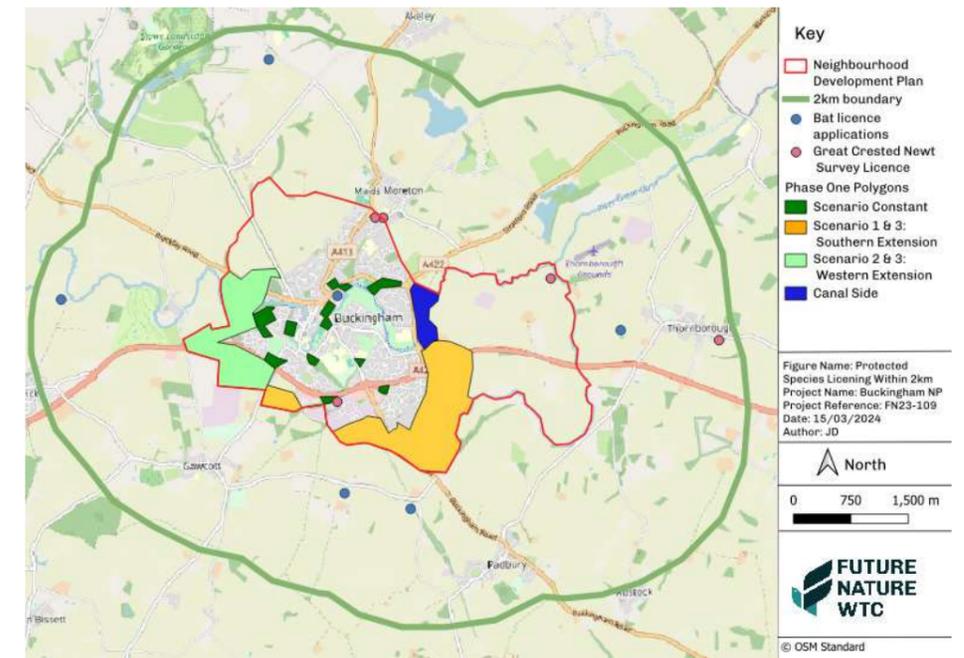
### Fish

Two notable fish; spined loach and brown/sea trout, were recorded in the River Great Ouse. Both are priority species.

### Invasive Species Records

A total of 14 invasive, non-native species listed on WCA Schedule 9 were recorded including nine plants and five fauna. A number were associated with freshwater habitats and were recorded along the river. Others were recorded in the town and countryside to the east.

**Figure 4: Natural England Protected Species Mitigation Licence Returns**



### Terrestrial mammals - bats

A total of eight bats species have been recorded with other records provided which were not identified to species level. All UK bats are European Protected Species and listed under Schedule 5 of the WCA. Three of the species recorded; noctule, soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared bat are also priority species. The records were either from within the town or along the River Great Ouse. Natural England licence return records also provided one record from within the town and a further five within 2km but outside of the plan boundary (as shown on Figure 4).

### Terrestrial mammals - other

Five other protected or notable terrestrial mammals were recorded. Water vole and otter are protected under Schedule 5 of the WCA and are priority species. Otter is also a European protected species. The majority of records were from along the River Great Ouse but with one water vole record from a tributary to the south. Badger is protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 and was recorded in multiple locations throughout the survey area. Brown hare and hedgehog are priority species. Hedgehog was recorded in multiple locations, predominantly within the town. Brown Hare was recorded in one location on the southern edge of the town.

<sup>3</sup> Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

**Constraints:**

- Protected species such as otter, water vole, badger, great crested newt, all UK bat species and some birds, invertebrates and plants provide a constraint due to the legal protection afforded to them and which needs to be considered as a planning matter. All planning applications that include green space should be supported by a suitable ecological report.
- Priority species (comprising those listed on Schedule 41 of the Natural England and Rural Communities Act (2006)) need to be considered as a material planning consideration by the local authority.
- The adder population recorded at Buckingham Sand Pits is relatively isolated from the extension sites and therefore there are limited opportunities to provide enhancements for this species.

**Opportunities:**

- There are opportunities to enhance extension sites for protected and notable species beyond the legislative or policy requirements to protect them, as set out below:
  - **Badger:** The Southern extension area provides a good opportunity to provide a value foraging resource for badgers within the semi-improved grasslands and orchards already recommended;
  - **Otter:** All of the extension areas offer an opportunity to provide a minimum 10m buffer along the rivers that border or pass through the site. This should include secluded areas away from footpaths and publicly accessible locations where otters can find shelter away from human disturbance;
  - **Water vole:** A 10m buffer along the rivers in all exclusion areas that includes secluded areas would also be beneficial to water vole. There is also an opportunity to enhance bankside vegetation specifically for water voles;
  - **Bats:** All extension areas provide suitable habitats for bats and therefore there are opportunities to enhance the sites for them. This should include the provision of one integrated bat box per dwelling and measures to ensure dark corridors are provided within the site;
  - **Other mammals;** hedgehog and brown hare have been recorded within the search area. All extension areas should provide suitable foraging areas for hedgehogs and all fencing used should include holes large enough for hedgehogs to pass through to ensure accessibility throughout the site. The recommendation for species-rich grassland in the Southern extension would also be beneficial to brown hare;
  - **Invertebrates:** There is an opportunity to increase the number of nesting sites for some solitary bees by providing integrated bee bricks into new buildings in all extension areas. There is also an opportunity to increase the foraging resource and availability of larval foodplants by ensuring all landscaping uses plants of known value to UK wildlife.
  - **Birds:** There is an opportunity to increase nesting sites for breeding birds across all extension sites by providing integrated nest boxes in all new buildings. This should include universal or swift nest boxes and house martin nest cups. Kingfisher has been recorded along the rivers that border the extension sites. A 10m buffer along the rivers in all exclusion areas that includes secluded areas would also be beneficial to kingfisher.
  - **Reptiles:** There is an opportunity to create new habitats for reptiles in all extension areas. Grass snake utilise wetland habitats and the provision of a 10m along the rivers in all exclusion areas that includes secluded areas would provide additional habitats for them. The semi-improved grasslands and orchards already recommended for the Southern extension area would be beneficial to common lizard.
  - **Amphibians:** There is an opportunity to create new habitats for amphibians in all extension areas. Water features, designed specifically for wildlife should be created in all extension areas. These should include wildlife ponds that hold water year-round plus ephemeral pools, scrapes and ditches and rain gardens.
  - **Invasive species:** There is an opportunity to eradicate invasive species from the extension sites, should they be present.

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<sup>4</sup> Species listed on Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

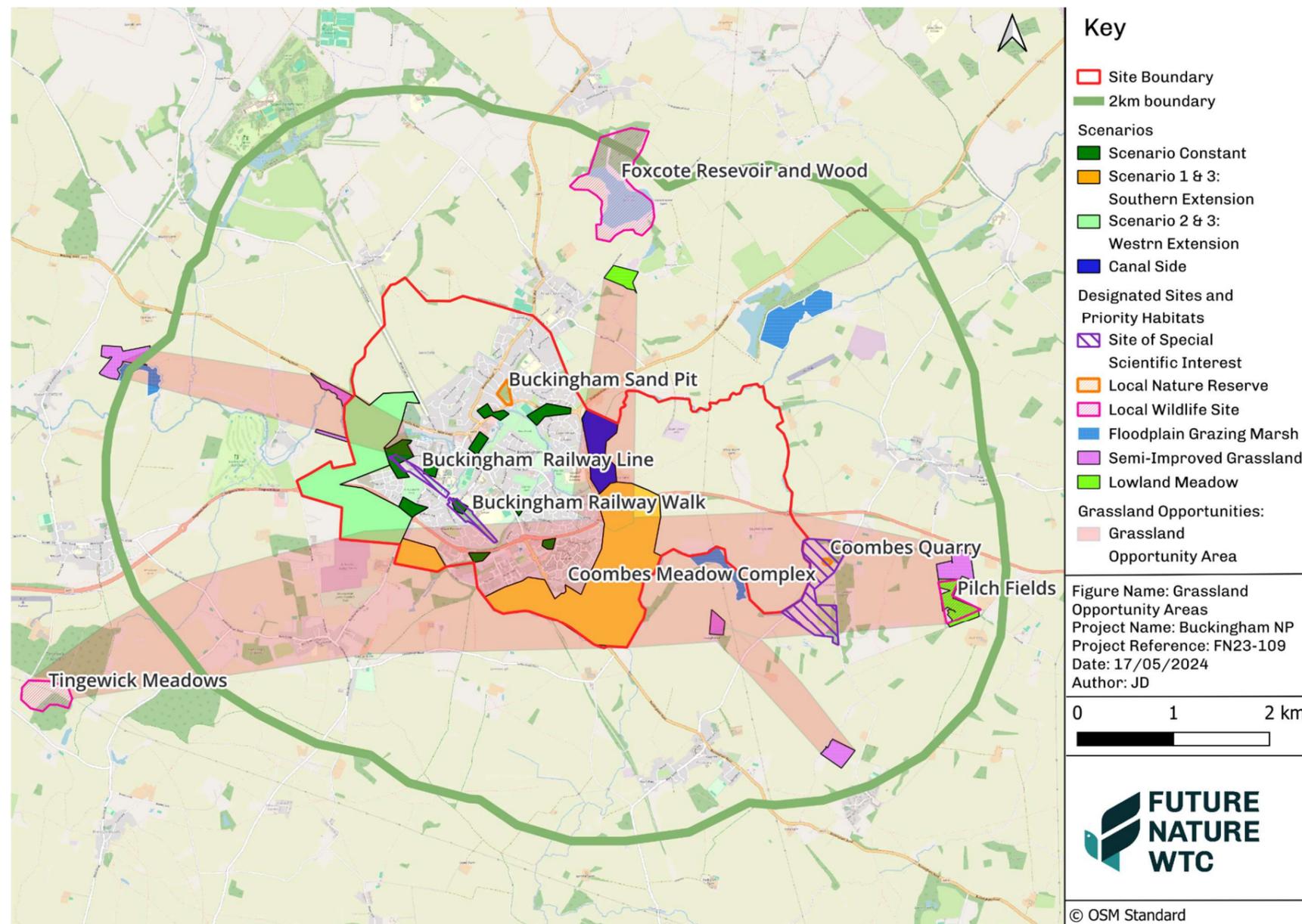
<sup>5</sup> Stanbury, A. et al (2021) Birds of Conservation Concern 5; Red or amber listed

<sup>6</sup> Listed under the Habitats and Species Regulations

### 3. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are provided in this section on how the opportunities identified earlier in this report should be considered and the additional policy that could be included for each extension area. Figure 5 to Figure 7 show the key opportunity areas within the plan boundary for three broad habitat types; grassland, woodland and wetland, and where the proposed extension sites are in relation to them. They indicate where the greatest areas of opportunity are for new habitat creation to ensure a resilient, well connected network of habitats is present in and around Buckingham.

**Figure 5: Grassland Opportunity Areas**



#### Grassland opportunity areas

The greatest opportunity for grassland creation is in the south of the plan boundary within the Southern Extension Area. A number of high quality grasslands occur to the south-east with areas designated as SSSI and LWS. A further SSSI grassland occurs to the south-west.

Therefore, opportunities to create species-rich grassland between these sites would allow for an overall larger area of grassland that was loosely connected as a series of ‘stepping stones.’

Areas of priority habitat (or near Priority Habitat) lowland meadow and species-rich grassland also occur to the north and east. There is an opportunity to increase the resilience of these currently isolated habitats by creating new species-rich grasslands within the Western Extension and Canal Side.

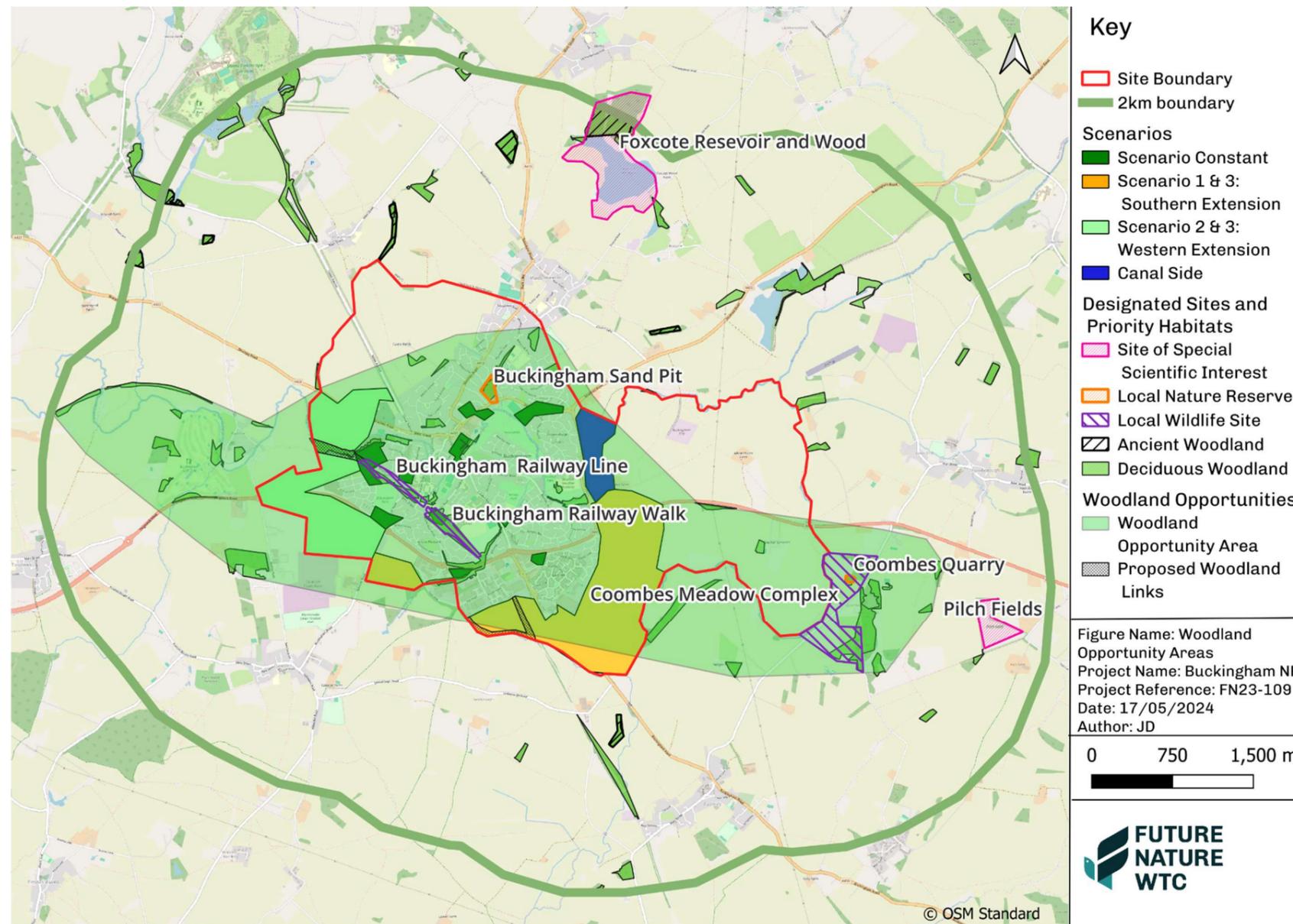
#### Grassland habitat suitability

There is an opportunity to create neutral grasslands within the plan boundary similar to those within designated sites and identified as priority habitat.

The Southern Extension, Western Extension and Canal Side have watercourses within or along their boundaries and therefore there is also an opportunity to create wet grasslands in these areas.

There is an opportunity to create grassland alongside other habitats, such as woodland and scrub, to create habitat mosaics.

**Figure 6: Woodland Opportunity Areas**



**Woodland opportunity areas**

Woodlands of raised ecological interest, due to being within designated sites or comprising priority habitat or ancient woodland, account for a relatively small area within the plan boundary and are well scattered within and around it.

There are opportunities to extend, enhance and create woodland as part of the plan. The disused railway corridor already comprises woodland in places and its route passes through the Southern Extension, Western Extension and some of the Scenario Constant sites. Where woodland is already present, there is an opportunity to retain and enhance it through implementing appropriate habitat management plans.

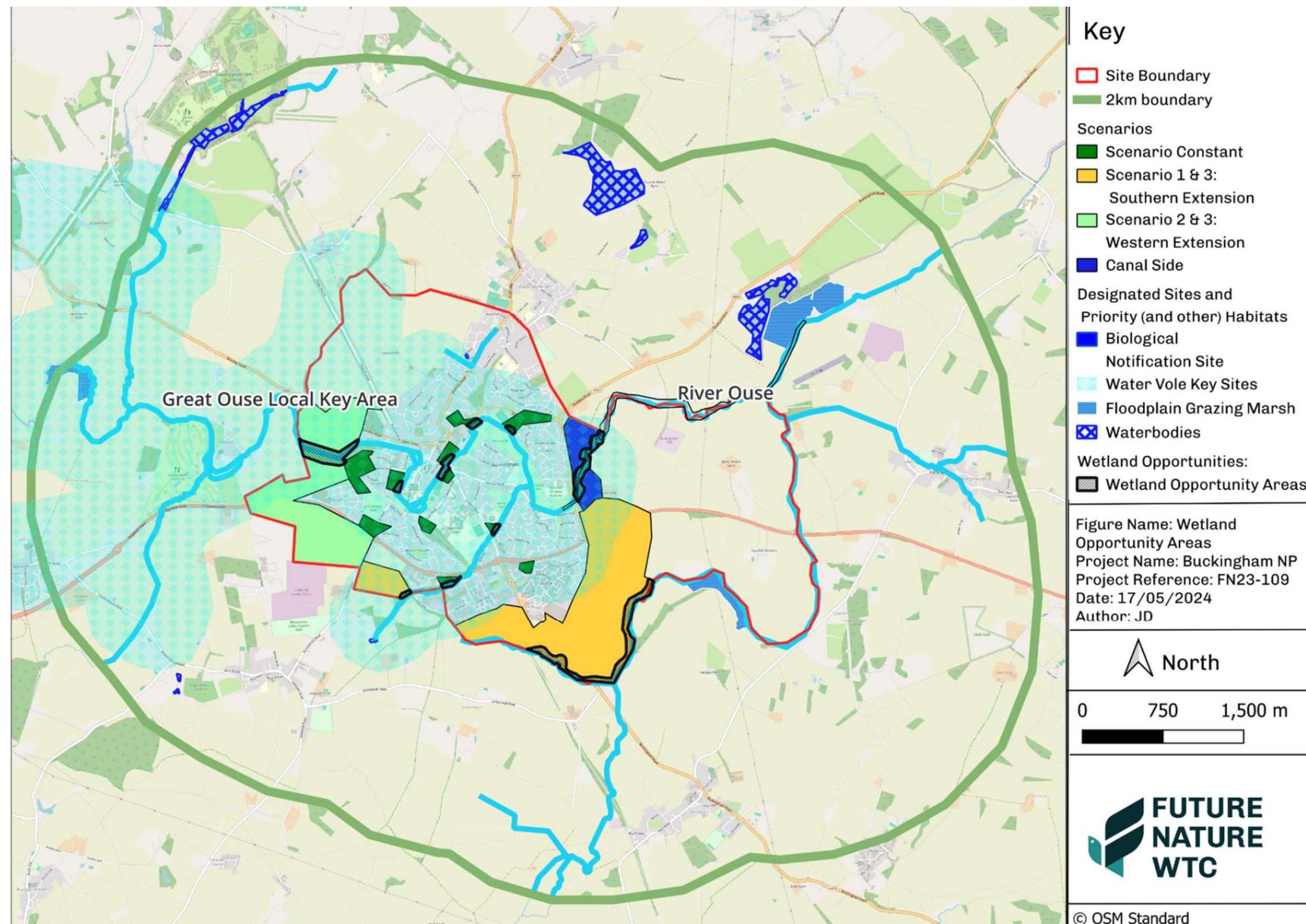
There is an opportunity to create new woodland along the route of the disused railway where it crosses the Southern Extension and along part of the boundary to improve habitat connectivity to other areas of woodland.

There is an opportunity to create woodland within all of the Scenario options which would increase the overall abundance of woodland within the plan boundary thereby building resilience and increasing connectivity.

**Woodland habitat suitability**

Deciduous woodlands comprising broadleaved species of local provenance should be used in new woodland creation.

**Figure 7: Wetland Opportunity Areas**



**Wetland opportunity areas**

The River Ouse, its tributaries and the canal form a network of watercourses within the plan boundary and a number of waterbodies are present within the wider area.

Watercourses are present within or bordering the Southern Extension, Western Extension and Canal Side, plus a number of the smaller Scenario Constant sites. Therefore, there is an opportunity to create wetland habitats within the floodplain of these watercourses such as wet grasslands and reedbeds. These habitats are currently poorly represented with only two areas of floodplain grazing marsh recorded within the wider area. Therefore, any creation of new habitats would significantly increase the overall resource and provide new opportunities for a range of species.

Individual ponds are a valuable habitat resource and there is an opportunity to build a network of ponds across the plan boundary by including them within all of the Scenarios.

The area in the west of the study area is designated as a key site for water voles. Therefore, there is an opportunity to enhance habitat for this species within all of the Scenario sites that contain watercourses.

**Wetland habitat suitability**

There are opportunities to create wet grassland and reedbeds along watercourses/within floodplains. Ponds should be targeted outside of these areas.

### 3.1 SOUTHERN EXTENSION AREA (SCENARIO 2 & 3)

The southern extension comprises a large area to the south and south-east of Buckingham bordered by the Padbury Brook, a tributary of the River Great Ouse, to the south. Three statutory and non-statutory designated sites comprising unimproved neutral grasslands occur to the south and east making the Southern extension area a strategic location to create new areas of species-rich grassland. Small areas of fen also occur within the wider area and therefore wetland habitats could also be created on the site to increase the overall resource in the wider area and would be most suited to the areas adjoining the existing watercourse. There is also an opportunity to create an orchard. This would provide suitable habitat for a range of fauna, including protected and notable species recorded within the wider area, such as badger, reptiles, amphibians, brown hare as well as a range of invertebrates and birds.

The route of the disused Buckingham Railway passes through the site and therefore there is an opportunity to extend the habitats present along the disused section of line to the north which is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. This would create a mosaic of habitats suitable for a range of species and increase the overall area of habitat available. This would include benefits to protected and notable species recorded within the wider area including badgers and bats as it would provide an opportunity to create a dark corridor through the site.

There is an opportunity to create a 10m buffer along the Padbury Brook within which habitats of raised interest could be created, such as a mosaic of wetland, species-rich grassland, scrub and occasional scattered trees. The strategic placement of trees and shrubs can help create secluded sections of river free from disturbance by people and their dogs which can be hugely beneficial to fauna using the river corridor, such as otter, grass snake, water vole and kingfisher. Creating woodland along the upper reaches of the brook would also provide screening and limit access.

A summary of recommended policy areas are listed below:

- Create a large area of green space [a precise area or % of the site should be provided here] should be created solely to provide habitat enhancements and predominantly comprising semi-improved grassland/other neutral grassland. Additional habitats should be incorporated into this area including; wetland, scrub and orchard. This area should be subject to a long-term habitat management and monitoring plan.
- The route of the disused Buckingham Railway should be used to create a strip of scrub/semi-natural woodland, wet woodland, rough grassland and standing water that connects to the LWS to the north. This strip should remain unlit to provide a dark corridor for nocturnal species. This area should be subject to a long-term habitat management and monitoring plan.
- A minimum 10m buffer should be created along the Padbury Brook comprising semi-improved grassland/other neutral grassland with scattered scrub and occasional individual trees. The buffer should be designed to include secluded sections free from people and their dogs. This area should be subject to a long-term habitat management and monitoring plan.

### 3.2 WESTERN EXTENSION AREA (SCENARIO 1 & 3)

The western extension comprises a large area to the west of Buckingham. The River Great Ouse passes through it and it falls within the Great Ouse Water Vole Local Key Area making it a strategic location for water vole enhancement measures. There is an opportunity to create a 10m buffer along the River Great Ouse within which habitats of raised interest could be created, such as a mosaic of species-rich grassland, scrub and occasional scattered trees and these could be used to help create secluded sections of river free from disturbance by people and their dogs. The focus of this would be to enhance the river corridor for water vole.

The route of the disused Buckingham Railway passes through the site and therefore there is an opportunity to extend the habitats present along the disused section of line to the east which is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. This would create a mosaic of habitats suitable for a range of species and increase the overall area of habitat available. This would include benefits to protected and notable species recorded within the wider area including badgers and bats as it would provide an opportunity to create a dark corridor through the site.

A summary of recommended policy areas are listed below:

- A minimum 10m buffer should be created along the River Great Ouse comprising semi-improved grassland/other neutral grassland with scattered scrub and occasional individual trees. The buffer should be designed to include secluded sections free from people and their dogs. An emphasis should be placed on enhancing the full length of river bank within the site boundary for water vole. This area should be subject to a long-term habitat management and monitoring plan.
- The route of the disused Buckingham Railway should be used to create a strip of scrub/semi-natural woodland, wet woodland, rough grassland and standing water that connects to the LWS to the east. This strip should remain unlit to provide a dark corridor for nocturnal species. This area should be subject to a long-term habitat management and monitoring plan.

### **3.3 CANAL SIDE AREA**

The Canal Side extension comprises a smaller area to the east of Buckingham. The River Great Ouse passes through the west of the site along with the route of a disused canal. This section of the river is designated a BNS due to its raised ecological interest. The site therefore lends itself to the creation of wetland habitats with a focus on the species they may support. There is an opportunity to create a 10m buffer along the River Great Ouse within which habitats of raised interest could be created, such as a mosaic of species-rich grassland, scrub and occasional scattered trees and these could be used to help create secluded sections of river free from disturbance by people and their dogs. The focus of this would be to enhance the river corridor for the range of flora and fauna recorded along it.

A summary of recommended policy areas are listed below:

- A minimum 10m buffer should be created along the River Great Ouse comprising semi-improved grassland/other neutral grassland with scattered scrub and occasional individual trees. The buffer should be designed to include secluded sections free from people and their dogs. An emphasis should be placed on enhancing the full length of river bank within the site boundary. This area should be subject to a long-term habitat management and monitoring plan.

### **3.4 OUTSIDE OF EXTENSION AREAS**

This report focusses on the role the neighbourhood plan can play in moulding the proposed extension sites and other developments into areas of high biodiversity interest. However, opportunities to provide biodiversity enhancements within the wider NP should also be considered. There are a range of green spaces present within the study area and it is likely that there would be potential to raise their ecological value, thereby increasing the overall habitat resource within the areas and increasing connectivity and permeability through the landscape for the range of floral and faunal species known to already be present.

It is recommended that a review of such sites is undertaken, including sites owned by Buckingham Town Council, to determine whether targeted enhancements could be made either directly or through working with partners.

### **3.5 GENERAL POLICY**

The following areas should be covered by policy for all development within the NP boundary.

- Prevent development that would damage or destroy statutory and non-statutory designated sites, ancient woodland or priority habitat;
- Provide a minimum 15m protection buffer around LWS/BNS within which complementary habitat creation would be provided;
- Provide at least one integrated bat box or one integrated bird box per building in all developments;
- Ensure all fencing has holes at the base large enough to allow hedgehog movement;
- All soft landscaping should use species of known benefit to UK wildlife

All developments should introduce permanent or ephemeral waterbodies, such as, ponds, scrapes, ditches and rain gardens

# Buckingham

Housing Needs Assessment (HNA)

October, 2023

## Quality information

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5. Final Report	October, 2023	Paul Avery	Principal Consultant

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**List of abbreviations used in the text:**

DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (formerly MHCLG)
HMA	Housing Market Area
HNA	Housing Needs Assessment
HRF	Housing Requirement Figure (the total number of homes the NA is expected to plan for, usually supplied by LPAs)
HLIN	Housing Learning and Improvement Network
HRP	Household Reference Person
LA	Local Authority
LHN	Local Housing Need
LHNA	Local Housing Needs Assessment
LPA	Local Planning Authority
LSOA	Lower Layer Super Output Area
MSOA	Middle Layer Super Output Area
NA	Neighbourhood (Plan) Area
NP	Neighbourhood Plan
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
OA	Output Area
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PPG	Planning Practice Guidance
PRS	Private Rented Sector
SHMA	Strategic Housing Market Assessment
VOA	Valuation Office Agency

# 1. Executive Summary

1. Buckingham is a Neighbourhood Area (NA) located in the recently created Buckinghamshire Unitary Authority. The NA boundary covers the areas administered by the Town Council.
2. The 2021 Census recorded 14,292 individuals in Buckingham, indicating an increase of 2,250 people (19% growth) since the 2011 Census.
3. There has been significant development in Buckingham in recent years. Buckinghamshire Council has provided data showing that 1,492 new homes have been built since 2011, bringing the current total number of dwellings to 6,417. As of July 2023, outstanding commitments (dwellings on sites with planning permission) total 471 homes.
4. This Executive Summary details the conclusions of each chapter of this Housing Needs Assessment (HNA), addressing each of the themes agreed with the Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan Working Group at the outset of the research.
5. Data from the 2021 Census is being released throughout 2023. At present, the available data covers population, households, tenure, and dwelling stock characteristics. Some data from the Census 2021 at the localised level, including parishes, will not be available until later in 2023, as well as data comparing numerous variables. As such this HNA will draw on the latest available data from the 2021 Census where possible and will also continue to use other data sets, including 2011 Census, Valuation Office Agency data, and ONS parish projections where necessary to build up evidence at the neighbourhood level.

## Conclusions – Quantity of Housing Needed

6. This HNA recommends an overall HNF of 74 dwellings per annum for Buckingham.
7. The Aylesbury Vale Local Plan covers the period up to 2033 but the new Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan will extend 7 years beyond this to 2040. How the annual need figure produced here should be translated into a total target for the new Neighbourhood Plan therefore depends on how the existing target is interpreted and the wider objectives of the community.
8. One option is for Buckingham to consider that it has (or soon will have) met in full its housing growth target for the period to 2033 (the end date of the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan), and therefore to multiply the annual housing need of 74 established here by the remaining 7 years in the proposed Neighbourhood Plan period. This would produce a residual need figure of 518 homes for the remaining period 2033-2040. Given how early in the current Local Plan period Buckingham has already nearly exceeded its existing 2,177 target, any additional homes built prior to 2033 could be counted toward the residual 518 need figure.
9. A higher growth option, if this is the desire of the community, would be to consider the existing target to have been fulfilled through the made Neighbourhood Plan and Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan, and to begin the new Neighbourhood Plan with a fresh target based on the need figure estimated here. This would involve multiplying the need figure of 74 by

the total number of years in the new Neighbourhood Plan, which is currently envisaged to run to 2040. Assuming a start date of 2024 implies a total need of 1,184 additional homes.

10. Which option to pursue (including the possibility of a middle-ground or further alternatives) is a policy discussion for consideration by the Working Group, Town Council, wider community and Buckinghamshire Council.
11. It should be noted that the housing figure for Buckinghamshire is derived from the Government's standard method and is likely to change annually as ONS publishes new affordability data each year and new household projections approximately every two years. Although housing need figures are not invalidated each year as new data is released, this could impact any indicative housing requirement figure provided by Buckinghamshire for neighbourhood areas in the future (since this would be calculated using new data).
12. That figure has been broken down with the aim of allocating an appropriate share to Buckingham with reference to the strategy for the pattern and scale of new development across the former district as expressed in the latest Local Plan, which takes into account the sustainability and suitability of the former district's various settlements for growth. This process relies on interpretations and assumptions made by AECOM.
13. Buckinghamshire are currently at the early stages of developing a Local Plan for the new Unitary Authority, with the new Local Plan expected to be adopted in 2025. At the time any final Neighbourhood Plan housing requirement figure is provided by Buckinghamshire, it can be considered to supersede the provisional calculation within this study. Consequently, there is a need for the neighbourhood group to continue to engage with the LPA to confirm the final housing figure for the Neighbourhood Plan.

## **Conclusions- Tenure and Affordability**

### **Current tenure profile**

14. Home ownership is the dominant tenure in Buckingham at 66% of all households, though it is slightly less common than the county average (70%). Of the remaining households, a majority live in privately rented accommodation (18%). At 13%, the rate of social renting in Buckingham is slightly above the county average. Over the past decade there have been particular increases in the number of private and social renters, as well as a proportionally significant injection of new shared ownership properties.

### **Housing costs**

15. Home values in the NA have followed a clear upward trajectory despite some year-on-year fluctuations. The current median house price (middle number when arranged from lowest to highest) is £369,000, which is 48% higher than its level in 2013. The lower quartile price (the lowest 25% of prices, used as a good proxy for entry-level housing) stands at £288,000.
16. It is also worth noting that the current median house price in Buckingham is slightly less expensive than the current median for Buckinghamshire as a whole. This is in spite of the unusual fact (for a town, and discussed in the Type and Size section), that the dwelling

mix in the NA includes a higher share of detached homes and fewer flats than wider Buckinghamshire.

17. AECOM has estimated the annual income required to afford various tenures of housing in Buckingham – each of which is explained in detail in Appendix C. These thresholds are compared to incomes to determine which options are the most appropriate for local people going forward. The average household income in the NA area was £52,150 in 2018, and the lower quartile income (per person) for Buckinghamshire was £19,200 in 2022.
18. It was found that local households on average incomes are unable to access even entry-level homes unless they have the advantage of a very large deposit. The median house price would require an annual income around 80% above the current average. Private renting presents a similar affordability challenge, generally only making entry-level properties accessible to average and dual lower earning households. Households made up of a single lower earner cannot afford the given rental thresholds and would need to rely on social and affordable rented options.
19. Subsidised routes to home ownership like First Homes and shared ownership are intended to target people who can afford to rent but not to buy. In Buckingham there is a relatively large gap between the income needed to afford to rent (£34,000) and to buy (£74,000), who may benefit from these products.
20. The discount on First Homes can be set at 30%, 40% or 50% in Neighbourhood Plans. In Buckingham a 30% discount may be marginally affordable to the average earning household, but a 40% discount would expand access to ownership more widely. If seeking to take action on this point in the Neighbourhood Plan, the Working Group advised to discuss this possibility with Buckinghamshire Council, who may be able to supply evidence of development viability that is also relevant to this policy option.
21. Affordable rented housing appears generally affordable to households with two lower earners (average earning households are unlikely to be eligible). Single lower earners can afford average social rents and affordable rents but the lowest earners, if unable to secure a social rented dwelling or additional subsidy, may need to live in a room in a shared house using housing benefits.

### **Students and HMOs**

22. The University of Buckingham, a private university with approximately 3,500 students, is located within the NA boundary. The Accommodation Office for the University confirms that there are currently 467 student rooms offered at 13 sites across three campuses. Plans currently exist to offer a further 71 shared rooms at a new site in early 2024, with a capacity for 142 students.
23. This suggests that around 3,000 University students are likely to be accommodated outside of halls of residences. Though some will live at home and others outside of Buckingham altogether, it is reasonable to assume that the majority live in private rented housing in the town. Nationwide data from the Higher Education Statistics Authority suggests that 27% of students live in the private rented sector, which would imply ongoing demand for rented homes from around 950 students in Buckingham.

24. This will include people living alone, in small groups, and in Houses in Multiple Accommodation (HMOs), where multiple unrelated individuals or households share facilities such as kitchens or bathrooms. This means that demand from students is likely to impact the market for both 1-2 bedroom self-contained flats and larger family housing that can be rented out to larger groups. This demand pressure can result in higher rents as well as incentives to convert more family housing to HMOs, with knock-on impacts on the housing needs of other groups.
25. The Buckinghamshire Council register indicates that there are 21 licenced HMOs in Buckingham, which have a total of 115 rooms (implying an average size of 5-6 bedrooms). This is likely to undercount the stock for a number of reasons. Speaking very generally, the current number of HMOs in the NA is likely to be fewer than 100 at present, though still able to accommodate around a third of the University's students as well as some non-student low-income house sharers.
26. Rental listings suggest that rooms in HMOs cost around £670 per month, making them cheaper than self-contained 1-2 bedroom homes. However, the potential rental income from a 4 bedroom HMO may be higher than a 4 bedroom self-contained house, providing an incentives for landlords to convert family housing if demand from students and low income house sharers rises in future.
27. There are a number of policy, licensing and other measures that can be taken to control the number, distribution and standards of HMOs. However, these are generally beyond the power of a Neighbourhood Plan and, if of interest, are a matter for discussion between the Working Group and Buckinghamshire Unitary Authority.

### **The need for Affordable Housing**

28. AECOM estimate that there is a need for 9 (rounded) new social/affordable rental homes each year to satisfy local need, this equates to 141 new social/affordable rental homes over the neighbourhood plan period (to 2040).
29. This result may be lower than expected given the current backlog of need (in the region of 300 households). This is due to the expected rate of turnover in the substantial existing stock of social housing, which suggests that vacancies will be able to satisfy much of the projected newly arising need as well as some of the backlog.
30. However, Buckingham may be expected to meet some of the wider needs of the town's surrounding rural area and/or that of the wider county as established in the 2016 HEDNA. As such, it may be prudent to maximise the potential delivery of new affordable rented housing to address the current backlog, future-proof the stock in case needs change, and provide homes for households living in the wider area.
31. AECOM estimate a potential demand for 38 affordable home ownership dwellings per annum in Buckingham, or 613 in total over the remaining years in the period to 2040. The households eligible for such homes do not necessarily lack their own housing but would prefer to buy rather than rent. They have been included in the national planning definition of those in need of Affordable Housing, but their needs are less acute than those on the waiting list for affordable rented housing.

### **Affordable Housing policy**

32. Affordable Housing is typically provided and made financially viable by Local or Neighbourhood Plan policies that require it to be included at a set proportion of market housing developments. Buckinghamshire's adopted policy on this subject requires 25% of all new housing be affordable, and this is raised to 35% in the made Neighbourhood Plan.
33. AECOM recommends that the tenure mix of Affordable Housing secured in future years gives broadly equal weight to affordable home ownership options (50%) and affordable rented provision (50%). There is an opportunity here to boost levels of affordable home ownership to meet high levels of potential demand in a context where home ownership through the open market is very unaffordable. The trade-off is that this would lower delivery of affordable rented housing, which serves those in the greatest need. In this case, AECOM estimates that the existing stock of affordable rented housing may be sufficient for the community's evolving needs. However, it may be prudent to future-proof the stock through some additional supply in case this situation changes and to contribute to the unmet needs of the wider area.
34. There is no obligation to follow this recommendation or to depart from emerging Local Plan policy if that is more in line with the community's objectives. Further discussion with Buckinghamshire Council about the options and their advice would be beneficial, and could cover issues beyond the scope of this report, such as development viability.

## **Conclusions- Type and Size**

### **The current housing mix**

35. The current dwelling mix in Buckingham is generally weighted in favour of larger and less dense home types. This is somewhat surprising given that the NA is a town with a generally more urban character than the surrounding rural area. This may be due to the impact of Buckinghamshire's larger settlements (e.g. High Wycombe and Aylesbury) on the county average.
36. The most common dwelling type in Buckingham is detached houses (37% compared to the national average of 23%), and there are relatively few flats (13% compared to the national average of 22%). The proportion of bungalows, at nearly 7%, is slightly below the county and national averages (both 9%), which may be reinforcing the high levels of demand observed by the Working Group.
37. Buckingham's size profile more closely tracks that of wider Buckinghamshire, while both areas depart from the national average in their high share of 4+ bedroom homes and low proportions of dwellings with 1-2 bedrooms. Homes with more than 3 bedrooms make up just over 70% of the total in Buckingham.
38. Over the past ten years, despite significant levels of new development, the housing mix has remained relatively similar in the town. The key exceptions to this are relatively high proportional growth (from a low base) in the number of flats, and the large increase in 4+ bedroom homes to become the joint most common size category (with 3 bedroom homes).

The former shift has provided useful diversity in the market, while the latter has exaggerated the existing dominance of larger homes.

### **Population characteristics**

39. The NA population, which is generally younger than the wider county and England, has experienced significant growth in the decade since 2011 in line with the scale of residential development in that time.
40. The only age group that has not expanded is that aged 15-24. This may be a reflection of the timing of the 2021 Census during the Covid-19 pandemic, when many students returned to their family homes. However, this statistic also chimes with the perception of the Working Group that young adults tend to leave Buckingham for employment and lifestyle reasons, returning (or replaced by others) in later age groups to begin or expand their families. The population of 25-44 year olds has accordingly increased, along with significant growth in the number of younger children.
41. Despite this evidence of the retention and attraction of family groups, another clear trend in Buckingham's population statistics is toward ageing, with by far the largest proportional changes seen in the 65-84 and 85+ age groups, even though they remain a relatively small proportion of the total.
42. Applying ONS household projections for Buckinghamshire to the Buckingham population in 2011 suggests that population growth can be expected to be driven by the oldest households, with the 65+ age group expected to increase by around two-thirds to become approximately 34% of the total, while all other age bands grow at more modest rates or contract. Given the slightly younger population of the NA compared to Buckinghamshire (data for which has been used to derive these projections), it is possible that the rate of ageing will be lower in practice, particularly if Buckingham continues to attract a replacement population of younger families.
43. Buckingham's household composition is similar to that of the wider county, notable for a low proportion of single-person households and a higher share of families with dependent children than the national average.
44. As of the 2011 Census, more than 75% of households in the NA had at least one more bedroom than they would be expected to need, and 46% had at least two extra bedrooms. This is not surprising given the relatively large skew of the housing stock. Under-occupancy was most common among the three distinct groups: couples with no children, older households and single people. While not uncommon, this might suggest that Buckingham's larger housing is not necessarily being occupied by households with the most family members, but by the people with the most wealth or by older people who have not chosen or been able to move to smaller properties.

### **Future population and size needs**

45. It is possible to estimate the size mix of future homes that might best accommodate demographic trends and address imbalances in the existing housing stock. The result of this process suggests that new development should deliver a variety of dwelling sizes with a focus on 3 bedroom homes. Despite being the most common size category at present,

3 bedroom homes offer the versatility to accommodate various household types, including new families and downsizers, a fact reflected in their popularity among all age groups locally.

46. This balanced mix, with a lower share of 4+ bedroom homes than are present in the existing housing stock, could help to achieve three key outcomes: improving affordability, meeting the needs suggested by demographic trends (notably the ageing of older people and continuing to attract younger families), and diversification away from the high proportion of 4+ bedroom homes in the current stock.
47. This recommendation is broadly in line with the evidence for former Vale of Aylesbury presented in the 2016 Buckinghamshire HEDNA Housing Need Study. However, this source could also be used to justify promoting slightly more larger homes and fewer 1 bedroom options if this is desired by the community – for example if flats are not supported throughout the NA for reasons of character.
48. It is important to remember that other factors should be considered in determining the dwelling mix that is desirable in the NA or on any particular site. These include the specific characteristics of the nearby stock of housing (such as its condition and design), the role of the NA or site within the wider housing market area (linked to any Local Authority strategies or plans) and site-specific factors. The size mix of Affordable Housing also tends to be considered separately from market housing by the Local Planning Authority, and to focus on the smaller units for which the vast majority of those on the waiting list in Buckingham are eligible.

## **Conclusions- Specialist Housing for Older People**

### **Characteristics of the current older population**

49. There are currently estimated to be around 1,157 individuals aged 75 or over in Buckingham, a number that has grown from 809 in 2011 and is projected to rise to 1,770 by the end of the Neighbourhood Plan period (2040).
50. A clear majority (83%) of Buckinghamshire households aged 55-75 in 2011 (and therefore likely to reach the 75+ bracket by 2040) are owner occupiers and the remainder predominantly rent from a social landlord. This is important because those currently owning will require specialist accommodation for market purchase, being largely ineligible for subsidised housing, while those in private or social rent will need to rely on subsidised rented housing because they are unlikely to have the funds to buy. Rates of disability in Buckingham are also higher among social tenants than owner-occupiers.

### **Projected demographic change and need for specialist housing**

51. The 75+ population of the NA is projected to increase from 8% to 12% of the population between 2021 and 2040. As established in the previous chapter, Buckingham has a slightly younger population than the wider county and may therefore age slower in the coming years than is estimated here.
52. The growth in the older population, which, rather than the total, is the focus of the estimates of need here, should be converted into households because some older people

will be cohabiting in old age. The projected 75+ population growth of 613 is equivalent to roughly 438 households in that age category.

53. The potential need for specialist housing with some form of additional care for older people can be estimated by bringing together data on population projections, rates of disability, and what tenure of housing the current 55-75 cohort occupy in the NA. This can be sense-checked using a toolkit based on national research.
54. Specialist housing is targeted at older people, and they are the focus of this analysis, because disability rates are significantly higher among older age groups. In Buckingham in 2011, the proportion of people with a disability that limits their daily activities a lot was under 2% for those aged below 49 and 5% for those aged 50-64 but jumps to 19% for those aged over 65.
55. The two estimates suggest a range of 154 to 200 specialist accommodation units might be required during the Plan period. The estimates are also broken down by tenure and level of support required. Broadly, 60-75% of the need is for accommodation offered for market purchase. This chimes with the higher propensity of older households to be homeowners. A similar range (60-75%) of the need is found to be for sheltered housing with limited support rather than additional care arrangements. The potential need for care and nursing home beds in Buckingham to 2035 can be roughly estimated at 40 units, a level of demand that could easily be met by the two recent care homes offering 152 bedspaces in total.
56. These estimates are fairly large relative to the overall housing need of the NA. Despite this, it would not be prudent to prioritise the potential demand from older people to the exclusion of other groups, such as those in need of Affordable Housing, young families, and others important to maintaining a balanced and vibrant community. The HNA evidence can be used to support specialist housing development but does not make that obligatory. How far to promote this is a choice for the Working Group and wider community.

### **Accessibility and adaptability**

57. Given that there may not be a large volume of additional specialist supply during the Plan period, an alternative or additional avenue to the provision of additional specialist homes is to discuss the standards of accessibility and adaptability required of new development with Buckinghamshire Council. There is a particularly high degree of overlap between the groups served by sheltered specialist housing and adapted mainstream housing, so the unmet need for such homes identified here can be reduced through this avenue.
58. The current adopted Local Plan provides explicit encouragement for development to accommodate specific groups such as older people. Policy H6c sets out that all new development should meet national standards for accessibility and adaptability (Category M4(2)), and 15% of Affordable Housing should be nominated for wheelchair users (Category M4(3)). The evidence gathered here further justifies these requirements. It is unclear whether Neighbourhood Plans can set their own requirements for the application of the national standards of adaptability and accessibility for new housing, and existing requirements in the Local Plan are robust, so discussions with the LPA are advised exceeding or departing from them is a priority here.

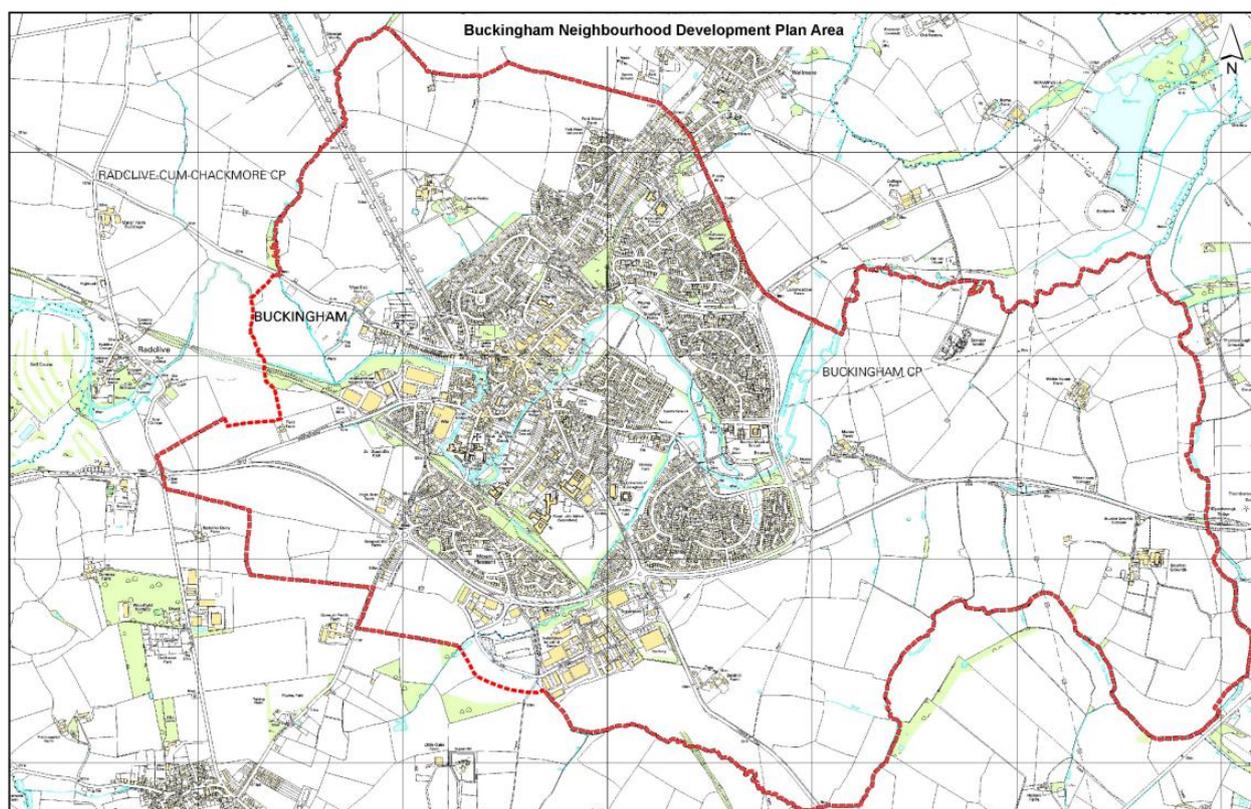
## 2. Context

### Local context

59. Buckingham is a town and Neighbourhood Area (NA) located in the unitary authority of Buckinghamshire in the South East of England. A Neighbourhood Plan for the area, covering the period 2011-2031, was adopted in 2015.
60. The Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan Working Group is currently in the process of reviewing the adopted Neighbourhood Plan. The evidence supplied in this report will look ahead to 2040, which is the currently envisaged end date of the new Plan, but where possible will also provide annualised figures which can be extrapolated to a different term if the timescale changes.
61. Buckingham is a town in the north of Buckinghamshire. It is served by the A413, which runs through the centre of the town, and bypassed by the A421.. Buckingham acts as a main service centre for a number of nearby villages. The town has a range of amenities, including hotels, large supermarkets, a university, two senior schools and four primary schools, and a range of other small and medium sized businesses.
62. Buckinghamshire Unitary Authority was created in 2020 through the amalgamation of the former local authorities of Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe. Previously Buckingham was part of Aylesbury Vale district.

### The NA boundary and key statistics

63. The NA covers the entire civil parish of Buckingham plus a small area in the parish of Gawcott with Lenborough. For Census purposes, the NA is made up, like the rest of England, of statistical units called Output Areas (OAs).
64. It should be noted that a small southwestern area within the designated NA is part of a much larger OA that extends far into the surrounding countryside. Because the small part inside the NA is primarily an industrial estate (with little bearing on population and housing statistics) and is smaller in scale than the large rural area outside of the NA, it has been excluded from the data analysed in this study. a map of the Plan area appears below in Figure 2-1. A breakdown of the specific OAs relevant to Buckingham and a map of the excluded area are provided in Appendix A.

**Figure 2-1: Map of the Buckingham Neighbourhood Area**

Source: *Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011-2031*<sup>1</sup>

65. At the time of the 2021 Census the NA was home to 14,292 residents, formed into 5,914 households and occupying 6,259 dwellings. The 2021 data indicates population growth of around 18.7% since 2011<sup>2</sup>, when the Census counted 12,043 people, 4,741 households and 4,925 dwellings. The average number of people per household is currently 2.4, falling slightly in the last decade (from 2.5) – due largely to ageing and mortality, but potentially also reflective of other patterns such as the provision of smaller homes and delays in childbearing.
66. Comparing the 2011 and 2021 Censuses suggests that the overall housing stock in Buckingham grew by 1,334 in the last decade. Completions data provided by Buckinghamshire Unitary Authority indicate that 1,492 dwellings have been built since 2011. This generally aligns with the Census data, since it is likely that a number of additional homes were built or occupied after Census day. Therefore, the current estimated housing stock in Buckingham is 6,417 (Census 2011 + completions since).

## The housing market area context

67. Whilst this HNA focuses on Buckingham NA it is important to keep in mind that neighbourhoods are not self-contained housing market areas. Housing market areas are usually wider than local authority areas and often stretch across a number of districts or

<sup>1</sup> Available at <https://www.buckingham-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/BNDP-Made-Version-October-2015.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that this figure is an estimate only, based on data which is mostly available at local authority level such as administrative registers of births and deaths, data on moves between local authorities, small-area population estimates and official population projections, and not based on a survey count.

boroughs. This is because housing market areas are inherently linked to the labour market, employment patterns and travel to work areas.

68. In the case of Buckingham, the NA sits within a housing market area which covers the whole of Buckinghamshire (the former authorities of Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe).<sup>[1]</sup> This means that when households in this geography move home, the vast majority tend to stay within it. The housing market area also has links to neighbouring areas, including Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire.
69. At the neighbourhood scale it is not possible to be definitive about housing need and demand because neighbourhoods, including Buckingham, are closely linked to other areas. In the case of Buckingham, changes in need or demand in settlements nearby are likely to impact on the neighbourhood. The significant ongoing growth of Milton Keynes is a notable example.
70. In summary, Buckingham functions within a wider strategic area. As well as fostering good working relationships with the local planning authority (Buckinghamshire), it is therefore useful to think about the *role* of the neighbourhood within the wider area. This HNA can provide evidence to understand this role and the specific features of the neighbourhood within this wider context. Neighbourhood Plans can have a significant impact in shaping their neighbourhoods, enhancing the positive role the neighbourhood plays within the wider housing market, or developing policies to change entrenched patterns and improve housing outcomes in the neighbourhood and wider area.

## Planning policy context

71. Neighbourhood Plans are required to be in general conformity with adopted strategic local policies.<sup>3</sup> In the case of Buckingham, the relevant adopted Local Plan is still the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (2011-2033), adopted in 2021.
72. Buckinghamshire are currently developing a Local Plan for the whole new Unitary Authority, which is scheduled for adoption in 2025.
73. A detailed breakdown of the adopted Local Plan policies relevant to housing need in Buckingham is provided in Appendix B. Here, it is worth summarising the most important points of the adopted Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan:
  - Local Plan Policy S2 identifies an overall housing target of 28,600 homes for the district;
  - In the settlement hierarchy and cohesive development section of the Local Plan Buckingham is designated as one of five strategic settlements, which should be the focus of a majority of the district's development;
  - Policy H1 states that 25% of all new dwellings are expected to be delivered as Affordable Housing on sites larger than 11 homes;

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<sup>[1]</sup> This is established in the Buckinghamshire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment Update 2016.

<sup>3</sup> A description of the Basic Conditions of Neighbourhood Planning is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2#basic-conditions-for-neighbourhood-plan-to-referendum>

- Policy HP5 (Provide Affordable Housing) of the made Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan raises the district wide Affordable Housing target to 35% of all housing on developments of more than 25 dwellings in the NA;
- Local Plan Policy H6b provides for sites which will accommodate 414 units of older persons accommodation between 2020-2025 (none allocated in Buckingham).

## 3. Objectives and approach

### Objectives

74. This Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) is structured according to a number of themes or topics that were agreed at the outset of the research with the Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan Working Group. These themes are broadly aligned with the kinds of housing policy areas available to neighbourhood plans, and each will form a distinct chapter of this report. The sub-sections below give a brief overview of the objectives of each chapter.

### Quantity

75. The objective of this chapter is to understand what quantity of housing overall might be needed in the NA over the Plan period.

76. This question properly falls within the remit of the LPA, to whom the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) gives responsibility for determining the overall housing need or requirement for any designated NA.

77. Buckingham is provided with a total number of homes to be delivered over the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan Period (2011-2033). However, these homes have largely now been delivered, and the new Neighbourhood Plan looks further into the future – to 2040. No new housing figure for Buckingham exists given the early stage of development of the emerging Buckinghamshire Local Plan.

78. AECOM have therefore agreed to supply an indicative estimate to help the Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan Working Group understand the potential scale of need in future years. This can be helpful context for the Neighbourhood Plan, particularly when considering the allocation of housing sites.

79. However, the indicative figure provided here will be automatically superseded if and when an LPA-provided figure emerges in future.

### Affordability and Affordable Housing

80. Neighbourhood plans may include policies that influence the scale of Affordable Housing provision and the mix of different tenures and products provided through new housing development.

81. This chapter has three aims, each given its own sub-section:

- To establish the existing **tenure** of homes within the NA at present (owner occupied, private rented, social/affordable rented, shared ownership);
- To examine the **affordability** of different tenures by considering house prices, rents, local incomes and earnings; and
- To estimate the scale of **need** for Affordable Housing, including the need for those who cannot afford to rent and those who cannot afford to buy.

82. The evidence gathered here can be used to justify planning policies in the Neighbourhood Plan, but it is likely that other supporting evidence may be needed, for example on viability. Local Plans typically include policies on Affordable Housing and whilst the Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with these strategic policies, there is scope for Neighbourhood Plan policies to adopt some local variety where this is supported by the evidence.

## Type and Size

83. It is common for neighbourhood plans to include policies that influence what form new housing should take in terms of type and size. This requires evidence of what local people need.

84. The focus of this chapter is to identify relevant trends and potential gaps in the market that can be used to justify planning policies. It has three aims, each given its own sub-section:

- To establish what **mix** of housing exists in the NA at present;
- To describe relevant characteristics of the local **population**; and
- To look to the **future**, considering how the population is likely to evolve and what mix of homes would be most appropriate to build.

85. In addition to the direction of travel revealed by statistics, a variety of reasons sit behind people's housing choices that are less easy to predict, including wealth, accessibility requirements and personal preference. The conclusions and recommendations given here are sufficient for justifying planning policies but are not definitive. It is also appropriate to take into account other factors and evidence if desired.

## Specialist Housing for Older People

86. It may be appropriate for neighbourhood plans in areas with aging populations to include policies relating to specialist housing for older persons.

87. This chapter supplements the demographic evidence relating to Type and Size, including the potential demand for downsizing, to consider the quantity and characteristics of need for housing for older people with some form of additional care. Its approach is as follows:

- To review the **current provision** of specialist housing in the NA;
- To estimate the **potential demand** for this form of accommodation with reference to the projected growth in the older population and current rates of mobility limitation; and
- To discuss the potential for meeting this need through adaptations to the mainstream stock and other **additional considerations**.

88. This element of the HNA recognises that the majority of older people will live in the mainstream housing stock and that there is no single way to meet their needs. It may also be inappropriate to focus excessively on the needs of one group or to promote a specialist scheme in a location that lacks adequate services. These issues will be drawn out.

## Approach

89. This HNA assesses a range of evidence to ensure its findings are robust for the purposes of developing policy at the neighbourhood plan level. This includes data from the 2021 and 2011 Censuses and a range of other data sources, including:
- ONS population and household projections for future years;
  - ONS population age estimates for parishes (as 2021 Census data does not yet include age profile at small scales);
  - Valuation Office Agency (VOA) data on the current stock of housing;
  - Land Registry data on prices paid for housing within the local market;
  - Rental prices from [Home.co.uk](https://www.home.co.uk);
  - Local Authority housing waiting list data; and
  - The Buckinghamshire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment Update (2016).
90. Data from the 2021 Census continues to be released throughout 2023. At present, the available data covers population, households, tenure, and dwelling stock characteristics. Some data at the localised level, including parishes, will not be available until later in 2023, as well as data comparing numerous variables. As such, neighbourhood level HNAs will draw on the latest available data from the 2021 Census where possible and will also continue to use other data sets, including 2011 Census, Valuation Office Agency data, and ONS parish projections to build up evidence at the neighbourhood level.

## 4. Quantity

### Introduction

91. The objective of this chapter is to understand what quantity of housing overall might be needed in the Neighbourhood Area (NA) over the Neighbourhood Plan period.
92. This question properly falls within the remit of the Local Planning Authority (LPA), to whom the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) gives responsibility for determining the overall housing need or requirement for any designated NA. More background on this point is provided in the Policy Background section below.
93. In the absence of a housing figure provided by the LPA, AECOM can supply an indicative estimate to help neighbourhood planning groups understand the potential scale of need in future years. This can be helpful context for the Neighbourhood Plan, particularly when considering the allocation of housing sites.
94. However, the indicative figure provided by AECOM has a lower status to one provided by an LPA and would be automatically superseded if an LPA-provided figure emerges in future. As well as having a different status to an LPA-provided housing figure, AECOM's indicative figure is more limited in how it can be calculated.
95. It is important to highlight that there is no established method for calculating the overall housing need of small areas. While the NPPF requires LPA's to provide figures for NA's upon request, neither the NPPF nor Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) set out exactly how this should be done. As a result, LPAs take a variety of different approaches.
96. Generally, the methods used are top-down in nature, meaning that they try to determine what share of the Local Authority area's need is attributable to the NA. It is possible to use a bottom-up approach, likely drawing on household survey evidence, but this tends to be less consistent in terms of the data used and risks distorting the wider picture when multiple such estimates are aggregated.
97. AECOM's approach in HNAs is quite limited and simplistic for reasons of consistency and because certain judgements would require a wider scope and/or remain in the remit of the LPA. For example, LPAs can make their own determinations about the suitability of the NA for housing growth, noting for example its infrastructure and environmental constraints, or the role it plays in the local area relative to other locations.
98. For this reason, the number provided here is termed a Housing Need Figure (HNF) rather than sharing the terminology generally used by LPAs, which would speak of a Housing Requirement Figure (HRF). A need figure is a simpler expression of what might be needed, irrespective of the additional objectives, constraints and wider targets that might feed into a more formal requirement or housing target. In short, a HRF can reflect the wider planning strategy in addition to local need.

## Policy background

99. The NPPF (paragraph 66) states that strategic policy-making authorities “should establish a housing requirement figure for their whole area which shows the extent to which their identified housing need (and any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas) can be met over the Plan period. Within this overall requirement, strategic policies should also set out a housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas which reflects the overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development and any relevant allocations”.
100. NPPF paragraph 67 states that “Where it is not possible to provide a requirement figure for a neighbourhood area the local planning authority should provide an indicative figure, if requested to do so by the neighbourhood planning body”. This indicative figure should (amongst other things) “take into account factors such as the latest evidence of local housing need, the population of the neighbourhood area and the most recently available planning strategy of the planning authority.”<sup>4</sup>
101. In calculating this HNF, it should be noted that paragraphs 66 and 67 place specific obligations on strategic or local planning authorities and no other parties (i.e. AECOM is not obliged to follow directly paragraphs 66 and 67). That said, AECOM’s calculation will be of most use as a starting point if it can seek to mirror the NPPF suggested approach as closely as possible, and so this is the reasonable approach that has been taken
102. The PPG<sup>5</sup> states that “Housing need is an unconstrained assessment of the number of homes needed in an area. Assessing housing need is the first step in the process of deciding how many homes need to be planned for. It should be undertaken separately from assessing land availability, establishing a housing requirement figure and preparing policies to address this such as site allocations”.
103. A HNF is a ‘policy-off’ figure. This means that, while it takes account of the factors set out paragraph 67 of the NPPF and dwelling completions over the course of the Plan period, it is an expression of total housing demand unconstrained by the limits of the land available to build on. It is also unconstrained by the impact of policies that either facilitate or obstruct development. A policy-off figure can then be reviewed in light of further evidence including environmental constraints, land availability, relevant Local and Neighbourhood Plan objectives and policies, to formulate a ‘policy-on’ HRF.
104. This, again, speaks to the difference between the Housing Need Figure (HNF) calculated here and the Housing Requirement Figure (HRF) that the Neighbourhood Plan may take forward based upon it, or which may be provided by the LPA. The HNA figure represents a blunt expression of need rather than a requirement.
105. The existing policy context for Buckingham’s overall housing need is established in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan. This indicates that, as of March 2020, 1,005 dwellings out of the total of 2,177 earmarked for Buckingham were completed and 622 were committed

<sup>4</sup> NPPF, paragraph 67, available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

<sup>5</sup> Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 2a-001-20190220 at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments>

on sites with planning permission, leaving 550 dwellings to be delivered through allocations made in the Local Plan.

106. Conversations with the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group have indicated that many of the commitments and allocations are currently under construction, and this is backed up by completions data provided by Buckinghamshire Unitary Authority, which indicates that 1,492 dwellings have been completed since 2011 in Buckingham. A further 471 dwellings currently have planning permission or are under construction. This level of supply is sufficient to very nearly satisfy the entirety of Buckingham’s existing target in the early part of the Local Plan period.

## Approach

107. The number of new dwellings that might be planned for in the NA for each year of the (whole or extended) Plan period (the Housing Need Figure or HNF) is estimated using a three-step approach that seeks to reflect to the maximum extent the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021, Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advice, and the April 2021 Government response to its consultation on ‘Changes to the current planning system’.<sup>6</sup> This is summarised in the box below:

### Step 1: Standard method

The HNF for the Neighbourhood Area should take as its starting point the housing target for the Local Authority area in which it sits. The baseline for our calculation for the NA is therefore a share of the current LPA Local Housing Need (LHN) figure that reflects the share of the district population living in the Plan area.

NPPF requires Local Authorities, and anyone calculating LHN in their place, to use the ‘standard method’ for calculating the minimum number of homes that a local authority should plan for in an area. The standard method is a simple and transparent way of calculating a baseline of need that can be applied consistently across the country using publicly available datasets. It produces a starting point for planning and not the final housing requirement.

The standard method was set out in PPG in February 2019 and has been updated to reflect changes since.<sup>7</sup> The result changes annually so it is important this is calculated afresh here rather than relying on any standard method results published in the Local Plan.

### Step 2: LPA planning strategy

The NPPF guidance then states that the initial needs figure for neighbourhood plans should reflect “the overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development and any relevant allocations,”<sup>8</sup> and “the most recently available planning strategy of the local planning authority.”<sup>9</sup>

This means introducing Local Authority spatial policy, housing targets, and assessments of housing need at different scales to estimate a more locally appropriate proportion of the LHN that should be provided in NA. This will often result in a slightly different figure to that produced in Step 1.

<sup>6</sup> Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-the-current-planning-system/outcome/government-response-to-the-local-housing-need-proposals-in-changes-to-the-current-planning-system>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments>

<sup>8</sup> NPPF, paragraph 65, page 18.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

The goal is to whittle down a share of the LHN that is attributable to the Neighbourhood in a way that is less blunt than using population statistics alone (as in the Step 1 baseline), and that reflects to some degree the suitability of the NA relative to other settlements in the area. The best sources for this are the LPA's settlement hierarchy, any settlement suitability scoring exercise that has been undertaken, or the distribution of allocations.

### Step 3: Dwelling completions

Next, any dwellings that have already been completed over the Plan period to the present date should be deducted from the total in order to provide a residual HNF for the remainder of the Plan period that reflects past under- or over-delivery. While it is appropriate to consider existing commitments (i.e. dwellings with planning permission, but not yet completed) at this point, they should not be deducted from the total until they are completed.

108. Employing this methodology, the HNF for Buckingham is calculated below.

## Standard method (Step 1)

109. Firstly, the Local Housing Need (LHN) for the Local Authority area is calculated using the standard method outlined in PPG. This can then be pro-rated to the NA according to population statistics to give a baseline estimate of its needs.
110. The Buckinghamshire LHN figure, using the standard method, is calculated as follows:<sup>10</sup>
111. **Stage one** is to set the baseline, by calculating the projected average annual household growth in Buckinghamshire over a 10-year period, beginning with the current year, using the 2014-based ONS household projections:
- According to Buckinghamshire's 2014-based household projection, total household growth will be 20,439 households between 2023 and 2033. This equates to an annual average of 2,044 dwellings.
112. **Stage two** is to adjust this annual average using the most recent ONS median workplace-based affordability ratios,<sup>11</sup> which provide the ratio of house prices to earnings in various geographies. For each 1% increase in the ratio above 4, projected household growth should be increased by a quarter of a percent:
- Buckinghamshire's 2022 median affordability ratio is 11.66. Using the formula outlined in PPG to calculate the adjustment factor<sup>12</sup> results in an uplifted annual need figure of 3,023 dwellings (rounded).
113. **Stage three** is to apply a cap which may limit the magnitude of the Stage Two increase. How this is calculated depends on the current status of relevant strategic policies for housing. There are two options depending on whether those policies were adopted within the last five years or are older:

<sup>10</sup> Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 2a-004-20190220, at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments>

<sup>11</sup> Available at <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/ratioofhousepricetoworkplacebasedearningslowerquartileandmedian>

<sup>12</sup> Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 2a-004-20190220, at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments>

- Option 1: where the relevant strategic policies were adopted within the last five years (at the point of making the calculation), the LHN is capped at 40% above the average annual housing requirement figure set out in the existing policies. This also applies where the relevant strategic policies have been reviewed by the authority within the 5-year period and have been found not to require updating.
- Option 2: where the relevant strategic policies for housing were adopted more than 5 years ago (at the point of making the calculation), the LHN is capped at 40% above whichever is the higher of:
  - a) the annual average projected household growth for the area over the 10-year period identified in Stage One above; or
  - b) The average annual housing requirement figure set out in the most recently adopted strategic policies (if a figure exists).
- It is not possible to follow the normal process for Buckinghamshire Unitary Authority. Due to its recent formation, there is no adopted Local Plan. It is also not appropriate to combine the figures presented in the most recent Local Plans for the former authorities because of the age of some of the plans and the lack of alignment in their timeframes. For reference, the targets contained within the plans that form Buckinghamshire Unitary Authority are as follows:
  - Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (adopted 2021) identifies an overall housing target of 28,600 homes across the plan period (2011-2033);
  - Chiltern Core Strategy (adopted 2011) seeks to deliver 2,900 new homes across its plan period (2006-2026);
  - South Bucks Core Strategy (adopted 2011) indicates the district should deliver 2,698 new homes across its plan period (2006-2026);
  - Wycombe District Local Plan (adopted 2019) identifies a targeted of 10,925 new homes across its plan period (2013-2033).
- As such, the cap should be set using Option 2 (a): the annual household growth for Buckinghamshire as set out in stage one. Applying the 40% cap to the annual growth figure of 2,044 equates to 2,862 dwellings (rounded), which is lower than the uncapped figure derived from the adjustment for affordability (3,023 dwellings). Therefore, the cap applies, and the capped figure of 2,862 dwellings should be carried forward.

114. Having derived Buckinghamshire's LHN, we now calculate Buckingham's baseline share of that target, by determining what proportion of Buckinghamshire's population currently reside in Buckingham and applying that percentage to Buckinghamshire's LHN.

115. According to the latest 2021 Census, there were 14,292 people living in Buckingham, or 2.6% of the 553,078 people living in Buckinghamshire Unitary Authority. Applying this percentage to Buckinghamshire's LHN figure of 2,862 gives a baseline indicative HNF for Buckingham of 74 dwellings per annum (rounded).

## LPA planning strategy (Step 2)

116. As stated in NPPF guidance, it is important to acknowledge the relevant policies in the most recently available<sup>13</sup> development plan document for the LPA. The policies reflect the overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development and any relevant allocations. This requires producing a HNF for the Neighbourhood Area that takes into account the Local Authority's spatial strategy, and therefore may differ from the baseline HNF calculated above, which is based solely on population statistics rather than the relative suitability of settlements.
117. For Buckingham, the adopted Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan 2013-2033 remains the relevant document given the absence of any published settlement hierarchy for the emerging Buckinghamshire Local Plan.
118. To attribute a more appropriate figure than the baseline number presented above to Buckingham, the 'Settlement Hierarchy and Cohesive Development' section in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan is the relevant starting point. This sets out six categories for different settlements in Aylesbury Vale, in terms of their suitability and sustainability for future development, which are as follows (in descending order of suitability):
- Strategic Settlements (including Buckingham);
  - North East Aylesbury Vale;
  - Larger Villages;
  - Medium Villages;
  - Smaller Villages; and
  - Other Settlements.
119. Although the settlement hierarchy itself does not quantify what share of the district's growth is appropriate for each settlement or category in the hierarchy, Policy S2 includes a spatial distribution table which indicates that Buckingham should deliver 2,177 of the overall target of 28,600 new homes – which equates to 7.6%.
120. This provides a sense of what proportion of the district's growth was attributable to Buckingham when the distribution of development was last considered by the (former) Local Planning Authority.
121. This is not, however, a pure expression of the relative need or suitability of Buckingham for growth because the housing numbers presented are equally influenced by historic delivery rates and the availability of development sites both in Buckingham and elsewhere across the local authority area. In particular, it should be noted that a significant proportion of the total new development in the district is associated with the expansion of Aylesbury Garden Town, to the order of 16,000 new homes – which represents close to 60% of the former district's entire housing growth. It is not yet possible to determine whether

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<sup>13</sup> This is the exact word used in the NPPF, i.e. not necessarily 'adopted'. In the case of Buckingham, the most recently 'available' planning strategy is Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (adopted, 2021), which also happens to be the most recently 'adopted' planning strategy.

Aylesbury Garden Town will continue to take such a large share of development in future, nor what the knock-on effect will be on the growth expectations of Buckingham.

122. The share of 7.6% of former Vale of Aylesbury's housing growth, implied in the adopted Local Plan, is therefore an imperfect basis for establishing Buckingham's future need. However, in the absence of any more concrete and quantifiable evidence of where the town sits within the strategy for the pattern and scale of development across Buckinghamshire, it provides a relevant alternative way of estimating Buckingham's need to that based purely on population statistics (the figure of 74 dwellings per annum reached at the end of Step 1 above).
123. The population of the Vale of Aylesbury was 34.5% of the total across Buckinghamshire at the time of the 2011 Census<sup>14</sup>. In turn, as noted above, Buckingham was earmarked for 7.6% of the growth of the former district at the time of the adopted Local Plan. On this basis, the share of Buckinghamshire's overall housing growth attributable to Buckingham is 2.6%. Applying this percentage to Buckinghamshire's current LHN of 2,862 (as established in Step 1 above) produces a figure of 74 dwellings per annum (rounded).
124. It is interesting to note that the result of this exercise is exactly the same as that produced when relying solely on population statistics. Both methods suggest that 2.6% of Buckinghamshire's growth is attributable to Buckingham, and thus that the annual housing need of the NA is therefore 74 dwellings per year.

### **Past dwelling completions (Step 3)**

125. The next step is to subtract any net completions of new dwellings that have occurred since the beginning of the Neighbourhood Plan period. However, in this case, the new Neighbourhood Plan is likely to begin in the future, i.e. in 2024 at the earliest. As such, there are no past completions to deduct.
126. It is also relevant to consider how far dwelling commitments (homes on sites with planning permission or that are under construction) will go to meet the future need. However, the 471 committed dwellings tallied by Buckinghamshire Council in 2023 are considered to count toward the achievement of Buckingham's existing target in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan, and as such should not be discounted from the need figure calculated here.

### **Final Housing Need Figure**

127. Based on the evidence above, this HNA recommends an overall HNF of 74 dwellings per annum for Buckingham. This figure has been arrived at using two methods which produce the same result.
128. The Aylesbury Vale Local Plan covers the period up to 2033 but the new Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan will extend 7 years beyond this to 2040. How the annual need figure produced here should be translated into a total target for the new Neighbourhood Plan therefore depends on how the existing target is interpreted and the wider objectives of the

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<sup>14</sup> 2011 Census data is required in this case as the 2021 Census presents the population of Buckinghamshire and does not disaggregate the data based on the four former districts.

community.

129. One option is for Buckingham to consider that it has (or soon will have) met in full its housing growth target for the period to 2033 (the end date of the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan), and therefore to multiply the annual housing need of 74 established here by the remaining 7 years in the proposed Neighbourhood Plan period. This would produce a residual need figure of 518 homes for the remaining period 2033-2040. Given how early in the current Local Plan period Buckingham has already nearly exceeded its existing 2,177 target, any additional homes built prior to 2033 could be counted toward the residual 518 need figure.
130. A higher growth option, if this is the desire of the community, would be to consider the existing target to have been fulfilled through the made Neighbourhood Plan and Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan, and to begin the new Neighbourhood Plan with a fresh target based on the need figure estimated here. This would involve multiplying the need figure of 74 by the total number of years in the new Neighbourhood Plan, which is currently envisaged to run to 2040. Assuming a start date of 2024 implies a total need of 1,184 additional homes.
131. Which option to pursue (including the possibility of a middle-ground or further alternatives) is a policy discussion for consideration by the Working Group, Town Council, wider community and Buckinghamshire Council.
132. It should be noted that the housing figure for Buckinghamshire is derived from the Government's standard method and is likely to change annually as ONS publishes new affordability data each year and new household projections approximately every two years. Although housing need figures are not invalidated each year as new data is released, this could impact any indicative housing requirement figure provided by Buckinghamshire for neighbourhood areas in the future (since this would be calculated using new data).
133. That figure has been broken down with the aim of allocating an appropriate share to Buckingham with reference to the strategy for the pattern and scale of new development across the former district as expressed in the latest Local Plan, which takes into account the sustainability and suitability of the former district's various settlements for growth. This process relies on interpretations and assumptions made by AECOM.
134. Buckinghamshire are currently at the early stages of developing a Local Plan for the new Unitary Authority, with the new Local Plan expected to be adopted in 2025. At the time any final Neighbourhood Plan housing requirement figure is provided by Buckinghamshire, it can be considered to supersede the provisional calculation within this study. Consequently, there is a need for the neighbourhood group to continue to engage with the LPA to confirm the final housing figure for the Neighbourhood Plan.

## 5. Affordability and Affordable Housing

### Introduction

135. Neighbourhood plans may include policies that influence the scale of Affordable Housing provision and the mix of different tenures and products provided through new housing development.
136. This chapter has three aims, each given its own sub-section:
- To establish the existing **tenure** of homes within the NA at present (owner occupied, private rented, social/affordable rented, shared ownership);
  - To examine the **affordability** of different tenures by considering house prices, rents, local incomes and earnings; and
  - To estimate the scale of **need** for Affordable Housing, including the need for those who cannot afford to rent and those who cannot afford to buy.
137. The evidence gathered here can be used to justify planning policies in the Neighbourhood Plan, but it is likely that other supporting evidence may be needed, for example on viability. Local Plans typically include policies on Affordable Housing and whilst the Neighbourhood Plan must conform with these policies, there is scope for Neighbourhood Plan policies to adopt some local variety where this is supported by the evidence.

### Definitions

138. This section uses a range of technical terms which are useful to define at the outset:
- **Tenure** refers to the way a household occupies their home. Broadly speaking, there are two categories of tenure: market housing (such as homes available to purchase outright or rent from a private landlord) and Affordable Housing (including subsidised products like social rent and shared ownership).
  - **Affordability** refers to the relationship between the cost of housing to buy or rent and the incomes and earnings of households.
  - The definition of **Affordable Housing** is set out in the NPPF 2021 (Annex 2) as 'Housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market...' We refer to Affordable Housing, with capital letters, to denote the specific tenures that are classified as affordable in the current NPPF (Annex 2). A relatively less expensive home for market sale may be affordable but it is not a form of Affordable Housing.
  - A range of affordable home ownership opportunities are included in the Government's definition of Affordable Housing, to meet the needs of those aspiring

to own a home. As part of this, the Government has introduced a new product called First Homes, although this is not yet reflected in Annex 2 of the NPPF.<sup>15</sup>

- **First Homes** is a new product and expected to be an important part of the strategy for improving access to home ownership. Its key features are explained in greater detail in Appendix C.

## Current tenure profile

139. The current tenure profile is a key feature of the Neighbourhood Area (NA). Patterns of home ownership, private renting and affordable/social renting reflect demographic characteristics including age (with older households more likely to own their own homes), and patterns of income and wealth which influence whether households can afford to rent or buy and whether they need subsidy to access housing.

140. Table 5-1 presents data on tenure in Buckingham compared with Buckinghamshire and England from the 2021 Census. It shows that home ownership is the dominant tenure in Buckingham (66%), though it is a slightly less common than the county average. There is, however, a higher proportion of private renters in Buckingham than the Buckinghamshire average. The rate of social renting is similar to the county though lower than the national average.

**Table 5-1: Tenure (households) in various geographies, 2021**

Tenure	Buckingham	Buckinghamshire	England
Owned	66.3%	70.0%	61.3%
Shared ownership	2.5%	1.3%	1.0%
Social rented	13.2%	13.0%	17.1%
Private rented	18.1%	15.8%	20.6%

Sources: Census 2021, AECOM Calculations

141. It is also worth considering how the tenure mix has changed in the last ten years, through comparison with the 2011 Census (see Table 5-2). The table shows that there has been a roughly 50% increase in the proportion of both social and private renting. Growth in the private rented sector can indicate deepening affordability issues in the NA, as segments of the population who may typically be seeking to buy their home are forced to rent due to rising house prices. It may also be that some of the large number of new properties built in recent years were purpose-built rented homes. There has been a modest supply of affordable rented housing in the last decade, as well as a proportionally significant increase in the number of shared ownership properties. Despite starting at a low base in 2011, the addition of more than 100 new shared ownership properties represents a notable shift in the availability of such options.

<sup>15</sup> The shape that the new First Homes product will take is set out in a Ministerial Statement issued in May 2021, available here: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-05-24/hlws48>. The relevant update to PPG is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/first-homes#contents>.

**Table 5-2: Tenure change (households) in Buckingham, 2011-2021**

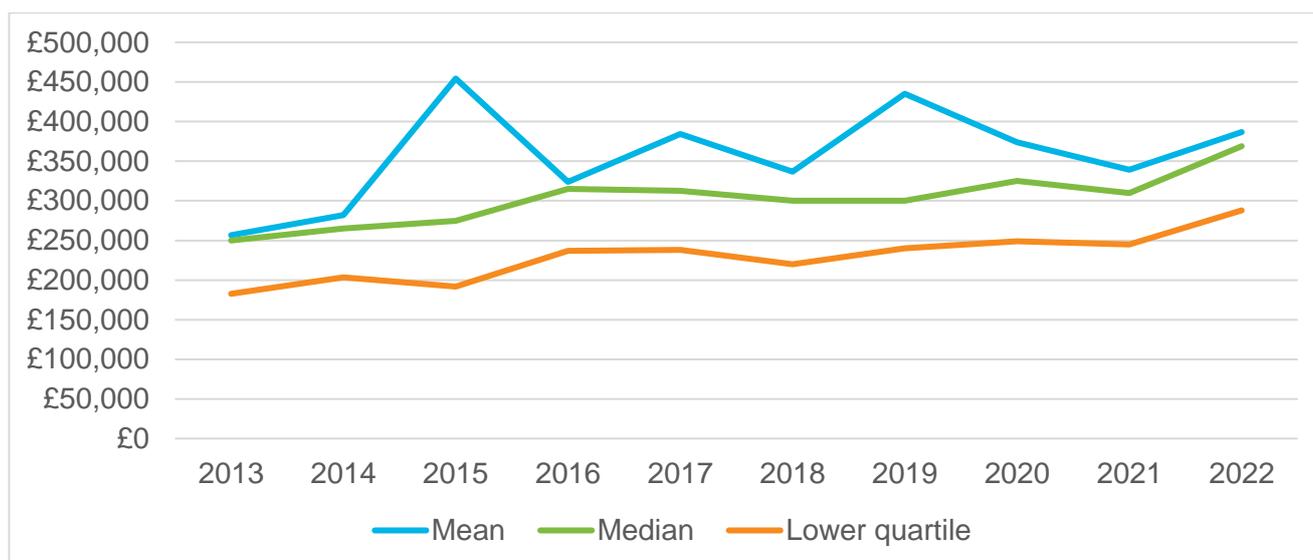
Tenure	2011	2021	% change
Owned	3,435	3,912	13.9%
Shared ownership	34	145	326.5%
Social rented	521	778	49.3%
Private rented	711	1,069	50.4%

Sources: Census 2021 and 2011, AECOM Calculations

## Affordability

### House prices

142. House prices provide an indication of the level of demand for homes within an area. The relationship between house prices and incomes determines whether housing is affordable to local households and, to a large extent, what tenure, type and size of home they occupy. Changes in affordability over time can indicate pressures in the housing market. As such, it is useful for the evidence base for plans to examine trends in prices and consider what this reveals about the local housing market.
143. Figure 5-1 looks at the average and lower quartile house prices in Buckingham based on sales price data published by the Land Registry. It shows that median house prices, which represent the middle number when the data is sorted from smallest to largest, have experienced relatively steady upward growth, despite some year-on-year fluctuations.
144. The current median house price in Buckingham is £369,000, which is 48% higher than the median price in 2013. The current mean, which represents the average of all house prices, is slightly higher than the median at £387,000, and 51% higher than the same category in 2013. Because the mean reflects every transaction in the sample there is potential for outlying data to skew the overall result (usually higher than the median). This can be seen in Figure 5-1, where there are a few spikes in the mean, particularly in 2015 and 2019.
145. The current lower quartile (LQ) price, which is the middle figure of the lowest 50% of sales and acts as a good representation of entry-level housing is £288,000 and is 58% higher than the 2013 LQ figure.
146. House prices in Buckingham appear to be slightly cheaper than the county as a whole, where the 2022 median house price stands at £450,000. This is in spite of the unusual fact (for a town, and discussed in the Type and Size section), that the dwelling mix in the NA includes a higher share of detached homes and fewer flats than Buckinghamshire as a whole – a factor that would suggest that more high-value property types feature in the NA transactions data and should have the effect of raising average prices.

**Figure 5-1: House prices by quartile in Buckingham, 2013-2022**

Source: Land Registry PPD

147. Table 5-3 breaks down house prices by type, presenting the median within each type. It shows that there is little variation in the growth rates of different dwelling types, but that there are significant price differences between detached homes, semi-detached or terraced houses, and flats.

**Table 5-3: Median house prices by type in Buckingham, 2013-2022**

Type	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Growth
Detached	£303K	£359K	£390K	£418K	£418K	£410K	£431K	£455K	£445K	£490K	61.9%
Semi-detached	£215K	£220K	£255K	£285K	£286K	£289K	£289K	£310K	£300K	£350K	62.8%
Terraced	£190K	£218K	£226K	£250K	£273K	£260K	£260K	£260K	£270K	£316K	66.3%
Flats	£125K	£140K	£153K	£195K	£170K	£195K	£191K	£158K	£170K	£195K	56.0%
<b>All Types</b>	<b>£250K</b>	<b>£265K</b>	<b>£275K</b>	<b>£315K</b>	<b>£313K</b>	<b>£300K</b>	<b>£300K</b>	<b>£325K</b>	<b>£310K</b>	<b>£370K</b>	<b>47.6%</b>

Source: Land Registry PPD

## Income

148. Household incomes determine the ability of households to exercise choice in the housing market, and consequently the level of need for affordable housing products. Two sources of data are used to examine household incomes in the NA.

149. The first source is ONS's estimates of incomes in small areas. This is locally specific but limited to the overall average income (i.e. it does not provide the average income of lower earners). The average total household income locally was £52,150<sup>16</sup> in 2018 (the most recent year for this dataset). Detail about the area to which this data applies is provided in Appendix A.

150. The second source is ONS's annual estimates of UK employee earnings. This provides lower quartile average earnings (i.e. the income of the lowest 25% of earners). However, it is only available at the Local Authority level. It also relates to individual earnings. While this is an accurate representation of household incomes where there is only one earner,

<sup>16</sup> It should be noted this figure is an average of two MSOA areas which cover Buckingham, details of which can be found in Appendix A

it does not represent household income where there are two or more people earning. Buckinghamshire's gross individual lower quartile annual earnings were £19,200 in 2022. To estimate the income of households with two lower quartile earners, this figure is doubled to £38,400.

151. It is immediately clear from this data that there is a large gap between the spending power of average earning households and those earning the lowest 25% of incomes, particularly where the household in question has one earner only.

## **Affordability Thresholds**

152. To gain a clearer understanding of local affordability, it is useful to understand what levels of income are required to afford different tenures. This is done using 'affordability thresholds': the estimated amount of annual income required to cover the cost of rent or a mortgage given local housing prices.
153. AECOM has determined thresholds for the income required in Buckingham to buy a home in the open market (average and entry-level prices), and the income required to afford private rent and the range of Affordable Housing tenures as set out in the NPPF. These calculations are detailed and discussed in more detail in Appendix C.
154. The key assumptions made in assessing the affordability of different tenures are explained alongside the calculations, but it is worth noting here that we have assumed that the maximum percentage of household income that should be spent on rent is 30% and that mortgage financing will be offered at a maximum of 3.5 times household income. These are standard assumptions across housing needs assessments at neighbourhood and local authority scale although different approaches are sometimes taken and a case can be made for alternatives. This is discussed in more detail at the start of Appendix C.
155. Table 5-4 summarises the estimated cost of each tenure, the annual income required to support these costs within the NA, and whether local incomes are sufficient. The income required column assumes the household already has access to a deposit (which we have assumed to be 10% of the value to be purchased) but does not reflect the possibility that households may already hold equity from an existing property. Although these factors may be crucial to whether housing will be affordable, they are highly dependent on individual circumstances that cannot be anticipated here.

**Table 5-4: Affordability thresholds in Buckingham (income required, £)**

Tenure	Mortgage value (90% of price)	Annual rent	Income required	Affordable on average incomes? £52,150	Affordable on LQ earnings (single earner)? £19,200	Affordable on LQ earnings (2 earners)? £38,400
<b>Market Housing</b>						
Median House Price	£332,096	-	£94,884	No	No	No
Estimated NA New Build Entry-Level House Price	£267,839		£76,525	No	No	No
LQ/Entry-level House Price	£259,200	-	£74,057	No	No	No
LA New Build Median House Price	£418,498	-	£119,571	No	No	No
Average Market Rent	-	£16,440	£54,800	No	No	No
Entry-level Market Rent	-	£10,200	£34,000	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Affordable Home Ownership</b>						
First Homes (-30%)	£187,487	-	£53,568	Marginal	No	No
First Homes (-40%)	£160,703	-	£45,915	Yes	No	No
First Homes (-50%)	£133,919	-	£38,263	Yes	No	Yes
Shared Ownership (50%)	£133,919	£3,720	£50,663	Yes	No	No
Shared Ownership (25%)	£66,960	£5,580	£37,731	Yes	No	Yes
Shared Ownership (10%)	£26,784	£6,696	£29,972	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Affordable Rented Housing</b>						
Affordable Rent	-	£7,904	£26,320	Yes	No	Yes
Social Rent	-	£5,564	£18,528	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: AECOM Calculations

156. Before considering each tenure category in turn, it is important to stress that these affordability thresholds have been calculated to give an indication of the costs of various tenures to inform Neighbourhood Plan policy choices. These figures rely on existing data and assumptions, and it is not possible to estimate every possible permutation. The income figures also disguise a large degree of variation. For simplicity the analysis below speaks in terms of tenure products being 'affordable' or 'not affordable' for different groups, but individual circumstances and the location, condition and other factors of specific properties in each category have a large impact. These conclusions should therefore be interpreted flexibly.

### Market housing for purchase and rent

157. Thinking about housing for purchase on the open market, it appears that local households on average incomes are unable to access even entry-level homes unless they have the advantage of a very large deposit. Market housing, even with the benefit of a higher than average income, is likely to remain out of reach to most. The median house price would require an annual income 80% higher than the current average.

158. Private renting is similarly unaffordable to average earners and households with two lower earners, who cannot afford the average rental property but may be able to afford a 1-2 bedroom option. Affordability is improved if households are able or willing to dedicate a larger proportion of their incomes to rental costs, although this has

repercussions for other quality of life aspects and cannot be assumed to suit all individuals' circumstances.

### **Affordable home ownership**

159. There is a relatively large group of households in Buckingham who may be able to afford to rent privately but cannot afford home ownership. They are typically earning between around £34,000 per year (at which point entry-level rents become affordable) and £74,000 (at which point entry-level market sale homes become affordable). This 'can rent, can't buy' cohort may benefit from the range of affordable home ownership products such as First Homes and shared ownership.
160. First Homes are to be offered at a discount of at least 30% on equivalent market prices (i.e. new build, entry-level properties). Local authorities and neighbourhood plan qualifying bodies will have discretion to increase the discount on First Homes to 40% or 50% where there is evidence to suggest this is appropriate.
161. This report has estimated the income required to afford First Homes and tested the implications of 30%, 40% and 50% discount levels. First Homes would need to be offered at a discount of at least 40% to be affordable to average earning households. However, discounts of 30% would be marginally affordable to average earning households.
162. It is important to note that this evidence based on affordability does not provide a complete picture: evidence about the financial viability of development is also relevant. The question is whether demanding higher discount levels on First Homes will create a financial burden on developers that leads them to argue either that the discount level is not feasible or that the total amount of Affordable Housing may need to be decreased. This could effectively sacrifice the provision of affordable rented housing to provide a more attractive First Homes product. The issue of development viability is a specialist matter involving analysis of land values and build costs that is outside the scope of this assessment. If the Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan Working Group intend to set a higher First Homes discount level than that set at Unitary Authority level, further discussions with the LPA are advised. (The Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan pre-dated the introduction of First Homes, and the new Buckinghamshire Local Plan is at an early stage of development, so LPA policy expectations in this area may not be settled as yet.)
163. Shared ownership appears to be more affordable than First Homes but is broadly accessible to the same groups. Government has recently announced that the minimum equity share for shared ownership will fall to 10% of the property value.<sup>17</sup> If this is delivered in the NA, it will make shared ownership easier to access for more people. However, while the income threshold for a 10% equity shared ownership home is lower, this product may not necessarily be more attractive than the alternatives (such as shared ownership at higher equity shares and First Homes) for those who can afford them.
164. Rent to Buy provides households with the option to rent at a discount whilst saving for a deposit to buy their property within a set period (usually within 7 years). The income

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<sup>17</sup> The previous minimum equity share was 25%. This change took effect from 28 June 2021 and transitional arrangements are in place for planning policy documents that are prepared during the implementation timeframe. Changes are also introduced to make the process of staircasing to full ownership more gradual with lower minimum increments of 1%. The ministerial statement confirming and detailing the changes is available here: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-05-24/hlws48>.

required to access Rent to Buy is assumed to be the same as that required to afford market rents. However, affordability to local households would depend on how rents are set. If Rent to Buy is offered at a discount to *entry-level* rents, this would expand this route to home ownership quite significantly, including dual LQ earners. However, discounts on *average* rents would make Rent to Buy affordability, in terms of the household income required, comparable to First Homes and Shared Ownership. However, for some households, the availability of a deposit rather than income level per se is the key barrier to accessing home ownership. Rent to Buy may therefore offer a useful product to meet the needs of some households.

165. These three affordable home ownership products need to be considered in relation to what they offer occupants in the long term beyond simply being affordable to access or not:

- First Homes allow for a greater ownership stake in the property, enabling occupiers to benefit from price appreciation over time. Monthly outgoings are also limited to mortgage costs alone, which tend to be cheaper than renting.
- Shared ownership at high equity shares performs a similar function to First Homes, but there are additional costs associated with the rented portion.
- Shared ownership at low equity shares can usually be accessed by lower earning households (than First Homes) and requires a smaller deposit. However, this is a potentially less attractive route to eventual ownership because monthly outgoings remain high. The occupant has to pay a significant monthly rent as well as service charges and other costs, so it can be harder for them to save funds to buy out a greater share in the property over time.
- Rent to Buy requires no deposit, thereby benefitting those with sufficient incomes but low savings. It is more attractive than renting but results in a much slower accumulation of the funds that can provide an eventual route to ownership than the other tenures discussed above.

### **Affordable rented housing**

166. Affordable rents set out in the table above are substantially below market rents. Whilst affordable rents can be set at up to 80% of market rents, in many locations Registered Providers (housing associations) set them to ensure that they are affordable to those claiming housing benefit, i.e. at or below Local Housing Allowance levels. This means that they are in practice below 80% of market levels. This appears to be the case in Buckingham

167. Affordable rented housing is generally affordable to households with two lower earners depending on their household size (average earning households are unlikely to be eligible). However, households with a single lower earner appear unable to afford any of the tenures considered except for socially rented units. Many such individuals will, if unable to secure a social rented dwelling of the appropriate size, require additional subsidy through Housing Benefit to access housing.

168. The evidence in this chapter suggests that the affordable rented sector performs a vital function in Buckingham as the only option for a large segment of those in the greatest need. Social rents are cheaper and would therefore leave households on lower earnings better off and better able to afford their other living costs, such as food and fuel etc. Where households are supported by housing benefit the difference in the cost of affordable and social rents may be irrelevant as the level of housing benefit flexes according to the rent. This means that households supported by housing benefit may be no better off in social rented accommodation because they receive a lower rate of housing benefit to cover their rent.

## **Students and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)**

169. The University of Buckingham, a private university with approximately 3,500 students, is located within the NA boundary. The 2021 Census indicates that there were 734 students living in Buckingham, constituting 6.4% of the NA population. This is likely to be a significant undercount owing to the varied ways that students may (or may not) respond to the Census, as well as the fact that the 2021 Census was taken at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, when many students had returned home.
170. The Accommodation Office for the University confirms that there are currently 467 student rooms offered at 13 sites across three campuses. Plans currently exist to offer a further 71 rooms at a new site in early 2024, with a capacity for 142 students.
171. This suggests that around 3,000 University students are likely to be accommodated outside of halls of residences. It is worth noting that, given the nature of courses offered by the University of Buckingham, a significant number of the students counted above are undertaking distance learning courses and therefore do not require housing in the town. Applying nationwide rates provided by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) to the University of Buckingham statistics suggests that of the 3,430 students, 2,145 could be based within Buckingham with the remaining 1,285 being UK-based distance learners. Applying the further breakdown in the HESA data suggests that in 2021/22 470 students lived in their parental home, 765 in their own residence (the split between owner occupiers and private renters is not known), 525 in provider accommodation and 295 in other rental accommodation. Moreover, there are further 620 whose living status is unknown.
172. The HESA also holds data suggesting that the percentage of full-time higher education students living in the private rented sector in the 2021/22 academic year is 27%, having declined slightly from 29% in 2019/20 and above 30% in 2015/16.<sup>18</sup> This is consistently the largest accommodation category, followed by the parental home at 20%, own residence at 19% and halls of residence at 16%. This final statistic holds true for Buckingham, where around 13% of the current student population lives in halls of residence, rising to 17% when the new accommodation becomes available.
173. If 27% of University of Buckingham students live in the private rented sector, this implies ongoing demand for rented accommodation from around 950 students. This will include

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/chart-4>

people living alone, in small groups, and in Houses in Multiple Accommodation (HMOs), where multiple unrelated individuals or households share facilities such as kitchens or bathrooms.

174. This distinction is important because demand from students is likely to impact the market for both 1-2 bedroom self-contained flats and larger family housing that can be rented out to larger groups. This demand pressure can result in higher rents as well as incentives to convert more family housing to HMOs, with knock-on impacts on the housing needs of other groups. High concentrations of HMOs in particular are also associated with other impacts on local communities, such as pressures on parking and refuse collection and, in some cases, anti-social behaviour.

### **HMOs: Number and Affordability**

175. It is not possible to accurately determine what proportion of the University's privately renting students live in HMOs or other forms of private rented accommodation nor, therefore, the total number of dwellings occupied by students. Despite the limited availability of data, it is worth considering Buckingham's HMO stock in more detail.
176. The 2021 Census only captures the quantity of HMOs at a local authority level, where they are categorised as either 'small HMOs' which have 3 or 4 unrelated tenants and 'large HMOs' which have 5+ unrelated tenants. The former would be an unlicensed HMO and the latter (normally) licensed. The 2021 Census shows that across Buckinghamshire there were 564 HMOs (0.24% of all dwellings, compared to a national average of 0.7%). Of these, 441 were small HMOs and 123 were large HMOs. In AECOM's experience, the Census tends to significantly undercount HMOs.
177. The register of HMOs held by Buckinghamshire Unitary Authority indicates that there are 21 licenced HMOs in Buckingham itself, which have a total of 115 rooms (implying an average size of 5-6 bedrooms). This is again likely to be an undercount because only licensed HMOs are included: those with fewer than 5 occupants do not require a license, some properties will not have the appropriate license, and others may not be captured on the latest register.
178. The current number of HMOs in the NA is likely to be fewer than 100 at present, able to accommodate around a third of the University's students as well as some non-student low-income house sharers. This would imply fairly large demand for smaller private rented housing from the remaining student population.
179. In July, 2023, there were a total of 25 rooms in shared accommodation available for rent from Spareroom.com with an average monthly rent of £668. Rightmove.com provides a similar result of £670 derived from 8 rooms listed on the site in July 2023. Renting a room in a HMO would therefore require an income of roughly £26,800, which is approximately 80% of the income needed to afford entry-level market rents given above (£34,000). This suggests that there is a clear financial incentive to occupy a room in a HMO rather than a self-contained property, but not necessarily to such an extent that only HMOs are likely to be affordable to students. It is interesting to observe that the 2024 pricing of purpose-built student accommodation in Buckingham ranges from

£140-235 per week (or £560-940 per month, which is broadly comparable to the costs of a room in a HMO).

180. The financial capacity of students will vary greatly depending on personal circumstances, but it is clear that students in the private rented market will be competing with lower income households – including both individuals looking for rooms in shared housing and households seeking entry-level self-contained accommodation.
181. It is also worth noting the potential financial incentive for landlords to convert larger rented homes to HMOs. Multiplying the average HMO room rent by four rooms suggests that a 4 bedroom house could generate £2,672 in rent per month as a HMO. This is higher than the current median 4+ bedroom rental value of £2,145 in Buckingham according to [Home.co.uk](https://www.home.co.uk). As such, if demand from students rises in future, some of the few larger homes available on the rental market (or, indeed, in owner occupation) may be converted to HMOs.
182. While a potential risk depending on the supply of similar sized properties through future development, there are also advantages to HMOs, which provide a flexible role within the private rented sector and, in addition to students, meet the needs of lower income people who are ineligible for affordable rented housing and other vulnerable groups.
183. There are a number of policy, licensing and other measures that can be taken to control the number, distribution and standards of HMOs. However, these are generally beyond the power of a Neighbourhood Plan and, if of interest, are a matter for discussion between the Working Group and Buckinghamshire Unitary Authority.

## Estimates of the need for Affordable Housing

184. This section seeks to quantify the long-term potential need for Affordable Housing, which should be considered separately for affordable rented housing and affordable routes to ownership. The appropriate approach is taken based on the evidence available at Local Authority and NA scale.

### AECOM Estimates

185. AECOM estimates that there will be relatively modest long-term need for affordable rented homes in Buckingham. Specifically, our model estimates an annual shortfall of 8.8 affordable rented homes per annum, amounting to around 141 over the remaining years in the Neighbourhood Plan period (to 2040). The estimate and assumptions used are detailed in Appendix D and summarised in Table 5-5 below. This estimate is largely for social/affordable rent as it relates to households who live in unsuitable housing and who cannot afford to access market rents.
186. This result is chiefly a response to the current backlog of need, which is in the region of 298 households according to Buckinghamshire Council figures. It should also be noted that this backlog represents the needs of a slightly wider area than the town, including all applicants in the MK18 and MK17 postcode areas. This is because Buckingham is designated as a strategic settlement within the wider district and serves the needs of its hinterland in terms of Affordable Housing.<sup>19</sup>
187. The need figure of 8.8 new dwellings per annum is fairly low relative to the size of the Buckingham population. The main reason for this is that the model reflects the ability of the existing social rented housing stock to meet a proportion of longer-term needs through turnover: of the affordable rented accommodation existing currently, it can be expected that some will come vacant in any given year as their current occupants move to a new location, pass away or cease to be eligible as their circumstances change. Because of the substantial size of the existing stock, this is able to satisfy the projected newly arising need as well as some of the backlog, which is effectively spread out over the 10-year period to produce an annualized figure. The model assumes that 3% of the socially rented housing stock in Buckingham is being re-let year on year. In AECOM's experience (and in the absence of concrete historical figures) suggest that this is a fair and conservative assumption. However, for the sake of comparison the model has been re-run for a hypothetical scenario in which only 2% of the existing stock turns over each year. In this scenario, Buckingham would have a need for 16.6 social/affordable rental homes per annum.
188. It is also important to emphasise that whether or not localised needs can be satisfied through the existing stock, new affordable rented housing may still be required to provide homes for households in acute need living in the wider area. Another reason to continue to maximise supply is the fact that one unit of

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<sup>19</sup> When the current need for social/affordable housing for Buckingham alone is considered (129 households in need), the model produces a surplus figure of 3.5 dwellings per annum, suggesting Buckingham (when considered in isolation) has a sufficient social housing stock to meet the needs of its population.

Affordable Housing does not necessarily service one household worth of need, since the unit might have 2 bedrooms while the applicant household might require 4 bedrooms, may be located in an inappropriate location, or be otherwise unsuitable.

189. It is therefore considered appropriate for Buckingham to encourage the delivery of affordable rented housing in future years to meet the needs of the local population, future-proof the stock in case needs rise of vacancies are lower than expected, and to serve the wider area. The NA's wider strategic role in the delivery of Affordable Housing may be a further matter for discussion with Buckinghamshire Council.

**Table 5-5: Estimate of need for Affordable Housing for rent in Buckingham**

<b>Component of need or supply in the AECOM estimate</b>	<b>Per annum</b>
Current need	18.6
Newly arising need	13.5
Supply	23.3
<b>Net shortfall</b>	<b>8.8</b>

*Source: AECOM model summary of estimates. Full estimate included in Appendix D*

190. Turning to affordable home ownership tenures, AECOM estimate potential demand for 38.3 such dwellings per annum in Buckingham over the period to 2040, or 613 in total over that period. The estimate and assumptions used is detailed in Appendix D and summarised in Table 5-6 below.
191. It is important to keep in mind that the households identified in this estimate are, by and large, adequately housed in the private rented sector, Affordable Housing, or living in other circumstances. They do not necessarily lack their own housing but would prefer to buy rather than rent. Because the private rented sector in Buckingham is large there is a potentially vast market for affordable home ownership if most renters would prefer to own if given the opportunity. Such households have been included in the national planning definition of those in need of Affordable Housing, but their needs are less acute than those on the waiting list for affordable rented housing, considered above.

**Table 5-6: Estimate of need for Affordable Housing for sale in Buckingham**

<b>Component of need or supply in the AECOM estimate</b>	<b>Per annum</b>
Current need	36.6
Newly arising need	8.9
Supply	7.3
<b>Net shortfall</b>	<b>38.3</b>

*Source: AECOM model summary of estimates. Full estimate included in Appendix D*

## **Evidence in the HEDNA**

192. A HEDNA was undertaken for Buckinghamshire in 2016. This study estimates the need for affordable housing across the county based on analysis of the former Councils' housing waiting lists and analysis of other data sets in line with Planning Practice Guidance at the time.
193. The HEDNA identifies a total need for 9,434 additional homes across Buckinghamshire over the period 2013-33. This is broken down to the four former local authority areas, with a total need over the same period of 4,130 identified for the Vale of Aylesbury. As 6.9% of the population of the former district resided in the Buckingham NA at the time of the 2011 Census, this implies that the NA's share of this need would be roughly 285 units in total, or 14 per year.
194. However, pro-rating district-level estimates of affordable housing need presents problems in practice, particularly given the age of the HEDNA in this case and the creation of the Unitary Authority in the period since. In particular, the HEDNA figure largely represents the need for social/affordable rent as it relates to households who live in unsuitable housing and who cannot afford to access market rents. A small proportion of these households may be able to afford shared ownership because in some cases it is more affordable than market rents, especially when available at a share of 25%. However, the HEDNA does not provide separate estimates for rented and ownership tenures within affordable housing, as is now conventional.
195. Given these limitations, the need figure derived from the HEDNA should be accorded less weight than the NA-specific estimates provided here. That said, it does highlight the fact that Buckinghamshire has a large volume of need for affordable homes, a reasonable share of which Buckingham may be expected to meet. This provides some justification for aspiring to deliver affordable rented housing within the new Neighbourhood Plan period despite the fact that an annual surplus of this tenure is identified for the NA itself.

## **Affordable Housing policies in Neighbourhood Plans**

196. This section outlines a common Neighbourhood Plan policy level around the tenure mix of affordable housing, provides a recommendation and summarises relevant considerations.

### **Application of Local Plan policies**

197. Former Vale of Aylesbury's adopted policy on this subject requires 25% of all new housing to be affordable, and the made Neighbourhood Plan for Buckingham raises this to 35%. It is not known precisely what percentage of the new housing built in Buckingham in recent years was delivered as Affordable Housing and thus whether this target tends to be met on development sites in the NA.
198. While the 35% target has not been tested specifically here on the grounds of need or viability, it remains appropriate in AECOM's view given the potentially large

scale of need, the broader strategic role Buckingham plays in the county context, and the affordability challenges faced by local households established in the previous section.

199. How the Affordable Housing that comes forward through mainstream development sites should be broken down into specific tenures – such as the balance between rented tenures and routes to home ownership – is not specified in the Local or Neighbourhood Plan.

## **Affordable Housing at Neighbourhood level**

200. The HNA can provide localised evidence on this point, which may be used to support future Neighbourhood Plan policies defining the appropriate Affordable Housing tenure mix. This section suggests an Affordable Housing tenure mix that might be suitable for Buckingham on the basis of identified housing need and a range of other considerations detailed in Appendix D. The relevant factors for Buckingham can be summarised as follows:

- AECOM's estimates suggest a robust potential demand for affordable home ownership and limited need for further affordable rented homes because turnover in the current stock appears able to satisfy newly arising need. This points toward a strong emphasis on ownership options;
  - There is nevertheless a not insignificant current backlog of need for affordable rented housing (298 households) as well as persistent outstanding need across Buckinghamshire as a whole, to which the NA might reasonably be expected to contribute. There may also be unmet needs in the rural villages nearby that may be more appropriate to meet in the town.
  - There are 471 homes currently with planning permission and an option for the new Neighbourhood Plan to take forward an annual target of 74 new homes over an appropriate period. If 35% of all new homes are required to be delivered as Affordable Housing, this would represent a fairly large increase in provision, though not high enough to meet in full the potential demand for affordable home ownership identified here. When supply is limited, there is cause to consider what should be prioritised, and it is often prudent to ensure the most acute needs (for affordable rented housing) are protected as a priority, even where these are expected to be limited over the long-term.
  - The affordability analysis earlier in this chapter established that affordable rented housing is the only option for lower earners and that affordable home ownership products would meaningfully widen access to home ownership to average earning local people. This suggests both should feature in the tenure mix.
201. On balance, AECOM suggests that there is an opportunity here to boost levels of affordable home ownership to meet high levels of potential demand in a context where home ownership through the open market is very unaffordable. The trade-off is that this would lower delivery of affordable rented housing,

which serves those in the greatest need. In this case, AECOM estimates that the existing stock of affordable rented housing may be sufficient for the community's evolving needs. However, it may be prudent to future-proof the stock through some additional supply in case this situation changes and to contribute to the unmet needs of the wider area.

202. As such, both affordable rent and affordable home ownership should feature in the Affordable Housing tenure mix. AECOM's interpretation of the evidence suggests that a broadly even split of 50% rented options and 50% routes to ownership could be appropriate. Table 5-6 sets out one proposed option, and breaks down the headline split between rented and ownership tenures with reference to the affordability analysis earlier in the chapter. This suggested that First Homes are accessible at a 30% or 40% discount, shared ownership is also potentially valuable at lower equity shares, and that rent to buy appears less affordable given the fairly high equivalent market rents.
203. Where the Working Group wish to develop policy that deviates from evolving Local Plan policy – either by differing from the headline split between renting and ownership or by specifying a greater level of detail around sub-tenures, it is important that they liaise with Buckinghamshire Council to determine what additional evidence (notably about development viability) may be needed, and to ensure that departures from the local policy context have their support.

**Table 5-7: Indicative tenure split (Affordable Housing)**

<b>Tenure</b>	<b>Indicative mix</b>	<b>Considerations and uncertainties</b>
<b>Routes to home ownership, of which</b>	<b>50%</b>	
First Homes	25%	Product untested so uncertainties around viability, developer, lenders and buyer appetite etc.
Shared ownership	15-25%	Recently confirmed changes to the model to allow purchases of 10% share – impact on viability unknown. RPs business plans currently reliant on shared ownership model. Impact of displacement by First Homes unknown.
Rent to Buy	0-10%	Emerging product with popularity and effectiveness as yet unknown. Impact of displacement by First Homes unknown.
<b>Affordable Housing for rent, of which</b>	<b>50%</b>	
Social rent	To be set by Registered Providers	Uncertain how much funding available to support this tenure in local area. Uncertain whether RPs willing to own/manage stock in this area.
Affordable rent	To be set by Registered Providers	Uncertain whether RPs willing to own/manage stock in this area.

Source: AECOM calculations

## Conclusions- Tenure and Affordability

### Current tenure profile

204. Home ownership is the dominant tenure in Buckingham at 66% of all households, though it is slightly less common than the county average (70%). Of the remaining households, a majority live in privately rented accommodation (18%). At 13%, the rate of social renting in Buckingham is slightly above the county average. Over the past decade there have been particular increases in the number of private and social renters, as well as a proportionally significant injection of new shared ownership properties.

### Housing costs

205. Home values in the NA have followed a clear upward trajectory despite some year-on-year fluctuations. The current median house price (middle number when arranged from lowest to highest) is £369,000, which is 48% higher than its level in 2013. The lower quartile price (the lowest 25% of prices, used as a good proxy for entry-level housing) stands at £288,000.

206. It is also worth noting that the current median house price in Buckingham is slightly less expensive than the current median for Buckinghamshire as a whole. This is in spite of the unusual fact (for a town, and discussed in the Type and Size section), that the dwelling mix in the NA includes a higher share of detached homes and fewer flats than wider Buckinghamshire.
207. AECOM has estimated the annual income required to afford various tenures of housing in Buckingham – each of which is explained in detail in Appendix C. These thresholds are compared to incomes to determine which options are the most appropriate for local people going forward. The average household income in the NA area was £52,150 in 2018, and the lower quartile income (per person) for Buckinghamshire was £19,200 in 2022.
208. It was found that local households on average incomes are unable to access even entry-level homes unless they have the advantage of a very large deposit. The median house price would require an annual income around 80% above the current average. Private renting presents a similar affordability challenge, generally only making entry-level properties accessible to average and dual lower earning households. Households made up of a single lower earner cannot afford the given rental thresholds and would need to rely on social and affordable rented options.
209. Subsidised routes to home ownership like First Homes and shared ownership are intended to target people who can afford to rent but not to buy. In Buckingham there is a relatively large gap between the income needed to afford to rent (£34,000) and to buy (£74,000), who may benefit from these products.
210. The discount on First Homes can be set at 30%, 40% or 50% in Neighbourhood Plans. In Buckingham a 30% discount may be marginally affordable to the average earning household, but a 40% discount would expand access to ownership more widely. If seeking to take action on this point in the Neighbourhood Plan, the Working Group advised to discuss this possibility with Buckinghamshire Council, who may be able to supply evidence of development viability that is also relevant to this policy option.
211. Affordable rented housing appears generally affordable to households with two lower earners (average earning households are unlikely to be eligible). Single lower earners can afford average social rents and affordable rents but the lowest earners, if unable to secure a social rented dwelling or additional subsidy, may need to live in a room in a shared house using housing benefits.

### **Students and HMOs**

212. The University of Buckingham, a private university with approximately 3,500 students, is located within the NA boundary. The Accommodation Office for the University confirms that there are currently 467 student rooms offered at 13 sites across three campuses. Plans currently exist to offer a further 71 shared rooms at a new site in early 2024, with a capacity for 142 students.
213. This suggests that around 3,000 University students are likely to be accommodated outside of halls of residences. Though some will live at home and

others outside of Buckingham altogether, it is reasonable to assume that the majority live in private rented housing in the town. Nationwide data from the Higher Education Statistics Authority suggests that 27% of students live in the private rented sector, which would imply ongoing demand for rented homes from around 950 students in Buckingham.

214. This will include people living alone, in small groups, and in Houses in Multiple Accommodation (HMOs), where multiple unrelated individuals or households share facilities such as kitchens or bathrooms. This means that demand from students is likely to impact the market for both 1-2 bedroom self-contained flats and larger family housing that can be rented out to larger groups. This demand pressure can result in higher rents as well as incentives to convert more family housing to HMOs, with knock-on impacts on the housing needs of other groups.
215. The Buckinghamshire Council register indicates that there are 21 licenced HMOs in Buckingham, which have a total of 115 rooms (implying an average size of 5-6 bedrooms). This is likely to undercount the stock for a number of reasons. Speaking very generally, the current number of HMOs in the NA is likely to be fewer than 100 at present, though still able to accommodate around a third of the University's students as well as some non-student low-income house sharers.
216. Rental listings suggest that rooms in HMOs cost around £670 per month, making them cheaper than self-contained 1-2 bedroom homes. However, the potential rental income from a 4 bedroom HMO may be higher than a 4 bedroom self-contained house, providing an incentives for landlords to convert family housing if demand from students and low income house sharers rises in future.
217. There are a number of policy, licensing and other measures that can be taken to control the number, distribution and standards of HMOs. However, these are generally beyond the power of a Neighbourhood Plan and, if of interest, are a matter for discussion between the Working Group and Buckinghamshire Unitary Authority.

### **The need for Affordable Housing**

218. AECOM estimate that there is a need for 9 (rounded) new social/affordable rental homes each year to satisfy local need, this equates to 141 new social/affordable rental homes over the neighbourhood plan period (to 2040).
219. This result may be lower than expected given the current backlog of need (in the region of 300 households). This is due to the expected rate of turnover in the substantial existing stock of social housing, which suggests that vacancies will be able to satisfy much of the projected newly arising need as well as some of the backlog.
220. However, Buckingham may be expected to meet some of the wider needs of the town's surrounding rural area and/or that of the wider county as established in the 2016 HEDNA. As such, it may be prudent to maximise the potential delivery of new affordable rented housing to address the current backlog, future-proof the stock in case needs change, and provide homes for households living in the wider area.

221. AECOM estimate a potential demand for 38 affordable home ownership dwellings per annum in Buckingham, or 613 in total over the remaining years in the period to 2040. The households eligible for such homes do not necessarily lack their own housing but would prefer to buy rather than rent. They have been included in the national planning definition of those in need of Affordable Housing, but their needs are less acute than those on the waiting list for affordable rented housing.

### **Affordable Housing policy**

222. Affordable Housing is typically provided and made financially viable by Local or Neighbourhood Plan policies that require it to be included at a set proportion of market housing developments. Buckinghamshire's adopted policy on this subject requires 25% of all new housing be affordable, and this is raised to 35% in the made Neighbourhood Plan.

223. AECOM recommends that the tenure mix of Affordable Housing secured in future years gives broadly equal weight to affordable home ownership options (50%) and affordable rented provision (50%). There is an opportunity here to boost levels of affordable home ownership to meet high levels of potential demand in a context where home ownership through the open market is very unaffordable. The trade-off is that this would lower delivery of affordable rented housing, which serves those in the greatest need. In this case, AECOM estimates that the existing stock of affordable rented housing may be sufficient for the community's evolving needs. However, it may be prudent to future-proof the stock through some additional supply in case this situation changes and to contribute to the unmet needs of the wider area.

224. There is no obligation to follow this recommendation or to depart from emerging Local Plan policy if that is more in line with the community's objectives. Further discussion with Buckinghamshire Council about the options and their advice would be beneficial, and could cover issues beyond the scope of this report, such as development viability.

225. Table 5-8 summarises Buckingham's position with regards to the expected delivery of Affordable Housing, and how this might ideally be apportioned among sub-categories of tenure to meet local needs over the Plan period. This exercise simply applies the housing requirement figure for the area to the Local Plan policy expectation, and shows the quantities of affordable housing for rent and sale that would be delivered if the tenure mix proposed in this HNA were to be rigidly enforced. In this sense it is hypothetical, and the outcomes in practice may differ, either as a result of measures taken in the neighbourhood plan (e.g. if the group plans for more housing (and therefore more affordable housing) than the local plan, or if the group decides to influence the tenure mix in other ways), or as a result of site-specific constraints.

**Table 5-8: Estimated annual delivery of Affordable Housing in Buckingham**

	<b>Step in Estimation</b>	<b>Expected delivery</b>
A	Annual housing need figure (calculated in Quantity chapter)	74
B	Affordable housing quota (%) in made Neighbourhood Plan	35%
C	Potential total Affordable Housing in NA (A x B)	26
D	Rented % (e.g. social/ affordable rented)	50%
E	Rented number (C x D)	13
F	Affordable home ownership % (e.g. First Homes, Rent to Buy)	50%
G	Affordable home ownership number (C x F)	13

Source: AECOM estimate based on LPA's affordable housing policies, AECOM's indicative tenure mix

## 6. Type and Size

### Introduction

226. It is common for neighbourhood plans to include policies that influence what form new housing should take in terms of type and size. This requires evidence of what local people need.
227. This can be done using statistics to identify relevant trends and potential gaps in the market. That is the focus of this chapter of the HNA. The evidence gathered here can be used to justify planning policies either on its own or in combination with survey results expressing the specific wants and concerns of local residents. It will also build up a picture of the population and existing range of homes that may provide useful context for the neighbourhood plan.
228. This chapter has three aims, each given its own sub-section:
- To establish what **mix** of housing exists in the NA at present;
  - To describe characteristics of the local **population** that are relevant to housing need; and
  - To look to the **future**, considering how the population is likely to evolve and what mix of homes would be most appropriate to build.
229. It is important to keep in mind that housing need is not an exact science. To get from a set of facts about the population to an ideal mix of homes requires making assumptions. For example, there are clear patterns about what size of home families tend to live in at different stages of life. However, a variety of other reasons sit behind people's housing choices that are less easy to predict, including wealth, accessibility requirements and personal preference. Some trends can also change rapidly over time, such as the increasing preference for home working.
230. The conclusions and recommendations given here are therefore not definitive. Rather, they are what the statistics suggest future needs will look like based on current trends. This is sufficient for justifying planning policies, but it is also appropriate to take into account other factors and evidence if desired.

### Definitions

- **Dwelling type:** whether a home is detached, semi-detached, terraced, a flat, bungalow or other type. Which a household chooses to occupy tends to be more about wealth and preference than a specific need.
- **Dwelling size:** how many rooms or bedrooms a home contains. While this could also mean floor area or number of storeys, the number of bedrooms is most reliably recorded in housing statistics. Bedroom numbers are also closely linked to family size and life stage.
- **Household:** a unit of people who live together, commonly a family, couple or single person. Not all dwellings contain a household, including properties that

are vacant and second homes, so the number of dwellings and the number of households in an area is usually different.

- **Household composition:** the specific combination of adults and children who form a household. The Census offers a number of categories, for example distinguishing between families with children who are dependent or non-dependent (i.e. adults). 'Other' households in the Census include house-sharers, groups of students, and multi-family households.
- **Household life stage:** the age of the lead member of a household – usually the oldest adult, or what used to be called the 'head of household'. Life stage is correlated with dwelling size as well as wealth.
- **Housing mix:** the range of home sizes and types in an area.
- **Over- and under-occupancy:** the degree to which the size and composition of a household lines up with the number of bedrooms in their home. If there are more bedrooms than the household would be expected to need, the home is considered under-occupied, and vice versa.

## The current housing mix

231. This section establishes the current housing mix of Buckingham, highlighting recent changes to it and comparing it to wider averages.

232. There are currently estimated to be 6,437 dwellings in Buckingham. This reflects the additional 1,492 homes built since the 2011 Census, when the total was recorded as 4,925. The nature of the completions data provided by Buckinghamshire Council does not allow for the type and size mix of these additional homes to be reflected in the analysis to follow, which is primarily based on the 2021 Census.

## Dwelling type

233. Table 6-1 below shows the breakdown of different types of housing available in Buckingham. The most prevalent housing type is detached dwellings (37%) followed by semi-detached dwellings (28%), terraces (22%) and flats (13%).

234. Table 6-1 also presents figures from 2011, to give an understanding of how the housing stock has changed over the last decade. Despite considerable development in the past ten years, the proportional mix of housing does not appear to have changed significantly. The dominant category of detached homes saw the greatest actual growth but flats, the least common category, saw the greatest proportional growth from a low base. So while new development has generally followed existing patterns, some additional diversity has been created through the supply of additional flats.

235. These findings corroborate the completions data provided by Buckinghamshire Council, which show that recent development has been driven by large mixed sites, as well as the perception of the Working Group that flats above shops have featured strongly in windfall permissions in recent years.

**Table 6-1: Accommodation type, Buckingham, 2011-2021**

Type	2011	%	2021	%
Detached	1,834	37.1%	2,197	37.1%
Semi-detached	1,420	28.7%	1,648	27.9%
Terrace	1,167	23.6%	1,296	21.9%
Flat	529	10.7%	768	13.0%
Total	4,945	100%	5,914	100%

Source: ONS 2021 and 2011, VOA 2021, AECOM Calculations

236. Table 6-2 compares the NA mix to wider benchmarks. It shows Buckingham has a slightly less balanced housing profile than the wider unitary authority and country – with a higher proportion of detached homes and a lower proportion of flats. This is somewhat surprising given that the NA is a town with a generally more urban character than the surrounding rural area. This may be due to the impact of Buckinghamshire’s larger settlements (e.g. High Wycombe and Aylesbury) on the county average.

237. Census data does not disaggregate bungalows as their own housing type. However, VOA can be used to give an estimate of the proportion of bungalows. The data shows that bungalows make up 6.6% of the overall housing stock in Buckingham, which is lower than averages seen across Buckinghamshire (8.8%) and nationally (9.2%). The relative scarcity of bungalows may contribute to the perception shared by the Working Group that they are in particularly high demand at present.

**Table 6-2: Accommodation type, various geographies, 2021**

Type	Buckingham	Buckinghamshire	England
Detached	37.1%	34.3%	22.9%
Semi-detached	27.9%	30.2%	31.5%
Terrace	21.9%	17.8%	23.0%
Flat	13.0%	17.2%	22.2%

Source: Census 2021, AECOM Calculations

## Dwelling size

238. Table 6-3 below presents the current housing mix in terms of size. It shows that the current stock is skewed toward mid-sized and larger dwellings: homes with more than 3 bedrooms make up just over 70% of the total.

239. The table also presents figures from 2011 to show how the housing stock has changed over the last 10 years. Again, despite quite considerable development since 2011, few significant changes to the proportional size profile can be seen. That said, the number of 4+ bedroom homes has increased most significantly, almost reaching parity with the number of 3 bedroom homes.

**Table 6-3: Dwelling size (bedrooms), Buckingham, 2011-2021**

Number of bedrooms	2011	%	2021	%
1	382	8.1%	513	8.7%
2	990	20.9%	1,253	21.2%
3	1,726	36.4%	2,081	35.2%
4+	1,613	34.0%	2,060	34.9%
Total	4,714	100%	5,907	100%

Source: ONS 2021 and 2011, AECOM Calculations

240. Again, it is useful to look at the percentage breakdown of dwelling sizes in comparison with the wider district and country. Table 6-4 shows that Buckingham's size profile closely tracks that of wider Buckinghamshire, while both areas depart from the national average in their high share of 4+ bedroom homes and low proportions of dwellings with 1-2 bedrooms.

**Table 6-4: Dwelling size (bedrooms), various geographies, 2021**

Number of bedrooms	Buckingham	Buckinghamshire	England
1	8.7%	9.5%	11.6%
2	21.2%	22.3%	27.3%
3	35.2%	36.1%	40.0%
4+	34.9%	32.0%	21.1%

Source: Census 2021, AECOM Calculations

## Population characteristics

241. This section examines key characteristics of the local population that have a bearing on what housing might be needed in future years. Where available, recent data is used. However, for some information, notably the age profile of households (as opposed to individuals), it is necessary to fall back on the 2011 Census.

### Age

242. Table 6-5 shows the current age structure of the NA population, alongside 2011 Census figures. Given the relatively large overall population increase, which is in line with the scale of development in recent years, it is unsurprising that all age groups have experienced growth. The single exception to this is the population aged 15-24. This may be a reflection of the timing of the 2021 Census during the Covid-19 pandemic, when many students returned to their family homes. However, this statistic also chimes with the perception of the Working Group that young adults tend to leave Buckingham for employment and lifestyle reasons, returning (or replaced by others) in later age groups to begin or expand their families. The population of 25-44 year olds has accordingly increased, along with significant growth in the number of younger children.

243. Despite this evidence of the retention and attraction of family groups, another clear trend in Buckingham's population statistics is toward ageing, with by far

the largest proportional changes seen in the 65-84 and 85+ age groups, even though they remain a relatively small proportion of the total.

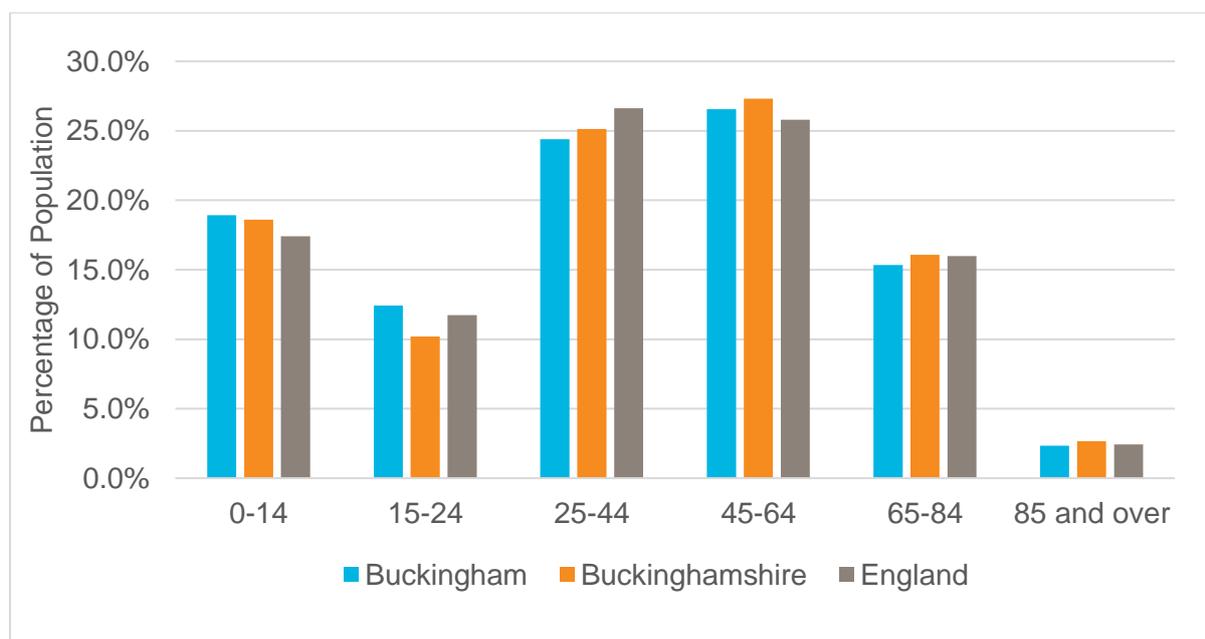
**Table 6-5: Age structure of Buckingham, 2011 and 2021**

Age group	2011 (Census)		2021 (Census)		Change
0-14	2,163	18.0%	2,706	18.9%	25.1%
15-24	1,882	15.6%	1,776	12.4%	-5.6%
25-44	2,963	24.6%	3,487	24.4%	17.7%
45-64	3,325	27.6%	3,796	26.6%	14.2%
65-84	1,494	12.4%	2,192	15.3%	46.7%
85+	216	1.8%	335	2.3%	55.1%
Total	12,043	100%	14,292	100%	18.7%

Source: ONS 2011, ONS 2021, AECOM Calculations

244. For context, it is useful to look at the NA population structure alongside that of the district and country. Figure 6-1 (using 2021 Census data) shows that Buckingham has a slightly younger age profile than the wider Unitary Authority and country – with a higher share of people in the youngest age groups and a lower share in the older groups.

**Figure 6-1: Age structure in Buckingham, 2021**



Source: ONS 2021, AECOM Calculations

## Household composition and occupancy

245. Household composition (the combination and relationships of adults and children in a dwelling) is an important factor in the kinds of housing needed over the Neighbourhood Plan period. Table 6-6 shows that there is little distinction between Buckingham and the wider Unitary Authority in terms of the composition of their respective household types. More than two thirds of households are composed of more than one person, and nearly one third contain dependent children (a slightly higher rate than Buckinghamshire and much higher rate than England).

246. Note that non-dependent children refer to households in which adult children are living at home, or which students still call their primary residence despite living for most of the year near to university. A marked increase in this category can be taken to indicate the relative unaffordability of entry-level homes, where young people are financially unable to move out and form their own households. It is interesting to observe that this category grew by 37% between 2011 and 2021 in the NA (although this may again be influenced by trends arising during the pandemic).

**Table 6-6: Household composition, various geographies, 2021**

Household composition		Buckingham	Buckinghamshire	England
<b>One person household</b>	<b>Total</b>	27.0%	26.3%	30.1%
	Aged 66 and over	11.9%	12.3%	12.8%
	Other	15.1%	14.0%	17.3%
<b>One family only</b>	<b>Total</b>	68.9%	67.8%	63.1%
	All aged 66 and over	11.9%	10.4%	9.2%
	With no children	17.1%	17.1%	16.8%
	With dependent children	30.6%	29.1%	25.8%
	With non-dependent children <sup>20</sup>	10.3%	10.6%	10.5%
<b>Other household types</b>	<b>Total</b>	4.1%	5.9%	6.9%

Source: ONS 2021, AECOM Calculations

247. The tendency of households to over- or under-occupy their homes is another relevant consideration to the future size needs of the NA. A person is considered to under-occupy their home when there are more bedrooms in their home than a family of their size and composition would normally be expected to need. This is expressed as an occupancy rating of +1 or +2, indicating that there is one surplus bedroom or at least two surplus bedrooms (respectively). Over-occupancy works in the same way, with a rating of -1 indicating at least one bedroom too few.

248. The table shows that the NA's population is generally well housed, with only 3% of houses being over overcrowded. However, the data shows that most households in the parish tend to have at least one more bedroom than they would be expected to need (76%). This dynamic appears to be most prevalent in the older population but is also common among single person households and couples without children – many of which have two or more bedrooms above what they might be expected to need.

<sup>20</sup> Refers to households containing children who are older than 18 e.g students or young working people living at home.

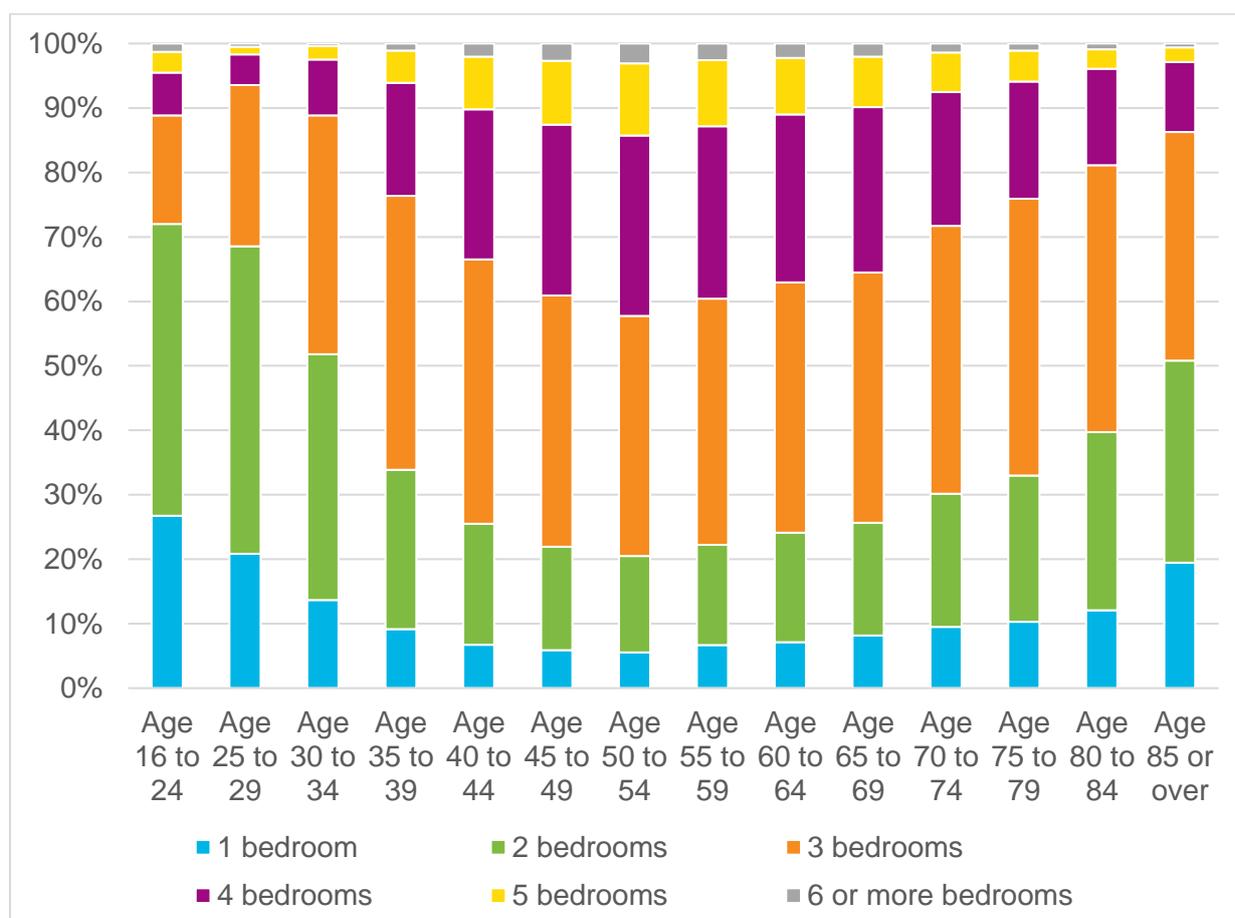
**Table 6-7: Occupancy rating by age in Buckingham, 2021**

Household type	+2 rating	+1 rating	0 rating	-1 rating
Family 66+	79.5%	18.7%	1.8%	0.0%
Single person 66+	54.4%	29.8%	15.7%	0.0%
Family under 66 - no children	73.9%	18.3%	7.8%	0.0%
Family under 66 - dependent children	30.3%	39.7%	26.8%	3.2%
Family under 66 - adult children	33.3%	39.3%	25.2%	2.2%
Single person under 66	44.8%	29.7%	25.5%	0.0%
All households	46%	30%	20%	3%

Source: ONS 2021, AECOM Calculations

249. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the life stage of households is strongly correlated with the size of home they tend to occupy. Figure 6-2 sets out this relationship for Buckinghamshire in 2011 (because this data is not available at smaller scales). The graph shows how the youngest households tend to occupy the smallest dwellings, before rapidly taking up larger homes as their families expand, and then more gradually downsizing to smaller homes again as they age.

**Figure 6-2: Age of household reference person by dwelling size, Buckinghamshire, 2011**



Source: ONS 2011, AECOM Calculations

## Future population and size needs

250. This section projects the future age profile of the population in Buckingham at the end of the Neighbourhood Plan period and then estimates the mix of dwelling sizes they may need.

### Age

251. The result of applying Local Authority level household projections to the age profile of Buckingham households in 2011 is shown in Table 6-8 (data on this metric is not yet available for the 2021 Census). This makes clear that population growth is expected to be driven by older households, with the number of households headed by persons aged 65+ expected to increase by two thirds to become around 34% of the total while the age groups younger than 55 all contract slightly.

252. Given the slightly younger population of the NA compared to Buckinghamshire (data for which has been used to derive these projections), it is possible that the rate of ageing shown in the table will be less extreme in practice, particularly if Buckingham continues to attract a replacement population of younger families.

**Table 6-8: Projected age of households, Buckingham, 2011 - 2040**

Year	24 and under	25 to 34	35 to 54	55 to 64	65 and over
2011	186	523	2,018	874	1,140
2040	177	501	1,958	1,040	1,902
% change 2011-2040	-5%	-4%	-3%	19%	67%

Source: AECOM Calculations

253. The demographic change discussed above can be translated into an ideal mix of dwelling sizes. This is achieved through a model that maps the dwelling size preferences by life stage shown earlier (in Figure 6-2) onto the projected age profile for the NA in Table 6-8 immediately above. The resulting 'ideal' future mix of dwelling sizes can then be compared to the current stock of housing to identify how future development might best fill the gaps.<sup>21</sup>

254. This approach has limitations, in that it embeds existing size preferences and does not anticipate changes in what people want from their homes. As such, it is appropriate for the results to be taken as a baseline scenario – what would occur if current trends persisted. It may well be the intention of the community to intervene to produce a different outcome more in line with their interpretation of emerging trends and their place- and community-shaping objectives.

<sup>21</sup> Note that significant growth in the population in recent years means that Buckingham has a current number of households that slightly exceeds the total projected in 2040 through this exercise. The model requires household growth to project future housing need, so the overall total and number of households in each age category in 2040 has been manually inflated by 10% to simulate a scenario with modest household growth, roughly in line with the overall housing need identified in the Quantity section of this report (need for 74 homes x 7 years 2033-2040 = 518 new homes. 10% growth on the current number of households is 591).

Layering these factors on top of the indicative picture provided by this model is appropriate for the purpose of drafting neighbourhood plan policies.

255. The result of this exercise is presented in Table 6-9. It suggests that in order to meet the needs of a changing population and diversify its housing offer, Buckingham should provide a range of different sized homes, but focus delivery on those with 3 bedrooms. Despite being the most common size category at present, 3 bedroom homes offer the versatility to accommodate various household types, including new families and downsizers, a fact reflected in their popularity among all age groups in Figure 6-2. Between 15% and 22% of homes are allocated to each of the other size categories, helping to diversify the stock in favour of smaller, more affordable options, without entirely restricting the supply of the largest homes.

**Table 6-9: Suggested dwelling size mix to 2040, Buckingham**

Number of bedrooms	Current mix (2021)	Suggested mix (2040)	Balance of new housing to reach suggested mix
1	8.7%	9.2%	14.8%
2	21.2%	21.2%	21.3%
3	35.2%	36.2%	45.4%
4+	34.9%	33.4%	18.5%

Source: AECOM Calculations

256. The following points sense-check the results of the model against other evidence and suggest ways to interpret them when thinking about policy options.

- The preceding chapter found that affordability is a serious and worsening challenge in the NA. While the provision of Affordable Housing (subsidised tenure products) is one way to combat this, another is to ensure that homes come forward which are of an appropriate size, type and density for local residents' budgets.
- Maintaining a supply of smaller 1-2 bed homes as suggested by the model would help to address this situation, although it should be considered whether large number of 1 bedroom homes are suitable on the development sites available in the NA and whether the form they tend to take (flats) aligns with the preferences of the local community.
- The delivery of 2-3 bedroom homes may also encourage older households to downsize, in so doing releasing larger family homes to the market and reducing the need for further large dwellings.
- To best meet the needs of the growing cohort of older households expected to be present by the end of the Plan period, it should also be considered whether the existing options are well tailored to older people's requirements in terms of space, flexibility, quality, location and accessibility.
- Variety should be sought within the mid-sized homes that are built in future to attract both newly forming households on lower budgets and older households

with equity from their existing larger homes. While the number of bedrooms required may be similar, other preferences and levels of purchasing power could be very different. Facilitating downsizing among older households may also release those larger homes for use by families who need more bedrooms if the existing stock of larger homes is sufficiently affordable.

- The overall size mix recommended for former Vale of Aylesbury of the Buckinghamshire HEDNA (2016), calculated from Figure 123, is as follows:
  - 4.7% 1 bedroom
  - 22.0% 2 bedroom
  - 49.3% 3 bedroom
  - 24.0% 4+ bedroom
- This recommendation is not dissimilar from the mix proposed for Buckingham here, particularly in the percentages allocated to 2 and 3 bedroom homes. The main difference is that the HEDNA mix places greater emphasis on 4+ bedroom homes and less on 1 bedroom homes. The key reason for this is the current abundance of 4+ bedroom homes in Buckingham. The HEDNA recommendation can be used to adjust the HNA mix to reduce the weight given to 1 bedroom homes in favour of 4+ bedroom properties if remaining in line with wider needs or avoiding large volumes of new flats are priorities of the community.

## Tenure

257. The recommendation discussed immediately above applies to all housing in the NA over the Plan period. This is considered proportionate for devising policy at neighbourhood scale. However, in practice different size mixes may be appropriate for market housing and Affordable Housing. While this distinction may not be appropriate to make in Neighbourhood Plan policy, since Local Authorities tend to define the precise mix of Affordable Housing required on applicable sites, it is worth thinking through the factors at play.

258. Generally speaking, higher proportions of smaller homes are needed within affordable tenures, particularly affordable and social rent, than in market housing. This is because there tend to be more single people and couples in need of affordable rented housing, and they are likely to be eligible only for 1 or 2 bedroom properties. In contrast, people buying their own homes tend to want more space than they technically 'need', such as spare rooms for guests, home working or other uses. This fact is established in the data on under-occupancy presented earlier in this chapter.

259. There are three key sources of information for thinking through the size needs of different categories. These are:

- The Buckinghamshire HEDNA, which suggests that around 50% of affordable homes should have 1-2 bedrooms, compared with just 20% of market housing.

- The waiting list for affordable rented housing, kept by the Local Planning Authority, which provides a more current snapshot of the size needs of applicant households. The data provided by Buckinghamshire Council for those with a current address in the NA shows that 110 of the 129 applicant households are only eligible for a 1-2 bedroom property, and 89 of these for a 1 bedroom only.
- Any relevant household survey or consultation work in the NA can also highlight any specific gaps in the market within particular segments of the population.

260. To summarise, the overall size mix recommendation presented above applies generally to new housing in the NA. Within this mix, Affordable Housing might require a greater weighting towards smaller sizes while market homes focus on mid-sized homes and some larger options. It is not necessary (and is potentially not appropriate) for Neighbourhood Plans to be prescriptive about the size mix within different tenures, but a range of data sources exist that indicate a direction of travel, which Local Planning Authorities will draw upon when determining applications, and which it is possible for the neighbourhood planners to monitor.

## Type

261. Planning policy also tends to be less prescriptive about the mix of dwelling types that are needed than the mix of home sizes. This is because the choice to occupy a terraced rather than a detached home, for example, is primarily a matter of wealth, personal preference, and the amount of outdoor space or other features sought than 'need' in the strict sense. This stands in contrast to the matter of dwelling size, where it can be more clearly established that a household with a certain number of members, closely correlated with age, requires a particular number of bedrooms.
262. The key distinctions when it comes to dwelling type are between flats and houses and, to a lesser extent, bungalows, each of which tend to appeal to occupants with different life circumstances. However, it remains difficult to generalise about this, particularly when drawing on demographic evidence.
263. The benefits of delivering a certain blend of dwelling types are more closely related to affordability, which is clearly established as an issue in Buckingham and which favours more dense options (e.g. terraces and flats). This imperative to improve affordability is often in conflict with matters of character, which in less urban areas tend to favour lower density options that blend in with the existing built environment. This is particularly relevant in the case of flats, a large block of which may not be a welcome proposition in some parts of the NA. That said, it is possible to deliver flats in the form of low-rise maisonettes that resemble terraces from street level, which can counter this issue.
264. In summary, there is a balance to be struck between, on the one hand, improving affordability and choice in the market by encouraging flats and terraces, and, on the other hand, preserving the distinctive character and other

features that residents like about the area today. How far the Neighbourhood Plan should guide on this issue, and in what direction, is a policy decision for the Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan Working Group and community to consider.

## Conclusions- Type and Size

### The current housing mix

265. The current dwelling mix in Buckingham is generally weighted in favour of larger and less dense home types. This is somewhat surprising given that the NA is a town with a generally more urban character than the surrounding rural area. This may be due to the impact of Buckinghamshire's larger settlements (e.g. High Wycombe and Aylesbury) on the county average.
266. The most common dwelling type in Buckingham is detached houses (37% compared to the national average of 23%), and there are relatively few flats (13% compared to the national average of 22%). The proportion of bungalows, at nearly 7%, is slightly below the county and national averages (both 9%), which may be reinforcing the high levels of demand observed by the Working Group.
267. Buckingham's size profile more closely tracks that of wider Buckinghamshire, while both areas depart from the national average in their high share of 4+ bedroom homes and low proportions of dwellings with 1-2 bedrooms. Homes with more than 3 bedrooms make up just over 70% of the total in Buckingham.
268. Over the past ten years, despite significant levels of new development, the housing mix has remained relatively similar in the town. The key exceptions to this are relatively high proportional growth (from a low base) in the number of flats, and the large increase in 4+ bedroom homes to become the joint most common size category (with 3 bedroom homes). The former shift has provided useful diversity in the market, while the latter has exaggerated the existing dominance of larger homes.

### Population characteristics

269. The NA population, which is generally younger than the wider county and England, has experienced significant growth in the decade since 2011 in line with the scale of residential development in that time.
270. The only age group that has not expanded is that aged 15-24. This may be a reflection of the timing of the 2021 Census during the Covid-19 pandemic, when many students returned to their family homes. However, this statistic also chimes with the perception of the Working Group that young adults tend to leave Buckingham for employment and lifestyle reasons, returning (or replaced by others) in later age groups to begin or expand their families. The population of 25-44 year olds has accordingly increased, along with significant growth in the number of younger children.
271. Despite this evidence of the retention and attraction of family groups, another clear trend in Buckingham's population statistics is toward ageing, with by far

the largest proportional changes seen in the 65-84 and 85+ age groups, even though they remain a relatively small proportion of the total.

272. Applying ONS household projections for Buckinghamshire to the Buckingham population in 2011 suggests that population growth can be expected to be driven by the oldest households, with the 65+ age group expected to increase by around two-thirds to become approximately 34% of the total, while all other age bands grow at more modest rates or contract. Given the slightly younger population of the NA compared to Buckinghamshire (data for which has been used to derive these projections), it is possible that the rate of ageing will be lower in practice, particularly if Buckingham continues to attract a replacement population of younger families.
273. Buckingham's household composition is similar to that of the wider county, notable for a low proportion of single-person households and a higher share of families with dependent children than the national average.
274. As of the 2011 Census, more than 75% of households in the NA had at least one more bedroom than they would be expected to need, and 46% had at least two extra bedrooms. This is not surprising given the relatively large skew of the housing stock. Under-occupancy was most common among the three distinct groups: couples with no children, older households and single people. While not uncommon, this might suggest that Buckingham's larger housing is not necessarily being occupied by households with the most family members, but by the people with the most wealth or by older people who have not chosen or been able to move to smaller properties.

### **Future population and size needs**

275. It is possible to estimate the size mix of future homes that might best accommodate demographic trends and address imbalances in the existing housing stock. The result of this process suggests that new development should deliver a variety of dwelling sizes with a focus on 3 bedroom homes. Despite being the most common size category at present, 3 bedroom homes offer the versatility to accommodate various household types, including new families and downsizers, a fact reflected in their popularity among all age groups locally.
276. This balanced mix, with a lower share of 4+ bedroom homes than are present in the existing housing stock, could help to achieve three key outcomes: improving affordability, meeting the needs suggested by demographic trends (notably the ageing of older people and continuing to attract younger families), and diversification away from the high proportion of 4+ bedroom homes in the current stock.
277. This recommendation is broadly in line with the evidence for former Vale of Aylesbury presented in the 2016 Buckinghamshire HEDNA Housing Need Study. However, this source could also be used to justify promoting slightly more larger homes and fewer 1 bedroom options if this is desired by the community – for example if flats are not supported throughout the NA for reasons of character.

278. It is important to remember that other factors should be considered in determining the dwelling mix that is desirable in the NA or on any particular site. These include the specific characteristics of the nearby stock of housing (such as its condition and design), the role of the NA or site within the wider housing market area (linked to any Local Authority strategies or plans) and site-specific factors. The size mix of Affordable Housing also tends to be considered separately from market housing by the Local Planning Authority, and to focus on the smaller units for which the vast majority of those on the waiting list in Buckingham are eligible.

## 7. Specialist housing for older people

### Introduction

279. It is relatively common for neighbourhood plans in areas with aging populations to include policies relating to specialist housing for older people. This chapter considers in detail the specialist housing needs of older people in Buckingham. It focuses on specialist forms of provision but recognises that the majority of older people will live in the mainstream housing stock. The approach is as follows:

- To review the **current provision** of specialist housing in the NA;
- To estimate the **potential demand** for this form of accommodation with reference to the projected growth in the older population and current rates of mobility limitation; and
- To discuss the potential for meeting this need through adaptations to the mainstream stock and other **additional considerations**.

280. Because of the wide variation in the level of support needed, as well as the financial capabilities of those affected, the estimates of need presented here should be viewed with caution – as an idea of the broad scale of potential need rather than an obligatory target that must be met.

281. It is important to note that the need for housing for particular groups of people may well exceed, or be proportionally high in relation to, the total housing need or requirement. This is because the needs of particular groups will often be calculated having consideration to the whole population of an area as opposed to the projected new households which form the baseline for estimating housing need overall.<sup>22</sup>

282. This study covers the need for housing, i.e. buildings that the planning system classifies as Use Class C3 (private dwellings).<sup>23</sup> Residences that fall into Use Class C2 (institutions including prisons, boarding schools and some care homes for older people) are largely beyond the scope of this research. However, it is possible to estimate the likely need for residential and nursing care over the Neighbourhood Plan period.

283. The distinction between care homes for older people that fall into use class C2 and those where accommodation is counted as C3 is blurred. As such, the findings of this chapter may justify the provision of extra-care C3 housing and/or C2 care home units, but it is not possible to state definitively how much of each would be required. C3 specialist accommodation is typically self-contained with its own front door, made available on an individual basis with support provided

<sup>22</sup> See Paragraph: 017 Reference ID: 2a-017-20190220, at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments>)

<sup>23</sup> For a full description of Planning Use Classes, please refer to [https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200130/common\\_projects/9/change\\_of\\_use](https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200130/common_projects/9/change_of_use)

in the home or not at all if the resident does not require it, and offered for sale or rent on the open market.

## Definitions

- **Older people:** people over retirement age, ranging from the active newly retired to the very frail elderly. Their housing needs tend to encompass accessible and adaptable general needs housing as well as the full spectrum of retirement and specialised housing offering additional care.
- **Specialist housing for older people:** a wide range of housing types specifically aimed at older people, which may often be restricted to those in certain older age groups. This could include residential institutions, sheltered housing, extra care housing, retirement housing and a range of other potential types of housing which has been designed and built to serve the needs of older people, including often providing care or other additional services.
- **Sheltered Housing<sup>24</sup>:** self-contained flats or bungalows where all the residents are older people. Schemes on the whole provide independent, self-contained homes, either to rent or buy. Properties in most schemes have features like raised electric sockets, lowered worktops, walk-in showers, and so on, as well as being linked to an emergency alarm service. Some will be designed to accommodate wheelchair users. Managed schemes will also usually have some shared or communal facilities such as a lounge for residents to meet, a laundry, guest flats and gardens.
- **Extra Care Housing:** housing which usually consists of purpose-built or adapted flats or bungalows with a medium to high level of care available if required. Residents are able to live independently with 24-hour access to support services and staff, and meals are often also available. In some cases, these developments are included in retirement communities or villages - the intention is for residents to benefit from varying levels of care as time progresses.
- **Category M4(2):** accessible and adaptable dwellings.
- **Category M4(3):** wheelchair user dwellings.

## Specialist housing for older people

284. The housingcare.org website identifies a total of 181 units of specialist accommodation in the NA at present, roughly half of which are social housing and the other half are offered for leasehold purchase. There have also been two new care homes recently developed which have a capacity for 152 people, and further care home facilities are available in Maids Moreton beyond the NA boundary. Details of the facilities existing within the NA are provided in Appendix E.

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<sup>24</sup> See <http://www.housingcare.org/jargon-sheltered-housing.aspx>

285. The 2021 Census suggests that there are currently 1,157 individuals aged over 75 in Buckingham. This suggests that current provision is in the region of 156 units per 1,000 of the 75+ population (a common measure of specialist housing supply).

## Demographic characteristics

286. The starting point for estimating the need for specialist housing for older people is to project how the overall number of older people in Buckingham is likely to change in future. This is calculated by extrapolating population projections from the ONS Sub-National Population Projections for Buckinghamshire. The results are set out in Table 7-1.

287. The table estimates that by 2040 the population over 75 years old will make up approximately 12% of the overall NA population, up from 8% in 2021. As for the projections presented in the Type and Size section, it is possible that the ageing trend will not be as strong in practice due to the different starting age profiles of Buckingham and the Unitary Authority. It is also likely that the overall population growth indicated here is an underestimate given the rate of development in recent years. However, the main purpose of this exercise is to understand the trend toward ageing.

288. A key assumption for the estimate given at the end of this section is that the older people living in the NA currently are already suitably accommodated, either because they occupy the existing stock of specialist accommodation, have made appropriate adaptations to their own homes or do not require support or adaptations. This is unlikely to be completely true, but it is not possible to determine how many such individuals are inadequately housed without evidence from a household survey (which itself may not give a complete picture). As such, the growth in the older population rather than the total at the end of the Plan period is the key output of this calculation.

**Table 7-1: Modelled projection of older population in 2040 by end of Plan period**

Age group	2021		2040	
	Buckingham	Buckinghamshire	Buckingham	Buckinghamshire
All ages	14,292	553,078	14,859	575,019
75+	1,157	49,812	1,770	76,194
%	8.1%	9.0%	11.9%	13.3%

Source: ONS SNPP 2020, AECOM Calculations

289. The next step is to consider the need for different tenures of dwelling for older people. It is assumed that those currently occupying their own home will wish to do so for as long as practicably possible in future, even where downsizing or moving into specialist accommodation. Equally, those who currently rent, either in the private or social sectors, are projected to need affordable rented specialist accommodation.

290. The 2011 55-75 age bracket is considered the best proxy for the group likely to fall into need for specialist accommodation during the Plan period to 2040. The

top row in Table 7-1 outlines the tenure mix among households aged 55-75 at Local Authority scale (due to data availability), which indicates that the vast majority of older people own their own homes, with some social renters and very few private renters.

291. The expected growth in the 75+ population in the NA is 613 additional individuals by the end of the plan period. This can be converted into 438 households based on the average number of people per household aged 75+ at Local Authority scale (1.4). Multiplying this figure by the percentages of 55-75 year olds occupying each tenure gives a breakdown of which tenures Buckingham households are likely to need in 2040, and is shown in the bottom row of Table 7-2.

**Table 7-2: Tenure of households aged 55-75 in Buckinghamshire (2011) and projected aged 75+ in Buckingham (2040)**

	All owned	Owned outright	Owned (mortgage) or Shared Ownership	All Rented	Social rented	Private rented	Living rent free
<b>Buckinghamshire (2011)</b>	<b>83.0%</b>	57.2%	25.8%	<b>17.0%</b>	11.2%	4.7%	1.1%
<b>Buckingham (2040 projection)</b>	<b>363</b>	251	113	<b>75</b>	49	21	5

Source: Census 2011

292. It is also important to consider rates of disability by tenure. The tendency for people in rented housing to have higher disability levels is well established. It arises partly because people with more limiting disabilities tend to have lower incomes. It also reflects the fact that as people develop support and care needs they may find that the only suitable and affordable option to them is available in the social rented sector. Table E-2 in Appendix E presents this data for those aged over 65 in Buckingham from the 2011 Census.

293. It is also relevant to consider disability rates for other age groups. Specialist housing is targeted at older people, and they are the focus of this analysis, because disability rates are significantly higher among older age groups. In Buckingham in 2011, the proportion of people with a disability that limits their daily activities a lot was under 2% for those aged below 49 and 5% for those aged 50-64 but jumps to 19% for those aged over 65. The same pattern holds for less limiting disabilities (26% for those aged over 65, 8% for the 50-64 age group and below 4% for younger people). Disability rates in Buckingham among all age groups generally followed the trend seen across Buckinghamshire, suggesting that there is not an unusually high rate of disability among younger people requiring action from a housing standpoint.

## Future needs for specialist accommodation and adaptations

294. Based on the evidence outlined above, the number of households falling into potential need for specialist accommodation over the Plan period is calculated to be 200.
295. AECOM's modelling, summarised in Table 7-3, is based on the assumption that those whose day-to-day activities are limited a lot may need housing with care (e.g. extra care housing, with significant on-site services, including potentially medical services), while those with their day to day activities limited only a little may simply need adaptations to their existing homes, or alternatively sheltered or retirement living that can provide some degree of oversight or additional services. However, it is important to note that, even those people who have high support or care needs can often be supported to live in their own homes. This is often reflected in policy of local authorities, with explicit aim to reduce the need to commission increasing numbers of care home beds.
296. The model suggests there is an opportunity to provide a large share of the need for specialist housing in the NA through adaptations to the existing housing stock and the provision of sheltered or retirement living. However, there remains robust potential demand for housing with care.
297. The model suggests that the balance of tenure options in both forms of specialist housing should be weighted in favour of market rather than socially rented housing. This is because of the high rates of ownership among the existing older population (noting that Buckinghamshire rates have been assumed due to a lack of data for the NA specifically).

**Table 7-3: AECOM estimate of specialist housing for older people need in Buckingham by the end of the Plan period**

Type	Affordable	Market	Total
Housing with care	30	56	<b>86</b>
Adaptations, sheltered, or retirement living	23	91	<b>114</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>200</b>

Source: Census 2011, AECOM Calculations

298. It is worth comparing these findings with the recommendations of the Housing Learning and Improvement Network (HLIN), one of the simplest and widely used models estimating for the housing needs of older people. Table 7-4 in Appendix E reproduces the key assumptions of HLIN's Strategic Housing for Older People (SHOP) toolkit. Applying those assumptions to the growth in the older population of Buckingham results in a total of 154 specialist dwellings that might be required to the end of the Plan period. This is set out in Table 7-4.

**Table 7-4: HLIN estimate of specialist housing for older people need in Buckingham by the end of the Plan period**

Type	Affordable	Market	Total
Housing with care	19	25	<b>44</b>
Adaptations, sheltered, or retirement living	37	73	<b>110</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>154</b>

Source: Housing LIN, AECOM calculations

## Further considerations

299. The above estimates suggest that potential need for specialist accommodation could be in the range of 154-199 units over the Neighbourhood Plan period. However, it may not be possible or appropriate to deliver this scale of new accommodation. It may be considered proportionally high in relation to the overall housing need identified in this report (depending on whether the annual target is applied only to the years after 2033 or the whole plan period), and therefore should not necessarily be prioritised to the exclusion of other groups, such as those in need of Affordable Housing.
300. In addition, specialist housing for older people should only be provided in sustainable, accessible locations that offer services and facilities, public transport options, and the necessary workforce of carers and others.
301. It is considered that Buckingham is, in broad terms, a suitable location for specialist accommodation on the basis of the accessibility criteria and the considerations of cost-effectiveness above. As such, there is potential for such accommodation to be provided within the NA (while noting there is no specific requirement or obligation to do so).
302. It is also important to emphasise that the potential need for specialist housing for older people overlaps with the need for care home bedspaces and the need for adaptations to mainstream housing. These topics are considered in the sections below.

## Care homes

303. Residential and nursing care homes are not defined as housing because they do not provide self-contained accommodation where an older person can live independently. Care home accommodation is defined as institutional accommodation rather than housing.
304. However, residents of care homes may be similar in terms of their care and support needs as those living in specialist housing, or even mainstream housing with appropriate care and support delivered in their homes. There may be some scope for older people who would otherwise have been accommodated in care homes to meet their needs within specialist or mainstream housing if sufficient appropriate accommodation can be provided. Nevertheless, there is likely to be

continued need for care home accommodation to meet more acute and severe needs, and to offer choice to some older people and their families about how they are cared for and supported.

305. Given the overlap between people who might enter care home accommodation and those who might take up specialist housing or care and support in their own home if available, estimates of the future need for care home accommodation, as with estimates of the need for specialist housing above, are uncertain and depend on both local and national policies, delivery, and the appetite of private developers.
306. AECOM has estimated the likely need for care home accommodation over the plan period, based on the HLIN SHOP toolkit prevalence rates for residential and nursing care homes for older people (aged 75+). This estimate applied the prevalence rates in the 'More Choice, Greater Voice' 2008 report which informed the development of the HLIN toolkit. This report suggested that 65 residential care beds per 1,000 people aged 75+ was an appropriate rate. Based on this rate, applied to the growth in the older population for consistency with the calculations above, it is estimated that in 2040 there would be a need for 40 care homes beds in the NA. The recent delivery of two new care homes with the capacity for 152 new units represents a significant injection of supply that is capable of fully meeting the need identified here.
307. It is important to note that as these estimates relate to care homes (or the population in institutions) rather than independent housing, these figures are in addition to the overall need for housing in the NA. However, as discussed in this section, some of the need for care home beds might be met by independent housing accommodation and vice versa.

## The Role of Mainstream Housing

308. The majority of older people live in mainstream housing and will continue to do so all of their lives. Based on the estimated number of older people and the tally of the existing stock in Appendix E, around 84% of the Buckingham population aged 75 and over is likely to live in the mainstream housing stock<sup>25</sup>.
309. It is not possible to be precise about how well older people are accommodated within mainstream housing, in terms of whether their accommodation is suitable to their needs and whether adequate care or support is provided within the home when they need.
310. However, if there is unlikely to be a large volume of additional specialist supply during the Plan period, another key avenue to addressing those with relevant needs is to discuss the standards of accessibility and adaptability in new development to be met in the Local Plan with Buckinghamshire Council.
311. It is relatively common for Local Plans to require that all or a majority of new housing meets Category M4(2) standards in response to the demographic shifts

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<sup>25</sup> 1,157 over 75s in 2020, of which 181 are accommodated in specialist housing, leaving 976 people living in mainstream housing. This is approximate since some people in specialist housing and care homes will be under the age of 75.

being observed nationwide. Government is considering mandating M4(2) on newly erected dwellings<sup>26</sup>, although changes to Building Regulations have not yet been made.

312. The adopted Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan in Policy H6b provides explicit encouragement for development to accommodate specific groups such as older people and allocates sites for new specialist accommodation in the NA (none of which are in the NA). Local Plan Policy H6c sets out that all new development should meet national standards for accessibility and adaptability (Category M4(2)), and 15% of Affordable Housing should be nominated for wheelchair users (Category M4(3)).

313. The evidence gathered here would appear to justify these provisions being maintained in the emerging Buckinghamshire Local Plan. It is unclear whether Neighbourhood Plans can set their own requirements for the application of the national standards of adaptability and accessibility for new housing and so discussions with the LPA are advised if this is a key priority.

## **Conclusions- Specialist Housing for Older People**

### **Characteristics of the current older population**

314. There are currently estimated to be around 1,157 individuals aged 75 or over in Buckingham, a number that has grown from 809 in 2011 and is projected to rise to 1,770 by the end of the Neighbourhood Plan period (2040).

315. A clear majority (83%) of Buckinghamshire households aged 55-75 in 2011 (and therefore likely to reach the 75+ bracket by 2040) are owner occupiers and the remainder predominantly rent from a social landlord. This is important because those currently owning will require specialist accommodation for market purchase, being largely ineligible for subsidised housing, while those in private or social rent will need to rely on subsidised rented housing because they are unlikely to have the funds to buy. Rates of disability in Buckingham are also higher among social tenants than owner-occupiers.

### **Projected demographic change and need for specialist housing**

316. The 75+ population of the NA is projected to increase from 8% to 12% of the population between 2021 and 2040. As established in the previous chapter, Buckingham has a slightly younger population than the wider county and may therefore age slower in the coming years than is estimated here.

317. The growth in the older population, which, rather than the total, is the focus of the estimates of need here, should be converted into households because some older people will be cohabiting in old age. The projected 75+ population growth of 613 is equivalent to roughly 438 households in that age category.

318. The potential need for specialist housing with some form of additional care for older people can be estimated by bringing together data on population

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<sup>26</sup> See [Raising accessibility standards for new homes: summary of consultation responses and government response - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/raising-accessibility-standards-for-new-homes)

projections, rates of disability, and what tenure of housing the current 55-75 cohort occupy in the NA. This can be sense-checked using a toolkit based on national research.

319. Specialist housing is targeted at older people, and they are the focus of this analysis, because disability rates are significantly higher among older age groups. In Buckingham in 2011, the proportion of people with a disability that limits their daily activities a lot was under 2% for those aged below 49 and 5% for those aged 50-64 but jumps to 19% for those aged over 65.
320. The two estimates suggest a range of 154 to 200 specialist accommodation units might be required during the Plan period. The estimates are also broken down by tenure and level of support required. Broadly, 60-75% of the need is for accommodation offered for market purchase. This chimes with the higher propensity of older households to be homeowners. A similar range (60-75%) of the need is found to be for sheltered housing with limited support rather than additional care arrangements. The potential need for care and nursing home beds in Buckingham to 2035 can be roughly estimated at 40 units, a level of demand that could easily be met by the two recent care homes offering 152 bedspaces in total.
321. These estimates are fairly large relative to the overall housing need of the NA. Despite this, it would not be prudent to prioritise the potential demand from older people to the exclusion of other groups, such as those in need of Affordable Housing, young families, and others important to maintaining a balanced and vibrant community. The HNA evidence can be used to support specialist housing development but does not make that obligatory. How far to promote this is a choice for the Working Group and wider community.

### **Accessibility and adaptability**

322. Given that there may not be a large volume of additional specialist supply during the Plan period, an alternative or additional avenue to the provision of additional specialist homes is to discuss the standards of accessibility and adaptability required of new development with Buckinghamshire Council. There is a particularly high degree of overlap between the groups served by sheltered specialist housing and adapted mainstream housing, so the unmet need for such homes identified here can be reduced through this avenue.
323. The current adopted Local Plan provides explicit encouragement for development to accommodate specific groups such as older people. Policy H6c sets out that all new development should meet national standards for accessibility and adaptability (Category M4(2)), and 15% of Affordable Housing should be nominated for wheelchair users (Category M4(3)). The evidence gathered here further justifies these requirements. It is unclear whether Neighbourhood Plans can set their own requirements for the application of the national standards of adaptability and accessibility for new housing, and existing requirements in the Local Plan are robust, so discussions with the LPA are advised exceeding or departing from them is a priority here.

## 8. Next Steps

### Recommendations for next steps

324. This Neighbourhood Plan housing needs assessment aims to provide Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan Working Group with evidence on a range of housing trends and issues from a range of relevant sources. We recommend that the neighbourhood planners should, as a next step, discuss the contents and conclusions with Buckinghamshire Council with a view to agreeing and formulating draft housing policies, bearing the following in mind:

- All Neighbourhood Planning Basic Conditions, but in particular Condition E, which is the need for the Neighbourhood Plan to be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted development plan;
- The views of Buckinghamshire Council;
- The views of local residents;
- The views of other relevant local stakeholders, including housing developers and estate agents; and
- The numerous supply-side considerations, including local environmental constraints, the location and characteristics of suitable land, and any capacity work carried out by Buckinghamshire Council.

325. This assessment has been provided in good faith by AECOM consultants on the basis of housing data, national guidance and other relevant and available information current at the time of writing.

326. Bearing this in mind, it is recommended that the Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan Working Group should monitor carefully strategies and documents with an impact on housing policy produced by the Government, Buckinghamshire Council or any other relevant party and review the Neighbourhood Plan accordingly to ensure that general conformity is maintained.

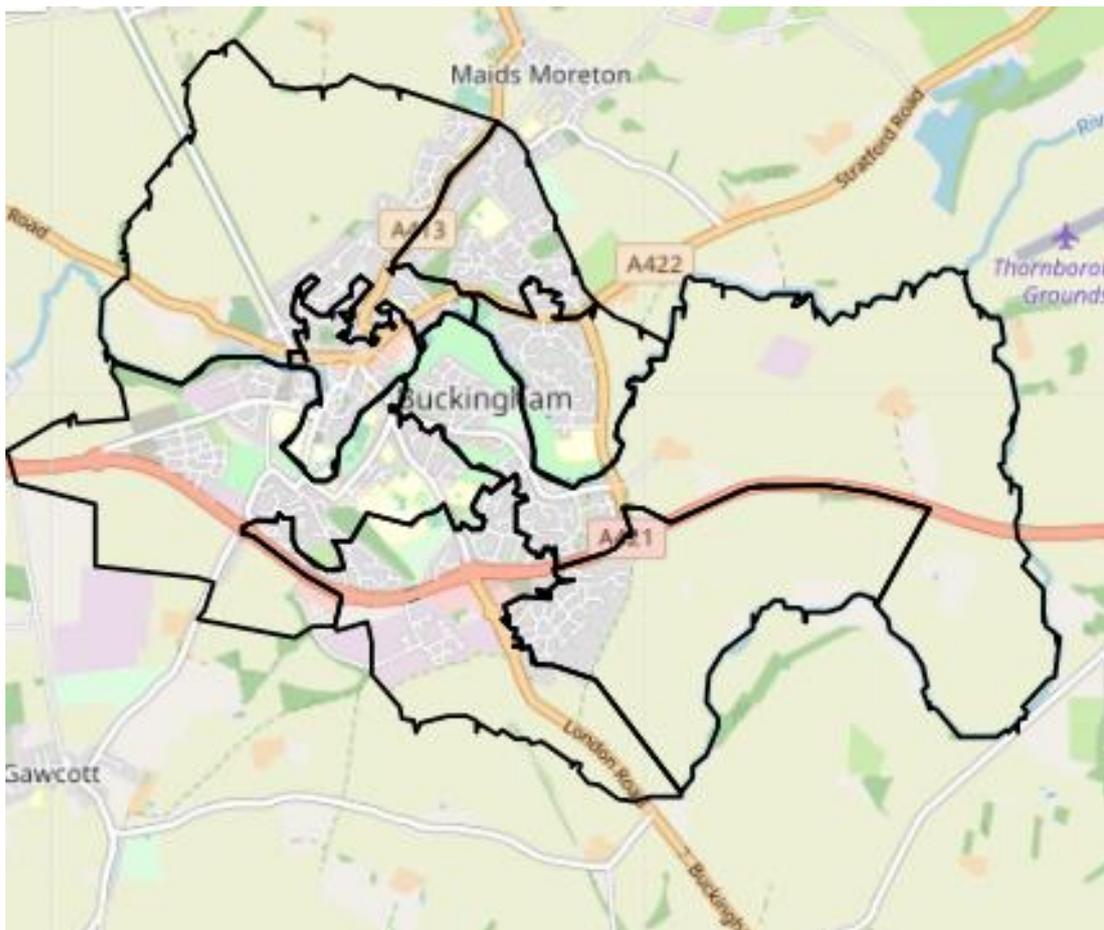
327. At the same time, monitoring on-going demographic or other trends over the Neighbourhood Plan period will help ensure the continued relevance and credibility of its policies.

## Appendix A : Assessment geography

328. For Census purposes, the whole of England is divided into statistical units of similar population size called Output Areas (OAs) and their larger equivalents. OAs are the smallest units. They make up Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs), which in turn make up Middle Layer Super Output Areas (MSOAs). The NA equates to the following combination of LSOAs:

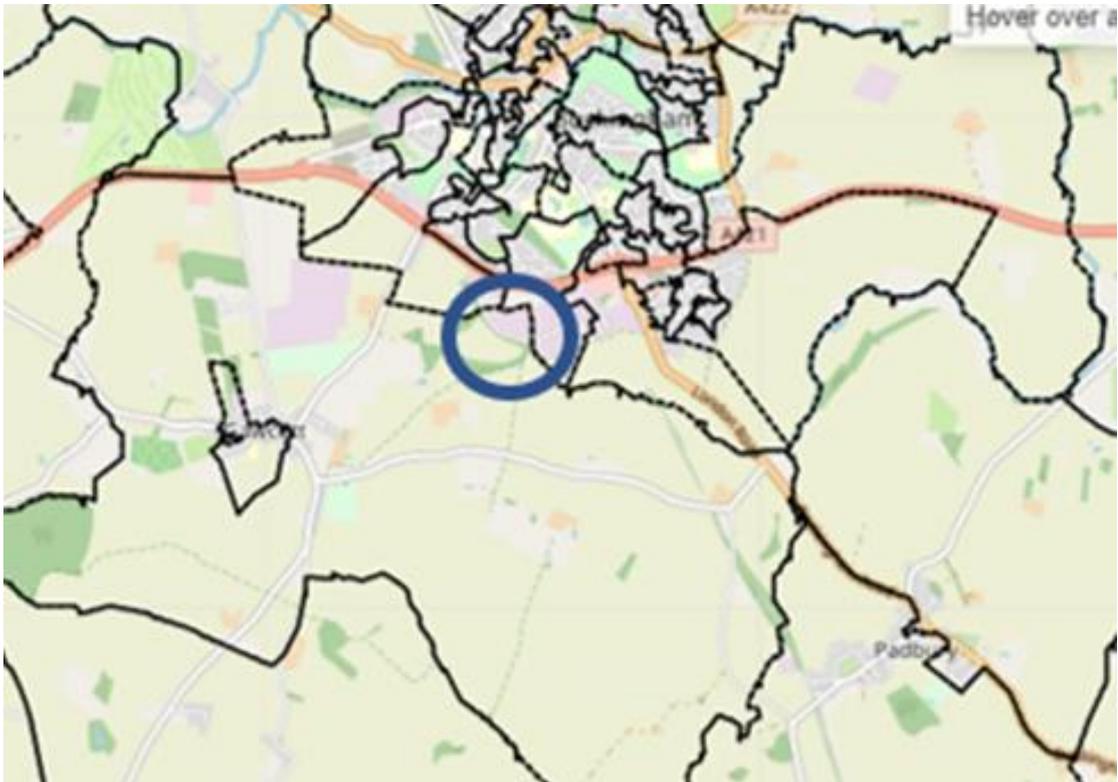
- E01017648;
- E01017649;
- E01033953;
- E01033954;
- E01017644;
- E01017645;
- E01017646;
- E01017647.

329. A map of the relevant LSOAs for the NA is provided below:



330. As noted in the Context section of this report, there is a small area in the southwest of Buckingham which is accounted for in the designated NA map but cannot be disaggregated using OAs. The area includes Buckingham Industrial Estate but also extends far beyond the NA into the surrounding rural area,

meaning that any households captured live outside of Buckingham and would skew the data in this report. Accordingly, this small area has not been included in the data gathered. A map of the excluded OA is provided below, with the area that falls within the NA circled in blue:



331. As noted in the Affordability section of the report, household income data for small areas is only provided down to the scale of MSOAs. The relevant MSOAs, in which the NA is located, and which will need to serve as a proxy for it for this data source, are:

- E02003652;
- E02003653.

# Appendix B : Local Plan context

## Policies in the adopted local plan

332. Table B-1 below summarises adopted Local Plan policies that are relevant to housing need and delivery in Buckingham.

**Table B-1: Summary of relevant policies in the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan 2013-2033 (adopted 2021)**

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Provisions</b>
Settlement hierarchy and cohesive development	Buckingham is designated as one of five strategic settlements which should be the focus for the majority of development and act as service centres for other nearby towns and villages.
S2 Spatial Strategy for Growth	<p>Provision should be made for the delivery of 28,600 new dwellings between 2011 and 2033.</p> <p>Of this overall target 2,177 is expected to be delivered within Buckingham.</p>
H1 Affordable Housing	Residential developments of 11 or more dwellings will be required to provide a minimum of 25% affordable homes on site.
H6a Housing Mix	<p>New residential development will be expected to meet the current and expected future needs of the future population and meet the following size mix:</p> <p>Market:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Bed Flats: 4%</li> <li>2 Bed Flats: 4%</li> <li>2 Bed House: 13%</li> <li>3 Bed House: 52%</li> <li>4 Bed House: 21%</li> <li>5+ Bed House: 6.5%</li> </ul> <p>Affordable Housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Bed Flats: 9%</li> <li>2 Bed Flats: 6%</li> <li>2 Bed House: 36%</li> <li>3 Bed House: 39%</li> <li>4 Bed House: 10%</li> </ul>
H6b Housing for older people	Class C2 older persons provision will be met through the allocation of sites, none of which are in Buckingham.
H6c Accessibility	New development should meet at least category 2 accessible and adaptable dwelling standards (subject to viability). A minimum of 15%

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Provisions</b>
	of Affordable Housing should meet M4(3) wheelchair accessibility housing standards

*Source: Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan*

**Table B-2: Summary of relevant policies in the made Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan 2012-2031 (made 2015)**

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Provisions</b>
HP1 - Allocate land for 617 new dwellings	Five sites are allocated through the Neighbourhood Plan which could deliver a total of 617 new dwellings.  A further reserve site is allocated which is capable of delivering 300 dwellings.
HP2 – Allocate land for 400 new rooms for University expansion	Two sites are allocated which are capable of delivering 400 additional rooms of student accommodation.
HP5 – Provide Affordable Housing	All proposals for new housing on sites delivering over 25 units should provide 35% of the new dwellings as Affordable Housing.

*Source: Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan (made 2015)*

## Appendix C : Affordability calculations

333. This section outlines how the affordability thresholds discussed in the Affordability and Affordable Housing have been calculated.

### C.1 Market housing

334. Market housing is not subsidised and tends to be primarily accessible to people on higher incomes.

#### i) Market sales

335. The starting point for calculating the affordability of a dwelling for sale from the perspective of a specific household is the loan to income ratio which most mortgage companies are prepared to agree. This ratio is conservatively estimated to be 3.5. In practice this can be highly variable. Multipliers up to 4.5 or even above 5 times income increasingly available, although the actual average in practice tends to be lower, particularly where applicants are dual earning. The Financial Conduct Authority uses 3.5 or more as its standard assumption for single applicants and 2.75 or more for dual applicants.

336. To produce a more accurate assessment of affordability, the savings required for a deposit should be taken into account in addition to the costs of servicing a mortgage. However, unlike for incomes, data is not available for the savings available to households in Buckingham, and the precise deposit a mortgage provider will require of any buyer will be determined by their individual circumstances and the state of the mortgage market. An assumption is therefore made that a 10% purchase deposit is required and is available to the prospective buyer. In reality it is possible that the cost of the deposit is a greater barrier to home ownership than the mortgage costs.

337. The calculation for the purchase threshold for market housing is as follows:

- Value of a median NA house price (2022) = £370,000;
- Purchase deposit at 10% of value = £37,000;
- Value of dwelling for mortgage purposes = £332,000;
- Divided by loan to income ratio of 3.5 = purchase threshold of £95,000.

338. The purchase threshold for an entry-level dwelling is a better representation of affordability to those with lower incomes or savings, such as first-time buyers. To determine this threshold, the same calculation is repeated but with reference to the lower quartile rather than the median house price. The lower quartile average in 2022 was £288,000, and the purchase threshold is therefore £74,000.

339. It is also worth assessing the purchase threshold for new build homes, since this most closely represents the cost of the new housing that will come forward

in future. Land Registry records 36 sales of new build properties in the NA in 2022, with an average price of £375,000.

340. It is necessary to also understand the likely cost of newly built entry-level housing as the basis for estimating the costs of affordable home ownership tenures (considered below). Given the small sample size and the potential for higher value sales skewing the average cited above, an estimate for new entry-level housing has been calculated by determining the uplift between all house prices in 2022 across Buckinghamshire and new build house prices in 2022 in the same area. This percentage uplift (or 'new build premium') is then applied to the 2022 lower quartile house price in the NA to give an estimated NA new build entry-level house price of £297,600 and purchase threshold of £76,500.

## ii) Private Rented Sector (PRS)

341. It is assumed here that rented housing is affordable if the annual rent does not exceed 30% of the household's gross annual income. The percentage of income to be spent on rent before the property is considered affordable varies considerably for individuals, and it is increasingly common for households to dedicate a larger proportion of their earnings to rent. When considering affordability it is considered good practice to be conservative, and the 30% benchmark is used as ONS's current standard assumption.
342. This is an important assumption because it is possible that a household will be able to afford tenures that are deemed not affordable in this report if they are willing or able to dedicate a higher proportion of their income to housing costs. It is becoming increasingly necessary for households to do so. However, for the purpose of planning it is considered more appropriate to use this conservative lower benchmark for affordability on the understanding that additional households may be willing or able to access housing this way than to use a higher benchmark which assumes that all households can afford to do so when their individual circumstances may well prevent it.
343. The property website [Home.co.uk](https://www.home.co.uk) shows rental values for property in the Neighbourhood Area. The best available data is derived from properties available for rent within the MK18 postcode area, which covers a larger area than the Plan area itself but can be used as a reasonable proxy for it. Moreover, because it forms a larger geography with a greater number of rental properties offered, the larger sample size is likely to generate more robust findings.
344. According to [home.co.uk](https://www.home.co.uk), there were 23 properties for rent at the time of search in July 2023, with an average monthly rent of £1,370. There were 15 1-2 bedroom properties listed, with an average price of £850 per calendar month.
345. The calculation for the private rent income threshold for entry-level (1-2 bedroom) dwellings is as follows:
- Annual rent = £850 x 12 = £10,200;
  - Multiplied by 3.33 (so that no more than 30% of income is spent on rent) = income threshold of £34,000.

346. The calculation is repeated for the overall average to give an income threshold of £54,800.

## C.2 Affordable Housing

347. There are a range of tenures that constitute the definition of Affordable Housing within the NPPF 2021: social rent and affordable rent, discounted market sales housing, and other affordable routes to home ownership. More recently, a new product called First Homes has been introduced in 2021. Each of the affordable housing tenures are considered below.

### i) Social rent

348. Rents in socially rented properties reflect a formula based on property values and average earnings in each area, resulting in substantial discounts to market rents. As such, this tenure is suitable for the needs of those on the lowest incomes and is subject to strict eligibility criteria.

349. To determine social rent levels, data and statistical return from Homes England is used. This data is only available at Local Authority scale so must act as a proxy for Buckingham. This data provides information about rents and the size and type of stock owned and managed by private registered providers and is presented for former Vale of Aylesbury district in Table C-1.

350. To determine the income needed, it is assumed that no more than 30% of income should be spent on rent. This is an assumption only for what might generally make housing affordable or unaffordable – it is unrelated to the eligibility criteria of Affordable Housing policy at Local Authority level. The overall average across all property sizes is taken forward as the income threshold for social rent.

**Table C-1: Social rent levels (£)**

Size	1 bed	2 beds	3 beds	4 beds	All
Average social rent per week	£96.00	£106.00	£115.00	£133.00	£107.00
Annual average	£4,992	£5,512	£5,980	£6,916	£5,564
<b>Income needed</b>	<b>£16,623</b>	<b>£18,355</b>	<b>£19,913</b>	<b>£23,030</b>	<b>£18,528</b>

Source: Homes England, AECOM Calculations

### ii) Affordable rent

351. Affordable rent is controlled at no more than 80% of the local market rent. However, registered providers who own and manage affordable rented housing may also apply a cap to the rent to ensure that it is affordable to those on housing benefit (where under Universal Credit the total received in all benefits to working age households is £20,000).

Even a 20% discount on the market rent may not be sufficient to ensure that households can afford this tenure, particularly when they are dependent on

benefits. Registered Providers in some areas have applied caps to larger properties where the higher rents would make them unaffordable to families under Universal Credit. This may mean that the rents are actually 50-60% of market levels rather than 80%.

352. Data on the most realistic local affordable rent costs is obtained from the same source as social rent levels for former Vale of Aylesbury. Again, it is assumed that no more than 30% of income should be spent on rent, and the overall average is taken forward.

353. Comparing this result with the average 2-bedroom annual private rent above indicates that affordable rents in the NA are actually closer to 75% of market rates than the maximum of 80%, a feature that is necessary to make them achievable to those in need.

**Table C-2: Affordable rent levels (£)**

Size	1 bed	2 beds	3 beds	4 beds	All
Average affordable rent per week	£121.00	£147.00	£172.00	£214.00	£152.00
Annual average	£6,292	£7,644	£8,944	£11,128	£7,904
<b>Income needed</b>	<b>£20,952</b>	<b>£25,455</b>	<b>£29,784</b>	<b>£37,056</b>	<b>£26,320</b>

Source: Homes England, AECOM Calculations

### iii) Affordable home ownership

354. Affordable home ownership tenures include products for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels. The three most widely available are discounted market housing (a subset of which is the new First Homes product), shared ownership, and Rent to Buy. These are considered in turn below.

355. In paragraph 65 of the NPPF 2021, the Government introduces a recommendation that “where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed, planning policies and decisions should expect at least 10% of the total number of homes to be available for affordable home ownership.” The recently issued Ministerial Statement and updates to PPG state that 25% of all Affordable Housing should be First Homes – the Government’s new flagship discounted market sale product. When the NPPF is next updated, it is expected that the 10% affordable home ownership requirement referenced above may be replaced by the First Homes requirement.

#### First Homes

356. Because First Homes are a new tenure product, it is worth explaining some of their key features:

- First Homes should be available to buy with a minimum discount of 30% below their full market value (i.e. the value of an equivalent new home);

- The discount level can be set higher than 30% – at 40% or 50% – where this can be suitably evidenced. The setting and justifying of discount levels can happen at neighbourhood as well as local authority scale;
- After the discount is applied the initial sale price must not exceed £250,000 (or £420,000 in Greater London), and lower caps can be set locally;
- Purchasers must be first-time buyers with an income less than £80,000 (or £90,000 in Greater London), and First Homes can be prioritised for local people and/or key workers;
- They will be subject to legal restrictions ensuring the discount is retained for future occupants, and renting out or sub-letting will not normally be permitted;
- In addition to setting the discount level, local authorities and neighbourhood planning groups can apply additional criteria, such as a lower income cap, local connection test or prioritisation for key workers through adopted plans, emerging policy or Supplementary Planning Documents.
- 25% of all homes delivered through section 106 developer contributions on sites enabled through the planning process should be sold as First Homes. In simpler terms, 25% of all subsidised Affordable Housing on mainstream housing developments should be First Homes. This is likely to mean that First Homes will take the place of shared ownership housing in many circumstances, and in some cases may also displace social or affordable rented homes.

357. The starting point for considering whether First Homes are affordable is the estimated cost of new build entry-level housing in the NA noted above of £297,600.

358. For the minimum discount of 30% the purchase threshold can be calculated as follows:

- Value of a new home (estimated NA new build entry-level) = £297,600;
- Discounted by 30% = £208,320;
- Purchase deposit at 10% of value = £20,800;
- Value of dwelling for mortgage purposes = £187,500;
- Divided by loan to income ratio of 3.5 = purchase threshold of £54,000.

359. The income thresholds analysis in the Affordability and Affordable Housing chapter also compares local incomes with the costs of a 40% and 50% discounted First Home. This would require an income threshold of £46,000 and £38,000 respectively.

360. All of the income thresholds calculated here for First Homes are below the cap of £80,000 above which households are not eligible. All discount rates are comfortably below the £80,000 threshold for eligibility.

361. Note that discounted market sale homes may be unviable to develop if the discounted price is close to (or below) build costs. Build costs vary across the country but as an illustration, the build cost for a 2 bedroom home (assuming 70 sq. m and a build cost of £1,750 per sq. m<sup>27</sup>) would be around £122,500. This cost excludes any land value or developer profit. This is unlikely to be an issue in Buckingham.

362. Table C-3 shows the discount required for First Homes to be affordable to the three income groups considered in the main body of this report. The cost of a typical First Home is calculated using an estimate for new build entry-level housing in the NA. However, it is worth thinking about First Homes in relation to the cost of new build prices in the wider area, as well as median and entry-level existing prices locally to get a more complete picture. The discount levels required for these alternative benchmarks are given below.

**Table C-3: Discount on sale price required for households to afford First Homes**

House price benchmark	Mean household income	Single LQ earner	Dual LQ earning household
NA median house price	45%	80%	60%
NA estimated new build entry-level house price	32%	75%	50%
NA entry-level house price	30%	74%	48%
LA median new build house price	56%	84%	68%

Source: Land Registry PPD; ONS MSOA total household income

### Shared ownership

363. Shared ownership involves the purchaser buying an initial share in a property, typically of between 25% and 75% (but now set at a minimum of 10%), and paying rent on the share retained by the provider. Shared ownership is flexible in two respects, in the share which can be purchased and in the rent payable on the share retained by the provider. Both of these are variable. The share owned by the occupant can be increased over time through a process known as 'staircasing'.

364. In exceptional circumstances (for example, as a result of financial difficulties, and where the alternative is repossession), and at the discretion of the provider, shared owners may staircase down, thereby reducing the share they own. Shared equity is available to first-time buyers, people who have owned a home previously and council and housing association tenants with a good credit rating whose annual household income does not exceed £80,000.

365. To determine the affordability of shared ownership, calculations are again based on the estimated costs of new build housing as discussed above. The deposit available to the prospective purchaser is assumed to be 10% of the value of the dwelling, and the standard loan to income ratio of 3.5 is used to calculate the income required to obtain a mortgage. The rental component is estimated at

<sup>27</sup> It is estimated that in 2022, build costs for a house are between £1,750 and £3,000 per square metre - <https://urbanistarchitecture.co.uk/cost-to-build-a-house-uk/>

2.5% of the value of the remaining (unsold) portion of the price. The income required to cover the rental component of the dwelling is based on the assumption that a household spends no more than 30% of the income on rent (as for the income threshold for the private rental sector).

366. The affordability threshold for a 25% equity share is calculated as follows:

- A 25% equity share of £297,600 is £74,400;
- A 10% deposit of £7,440 is deducted, leaving a mortgage value of £66,960;
- This is divided by the loan to value ratio of 3.5 to give a purchase threshold of £19,130;
- Rent is charged on the remaining 75% shared ownership equity, i.e. the unsold value of £223,200;
- The estimated annual rent at 2.5% of the unsold value is £5,580;
- This requires an income of £18,600 (annual rent multiplied by 3.33 so that no more than 30% of income is spent on rent).
- The total income required is £37,730 (£19,130 plus £18,600).

367. The same calculation is repeated for equity shares of 10% and 50% producing affordability thresholds of £30,000 and £51,000 respectively.

368. All discount rates are comfortably below the £80,000 threshold for eligibility.

### **Rent to Buy**

369. Rent to Buy is a relatively new and less common tenure, which through subsidy allows the occupant to save a portion of their rent, which is intended to be used to build up a deposit to eventually purchase the home. It is therefore estimated to cost the same as private rents – the difference being that the occupant builds up savings with a portion of the rent.

### **Help to Buy (Equity Loan)**

370. The Help to Buy Equity Loan is not an affordable housing tenure but allows households to afford market housing through a loan provided by the government. With a Help to Buy Equity Loan the government lends up to 20% (40% in London) of the cost of a newly built home. The household must pay a deposit of 5% or more and arrange a mortgage of 25% or more to make up the rest. Buyers are not charged interest on the 20% loan for the first five years of owning the home.

371. It is important to note that this product widens access to market housing but does not provide an affordable home in perpetuity.

# Appendix D : Affordable Housing need and policy

## Affordable Housing estimates

372. In Table D-1 AECOM has calculated, using PPG as a starting point,<sup>28</sup> an estimate of the total need for affordable rented housing in Buckingham over the Plan period to 2040 (using an assumed start date of 2024). It should, however, be noted that the accuracy of the findings generated by the model is only as strong as the evidence available, including that provided by Buckinghamshire Council in its capacity as manager of the local housing waiting list. However, given the test of proportionality for evidence supporting neighbourhood plans, and the need to be in conformity with Local Authority strategic policies, the calculations set out here are considered a reasonable basis for understanding and planning for neighbourhood-level affordable housing need.

**Table D-1: Estimate of need for Affordable Housing for rent in Buckingham**

Stage and Step in Calculation	Total	Description
<b>STAGE 1: CURRENT NEED</b>		
1.1 Current households in need	298.0	Number of households on the affordable housing register living in Buckingham (based on first four postcode digits MK18 and MK17) as of 26 July 2023.
1.2 Per annum	<b>18.6</b>	Step 1.1 divided by the plan period to produce an annualised figure.
<b>STAGE 2: NEWLY ARISING NEED</b>		
2.1 New household formation	927.1	DLUHC 2018-based household projections for former Vale of Aylesbury between start and end of plan period. % increase applied to NA.
2.2 Proportion of new households unable to rent in the market	23.3%	(Steps 1.1 + 2.2.1 + 2.2.2) divided by number of households in NA.
2.2.1 Current number of social renters in NA	778.0	2021 Census social rented occupancy
2.2.2 Number of private renters on housing benefits	287.6	Proportion of households on housing benefits or universal credit across Buckinghamshire in March 2021 applied to the number of private renters currently in Buckingham.
2.3 New households unable to rent	215.9	Step 2.1 x Step 2.2.

<sup>28</sup> Paragraphs 024-026 Reference ID: 2a-026-20140306, at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment>

2.4 Per annum	<b>13.5</b>	Step 2.3 divided by plan period.
<b>STAGE 3: TURNOVER OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING</b>		
3.1 Supply of social/affordable re-lets (including transfers) %	3%	Assumed proportion of stock re-let each year. Precise relets data for Buckingham not able to be supplied by Buckinghamshire Council.
3.2 Supply of social/affordable re-lets (including transfers)	<b>23.3</b>	Step 3.1 x NA social rented stock (2.2.1).
<b>NET SURPLUS OF RENTED UNITS PER ANNUM</b>		
Overall surplus per annum	<b>8.8</b>	Step 1.2 + Step 2.4 - Step 3.2

Source: AECOM model, using Census 2011, English Housing Survey 2018, DLUHC 2018 based household projections and net additions to affordable housing stock. 2018 is the latest reliable data for some datasets so is used throughout for consistency. Figures may not sum up due to rounding.

373. Turning to Affordable Housing providing a route to home ownership, Table D-2 estimates the potential demand in Buckingham. This model aims to estimate the number of households that might wish to own their own home but cannot afford to. The model is consistent with methods used at Local Authority scale in taking as its starting point households currently living in or expected to enter the private rented sector who are not on housing benefit.

374. There may be other barriers to these households accessing home ownership on the open market, including being unable to save for a deposit, or being unable to afford a home of the right type/size or in the right location. The model also discounts 25% of households potentially in need, assuming a proportion will be renting out of choice. This assumption is based on consistent results for surveys and polls at the national level which demonstrate that most households (typically 80% or more) aspire to home ownership.<sup>29</sup> No robust indicator exists for this area or a wider scale to suggest aspirations may be higher or lower in the NA.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.ipsos-mori-generations.com/housing.html>

**Table D-2: Estimate of the potential demand for affordable housing for sale in Buckingham**

Stage and Step in Calculation	Total	Description
<b>STAGE 1: CURRENT NEED</b>		
1.1 Current number of renters in NA	1,069.0	Census 2021 private rented occupancy.
1.2 Percentage renters on housing benefit in LA	26.9"	% of renters in 2018 on housing benefit or universal credit (using Buckinghamshire rate for March 2021).
1.3 Number of renters on housing benefits in the NA	287.6	Step 1.1 x Step 1.2.
1.4 Current need (households)	586.1	Current renters minus those on housing benefit and minus 25% assumed to rent by choice. <sup>30</sup>
1.5 Per annum	<b>36.6</b>	Step 1.4 divided by plan period.
<b>STAGE 2: NEWLY ARISING NEED</b>		
2.1 New household formation	927.1	Vale of Aylesbury household projections for plan period (2018 based) pro rated to NA.
2.2 % of households unable to buy but able to rent	12.5%	(Step 1.4 + Step 3.1) divided by number of households in NA.
2.3 Total newly arising need	115.8	Step 2.1 x Step 2.2.
2.4 Total newly arising need per annum	<b>8.9</b>	Step 2.3 divided by plan period.
<b>STAGE 3: SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING</b>		
3.1 Supply of affordable housing	145.0	Number of shared ownership homes in the NA (Census 2021).
3.2 Supply - intermediate resales	<b>7.3</b>	Step 3.1 x 5% (assumed rate of resale).
<b>NET SHORTFALL PER ANNUM</b>		
Overall shortfall per annum	<b>38.3</b>	(Step 1.5 + Step 2.4) - Step 3.2.

Source: AECOM model, using Census 2011, English Housing Survey 2018, DLUHC 2018 based household projections and net additions to affordable housing stock. 2018 is the latest reliable data for some datasets so is used throughout for consistency.

375. There is no policy or legal obligation on the part either of the Local Authority or Neighbourhood Plan to meet affordable housing needs in full, though there are tools available to the Working Group that can help ensure that it is met to a greater extent if resources permit (e.g. the ability to allocate sites for affordable housing).

<sup>30</sup> The assumption of approximately 25% preferring to rent and 75% preferring to buy is AECOM's judgement, based on national level polls which consistently reveal that most households who prefer home ownership eg <http://www.ipsos-mori-generations.com/housing.html> and informed by our experience across numerous neighbourhood level HNAs. The assumption is based on the fact that some households choose to rent at certain stages in their life (e.g. when young, when needing flexibility in employment market, or when new migrants move into an area). While most households prefer the added security and independence of owning their own home, private renting is nevertheless a tenure of choice at a certain points in many households' journey through the housing market. The actual percentage of preference will differ between areas, being higher in large metropolitan areas with younger households and more new migrants, but lower in other areas. 25% is used as a reasonable proxy and for consistency across HNAs and similar assumptions are used in some larger scale assessments such as LHNAs and SHMAs. If the neighbourhood planning group feel this is not an appropriate assumption in their particular locality they could use the results of a local residents survey to refine or confirm this calculation.

376. It is also important to remember that even after the Neighbourhood Plan is adopted, the assessment of need for Affordable Housing, the allocation of affordable rented housing to those in need, and the management of the housing waiting list all remain the responsibility of the Local Authority rather than the Working Group.

## Affordable housing policy

377. The following table reviews the relevant factors in developing a policy on the Affordable Housing tenure mix, which inform the recommendation given in the main body of the report.

**Table D-3: Wider considerations in developing Affordable Housing mix policy**

Consideration	Local Evidence
<p><b>A. Evidence of need for Affordable Housing:</b></p> <p>The need for affordable rent and affordable home ownership is not directly equivalent: the former expresses the identified need of a group with acute needs and no alternative options; the latter expresses potential demand from a group who are generally adequately housed in rented accommodation and may not be able to afford the deposit to transition to ownership.</p>	<p>This HNA suggests that there is an unmet need for 9 new social/affordable rented homes in the NA and a potential demand for around 38 units of affordable home ownership per annum over the period to 2040. Both forms of Affordable Housing appear to be valuable in meeting the needs of people on various incomes.</p> <p>The relationship between these figures suggests that a majority of new affordable housing should provide a route to ownership. However, it would be prudent to secure the delivery of more affordable rented housing because of the risk of relying on turnover if needs rise in future and the potential expectation for Buckingham to meet the unmet needs of the surrounding rural area or wider county.</p>
<p><b>B. Can Affordable Housing needs be met in full?</b></p> <p>How far the more urgently needed affordable rented housing should be prioritised in the tenure mix depends on the quantity of overall housing delivery expected.</p>	<p>If the existing Neighbourhood Plan target of 35% were achieved on every new development site, Buckingham might expect around 165 units of Affordable housing from the 471 new homes with planning permission at present, plus around 26 per year for every year for which the annual housing need figure of 74 identified in the Quantity chapter of this report is taken forward.</p> <p>This level of delivery would allow for allow for a moderate number of affordable rented</p>

	homes to future-proof the stock as well as a broader opportunity to service a large share of the potential demand for affordable home ownership.
<p><b>C. Government policy (eg NPPF) requirements:</b></p> <p>Current NPPF policy requires 10% of all homes to be delivered for affordable home ownership. There can be exceptions to this requirement if it would prevent the delivery of other forms of Affordable Housing.</p>	For 10% of all housing to be affordable ownership in Buckingham, where 35% of all housing should be affordable, at least 28.5% of Affordable Housing should be for affordable ownership.
<p><b>D. Local Plan policy:</b></p>	The adopted Local Plan does not contain a recommended split between affordable rent and affordable home ownership.
<p><b>E. First Homes policy:</b></p> <p>The Government recently concluded a consultation on the introduction of First Homes (to provide at least 30% discount on new build home prices). The proposals have now been enacted through a ministerial statement. A minimum of 25% of all Affordable Housing secured through developer contributions are now required to be First Homes.</p> <p>After the 25% First Homes requirement has been met, the remaining 75% of Affordable Housing units should as a first priority protect the provision for social rent set out in the Local Plan. The remaining units should then be allocated to other tenure products in the relative proportions set out in the Local Plan.</p> <p>AECOM is aware that some Local Planning Authorities are considering 'top slicing' their affordable housing quota to provide 25% First Homes and then allocating the remaining proportion according to their existing policy tenure split. Some LPAs are considering this approach because of the existing business models of registered providers which have relied on shared ownership to cross subsidise affordable</p>	This new minimum requirement may have the effect of displacing other products in any established tenure mix, and will reduce the amount of social or affordable rent if this was proposed to be more than 75% of Affordable Housing. As this is not specified in the adopted Local Plan it is not clear whether any affordable rented homes would be displaced by the First Homes requirement in the former district.

<p>rented housing and uncertainty over whether First Homes could replace this model.</p>	
<p><b>F. Viability:</b></p>	<p>HNAs cannot take into consideration the factors which affect viability in the neighbourhood area or at the site-specific level. Viability issues are recognised in the Local Plan. It is acknowledged that this may affect the provision of affordable housing, the mix of tenures and the discounts that can be sought on First Homes.</p>
<p><b>G. Funding:</b></p> <p>The availability of funding to support the delivery of different forms of Affordable Housing may also influence what it is appropriate to provide at a particular point in time or on any one site.</p>	<p>The Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan Working Group may wish to keep this in mind so that it can take up any opportunities to secure funding if they become available.</p>
<p><b>H. Existing tenure mix in Buckingham:</b></p> <p>The current stock of homes in an area, in terms of balance between ownership, rented and affordable provision may be a consideration in the mix of tenures provided on new development sites.</p>	<p>Buckingham currently benefits from a higher provision of social rented and shared ownership homes than the average for the county, which suggests that there is no particular deficit to be addressed.</p>
<p><b>I. Views of registered providers:</b></p>	<p>It is not within the scope of this HNA to investigate whether it would be viable for housing associations (registered providers) to deliver and manage affordable rented homes in the NA. The funding arrangements available to housing associations will determine rent levels.</p>
<p><b>J. Wider policy objectives:</b></p>	<p>The Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan Working Group may wish to take account of broader policy objectives for Buckingham and/or the wider district. These could include, but are not restricted to, policies to attract younger households, families or working age people to the NA. These wider considerations may influence the mix of Affordable Housing provided.</p>

# Appendix E : Specialist housing for older people

## Background data tables

Table E-1: Existing specialist housing supply, Buckingham

	Name	Description	Dwellings	Tenure	Type
1	Chandos Court	Retirement Housing	23	Social Landlord	1 Bed Flats
2	McKenzie	Age Exclusive Housing	32	Shared Ownership	2 Bed Flats
3	Brooks Court	Retirement Housing	19	Social Landlord	1 Bed Flats
4	Regents Gate	Age Exclusive Housing	31	Leasehold	1-2 Bed Flats
5	Paynes Court	Retirement Housing	35	Leasehold	2 Bed Flats
6	Mary McManus Drive	Retirement Housing	16	Social Landlord	2 Bed Bungalows
7	Northend Court	Retirement Housing	25	Social Landlord	1-2 Bed Flats

Source: <http://www.housingcare.org>

Table E-2: Tenure and mobility limitations of those aged 65+ in Buckingham, 2011 (65+ is the closest proxy for 75+ in this data)

Tenure	Day-to-day activities limited a lot		Day-to-day activities limited a little		Day-to-day activities not limited	
<b>All categories</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>19.2%</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>25.9%</b>	<b>916</b>	<b>54.9%</b>
<b>Owned Total</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>15.5%</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>25.0%</b>	<b>841</b>	<b>59.4%</b>
Owned outright	199	15.7%	318	25.1%	749	59.2%
Owned (mortgage) or shared ownership	21	14.1%	36	24.2%	92	61.7%
<b>Rented Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>39.7%</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>30.6%</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>29.8%</b>
Social rented	85	42.9%	66	33.3%	47	23.7%
Private rented or living rent free	15	27.8%	11	20.4%	28	51.9%

Source: DC3408EW Health status

## HLIN calculations

**Table E-3: Recommended provision of specialist housing for older people from the HLIN SHOP toolkit**

FORM OF PROVISION	ESTIMATE OF DEMAND PER THOUSAND OF THE RELEVANT 75+ POPULATION
Conventional sheltered housing to rent	60
Leasehold sheltered housing	120
Enhanced sheltered housing (divided 50:50 between that for rent and that for sale) <sup>36</sup>	20
Extra care housing for rent	15
Extra care housing for sale	30
Housing based provision for dementia	6

Source: *Housing LIN SHOP Toolkit*

378. As Table 7-4 in the main report shows, Buckingham is forecast to see an increase of 613 individuals aged 75+ by the end of the Plan period. According to the HLIN tool, this translates into need as follows:

- Conventional sheltered housing to rent =  $60 \times .613 = 37$
- Leasehold sheltered housing =  $120 \times .613 = 74$
- Enhanced sheltered housing (divided 50:50 between that for rent and that for sale) =  $20 \times .613 = 12$
- Extra care housing for rent =  $15 \times .613 = 9$
- Extra care housing for sale =  $30 \times .613 = 18$
- Housing based provision for dementia =  $6 \times .613 = 4$

# Appendix F : Housing Needs Assessment Glossary

## **Adoption**

This refers to the final confirmation of a local plan by a local planning authority.

## **Affordability**

The terms 'affordability' and 'affordable housing' have different meanings. 'Affordability' is a measure of whether housing may be afforded by certain groups of households. 'Affordable housing' refers to particular products outside the main housing market.

## **Affordability Ratio**

Assessing affordability involves comparing housing costs against the ability to pay. The ratio between lower quartile house prices and the lower quartile income or earnings can be used to assess the relative affordability of housing. The Ministry for Housing, Community and Local Governments publishes quarterly the ratio of lower quartile house price to lower quartile earnings by local authority (LQAR) as well as median house price to median earnings by local authority (MAR) e.g. income = £25,000, house price = £200,000. House price: income ratio = £200,000/£25,000 = 8, (the house price is 8 times income).

## **Affordable Housing (NPPF Definition)**

Housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:

a) Affordable housing for rent: meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).

b) Discounted market sales housing: is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.

c) Other affordable routes to home ownership: is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low-cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and

Rent to Buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision, or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.

### **Affordable rented housing**

Rented housing let by registered providers of social housing to households who are eligible for social rented housing. Affordable Rent is not subject to the national rent regime but is subject to other rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable). The national rent regime is the regime under which the social rents of tenants of social housing are set, with particular reference to the Guide to Social Rent Reforms (March 2001) and the Rent Influencing Regime Guidance (October 2001). Local market rents are calculated using the Royal Institution for Chartered Surveyors (RICS) approved valuation methods<sup>31</sup>.

### **Age-Restricted General Market Housing**

A type of housing which is generally for people aged 55 and over and active older people. It may include some shared amenities such as communal gardens but does not include support or care services.

### **Annual Monitoring Report**

A report submitted to the Government by local planning authorities assessing progress with and the effectiveness of a Local Development Framework.

### **Basic Conditions**

The Basic Conditions are the legal tests that are considered at the examination stage of neighbourhood development plans. They need to be met before a plan can progress to referendum.

### **Backlog need**

The backlog need constitutes those households who are eligible for Affordable Housing, on account of homelessness, over-crowding, concealment or affordability, but who are yet to be offered a home suited to their needs.

### **Bedroom Standard<sup>32</sup>**

The bedroom standard is a measure of occupancy (whether a property is overcrowded or under-occupied, based on the number of bedrooms in a property and the type of household in residence). The Census overcrowding data is based on occupancy rating (overcrowding by number of rooms not including bathrooms and hallways). This tends to produce higher levels of overcrowding/ under occupation. A detailed definition of the standard is given in the Glossary of the EHS Household Report.

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<sup>31</sup> The Tenant Services Authority has issued an explanatory note on these methods at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/1918430.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2011-to-2012-household-report>

## **Co-living**

Co-living denotes people who do not have family ties sharing either a self-contained dwelling (i.e., a 'house share') or new development akin to student housing in which people have a bedroom and bathroom to themselves, but share living and kitchen space with others. In co-living schemes each individual represents a separate 'household'.

## **Community Led Housing/Community Land Trusts**

Housing development, provision and management that is led by the community is very often driven by a need to secure affordable housing for local people in the belief that housing that comes through the planning system may be neither the right tenure or price-point to be attractive or affordable to local people. The principal forms of community-led models include cooperatives, co-housing communities, self-help housing, community self-build housing, collective custom-build housing, and community land trusts. By bringing forward development which is owned by the community, the community is able to set rents and/or mortgage payments at a rate that it feels is appropriate. The Government has a range of support programmes for people interested in bringing forward community led housing.

## **Community Right to Build Order<sup>33</sup>**

A community right to build order is a special kind of neighbourhood development order, granting planning permission for small community development schemes, such as housing or new community facilities. Local community organisations that meet certain requirements or parish/town councils are able to prepare community right to build orders.

## **Concealed Families (Census definition)<sup>34</sup>**

The 2011 Census defined a concealed family as one with young adults living with a partner and/or child/children in the same household as their parents, older couples living with an adult child and their family or unrelated families sharing a household. A single person cannot be a concealed family; therefore one older parent living with their adult child and family or an adult child returning to the parental home is not a concealed family; the latter are reported in an ONS analysis on increasing numbers of young adults living with parents.

## **Equity Loans/Shared Equity**

An equity loan which acts as a second charge on a property. For example, a household buys a £200,000 property with a 10% equity loan (£20,000). They pay a small amount for the loan and when the property is sold e.g. for £250,000 the lender receives 10% of the sale cost (£25,000). Some equity loans were available for the purchase of existing stock. The current scheme is to assist people to buy new build.

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<sup>33</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/annex-2-glossary>

<sup>34</sup> See [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160107160832/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776\\_350282.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160107160832/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_350282.pdf)

## **Extra Care Housing or Housing-With-Care**

Housing which usually consists of purpose-built or adapted flats or bungalows with a medium to high level of care available if required, through an onsite care agency registered through the Care Quality Commission (CQC). Residents are able to live independently with 24 hour access to support services and staff, and meals are also available. There are often extensive communal areas, such as space to socialise or a wellbeing centre. In some cases, these developments are included in retirement communities or villages - the intention is for residents to benefit from varying levels of care as time progresses.

## **Fair Share**

'Fair share' is an approach to determining housing need within a given geographical area based on a proportional split according to the size of the area, the number of homes in it, or its population.

## **First Homes**

First Homes is another form of discounted market housing which will provide a discount of at least 30% on the price of new homes, introduced in 2021. These homes are available to first time buyers as a priority but other households will be eligible depending on agreed criteria. New developments will be required to provide 25% of Affordable Housing as First Homes. A more detailed explanation of First Homes and its implications is provided in the main body of the HNA.

## **Habitable Rooms**

The number of habitable rooms in a home is the total number of rooms, excluding bathrooms, toilets and halls.

## **Household Reference Person (HRP)**

The concept of a Household Reference Person (HRP) was introduced in the 2001 Census (in common with other government surveys in 2001/2) to replace the traditional concept of the head of the household. HRPs provide an individual person within a household to act as a reference point for producing further derived statistics and for characterising a whole household according to characteristics of the chosen reference person.

## **Housing Market Area**

A housing market area is a geographical area defined by household demand and preferences for all types of housing, reflecting the key functional linkages between places where people live and work. It might be the case that housing market areas overlap.

The extent of the housing market areas identified will vary, and many will in practice cut across various local planning authority administrative boundaries. Local planning authorities should work with all the other constituent authorities under the duty to cooperate.

## **Housing Needs**

There is no official definition of housing need in either the National Planning Policy Framework or the National Planning Practice Guidance. Clearly, individuals have their own housing needs. The process of understanding housing needs at a population scale is undertaken via the preparation of a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (see below).

## **Housing Needs Assessment**

A Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) is an assessment of housing needs at the Neighbourhood Area level.

## **Housing Products**

Housing products simply refers to different types of housing as they are produced by developers of various kinds (including councils and housing associations). Housing products usually refers to specific tenures and types of new build housing.

## **Housing Size (Census Definition)**

Housing size can be referred to either in terms of the number of bedrooms in a home (a bedroom is defined as any room that was intended to be used as a bedroom when the property was built, any rooms permanently converted for use as bedrooms); or in terms of the number of rooms, excluding bathrooms, toilets halls or landings, or rooms that can only be used for storage. All other rooms, for example, kitchens, living rooms, bedrooms, utility rooms, studies and conservatories are counted. If two rooms have been converted into one they are counted as one room. Rooms shared between more than one household, for example a shared kitchen, are not counted.

## **Housing Type (Census Definition)**

This refers to the type of accommodation used or available for use by an individual household (i.e. detached, semi-detached, terraced including end of terraced, and flats). Flats are broken down into those in a purpose-built block of flats, in parts of a converted or shared house, or in a commercial building.

## **Housing Tenure (Census Definition)**

Tenure provides information about whether a household rents or owns the accommodation that it occupies and, if rented, combines this with information about the type of landlord who owns or manages the accommodation.

## **Income Threshold**

Income thresholds are derived as a result of the annualisation of the monthly rental cost and then asserting this cost should not exceed 35% of annual household income.

## **Intercensal Period**

This means the period between the last two Censuses, i.e. between years 2001 and 2011.

## **Intermediate Housing**

Intermediate housing is homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels subject to the criteria in the Affordable Housing definition above. These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low-cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing. Homes that do not meet the above definition of affordable housing, such as 'low-cost market' housing, may not be considered as affordable housing for planning purposes.

## **Life Stage modelling**

Life Stage modelling is forecasting need for dwellings of different sizes by the end of the Plan period on the basis of changes in the distribution of household types and key age brackets (life stages) within the NA. Given the shared behavioural patterns associated with these metrics, they provide a helpful way of understanding and predicting future community need. This data is not available at neighbourhood level so LPA level data is employed on the basis of the NA falling within its defined Housing Market Area.

## **Life-time Homes**

Dwellings constructed to make them more flexible, convenient adaptable and accessible than most 'normal' houses, usually according to the Lifetime Homes Standard, 16 design criteria that can be applied to new homes at minimal cost: <http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/>.

## **Life-time Neighbourhoods**

Lifetime neighbourhoods extend the principles of Lifetime Homes into the wider neighbourhood to ensure the public realm is designed in such a way to be as inclusive as possible and designed to address the needs of older people, for example providing more greenery and more walkable, better connected places.

## **Local Development Order**

An Order made by a local planning authority (under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) that grants planning permission for a specific development proposal or classes of development.

## **Local Enterprise Partnership**

A body, designated by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, established for the purpose of creating or improving the conditions for economic growth in an area.

## **Local housing need (NPPF definition)**

The number of homes identified as being needed through the application of the standard method set out in national planning guidance (or, in the context of preparing strategic policies only, this may be calculated using a justified alternative approach as provided for in paragraph 60 of this Framework).

## **Local Planning Authority**

The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a particular area. All references to local planning authority apply to the District Council, London Borough Council, County Council, Broads Authority, National Park Authority or the Greater London Authority, to the extent appropriate to their responsibilities.

## **Local Plan**

This is the plan for the future development of the local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community. In law this is described as the development plan documents adopted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Current core strategies or other planning policies form part of the Local Plan and are known as 'Development Plan Documents' (DPDs).

## **Lower Quartile**

The bottom 25% value, i.e. of all the properties sold, 25% were cheaper than this value and 75% were more expensive. The lower quartile price is used as an entry level price and is the recommended level used to evaluate affordability; for example for first time buyers.

## **Lower Quartile Affordability Ratio**

The Lower Quartile Affordability Ratio reflects the relationship between Lower Quartile Household Incomes and Lower Quartile House Prices, and is a key indicator of affordability of market housing for people on relatively low incomes.

## **Market Housing**

Market housing is housing which is built by developers (which may be private companies or housing associations, or Private Registered Providers), for the purposes of sale (or rent) on the open market.

## **Mean (Average)**

The mean or the average is, mathematically, the sum of all values divided by the total number of values. This is the more commonly used "average" measure as it includes all values, unlike the median.

## **Median**

The middle value, i.e. of all the properties sold, half were cheaper and half were more expensive. This is sometimes used instead of the mean average as it is not subject to skew by very large or very small statistical outliers.

## **Median Affordability Ratio**

The Lower Quartile Affordability Ratio reflects the relationship between Median Household Incomes and Median House Prices and is a key indicator of affordability of market housing for people on middle-range incomes.

## **Mortgage Ratio**

The mortgage ratio is the ratio of mortgage value to income which is typically deemed acceptable by banks. Approximately 75% of all mortgage lending ratios fell below 4 in recent years<sup>35</sup>, i.e. the total value of the mortgage was less than 4 times the annual income of the person who was granted the mortgage.

## **Neighbourhood Development Order (NDO)**

An NDO will grant planning permission for a particular type of development in a particular area. This could be either a particular development, or a particular class of development (for example retail or housing). A number of types of development will be excluded from NDOs, however. These are minerals and waste development, types of development that, regardless of scale, always need Environmental Impact Assessment, and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects.

## **Neighbourhood plan**

A plan prepared by a Parish or Town Council or Neighbourhood Forum for a particular neighbourhood area (made under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

## **Older People**

People over retirement age, including the active, newly-retired through to very frail older people, whose housing needs can encompass accessible, adaptable general needs housing for those looking to downsize from family housing and the full range of retirement and specialised housing for those with support or care needs.

## **Output Area/Lower Super Output Area/Middle Super Output Area**

An output area is the lowest level of geography for publishing statistics, and is the core geography from which statistics for other geographies are built. Output areas were created for England and Wales from the 2001 Census data, by grouping a number of households and populations together so that each output area's population is roughly the same. 175,434 output areas were created from the 2001 Census data, each containing a minimum of 100 persons with an average of 300 persons. Lower Super Output Areas consist of higher geographies of between 1,000-1,500 persons (made up of a number of individual Output Areas) and Middle Super Output Areas are higher than this, containing between 5,000 and 7,200 people, and made up of individual Lower Layer Super Output Areas. Some statistics are only available down to Middle Layer Super Output Area level, meaning that they are not available for individual Output Areas or parishes.

## **Overcrowding**

There is no single agreed definition of overcrowding, however, utilising the Government's bedroom standard, overcrowding is deemed to be in households where there is more than one person in the household per room (excluding kitchens, bathrooms, halls and storage areas). As such, a home with one bedroom and one

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<sup>35</sup> See <https://www.which.co.uk/news/2017/08/how-your-income-affects-your-mortgage-chances/>

living room and one kitchen would be deemed overcrowded if three adults were living there.

### **Planning Condition**

A condition imposed on a grant of planning permission (in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) or a condition included in a Local Development Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

### **Planning Obligation**

A legally enforceable obligation entered into under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to mitigate the impacts of a development proposal.

### **Purchase Threshold**

Purchase thresholds are calculated by netting 10% off the entry house price to reflect purchase deposit. The resulting cost is divided by 4 to reflect the standard household income requirement to access mortgage products.

### **Proportionate and Robust Evidence**

Proportionate and robust evidence is evidence which is deemed appropriate in scale, scope and depth for the purposes of neighbourhood planning, sufficient so as to meet the Basic Conditions, as well as robust enough to withstand legal challenge. It is referred to a number of times in the PPG and its definition and interpretation relies on the judgement of professionals such as Neighbourhood Plan Examiners.

### **Private Rented**

The Census tenure private rented includes a range of different living situations in practice, such as private rented/ other including households living “rent free”. Around 20% of the private rented sector are in this category, which will have included some benefit claimants whose housing benefit at the time was paid directly to their landlord. This could mean people whose rent is paid by their employer, including some people in the armed forces. Some housing association tenants may also have been counted as living in the private rented sector because of confusion about what a housing association is.

### **Retirement Living or Sheltered Housing**

Housing for older people which usually consists of purpose-built flats or bungalows with limited communal facilities such as a lounge, laundry room and guest room. It does not generally provide care services, but provides some support to enable residents to live independently. This can include 24 hour on-site assistance (alarm) and a warden or house manager.

### **Residential Care Homes and Nursing Homes**

Housing for older people comprising of individual rooms within a residential building and provide a high level of care meeting all activities of daily living. They do not usually

include support services for independent living. This type of housing can also include dementia care homes.

## **Rightsizing**

Households who wish to move into a property that is a more appropriate size for their needs can be said to be rightsizing. This is often used to refer to older households who may be living in large family homes but whose children have left, and who intend to rightsize to a smaller dwelling. The popularity of this trend is debatable as ties to existing communities and the home itself may outweigh issues of space. Other factors, including wealth, health, status and family circumstance also need to be taken into consideration, and it should not be assumed that all older households in large dwellings wish to rightsize.

## **Rural Exception Sites**

Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. Small numbers of market homes may be allowed at the local authority's discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable dwellings without grant funding.

## **Shared Ownership**

Housing where a purchaser part buys and part rents from a housing association or local authority. Typical purchase share is between 25% and 75% (though this was lowered in 2021 to a minimum of 10%), and buyers are encouraged to buy the largest share they can afford. Generally applies to new build properties, but re-sales occasionally become available. There may be an opportunity to rent at intermediate rent level before purchasing a share in order to save/increase the deposit level

## **Sheltered Housing<sup>36</sup>**

Sheltered housing (also known as retirement housing) means having your own flat or bungalow in a block, or on a small estate, where all the other residents are older people (usually over 55). With a few exceptions, all developments (or 'schemes') provide independent, self-contained homes with their own front doors. There are many different types of scheme, both to rent and to buy. They usually contain between 15 and 40 properties, and range in size from studio flats (or 'bedsits') through to 2 and 3 bed roomed. Properties in most schemes are designed to make life a little easier for older people - with features like raised electric sockets, lowered worktops, walk-in showers, and so on. Some will usually be designed to accommodate wheelchair users. And they are usually linked to an emergency alarm service (sometimes called 'community alarm service') to call help if needed. Many schemes also have their own 'manager' or 'warden', either living on-site or nearby, whose job is to manage the scheme and help arrange any services residents need. Managed schemes will also

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<sup>36</sup> See <http://www.housingcare.org/jargon-sheltered-housing.aspx>

usually have some shared or communal facilities such as a lounge for residents to meet, a laundry, a guest flat and a garden.

### **Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment**

A Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) is a document prepared by one or more local planning authorities to establish realistic assumptions about the availability, suitability and the likely economic viability of land to meet the identified need for housing over the Plan period. SHLAAs are sometimes also called LAAs (Land Availability Assessments) or HELAAs (Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessments) so as to integrate the need to balance assessed housing and economic needs as described below.

### **Strategic Housing Market Assessment (NPPF Definition)**

A Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) is a document prepared by one or more local planning authorities to assess their housing needs under the 2012 version of the NPPF, usually across administrative boundaries to encompass the whole housing market area. The NPPF makes clear that SHMAs should identify the scale and mix of housing and the range of tenures the local population is likely to need over the Plan period. Sometimes SHMAs are combined with Economic Development Needs Assessments to create documents known as HEDNAs (Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessments).

### **Specialist Housing for Older People**

Specialist housing for Older People, sometimes known as specialist accommodation for older people, encompasses a wide range of housing types specifically aimed at older people, which may often be restricted to those in certain older age groups (usually 55+ or 65+). This could include residential institutions, sometimes known as care homes, sheltered housing, extra care housing, retirement housing and a range of other potential types of housing which has been designed and built to serve the needs of older people, including often providing care or other additional services. This housing can be provided in a range of tenures (often on a rented or leasehold basis).

### **Social Rented Housing**

Social rented housing is owned by local authorities and private registered providers (as defined in Section 80 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008.). Guideline target rents for this tenure are determined through the national rent regime. It may also be owned by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or with Homes England.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> See <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/doc/1980960.doc#Housing>





## Buckingham Town Centre Study

# Buckingham Town Centre Study

*This town centre study has been commissioned by Buckingham Town Council with support from the Buckingham & Villages Community Board (Buckinghamshire Council).*

*The report is being prepared by Chris Wade of the People & Places Partnership, based on research and survey work undertaken in Buckingham during Summer 2023. The town centre customer profile has been prepared by Laura Harris of LH Analytics.*



# Background: Revitalising Town Centres

## Background

### *Introduction*

This proposal has been prepared by the People & Places Partnership as a basis for preparing an updated Town Centre Study for Buckingham town centre on behalf of Buckingham Town Council. This study will be developed from an evidence-based review of the Buckingham town centre and the two key beneficiary groups of town centre customers and businesses.

### *Buckingham Town Councils' requirements*

A Buckingham Town Centre Retail Appraisal, Health Check and Opportunities Assessment was undertaken in 2016. Since this time the outlook for high streets has changed substantially, with major changes accelerated by Covid-19.

The last health check included: Consumer/customer insights; operator/business views; location review; commentary on outlook and growth; conclusions/summary of findings, including positive and negative indications of health and growth and improvement opportunities.

The Town Council has been asked to commission a Town Centre Study that updates this research, as well as providing options for the improvement or development of the town on behalf of Buckingham & Villages Community Board (Buckinghamshire Council).

The new Buckingham Town Centre Study report should include:

Baseline data, including consumer/customer and operator/business views and a location review. A comparison and judgement should be made about how well Buckingham's town centre is currently doing in comparison to the national picture. The Town Council will provide updated data on current business occupancy rates and the mix of retail types, for further analysis and comparison to national benchmarks.

Research for the report should minimally include a stakeholder workshop, to be held in Buckingham and involving a mixed group of public sector, private sector and third sector representatives. The Town Council will arrange the venue and invite attendees. The Town Council can also circulate surveys, or other consultation materials to relevant stakeholders, as required.

Ideas for growth and improvement. This could include: short, medium and long term options.

The study should also identify areas where the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan could provide strength and support to the high street through local planning policy.

It is possible that there would be further work in one or more of the areas identified during the ideas for growth and improvement stage, and the successful applicant would be able to deliver this work too.

### *People & Places' approach*

The People & Places Partnership offers a proven track-record of [bringing facts and faces to centres](#) through an evidenced-based, collaborative working method for enabling the revitalisation of town and city centres. People & Places have extensive experience of



conducting research into town centre performance and perceptions; businesses confidence; stakeholder engagement; partnership development; town centre action planning and delivery; and performance monitoring.

In 2020, People & Places updated its earlier national [revitalising town centres toolkit](#), prepared for the Local Government Association (LGA). The toolkit provides local leaders with guidance on how to approach the revitalisation of town and city centres.

The methodology used by People & Places to develop the Buckingham Town Centre Study will adopt and adapt the approach created nationally as good practice in the LGA toolkit. In line with the requirements of Buckingham Town Council, this methodology focuses on updating the 2016 Health Check with a focus that looks at 'retail and beyond'.

Characteristics of the People & Places' approach, specifically adapted to the brief provided by Buckingham Town Council and to advance the approach of the previous study to fit current circumstances include:

- Structuring the proposal and associated costs as a menu of core and optional activities to enable the Town Council and partners to determine the appropriate approach and budget.
- Combining the use of secondary data and analytics to construct a customer profile that can to different degrees be comparable with the 2016 study.
- Capturing primary survey data about customer use, perceptions and priorities for the town centre rather than relying solely on the perspective of operators businesses. People & Places' extensive experience shows that business and customer perspectives about town centres are often very different.
- Using the LGA's Revitalising Town Centre Checklist (see page 4) as a focus for survey work, analysis and recommendations to ensure that the proposed study looks beyond retail-based solutions and towards factors that local leadership is able to address.
- Drawing on People & Places' previous experience of working with the Neighbourhood Planning process to ensure the study adds to the understanding of town centre issues and potential policy recommendations
- Helping the Town Council to work with Buckingham Council and other partners local authorities to develop a 'Forward Framework' that focus on both the 'what' and the 'how' of town centre revitalisation.
- Working in a way that enable People & Places to work with trusted associates to help the Town Council deliver some initial projects in conjunction with local stakeholders.





The People and Places Partnership are creators of the Local Government Association's national revitalising town centres toolkit. This online toolkit provides practical guidance and resources to assist councils in taking a strategic and evidence-based approach to revitalising town centres. The updated version prepared by People & Places in summer 2020 includes newly available case studies and guidance to help local authorities and place partnerships to develop COVID-19 recovery planning as part of wider revitalisation.

The toolkit uses the town centre checklist developed by the People & Places Partnership for delivering the 'how' and the 'what' of town centre revitalisation. Councils can use the self-assessment 'town centre checklist' with partners, to regularly review progress in developing local policy and practice.

Key elements to consider in applying the town centre checklist are:

- **Foundations:** the process should be underpinned by an up-to-date review of existing strategies, collective objectives and evidence from recent surveys.
- **Function:** action planning begins with a clear statement of identified issues; recognition of council and partners' roles; creation of suitable responses; acknowledgment of gaps in delivery; identification of impact measures.
- **Form and Folk:** next comes the development of appropriate organisational 'form' to coordinate activity including defining the roles of key partners and wider stakeholder engagement through 'folk'.
- **Finances:** financial planning needs to include identifying opportunities for fund raising inward investment and partnership sustainability.
- **Forward planning:** finally, everything gets written down as a 'forward framework' and regularly reviewed.

The updated toolkit uses guidance on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic based on an adaptation of the Institute of Place Management's (IPM) national post-COVID 19 Recovery Framework. The IPM's post-COVID 19 Recovery Framework has much in common with the toolkit's approach. Essentially both frameworks place a strong emphasis on evidence-based planning and delivery whilst focusing on shaping the 'how' (partnership development) and 'what' (action planning & delivery) of recovery/revitalisation. Both frameworks recognise the key roles of local coordination and communication in delivering successful town and city centre outcomes.



<b>LGA Revitalising Town Centres Checklist</b>	
<b>FOUNDATION</b>	
Evidence and objectives	Has a baseline survey of issues been completed including COVID-19 impacts, objectives defined and short/long-term outcome monitoring 'dashboard' agreed?
<b>FUNCTION</b>	
Travel, parking, and access	Is an integrated town centre travel, parking and access strategy in place with immediate social distancing measures and transition to increased sustainability?
Planning and property	Are town-centre-first policies, master-planning or asset management in place that take account of COVID-19 impacts and engage businesses and landlords?
Streetscape and public realm	Has a prioritised streetscape and public realm improvement plan been agreed that facilitates social distancing and increases long-term, cross-town foot-flow?
Business support	Is there tailored mentoring and support to enhance the quality, performance and distinctiveness of businesses based on recovery needs and future trends?
Place branding and marketing	Is there a clear understanding of the town brand with pooled resources and a creative, collective campaign offering reassurance to existing and new markets?
Digital tech and data	Is there an assessment of digital infrastructure and skills with an investment plan for the collective use of data in marketing and monitoring the town centre?
<b>FORM</b>	
Governance and influence	Is there an appropriate structure, membership and credibility to coordinate local stakeholder activity and influence cross-departmental or strategic partnerships?
<b>FOLK</b>	
Community engagement and coordination	Is there strong public, private and community engagement with active and coordinated involvement in planning and delivery that extends to community assets development and is backed by a clear communications plan?
Capacity mapping and team building	Are there an effective chair, suitably skilled board, employment of necessary staff, effective management of trained volunteers and established relationships for joint working with other stakeholder groups?
<b>FUNDING</b>	
Finances and investment	Is there an organisation with robust financial procedures and strategy agreed for diverse and sustainable fund raising and income to support a town centre? Is it 'run as a business' with inter-relationships understood and investment secured?
<b>FORWARD PLANNING</b>	
Strategy and plans	Is there a well-defined 'forward framework' comprising an overarching vision/strategy, a rolling organisational business plan and a parallel action plan coordinating and monitoring delivery on the ground?



## Methodology

The methodology proposed here to prepare the Buckingham Town Centre Study has six key elements reflecting the requirements in the brief blended with People & Places' tried and tested approach used in the LGA toolkit.

### 1. *Analysis of Existing Evidence & Strategies*

It is proposed that the work commences with a desktop review and analysis of existing and emerging local strategies, reports and available data relating to Buckingham town centre. This will include liaison with the Town Council and Neighbourhood Planning group to understand previous and ongoing research and plan development.

As part of this initial analysis, People & Places will assess business mix and vacancy data provided by Buckingham Town Council's Town Centre Manager. This will use a detailed business use class classification system and record ownership types and vacant premises. This data can be compared against People & Places' national benchmarks to help understand the town's business mix and evolving function.

This business survey will help meet the Town Council's requirement to 'look beyond retail' and examine the changing categories and portfolio of retail, hospitality, office and professional services businesses in the town and how this may look for the next five years. It will include the split of independent and national businesses (franchises included) and any impact of rental costs and rates on the businesses that do or do not maintain a presence in the town.

The assessment of the business mix will also help provide evidence of any change to the function and performance of Buckingham town centre in light of increasing online sales versus in-store sales and the emergence of new hospitality delivery services. With a shift to working from home for some Buckingham residents, the impact on Buckingham for different businesses or services on the High Street will also be anticipated.

It is suggested that this desktop review and business mix analysis, will be supplemented by an initial interactive, briefing(s) to key stakeholders including representatives of Town Council, Neighbourhood Plan Group, Buckingham Council officers, business representatives, and civic groups organised by Town Council. From People & Places' experience, such an introductory briefing will be important in achieving 'buy-in' to the process at an early stage.

The initial online briefing(s) will present an objective overview of the methodology and purpose of the study, to assist in developing ongoing, local engagement with businesses and other key stakeholders. This will help gain support for the objectives of the study in a way that will help achieve wide buy-in to the final study findings and 'forward framework'. This short, initial briefing(s) is intended to be in addition to the later in-person stakeholder workshop required by the brief.

In these initial meetings, People & Places will brief stakeholders on the importance of addressing both the 'what' and the 'how' of recovery planning and revitalisation. Partners and stakeholder groups will be prompted to begin reflecting on the potential future roles of their organisations in supporting the delivery of a cohesive Buckingham Recovery Strategy.

In this initial stage and throughout this work to develop the Buckingham Town Centre Study, People & Places will operate in an iterative way that reflects phased findings back to the



Town Council, partners and wider stakeholders through an engaging process. A stage 1 report will be prepared and shared with the Town Council at the end of phase of the work.

### 2. *Preparation of Town Centre Customer Profile with Secondary Data Analytics*

People & Places have teamed-up with [LH Analytics](#) to develop this proposal and deliver the study in a way in which it will create a town centre customer profile based on available secondary data. LH Analytics is a small and friendly data and location analytics consultancy which assists town and their businesses to better understand customers.

Using customer journey and location analytics, LH Analytics can give clear insights about growth and diversification, by understanding a town's customers or footfall, catchment, population and market characteristics.

As part of the core proposal, it is recommended that LH Analytics prepare a drivetime analysis for Buckingham town centre. This will provide an overview of the town's catchment that can provide a context for more subsequent primary research of local customers and their perceptions and priorities for the town centre. This drive time analysis will include:

- 5,10,15,20,25-minute drivetimes around the town centres with map of catchments,
- Census information on size of population age and ethnicity profile
- average Income

### 3. *Undertaking Town Centre Assets and Stakeholder Surveys*

To help objectively understand Buckingham town centre, the People & Places Partnership propose to adapt its national town centre baseline survey process that forms part of the LGA toolkit.

This tried and tested, nationally-used survey process enables the monitoring and analysis of town centre performance and key stakeholder perceptions. The purpose of the monitoring process is to collect standardised key performance indicators (KPIs) to help local organisations and businesses to better understand the function, trends and issues facing the town centre and its potential relative to similar towns elsewhere. Key components of the Buckingham town centre baseline survey will be a town centre customer and business surveys.

Evidence from such detailed surveys will help support a reasoned, evidence-based discussion of key stakeholders' priorities and facilitate involvement in preparing and delivering a Buckingham Town Centre 'forward framework' of initial recommendations. The approach will help in strengthening the collective understanding of the role of the town centre as a retail destination and local community hub.

#### *The Place*

##### *3a. The Mix of Businesses & Services*

To help understand the scale and variety of businesses and services in a town centre, data made available by Buckingham Town Council about the mix of town centre businesses and services in 2019 and 2023 will be assessed. This offers the opportunity to gain insights during a period when already significant trends were heightened by the pandemic and greater flexibility in the way the mix could be curated through the planning system. It is key to understand these trends as a pointer to the incentives and controls that can and should be



employed to maintain the critical mass of Buckingham's town centre mix of businesses and services.

### *3b. Town Centre Access and Movement*

As part of a town centre visit, an initial audit will be undertaken of town centre arrival points, access routes, sightlines and signage. This information will be helpful in determining the way customers access and move around the different parts of the town centre and the impact vitality of Buckingham.

#### *The People*

### *3c. Town Centre Business Confidence Survey*

People & Places will adapt its tried and tested business survey in a way that enables benchmarking with other towns and comparison with the 2016 study. This business survey will also follow the customer surveys so that it might adapt and test some of the findings from the analysis of customers' perspectives.

The core proposal and costs presented here allow for the preparation and distribution of an online 'business confidence survey' that will be made available to every customer facing, town centre business and organisation using social media accounts and email contacts made available by Buckingham Town Council and partners. The short survey will be used to gauge businesses' perceptions of trading in the town centre and get a sense of their collective future priorities for helping to boost its economic performance.

This proposal allows for the option of the survey to be produced and distributed in a paper format if this is preferred. Using this approach, every business will be visited up to three times with the option of an online version also provided. This face-to-face approach could equally be used to capture the responses of those businesses and organisations that did not respond to an initial online version.

As an adjunct to the business confidence and town centre business survey, preliminary questions will be asked about Buckingham's digital infrastructure and the different perspectives on services such as social media channels; targeted marketing by businesses; web site development and online browsing/sales.

### *3d. Town Centre Customer Survey*

People & Places will work with the Town Council and Neighbourhood Planning group, to agree a town centre customer survey that complements and adds to research already undertaken about residents' perceptions of the town centre.

People & Places' extensive experience shows that business and customer perspectives about town centres are often very different. Distinct from the previous study, this approach therefore does not rely on an understanding of customers' use of the town centre gathered indirectly from businesses. It will also survey their views on a wide-range of issues that looks beyond retail alone as an inspiration for customers to use the wider town centre.

This approach gives more specific information about local customers perceptions and use of the town centre than could be gleaned from depending solely on secondary data to prepare a customer profile.



A link to an online town centre users' survey will be distributed through Town Council and partners social media accounts to gauge the perceptions, profile and priorities of different types of town centre customers.

#### *4. Stakeholder Engagement and Publication of Final Study Report*

Based on the findings of the desktop review, initial stakeholder engagement and surveys, People & Places will take the lead in initial action planning with the Council, its partners and stakeholders.

The action planning process will use the structure of the town centre checklist contained within the LGA's revitalising town centres toolkit. This enables a comprehensive and integrated response in providing practical suggestions for ensuring Buckingham's daytime and nighttime economies evolve in concert to maximise the draw of the town centre and aid its post-pandemic recovery.

This process will be initiated through the preparation of a Buckingham Town Centre Forward Framework. The key to the approach advocated by the People and Places Partnership is to have a seamless thread running through evidence of issues, responses and measures of impact. This forward framework can be produced to suggest immediate (6 months), short-term (12-24 months) and medium-term (up to five years) actions. Reference will be inbuilt to the latest thinking and best practice on a comprehensive range of issues.

The findings from the study and the initial Buckingham Town Centre Forward Framework will be shared at an in-person meeting of key town centre stakeholders from a mixed group of public sector, private sector and third sector representatives.

After feedback from the meeting, the Forward Framework will be expanded as the final section of the evolving Buckingham Town Centre Study. The proposal includes the option for graphically-designed shorter to be produced for stakeholders.



# Review: Existing Strategies

Initial stakeholder engagement was supplemented by a desktop review and analysis of existing local strategies and reports relating to Buckingham town centre. These key existing strategies are:

- Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (2015)
- Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan (2015)
- Buckingham Town Centre Retail Appraisal, Health Check and Opportunities Assessment (2016)

## *Review of policies relating to town centre role*

### **Local Plan**

It is important for the future development of town centres to be driven by a collective future vision and understanding of their evolving function.

The legacy Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) published in 2013 by the then Aylesbury Vale District Council offered the following description of how Buckingham town centre could be directed to evolve:

*“Buckingham town centre also needs to build on its programme of regeneration to maximise the benefits continuing growth can bring, and to support the level of jobs and homes growth proposed for the northern part of Aylesbury Vale. Growth of the university campus is likely to play a role in this. Some of these issues are addressed in the made Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan. It sets out policies to revitalise and grow Buckingham town centre.”*

A specific policy for town, village and local centres to support new and existing communities, stated that that the then district council will promote the sustainable growth and regeneration of Aylesbury, Buckingham and three smaller town centres. Within defined town centres, development proposals for retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential development would be supported where they:

- a. retain or enhance the town centre’s historic character and appearance, vitality and viability
- b. sustain or enhance diverse town centre uses and customer choice, incorporating residential accommodation above ground floor level where possible, and
- c. are readily accessible by public transport, walking and cycling.

The policy stated that proposals for town centre uses should be sited within the town or local centres. Proposals for development in and around town centres, including proposals for changes of use, should support the aspirations for regeneration of those centres including those subject to neighbourhood plans by improving the range and quality of retail, public realm, leisure, employment and training opportunities.

The VALP was officially adopted by the newly formed Buckinghamshire Council in 2021, in lieu of the existence then of a new county-wide Local Plan.



Buckinghamshire Council is committed to produce a new Local Plan within five years of coming into being, that is, by April 2025. It states that the new Local Plan will aim to deliver sustainable development by meeting social, economic, and environmental needs to bring benefits for people who live, work, or visit, through:

- making sure there are enough of the right homes and workplaces
- getting the infrastructure in the right place at the right time
- delivering better deals from developers on the obligations arising from their proposals

### Neighbourhood Development Plan

Buckingham's Neighbourhood Development Plan (BNDP) became a legal document in 2015, after approval in a town-wide referendum. Its policies have been used in planning decisions for Buckingham since then.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and Town Council have recognised that since 2015 there have been many changes including that the town's population has increased, from the 12,000 of the 2011 census to more than 14,000 in the 2021 census, and today is heading towards 16,000 as further housing developments are completed.

Due to this, Buckingham Town Council are working to refresh the Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that it works towards building a future Buckingham that suits also its residents, businesses and visitors. The new plan will set out fresh policy ideas to ensure the vibrancy of our historic market town.

The overarching vision of the 2015 Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan was to “make Buckingham a better place to live, work, study and play”. It was recognised that this must be achieved in the context of sustainable growth. The Plan identified six themes as important for delivering this vision:

- Housing and phasing
- Design, heritage and environment
- Culture, leisure, health
- Economy and education
- Infrastructure
- Developer contributions

These themes encapsulated 12 objectives which were identified to ensure that the Plan makes Buckingham a better place to live, work, study and play. It is possible to recognise objectives which have a primary and secondary relationship with guiding revitalisation of the town centre.

*Primary:* Foster the economic development of the town and its hinterland by providing employment-led growth, increasing the town's appeal to tourists and invigorating the town centre.

*Secondary*

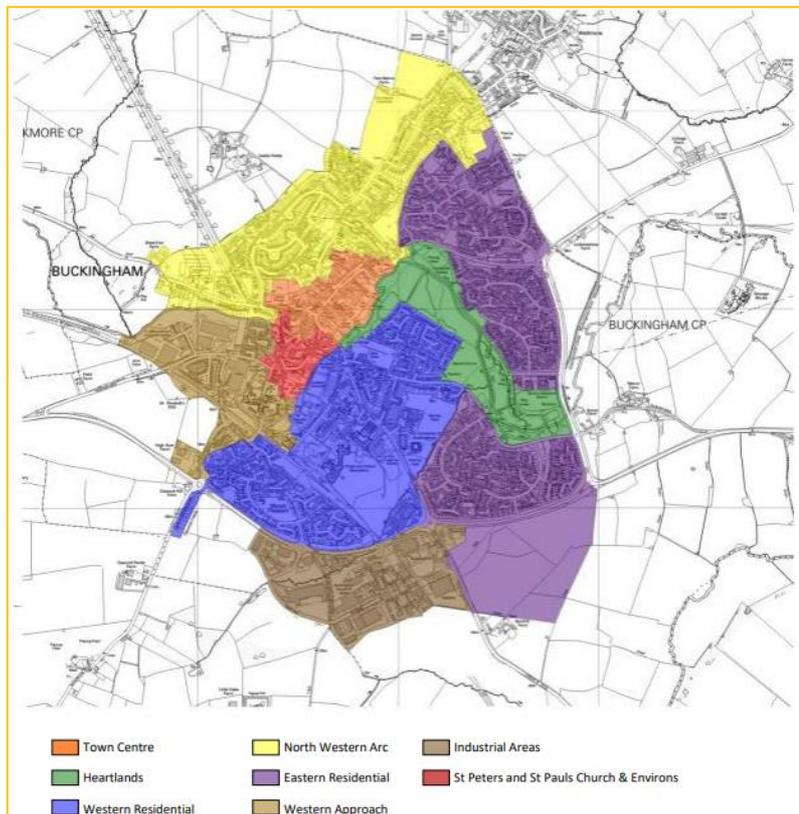
- Conserve and enhance the town's historic environment and its setting.



- Encourage development that strengthens culture, leisure, sport and play facilities in the town.
- Maintain the quality of Buckingham's parkland and green space, in particular its 'green heart'.
- Improve movement into and around the town in a healthy and safe manner. Specifically promoting cycling, walking and ease of access for the disabled.

The Plan also identified eight distinct character areas including the town centre (see map opposite). This is described as forming the central focus of the town that contains many historic buildings and frontages including a number of listed buildings. This provides a wide variety of architectural styles and a mixture of residential and business use. The mix of residential housing includes retirement flats and flats and houses catering for a wide range of ages and lifestyles. It provides a focal point for the town with connected streets.

Projecting forward, the 2015 Neighbourhood Plan stated that through its policies *"the town will have grown. New people, employment and retail have come to the town. However, the traditions of Buckingham have been kept alive. The development which has taken place in the town centre has been complementary to the existing building scape. This has enabled the town to conserve and enhance the town's historic environment and its setting."*



*The new residents and retail in the town centre will have contributed to the continuation of the town's markets and ensuring Buckingham continues as a market town well into the future."*

In Buckingham in 2031 there will be:

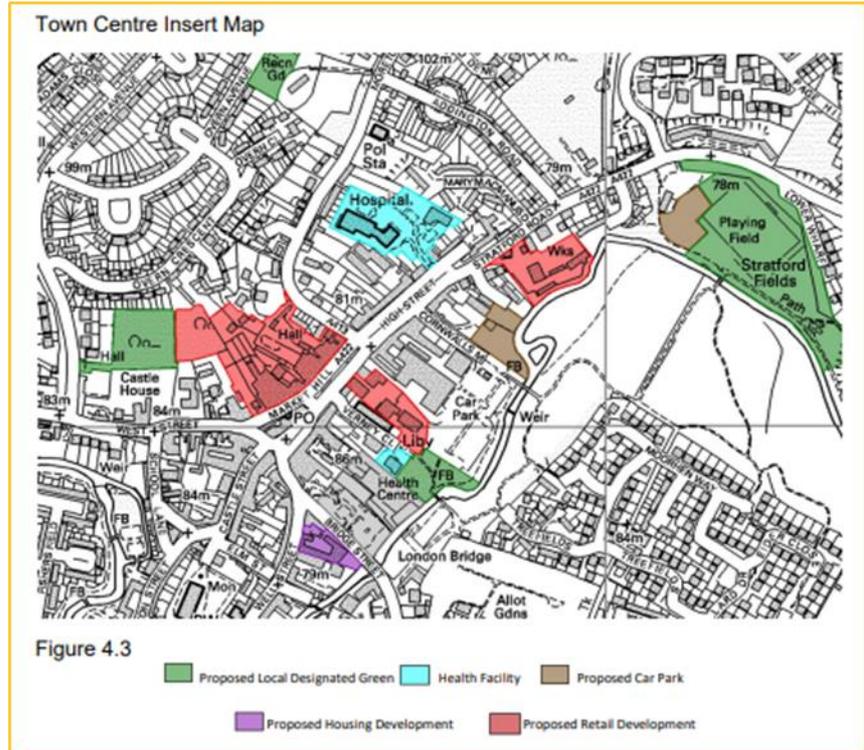
- An additional 617 dwellings excluding existing commitments
- An additional 400 rooms to accommodate the expansion of Buckingham University
- 10 hectares of new employment land

As the town centre insert plan shows, the 2015 Neighbourhood Plan envisaged that retail expansion would be a key part of town centre development.

### Town centre economy

Specific town centre policies and proposals included as part of the economy and education section of the plan include:

- EE2: The allocation of land for retail, office and mixed development will be supported, with three potential sites identified.
- EE3: Applications will be supported for new town centre commercial uses.
- EE4: Retain and enhance both the primary and secondary retail frontages, including the restriction of professional services and hospitality to 35% of the primary retail frontages.
- EE5: Provision for additional town centre car parking as provided at Stratford Fields and on the site now occupied by Regents Gate.



### Housing

The section on housing and phasing included:

- HP1: Allocate land for 617 new dwellings including 589 homes clustered along Tingewick Road that have been developed at sites G, H, I and J shown on development plan map overleaf.

### Environment and heritage

The section on design, heritage and environment is very strong on safeguarding the natural environment and biodiversity though omits policies and proposals for conserving and enhancing Buckingham's built heritage, historic setting and public spaces.

### Culture and leisure

In addition, the culture, leisure and health section included:

- CLH4: Provision of new or extended health care facilities on two existing sites at the Community Hospital and on Verney Close.
- CLH5: Identified green and open spaces will be protected and retained as designated Local Green Space.
- A 'Community Action' to produce a Community Building Strategy including proposals for a new cultural arts venue, sports facilities, a community building and a venue for religious services.

### *Investment in infrastructure*

The section on infrastructure prides a clear objective to improve movement into and around the town in a healthy and safe manner, by promoting cycling, walking and ease of access for the disabled.

There is a community commitment that the Town Council strongly supports the provision of good connections, via pedestrian and cycle links. “Good connections” is defined as keep changes of levels and road crossings to a minimum and as part direct routes, with adequate widths to enable passing of cycles, wheel chairs and/or mobility scooters and made of a suitable material to allow easy access.

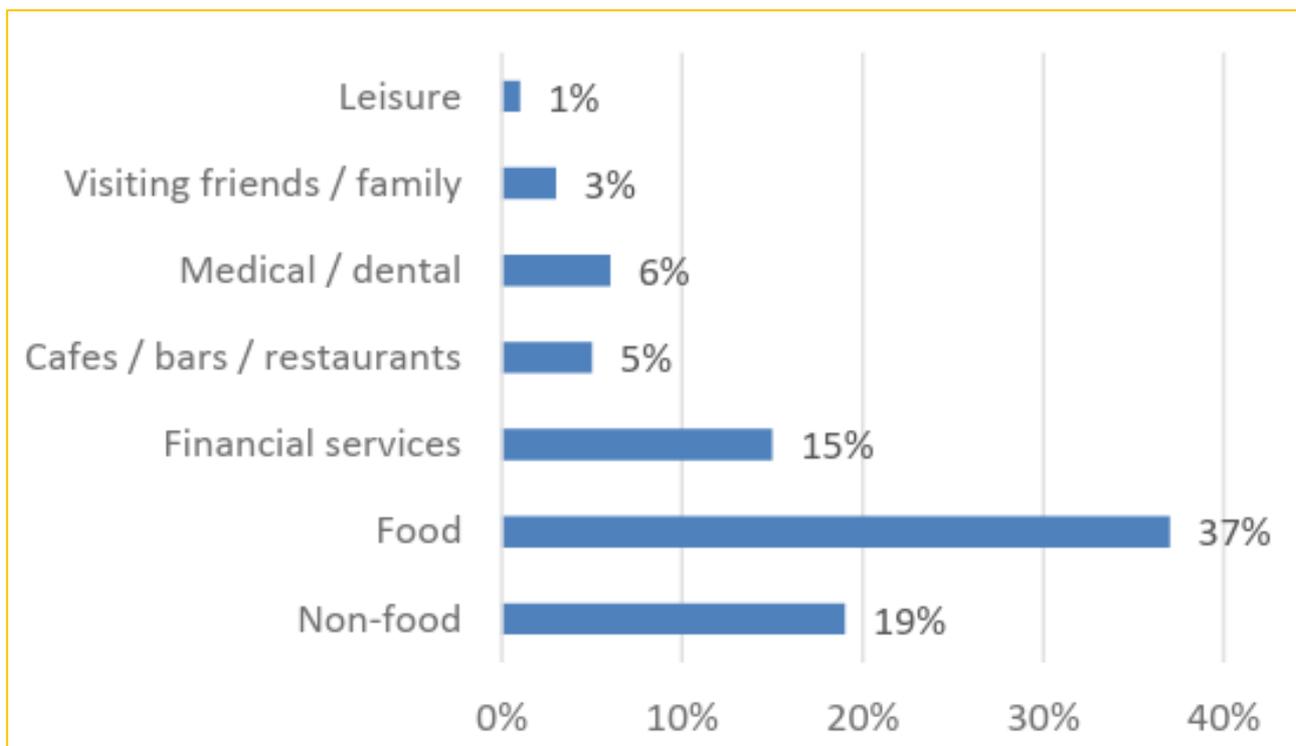
The section included a specific policy commitment that covers such good connections in-part:

I1: Pedestrian routes should be made suitable for disabled access, including the provision of seating as rest points.

### *Developer contributions*

This section includes a recommended community action to seek contributions towards providing new pedestrian and cycle links within and beyond the town boundary that incorporate new and existing residential developments. It was also proposed that improved public transport could be provided along Tingewick Road that encompasses new developments.

### **Retail Appraisal, Health Check and Opportunities Assessment**



This assessment drew on a 2015 retail study for its consumer profile. Key points were:

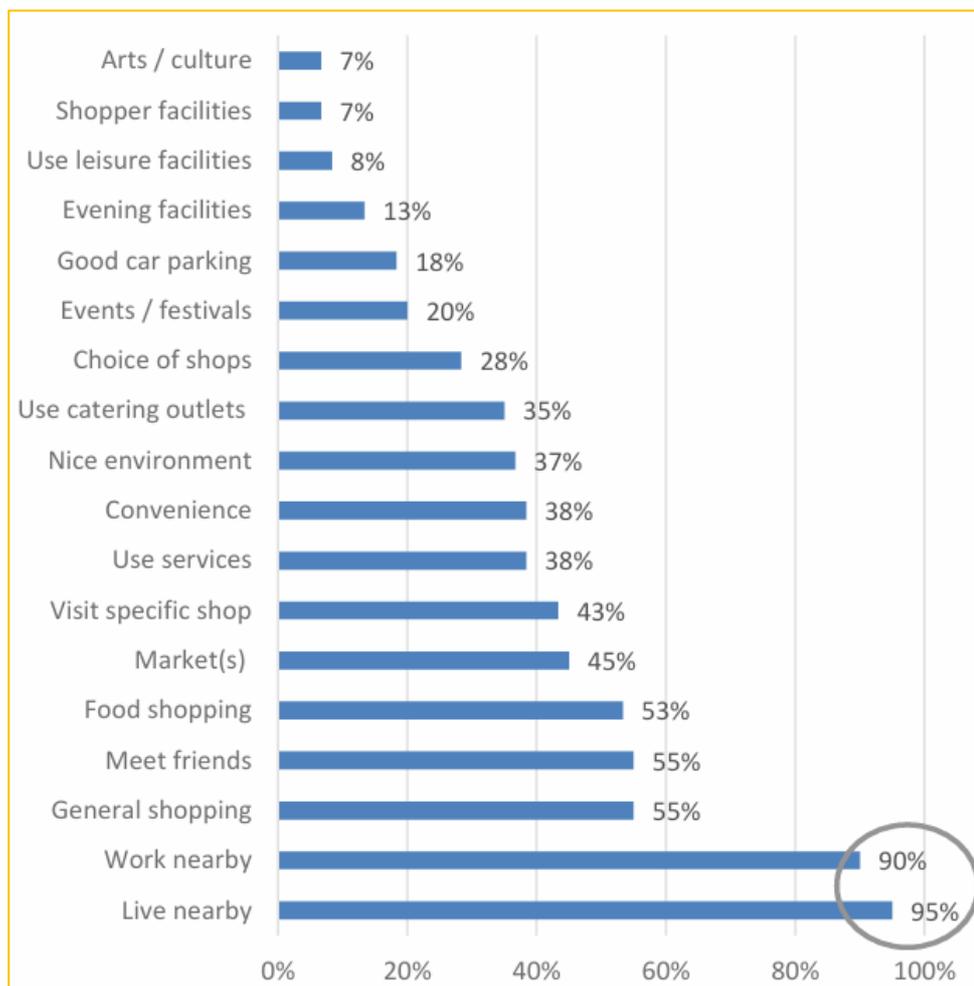
- residents from the town (88%) and surrounding area (72%) cited Buckingham as their most often visited destination.

- 75% visit once a week or more frequently and appear to be visiting primarily for food shopping.
- Buckingham is used by a high proportion of residents (56%) and to a lesser extent customers from surrounding areas (33%) for restaurants.

The Assessment used the Acorn is a lifestyle classification system developed by CACI to offer insights on the resident population. This identified that Buckingham's residents are dominated by the affluent and comfortably off lifestyle sectors. Both the Buckingham South and North wards were dominated by *Wealthy Achievers* (30% & 61%) and the *Comfortably Off* (27% & 25%), respectively. The former group are typically discerning consumers with mid to upmarket tastes and want good quality and good service over price. The latter group seemingly have good available disposable income, are aspirational and brand aware, whilst looking for good choice and customer service.

Primary research was undertaken into businesses' attitudes and their perceptions of customers' behaviour.

The survey captured businesses' perceptions about why customers visit the town centre. The primary reason was perceived as the convenience of its location, whilst over half of businesses cited secondary reasons including general shopping, meeting friends and food shopping.



Businesses also shared their perceptions of different town centre attributes (see table overleaf). Attributes weighted towards the 'poor' end of the scale were parking provision, destination stores, retail mix / offer and promotional activity. By comparison the more positive attributes were; quality of environment, catering mix / offer, and customer experience.

	1 Poor	2	3	4	5 Good	No Reply
Facilities	12%	25%	50%	7%	2%	5%
Retail mix / offer	12%	22%	47%	10%	5%	5%
Catering mix / offer	0%	8%	23%	43%	18%	7%
Parking provision	25%	20%	30%	12%	10%	3%
Destination stores	17%	23%	32%	7%	2%	18%
Customer experience	0%	10%	30%	38%	12%	10%
Ease of use	3%	12%	30%	35%	7%	13%
Promotional activity	8%	28%	40%	12%	2%	10%
Quality of environment	2%	7%	18%	52%	15%	7%

Through consultation on the Buckingham Town Centre Retail Appraisal, Health Check and Opportunities Assessment, it was determined that there would also be significant new retail areas and leisure facilities in the town centre.

At the time it was envisaged that the demand for more retail provision in the town centre would increase, factoring in the increase in population associated with the new housing developments were factored in. The increase in people was considered to mean a further demand for retail shops in the town centre and retention of existing retail uses.

This would be alongside:

- New community facilities:
- New sport facilities
- New and improved transport connections
- New green spaces
- New Cemetery and allotments

This Town Centre Retail Appraisal proposed that:

*“The opportunity for Buckingham lies in further strengthening the local role it fulfils, both for shopping and socialising, while improving the offer and environment to increase its appeal to all its potential customer groups and encourage further usage (frequency, length of stay and wider town centre offer).”*

The Retail Appraisal and Health Check wrote about development opportunities rather than recommended actions. The presented overview was that opportunity for Buckingham lies in further strengthening the local role it fulfils, both for shopping and socialising, while improving the offer and environment. It was envisaged that this would increase its appeal to all its potential customer groups and encourage further usage. Points that remain pertinent to review today are included:



- better promotion is needed about the town's 'success' in response to a perception that it is not doing well.
- important to build on the positives such as the role as a meeting place with a good social and food offer, including markets.
- recognised weaknesses to overcome included parking provision and the mix of shops
- add 5-6 units in total to provide larger premises through planned / facilitated development or consolidation of units.
- increase shops with appeal to younger shoppers and expand food and beverage offer with 2-3 brands.
- improve quality and promotion of markets.
- carry-out a signage review 'to promote and remind' as well as integrate all areas.

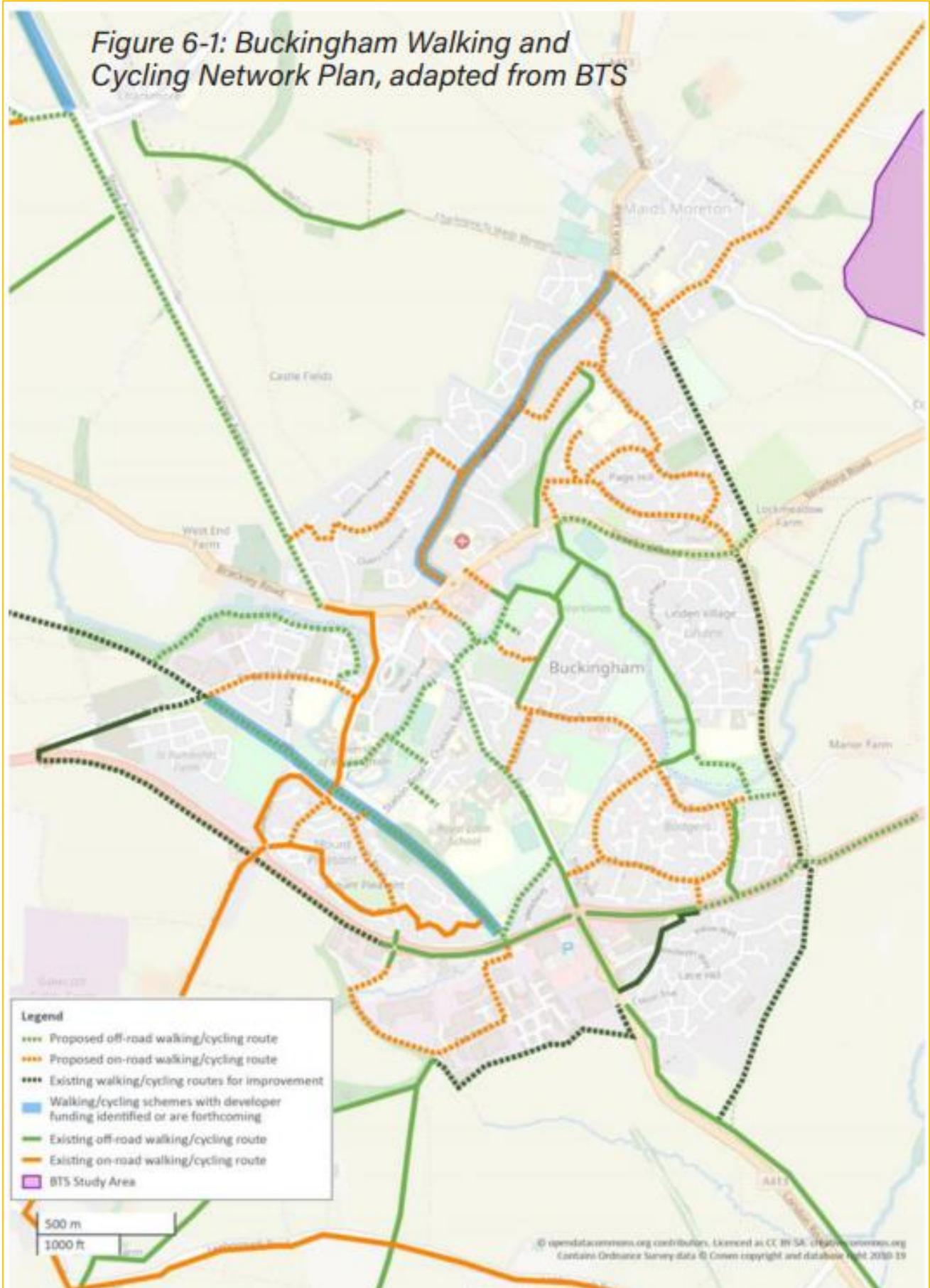
### **Buckingham Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan -Lite**

The Buckingham Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan -Lite (LCWIP-lite) extracts and updates the active travel routes identified in the Buckingham Transport Strategy from 2016, with the objective of increasing the mode share for walking and cycling in Buckingham. The proposed routes include a comprehensive network of walking and cycling routes in the town that connect residential areas the town centre. The routes identified should be considered as indicative routes to cater for existing and future active travel demand though have not yet been assessed in detail. Through further consultation with stakeholders, the routes will be refined at the next stage of LCWIP development, and high-level recommendations for improvement will be developed and prioritised for implementation.

Figure 6.1 (overleaf) is taken from the LCWIP-lite and identified what has been delivered since the Transport Strategy was published in 2016 and where there are commitments of developer funding, or where improvements are forthcoming. The proposed network improvements included existing facilities and a combination of off-road routes along busier corridors and on-road cycling in quieter streets and where available width for off-carriageway provision is constrained.



**Figure 6-1: Buckingham Walking and Cycling Network Plan, adapted from BTS**



# *Analytics: Town Centre Customer Profile*

An updated town centre potential customer profile was prepared based on available secondary data. The aim is that using customer journey and location analytics, clear insights can be provided about growth and diversification opportunities, the potential for increases in footfall, the expansion of the Buckingham's catchment area and its market characteristics.

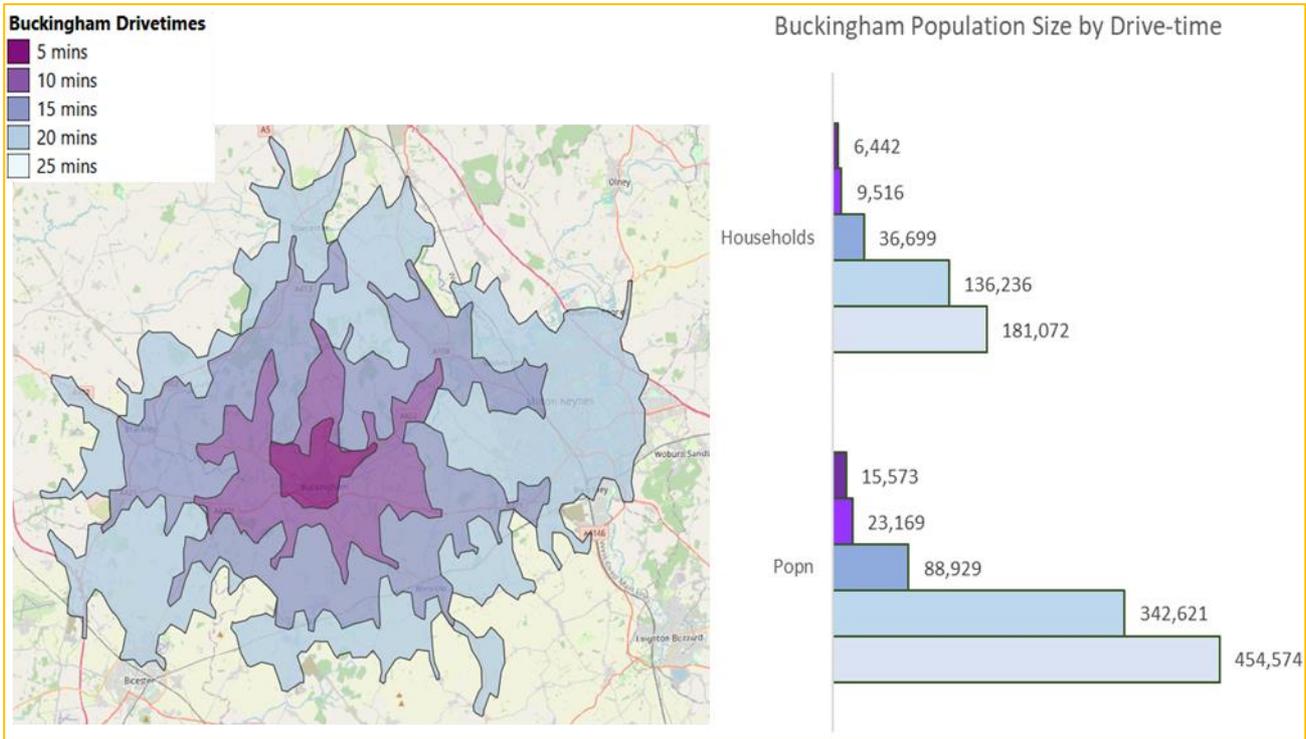
The summary analytics on the subsequent pages cover:

- Buckingham prospect population size by drive-time isochrone
- Buckingham census stats (2011 vs 2021) – by drive-time
- Buckingham census stats (2011 vs 2021) – residents living within a 5-minute drive-time
- The average income after household costs
- Buckingham sub regional towns by drive-time
- Buckingham competing towns by drive-time
- Buckingham competing towns and their drive-times

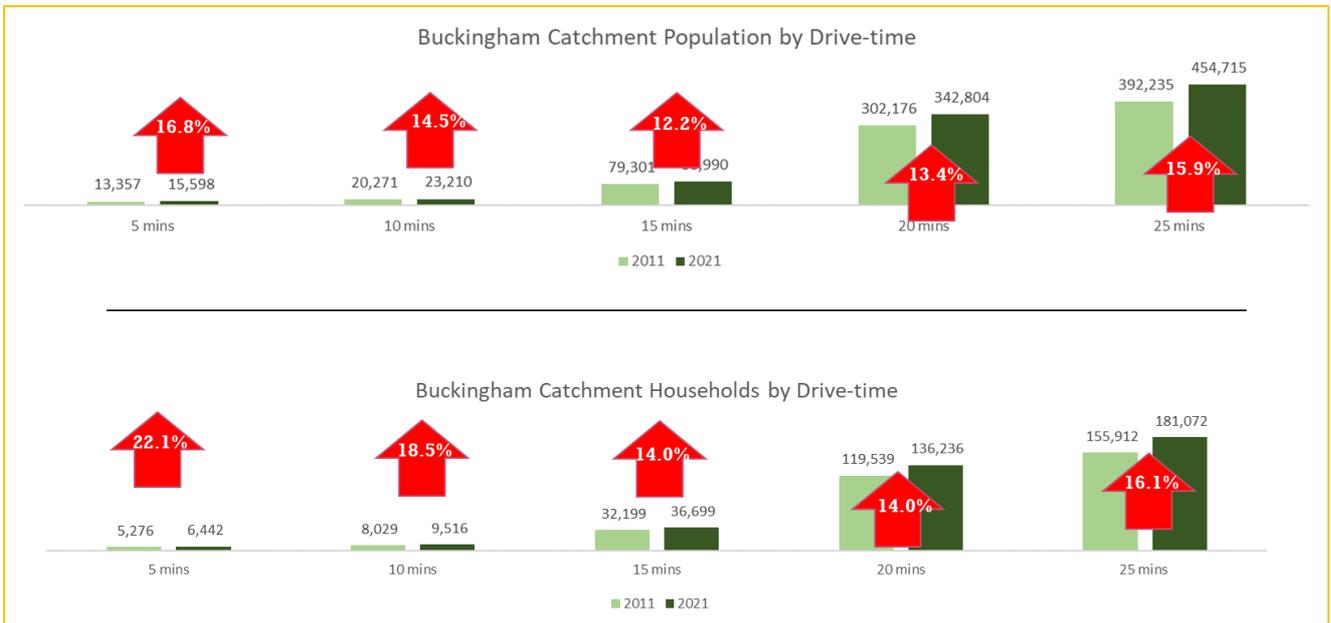
See analysis overleaf.



### Buckingham Prospect Population Size by Drive-time Isochrone



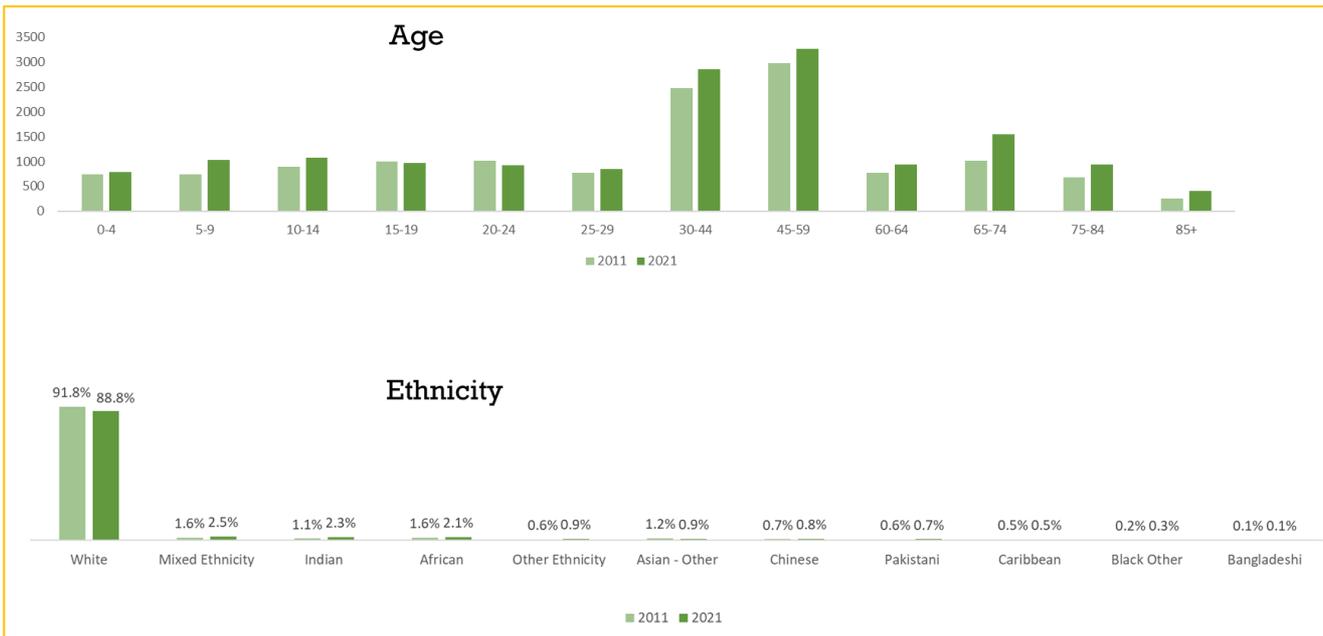
### Buckingham Census Stats (2011 Vs 2021) – by Drive-time



The analysis of the Buckingham prospect population size by drive-time shows that there is a population of nearly half a million (454,574) potential customers within a 25-minute drive. Comparison between the 2011 and 2021 Census data shows that this catchment population has grown by a significant 16% (62,480).



### Buckingham Census Stats (2011 Vs 2021) – Local Residents living within a 5 Minute Drive-time



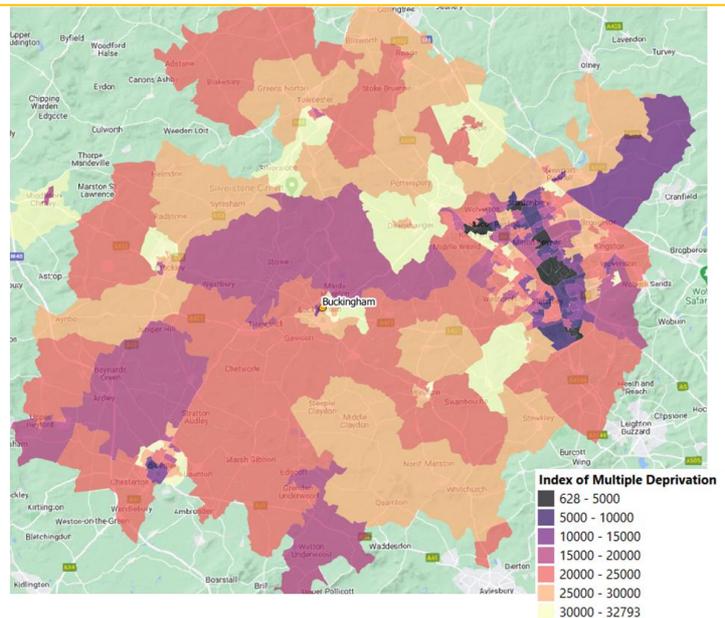
### Buckingham – The Index of Multiple Deprivation

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) ranks every small area in England from 1 (most deprived area) to 32,844 (least deprived area).

The IMD combines information from the seven domains to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation. The domains are combined using the following weights:

- Income Deprivation (22.5%)
- Employment Deprivation (22.5%)
- Education, Skills and Training Deprivation (13.5%)
- Health Deprivation and Disability (13.5%)
- Crime (9.3%)
- Barriers to Housing and Services (9.3%)
- Living Environment Deprivation (9.3%)

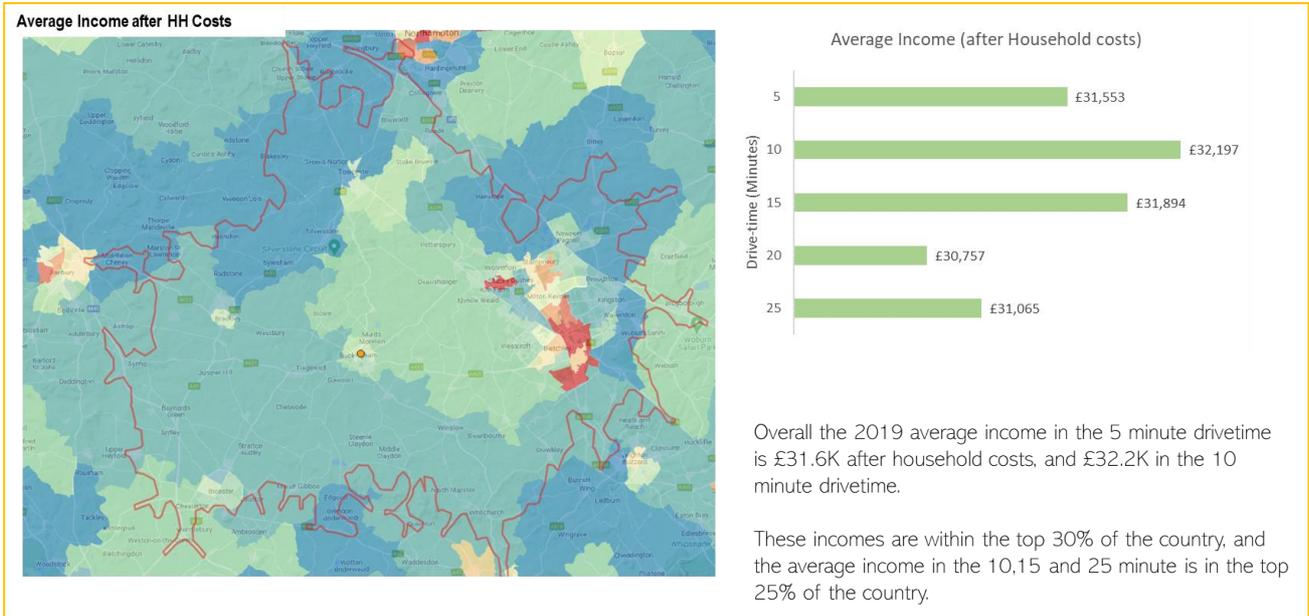
The Population in the Catchment around Buckingham is predominantly less deprived. In areas on the outskirts of Milton Keynes, on the edge of the Buckingham Catchment at around 20 Minute Drive, there are some small areas that fall into the more deprived areas.



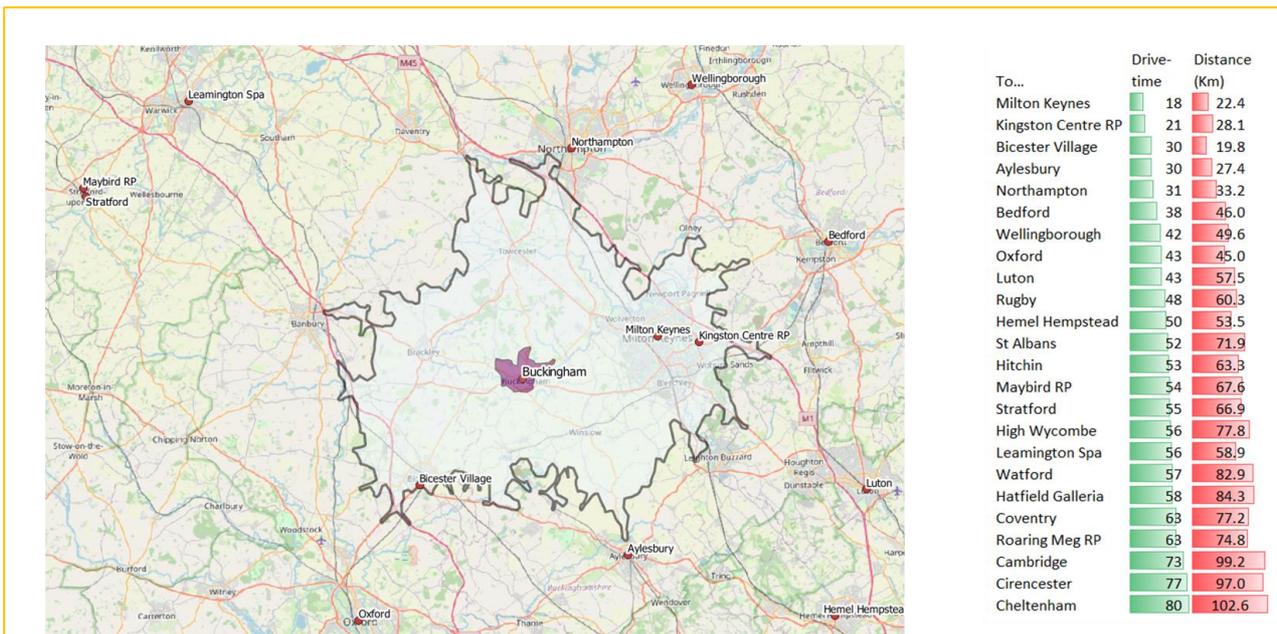
Analysis of Census statistics for residents living within a 5-minute drive-time shows that there has been an increase for all age categories except 15 to 24 year-olds. The ethnic mix of Buckingham’s catchment population has seen an increase in diversity with increases across arrange of different ethnic groups including Indian increasing the most from 1.1% to 2.3%. In terms of indices of multiple deprivation, Buckingham’s catchment area is predominantly less-deprived though there are some small areas of deprivation within a 20-minute drive.



### Buckingham – The Average Income After Household Costs



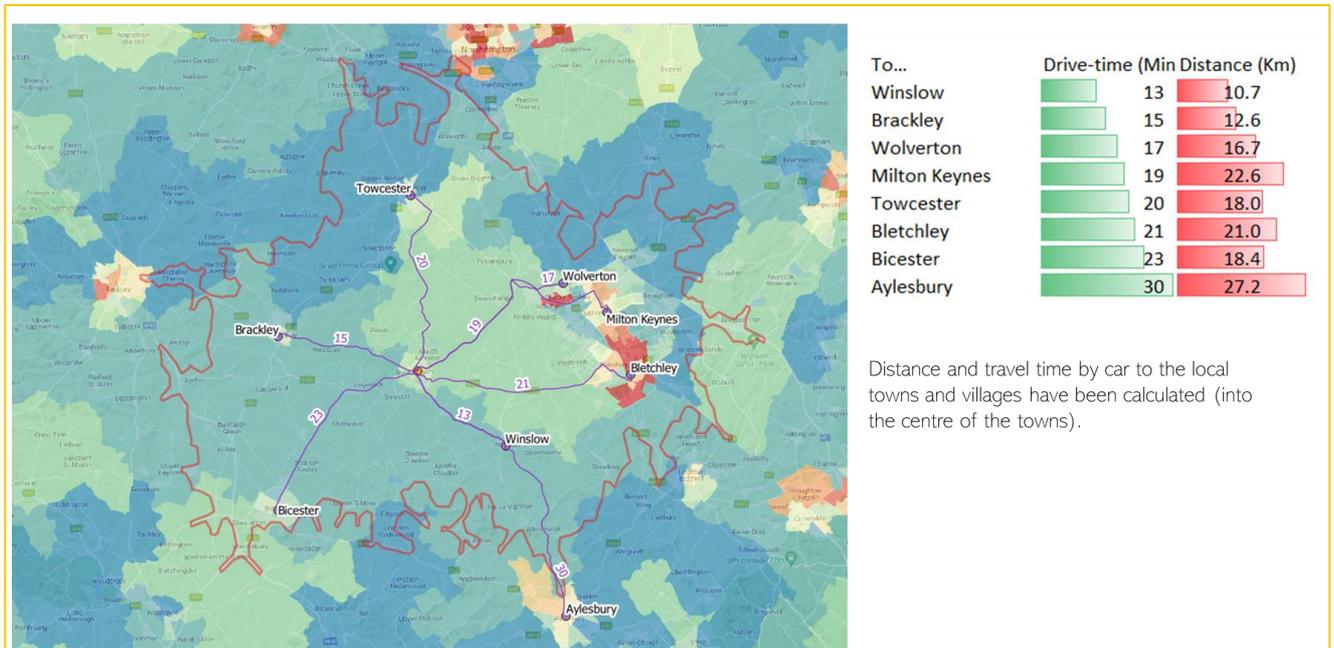
### Buckingham Sub Regional Towns by Drive-Time



Analysis of average income after household costs show that in the 10, 15 and 25 minute drivetime catchments, they are in the top 25% in the country. Assessment of the Buckingham sub-regional retail destinations by drive-time indicates that Milton Keynes is the key centre within Buckingham’s catchment area, along with the Kingston shopping centre.



### Buckingham Competing Towns by Drive-Time



### Buckingham Competing Towns and their Drive-Times



Analysis of Buckingham’s competing towns by drive-time, shows that besides Milton Keynes, there are 7 towns within a 30-minute drivetime. Isochrone representations of these competing towns and their drive-times shows overlaps within 10-minute drive-times for four of these towns as well as Milton Keynes.



# Evidence: The Survey Process

## *Undertaking Town Centre Assets and Stakeholder Surveys*

To help objectively understand Buckingham town centre, the People & Places Partnership has adapted its town centre assets and stakeholder survey process that forms part of the LGA toolkit.

This tried and tested, nationally-used survey process enables the monitoring and analysis of town centre performance and key stakeholder perceptions. The purpose of the monitoring process is to collect standardised key performance indicators (KPIs) to help local organisations and businesses to better understand the function, trends and issues facing the town centre and its potential relative to similar towns elsewhere. Key components of the Buckingham town centre baseline survey will be a town centre customer and business surveys.

Evidence from such detailed surveys will help support a reasoned, evidence-based discussion of key stakeholders' priorities and facilitate involvement in preparing and delivering a Buckingham Town Centre 'forward framework' of initial recommendations. The approach will help in strengthening the collective understanding of the role of the town centre as a retail destination and local community hub. This survey of town centre assets and stakeholder perceptions has four elements:

### *a. The Mix of Businesses & Services*

To help understand the scale and variety of businesses and services in a town centre, data made available by Buckingham Town Council about the mix of town centre businesses and services in 2019 and 2023 has been assessed. This offers the opportunity to gain insights during a period when already significant trends to maintain the critical mass of Buckingham's town centre mix of businesses and services.

### *b. Town Centre Access and Visual Assessment*

As part of a town centre visit, an initial audit was undertaken of town centre arrival points, access routes, along with an initial assessment of the visual quality of key locations. This information will be helpful in determining the vitality of Buckingham and the way customers access and move around the different parts of the town centre.

### *c. Town Centre Business Confidence Survey*

A business survey was sent digitally to all town centre businesses with the Town Council and Buckinghamshire Council. The short survey helps to gauge businesses' perceptions of trading in the town centre and gives a sense of their collective future priorities for helping to boost its economic performance.

### *d. Town Centre Customer Survey*

People & Places has worked with the Town Council and Neighbourhood Planning group, to agree a town centre customer survey that complements and adds to research already undertaken about residents' perceptions of the town centre. Distinct from the previous study, this approach does not rely on an understanding of customers' use of the town centre gathered indirectly from businesses.



## The Place: The Mix of Businesses & Services

### Business and Services Use Class

It is important to understand the scale and variety of businesses and services in a town centre. A variety of shops and a wide range of services in a town are important to its ability to remain competitive and continue to attract customers. Sustaining a balance between the different aspects of retail and services ensures that the local population and visitors can spend time and money there, keeping the generated wealth within the local economy. Importantly, it provides local employment and helps to retain local spend rather than lose it to nearby towns or retail parks.

Data made available by Buckingham Town Council about the mix of town centre businesses and services in 2019 and 2023 offers the opportunity to gain insights during a period when already significant trends were heightened by the pandemic and greater flexibility in the way the mix could be curated through the planning system. It is key to understand these trends as a pointer to the incentives and controls that can and should be employed to maintain the critical mass of Buckingham's town centre mix of businesses and services.

### Simplified use classes from Summer 2021

The types of businesses and services are classified and controlled to a degree by the planning system through use class designations. The ways the business uses were classified and controlled was simplified in September 2020. New regulations created a streamlined new use class system that came into operation in July 2021.

The implications for a town like Buckingham are that the greater flexibility enables, for example, premises previously occupied a shop to be readily converted to a restaurant. This can help reduce the number of empty units and increase town centre vitality. It can in extremes lead to an imbalance in the mix of businesses and services. The change in use class definitions also makes comparison between current and former business mix data more complicated.

The new use classes are: a broad Class E (commercial, business and service), Class F1 (learning and non-residential institutions) and Class F2 (local community). Shops fall into Class E or Class F2 depending on their use, size and location. This change is important in shaping the potential mix of town centre businesses because it is no longer necessary to obtain planning permission for some changes between various non-residential uses required under the previous use classes.

Full details of the changes, including the full list of the new use classes and their previous equivalents, are provided in People & Places downloadable guide to [changing the town centre business mix](#).

### Permitted development

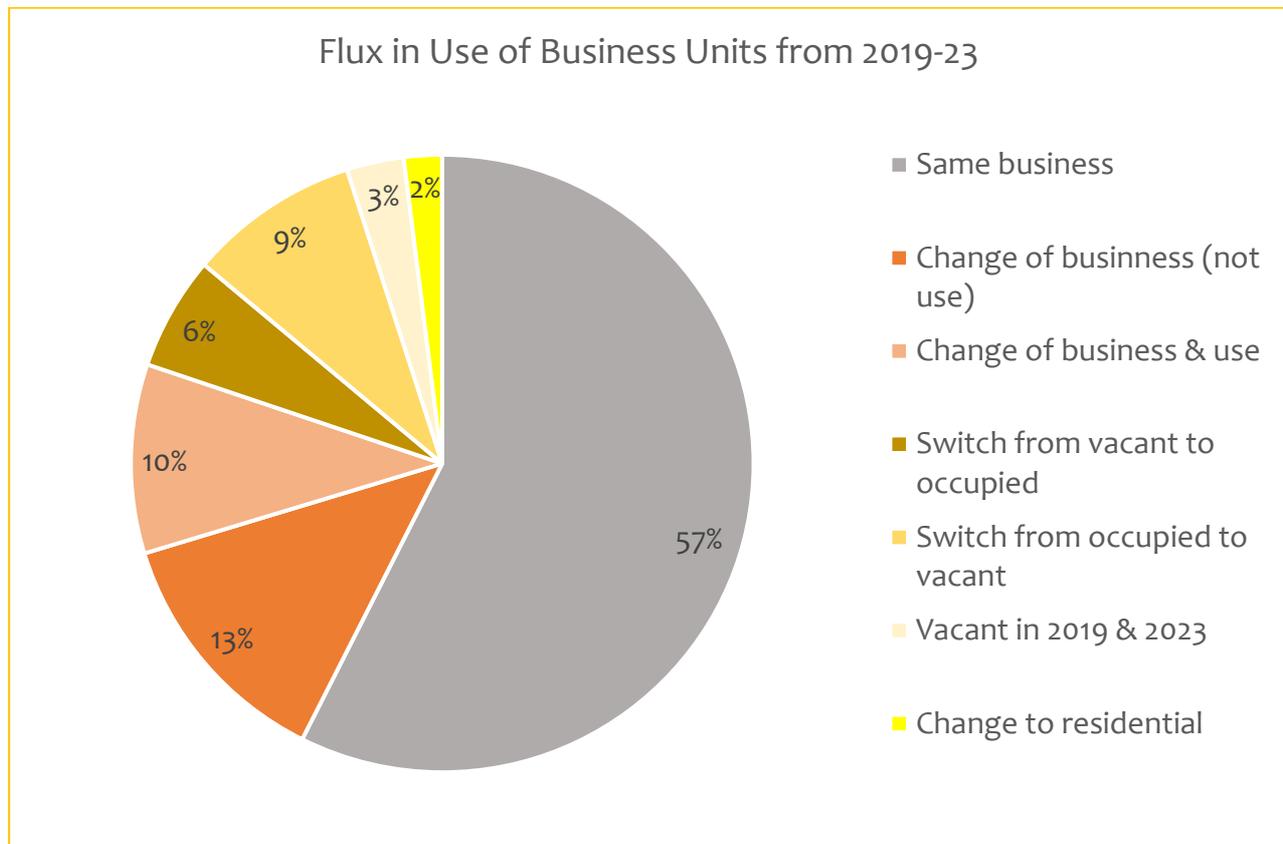
In addition to the changes allowed within the broader use class definitions, some changes between use classes are covered by 'permitted development' rights (meaning that planning permission is deemed to have been given). This includes new rules allowing commercial premises to be converted into homes that came into force in March 2021.



A change from business premises to new homes can be delivered through a simple 'prior approval' process instead of a full planning application, subject to consideration by the local planning authority of specific issues such as the impacts of noise from commercial premises and consideration of the impact of the loss of the ground floor commercial, business and service use (in conservation areas only).

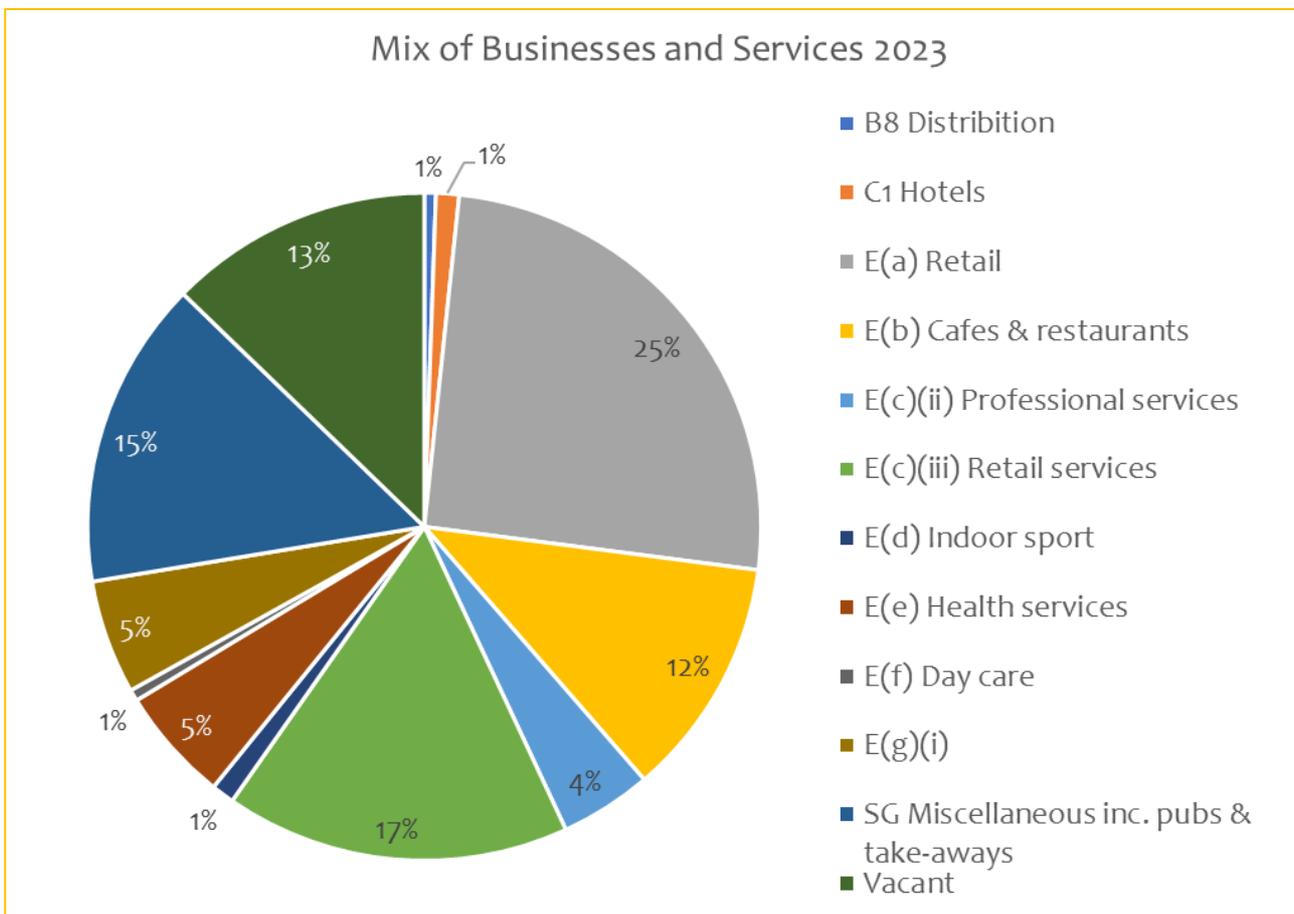
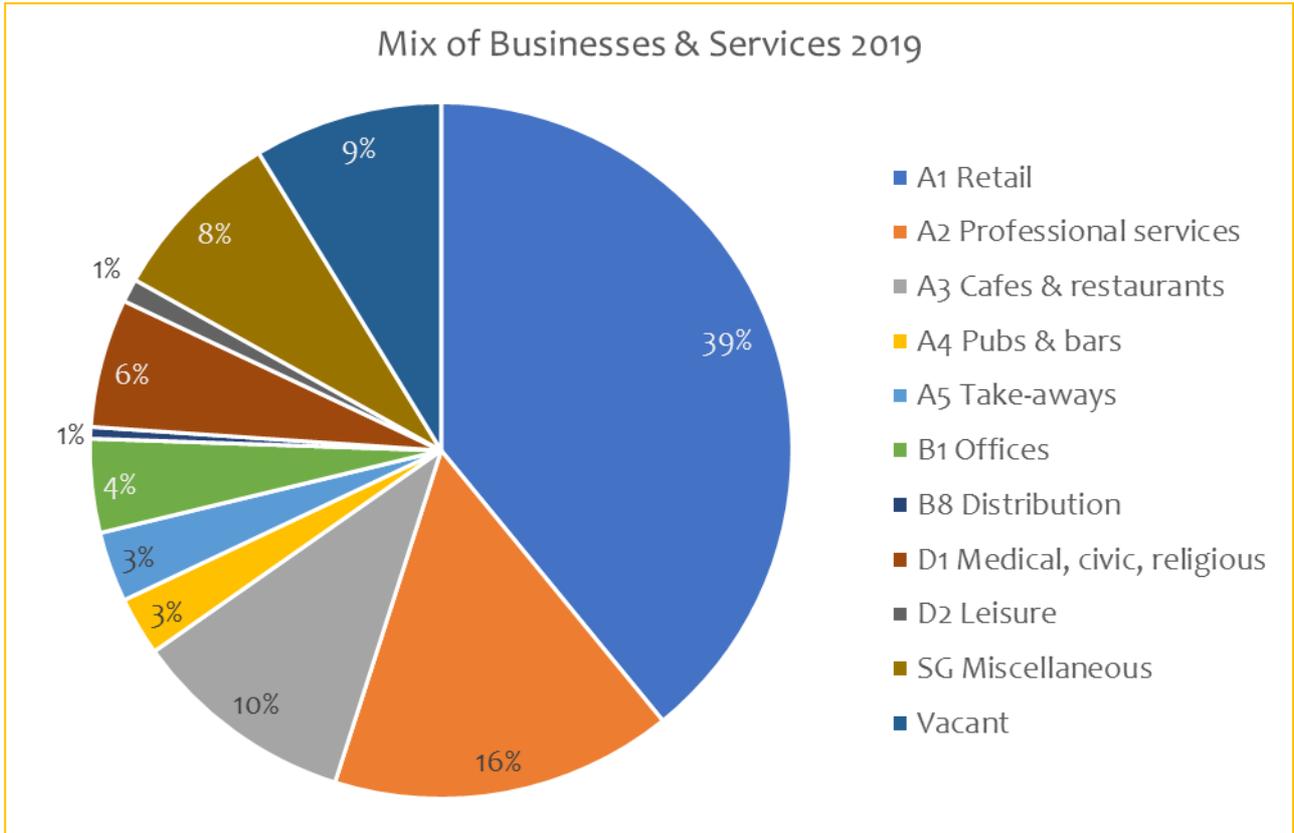
The permitted development right also currently includes a vacancy requirement designed to ensure the building changing use has been vacant for 3 months before the date of the application to protect successful businesses in these premises. A size limit is also included of 1,500 square metres of floorspace being able to change use under the right.

### Analysis Changes in Business and Services Mix



The first headline trend to note is that the period between 2019 and 2023 has been a period of significant flux in the use of business premises in Buckingham town centre. As the chart below illustrates, over 40% of business premises in the town have had some form of change in use over this period. This is independent of changes in classification methodology though flags-up a potential instability to be wary of.

Over the period, just under a quarter (23%) of business premises changed in tenant and/or type of business use, including change of business whilst retaining the same use (13%). The changes including a significant (10%) switch in use as designated by the pre-2021 business use classification, including notably the former M&Co premises reopening as the Verdetto Lounge. There was also a flux in vacant units with some empty properties being brought back into use (6%), whilst slightly more other premises became vacant over the period. A small proportion (3%) were empty in both 2019 and 2023.



Although the change in the use class category definitions makes it difficult to make direct comparisons between the Buckingham data for 2019 and 2023, it is helpful to consider what is revealed separately about trends.

Use Class 2019	National Benchmark for Small Towns (%)	Buckingham (%)
<b>A1 Retail</b>	42%	39%
<b>A2 Professional services</b>	9%	16%
<b>A3 Cafes &amp; restaurants</b>	9%	10%
<b>A4 Pubs &amp; bars</b>	4%	3%
<b>A5 Take-aways</b>	4%	3%
<b>B1 Offices</b>	2%	4%
<b>B8 Distribution</b>	0%	1%
<b>D1 Medical, civic, religious</b>	8%	6%
<b>D2 Leisure</b>	1%	1%
<b>SG Miscellaneous</b>	9%	8%
<b>Vacant</b>	9%	9%

Comparing the 2019 main categories of use with national benchmarks compiled by People & Places reveals that the overall mix of businesses in Buckingham was broadly typical of similar small towns. There was a slightly smaller proportion of retail in Buckingham (39%) compared to national benchmarks (45%), though a slightly larger percentage of financial and professional services (16%) compared to that might be typically expected (9%).

Looking at the proportion of properties occupied by different use classes in 2023, the key point to note is that nearly three-quarters (71%) of town centre premises are now occupied by businesses within use class E. The significance of this is that the owners of these properties do not have to get planning permission to change the use of their building. That is as long as there are no planning conditions directly mentioning the use class and there are not any external structural changes that you would need consent.

The flexibility to change the use of premises classified with use class E can have a positive impact in making re-lettings easier to achieve. It can also enable the mix of different businesses to be skewed, for example, a town popular with visitors is more likely to become dominated by cafes and restaurants.

Another point to note is the change of use of three properties from business to domestic use. This may be due to the special circumstances of the buildings involved, though again is a trend to monitor.



## The Place: Town Centre Access and Movement

Improving access to and around the town centre is an important part of maintaining viability and vibrancy. This involves considering different modes of transport, routes and ‘gateways’ into town centre as well as the ease of access around the town centre for both the familiar resident and unfamiliar visitor.

### Active travel potential

The earlier review of the status of the Buckingham Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan -Lite (LCWIP-lite) indicates that now is an opportune time to consider boosting the active travel potential of access into the town centre. Ahead of reviewing the findings of the town centre customers’ survey, this section considers what might be the potential for increasing active travel in Buckingham by drawing partly on national research and benchmarks.

Active travel trends and potential for Buckingham can be benchmarked against the UK and Ireland Walking and Cycling Index recently published by Sustrans. The term ‘wheeling’ is used alongside walking to ensure that wheelchair and mobility scooter users are included.

Key benchmarks about the potential for walking and wheeling are:

- more people walk or wheel five or more days a week than any other mode of travel (49%).
- the most popular purpose for walking is to reach a particular destination, e.g. work, shopping (51%); followed by enjoyment or fitness (42%).
- the most popular change to encourage residents to walk more is to create nicer places along streets to rest (78%). This followed by better pavement accessibility such as level surfaces and dropped kerbs (74%).

Important benchmarks about the potential for cycling include:

- only 15% of people cycle regularly (at least once per week).
- the most popular purpose for cycling is work (34%), shopping, personal business and social trips (33%); and leisure (17%).
- 10% of residents perceive themselves as cycling regularly; 18% occasionally; 5% new or returning to cycling; with 28% saying they do not cycle but would like to.
- the most popular personal improvement to encourage cycling was jointly access to secure cycle storage at or near home and access to a bike (53%); followed by access or improvements to a city cycle sharing scheme (47%).
- the most popular infrastructure investment for encouraging more cycling was more traffic-free cycle routes away from roads, e.g. through parks or along waterways (67%); followed by better links with public transport, like secure cycle parking.

### Accessibility within Buckingham town centre

A previous access and signage audit of Buckingham town centre undertaken by People & Places revealed that a key issue for the unfamiliar visitor is awareness and orientation to and around the west end of the town centre between West and Wells Streets. The customer survey helps provide additional information about accessibility issues particular to residents.



## The People: Business Confidence Survey

The business confidence survey is an important part of engaging local businesses by understanding their perceptions and priorities. It is a first step in working with them and local businesses groups to help develop solutions.

### Characteristics of businesses surveyed

Survey forms were electronically distributed to all the town centre businesses in Buckingham. Town centre businesses were asked to complete the full survey whilst other Buckingham businesses were routed through a shorter version of the survey. There were 76 surveys completed in total, of which 52 were based in the town centre. Based on 158 active town centre businesses shown in Town Council's 2023 business use survey, this equates to a return rate of 33% compared to 25% nationally and suggests an elevated level of interest within the town's business community. It is also indicative of a high percentage of independent retailers that are often owner-managed and more engaged in partnership working.

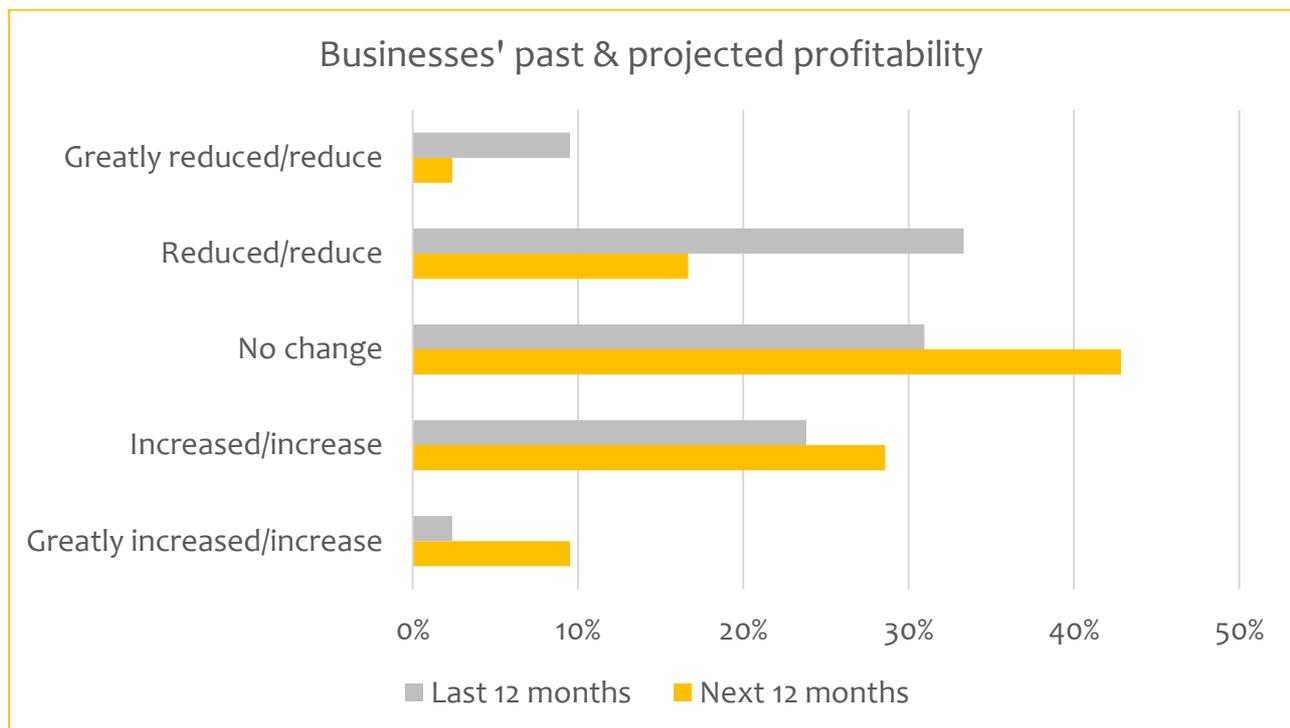
Nature of business	Buckingham business types surveyed (%)
<b>What type of business or organisation are you?</b>	
Shop	27%
Retail service	23%
Professional/financial services	10%
Hospitality	17%
Leisure	4%
Office	4%
Medical (incl. eye treatment and dentists)	13%
Other	2%
<b>What type of ownership does the business have?</b>	
National multiple business	11%
Regional multiple business	4%
Independent business or organisation	85%
<b>How long has your business been in the town?</b>	
Less than a year	6%
One to five years	25%
Six to ten years	10%
More than ten years	58%

Of the businesses that responded to the survey, 50% were shops of some kind, or providers of retail services and 17% were hospitality businesses; this is broadly representative of the town centre's business mix. 85% of these respondents were independent businesses and this is also broadly representative. A total of 68% of these businesses are long-established in



Buckingham, having been based there for at least six years. This compares to 59% of businesses in benchmarked towns nationally.

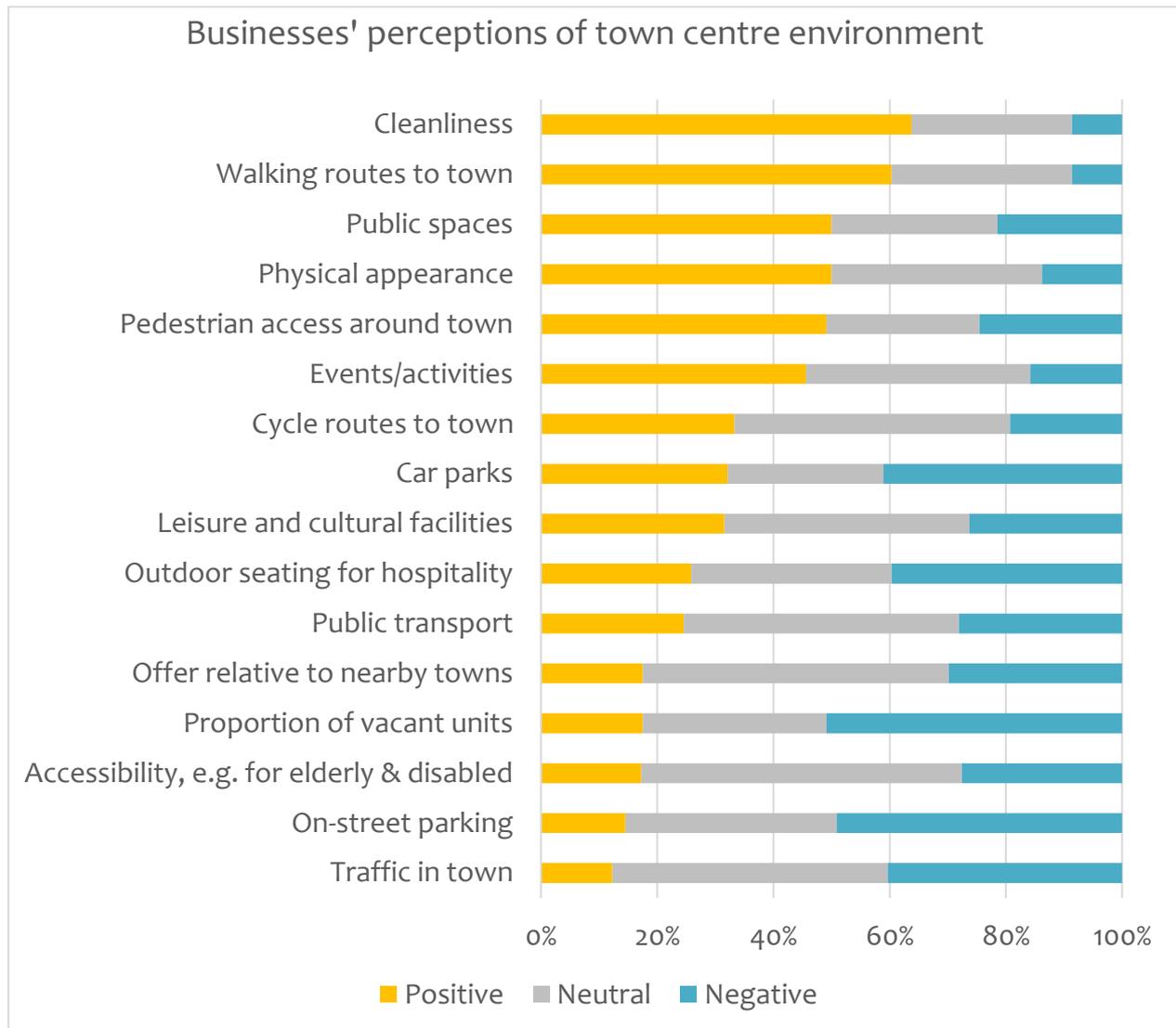
When town centre businesses were asked about their profitability over the last 12 months and their expected future profitability over the next 12 months, there was a variety of responses. A total of 43% of businesses reported that their profitability was reduced or greatly reduced over the 12 months to summer 2023. Optimism amongst businesses is nearly always greater looking forward, and the percentage projecting a decline in profitability is reduced to 19%. This does though indicate that nearly 1 in 5 town centre businesses are vulnerable to closure. In contrast, over a third of businesses (39%) are expecting profits to increase or greatly increase over the next 12 months, whilst 42% expect no change.



### *Businesses' perceptions of the town centre*

When Buckingham businesses were asked about their perceptions of the town centre, the following factors were rated positively by at least half of businesses:

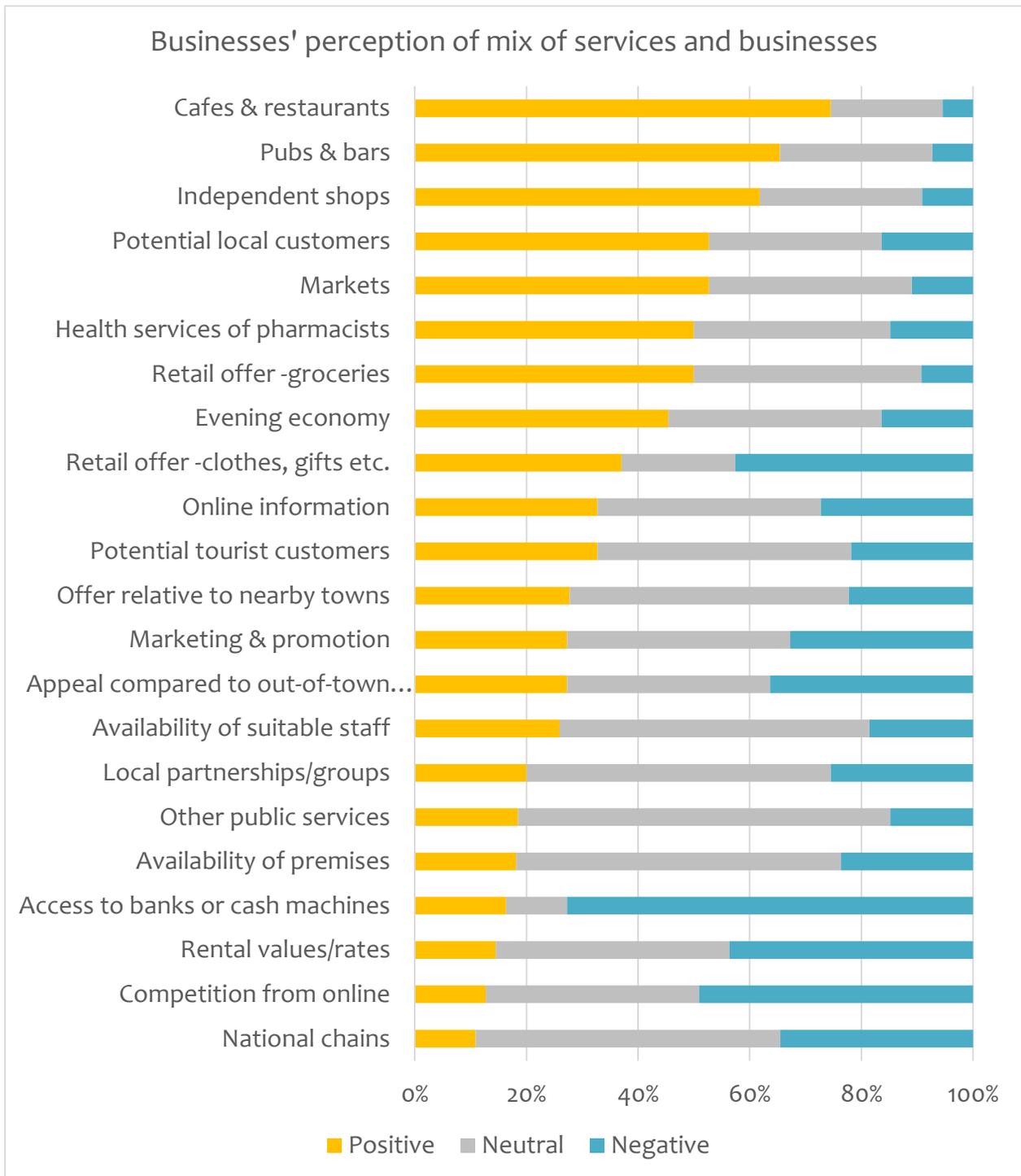
- Cafes & restaurants (75%)
- Pubs & bars (65%)
- Cleanliness (64%)
- Independent shops (62%)
- Walking routes to town (60%)
- Potential local customers (53%)
- Markets (53%)
- Retail offer -groceries (50%)
- Health services or pharmacists (50%)
- Physical appearance (50%)
- Public spaces (50%)



Fewer businesses held negative perceptions, though over a third of those surveyed had concerns about the following aspects of the town centre environment and its mix of businesses and services:

- Access to banking (73%)
- Proportion of vacant units (51%)
- On-street parking (49%)
- Retail offer -clothes, gifts etc. (43%)
- Car parks (41%)
- Outdoor seating for hospitality (40%)
- Traffic in town (40%)
- Appeal compared to out-of-town shopping (35%)
- National chains (35%)
- Town marketing & promotion (33%)

Going forward it is important to understand perceptions of businesses alongside those of town centre users in ways that accentuate the positive and address the negative. Stakeholders' views of future priorities will also inform such forward planning.



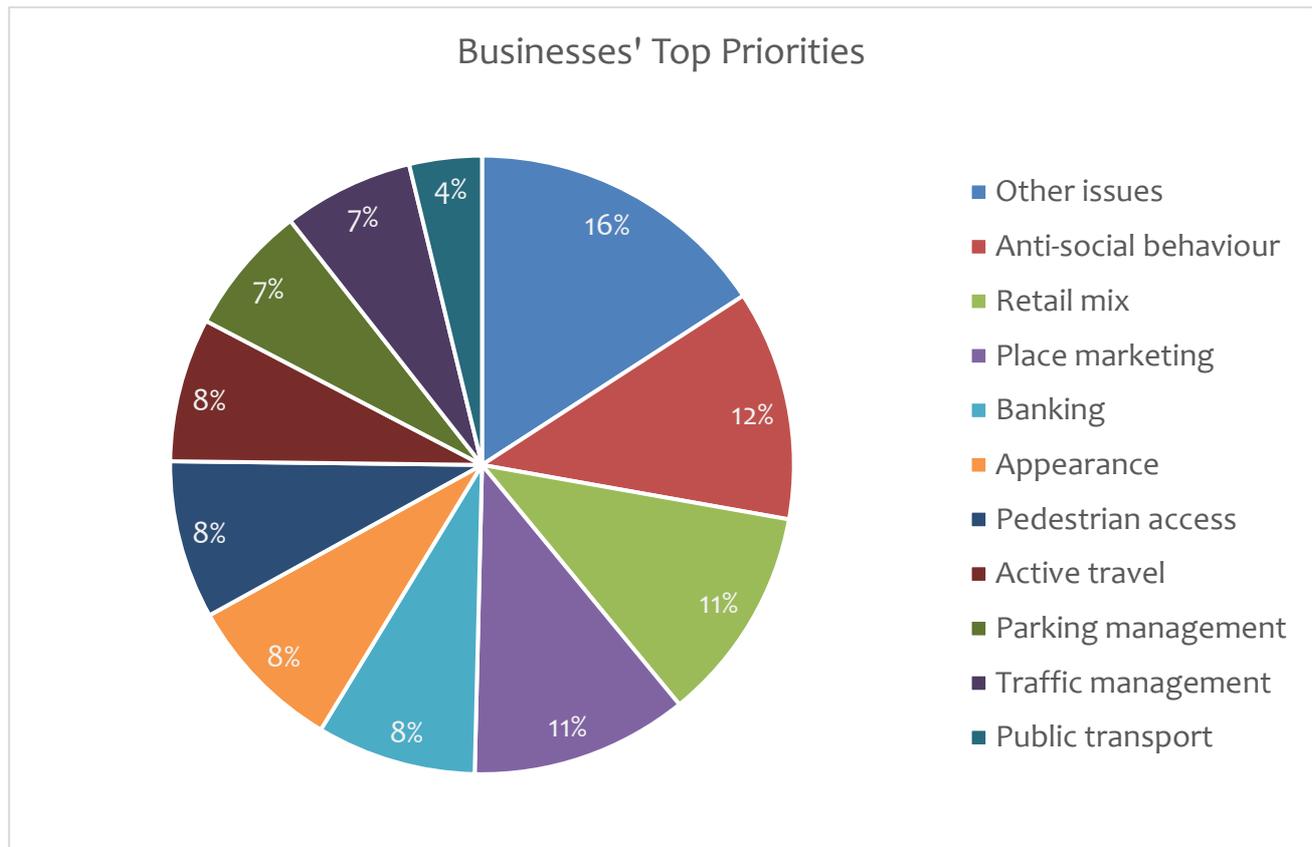
### Business priorities for improving the town centre

Businesses were also prompted to share their top two priorities for improving Buckingham town centre around five themes relating to the guidance in the LGA Toolkit. The table overleaf summarises the categorisation of proposed priorities by theme.



Priorities	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
<b>Travel to town</b>		
Active travel	10	8%
Parking management	9	7%
Traffic management	9	7%
Public transport	5	4%
Free parking	3	2%
	36	27%
<b>Mix of Businesses and Services</b>		
Retail mix	15	11%
Banking	11	8%
Hospitality	4	3%
Property costs	2	2%
Public services	1	1%
	33	25%
<b>Streetscape and Appearance</b>		
Appearance	11	8%
Pedestrian access	11	8%
Cleanliness	2	2%
Public spaces	1	1%
Amenities	1	1%
	26	20%
<b>Marketing and Events</b>		
Place marketing	15	11%
Specialist markets and events	3	2%
Leisure	2	2%
	20	15%
<b>Social Issues and Leadership</b>		
Anti-social behaviour	16	12%
Planning	1	1%
Cost of living	1	1%
	18	14%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100%</b>





The broad themes of travel to town (27%), mix of businesses and services (25%) and streetscape and appearance (20%), accounted for three-quarters of priorities expressed by businesses.

As the pie chart above summarises, within the broad themes, certain issues were identified as important priorities by a significant number of businesses, including anti-social behaviour (12%), the imbalance of the town centre retail mix (11%), the need for enhanced marketing (11%), pedestrian access (8%), active travel (8%) and parking management (8%). It is important to recognise the priority given to such softer issues that might not normally be picked-up by the statutory or neighbourhood planning processes.

## The People: Town Centre User's Survey

The aim of the town centre users' survey is to establish how the town centre is perceived and used by residents primarily. It provides a wealth of data from a range of different types of local -and some visiting- town centre users.

### Characteristics of customers surveyed

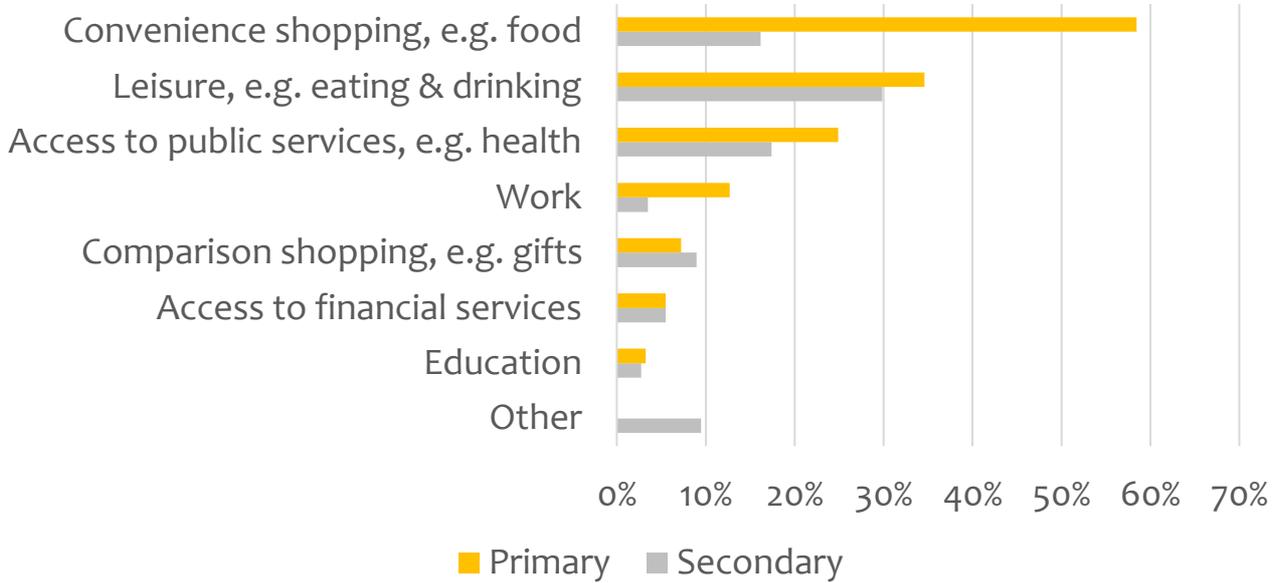
A sample of 407 Buckingham town centre users were surveyed online through social media using the help of local community partners. Over two-thirds (68.5%) of respondents were female, a comparable proportion to surveys conducted in towns nationally.

	Buckingham (number)	Buckingham %
<b>Is Buckingham the town centre that you visit most frequently?</b>		
Yes	379	93%
No	28	7%
<b>Where do you visit most frequently?</b>		
Milton Keynes	75%	246
Bicester	30%	100
Aylesbury	11%	35
Towcester	3%	11
Other (please specify)	23%	76

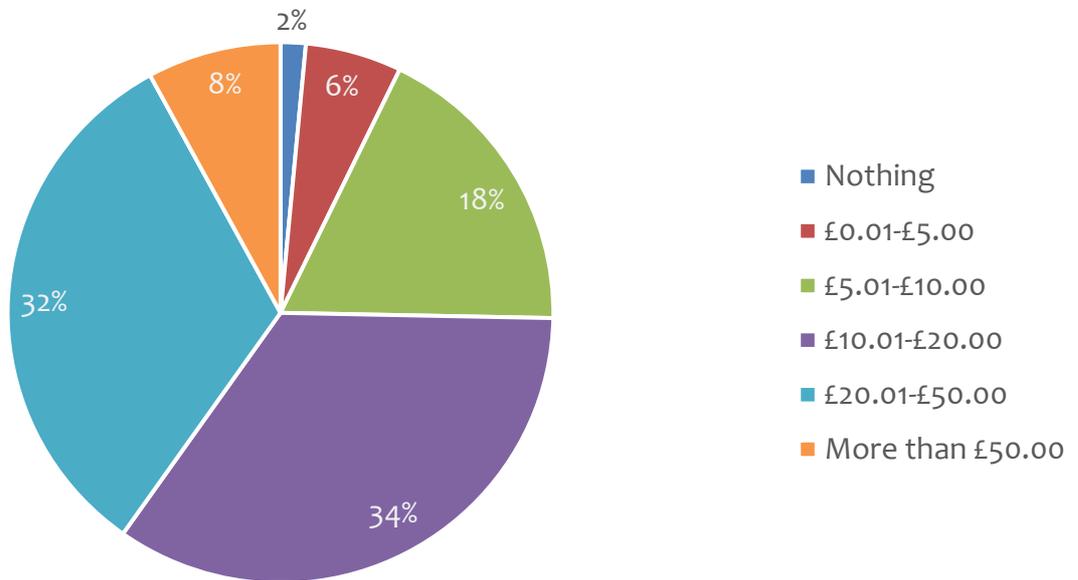
Customer background and nature of visit to town centre	National Small Towns %	Buckingham (number)	Buckingham %
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	35%	109	31.5%
Female	65%	237	68.5%
<b>Age</b>			
16-25	6%	11	3%
26-35	13%	41	12%
36-45	21%	75	22%
46-55	21%	82	24%
56-65	18%	66	19%
66-75	20%	49	14%
Over 75	-	24	7%

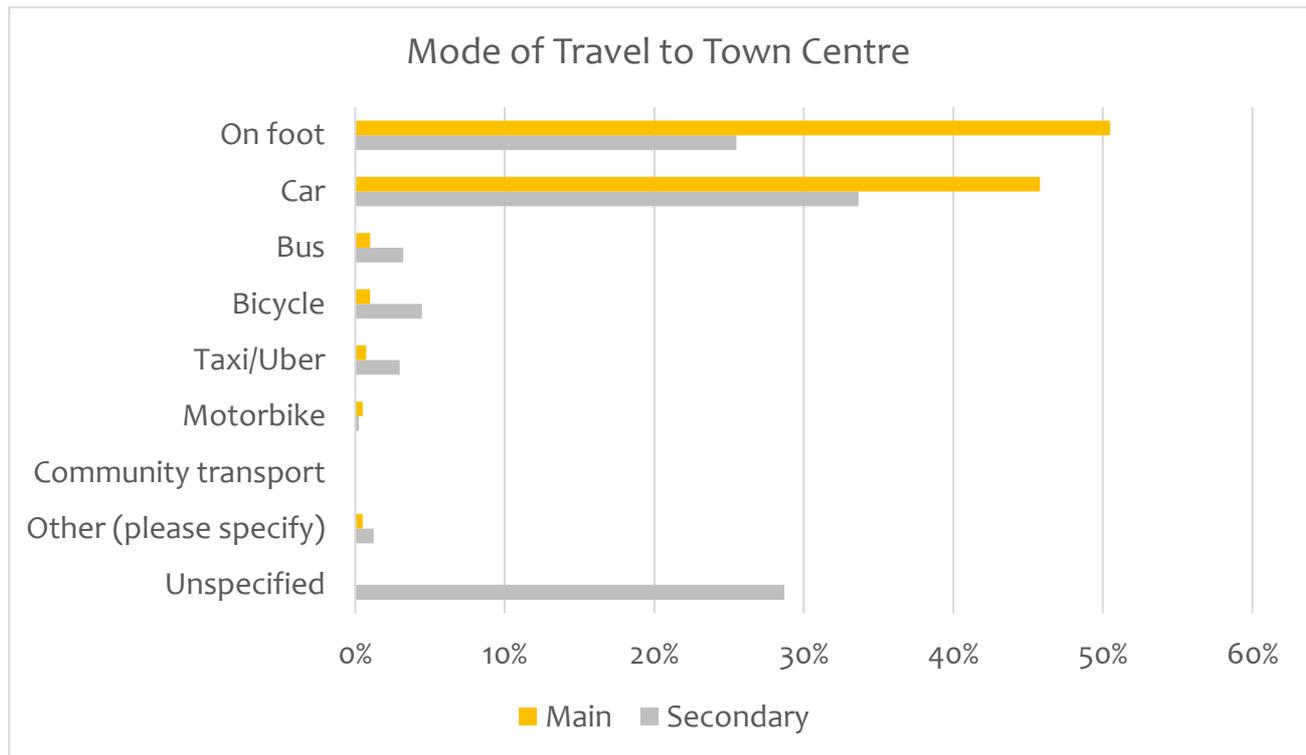


### Reasons for Visiting Town Centre



### Typical Spend per Visit





As the charts on these pages show, the customer survey gathered a wealth of information about who completed the survey and their habits in using the town centre. It shows, for example, that grocery shopping is by far the most popular primary reason (58%) for coming to Buckingham town centre. Not surprisingly this illustrates the importance of the town centre Waitrose to wider footfall.

Leisure uses such as using hospitality businesses, account for more than a further third of people's reasons for visiting the town centre. Taken together with grocery shopping, these two reasons probably account for why 40% of customers spend up to and over £50 on each visit.

In contrast, comparison shopping for items such as fashion, gifts or electrical goods is only a primary reason for visiting the town centre for 7% of users, despite it accounting for three quarters of retail businesses.

The data shows us that over half of town centre users surveyed (55%), come into the town centre more than once a week though two thirds (66%) dwell for less than an hour. Compared to what we might expect for a town of its size, only a small per centage of users (12%) extend their dwell time in Buckingham to one to two hours.

The data indicates that typically the residents surveyed come to town on foot as their primary (50%) or secondary (25%) travel mode. Comparable numbers travel to town by car as their primary (46%) or secondary (34%) mode of transport . Only 1% of town centre users travel by bike or public travel as their primary mode of transport though this increases to 4% and 3% respectively as secondary options.

Frequency and duration of visits to town centre	National Small Towns %	Buckingham (number)	Buckingham %
<b>How often do you currently visit Buckingham town centre? (Please choose one option only)</b>			
Daily	21%	73	18%
More than once a week	39%	151	37%
Weekly	19%	104	26%
More than once a month	10%	55	14%
Once a month or less	8%	16	4%
Infrequently	21%	7	2%
<b>How long do you currently stay during a visit to the town centre?</b>			
<1 hour	44%	264	66%
1-2 hours	35%	47	12%
2-4 hours	13%	56	14%
4-6 hours	3%	4	1%
All day	5%	17	4%

### Customers' perceptions of the town centre

When Buckingham town centre users were asked about their perceptions of the town centre, the following factors were rated positively by at least half of residents surveyed:

- Convenience (81%)
- Cafes/restaurants (74%)
- Walking routes to town (72%)
- Customer service (65%)
- Retail offer –groceries (62%)
- Physical appearance (62%)
- Cleanliness (61%)
- Markets (59%)
- Public spaces (55%)
- Independent shops (55%)
- Health services (54%)
- Pubs/ bars (53%)
- Pedestrian access (50%)

Fewer customers held negative perceptions, though 30% of those surveyed had concerns about the following aspects of the town centre environment and its mix of businesses and services:

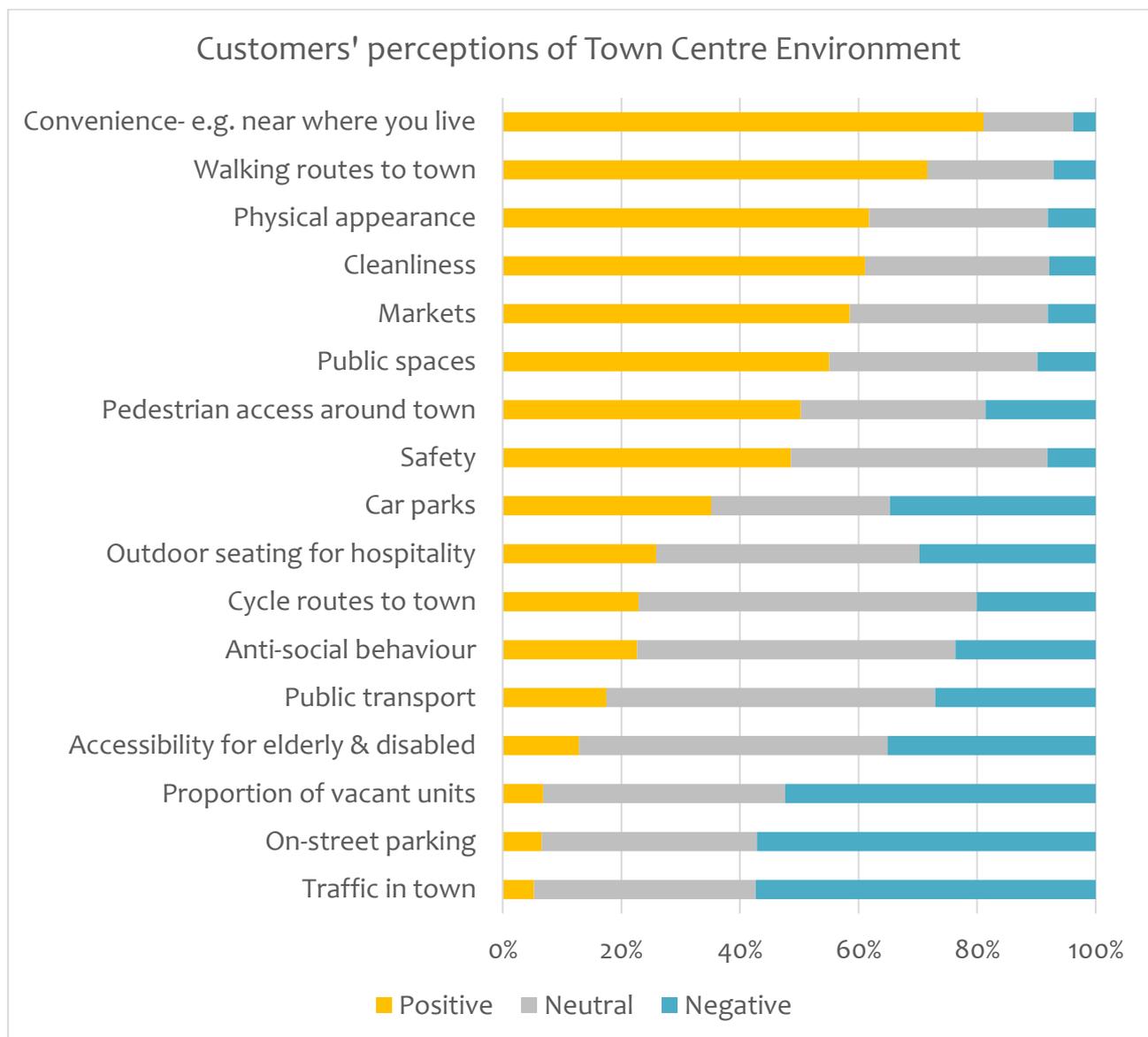
- Access to banking (74%)
- Traffic in town (57%)
- On-street parking (57%)

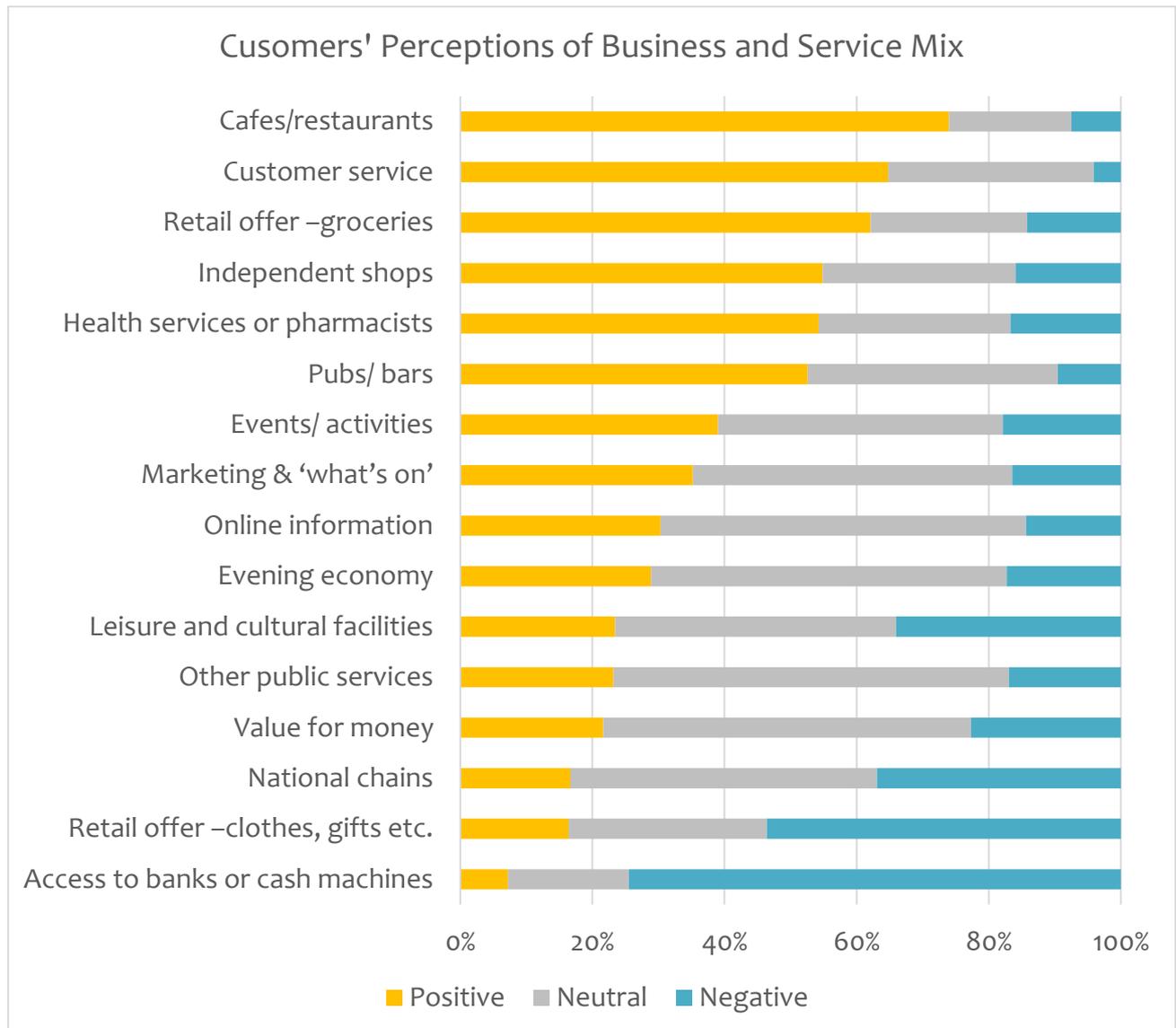


- Retail offer –fashion etc. (54%)
- Proportion of vacant units (52%)
- National chains (37%)
- Accessibility for elderly & disabled (35%)
- Car parks (35%)
- Leisure and cultural facilities (34%)
- Outdoor seating (30%)

As with businesses’ perception, going forward it is important to understand perceptions of both sets of stakeholders alongside each other in ways that accentuate the positive and address the negative. Stakeholders’ views of future priorities will also inform such forward planning.

**Customers’ perceptions of the town centre**





Customers were also asked about their overall impressions of Buckingham town centre and how this had changed over time.

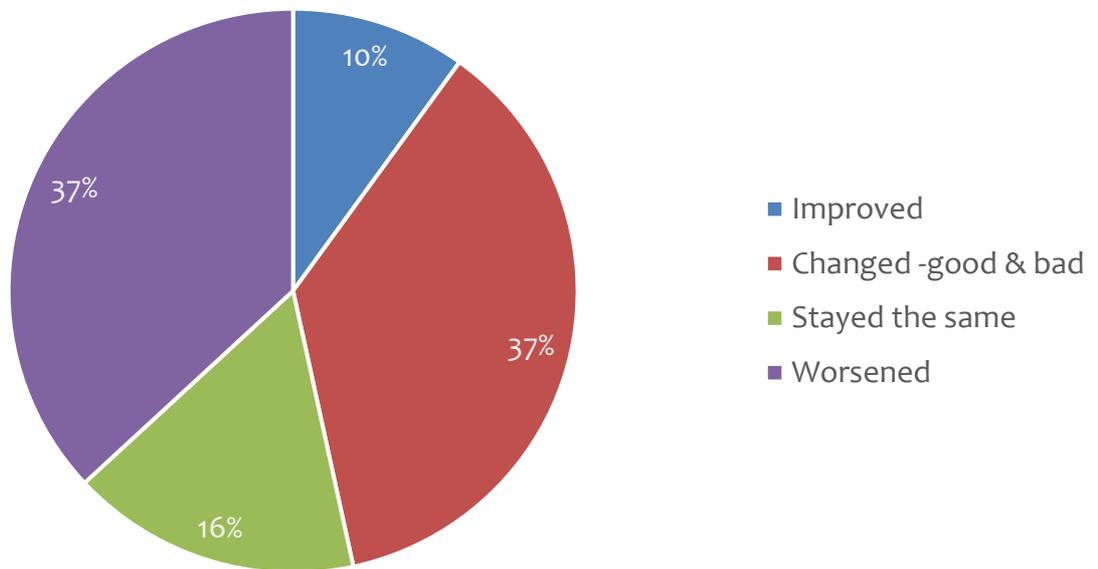
#### How has your experience of the town centre changed?

When asked how their experience of Buckingham town centre had changed in recent years, over a third (37%) reported that it had worsened. Only 10% of town users said it had improved, with a further 37% reporting that it had changed in a mixture of good and bad ways, and 18% said it had stayed the same.

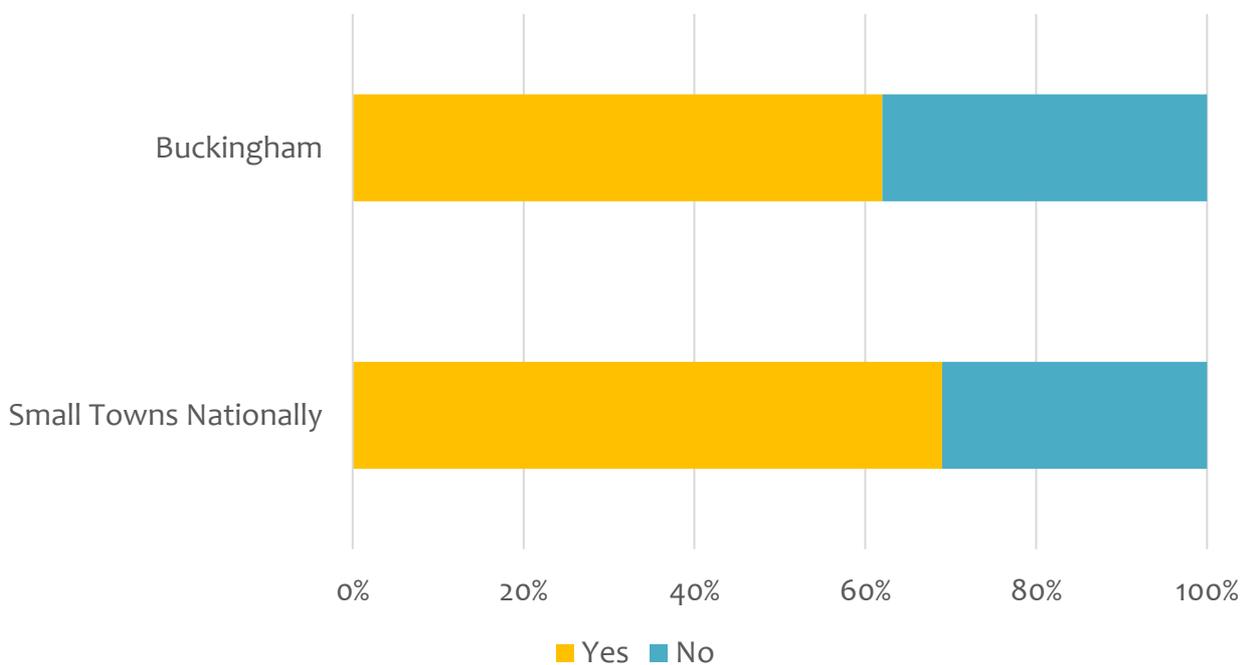
#### Would you recommend a visit to the town centre?

When asked if they would recommend a visit to the town centre, nearly two-thirds said 'yes'. This is slightly less than typical of similar towns nationally.

### How has Town Centre Experience Changed?

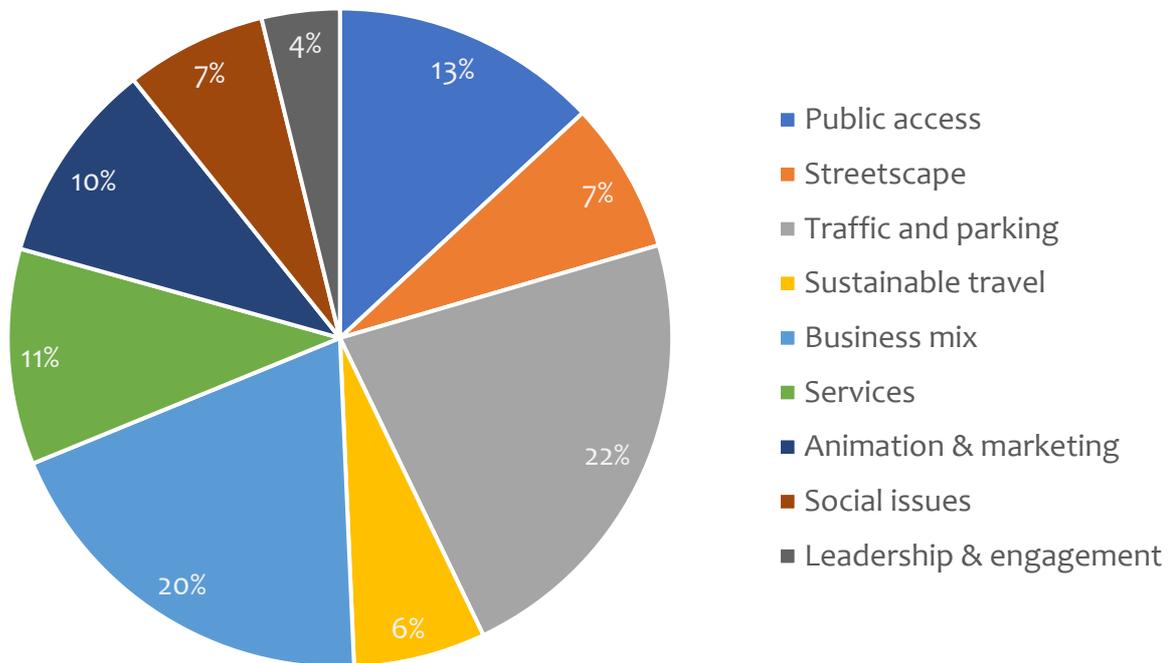


### Would you Recommend a Visit to Buckingham Town Centre?





Customers' Future Priorities by Category



Category of Customers' Future Priorities	Number	Percentage
<b>1. Businesses &amp; services</b>		
Business mix	215	19%
Services	117	11%
<b>2. Travel to town</b>		
Traffic and parking	248	22%
Sustainable travel	71	6%
<b>3. Appearance &amp; accessibility</b>		
Public access	144	13%
Streetscape	82	7%
<b>4. Managing change &amp; social issues</b>		
Social issues	76	7%
Leadership & engagement	42	4%
<b>5. Leisure and tourism</b>		
Animation & marketing	110	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1105</b>	<b>100%</b>



*Travel to town*

Within a variety of issues relating to customers' experiences of travel to town, calls for free parking were the sub-category that received the highest level of responses (9%), as is often typical of responses to such surveys. This was followed by comments covering perceived high levels of traffic in the town centre (7%) that create difficulties for pedestrians and also are a cause of congestion for motorists. With the range of comments about wider parking management (5%), many responses related to the Cornwall's Meadow Car Park and especially to the unreliability of payment machines in what was often referred to as the "Waitrose" section of the car park.

Calls for improvements to more sustainable modes of transport made-up a significant proportion of the overall responses (6%) including the prioritisation of improvements to public transport provision (3%), cycling infrastructure (2%) and walking routes into town (1%).

*Appearance & accessibility*

Priority given to improving public access across the town centre (14%) included the prioritisation of better accessibility (5%) through improved conditions for walking, wheeling and road crossings alongside specific calls for pedestrianisation schemes (4%) mostly covering the Market Place and mentions of the need to improve footpath paving (3%).

Calls for a range of streetscape improvements (3%) included cleanliness (2%), built heritage (2%) and the physical appearance of the town centre (1%).

*Managing change & social issues*

The need to respond to perceived levels of anti-social behaviour including congregation in public spaces, excessive drinking and a desire for an increased police presence, were a significant priority (4%). The need to show awareness of and respond to the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis on a section of the local population was a second social issue to receive a significant proportion of responses (2%).

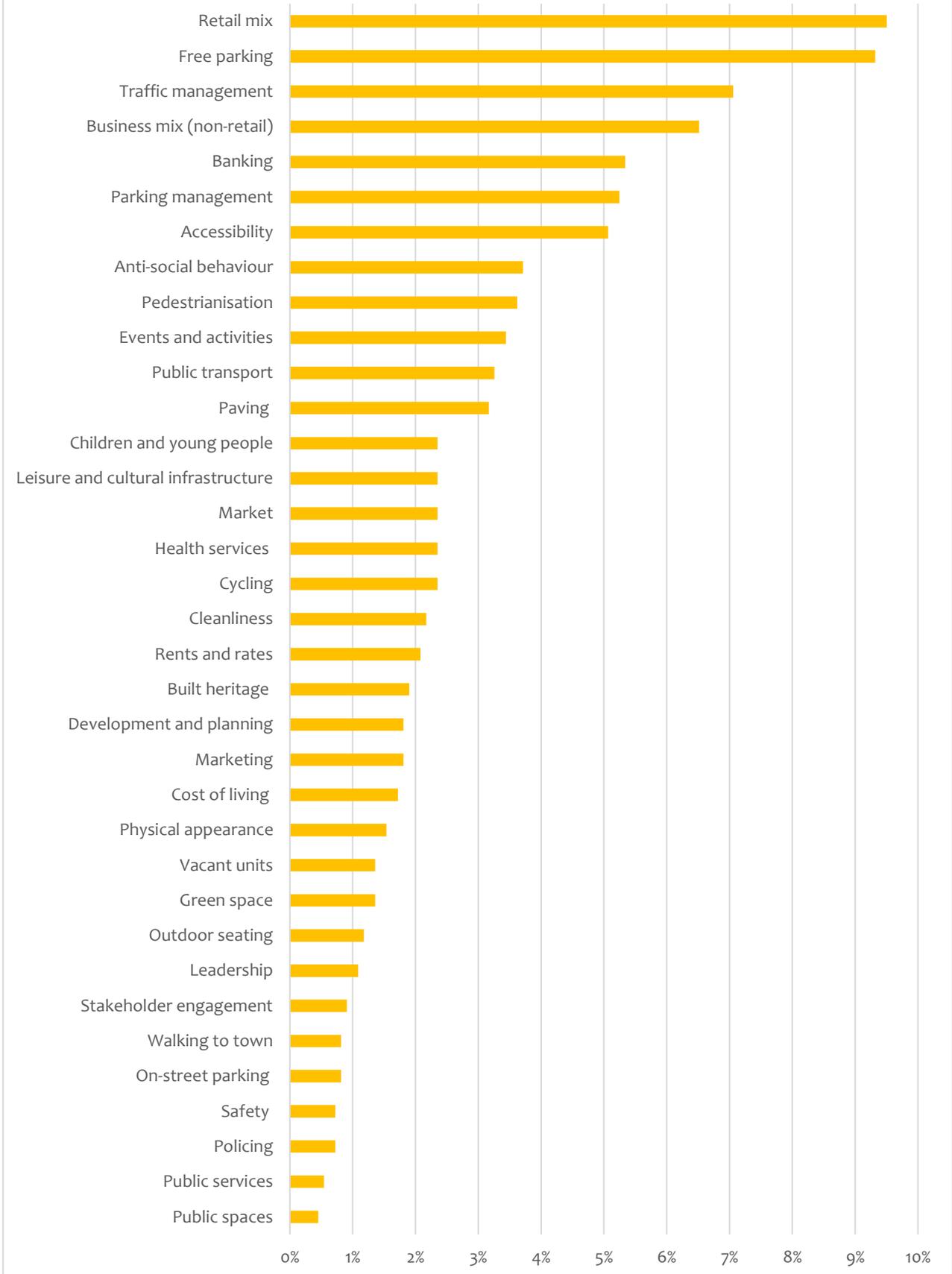
Concerns about the extent of recent development and pressure placed on existing to infrastructure was the main leadership issue (2%) that customers considered needed to be addressed.

*Leisure and tourism*

Within the broad category of leisure and tourism, there was an even spread of priorities between a desire to see more town centre events and activities (3%), investing in leisure and cultural facilities (2%), providing activities for children and young people (2%) and improved marketing (2%) of such activities and the wider town.



### Customers' Future Priorities by Sub-category



## Comparing Business and Customer Perceptions

It is instructive to compare and contrast the different perspectives of town centre businesses and customers. Businesses of course in part take the perspective of how the town centre environment and mix, impacts on their ability to trade that might be specific to the type and location of their business. Different types of customers too will bring their own perspectives based on what they seek from a town centre. The prompts used in the survey are also in part different and therefore account for some of the differences in the responses.

Looking at the responses from both sets of stakeholders, we should be able to see these contrasting perspectives as well as compatible elements that are key to attracting footfall and encouraging foot-flow around town, increased dwell-times and higher levels of satisfaction.

Looking at the top positive and negative perceptions of both businesses and customers for Buckingham town centre, shows remarkable similarities. The list of top positive perceptions for both sets of stakeholders feature cafes and restaurants prominently, and pubs to a slightly lesser extent. Independent shops, grocery retail, markets and access to health services are also all aspects of the mix of businesses and services viewed as making positive contributions to the town centre. Cleanliness, public spaces, physical appearance and the ability to walk to town, are all aspects of environment that feature in both lists of positive features. Issues that do not appear in both listings are the appeal to local customers and customer service /convenience that might be considered as different sides of same coin.

Current negative perceptions for both sets of stakeholders were unsurprisingly topped by access to banking services which have been temporarily lost from the town centre. The limited comparison retail such as fashion and national chains are considered negatively by both businesses and the customers. Traffic, the proportion of vacant premises, outdoor seating and both on and off-street parking are considered as significant negative factors by both. The appeal relative to out-of-town retail and the levels of town-wide marketing are negative perceptions specific to businesses, while negative perceptions about the level of cultural and leisure provision is particular to customers. Only customers perceive the accessibility around the town centre for the elderly and disabled as a significant negative issue.

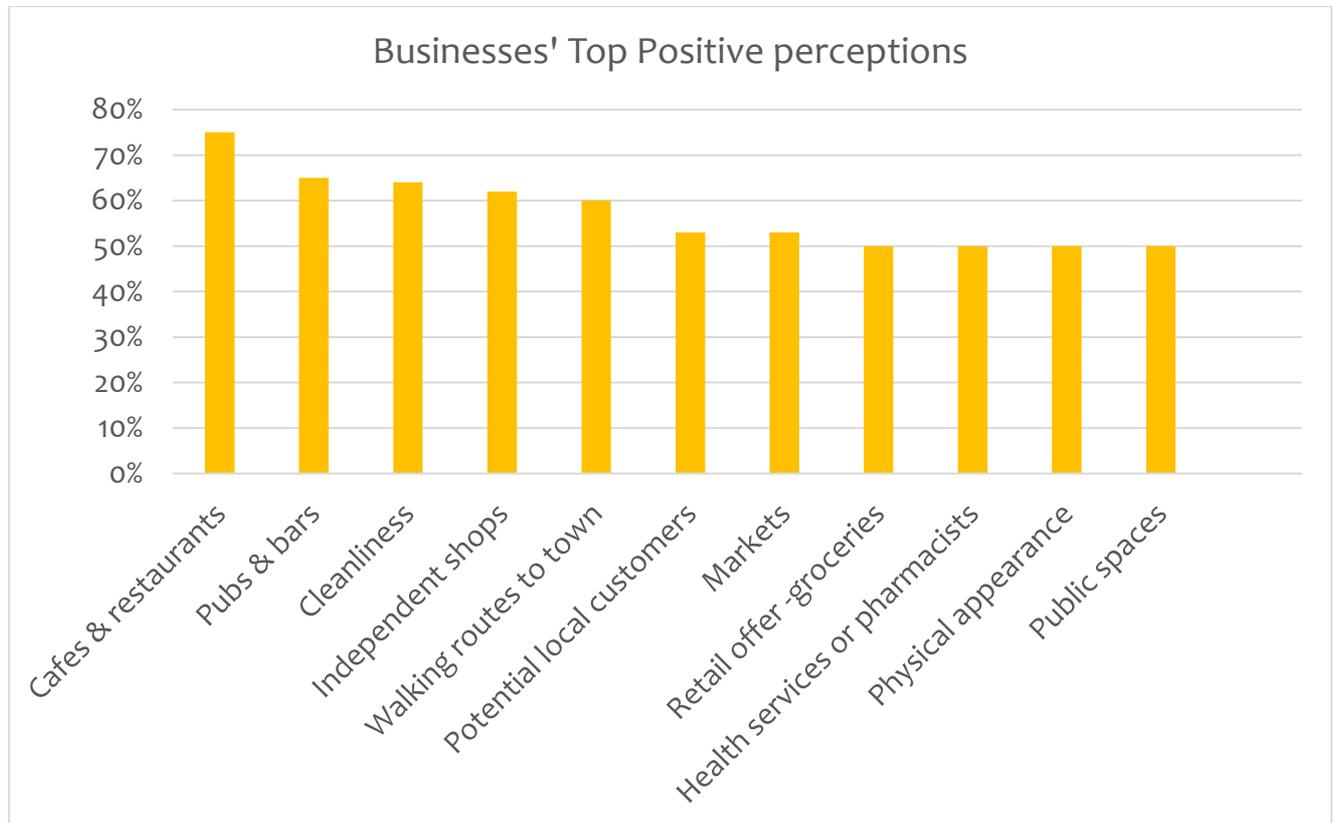
## Comparing Business and Customer Priorities

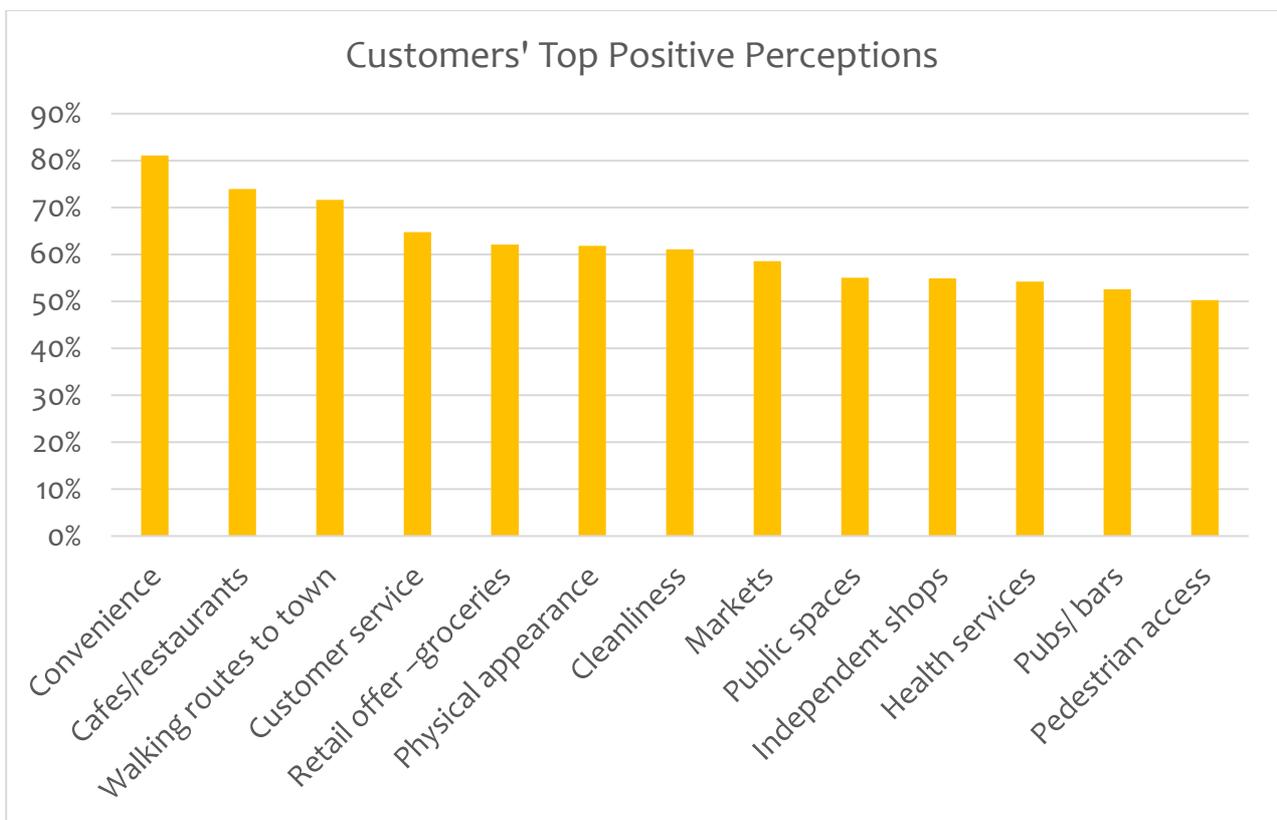
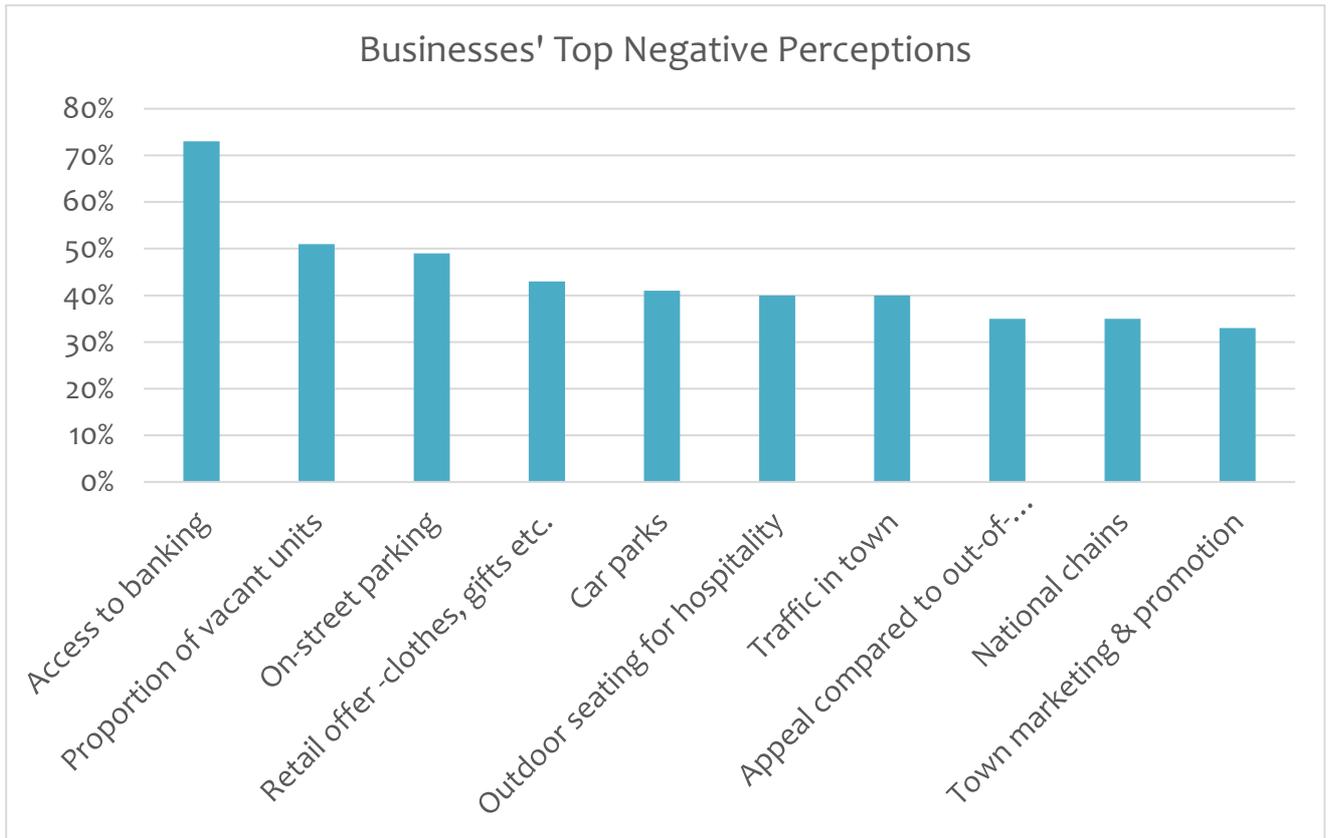
There is a broad level of synergy between businesses and customers' priorities for improving Buckingham town centre. Of customers' priorities receiving a significant response from at least 3% of those surveyed, retail and business mix combined, traffic management, banking, parking management, accessibility, anti-social behaviour and public transport all receive similarly significant responses from businesses. Issues such as free parking, pedestrianisation and paving are related to sub-categories of high priorities of businesses. Customers' high priority for events and activities is not matched by business responses. Similarly, only businesses give a high priority to improving the appearance of the town centre and boosting the town's brand and marketing.

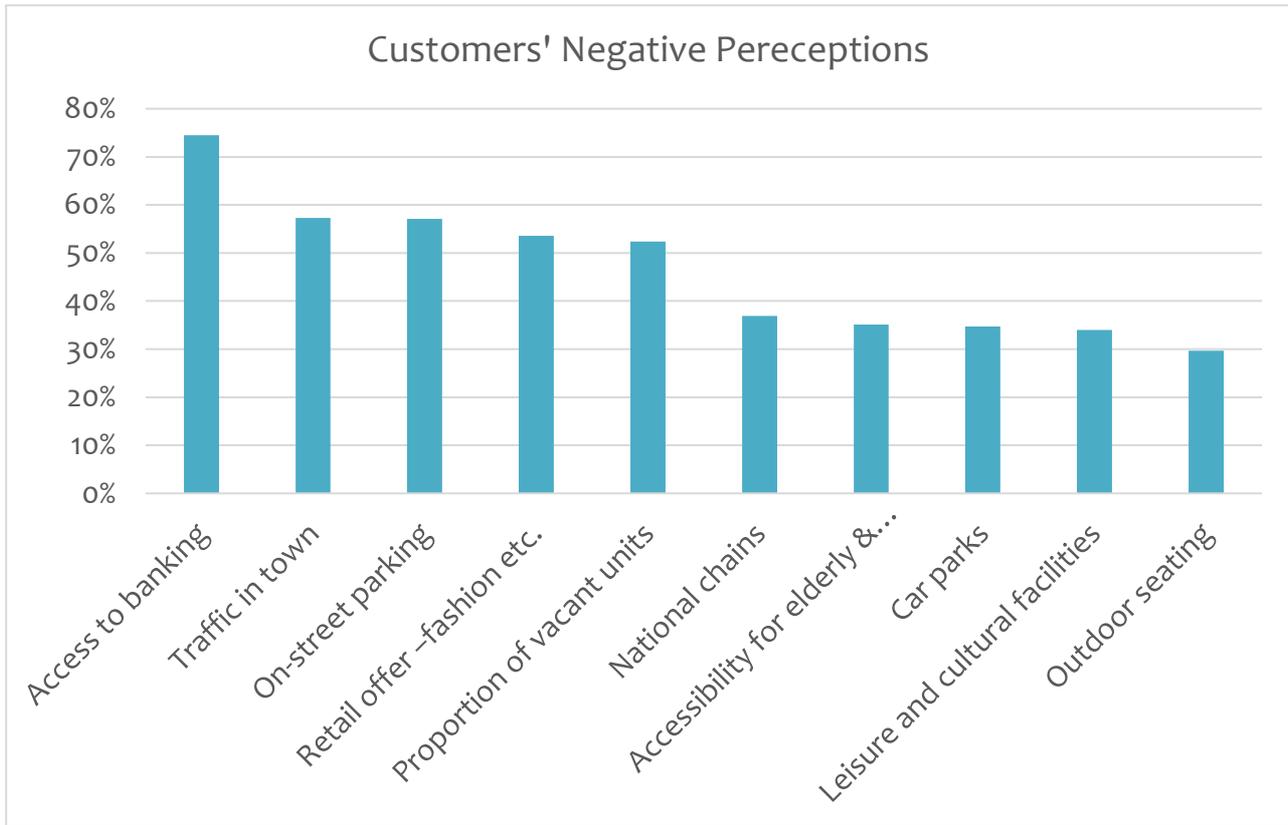
Combined with the analysis of negative perceptions for both sets of stakeholders, this analysis points to a need to address aspects of the town centre's changing business mix, as well as elements of travel to town and around town. Concerns about banking provision have been at least in-part addressed through the opening of the permanent Banking Hub. These



priorities strengthen businesses' cases for improved town-wide marketing that might focus on Buckingham's recognised strengths. These priorities add to customers' concerns and the case for greater investment in cultural/leisure facilities and events.

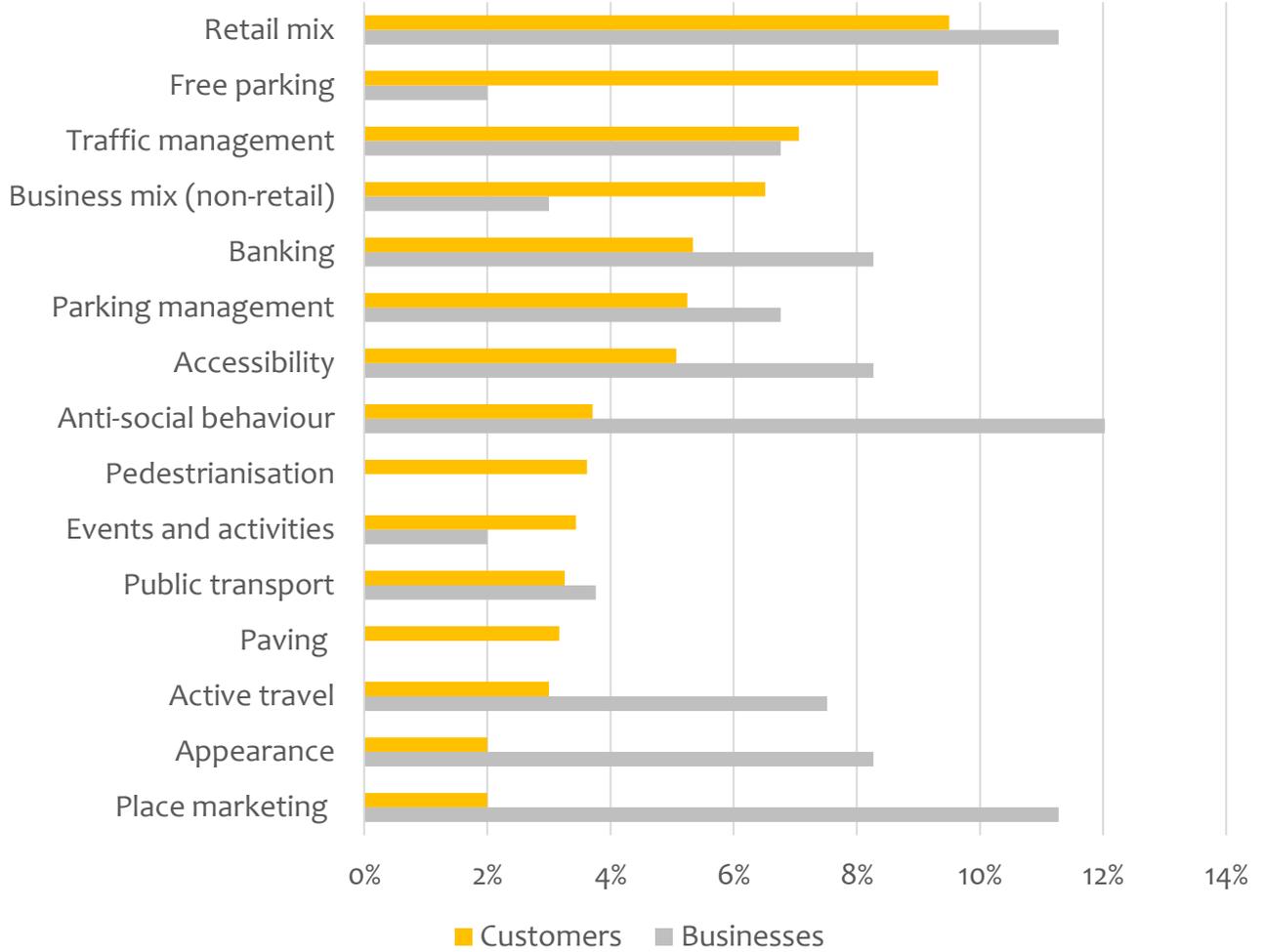






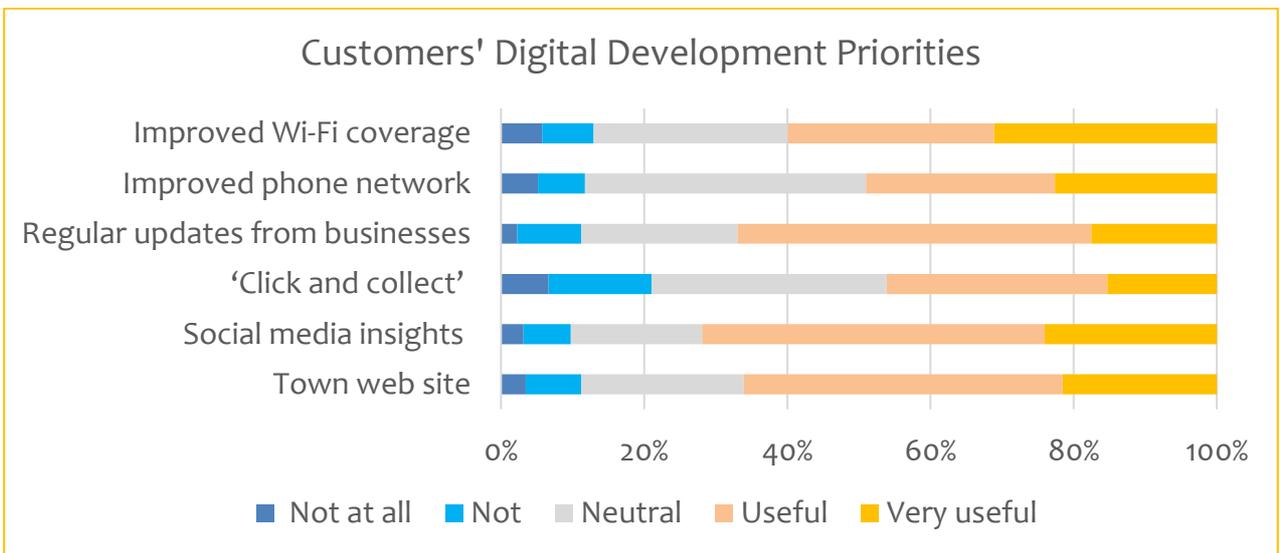
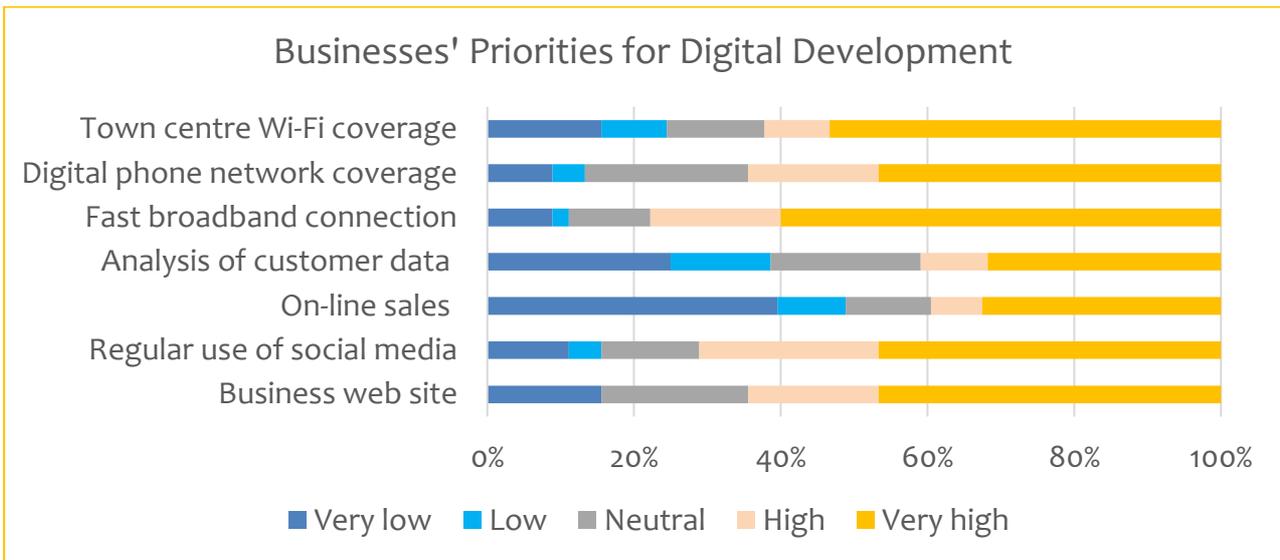
Businesses' Top Priorities	% of total	Customers' Top Priorities	% of total
Anti-social behaviour	12%	Retail mix	10%
Retail mix	11%	Free parking	9%
Place marketing	11%	Traffic management	7%
Banking	8%	Business mix (non-retail)	7%
Appearance	8%	Banking	5%
Accessibility	8%	Parking management	5%
Active travel	8%	Accessibility	5%
Parking management	7%	Anti-social behaviour	4%
Traffic management	7%	Pedestrianisation	4%
Public transport	4%	Events and activities	3%
Hospitality	3%	Public transport	3%
		Paving	3%

### Top Customer & Business Priorities by Sub-category



# Digital Development Opportunities

Both businesses and customers were given a similar set of prompts to determine their digital development priorities for Buckingham town centre. As is normal, businesses gave a slightly higher priority to continued investment in town centre digital infrastructure including continued investment in fast broadband connections which was a high or very high priority for 78% of respondents. Businesses did give a high or very high priority to them providing regular social media updates (71%) and creation and management of their own web sites (65%).



Customers gave a higher priority to the development of services that make use of improved infrastructure with a high proportion ranking as useful or very useful, social media insights (72%), the creation and management of a town web site (67%) and receiving regular updates from businesses about products, services or events (67%). Customers gave a moderately high priority to good Wi-Fi coverage (60%).



# Local Leadership: Creating a Forward Framework

For a partnership to evolve in its effectiveness, it is important to plan for constant progress through regular review and writing things down! This can be achieved by annually reviewing the town centre checklist provided by Local Government Association's Revitalising Town Centres Toolkit and updating a 'Forward Framework' comprising an over-arching strategy and two component plans: an organisational or business plan covering the 'how' of revitalisation and an action plan covering the 'what'.

## The 'How' of Town Centre Revitalisation : People & Partnerships

Revitalising a town centre is a complex and long-term venture. It is as important to focus on the people and partnerships necessary to drive success as it is to focus on the 'what' of delivering projects. Experience shows that it requires resources and leadership to make things happen in this way and that it should not be left to chance. The Local Government Association's Revitalising Town Centres refers to the 'f' factors for success as a guide for structuring an organisational or business development plan.

These 'f' factors begin with the 'foundations' that include creating the evidence base and engaging stakeholders to help determine priorities, as being undertaken here. A next consideration is the 'form' of an organisation necessary to move things forward and this covers its set-up, structure, governance, partnerships and legal status. The form of a partnership should follow its 'function'. Key determinants of this organisational form to consider include: the balance sought between being a consultative partner or can-do delivery body; available financial support and the need for independent fund raising; and close alignment with council policy verses the capacity to reach-out, engage with and empower sectors of the community.

There are many variations of the organisational models available for leading town centre revitalisation. Different options for organisational form include: council-led partnerships which coordinate activity and often inform policy; business-led town teams which can be very "can-do" and have a marketing focus; neighbourhood planning groups which can help shape future growth and its impact on a town centre; development trusts which are very adept in managing community-owned property; and Business Improvement Districts (BID) which combine financial independence and business leadership. The appropriate organisational form is also likely to evolve over time and two organisations can work side-by-side with clearly defined and well-coordinated roles.

An organisational business plan covering the foundations, form, folk and organisational finances will determine whether there is an effective and sustainable partnership able to deliver improvements. This organisational plan should define the inter-relationship and respective roles of partners such as the local authority(ies), town council, business partners, civic society, chamber of commerce or a BID.

Overleaf is a summary of the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to partnership development which has been taken from a case study of [creating talented town teams](#) prepared by the People & Places Partnership for the LGA.



## Advantages and Disadvantages of Different Approaches to Partnership Development

Approach	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Council-led partnership</b>	Close connection to other council departments; budget provided	Vulnerable to council budgetary pressures; can be difficult to fully engage with community & businesses
<b>Council-coordinated partnership</b>	Good connections to council departments; brings stakeholders together if clear purpose and/or delegated budget	Vulnerable to changing priorities; can create imbalance between action & strategic influence if role unclear
<b>Town centre manager &amp; forum</b>	Partly arms-length though probable budget contribution from council	Vulnerable to cuts; important to get balance between strategic influence and engaging with business & community
<b>Town council hosted partnership</b>	Close local links; arms-length though conduit between authorities; modest budget need and ability to access some external funds	The 'can do' attitude can be stifled if too formal; can be difficult to fully engage with businesses without suitable sub-group of link to Chamber of Trade, for example
<b>Business-led town team</b>	Business-like approach & understanding of economic issues and collective marketing	No assured funding stream; can have narrow business focus & lack strategic influence
<b>Neighbourhood Plan group</b>	Considers wider economic and community planning; exerts long-term influence	Long-term and strategic process; can lack tangible, short-term impacts or town centre focus
<b>Development trust</b>	Capital asset base generates revenue income; strong community focus	Requires available property and large capital investment; can have narrow focus & lack strategic influence
<b>Business Improvement District</b>	Income stream from rates levy; strong business focus and contacts	Can have narrow business focus & lack strategic influence if not part of wider strategy alongside council
<b>Public-private partnership</b>	Combine council and commercial expertise and investment with strong development focus to deliver key sites	Likely to have a narrow, site-based focus and limited life though should sit within wider strategy



Obviously, in a town like Buckingham, there are existing partners already involved at least in part in seeking to shape the future of the town centre and wider community. These include the Town Council, Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and Buckinghamshire Council. It will be important for these and other partners to begin to determine how they will continue to work together going forward as part of an organisational or business plan covering the 'how' of revitalisation.

### Action planning: A Timetable for Change

A town centre action plan is necessary to determine and define objectives, projects, responsibilities, budgets, timescales, outcomes and impact measures as the building blocks of the coordinated delivery of improvements on the ground. The annual review of such an action plan should begin and end with a review of available evidence and the monitoring of impacts and changes. This needs to be developed alongside or as part of delivery and governance proposals for the Neighbourhood Plan.

The draft recommendations in the final section of this report, focus on the activities that would need to be included in a town centre action plan to deliver the 'what' of town centre revitalisation.



# Delivering Change: Recommendations

This section of the report focuses on the activities that would need to be included in a town centre action plan to deliver the ‘what’ of town centre revitalisation. It is subdivided in to physical changes or the ‘look’ of the town centre as short-hand and the ‘feel’ or softer changes that involve how places are promoted and animated. It is currently written as proposals for consideration that can be updated later as agreed recommendations.

## The ‘Look’

### Planning and property

*Planning policy and development has a pivotal role in underpinning long-term revitalisation when combined with an understanding of hands-on place leadership for town and city centres.*

It will be important for the Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan Working Group to work closer with Buckinghamshire Council to make use of the current opportunity to review the vision, aims and objectives of planning policy in relation to the direct and indirect impacts on the town centre. This can include polices for managing the ‘look’ of the town through physical changes including the diversification of the mix of town centre businesses and services; enhancing public spaces and historic streetscape; and improving the journey to and around town.



Such an approach will help shape policies and practices outlined below and inform the Local Plan review including previous policy support for the allocation of land for retail, office and mixed development through previously identified sites.

Re-stated objectives can also provide a context for developing policies/plans for the delivery of the town centre’s ‘feel’ through softer non-statutory interventions such as business support, events organisation and marketing.

Analysis of the proportion of properties occupied by different use classes in 2023, shows that nearly three-quarters (71%) of town centre premises are now occupied by businesses within use class E and therefore their owners do not have to get planning permission to change the use of their building. This offers a positive impact in making re-lettings easier to achieve though can enable the mix of different businesses to become skewed. Another point to note is the, for now, modest change of use from business to domestic use. Both factors are trends to continue monitor and respond to with policies, where appropriate and as possible.

Beneath these aims and objectives, the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group with partners could investigate what options there are for maintaining the primary and secondary retail frontages including restricting permitted development as housing. Over the four-year period between 2019 and 2023 there had been a significant flux in the business mix with over 40% of business premises having changed in use.



The Town Council also previously had a Community Action to produce a Community Building Strategy including proposals for a new cultural arts venue, sports facilities, a community building and a venue for religious services. It will be good to review progress and next steps with this action.

## Travel to town

*The perceptions and practicalities of how people travel to town, congestion caused, parking provision and alternative sustainable options, can have a profound impact on the frequency of visits.*

Through planned further consultation on the Buckingham Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan -Lite, there is the opportunity for the Town Council, Neighbourhood Plan Working Group and other local stakeholders to work together to influence and help prioritise the recommendations for future improvement during the next stage.



Key national active travel benchmarks help assess the potential to increase current levels of walking and cycling in Buckingham. Nationally, nearly half of people (49%) walk or wheel five or more days per week and the most popular reason is to reach a particular destination, e.g. work, shopping (51%); followed by enjoyment or fitness (42%). The Buckingham customer survey responses indicate comparable levels of activity with perhaps scope to achieve even more of a modal shift in the 50% of residents who regularly travel to town by foot as their primary means, to target the 25% who choose to walk as their second-choice travel mode. According to national data, popular changes that could encourage residents to walk more are to create nicer places along streets to rest (78%), followed by better pavement accessibility (74%).

Important benchmarks about the potential for cycling include that only 15% of people cycle regularly and the most popular purpose for cycling are work (34%) and shopping, personal business and social trips (33%). This compares to only 1% of Buckingham town centre users travel by bike as their primary mode of transport, with scope to potentially build-on the 4% and 3% respectively who cycle as a secondary option. Top popular personal improvements to encourage cycling include access or improvements to a cycle sharing scheme (47%), whilst the most popular infrastructure investment for encouraging more cycling was more traffic-free cycle routes away from roads, e.g. through parks or along waterways (67%).

Calls for improvements to more sustainable modes of transport (6%) made-up a significant proportion of the overall customer responses in the survey undertaken for this review. This included calls for the prioritisation of improvements to public transport provision (3%), cycling infrastructure (2%) and walking routes into town (1%).

Traffic levels and both on and off-street parking, are considered as significant negative characteristics of the town centre by both businesses and customers. From businesses' perspective, the broad theme of travel to town (27%) got the greatest response when businesses were asked their top two future priorities, and within this pedestrian access (8%), active travel (8%), parking management (8%) and traffic management shared similar response rates.

Within a variety of issues relating to customers' experiences of travel to town, comments covering perceived high levels of traffic in the town centre were prominent (7%). Amongst comments about wider parking management (5%), many responses related to the Cornwall's Meadow Car Park and especially to the unreliability of payment machines, which could be readily resolved to provide a 'quick win'.

It appears there is considerable scope to update and further strengthen already incisive policies under the Neighbourhood Plan objective for improving movement into and around the town in a healthy and safe manner.

The Neighbourhood Plan's section on infrastructure provides a clear objective to improve movement into and around the town with a specific policy commitment that pedestrian routes should be made suitable for disabled access, including the provision of seating as rest points. In addition, there is a community commitment that the Town Council strongly supports the provision of good connections, via pedestrian and cycle links.

The section on developer contributions includes a recommended Community Action to seek contributions towards providing new pedestrian and cycle links. It was also proposed that improved public transport could be provided along Tingewick Road that encompasses new developments.

The Town Council and Neighbourhood Plan Working Group can work closely with Buckinghamshire Council departments to determine the potential scope and feasibility of undertaking reviews, plan preparation and delivery covering:

- The reduction/amelioration of the impacts of traffic on travel to and within the town centre.
- The delivery of cycling and walking improvements to encourage increased active travel to the town centre, in conjunction with the full Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan development being led by Wiltshire Council. This will include pursuing the delivery of active travel routes where developer funding contributions have or could be determined.
- Quick win parking improvements such as the upgrading of payment machines in Cornwall's Meadow and potentially a wider review of off and on-street parking provision using a customer-focused approach such as the People, Places & Parking process developed by People & Places. Such a wider review should consider the previous Neighbourhood Plan policy for providing additional town centre car parking.
- The possibility of enhanced public transport to the town centre from surrounding villages.



## Streetscape and access

*Creating well-designed and accessible streetscapes has a leading role in enabling prosperous and welcoming places for the benefit of both businesses and residents.*

The list of survey responses about the top positive perceptions about Buckingham's town centre environment for both business and customer stakeholders, feature cleanliness, public spaces, physical appearance and the ability to walk to town. In contrast, outdoor seating provision is considered as a significant negative factor by both, while only customers perceive the accessibility around the town centre for the elderly and disabled as a significant negative issue.



The broad themes of streetscape and appearance was the third highest future priority of businesses (20%), with appearance (8%) and pedestrian access (8%) prominent within this.

Priority given by customers to improving public access across the town centre (14%) included the prioritisation of better accessibility (5%) through improved conditions for walking, wheeling and road crossings, alongside specific calls for pedestrianisation schemes (4%) mostly covering the Market Place and mentions of the need to improve footpath paving (3%). Calls for a range of streetscape improvements (3%) included cleanliness (2%), built heritage (2%) and the physical appearance of the town centre (1%).

The Neighbourhood Planning Working Group could seek to expand the Plan's section on design, heritage and environment to reflect these concerns and include policies and proposals for conserving and enhancing Buckingham's built heritage, historic setting and public spaces.

The section on culture and leisure included a policy for protecting and retaining identified green and open spaces as designated Local Green Space. It might be good to also include the aspiration to enhance them including by the riverside and Cornwall Meadows car park.

An additional community-based action might be that the feasibility is investigated with Buckinghamshire Council for involving local stakeholders in undertaking a deliverable audit of town centre access improvements.

## The ‘Feel’

The Town Council, Neighbourhood Plan Working Group and partners can also determine how policies/plans and plans are shaped for the delivery of the town centre’s ‘feel’ through softer non-statutory interventions such as business support, leisure and cultural activity and marketing and events organisation.

### Business diversification

*Through a town-wide and evidence-based understanding of changing customer habits and demands, the Town Council and partners can support town centre businesses in adapting as well as creating new business opportunities.*

Over the period between 2019 and 2023, just under a quarter (23%) of business premises in Buckingham town changed in tenant and/or type of business use. The vacancy rates of 9% is typical for a town of Buckingham’s size, though with 43% of businesses reporting that their profitability was reduced or greatly reduced over the preceding 12 months, the indication is that many more are perhaps vulnerable to closure.



The levels of comparison retail such as fashion and national chains are considered negatively by both Buckingham businesses and the customers, as is the proportion of vacant premises. In contrast, the list of top positive perceptions for both sets of stakeholders feature cafes and restaurants, pubs, independent shops, grocery retail, markets and access to health services are also all aspects of the mix of businesses that are viewed positively.

The broad theme of the mix of businesses and services (25%) was the second highest future priority for Buckingham’s businesses with the imbalance of the town centre retail mix (11%) and banking provision (8%) at the time prominent within this.

The businesses and services mix (30%) was the broad theme that received the highest level of responses when customers were asked to give their top two priorities for the future of the town centre. Looking in detail at the responses about the business mix alone, calls to improve the retail mix in Buckingham town centre accounted for 10% of responses and priorities for improving a perceived imbalance of the wider mix accounted for a further 7% of responses. In terms of services there was a significant number of calls for improved banking there were a significant number of responses (2%) relating to health service provision because of both its perceived importance and high demand, as well as calls to improve the market (2%).

Previous town centre policies the Buckingham Plan included retaining and enhancing both the primary and secondary retail frontages. In addition, the culture, leisure and health section included a policy for the provision of new or extended health care facilities on two existing sites at the Community Hospital and on Verney Close.



## Leisure and culture

*The provision of cultural and leisure facilities and activities is a key part of broadening the role and appeal of town centres as multi-purpose places at the heart of their communities and with a wider appeal to visitors.*

The “What’s On” page of the Discover Buckingham web site and listings on the Town Council web site currently present a busy schedule of monthly events. Many of these are based in and around the town centre and complement its roles as a hub for the local community. Some higher profile events such as Buckingham Live Weekend and Buckingham Summer Festival can also help attract visitors from further afield.



From the survey responses it is apparent that customers have mildly negative perceptions about the current level of cultural and leisure facilities in Buckingham with over a third viewing it negatively (34%), compared to just under a quarter who had a positive perception (23%). Nearly 4 in 10 respondents (39%) were positive about town centre events though, compared to less than 2 in 10 (18%) who had a negative perspective. In terms of customers top-two future priorities, there was an even spread of calls between a desire to see more town centre events and activities (3%), investing in leisure and cultural facilities (2%) and providing activities for children and young people (2%).

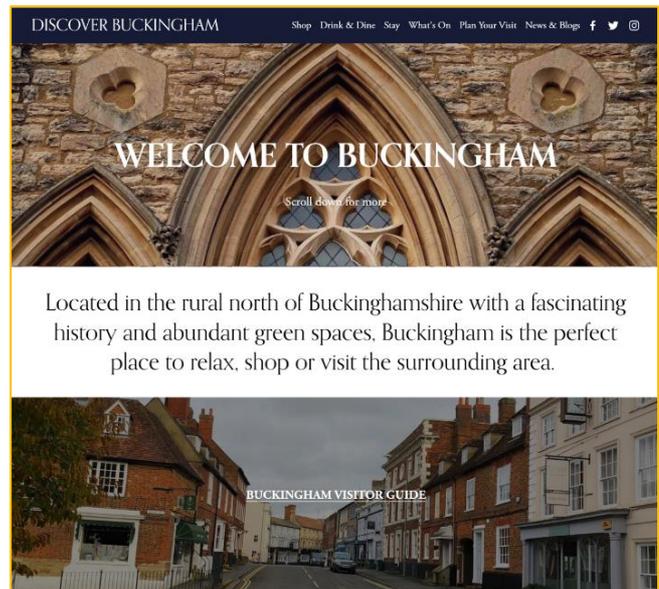
These findings support the Neighbourhood Plan’s existing commitment to encourage development that strengthens culture, leisure, sport and play facilities in the town. The culture, leisure and health section included a Community Action to produce a Community Building Strategy including proposals for a new cultural arts venue, sports facilities, a community building and a venue for religious services.

It may be beneficial to add an additional community-based action to support the creation of new cultural and leisure events in town centre public spaces, including for example, more activities for children and young people. These can be added to an annual events programme and listing for the benefit of the local community, with perhaps highlighted sections for different audiences and visitors from further afield.

## Place Branding and Marketing

*Capturing the changing identity of a town centre and stakeholder /audience perceptions through place branding and marketing, helps strengthen a local sense of place and shapes a positive external image.*

As far back as the 2015, the Buckingham Retail Appraisal, Health Check and Opportunities Assessment recognised that better promotion is needed about the town's 'success' and that it is important to build on the positives such as the role as a meeting place with a good social and food offer, including markets.



As well as the informative Discover Buckingham web site, there is a related Instagram account and a Tourist Information Centre Facebook page. Other Facebook pages include a popular Buckingham Events account and a Buckingham Town account that promotes local businesses and services. There are web pages and Facebook accounts specific to particular events and destinations/businesses. A Visit Buckinghamshire web page is no longer operational and a Visit the South East web page includes limited information about Buckingham or events in the town.

The analysis of the Buckingham prospect population size by drive-time shows that there is a population of nearly half a million (454,574) potential customers within a 25-minute drive and that this has grown by a significant 16% (62,480) since 2011. Analysis of Buckingham's competing towns by drive-time, shows that there are 4 towns plus Milton Keynes where 10-minute catchment areas overlap.

The customer survey responses show that grocery shopping is by far the most popular, primary reason (58%) for coming to Buckingham town centre, whilst leisure uses such as using hospitality businesses (35%), account for more than a further third of people's reasons for visiting the town centre.

When customers were asked how their experience of Buckingham town centre had changed in recent years, over a third (37%) reported that it had worsened, with as many reporting that it had changed in a mixture of good and bad ways. When asked if they would recommend a visit to the town centre, nearly two-thirds said 'yes'.

The list of top positive perceptions for both businesses and customers feature cafes and restaurants prominently, and pubs to a slightly lesser extent. Independent shops, grocery retail, markets and access to health services are also all aspects of the mix of businesses and services viewed as making positive contributions to the town centre. Cleanliness, public spaces, physical appearance and the ability to walk to town, all aspects of environment that feature in both lists of positive features. The appeal relative to out-of-town retail and the levels of town-wide marketing are negative perceptions specific to businesses.



When asked to give a single word that sums-up Buckingham town centre, prominent words used included a mix of positive sentiments such as ‘friendly’, ‘pleasant’, ‘convenient’ and ‘quaint’ to more negative descriptions to ‘tired’, ‘decline’, ‘dull’ and ‘traffic’.

Businesses and customers gave a high or very high priority to providing social media insights (72% & 71% respectively). Customers gave a similarly high priority to the creation and management of a town web site (67%) and receiving regular updates from businesses about products, services or events (67%). Just two-thirds of businesses gave a high or very high priority to the creation and management of their own web sites (65%).

In terms of digital infrastructure, businesses gave a high or very high priority to continued investment in fast broadband (78%). Customers gave a moderately high priority to good Wi-Fi coverage (60%).

Place branding and marketing is unsurprisingly not specifically covered by the objectives and policies of the Neighbourhood Plan. It is, however, something that perhaps could be recognised as a Community-based action that cross-references work being led by the Town Council. This could include analysis to capture Buckingham’s current identity in a way that recognises change, accentuates the positives and provides a narrative to pitch to different audiences, beginning with residents.

A communications and marketing plan for the town could cover:

- A positive representation of change and the partnership involved in shaping it including the Town Council, Neighbourhood Plan Working Group and Buckinghamshire Council.
- Targeted social media campaigns aimed at different types of local town centre user by location, e.g. town residents and surrounding villages; or demographic group such as children and young people.
- Training and support for businesses; attractions and local groups to promote themselves and the town in ways that reinforce the collective identity.
- Targeted promotion aimed at visitors that highlights distinctiveness of Buckingham and the appeal of its heritage, events, businesses including hospitality, and attractions.

## Town Centre Stewardship

*Ensuring the ongoing, routine stewardship of town centres by managing aspects such as litter or ant-social behaviour is essential in managing stakeholders’ perceptions and meeting their needs.*

Cleanliness (61%) and safety (49%) were considered as positives by town centre customers. Businesses considered the town centre’s cleanliness as a positive (64%).

There were more balanced opinions from customers about ant-social behaviour with equal



numbers considering its absence a positive (23%) compared to those considering its presence a negative (24%). Considering stakeholders' future priorities, it is important to recognise that anti-social behaviour was the sub-theme receiving the highest number of responses, with comments focusing on a perceived lack of police presence to address nuisance caused by people congregating at times in and around the town centre. The need to respond to perceived levels of anti-social behaviour including congregation in public spaces, excessive drinking and a desire for an increased police presence, were a significant priority (4%). The need to respond to perceived levels of anti-social behaviour including congregation in public spaces, excessive drinking and a desire for an increased police presence, were also a significant priority for town centre customers with over 40 (4%) respondents rating it amongst their top two future priorities.

Looking to the future it will be important to maintain and promote the positive perceptions about the towns centre's cleanliness and safety. It will also be important to work with the police to better understand, communicate to stakeholders and address as appropriate, the causes of concerns about anti-social behaviour in the town centre. This could be recognised as a community-based action in the Neighbourhood Plan and/or wider partnership plan.



## Next Steps: Making it Happen

This report is a detailed piece of work that necessarily pulls together existing policies/proposals and a stakeholder perspective of issues in a systematic way. Its aim is to provide an action-orientated approach that can be delivered by a coming together of key local partners and a realistic appraisal of priorities and resourcing needs. In this way, it is possible to set about making a meaningful difference to the long-term vitality and viability of Buckingham's town centre. Realistically, this should be viewed as a 5-10 year project that will need extra resources, including organisationally, to coordinate delivery. It will however, be important to deliver quick-wins over the next 12 months to gain stakeholder confidence and increase engagement.

Below are the proposed next steps that partners will need to consider and undertake in the process of developing and delivering a robust partnership and action plan that would be able to aid the town centre's recovery and revitalisation.

1. *Discussion with key partners/stakeholder groups:* This draft report should be presented to and discussed with key partners and stakeholder representatives to finalise it and agree recommendations.
2. *Adapt recommendations for inclusion in Neighbourhood Plan and other local strategies:* Key stakeholder organisations can work through the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, Town Council and Buckingham & Villages Community Board, to incorporate recommendations within existing plans and strategies.
3. *Potentially publish stakeholder summary:* A short, illustrated version of the of this report and its findings could published by for wider distribution, and as record of findings and actions related to the town centre. Alternatively, a suitable section on the town centre might be included in the Neighbourhood Plan.
4. *Meetings of theme-based sub-groups:* Initial meetings could be organised of theme-based sub-groups to discuss the development of proposals for the 'look' and 'feel' of the town centre and partnership working/governance. People & Places can help assist in determining the membership and format of these groups, as required.
5. *Initial business engagement:* The publication of the summary could be used to begin engagement with businesses through a meeting. This would discuss the findings and future role of businesses including through the formation of a representative group. People & Places can help assist in this as an extension of the current work.
6. *Partnership development and governance:* The existing stakeholders on the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, Town Council and Buckingham & Villages Community Board, as well as businesses representatives, need to determine the partnership development and governance arrangements for revitalising Buckingham's town centre. This can include focusing on the representation and roles for a core group responsible and equipped to manage the coordination and communication of activity. This needs to be developed alongside or as part of delivery and governance proposals for the Neighbourhood Plan.



7. *Determine initial delivery priorities:* The evolving partnership needs to determine initial delivery priorities that underpin long-term strategy and capacity as well demonstrate ‘quick wins’ to stakeholders and the wider community. The Shared Prosperity Fund provides an initial and flexible injection of funds to help achieve this.





# BUCKINGHAM

## NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN EVIDENCE BASE REG. 16



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## 1. What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

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### Introduction

1.1 Neighbourhood Development Plans were introduced in the Localism Act 2011.

*A “neighbourhood development plan” ..... sets out policies (however expressed) in relation to the development and use of land in ..... a particular neighbourhood area.”<sup>1</sup>*

1.2 The National Planning Policy Framework [NPPF] provides:

*“Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan. Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area or undermine those strategic policies.”*

1.3 Neighbourhood Development Plans do not allow for complete self-determination for local communities.

There are two key points:

- (i) Neighbourhood Development Plans must be in general conformity with the Local Plan.<sup>2</sup> They cannot alter central government planning law or guidance.
- (ii) The Neighbourhood Development Plan sits with the Local Plan as forming an equal part of the Development Plan for the area concerned.

1.4 Buckingham Town Council was proud to be one of the forerunners in producing a Neighbourhood Development Plan that provided housing and employment allocations in 2015.

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<sup>1</sup> S.38A(2) of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004 as inserted by Localism Act 2011.

<sup>2</sup> NPPF ft 16 but also noted by Examiner of the first Buckingham NDP that this did not mean “identical”. Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan Examination, Nigel McGurk, June 2015 <https://www.buckingham-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Full-Council-agenda-with-attachments-29-June-2015.pdf> at page 18: ‘I note here, with reference to housing and housing land providers, who have objected to Policy HP5 as they would like to see a lower requirement for affordable housing, that the phrase “in general conformity” has a different meaning to the phrase “the same as”.’

1.5 The Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan 2015 [BNDP 2015] was made on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015.<sup>3</sup>

### Events since 2015

1.6 Since 2015, the BNDP has been one half of the Development Plan for the area; the other is the Local Plan prepared by the Local Planning Authority – formerly Aylesbury Vale District Council [AVDC], now Buckinghamshire Council. When work began on the original BNDP it was envisaged that it would form the Development Plan alongside the Vale of Aylesbury Plan [VAP]. This was withdrawn by AVDC, and work started on the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan [VALP]. The BNDP 2015 remained the most up-to-date part of the Development Plan in conjunction with the “saved” policies from the previous Local Plan of 2004 until 2021 when Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan [VALP] was adopted.<sup>4</sup>

1.7 Indeed much has happened since 2015. Buckingham Town Council now works with the unitary authority, Buckinghamshire Council in representing the people of Buckingham, whereas prior to April, 2020, there was the district council, AVDC and the county council, Buckinghamshire County Council, running services for Buckingham in addition to the Town Council. Buckinghamshire Council is now the Local Planning Authority for the purposes of planning legislation. In light of the VALP and with work commencing on Buckinghamshire Council’s own Local Plan, Buckingham Town Council considered it appropriate to refresh the Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan. There are additional factors that have impacted on that decision.

1.8 In 2017 the National Infrastructure Commission [NIC] published *Partnering for Prosperity A New deal for the Cambridge-Milton Keynes- Oxford Arc* which made several recommendations for ensuring the Knowledge Arc developed as a global destination.<sup>5</sup> The town of Buckingham lies within the Knowledge Arc. The East-West Railway (with a new station at Winslow to the south of Buckingham due now to open in 2025) was an integral component of its recommendations. This report envisaged major regional development, not least in the form of 1,000,000 new homes in the Arc by 2050.

1.9 Buckingham Town Council declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019.<sup>6</sup> The BNDP 2015 contained several policies designed to help protect the natural environment and to promote energy conservation, but it was felt to be appropriate to keep policies under review as concerns regarding the environment increased and that a new Neighbourhood Development Plan would assist in that aim.

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<sup>3</sup> This was the date that Aylesbury Vale District Council “made” BNDP 2015 part of the local development plan.

<sup>4</sup> 15<sup>th</sup> September, 2021 Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan 2013-2033.

<sup>5</sup> <https://nic.org.uk/app/uploads/Partnering-for-Prosperty.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.buckingham-tc.gov.uk/our-services/climate-emergency/>

1.10 The Covid-19 pandemic which stretched from 2020 until 2021 in the UK created challenges far more wide-ranging than were immediately obvious. The design of homes has been rethought as people seek more space to enable either working from home permanently or hybrid working. Space both within the home and its outside private space has become important. Buckingham Town Centre, the heart of our historic market town, had to meet the challenges from the changes in shopping and recreational habits, lockdowns and a faster move away from traditional high street shopping to online shopping than had been predicted.

1.11 In 2021 it was announced that the East-West Expressway project would not go ahead after the scheme was paused in 2020. This project had envisaged a new express road connecting Oxford and Milton Keynes to connect with the upgraded sections of road between Cambridge and Milton Keynes. This had been one of the infrastructure projects considered in the NIC's *Partnering for Prosperity* Report.<sup>7</sup> This has raised the question of the future of the largely single carriageway provision of the A421 which provides the main connection between Milton Keynes and Oxford. There is currently a report being prepared by Buckinghamshire Council on this. The difficulties with this road remaining largely single carriageway between Milton Keynes and Oxford connecting to two major distribution routes, has been raised by England's Economic Heartland.<sup>8</sup>

1.12 Buckingham has also grown again as a residential town. This is set out in more detail below, but the homes on the Lace Hill estate were still being built in 2015 -today there are 600+ new homes there, and the major development allocated in the BNDP 2015 on the Tingewick Road is in the final stage of build out with an additional 300+ homes. The Town Centre has also seen windfall and brownfield development creating more infill homes and the larger development at Summerhouse Hill. Further development was designated in VALP with two sites, both lying outside of the Buckingham Settlement Boundary stated in the BNDP 2015. The Osier Way development is underway with another 300+ homes due to be delivered. The Moreton Road Phase III developers have succeeded in gaining planning approval after a call-in of the application by the Secretary of State. The latter is an example of major development being delivered in Phases, which, as a consequence of the phasing, means that less overall infrastructure is provided than would be the case if the total development had come forward in one application.

1.13 The BNDP 2015 contained a reserve site to the west of the town. The purpose of this site was to provide additional homes should this be required, or to provide alternative provision, if larger sites were not brought forward. This site was preserved in the draft VALP. Problems, however, with traffic congestion in the town centre, meant

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<sup>7</sup> <https://nic.org.uk/app/uploads/Partnering-for-Prosperity.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> England's Economic Heartland, *Connecting People; Transforming Journeys: Regional Transport Strategy* need for study of Oxford-Milton Keynes routes at p.68. [https://eeh-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Connecting\\_People\\_Transforming\\_Journeys\\_av.pdf](https://eeh-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Connecting_People_Transforming_Journeys_av.pdf)

that objections were raised to this site by the Highways Authority [then the remit of Buckinghamshire County Council] and the site was removed from VALP. Although it remains within the BNDP 2015, there would have been significant issues bringing forward this preferred site whilst the traffic objections apparently remain. The lack of an up-to-date traffic assessment and the aforementioned uncertainty regarding any future upgrading of the A421 has meant that the original scenario-planning proposals could not be taken further at this point.

1.14 The overarching principle of “sustainable development” remains. Resolution 42/187 of the

United Nations General Assembly defined sustainable development as **meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs**. The UK Government has stated in the National Planning Policy Framework, three objectives from this Resolution– social, economic and environmental – as key to achieving these aims.<sup>9</sup>

1.15 The key factor is that a Neighbourhood Development Plan should be written after extensive consultation with the people of Buckingham and others with an interest in the town.<sup>10</sup>

1.16 The purpose of the Neighbourhood Development Plan is to provide a clear vision for the future of Buckingham, and the means for the delivery of that vision.

### **Immediate Background to the new BNDP**

1.17 Since then Aylesbury Vale District Council which produced the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan [VALP in 2021] has been replaced by the unitary authority, Buckinghamshire Council as the local planning authority.

1.18 In a similar situation to the delays in the production of the Vale of Aylesbury Plan [VAP] which resulted in VALP, the new Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan was initially scheduled to develop alongside the new Buckinghamshire Plan, and thus be able to utilise the data from Buckinghamshire Council.

1.19 Buckingham Town Council through the BNDP Working Group (composed of both Councillors, residents and business representatives) initially planned and consulted using a scenarios-based initiative which would help to scope the need for infrastructure and the development required to provide for its delivery. This consultation took place in late 2023 and early in 2024.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 8 - [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/669a25e9a3c2a28abb50d2b4/NPPF\\_December\\_2023.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/669a25e9a3c2a28abb50d2b4/NPPF_December_2023.pdf) accessed 1st December, 2024.

<sup>10</sup> This is documented in the associated Consultation Statement.

<sup>11</sup> Details of the associated consultation events, as well as all consultation surrounding the production of the new BNDP can be found in the accompanying Consultation Statement.

1.20 It became obvious that the updated supporting data from Buckinghamshire Council would not be available as there were delays in the forthcoming Buckinghamshire Plan.

1.21 Although Buckingham Town Council was able to commission independent research through Locality funding<sup>12</sup> it was unable to supply all the additional supporting evidence within its resources. The decision was taken to produce a shorter version with some allocations but to await the Buckinghamshire Plan in 2027 before deciding whether to proceed further.

1.22 It was felt necessary to update the current BNDP 2025, even on more constrained terms, due to the continued threat of speculative development planning applications. Residents of Buckingham have experienced much such development over recent decades and are aware of how little infrastructure is often delivered as a result.

1.23 As has been shown by the proactive stance taken towards Neighbourhood Planning by successive Town Councils, Buckingham residents cannot be said to wish to prevent or reduce development. They do wish to see the necessary infrastructure delivered alongside new development.

### **Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Area**

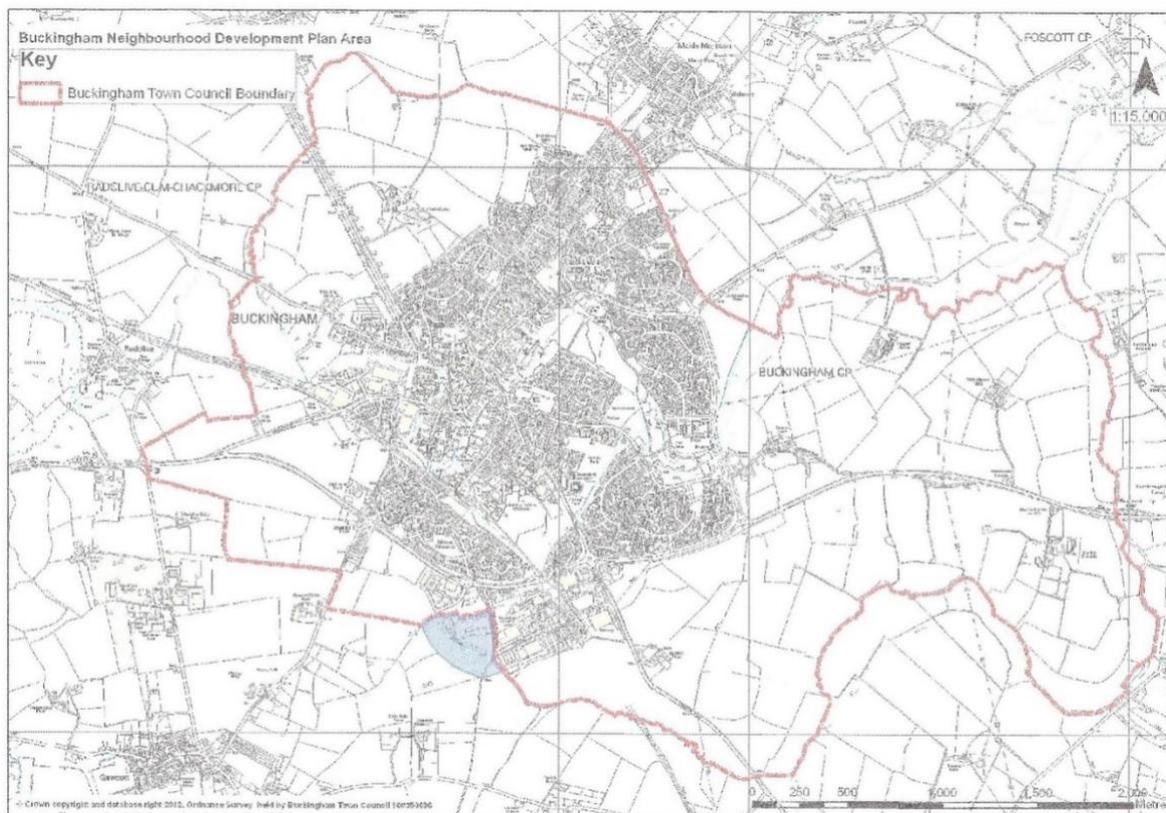
1.24 The Plan Area remains the same as the BNDP 2015.<sup>13</sup> The designated area contains the whole of the parish of Buckingham, as well as a small area of the parish of Gawcott with Lenborough.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Locality is a registered charity; more details can be found here: <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/>

<sup>13</sup> The Buckingham Town Council boundaries are not the same as the Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan [BNDP] area. Part of Gawcott with Lenborough Parish was included after consultation events. The final approval was given by Aylesbury Vale District Council on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2014. This has been confirmed for this new Plan by Gawcott with Lenborough Parish Council on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

<sup>14</sup> As noted above, this continues with the consent of Gawcott with Lenborough Parish Council and is accordance with s61F(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The original area of the BNDP 2015 was set as per parish boundaries; this was approved by Aylesbury Vale District Council [AVDC] on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2012. Following consultation exercises, it was decided to apply to amend the boundaries of BNDP area to include small portions of two neighbouring parishes - Radclive-cum-Chackmore and Gawcott with Lenborough. This was approved by AVDC on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2013. Following the decision of Radclive-cum-Chackmore Parish Council to withdraw its previously given consent, the boundaries were changed again. This was approved by AVDC 25<sup>th</sup> June, 2014. Due to an error at AVDC during the consultation stage of this process, the redesignation process had to run again. The final approval was given on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2014.



## 2. Buckingham – Place and People



### Location

2.1 Buckingham is an historic market town situated in the north of the county of Buckinghamshire. It provides services to surrounding villages such as Maids Moreton, Gawcott, Chackmore, Radclive, Tingewick, Thornborough and Padbury. It lies close to the boundaries of the county with Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire.

2.2 It is the second largest settlement after Aylesbury, in the district of Aylesbury Vale. It is located sixteen miles north of Aylesbury, the county town and Garden Town, another area of rapid residential development.

2.3 It lies fourteen miles to the west of Milton Keynes developed area, approximately seven miles from the closest border with Northamptonshire, and approximately five miles to the closest border with Oxfordshire,

2.4 Milton Keynes, one of the fastest growing areas in the UK is fourteen miles to the east.<sup>15</sup> Milton Keynes provides access to the West Coast Main Line Route at Milton Keynes Railway Station, as well as the more local rail service between Birmingham, Northampton and London.

2.5 Bicester, designated as a Garden Town, is another rapidly developing area, eleven miles to the west. The M40 is accessed at Bicester; also the A34 leading to Oxford; southwestern ports and the western ports.

2.6 As such Buckingham is firmly placed within the “Knowledge Arc” the corridor of the country lying between areas surrounding the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

2.7 Also to the west is the market town of Brackley, lying in Northamptonshire, which has also seen significant residential expansion in recent years. The nearest border with Northamptonshire is approximately seven miles from Buckingham.

2.8 To the south, is the historic market town of Winslow (six miles), site of the new East-West Railway station.

2.9 The north of Buckingham opens to countryside and working farmland. The Grade 1 listed Stowe Avenue leads to Stowe School, and the National Trust’s Stowe Landscape Gardens. Due to the proximity of these important historic sites, this aspect is likely to remain open countryside for the foreseeable future. The A413 running through the town and to the north, leads in this direction to Towcester in Northamptonshire, another market town, again which has seen significant residential development. Close to Towcester lies Silverstone, home to Formula 1 racing in the UK and the site of Silverstone Park, a major employment hub, one of two designated for Buckingham, which lies seven miles from Buckingham.

2.10 Buckingham has two major A roads running through the town – the A413 and the A422; the A421 skirts the town by means of the by-pass.

2.11 Buckingham is a civil parish designated as a Town Council. The Town Council has four electoral wards.<sup>16</sup> The town is situated within the unitary authority area of Buckinghamshire Council.<sup>17</sup> It is now part of the new Parliamentary constituency of Buckingham and Bletchley<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> This distance, and any following are based on Google Map calculations.

<sup>16</sup> Buckingham North; Buckingham South; Highlands and Watchcroft & Fishers Field. There are 17 councillors in total. However from 2025 due to review Buckingham Town Council will have two wards Buckingham North with 8 councillors and Buckingham South with 9 councillors – keeping the total at 17 councillors in total.

<sup>17</sup> Currently Buckingham is split into Buckingham East and Buckingham West wards in terms of Buckinghamshire Council with three councillors in each ward making a total of 6. However, the Buckinghamshire (Electoral Changes) Order SI 2023 No.1205 reduces this to three councillors within the new ward of Buckingham. There is an overall reduction in councillors in Buckinghamshire Council.

<sup>18</sup> The Parliamentary constituency boundaries were reviewed in 2023 by the Boundary Commission and changed by the Parliamentary Constituencies Order 2023 SI No.1230. Previously Buckingham was the constituency name.

## Historic Market Town

2.12 Buckingham identifies as an historic market town as was indicated in the first Neighbourhood Development Plan made in 2015. Buckingham was a settlement by Anglo-Saxon times.<sup>19</sup> The town is the site for St Rumbold's Well, a shrine to the Anglo-Saxon infant saint<sup>20</sup> and a now a scheduled monument.<sup>21</sup> Archaeological digs have found evidence of Roman settlement. The centre of the town around North End shows the layout of the medieval town, as well as the aptly named "Tudor House" but the predominant period represented is Georgian.

2.13 The Great Fire of Buckingham in 1725 meant that large parts of what was then the county town were destroyed and rebuilt in then-modern Georgian style. It is thought that 138 homes were destroyed<sup>22</sup> leaving around a third of the town's population homeless, after the blaze affected Castle Street; areas of Market Hill, West Street and Well Street.<sup>23</sup> So much of the town reflects this era and has Conservation Area status.

2.14 Buckingham had moderate growth in the late Georgian/Victorian period with first the Grand Junction Canal, Buckingham arm in use from 1801<sup>24</sup> and then with the coming of the railway in 1850,<sup>25</sup> both considerably boosted trade. Buckingham also adopted the new concept of the Garden cemetery with the opening of the Brackley Road cemetery in 1856.<sup>26</sup>

2.15 Buckingham did not see much further growth until really the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and throughout this century, with many new residential developments both within and on the outskirts of the town when the town regained residents after the decline in agriculture from the late 1800s until the Second World War.

2.16 The University of Buckingham was founded in 1976 as the UK's first independent university; the site chosen as being approximately half-way between Oxford and Cambridge. The University has revitalised the Prebend area of Buckingham as its Hunter Street campus. It also has a campus at Verney Park incorporating the former

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<sup>19</sup> A short further account can be found here: <https://www.buckingham.ac.uk/about/history/town>

<sup>20</sup> For more information see: <https://www.buckingham.ac.uk/about/history/rumbold>

<sup>21</sup> Under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979; see Historic England: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1017204?section=official-list-entry>

<sup>22</sup> Buckingham Conservation Area Part 1 at para.2.15: <https://buckinghamshire-gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Updated-2009-part1-doc.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> The Buckingham Society: <https://buckinghamssociety.org.uk/?cat=13>

<sup>24</sup> See The Buckingham Canal Society website for more detail: <https://www.buckinghamcanal.org.uk/history-and-heritage/history/>

<sup>25</sup> More detail on the railways can be found here: [http://www.bucksas.org.uk/rob/rob\\_19\\_2\\_156.pdf](http://www.bucksas.org.uk/rob/rob_19_2_156.pdf) and also here <http://www.disused-stations.org.uk/b/buckingham/> The Buckingham station closed to passengers in 1964 and then completely closed in 1966. Today much of the station and track form part of the Buckingham Railway Walk.

<sup>26</sup> More information regarding the site including arboreal information can be found here: <https://bucksgardenstrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Buckingham-Cemetery-BGT-RR-dossier-10-July-202.pdf>

Franciscan Friary and Boys' School. Most recently the new Mount Pleasant Campus on the by-pass utilising the former Best Western Hotel.<sup>27</sup> As an independent university it is reliant on student numbers and benefactors for income, this does impact on how the University plans for the future.<sup>28</sup> It is one of the largest employers in Buckingham.

2.17 In 1983 the University was granted a Royal Charter, joining those given to the town in 1554 by Mary Tudor and in 1684 by Charles II.

2.18 Buckingham has seen a more rapid growth in the last fifty years with new housing estates on the outskirts of the town. Its historic town centre has been preserved through designation as Conservation Areas.

### Conservation Area and Heritage

2.19 The Conservation Area of Buckingham has been described as a "large and complex Conservation Area that incorporates a number of areas of individual townscape character."<sup>29</sup>

2.20 The original Conservation Area was designated in 1971, and the current Conservation Area, which was extended, was designated in 2005.<sup>30</sup> There is another review under way at present through Buckinghamshire Council. The Town Council did not suggest any further extension to the current Conservation Area through this process.

2.21 The original Conservation Area dating from 1971 focused on the Georgian Town Centre which was noteworthy due to the rebuilding after Great Fire of Buckingham in 1725.<sup>31</sup>

2.22 In its assessment in 2005, AVDC, the then planning authority, divided the Conservation Area in Buckingham into four "Identity Areas."

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<sup>27</sup> Further information can be found here: <https://www.buckingham.ac.uk/about/history>

<sup>28</sup> The most recent strategic document from the University for the period 2023-2028 can be found here: [https://www.buckingham.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/University-of-Buckingham-Strategic-Plan-2023-2028.pdf?\\_gl=1\\*1fkyhw5\\*\\_up\\*MQ..\\*\\_ga\\*MjMyMTAyMjA0LjE3MzMwODk4OTU.\\*\\_ga\\_PWEL0GXNN9\\*MTczMzA4OTg5NS4xLjEuMTczMzA4OTk5My4wLjAuNTk2MjYxMzQ1](https://www.buckingham.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/University-of-Buckingham-Strategic-Plan-2023-2028.pdf?_gl=1*1fkyhw5*_up*MQ..*_ga*MjMyMTAyMjA0LjE3MzMwODk4OTU.*_ga_PWEL0GXNN9*MTczMzA4OTg5NS4xLjEuMTczMzA4OTk5My4wLjAuNTk2MjYxMzQ1) In the main the plan focuses on maintaining and improving current facilities and sports provision.

<sup>29</sup> *Buckingham Conservation Area Part 1*, AVDC 2005 at para.3: <https://buckinghamshire-gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Updated-2009-part1-doc.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> *Buckingham Conservation Area Part 1*, AVDC 2005 Chapter 2: <https://buckinghamshire-gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Updated-2009-part1-doc.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> For more detail on the Great Fire see above under Historic Market Town.

**Table 2.1**

Identity Area	Extent of Area
Identity Area 1 <sup>32</sup>	Market Square, Market Hill and the Bull Ring, The Cattle Market, North End Square, Buckingham Hospital and the north-western side of the High Street, Stratford Road and the south-eastern side of the High Street and Moreton Road
Identity Area 2 <sup>33</sup>	St. Peter and St. Paul's Church, West Street, School Lane, Bristle Hill, Castle Street, Elm Street, Well Street and Victoria Row, Nelson Street, Tingewick Road, St. Rumbold's Lane, Church Street, Mill Lane, Manor Street, The former Graveyard and original site of St. Peter and St Paul's Church and Hunter Street and the University of Buckingham.
Identity Area 3 <sup>34</sup>	Mitre Street and Bone Hill, Bath Lane and Berties' Walk and the Dismantled Railway
Identity Area 4 <sup>35</sup>	Station Road and Station Terrace, Chandos Road, Chandos Park, Bourton Road, Ford Street and Bridge Street

2.23 Buckingham Town Council is committed to conserving the town's heritage, but it is also aware that Conservation Area status can make it difficult to ensure properties are energy -efficient in light of climate change. It would seek to create a balanced approach.

2.24 It is also the case that almost all the shops in Buckingham are located in listed buildings. This is undoubtedly beneficial to the appeal of the historic market town, but it can also be challenging for business owners to maintain their premises and business in accordance with the requirements of the Conservation Area.

2.25 The town has two historic weekly markets as well as two annual fairs, the Charter Fair, which are all enabled by Royal Charters.<sup>36</sup> This links today's commerce and recreation to a time when Buckingham was the market town for an even more extensive surrounding agricultural community, connecting the generations of residents.

2.26 There are over 200 listed buildings within the BNDP Area.<sup>37</sup> Within the Conservation Area itself perhaps the most notable are the Grade I listed Castle House

<sup>32</sup> *Buckingham Conservation Area Part 1*, AVDC 2005: <https://buckinghamshire-gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Updated-2009-part1-doc.pdf> for full description and appraisal

<sup>33</sup> *Buckingham Conservation Area Part 2*, AVDC 2005: <https://buckinghamshire-gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Updated-2009-part2-doc.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> *Buckingham Conservation Area Part 3*, AVDC 2005: <https://buckinghamshire-gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Updated-2009-part3-doc.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> *Buckingham Conservation Area Part 3*, AVDC 2005: <https://buckinghamshire-gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Updated-2009-part3-doc.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Royal Charters were granted by Mary Tudor in 1554 and by Charles II in 1684; it is said that both favoured the town for loyalty to their respective parent. Mary Tudor in relation to her mother, Catherine of Aragon, who is reputed to have stayed at the Grade 1 Listed, Castle House on West Street; and for remaining Royalist in support of Charles I during the English Civil War.

<sup>37</sup> There are three Grade 1 listed buildings; 9 Grade II\* and at least 200 Grade II listed buildings within the parish of Buckingham. See <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/england/buckingham-aylesbury-vale->

in West Street; the Grade I listed Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul which dominates the skyline of the town; as well as the Old Gaol (Grade II) housing a museum and Tourist Information; the Old Town Hall (Grade II\*) now part of the Villiers Hotel; Christ's Hospital Almshouses (Grade II \*) and the White Hart Hotel (Grade II) although this is perhaps to select only the most striking examples. It is almost impossible to walk through the Conservation Areas and remain unaware of Buckingham's history and that you are part of this current generation only.

## Population

2.27 The population of Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan Area from the 2021 Census is 14, 297.<sup>38</sup> This represents an increase of 19% since 2011. There have been a significant number of completions on the new residential development of St Rumbold's Fields since that date which would indicate a slightly higher current figure

2.28 The breakdown within the town can be seen from the data available for the Lower Level Super Output Areas contained within the Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan Area

**Table 2.2**

Lower-Level Super Output Area [LLSOA]	Area	Population	Index of multiple deprivation
<b>E01017644/Buckinghamshire 002A</b>	Linden Village & Bourton Meadow Academy, Part of Page Hill [Middlefield Close, part of Page Hill Avenue, De Clare Court] & Canal Area	1,464	9* [Housing 3]
<b>E01017645/Buckinghamshire 002B</b>	Town centre to Stowe Avenue; to University of Buckingham Hunter Street Campus; Hospital; to the river	1,432	5* [Housing 4]
<b>E01017646/Buckinghamshire 002C</b>	North side of Moreton Road to borders; Stowe Avenue and Brackley Road to north river side; eastern side of town centre and most of western and Overn Avenues	2,320	7* [Housing 5]
<b>E01017647/Buckinghamshire 002D</b>	Majority of Page Hill, area to the south of Moreton Road	1,539	10* [Housing 7]
<b>E01017648/Buckinghamshire 001A</b>	Heartlands, Bourton Road, part of Badgers, area to north of A421 to Thornborough border, part of the area to the south towards Coombs	1,644	10* [Housing 3]

[buckinghamshire](https://buckinghamshire.gov.uk) for an interactive list; and Buckinghamshire Council's Interactive Heritage Map: <https://heritageportal.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/map>

<sup>38</sup> The figure in the 2011 Census was 12,043 - 2011 Census; <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk> - AVDC use a figure of 12,212 in the Buckingham Fact Pack [AVDC Vale of Aylesbury Plan Buckingham Fact Pack, July, 2011] derived from Office of National Statistics Super Output area data of 2009. This represents a population increase of around 19% and probably nearer 20% when more recent completions are considered. The 2001 Census figure was 12,512.

<b>E01017649/Buckinghamshire 001B</b>	Bourtonville, Chandos Road, Station Road, approximately half of Mount Pleasant, Gawcott Road, Tingewick Road	2,504	9* [Housing 5]
<b>E01033953/Buckinghamshire 001E</b>	Majority of Lace Hill to southern boundaries	1,681	9** [Housing N/A]
<b>E01033954/Buckinghamshire 001F</b>	Industrial Estate, approximately half of Mount Pleasant, Meadway, part of Lace Hill proximate to London Road, Benthill	1,713	9** [Housing N/A]
		14,297	

\*Source: <https://app.powerbi.com/view>

\*\*Source: <https://data.cdrc.ac.uk/dataset/index-multiple-deprivation-imd#data-and-resources>

2.29 In terms of all indices of multiple deprivation, 73% of the population are in the lowest levels of deprivation<sup>39</sup>, while 10% of the population are at the midpoint.<sup>40</sup> It is noteworthy that these indices show much higher levels of deprivation when it comes to housing.

## Age of Population

Table 2.3

LLSOA	002A	002B	002C	002D	001A	001B	001E	001F	Total
									(% of total population)
<b>0-4 years</b>	77	61	132	47	44	154	155	69	739 (5% of total)
<b>5-9 years</b>	108	59	176	76	77	155	207	109	913 (6%)
<b>10-15 years</b>	92	69	206	117	140	194	205	161	1184 (8%)
<b>16-19 years</b>	53	126	100	75	83	110	74	101	722 (5%)
<b>20-24 years</b>	69	208	107	62	81	199	59	87	692 (4.8%)
<b>25-34 years</b>	213	232	284	88	121	329	254	143	1664 (11.6%)
<b>35-49 years</b>	296	232	456	254	282	456	468	366	2810 (19.6%)
<b>50-64 years</b>	314	254	409	333	438	465	200	400	2813 (19.6%)
<b>65-74 years</b>	148	87	220	271	204	233	42	164	1369 (9.5%)
<b>75-84 years</b>	65	70	153	166	133	145	15	79	826 (5.7%)
<b>85+ years</b>	29	38	79	49	41	64	1	34	335 (2.3%)
<b>Total</b>	1464	1436	2322	1538	1644	2504	1680	1713	14,301

<sup>39</sup> 9 & 10 on the scale.

<sup>40</sup> 5 on the scale.

2.30 Trends over twenty period from 2001 to 2021 using figures from the 2001, 2011 and 2021 Census are shown in the table below.

**Table 2.4**

Age Group	2001 (12,212)	2011 (12,043)	2021 (14,301)*
Under 16	1331 (10%)	2435 (20%)	2836 (20%)
16-24	1331 (10%)	1722 (14%)	1414 (10%)
25-44	3795 (33%)	2963 (25%)	4474** (31%) [25-49]
45-64	2388 (21%)	3325 (28%)	2816** (20%) [50-64]
Over 65	1348 (12%)	1598 (13%)	2530 (18%)

\* Figure as found in from calculating age of population figures in 2021 census.

\*\* This is not a direct comparison due to different groupings of age but does assist in noting trends.

2.31 The figures note that the largest age groups are those between 25 and 64 with the 25-49 age group being the largest at 31%. This may be a result of the growth of new housing around Buckingham in the period from 2011 to 2021, attracting younger families. It is also noted that the highest age group in 2011 that of those aged between 45 and 64 can be seen to be reflected in the higher figure of 18% of over 65s in the 2021 Census.

2.32 There is a continuing trend to lose numbers in the age group of 16-25; in the last ten years this has been around half. This is despite the fact that the 2021 Census took place during a period of lockdown arrangements for many higher education institutions, when it might be anticipated that many young people would have returned to the family home. Many of the University of Buckingham students would also have not been on campus for the same reason who might also have been part of this group in previous years.

2.33 There is concern that more of Buckingham's young people should remain. Although many young people may actively choose to move away, it should be ensured that full employment opportunities [not just part-time work] should be available, as well as affordable accommodation.

## **Nurseries, Schools, Further Education, Higher Education & Continuing Education**

2.24 Buckingham has five nurseries,<sup>41</sup> four primary schools<sup>42</sup> and two secondary schools.<sup>43</sup> Both secondary schools also have a Sixth Form providing further education

<sup>41</sup> Bourton Meadow Nursery; Buckingham Primary Nursery; Field House Nursery; George Grenville Nursery & Lace Hill Nursery – there age requirements on some nurseries.

<sup>42</sup> Bourton Meadow Academy; Buckingham Primary School; George Grenville Academy and Lace Hill Academy. The Academy Schools are run by the Campfire Education Trust.

<sup>43</sup> The Buckingham School and the selective grammar school, The Royal Latin School.

from 16-18.<sup>44</sup> In addition, a further Sixth Form Centre has been opened in the Short Breaks Day Services Building [formerly the Infant School] in Well Street.<sup>45</sup>

2.25 One point of note is that the two secondary schools and one primary school are in very close proximity to each other. Although the schools have agreed different starting and finishing times to ease congestion, the fact that many secondary pupils are bussed in from neighbouring villages and further afield, alongside the inevitable parent drop-off and pick-up results in severe congestion in and around London Road and Chandos Road, and this can cause congestion on the by-pass, especially at the Tesco roundabout.

2.26 It is also noteworthy in terms of predicting traffic flow around Buckingham that parents may not take the most direct route to their workplace as they will be dropping children at their choice of school within that journey.

2.27 Children from Buckingham may also attend the primary schools in neighbouring villages. There are also faith schools in Milton Keynes; the Thomas Fremantle Free School in Winslow, alternative grammar schools in Aylesbury and several private schools in the surrounding area as well as the leading public school at Stowe, which draw pupils from Buckingham.

2.28 The University of Buckingham was the first independent University in the UK, with an international as well as UK based student body that offers two-year intensive degree programmes. It has been observed that this has become an attractive option for some local students, who prefer to remain at home.<sup>46</sup> In addition to students on campus both in Buckingham and London,<sup>47</sup> the University offers a number of distance-learning modules.

2.29 There is an Adult Learning Centre based in the Buckingham Centre in Verney Close which provides a range of courses.<sup>48</sup> The nearest alternative centre is now in Aylesbury.

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<sup>44</sup> Potentially there will be increased pressure on Sixth Entry as the Thomas Fremantle School in Winslow has closed its Sixth Form.

<sup>45</sup> This is to accommodate the Sixth Form provision at Furze Down School in Winslow which specialised services for SEND pupils.

<sup>46</sup> Another such option for local students is to pursue a degree through the Open University whilst remaining at home; saving on accommodation expenses.

<sup>47</sup> The University has recently announced that it will be closing its campus at Crewe and relocating students to Buckingham. <https://www.buckingham.ac.uk/news/the-university-of-buckingham-announces-strategic-relocation-of-teaching-activities-from-crewe-to-buckingham/#:~:text=The%20University%20of%20Buckingham%20has,by%20the%20end%20of%202026>; <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cpv0lznglldo>

<sup>48</sup> More information at <https://adultlearningbc.ac.uk/centre-locations/>

### 3.Environment

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3.1 Much of the evidence relating to environmental issues can be found in the *Future Nature Report* to be found in the Supporting Documents.<sup>49</sup> There are some specific issues to be included here.

#### **Flooding Generally**

3.2 River water flooding and surface water flooding are both very important issues to the residents of Buckingham.

#### **River [Fluvial] Flooding**

3.3 The River Great Ouse is literally at the centre of Buckingham, and is a highly prized blue asset, providing wildlife havens and pleasant walks along the banks which are part of the town's green infrastructure. Yet it can also bring devastating flooding to the town.

3.4 In 2015 the Evidence Base for the BNDP 2015 noted that there had been two major floods in recent years, those in 1998 and 2007.<sup>50</sup>

#### **Events since 2015**

3.5 Since then, Buckingham has endured another two major floods. The first occurred in December 2020. This event is well documented in the *Buckingham Section 19 Flood Investigation, Final Technical Report*.<sup>51</sup>

3.6 In November 2024 another major incident in the wake of Storm Bert caused serious flooding in Nelson Street, Well Street, Ford Street, Chandos Road amongst others.<sup>52</sup>

3.7 In September 2024 there had been a more "minor" incident which serves as an example of the more common experience of flooding. The river rose quickly inundating the main shopping car park at Cornwall's Meadow, trapping some cars due to the quick rise in the waters and rendering the car park unusable. This obviously has a knock-on effect on the town's economy.

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<sup>49</sup> Future Nature Report WTC Desk-Based Ecological Assessment Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan for ONH consultants, March 2024.

<sup>50</sup> See Table 4-1 of the *Buckingham Section 19 Flood Investigation Final Technical Report*, [2022 Report] Buckinghamshire Council/jba consulting, February, 2022 for a more comprehensive table of flooding in Buckingham over 100 years+. This report is attached as Appendix 2 to this Evidence Base.

<sup>51</sup> Buckinghamshire Council/jba consulting, February 2022.

<sup>52</sup> BBC Report: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cze37d39dzpo> The river level recorded by the Environment Agency reached 2.35m which is higher than in 2020, although it is believed that the gauge may have been faulty in 2020 and it may have been higher.

## Impact

3.8 Flooding in Chandos Park, Heartlands and Bourton Park occurs most years, with the parks acting as flood plains. Environment Agency Flood Alerts and even Flood Warnings are not uncommon events for many householders in proximity to the river. Residents' concerns about river flooding are not just based on major events but affect day-to-day living including decisions whether to put up bespoke flood defences or move furniture as well as issues such as obtaining household insurance at a reasonable cost.<sup>53</sup>

3.9 The Environment Agency has supported resilience and protection for the homeowners regularly flooded, especially since 2007 when packages of preventative measures were offered to affected homeowners along with DEFRA and Aylesbury Vale District Council.

3.10 It was noted that these measures were tested in 2012 during a flooding event.<sup>54</sup> It is also noted however, that despite deployment of such defences in 2020 several properties were still flooded.<sup>55</sup>

3.11 Buckingham Town Council offers advice on flood preparation and defence to residents and oversees the volunteer Flood Warden Scheme. It also has a Buckingham Community Flood Response Plan.<sup>56</sup> This had its origins in the Buckingham Town Council declaring a climate emergency in 2019 and the resulting Council Action Plan.<sup>57</sup>

3.12 Buckinghamshire Council has set up a "BeFloodReady" website aimed at resilience and recoverability.<sup>58</sup>

3.13 A significant proportion of land in the BNDP Area lies within Flood zones 2 & 3.<sup>59</sup>

3.14 The Environment Agency data places the greatest flood risk to Buckingham as 1:100-year event which fixes the planning zones. It is clear that even with statistical anomalies, Buckingham is currently experiencing major flood incidents in a ratio closer to 1:10 years.<sup>60</sup> There is a comment by a resident recorded in the 2020 Buckingham Section Flood Investigation, when she relates that she has lived in the property for 48 years and has been flooded four times.<sup>61</sup> This is the lived experience by residents. It

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<sup>53</sup> This is well documented in 8.3.2 of the 2022 Report

<sup>54</sup> 5.3.5 of the 2022 Report

<sup>55</sup> 8.3.2 *Buckingham Section 19 Flood Investigation, Final Technical Report*, Buckinghamshire Council/ jba consulting, February 2022. This reports that at least 72 properties, 60 of which were residential, were internally flooded during this event. This report is attached in Appendix 2 to this Evidence Base

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.buckingham-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Buckingham-Flood-Plan-Dec-2022.pdf>

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.buckingham-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/BTC-Climate-Emergency-Action-Plan-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.befloodready.uk/buckinghamshire>

<sup>59</sup> Details can be found in Figure 4-1 of the 2022 Report.

<sup>60</sup> From 1924 to 2024 there have been major floods in 1947, 1998; 2007 and 2020 with more minor incidents in 1999, 2003, 2012, & 2016.

<sup>61</sup> 8.3.1 of the 2022 Report.

would also appear that the greatest incidence of major flooding events have taken place during the last 25 years or so.

3.15 Land in a 1:100-year risk assessment is placed in zone 2 for the purposes of planning. It is debatable as to whether Buckingham should be reassessed in light of the last 25 years, but failing that Buckingham Town Council feels strongly that no further development should be supported in zone 2 (and zone 3) unless the NPPF Sequential & Exception Tests have been fully satisfied so that further properties are not put under this risk, and that public resources are not stretched to provide assistance in flooding events.

3.16 There are several concerns. The first is that it will add to the number of houses potentially at risk during such events. The second is that flood mitigation measures will mean that the water is redirected further downstream, potentially exacerbating problems there.

3.17 This is a very important issue to many residents in Buckingham and therefore it is felt necessary to reiterate the expectation that there will be strict adherence to the relevant policies within the NPPF within the new BNDP.<sup>62</sup> Although it may not be necessary, or even discouraged, this is such an important issue to the people and businesses of Buckingham that to not restate the policies and the Town Council's robust support for them, would appear an omission.

### **Surface Water [Pluvial] Flooding**

3.18 Buckingham is experiencing more frequent incidences of surface water flooding. Adequate surface water drainage is a major issue as some of Buckingham's older drains struggle to cope in heavy rain.

3.19 There are a number of problem areas for example the London Road [A413] where large areas of water collect on the road surface making walking on the pavements treacherous through the risk of being drenched by passing cars. This spot is highlighted as this is a walking route to the two main secondary schools as well as several primary schools.<sup>63</sup> The concern is that pupils will be deterred from pursuing active transport options as a result. There have been repeated attempts to solve this drainage issue but there is expressed concern that run-off from new development uphill is not completely contained and is exacerbating the issue.<sup>64</sup>

3.20 A severe incident occurred in June 2023. It is recorded on the Buckingham Town website<sup>65</sup> Waitrose suffered a partial roof collapse as water poured through, and the

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<sup>62</sup> *National Planning Policy Framework* paragraphs 165-175 & Appendix 3 of same.

<sup>63</sup> George Grenville Academy in Chandos Road; the Lace Hill Academy on Lace Hill and Bourton Meadow Academy on Linden Village.

<sup>64</sup> Similar concerns have been expressed by residents on developments off the Moreton Road [also A413]. Other areas also noted but not limited to Bath Lane, Badgers Estate, Moreton Road Estate, Beech Close & Bradwell Avenue & Otters Brook.

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.buckingham-tc.gov.uk/extreme-weather-causes-flash-flooding-and-damage-for-buckingham/>

Buckingham School, on the London Road, also suffered flooding. One of the companies in Wharf Yard suffered flooding as a result of sewer drains overflowing.<sup>66</sup>

3.21 It was noted that in addition the river level rose 40 cm over a few hours, and warnings were issued to residents near the river.

3.22 It is important to residents that the storm drains in Buckingham are not further overloaded, or that the surface water adds to the water levels in the Great River Ouse, with associated risks of flooding.

### **Water Concerns Generally -Buckingham Waste Water Station**

3.23 There is serious concern raised by residents about the sewage capacity within Buckingham and that there is very limited capacity left until upgrades are made.

3.24 The Town Council appreciates that there is an issue for Anglian Water as the local undertaker, in that they are unable to refuse connection to the public sewer by a developer regardless of capacity; and that planning authorities cannot refuse planning permission on the basis of lack of capacity of the sewers.<sup>67</sup>

3.25 It is known that Anglian Water has made provision for upgrades in its latest Management Plan but this is yet to approved by OFWAT. This should be known by mid-December, 2024.<sup>68</sup>

3.26 In 2017 there was a serious incident at the Brackley Pumping station when raw sewage was discharged into the Great River Ouse due to pump and alarm malfunctions.<sup>69</sup> Such incidents raise concerns as to the further dangers of a system had almost complete capacity.

3.27 There is local concern about further development until such upgrades have been approved and made. There would be support for phasing of further development in line with this aim.

3.28 There is also concern that Buckingham is situated in Anglian Water's Ruthamford West Water Resource Zone. Not only is the proximate to one of the most rapidly growing areas of the country in Milton Keynes, but also that this Resource Zone does not have any water sources of its own and is reliant on water being transferred from other Water Resource Zones.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Buckingham News: <https://buckingham.news/flooding-in-buckingham-can-it-be-resolved/>

<sup>67</sup> Press Release from Buckingham Town Council, 8<sup>th</sup> February, 2024 - <https://www.buckingham-tc.gov.uk/sewage-capacity-matters/>

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.anglianwater.co.uk/corporate/strategies-and-plans/our-plan-2025-to-2030-pr24/>

<sup>69</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/water-company-fined-560170-after-sewage-discharge-in-river#:~:text=Around%206%20million%20litres%20of,down%20the%20River%20Great%20Ouse.>

<sup>70</sup> [wrmp-report-2019.pdf](#) diagram at p.12 [V3 WRMP24 main report](#) table at p.43

3.29 This makes it very important that households in the BNDP are able to conserve water use through such options as grey water harvesting. These are often more successfully incorporated in the initial building stage rather than as a retrofit option.

### Allotments

3.30 Many residents enjoy cultivating an allotment. There has been increased interest as a result of the Covid-19 lockdowns. Currently there are two areas of allotments within the BNDP Area: the private allotments off the Tingewick Road,<sup>71</sup> and the Bourton Road Allotments.<sup>72</sup> Additionally, new allotment plots will become available beside the new cemetery as part of the delivery of this site from the BNDP 2015.<sup>73</sup>

3.31 There is no agreed formula for calculation of need for allotments<sup>74</sup> in light of new development. Demand for allotments can go in waves according to societal and economic factors. Demand has evidently remained high since the Covid -19 pandemic in 2020<sup>75</sup> and the cost of living crisis may be sustaining that interest as well. It is unlikely now that new allotment holders will want or be allocated a full plot; plots are being subdivided into halves and quarters – so there will be more allotment holders than full 10 pole plots calculation will indicate.

3.32 In the Evidence Base for BNDP the following calculation was researched and used that of 16 plots per 1000 households. So as approximately 1000 new households may be added by the new Plan, there may be a need for 16 more 10 pole plots or the equivalent.

3.33 As it is unknown how popular the new plots at the new cemetery site will be, and for how long demand may remain high for allotment space in Buckingham, in conjunction with the continued policy regarding decent private green space for households, there has been no specific allocation of land for allotment use at this point. This will be monitored closely for the anticipated further plan in light of the progress of the Buckinghamshire Plan.

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<sup>71</sup> It is believed that this site has 21 plots= an assumption is made that these are the traditional 10 pole plots.

<sup>72</sup> For more information see: <https://bourtonroadallotments.co.uk/> The Bourton Road allotments have 75 full size plots which equate to the old 10 pole measurement of 56 such plots, not all are available.

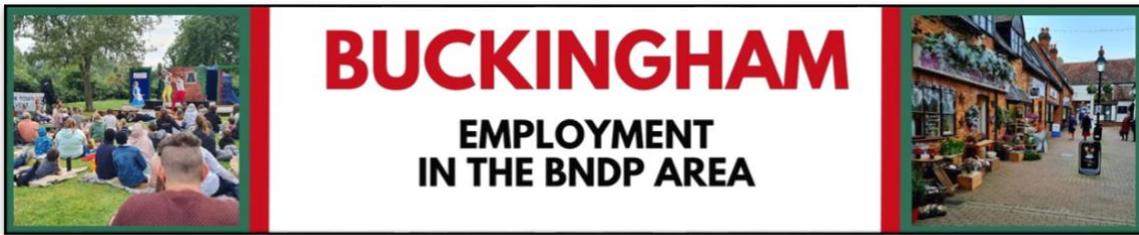
<sup>73</sup> It is estimated that these will be the equivalent of 10x10 pole plots; the working figures are 30 x 25sqm plots.

<sup>74</sup> The Thorpe Report of the Departmental Committee of Inquiry into Allotments, Cmnd 4166 HMSO 1969 suggested a figure of 15 per 1000 households, which seems to have been widely adopted as a guide. The National Society of Allotments & Leisure Gardens suggests 20 standard allotments per 1000 households – standard being 30 square yards [www.nsalg.org.uk].

<sup>75</sup> Information supplied by the chair of the Bourton Road Allotments Association; a small waiting list in 2020 rising to 18 in 2023 and now currently around 25.

## 4. Employment in the BNDP Area

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4.1 As noted above, Buckingham is part of the “Knowledge Arc/Corridor”. In particular its proximity to the Silverstone Racing Circuit has meant that it has been noted for its connections to the motorsport industry and associated high-tech engineering.

4.2 The University of Buckingham, the first independent University in the UK was founded in the 1976 and continues to be one of the largest employers in the BNDP area.

4.3 A number of clearly defined employment areas can be identified within the BNDP area.

### Town Centre

4.4 The Town Centre provides a good number of retail and service employers. The area is constrained as much of the town centre is within the Conservation Area, and there is not a large supply of suitable brownfield sites for employment opportunities. The town centre houses the bus station and thus provides public transport links. Car parking remains a contentious issue.<sup>76</sup>

4.5 The town centre boundaries were defined in the BNDP 2015 Policy EE3.<sup>77</sup> The boundaries have not been altered by the new Plan.

4.6 An assessment and recommendations of the Town Centre is found in the Buckingham Town Centre Study based on 2023 data found in the Supporting Documents.<sup>78</sup>

### Tourism Attractions

4.7 Buckingham is well placed to support tourism. The number of historic listed buildings within the town itself is attractive, and the town offers a wide selection of hospitality outlets through coffee shops, bars and restaurants. Nearby are the National Trust properties of Claydon House and Stowe Landscape Gardens, as well as the

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<sup>76</sup> BNDP 2015 Policy EE5 had indicated potential car park extension availability. The land in question adjacent to Cornwall’s Meadow car park has now been developed as a care home with assisted living flats. It is unclear where suitable space in the town centre would now be found to extend car parking facilities.

<sup>77</sup> <https://www.buckingham-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/BNDP-Made-Version-October-2015.pdf> p.53 Fig.9.6

<sup>78</sup> This was prepared by People & Places Partnership for Buckingham Town Council & Buckingham & Villages Community Board (Buckinghamshire Council): <https://www.buckingham-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Town-Centre-Study-1.pdf>

Silverstone Racing Circuit.<sup>79</sup> There is a Tourist Information Office, managed by Buckingham Town Council, housed in the Old Gaol, which is itself a museum.

4.8 Bicester Village Designer Outlet Shops are also nearby which can be reached by the X5 bus service, which continues to Oxford.

4.9 The Town Council hosts the Discover Buckingham<sup>80</sup> website and also introduced the Buxplore app.<sup>81</sup>

4.10 In the BNDP 2015 it was hoped that the Canal area might be developed to provide a further tourist attraction. This has now been allocated in the new BNDP with facilities for the Buckingham Canal Society to explain the historical importance of the canal system, as well as providing an attractive outdoor space.

### **Tourism Facilities**

4.11 There are now four hotels; the Villiers Hotel and the White Hart in the town centre; and a Premier Inn and a Travelodge on the Lace Hill Employment area off the by-pass, all providing accommodation for a range of budgets. The Stoneleigh Boutique Hotel on Castle Street has closed, and the Best Western Hotel on the by-pass has been converted into student accommodation for the University of Buckingham's Mount Pleasant campus.

4.12 There are a number of properties offered on Airbnb – many of which are advertised as close to the Silverstone Circuit, which may indicate one of the main draws to the area.

4.13 There is also a coach park on the A413 opposite the Shell Garage, adjacent to Travelodge hotel. This is provided so that coaches will have an easy place to park if groups are visiting or staying in Buckingham.

4.14 This is an area of employment that will be closely monitored as to where a future plan may be able to assist with supportive policies.

### **Tingewick Road Industrial Estate**

4.15 This is located within the western town centre area. There has been a significant amount of residential development in the surrounding area since the BNDP 2015. Part of this site was allocated for residential development in the 2015 Plan and remains so as a brownfield site in the new Plan. This site has seen redevelopment as an industrial site since 2015 with three main units [A, B & C] housing businesses. There appears to be a reasonable occupancy rate although there also appears to be some turnover with the fairly recent departure of ORN workwear to larger premises away from Buckingham.

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<sup>79</sup> There is now a hotel on site at Silverstone Park, and the Whittlebury Park Hotel has been a popular choice in attending Silverstone in recent years.

<sup>80</sup> <https://www.discoverbuckingham.uk/>

<sup>81</sup> <https://buxplore.web.app/> provides interactive trails to follow around Buckingham based on various themes.

4.16 There is also now an Angling Club adjacent to the river.<sup>82</sup>

4.17 There is no direct public transport but there are now significant residential estates well within walking or other active transport distance on the Tingewick Road.

4.18 A small employment site exists on the other side of Tingewick Road which housed a self-service laundrette and laundry business, adjacent to a furniture store. Both businesses are listed as temporarily closed.

4.19 Further up Tingewick Road is the Field House Nursery which provides day child care from age 6 weeks to 5 years.<sup>83</sup>

### **Buckingham Industrial Estate**

4.20 This area lies to the south beyond the A 421 by-pass. There are no public transport links to this site. The Local Plan, VALP identifies this as a key employment site within Aylesbury Vale and is covered by Policy E1 of VALP.

4.21 There is a mixture of small to large units as well as office space. Originally intended for business only more recently a number of retail shops and services have opened, either as “factory” shops associated with a business on site, or relocations from the town centre to provide cheaper/larger space and easier parking for customers, or simply new retail units. It is noticeable that this trend has not expanded and that some businesses have transferred retail to shop units elsewhere. This may reflect a pattern on the High Streets of reduced sales on premises and a move to online shopping overall. Service providers still benefit from easy and free parking.

4.22 Several of the units are subdivided into upstairs and downstairs premises – this provides flexibility in terms of the size of the unit and helps reduce costs if not all the space is required by one business.

4.23 Additionally, several businesses occupy adjacent units, providing the necessary space [and flexibility] subject to availability, for their needs.

4.44 There appears to be a good occupancy rate. There is turnover but with many long-term tenants/owners.

4.45 There are a number of larger units on the site, but this is perhaps a potential gap in provision – many businesses are looking for bespoke premises. There is a reduced potential to expand the site as there is now housing being developed to the west of Osier Way. This may limit the potential to offer larger, bespoke sites for either expansion, relocation or even start up.

4.46 There is no direct public transport to this site, which has two access points from the by-pass. The nearest bus stops are located on London Road and therefore it would be necessary to walk from there to the Industrial Estate.

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<sup>82</sup> For more information see: <https://www.verulam-angling.co.uk/tingewick/>

<sup>83</sup> <https://childbasepartnership.com/nursery/field-house-day-nursery/>

4.47 There is no dedicated cycle route.

4.48 Walking from the town centre would be via London Road, and then along the by-pass; or via the Railway Walk and then crossing the by-pass. The access point beside the Swan Retail Park is walkable from the Mount Pleasant residential area and will also provide walkable access from the new Osier Way development. Meadway and Lace Hill, residential areas, are also within reasonable active transport distances, although cycling may be less attractive.

### **Swan Business Park**

4.49 This lies to the south of the town centre, proximate to the Buckingham Industrial Estate and also to the new Osier Way residential area allocated by VALP. It lies directly off the A421 by-pass. There are no direct public transport links.

4.50 This houses a number of retail units, including an Aldi supermarket, as well as businesses and services such as Pure Gym.

### **Bourton Business Park**

4.51 This lies off the A421 bypass to the south east. It has no direct public transport links.

It houses a small number of businesses and services.<sup>84</sup> It is adjacent to Manor Farm which runs a butchery and the Larder Café.

### **Park Manor Industries**

4.52 Located off the Moreton Road, close to residential area and the boundary with Maids Moreton Parish. There is also a recording studio located here.

### **Area off the A413 to south of by-pass/Lace Hill Employment Area**

4.53 A number of retail and services have opened around this area. Tesco has been joined by Lidl, as well as McDonalds, Starbucks, Beefeater Restaurant & Costa, as well as two hotels, the existing Travelodge and the more recent Premier Inn.

4.54 This is also the site of the Wipac factory, another major employer within the BNDP Area.

4.55 This area is served by bus stops for the X5 and X60 buses which also make stops in the town centre bus station, as well as less frequent services.

### **Wider Area**

4.56 The Local Plan, VALP, identifies Silverstone Park as a key employment area in the north of Buckinghamshire, as well as Westcott Venture Park. Both are covered by Policy E1 of VALP.

4.57 Neither of these sites enjoy good transport links with Buckingham. There is no regular direct public transport.

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<sup>84</sup> Currently as of November 2024, Thrive Chiropractic & Health Clinic; & Equine Veterinary & Reproduction.

4.58 Silverstone Park website lays out cycle hire schemes and car share schemes to contribute to sustainable travel, as well as a demand led minibus service between Milton Keynes and Silverstone Park calling at Dadford and Buckingham provided by Zeelo.<sup>85</sup>

4.59 The currently available cycle routes are not particularly attractive, the Dadford Road is not especially cycle friendly. The National Cycle Route 50 is useful until the top of Stowe Avenue, but then heads west towards Syresham, when cyclists would need to join the A43 as the alternative to the Dadford Road. Currently [as of November 2024] there have been signs prohibiting cycling between Brackley and Towcester. There are discussions as to how to improve the cycle route provision. The Buckinghamshire Greenway will improve cycling connections to Brackley, but again this does not assist in terms of Silverstone Park as an employment area.

4.60 There is a bus service from Buckingham to Silverstone UTC during school terms – Stagecoach 83 - which leaves Buckingham at 08.38 and returns from Silverstone at 16.32. This is unlikely to be of assistance to the majority of people working at Silverstone who wish to travel from Buckingham. This is commonly misunderstood to be a regular bus service, especially in developers’ transport plans.

4.61 Westcott Venture Park is situated off the A41. This is unlikely to be a viable cycle route and there are no bus services. The nearest train station is Aylesbury Parkway which is approximately 5 miles away. Even with the new Winslow station in the future, a worker would need to cycle to Winslow Station, then board a train with a bike [if permitted] and then cycle from Aylesbury Parkway to Westcott.

4.62 These employment sites are thus largely only available to Buckingham residents with vehicle transport. This is of concern to the Town Council in that it is keen to encourage sustainable transport options.<sup>86</sup>

## Employment Information from 2021 Census

**Table 4.1**

Lower-Level Super Output Area [LLSOA]	Area	Population
<b>E01017644/Buckinghamshire 002A</b>	Linden Village & Bourton Meadow Academy, Part of Page Hill[ Middlefield Close, part of Page Hill Avenue, De Clare Court] & Canal Area	1,464
<b>E01017645/Buckinghamshire 002B</b>	Town centre to Stowe Avenue; to University of Buckingham Hunter Street Campus; Hospital; to the river	1,432
<b>E01017646/Buckinghamshire 002C</b>	North side of Moreton Road to borders; Stowe Avenue and Brackley Road to north river side; eastern side of town centre and most of western and Overn Avenues	2,320
<b>E01017647/Buckinghamshire 002D</b>	Majority of Page Hill, area to the south of Moreton Road	1,539

<sup>85</sup> <https://silverstone-park.com/enviroment/green-travel/>

<sup>86</sup> Buckingham Town Council Climate Emergency Objectives No.2.

<b>E01017648/Buckinghamshire 001A</b>	Heartlands, Bourton Road, part of Badgers, area to north of A421 to Thornborough border, part of the area to the south towards Coombs	1,644
<b>E01017649/Buckinghamshire 001B</b>	Bourtonville, Chandos Road, Station Road, approximately half of Mount Pleasant, Gawcott Road, Tingewick Road	2,504
<b>E01033953/Buckinghamshire 001E</b>	Majority of Lace Hill to southern boundaries	1,681
<b>E01033954/Buckinghamshire 001F</b>	Industrial Estate, approximately half of Mount Pleasant, Meadway, part of Lace Hill proximate to London Road, Benthill	1,713
		14,297

## Economic Activity

**Table 4.2** figures drawn from 2021 Census Lower Output Areas

LLSOA	Population	Economic activity 16+	Active	Employed	Unemployed	Inactive	Retired	Looking after home/family	Long-term sick/disabled	Students
<b>002A</b>	1,464	1,187	841	821	12	330	232	40	13	39
<b>002B</b>	1,246	686	656	656	30	487	168	44	39	41
<b>002C</b>	1,807	1,089	1,051	1,051	38	681	415	84	55	91
<b>002D</b>	1,298		692	674	18	593	472	37	16	53
<b>001A</b>	1,385		826	809	2	528	386	40	20	63
<b>001B</b>		2,000	1,195	1,155	40	758	426	88	34	163
<b>001E</b>		1,115	852	833	19	235	64	58	20	62
<b>001F</b>		1,375	915	878	37	433	280	53	9	68
<b>Total</b>			7,028	6,877	196	4,045	2,443	444	206	580*

NB: \* - This figure is derived from a period when the University of Buckingham was still largely providing classes online due to the Covid Pandemic and also outwith the University term – so the number of resident University of Buckingham students may not be fully represented here.

4.63 From the individuals who identified as being economically active in 2021, **97% were employed and 3% (approximately) were unemployed.**<sup>87</sup>

4.64 From those identifying as **economically inactive, 60% were retired.**<sup>88</sup> It may be assumed that some individuals who are currently in a caring/home-making capacity, may become economically active in the future as well as some students who may choose to remain in Buckingham for work. It would also be incorrect to assume that all those identifying as retired, will remain so. Changes in pension provision in recent years may mean a more fluid status that previously could be assumed. There remains

<sup>87</sup> For comparison the figure for Buckinghamshire Council area is 96% & 3.8%; for England 95% & 4.9%.

<sup>88</sup> For comparison Buckinghamshire Council area the figure is 61% and nationally 55%

a potential pool of people who may return to economic active, as well as those leaving it.

4.65 Buckingham also has an increasing population in the age groups under 16. This will mean that more people will be entering economic activity at this point than previously. It has been the case that Buckingham loses residents in the 18-45 age group, it is desirable to ensure that this loss, if continued, is not due to the lack of employment opportunities locally.

## Employment Sector

Table 4.3

Sector	LLSOA 002A	LLSOA 002B	LLSOA 002C	LLSOA 002D	LLSOA 001A	LLSOA 001B	LLSOA 001E	LLSOA 001F	Total
<b>Total</b>	834	708	1,082	687	835	1,190	861	902	7,099
<b>A Agriculture, forestry and fishing</b>	5	4	4	2	7	6	3	4	35
<b>B Mining and quarrying</b>	3	0	0	2	0	3	1	0	9
<b>C Manufacturing</b>	89	62	80	47	66	84	62	65	555
<b>D Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply</b>	1	1	7	1	1	5	2	4	22
<b>E Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities</b>	7	6	9	1	4	13	10	2	52
<b>F Construction</b>	65	64	89	46	59	89	63	59	534
<b>G Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motor cycles</b>	138	102	172	100	122	179	138	144	1,095
<b>H Transport and storage</b>	22	26	36	23	32	43	28	27	237
<b>I Accommodation and food service activities</b>	26	50	51	16	25	68	27	25	288
<b>J Information and communication</b>	47	41	59	42	54	68	58	58	427
<b>K Financial and insurance activities</b>	26	13	22	21	34	44	42	31	233
<b>L Real estate activities</b>	13	10	14	16	11	14	9	19	106
<b>M Professional, scientific and technical activities</b>	47	47	78	52	76	76	59	70	505
<b>N Administrative and support service activities</b>	36	25	47	28	44	70	35	43	328
<b>O Public administration and defence; compulsory social security</b>	50	25	46	39	59	64	50	66	399
<b>P Education</b>	126	114	179	130	147	189	115	136	1,136
<b>Q Human health and social work activities</b>	93	74	130	79	63	127	114	88	768
<b>R, S, T, U Other</b>	40	44	59	42	31	65	45	61	387

## Largest Employment Sectors

Table 4.4

Number of employees	Sector
1136	Education
1095	Wholesale & Retail trade; motor vehicle repair
768	Human Health and social work
555	Manufacturing
534	Construction
505	Professional, scientific & technical

4.66 Not all of these jobs may be located in Buckingham but in identifying the highest numbers, it is possible to demonstrate that there are also significant employers in these sectors within Buckingham, which tends to support that these sectors do provide major employment opportunities within the BNDP area.

4.67 Buckingham has one university; two secondary schools and four primary schools within the BNDP area, and there are three private schools in the surrounding area [Stowe, Thornton College & Akeley Wood School] so there is clearly significant employment available within this sector. The University of Buckingham is recognised as one of the major employers.

4.68 Buckingham has a thriving town centre with one major supermarket, and two convenience sized major supermarkets, in addition to a large number of smaller shops; outside of the town centre are three more supermarkets as well as the Swan Retail Park units, as well as several units on the Buckingham Industrial Estate which are retail outlets.

4.69 There are also three repair garages, two within the town centre and one on the edge, as well as specialised motor repair outlets such as tyre shops and motorbike repairs notably on Buckingham Industrial Estate. There are five fuel stations: two in the town centre, two at Lace Hill and one on the A421 by-pass.

4.70 Buckingham has a large GP practice, as well as the Buckingham Community Hospital; there are four dental practices within the town centre; as well as four opticians.

4.71 There are a number of manufacturers within the Buckingham area, most notably Wipac, which has been recognised as a major employer within the town and manufactures motor components. These businesses are located near or in the Buckingham Industrial Park.

4.72 Natco Foods Ltd, a major spice and food wholesaler, is located in the area of Gawcott with Lenborough Parish Council that falls within the BNDP Area.

4.73 Buckingham has a number of builders and building firms, and in addition to housing construction within the town area, major infrastructure work is taking place for East-West rail and HS2 in the surrounding area.

4.74 Buckingham benefits from having a number of diverse employment sectors in terms of overall job security and is not overly dependent on one industry or employer.

## Occupation

**Table 4.5**

Description	LLSOA 002A	LLSOA 002B	LLSOA 002C	LLSOA 002D	LLSOA 001A	LLSOA 001B	LLSOA 001E	LLSOA 001F	Total
<b>Total</b>	833	702	1,077	686	836	1,190	859	901	7,084
<b>1. Managers, directors and senior officials</b>	102	82	140	130	168	175	127	160	1,084
<b>2. Professional occupations</b>	153	156	214	199	198	259	245	228	1,652
<b>3. Associate professional and technical occupations</b>	128	82	167	121	144	202	126	140	1,110
<b>4. Administrative and secretarial occupations</b>	80	51	87	54	91	104	72	84	623
<b>5. Skilled trades occupations</b>	92	73	113	48	54	117	73	72	642
<b>6. Caring, leisure and other service occupations</b>	87	50	109	45	43	93	60	67	554
<b>7. Sales and customer service occupations</b>	70	71	79	37	48	79	67	65	516
<b>8. Process, plant and machine operatives</b>	54	53	64	19	35	58	35	43	361
<b>9. Elementary occupations</b>	67	84	104	33	55	103	54	42	542

4.75 It is notable that a significant percentage of the population are employed at high levels within their employment sectors.

## Travel to Work [subject to qualifications around Covid restrictions and answer guidance as to accuracy]

**Table 4.6**

Description	LLSOA 002A	LLSOA 002B	LLSOA 002C	LLSOA 002D	LLSOA 001A	LLSOA 001B	LLSOA 001E	LLSOA 001F	Total
<b>Number</b>	835	701	1,075	687	386	1,189	860	902	6,635
<b>Work mainly at or from home</b>	271	231	373	289	359	401	327	358	2,609
<b>Underground, metro, light rail, tram</b>	0	0	3	0	1	0	2	0	6
<b>Train</b>	4	8	4	4	3	11	3	4	41
<b>Bus, minibus or coach</b>	8	25	15	3	5	9	14	8	87
<b>Taxi</b>	2	12	4	5	3	5	3	1	35
<b>Motorcycle, scooter or moped</b>	0	1	4	1	1	4	1	5	17

Driving a car or van	426	280	511	315	372	582	427	433	3,346
Passenger in a car or van	25	23	32	17	25	33	22	25	202
Bicycle	12	12	14	6	6	13	2	7	72
On foot	79	104	105	43	57	116	52	54	610
Other	8	5	10	4	4	15	7	7	60

## Highest level Qualifications

Table 4.7

Level	LLSOA 002A	LLSOA 002B	LLSOA 002C	LLSOA 002D	LLSOA 001A	LLSOA 001B	LLSOA 001E	LLSOA 001F	Total
Number 16+	1,185	1,246	1,807	1,297	1,384	1,999	1,116	1,372	11,406
No qualifications	140	166	286	103	139	262	71	129	1,296
Level 1	144	91	178	113	117	177	99	133	1,052
Level 2	189	169	267	177	197	264	191	188	1,642
Apprenticeship	73	54	87	65	68	88	26	55	516
Level 3	194	246	285	215	231	376	209	243	1,999
Level 4 & above	416	478	656	594	602	785	519	585	4,635
Other	29	42	48	30	30	47	7	39	272

NB on qualification levels from Census

- Level 1 and entry level qualifications: 1 to 4 GCSEs grade A\* to C , Any GCSEs at other grades, O levels or CSEs (any grades), 1 AS level, NVQ level 1, Foundation GNVQ, Basic or Essential Skills
- Level 2 qualifications: 5 or more GCSEs (A\* to C or 9 to 4), O levels (passes), CSEs (grade 1), School Certification, 1 A level, 2 to 3 AS levels, VCEs, Intermediate or Higher Diploma, Welsh Baccalaureate Intermediate Diploma, NVQ level 2, Intermediate GNVQ, City and Guilds Craft, BTEC First or General Diploma, RSA Diploma
- Level 3 qualifications: 2 or more A levels or VCEs, 4 or more AS levels, Higher School Certificate, Progression or Advanced Diploma, Welsh Baccalaureate Advance Diploma, NVQ level 3; Advanced GNVQ, City and Guilds Advanced Craft, ONC, OND, BTEC National, RSA Advanced Diploma
- Level 4 qualifications or above: degree (BA, BSc), higher degree (MA, PhD, PGCE), NVQ level 4 to 5, HNC, HND, RSA Higher Diploma, BTEC Higher level, professional qualifications (for example, teaching, nursing, accountancy)
- Other qualifications: vocational or work-related qualifications, other qualifications achieved in England or Wales, qualifications achieved outside England or Wales (equivalent not stated or unknown)

### Inflow and Outflow for Work

4.76 This data is drawn from the 2011 Census and was collated in November 2021.<sup>89</sup>

4.77 It is not definitive as it focuses on journeys within the Study's selected area [and beyond in terms of London], but it does give a good general indication of the patterns of commuting from and into Buckingham.

**Table 4.8** Data from 2011 – no comparable updated data

Travelling from X to Buckingham	X – Work Destination or Residence	Travelling to X from Buckingham
1	Abingdon	1
46	Aylesbury	159
9	Banbury	29
21	Bicester	79
57	Brackley	49
[433]	Buckingham*	[433]
0	Didcot	0
3	Kidlington	1
11	Leighton Buzzard	8
189	Milton Keynes	440
11	Oxford	62
0	Princes Risborough	7
2	Thame	3
1	Tring	0
930	Rural Areas**	971
27	London	85
<b>1308 Commute in</b>		<b>1867 Commute out</b>

\*The mirror figure of 433 for Buckingham is internal journeys within Buckingham removed from totals for commutes in/out.

\*\* Rural areas within the corridor identified by England's Economic Heartland for Oxford-Milton Keynes Connectivity omitting the major urban settlements.

4.78 It may be safe to assume changes have occurred since 2011, not least as a result of Covid-19 Lockdowns and the difference in work patterns since, with more people working from home for at least part of the week where that is feasible. This may mean that workers can consider being at a greater distance from their place of work, as the previous daily commute might have been considered too great or too expensive. Nevertheless the pattern and work location may follow a similar pattern. It may be assumed that more people are working from home in Buckingham and as such are not involved in any form of commute. The data from the 2021 census does provide some information here, in that 2,609 individuals stated that they worked mainly from home, but it should also be considered that the data carries a warning as to accuracy in light of furlough and general work practices in March 2021.

<sup>89</sup> The Evidence Base Phase 2 for England's Economic Heartland's Oxford -Milton Keynes Connectivity Study [https://eeh-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/EEH\\_CS\\_Ox-Mk\\_Evidence\\_BaseV4.1AltFuturesv3.1\\_FINAL\\_DOCUMENT.pdf](https://eeh-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/EEH_CS_Ox-Mk_Evidence_BaseV4.1AltFuturesv3.1_FINAL_DOCUMENT.pdf) at p.57

4.79 In terms of residents commuting from Buckingham, the largest number travel to rural locations; followed by travel to Milton Keynes and then Aylesbury. Bicester is the fourth most popular *commuting* destination, and again the growth of Bicester to a new Garden Town status with significant new employers such as Ocado since 2011, may potentially have increased the numbers commuting there from Buckingham.

4.80 Therefore it may be said that the greatest number of workers commute eastwards to Milton Keynes; with westwards towards Bicester, Oxford, Brackley etc being the next most frequent direction. Without taking into account rural destinations, it is clear that the volume of commuting traffic is following between east and west points.

4.81 Again without closer identification of the rural points, it would appear that few people work in Buckingham and live in the south of the county – so there may not be a significant demand for housing in Buckingham from such workers.

4.82 It is clear that there is a significant number of workers who leave Buckingham to work, and a slightly smaller number who commute to Buckingham for work. So there is a crossflow of skills entering and leaving Buckingham for work purposes. It is fair to assume that not all persons who commute from Buckingham would wish to work in Buckingham, but a portion may do so, and providing further employment opportunities in Buckingham would afford further choice.

4.83 Buckingham also provides significant employment opportunities to the surrounding rural areas, with a very high figure of commuters from rural areas arriving in Buckingham for work. This demonstrates that Buckingham does not just need to plan for its own residents' employment needs but for the surrounding villages in North Buckinghamshire. It is important for the wider local economy that Buckingham does not become mainly a dormitory town for surrounding active economic areas without significant employment opportunities within the town itself. Increasing housing may mean that some existing Buckingham workers who commute into the town, may be able to reside within the area, but it will also mean more people who may wish to work nearer to their homes.

4.84 Buckingham is an attractive destination for employment. It will become more so if the transport connectivity between Milton Keynes and Oxford is improved in line with the improvements that have already been achieved in the "Knowledge Arc/Corridor" from Cambridge to Milton Keynes.

4.85 Buckingham is extremely proximate to Silverstone, the home of British F1 racing and at the heart of UK's "Motorsport Valley" of circa 4500 companies employing 41,000 in motorsport-related activities. It is proximate to the A34 with access to the western ports; to the A43 with access to Southampton and the southern ports; and to the M1 and the M40 with connections to London, Birmingham and the north.

4.86 Buckingham does have a highly educated work force available to employers.

## Future Needs

**Table 4.9** Population age 2021 census

LLSOA	00 2 A	002 B	002 C	002 D	001 A	001 B	001 E	001 F	Total	Buck	National
									(% of total population)	As % of total population	As % of total population
<b>0-4 years</b>	77	61	132	47	44	154	155	69	739 (5% of total)	5.6% of total	5.4% of total population
<b>5-9 years</b>	108	59	176	76	77	155	207	109	913 (6%)	6.4	5.9
<b>10-15 years</b>	92	69	206	117	140	194	205	161	1184 (8%)	7.9	7.2
<b>16-19 years</b>	53	126	100	75	83	110	74	101	722 (5%)	4.3	4.6
<b>20-24 years</b>	69	208	107	62	81	199	59	87	692 (4.8%)	4.6	6.0
<b>25-34 years</b>	213	232	284	88	121	329	254	143	1664 (11.6%)	11.6	13.6
<b>35-49 years</b>	296	232	456	254	282	456	468	366	2810 (19.6%)	20.4	19.4
<b>50-64 years</b>	314	254	409	333	438	465	200	400	2813 (19.6%)	20.4	19.4
<b>65-74 years</b>	148	87	220	271	204	233	42	164	1369 (9.5%)	9.7	9.8
<b>75-84 years</b>	65	70	153	166	133	145	15	79	826 (5.7%)	6.3	6.1
<b>85+ years</b>	29	38	79	49	41	64	1	34	335 (2.3%)	2.7	2.4
<b>total</b>	1464	1436	2322	1538	1644	2504	1680	1713	14,301		

4.87 None of the figures are significantly out of line with either Buckinghamshire Council Area or the National figures for England.

**0-19 – 3558 – approximately 25%**

**20-64 -7979 – approximately 56%** - of which 20-49 [assuming still in workforce at plan end of 2040] -5166 approximately 36% - 50-64 may be leaving economic activity during plan period – 2813 – approximately 20%

**65+ 2530 -approximately 18%**

4.88 It would appear that on a very basic calculation, there will be more individuals entering the job market than are leaving the market during the Plan period, and that a basic assumption that aside from other factors approximately 5% more jobs may be required during the Plan period.

## 5. Transport

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5.1 Transport Strategy for Buckingham is found in AECOM Buckingham Transport Strategy of 2017.<sup>90</sup> This contains the suggested mitigation measures to ease traffic congestion in Buckingham. The optimum measure would be a relief road between the A421 and A422 to the west of the town but this would be a very costly option.

5.2 As a result of the cancellation of the proposed East-West Expressway by central government, the report on the status of the A421 between Milton Keynes and Oxford by Buckinghamshire Council is awaited. The perception is that this route now carries a very significant amount of through traffic not originating from or heading to Buckingham itself.

5.3 England's Economic Heartland's Transport Strategy seeks to direct investment to improving the rail and other public transport networks in a desire to mitigate the effects of climate change.<sup>91</sup> This envisages a future less centred on road freight and other road journeys.

5.4 The effect of the Buckingham Transport Strategy was to rule out the proposed reserve housing site to the west in the BNDP 2015 due to objections raised at the VALP hearings that this would increase traffic congestion as traffic from the west sought to access the town centre.

5.5 Buckingham Town Council is concerned about the effect of traffic moving down the Moreton Road [A413] from both the new development at Moreton Road Phase III, but also from the new allocation of 170 homes at Walnut Drive in Maids Moreton parish. It is envisaged that this will increase congestion at the Old Gaol mini-roundabout and on the Stratford Road. It is proposed to provide a filter lane at the A422 roundabout at the top of the Stratford Road, as outlined as one possible measure of mitigation set out in the Buckingham Transport Strategy. The alternative route for this traffic to access the A422 to Milton Keynes would be via Mill Lane, a narrow single carriageway road.

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<sup>90</sup> AECOM, *Buckingham Transport Strategy* Report for Buckinghamshire County Council in 2017:[https://buckinghamshire-gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/buckingham-transport-strategy-final-jan-17-1\\_LA9bjiO.pdf](https://buckinghamshire-gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/buckingham-transport-strategy-final-jan-17-1_LA9bjiO.pdf)

<sup>91</sup> <https://www.englandseconomicheartland.com/our-work/our-strategy/>

## Public Transport

5.6 There are no train services to Buckingham. Trains to various destinations can be accessed at Milton Keynes station, which provides access to the West Coast Main Line trains to London and the North; or the local line between London, Northampton and Birmingham. Both services will give access to Birmingham International Airport.

5.7 Trains to London, Oxford and Birmingham can also be accessed in Bicester at either Bicester North or Bicester Village stations. It will also be possible to access trains to London at the new Winslow station in 2025.

5.8 Either way, residents must find a mode of transport to these stations.

5.9 Buckingham is served by the X5 service that connects Bedford, Milton Keynes, Buckingham, Bicester and Oxford (although it no longer continues from Bedford to Cambridge); and the X6 which connects Aylesbury, Winslow, Buckingham and Milton Keynes. Neither of these services run into the late evening, so do not offer an opportunity for a night out at the theatres in Aylesbury, Oxford or Milton Keynes for example.

5.10 The more local bus services do tend to confuse the unwary or optimistic such as those preparing travel plans for developers.

## 6. Areas of Buckingham

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6.1 In the Evidence Base supporting the BNDP 2015, general areas of Buckingham were identified, and strengths and weaknesses listed. This section provides an assessment of the new areas that have been developed since 2014/15.

### Lace Hill

6.2 Since 2015 – the new residential area of Lace Hill has been fully established. It has a number of play areas, a very attractive green pathway at the south side of the estate joining the Bridlepath which runs through the other side. There is a primary school and nursery run by an Academy Trust as well as a very popular Community Centre. The Community Centre has two indoor spaces available for hire as well as a football pitch; these are managed by Buckingham Town Council. Unfortunately the indoor sports hall is not suitable for competitive badminton, although there is a court, as the side runoff is not a safe depth for such matches. The football pitch is well used but is only one pitch and somewhat isolated.

6.3 The retail area has provided a Premier Inn hotel, a Beefeater restaurant a Costa “Drive Thru”, and a Lidl supermarket. In addition there remains the Travelodge Hotel, petrol station and a new Starbucks “Drive Thru”. A care home, Lace Hill Manor has also been built.

6.4 The estate is well provided for with shops with a Tesco [with café and petrol station] across the road, which has added a branch of McDonald’s to its car park.

6.5 In addition to the opportunities provided by retail for employment, Wipac factory is next to Tesco, and access to the Buckingham Industrial Park is possible via the bridlepath.

6.6 Although there is no bus route through the estate as was originally planned, those near the London Road side of the estate are well served by X6 and X5 bus services; those further into the estate face a longer walk to access public transport.

6.7 What has emerged from the Lace Hill estate is that the concept of shared road space has not been well received, especially by young families.

### **Summerhouse Hill**

6.8 This residential area is in the town centre just off the Moreton Road. It is considered to be a town centre site and is close to the associated amenities. It is bordered by an area of Local Green Space to the west, which was designated in the 2015 BNDP.

6.9 This added to an area of infill behind the existing row of one bedroom cottages set back from the Moreton Road, with flats converted from older building that was once a retail furniture shop, as well as a row of townhouses.

### **Clarence Park and Hamilton Close**

6.10 Two new residential areas developed since 2015 on the Tingewick Road to the western side of the town, close to the existing residential areas of Fishers Field & Westfields, and also the Hunter Street campus of the University of Buckingham. There is a pleasant recreational area adjoining the riverside and a variety of style of homes. Hamilton Place delivered additional affordable homes in this area.

6.11 There is some employment opportunity at hand on the Tingewick Road Industrial Estate, but this is limited. In addition, there is one convenience store nearby on Nelson Street and a restaurant, while a further walk leads to the shops on Castle Street.

6.12 Parts of these developments are listed on flood alerts specifically, and the adjacent Fishers Field and Nelson Street have flooded in the past.

### **St Rumbold’s Fields**

6.13 This estate was allocated in the BNDP 2015. The site is divided by the Tingewick Road. There have been issues with the lack of continuous footpaths and the lighting thereof from and to the town centre from these developments. There are open green spaces including an area around the site of St Rumbold’s Well which is a scheduled monument.

6.14 The site has the same access to the facilities in Nelson Street but does not have a community centre. Access to public transport requires a walk into the town centre.

6.15 There will be a green walkway via the Old Railway Walk to the secondary schools and the Railway Walk continues from there to the retail area on London Road.

## 7. Housing

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7.1 The majority of information and evidence regarding housing for Buckingham in support of the new Neighbourhood Development Plan and associated policies is found in the AECOM report attached. This section seeks to highlight points that are of especial importance to the residents of Buckingham.

### Background

7.2 It has not been possible for Buckinghamshire Council to provide a Housing Needs or a Housing Requirement figure for the Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan Area as the data collated and prepared for the new Local Plan has not yet been published. Changes in Central Government policy may also impact on the eventual figures.

7.3 It is recognised that the new Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan is likely to be an interim measure which may require review in light of the eventual Buckinghamshire Plan due in 2027.

7.4 Early thinking and consultation by the Town Council had posited a plan led growth for housing and the resulting provision of necessary infrastructure. Responses at the early consultation indicated that Buckingham residents would accept further residential development provided that it went hand-in-hand with provision of necessary infrastructure.

### Factors

7.5 There has always been concern that speculative growth does not always deliver on amenities.

7.6 One recurring concern is the affordability of homes in the Buckingham area. This has not altered since the previous plan.

7.7 Buckingham remains an attractive residential area. Aside from the features of an historic market town, Buckingham lies within the catchment area of the Royal Latin

Grammar School, as well as the close proximity of a number of private schools such as Stowe.

7.8 There is competition in the rental sector with the addition of students at the University of Buckingham.

7.9 Buckingham will also be proximate to the new Winslow station on the East West Railway line. This is due to open in late 2025.

7.10 Buckingham does not appear to have a particular problem, as yet, with properties let as Airbnb properties thus removing them from the general housing market. It is noted that there is a growing number, with fairly recent additions. Most are marketed as being close to Silverstone Circuit.<sup>92</sup> Similarly there is no noted problem with second-home ownership at present.

### **Houses in Multiple Occupation**

7.11 Buckingham Town Council Planning Committee has monitored the number of Houses in Multiple Occupation [HMO] in Buckingham. The Committee acknowledge that such homes can be problematic for those living in close proximity with issues of car parking for multiple residents being a notable concern.<sup>93</sup>

7.12 There was consideration given to whether the new Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan would be able to provide a policy in relation to this; and if so whether such a policy should be adopted.<sup>94</sup>

7.13 It is also acknowledged that HMOs also provide affordable rental properties for those on lower incomes in an area of very expensive housing.

7.14 It is noted in the AECOM Report on Housing Needs Assessment in Buckingham that Houses in Multiple Occupation [HMOs] provide essential housing for single [and possibly double] households on lower quadrant salaries in Buckingham because of the costs of both private rental market and market purchase, along with eligibility criteria for social housing.<sup>95</sup>

7.15 The AECOM report states the average income in Buckingham to be £52,150.

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<sup>92</sup> General search on Airbnb on 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2024 looking at entire rentals rather than rooms offered, although at least one property was offered as either. There is one property with multiple units being offered which was received planning permission for student residences.

<sup>93</sup> It was noted that in Regulation 14 a couple of comments were received in relation to HMOs, although ultimately there is no policy in regard to HMOs in the new BNDP.

<sup>94</sup> Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan Working Group meeting, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024

<sup>95</sup> AECOM Buckingham Housing Needs Assessment, October 2023

**Table 7.1**

Buckingham Salary	Amount	Entry Level to Market Rent at £34,000pa	Entry Level to Affordable Rent at £26,320 pa	Entry Level to Social Rent at £18,528
<b>Buckingham Average Income</b>	£52,150	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Buckingham Lower Quadrant Single Income</b>	£19,200	No	No	Yes, but criteria and priority
<b>Buckingham Lower Quadrant Double Income</b>	£38,400	No	Yes	Yes, but criteria and priority

7.16 In light of this, it was felt that some caution should be exercised if this housing resource is to be restricted until adjustments are successfully made to access to other affordable housing provision especially in relation to lower quadrant single earners.

7.17 This should not be presumed to be just students or young people.

### Regulation of HMOs

7.18 There are two possible systems of monitoring which are not mutually exclusive:

(a) Planning system – some HMOs require planning permission

(b) Licensing system – large HMOs require to be licensed by the Local Authority under the Housing Act 2004 [it is possible to require licensing in other situations, but this is at the discretion of the Local Authority]

7.19 It is important to note that the systems do not share the same definitions, which makes the process slightly more complicated.

7.20 The shared definition of a HMO is two or more households sharing essential facilities [kitchen, bathroom] – there must also be at least three tenants.<sup>96</sup>

7.21 So thus HMOs are dependent on the number of tenants, sharing facilities, for each system rather than the number of bedrooms in the property. This may mean that restrictions on the size of properties being built may not have much impact on the number of HMOs. Although it is noted that through Licensing conditions – four-bedroom houses can be limited to 4-person occupancy but although that reduces risk of overcrowding, it does not impact on the four-bedroom house becoming a HMO.

<sup>96</sup> “Properties let to three or more tenants who form two or more households with shared facilities (e.g., kitchen). Larger houses in multiple occupation, those occupied by five or more people in two or more households who share facilities such as a kitchen or bathroom, must be licensed by the local council.” [Glossary, Buckinghamshire Council Housing Strategy, 2024-2029]` .;’

## Who uses HMOs?

7.22 The AECOM Housing Needs report considers HMOs in terms of popularity with students; and although that is true and there a number of large HMOs in Fishers Field and also in West Street, Well Street & Bernardine’s Way that would likely be attractive locations for students, there are also individuals who are earning low wages [for Buckingham at least] who if they wish to live and work in the area, this is their only viable option. An example being the request for a double room to share for employees of Smarts, a local fish and chip shop– in the Autumn 2023. It is not clear whether Buckingham also has HMOs used by contractors or businesses– anecdotal evidence might suggest that the Travelodge and Premier Inn hotels or Airbnb properties satisfy that need currently – but such use is noted in other NDPs consulted [e.g., Falmouth]. There are several HMOs in locations that would be deemed too far from the University to be of particular attraction to students e.g., Lockmeadow Farm and Western Avenue/Overn Avenue locations.

7.23 There may also be some use by individuals who could afford higher cost housing but who wish to save money by renting a room in a HMO. The AECOM report identifies that the current cost of a HMO in Buckingham is about 80% of the cost of Market rental [AECOM para 179 at p.38 and this has been confirmed by the Housing Strategy document from Buckinghamshire Council] – this saving may be earmarked towards the deposits required on market rentals or perhaps towards a deposit on a property purchase.

7.24 The AECOM report suggests that there are probably under 100 HMOs in Buckingham at the time of their report last year<sup>97</sup> – there were 21 large HMOs in Buckingham licensed by Buckinghamshire Council [5 or more tenants] Again this can obviously fluctuate, the numbers of students on campus can affect this – a trend towards commuting students, and distance learning students in the University of Buckingham numbers may reduce the demand for private student housing, along with the “value” option offered currently at the Mount Pleasant Campus of the University. In May 2024, there were sixteen licensed large HMOs in Buckingham on the Public Register.

7.25 The Housing Act 2004 does allow Local Authorities to go beyond mandatory licensing requirements as set out above. This can be done if there is deemed to be an issue. It is not clear that any one area of Buckingham or even a street does have an issue with HMOs to the extent that a request could be made of Buckinghamshire Council to consider this, the possible candidate being Fishers Field when the pattern is considered in relation to past and current examples. There would be a significant consideration of required additional resources, and it is imagined a very strong case would be required. As an example, in May 2024 there were 112 licensed large HMOs in Aylesbury Vale area on the Public Register – as noted 16 are in Buckingham; 2 are

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<sup>97</sup> AECOM Buckingham Housing Needs Report, October 2023 p.38, paragraph 177

in Leighton Buzzard and the remainder are in Aylesbury [Chiltern and South Bucks have 66; Wycombe have 128].

## Indirect approaches

7.26 There are three possible approaches to controlling numbers of HMOs.

(a) Support of 3 bedroom homes as per AECOM Report – this would reduce the number of larger bedroomed “executive” homes, which can *easily* be turned to large HMOs – of course large HMOs require licensing to ensure safety and standards but as is demonstrated above, 3 bedroom houses would also fall into that category once occupancy is 5 or more for licensing and 6 or more for planning permission- and provide the general versatility of housing noted by AECOM;

(b) Enforcement of licensing requirements through working with Buckinghamshire Council to enforce licensing standards and requirements through the Planning Committee and local resident information.

Buckinghamshire Council has used the licensing powers to prevent HMOs becoming overcrowded by stating maximum occupancy for the licensed HMO. Obviously, this also depends on resources for enforcement.

(c) Awareness of overdevelopment of existing properties and consider whether facilities can keep pace e.g., parking requirements. This does also need to be considered with the need for homes to meet expectations throughout occupants’ lifetimes and changing needs.

## Actual NDP Policies on HMOs

7.27 Although AECOM suggest that specific policies are generally beyond the scope of a NDP, at least without input from the Local Planning Authority,<sup>98</sup> there have been NDPs to do so, but with the support of the relevant Local Planning Authority.

7.28 The two identified were in Exeter St James<sup>99</sup> and in Falmouth<sup>100</sup>.

7.29 In Exeter St James, the issue was with student accommodation and part of the justification was the tip in the balance of the community by the predomination of 18-25 age group of students. There is not really an area of Buckingham that appears to have a large number of large HMOs and not to the extent of 20% of one street, as noted the closest might be Fishers Field. In certain areas close to the University, there may be younger people in HMOs but again the University of Buckingham does attract a significant number of mature students as well – it would perhaps be difficult to evidence the same issues in Buckingham as Exeter St James did to justify a policy.

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<sup>98</sup> AECOM Buckingham Housing Needs Report paragraph 183: “There are a number of policy, licensing and other measures that can be taken to control the number, distribution and standards of HMOs. However, these are generally beyond the power of a Neighbourhood Plan..”

<sup>99</sup><https://exeter.gov.uk/planning-services/current-planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/st-james-neighbourhood-plan/>

<sup>100</sup> <https://planforfalmouth.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/falmouth-neighbourhood-development-plan-post-examination-version-optimized-003-reduced-size.pdf>

7.30 In Falmouth, the policy sought to bring all HMOs into the planning process by use of Article 4 withdrawal of permitted development rights by the Local Authority. It would seem that to provide scrutiny of all HMOs, the Falmouth approach is the most comprehensive. This would require Buckinghamshire Council to issue Article 4 Directions for potentially all new housing developments and for a clear statement of the existing areas to be provided. It is not clear whether it would be possible for retrospective designation of such areas as Fishers Field, if not already covered, as this does have an impact on existing owners' property rights and it is suggested that the problem may not be sufficiently serious to justify such action, even if possible.

7.31 In addition, the Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan would need to include land use considerations for determining such planning applications, which would need to include a requirement to consider the current affordable housing market. Both would be required to support the policy. The main concern was that the policy would be subject to challenge as lacking the evidence to support its inclusion in terms of altering the character and balance of the neighbourhoods as Exeter St James and Falmouth were able to demonstrate, against the need for this form of affordable housing for individuals in the Buckinghamshire Neighbourhood Development Plan Area. It could be argued that Fishers Field may be altered from a mixed residential area to a student HMO area, but this is quite a small and contained area, close to the University, and now surrounded by substantial mixed housing development.

7.32 The Working Group considered that the best route would be to continue close monitoring by the Planning Committee and the support of the Buckinghamshire Housing Strategy Priority 2 through licensing conditions and enforcement for the time being. This may be reviewed in future Neighbourhood Development Plans.

### **Affordable Homes: The Neighbourhood Plan's Role**

7.33 The National Planning Policy Framework states:

“Neighbourhood plans should **support the delivery of strategic policies** contained in local plans or spatial development strategies”<sup>101</sup>

7.34 The BNDP 2015 required a figure of a minimum of 35% of affordable housing on larger developments, unless viability was proved to be at issue.<sup>102</sup>

7.35 This requirement was retained in VALP.<sup>103</sup> Policy H1 of VALP states that a *minimum* of 25% of affordable housing.<sup>104</sup>

7.36 In considering whether to retain the figure of 35% of affordable housing in the new plan, having recognised the real need for this amount in the BNDP Area, the Town Council considered the point made by the Examiner of the original BNDP who stated

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<sup>101</sup> National Planning Policy Framework December 2023 paragraph 13. Emphasis added.

<sup>102</sup> Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Plan 2015 Policy HP5: <https://www.buckingham-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/BNDP-Made-Version-October-2015.pdf>

<sup>103</sup> There is the specific mention of

<sup>104</sup> “Residential developments of 11 or more dwellings gross or sites of 0.3ha or more will be required to provide a minimum of 25% affordable homes on site”. VALP H1.

that “in general conformity” with the Local Plan did not mean that it had to be identical.<sup>105</sup>

7.37 Further support was found when it was considered that VALP remains the current local plan for the Buckingham Neighbourhood Development Area for the time being. The new Plan is in general conformity in that it does not **reduce** the amount of affordable housing and is in conformity in that it meets the requirement of a minimum of 25% found in VALP H1. It is noted that H1 text references that detail will be found in a SPD. This document is also supportive stating:

The council will require **a minimum of 25%** of the total number of units on the site to be provided as affordable housing. There may also be circumstances, such as in **Neighbourhood Plans**, where **a different affordable housing requirement applies**. The VALP Inspector’s Report (August 2021) noted at para 271: “As noted elsewhere in this report, **VALP does not explicitly say that it supersedes any Neighbourhood Plan policy and so they exist side by side. VALP policy H1 requires a minimum of 25% affordable homes on site and so Neighbourhood plan policies which require more than that minimum are not inconsistent with it.**”<sup>106</sup> [emphasis added]

7.38 Further, there have been development and planning applications received to date that have not questioned the requirement of 35% either in terms of need or viability.<sup>107</sup> In addition it is noted that intended central government policy would allow for “requirements for affordable homes.” In Neighbourhood Development Plans.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Buckingham Neighbourhood Plan Examination, Nigel McGurk, June 2015 <https://www.buckingham-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Full-Council-agenda-with-attachments-29-June-2015.pdf> at page 18: ‘I note here, with reference to housing and housing land providers, who have objected to Policy HP5 as they would like to see a lower requirement for affordable housing, that the phrase “in general conformity” has a different meaning to the phrase “the same as”.’

<sup>106</sup> Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan Technical Note Affordable Housing May, 2024 at p.7 paragraph 11 - <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-development-plans-and-guidance/local-planning-guidance/> Emphasis added.

<sup>107</sup> The current Osier Way development, which was allocated in VALP, and also the current application for mixed residential and employment development at Land south of Wipac on London Road Buckinghamshire Council 23/00178/AOP.

<sup>108</sup> The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 s98 inserted a new provision into the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 as follows: S38B (A1)A neighbourhood development plan may include—

(a)policies (however expressed) in relation to the amount, type and location of, and timetable for, development in the neighbourhood area in the period for which the plan has effect;

(b)other policies (however expressed) in relation to the use or development of land in the neighbourhood area which are designed to achieve objectives that relate to the particular characteristics or circumstances of that area, any part of that area or one or more specific sites in that area;

(c)**details of any infrastructure requirements, or requirements for affordable housing, to which development in accordance with the policies, included in the plan under paragraph (a) or (b), would give rise;** [emphasis added]

(d)requirements with respect to design that relate to development, or development of a particular description, throughout the neighbourhood area, in any part of that area or at one or more specific sites

## The Need for Affordable Housing in Buckingham

7.39 Homes in Buckingham are expensive. There is a variety of figures for the average house price in Buckingham over the period of 2023/2024.<sup>109</sup> Rightmove gives this as £383,119.<sup>110</sup>

7.40 Zoopla has a figure of £376, 809.<sup>111</sup> On the Move places the average price for November 2024 as £406,000.<sup>112</sup>

7.41 The average house price in Buckinghamshire in August 2024 was £473,000 and had risen by 4% since August 2023.<sup>113</sup> At the same point, the average house price in Great Britain was £296,000.<sup>114</sup>

7.42 Buckingham is significantly above the national average but under the average for Buckinghamshire as a whole.

7.43 Average Household income in the BNDP Area is approximately £35,000 - £40,000.<sup>115</sup> This is lower generally in the north of the county than in the south. It is noted that this is in variance to the figure used by AECOM. It might be assumed that the AECOM figure lies to the top end of possible calculations. The variance increases/decreases the number of households able to access the private housing market to purchase a property.

7.44 If an average of the above house price averages for Buckingham is taken as £388,643 then there is a requirement 9.7 to 11.1 ratio of earnings to house price. For context this ratio is 8.14 for England & Wales; 8.9 for Milton Keynes and 11.4 for Buckinghamshire.<sup>116</sup> It should be remembered that the average household income in

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in that area, which the qualifying body considers should be met for planning permission for the development to be granted.” As yet this is not in force an order from the Secretary of State under s255 of the 2023 Act. If this were to be brought into force, it is considered as further support for the inclusion of policies in relation to the minimum requirement of affordable homes on new development.

<sup>109</sup> Average prices as stated as of November, 2024.

<sup>110</sup> <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/house-prices/buckingham.html> accessed 14<sup>th</sup> November 2024 -this is stated to be a rise of 11% from the peak in 2021 of £346,695

<sup>111</sup> [https://www.zoopla.co.uk/house-prices/buckingham/?new\\_homes=include&q=Buckingham&view\\_type=list](https://www.zoopla.co.uk/house-prices/buckingham/?new_homes=include&q=Buckingham&view_type=list) accessed 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2024

<sup>112</sup> [https://www.zoopla.co.uk/house-prices/buckingham/?new\\_homes=include&q=Buckingham&view\\_type=list](https://www.zoopla.co.uk/house-prices/buckingham/?new_homes=include&q=Buckingham&view_type=list) accessed 14<sup>th</sup> November 2024

<sup>113</sup> Office of National Statistics <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/housingpriceslocal/E06000060/> accessed 13<sup>th</sup> November, 2024

<sup>114</sup> As above

<sup>115</sup> <https://www.plumplot.co.uk/Buckinghamshire-salary-and-unemployment.html> accessed 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2024

<sup>116</sup> As above

the north of Buckinghamshire is approximately £10,000 lower on average than the south.<sup>117</sup>

7.45 If the average mortgage requires 3.5 times household income for lending, then an average priced house would require a household income of just over £110,000.

7.46 Similar figures are contained within the AECOM Report.

7.47 The situation has not improved since 2015. It is also noted that Buckingham loses a significant number of people as they enter the employment market. It is unlikely that they would be able to return to live in Buckingham easily or remain in Buckingham in their own accommodation, if they so wished.

7.48 As a result of this information, it is felt that it is justified to retain the general requirement of 35% affordable housing from the BNDP 2005.

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<sup>117</sup> As above