

Supporting Evidence C

ESBG NP Small Rural Settlement Sustainability and Housing Need Report

Introduction

This report has 3 sections

- A. Sustainable Settlements
- B. Protecting the Integrity of Villages and Rural Communities.
- C. Housing Need in Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green
- D. Green Space Availability & Standards

Policy ESBG2 addresses the housing required over the NP period that will meet local needs:

“Only modest scale development in the small settlements of Bishops Green and Ecchinswell will be supported. Furthermore such development must not be detrimental to the sustainability nor the rural character of the settlements.”

This policy supports the Vision for the Parish of Ecchinswell Sydmonton & Bishops Green:

- *A small rural parish located near prosperous towns that nurtures modest organic growth and continues to evolve towards a more sustainable lower-carbon future.*
- *Peaceful settlements with a rural character where residents prosper and enjoy both their communities and the surrounding countryside as well as having easy access to employment, vital services and leisure activities. Confidence that the highly-valued natural environment, biodiversity and landscape are continuously improving and that important heritage assets and views are maintained for future generations.*
- *Housing development is limited, in keeping with the rural environment, governed by local growth, the need for affordability and with more options for young families, the elderly and less mobile.*

A Sustainable Settlements

The sustainability of a settlement should be considered in relation to its access to services and facilities relating to retail, education, health, social, community and recreation, and its access to sustainable transport and employment opportunities. (NPPF and B&D BC LPU)

Truly sustainable settlements are considered to be more appropriate locations for significant future growth, due to their relatively large size. Such scale ensures long-term viable access to and/or provision of a greater range of services and facilities. Such communities offer decent, affordable homes, a diverse and inclusive community, ready access to education, jobs, leisure/sporting/cultural activities and vital services, and the chance to get engaged in and make a difference to a community in which people want to live and work, now and tomorrow.

Settlements in the Parish of ES&BG

The parish is small overall (~1200 residents and 450 homes) and comprises two main settlements: Bishops Green (~700 residents/ ~230 homes) and Ecchinswell (~210 residents, ~100 homes). (SAPF 2019)

There are a number of very small named Hamlets in the parish notably: Ashley Warren, Brocks Green, Hare Warren, North Sydmonton and Sydmonton. There are also other small groups of houses or bigger individual homes.

The two main settlements in the parish are classified as being “small villages” in the group of lowest sustainability (Category 4) settlements in the categorisation that is part of the Basingstoke & Deane BC Local Plan Update.

“Small Villages” are characterised as having a population of over 150 residents but very limited services and facilities with a high reliance on reasonably nearby larger settlements for day-to-day needs and on larger towns for higher-tier services. There is also a high dependency on private cars as public transport options are very limited or non-existent.

Key indicators of Sustainability & scoring for the Parish

Function	Services & Facilities	
	Bishops Green	Ecchinswell
Retail Facilities	Convenience Shops Supermarkets Other Shop(s)/Service(s) Post Offices	Convenience Shops Supermarkets Other Shop(s)/Service(s) Post Offices
Education Services	Primary Schools Secondary Schools Early Years Education	Primary Schools Secondary Schools Early Years Education
Social Facilities	Public Houses	Public Houses
Community Facilities	Village/Community Hall Places of Worship Libraries	Village/Community Hall Places of Worship Libraries
Healthcare Services	GP Surgeries Dentists Pharmacies	GP Surgeries Dentists Pharmacies
Recreation/ Sports and Leisure Facilities	Indoor Sports/Leisure Centres Recreation Grounds and Sports Pitches	Indoor Sports/Leisure Centres Recreation Grounds and Sports Pitches
Employment Facilities	Strategic Employment Areas	Strategic Employment Areas
Sustainable Transport Services	Bus Service (daily service Monday-Saturday) Railway Station	Bus Service (daily service Monday-Saturday) Railway Station
Communications	Superfast Broadband Mobile Data	Superfast Broadband Mobile Data

(Scoring indicates presence but neither adequacy or fit with community needs. Broadband and mobile data are very patchy both in the settlements and the wide parish.)

Settlements that are Rural in Character.

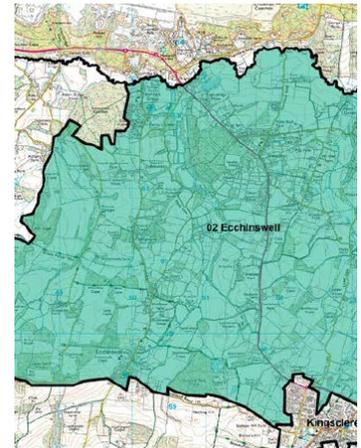
A striking finding from the community consultation was the near universal opinion among residents that they valued highly the rural feel of the parish and ready access to the countryside. Accordingly sustaining and enhancing the rural character of the parish is a key objective of the plan. Some development in the parish (e.g. the Ash Road area of Bishops Green and the Oakfields area of Ecchinswell) does not meet this objective so future development must offset this.

The parish is part of the borough of Basingstoke and Deane which a recent (May 2021) Land Character Assessment describes as a predominantly rural, agricultural district which covers a large area of north-east Hampshire with a diverse pattern of landscapes, including rolling chalk downland, pastoral river valleys, historic parkland, remnants of ancient forests and intimate mosaics of lowland farmland and woodland, with a scattering of farms, villages and hamlets, and a few larger settlements. This patterning is the product of the interaction between the physical structure of the landscape and the nature of the vegetation and land uses that cover it. The lower part of the parish lies within the North Essex AONB.

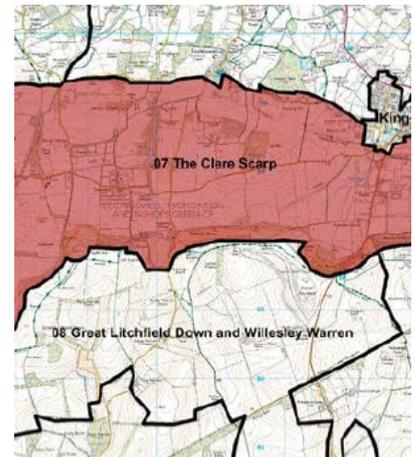
The 2021 assessment shows the parish landscape as rich with 3 contrasting areas each with a distinct character:

ES&BG Neighbourhood Plan

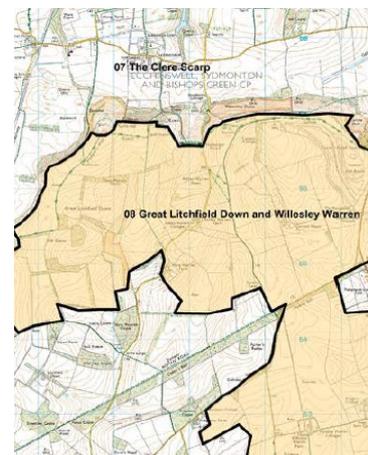
- The north third of the parish is characterised by a medium-scale mosaic of mixed farmland and relatively small but numerous areas of woodland. These small, irregular-shaped woodlands are predominantly broadleaved, although larger, less-frequent areas of mixed conifer and broadleaf are evident to the west of Headley and on Sydmonton Common. Fields are under a mix of pasture and arable, and bounded by a strong structure of hedgerows and trees. Added diversity is created by areas of more open farmland on higher ground and smaller, more enclosed fields, under pasture, within the minor stream valleys. The landform is gently undulating and the landscape has an intimate, relatively secluded character. Small villages, hamlets and individual farmsteads or properties are scattered throughout the area accessed through a network of narrow lanes, often enclosed within high hedgerows. Some parts have a feeling of remoteness and overall area has retained a rural character away from the A339 and fringes of Newbury, Greenham Business Park, Headley and Kingsclere.



- The middle third of the parish is an area dominated by the dramatic escarpment, an example of a distinctive and scarce chalk landscape type. Its strongly linear form brings a unifying and cohesive character to the scarp footslopes and offers long views from points such as Ladle Hill. Both the scarp and its footslopes display localised variations in landcover and use. The escarpment is characterised by calcareous grassland with small areas of encroaching scrub and blocks of infrequent woodland. At Sydmonton, parkland provides a more ornamental and managed element. Settlement density within this area is limited with only a small scattering of farm buildings. As a result, a sense of remoteness and tranquillity pervades the landscape.



- The lower third of the parish has a landscape character within this area is comparatively uniform, with coherence and unity provided by the area's scale and openness. Large, open arable fields, with a weak hedgerow and woodland structure, separate it from the surrounding, more enclosed, chalkland landscapes. Occasional small areas of pasture are distributed throughout the area. A regular, formal, wooded element within the open landscape is formed by the route of the straight Roman road that marks the southern boundary of the parish. The landscape is sparsely populated, with infrequent farmsteads dispersed across the area. Due to the low density of settlement, roads are also few and, where present, generally follow a straight and direct route. The area is remote from major urban influences, ensuring that the landscape has retained a quiet, rural character.



Realising the Vision for Small Rural Settlements with Improving Sustainability

The parish is small and is demonstrated as having relatively low sustainability. The objective of the Plan and Policies is to ensure that development to realise the Parish Vision enhances rather than damages current sustainability and maintains or enhances the rural character. This means:

- Small scale development especially of affordable homes with a rural feel that enable more people/families with strong connection to the parish to stay local.
- Encourage the development not only of facilities that enable more local in-parish shopping, leisure, sporting, social activity but also for employment with premises and activity appropriately scaled to the rural environment.
- Design codes that enhance the rural feel of the parish and ensure new building is in harmony with existing buildings, the conservation area and heritage assets.
- Design codes that encourage low-carbon footprint buildings that anticipate future standards.
- Development that reduces dependence on private cars. Encourage service providers (e.g. health, sports etc) to deliver in-parish with suitable (shared/community) premises
- Development that supports greater level of home-working.
- Development that supports the availability of renewable energy and the use of electric cars.
- Development that enhances the rural feel and character of the parish notably the natural environment, green spaces and our valued landscape including the AONB bio-diversity/habitats.
- Bishops Green is a settlement with a population of ~700 in a compact layout largely surrounded by private land. It should have accessible Green Space of at least 22,400 m² to meet the B&D BC standard for rural areas. Current space is hard to assess precisely but is significantly less than this so any new development must provide not only the target green space of 32m² per person but also significant extra green space to raise the total available to the settlement.
- No dense large scale development that reduces sustainability by increased reliance on external facilities and services, adds to traffic movements and suburbanises the environment.

B Emerging B&D BC Policy to Protect the Integrity of Villages and Rural Communities.

The text below is draft policy being developed as part of the B&D BC Local Plan Update. It was discussed at the EPH Committee on 9th June 2022. It is overall very relevant to the settlements in ES&BG and all the points are incorporated in the policies and implementation actions in the ES&BG Neighbourhood Plan.

The Council recognises that individual villages and rural communities are an important component of the overall fabric of the Borough and that large developments can have a disproportionate impact on the nature and integrity of these communities.

The Council acknowledges the importance of maintaining clear gaps between communities in order to retain their unique nature and character.

The Council also acknowledges that settlements closest to Basingstoke should be afforded stronger protection from large scale developments on the edge of Basingstoke in order to protect them from being subsumed into Basingstoke itself.

Developments proposals will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that;

- a) the scale and nature of the development do not materially change the existing character or integrity of the village.*
- b) developments are able to fully integrate into the existing community and do not comprise stand-alone or dormitory settlements.*
- c) they are not disproportionate in size to the existing community and that proposals will typically not expand the total number of dwellings within the village by more than 2.5% in aggregate (across the period of the plan and against a baseline of 2019 settlement figures) so as to facilitate organic growth of the community.*
- d) the existing infrastructure of villages (including highways, sewerage, water supply, electricity supply, public and private parking spaces, digital communications networks and transport nodes) has sufficient capacity to sustain new developments without acting to the material detriment of existing homes within the village.*
- e) the existing amenities (such as schools, shops, doctor's surgeries, play areas, allotments and other community assets) have sufficient capacity to be able to absorb developments without acting to the material detriment of existing residents and that residents should not have to travel far from their homes in order to access these amenities.*
- f) cyclists and pedestrians can safely and easily access village amenities and services (including public transport facilities).*
- g) the importance of significant green gaps between communities is recognised and developments do not materially contribute to the coalescence of villages or rural communities and that the individual identity and character of these communities are maintained.*
- h) the cumulative impact of developments over the previous five years is taken into account in order to satisfy any of the items listed above.*

Where developments are unable to fulfil any of the above conditions proposals must be accompanied by assessments of how any of these criteria will be achieved prior to the completion of the development.

C Housing Need in Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green

The September 2021 and May 2022 ESG NP Community Consultations gave a clear message that parish residents wanted/expected to see *some but not a lot* of extra homes in both the Bishops Green and Ecchinswell settlements that:

- will support modest organic growth of our community,
- enable individuals and families to say connected to the community over time and through evolving circumstances
- are affordable to buy and/or suited to young families, the elderly, ...and...
- are in keeping with the rural environment.

There was universal rejection of larger scale development in the parish (30+ extra homes) given concerns over sustainability and the impact on the rural feel of the area.

An “Action Hampshire” Housing Needs Survey was carried out for the parish of ES&BG in 2018 but the sample group was very small (16 valid inputs) so the conclusions are directional rather than quantitative. The key messages were similar to those received in the much more extensive ES&BG NP Community Consultations in that there is a need for a mix of housing types that are affordable to buy and suited to people with connections to the parish

As of 2021, the B&D BC social housing waiting list had up to ~20 people with connections to the parish (mainly with Bishops Green) looking for homes suited for one or two people. It is notable though that the parish already has a large stock of social housing to rent with a total of 200+ units. Most are in Bishops Green (Sovereign have 88 units in Eagle Road and Vivid 105 in/around Ash Road) and represent ~ 80% of the housing in the settlement. Ecchinswell has a smaller number (Vivid have 24 units) but is well stocked compared with other parishes. Given this background, it is not surprising that the community wish is for plans for extra homes to be focused on a mix of homes for purchase especially by younger people/families with connections to the parish and for older residents to downsize but stay in the community..

Policy Background

Central to the ESG NP thinking on future housing is the work on a Spatial Strategy being developed for the B&D BC Local Plan Update. Work on the Local Plan Update (LPU) has so far included a [Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment \(SHELAA\)](#) published in December 2021 and the latest version of the [spatial study](#) reviewed at the Economic Planning and Housing Committee on 9th June and 21st July 2022. (The appendices to this report ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)) have a lot of relevant detail.) Current time plan for the LPU is for:

- Consultation on draft Plan (Regulation 18) in Autumn/Winter 2022;
- Publication of Submission Draft Local Plan (Regulation 19) in Autumn 2023;
- Submission (Regulation 22) in Winter 2023;
- Examination & Main Modifications in Spring 2024; and
- Adoption in Autumn 2024.

ES&BG Neighbourhood Plan

In the LPU Spatial strategy work, the two main settlements in the parish are categorised as Tier 4 “Small Village” settlements of limited sustainability. Furthermore both Bishops Green and Ecchinswell are among the smaller Tier 4 settlements in the Borough.

B&D BC policy is to allocate from the overall Borough target only a small number of extra homes to the Tier 4 small village settlements such as ES&BG. Larger more sustainable settlements (e.g. Whitchurch (Tier 2) and Kingsclere (Tier 3)) are being allocated bigger targets.

The emerging B&D BC Local Plan Update is proposing an allocation of ~15 extra homes for Bishops Green and zero for Ecchinswell. This allocation is based on a sustainability-based formula for the various settlement tiers combined with a further sustainability-based adjustment for Tier 4 settlements.

For the purposes of the ESBG NP (which is proceeding ahead of the B&D BC LPU, these numbers were confirmed in a letter from the B&D BC Planning Policy Team dated 10th June 2022.

Current and emerging B&D BC Policy does not support big development proposals for low sustainability settlements.

ES&BG Neighbourhood Plan – number of extra homes:

The ES&BG NP will meet not only the need for a small number of new homes to support modest local growth but also the proposed allocation from the B&D BC LPU by allocating:

- a site in Bishops Green for around 15 homes plus extra accessible Green Space (ESBG3)
- a site in Ecchinswell for around 5 extra homes (ESBG4)
- all to be affordable with options for young/growing families, the elderly and less mobile

There is only limited space available within proposed Settlement Boundaries. Hence via a structured Call for Sites Process, we have identified and allocated one new site for each village adjacent to the Settlement Boundary.

ES&BG Neighbourhood Plan – mix of housing types for extra homes:

The various phases of consultation with residents gave a number of messages about the mix of housing types required

- “Affordable” is an unclear term ... to some it means “social housing” ... to others it means “small cheap (badly built) homes” or “homes whose price is subsidised by some form of support scheme”.
- In both Bishops Green and Ecchinswell, some residents feel “we don’t need any more social housing – we already have sufficient/too much”. (Some supporting data – for Bishops Green with a total of around 250 homes, nearly 200 are owned/operated by Sovereign/Vivid as social housing – for Ecchinswell with a total of ~150 homes, 24 are owned/operated by Vivid)
- There is however broad consensus that:
 - any new homes should be “affordable to buy” ... ie smaller in size with limited facilities compared with “premium” homes

ES&BG Neighbourhood Plan

- the mix of housing should enable individuals and families to stay connected to the community over time and through evolving circumstances (couples getting together, growing families, later life etc)
- “we do not need (any/many) more big/expensive houses”

Given these community inputs, the mix of housing types therefore proposed for policies ESBG3 and ESBG4 in the ES&BG NP are as follows:

- A. Smaller 1 or 2 bed homes suitable for sale to couples/small families perhaps as their first home
- B. 2 or 3 bed homes suitable for sale to small families likely to be first or second homes
- C. Larger 3+ bed homes suited to larger families with older children
- D. “Downsizer” Homes suited to the elderly/less mobile

Types A/B/C need to be “affordable to buy” with a proportion of type A and perhaps some type B being delivered via the First Homes scheme.

In the allocation of ~ 15 homes for a site in Bishops Green (ESBG3) homes of types A-D are targeted to be built ideally with at least 3 of each type delivered.

In the allocation of ~5 homes for a site in Ecchinswell (ESBG4) homes of types A, B & D would be appropriate

Type D is desired in the community as it creates the potential to unlock some of the larger family homes in the parish that are occupied by people who . want something smaller but cannot find something suitable that enables them to stay in the community. It is different to types A/B as layout needs to be suited to the less mobile (as an alternative to the “traditional bungalow option”).

D Green Space Availability & Standards

The B&DBC Local Plan sets Green Space Accessibility standards for the Borough and these were used in the [B&DBC's Green Infrastructure Strategy \(2018\)](#) to assess provision of accessible Green Infrastructure. Standards are provided in terms of distance and quantity for 'multi-functional green space', including Amenity Green Space, Natural Green Space, parks, play areas and allotments. For instance, the maximum distance threshold for natural green space is 10 minutes (600m walking or 1500m cycling). For amenity green space the figure is 5 mins (300m walking). In terms of quantity, the standard is 32m² per person for a rural area, the absolute minimum requirement being 20m² per person.

B&DBC's Green Infrastructure Strategy assesses GI provision by ward, so includes Ecchinswell, Sydmonton & Bishops Green (ES&BG) Parish under Highclere, Burghclere and St Mary Bourne, which unhelpfully distorts the picture towards a positive outcome. In fact, although ES&BG is a rural Parish, Appendix F of BDBC's Green Infrastructure Strategy shows only moderate access to Accessible Natural Greenspace, most local natural landscapes being privately owned and not freely accessible. Under the wider definition of Green Infrastructure, however, including amenity green spaces, sports fields and play areas, parks and gardens, and green corridors (& Public Rights of Way), the Parish is much better provisioned (although it is notable that some of these are not fully represented for this Parish on the report's maps). However, it should be noted that Green Space provision in the Parish for those whose mobility is limited is an area of concern.

B&DBC's Green Infrastructure Strategy states that for areas within lower-than-average provision of Accessible Green Space, provision of Green Space that demonstrably meets the declared standards should be a priority within any plans for development.