

**BUCKLEBURY VISION**  
PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE OF THE PARISH

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**BACKGROUND**

The Government, through an initiative being progressed by the Countryside Agency, is offering village communities throughout the country, an opportunity to have a greater influence on the future development of their village/parish, by establishing a Village Design Statement (VDS).

The Statements are intended to provide a context for new development, based on local character and sense of place. Their purpose is to manage change, whether that change is major new development or just cumulative, small scale additions and alterations. They are not about whether development should take place; that is the job for the Local Plan. They are about how planned development should be carried out, so that it is in harmony with its setting and makes a positive contribution to the local environment. By describing the qualities and characteristics that people value in their villages and surroundings, local communities can have an input into the planning process on both policy and implementation basis.

**INTRODUCTION**

Bucklebury through a series of communications with its parishioners, has established how it would like to see the future development in the Parish evolve and has prepared the following **Parish Design Statement**.

Due to the fragmented status of Bucklebury Parish, consisting of 17 small, isolated, separate hamlets, Bucklebury Parish decided that a consolidated Design Statement would provide more meaningful assessment and a better practical guidance than individual statements.

At the outset of the programme, a small core team set out to establish as full an understanding of the concept of a VDS as possible. This core was expanded with invitations to a wide selection of parishioners with varied background interests. Thereafter the whole community was invited to participate through a series of promotions, including: open meetings, the village fete, the Parish Annual assembly and articles in the Parish newsletters. A questionnaire was issued to each and every household (800) and the resulting opinions analysed as the basis for statements expressed in Bucklebury Vision. Regular updates of the content and progress were issued through newsletters, and

each household was given copies of an extensive summary of the final draft with the invitation to comment.

**This document** sets out the Parishioners ambitions.

Its **contents** explain the qualities of the Parish as they are seen today; highlighting those factors which are generally valued and considered worthy of conservation and enhancement.

Its **aim** is to ensure that any **future changes** take into account the wishes and desires of the community with regard to the character and style of development, amenities, services and local needs.

Its **scope** covers all forms and scales of development.

*Its Users will include:*

- *West Berkshire Council, as Supplementary Planning Guidance.*
- *The Parish Council, as a guide to the future wishes of the community.*
- *Householders and individual members of the Parish*
- *Planners, developers, builders, architects, designers and engineers.*
- *Local community groups*
- *Local businesses*

### **The Overall picture**

The document in its entirety, and the Appendices should be taken as to represent the overall views of all the community. They can be summarised as follows:-

- To ensure the future viability of the community is sustained
- To maximise rural conservation and protection from pollution
- To ensure future development avoids 'pattern book' designs.
- To ensure new development, alterations and extensions are architecturally in keeping and are sympathetic to the rural environment

## **1. HISTORY**

The earliest recorded reference to Bucklebury relates to the 10th century ( 956 AD) when King Edwig granted wood from Hawkridge to rebuild Abingdon Abbey. Bucklebury is mentioned in the Domesday Book when it was part of the royal hunting grounds and boasted of two manors. The Romans settled in this area and remains of their dwellings have been found within the Parish. Bucklebury village church of St Mary the Virgin dates from the 11th century. It was not until the 12th century that it became part of Reading Abbey possessions by means of an exchange of properties with St Alban's Abbey. Bucklebury provided peace, tranquillity, and a beautiful location for the Abbot to build his house. The fish ponds, which were constructed at that time to provide a food source, still exist today.

Following the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII, the manor was sold to the Winchcombe family in 1540. It and the surrounding hamlets gradually expanded and prospered under the stewardship of this family. By the 19th century villagers had benefited from the freedom of access to the Common only to see this threatened by the Enclosures Act. John Morton, a tenant farmer and local lay preacher, fought and won the battle with parliament to keep the Common protected from 'Enclosure' and hence it still remains open today to both Commoners and visitors alike.

The cultural heritage has, and continues to have, great influence on the whole Parish. There is a sense of pride amongst the Parishioners of Bucklebury for what has been created over the years.

(Supplementary historical comment, Appendix 1)

### **Guidelines**

**1 G 1 The historic environment of the Parish should be conserved and enhanced.**

## 2. COMMUNITY & POPULATION

The present population (1998) is around 2100. It is widely spread across the many individual hamlets and has a significant proportion of life long residents. The average household size is 2.6. Household sizes may well follow the national trend to reduce over the years.

The local residents highly value the rural nature and natural beauty of the area in which they live and are keen to protect this for future generations to enjoy. At the same time they are concerned that properties are not always available to allow the local younger generations, who wish to remain in the parish, to find appropriate homes of their own.

(Statistical data, Appendix 3 Section 1).

### Guidelines

**2 G 1 Development should be planned so as to reflect and support the existing built form of the many small communities within the Parish.**

**2 G 2 Any new housing development should include an appropriate mix of units, in terms of size and tenure, to meet the needs of the community.**

## 3. LANDSCAPE & ENVIRONMENT

In June 2000 the Government clarified its planning policy with regard to “Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It stated that AONB share the highest status of protection along with National Parks, in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.

The Parish of Bucklebury, comprising of 2200 hectares\*, lies wholly within the North Wessex Downs’ “Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty”. It consists of 3 natural sectors: the North, with the heavily wooded high ground of Hawkridge; the Central lowland strip of the Pang Valley with its chalk stream and water meadows; and the Southern sector of the high ground of Bucklebury Common.

The quality and diversity of wildlife and their habitats within the Parish are highlighted by:

- The heavily wooded areas include deciduous woods classed as ‘**Ancient Woodland**’
- The Pang river, designated as an EC ‘**Salmonid fishery**’ supporting trout populations
- Briff Lane Meadows and Kings Copse, **Sites of Special Scientific Interest** .
- Several habitats have **Wildlife Heritage Site Status**, these are sites of County importance, for example, Bucklebury Common, the largest area of common in Berkshire
- The Avenue, consisting of two rows of oaks on either side of the road, planted in the 16th century when Queen Elizabeth 1 visited John Winchcombe in his new Manor house, is considered one of the most important group of oaks planted on land permanently open to the public.

The wildlife of the Parish, both plants and animals, is extensive and contains some rare species, many of which are protected by law. Examples of species found include Nightjars, Tawny and Little Owls, Kestrels, Sparrowhawks and Buzzards. The bigger animals include Fox, Badgers, Muntjac, and Roe Deer. Among the smaller mammals are squirrels (grey), rabbits, and the Yellow Necked Woodmouse. The flora is rich and includes wood anemone, wood sage, honeysuckle, bluebell, tormentil, saxifrage, climbing Corydalis and several species of wild orchid.

Loss of habitats or habitat change as a result of inappropriate management are one of the most damaging threats facing rare species in Berkshire. These habitats should be safeguarded wherever possible and appropriate advice sought on managing them to conserve the natural diversity of life and to halt the extinction of species diversity not only in Berkshire but also in the UK.

Funds from West Berkshire Council, the Environment Agency, English Nature and others are made available to the Pang Valley Countryside Project to provide an advisory service to farmers and landowners on improving wildlife, habitats and landscape in the Pang Valley  
In the rural setting, hedges, trees, and the original flora and fauna of the area should be respected and incorporated into any plans for future development.

\* (Additional topographic information, Appendix 3 Section 2)

(Supplementary environmental and geological information Appendix 2)

#### **Guidelines**

- 3 G 1 Any development should be in keeping with the rural nature of the area and its designation as an AONB**
- 3 G 2 The natural beauty of the landscape, visual quality and amenity of the area should be conserved and enhanced.**
- 3 G 3 The biodiversity of the parish should be conserved and enhanced.**
- 3 G 4 Existing hedgerows and trees should be retained whenever possible.**
- 3 G 5 New developments should include indigenous planting and landscaping.**
- 3 G 6 The ongoing work of the environmental projects, such as the Pang Valley Countryside Project, is recognised and should continue to be supported and encouraged.**

#### **4. THE ECONOMY**

Bucklebury has throughout its history been chosen as a peaceful haven to escape from the main clamours of town and city life. It has therefore not seen the establishment of any major economy. Farming and associated businesses have provided small scale job opportunities alongside those offered by village shops, schools, pubs and artisan services.\* This farming sector with 8/9 working units, 10-15 small holdings, handles cattle, pigs, sheep, dairy, and arable crops has created the balanced rural economy established today. However the bulk of the population relies on work from outside the parish boundaries and will continue to do so. Nevertheless there is a strong desire from residents for the present level of small home-based businesses, and artisan and service sectors to flourish within the limits of the present infrastructure.

\* (Local services and commercial operations listed Appendix 3 Section 3)

#### **Guidelines**

- 4 G 1 Where appropriate, plans for small scale farm diversification projects, suitable for a rural location to provide for local employment will be supported.**
- 4 G 2 The role of artisan and home based service sectors in meeting local needs is recognised**
- 4 G 3 Sustainable rural economic development is supported where it complies with the policies of the West Berkshire District Local Plan.**

#### **5. AMENITIES, SERVICES AND RECREATION**

For those who live in Bucklebury, the proximity to the open space offered by both the Common and the surrounding woodlands and farmlands provides the inhabitants with excellent opportunities to enjoy walking, horse riding and countryside pursuits. The 40 miles of footpaths and bridleways through the surrounding countryside is an amenity highly valued and appreciated by residents.

The community is well served with a range of basic and essential amenities including:

The Church of England Primary School \*, a preparatory school, nursery and pre-school; three churches, one chapel, two pub/restaurants, a Doctors' Surgery with a dispensary, two garages, four shops two of which have a Post Office, two Community Halls, a Mobile Library visiting on a fortnightly basis, and a Bus Service running to Reading and Newbury..

(\*Currently over-subscribed, see Appendix 3 Section 4)

The electricity supply is by overhead distribution lines, failures occur at intervals, and voltage is low at times. Water shortages are not infrequent. Mains sewerage, provided in limited areas, is at full capacity. The predominant waste disposal is dependent on individual septic tanks. No mains gas is

available. Any new development would have to take into account any necessary extension to basic utilities.

The Parish has two main recreational fields; one in the Village, used for football and cricket, and the second, the Hockett field, which is currently unsuitable for formal sports due to its location and soil, used for general outdoor pursuits. Tennis is played on two courts at the Memorial Hall and badminton and table-tennis, are played in local school facilities. There are two Children's Play Parks.

The strong community spirit enables a large selection of societies and organisations to cater for a wide variety of interests in sport, clubs, and community activities. Facilities are thought by residents to be adequate for the present community's needs. There is an expressed interest for improved facilities for young and elderly residents, and additional sporting facilities (indoor and outdoor). However the general feeling in the community is that further formalised sports facilities are better met by nearby towns which have the higher local demand required to produce financial viability for such amenities.

#### **Guidelines**

**5 G 1 The effects of any new development on essential services and infrastructure should be considered. (water, power, sewerage, schools, etc.)**

**5 G 2 Opportunities for informal countryside recreation for all sectors of the community should be encouraged.**

**5 G 3 Access by public transport to additional sporting and recreational facilities in urban centres will be supported and encouraged.**

### **6. HIGHWAYS, COMMUNICATIONS AND TRAFFIC**

The Parish roads have been established over the years for access, service and communication between the numerous hamlets, farms and dwellings. They consist entirely of unclassified roads (*rural roads*), mostly without pavements or kerbstones, upgraded from gravel tracks with only a limited top surface structure. The 14 miles of tarmac lanes - all single carriageway or single track, with few passing places, are generally narrow winding country lanes with hedgerows or soft verge edges, many subject to flooding and only really suitable for local traffic.

Two roads (9 miles in all) run east/west, one from Thatcham, through the two main Parish centres, Upper Bucklebury and Chapel Row, and on to Theale and Reading, and a second from Hermitage to Chapel Row through Marlston and Bucklebury Village. Most of the remaining lanes join these two roads on a north/south axis serving the small and scattered enclaves of houses throughout the area.

The two principal roads serve two functions: primarily for local movements to and from the Parish and adjoining Parishes (most residents work outside) and secondly they have come to be used as a through-road for traffic between Hermitage/Newbury/Thatcham and Pangbourne/Theale/M4 and Reading: i.e. a Rat Run'.

The general increase in volume and speed of traffic is of great concern to residents., Whilst 30 mph limits have been introduced through Upper Bucklebury, Chapel Row and Bucklebury Village, they consider that the local byways and lanes are potential for reassessment under the "Quiet Lanes Initiative".

(Road statistics, Appendix 3 Section 5)

#### **Guidelines**

**6 G 1 Any development which creates unacceptable levels of traffic would be resisted.**

**6 G 2 The reduction of vehicular traffic in order to reduce traffic on unclassified roads is supported**

**6 G 3 Initiatives which make the roads in the Parish safer for all users, such as the 'Village Speed Limits Initiative' and 'The Quiet Lanes Initiative', are supported. Where appropriate other traffic calming methods are also encouraged.**

**6 G 4 Where appropriate, the status of the Parish within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty should be acknowledged**

**6 G 5 Improved public transport initiatives will be supported.**

## 7. BUILDINGS

The overall housing stock is 775 dwellings, with four main settlements holding 500 homes out of this total (60-65%). Upper Bucklebury now accounts for around 280 of these dwellings. In the Parish there are in the region of 110 houses (14%) managed by Sovereign Housing Association.

There are numerous hamlets (*17 in number\**) and isolated houses found nestling within woodlands, farmlands and on the Common, which often enjoy rural outlooks. Styles of housing vary considerably with thatched cottages, manorial homes, family houses, with newer properties all blending into the area. A number are listed and are of historical interest. This pattern and diversity, within the numerous individual hamlets, are major attractions for residents of the rural nature of the area.

Bucklebury Village is designated a Conservation Area.

Individual buildings although of no coherent architectural pattern, nonetheless have a common thread of earthy, traditional materials indigenous to West Berkshire, and are, in some cases, of superb quality and craftsmanship.

There is a consistency of comfortable and well accepted roof forms, predominantly clay tiled, double pitched and dormered, which have a timeless quality and which can easily be adapted to new building as well as to extension and improvement. Building lines are important, to prevent the overpowering of neighbouring properties, particularly with bulky double garage placements

A sense of generous spacing between adjacent buildings prevails.

(Statistics on dwelling numbers, new build and social housing, see Appendix 3 Section 6)

### Guidelines

**7 G 1 New buildings and extensions should respect the scale, density, style, and general line of existing buildings. Features sought after in new, replacement buildings or extensions, include hipped dormers, low profile chalet styled bungalow conversions.**

**7 G 2 All materials should be of good quality, sympathetic, and appropriate in colour and form to harmonise with their surroundings.**

**Recommended materials are:-**

**Handmade or similar bricks.**

**Clay tiles for roofing**

**Wooden door and window frames.**

**7 G 3 Elements of good design to blend with local character are:**

- **Hipped gabled roofs to reduce bulk on skyline**
- **Eaves as low as possible**
- **Hipped dormer to break up roofline**
- **Side extensions set back and articulated from main house**
- **Non dominant garage frontages**
- **Porches and small scale elements break up surfaces. Soft zone to public boundary**
- **Hedgerows and planting to frontages**
- **Space around buildings**
- **Bland car parking areas to frontages avoided**

**7 G 4 Construction details to enhance the traditional rural quality of the Parish**

- **Corbelled brick cornicing rather than featureless deep bargeboards**
- **Clay plain tiling**
- **Window reveals to full depth of facing course for greater shadow and relief**
- **Exposed rafters rather than deep eaves boarding**

**7 G 5 Where infilling is proposed, over development of the site should be avoided in order to maintain the rural character of the Parish.**

## 8. PLANNING

Upper Bucklebury is the only area within the Parish designated in planning terms with a 'settlement boundary'. Over the last 50 years it has seen the number of properties quadruple to 280 properties, with expectations of a further 40 properties in the near future. In the opinion of its residents any additional development on this scale and on one site is likely to extend the community beyond that of the desired rural village community. They want the village to remain predominantly rural. Any new housing, if spread throughout the Parish in the numerous hamlets, sympathetically situated in either singularly on adequate plots, or in small clusters (e.g. 4/5 on an appropriately sized plot), would help in the retaining of a community.

#### **Guidelines**

- 8 G 1** Any future development should respect the basic settlement pattern of the Parish.
- 8 G 2** Any proposed housing development should acknowledge the Bucklebury context and avoid 'pattern book' designs.
- 8 G 3** Any proposed housing development should be of a scale suitable to its immediate environs and should aim to meet local needs.

#### **9. WEST BERKSHIRE DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN (1991-2006).**

The current West Berkshire District 'Local Plan' (1991-2006) sets out West Berkshire Council's proposals for the development and use of land within its area up to 2006.

The Council will begin a review of the Local Plan in 2002.

The Parish Council will be making every effort to ensure the views expressed within Bucklebury Vision are taken into account.

Factors to be highlighted for the Parish include:

- The diversity and separate entities of hamlets and small communities.
- The over stretched service infrastructures and highways.
- The depleted stock of smaller dwellings for older and younger members of the community
- The status of the AONB

## **SUMMARY**

### **KEY ISSUES:**

- **Bucklebury is a historic rural community in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Beauty.**
- **The Parish offers the tranquillity of a countryside rich in biodiversity to all those who live or visit the area.**
- **There are individual communities in many small hamlets which have their own identities.**
- **New houses, extensions/alterations should respect and/or enhance the rural character/style of the Parish.**
- **There is no wish amongst the residents to allow growth to change the character and nature of the community of Bucklebury.**

**Bucklebury is special - we wish to keep it that way for future generations.**

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**Acknowledgements:**

*West Berkshire Planning and Transport Strategy Service: their informal guidance and advice.*

*The community of the Parish of Bucklebury*

*Pang Valley Countryside Project: advice on environmental issues.*

*G.G. Sanderson; Sanderson Associates: advice on architecture, layout and sketches*

*Lynda Sheridan: Layout*

*Bucklebury History Group:*

*Bucklebury Parish Council: funding and support.*

*Bucklebury Memorial Hall and Victory Rooms: for equipment and facilities.*

*Chapel Row Fayre: support on the launching of the project.*

*The Oaks and the Parish magazine: communications with the Parish.*

**References:**

*West Berkshire District Local Plan 1991-2006 (Previously Newbury District Local Plan)*

*Countryside Agency: Village Design Advisory booklets 1 & 2*

*West Berkshire Council statistical records and forward projections.*

**Endorsements:**

*The Berkshire branch of the CPRE fully supports the aims and design principles set out within this document.*

*Bucklebury Parish Council fully endorses the forward vision and planning guidance set out in this document.*