

6.3 Bidford-on-Avon Area Strategy

Context

Bidford-on-Avon dates back to Saxon times, although the Roman Rykneld Street originally crossed the River Avon at this point.

This large village lies six miles to the west of Stratford-upon-Avon and six miles to the north-east of Evesham. The parish population (which includes the villages of Broom, Barton and Marlcliff), was 5,350 according to the 2011 Census; an increase of about 69% since 1981. The number of dwellings in the parish has increased by 86% over this period. It is estimated that the population of Bidford-on-Avon village itself is now close to 5,000 and comprises about 2,200 dwellings (as at 2011).

The relief road, which was built in 1978, tends to sever more recent residential areas from the village centre, although two pedestrian/cycle crossings help the situation. The centre itself has many attractive features and the riverside recreation ground, known as Big Meadow, is a popular attraction.

There is a reasonable range of shops and services in the village centre although the provision has declined in recent years, which is reflected in the number of previously commercial premises that have been converted into dwellings. There is a primary school and medical centre, both of which meet the needs of local residents and surrounding villages. The latter is relocating to a larger facility just outside the village to cater for its growing catchment population. However, the closure of the secondary school in 1985 had a significant effect on the community. A large foodstore was built on the Salford Road, just outside the village centre, in the late 1990s.

A frequent (half-hourly) bus service runs through Bidford-on-Avon on Mondays to Saturdays linking with Evesham and Stratford-upon-Avon. There is also a daily (including Sunday) service between Redditch and Evesham which passes through the village.

The local shops and services help to meet the day-to-day needs of the village's residents and those who live in surrounding communities. However, Bidford-on-Avon's catchment is relatively small due to the proximity of the larger towns of Stratford-upon-Avon, Evesham and Alcester.

A well-established industrial estate off Waterloo Road supports a wide range of jobs, although the 2001 Census showed that only 34% of employed residents also worked in the local area (Bidford-on-Avon and Salford Ward). 19% of the Ward's employed residents work in Stratford-upon-Avon, compared with only 5% who work in Alcester and 3% in Evesham. About 64% of the jobs in the Ward are taken by residents of Stratford District, with Wychavon District (22%) being the only other dominant source of workers.

The household survey carried out in 2008 for the Retail Study showed that Stratford-upon-Avon is used by 34% of residents in the Alcester and Bidford-on-Avon area for their main food shopping, compared with 14% who go to Evesham and 10% to Redditch. Only 8% use the food shops in Bidford-on-Avon itself for this purpose. For non-food shopping, 33% of residents use Stratford-upon-Avon on a regular basis, 16% go to Redditch and only 4% to Evesham.

Future development issues

The community is concerned about the scale of development that has taken place in Bidford-on-Avon in recent decades, which has changed its character. Despite this level of growth, there has been little investment in infrastructure and there is limited and, in some respects, a declining range of shops and services in the village.

There is also local concern that the drainage system, both surface and foul, has little spare capacity and that further development would increase the risk of flooding in some parts of the village. Furthermore, the primary school has limited capacity to deal with further large-scale growth. Such development would also lead to an increase in out-commuting due to the limited number of local jobs available.

Future development in the village is intended to be limited given the comparatively modest provision of shops, services and infrastructure. It is essential that further development does not increase the drainage problems experienced and preferably helps to alleviate the situation. Opportunities should be taken to limit the impact of vehicles in the village, through the use of traffic management measures and improvements to pedestrian and cycle links.

There are significant constraints affecting large areas of land on the edge of the village. All of the southern edge along the Avon valley is affected by flood risk (mostly Flood Zone 3a, high probability). This land is also designated as an Area of Restraint within which the open nature of the landscape should be protected. Small Brook, a minor watercourse that runs along the northern and western edges of the village, is also prone to flooding.

The land rises quite sharply to the east and particularly to the west of the village at Marriage Hill. The Landscape Sensitivity Study identifies these rising areas as being of high/medium sensitivity to development. It also specifies the Avon Valley as being of high sensitivity. Furthermore, much of the land around the village is high quality (Grade 2) agricultural land, including the area between Victoria Road and Waterloo Road.

There are no nationally significant archaeological constraints affecting land around the village apart from the bridge over the River Avon which is an Ancient Monument. The village centre and river environs to the south lie within a Conservation Area. There are no nationally significant ecological or geological features on the edge of the village.

While the Employment Land Study concludes that additional land for employment purposes is not required in Bidford-on-Avon unless there is large-scale housing development, a small amount may be appropriate to help increase the opportunity for residents to work locally. The regeneration of certain parts of the well-established Waterloo Park Industrial Estate will be encouraged.

Particular attention needs to be given to the village centre in order to arrest its recent decline so that it provides an attractive focus of services and activities for the local community. The provision of small-scale shopping and other commercial uses will be encouraged, along with projects to enhance the environmental quality of the centre and its links with the rest of the village.

Based on the strategy set out in Section 5 for distributing housing development in the District, and taking into account the number of dwellings built and granted planning permission since 2011, about 220 homes, plus windfall development, are to be provided in the village over the plan period.

A wide range of issues and opportunities relating to the future planning of the Bidford-on-Avon area have been identified from various sources, including plans produced by the local community and studies produced for the Council.

Policy AS.3

Bidford-on-Avon

The Council will apply the following principles in considering development proposals and other initiatives relating to the Bidford-on-Avon area. Developers will be expected to contribute to the achievement of these principles where it is appropriate and reasonable for them to do so, taking into account the provisions of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

(a) Environmental

- Protect and enhance the historic character of the village core.
- Preserve the riverside setting of the village and the views towards it.
- Improve the drainage infrastructure in order to reduce the risk of flooding, including the combined sewer outflow at The Pleck.
- Reduce the impact of traffic through the village.
- Provide additional natural accessible greenspace given the shortfall against the standard set out in Policy CS.24 Healthy Communities.
- Support the multi-functional use of land to the south of the river for recreation, biodiversity and flood alleviation.
- Enhance the character and setting of the Bidavon/Waterloo Industrial Estate.
- Enhance biodiversity at Bidford Grange Golf Course, including through tree planting.

(b) Social

- Improve sports and social facilities, including the ongoing modernisation of Crawford Hall.
- Provide a pedestrian/cycle bridge across the River Avon to improve access to the Big Meadow.
- Provide additional play spaces for children and young people given the shortfall against the standard set out in Policy CS.24 Healthy Communities.
- Provide additional pitches for mini and junior football given the shortfall identified in the village.
- Investigate the creation of a greenway with public access along the dismantled railway line on the northern edge of the village.

(c) Economic

- Support the regeneration of the industrial estate and redevelopment of vacant and underused plots within it.
- Assess the need for additional employment development in the village.
- Enhance the role of the village centre as a focus of shops and services in order to attract more customers.
- Seek to attract more leisure visitors to the village by promoting its riverside setting and Big Meadow recreation ground.