

# Bury Unitary Development Plan

- Introduction
- Borough profile and key issues
- Strategic planning background
- Strategy
- The plan and sustainability

## INTRODUCTION

In preparing a Borough-wide plan to guide and control development into the next century, it is considered important to have a clear vision of the type of Borough the Plan is attempting to create. With this aim in mind a strategy for the Plan was prepared as a first step in the work on the UDP.

The strategy to be pursued through the UDP was previously published in the document "Bury 2001 - The Strategy for the Plan" (July 1991). This Strategy is now set out as part of the UDP to provide essential background to the policies and proposals which follow later in the Plan.

Primarily, the Strategy is a response to the changes which have taken place in the local economy over recent years and the growing concern for the environmental quality of the area. Such matters can also be seen to be at the heart of the emerging interest in the concept of "sustainability" where it is recognised that, if development is to be sustainable, its impact should not result in the irreversible or unacceptable deterioration of the environment.

The intention of the Strategy is to give direction to the Plan. This, in turn, will help the Borough to balance the need to meet the challenges and develop the opportunities of the 1990's in a positive manner, whilst at the same time enhancing the quality of the environment and ensuring that the needs of all sectors of the population are taken into account.

## BOROUGH PROFILE AND KEY ISSUES

The nature and character of the Bury area and the way in which it has developed can be seen to be at the heart of many of the key issues affecting the Borough today. Any strategy for the area must, therefore, have its roots in the processes of change which have had an impact on the Borough's development.

### **Industrialisation and the Changing Local Economy**

Industrialisation in the late 18th Century and throughout the 19th Century brought the first major period of development to the Borough. The area grew rapidly during this period with the Borough's population rising dramatically from 27,000 in 1801 to reach 123,000 by 1891. Industries such as textiles, paper making and engineering dominated and towns such as Radcliffe, Bury and Ramsbottom were transformed from rural settlements and small townships into major towns and manufacturing centres.

Evidence of this early growth still characterises many of the inner areas of the Borough and can be seen in many of the Borough's older industrial areas and associated areas of older terraced housing. Over recent years much has been done to revitalise and improve these areas and many now form popular and successful residential and employment areas. Nevertheless, some parts of the inner areas still display concentrations of social problems, poor environment and persistent unemployment, and the need for further regeneration and renewal initiatives still remains an issue for the UDP.

Today, although many of the traditional industries of the area have been in decline for many years and modern production methods mean they are far less labour intensive than they used to be, the traditional industries are still significant employers in many parts of the Borough. However, in overall terms, manufacturing industries now play a much less significant role in the local economy. As recently as 1959 the Borough provided a total of 55,100 jobs, of which some 62% were in manufacturing and some 33% in services. By 1987 the situation had changed dramatically. Total employment provision had declined to 50,100 jobs, but perhaps more significantly the relationship between the manufacturing and service sectors had been reversed with only 36% of jobs still in manufacturing and 59% of jobs now in services.

The need to overcome remaining problems associated with the legacy of early industrialisation and the need to respond positively to recent changes in the local economy are now two of the major factors behind the key issues to be tackled by the UDP.

## **The Growth of Commuting**

After the rapid expansion of the Borough associated with the Industrial Revolution, perhaps the second most significant factor in the Borough's development has been its growth as a residential area for commuters working in Manchester city centre and other neighbouring areas.

By the early part of this century industrial growth was stabilising. Population growth, however, continued as first areas such as Prestwich and Whitefield, in the south of the Borough, started to develop as significant commuter areas. The proximity of Manchester city centre and the existence of good road and rail links were the driving forces behind this development.

With the post-war explosion in car ownership, areas further afield also came under pressure for commuter development. During the late 1960's and early 1970's house building reached a peak with an average of 1,250 dwellings per annum being built, and areas such as Unsworth, West Bury and Tottington expanded rapidly during this period. The Borough's population also grew sharply during this period rising from 152,000 in 1961 to 177,000 in 1981.

In recent years the level of house building has slowed, averaging 413 dwellings per annum during the 1980's, and the Borough's population has remained relatively constant.

Nevertheless, the Borough's pleasant blend of town and country seems as popular as ever with commuters. In recent years it has been the towns of Radcliffe and Ramsbottom which have seen significant levels of house building and an influx of commuters. Now commuting is widespread throughout the Borough, indeed, in 1991, some 43.6% of the working population travelled outside the Borough to work, the highest level of commuting for any district in Greater Manchester.

The point now appears to be being reached where further large scale development would give rise to serious environmental conflicts. Therefore, as Bury approaches the 21st Century, the Borough finds itself entering a critical and challenging period in its development. It is recognised that consideration now needs to be given to the level of development which can be sustained in the Borough in the future without compromising the environmental qualities of the area.

Balancing the needs for economic prosperity and demands for development against the growing concerns for the environment and protection of the Borough's character and identity, will become increasingly difficult. However, by attempting to set clear guidelines to control such pressures, the UDP has a vital role to play.

## **Key Issues**

Arising from the difficult balancing exercise between development and environmental protection, there are a number of key issues which the UDP, and particularly the Strategy for the Plan, will need to address and these are described below:-

### **KEY ISSUE 1 - Economic Prosperity and Development**

Economic prosperity requires access for residents to a modern, expanding industrial and commercial base to provide employment opportunities and income. Economic growth needs development sites, and one of the most important roles of the UDP is to seek to ensure that sufficient land is made available. However, the Plan will have to balance land requirements against environmental issues and regeneration objectives. What level of development should the Borough aim to accommodate and to what degree can the Borough rely on areas beyond its boundaries to provide employment opportunities with a reliance on commuting?

### **KEY ISSUE 2 - Protection and Enhancement of the Environment**

The quality of the environment at all levels is at the forefront of public concern. Local residents have demonstrated in the past on many occasions that they put "conservation" issues firmly ahead of "development" issues. The local environment is seen as one of the major assets of the Borough. It helps maintain the attractiveness of the Borough as a popular residential area and is becoming increasingly important as the Borough begins to take on a leisure and tourism role. Undoubtedly, the UDP has an important role to play - environmental conservation and improvement within the Borough will be fundamental to a whole range of topics covered by the UDP.

### **KEY ISSUE 3 - Green Belt, Open Land and the River Valleys**

Strategic Guidance urges Councils in Greater Manchester to seek to incorporate existing Green Belt in their UDP's and to demonstrate continuing care for the river valleys and for the open land which helps to project an attractive image of the County. In the case of Bury, supporting these requirements will be important in maintaining and enhancing the environmental quality of the Borough.

The challenge for Bury's UDP, therefore, must be to make provision for the Borough's development needs within the constraints of Strategic Guidance. Obviously, with the tight Green Belt around Bury this leaves little room for manoeuvre, but only in exceptional circumstances should development of open land be considered and any alteration to the Green Belt must be to the minimum degree required.

### **KEY ISSUE 4 - Attractiveness of Bury Town Centre and Other Centres**

Maintaining the attractiveness of Bury town centre and the other centres of the Borough is a growing area of concern. The structure of the Borough with its range of small town centres is a characteristic with which local residents identify very strongly and maintaining the vitality and viability of these centres is an important issue. The economic prosperity and well-being of the Borough is very much reflected through its town centres. Bury town centre, in particular, is facing fierce competition from neighbouring town centres. The UDP has an important role in co-ordinating measures to promote a healthy future for all the Borough's centres.

## **KEY ISSUE 5 - Quality and Control of Urban Development**

In line with Strategic Guidance the UDP will be concerned to restrict peripheral development. However, it is likely in areas like Bury that development pressures will remain high and this will result in increasing demands being brought to bear on the existing urban area. The attractive character of many parts of the Borough will be increasingly under threat from increasing densities and loss of open spaces caused by infilling and high density redevelopments. Measures are needed in the UDP which will safeguard the Borough from excessive over development.

## **KEY ISSUE 6 - Traffic Movement and the Transportation Network**

Continuing trends of growing car ownership and usage, together with high levels of commuter travel in the Borough will place increasing demands on the highway and transportation network. New road construction and improvements will not provide all the answers and other solutions must be examined. The concentration of employment, services and shopping in central locations will facilitate access by public transport but measures are needed to encourage its use and make centres more "user friendly" for pedestrians, cyclists, and other vulnerable transport users.