

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – July 2026

Dear Residents,

Buckden is facing one of the most challenging planning periods in its recent history. Many of you have shared your worries about the scale of development, the strain on our infrastructure, and the future character of our village. I share those concerns. With the Silver Street Reserved Matters now submitted and national planning rules undergoing major reform, this month demands focused, informed action. My priority is ensuring your voices are heard and that every decision affecting our community is scrutinised with care.

Local Government Reorganisation

Ben Obese-Jecty, MP for Huntingdon, has indicated that Option D is likely to be the government's preferred direction, with Huntingdonshire expected to be split between two new unitary authorities. He did not specify Buckden's placement, but current analysis suggests Buckden would fall within a new Mid Cambridgeshire unitary alongside St Neots and the A428 corridor villages. Huntingdonshire District Council would be abolished, and Buckden's services, planning, transport priorities, and representation would transfer to the Mid Cambs authority. Exact boundaries remain uncertain, and councillors should treat these implications as emerging rather than confirmed.

Silver Street Development: Current Position

The Reserved Matters application for Silver Street (26/00956/REM) is now live. I have formally called in the application so it will be determined by the District Council's Development Management Committee, ensuring full public debate.

A major issue has emerged around drainage. The Lead Local Flood Authority has made a formal objection because the developer is proposing a pumped drainage system. This contradicts the gravity-fed strategy legally secured under Condition 35 of the outline permission. Such a fundamental change cannot be slipped through under Reserved Matters. It requires a separate Section 73 application, and I will continue pressing for that.

National Highways has also issued its statutory response. They raise no objection, but crucially confirm that this application deals only with internal site matters. This places on record that the Buckden Roundabout upgrade, an essential and costly piece of strategic infrastructure, remains unresolved and unfunded. Without confirmed costs, the developer cannot claim the scheme's viability is fixed. That means there is no

justification for departing from the Buckden Neighbourhood Plan or shifting the housing mix away from the smaller homes our village actually needs.

Recent foul water drainage evidence for Silver Street, St Hugh's Road and Taylors Lane shows the local foul network is in severe structural failure. Anglian Water's 2022 CCTV survey recorded Grade 4 pipe condition, with major fouling, standing water at 70%, and an inspection so compromised it had to be abandoned. Despite this, the developer's Reserved Matters submission proposes a 15 litres/second pumped discharge into a system with a documented safety limit of just 5.1 l/s. Given the recent dry discharge event and the risk posed by this proposal, I have requested an urgent meeting with Anglian Water's operational team and reminded them of Ofwat's requirement to implement temporary mitigation where possible. I will update residents as soon as Anglian Water responds.

Local Plan Update and Infrastructure Pressures

Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) is updating its Local Plan to 2046. A new national formula has increased our annual housing requirement by 35% to **1,232 homes per year**. HDC's past delivery has not met these levels, the district currently has only a **3.68-year housing land supply**. Falling below the required five years triggers the "tilted balance", meaning our housing policies are treated as out-of-date and speculative development becomes far harder to resist.

Understandably people are concerned, I am hearing that more than 30 parish councils and many residents have joined the "Pause the Plan" campaign. The evidence base shows why:

- **Wastewater capacity** at key Water Recycling Centres, including Huntingdon (Godmanchester), Somersham and Wyton are already at or beyond legal limits. Anglian Water has no funded upgrade for Huntingdon WRC in its current investment cycle. Increasing reliance on "Grampian conditions" means homes cannot be occupied until upgrades are delivered - delays that further erode our land supply.
- **Water supply** in the East of England is under severe stress. Long-term security depends on the Fens Reservoir, not expected until at least 2035.
- **Transport constraints** on the A141 and A1 remain unresolved, with major schemes lacking confirmed government funding.
- **Tempsford New Town**, a proposed 40,000-home development in Bedfordshire, poses a significant downstream risk. It could absorb Anglian Water's future capital investment and limit the ecological capacity of the River Great Ouse, potentially restricting Huntingdonshire's ability to secure discharge permits.

Choosing the Right Planning System

The Council currently intends to continue under the legacy planning system, aiming for submission by **31 December 2026**. However, rushing a plan with unresolved infrastructure risks failure at Examination as recently seen in Horsham, where inspectors advised withdrawal over water issues. Even if we stay on the legacy route, adoption would not occur until early 2028.

The government's new **30-month plan-making system** offers important safeguards:

- **Early Gateway checks** by the Planning Inspectorate ensure infrastructure strategies are deliverable before years of work are invested.
- **Alignment with Anglian Water's AMP9 funding cycle (2030–2035)**, giving the best chance of securing upgrades for Huntingdon, Wyton and St Neots WRCs.
- **Comparable timelines**, with adoption likely only months apart from the legacy route.

To avoid predetermining the outcome, I am advocating for an independent strategic review comparing both methodologies. Following that, the Council should vote in September on the safest, fastest route out of the tilted balance. Let's see what Cabinet decide to do!

Wishing you well,

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