

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – MARCH 2026

Dear Residents and Councillors,

Every day, our village faces compounding infrastructure challenges that affect us all. We know exactly how our local network is failing, particularly when it comes to wastewater not being processed properly. Alongside this drainage crisis, we are dealing with severe traffic bottlenecks at the main A1 roundabout. We are also seeing escalating parking congestion directly hitting Silver Street due to the expansion and extended operating hours of the dental practice, alongside significant delays at the level crossing. These compounding issues mean many of you harbour a very real fear of being unable to get out of the village safely or in a timely manner.

We must remain objective regarding new housing. The Lucks Lane development, which was not included in the local plan at the time, has ultimately added benefits to the village community that were not initially anticipated. We must, however, rigorously scrutinise the impact of any new major development against our current backdrop of struggling infrastructure. The forthcoming Silver Street Development threatens to make our existing infrastructure crises significantly worse if vital road and drainage upgrades are not delivered first. An ageing and failing foul water system simply cannot safely absorb hundreds of new homes relying on a mechanically pumped drainage solution.

Sewage Capacity and Ageing Foul Water Infrastructure

The current sewage failures across the local area provide undeniable proof that the network is overwhelmed. Our foul water infrastructure is ageing. A vigilant local resident recently obtained direct confirmation from Anglian Water that there is a blockage in the rising main, which is the pressurised sewer pipe. Tankers are currently being used to ship sewage out of Diddington. The company expects to be running tankers for another two to three weeks.

The Foul Water Community Rebate Campaign

I am currently coordinating a major community campaign regarding the Buckden Water Recycling Centre. Environment Agency data shows this site discharged untreated wastewater into the Diddington Brook and River Great Ouse catchment for 3033 hours in 2024. That equates to roughly one third of the entire year. Despite this catastrophic failure, Anglian Water has allocated zero capital investment to fix this specific capacity issue in their draft 2025 to 2030 business plan.

Residents across the affected villages are now formally invoicing Anglian Water for a 33 percent pro rata rebate on their foul water charges for 2024, alongside demands for

refunds on all 2025 discharges. I am compiling a central dossier of these demands to launch a targeted press campaign. This will demonstrate the sheer scale of public anger while providing undeniable commercial proof that our local infrastructure is currently failing to deliver the most basic services to our community.

Transition of Management at Grafham Water Nature Reserve

Anglian Water announced in January 2026 that its forty-year management partnership with the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire at Grafham Water will conclude in April 2026. The water company intends to bring the conservation and maintenance of the 280-acre Site of Special Scientific Interest in house, citing a desire to develop internal expertise and manage its land holdings directly during a period of record investment. While the company has committed to maintaining all existing wildlife protections and public access, the shift represents a significant change in the long-term stewardship of the site.

Local volunteers have expressed significant concern regarding the sudden cessation of their conservation activities, which have been a staple of the reserve for decades. This disruption to long term monitoring and habitat management programmes has raised fears among residents that the delicate ecological balance of the ancient woodland may be endangered. The transition coincides with a twelve week refurbishment of the Marlow Visitor Centre, reflecting a broader shift in management that many feel prioritises infrastructure over the nuanced, expert led conservation previously provided by the Trust and its dedicated volunteer network.

The Silver Street Development

District Council planners have explicitly confirmed in writing that they did not encourage a housing mix weighted towards larger units. They have reiterated that Condition 25 of the outline permission strictly dictates any variation must comply with the Buckden Neighbourhood Plan. The National Planning Policy Framework strongly encourages early discussion between developers and Parish Councils to secure better outcomes for residents. It is understood that Morris Homes has engaged in these informal negotiations, alongside commissioning a new Housing Needs Assessment by Savills. Their strategy appears to be using this developer funded report to argue that the village needs larger houses, thereby attempting to overwrite our adopted local data.

This is where we must stand firm. As your District Councillor, I have no mandate to decide whether a bungalow is better than a two bedroom house. I must refer to our adopted Housing Needs Assessment for that guidance. The Parish Council is in exactly the same position. We remain fundamentally bound by the adopted Neighbourhood

Plan, as these documents represent the direct democratic mandate from you, the residents. While discussion is always encouraged, the Parish Council possesses no democratic mandate to overrule its own adopted Housing Needs Assessment during informal negotiations.

The only mechanism to bypass the primary housing mix is if the developer formally claims the Silver Street site is financially unviable. It is highly likely the developer is using their own commercial report to avoid making a formal viability claim, as doing so would force them into an open book independent viability assessment. If Morris Homes eventually does claim the site is unviable, I strongly recommend the Parish Council formally requests this open book independent assessment. This ensures their financial claims are rigorously tested rather than simply accepted.

Procedural Risk and Silver Street Public Meetings

I want to share a word of caution regarding your upcoming debate on the holding of public meetings. As a statutory consultee, the Parish Council must remain strictly objective. If the Parish Council formally hosts or sponsors a presentation by Morris Homes, it creates a severe legal vulnerability.

Sharing a platform risks blurring the line between an independent democratic body and a public relations platform for a commercial developer. It also exposes councillors to the risk of making comments during a heated presentation that could be legally construed as predetermination. Morris Homes should independently hire a venue, fund their own public exhibition, and take questions directly from the residents.

Joint District and County Councillor Surgery

Given the sheer volume of resident correspondence regarding our failing local networks, a joint District and County Councillor Surgery has been arranged. This will provide a dedicated forum for residents to discuss the severe drainage crises, traffic bottlenecks, escalating parking congestion, and wider infrastructure challenges currently impacting the community.

The surgery will take place on **17th March at 7:00pm at St Stephen's Hall, Buckden Towers.**

I would be very grateful if the Parish Council could note this date and share the details with any residents seeking an opportunity to discuss these specific infrastructure matters directly with their District and County representatives.

Local Allotments Update

As a final note, I want to formally minute our shared position regarding the local allotments. It is important to clarify that the allotments are not part of the Silver Street development, although the preservation of services certainly is. The allotments are an entirely separate matter. I understand that heads of agreement are currently being put in place for their sale to the Parish Council by the Church Commission. Savills, acting as their agents, have simultaneously issued an eviction order. This is a concerning, distinct issue. Given that I am not part of the direct negotiations with the agent, I formally request that the Parish Council keeps me updated on your progress so I can accurately answer community queries.

Wishing you well,

Martin

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