



Central Bedfordshire Council

Sourcing the power for housing in an electrical desert!

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Think Biggleswade

- Strategic position
- Heart of the Oxford Cambridge Arc
- East Coast Mainline
- A1 Corridor
- Understanding power demand
- Existing constraint
- Planning for growth
- Garden Village



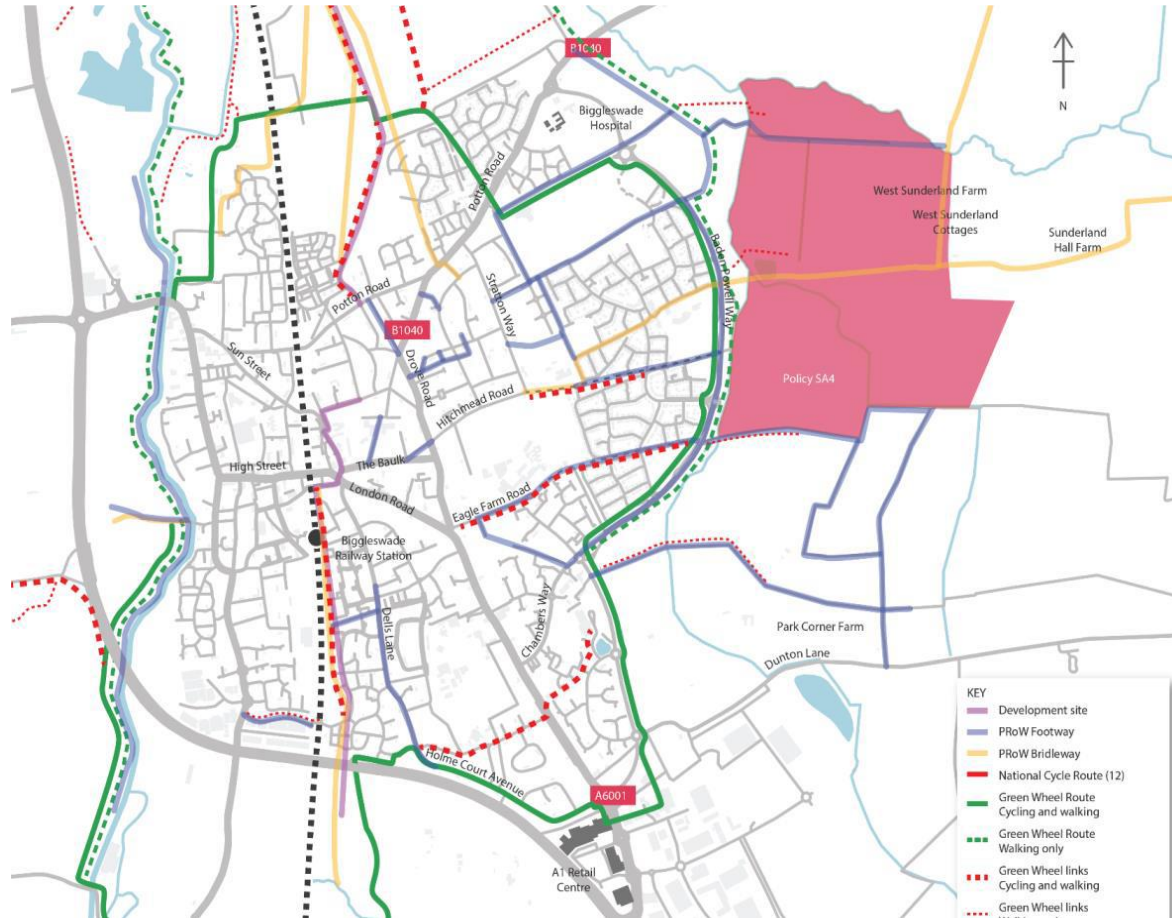
In 2020 London's best value commuter towns saw Biggleswade top the list with an average house price of £300,000 and a 44-minute journey to work

Progressing a large housing development

East Biggleswade Garden Village

- UK Regeneration was taking a new approach
- 1,500 homes meeting a range of needs
- 65ha of open space and leisure uses including 48ha of country park
- 2ha commercial land
- Primary School
- Healthcare facility
- Community facility

East Biggleswade Garden Village



East Biggleswade Garden Village



A unique place we are proud of



A high quality, healthy place to live, work & play



A green and natural place for all to enjoy



A connected and well integrated place



A place with strong community roots



A place that is sustainable and fit for the future

What questions do we even ask?

- Started unravelling the power constraints story
- No one knew the problem or the solution
- Big ask of any local authority - why our problem?
- Gathered information & knowledge
- Built network of people
- Built evidence base
- Scoped resources
- Front funding CBC



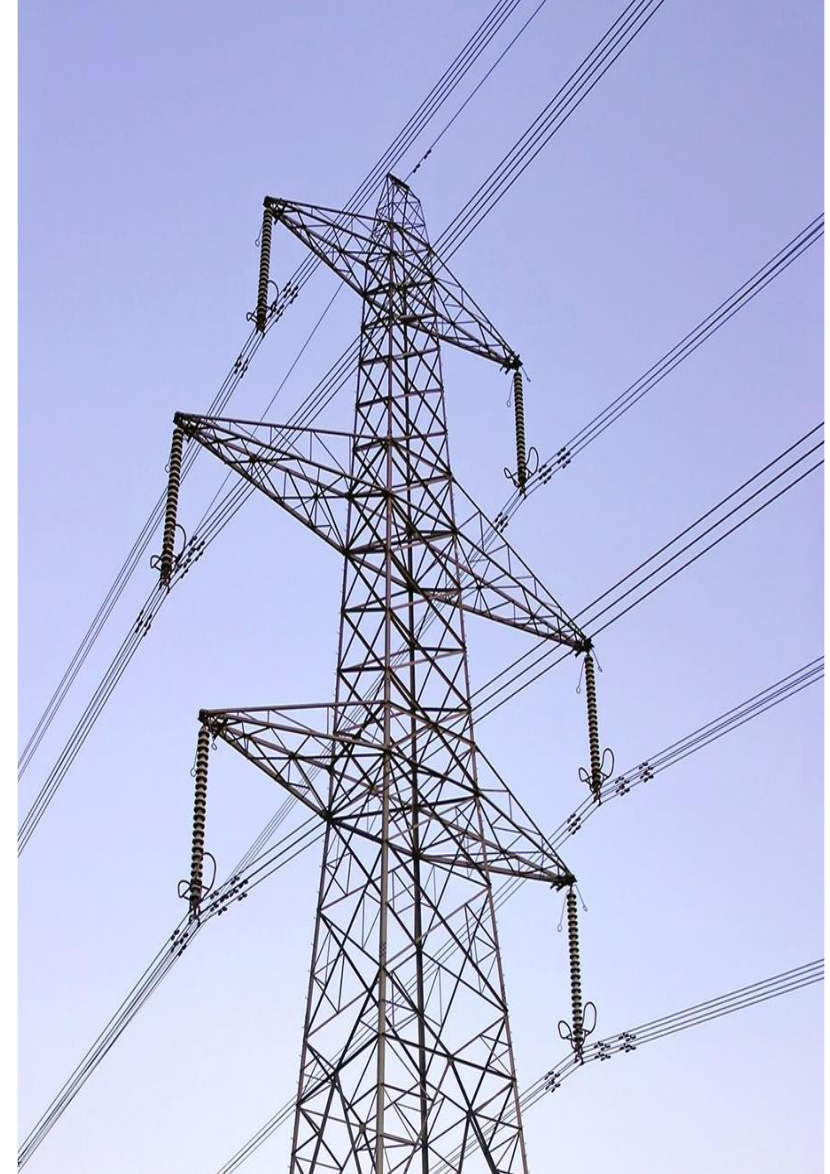
Picture became clearer

- Lack of capacity & expertise
- Severe Growth Constraint
- No real investment since 1960s
- An 'electrical desert'
- Market Failure



Grid connection challenges

- We were aware we had power capacity issues
- NIC report 'Partnering for Prosperity' confirmed the need for action
- Distribution Network Operators - investment required
- Thinking Big to address the issue – we needed internal support & leadership
- Opportunity – Housing Infrastructure Fund



Partnership Approach

The answer to not knowing what to do

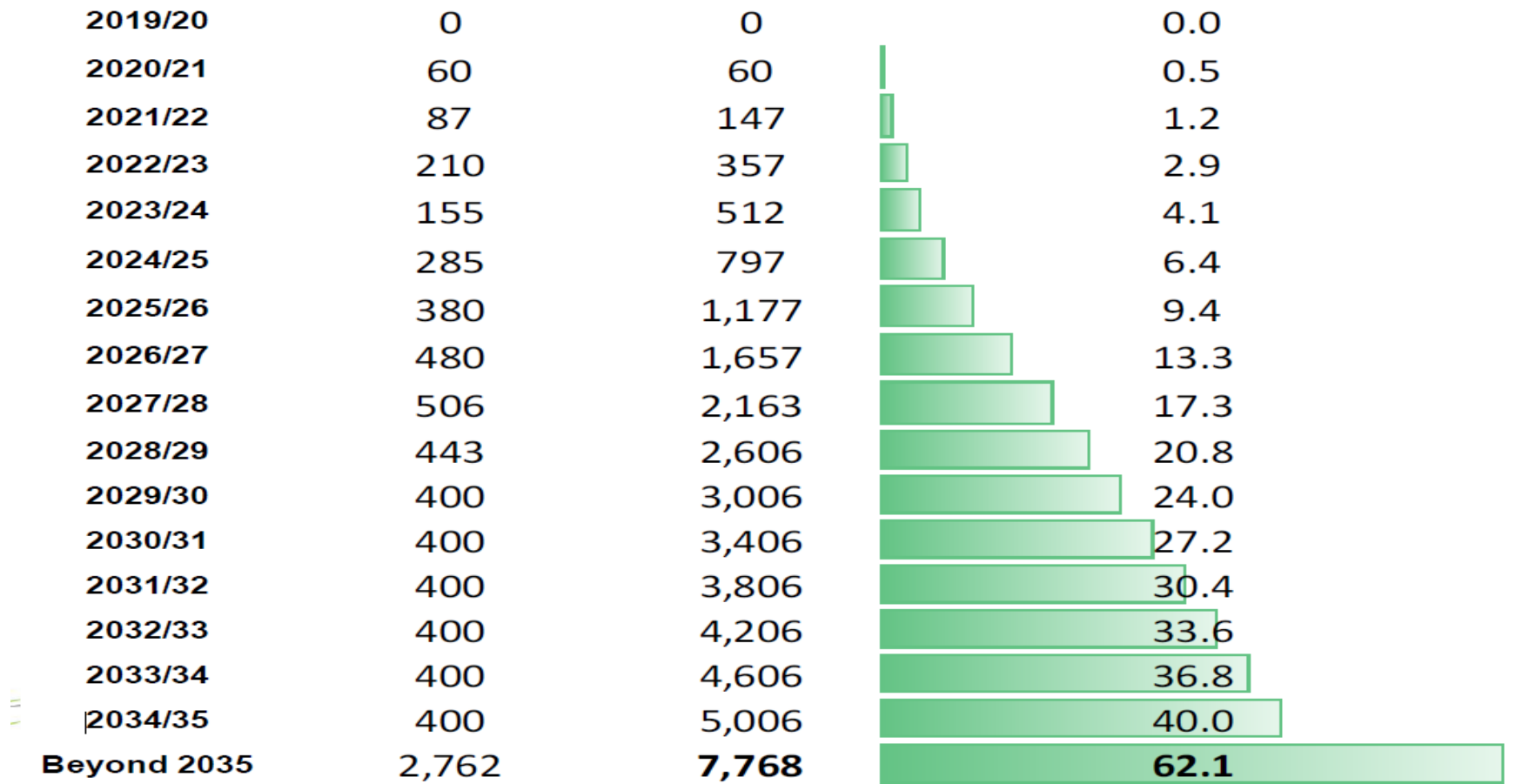
- Built confidence in our funding partner
- Built expertise in our team
- Gave us confidence in our funding decisions
- Both a barrier to progress & unlocked blockages
- Had to learn a different language
- Had to communicate on many levels

Power Investment Options in 2019

- 1. Do minimum** –Upgrade existing power infrastructure 10 MVA for £10.6M –insufficient
- 2. Do less** –New primary substation –20 MVA for £14M – capacity soon exceeded & more investment required
- 3. Preferred**–£48M New supergrid transformer substation 132kV
 - 240 MVA stepped transformation –40MVA expandable to 240MVA
 - Most cost effective + funding recovery opportunity
 - Unlocks capacity across a strategic area
 - Easily expanded in 40 MVA stages at low cost
 - Contribution from National Grid c.£15M
 - Deliverable by 2024
 - Mitigates commercial power needs risk

Future Proofing Power Options - How Much Power?

Assumed high @8KV per home



Where are we now?

- Complete February 2025
- Looking at wider implications & opportunities
- Inward investment
- Sustainable power generation
- Funding recovery & recycling
- Garden Village

Lessons Learned and tips!

- Be Brave! Be determined!
- Think Big! Think Strategically!
- Maintain a sense of humour! Securing support took a significant amount of time and effort
- Data Data Data! - The lack of a comprehensive evidence base to understand infrastructure needs at a local level is a barrier to effective strategic planning
- Focus on relationships – essential to getting traction and unblocking sticking points
- Be honest! About the time, effort and risk involved
- Be clear on who decides – establish governance early
- Bring your stakeholders with you – even when it's hard!



Questions?

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