

**This report may be of interest to: Those interested in the future planning of the Borough**

## **LOCAL PLAN REVIEW : PROGRESS REPORT AND TIMETABLE**

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### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To update the Sub Committee on progress on the Local Plan Review, and to seek approval for a revised timetable for preparing and approving the new Local Plan and placing it on deposit.

### **2. Summary**

- 2.1 The main reason why it has not proved possible to complete the Deposit Plan by June / July, as originally programmed, is the time needed to complete a number of studies, both internally and externally, which will provide essential inputs into the new Plan. Other factors which have led to a review of the timetable are the loss of one member of staff earlier in the year (post since refilled), and the implications of draft revised PPG12 and the review of Regional Planning Guidance for the South East.
- 2.2 Options are put forward for a revised timetable for the next stage of the Local Plan Review process, through to putting the Plan "on deposit". The revised timetable envisages the Deposit Plan being "approved" by the Sub Committee either in early September or in late October, depending on Members' views on how comprehensive the Deposit Plan should be. The implications of the two options are explained in the report.

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 That progress on the various studies currently underway, be noted
- 3.2 That a revised Local Plan Review timetable to deposit (either Option 1 or Option 2), be agreed
- 3.3 That the provisional timetable thereafter, be reviewed following the deposit period

#### 4. **Background**

4.1 The Sub Committee approved a timetable for producing the Deposit Plan in September 1998. It envisaged ...

- (a) the Plan being considered by Members in June / July 1999
- (b) the deposit period taking place in autumn 1999

4.2 Following consideration of responses to the Issues Papers and approval of the Directions Paper (January 1999), a number of detailed studies have been carried out internally or commissioned from consultants. In terms of the consultants studies, many have relied on financial contributions from other partners; in such cases, the briefing, tendering, selection and project management process has been the responsibility of a working group comprising representatives of the commissioning authorities.

4.3 In March 1999, the Sub Committee considered a report on Draft PPG12 : Development Plans. The draft includes new guidance on preparing and managing the production of development plans, including the following :

- (a) An agreed and published timetable for local plan preparation, which is regularly reviewed, with local authorities “publicly accountable” for any changes to the programme.
- (b) The government regional office should be involved in setting and agreeing the timetable.
- (c) Good project management to ensure the programme is realistic in relation to both staff and financial resources.

#### 5. **Progress Report**

5.1 A progress report on the work currently underway, together with completion dates, is in **Annex A**. Although ideally the results of all the studies currently underway would be completed before the Deposit Plan is agreed, **Annex A** differentiates between those studies where the outcome is considered critical to the Deposit Plan, and those which can feed into the review after the deposit period.

#### 6. **Regional Planning Guidance**

6.1 Discussion of the future role of Milton Keynes within the South East region took place at the Public Examination into Draft Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) in London on 22 June.

6.2 The Council’s position at the Public Examination (PE) was agreed by the Environment Committee on 31 March 1999 (Minute EN96/99 refers) following earlier consideration by this Sub Committee. In summary, the Council did not either actively seek further

significant growth in the MK area nor endorse the findings of the Milton Keynes Area Development Potential Study (1998); however, if there is to be further significant growth at Milton Keynes, the Council requested that a number of pre-conditions should be included in the final version of the RPG.

- 6.3 Although the Panel's report is not expected until October, some key points emerged from the debate :
- (a) There were many representations to the PE that the overall housing allocation for the South East to 2016 is too low. Without implying acceptance of this argument, the Panel wanted to know what contribution the MK area could realistically make to a higher figure.
  - (b) Most parties accepted that there would be some further development at MK after 2016. Between 5,000 - 10,000 dwellings was generally considered realistic for the period 2011-2016.
  - (c) There was support for a further study of the MK sub-region to consider the opportunities and implications of significant growth in more detail, and across a wider area, including Northampton and Bedford, than had been possible in the 1998 study. SERPLAN also proposed a study looking at the case for new and expanded settlements across the whole region, to feed into the next review of RPG.
  - (d) If there is to be significant growth at MK, there was also widespread support for a locally accountable development agency to plan and manage the process, comprising both public and private sector representatives.

## 7. **Implications for the Local Plan Review**

- 7.1 To date, the Council has adopted a "twintrack" approach to the Local Plan Review and SERPLAN regional debate, recognising the need to move forward with the Local Plan Review (to 2011) despite uncertainty about the longer term policy context.
- 7.2 The Panel's report on the Public Examination is expected in October. The target for the Government Office for the South East is to produce the final RPG by Christmas 1999, but this cannot be guaranteed. It is not yet clear what will eventually emerge in RPG about MK but, in the view of your officers, it is unlikely to be very specific about the scale, location and timing of future growth in the Mk area and it could be several years before these issues become clearer.
- 7.3 Whatever housing allocation does emerge for the period to 2016, it is likely to be for "old" Buckinghamshire as a whole; it will then have to be split between "new" Bucks and MK through the Structure Plan process for the two areas before actual land allocations can be considered in local plans. This will therefore be a matter for the next review of our Local Plan.

- 7.4 As part of their recommended “plan, monitor and manage” approach, SERPLAN have also proposed a timetable for development plan preparation to follow and implement RPG once approved. To achieve their suggested timescale for Structure and Local Plan approval RPG (36 and 54 months respectively after RPG is approved), it will be essential for the current review of our Local Plan (up to 2011) to lay the foundations for the 2011-2016 period - so that the next review can be achieved to a much tighter programme and in parallel with Structure Plan preparation.
- 7.5 It is therefore essential for the current Local Plan review to recognise that there is likely to be some further growth at MK after 2011, and to indicate in general terms how such growth is likely to be accommodated. The Plan should also avoid closing off all long-term options while stating clearly that decisions on larger scale and / or accelerated growth to meet a regional growth role are issues which will be dealt with through a separate and clearly defined process (sub-regional study > MK structure plan > future local plan review).

## 8. Local Plan Review Timetable

- 8.1 The timetable agreed in September 1998 envisaged putting a draft plan to the Sub Committee in June/July 1999, with the deposit period in the autumn. The key reasons why this programme has slipped are ...
- (a) the work which has been needed to respond to matters raised through consultation on the Issues Papers;
  - (b) the time involved in partnership working, including commissioning studies and further consultation with local councils and other partners; and
  - (c) the loss of a key member of staff (post refilled in just over 2 months)
- 8.2 There are also some key strategic decisions which need to be taken by the Council which will feed into the Local Plan Review - mainly arising from the CMK Review and the Bletchley Regeneration Study.
- 8.3 Two options are put forward for a revised programme in **Annex B**.
- 8.4 A programme of Sub-Committee meetings is proposed between now and September, with scope for additional informal workshops in August as necessary. Some of the discussions may need to be confidential but discussion and approval of the Deposit Plan will be in public. A bus tour of key rural settlements / sites is still to be arranged.
- 8.5 The Sub-Committee can only recommend approval of the Plan to the Environment Committee. The timetable allows for this and the possibility of the Plan being referred to full Council.
- 8.6 Following approval of the Plan, time is needed to prepare and print the final versions of the written document and Proposals Map, and to make the necessary arrangements for public consultation. This work would be put in hand following approval by the Sub

Committee - while recognising that some further changes may be necessary following consideration by the Environment Committee and possibly full Council.

- 8.7 The Development Plan regulations require a 6 week deposit period - the stage at which anyone can object or support particular elements of the Plan - and include very specific requirements for advertising the deposit arrangements. Both options avoid the deposit period running over the Christmas / New Year / Millennium period.
- 8.8 **Annex B** also includes a provisional timetable for the Local Plan Review after deposit, although it will be essential to reconsider this immediately after the deposit period, when the volume and strength of objections to the Plan are known and the scope for negotiation can be assessed.
- 8.9 Assuming that the final version of RPG is approved early in 2000, the Sub Committee can consider its implications in responding to objections to the Deposit Plan. An amended Local Plan will then go forward to a second deposit stage - in line with emerging government advice in Draft PPG12 - before the Local Plan Inquiry.
- 8.10 Partnership working has been one of the strengths of the review process so far. The need to continue this approach beyond the deposit stage is highlighted in Draft PPG12, which envisages a period for negotiation with objectors and particularly developers after the deposit period - possibly including round table discussions on some issues. It is hoped that this approach will save time and money through a shorter public inquiry.

## 9. **Issues and Choices**

- 9.1 Option 1 : seeks to achieve approval of the Deposit Plan and production of the Plan and Proposals Map before the end of 1999, with the deposit period early in 2000.
- 9.2 Advantages :
- Scope for more informal consultation, internally and externally, before approval of the 1st Deposit Plan
  - Enables most of the committed studies to feed into the 1st Deposit Plan and more time to ensure the plan is technically sound
  - Time for consultation material to be prepared between approval of the deposit plan and the actual deposit period
- 9.3 Disadvantages :
- The Deposit Plan (for the period up to 2011) may become confused with the wider debate about the longer term role of MK (to 2016 and beyond) following publication of the RPG Panel's Report in October
- 9.4 Option 2 : if the Sub Committee wishes to place a new Plan on deposit before the end of 1999, this can only be achieved if the new Plan focuses on the key strategic issues, leaving the remaining policies to be reviewed at the second deposit stage. The 1st Deposit Plan would only include key strategic policies and proposals; the scope of these key strategic issues to be agreed in advance but probably including the following :

- (a) Overall transport strategy (reflecting SITS and the Local Transport Plan)
- (b) Infill capacity / new development sites in the City
- (c) Expansion areas : location, capacity and timing
- (d) The policy approach to CMK and Bletchley
- (e) Key rural settlements and development sites
- (f) Retail and town centre strategy

9.5 It might be possible to include within the Plan all the existing Adopted Local Plan policies, together with an indication of the Council's intention in respect of each policy - e.g. whether it is likely to be unchanged; superseded by a new strategic policy; deleted or amended, with an indication of the purpose and direction of retained and amended policies. People would be able to object to these policies, which could then be re-assessed in the light of objections and / or any suggested revised wordings, with detailed wording put forward in the 2nd Deposit Plan.

9.6 Advantages :

- Early certainty about the Council's position in relation to key strategic issues, such as the location of future City expansion up to 2011
- Innovative and constructive use of the need for two deposit periods, allowing the Plan to evolve in the light of objections at the first deposit stage
- Reduced time spent on detailed policy wording at this stage

9.7 Disadvantages :

- Limited scope for further informal consultation, internally or externally, before the 1st Deposit Plan is put forward for approval
- Risk of producing a plan which subsequent work, the outcome of various studies and / or objections shows to be technically unsound
- Risk of a 3rd deposit period, if the Plan as revised for the 2nd deposit period is radically different from the 1st Deposit Plan

9.8 Other implications include :

- Limited scope to produce consultation material for the first deposit period
- Uncertainty about the timing of the deposit period. Even with an earlier approval of the 1st Deposit Plan, there remains the risk of the Plan being changed or referred back when it is considered by Environment Committee and possibly full Council. In addition, the production time for the final documents, particularly the Proposals Map, is currently uncertain : there will be a verbal update on this issue at the Sub Committee meeting

- Time gained by an earlier 1st deposit period is likely to be balanced by the need for more time before the 2nd deposit period - to consider objections to previously unchanged policies, negotiate with objectors and produce a full plan for the 2nd deposit period

## 10. **Conclusions**

- 10.1 The new Deposit Local Plan will be one of the most important planning documents for Milton Keynes since the master plan in 1970. It will be the first time that the Council has had the opportunity to make decisions about *where* to locate significant areas of new development; and it will also set out policies to determine *how* those areas should be developed. It will be critical in terms of ensuring that new development meets all its own costs (in terms of facilities and infrastructure), and where possible, helps to tackle existing problems.
- 10.2 It will also reflect key strategic decisions about the future role of the main centres in the Borough and be crucial in helping to achieve the targets set out in the Sustainable Integrated Transport Strategy.
- 10.3 To perform this role, it is essential that the Deposit Plan is ...
- (a) Technically sound
  - (b) Supported throughout the Council and, as far as possible, by partner organisations
  - (c) Strategic and concise
  - (d) Capable of evolution after the deposit period, to reflect the final version of RPG; any additional information / study results; and, where possible, concerns expressed by objectors
  - (e) Capable of providing a framework for some further development after 2011 (to 2016), without closing off options for further large scale expansion if this becomes a requirement through regional policy
- 10.4 The suggested timetable options should allow these objectives to be achieved, although there are advantages and disadvantages with each approach. Both options assume there is no significant loss of staff resources (through staff turnover or illness) between now and January 2000.

## 11. **Implications**

### 11.1 Environmental

None.

## 11.2 Equalities

None arising from the report. Equalities issues will be taken into account in both preparing the Deposit Plan and in ideas for public consultation.

## 11.3 Financial

The costs of the various studies referred to in the report are being met from existing Planning budgets. Most also involve contributions from other parts of the Council and/or other organisations.

## 11.4 Legal

It will be necessary for Legal Services to critically appraise and advise on the draft version of the Deposit Plan, before it is considered by the Sub Committee.

The Government Office for the South East will also be invited to comment on the proposed timetable (particularly Option 2), consistent with advice in draft PPG12. Any comments will be reported at the meeting.

## 11.5 Staff and Accommodation

None.

### Background Papers:

Draft PPG12 : Development Plans (DETR, 1999)

Local Plan Review Directions Paper (1999)



## CURRENT STUDIES : PROGRESS REPORT

<b><i>Surface Water Drainage Study</i></b>	
Who's doing it ?	Halcrow UK
Funding partners	Environment Agency, Anglian Water, Bedford Group of Drainage Boards, English Partnerships
Purpose	Re-assess design principles, capacity and operation of SWD system for the City  Identify what scope within system to serve additional development and/or improve flood relief downstream  Draw up drainage strategy for new development areas
Completion	Progress report : end of June  Final report : end of October
Critical to Deposit Plan ?	<b>No</b> : Final report can feed in after deposit period, progress report will help to inform Deposit Plan
<b><i>Retail Strategy Review : Phase 2</i></b>	
Who's doing it ?	CB Hillier Parker
Funding partners	None
Purpose	Update RSR Phase 1 (1996) in light of new government advice, Tesco Kingston appeal decision, the Council's (and others) aspirations for CMK, town centre regeneration objectives etc.  Assess and recommend potential sites for retail development
Completion	Review of retail impact study for proposed ASDA store, Rooksley (completed)  Results of retailer survey and revised capacity assessment : July  Final report : end of August
Critical to Deposit Plan ?	<b>Yes</b> : Fundamental to determining the scale and location of any further shopping development in the Borough
<b><i>Landscape and Wildlife Study</i></b>	
Who's doing it ?	Landscape Design Associates
Funding partners	MKC Landscape Division, MKC Development Control

Purpose	Landscape appraisal of Potential Expansion Areas  Update information on Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation  Re-assess Areas of Attractive Landscape, in line with advice in PPG7 about local landscape designations
Completion	September
Critical to Deposit Plan ?	<b>Yes</b> : In relation to expansion areas. Work on AALs and SINC's can feed into process after deposit period
<b><i>Housing Needs Survey</i></b>	
Who's doing it ?	University of Wales
Funding partners	MKC Neighbourhood Services (main funding), English Partnerships, plus a number of MKC's preferred Registered Social Landlords
Purpose	Identify future housing needs across the Borough, including need for affordable housing. Includes 2,800 personal interviews (fieldwork in July). Develop model that can be used in future in MK, and by EP elsewhere
Completion	Initial survey results : September  Final report : December
Critical to Deposit Plan ?	<b>No</b> : Maintain existing target of 30% affordable housing but may need to revise after deposit period in light of study results
<b><i>CMK Review</i></b>	
Who's doing it ?	Various agencies, managed by CMK Steering Group
Funding partners	Organisations represented on CMK Steering Group
Purpose	Review principles and pattern of development in CMK to achieve a more human scale environment, greater diversity of use and urban form, and less reliance on the car for access
Completion	Ongoing - but key principles need to feed into LPR
Critical to Deposit Plan ?	<b>Yes</b> : Key principles emerging from CMK Review need to feed into deposit plan if existing policies are to be amended. Also relationship with Bletchley regeneration objectives needs to be clarified
<b><i>Bletchley Regeneration Study</i></b>	
Who's doing it ?	EDAW
Funding partners	English Partnerships
Purpose	Identify options for regenerating town centre, reflecting different levels of available resources and commitment

Completion	October
Critical to Deposit Plan ?	<b>Yes</b> : In relation to approach to Bletchley relative to CMK. Detailed proposals for sites / areas within town centre can be progressed outside the Local Plan but principles need to be set out in the Plan.
<b>Potential Expansion Areas : appraisal</b>	
Who's doing it ?	In-house
Partners	Input from other Council departments
Purpose	Re-assess the potential expansion areas identified by Llewelyn -Davies in light of criticisms at Issues Report stage, and agreed Local Plan aims
Completion	End of July
Critical to Deposit Plan ?	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Rural Settlements / Potential Development Sites : appraisal</b>	
Who's doing it ?	In-house
Partners	Input from other Council departments plus mains service suppliers
Purpose	Identify and assess potential development sites in 4 key settlements identified in Directions Paper (Newport Pagnell, Woburn Sands, Olney, Hanslope)
Completion	August
Critical to Deposit Plan ?	<b>Yes</b>
<b>MK City Infill Study</b>	
Who's doing it ?	In house
Funding partners	None
Purpose	To provide an estimate of the likely capacity of the City to accommodate housing development on infill sites within its current boundaries. Assessing urban capacity is consistent with government advice on the sequential approach to development and making best use of urban land
Completion	Draft report published : May  Deadline for comments : 9 July (31 July for residents' associations)
Critical to Deposit Plan ?	<b>Yes</b> : Need to re-assess estimate of infill capacity in light of comments received; will affect amount of new land needed for development on the edge of the City

## EXISTING TIMETABLE AND FUTURE OPTIONS

	<i>As agreed</i>	<i>Option 1</i>	<i>Option 2</i>
Deposit Plan : approval	June / July 99	Late October 1999	Early Sept 1999
Deposit Plan : printing	Summer 99	Nov - Dec 1999	Sept - Oct 1999
First deposit period (6 weeks)	Autumn 99	Jan - Feb 2000	Oct - Nov 99
Negotiation with objectors / developers  (as recommended in Draft PPG12)	- - -	March - May 2000 *	Jan - April 2000 *
Changes to Deposit Plan approved	Late 99 *	May 2000 *	May 2000 *
Second deposit period : changes to Deposit Plan	Early 2000 *	Mid 2000 *	Mid 2000 *
Local Plan Inquiry starts	Mid 2000 *	Autumn 2000 *	Autumn 2000 *

\* Depends on volume and nature of objections to Deposit Plan; timetable to be re-assessed a.s.a.p. after first deposit period