

Report considered by Cabinet – 5 January 2010

Abstract:

To approve the Core Strategy Development Plan Document for the purpose of publication and consultation, and subsequent submission to the Secretary of State.

Purpose:

To recommend the approval of the Core Strategy to Council for publication purposes.

The Core Strategy will help to deliver Council priorities 1 to 4 from the Council Plan 2008 and 6 out of 7 of the Council Priorities for 2009-2011. It will affect all Wards within the Borough as it will help influence strategic planning decisions in the future.

CORE STRATEGY: PRE-SUBMISSION PUBLICATION DOCUMENT AND PRE-SUBMISSION PUBLICATION AND CONSULTATION

Accountable Cabinet Member: Councillor Galloway

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1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That the Council be recommended to approve the Core Strategy for the purposes of pre-submission publication and consultation, and subsequent submission to the Secretary of State.
- 1.2 That, subject to approval of the Core Strategy by Council:
 - (a) the accountable Cabinet Member be authorised to agree the detailed publication and consultation arrangements on the Core Strategy prior to submission to the Secretary of State; and
 - (b) the Corporate Director, Environment be authorised to agree any updating, clarification or factual corrections to the Core Strategy, either prior to the pre-submission consultation period, prior to submission to the Secretary of State, or in the lead up to the Public Examination.

2. Issues**Background**

- 2.1 The Cabinet considered the Core Strategy: Pre-Submission Publication version at their meeting of 24 November, and agreed a resolution “that the Core Strategy be submitted to a Council meeting for consideration on, or before, 12 January 2010, subject to any discussions that are necessary to achieve a strategy around which the Council is likely to coalesce”. Following this resolution, a further Local Development Framework Advisory Group

meeting has taken place (15 December 2009) to discuss additional changes to the Core Strategy to address any outstanding concerns that Members' had with the draft document.

- 2.2 The Cabinet report for 24 November and the Advisory Group report for 15 December provide more background to the ongoing process of preparing the Core Strategy Pre-Submission Publication version. A copy of the Cabinet report from 24 November is attached as an **Annex** to this report.
- 2.3 The Core Strategy: Pre-Submission Publication version dating from 18 December 2009 was discussed at a reconvened meeting of the Advisory Group on 23 December, and revised version of the Core Strategy will be circulated to all Members of the Council prior to this meeting.
- 2.4 Following consideration of this report by the Cabinet, it is intended that the Council will be asked to endorse the recommendation to approve the Core Strategy for publication and consultation purposes, and subsequent submission to the Secretary of State.

Issues Raised by the Local Development Framework Advisory Group

- 2.5 The main issues discussed at the Advisory Group meeting on 17 November are set out below. Officers have addressed the concerns raised by Members at this meeting, and changes have been made, as necessary, to the Core Strategy.
- 2.6 The full schedule of comments from the series of Advisory Group meetings and the changes resulting from those comments was included as a paper for the Advisory Group meeting of 15 December (reconvened on 23 December). It can be accessed from the Committee web page: <http://cmis.milton-keynes.gov.uk/CmisWebPublic/Meeting.aspx?meetingID=9100>
- 2.7 In summary, the changes incorporated into the Core Strategy after the 17 November meeting include:
 - (a) Identifying transport and the scale of planned growth as key issues
 - (b) Adding an objective that the Core Strategy should aim to improve people's quality of life
 - (c) Recognising the risk of losing an understanding of the design principles that have guided the development of the city
 - (d) Addressing queries about the scale of growth proposed in Central Milton Keynes and its impact on transport into the city centre.
 - (e) Under economy and employment, recognising that not all small businesses could or would want to be accommodated in CMK; and that we need a wide range of jobs and skills to ensure MK does not come to rely on one type of industry.

- (f) Interpreting the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) as indicating the scale of future housing needs, while recognising that the exact figures will need to be reviewed regularly
 - (g) Highlighting MK's record of achieving energy standards in new development that have been above the norm, and continuing to promote higher standards in future
 - (h) Flagging up the role of sport as a key driver for leisure in the city, with major sports facilities to be located near key major transport routes
 - (i) In relation to the South West Strategic Development Area, which will be in Aylesbury Vale, identifying where we disagree with AVDC's current policies for the area.
- 2.8 The Core Strategy will allocate the South East Strategic Development Area (SDA), and this must be shown on the Proposals Map for the Borough. An alteration to the Adopted Local Plan Proposals Map has been prepared which changes the designation in this area from open countryside to SDA, with reference to Core Strategy Policy CS5.
- 2.9 The existing settlements of Wavendon and Woburn Sands are not included in the SDA and their designations do not change. No other allocations and designations outside the South East SDA will be altered as a result of the Core Strategy, and the Adopted Local Plan Proposals Map should still be referred to for all areas outside the SDA. It is intended that this alteration will sit alongside the Adopted Local Plan Proposals Map.

3. **Alternative Options**

- 3.1 Should the Council decide to defer or not approve the Core Strategy: Pre-Submission Publication version the implications would be far-reaching:
- (a) To ensure it does not run into Easter or the pre-Election purdah period, the publication and consultation of the Core Strategy must start in early/mid February. To allow sufficient time for preparation and printing of final documents, correspondence and advertising, the Council meeting of 12 January is the last feasible meeting date to approve the Core Strategy for publication purposes to meet the February consultation start-date.
 - (b) Some of the background work (the evidence base) will become out of date and it will take more time and more money to update
 - (c) The Council's performance in producing the Core Strategy is monitored through national indicators, with good performance rewarded through Housing and Planning Delivery Grant (HPDG)
 - (d) Other statutory planning policy documents would be delayed - for example, the update of Development Control policies which will

address (amongst other things) the need for a new policy on Houses in Multiple Occupation

- (e) The development industry may decide to progress sites by planning application and appeal; these sites may not be consistent with the Council's strategy for the Borough.

3.2 Once the Core Strategy has been agreed and published, people will have the opportunity to comment on the 'soundness' of the document. When the Core Strategy is examined by an independent inspector, he/she will assess the document against the tests of soundness set out in government policy. This is a different process to that used in the past at Local Plan inquiries; officers will prepare guidance for the public on what this means, to be published with the Core Strategy.

3.3 The Council will not be able to make any further changes to the Core Strategy once it has been agreed and published. However, if there are changes that the Council would be happy to make, in response to public comments on the Pre-Submission version, the Council can submit those changes to the independent inspector and ask him to consider them as part of his examination of the Core Strategy.

4. **Implications**

4.1 Policy

The Core Strategy is a key document within the Local Development Framework, setting the spatial vision and development strategy until 2026. It is a document that is specifically required by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004).

Upon adoption, the Core Strategy and forthcoming Development Plan Documents (DPD) will replace existing, saved policies in the adopted Milton Keynes Local Plan. A full list of which policies will be replaced by which DPD is included in Appendix C of the Core Strategy.

4.2 Resources and Risk

Financial: The preparation of the Core Strategy has been funded largely from the existing Development Plans budget. Further consultants' studies may need to be commissioned as part of the evidence base to support the Core Strategy in the run up to examination. Housing and Planning Delivery Grant (HPDG) has been used to fund some of these studies in the past. Some studies have also been jointly funded with Milton Keynes Partnership (MKP) and opportunities will continue to be explored. The 2008 study on the SDAs was jointly funded by all of the affected local authorities (Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire County Councils, Aylesbury Vale and Mid Beds District Councils, this Council and MKP). Joint working on the SDAs is ongoing and may result in jointly funded technical work to support the preparation of more detailed planning for these areas.

The timetable for producing the Core Strategy is set out in the revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) approved by Cabinet on 17 March 2009. In

terms of future grant settlements, HPDG will be based on (amongst other things) the delivery of new housing rather than just related to performance against the LDS.

The new examination process will involve more frequent Public Examinations but they should be shorter and more focussed. An annual Planning Inquiries budget is in place to fund Public Inquiries / Examinations. This position will be kept under review.

Staffing: The preparation of the Core Strategy involves considerable officer and Member time. It is key service priority of the Development Plans Team. Internal promotions, secondments and staff departures meant that the Development Plans Team was short staffed between September 2007 and summer 2008. This had an inevitable impact on original timetable for the Core Strategy. The Team is now close to full strength and has been able to progress the Core Strategy during 2009.

N	Capital	Y	Revenue	N	Accommodation
N	IT	N	Medium Term Plan	N	Asset Management

4.3 Carbon and Energy Management

In order to minimise the impact of new development, the Core Strategy includes a chapter and policies for Building Sustainable Communities. It sets high standards for sustainable construction, the use of renewable energy and sustainable design.

4.4 Legal

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 has changed the statutory basis for drawing up development plans in England and Wales. The Milton Keynes Local Plan and associated Supplementary Planning Guidance will eventually be replaced by the Core Strategy and other Local Development Documents.

4.5 Other Implications

- (a) *Equality:* Consultation on the Core Strategy has been and will be in line with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement, including an Equalities Audit to help target under-represented or hard-to-reach groups. Equality issues have been considered through the Sustainability Appraisal that accompanies the Core Strategy and also in preparing policies in the document itself.
- (b) *E-govt:* The Core Strategy will be available via the Council's website. People will be able to comment online and read other people's comments using the Limehouse system. The documents that make up the evidence base, including the MK Growth Strategy documents (including the report on consultation) are available on the Council's website.

- (c) *Sustainability*: The Core Strategy is subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under statutory regulations. SA and SEA are iterative processes that run throughout all stages of Core Strategy production. The work is combined into one Sustainability Appraisal report which assesses the environmental, social and economic impacts of the policies and proposals developed for the Core Strategy. A Sustainability Report encompassing all of the work to date will be published alongside the submission document. It is not a formal consultation document but its scope has been agreed with the relevant statutory consultees.
- (d) *Users, partners and stakeholders*: The Local Strategic Partnership and other key MK stakeholders have been involved throughout the stages for the preparation of the Core Strategy. MKP and the neighbouring local authorities have also been involved in shaping the submission document.

Y	Equalities / Diversity	Y	Sustainability	N	Human Rights
Y	E-Government	Y	Stakeholders	N	Crime and Disorder
Y	Carbon and Energy Policy				

Background Papers:

- The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004, as amended.
- PPS12: Local Spatial Planning (CLG, 2008).
- Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) (March 2001).
- Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Planning Guidance (March 2005)
- MK2031: draft Growth Strategy (June 2006).
- Milton Keynes Local Development Scheme (2009 – 2012) (as amended March 2009).
- Report on the consultation on the Growth Strategy for Milton Keynes (Ubiquis, December 2006).
- Delegated Decision report - 10 November 2006. MK Local Development Framework Core Strategy: Issues and Options consultation paper.
- Cabinet report – 16 January 2007. Regional Spatial Strategy 9: Consultation on the MK Growth strategy and further statements to the South East Plan Examination in Public.
- Cabinet report – 07 November 2006. Regional Spatial Strategy 9: The South East Plan Examination in Public & the response to consultation on the MK Growth Strategy.

- Cabinet report - 27 June 2006. Regional Spatial Strategy 9: The South East Plan – Response to the consultation on the submission plan.
- Cabinet report – 7 October 2008 the South East Plan: the Government’s Proposed Changes to the Regional Spatial Strategy
- Cabinet report – 24 November 2009. Milton Keynes Local Development Framework: Core Strategy Submission Document and Consultation
- Technical Background Papers: Housing Land Supply and Delivery (Milton Keynes City); Rural Area Spatial Options; Landscape Character.
- The full South East Plan is available to view through the South East England Regional Assembly website at: www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/southeastplan
- Documents relating to the MK2031: draft Growth Strategy are available at: <http://www.mkweb.co.uk/mk2031>
- LDF Advisory Group minutes available at: <http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/CmisWebPublic/CommitteeDetails.aspx?committeeID=2139>
- The Core Strategy evidence base available at: <http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planning%2Dpolicy/DisplayArticle.asp?ID=61306>