

# STRATEGIC PLACEMAKING SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

23 October 2018

## COMMENTS FROM COUNCILLOR SAM CROOKS

- 1 I am afraid that I am unable to take part in tonight's meeting as I will be attending a Mayoral event on behalf of Willen Hospice. However I would like to draw the sub-committee's attention to two important considerations, namely the Government's commitment to doubling the size of Milton Keynes and the funding of the A509 (MK East) development.
- 2 In essence I believe that this development is implicitly government backed and going to happen. We must therefore get the best deal we can for the Council and our present & future residents.

### Doubling the size of Milton Keynes

- 3 In November 2017 the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) which is a non-Ministerial government department published its report *Partnering for Prosperity: a new deal for the Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford Arc*. The Commission proposed the delivery of one million new homes and jobs in the area by 2050, while respecting the natural environment. It suggested (page 36) that a key opportunity for immediate growth over the next 30 years could include the re-establishment of Milton Keynes as a development location of national significance, through the intensification and expansion of the town (*sic*) to a population of at least 500,000, in line with local aspirations.
- 4 In the House of Commons on 22 November last the Chancellor of the Exchequer, referring to the NIC report, said "*Today we back their vision and commit to building up to 1 million homes by 2050...capitalising on the global reputations of our two most famous universities, and Britain's biggest new town.*"
- 5 Since then the Government has shortlisted the HIF bid which is the subject of the call-in and nominated officials from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG), the Department of Transport, and Homes England to work on it with the Council. And on the closing day of the Plan:MK Public Examination on 31 August the Inspector, David Spencer, who acts on behalf of the MHCLG Secretary of State indicated to the Council that he was "*minded, subject to reflection*" to recommend that around 1,475 houses within the MK East development (which had been proposed for *post* 2031 by the Council) should be brought forward to 2026/7.
- 6 In other words – having regard to the third bullet point of the first call in - the policy context for the bid is not solely Plan:MK and MK East. It is the Government's

commitment to build up to 1 million houses over the next 30 years, some of which will be in Milton Keynes.

### **Funding of the A509 (MK East) development**

- 7 Given therefore that this development will go ahead in any case, it is in the best interests of the Milton Keynes council tax payer to have the infrastructure funded by government rather than from the Council's own resources. If the Council had to borrow the money over 40 years the cost of servicing the debt would be £5 million *p.a.* This equates to around a 5% increase in council tax. But as council tax increases are currently capped we would effectively need to find an additional £5 million of savings *p.a.* to cover the debt charges on the borrowing.
- 8 We need to remember also that the bridge referred in the call-in comprises some 15 % of the total HIF bid. Withdrawing the bid would put at risk its other components which include a primary school and a health centre.

### **And finally....**

- 9 May I correct a small point in the second bullet point of the first call-in. Two of Broughton's current ward councillors (including me) were members of the 2017 – 18 Plan:MK working party and both of us were consulted on the proposal to submit the original bid at a Plan:MK meeting on 18 July last year.

Cllr Sam Crooks  
23 October 2018