



Minutes of the meeting of the LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK ADVISORY GROUP held on 19 August 2009 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillor Galloway (Chair)
Councillors Bristow, Ferrans, Hopkins, A Morris, Potts and White

Officers: D Hill (Chief Executive), B Wilson (Development Plans Manager), M Moore (Senior Planner) and J Zammit (Committee Manager)

Also Present: Councillors Bint, Crooks and Tunney

Public: 3

LDF6 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1. Councillor Potts declared a general personal interest as a member of the NEEM Group (No Expansion East of the M1).
2. Councillor White declared a general personal interest as the Secretary for the Federation of Small Businesses.

LDF7 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: CORE STRATEGY

At its meeting on 2 June 2009 the Cabinet had resolved to withdraw the draft Core Strategy to allow for a further meeting of the LDF Advisory Group to take place. Subsequently, a meeting between the Leader of the Council and relevant Members identified certain matters for discussion including.

- (a) Core Strategy Vision - the document lacked a sense of vision and was difficult to navigate.
- (b) Local distinctiveness - the wording of the Core Strategy needed to reflect the unique nature of Milton Keynes
- (c) Cross-boundary Issues - more detail on how these are addressed
- (d) Policy Wording - ensuring the Core Strategy provides a robust basis for enforcing the policies
- (e) Housing Strategy - strengthening the references to the overall housing strategy for the Borough and providing the context for more specific types of housing areas such as houses in multiple occupation (HIMOs) and sites for travellers

An advisory visit had been carried out by an experienced Inspector who had reviewed the draft Core Strategy, to consider what had been done so far to prepare the Core Strategy and to assist the Council in identifying matters and questions that could be problematic in terms of the 'soundness' of the document. A different Inspector would hold the examination into the Core Strategy. The comments and advice given at the advisory visit were without prejudice to the examination of the submitted Core Strategy.

The key questions and points raised by the Inspector were:

(a) Are the various parts of the Strategy (policies and text) relevant to spatial planning? Do they contribute to 'place shaping and delivery'? If it does not shape a place and/or cannot be delivered, what is it doing in the Strategy?

(b) The key questions to be answered by every part of each policy are what will be delivered, where will it be delivered, when will it be delivered; and how will it be delivered through the Core Strategy?

(c) Does the Strategy deal with the critical questions? The Strategy is the place where tough, hard and key decisions have to be made. The principal guiding components must be in the Strategy before a lower level document can deal with the details of implementation.

(d) Anything that exceeds government policy / standards / requirements must be tested for its impact on development viability and impact on delivery.

(e) Make sure everything is in the right place – e.g. that detailed projects required as part of the growth of the city are in the Objectives rather than the Vision, and that all proposals are in a policy rather than in supporting text. Be clearer about when particular bits of infrastructure will be required.

(f) Where 'further work is required', this should only be if further work is required to resolve detailed matters, not matters of principle.

(g) Where decisions are not being made in the Core Strategy – e.g. because they are detailed matters not appropriate for a strategic document - make clear where those decisions would be made – such as which specific Development Plan Document would address the issue.

A criticism of previous versions of the Core Strategy was that it was difficult to understand what the document was about and to navigate around it. To make the Strategy more concise and to aid transparency and comprehension, the document has been extensively revised and restructured. The most important parts of the document now appeared at the front, and supporting policies had been moved to the back of the document.

Additional plans and illustrative material will be added to the Strategy to illustrate key points such as the areas where the Council and Milton Keynes Partnership act as development control authorities.

Although every effort has been made to make the Strategy more concise, some sections that were previously removed have been restored. For example in the Well Connected chapter (page 58), under the heading "Delivery", a list of transport infrastructure priorities had been included.

The Council had yet to receive the finalised version of the Retail Capacity and Leisure Study (discussed at the last Advisory Group meeting on 8 July 2009).

This may require changes to Policies CS4 and CS7 and accompanying text dealing with retail and leisure and CMK.

The Group felt that the current version of the Core Strategy was an improvement over previous versions.

It was felt that the Core Strategy was still lacking a vision and a direction of where Milton Keynes would be in the future. There needed to be a marketing exercise to sell the vision of the Core Strategy which would need to use a different style of language.

Councillor Bint noted that there still had not been a comprehensive list of choices that could still be made within the document. The Group noted for example that there was a section on Houses in Multiple Occupation where the Group was unclear on what choices could be made in respect to this section.

Officers informed the Group that the Core Strategy had to take into account current housing policy and national policy. There would need to be strong evidence to support the feasibility and viability of any deviations.

Councillor Bint commented that there was little mention within the document on the people who lived here and how they felt.

The Group noted that Milton Keynes had originally started with bold ideas and imagination to make a place that residents would be proud to live in. The Group understood the pressures to get the Core Strategy out on schedule but felt that it was vital that the document was right for Milton Keynes. There was a feeling that in some parts of the document the choices had been made already when Milton Keynes should be the place that "thinks differently".

The Group noted that there was a need to keep the language open in regards to the housing issues of the future such as Houses in Multiple Occupation, shared ownership houses and the ageing population and their housing needs with flexible solutions.

The Group requested that officers highlight the positive and proactive approach to travellers sites that Milton Keynes had used to date.

Some Members had concerns that there were still divergent views on key sections of the Core Strategy and that lengthy discussions may still not resolve these differences. The Chief Executive highlighted the need for a completed Core Strategy document as soon as possible to avoid situations where planning decisions were overturned at appeal resulting in a loss of control over the Development Control process. The Core Strategy did not have to discuss every issue nor be a marketing document, there could be a separate document which dealt with these issues in a more tailored fashion.

The Chief Executive informed the Group that while technically Milton Keynes could choose not to submit a Core Strategy within agreed time lines it was not in our best interest to do so.

The Group commented on the document directly and made the following points:

- There needed to be a mention of how large companies will be approached to get them to set up within Milton Keynes.
- That there will need to be some choices made in respect of how retail capacity will be allocated, especially in regards to the number and size of new retail centres. There may need to be retail centres in the expansion areas for example, but there was no need for a new District Centre
- There was a concern that the Core Strategy was reducing sustainable construction standards to below the original standards set out by the Milton Keynes Development Corporation.
- That the opportunity to implement a multi-modal transport hub (in the South East Strategic Development Area) needed to be taken now otherwise there would be no chance in the future.
- That there were concerns over the housing numbers in the Aylesbury Vale Core Strategy. The Council had objected to them but there was huge potential for problems in the future in terms of service provision for houses that did not pay taxes to Milton Keynes Council but would use services in the city.
- That the wording in respect of the water management facilities needed to be clear in regards to the solutions and what level they worked on (e.g. strategic or neighbourhood level).
- That there were concerns over how young people would reach certain areas without sufficient transport.
- That it needed to be highlighted that a lot of regeneration would focus on pockets of deprivation which could often occur in affluent areas.

The Group noted that further submissions in respect of the Core Strategy from Members should go to officers in writing by 25 August with Members of the Group copied in so that all Members were aware of comments submitted.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted
2. That officers incorporate Members' comments into the Core Strategy where possible
3. That minutes be produced in time for the next meeting of the Local Development Framework Advisory Group detailing comments Members had submitted for inclusion in the Core Strategy.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 8.30pm.

DRAFT