

Luton & South Bedfordshire Joint Committee

Thursday 29 November 2007

Agenda Item No.17

AUTHOR	Joint Officer Team (Mark Saccoccio, Planning Officer)
SUBJECT	Representation to Bedfordshire and Luton Minerals and Waste Development Framework Minerals Core Strategy and Site Allocations Plan (MWDFMCS)
PURPOSE	To seek clarification of this Committee to the officer comments sent in response to the above document
RECOMMENDATIONS	The Joint Committee is recommended to: 1. consider the report below; 2. endorse the officer recommendation as elaborated in the letter dated 31 October 2007 from Mark Saccoccio to Mr Roy Romans of Beds CC (attached).
REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION	To ensure that the views of the Joint Committee are taken into account in the formulation of the Preferred Options Consultation Exercise.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Bedfordshire County Council (BCC) and Luton Borough Council (LBC) are charged with producing a Development Plan which will set out policies to control mineral working and identify preferred locations for future quarries. The Minerals Development Framework will consist of two main documents, the Core Strategy and the Sites Allocations Plan. The Core Strategy will identify how much mineral working is needed and set out a broad strategy for the location and control of future quarry sites. The Sites Allocation Plan will identify preferred sites for future quarrying.
- 1.2 Consultation on the BCC and LBC Core Strategy Preferred Options document was undertaken in September and October 2007. This follows the previously undertaken "Issues and Options" consultation

stage which took place in 2006, and again (supplementary issues) in the spring of 2007.

- 1.3 This report discusses the parts of that consultation document that are relevant to the Luton and South Bedfordshire growth area, and recommends that the Joint Committee submits their support for the approach taken in the Core Strategy Preferred Options document.
- 1.4 To meet the deadline for the consultation (31 October 2007), a preliminary officer response has been sent to BCC, pending its consideration by this Committee. The recommendations in this report align with the comments made through that response. The officer response is appended to this report for reference.

2.0 RELEVANT SECTIONS OF THE DOCUMENT

- 2.1 The following sections of the Bedfordshire and Luton Preferred Option Strategy are considered particularly relevant to the Joint Committee:

Section 4: Time Period of the Plan. The following options were presented for consultation in the issues and options papers:

- (a) Plan coverage to year 2018 (i.e. 10 years from anticipated date of adoption)
- (b) Plan coverage to year 2021 (to match time period of the East of England Plan)

Section 8: Aggregate Minerals – Sources of Supply. Within this section, reference is made to the operational railhead at Leagrave Road, Luton which takes imports of marine sands and gravels from landing wharves in the Thames estuary. The current Minerals and Waste Local Plan provides for safeguarding of this existing railhead facility.

Section 9: Specialist Silica Sands. This section makes reference to specialist silica sands and its importance as an essential industrial feedstock. Whilst government policy places considerable emphasis on the security of its supply, Mineral Planning Guidance Note 15 makes clear that its supply should not come regardless of environmental cost and there will be circumstances in which, "... the stock of permitted reserves at some sites may not be replenished as they are used up."

Statement 8 establishes that further reserves of silica sand will only be allocated where there is demonstrable need for the product, and that this need cannot be met from other existing sites in the plan area, or from alternative materials. The MWDFMCS goes on to consider 4 sites which have been proposed for silica sand working. Of these, one (MD21 – Grovebury Road) is an extension, whilst the other 3 are new sites (MD13, land north of Billington; MD14, Land at Mile Tree Farm, Heath & Reach; MD43; land between Gig Lane and Eastern Way,

Heath & Reach). In response to these sites, the MWDFMCS asks the following questions:

Question 22 asks if the Grovebury Road site (MD21 as defined within the Minerals Site Allocations Preferred Consultation Paper) should be extended.

Question 23 continues by asking if there are any operational or restoration considerations which require to be taken account of in respect of site MD21.

Question 24 addresses the issue of rejecting site MD13, land north of Billington.

Question 25 addresses the issue of rejecting site MD 14, land at Mile Tree Farm, Heath & Reach.

Question 26 addresses the issue of rejecting site 43, land between Gig Lane and Eastern Way, Heath & Reach.

3.0 RESPONSE TO THE MINERALS SITE ALLOCATIONS PLAN

3.1 The officer response makes the following comments to The Minerals Site Allocations Plan:

Section 4: Time Period of the Plan. Question 1: In accordance with the preferred option, the 2021 end date is preferred given that it is consistent with and aligns with the planning horizons of the emerging Core Strategy.

Section 8: Aggregate Minerals – Sources of Supply. Question 5: For this part of the county, the railhead at Leagrave Road, Luton is strategically important and its safeguarding is supported.

Section 9: Specialist Silica Sands. Question 8: Central Leighton Buzzard suffers from traffic congestion, part of which arises from HGV traffic bearing silica sands from the south of the town to the processing plant in the north, a genuine concern for residents. Taken with the growth area agenda, it is likely that any future intensification of extraction will result in an increase in traffic congestion within the town which cannot be supported.

Question 22: The principle of extending this site is supported. However, the site represents an eastward extension of the existing Grovebury Road site which within the South Bedfordshire Local Plan Review 2004 has been identified as R7 “Open Space” land. In accordance with restoration requirements, the purpose of the Grovebury Road site is to meet the open space requirements of the southern Leighton Buzzard urban extension which is located to the north of the A505. Any new proposal to extend the Grovebury Quarry

site must not compromise the local plan objective of providing accessible and useable open space (including access to proposed waterside recreation areas). This includes means of access both to the site and also to the countryside beyond.

Question 23: Given the growth area agenda, it is highly likely that any extension to the Grovebury Road site will provide future open space provision. To this end, any restoration scheme should be provided to a standard which allows its future use as open space (be it either informal or formal) provision.

Question 24: The rejection of site MD13 is fully supported given its relation to Wayside Farm, the village of Billington and the attendant highway issues. Whilst its future use as green infrastructure is supported, this cannot override the harm the operation would cause to the existing population.

Question 25: The rejection of site MD 14 is supported given the cumulative impact with other operations in the vicinity together with its impact on Rights of Way and increased highway generation.

Question 26: The rejection of site MD 43 is supported given its proximity to Heath and Reach and in particular, the village school. Moreover, the cumulative impact of further quarrying within the area would result in a demonstrable negative impact upon the existing population.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 For the reasons set out in this report, it is recommended that the Joint Committee ratifies the officer comments as outlined within the attached correspondence and submits their support for the approach taken in the Core Strategy Preferred Options document.

Appendix 1: Letter stating officer response to the consultation