



OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

AGENDA ITEM: 8

DATE OF MEETING: 25th March 2010

REPORT AUTHOR: Peter Mulvihill

SUBJECT: Waste Core Strategy Preferred Options – Consultation Document

PURPOSE:

1. To seek any comments which the Board might have on the Waste Core Strategy Preferred Options in terms of content and relating to the consultation – thereon which can proceed once Executive approval has been obtained and once approval has been received from Bedford Borough Council – (Central Bedfordshire Council's Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee has already endorsed the Plan).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

2. That the comments of the Board on the Waste Core Strategy in terms of
 - (a) potentially satisfying Luton Borough Council's long-term waste planning needs, and
 - (b) being appropriate for consultation purposes, in accordance with statutory procedures, to elicit views to inform the eventual preparation of a "Combined Minerals and Waste Core Strategy Development Plan Document"

be noted and passed to the Executive for its consideration when it considers this matter fully in due course.

REPORT:

Summary

3. Key points contained within this report are:
 - That production of the Waste Preferred Options, and associated consultation, will help to achieve parity with the current position on the Minerals Plan;
 - The Preferred Options set out recommended Strategic Sites to meet anticipated needs, but do not specify actual technologies (a later process);

- There are no Strategic Sites proposed within Luton, but those indicated are reasonably accessible from all parts of the Plan area; and
- The 'total picture' for this Council's waste planning incorporates not just this Plan, but a Municipal Waste Management Strategy and site allocations for non-strategic sites at the local level (via the Local Development Framework).

Introduction

4. On the 30th March, 2009, this Council's Executive approved a Joint Minerals and Waste Development Scheme, setting out a programme of Plan preparation with the aim of eventually producing a "Combined Minerals and Waste Core Strategy Development Plan Document" for the three Unitary Authorities of Bedford Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council and Luton Borough Council.
5. Currently, the Minerals section of the overall Plan has progressed through what is called a Preferred Options stage, but progress with Waste planning was delayed due to a number of factors, including regional policy formulation. It is now appropriate for the Waste Preferred Options to go forward for public comment, prior to the Plan being unified into a Combined Core Strategy, and eventually submitted to Government, with eventual adoption anticipated in 2012. The Plan covers 15 years, 2012 - 2027.
6. The Waste Preferred Options invite consultees to express their views on a variety of statements and draft policies. The potential response will prove to be a valuable input to the next stage - the Combined Core Strategy, referred to above.

Background

7. In 2009, local government reorganisation resulted in the formation of two new Unitary Authorities, Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Councils. A Joint Minerals and Waste Planning Team ("the Joint Planning Team") was established, employed by Central Bedfordshire Council, but working on behalf of these two Authorities as well as Luton Borough Council. Each Authority still retains responsibility for minerals and waste planning in its respective area (as a formal 'Minerals and Waste Planning Authority').
8. Before re-organisation, Bedfordshire County Council undertook Minerals and Waste development planning on behalf of the County and Luton Borough Council. In September 2007, a Minerals Core Strategy Preferred Options Consultation Paper was published. Later, in October 2007, a Waste Core Strategy Issues and Options Consultation Paper was also produced – but this did not advance to a Preferred Options stage. Since then, the relatively new Joint Planning Team has concentrated on progressing the Waste Preferred Options, to achieve parity with the Minerals position, hence this Plan now under consideration.
9. The Waste Core Strategy Preferred Options have been endorsed by Central Bedfordshire's Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee (on the 23rd February 2010). Any further procedures will be advised. However, both this Council's Executive (on the 19th April 2010) and Bedford Borough Council's Executive (21st April 2010) need to consider and agree the Plan's content prior to any formal consultation.

The Waste Preferred Options

10. The Waste Core Strategy Preferred Options adopt a logical structure comprising six Chapters, commencing with background information and Government planning requirements. Importantly, the Core Strategy identifies four “Strategic Sites” comprising two ‘landfill’ and two ‘recovery’ locations (also two Reserve Strategic Sites), considered below (paragraph 12).
11. Plan context includes geographical factors, waste management background, policy and an outline of municipal waste strategies. The waste hierarchy requires that the waste strategy is based on reduction, reuse, recycling, recovery and lastly disposal as a final resort. The Plan’s ‘Vision’ is based on the concept of a “sustainable material resources economy” – seeking to maximise the reuse and recycling of wastes, and minimise disposal. Core Strategy objectives are defined. Also addressed is the integration of waste facilities in new development.
12. Section 4 sets out “The Preferred Option” with detailed projections of waste needs. The Plan’s Strategic Site land-use proposals incorporate:-
 - a) two Strategic Non-Hazardous Waste Landfill sites at Rookery Pit South (Central Bedfordshire) and Elstow Pit South (Bedford Borough) and Two Preferred Strategic Recovery Sites at Rookery Pit South and the former Brogborough Landfill (Central Bedfordshire), there are also two Reserve Sites; the text outlines the rationale behind these options (pages 33-34, and 51-52), with Site plans shown (pages 37-40); and
 - b) nine generic Core Policies cover waste planning self-sufficiency, targets, design, restrictions on the origin of waste, design, specialist waste, non-strategic facilities, composting and freight strategies (pages 41-50).
13. A penultimate ‘Implementation and Monitoring’ chapter identifies parties that will be required to actually implement the Plan, together with monitoring indicators and other information. A glossary completes the Plan.

Meeting Luton’s Waste Planning Needs

14. Regarding this Council’s specific needs, these can be addressed as follows:-
 - a) Waste Projections - Luton’s requirements are subsumed within the overall Plan area projections. Eventually it may be possible/desirable to disaggregate such data to the Unitary area level, as the Combined Plan is formulated;
 - b) Site Locations – The Plan seeks to rectify an imbalance whereby the majority of population resides in the south of the Plan area, but major facilities are to the north – hence the relatively central location of Strategic Sites (also taking advantage of land availability);
 - c) Site Functions – a vital point is that the Core Strategy identifies land, but not specific uses or technologies, and only addresses “Strategic Sites” (i.e. landfill; materials recovery and/or energy production with a throughput of at least 75,000

tonnes per year; and specialist waste facilities). The Strategic Site capacities are deemed to meet the anticipated needs of the Plan area; and

- d) Other strategies – Members will be aware of the ending of the Bedfordshire Energy and Recycling Project (BeaR). All three Unitary Authorities are developing their own Municipal Waste Management Strategies (Luton's is envisaged to be completed by March 2011). Furthermore, individual Local Development Frameworks will address 'non-strategic' facilities – such as aggregates recycling, composting, anaerobic digestion plants, materials recovery/waste transfer/bulking facilities. The total picture for waste provision, therefore, includes this strategic level Plan, later decisions on technologies, and a comprehensive network of local facilities via other strategies.

Conclusion

- 15. Preferred Options are an interim step before the Combined Core Strategy is prepared. Consultation can provide a valuable opportunity to test the support for proposals. Given Luton's land supply constraint, the Strategic Site allocations are located outside of the Borough. Central Bedfordshire Council have indicated acceptance of the Plan – subject to any further advice; while the formal position of Bedford Borough Council is awaited. From this Council's perspective, it will be recommended that the Executive should approve both the Plan's main content (subject to possible amendments) and the request to allow statutory consultation to proceed.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 16. The Council is obliged to develop planning Policy documents for the control of Minerals and Waste developments, according to a Local Development Scheme, this is a requirement under the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004. Save for this and any other Legal implications mentioned in the report there are no legal implications to this report and this has been agreed with J. Newman solicitor in Legal Services on 12 March 2010.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 17. Luton Borough Council contributes to the costs of producing the Minerals and Waste Development Framework (costs are shared between the three Councils), the costs of consultation on the above Waste Preferred Options Plan are expected to be insignificant, and it is expected that all costs can be met within existing budgets. Agreed by the Finance Manager (Environment & Regeneration) on 12th March 2010.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Copies of the Waste Core Strategy Preferred Options Consultation Document can be found in the Members Group Rooms.