

Luton & South Bedfordshire Joint Committee

Thursday 29 November 2007

Agenda Item No. 16

AUTHOR	Joint Officer Team (Andy Johnson, Planning Officer)
SUBJECT	Response to Mid Bedfordshire District Council (MBDC) Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Preferred Options Consultation Stage.
PURPOSE	To obtain formal Member response to the MBDC Core Strategy and Development Policies consultation.
RECOMMENDATIONS	The Joint Committee is recommended to: 1. consider the report below; 2. respond to the MBDC consultation expressing support for the Preferred Options Core Strategy and Development Control Policies.
REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION	The approach taken in the MBDC Preferred Options Core Strategy to locating growth is considered suitable and will help ensure the retention of the South Bedfordshire Green Belt in Mid Bedfordshire and protect the key landscapes, including the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), in the south of the District, and should therefore be supported.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Consultation on the MBDC Core Strategy Preferred Options document was undertaken in September/October/November 2007. 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 submit its support for the approaches taken in that document.
- 1.2 To meet the deadline for the consultation (5 November 2007), a preliminary officer response has been sent to MBDC supporting the approach taken in their Core Strategy. The recommendations of 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 relevant sections of the MBDC Preferred Options Core Strategy to the Luton and South Bedfordshire Growth Area relate to two principal areas:

- the location of future development to meet the 11,000 housing target to 2021; and
- the approach to the protection of the South Bedfordshire Green Belt in Mid Bedfordshire and the key landscapes, including the AONB, that adjoin the Growth Area.

3.0 LOCATION OF FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

3.1 In relation to the proposed location of future development, the Preferred Options Strategy advocates very limited growth adjoining the Growth Area, and only limited infilling to the villages permitted. Rather, it seeks to focus development in the larger and more sustainable settlements within the District in accordance with a detailed settlement hierarchy. This is explained in detail in Preferred Options CS3 to CS6 and CS13, and is supported diagrammatically in the Key Diagram (reproduced in Appendix 1).

3.2 These preferred options contained within the Core Strategy part of the document are supported by preferred options in the Development Control part, notably preferred option DC7 which details the type of development permitted within and beyond settlement envelopes.

4.0 GREEN BELT AND LANDSCAPE PROTECTION

4.1 With regard to the protection of the South Bedfordshire Green Belt in Mid Bedfordshire and the key landscapes that adjoin the Growth Area, the following extracts from the document are relevant:

Preferred Option CS2 – Green Belt

“The Council’s Preferred Option is that:

The existing extent of the adopted South Bedfordshire Green Belt in Mid Bedfordshire should continue to be maintained up to 2021 to contain the outward growth of settlements including Ampthill and Flitwick and prevent the coalescence of settlements within it. The Site Allocations DPD will not consider allocating new development sites within the Green Belt. Within ‘infill only’ boundaries of villages washed over by the Green

Belt, residential infill development will be considered acceptable in principle.”

Preferred Option CS22 – Countryside and Landscape

“The Council’s preferred option is to:

- Support the conservation and enhancement of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as defined in the adopted AONB Management Plan.*
- Protect, conserve and enhance the quality and character of the wider countryside in the district in accordance with the findings of the Mid Bedfordshire Landscape Character Assessment. Development will be expected to protect important landscape features and provide enhancement for landscapes that are of poor quality.”*

- 4.2 These preferred options are also supported in the Development Control part of the document, notably preferred options DC18 to 21 which seek to ensure that new development protects and enhances important landscapes, biodiversity, woodland, and accessible green spaces.

5.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 The extracts above show that the approach being recommended by MBDC to the location of new development and the protection of key areas of landscape adjoining the Growth Area should be supported.
- 5.2 It is therefore recommended that the Joint Committee take this opportunity to make a formal response to Mid Bedfordshire District Council expressing support for their Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Preferred Options document.

Appendix 1: Mid Bedfordshire Core Strategy and Development Control Policies: Preferred Option – The Key Diagram

Appendix 2: Letter stating officer response to the consultation

Appendix 3: Representation form supporting relevant preferred options

Mid Bedfordshire Core Strategy and Development Control Policies: Preferred Option – The Key Diagram

Figure 2: Key Diagram

These Spatial Development Principles are illustrated on the Key Diagram below

