Appendix A

Quick Read Overview of the Draft Central Bedfordshire Local Plan

What is the Draft Local Plan?

The Local Plan sets out how Central Bedfordshire will develop over the next 20 years. It outlines the strategy for ensuring the growth that we need is delivered in the right place, and is of the right character and quality. It also ensures that growth is delivered with the supporting roads, schools and services such as health, as well as retail, leisure and community facilities.

We are consulting the public on the first draft of our Local Plan which sets out the options for growth.

Why the Local Plan is important?

Our prime location and excellent connectivity means that we have high growth pressures and this is the reason we need to plan for it. We need more homes and in particular, homes that you and your families can afford to buy and to rent. It means that we need to continue to create more jobs to grow the local economy and that we need to keep improving our transport networks. It also means that we need to protect and enhance what you love about where you live.

Producing a Local Plan is a priority for the Council for a number of reasons. The Government is clear that Local Authorities are expected to have up to date Plans in place to guide development within their area to plan for the infrastructure, homes and jobs that our residents need.

Failure to have an up to date plan would risk Government intervention and a resulting loss of control of the process. Having an up to date plan in place also means that the Council retains control over where development should be located rather than it being delivered in an ad hoc way as a result of speculative development, sometimes without sufficient benefit to local communities.

How we've been developing our Plan

The Plan has been informed by around 15 new evidence studies and modelling. These look at issues such as population, housing, employment, retail and flooding.

We've also considered existing, potential and new transport infrastructure e.g. roads and railways, so that growth and transport infrastructure go hand in hand.

We've developed this Draft Plan with residents' input – through Community Planning events and our Shaping Central Bedfordshire Consultation and we will continue this engagement with you because we want to make sure we get this right.

Listening to the community

From the consultations and community engagement events, we know that local communities want us to:

- keep the character of Central Bedfordshire
- limit the impact on the countryside
- plan for homes for the older generation and affordable homes
- plan for local jobs & services
- make sure our roads can cope
- build near to existing roads and infrastructure
- use brownfield sites

What the Draft Plan proposes

1. Homes - 20,000-30,000

The number of homes we need to plan for is calculated using a standard national approach. However, we need to be flexible and therefore we're planning for a range of between 20,000-30,000 new homes. Further work will be undertaken to establish an exact amount when we produce the next version of the Plan in 2018. This is in addition to the 23,000 homes that already have planning permission.

The options put forward in the draft plan to deliver this housing growth are through:

- creating new attractive villages
- creating a new market town
- expanding existing towns; and
- growth in existing villages, but only where services can support it.

Some of this development will be dependant on improvements to our transport networks, plus the development of critical new infrastructure, like the proposed East-West Railway.

The plan includes a range of different homes to rent and buy with a mixture of sizes including family homes, two bedroom homes, apartments and bungalows. And, to help people get on the housing ladder, this will include 30% to be provided as lower cost options such as affordable rent and shared ownership.

2. Jobs - 24,000-30,000

A range of new jobs would be delivered through existing sites and the proposed growth locations. Additionally, the plan proposes the following key employment sites at strategic locations close to the M1 and A1:

- J11a of M1 motorway
- J13 of M1 motorway
- Biggleswade South Roundabout on the A1
- RAF Henlow

3. Transport & Services

We are planning for new infrastructure such as roads, schools, shops, leisure, community facilities and open space.

Sometimes infrastructure is put in place before housing is developed (for example, major link roads and schools have been developed to support future growth). At other times infrastructure follows development but they support each other, so we need to plan for both.

4. Transport

Existing and potential new roads and rail have already informed the draft plan, such as the A6-M1 link road and the Ridgmont Station upgrade.

Others are key to development in the areas we have proposed, such as the proposed East-West Railway and the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway. We are also lobbying Government for improvements to the A1 and A421 to support this growth too.

5. Services

Small developments in and around villages will only happen where this can be supported by existing services or where the development will enhance these services and there is good accessibility.

Larger developments include requirements for road improvements, new shops, community facilities, leisure facilities, schools and health and care hubs.

Some of the larger developments are dependant on critical road and/or rail improvements to support them.

6. Countryside

We know how important the countryside and rural character of Central Bedfordshire is. Whilst we recognise that the number of homes we're required to build is significant, in total these homes, together with those that already have planning permission, would equate to new development on only 4% of Central Bedfordshire land.

88% of Central Bedfordshire is countryside and 84% of it still would be countryside if the maximum number of homes that are proposed and planned are delivered.

Two of the options proposed in the plan use brownfield land (land that has previously been developed) and we're seeking to use as much of this as we can. Unfortunately supply of brownfield land in Central Bedfordshire is very limited and there isn't enough to deliver all of the growth that we require.

The draft plan proposes to increase public access to the countryside by creating more rights of way and country parks as well as play parks and open spaces within the proposed developments.

The plan includes protecting the Greensand Ridge, the Forest of Marston Vale, the Ivel Valley and the Chilterns ANOB, enhancing where possible and increasing access.

Planting, landscaping and creating green space between developments and existing areas of natural beauty will limit the impact of development on these important areas.

We will use green open space to prevent existing settlements merging, keeping their identity and the rural character of the area.

Have your say

The consultation will be open for feedback from 4th July to 29th August 2017.

We want public feedback on these options. Whilst we need to plan for growth, we are asking for views on how we deliver it.

You can read more detail about the individual growth locations, the full Draft Local Plan document as well as the supporting evidence and studies on our website at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/localplan or by visiting our office at the address below from 4th July.

During the consultation we will be holding a drop in session for Town and Parish Councils; this will be on 18 July at Priory House from 2pm-8pm.

We will also hold a number of drop-in-sessions for members of the public to talk to us and ask questions, there's no need to book just come along.

Public drop in sessions (2pm – 8pm):

- 11 July, Marston Sports Pavilion
- 20 July, Biggleswade Town Council
- 26 July, Arlesey Village Hall
- 7 August, Sandy Village Hall
- 9 August, Caddington Village Hall

Feedback can be submitted online or in writing to us at Local Plan, Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, SG17 5TQ.

We will consider all of the comments we receive and publish the next iteration of the Local Plan (pre-submission plan) for comment in spring 2018.

From late 2017 to early 2018 we will be running another series of Community Planning events across Central Bedfordshire. Details will be published nearer the time.

Anyone can sign up for our email updates about the Local Plan and Community Planning at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/localplanupdates