

**LUTON AND SOUTH BEDFORDSHIRE JOINT COMMITTEE
(SECTION 29 COMMITTEE)**

At a meeting of the **Luton and South Bedfordshire Joint Committee (Section 29 Committee)** held at Committee Room 1, The Council Offices, High Street North, Dunstable, Beds, LU6 1LF on Friday, 24 July 2009 at 9.30 a.m.

PRESENT:

Councillor R.J. Davis (Chairman)	Luton Borough Council
Councillor Franks	Luton Borough Council
Councillor Matthews	Central Bedfordshire Council
Councillor McVicar	Central Bedfordshire Council
Councillor Nicols (Vice-Chairman)	Central Bedfordshire Council
Councillor Shadbolt	Central Bedfordshire Council
Councillor Taylor	Luton Borough Council
Councillor Worlding	Luton Borough Council
Councillor Young	Central Bedfordshire Council

SUBSTITUTES:

Councillor Rutstein for Councillor Dolling – Luton Borough Council
Councillor Ashraf for Councillor Hussain – Luton Borough Council
Councillor Jones for Councillor Stay – Central Bedfordshire Council

CO-OPTEEES:

John Gelder	LSPs Representative
Councillor Jones	BATPC

OBSERVERS:

Councillor Brindley	North Hertfordshire District Council
Councillor Paternoster	Aylesbury Vale District Council

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr McKillen	Go-East
Mr Kirkdale	Highways Agency

OFFICERS:

Mr Alderson (CBC), Mr Atkinson (JTU), Mrs Hobbs (CBC), Mr Ironside (NHDC), Mr Khan (LBC), Mr Pagdin (LBC), Mr Robertson (JTU), Mr Saunders (CBC), Mr Thomson (CBC) and Ms Veater (LBC)

1. WELCOME

Councillor Nicols welcomed everyone to the meeting. He stated that it was five years to the day since the public examination of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy which proposed growth for South Bedfordshire, Luton, Aylesbury and North Hertfordshire. He thanked Members and Officers from these authorities for their co-operation in working together.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN (REF: 1)

RESOLVED that Councillor Davis (LBC) be elected Chairman of the Luton and South Bedfordshire Joint Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year.

3. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN (REF: 2)

RESOLVED that Councillor Nicols (CBC) be elected Vice-Chairman of the Luton and South Bedfordshire Joint Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year.

Members agreed that Councillor Nicols take the Chair for this meeting, as the outgoing Chairman. Members thanked Councillor Nicols for his hard work over the previous year.

4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS (REF: 3)

Apologies were received from Councillors Dolling, Hussain and Stay. Substitutions were as follows:

Councillor Rutstein for Councillor Dolling – Luton Borough Council
Councillor Ashraf for Councillor Hussain – Luton Borough Council
Councillor Jones for Councillor Stay – Central Bedfordshire Council

5. MINUTES (REF: 4)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Luton and South Bedfordshire Joint Committee held on the 20 March 2009 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to an additional resolution as follows:

- (iv) Members agreed that as Central Bedfordshire was currently a Shadow Authority the new authority would need time to formally consider the matter.***

In response to a query regarding minute number 55 (ii) Members were advised that the minor changes to the Local Development Scheme were being worked on and would be submitted to the Members Steering Group for consideration as soon as possible.

6. MEMBERS' INTERESTS (REF: 5)

(a) Personal Interests:-

None.

(b) Personal and Prejudicial Interests:-

None.

7. URGENT BUSINESS (REF: 6)

Councillor Nicols suggested that all decisions relating to the Local Delivery Framework were urgent.

8. ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2008/09 (REF: 7)

Members received a report that sought approval for the 2008/09 Statement of Accounts. The report updated Members on the current budget position and considered future budget requirements. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 required that the 2008/09 Statement of Accounts be approved by the Joint Committee as it was not a process that could be performed by the respective Executive Committees. Members were advised that the Accounts and Annual Governance Statements were subject to external audit. The budget position would enable the Committee to plan its future work programme and resources.

RESOLVED

- 1) *that the Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement for 2008/09 be approved subject to audit***
- 2) *that the Joint Committee budget position for 2009/10 and future years be noted together with the dependency on the existing revenue budgets of the two core authorities to meet the supporting employee and additional costs incurred in the preparation of the joint Local Development Framework.***

9. UPDATE ON PROGRESS TOWARDS THE SUBMISSION OF THE LUTON AND SOUTH BEDFORDSHIRE CORE STRATEGY (REF: 8)

Members received a report to update them on the progress towards the pre-submission of the Luton and South Bedfordshire Core Strategy, since the meeting on 20 March 2009. The Joint Technical Unit (JTU) had undertaken the Public and Stakeholder Consultation and was continuing to keep under review the evidence that was used to underpin the Local Development Framework as a whole to date. Members were advised that this continuing health check on the content of the Core Strategy would ensure that it could be presented to the Secretary of State as a 'sound' plan.

Members were advised of the main elements of the Core Strategy that required clarification. Members were pleased that the document would follow 'plain english' principles, although they noted that it was a difficult task to write one document that could be understood by the general public, but covered the technical and legal issues which needed to be set out for developers and other such stakeholders etc.

Members noted that in accommodating the national and regional requirements for growth in this area, and to ensure a legacy of sustainable development, all future development would need to contribute financially and in other ways to the delivery of the required infrastructure regardless of where it was positioned within the Core Strategy area. It would also have to take the whole of the growth agenda up to 2031 into account. Although there were two important caveats:

- that each major element of the infrastructure would need to be identified in advance and that the evidence would clearly need to demonstrate the necessity for it to allow development across the whole of the growth area to contribute to it
- that the Core Strategy would need to enable opportunity for early development to occur in a phased manner whilst contributing part of its development value towards paying for the elements of major infrastructure which will be necessary.

The proposal to 'map' the Core Strategy against Sustainable Communities Strategies was welcomed. It was important that the Core Strategy provided the policy framework and identified the infrastructure needed to enable partners on the Local Strategic Partnership to deliver their services.

The aim is for Members to receive a full report on the responses to the recent Public Consultation exercise at their next meeting on 18 September 2009. That said due to the scale of the exercise to analyse all the responses it may be necessary for additional time to be sought to do this.

RESOLVED

- 1) to agree with the identification of the main elements of the Core Strategy that required clarification**
- 2) to approve the alterations identified and the further work that was required**
- 3) to endorse the process to be followed towards submitting the Core Strategy to the Secretary of State.**

10. LUTON AND SOUTH BEDFORDSHIRE CORE STRATEGY PREFERRED OPTIONS: INITIAL REPORT OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION (REF: 9)

Members received a report that advised them of the findings of the early analysis work undertaken in relation to the public consultation responses received during the recent eight week public consultation held between 17 April and 12 June 2009 on the Preferred Options Core Strategy. Various techniques were deployed to engage with stakeholders and the general public during this period. Officers acknowledged the support of the community engagement officers at Central Bedfordshire Council and Luton Borough Council.

All responses would be looked at in detail and would be reported back to the Joint Committee on 18 September 2009, although additional time may be needed to analyse all the responses due to the scale of the response received. The analysis would set out a summary of each representation/issue, action proposed and the reason for the proposed action. Members requested that this information be circulated to Members as soon as possible before the meeting on 18 September 2009 given the amount of issues raised through the public consultation exercise.

Members noted that any development in Hertfordshire would need to be regarded as an uncommitted planning assumption. Members were advised that Officers at North Hertfordshire District Council had been involved in work underpinning the Core Strategy to date and had co-operated where possible.

Members discussed the need for a contingency plan being incorporated into the emerging Core Strategy in the event of any of the preferred sustainable urban extensions failing to be delivered e.g. because of delays in delivering of a key piece of essential enabling transport infrastructure. Members queried whether this included alternative sites and if any original options would be reconsidered. Members were advised that original options would not be reconsidered but Officers were duty bound to consider 'new' alternative areas.

Members also noted that the Regional Spatial Strategy was being reviewed and until this had reached its later stages towards adoption there was uncertainty as to what could be aspired to during the period 2021 to 2031, but at this stage the total number of houses to be aimed for by 2031 was 43,000.

Members requested that the Core Strategy take on board the aspirations of the forthcoming Dunstable Town Centre Masterplan. The Masterplan was currently being consulted upon and Members requested that a copy be circulated to them.

RESOLVED

- 1) to note the early findings in relation to the 'Direction of Travel' of the Core Strategy as it moved to the next stage in its preparation**
- 2) that a further detailed report on the submissions made at the next meeting of the Joint Committee on 18 September 2009, Members understood that additional time may be needed to report all the responses due to the scale of the response received.**

11. UPDATING AND COMMISSIONING EVIDENCE STREAMS (REF: 10)

The Joint Committee received a report on the continuing work being undertaken to achieve a comprehensive evidence base to inform the Core Strategy. Planning Policy Statement 12: Creating Local Development Framework identified two types of evidence:

- participation: evidence of the views of the local community and others who have a stake in the future of the area

- research/fact finding: evidence that the choices made by the plan are backed up by the background facts.

Table 1 in the report set out the updates to existing evidence that had been identified as necessary in the preparation of the Pre Submission version of the Core Strategy. Table 2 in the report outlined a number of additional studies also required. Members were advised that an environmental analysis had been carried out in North Hertfordshire which would be shared with the Joint Technical Unit and added to the evidence base.

RESOLVED to note and support the work proposed.

12. PROGRESS OF OTHER DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENTS (REF: 11)

The Joint Committee received a report that advised Members on the progress of the following Development Plan Documents (DPD):

- Development Management
- Gypsy and Traveller
- Site Allocations.

The first step of developing the Development Management DPD was to consider the existing 'saved' policies currently found in the Local Plans for Luton Borough and the former South Bedfordshire District. It was envisaged that issues would emerge which would form the basis of an Issues and Options document to be publicly consulted on.

In respect of the Gypsy and Traveller DPD, the former South Bedfordshire District Council had commissioned a study during 2008 to identify a number of potential gypsy and traveller sites which would help meet the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy requirement. Luton Borough Council was in the process of carrying out their study and it was expected that this would be completed in September 2009. The results from these studies would be used in the preparation of the Core Strategy and the Gypsy and Traveller DPD. Between August and October 2009 it was planned that Officers would meet with key stakeholders, including the affected town councils to identify a set of issues relating to this.

The review of the existing site allocations was planned to be undertaken in the period up to autumn 2010 in partnership with key stakeholders.

NOTED the findings set out in the report.

13. HIGH TOWN EAST VILLAGE DESIGN CODES - APPENDIX 2009 TO THE HIGH TOWN SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (REF: 12)

The Joint Committee received a report that advised Members on the process followed in the production of the High Town East Village Design Codes. The purpose of the document was to explain the vision, detailed configuration of the public realm and building typologies for the private realm, which together determined the look, feel and function of the East Village, in the wider regeneration of High Town. A revised Appendix C 'Schedule of responses of the Statutory Consultees' was circulated at the meeting.

It was envisaged that the site would accommodate 360 dwellings predominantly housing mixed with some commercial uses. The East Village would provide a variety of house sizes, predominantly with gardens, but with some flats on the perimeter roads. Members welcomed the plans and were pleased that High Town East was being redeveloped.

The reason for the decision was that this would deliver the vision set in the High Town Supplementary Planning Document and would contribute to the growth area targets and the housing requirement in Luton.

RESOLVED

- 1) to approve the proposed amendments to the document as set out in the two schedules of responses**
- 2) to agree to adopt the document subject to any minor amendments in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Joint Committee.**

14. MAJOR DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES (REF: 14)

Members received a report that updated them on the latest position on the major transport schemes, affecting the delivery of growth in the area, including those funded by Central Government either through the Highways Agency, the Regional Funding Allocation or the £22m Growth Area Funding 3 (GAF) funding allocated to Luton and South Bedfordshire in December 2007.

Members were advised that the Department for Transport had confirmed its support for the A5-M1 Link and Luton Dunstable Busway and had allocated a further £8.1m for the Luton Town Centre Transport scheme.

The Dynamic Hard Shoulder Running between junctions 10-13 was being progressed. The hard shoulder would be used at peak times or if there had been an incident in one of the others lanes. Signage would be used for motorists advising when the hard shoulder was in use as a fourth lane.

The Highways Agency was carrying out consultation on proposals for improvements to M1 junctions 11 and 12, with the consultation due to close on 24 September 2009. The Joint Committee would consider its formal consultation response on 18 September 2009. Members took an initial look at the proposals and supported the proposal for the improvements at junction 11 and suggested that on at this stage the orange option for junction 12 appeared preferable. The orange option for junction 12 would:

- have new slip roads built to the north of the existing junction which would provide increased capacity
- have a new bridge built over the M1
- enable the existing junction to remain open during construction
- have new traffic signals installed
- need extra land, but less than for the red and blue options
- need less fill material than for the red and blue options
- allow for the new M1 bridge to provide better facilities for cyclists and pedestrians
- allow for the existing bridges under the motorway to be extended and new ones built to maintain access to fields and routes for pedestrians
- have an estimated cost in the range of £32.4m to £47.9m.

Members also put forward to the Highways Agency that if there were any budget savings by going with the orange proposal rather than the red proposal then these savings be used to help pay for other strategic highway improvements within the growth area. The representative from the Highways Agency explained that funding for M1 works came from the national network budget, whereas improvements for junction 10a would be from the regional budget, but that this would be given further consideration.

Tender documents had been despatched to the short-listed contractors for the work on the Luton Dunstable Busway. The closing date for these tenders was 23 September 2009, with the preferred contractor being identified in early December.

The results from the consultation on the East West Rail route between the Midland Main Line and the East Coast Main Line had been assessed and concluded that the construction of a new route between the south of Luton and Stevenage had the greatest operational benefits.

Two options had been presented for public consultation on Junction 10a. In both options the existing roundabout at Junction 10a would be removed and slip roads provided to connect the M1 spur/Airport Way to London Road. The main differences were:

- Option 1 uses the existing under-bridge at Newlands Road, together with a link to London Road to connect to the new slip roads
- Option 2 would have a new under-bridge about halfway between Newlands Road and the existing Junction 10a roundabout.

Consultation responses were due back by 1 September 2009, with the outcome of the consultation process being provided to the Joint Committee on 18 September 2009. Members felt that insufficient information was available and that further work should be undertaken to refine Option 2. As neither of the options appeared satisfactory, particularly given the proposed land take from Stockwood Park. Members felt that at this stage neither option would be supported, but agreed that a solution to the traffic congestion in that area was needed. Members will give further consideration to the issue on 18 September 2009.

NOTED the report.

RESOLVED

- 1) to support the proposal for the improvements at junction 11***
- 2) that the orange option was preferred for junction 12***
- 3) that at this stage in the consultation process not to support either option for the M1 junction 10a.***

15. MINUTES OF THE MEMBERS STEERING GROUP (REF: 13)

Members received and considered the minutes from the Member Steering Group meetings held on 24 April and 1 July 2009.

Members advised that discussions were still taking place on the timing of their next meeting on 18 September, due to the Regional Assembly meeting in the morning of that day. Members requested that this be confirmed as soon as possible.

NOTED the Member Steering Group minutes of the meetings held on 24 April and 1 July 2009.

(Note: The meeting commenced at 9.30 a.m. and concluded at 11.10 a.m.)