
Meeting: Executive
Date: 15 March 2011
Subject: LDF (North): Site Allocations Development Plan Document
Report of: Cllr T. Nicols, Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Development
Summary: The report proposes consideration of this Development Plan Document (DPD), attached at Appendix A, in advance of consideration by Council for formal adoption. This follows the recent Public Examination and receipt of the Inspector's report which has found the DPD to be 'sound'.

Advising Officer: Gary Alderson, Director of Sustainable Communities
Contact Officer: Carry Murphy, Principal Planning Officer, LDF Team (North Area)
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council
Key Decision Yes
Reason for urgency/ exemption from call-in (if appropriate) Not applicable

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

Adoption of the DPD will provide the framework for managing growth effectively in Central Bedfordshire. Providing for well-located sites for new homes and jobs and ensuring this development is accompanied by the full range of supporting infrastructure is crucial to securing the sustainability of both new development and the existing communities in Central Bedfordshire.

Financial:

The Planning Inspectorate's clearance of the DPD provides some level of comfort that the DPD is sound from the professional perspective, and therefore reduces the financial risk of inquiries and appeals in the future. This part of the LDF has been managed within existing budgets.

Legal:

This is a statutory document, part of the Local Development Framework and will form part of the Development Plan. It is a statutory requirement to produce an LDF under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The LDF process is regulated by the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 and subsequent amendments. The determination and consideration of Development Plan Documents is a function of Council under the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) Regulations.

Risk Management:

The task has been completed apart from production of the final document.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

None.

Equalities/Human Rights:

Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote race, gender and disability equality and to tackle discrimination experienced by other vulnerable groups. An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken which concluded that the emphasis that is being placed on ensuring that development has been allocated within sustainable locations ensuring that residents are able to access employment opportunities, facilities and services to meet their everyday needs should help to ensure a positive impact for all sections of the community. Data suggests that there will be a rapid increase in the elderly population in coming years. Therefore providing the appropriate accommodation for this age group will become a priority.

Community Safety:

None.

Sustainability:

The Document has been assessed at various stages in development under the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment requirements as set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 12 (PPS12). The entire document is aimed at promoting and enabling sustainable development.

RECOMMENDATION:

that the Executive recommends Council to adopt the Site Allocations Development Plan Document.

Reason for Recommendation:::

To ensure the Council complies with the statutory requirement to produce a Development Plan through the production of the Local Development Framework (North).

Background

1. The Local Development Framework (LDF) is a series of documents which collectively deliver the spatial planning strategy for Central Bedfordshire. The LDF (North Area) covers the former Mid Bedfordshire Area and the LDF (South Area) is prepared jointly with Luton Borough under the Joint Committee. The system differs from the Local Plan process in that the Core Strategy, which is the key plan within the LDF, has a wider remit than purely land use planning with a strong link to the Sustainable Communities Plan and an emphasis on delivery.
2. Development Plan Documents (DPD), a component part of the LDF, make up the Statutory Development Plan, together with the East of England Plan. The statutory process of preparing a DPD is set out in the Planning Regulations and comprises many stages and types of consultation which have been to date considered by the LDF Members Task Force, in some instances direct Councillor Briefings, Executive and Council. Under the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations, the adoption of the DPD is a function of the Council.
3. A Proposals Map is prepared for the LDF which illustrates all the policies which have a map base both in the DPD documents and policies which remain in existence in the Local Plan. The Proposals Map is updated as each DPD is adopted and it also illustrates national designations and constraints.

The Site Allocations DPD

4. This document is part of the LDF (North Area) and commenced in late 2006. It is based on the broad spatial strategy set out in the Core Strategy and translates general requirements of housing and jobs into specific sites. The Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD was formally adopted by Council in November 2009.
5. The Core Strategy provides for a total of 18,000 new homes and 17,000 new jobs up to the year 2026. Of these, a large number have already been completed or have extant planning permission. The residual requirement to be provided in the Site Allocations DPD is 5,000 new homes and 78 hectares of land for employment purposes.
6. The approach in the Core Strategy has been to focus on the larger settlements (known as “Major Service Centres” and “Minor Service Centres”) in the former Mid Bedfordshire area, with less emphasis on the villages. This approach has been carried forward when choosing sites for inclusion within the Site Allocations DPD.

7. There has been significant Member involvement in the process and large scale public consultation throughout the preparation of the DPD - refer to Appendix B. With approximately 440 sites to choose from and only a small percentage of these actually required, a criteria-based approach was carried out to select the most sustainable and the most suitable of the sites. Detailed work was then undertaken to develop policies for each of the sites, setting out the Council's expectations for development of the sites and potential infrastructure provision and particular developer contributions. These policies will then set the context and framework for considering future planning applications on these sites. Appendix A includes the DPD with policies for each of the sites proposed for allocation. A number of the larger sites will require the preparation of a master plan or development brief, to be completed prior to any planning application submitted.
8. Selecting sites for allocation in this way is an important part of the Council's work to manage growth effectively. It is important that provision is made for new homes and jobs within Central Bedfordshire, not simply to meet Government targets but to provide for those people needing housing or employment. By providing sufficient well-located sites in advance the Council can plan positively for new development, bring certainty to local communities and ensure appropriate supporting infrastructure is in place. Without a supply of allocated sites the Council would be open to challenge and would find it much more difficult to resist opportunistic development, for example, in countryside locations.
9. In January 2010, full Council agreed the Submission to the Secretary of State of the Site Allocations DPD. Following a further period of public consultation the document was submitted in May 2010 and the Examination of the DPD by the Planning Inspectorate took place during October and November 2010.
10. The purpose of Examination is for the Inspector to determine whether the DPD satisfies the requirements of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Planning Regulations and whether the document is 'sound' under the provisions of PPS12 i.e. whether it is justified, effective and consistent with national policy. The Inspector's report was received on 24 January 2011 and is available on the LDF pages of the Council's website. The Inspector's report is binding on the Council.
11. The report concludes that the DPD provides an appropriate basis for the planning of the area over the next 15 years and that the Council has produced sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the document is consistent with the Core Strategy for the area, that the allocations it contains have a reasonable chance of being delivered and that it is reasonable flexible. The report confirms that the DPD complies with the legal planning requirements and is considered sound and no changes are required.

Conclusion and Next Steps

12. The achievement of this important milestone in the production of the LDF (North) enables progress to be made towards managing growth in housing and jobs in a sustainable and effective manner across the area.

13. Upon adoption, the DPD will be produced both in paper and electronic form and the Proposals Map updated accordingly. Members of the public and stakeholders will also be informed of its availability. Work will also commence on the preparation of the various master plans and development briefs identified in the DPD.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Site Allocations Development Plan Document

Appendix B – Summary of public consultation undertaken during the preparation of the Site Allocations DPD

Background Papers: Report on the Examination into the Site Allocations DPD by Robert Yuille, an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Location of papers: Priory House, Chicksands