



A plan-making programme for Central Bedfordshire

September 2011

(Local Development Scheme for Central
Bedfordshire)

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires each local planning authority to produce a Local Development Scheme (LDS), which is essentially a work programme for the preparation of new planning policy documents. This plan-making Programme represents the LDS for Central Bedfordshire.
- 1.2 This document covers the whole administrative area of Central Bedfordshire. It is the starting point for the community and other stakeholders in order to find out which planning policy documents the Council intends to produce, and the timescale for their preparation.

2.0 About the area

- 2.1 Central Bedfordshire comprises the former administrative areas of Mid Bedfordshire and South Bedfordshire Districts. It is a varied area containing a mixture of rural countryside, attractive villages, and small to medium sized towns. It is well connected, being traversed by the M1, A1, A5 and A6 as well as the East Coast Mainline, West Coast Mainline and the Midland Mainline. London Luton Airport is also in close proximity.
- 2.2 Much of the rural area is of high landscape and biodiversity value with extensive tracts of high-grade agricultural land. The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty covers a substantial part of the area while some land outside of the main towns and villages is designated as Green Belt.

3.0 Policy Framework and the requirement for a new Plan-making Programme

- 3.1 Following the formation of Central Bedfordshire Council as a unitary authority in April 2009, two separate Local Development Frameworks were progressed; one covering the area formerly administered by Mid Beds District Council and one covering Luton and the area formerly administered by South Beds District Council.
- 3.2 The withdrawal of the draft joint Luton and South Bedfordshire Core Strategy, and the publication of the draft Localism Bill and draft National Planning Policy Framework, means that the opportunity has arisen to consolidate the two separate frameworks into one. In the interim, the Development Plan for the former Mid Beds area will consist of the Regional Strategy, and the existing adopted Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD and Site Allocations DPD. For the former South Beds area, it will consist of the Regional Strategy and saved Structure Plan and Local Plan policies.

3.3 The decision to prepare a new plan for Central Bedfordshire means that a new LDS is required.

4.0 Proposed Development Plan Documents

4.1 This Programme focuses solely on the preparation of two Development Plan Documents (DPDs): the Central Bedfordshire Development Strategy and the Gypsy and Traveller Plan. The Council will also need to plan for the allocation of non-strategic scale sites, either through the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans or a Site Allocations plan. A decision regarding this issue will be made once the Localism Bill has been enacted and the National Planning Policy Framework agreed. Once a decision has been reached, a revision to this document may be required.

4.2 Following the Planning Act 2008, it is no longer necessary to include details of proposed Supplementary Planning Documents and other Local Development Documents within an LDS. Policies and designations will be illustrated on the Proposals Map which will be updated following adoption of each document.

Table 1: Central Bedfordshire Development Strategy

Central Bedfordshire Development Strategy	
Role and content	To set out the vision, strategic objectives and spatial strategy for the area up to 2031 and the policies for achieving the strategic vision. This will entail an assessment of general development needs together with the consideration of any necessary Green Belt reviews. The identification of strategic-scale development sites will also be considered.
Status	Development Plan Document
Chain of conformity	General conformity with regional and national planning guidance
Geographic coverage	The entire administrative area of Central Bedfordshire
Projected timetable and milestones	
Commencement (including SA Scoping Report)	September 2011
Evidence Gathering	October 2011 – April 2012
Consultation	May – June 2012
Consideration of consultation responses and produce revised Plan	July – November 2012
Publication stage	December 2012 – February 2013
Submission to Secretary of State	May 2013
Examination Hearings	September 2013
Receipt of Draft Inspector's Report	December 2013
Adoption	February 2014

Arrangements for production	
Management arrangements	Decisions will be taken by Central Bedfordshire Council's Executive. Day to day management of process by Head of Development Planning and Housing Strategy.
Resources required	Officers from the Development Planning team with input as necessary from other teams and departments. Consultants may be used for specific aspects of the work.
Stakeholder and Community Involvement	The Statement of Community Involvement sets out the standard mechanisms for community involvement. This DPD will be prepared in light of the views of the community and other stakeholders
Monitoring and review mechanisms	Monitored on an annual basis as part of the Annual Monitoring Report.

Table 2: Gypsy and Traveller Plan

Gypsy and Traveller Plan	
Role and content	To identify the Council's approach to the provision of additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches and sites, including the allocation of new sites if required.
Status	Development Plan Document
Chain of conformity	Conformity with the Central Bedfordshire Development Strategy and general conformity with regional and national planning guidance
Geographic coverage	The entire administrative area of Central Bedfordshire
Projected timetable and milestones	
Commencement (including SA Scoping Report)	January 2012
Evidence Gathering	February – September 2012
Consultation	October - November 2012
Consideration of consultation responses and produce revised Plan	December 2012 – April 2013
Publication stage (Regulation 27)	May – June 2013
Submission to Secretary of State	September 2013
Examination Hearings	January 2014
Receipt of Draft Inspector's Report	April 2014
Adoption	June 2014
Arrangements for production	
Management arrangements	Decisions will be taken by CBC Executive. Day to day management of process by Head of Development Planning and Housing Strategy.

Resources required	Officers from the Development Planning team with input as necessary from other teams and departments. Consultants may be used for specific aspects of the work.
Stakeholder and Community Involvement	The Statement of Community Involvement sets out the standard mechanisms for community involvement. This DPD will be prepared in light of the views of the community and other stakeholders
Monitoring and review mechanisms	Monitored on an annual basis as part of the Annual Monitoring Report.

- 4.3 In order to inform the preparation of policy documents, the Council has undertaken a large number of background technical studies. These will be refreshed and updated periodically as necessary. In preparing these policy documents, the Council will have regard to a number of different strategies. These include the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and others covering topic areas such as education, health, social inclusion, waste, biodiversity, recycling and environmental protection, local housing strategies and transport plans.
- 4.4 The Council will seek to work closely with neighbouring authorities on the preparation of policy documents. Technical studies maybe undertaken jointly where this is deemed to be appropriate.

5.0 Project Management

- 5.1 In order to ensure that the preparation of the Core Strategy is undertaken in a focussed and coherent manner, a project management approach is being taken to the coordination of the work. To this end a Plan-making Programme Project Management Gantt Chart has been drawn up. This is set out in Figure 1.
- 5.2 The Gantt Chart identifies how the documents will be prepared and when key milestones are expected to be met.
- 5.3 The project management approach, using the Project Management Gantt Chart, will enable the undertaking of clear and accurate monitoring which will inform the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). This process will feed into the regular review of the Plan-making Programme and ensure that it continues to be relevant and up-to-date.

6.0 Risk Assessment

6.1 An analysis has been completed of the principal tasks associated with undertaking the preparation of planning policy documents. These risks, listed in Table 5 below, have been taken into consideration in devising this Programme and will be closely monitored.

Table 4: Key risks and mitigation measures

Key Risks/Owner	Action to Mitigate Risk and Comments	Risk Level
Challenging time-scales for preparing policy documents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Careful project management and regular review If necessary, adjustment of Programme through annual review. Prioritisation of other work <p>Uncertainty factors remain – e.g. the level of representations submitted on documents, time taken in Public Examination and reporting time, or if new issues arise requiring other documents to be prepared or the diversion of staff. Other factors identified in this assessment may also lead to delay to the timescales. There is no real slack in the timetable.</p>	Medium
Changing national policy context requiring reassessment of content of documents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Continual monitoring of planning policy climate Prompt action to align local policy 	High
Premature planning applications for sites resulting in staff being redeployed to deal with time-consuming appeals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Regular monitoring and review of progress with a view to delivery on schedule If necessary, allocate relevant officer(s) and/or appeals consultants. 	High
Too few staff, staff turnover, level of experience of staff and strong reliance on consultants	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Scope for flexible use of staff from other teams Budget contingency fund 	Medium

Previously developed sites not being redeveloped because of lack of investment in essential infrastructure	Continue to exert pressure on government, Highways Agency and other bodies to ensure that essential infrastructure is in place and other blockages to development are removed to facilitate delivery . Current market downturn affects all development in the short term.	High
Financial resources	Regular budget monitoring.	Medium
Capacity of Planning Inspectorate (PINS) and other agencies to support the preparation of documents	Provide early warning to PINS and other agencies of timescales and requirements and develop good relationships with agencies through consultation.	Medium
Ensuring 'Soundness' of documents	Through preparing a good evidence base, good dialogue with the community/stakeholders in line with the SCI, regular liaison with Counsel and CLG.	Low
Legal Challenge	Through ensuring preparation of 'sound' documents.	Low

6.2 Plan-making bodies must prepare an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) to assess their implementation of the plan-making, and the extent to which plan policies are being achieved. Such review will assess progress against targets and milestones in the Programme, with appropriate action being taken in the light of findings.

6.3 Changes to the Plan-making Programme will be reported in the AMR with complete revisions to the Programme only made where necessary.

7.0 Glossary

Development Plan: the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Development Plan Documents contained within a Local Development Framework constitute the statutory development plan.

Local Development Framework (LDF): a portfolio of Local Development Documents – it consists of Development Plan Documents, Supplementary Planning Documents, a Statement of Community Involvement, the Local Development Scheme and Annual Monitoring Reports

Local Development Document (LDD): the collective term for Development Plan Documents, Supplementary Planning Documents and the Statement of Community Involvement.

Development Plan Documents (DPD): a name given to a range of policy plans that are subject to independent examination, and are shown geographically on an adopted Proposals Map (discussed below).

Site Allocations: allocations of sites for specific or mixed uses or developments to be contained in Development Plan Documents. Policies will identify any specific requirements for individual proposals.

Development Management Policies: these constitute a suite of criteria-based policies, which are required to ensure that all development within an area meets the spatial vision and objectives set out in the Core Strategy. They may be included in any Development Plan Document or form a standalone document.

Proposals Map: the adopted proposals map illustrates on a base map at a registered scale all the policies contained in Development Plan Documents, together with any saved policies. It must be revised as each new Development Plan Document is adopted, and it should always reflect the up-to-date planning strategy for the area. Proposals for changes to the adopted proposals map accompany submitted development plan documents in the form of a submission proposals map.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD): provide supplementary information in respect of the policies in Development Plan Documents or a saved policy. They do not form part of the Development Plan and are not subject to independent examination.

Annual Monitoring Report (AMR): A public report to be produced by local authorities to assess their progress on implementation of the LDS and the effectiveness of the LDDs in terms of policy achievement.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA): a tool for appraising policies to ensure they reflect sustainable development objectives (i.e. social, environmental and economic factors) and required in the Act to be undertaken for all Local Development Documents (except the Statement of Community Involvement). This process incorporates the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.

Examination: a local planning authority must submit a Development Plan Document for independent examination to the Secretary of State, publish a notice and invite representations, to be made within a specified period of at least six weeks.