

Summary of Comments and Responses **to East of Leighton Linlade Public Consultation**

The attached schedule sets out in detail the written responses received as a result of the public consultation events undertaken for the East of Leighton Linlade Draft Framework Plan, together with a detailed point by point response to these issues. This short paper is intended to summarize the position as regards the type of objections/comments which were submitted including the provision of an explanation as to the source of these and the general response of the Council to each of those issues.

A separate report has been undertaken which analyses the response to individual questions put forward in the consultation process. This follows the procedure adopted in respect of other Framework Plans elsewhere in CBC area. The attached schedule is a summary of individual points raised by respondents either specifically to Question 12 (Have you any other comments regarding the EoLL Framework Plan?), or by any other written material (letters or reports) attached to the questionnaire (or otherwise sent to the Council).

Out of a total of 132 responses received from the 3 consultation events held 51 residents from 41 households wrote objecting to the development from Leighton Linlade with a further 1 resident from Milton Keynes also objecting. Additionally the Parish Councils of Heath & Reach and Eggington wrote to object as did one other developer (Paul Newman New Homes Ltd) who is promoting an alternative site. This leaves 78 respondents who did not object but were commenting on the Framework Plan or who supported the proposals.

Of those objecting to the scheme there were a number of criticisms which can be categorized in the following manner:-

(i) **Too much housing** (32)

Most of the objectors raised questions about the need for the release of land for 2,500 homes and why Leighton Linlade had been selected as a location for this number.

The response to these points (see Column 5 of the attached schedule) indicates that Leighton Linlade as the largest town in the Council area, would need to provide a proportionate share of the housing needs over the next 20 years. The urban extension was proposed in response to needs identified (over and above

existing commitments) in the Development Strategy for the area. As such this was an "in principle" objection which was not the purpose of the Framework Plan exercise.

(ii) Traffic (23)

A large proportion of the objectors refer to the effect which the additional houses will have on congestion within the Town Centre, on some of the radial routes and on trips across the town especially to the station. Reference is also made by some objectors to the need to extend the ELR down to the A505.

The Framework Plan is of necessity a high level plan which does not examine detailed traffic flows. Notwithstanding this the Evidence Base for the Development Strategy does examine traffic flows in broad terms and concludes that with the requisite mitigation EoLL urban extension is acceptable. More importantly this study was at least partly influenced by the very detailed traffic model of the town prepared to accompany the earlier major planning applications across the site. This model, which has been ratified by the Council, its team engineering consultants and the Highways Agency demonstrates that the construction of the Eastern Link Road will allow many of the existing journeys which have to route via the Town Centre to be diverted around the town. Consequently any increase in the number of trips into the town from new residents in the future at EoLL will be more than offset by the numbers of cars which are diverted. The model demonstrates significant improvements in future levels of congestion on many junctions and a reduction in overall trip times.

(iii) Inadequate Social Infrastructure (23)

Numerous objectors make reference to the lack of facilities associated with new development with many referring to the problems at South Leighton Linslade (Sandhills/Billington Park) caused by lack of schools, open space, surgeries etc.

The draft Framework Plan acknowledges the need for the provision of these facilities. It points out that this can best be controlled through the phasing of Section 106 Obligations associated with the outstanding planning applications (in contrast to the scheme at South Leighton Linslade which was determined at appeal with the Secretary of State examining the Section 106 unilateral obligations. The Framework Plan incorporates a range of social educational and

recreational facilities within the East of Leighton Linlade urban extension which will not only meet the needs of all new residents but which will also meet the needs of some of the existing residents. The proposed Neighbourhood Centre on Vandyke Road will act as the focus for new social facilities (surgery, multi purpose hall etc) with the early provision of an adjoining 2FE Lower School and Middle School shortly thereafter.

(iv) Green Belt (12)

Loss of Green Belt is mentioned by over half the objectors. This matter, involving the need to identify "very special circumstances" in accordance with the NPPF, is addressed in the Development Strategy and its accompanying Evidence Base. Thus, whilst this matter is one which clearly causes concern it is a matter of principle which has already been determined by the Council in its draft Development Strategy.

(v) Flooding (8)

As eastern parts of the town adjacent to the Clipstone Brook are already affected by flooding it is, perhaps, not surprising that this issue is raised by a number of residents particularly from the Planets.

The Framework Plan does not propose any built development in the floodplain or in the area between the 1:100 level and the 1:1000 year level confining all development to Flood Zone 1 i.e. above 1:1000 years. Surface water runoff from the development will be required by the Environment Agency and the Council to at least be sufficient to store water for a 1:100 year event with a 30% allowance for climate change and be the equivalent of Greenfield run off rates. Some additional storage capacity is available and this will be sufficient to marginally improve storage and reduce the level of downstream flooding that might occur in severe events.

(vi) Coalescence with Outlying Villages (8)

A number of residents particularly arising from the special consultation event at Eggington expressed concern about the potential for coalescence between East of Leighton Linlade and the outlying villages.

The Framework Plan deliberately keeps a significant gap between the proposed development at its southern end and Eggington which is also protected by the alignment of the Eastern Link Road which at that point acts as a perimeter road. The gap between Leighton Linlade and Eggington will continue to be protected by the Green Belt designation, as will all the countryside between the extension and other villages. The Green Belt has as its one of its main objectives the prevention of coalescence.

(vii) Character of the Town or Village (13)

Several residents are concerned that Leighton Linlade will change its market town character irrevocably and that this is to be regretted. Some also referred to the effect on Eggington.

The town has inevitably changed in many ways over the last 50 years as a result of growth and social progression. However, it has retained its essential appearance as a Bedfordshire market town and will continue to do so in the next two decades. It is the largest town within the Council area and lies within the southern part where pressures for change are greatest. As such the Development Strategy suggests that it will need to accommodate a proportionate share of new growth to 2031, but the key must be to do this in a manner which retains the best features in the central area whilst encouraging regeneration. This is the approach adopted in the Development Strategy.

(viii) Other Issues Raised by Objectors

More detailed points were raised by a number of objectors. Some related to detailed drafting requiring clarification and some involved individual opposition to new recreational features such as the location of footpaths and the proposed adventure playground. Most of these were detailed issues but will need to be monitored as planning applications and reserved matters are submitted. Several respondents were concerned that the Framework Plan was premature until the Development Strategy was completed.

(ix) Other Comments

A wide range of other comments were submitted by other respondents some of which corroborated and emphasized proposals in the Framework Plan. For

example there was general support for improved bus services with some detailed suggestions as to where these might go.

Some respondents referred to the possibility of extending the ELR to the A505. However, this option was not included in the Development Strategy as traffic modelling work has proved that this is not required. The ELR will connect to Stanbridge Road in the south, which provides an existing connection to the A505 however it is proposed that the junction on the A505 will be replaced with a new roundabout.

Most respondents supported the recreational proposals and the proposed new pavilion although there was a significant minority wishing to see athletics provision made as opposed to more football pitches. Some existing residents complained about the potential for disturbance and loss of amenity caused by proposed new footpaths and adventure playgrounds.

The Council EDO and the Town Council raised issues over the amount of employment land but this does not require amendment to the Framework Plan.