

Appendix C

Frequently Asked Questions

Draft Local Plan Consultation: July 2017

Question	Answer
What is the Local Plan and why do we need one?	The Local Plan is the key planning document for Central Bedfordshire which will guide and support the delivery of new homes, jobs and infrastructure. It sets out what is going to happen, where it will happen and how it will be achieved. Central Bedfordshire is a local planning authority and legislation requires all local planning authorities to produce a Local Plan.
What stage in the process is the Local Plan at?	This is a consultation on the first draft of the Local Plan. Officially we call this stage 'Regulation 18' so you may hear some people refer to this. This draft plan includes broad policies for steering and shaping development and also some detailed draft policies to be used when determining planning applications. It does not include policies for specific development sites. These will be included within the 'Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan' which will be published in 2018.
How long will this consultation last?	This consultation will run for 8 weeks from 4 th July 2017 to 29 th August 2017 at 5pm.
Why is the Council consulting over the summer?	With school holidays, Christmas and elections etc. it is difficult to find an ideal time of year to hold a public consultation. We are consulting now because it is important that the production of the Local Plan is delivered to schedule. We acknowledge that many residents go away in the summer and this is why we have extended the consultation from the statutory requirement of 6 weeks to 8.
What happens next?	<p>We will collate and consider all of the comments we receive. These will help inform and refine the next version of the Local Plan called the 'Pre-Submission Local Plan' which will be published for comment in spring 2018.</p> <p>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.</p>
How can I make comments on this plan?	<p>If you make a formal comment on the Local Plan this is called a representation. Representations can be made online at the following link www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/localplan or submitted by post for the attention of the Local Plan Team at Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, SG17 5TQ.</p> <p>We will be holding public drop-in-sessions over the summer of 2017, where you can find out more about the Local Plan there's no need to book, just come along.</p> <p>Public drop in sessions (2pm – 8pm):</p> <p>11 July, Marston Sports Pavilion 20 July, Biggleswade Town Council</p>

Question	Answer
	<p>26 July, Arlesey Village Hall 7 August, Sandy Village Hall 9 August, Caddington Sports and Social Club</p>
Who makes the decision?	<p>Planning officers make recommendations for the Local Plan based upon up-to-date technical evidence, national planning policy and other matters relevant to Central Bedfordshire. The decisions regarding the Local Plan are made by Members of Central Bedfordshire Council until the Local Plan is submitted for examination to the Secretary of State. Members have access to all the necessary evidence in order for them to make their decisions. All decisions made by elected Members must be in accordance with national planning legislation and guidance.</p>
When will we know the final decision?	<p>The Local Plan will be subject to a public examination which we anticipate will be in 2019. This will be conducted by a Planning Inspector who will then issue a report on their findings. If the Inspector finds that the plan is 'sound' then it will be up to the elected members of the Council to formally adopt it. At this point in time it is difficult to provide dates for this latter part of the process as we are reliant on the availability of the Planning Inspector.</p>
Can we stop it happening?	<p>The Government requires all Councils to produce a Local Plan, providing for all types of development in the future. This includes providing for new housing, jobs and Gypsy and Traveller sites, as well as community facilities, services and associated infrastructure. There are opportunities to make comments and contribute to the Local Plan throughout the process. All comments will be considered and they will assist us in making decisions.</p>
What is the relationship between the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan and neighbouring authority local plans?	<p>This Local Plan has been produced through close partnership working with our neighbouring councils (local authorities) to ensure that 'cross-boundary' planning issues have been taken into account. A series of 'Strategic Frameworks' have been produced to set out Central Bedfordshire's commitment to work with our neighbours throughout the Local Plan process and set out specific cross-boundary issues.</p>
What is the relationship between Neighbourhood Plans and the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan?	<p>Neighbourhood Plans are produced by neighbourhood planning groups and form part of the overall development plan for the area. They will sit alongside the Local Plan and decisions on planning applications will be made using both the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plans, and any other material considerations.</p>
How do the Community Planning events relate to the Local Plan?	<p>Following the Community Planning events, 15 Community Plans have been prepared and published as part of the evidence for the Local Plan. The Community Plans bring together all the information gathered for each of the areas where an event was held. Some of this information has been used to produce this draft Local Plan. More detailed information on community needs etc. will be fed into the next version of the plan.</p>

Question	Answer
There are a lot of housing sites listed in the Site Assessment Technical Document. Will they all be developed?	No. We have received many more submissions than is required to meet housing need and our initial assessments have found that not all sites are worthy of further consideration.
When will we know which sites have been chosen for development?	Following this consultation and the consideration of the comments received, we will begin working on producing a list of final preferred sites. This will be published as part of the Pre-submission Draft Local Plan in March 2018 and you will have a further opportunity to comment at that time.
How many homes will be built?	Taking into account Central Bedfordshire's housing need and any unmet need from Luton; we need to provide for between 20,000-30,000 additional new homes between 2015 and 2035. This range allows for flexibility as the new methodology from Government on how housing need is calculated has not yet been published. Further work will be undertaken to establish an exact amount when we produce the next version of the Local Plan in 2018. The above figures are in addition to approximately 23,000 homes that are already planned for or have been built since 2015.
Where are all the people coming from?	Our population is increasing due to a combination of natural growth (changes in birth and death rates) and people moving into the area from elsewhere.
What is a 5 year housing land supply and why is it important?	<p>All local planning authorities are required to identify a supply of specific deliverable housing sites which are sufficient to provide five years worth of housing against their housing Requirements. This is called a Five Year Housing Land Supply. To be included in this supply a site must be 'deliverable'. This means it must be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years and in particular that development of the site is viable.</p> <p>A five year supply is important because it helps to boost housing supply. If a local planning authority cannot provide evidence to demonstrate a five year supply of sufficient deliverable sites then the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' applies. This means that relevant policies in the Local Plan for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date and cannot be relied upon fully when making decisions on planning applications.</p>
What is unmet housing need?	Unmet housing need is when a local authority is unable to meet its housing needs within its own administrative area. The number of homes they are unable to accommodate is called unmet need.
Why do we need to meet any unmet housing need from neighbouring authorities?	Under the Duty to Cooperate legislation Central Bedfordshire Council must work with neighbouring councils to ensure that housing needs are met. We may need to deliver homes for neighbouring authorities that are unable to meet their own needs due to a lack of suitable development land within their areas.

Question	Answer
What about Brexit? Will we still need all the new homes?	The impact of Brexit is currently unknown. This Council is still required to produce a Local Plan which provides for known needs at this point in time. The Council will monitor the situation closely to ensure that any impacts are factored into our overall housing numbers to ensure that the Plan reflects the most up to date housing forecasts.
How have the housing growth locations been chosen?	Not all of the growth locations outlined in the draft Local Plan will be developed. These sites have been included within this draft plan as they have passed through our initial assessment stage. The list will be refined after the Council has considered the responses to this consultation and undertaken further technical work.
Why do we need to build new towns?	The Council has commissioned a report called a Sustainability Appraisal to assess potential options for growth. This has found that a mix of development that includes large scale new communities and development at different scales in close proximity to existing settlements would be a sustainable option for growth.
Green Belt land is protected, so why are we proposing to build in the Green Belt?	Land can be removed from the Green Belt by a Local Plan if there are exceptional circumstances which justify it. The main aim of the Local Plan is to deliver sustainable growth over the next 20 years, and this means identifying the very best sites for development. If all the houses and employment sites we need were built outside of the Green Belt development would be concentrated in one part of Central Bedfordshire. This would have negative consequences for settlements both within and outside of the Green Belt and would not be an acceptable way for Central Bedfordshire to grow. We think the best way to achieve balanced and sustainable growth across Central Bedfordshire is to consider building on some Green Belt land.
How much Green Belt land will be lost?	The Central Bedfordshire Green Belt covers approximately 40% of the total area of Central Bedfordshire. Although we haven't identified our preferred sites yet, it is highly likely that only a fraction of the overall Green Belt would need to be developed.
Can new Green Belt be designated?	Yes. As part of the technical evidence base supporting the Local Plan, consideration will be given as to whether 'exceptional circumstances' exist which allow us to designate new Green Belt.
How many new jobs do we need in Central Bedfordshire and where will they be located?	This draft Local Plan sets out a requirement for 24,000-30,000 new jobs over the 2015-2035 period. No decisions have been made about where these will go. We are consulting on a number of growth locations which are proposed to include employment areas (see Section 8 of the Draft Local Plan). Other locations for employment sites are also proposed at M1 junction 11a, M1 junction 13, Biggleswade south roundabout and RAF Henlow.
Why aren't we building on brownfield land?	A number of the proposed development sites are brownfield land but due to the rural nature of much of Central Bedfordshire, the supply of brownfield land is limited and there isn't enough to deliver all of the growth that we require.

Question	Answer
How many Gypsy and Traveller sites are needed?	The number of pitches (land per household which is suitable for a mobile home, touring caravan and a utility building, together with space for parking) is determined by a needs assessment which every local authority must carry out. Central Bedfordshire's assessment shows that 71 new Gypsy and Traveller pitches, and 31 Travelling Showpeople plots will be needed over the period 2015 - 35
Where will the Gypsy and Traveller sites be?	We do not know at this stage. The Council will be reviewing options for how and where we provide for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. Work will begin on this in Summer 2017. There will be an opportunity to comment in 2018.
How soon will building begin?	We do not yet know which sites will be built on. We are looking to allocate a range of sites for housing, employment and community uses and the development of these will be spread out over a 20 year period. Developers usually give an indication of their timescales, but these are dependent upon a range of factors.
How can you buy or rent one of the houses?	There will be a range of housing to buy and to rent including market housing, affordable housing and starter homes. If you are in housing need, you will need to be put on the Housing Register to be eligible for affordable housing.
Will the houses just be for people from the area?	We are not able to place restrictions on where new residents will come from but the allocation of affordable rented homes will be done via the housing register.
Will there be bungalows/affordable housing/old people's accommodation?	The Council recognises the need for different types of homes within Central Bedfordshire. Through the allocation of sites and the use of policies in the Local Plan we will seek to ensure that a mix of house types is provided including affordable housing, bungalows and other types of housing for older people.
Who owns the land that will be built on?	Land which has been put forward for development is owned by a variety of landowners including private individuals, developers and public bodies.
What if proposed development affects the value of my house?	Property values are not a planning consideration. This means that property values are not taken into account when assessing sites and allocating land for development. There is no mechanism for claiming back any considered loss in value.
How will the schools and doctors cope with more people in the area?	We consult with health services and our Education Department as part of the Local Plan process, and have considered the capacity of schools and GP surgeries throughout Central Bedfordshire. This information will help us to identify the very best sites for development in the Local Plan. In addition to this all development is required to contribute to essential facilities including schools and doctors surgeries. This usually takes the form of financial contributions, although new facilities are often provided on larger housing sites.

Question	Answer
How will the roads cope with more cars?	This is one of the key considerations that we will take into account when addressing where development should go. Where needed, developers are expected to pay for new roads or improvements to existing roads.