

Agenda Item: 13

Meeting: CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

Date: 18 June 2009

Subject: Local Development Framework (Rural Area): Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document Examination

Report of: Portfolio Holder Sustainable Development

Summary: The report proposes that Council delegates authority to the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Sustainable Development Portfolio Holder to make minor changes to the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document.

Contact Officer: Sally Chapman; LDF Projects and Process Manager

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: (all in the former Mid Bedfordshire Area)

Function of: Council

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. That the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Sustainable Development Portfolio Holder is authorised to make minor amendments to the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document during Examination.**

Background

1. The Local Development Framework (LDF) is a series of documents which collectively deliver the spatial planning strategy for Central Bedfordshire. The LDF (Growth Area) is prepared jointly with Luton Borough under the Joint Committee and the LDF (Rural Area) covers the former Mid Bedfordshire Area. 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 submission of the DPD to the Secretary of State and adoption of the DPD are functions of the Council.
3. Councils are under pressure from the Government to complete their LDFs and financial incentives are given through the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant for successful completion of DPDs.

The Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD.

4. This document is part of the LDF (Rural Area) and commenced in mid 2005. It contains the strategy to direct development and infrastructure across the area. It also contains more specific policies for the determination of planning applications. In September 2008, Mid Bedfordshire District Council agreed the Submission to the Secretary of State of the Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD. Following a period of consultation the document was submitted in February 2009 and the Examination of the DPD is currently underway by the Planning Inspectorate. Statements responding to matters raised by the Inspector have been submitted by officers of the Council and interested parties. Formal Hearings will commence on the 23rd June for a 3 week period with the Inspector chairing sessions with Council Officers and representors. This is the final stage of the DPD and following the Inspectors Report expected in September, Council will be asked to adopt the DPD in the Autumn.
5. During the examination process, some minor, relatively inconsequential changes to the submitted DPD will be advisable, many of them in relation to changing circumstances, or arising from the examination process or simply to make the text clearer. It is important to note that any 'suggested changes' must be minor in nature and not affect the direction of the Plan. The Council is able to suggest minor changes which the Inspector, in his report, is able to agree. The Inspector is also able to recommend minor changes which will be discussed at the hearings. It is possible, despite the minor nature of the changes, for the Inspector to consider the DPD unsound either in part or as a whole unless certain changes are proposed. This is mostly due to the complex requirements of the LDF system.
6. Changes that would alter the thrust of a policy, extend the range of development a policy would apply to, delete a policy or introduce a new policy would not fall into this category. Therefore changes which 'go to the heart of the Plan' would have to be consulted upon and subject to the process of Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment. Members will of course be fully involved in these more strategic decisions.

7. A Table of Suggested Changes has been prepared and will be updated regularly throughout the Examination. In order to facilitate the Examination process, it is necessary for these suggested changes to be proposed by officers and agreed by the Director and Portfolio Holder of Sustainable Development for the Inspector to consider. The table will be placed on the website alongside all documentation relating to the Examination.

Conclusion and Next Steps

8. It is recommended, therefore, that the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder is authorised to make the minor changes and amendments set out above to the Core Strategy and Development Management DPD.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The LDF expresses many of the Council's policy aims and objectives and will bring them to implementation.

Financial:

None beyond existing budgets.

Legal:

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:

Not relevant

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

Existing

Equalities/Human Rights:

None

Community Safety:

None

Sustainability:

The LDF is a key component of the planning and delivery of sustainable communities

Appendices: N/A

Background Papers: N/A