

Milton Keynes and South Midlands Strategy

To: Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum

Date: 24 September 2003

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A. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1 To advise the Forum of implications for the historic environment of proposed alterations to Regional Planning Guidance set out in the Milton Keynes & South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy and recommend a response.

B. PROPOSED ACTION

2 The Committee is invited to:

- a) **NOTE the contents of the report and implications of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy for the historic environment of Buckinghamshire.**
- b) **ENDORSE and SUPPORT the efforts of Aylesbury Vale District Council, Buckinghamshire County Council and Milton Keynes Council to highlight historic environment issues in their respective responses to the Enquiry Panel and in the establishment of Local Delivery Vehicles.**

C. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 3 Full assessment of the implications of the MKSM Strategy for the historic environment could not be contained within established budgets without major implications for other commitments. English Heritage is supporting the Milton Keynes Growth Area Historic Environment Assessment whilst the Bucks County Council Strategic Planning Team are providing additional support for a more detailed sustainability assessment of the western flank of Milton Keynes (in Aylesbury Vale District).

D. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Proposals

- 4 Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG 9, March 2001) published by the Government identified the general area of Milton Keynes and the South Midlands as one of four potential major growth areas in the wider South East. (The others are London-Stansted-Cambridge, Ashford and the Thames Gateway). The Government's commitment to this approach was confirmed by John Prescott's Ministerial Statement: "*Sustainable communities: building for the future*" which outlined a fast-track timescale involving a partial review of RPG9.
- 5 A sub-regional study was completed by consultants (Milton Keynes and South Midlands Study, Final Report, Roger Tym, Halcrow and Three Dragons,

September 2002) considering the future spatial development of the sub-region up to 2030. A key recommendation of the study was that future housing and economic development in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands area should be focused on five urban areas:

- a. Milton Keynes;
- b. Northampton;
- c. Luton/Dunstable/Houghton Regis;
- d. Corby/Kettering/Wellingborough; and
- e. Bedford.

Major infrastructure improvements would be required and special delivery mechanisms were envisaged.

6 Consultants have subsequently completed Technical Assessments across the whole MKSM sub-region to test the conclusions of the original Study. The recommendations for all of the main growth areas (Milton Keynes, Northampton, Bedford, Luton, Aylesbury and the Corby-Kettering-Wellingborough corridor) were reported to the Regional Planning Bodies at the end of May.

7 The South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) has now agreed a series of proposed Alterations to RPG9 (covering the period up to 2016) in the form of a Consultation Draft "Milton Keynes & South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy". This is presently the subject of a consultation exercise which was launched on 18 July 2003. The timetable for the consultation from now on is:

13 October 2003	End of consultation period
15 March 2004	Start of Public Examination
7 June 2004	Public Examination Panel reports to SoS
August 2004	SoS publishes proposed changes for consultation
December 2004	SoS publishes final RPG Alterations

8 Directly reflecting the recommendations of the Technical Assessments, the Draft Strategy requires Aylesbury Vale to accommodate an additional 16,400 dwellings between 2001 and 2016, of which new allocations (over and above existing commitments) provide for 2,800 dwellings to the South East of Aylesbury and 2,500 dwellings adjacent to the South West flank of Milton Keynes. Milton Keynes would be required to accommodate 32,600 dwellings (plus the 2,500 in AVDC) through urban intensification and extensions East of Milton Keynes (west of M1 Junction 13) and West of Milton Keynes (east of Calverton). See attached plans.

9 The consultation document also indicates the road, rail and other infrastructure that would be required to support this growth, whilst further emphasising the need to create sustainable communities, with jobs, affordable housing, strategic open space and other community infrastructure.

10 The Draft Strategy is being progressed as Alterations to Regional Planning Guidance for the East of England (RSS14 in preparation); East Midlands (RPG8); and South East of England (RPG9). It takes the form of a "Part A" which covers the whole MKSM area and a "Part B" in 3 sections - one for each of the constituent regions. Each Sub-Area lies in a different standard region. The Sub-Areas are the administrative areas of: Bedfordshire and Luton (East of England region), Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale (South

East region) and Northamptonshire (East Midlands region). The policies proposed in the Draft MKSM Sub-Regional Strategy (the Consultation Document) relate to:

Strategic Policies for the whole MKSM Sub-Region ("Part A")

Strategic Policy 1: The Spatial Framework- Locations for Growth

Strategic Policy 2: Strategic Communications Infrastructure

Strategic Policy 3: Sustainable Communities

Strategic Policy 4: Effective Delivery

Policies for the Milton Keynes & Aylesbury Vale Growth Areas ("Part B")

Policy 1: Spatial Framework for Milton Keynes Growth Area

Policy 2: Aylesbury Growth Area

Policy 3 - Delivering Sustainable Communities

Treatment of the historic environment

- 11 Treatment of the historic environment, and indeed of the natural environment and landscape in general, throughout the MKSM study has been weak. Consideration of local environmental impacts has been almost wholly restricted to statutorily designated sites, and even failed to take consistent account of these. In its only direct reference to the historic environment the strategy says (page 7), "There is a richness in the character and heritage of the countryside ... ", but that recognition is not explicitly followed through in the objectives and strategic policies.

Conclusions

- 12 The technical opinion of BCC strategic planning staff accepts that the testing of the growth in the Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale Growth Area Study has shown that the levels of growth proposed for the period to 2016 can be accommodated. However, there is a need to test the impact of the proposals on the historic environment, especially within the context of the Delivering Sustainable Communities (Policy 3). This will be especially relevant in assessing in more detail the potential impacts of urban extensions on the flanks of Milton Keynes (at Aylesbury, these considerations generally support focusing development to the south of the town rather than to the north and northwest). The County Archaeological Service is therefore preparing a study of the historic environment of the wider Milton Keynes (peripheral) area jointly with English Heritage, Milton Keynes Council and Bedfordshire County Council. A more detailed separate case study of the western flank of Milton Keynes (in Aylesbury Vale District) is also in preparation for the County Council and Aylesbury Vale District Council. The findings of these studies will feed into the local planning framework and are intended as an input into the Public Examination into the draft Strategy. The work is expected to include the identification of historic environment-led enhancement opportunities relating these, as far as possible, to the broad objectives set out in the Communities Plan and to wider objectives for landscape and nature conservation and enhancement. As well as informing the Public Examination the studies are intended to guide Local Development Frameworks and the Local Delivery Vehicles once these are established.

- 13 There is greater concern over the potential impacts of longer term (post 2016) growth which might require substantial greenfield development. Although the RPG revisions do not cover this period the historic environment studies will enable key issues to be identified at an early stage of consideration.

E. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Buckinghamshire County Structure Plan Review. Northwest of Aylesbury Historic Environment Sustainability Assessment. BCC 2003.

Consultation Draft Milton Keynes & South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy (Proposed RPG Alterations), July 2003, EERA, EMA & SEERA

Milton Keynes and South Midlands. Final Report of Study. Roger Tym & Partners, September 2002.

Milton Keynes & Aylesbury Growth Area Studies, May 2003, Roger Tym & Partners

Sustainable communities: building for the future. Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, January 2003.

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