

AGENDA ITEM: 6

Milton Keynes and South Midlands Strategy

To: Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum

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A. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1 To advise the Forum of the historic environment response to the Milton Keynes & South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy and forthcoming issues.

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) **CONSIDER the desirability of lobbying the new Milton Keynes Partnership Committee directly to ensure proper provision for the historic environment and offering the Committee voting membership of this Forum.**

C. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 3 Full assessment of the implications of the MKSM Strategy for the historic environment could not be contained within established budgets. English Heritage has provided financial support for the Milton Keynes Growth Area Historic Environment Assessment as part of the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Historic Landscape Characterisation Project.

D. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4 Treatment of the historic environment in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy 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.

6. In order to illustrate and help redress these deficiencies, English Heritage commissioned the County Archaeological Service to prepare a study of the historic environment of Milton Keynes Urban Expansion as a joint project with English Heritage, Milton Keynes Council and Bedfordshire County Council. The report has been submitted as a core document to the Public Examination.
7. The *Milton Keynes Urban Expansion Historic Environment Assessment* uses the newly developed technique of Historic Landscape Characterisation to assess the sensitivity and capacity of the whole historic environment, not just designated sites. Fifteen "historic character zones" were identified and attributed to three broad sensitivity bands. The most sensitive historic landscapes were found to lie on the western and southern flanks of Milton Keynes around Beachampton, Whaddon, Salden Manor and along the Greensand ridge in the Brickhills and Woburn. The least sensitive areas were found on the south-eastern flank of Milton Keynes around M1 Junction 18 and in the Marston Vale in Bedfordshire. Opportunities for enhancement of the historic environment, including the creation of "green infrastructure" have also been identified.
8. Although the proposed urban expansions at Calverton and Newton Longville would involve some loss of sensitive historic landscape (principally parliamentary enclosure fields) and of buried archaeological sites, there is greater concern over the potential impacts of longer term (post 2016) growth, which might require substantial greenfield development in the vicinity of Salden and Whaddon. Such a long term trajectory would be seriously damaging and should be strongly resisted. Instead the study contends this area, centred on the former Forest of Whaddon Chase, could be a focus for the creation of "green infrastructure" involving replanting of woodland as a public amenity.
9. The proposed Local Delivery Vehicle for Milton Keynes is a Committee of English Partnerships which would assume planning powers for a designated Urban Development Area (UDA). Under the current proposal the UDA will encompass growth areas on the eastern and western flanks of Milton Keynes but not extending into the adjacent areas of Aylesbury Vale District. There has been a truncated consultation period for the UDA designation, which ended on 1st March with a stated intention of setting up the new Milton Keynes Partnership Committee by the end of April 2004.
10. The MKSM Strategy also envisages substantial urban expansion and the creation of a linear park on the south side of Aylesbury. The

strategy avoids the most sensitive historic landscapes to the north-west of the town so the main focus of historic environment comment will be to secure adequate mitigation with regard to archaeological sites, and wherever possible their incorporation within sensitively designed “green infrastructure”. Some funding has been secured by Aylesbury Vale District Council for enhancement of open space provision and it is hoped that some of this will be available to manage the transition of the Quarrendon scheduled ancient monument from countryside to urban fringe as a consequence of the development of the Berryfields and Weedon Hill MDAs. At Aylesbury the proposed Local Delivery Vehicle is a Limited Liability Partnership with planning controls remaining with the local authorities. Whilst it will be important to establish close working relationships with the LLP this arrangement is likely to be less problematic for the historic environment as it works within the normal planning system.

E. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

Milton Keynes Urban Expansion. Historic Environment Assessment, February 2004. English Heritage, Buckinghamshire County Council and Milton Keynes Council.

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