

**SOUTH EAST PLAN**

To: Buckinghamshire Historic Environment Forum

Date: 30<sup>th</sup> March 2005

Authors: Report by the Senior Archaeological Officer

**A. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1 To report on the historic environment issues raised by the consultation draft of the South East Plan and recommend a response by the Forum.

**B. PROPOSED ACTION**

**2 The Forum is invited to:**

**AUTHORISE the Chairman to send comments on the South East Plan on behalf of the Forum taking due account of the matters raised in this paper and in discussion.**

**C. RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

- 3 None

**D. SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 4 The draft South East Plan is out for consultation until 15<sup>th</sup> April. Members will doubtless be familiar with the demands for growth in housing, employment and related infrastructure and the pressures these demands will place upon the environment. The Plan seeks to mediate these potentially conflicting demands to achieve sustainable development.
- 5 For Buckinghamshire the main areas proposed for development are in the north of the county, in the identified growth area centred on Aylesbury and Milton Keynes, and potentially in the southernmost parts of the county in the so-called "Western Corridor". Within these areas historic sites and landscapes will be at risk from urban expansion, both direct destruction and isolation from context into "at risk" islands within modern development. This process needs to be positively managed through the identification of key sites as "green or cultural infrastructure". The central belt of the Chilterns is allocated only modest growth but will inevitably face indirect pressures from rising populations all around it, again these pressures need to be recognised and managed for example through the Chiltern Conservation Board and its Management Plan.

6 The Plan includes a specific historic environment policy (see appendix) as well as many policies with a bearing on the historic environment. Whether the Plan is truly “sustainable” with respect to the historic environment is perhaps doubtful but is difficult to assess objectively due to a lack of information and agreed definition. It is suggested that the Forum may wish to respond by supporting the inclusion of an historic environment policy, emphasising the need for it to “join up” with other policies (e.g. on villages, town centres and landscape) and making the following specific suggestions for its improvement:

- a) Make explicit reference to Historic Environment Records as an essential source of information for managing the historic environment, and the desirability of their enhancement.
- b) Make explicit reference to Characterisation as a methodology for informed and sensitive management of change in relation to conservation areas and the wider historic environment both, built and rural. Suggest that the Plan itself should draw upon the results of Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC), which is now nearing completion across the South East
- c) Emphasise the need for further information on the state of the historic environment and the impact of change in order to monitor the extent to which the Plan can be considered genuinely “sustainable”.
- d) Emphasise the positive role the historic environment can play in the maintenance and creation of sustainable communities by providing a sense of place, local distinctiveness and a focus for green and cultural infrastructure.
- e) Require Local Development Frameworks to include policies for the conservation and management of the historic environment in all its manifestations, not just designated sites. Where physical preservation cannot be achieved the LDF should require appropriate archaeological recording to be conducted within a recognised research framework.

## E. BACKGROUND PAPERS

South East Plan (Consultation Draft)

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