

**MILTON KEYNES AND SOUTH MIDLANDS
(MKSM) SUB-REGIONAL STRATEGY –
RESPONSE TO PROPOSALS PUBLISHED
FOR FINAL CONSULTATION BY OFFICE
OF THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER**

Director of Environment & Planning

(1.0) Purpose

- 1.1 This report is to allow Scrutiny Committee to consider the alterations to the MKSM Sub-Regional Strategy published for final consultation by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. These changes represent the Government's response to the recommendations from the Independent Panel who held an Examination in Public into this Strategy earlier this year. Once the ODPM has made any changes as a result of comments received during this consultation the Guidance will be issued in its final form and we, and the Local Delivery Vehicle (Delivery 2031) must work to it.
- 1.2 This report has been brought to this Committee so that Scrutiny's views can be known when the issue is discussed at Cabinet on 30th November and Full Council on 1st December. Unfortunately, delays by the ODPM in publishing the final consultation document have meant that at the time of preparing this report it has not yet been received. There will however be a Seminar for all AVDC Members on 10th November at which the contents and implications of the consultation document will be explored, and an update will be provided to this Committee.

(2.0) Recommendation

That this Committee consider the final consultation from ODPM and resolve what comments they would wish to make to inform the subsequent discussions by Cabinet and Council.

(3.0) Supporting Information

- 3.1 The Government has decided that the wider Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-region will be a Growth Area. To deliver this a sub-regional strategy is being produced for the MKSM area, which will constitute alterations to the Regional Planning Guidance for each of the regions covered by this sub-region (In our area, this means the Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9)). The general process that this follows is:
 - a) SEERA (South East England Regional Assembly) is the Regional Planning Body and it brings forward proposed Alterations to the existing Regional Guidance. This is integrated with corresponding changes to the Guidance for the other two regions involved in the MKSM Area.
 - b) Public consultation on these proposals
 - c) Independent Panel appointed by ODPM and holds an Examination in Public into the proposals
 - d) Panel publishes its recommendations
 - e) ODPM considers the Panel's recommendations and produces further proposed alterations for final public consultation

- f) After the results of that final consultation are considered the ODPM issues the final Regional Planning Guidance
- g) Local Planning Authorities must work to that guidance and revise Local Plans/Local Development Frameworks to deliver it.

3.2 Stage (a) above was informed by the original MKSM Study (published in September 2002) which proposed that Aylesbury and Milton Keynes should be growth areas within the sub-region. This Study was subsequently supported by the Growth Area Assessment report (published May 2003) which developed this in more detail for Aylesbury and Milton Keynes. The formal proposals for the Sub-Regional Strategy were published in July 2003.

3.3 The text of this Council's formal response to the consultation (stage (b)) is at Appendix A to this report and followed discussion at Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and Council. The Panel's recommendation is a lengthy (375 page) document but the key points from it are at Appendix B.

3.4 It was originally understood the Government's response (stage (e)) would be published in early/mid October, with the final consultation period running until December. However this has been delayed and at the time this report had to be produced, was not yet available. Assuming it is published before then, a seminar for AVDC Members has been arranged for 10th November to explain the proposals and further information will be provided to this Committee.

3.5 In advance of seeing the detailed document, your officers consider the key issues for the Council to consider in responding to this consultation are:

- The magnitude of growth proposed
- The degree of detail over the location and direction of growth
- The balance between housing growth and economic growth
- The provision of both local and strategic infrastructure to support the growth
- The emphasis placed on environmental and sustainable development issues
- The future planning and delivery arrangements that are proposed

3.6 This Committee may wish to structure its comments around these issues.

(4.0) Options Considered

There are no realistic options other than to respond to the consultation

(5.0) Reasons for Recommendation

So that the subsequent discussions by Cabinet and Council can be informed by this Committee's scrutiny of the matter.

(6.0) Resource Implications

This report and the associated work can be brought forward within existing resources.

(7.0) Response to Key Aims and Outcomes

The growth agenda will have a bearing in the long term on all of our Key Aims and Outcomes.

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Background Documents:

Original MKSM study and Growth Area Assessments;

Proposed Alterations to RPG9;

Report of the Panel;

ODPM's final consultation document (when published)

Mksm-envscrutiny-nov04 18199.doc

Environment 16.11.04

Appendix A – text of Council’s formal response to previous formal consultation

The Council has formally considered the Consultation Draft in relation to the above and its response is set out below:-

- 1) This Council
 - a) Accepts that significant growth will take place within Aylesbury Vale District but is concerned at the amount of the growth proposed.
 - b) Will become constructively engaged in the process of delivering this growth.
 - c) Accepts the general level, phasing and broad distribution of growth for the sub-region put forward in the proposed alterations, subject to commitments by the Government to deliver adequate infrastructure and resources to Aylesbury Vale.
 - d) Emphasises that in identifying the infrastructure requirement for further growth full account must be taken of the current infrastructure deficits (e.g. bed spaces at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, strategic transport links, public transport, strategic open spaces) and these must be resolved (and funded) before further growth occurs.
 - e) Has major concerns that key infrastructure improvements, especially road improvements associated with Aylesbury, and the East/West Rail reopening, are being phased post 2011 and considers these must be brought forwards.
 - f) Considers that :-
 - i) The road infrastructure improvements identified for Aylesbury and its surroundings are too limited. In particular they fail to address:-
 - The need to provide a link between the A41 Aston Clinton Road to the east of Aylesbury and the A418 from Milton Keynes (identified as a spoke in the emerging Regional Transport Strategy) given that growth is focused on the urban areas of Milton Keynes and Aylesbury.
 - The need to improve linkages between Aylesbury and south Buckinghamshire/ the Thames Valley, recognising that some of the expanded population will work in those areas.
 - Aylesbury’s role as a transport hub which calls for improvements to the main road network linking Aylesbury with other key towns in the region (e.g. Buckingham, Bicester & Oxford).
 - The need to make specific provision for public transport corridors along the key radial routes into Aylesbury town centre.
 - The need to improve the network of distributor roads to the north side of Aylesbury, given current levels of congestion.
 - The need to provide improved access to the existing employment sites in Aylesbury so that they continue to attract investment and provide an employment base for the expanded population.
 - i) Alternative routes for the A421 Milton Keynes Southern by-pass running to the north of Newton Longville should be considered to maintain the integrity of the Vale.
 - ii) The proposed distributor road to the south of Aylesbury should be a local distributor road and not a by-pass for the Town.
 - iii) Stoke Mandeville Station by virtue of its size, access and character, would be inadequate to act as a focus for the growth proposed to the south of Aylesbury.

- g) Supports the priority placed on achieving sustainable communities and in particular the need for the phased provision of high quality community, economic, environmental and social infrastructure and services as detailed in the consultation document. However to promote sustainable communities the Regional Spatial Strategy should include a policy requirement that, for major schemes at least, new development should be required to meet sustainability standards at least to BREEAM standard “very good” or equivalent.
- 2) This Council registers its strong concern that the draft guidance is too site-specific in identifying areas for additional development around Aylesbury. The consultation document does not make the case for this development to be located to the south of the Town, and this location should not be accepted until it is justified in a reasoned public debate in which all sites around Aylesbury can be properly, publicly and rationally considered. The Council also emphasises that the detailed location and arrangements for growth will need to be considered through future Local Development Frameworks prepared by the District Council, and which minimises the impact of growth on the character and identity of nearby villages and the surrounding countryside.
- 3) This Council believes that the SEERA consultation process has been ineffective in involving the local communities and the people who will be directly affected by proposed development, particularly given that the sub-regional guidance is to be so precise in identifying the areas of growth. This Council will support the involvement in the process of those local communities most affected by the proposed growth targets for Aylesbury and Milton Keynes, in order to create sustainable communities.
- 4) This Council reiterates that no change should be made to its administrative boundaries as a result of these proposals.

Appendix B – Key Points from MKSM EiP Panel’s recommendations

Background

The consultation draft Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy, published in July 2003, considered broad locations for significant growth in both Aylesbury and Milton Keynes. The Sub-Regional Strategy was considered at a Public Examination in March/April 2004 by an independent panel of experts. The Panel’s Report has since been published (2 August).

Milton Keynes - Key issues and recommendations

The key issues and recommendations relating to Milton Keynes include:

- Milton Keynes should continue to grow in the long term, but the previous approach to development is now felt to be unsustainable and should not be perpetuated.
- An extension of the period covered by the Sub-Regional Strategy from 2016 to 2021, with further recommendations being made in respect of the period to 2031.
- The Panel Report notes that it is planned to accommodate an increase of 44,900 homes in the Milton Keynes Urban Area in the period to 2021, and that existing proposals will accommodate 19,000 homes up to 2016.
- The remaining requirement (to 2016) of 14,600 should be provided through sustainable urban extensions to Milton Keynes City to the west, the south west, and the east; beyond 2016, a balanced programme of urban extensions and opportunities within the urban area should continue.
- The Panel recommends that these levels of development are based on the need to plan for an increase of 44,900 jobs in the period to 2021. There is considered to be sufficient planned employment supply to meet the forecast demand to 2016, but this will need to be kept under review through the Local Development Documents process.
- The Panel considers there is little justification for the southern by-pass of Milton Keynes as proposed in the Guidance, and that it has no place in the Regional Spatial Strategy. They believe that there should be further work on how to improve East-West links across Milton Keynes, suggesting this should use existing (possibly improved) roads such as the A421.
- The importance of providing social and community infrastructure is emphasised, but the requirement for a new hospital shown on the proposed Spatial Diagram should be deleted as it is too specific and did not appear to match the needs now being identified by the relevant agencies.
- The details of directions for growth at Milton Keynes up to 2021, beyond those established through the emerging Milton Keynes Local Plan (to cover the period to 2011) should be established through the preparation of appropriate Local Development Documents (LDDs). The Sub-Regional Strategy should not therefore identify the number of dwellings to come within AVDC’s area.
- LDDs covering growth outside the Milton Keynes Unitary Authority Area should be prepared in conjunction with AVDC and Mid-Bedfordshire DC and other relevant partners.
- Any development proposed within Aylesbury Vale towards Milton Keynes’ total provision should take place post-2011. The Panel Report suggests a figure of 2500, but advises that the actual figure should be established through the LDD.
- The Report further recommends that, beyond 2021, Milton Keynes should expect to continue at broadly the same rate, adding a further 23,700 homes in the following decade.

- A vision for 2031 should be prepared, involving Milton Keynes Council, its neighbouring authorities, local communities, Government, and a wide range of other stakeholders. This work is already underway.

Aylesbury - Key issues and recommendations

The most significant issues and recommendations from the Panel's report in relation to Aylesbury are:

- Aylesbury is confirmed as one of the growth locations in the Milton Keynes & South Midlands area (although at the time of the Public Examination, concerns were expressed about the apparent absence of a clear future vision for the town).
- Overall 14,100 dwellings should be provided (a reduction in 750 from the original proposals), but the Panel has extended the time period within which these should be delivered from 2016 to 2021. For Aylesbury this would represent an expansion of some 55% from the town's 2001 size of around 26,000 dwellings.
- The specific locations for growth indicated on the maps in the draft Sub-Regional Strategy should not be included, such matters being for the forthcoming Local Development Framework to determine, which the District Council is required to prepare.
- Transport issues affecting the town and its future development options should be explored in more depth.
- Appropriate arrangements will need to be defined for monitoring the provision of this scale of housing against a net growth in jobs of 635 per annum over the period 2001/2021 – a total of 12,690.
- The need to urgently resolve the waste water management issues is highlighted.
- The report also includes some specific suggestions on activities for the Aylesbury Local Delivery Vehicle:-
 - High-quality radial bus corridors: the Panel considers it essential for the LDV to ensure that resources are made available to complete the whole system as soon as possible in order to provide effective alternative travel opportunities to the town's fast-growing population.
 - The LDV should seek to develop the business case to extend the Chiltern Line from the terminus at Aylesbury northwards to Berryfields, and seek to deliver this in 2006-2011.

Rest of District

- Although the report concentrates on the "Growth Towns" of Aylesbury and Milton Keynes, it makes a number of general comments about reinforcing the emphasis that should be given to environmental issues and sustainability in new development. Other key points for the rest of the District are
- That 3,300 homes should be provided in the "rest of the District" in the period up to 2016 (NB this is one case where the time horizon has not been taken forward to 2021)
- In commenting on the overall strategy, the Panel have said that alternative approaches

involving new settlements are not appropriate for the period up to 2021, and they do not recommend any such approach in the longer term.

Appendix C – Summary of MKSM Proposed Changes (as per Members’ Information 28/10/04)

Background

The emerging Milton Keynes and South Midlands (MKSM) Sub-Regional Strategy considers broad locations for significant growth across the MKSM area, identifying both Aylesbury and Milton Keynes as growth towns.

When finalised, the Sub-Regional Strategy will form part of the regional planning policy basis for the South East (firstly as an alteration to current policy set out in RPG9 (Regional Planning Guidance for the South East), and later to inform the new overall housing figures for the region to be included in the South East Plan, alongside revised housing figures for the rest of Buckinghamshire).

The first draft of the Sub-Regional Strategy was published for public consultation in July 2003. It was then considered at a Public Examination in March/April 2004, held by an independent panel of experts. The Panel’s Report was published in August, and reported to Members in a Members’ Information sheet (16 September), and at a Members’ Seminar (11 October).

This note provides an update in respect of the latest stage, the publication of the Government’s ‘Proposed Changes’ to the Sub-Regional Strategy.

Context

The Proposed Changes were published on 26 October. They constitute a revised draft of the Sub-Regional Strategy, incorporating the changes that the Deputy Prime Minister proposes to make to the original consultation draft of the Sub-Regional Strategy. The changes take into account the comments made on the consultation draft, and the recommendations contained in the August 2004 Panel Report.

The purpose of the Proposed Changes is to:

- provide strategic guidance on the scale, location and timing of development and associated employment, transport and other infrastructure to 2021, and the necessary delivery mechanisms; and
- provide a longer-term perspective for the sub-region to 2031, although any housing figures quoted are provisional at the moment, and will be subject to later review.

The Proposed Changes have themselves been published for consultation: the deadline for comments is 23 December 2004.

Key issues

- The Proposed Changes reflect the Panel’s recommendation that the Sub-Regional Strategy should cover the period up to 2021, and not 2016 as proposed in the original draft. The revised draft also broadly reflects the recommendations made by the Panel in relation to the scale of development proposed.
- The Sub-Regional Strategy proposes growth across the MKSM Sub-Region as follows:

	Current Policies	Sub-Regional Strategy (SRS) Additions	SRS new homes by 2021 (a + b)	Short term build rate in SRS 2001-06 (average houses per annum)	Long term build rate in SRS 2001-2021 (average houses per annum)
	(a)	(b)			
Aylesbury	7,750	7,250	15,000	480	750
Bedford	19,500	Nil	19,500	750	975
Corby, Kettering & Wellingborough	14,900	19,200	34,100	1,350	1,705
Luton, Dunstable & Houghton Regis (with Leighton-Linslade)	8,750	17,550	26,300	700	1,315
Milton Keynes	27,150	17,750	44,900	1,580	2,245
Northampton	28,100	1,900	30,000	1,050	1,500
Total for the Growth Towns	106,150	63,650	169,800	5,910	8,490

- The Proposed Changes also suggest provisional housing figures to cover the period between 2021 and 2031, although these are to be reviewed at a later date before being confirmed.
- Where the original draft included maps for each growth town, with possible locations for growth shown within each, the Proposed Changes include only one ‘Spatial Diagram’, which covers the whole sub-region, and does not specify the precise locations for growth in each growth town. ‘Directions for growth’ are identified for the larger towns, such as Milton Keynes, but the detailed locations for growth are left to each local area to determine.
- There is a strong emphasis on the delivery of growth within the Proposed Changes, with recognition that infrastructure needs must be met if growth is to take place. The role of the utility providers in providing this infrastructure is also set out clearly.
- Leighton Linslade is identified as a growth town in the Proposed Changes, to support the existing contribution of the Luton/Dunstable/Houghton Regis conurbation towards the overall Sub-Regional Strategy provision for Luton and South Beds. Whilst this was recommended in the Panel Report, a new development has been the proposed accommodation of some of Leighton Linslade’s development within Aylesbury Vale.

Aylesbury

- The Proposed Changes recognise Aylesbury’s role as both a County and a market town, stating that it ‘should grow through strengthening and extending its traditional role’.
- The housing figures for Aylesbury town to 2021 have been increased from 14,100 in the Panel Report to 15,000 (a further 8500 dwellings are provisionally suggested for Aylesbury town in the period 2021-31):

2001-06	2006-11	2011-16	2016-21	TOTAL 2001- 2021
2,400	3,800	4,400	4,400	15,000
c. 480 pa	c. 760 pa	c. 880 pa	c. 880 pa	c. 750 pa

- The remainder of the District is to accommodate an additional 3,300 dwellings to 2016 (as previously suggested by the Panel).
- Whilst the Proposed Changes leave the future direction of growth to be determined locally, reference is made within the document to the ‘option’ of utilising opportunities presented by a new southern distributor road, ‘which should come forward in parallel with the southerly and south easterly expansion of the town’ (for which public sector funding is required in advance of planning obligations).
- The Proposed Changes carry forward the Panel’s net employment growth figures for the District to 2021, i.e., 12,690 jobs.
- The Proposed Changes suggest a number of areas to be addressed in planning for the proposed growth:
 - The production of a framework for renaissance for the town centre is needed, as has been produced for Milton Keynes.
 - The need for larger scale informal recreation facilities must be recognised and allowed for in the planning and design process; formal recreation and sporting facilities should also be addressed.
 - Emphasis is placed on realising the economic potential of Aylesbury by focusing on the provision of ‘quality employment land and buildings and attracting knowledge-based industries’.
- With regard to infrastructure:
 - A new rail station is proposed at Berryfields, and improvements to the A418 are noted as being under consideration.
 - The need to address water and sewerage issues is recognised, and the legal obligation on the utilities to ensure delivery reinforced; the need to upgrade electricity supply is also recognised.
 - The expansion of education, healthcare and other public services is also needed.

Milton Keynes

- Milton Keynes is recognised in the Proposed Changes as a ‘major regional centre’, rather than a ‘major and influential city’, as originally proposed.
- 44,900 dwellings are proposed to 2021:

2001-06	2006-11	2011-16	2016-21	2001-16	TOTAL 2001-2021
7,900	15,000	11,000	11,000	33,900	44,900
1,580 pa	3,000 pa	2,200 pa	2,200 pa	2,260 pa	2,245 pa

- A further 23,700 dwellings are provisionally suggested for Milton Keynes in the period 2021-31.
- The directions of growth for Milton Keynes are identified as being to the west, south and east (north and south of the A421), on the grounds that this reflects the detailed work already undertaken, and enables detailed local planning documents to be brought forward rapidly.

- The precise locations and amounts of any of this housing to be provided within Aylesbury Vale or Mid Beds Districts are to be determined locally through the preparation of joint Local Development Documents (the successors to Local Plans); any such development would come forward after 2011.
- The Proposed Changes carry forward the Panel Report's recommended employment figures: 44,900 net employment growth to 2021.
- With regard to transport infrastructure, improvements to A421 are listed as being under consideration, and M1 junction improvements are proposed; a new station is proposed, and other public transport improvements; the Milton Keynes Southern Bypass schemes are not listed as being under active consideration.

Leighton Linlade

- Leighton Linlade is identified as an additional growth location, to contribute towards the overall Sub-Regional Strategy provision for Luton and South Beds.
- The Proposed Changes suggest that some of the growth may need to take place within Aylesbury Vale, necessitating early discussions and joint working between Aylesbury Vale District Council, Luton Borough Council, South Bedfordshire District Council and North Hertfordshire District Council.
- Housing figures are provided for the combined Luton/ Dunstable/ Houghton Regis and Leighton Linlade growth towns:

2001-06	2006-11	2011-16	2016-21	TOTAL 2001-2021
3,500	6,500	8,000	8,300	26,300
(c. 700 pa)	(c. 1,300 pa)	(c. 1,600 pa)	(c. 1,660 pa)	(c. 1315 pa)

- The levels of development proposed are based on the need to plan for an increase of 13,500 jobs in Luton Borough and South Bedfordshire District to 2021.
- Land should be safeguarded for a further 15,400 houses and 7,400 jobs between 2021 and 2031.
- To allow for the expansion of Leighton Linlade, a review of the Green Belt is recommended.
- Improvements to A418 under identified as being under consideration

A full copy of the Proposed Changes is available by pursuing the following link:

<http://www.go-em.gov.uk/planning/mksm/consultation.php>