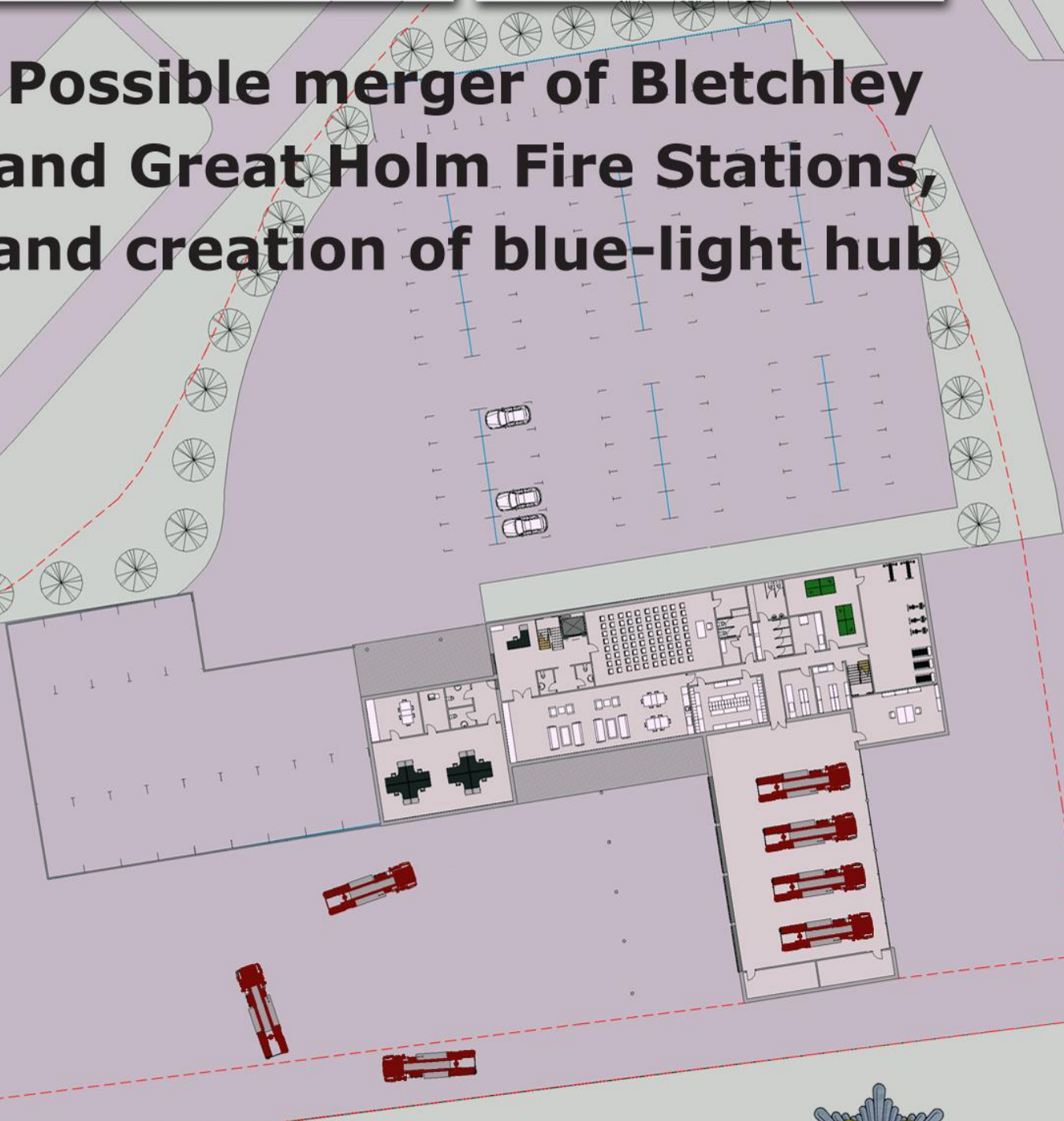




# Possible merger of Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations, and creation of blue-light hub



Public consultation:  
14 September to  
9 November 2015



**Introduction**

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority is consulting the public, stakeholders and its staff about a proposal to create a joint blue-light hub station for Bletchley and Great Holm at West Ashland in Milton Keynes. It would be a base for Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service and Thames Valley Police to work together more effectively for the benefit of the local area.

Moving long-established fire stations is always a sensitive issue, but in this case we are confident that the proposal is safe and cost-effective while building greater collaboration between the emergency services and offering some facilities for local community groups to use.

In our **Public Safety Plan 2015-20**, we set out our blueprint for the next five years. Included within this was a proposal to review the number and location of our fire stations while continuing to strive to reduce risk across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

Under the proposal, all existing fire engines and other resources at Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations would be relocated to the new hub station. The fire stations at Broughton, Newport Pagnell and Olney would continue as now, unaffected by this proposal.

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority is consulting widely about this proposal. The consultation is your chance to have your say because no decisions have yet been taken. We will consider your views, and all the evidence, before making a decision – so please take part.

This document explains why we believe that the co-location of blue-light services will help provide even more effective, joined-up emergency services to the communities of Milton Keynes. The ways in which you can feed your comments back to us are outlined on page 12.



Councillor Adrian Busby,  
Chairman,  
Buckinghamshire  
& Milton Keynes  
Fire Authority



Jason Thelwell,  
Chief Fire Officer,  
Buckinghamshire  
Fire & Rescue  
Service

## **Current position**

The firefighters based at Bletchley and Great Holm provide 24-hour, immediate response to incidents. Both fire stations also have on-call crews who are paged to come in when needed.

Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service has undergone a lot of positive changes over the last five years, meaning that firefighters are out in the community more than ever. We also have a mobilising system which uses automated vehicle location technology to select the nearest fire engine, regardless of whether it's in a fire station, to ensure that our communities will always benefit from the quickest possible attendance in an emergency.

This means the location of fire stations becomes less important when crews are out doing life-saving community work.

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority has been very successful in a number of bids to the Government, most recently securing a grant of £2.8million to build a new fire station. As this money is coming directly from the Government, there is no additional cost to the local community through extra council tax.

If further changes in Milton Keynes that could affect the service you receive from us are proposed in any of our future plans, we will consult with you again.

## **Why are we consulting?**

The existing fire and police stations in Bletchley are located within an area identified for pedestrian link and public realm improvements by Milton Keynes Council's "Fixing the Links" project and also within an "opportunity area" identified in within the emerging West Bletchley Neighbourhood Plan.

We are keen to support the efforts to improve pedestrian links between Bletchley town centre and the railway station and, indeed, to capitalise on the economic and transportation opportunities flowing from the East-West Rail scheme.

Relocation of both emergency services from their current sites in Sherwood Drive will create a significant redevelopment opportunity to exploit Bletchley's new-found location at the centre of a strategic transport network.

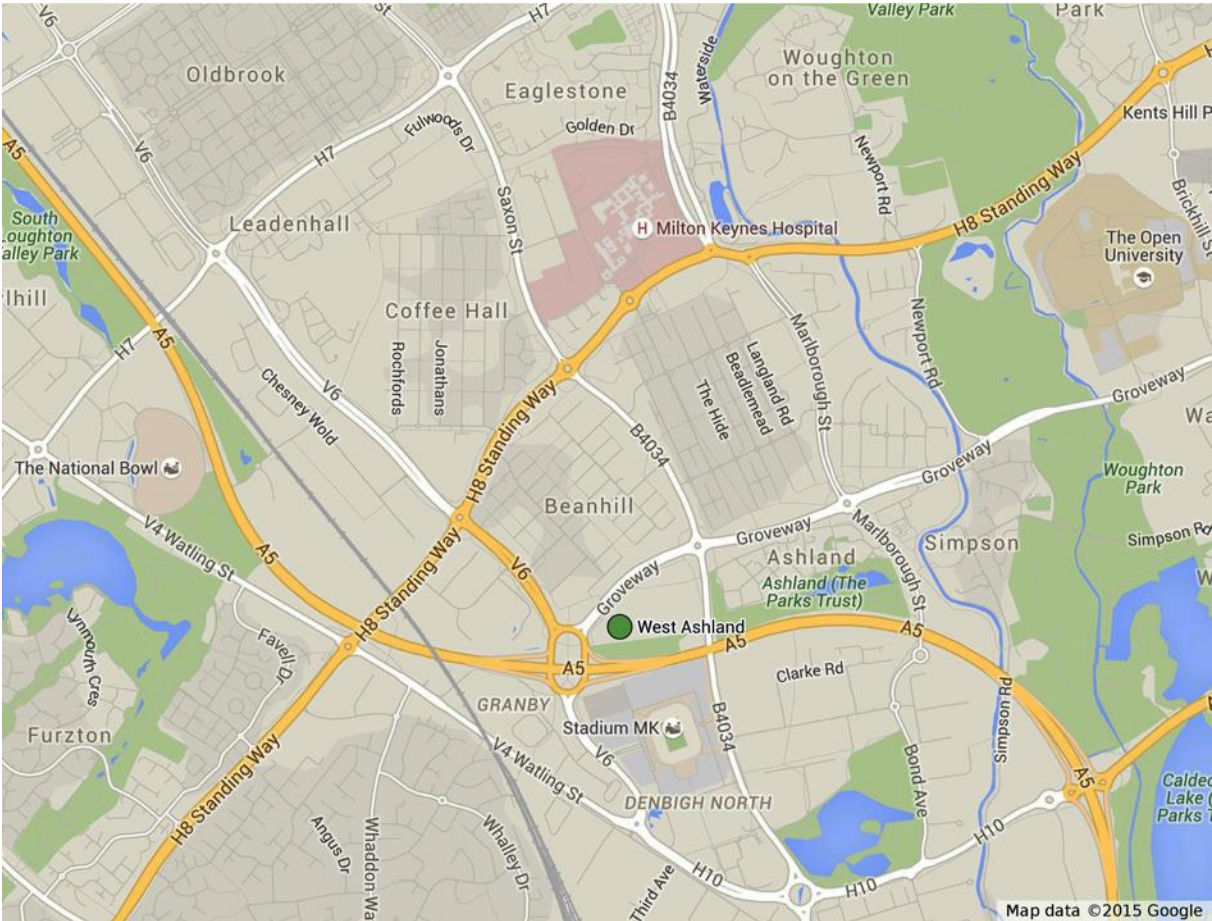
When we submitted a speculative application to the Department for Communities and Local Government for funding in 2014, we outlined that we would need £2.8 million to help fund the construction of a combined fire and police station in Milton Keynes.

The business case that supported this bid will deliver a new multi-agency hub and enable both the fire and police stations located in Sherwood Drive in Bletchley to be vacated and a new fit-for-purpose modern facility to be provided.

We analysed a number of sites for this relocation with a requirement to limit any impact on the time it would take to respond to 999 calls in our communities. The site that came out of this analysis as the best location is at West Ashland, just off the A5 near Redmoor Roundabout.

**Map 1**

Map showing the location of the proposed West Ashland site.



Given the proposed site's proximity to Great Holm, we can also relocate the resources currently based at the fire station there to the new site without adversely affecting our services to the community (see maps on pages 7, 8 and 9) and make significant savings by reducing the cost of our overheads.

However, no decisions have been taken and this consultation is to help Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority consider all points of view and all the evidence – so please let us know your views.

We want to do what is best for the community, so if you have a new suggestion or something that you believe will improve this proposal, please let us know. For example, we are keen to hear from you on what type of public facilities you think should be considered at this site.

### **What does the proposal mean?**

We are proposing to combine the fire stations at Bletchley and Great Holm into one new facility that will be shared with Thames Valley Police. We are also talking to South Central Ambulance Service and other local authority service providers about the potential for relocating some of their local services to this site.

It will be a community resource, with meeting rooms and facilities provided for use by community groups. These facilities are not currently available on our two sites at Bletchley and Great Holm. We see this as an exciting opportunity for the whole community to benefit from a grant of £2.8million.

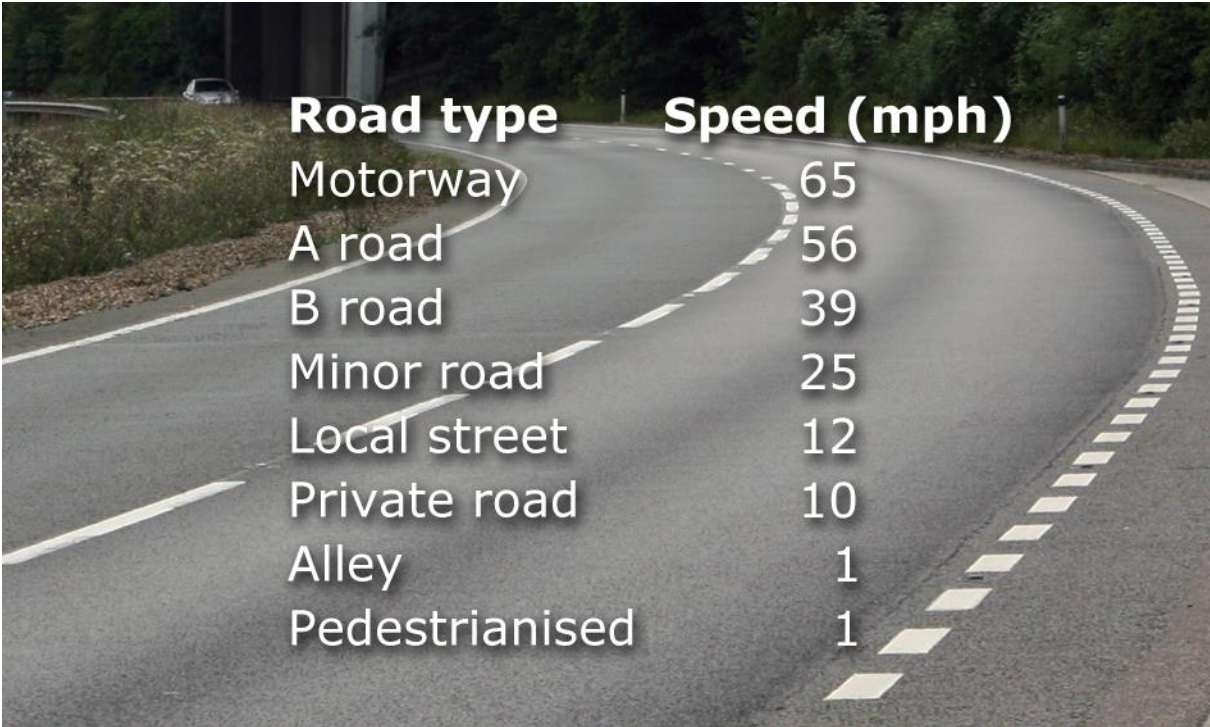
The new shared facility will promote closer working between the blue-light services, with shared facilities creating an emergency service hub environment, enabling staff from all services to be better trained in working together. The sites at Bletchley and Great Holm will be cleared and alternative uses will be found. Any income will be reinvested into the service we provide for our community.

If approved, the hub station would have all the emergency cover resources currently split between Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations. There would be no net reduction in fire engines or their crews.

**How would the proposal affect our emergency response times?**

We have analysed the relevant road networks and speeds of travel to assess the most suitable site for the hub station. For a realistic analysis of journey times, different speeds were applied to different types of road, based upon the mobilising system operated by the Thames Valley Fire Control Service.

The vehicle speeds associated with different kinds of roads were:



Road type	Speed (mph)
Motorway	65
A road	56
B road	39
Minor road	25
Local street	12
Private road	10
Alley	1
Pedestrianised	1

Using these speed norms, we calculated emergency journey times for the different hub station locations based on the time from when a fire engine leaves the station to when it arrives at the incident.

To validate the results, the distances that could be travelled in a given time were compared with actual incident data. We also tested typical journey times under simulated emergency conditions.

Based on our analysis, the maps on the next three pages show five- and 10-minute drive times from the two existing fire stations, as well as from the proposed site at West Ashland.

The West Ashland site is next to the A5, so the improved access to the north and south of Milton Keynes, combined with the grid road network, means that fire engines can travel more quickly to emergency incidents.

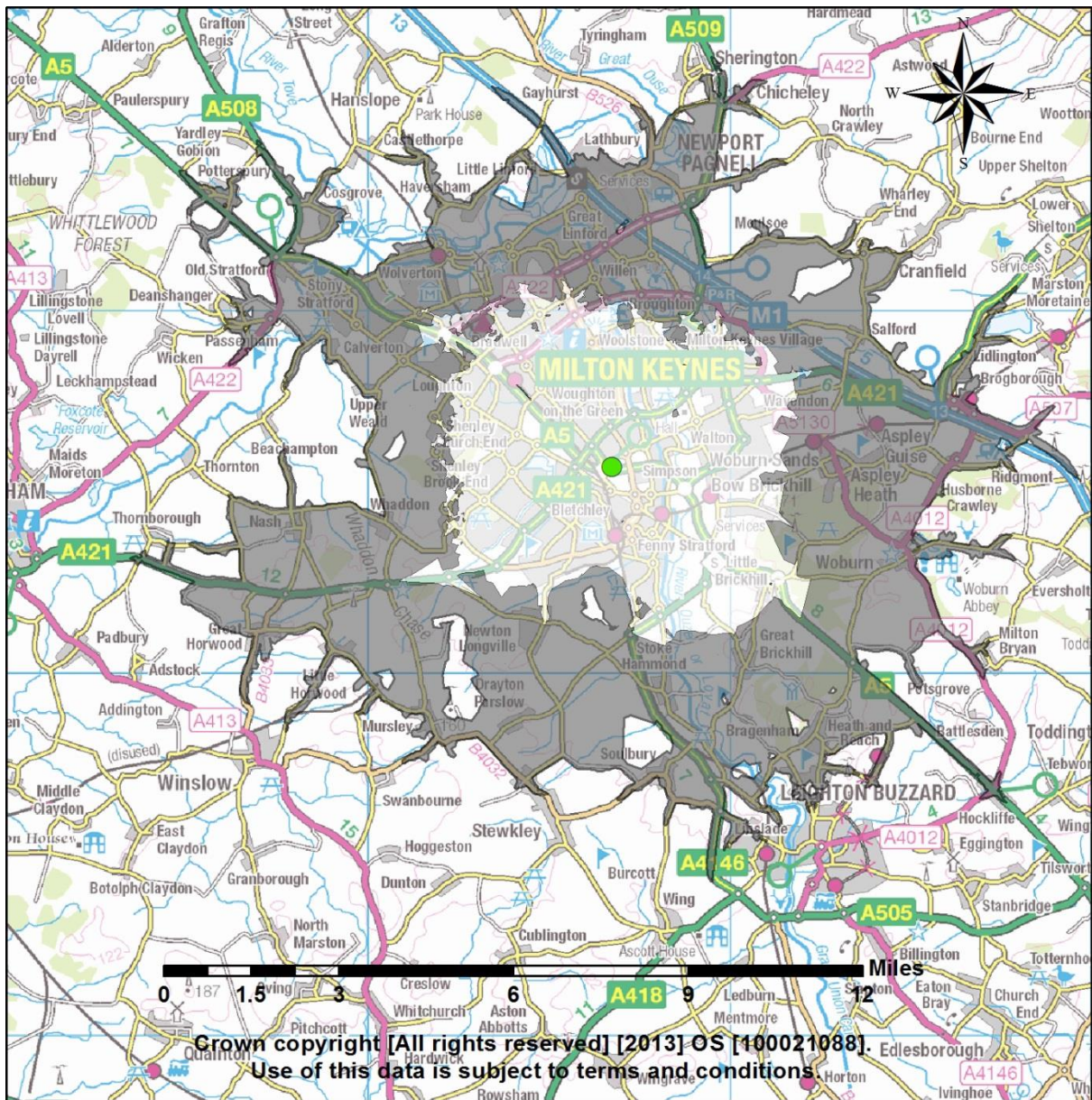






## Map 4

Map showing the area covered within five and 10 minutes – proposed West Ashland site.



**KEY:** ● Proposed West Ashland site    ◻ 5 minutes    ◻ 10 minutes

### **Are there any other advantages?**

The age and condition of Bletchley Fire Station does not lend itself to efficient long-term investment. Improvement benefits will always be constrained by the current layout and lack of modern building technology.

Much more can be gained from seeking a brand new purpose-built facility of modern and energy efficient construction.

Great Holm Fire Station does not have the same problems, but it is not ideal, sitting as it does in the middle of a residential area which has grown up around it as Milton Keynes has expanded.

The key features of the current and proposed fire stations are:



### **Bletchley Fire Station**

- 50 years old.
- Limited access for community use.
- High maintenance cost.
- Not energy efficient.
- Located within the area designated for regeneration in Bletchley.



### Great Holm Fire Station

- 26 years old.
- Limited access for community use.
- High maintenance cost.
- Not energy efficient.
- Located in a residential area.
- Close to the A5.



### Proposed West Ashland site

- Modern.
- Energy efficient.
- Good access and facilities for community use.
- Low maintenance cost.
- Space and facilities for joint blue-light training scenarios.
- Opportunities for shared facilities with other agencies.
- Opportunities to develop facilities to support community health and wellbeing initiatives.
- Located away from residential areas.
- Close to the A5.

## **How to give your feedback**

The consultation period runs from 10am on Monday 14 September 2015 to 10am on Monday 9 November 2015.

Following the consultation period, Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority will consider the responses and all the other evidence before deciding whether the proposal should be implemented, rejected or amended.

To let us know your thoughts, please:

**Fill in the online questionnaire:** [www.opinionresearch.co.uk/BMKFRS](http://www.opinionresearch.co.uk/BMKFRS)

**Email:** [irmp@bucksfire.gov.uk](mailto:irmp@bucksfire.gov.uk)

**Write to:** Public Safety Plan, Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service HQ,  
Stocklake, Aylesbury, HP20 1BD.

If you are reading a hard copy of this consultation document, you can find the online version on the Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service website at [bucksfire.gov.uk/mk](http://bucksfire.gov.uk/mk)