

Report to the Public Engagement & Corporate Consultation Task and Finish Group

Title:	Minerals & Waste LDF Consultation
Date:	6 December 2010
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Electoral divisions affected:	All

Background

1. After the County Council's adoption of the Buckinghamshire Minerals & Waste Local Plan (BM&WLP) in April 2006, the Council began work upon the successor Minerals & Waste Local Development Framework (MWLDF) as required by the "new" planning system introduced in 2004.
2. The MWLDF comprises a "suite" of Local Development Documents (for example, the Statement of Community Involvement) and Development Plan Documents (for example, the emerging Minerals and Waste Core Strategy). The programme (and stages) for the preparation of the various Documents has been agreed with the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) in the Minerals & Waste Local Development Scheme (MWLDS).
3. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, introduced changes to the planning system, one of which is the requirement for local planning authorities to prepare and publish a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) to explain how and when people will be involved in planning processes.
4. The County Council's SCI sets out the standards for involving the community in shaping the planning documents for minerals and waste, and for consulting on planning applications and other development control matters (for minerals and waste and its own developments).
5. During 2006 and 2007 the SCI was subject to three separate six week periods of public consultation. Comments made at each stage helped to inform changes as the Plan developed.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



6. The SCI was examined (by written representations) in July 2007 by an independent Planning Inspector. Following a small number of minor amendments the document was found to be "Sound." The Buckinghamshire SCI was subsequently adopted by the full County Council in September 2007.

Minerals & Waste Core Strategy (MWCS) Preferred Options Consultation-Feb 2008

7. Between 29 February and 25 April 2008 (eight weeks), we carried out public consultation on the Minerals & Waste Core Strategy Preferred Options. We consulted with a number of individuals, organisations and bodies to garner views on the Preferred Options. These included the Regional Assembly, the Highways Agency, District and Town / Parish Councils (both within Buckinghamshire and adjacent), neighbouring County Councils, statutory organisations, utilities, interest and amenity groups, educational establishments, voluntary organisations, the minerals and waste industry, other business interests, planning consultancies, land agents and individuals.
8. We also:
 - Sent copies of the document to all consultation bodies
 - Provided a Representation Form
 - Used the 'Have your Say' pages on the Council's website with links to documents, on-line response and monitoring forms
 - Made documents available for inspection at County Hall, Aylesbury
 - Made copies available for reference in District Council offices and libraries
 - Ensured copies of the documents were available on request from the County Council
 - Published notices in local newspapers advising that comments could be posted or submitted on-line
 - Published a two page article, about the consultation, in the Spring edition of Buckinghamshire Times, distributed to all households in the county
 - Gave briefings to Buckinghamshire MPs, County Councillors and District Councillors
 - Attended Parish / Town Council and Local Area Forum meetings
 - Held public meetings across Buckinghamshire (Aylesbury, Calvert Green, Beaconsfield, Gerrards Cross) to give residents and businesses the chance to quiz a panel of councillors, officers and experts. Over 700 people attended these meetings
 - Sent letters to over 14,500 residents and businesses close to proposed sites
 - Issued a total of 4 carefully timed Press Releases which generated widespread coverage and public debate in the Bucks Herald, Bucks Free Press and Buckinghamshire and Winslow Advertiser. Interviews with the Cabinet Member and officers were also broadcast on Mix 96, Horizon Radio, BBC Three Counties Radio and the Radio 4 'Today' Programme as part of the national debate on alternatives to landfill
9. We received a total of 2,837 representations. 2,745 of these objected to specific draft proposals (with over 2,200 objections from Buckinghamshire Residents Against

Incineration (BRAINS) and other pressure groups); 61 supported the plan; with 31 unspecified comments.

10. We have taken account of and actively embraced many of the ideas suggested by residents and businesses in the preparation of the final Submission Core Strategy – for example, enhanced protection of the Green Belt, location of strategic waste capacity, and reviewing our ability to transfer waste by rail. We also learnt that having a standard process for responses to letters and keeping everyone (especially Members) fully briefed throughout are critical to the success of consultations.

Future Prospects for Consultation

11. The coalition Government has declared its intention to achieve a “stronger bottom-up impetus to planning and development”. This implies more transparent structures and processes - and more consultation.
12. At present, and pending publication of the Localism Bill (expected on 9 December), the future shape of the planning system is uncertain. Nevertheless some things are reasonably clear and will impact upon consultation arrangements to support minerals and waste planning:
 - The Government has confirmed County Councils will remain responsible for minerals and waste planning and thus we will have to consult on these often contentious plans
 - There will be statutory local and neighbourhood plans. Local plans will have a ‘strategic role’, with minerals and waste plans fitting this category. The Government has indicated that those preparing a plan will be required to consult on it
 - ‘Localism’ requires that the planning system “allow people to shape their communities”, supported by more open processes. The effect of the consultation processes being undertaken by the District Councils (e.g. Aylesbury Vale’s proposals for the Vale of Aylesbury Plan) may increase demand for ‘more consultation’
 - This should have little effect on the emerging Minerals & Waste Core Strategy (MWCS) as we have nearly completed the statutory processes and have clearly responded to local views. However it does suggest that in the development of the detailed Minerals and Waste plans we will need to extend our consultation activities