

SALDEN CHASE
OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION

Chapter 3: Alternatives Considered

3.0 POLICY CONTEXT AND ALTERNATIVES

3.1 Milton Keynes was designated as a 'New Town' in 1967 and since then has been one of the fastest growing cities in Europe. Various studies have taken place in relation to the future growth of Milton Keynes. These studies have all consistently identified a development area South West of Milton Keynes (SWMK) as appropriately contributing towards future growth.

Background Studies

3.2 Three studies were commissioned from Llewellyn Davies (1992, 1996 & 1998) by a consortium of public sector bodies comprising Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire County Councils, Milton Keynes Borough Council, Aylesbury Vale, Mid Bedfordshire and South Northamptonshire District Councils, the then Commission for New Towns and the Government Office for the South East. The studies consistently identified the SWMK area as a 'development area without major problems'.

3.3 A study was commissioned from David Lock Associates (1999) by Milton Keynes Chamber of Commerce that addressed the potential for development in and around the City. The report recommended that the City's future growth should be concentrated on the A421 axis, reinforced by east-west rail.

3.4 In 2001 Roger Tym & Partners were commissioned by the Government and Regional Assemblies and Regional Development Agencies for the South East, East of England and East Midlands to study the growth potential of the Milton Keynes & South Midlands area. The study report was published in 2002 and recommended a preferred spatial strategy for Milton Keynes with the SWMK development area being identified as a site with potential for development by 2016.

3.5 Subsequently, a further study was commissioned from Roger Tym & Partners. The Milton Keynes Growth Area Assessment, published in 2003, was prepared to inform the then pending Examination in Public of the draft Milton Keynes & South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy. The final study report identified the SWMK area as one of only three locations to meet development requirements to 2016.

3.6 The Faber Maunsell (2003) Milton Keynes Public Transport Long Term Vision further reinforced the importance of an east-west growth corridor embracing the A421, together with development of SWMK, involving public transport and the provision of a park and ride interchange.

Milton Keynes & South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy

3.7 The Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy was prepared in response to the Government's request to the three Regional Planning Bodies, whose areas cover parts of the sub-region, to develop proposed Alterations to Regional Planning Guidance for the South East, East Midlands and East of England. The draft Strategy was placed on deposit for consultation purposes in 2003 and was then subject to an Examination in Public that was held the following year.

3.8 Paragraph 7.39 of the subsequent Panel Report noted that the sub-regional strategy proposals included the four expansion areas from the then draft Milton Keynes Local Plan 2011, together with the three proposals for growth to 2016 identified in the Growth Area Assessment for Milton Keynes and Aylesbury undertaken by Roger Tym & Partners. It went on to say that these three locations were:-

- to the west, immediately north of the Local Plan's 'Western Expansion Area';
- to the south west, between the A421 and the railway line to Oxford; and
- to the east, north of the Bletchley to Bedford railway line and flanking Wavendon.

- 3.9 Subsequently, the Panel recommended at R7.2 (page 98 of their report) that paragraph 2.5 of the draft Strategy should be revised to read as follows:-

'The majority of urban development will be provided within the existing urban area of Milton Keynes in conjunction with development of the City Centre, selective urban intensification and the completion of developments already planned as part of the new town programme. These sources are expected to provide some 19,000 additional homes up to 2016 and more in the period beyond. The remaining requirement of 14,600 up to 2016 will be provided through sustainable urban extensions to Milton Keynes City to the west, south west and the east. Beyond 2016 a balanced programme of urban extensions and opportunities within the urban area should continue.'

- 3.10 The Secretary of State accepted the Panel's recommendation at R7.2 of their Report and revised paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5 of the draft Strategy accordingly (renumbered as paragraphs 97 and 98). The Secretary of State then published the finalised Sub-Regional Strategy in March 2005.

- 3.11 As such, the MKSM Sub-Regional Strategy was embodied in the statutory development plan by virtue of the Secretary of State's prescription of RPG9 as RSS9 and subsequent formal amendment with the finalised Sub-Regional Strategy.

RSS9 the South East Plan

- 3.12 RSS9 has subsequently been the subject of review. In part in order to inform that review the Milton Keynes Partnership commissioned an 'Options for Growth' study from GVA Grimley. Looking at potential for the growth of Milton Keynes to 2031 a 'Strategy for Growth' was published in June 2006.

The Strategy proposed the provision of growth in two phases of development at Newton Longville to the south west of Milton Keynes in Aylesbury Vale District, the first providing some 7,500 new dwellings in the period 2021 to 2026 and the second, providing for the same scale of development in the period 2026 to 2031. The first phase in the vicinity of Newton Longville was described as Growth Area 2 in the Strategy and broadly equates to the land situated between the A421 and the line of the Oxford to Cambridge railway.

3.13 The draft South East Plan was submitted to Government in 2006 and an Examination in Public was then held. The Panel Report was published in 2007 and they recommended to the Secretary of State (R23.6) that in the light of the more sensitive landscape to the south west, the greater uncertainty over future access to rail services and the need to create better defensible boundaries, that it would be appropriate to reduce the amount of housing allocated within the south west urban extension to below that proposed in MK2031. The Panel recommended an allocation of 5,390 dwellings.

3.14 The Secretary of State published Proposed Changes in 2008 and they reflected the Panel's recommendations insofar as they related to the identification of an urban extension of Milton Keynes to the south west in Aylesbury Vale District. The South East Plan was subsequently adopted in May 2009 and makes specific provision for the provision of 5,390 dwellings in a Strategic Development Area to the south west of Milton Keynes in Aylesbury Vale District.

North East Aylesbury Vale SDA

3.15 Following receipt of the Panel Report, the local authorities in conjunction with the Milton Keynes Partnership jointly commissioned a study to provide advice on the land use implications of the Panel's recommendation. Prior to this, in 2006, AVDC invited submissions from landowners and developers to provide details of the sites that they wished to be considered for allocation through the LDF process.

These two strands of work enabled AVDC to define three broad locations to be evaluated as potential locations for the strategic allocation of the SDA in north east Aylesbury Vale, south west of Milton Keynes. The Council's evaluation of the alternatives is noted in greater detail below and is also set out in its LDF evidence paper entitled North East Aylesbury Vale SDA (March 2009).

In reflection of its assessment of the three broad locations, the Council has allocated land situated between the A421 and the disused Oxford to Bletchley railway line (Salden Chase) as a strategic development area in its submission draft Core Strategy. The Council has subsequently also prepared a Masterplan & Delivery Supplementary Planning Document which sets out 42 key principles for the development of the SDA.

Consideration of Alternatives

3.16 The three broad locations that were evaluated by the Council are:

- land to the north of the A421 (site A);
- land between the A421 and the disused Oxford to Bletchley railway line (Site B - Salden Chase); and
- land south of the disused Oxford to Bletchley railway line, west of Newton Leys (site C).

3.17 The evaluation process adopted by the Council assessed the three broad locations against place shaping principles that were emerging in the preparation of the draft Core Strategy and examined whether there were other constraints that affected the sites. The place shaping principles noted were:

- to provide a long term defensible boundary to the western edge of Milton Keynes;

- recognise that whilst being totally in Aylesbury Vale, the development will use some facilities in Milton Keynes, given its proximity;
- ensure the long term retention of Newton Longville as a separate community with a unique identity; and protect Newton Longville and other neighbouring communities (in particular Whaddon, Mursley and Far Bletchley) from direct and indirect negative impacts generated by the development;
- be deliverable so as to maximise speed of delivery and enable faster delivery of key infrastructure whilst minimising disruption and delay;
- will encourage developers to meet the expectation that minimum national / regional sustainable construction standards will be exceeded for residential and non-residential buildings; and
- provide a sustainable and strategic approach to flood mitigation and urban drainage, linked to multifunctional green infrastructure, to control surface water flows and flooding.

The other constraints against which the three broad locations were assessed are more typical land use and environmental planning constraints, i.e. landscape impact, ecology, archaeology and cultural heritage, green infrastructure, transport, utilities and services.

Finally, the Council undertook a sustainability appraisal of the three broad locations, scoring each against 17 SA objectives, including the delivery of housing, impact on climate change, mitigation of flood risk and provision of business and employment. The SA scored the sites against the objectives ranging from a major negative impact to a major positive impact, with minor negative and positive impacts and uncertain impact also being available 'scores'. Land situated between the A421 and the disused Oxford to Bletchley railway line scored the best overall with the least number of major negative impacts and the highest number of positive impacts (both major and minor).

3.18 The Council concluded that the evaluation demonstrated that land between the A421 and the disused Oxford to Bletchley railway line (Salden Chase) is the most appropriate location for the SDA in doing so noting that:

- the Land Suitability Assessment that was undertaken in the preparation of the Milton Keynes Growth Strategy for the Milton Keynes Partnership identified this area as least constrained;
- the site has the potential to make an important contribution to the Milton Keynes linear park system and the north east Aylesbury Vale SDA transport strategy; and
- it is the only proposal which meets the principle of being deliverable in one allocation to maximise delivery of infrastructure, speed of delivery and minimise delay.

Summary

3.19 There have been extensive studies over a considerable period of time to address the future directions of growth of Milton Keynes. These studies have informed and in some instances been examined through statutory plan making processes. Most recently Aylesbury Vale District Council has undertaken extensive technical study, including SEA/SA, of three broad locations for the strategic allocation of land to provide the SDA south west of Milton Keynes as required by the South East Plan.

3.20 This work has enabled the LPA to allocate a site in the Submission Draft Core Strategy which is the subject of this planning application. The site has been compared to other potential development sites and found to be an appropriate and sustainable location. Given this detailed assessment it is not appropriate for this Environmental Statement to consider further alternative locations for the development that is proposed.