



South Bucks District Council

Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

Annual Monitoring Report

2007-2008

Executive Summary

December 2008



South Bucks
District Council

Executive Summary

Introduction

Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, local authorities are required to produce a Local Development Framework (LDF) setting out their planning policies and proposals. In addition, they must produce a Local Development Scheme (LDS), which sets out how and when documents making up the LDF will be produced. As part of the process, under the above Act, Regulation 48 of its accompanying Regulations, local planning authorities must produce an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) by the 31st December each year.

Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is two fold:-

1. To monitor how well policies in the LDF are performing against a set of Core Indicators, and indicators determined in the Core Strategy / adopted local plan
2. To report whether the local authority is meeting its targets for the production of the LDF as set out in the LDS

The AMR defines key issues and trends and also provides monitoring on:-

- the Districts sustainable development
- whether the aims and vision of the Sustainable Community Strategy are being met through the local spatial approach to planning

Review of Indicators

The Government revised the Core Output Indicators for the AMR in February 2008. The AMR has, therefore, been prepared and set out in accordance with the new guidelines. Two new indicators were included in the revised set on Housing, however, H6 Housing quality - Building for Life Assessment could not be fulfilled in this AMR.

Local Development Framework

The South Bucks Local Development Framework (LDF) is currently being prepared, and the first development plan document will be the Core Strategy. The Core Strategy Preferred Options Document was prepared in September 2006 but this did not contain detailed policy wording. A revised Emerging Approach is being prepared which is based on much stronger evidence than at previous stages, and work throughout 2007/08 on the LDF has concentrated on delivering that document. There were no Core Strategy milestones in the reporting year ending March 2008.

A Residential Design Guide Supplementary Document (SPD), which is intended to provide guidance to developers, is being produced. The Guide is to ensure high quality residential development which respects and enhances the character and sustainability of the district. Work began on the SPD in early 2007, and is due to be adopted in 2008.

Adopted Local Plan Saved Policies

The adopted Local Plan saved policies (2006) are continuing to deliver sustainable development across South Bucks, though some policies need updating such as those relating to local energy development opportunities. Whilst development continues to be in sustainable locations such as towns helping to reduce the need to travel, the interconnection between settlements remains an issue. This and other issues raised in the AMR need to be addressed through effective joint working with other bodies and organisations.

The following paragraphs summarise the key trends and issues arising in the Annual Monitoring Report, which comprise the summary and conclusions of the report.

Quality of Life

The quality of life in South Bucks is high with higher than average wages. Education, skills and employment are higher than the South East average, and there is good access to employment opportunities. Crime is falling and South Bucks residents continue to enjoy good health.

Housing

A key issue is the need for Affordable Housing in the District. In 2007-08, 33 (net) affordable units were completed, compared to 18 units in 2006-07. Whilst the total housing completion in 2007-08 was exceptionally high, only 8.7% of the completion was affordable housing. The achievement of affordable housing was limited compared to assessed need. Preparation of the new Core Strategy is looking at the extent to which the planning policy threshold may be lowered and the affordable proportion of future new development increased, as measures to increase supply of affordable housing.

378 (net) housing completions were achieved during 2007/08, which is exceptionally high and is almost double last year's completion (195), an increase of 53.71% on the target set out in the 2004/05 AMR.

Business Development

A significant amount of new employment floorspace was completed in 2007/08 totalling 11,131 square meters (net), the most since 2002/03. All of the new employment generating floorspace completed in 2007/08 was on previously developed land.

The district has seen an annual increase in retail detail throughout the District over the past three years. Overall, comparison retail sales floorspace within South Bucks District appears to be trading healthily. Comparison expenditure growth up to 2016 could support about 1,950 sq m net within South Bucks District as a whole.

Environment

The District has a good quality environment. Measures such as the recommendations from the Open Spaces Strategy, work through Green Infrastructure planning, National Indicator 197, and the Biodiversity Priority Areas will enhance the area. Generally, pollution is low and the District does not appear to suffer from adverse issues such as high noise levels and other environmental health related impacts. The District, however, has the highest consumption of energy per capita in the UK but energy provided by local decentralised renewable, low carbon technologies is limited but increasing.

Summary

South Bucks is a popular area to live and this can be attributed to existing adopted Local Plan policies, which has been illustrated through this report. These policies will continue to be used until the new Core Strategy is adopted.

The report demonstrates a thriving economic area, set in a good quality environment with a good quality of life. It delivers a comprehensive view of South Bucks District and its progression towards sustainable development.



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