



Executive Summary

The Planning and Compulsory Act 2004 introduced a new system for producing planning policies. 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, Local Authorities must produce an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) by the end of each year.

Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the AMR is two fold: -

- to monitor how well policies in the LDF are performing against a set of Core Indicators as set out in Best Practice
- to report on whether the local authority is meeting its targets for the production of the LDF as set out in the LDS

This AMR identifies key challenges, opportunities and possible ways forward for revising, adjusting replacing or saving spatial planning policies. This AMR also provides monitoring on

- delivery of the principles of sustainable development
- whether the aims and vision of the Community Strategy are being delivered

The report sets out a picture of sustainable development for the area through interlinking the outcome of policies together with aims of the Community Plan, rather than viewing them in isolation. We think there is value in the AMR. It will develop in future years drawing in corporate input, and this will assist in the monitoring of the Community Plan. Whilst the report is concerned with South Bucks as a whole, it provides an opportunity to establish area profiles at a parish level, acknowledging any significant outcomes.

The Local Development Framework

Under the Council's Local Development Scheme, the South Bucks Local Development Framework is currently being prepared and the first document will be the Core Strategy. The Core Strategy Preferred Options Document was published in September 2006 but this did not contain detailed policy wording. It contains draft-monitoring indicators but these will not be finalised until the Core Strategy is adopted in 2008. The policies in the adopted South Bucks District Local Plan are automatically 'saved' until 28th September 2007 and can be submitted to Government for saving beyond that date. Most saved policies will be progressively replaced in a number of future Development Plan Documents.

The Local Development Scheme 2006 set out the Council's proposals to concentrate on the preparation of the following documents during 2006-07: -

- South Bucks Core Strategy
- Statement of Community Involvement
- Annual Monitoring Report 2005-06

For further information on the LDF 'Programme Management - Milestones', please see part 3 of the Local Development Scheme 2005, or as revised in March 2006, which sets out a profile for each Local Development Document. That information is available in the tables in the main Report, which also includes information on the progress that has been made against the milestones.

Saved Policies

Until the Council has new Local Development Documents in place, under the provisions of the 2004 Act, it is expected to annually assess the performance of policies in the Local South Bucks District Local Plan, as adopted in March 1999. This Plan provides quantitatively for the period to 2006, but beyond that, qualitative policies may be saved if agreed by Government.

This Plan contains 120 policies, supporting 36 cross-cutting objectives which in turn reflect and derive from seven key strategy features. These are: -

- maintain the Green Belt and protect it from inappropriate development
- focus development in existing built-up areas whilst avoiding town cramming
- minimise, as far as possible, the need to travel
- maintain (our) stock of employment sites whilst not adding to them
- provide for sufficient land to meet (our) housing allocation up to 2006
- town and village centres to continue to provide for the needs of their communities
- environmental protection, conservation and improvement

The saved policies will continue to successfully fill the vacuum between existing plans and the development of plans through the emerging Local Development Framework. When the Community Strategy has developed its own indicator base, the LDF will work through shared indicators and targets (where appropriate) to assess success or otherwise.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is the core principle underpinning planning. At the heart of sustainable development is the simple idea of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now, and in the future, and for Planning, sustainable development can be viewed as 'sustainable development with design'.

Given this, and with sustainable development underpinning the emerging the LDF, assessment of monitoring indicators - Core, Contextual, Local and Significant Effects - has been made within the context of the three main areas of sustainable development: -

- Social
- Economic
- Environmental

Social Aspects

Housing

Key trends

- High completions figures can be projected with confidence into the short term [2010-11]
- Whilst the delivery mechanism is sound and effective at the present time, there is only limited achievement of affordable housing compared to assessed need. Affordable housing achievement is as much as it can be within adopted and projected planning policy
- Of newly granted housing permissions in 2005-06 (excluding outline permissions where the size of dwellings is generally not known), 136 or 64% (gross) are 1 or 2 bed-roomed, and much of the provision is in the form of apartments, which repeats the pattern from last year
- The aggregate density of dwellings, both completed and permitted, continues to be consistently significantly higher on larger sites of 10+ dwellings, than on smaller sites of less than 10 dwellings [which is to be expected]
- *Completions* on large sites in locations generally of relatively high accessibility were ahead of government density guidelines of 30-50 dph. There has been a general upward trend since 2001. The aggregate density of *new permissions* for sites of 10+ dwellings (37%) also exceeded the guideline band of 30-50 dph

Key Housing Sustainable Development Issues

1. Meeting the need for affordable and other housing in sustainable locations (i.e. with access to transport and services)

Transport

Key Trends

- Diminishing public transport opportunities, reducing intra-urban bus opportunities further
- High car usage, congestion
- New development in existing settlement locations

Key Local Transport Sustainable Development Issues

1. Development of *integrated transport* and new bus service opportunities through partnership with the County Council and service operators, particularly fulfilling the 'intra-urban' requirement. This would contribute to 'improving traffic congestion, road safety and public transport and would help to improve health and well-being' (Community Plan)
2. Working with Bucks CC to deliver Area Action Plans arising from the Transport Plan 2006-11, subject to outcomes of consultation
3. Reducing impact from car journeys to school through the promotion of School Travel Plans (Bucks CC)
4. The need to encourage more frequent public transport opportunities, together with better links between places in the District
5. Continuing to encourage new development in existing settlements, to maximise existing public transport opportunities and to enable access to services and support, which encourages, 'a sustainable and thriving community' (Community Plan and Local Plan strategy aim)
6. Promoting green travel and flexible / homeworking to local organisations and businesses (Community Plan, SBDC Service Plans)

Economic Aspects

Business

Key Trends

- Continued redevelopment of existing employment land to B1a

Key Business Sustainable Development Issues

1. Greater pressure expected, particularly on urban sites. Options for partial or equivalent replacement may make the indicator less clear to report
2. Redevelopment of housing on employment land
3. Balance between new business development and the need for jobs and maintaining local environmental quality
4. Poor public transport provision and high commuting levels into and from the district
5. Affordable housing to meet future labour demands and reduce the need to travel-to-work
6. Engagement with local businesses to ensure the local economy can continue to thrive, including ensuring skills levels and provision of training and education can meet those needs

Local Services

Key Trends

The main centres, along with local centres, are well used and this should be encouraged to ensure that: -

- the local economy can continue to thrive
- the amount of travelling for people to access services, support and shops is reduced but at the same time conserving the overall character of towns and villages
- local residents enjoy access to open space and quality local countryside

Key Local Services Sustainable Development Issues

1. Conflict between accessibility, development and maintaining the character of the area
2. Manage open space effectively and maintain the Green Belt despite pressure for development, ensuring that local residents continue to have access to health and well-being opportunities through support for Open Space in order to meet the 'preservation and enhancement of green space, character and the environment of the district' (Community Strategy together with existing Local Plan policies L7 and L8)
3. Engagement with local businesses to ensure that the local economy continues to thrive
4. Ensure that affordable housing / support is available in centres, particularly for an ageing population, reducing the need to travel to local services

Sustainability Aspects

Key Trends

Environment

- Quality of the district environment as a whole is good, with good quality rivers, surrounding countryside, woodlands and designated sites, though there is concern over the quality of SSSIs. An aim of the Community Plan is the preservation and enhancement green space, character and the environment of the District, which is being met
- Saved policies continue to meet requirements for environmental use and protection

Energy

- Whilst measures are taken by the District to promote energy saving measures to domestic energy users, they still remain some of the highest users in the UK
- Linked to high car ownership / usage, this suggests that there needs to be a change in culture towards sustainable living, rather than keeping to current high consumption levels of carbon based energy

Key Local Sustainable Development Issues

1. Existing monitoring requirements need revision so that new indicators give a clearer picture of small scale renewable energy generation such as solar panels and photovoltaics
2. Whilst policies for small scale renewable energy permissions exist, this is likely to be inefficient for future demands made upon renewables to meet national demands for power generation, as the use of fossil fuels for power generation diminishes
3. There is currently no information on energy use of businesses
4. Promote policies which seek energy saving alternatives as source, i.e. at design stage and before households are completed, which are above and beyond national requirements
5. Ensure that SSSIs are moved up from 'unfavourable but recovering' to 'favourable' condition

Summary / Maintaining a Credible Evidence Base

The Council is currently preparing its Local Development Framework, starting with the Core Strategy. The indicators in the 04-05 Annual Monitoring Report are helping to inform the selection of indicators in the Core Strategy Preferred Options Document, which will be published in autumn 2006. As the Core Strategy passes through its different stages, the indicators used to monitor the draft policies are likely to change, to better reflect the close links between the spatial objectives, associated policies and the output indicators themselves. The Significant Effects Indicators need to be measurable to identify any significant effects of the policy predicted in the sustainability appraisal. Such changes would ensure the maintenance of a credible evidence base, meeting a key test of soundness.