



Campaign to Protect
Rural England

The Hertfordshire Society

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BRIEFING NOTE

Proposed Development East of Luton:

How did we get to where we are now?

The Government's so-called Sustainable Communities Plan in 2003 identified Milton Keynes/South Midlands, which included Luton and South Bedfordshire, as one of four Growth Areas in the wider South East of England. The subsequent Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy (MKSMSRS)¹ allocated a target of 26,300 new dwellings to be built in the period 2001 – 2021 for the Luton/ Dunstable/Houghton Regis conurbation. This figure has been incorporated in the recently-published East of England Plan², approved by the Government. The MKSMSRS indicated that, while some of this growth could be accommodated in the existing urban areas, 'sustainable urban extensions' on land which is currently Green Belt would be required, and one of the 'areas of search' should be to the east and south east of Luton.

In accordance with the national development planning process, detailed plans for meeting these requirements of the MKSMSRS will be drawn up in Local Development Documents (LDDs) prepared jointly by Luton Borough and South Bedfordshire District Councils. The first of these LDDs, the Luton and South Bedfordshire Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper³, was published for public consultation in mid 2007. This set out a number of options for development around the conurbation to meet the requirement for 26,300 dwellings. One of the 'potential areas of development' identified was an area of about 300 hectares east of Luton, in North Hertfordshire District, known as Area L. A Luton easterly bypass was also identified as a potential road scheme (subject to testing).

Since early 2007 (even before the Issues and Options were published), a developer, Bloor Homes has been preparing proposals to develop the area East of Luton with about 3-4,000 new homes and associated development. An Environmental Impact Assessment of the plans has been carried out, and during 2008 Trimedia, on behalf of Bloor Homes, have been holding a number of exhibitions and workshops to publicise the proposals. This exercise is separate from, but running in parallel with, the LDD preparation process.

What happens next?

At its meeting on 30 June 2008, the Luton and South Bedfordshire Joint Committee decided in principle what options should be included in their Core Strategy Preferred Options document⁴. They propose to delete the Green Belt designation from the area East of Luton and develop it as an urban extension of 5,500 new dwellings and associated development by 2031. Priority will be given to building on previously-developed ('brownfield') land in existing urban areas before the urban extensions are developed, so the proposed East of Luton development is unlikely to start before 2013/14.

No final decision has been taken on this, and the plan has to clear several hurdles before it is adopted as planning policy. The two Councils' joint Core Strategy is expected to be issued for a period of public consultation this autumn. When the responses to that have been assessed, the Councils' final Core Strategy will be submitted to the Secretary of State for approval, some time in 2009. The exact nature and scale of development in the urban extension areas will be determined through other LDDs known as Area Action Plans, which will also be subject to public consultation.

Any planning applications submitted for development in the East of Luton area will be determined by North Hertfordshire District Council as the local planning authority. However, by law, the applications must be

determined in accordance with the provisions of the 'development plan' (ie, the hierarchy of planning documents referred to above) and any other 'material considerations'.

1. See <http://www.goem.gov.uk/goem/psc/suscom/mksm/?a=42496>
2. See http://www.go-east.gov.uk/goeast/planning/regional_planning/
3. See http://www.southbeds.gov.uk/planning/Planning_services/Core_Strategy_Issues_and_Options_Paper.aspx
4. See http://www.southbeds.gov.uk/council_democracy/committees/committee_timetable2008/Luton_South_Beds_Joint_Committee_30_June_2008.aspx