

# London Fringe Sub-region

## I The London Fringe

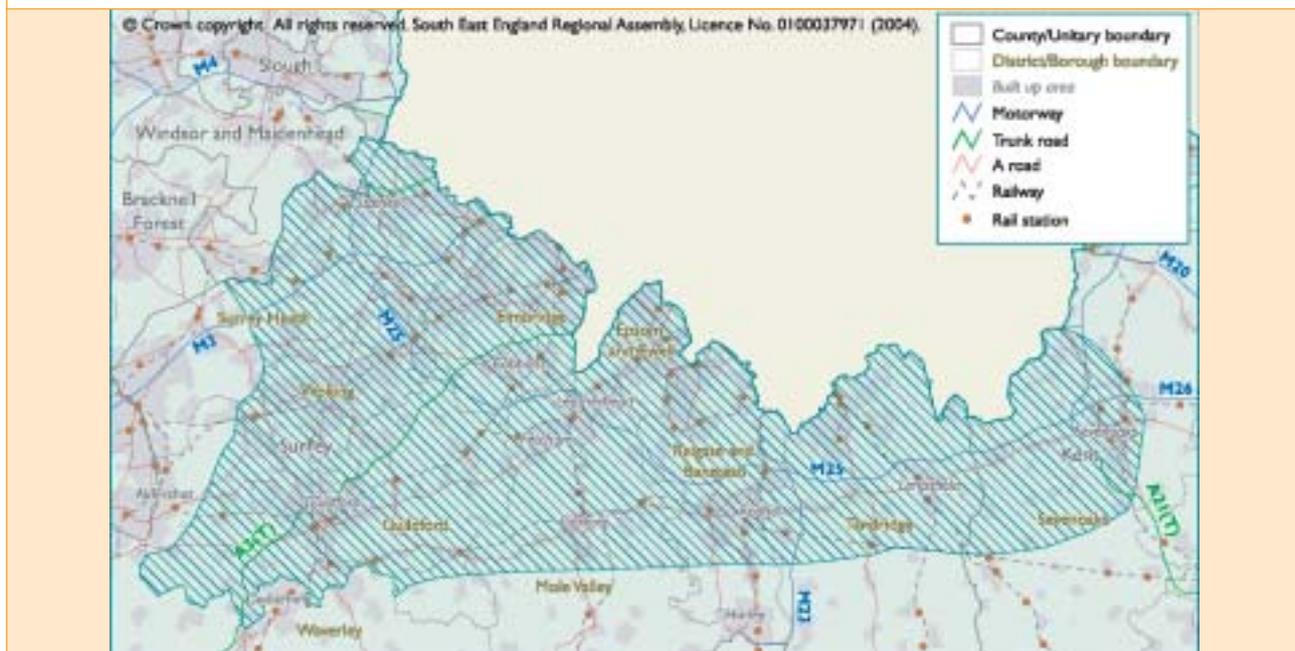
- I.1** This sub-regional strategy covers a large proportion of Surrey from the London border out to the towns of Guildford, Woking and Redhill. It also covers a very small part of west Kent (see map E5). Specifically it includes the whole of the Surrey districts of Spelthorne, Runnymede, Woking, Elmbridge, Epsom and Ewell, and partially the districts of Surrey Heath, Guildford, Mole Valley, Reigate and Banstead, and Tandridge, as well as partially including the Kent district of Sevenoaks. The Assembly is reviewing the name of this sub-region.
- I.2** The sub-region covers a broad area to the south and south-western side of London. It covers an area of just over 1,000 sq km, of which 80% is designated Green Belt. It is home to 828,300 people (2001) and is one of the most densely settled parts of the region outside the principal cities. The

economy is strong, particularly given its proximity to Heathrow and Gatwick airports and to London, with high participation rates, good representation of growth sectors within the economy and a skilled workforce. High quality landscapes are a characteristic of the area which, along with other natural and cultural resources, underpin the environmental quality of the countryside and its value as a resource for informal recreation.

- I.3** The area's main road and rail links are predominantly radial, to central London, with the M25 being the only significant orbital route, but all networks are subject to congestion, especially at peak times. The two international airports of Gatwick and Heathrow have significant implications for transport and other issues in the sub-region, although both fall just outside the sub-region's boundaries. Transport links with London enable residents in the sub-region and those in outer London to take

### MAP E5

#### London Fringe Sub-region



advantage of the wide range of employment opportunities available in the broader area, and there is a need to plan towns in a way that reduces the need to travel.

**1.4** Pressures for development reflect the position of the sub-region relative to London, its own inherent economic strength, and the quality of the local environment. Housing development, the majority of which is infilling and redevelopment within established developed areas, has consistently exceeded the levels set in RPG9, although there are some questions around the feasibility of continuing at this rate in the longer-term. Growth in employment has fallen from levels achieved in the 1990s but the local economy remains relatively buoyant.

**1.5** It is also recognised that the three regional hubs – Guildford, Redhill/Reigate and Woking – are important in terms of any future economic growth and transport investment. The critical question is how economic growth in the sub-region can be sustained in future without compromising the quality of life for all those who live in the area. Getting the right type of development (eg more affordable housing, proper investment in infrastructure and services) and maintenance of the open spaces that provide amenity, recreation and environmental value (within the context of the London Fringe, these areas tend to be Green Belt) are seen to be key in delivering this.

## 2 Spatial Options and Levels of Development

**2.1** The key drivers identified for this sub-regional strategy are as follows:

- i** Continued support for the regional role of the Green Belt in separating London from the South East
- ii** Making use of the potential of existing urban areas in a way which maintains and enhances quality of life whilst simultaneously addressing the

infrastructure and environmental constraints that need to be tackled

- iii** Supporting sustainable economic growth, which has regard to the labour supply and infrastructure problems facing the area, through the whole settlement approach and the promotion of ‘smart’ growth and local jobs for local people to reduce the need to travel
- iv** Supporting the role of the regional hubs – Guildford, Redhill/Reigate and Woking – and the hierarchy of smaller centres.

**2.2** Three spatial options, incorporating possible growth scenarios, were developed by the sub-regional strategy steering group reflecting these key drivers.

### **2.3 Option 1: Continue to Focus Development Within Existing Urban Areas and Protect the Green Belt**

This approach reflects the current Surrey Structure Plan policy of concentrating development in the existing urban areas where most people already live and there is existing access to services, employment and public transport. The amount of additional homes provided through this approach will depend on the effective management of the urban areas, but based on current evidence through monitoring of the Surrey Housing Capacity Study, this is likely to range from about 38,800 (RPG9) to 46,400 (20% above RPG9) over the period 2006-2026 (1,940-2,320 pa), based on an assessment of average development rates over the last three years.

The urban potential of the area will need to be tested under the ‘plan, monitor and manage’ regime to ensure that this rate of development is sustainable in the long term. This will be undertaken both at the regional level, through the Housing Potential Study and, on a more detailed basis, through the Local Development Frameworks. Should further evidence be provided to indicate that the potential of these areas is less than currently envisaged, greenfield releases will be required (in the sub-region the majority of greenfield land is Green Belt).

Alternatively, if there is justification at a regional scale for a higher level of development in the sub-region it is likely that greenfield land releases will be necessary.

#### **2.4 Option 2: Making Best Use of Urban Areas plus Green Belt Releases as Extensions to Urban Areas either:**

- i around all the main settlements within the sub-region, or**
- ii focused on the three regional hubs – Guildford, Redhill/Reigate and Woking.**

As in Option 1 the primary focus here is on making the best use of existing urban areas. The location and scale of the greenfield releases will depend on the growth parameters for the regional strategy. Based on demographic projections, the greenfield element would range between 6,000 and 21,700 homes. This would have significant implications for the integrity of the Metropolitan Green Belt. In total this Option would require the provision of between 52,400 and 68,100 dwellings from 2006 to 2026.

Under Option 2a Green Belt releases would be spread amongst a large number of settlements and therefore the urban extensions are likely to be relatively small in scale eg 100-500 homes. However, given the emphasis on the regional hubs it is assumed that, subject to testing, the three hubs would take a proportionately larger allocation.

Option 2b is similar to Option 2a but instead of spreading the green field allocation around all the main settlements it focuses exclusively on the three regional hubs.

#### **2.5 Option 3: Making Best Use of Urban Areas plus Green Belt Release Focused on a New Settlement**

As in each of the options for this sub-region, the primary focus here is on making the best use of existing urban areas. A further possible option for greenfield land release, as an alternative to Option 2, would be to

concentrate this in a single location as a new settlement. As for Option 2, the scale of the new settlement would depend on the parameters set by the regional strategy adopted by the Assembly. This option proposes that anything provided outside the existing urban areas should be accommodated through a planned single new community within the sub-region. This would have a significant impact on the Green Belt in the locality chosen and would require significant investment in new infrastructure to support a new settlement at the scale necessary to make it relatively self-contained. Overall, this Option would imply housing provisions similar to those in Option 2.

### **Preferred Option**

**2.6** The sub-region is an area where market pressures are acute and land use responses, supported by Government and epitomised by Green Belt policy, have sought to be restrictive in nature. Despite this policy of relative restraint, the sub-region has continued to make a considerable contribution to regional development requirements, both housing and economic. This is evident since the 1980s, with the area delivering housing in excess of planned requirements and, to judge by short term demographic projections, a high incidence of net in-migration. Present indications are that the strategy set out as Option 1 would deliver, in housing terms, a substantial increase on the levels of housing set in RPG9 – completions running at an average of around 20% in excess of RPG9 over recent years. In the light of continuing recognition at a national level of the need to protect established Green Belts, and the particular significance of the Metropolitan Green Belt to the region, this is considered a proportionate response.

**2.7** The consensus amongst the partners involved in the sub-regional strategy steering group is that the strategy for the area should be based around Option 1, as they consider it provides the best opportunity to make more efficient use of previously developed land, contributing to a more sustainable pattern of land use and



to more sustainable communities, and maintains the Metropolitan Green Belt on its present boundaries. They do however also recognise that this option may make a more limited contribution to the wider economic development and affordable housing requirements than the other options. Each option would require measures to be taken to better manage change within the built and natural environment in the sub-region.

### 3 Sub-regional Policies

Note: The following draft policies have been drawn up based on officer advice from the sub-region, reflecting the strategy contained in the final report from the sub-regional strategy steering group to the Regional Assembly, including the group's preferred approach to the level and distribution of housing development.

#### Core Strategy

**3.1** The strategy for the sub-region is based on the concept of restraint relative to the market pressures on the area; the scale of development should reflect urban potential (but recognising the need for higher densities and smaller dwellings) and the need to maintain the Metropolitan Green Belt, both to contain the outward spread of London and separate existing communities within the sub-region, and also to encourage investment in the regional growth areas and areas of regeneration. Relative restraint on housing would require strong mechanisms to deliver an adequate supply of affordable housing to underpin the economy. Economic growth should be directed at high value, low impact sectors ('smart'

growth) with an emphasis on knowledge-based enterprises. The employment land situation should be informed by careful monitoring of both the local economy and housing requirements related to this and the economy in adjacent areas.

#### **POLICY LFI: CORE STRATEGY**

The strategy will be based on sustaining the quality of life and the environment in the sub-region. This will include:

- i** moderating the growth in economic activity, linking this to an amount that can be supported by local labour markets and existing and proposed infrastructure provision
- ii** encouraging those types of economic activity which utilise existing skills in the workforce and minimise the need for additional employment land
- iii** meeting as far as possible the housing needs of the sub-region
- iv** promoting the better management of change in the urban areas given their key role in meeting future development requirements
- v** improving travel choice by investment in alternatives to the car
- vi** conserving and enhancing the character and natural and cultural resources of the area.

In addition, the Regional Assembly is seeking views on whether in the event of greenfield land releases being required they should take the form of extensions to the main settlements within the sub-region or be focused primarily on the three regional hubs – Guildford, Redhill/Reigate and Woking.

## Broad Amount and Distribution of Future Housing Development

- 3.2** Section 2 of this sub-regional strategy has suggested a number of options for spatial location of additional developments, incorporating a range of growth levels. This broad distribution is strongly influenced by the extent of constraints and the development pattern currently in the sub-region. New allocations will need to be made in ways which complement the regional level policy.

### **POLICY LF2: BROAD AMOUNT AND DISTRIBUTION OF FUTURE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**

The final version of the sub-regional strategy for the London Fringe will include a policy (or policies) setting out the overall level of housing provision, the distribution at district level, phasing and the type of housing that will be provided. There will also need to be further work undertaken to place a sub-regional perspective on the issue of affordable housing, particularly reflecting the issues raised by the reliance in this sub-region on small, previously developed sites to deliver future housing supply.

In the meantime, this sub-regional strategy steering group's preferred overall level of housing provision (as discussed in section 2) is between 38,800 and 46,400 additional homes over the period 2006-2026 (this range represents RPG to RPG +20%, and equates to 1,940-2,320 pa). The preferred sub-regional spatial option is Option 1 (as discussed in section 2).

In addition, the Regional Assembly is seeking views on whether in the event of greenfield land releases being required they should take the form of extensions to the main settlements within the sub-region or be focused primarily on the three regional hubs – Guildford, Redhill/Reigate and Woking.

## Focus on Urban Development; Town Centres and the Suburbs

- 3.3** Development should be concentrated in existing urban areas in this sub-region in order to safeguard the integrity of the Metropolitan Green Belt. The role and function of the three regional hubs identified in the sub-region should be given further consideration.
- 3.4** Specific initiatives to manage urban change are required to ensure development contributes towards the delivery of adequate physical and social infrastructure, including improvements to tackle issues such as the threats posed by climate change alongside improvements to the physical environment. The existing polycentric pattern of the settlement structure needs to be maintained with centres being a focus for mixed use development aimed to reduce the need for longer distance travel. The suburban dimension is particularly important in this sub-region, and measures should be considered that maintain or improve these areas, and development opportunities should be investigated.

### **POLICY LF3: FOCUS ON URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

The focus of development will be within existing built-up areas. Local authorities through their Local Development Documents and through integrated approaches developed with other service providers, the development industry and local communities, will manage urban change to ensure development contributes towards the delivery of necessary physical and social infrastructure alongside improvements to the physical environment.

This focus requires that existing urban open land will be safeguarded and additional open land provided in conjunction with new development proposals. Countryside character will be conserved and the quality of landscapes in the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty protected. River corridors will be managed to reduce flood risk.

#### **POLICY LF4: TOWN CENTRES**

The polycentric pattern of the settlement structure will be maintained with town and local centres being a focus for mixed use development aimed to reduce the need for longer distance travel to jobs, services and recreation. Investment priority will be directed to the major centres in the sub-region, particularly those identified as regional hubs.

Significant improvements to the arrangements for interchange between bus and rail, particularly in the quality of facilities, integration and frequency of services, should be linked to a restraint-based town centre parking strategy.

#### **POLICY LF5: THE SUBURBS**

Redevelopment and re-use of suburban areas should avoid a piecemeal approach and be designed to respect and enhance local character. Local Development Frameworks should:

- i** direct change to locations which have good access to existing public transport services or the opportunity to benefit from new upgraded services
- ii** identify those local centres which should be upgraded by mixed use development.

#### **Green Belt Management**

- 3.5** Specific initiatives to manage Green Belt countryside as a multi-functional resource should be given priority to support a more positive role for the Green Belt as well as securing improvements to countryside easily accessible to people within the sub-region and beyond.

#### **POLICY LF6: GREEN BELT MANAGEMENT**

Urban rural fringe land management proposals emphasising the positive role of the Green Belt in areas easily accessible to people within the sub-region and beyond will be encouraged. A specific initiative to manage Metropolitan Green Belt countryside as a multi-functional resource integrated with greenspace strategies in urban areas will be promoted.

#### **Economic Development**

- 3.6** Economic growth in this sub-region should be directed at high value, low impact sectors ('smart' growth) with an emphasis on knowledge-based enterprises. The employment land situation should be informed by careful monitoring of both the local economy and housing requirements related to this and the economy in adjacent areas, to ensure that the overall strategy of sustainable growth is achieved.

#### **POLICY LF7: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Employment related development will take place primarily on land already in employment use or available for such use. Employment land should be retained except where unsuitably located, particularly in the western part of the sub-region where demands related to Heathrow are stronger.

Mixed use development in and around areas of good public transport accessibility, or in the conversion of secondary employment land to other uses where amenity considerations permit, will be encouraged to meet the needs of the local economy.

## Infrastructure and Sub-regional Hubs and Spokes

**3.7** It is important that the infrastructure required to support development proposals is identified sufficiently early in the planning process so that its provision can be phased in relation to the development it will serve, and that it is delivered at the same time as that development. The key items of strategic infrastructure that, at this stage in the process, are considered to be needed to deliver the strategy will need further investigation during the refinement of the strategy for this sub-region.

### **POLICY LF8: INFRASTRUCTURE**

The planning authorities will ensure that the infrastructure needs to support development in the sub-region are identified during the refinement of the strategy for the sub-region. As part of this work the issues of phasing of development in relationship to the provision of infrastructure will be addressed. Detailed proposals for the timely implementation of the infrastructure required to support further growth will be developed during the refinement of the strategy for the sub-region.

### **POLICY LF9: SUB-REGIONAL HUBS AND SPOKES**

Local Transport Authorities should give consideration to the identification and inclusion of sub-regional hubs and spokes or corridors in Local Transport Plans to support local service provision and interchange with inter-urban public transport. These should be developed in co-ordination with local authorities in preparing spatial strategies for urban areas in Local Development Documents.

### Further Work Required

- 3.8** The following issues will require further work to inform this sub-regional strategy more fully – the Assembly will welcome any views on these issues during the draft South East Plan consultation:
- i The impact of Heathrow, and its planned expansion, on the employment and housing markets over its immediate hinterland and the wider area
  - ii Water and drainage infrastructure thresholds post 2016
  - iii Employment land and premises requirements associated with support for research and new businesses to underpin continued economic buoyancy
  - iv Mechanisms for delivery of affordable housing in the sub-region
  - v The inter-relationship between this sub-region and London.

## 4 Implementation and Delivery

### IMPLEMENTATION AND DELIVERY

Policy	Delivery Mechanisms	Lead Roles	Support Roles
LF1 – Core Strategy		See specific policies below	
LF2 – Broad Amount and Distribution of Future Housing Development	Local Development Documents Regional and local housing strategies Planning decisions	Local authorities	Regional Housing Board Infrastructure providers Regional Assembly

## IMPLEMENTATION AND DELIVERY – CONTINUED

Policy	Delivery Mechanisms	Lead Roles	Support Roles
<b>LF3 – Focus on Urban Development</b>	Local Development Documents	Local authorities	Developers
<b>LF4 – Town Centres</b>	Local Development Documents	Local authorities	Developers
<b>LF5 – The Suburbs</b>	Local Development Documents	Local authorities	Developers
<b>LF6 – Green Belt Management</b>	Local Development Documents Local management plans/initiatives	Local authorities	Voluntary sector Groundwork/other trusts Countryside Agency/New 'Integrated Agency'
<b>LF7 – Economic Development</b>	Local Development Documents Planning decisions	Local authorities	SEEDA Economic partners Regional Assembly Central government
<b>LF8 – Infrastructure</b>	Local Development Documents Local Transport Plans Planning decisions Direct provision Development contributions	Local authorities Highway authorities Infrastructure providers Developers	Central government Regional Assembly SEEDA
<b>LF9 – Sub-regional Hubs and Spokes</b>	Local Development Documents Local Transport Plans	Local authorities Highway authorities	Regional Assembly

## 5 Commentary

**5.1** The region is an economically buoyant area reflecting its position close to London and the international airports of Heathrow and Gatwick. However, most of the sub-region outside urban areas is within the Metropolitan Green Belt for which the Assembly considers there is no case for a strategic review within the South East Plan (see Policy CC9 on page 54). However, there may be a case for local small scale reviews which can be pursued in detail through the Local Development Framework process.

**5.2** Option I identified by the sub-regional strategy steering group reflects the levels of housing growth implied by the regional spatial options considered in Section C of the Plan. Some release of greenfield land may be required if the development potential of

urban areas proves to be less than currently envisaged. Views are therefore sought on whether this land, if required, should be released around the main settlements within the sub-region or focused primarily on the three regional hubs.

**5.3** In view of the decision to consult on a regional level of housing growth below the current planned rate in RPG9 taken by the Regional Assembly after the completion of the draft sub-regional strategies, the sub-regional strategy steering group may wish to test and seek views on a rate of housing development in the sub-region below RPG9.

**5.4** Further work is required on the issues referred to in paragraph 3.8, in particular the impact of Heathrow and its planned expansion with the building of a fifth terminal.

# Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley Sub-region

## I The Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley

- I.1** The sub-region extends from the western edge of London to the boundary of the South West region in the Swindon area. It adjoins the London Fringe sub-region to the east. The sub-region includes all or parts of the following administrative areas: West Berkshire, Reading, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest, Windsor and Maidenhead, Slough, South Oxfordshire, South Buckinghamshire, Wycombe, Surrey Heath, Waverley, Guildford, Hart, Rushmoor and Basingstoke and Deane (see map E6).
- I.2** The sub-region is one of the most economically successful and dynamic parts of the South East. The key issue facing the sub-region is how the economic buoyancy

of the area and its quality of life may be maintained having regard to growth already planned at Heathrow, the very tight labour and housing markets in the area, growing levels of in-commuting and pressures on water, transport and community infrastructure. The sub-region already has significant urban areas and extensive areas of land subject to environmental designations and green belt policy, which limit the scope for expansion in a number of locations.

- I.3** The sub-regional strategy steering group has identified the central purpose of the strategy as being the management of the pressures for investment in the sub-region in a sustainable manner, to secure the maximum community benefit from them and to design out their disadvantages.
- I.4** Heathrow airport and its future growth will have a major impact on the sub-region in terms of labour market and housing

### MAP E6

#### Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley Sub-region





pressures, surface access and the environmental consequences of increased surface and airborne traffic. Account has been taken of planned growth at Heathrow, including the fifth terminal currently under construction, but not the implications of a possible third runway. The Regional Assembly is opposed to the building of a third runway.

## 2 Spatial Options and Levels of Development

### Levels of housing development

**2.1** The following levels of housing development were tested by the sub-regional steering group<sup>1</sup>:

**Level A** – a continuation of the current growth levels in RPG9 across the sub-region to 2026. This would give a total of 116,275 dwellings between 2001 and 2026

**Level B** – a provision 20% above current RPG9 levels (139,530 dwellings 2001 to 2026)

**Level C** – provision of 40% above current RPG9 levels (162,785 dwellings 2001 to 2026).

**2.2** A number of tests were applied to the identified options. Key findings were:

**i** Locally-generated housing need arising from within the existing population to 2026 could broadly be met by a continuation of RPG9 levels of growth.

- ii** Maintaining the current state of balance between the size of the labour force and the forecast growth in jobs would require a house-building rate of between RPG9 + 20% and RG9 + 40%. Consequences of this could include serious difficulty in recruiting to a wide range of jobs, increased difficulty in delivering public services, wage inflation and possibly undermining the competitiveness of the area's economy against its rivals in Europe. However, this gap could be significantly reduced if there is an accelerated loss of jobs overseas, a process often known as off-shoring. More flexible working practices, addressing skills shortages and increasing economic activity rates could also have an impact, although the sub-region already has high proportions of the working age groups already in employment or seeking work. Against this, higher than anticipated employment growth in neighbouring areas, such as Heathrow, may further worsen the pressure in the local labour market. In addition, the sub-region cannot continue to rely on importing an ever-larger number of workers.
- iii** If the planning system alone is to be relied upon to meet local affordable housing needs, even RPG9 + 40% is unlikely to be adequate to meet forecast needs.
- iv** With transport, growth rates in excess of RPG9 levels, or continued growth beyond 2016, are forecast to result in

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The housing provision figures given for each level tested include dwellings built since 2001, dwellings under construction and dwellings not started on sites with planning permission and on sites allocated in adopted local plans.

worsening congestion in the area, even if all the schemes in the Thames Valley Multi-Modal Study are carried out and policy measures which are currently controversial with some (such as motorway widening and area-wide road-user charging) were introduced. For any growth beyond 2016 and for any rate of growth in excess of current RPG9 rates, (either before or after 2016), enhancements of the Multi-Modal Study's measures and new measures would be required.

- v With water infrastructure, growth rates in excess of RPG9 would result in a need for substantial (but as yet not fully costed) additional investment to ensure that they could be accommodated without detriment to the environment. Many of these schemes would be costly, controversial, require a long lead-in time and are some way from having funding assured. Without these enhancements and associated water efficiency measures there would be water supply problems in the sub-region.
- vi With secondary school provision, growth rates over RPG9 will give rise to a need for additional schools, over and above the need for the replacement and upgrading of the existing stock. In the case of RPG9 + 40%, it is estimated that ten additional secondary schools would be needed across the sub-region, at a cost of around £400 million.

**2.3** Having considered all the issues raised by the testing of growth options, the Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley Members Steering Group resolved that:

**2.4** Housing levels continuing at RPG9 are preferable, subject to the necessary infrastructure improvements; housing provision at RPG9 +10% is the most that could be accommodated but only if there is significant investment in infrastructure to support such a level of growth. Any housing provision above RPG9 + 10% is unacceptable.

**2.5** Continuing at RPG9 rates would require provision to be made for the building of 93,000 dwellings between 2006 and 2026; RPG + 10% 102,000 dwellings.

### Options for distributing growth

**2.6** A number of options for the distribution of growth within the sub-region were considered. These can be summarised as:

- i A continuation of current policies (consisting of a mix of development within existing urban areas and some releases of greenfield land)
- ii A greater emphasis on development within urban areas (which could involve higher densities and the release for housing development of land not currently allocated for that purpose)
- iii A distribution that gives priority to transport considerations. This would concentrate development in and around the sub-region's main transport hubs and would have given priority to transport considerations, where they came into conflict with other constraints
- iv A hybrid option, combining elements of the above.

### Preferred Option

**2.7** The sub-regional strategy steering group's preference is for a distribution, based on the hybrid option which:

- Establishes an urban focus throughout the sub-region, under which priority will be given to the efficient and effective use and re-use of land within existing built-up areas, whilst not compromising quality of life considerations
- Focuses the majority of additional green field development on the periphery of those urban areas which have been identified as key transport hubs in the sub-region in the Regional Transport Strategy and the Thames Valley Multi-Modal Study, particularly where this could make possible step changes in the quality of public transport services; but where those urban areas (hubs) are



tightly enclosed by higher order environmental designations (such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Special Policy Areas) or policy designations such as the Green Belt, the level of new peripheral development needs to be scaled back (or in some cases reduced to minimal levels) so as to avoid any conflict with existing policies.

**2.8** Under this option, the Blackwater Valley area shown on **Map E6** is identified as the main area of search for possible releases of land currently in the ownership of the Ministry of Defence, but making such releases sustainable in transport terms will present challenges because of their dispersed nature and small scale. The proposed Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area limits significantly the opportunities for expansion in the Blackwater Valley.

**2.9** The preferred option is considered sufficiently flexible to be adjustable in line with the pace of economic growth. It assumes that employment generating development will be concentrated sustainably in existing urban centres and that there will be no need for strategic employment land releases.

### 3 Sub-regional Policies

**3.1** Note: The following draft policies have been drawn up to reflect the strategy contained in the final report from the strategy steering group to the Regional

Assembly, including the group's preferred approach to the level and distribution of housing development. However, members of the steering group have not yet considered or approved the draft policies.

#### **POLICY WCBVI: SCALE, DISTRIBUTION AND TYPE OF HOUSING**

The final version of the sub-regional strategy for the Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley Sub Region will include a policy (or policies) setting out the overall level of housing provision, the distribution at district level, phasing and the type of housing (including affordable housing) that will be provided.

In the meantime, the sub-regional strategy steering group's preferred overall level of housing provision is between 93,000 and 102,000 additional dwellings over the twenty years 2006 to 2026 (These rates represent the continuation of RPG levels and RPG + 10% as discussed in section 2).

The rate of release will be phased and managed in the light of monitoring and in accordance with an implementation plan.

The distribution of housing development will be based on a version of the hybrid option described in paragraph 2.5. Further work is required in order to consider the form of a preferred option in terms of the weight to be attached to the various elements.

**The Regional Assembly is also seeking comments on whether parts of the sub-region should, depending on the scale of growth, be identified as strategic development areas within which additional funding might be levered in. In the sub-region it is unlikely to be appropriate to identify a single new area of development on the scale required. However, the approach could be adopted for a group of settlements linked by enhancements to the transport corridors between them.**

## The Economy

**3.2** In the Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley sub-region sustainable economic growth is threatened by congestion and delay on the area's transport systems, shortages of labour with the appropriate range of skills, the high cost of housing in the area (which in turn increases employers' costs and threatens competitiveness) and pressure on essential services and infrastructure (which in turn threatens the attraction of the area to employees and employers alike).

**3.3** Recent years have seen the sub-region go from being a net exporter of labour to one moving towards having many more jobs than there are workers available locally to fill them. On the basis of continuing current policies, the shortfall is likely to increase, although there is less consensus on how large the shortfall may be by 2026. However, the Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley sub-region is not homogeneous. The balance between jobs and labour supply differs between one part of the area and another, with employment concentrated in some areas whilst others are more predominantly residential in character. Further work needs to be undertaken to understand these local pictures and to inform the distribution of housing and employment to redress this balance.

**3.4** There are, however, other ways (other than increased housing provision) in which it might be tackled. The concept of smart growth referred to in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.5 of the economy and tourism policy section is particularly applicable to those parts of the region experiencing tight labour markets and pressure on the supply of land and infrastructure, such as the Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley. Whilst it may not be able to address these problems single-handedly, its potential contribution needs to be maximised.

**3.5** Smart growth can take many forms and the policy instruments through which these ends can be achieved are equally diverse. They include:

- removing the barriers to economic activity, through such measures as training, the provision of child-care, tax incentives, or flexible working to take account of, for example, family responsibilities or disabilities
- measures to spread the awareness of, or use of, technological aids to productivity
- changes to working practices, such as flexible working hours, home working, hot-desking, etc
- finding new incentives to encourage employers to develop green travel plans, or new means to enable smaller employers to participate in them.

Particular emphasis should be given to developing and applying the concept in those parts of the sub-region where it is most needed in development pressure and labour supply terms, and where the presence of concentrations of high technology industry may lend itself to the development of technological solutions.

**3.6** Further work is to be undertaken on the scale and distribution of employment development and a policy may be included in the final version of the sub-regional strategy.

## **POLICY WCBV2: THE ECONOMY AND SMART GROWTH**

The local authorities in the sub-region working with the Government, the Regional Assembly, the Regional Development Agency, and other agencies as appropriate, will develop a strategy to encourage forms of economic growth in the sub-region which minimise the demand for additional labour and the release of additional land for employment purposes.

### **Infrastructure**

- 3.7** Whatever the level of growth in the sub-region that is eventually provided for in the South East Plan, there will be an accompanying need for additional infrastructure, both to meet the needs of the additional population and to cover existing shortfalls. No commitment should be made without establishing a clear way forward in meeting the major transport, water supply and other infrastructure challenges that the chosen level of growth would provide.
- 3.8** The sub-regional strategy group considers that developer contributions are by themselves neither a sufficient, nor sufficiently timely, basis for providing essential services and infrastructure. Nor do they address the shortfalls arising from extended periods of previous development. Existing resources must therefore be used with the maximum efficiency, and present and future governments must be persuaded that they must invest further in the area if it is to remain successful. It may be necessary to find new ways of funding the infrastructure that the area needs.
- 3.9** A detailed implementation plan is to be developed as part of the final version of the sub-regional strategy. It will show what infrastructure is needed where to support development, how it will be funded and provided, and offer the maximum possible certainty to all the agencies concerned that infrastructure will grow in line with other development.

## **POLICY WCBV3: INFRASTRUCTURE**

The planning authorities will ensure that the infrastructure needs to support development in the sub-region are identified during the refinement of the strategy for the sub-region. As part of this work the issues of phasing of development in relationship to the provision of infrastructure will be addressed. Detailed proposals for the timely implementation of the infrastructure required to support further growth will be developed during the refinement of the strategy for the sub-region. For transport the key proposals of the Thames Valley Multi-Modal Study will be developed in detail and additional new measures identified.

### **The Blackwater Valley**

- 3.10** The Blackwater Valley area shown on [map E6](#) forms a large area of relatively dense urban development centered on a number of medium sized and smaller towns straddling a large number of local authority boundaries. The Blackwater Valley area has seen rapid growth in the past 25 years particularly in Camberley and the surrounding area. The buoyancy of the local economy, allied to business park and further aviation development at Farnborough Aerodrome in Hampshire, has given rise to pressures for continued economic development. Pressures on transport infrastructure are significant.
- 3.11** Under the preferred distribution option, the Blackwater Valley is identified as an area that may have the potential to bring forward areas for development, including possible releases of land currently in the ownership of the Ministry of Defence in accordance with the provisions of Policy CC6.
- 3.12** However, there are three factors which caution against placing too much reliance on Ministry of Defence sites both in the Blackwater Valley and in other parts of the sub-region. These are:

- doubts about which of the sites will be available and within what timetable
- the fact that their locations were chosen for military purposes rather than development ones, and they may therefore be less than ideal for supporting sustainable development
- some are subject to very tight environmental constraints.

**3.13** A detailed review was carried out by the sub-regional strategy group of the main areas of Ministry of Defence land within the sub-region, looking at current use, what is known of any plans for their release, their development potential and any constraints or other limitations to which they are subject. This concluded that to date, of the land identified for release by the MoD, only sites in Rushmoor and Hart Districts have the potential for housing development on a strategic scale. A further site within Basingstoke District may have potential, but there are no current plans by the MoD for its release.

areas and three counties, including parts of the London Fringe sub-region and is likely to have a major impact upon the potential for development within those areas, both within and near to the proposed Special Protection Area. Any proposal for development that is likely to have a significant impact on any Special Protection Area, whether negative or positive, must be subject to an appropriate assessment, and should only be permitted after the planning authority has ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned.

**3.15** A policy is required to provide certainty and timely decision making in relation to land designated under European Directive 79/409/EC: protecting, managing and enhancing land where development is inappropriate; ensuring that where land is suitable for development, its development does not have a negative impact on nearby sensitive areas; and ensuring that there is a clear process for the funding and implementation of these measures.

#### **POLICY WCBV4: THE BLACKWATER VALLEY**

**The Blackwater Valley will be planned in an integrated way focussing on improvements to the quality of the built environment and the transport network. The local authorities and other relevant agencies will develop a shared vision for the Blackwater Valley taking into account social and economic needs and the need to provide an integrated transport solution to improve accessibility in the area.**

#### **Proposed Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area**

**3.14** The sub-region contains large areas proposed for inclusion in the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area on the basis of its populations of three heathland species of birds – Dartford warbler, nightjar and woodlark. This designation covers eleven local authority

#### **POLICY WCBV5: THAMES BASIN HEATHS SPECIAL PROTECTION AREAS**

**The local authorities and other relevant agencies will develop an integrated plan for the management of development proposals that are likely to have an impact on the integrity of the proposed Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. This will secure the conservation and enhancement of sensitive sites; appropriate mitigation and/or compensation measures; the management of habitats and landscape; appropriate forms of development and measures to secure the funding and implementation of these proposals.**

**3.16** To implement the proposal a partnership of the 11 local planning authorities affected, Government agencies, regional partners and any other appropriate bodies, led by English Nature, will prepare an initial plan based on existing housing

allocations and applicable over a period, of for example three years. This will provide protection and management of open space where required, appropriate forms of development and mitigation measures where acceptable, and a framework for the implementation and funding of both. This will permit the approach to be tested, prior to its application to the allocations made in this Plan. The legislation requires that the proposal be approved by the Minister responsible for compliance with the UK Habitats Regulations.

## 4 Implementation and Delivery

4.1 The success of the sub-regional strategy will ultimately depend upon the commitment of national, regional and local agencies to its implementation. The strategic policies need to be translated into more detailed policies and action plans in local development frameworks, local transport plans, community strategies, local economic strategies, area-based master plans and, crucially investment programmes. The range of mechanisms needed to deliver the sub-regional strategy are set out below, together with a list of the agencies which need to take primary responsibility for delivering or securing the delivery of particular aspects of policy and those that will have supporting roles.

### IMPLEMENTATION AND DELIVERY

Policy	Delivery Mechanisms	Lead Roles	Support Roles
<b>WCBV1 – Scale, Distribution and Type of Housing</b>	Local Development Documents Regional and local housing strategies Planning decisions	Borough and district councils County Councils	County Councils Regional Housing Board Infrastructure providers Regional Assembly
<b>WCBV2 – Economy and smart growth</b>	Development of strategy Local Development Documents	Local authorities	Regional Assembly SEEDA Economic Partners Education authorities Central Government
<b>WCBV3 – Infrastructure</b>	Phasing of provision with new development Local Development Documents Local Transport Plans Planning decisions Develop contributions and sectoral funding mechanisms	Local authorities Infrastructure providers Developers	Central Government Regional Assembly SEEDA Local Strategic Partnerships
<b>WCBV4 – Blackwater Valley</b>	Development of shared vision	Local authorities	Ministry of Defence Voluntary sector and Economic Partners Regional Assembly SEEDA Local Strategic Partnerships
<b>WCBV5 – Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Areas</b>	Plan for the Special Protection Area Local Development Documents	English Nature	Local authorities Ministry of Defence Regional Assembly GOSE RSPB

## 5 Commentary

### Growth options

- 5.1** The options for the level of housing growth identified by the sub-regional strategy steering group (RPG9 and RPG9 + 10%) are broadly consistent with the region-wide spatial options set out elsewhere in this draft Plan (up to 14% above RPG).
- 5.2** In view of the decision to consult on a regional level of housing growth below the current planned rate in RPG9 taken by the Regional Assembly after the completion of the draft sub-regional strategies, the sub-regional strategy steering group may wish to test and seek views on a rate of housing development in the sub-region below RPG9.

### Spatial distribution

- 5.3** The spatial approach implied by the hybrid option is broadly consistent with the principles contained in the proposed draft regional policies. It establishes an urban focus throughout the sub-region and focuses the majority of additional greenfield development on the periphery of key transport hubs, while avoiding conflict with existing policies.
- 5.4** Further work is needed on developing an affordable housing strategy for the sub-region, on the scale and distribution of employment generating floorspace, links with adjoining areas including London and the Swindon, detailing the infrastructure needs of growth and drawing up a clear delivery programme.

# Central Oxfordshire Sub-region

## I Central Oxfordshire

**I.1** The extent of the area is shown on [map E7](#). It includes all or part of the following administrative areas; Oxford City, Cherwell, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and West Oxfordshire Districts in Oxfordshire. The settlement pattern of the sub-region is distinctive, with the historic city of Oxford at its centre surrounded by Green Belt and some substantial country towns beyond.

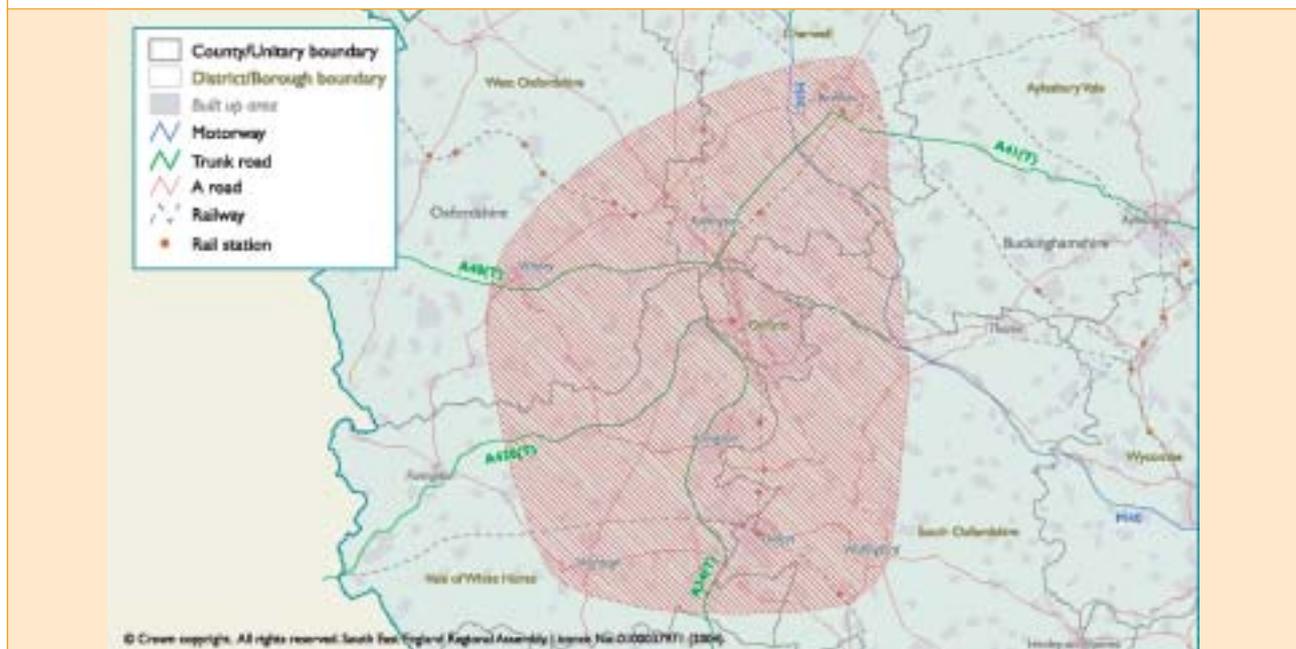
**I.2** The key issues of particular significance for the sub-region include:

- the unique potential of the sub-region's dynamic and innovative economy, including its role as an international centre for education and innovation

- congestion on road and rail, and the need to strengthen the public transport network, and promote alternatives to car and lorry traffic
- requirements for physical, social and economic infrastructure to address historic backlogs in provision and to provide for new economic and housing growth
- the need to improve housing availability and affordability
- the character and setting of the city of Oxford and potential constraints to development posed by the Oxford Green Belt
- the need to accommodate development in a sustainable way, meeting social and economic needs while protecting and enhancing the quality of the environment and ensuring the wise use of resources.

MAP E7

### Central Oxfordshire Sub-region



## Vision

**1.3** Central Oxfordshire has distinctive characteristics on which its success is built that must be maintained and enhanced. The Central Oxfordshire economy (especially the high value added end) is largely founded on the universities, spin offs, research campuses and publishing. This workforce is attracted and retained in part due to the sub-region's heritage, green spaces, areas of outstanding natural beauty and varied and beautiful villages and towns. It is important to provide employment land for such uses rather than for activities such as warehousing and distribution. It is equally essential that housing and other growth does not ruin the heritage which is part of central Oxfordshire's appeal to such businesses and their workers. The core strategy seeks to build on the strengths of the sub-region, realising opportunities for further growth while protecting and enhancing the natural, historic and cultural environment.

## 2 Spatial Options and Levels of Development

### Levels of Development

**2.1** The levels of housing provision considered by the sub-regional strategy steering group (officer and member level) were:

Growth level	New dwellings per annum in Central Oxfordshire	Total additional dwellings 2006-2026
RPG9	1,600	32,000
RPG9 + 25%	2,000	40,000

**2.2** The principal authority (Oxfordshire County Council) concluded that growth above RPG9 levels, particularly up to 2016, would not be practicable due to constraints posed by inadequate infrastructure capacity exacerbated by a legacy of past under-investment and improvements.

**2.3** The recommended level of growth proposed by the County Council is therefore that of RPG9 (not exceeding 1,600 houses per annum) with the qualification that any growth must be accompanied by adequate investment in infrastructure including addressing the backlog in provision.

### Spatial Options and Levels of Development

**2.4** Two broad spatial options have been considered by the sub-regional strategy steering group and were tested taking into account the settlement pattern of the sub-region, current and historic spatial policy, census data including population and travel-to-work and information on infrastructure capacity and needs. The County Council concluded that either of the options could provide for a continuation of the level of growth at the RPG9 rate. A higher rate of housing provision would be likely to require a hybrid with elements of both options.

**2.5** A sustainability appraisal was undertaken on both options by the County Council with a more detailed assessment to be undertaken by the Assembly's consultants a part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the South East Plan.

- **Option A – Development of larger settlements beyond the Green Belt**

**2.6** Focusing growth at the towns of Bicester in the north of the sub-region and Didcot (and potentially at Wantage/Grove) in the south. These towns and surrounding areas are regarded as being relatively free of physical constraints, well located and served for transport connections, having potential to generate employment, and



benefiting through greater and better planned investment in infrastructure. However, housing growth in these areas could also lead to growth in commuting from these towns, especially by car, if not matched by employment opportunities. This option would reflect the existing strategy of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan.

- **Option B – Urban extensions to Oxford**

**2.7** Potential exists for extensions immediately to the south of the city and also to the north-west in the area west of Kidlington. Development in these locations would provide housing nearest to the area of greatest need, and be close to the employment (Oxford's jobs exceed the size of the resident workforce by 27,000), entertainment and transport choices and services offered within the city of Oxford. It would also involve development of Green Belt land and be likely to adversely impact on transport routes including the A34.

**2.8** Option A was selected as the preferred spatial strategy by the County Council. However, there was not unanimous support for this within the Steering Group, with Oxford City Council presenting an alternative strategy with support from two district councils. This alternative was based on a hybrid of spatial Options A and B and accommodating between 36,800 and 40,000 additional dwellings between 2006 and 2026 (between 15% and 25% above RPG9 levels).

## 3 Sub-regional Policies

**3.1** The policies reflect the preferred strategy of the County Council. If the alternative option were to be pursued or a hybrid of the two, then some of these policies would require amendment.

### Core Strategy

**3.2** The strategy will provide for continued growth to help best realise the potential of the sub-region's dynamic and innovative economy through development in the most sustainable locations while protecting the natural, cultural and historic environment. This will require providing a scale and range of housing to meet local needs and to support the economy, with provision of the infrastructure in a timely fashion necessary to support this growth and address past under-provision.

**3.3** Growth needs to be linked to providing for high value added research and science based employment with improving opportunities for travel by public transport to employment areas. To minimise the pressures on transport, in-commuting and house prices this needs to be matched by a policy for education and skills.

### **POLICY COI: CORE STRATEGY**

**The strategy for Central Oxfordshire is to provide for development to meet the housing requirements of the area and to build on the sub-region's economic strengths particularly in education, science**

and technology in ways which will:

- ensure the provision of infrastructure which is essential to the proper functioning and future development of the area
- protect and enhance the environment and quality of life of the sub-region
- protect the setting and character of Oxford
- make best use of previously developed land within urban areas to reduce the need for greenfield development
- concentrate development where the need to travel particularly by car can be reduced.

The main locations for development will be Bicester and Didcot.

Elsewhere limited development will be permitted to support the social and economic well-being of local communities.

### Spatial Strategy – Scale, Location and Type of Housing

- 3.4 The County Council recommends that RPG9 levels of housing provision are continued for the period of the Strategy (not exceeding 1,600 dwellings per annum) and that the main focus for development will be at Bicester and Didcot.

#### **POLICY CO2: SCALE, LOCATION AND TYPE OF HOUSING**

The final version of the sub-regional strategy for Central Oxfordshire will include a policy (or policies) setting out the overall level of housing provision, the distribution at district level, phasing and the type of housing that will be provided. In the meantime, the County Council's preferred overall level of housing provision in the sub-region is 32,000 additional homes over the 20 years 2006 to 2026, and the preferred spatial option is for development to be concentrated at Bicester and Didcot.

The Regional Assembly is also seeking views on higher levels of development up to RPG9 + 25%, a level of growth tested by the sub-regional strategy steering group. In addition, the Assembly would welcome comments on both the spatial options described in section 2 or a combination of the two.

### Green Belt

- 3.5 The Green Belt was conceived in the 1950s and its general extent was set at that time. Option A, recommended by the County Council, focuses development on the larger country towns of Bicester and Didcot and avoids development of Green Belt land. Option B (an urban extension to Oxford) would inevitably involve development of Green Belt land and would require adjustment to the Green Belt boundaries. This could result in an increase in the actual extent of the designated area.

#### **POLICY CO3: GREEN BELT**

A green belt will be maintained around Oxford, to:

- a preserve the special character and landscape setting of Oxford
- b check the growth of Oxford and prevent ribbon development and urban sprawl
- c prevent the coalescence of settlements
- d assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
- e assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Development in the Green Belt will only be permitted if it maintains its openness and does not conflict with the purpose of the Green Belt or harm its visual amenities.

## Affordable Housing

- 3.6** Housing affordability generally, and the provision of affordable housing, is a key issue for the sub-region, and this is reflected in a challenging target for provision of affordable housing in all new development.

### **POLICY CO4: AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

**At least 50% of all new housing in the sub-region should be affordable, including housing for key workers. The amount and size of site where provision will be sought will be determined by local planning authorities based on assessments of local need. Provision will normally be made on site and be subject to permanent and enforceable arrangements to ensure the benefits will be passed to subsequent occupiers.**

## Economy

- 3.7** The dynamic and varied economy of the sub-region is one of its key characteristics and strengths. The policy provides for continued growth and guides development to locations identified to accommodate new housing to increase and diversify the economic and employment base, provide an environment to encourage investment and attempt to reduce the need for long-distance commuting.
- 3.8** Bicester and Didcot have strong rail links to London and there is a risk of them simply acting as dormitories rather than adding to the vitality of the sub-region. A strategy for growth in the towns therefore needs to be linked to one for providing high value added research/science based employment within easy travel routes and changing the economic and social profile of the towns. Bicester is particularly well placed for research related activities and other high value added employment sites needing strategic rail and road access and could benefit from and contribute to

wider economic development of the 'Oxford to Cambridge Arc'. The city of Oxford provides a diversity of economic opportunities and has a world-renowned name and reputation, attracting investment in a range of high value activities.

### **POLICY CO5: ECONOMY**

**The development of the sub-region's existing and emerging educational, scientific and technological and other high value added sectors and clusters will be supported in appropriate locations.**

**The main locations for the provision of additional land for employment will be at Bicester and Didcot, in particular to provide for the expansion and relocation of existing local firms and those in the sectors referred to above, including provision to support the development of science based industries and other important business clusters.**

**In Oxford, development for employment generating uses will take place on land that is already used or allocated for that purpose. In the city centre, development which maintains and enhances the sub-regional role and diversity of the centre will be permitted, provided it is consistent with the protection of Oxford's architectural and historic heritage.**

## Infrastructure

- 3.9** Infrastructure includes social and cultural as well as physical infrastructure and also affordable housing. Much of the significant growth that has occurred in the sub-region over the last 40 years has been without commensurate upgrading of supporting infrastructure. Whatever option is pursued, development will need to be accompanied by a package of investment in infrastructure in its widest sense that matches the level and phasing of future growth. There is a need to ensure that such provision is made in advance of and

phased with new development and demand.

**3.10** Transport is a key issue and potential constraint on the sub-region's economy and further growth. Improvements of access are required, particularly by public transport, and measures to reduce congestion along both the A34 and A40 corridors. There is also a need for improved rail services, including east-west links and expansion or possible relocation of Oxford station. Park and Ride schemes will be promoted where they form part of a wider transport strategy for the sub-region. Proposals will be developed through the Local Transport Plan.

**3.11** Other infrastructure needs include the significant improvement of Bicester town centre and the provision of facilities commensurate with the size of town it has now become; the provision of significant amounts of affordable housing throughout the sub-region; and the provision of a range of services, such as libraries, schools, community health services (which are in many cases declining rather than improving), public open space, recreation and local transport. In addition there will be a need for significant investment in water supply and, in certain locations, waste-water treatment.

### **POLICY CO6: INFRASTRUCTURE**

**The planning authorities will ensure that infrastructure needed to support development in the sub-region is identified during the refinement of the strategy for the sub-region. As part of this work the issues of phasing of development in relationship to the provision of infrastructure will be addressed. Detailed proposals for the timely implementation of the infrastructure required to support further growth will be developed during the refinement of the strategy for the sub-region.**

### **POLICY CO7: TRANSPORT**

**The management and development of the transport networks in the corridor between the south and the north-east (towards Milton Keynes) serving Didcot, Oxford and Bicester will be promoted to meet both strategic and important local movement requirements.**

## **4 Implementation and Delivery**

**4.1** The success of the sub-regional strategy will ultimately depend upon the commitment of national, regional and local agencies to its implementation. The strategic policies need to be translated into more detailed policies and action plans in local development frameworks, local transport plans, community strategies, local economic strategies, area-based masterplans and, crucially, investment programmes. The range of mechanisms needed to deliver the sub-regional strategy are set out in the following table:

## IMPLEMENTATION AND DELIVERY

Policy	Delivery Mechanisms	Lead Roles	Support Roles
<b>C01 – Core strategy</b>		See specific policies below	
<b>C02 – Scale, Location and Type of Housing</b>	Local Development Documents	City and district councils	County council Infrastructure providers Regional Assembly
<b>C03 – Green Belt</b>	Local Development Documents Planning decisions	Local authorities	Regional Assembly GOSE
<b>C04 – Affordable Housing</b>	Local Development Documents Planning decisions Funding schemes	Local authorities Housing Associations	Regional Assembly GOSE Regional Housing Board
<b>C05 – Economy</b>	Local Development Documents Planning decisions	Local authorities	Local strategic partnerships SEEDA Regional Assembly Economic Partnership Private sector Universities
<b>C06 – Infrastructure</b>	Phasing of provision with new development Local Development Documents Planning decisions Developer contributions and sectoral funding mechanisms	Local authorities Infrastructure providers	Central government Highways Agency Water companies and OFWAT Strategic Health Authority Local strategic partnerships SEEDA Regional Assembly
<b>C07 – Transport</b>	Phasing of provision with new development Local Transport Plan	Local authorities Highway authorities	Highways Agency Strategic Rail Authority Network Rail TOCs Bus companies SEEDA Regional Assembly

## 5 Commentary

- 5.1** It is considered that as part of the consultation, views should be sought on the County Council preferred level of housing provision, together with higher levels of up to RPG9 + 25%. Comments are also invited on both the spatial options considered by the sub-regional group option A ‘Development of larger settlements beyond the Green Belt’ and option B ‘Urban extensions to Oxford’, together with a hybrid of the two.
- 5.2** In view of the decision to consult on a regional level of housing growth below the current planned rate in RPG9 taken by the

Regional Assembly after the completion of the draft sub-regional strategies, the sub-regional strategy steering group may wish to test and seek views on a rate of housing development in the sub-region below RPG9.

- 5.3** Clear delivery mechanisms for the policies in the strategy, including the delivery of the 50% affordable housing target, have not yet been identified. In addition, the role the sub-region is expected to play in the development of the ‘Oxford to Cambridge Arc’ has not been fully addressed.

# Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale Sub-region

## I. Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale

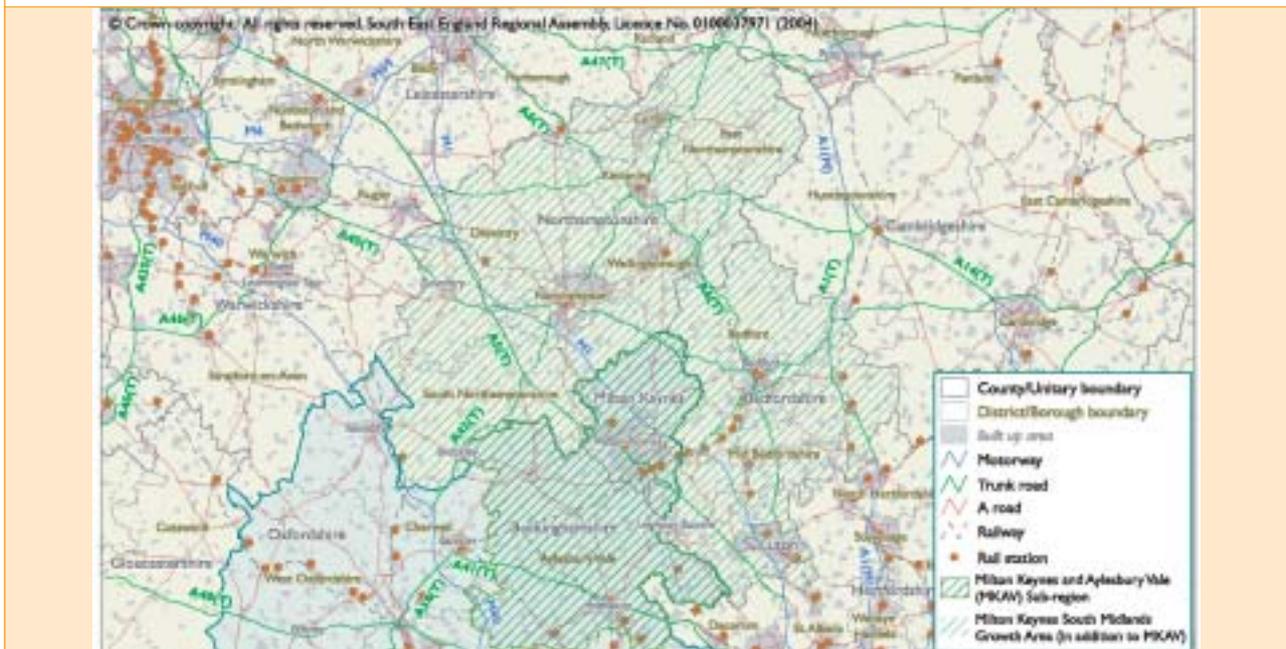
- I.1** Aylesbury and Milton Keynes are located within the wider Milton Keynes and South Midlands sub-region (MKSM), identified as a Growth Area within the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan. The wider sub-region straddles the South East, East of England and East Midlands regions and includes the growth centres of Northampton, Luton-Dunstable-Houghton Regis, Bedford and Corby-Kettering-Wellingborough. The MKSM area has a total population of 1.5 million (see map E8).
- I.2** The draft MKSM Sub-regional Strategy sets out a long-term spatial framework and identifies Aylesbury and Milton Keynes as two of the six urban areas within the Growth Area at which additional

development will be focused. The Secretary of State's proposed changes to the Strategy (October 2004) endorse this overall strategy and includes levels of development to 2021 for each growth location and indicative levels of development for the period 2021-2031.

- I.3** The sub-regional strategy for the Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale (MKAV) part of the MKSM sub-region must be seen within the context of the wider MKSM Strategy. The MKSM Strategy comprises a Part A Statement which sets out the overarching strategy for the sub-region as whole and separate Part B Statement for each of the individual regional components. This strategy for MKAV is a proposal for rolling forward the South East Part B statement of the MKSM Strategy to 2026. The current policies proposed in the Part B Statement for Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale are in the attached Annex.

### MAP E8

#### Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale Sub-region





**1.4** The focus of the MKSM Strategy Part B Statement for Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale is on issues relating to the identification of the two major urban areas as growth locations. Wider policy issues are only addressed in so far as they relate to growth. Non-growth related policy issues are considered to be most appropriately dealt with through topic based South East Plan policies and the relevant Local Development Frameworks. For the purposes of rolling forward the MKAV strategy to 2026, growth levels for Milton Keynes and Aylesbury have been developed and tested separately but within the strategic policy framework set out in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub Regional Strategy.

## 2 Spatial Options and Levels of Development

### Spatial Options

**2.1** The Spatial Framework for the sub-region is provided by the draft MKSM Strategy. Detailed spatial options for development at Milton Keynes have not been considered by the sub-regional steering group. A full investigation of the appropriate spatial patterns of development to 2031 in and around Milton Keynes urban area is to be taken forward by the Milton Keynes Partnership Committee working alongside a wide range of stakeholders, including neighbouring authorities in Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire. This study will inform the preparation of relevant Local Development Documents.

**2.2** The technical work undertaken for the Steering Group indicates that the south of Aylesbury town is the most appropriate area of search for new development to be tested through the LDF process.

### Levels of Development for Milton Keynes

**2.3** In preparing the roll forward of the MKAV Part B Statement to 2026 three alternative growth scenarios have been considered specifically for Milton Keynes (see table E8.1).

**2.4** **Base Growth** – based on the forecasts in the Draft MKSM Sub-Regional Spatial Strategy and MKSM Growth Study 2002. It would mean an additional 11,850 dwellings in the Milton Keynes Urban Area between 2021 and 2026. The testing of this growth option indicated that there appear to be no over-riding constraints to achieving this level of growth if adequate funding is available to provide the necessary infrastructure. However, it is important to stress that further work is required which cannot be undertaken until there is more information on the likely spatial pattern of development post 2016. For example, a capacity assessment of the roads network (both within and around Milton Keynes) post 2016 is required and the investment needed in some types of utility infrastructure cannot be assessed fully until more information is available on where it will be located.

**2.5** **Higher Growth A** – driven by a higher level of employment growth than assumed in the base growth scenario. This option assumes all aspects of the Milton Keynes Long Term Economic Vision are pursued with vigour and that, on average, some 3,200 jobs could be created per annum post 2016 (which equates to 32,000 jobs

over the ten year period 2016-2026). Assuming a 1:1 ratio between jobs and dwellings gives a dwelling requirement over this period of 32,000 new homes (3,200 per annum). Overall, the Higher Growth Scenario would require about 10,000 more homes over this ten-year period than the Base Growth Scenario. Housing completions of 3,000+ dwellings per annum is considered an unrealistic level – a view endorsed by the Panel Report – and has only ever been achieved in two years since 1981 at Milton Keynes and never in market-led conditions.

**2.6 Higher Growth B** – as Higher Growth Scenario A above but based on a 1.5:1 ratio between jobs and dwellings because an area like Milton Keynes which has a strong economy will attract predominately working households, many of which may have more than one earner. The two previous scenarios use a 1:1 ratio of jobs to dwellings which has underpinned all the MKSM Growth Area work to date. If a 1:1.5 ratio is used, higher employment growth in the order of 3,200 jobs per annum would entail a much lower dwelling requirement of around 2,000 – 2,500 dwellings per annum. This would keep a reasonable balance between jobs, workforce and housing and maintain the sustainability balance. This is a radical departure from the work which has underpinned the development of the MKSM Strategy and its adoption could have significant implications for the balance of labour supply and demand and associated commuting patterns across the MKSM sub-region.

**TABLE E8.1**

**Housing and Employment Levels 2016-2026 under different growth scenarios for Milton Keynes Urban Area**

	Base Growth	Higher Growth A	Higher Growth B
Employment	22,850	32,000	32,000
Dwellings	22,850	32,000	21,500

Figures relate to MK urban area (ie they are not district totals).

## Preferred Option for Milton Keynes

**2.7** The Steering Group’s preferred option for Milton Keynes is Base Growth. It concluded that, given the uncertainty over the achievability of higher levels of employment creation and associated higher levels of housing completion, it would not be prudent to base the strategy on higher levels of growth.

## Levels of Development for Aylesbury Growth Area

**2.8** Three employment and housing growth options have been independently tested for Aylesbury town, as follows:

**2.9 Option A** (Panel’s Advice) – this tests a level of growth recommended in the Report of the Independent Panel conducting the Public Examination of the MKSM Sub Regional Strategy (July 2004). This maintained growth levels to 2016 as proposed in the draft strategy but proposed a lower level to 2021 and beyond.

**2.10 Option B** (MKSM Sub-regional Strategy) – this option effectively rolls forward the quantum of development proposed for Aylesbury Town in the MKSM SRS to 2026.

**2.11 Option C** (Higher Growth) – this option assumes a higher level of employment in Aylesbury compared with that assumed in the MKSM Sub-regional Strategy, in accordance with the recently adopted Economic Vision for the town. This is reflected in a 6% increase in dwelling numbers focused on the town.

The main differences between the three growth options relate to:

- Levels of growth – the difference between the highest and the lowest is 4,000 dwellings in total
- Distribution of growth – between the Aylesbury Town growth area and the rest of the borough
- Relationship between jobs and housing – Option C specifically attempts to



redress some of the current imbalance between jobs and workers in Aylesbury and thereby reduce out-commuting.

- 2.12** The three levels of growth test for the Aylesbury Town Growth Area are illustrated in [Table E8.2](#).

**TABLE E8.2**

**Housing Levels 2001-2026 under different growth scenarios for Aylesbury Town Growth Area**

	2001-2016	2016-2026	2001-2026
Option A	10,600	7,000	17,600
Option B	10,600	8,900	19,500
Option C	11,400	9,900	21,300

Figures relate to Aylesbury Town Growth Area, not Aylesbury Vale District.

### Preferred Option for Aylesbury Vale

- 2.13** The Sub-regional Strategy Steering Group did not feel able to select a preferred strategy.

## 3 Infrastructure

- 3.1** Key infrastructure required to support and facilitate growth at Milton Keynes and Aylesbury to 2016 are identified in the draft MKSM SRS. In and around Aylesbury this includes the upgrade of the existing bus network, the re-opening of East West Rail with an Aylesbury Spur and well as selected highway improvements, including

a possible Southern Distributor Road. Further development at Aylesbury also has significant implications for investment in wastewater treatment capacity (by 2011-2016) and water supply (post 2016). The designation of Aylesbury as a Growth Area will require urgent attention paid to the ability of the existing transport infrastructure to accommodate the additional traffic associated with new development and economic activity. Strategic and local transport studies are considered urgent and essential to inform the development of a full investment programme.

- 3.2** In Milton Keynes there is a backlog of transport infrastructure work that must be delivered to facilitate development. By 2016 it is anticipated that Milton Keynes will experience significant road congestion and that sustainable growth will require a real step change in the provision and use of public transport. This will need to be supported by a pattern of development which facilitates the provision and use of public transport. Additional improvements to the MI will also be required to accommodate growth.

## 4 Implementation and Delivery

- 4.1** Although implementation mechanisms are well advanced in this sub-region as a consequence of its status as a Growth Area there is also a need to begin to programme a range of utility works required to support growth post 2016. If the necessary infrastructure is to be provided within the required timescale,

projects will need to be planned earlier and progressed in a more intensive way than has hitherto been the case. Significant additional technical and management resources and funding will be required to achieve this.

## 5 Monitoring

- 5.1 There will be a need for regular monitoring of both job creation and dwelling completion to ensure that development at Milton Keynes and Aylesbury is balanced and sustainable. The results of monitoring may require the review and alteration of the sub-regional strategy.

## 6 Commentary

- 6.1 The brief issued to the sub-regional steering group was to recommend options for levels of growth over the period 2016-2026 (ie the 10 year period beyond the draft MKSM SRS). However the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the MKSM SRS set out proposed levels of development to 2021.
- 6.2 The sub-regional steering group has recommended options for the period to 2026. The Assembly therefore invites comments on the options covering the full period to 2026.
- 6.3 The Secretary of State's proposed changes now provide a clear steer on the scale of growth in the sub-region, and clearly reject the Panel's recommendation to reduce the level of growth at Aylesbury after 2016.
- 6.4 In accordance with the brief issued to the sub-regional steering group, those options tested which fall below the levels of growth set out in the Proposed Changes are not considered appropriate. The Assembly does not therefore request comments on Option Higher Growth 'B' for Milton Keynes and Option 'A' for Aylesbury.

- 6.5 The Assembly invites comments on the 'Base Growth' and 'Higher Growth A' Options for Milton Keynes, and on Options B and C for Aylesbury. The 'Base Growth' option for Milton Keynes and Option B for Aylesbury are both consistent with those regional Spatial Options that incorporate the Government's proposals for the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Growth Area. The 'Higher Growth' A option for Milton Keynes and Option C for Aylesbury advocate levels of growth which exceed those in any of the regional spatial options.

- 6.6 A key requirement is the timely provision of supporting infrastructure. Many of these needs have already been identified, but reassurance about effective delivery remains an unresolved issue.

- 6.7 Although the Strategy does not include any specific policies providing criteria on the location of sub-regionally significant development, this guidance is implicit within the overall focus of development at the urban areas of Milton Keynes and Aylesbury which is clearly established in the MKSM Sub-Regional Strategy. The strategy does not propose any specific policies in relation to affordable housing, and further work will be required on this issue.

## Annex – Policies

### POLICIES INCLUDED IN THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S PROPOSED ALTERATIONS TO THE MKSM SRS PART B STATEMENT FOR MILTON KEYNES AND AYLESBURY.

These policies should be read in conjunction with the Strategic Policies contained in the MKSM SRS Part A Statement. The MKSM SRS can be downloaded from [www.go-em.gov.uk](http://www.go-em.gov.uk)

#### MILTON KEYNES/AYLESBURY VALE POLICY I: SPATIAL FRAMEWORK FOR MILTON KEYNES GROWTH AREA

Milton Keynes should accommodate an additional 44,900 dwellings over the period 2001-2021. Figures include any housing arising from Milton Keynes growth and provided in Aylesbury Vale or Mid-Bedfordshire DC areas after 2011. This will be phased as follows;

	2001-06	2006-11	2011-16	2016-21	2001-16	Total
Milton Keynes	7,900	15,000	11,000	11,000	33,900	44,900
Annual Average	(1,580)	(3,000)	(2,200)	(2,200)	(2,260)	(2,245)

New development will be delivered through a combination of urban intensification and the development of new sustainable urban extensions, integrated with the provision of new and enhanced public transport systems and interchanges. Locations for development will be those established through the Milton Keynes Local Plan, and in appropriate LDDs on the basis of areas of search around the western, southern and eastern edges of the urban area. LDDs should apply the principles for creating sustainable communities as set out in Strategic Policy 3. Sustainable urban extensions should be carefully programmed so as to complement and not undermine the contribution of development and regeneration within the urban area. Both urban intensification and sustainable urban extensions will be planned in such a way as to maintain and extend green

infrastructure, and to ensure that issues of impact on landscape character and coalescence of settlements are addressed.

The levels of development proposed are based on the need to plan for an increase in employment of 44,900 jobs in the period to 2021. Key locations for employment related development will be Central Milton Keynes, Bletchley, Wolverton and Newport Pagnell and some locations within new urban extensions at focal points on the public transport system. At present there is sufficient planned employment land supply in Milton Keynes to meet forecast demand to 2016. Both quantitative and qualitative aspects of supply and demand for employment land will be kept under review through the LDD process, to ensure provision of a range of types and sizes of premises to meet the needs of the economy, and that any land no longer required for employment purposes is considered for other use.

Local transport infrastructure will require early development and continued enhancement and upgrades to facilitate the delivery of sustainable growth throughout the period to 2021 and beyond. Key elements are:

- i core bus network upgrade across the whole of Milton Keynes
- ii high quality public transport serving East-West and North-South Corridors
- iii Park and Ride accompanied by appropriate traffic management measures
- iv measures to resolve east-west traffic problems across the southern half of Milton Keynes.

New and upgraded strategic transport links will be vital in underpinning the growth of Milton Keynes, including enhanced east-west public transport and possible new parkway stations. Details of strategic transport infrastructure are set out in the Part A Statement.

### MILTON KEYNES/AYLESBURY VALE POLICY 2: AYLESBURY GROWTH AREA

An expanded Aylesbury should accommodate a total of 15,000 new dwellings over the period 2001-2021. Other parts of Aylesbury Vale District should provide for a further 3,300 new dwellings in the shorter period of 2001-16, excluding any growth directly related to the urban area of Milton Keynes that may be identified through a cross-border LDD with Milton Keynes Council.

	2001-06	2006-11	2011-16	2016-21	Total 2001-21
Aylesbury Urban Area	2,400	3,800	4,400	4,400	15,000
Annual Average	(480pa)	(760pa)	(880pa)	(880pa)	(750pa)

Annual average development at Aylesbury should be delivered through maximising the use and re-use of land within the urban area and through the development of new sustainable urban extensions integrated with the provision of new and enhanced public transport systems and interchanges.

Sustainable urban extensions to the north of the town at Berryfields and Weedon Hill have already been identified through the Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan. While every effort should be made to maximise the use of urban land, further extensions will also be identified through the preparation of an appropriate LDD or LDDs. The LDD or LDDs should provide a strategic

long-term framework for the development of the town centering on:

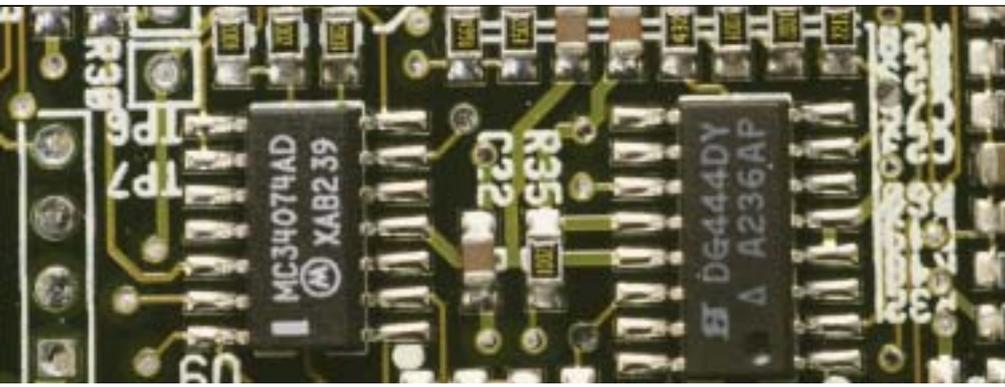
- i identifying land for new housing as above
- ii applying the principles for creating sustainable communities as set out in Strategic Policy 3
- iii identifying and ensuring the availability of appropriate strategic high quality employment sites
- iv identifying and implementing measures to achieve an urban renaissance of the town centre, strengthening its traditional role and heritage as a county town (possibly to be articulated through the preparation of a separate LDD)
- v providing for a sustainable transport system for the expanded town, including strategic bus corridors with bus priority measures and good links to the strategic rail network.

The levels of development proposed are based on the need to plan for an increase in employment of 12,690 jobs in Aylesbury Vale district in the period to 2021.

### MILTON KEYNES/AYLESBURY VALE POLICY 3: DELIVERING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

The scale of growth envisaged in Milton Keynes and Aylesbury must be harnessed to deliver an enhanced quality of life following the principles of sustainable development. This will necessitate the phased provision of high quality community, economic, environmental and social infrastructure and services in accordance with demand. This should include the following:

- i affordable housing – significant increases in provision, mix and choice
- ii urban renaissance – major public realm improvements and the provision of high quality, and well managed strategic and local open space



- iii** water – the strategic planning of surface water drainage management to minimise flood risk and avoid adverse impacts of large scale development on water quality
- iv** healthcare – substantial investment in expanding and modernising primary and community health and social care and secondary healthcare services and facilities
- v** school education – additional primary and secondary school provision
- vi** further and higher education – additional capacity should be sought in Aylesbury and Milton Keynes
- vii** delivery of the Milton Keynes economic vision and the emerging economic vision for Aylesbury Vale
- viii** proportionate increase in other public services eg police and fire service.