

**Serving our communities**



**Central**

Mr Ian Pickering  
Chairman, Aspley Guise Parish Council  
On behalf of The Parishes Liaison Group

**Your ref:**  
**Our ref:** ttkm200  
**Date:** 19<sup>th</sup> May 2010

Sent via Email

Dear Mr Pickering

**Milton Keynes South East Strategic Development Area Development Framework**

Thank you for your letter and enclosure addressed jointly to Councillor Sam Crooks and myself of 28<sup>th</sup> April 2010. Please accept my apologies for the delay in replying to you.

Your letter goes into some depth about your concerns in relation to the production and timing of the Development Framework. However, it seems to me that the essence of your concern relates to its relationship with the progress of the East of England Plan Review and Milton Keynes Core Strategy and the extent of involvement in the production of the document with stakeholders.

Clearly, given the result of the General Election there will be a review of the nature of regional and sub-regional planning going forward. My comments at the moment can only relate to the current system and legislative framework and I trust that you will accept them in that spirit.

I will turn to your detailed observations shortly, but it appears to me that your preferred option would be to await the outcome of the regional planning process and progress the Development Framework with certainty over housing numbers. However, the case to be presented at the forthcoming Examination Hearings has to be evidence based and the Development Framework will help fulfil that requirement. Despite your reservations, its preparation can be used also as a defence against hostile planning applications in advance of the conclusion of the regional planning process.

I note your wish for fuller engagement in the preparation of the brief for Consultants but I see this as part of the Councils' normal procurement process which is usually officer-led. Clearly, there will be very wide consultation during the preparation of the brief itself as explained by Bruce Stewart at the presentation.

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Turning now to your detailed observations, I will respond to some of your points in the order that you have raised them.

1. **Timing of the Preparation of the Development Framework.**  
Whilst the Examination into the Review of the East of England Plan may be held before the adoption of the development brief the preliminary findings of the brief will form an essential part of the evidence base for the Hearings. I note your view that the Framework should not be prepared until uncertainties regarding housing numbers are clarified but it may be that the uncertainties remain for some time and in the interim the Framework will provide some certainties for the future planning of this area which is subject to strong development pressures.
2. **Process for Producing the Consultants' Brief.**  
As I explained earlier, the preparation of the brief for Consultants is essentially a technical task and I have confidence in my officers' experience in the exercise of this type of work. The draft brief has been further amended to include an annexe elaborating on the need and extent of stakeholder engagement. This will entail comprehensive involvement of local communities in the production of the Framework.
3. **Role of Land Owners and Developers.**  
There was no priority given to land owners over community representatives in the preparation of the brief. It was felt the agreement of land owners and their representatives was required before embarking upon the production of the Development Framework.
4. **Housing Numbers, Densities and Green Spaces.**  
For clarification there will be one Development Framework incorporating two housing scenarios rather than two versions of the Framework. The potential pitfall of the alternative method suggested in your letter is that it could lead to different housing figures from those in adopted Central Bedfordshire Council Policy and that this could make defending our green belt proposal more difficult. The Framework will identify areas appropriate for high and lower density development.
5. **Issues to be Subject to Prior Consultation in Preparing the Consultant's Brief.**  
I consider that all the matters referred to can be properly addressed during the development of the Framework itself rather than during the preparation of the brief.
6. **Impact of Adoption of the Development Framework on existing Core Strategies.**  
The adoption of a Development Framework will not require any changes to the North Central Bedfordshire adopted Core Strategy.

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In conclusion, I can fully appreciate and understand the concern of local communities about the expansion of Milton Keynes. It is for this reason that Central Bedfordshire has consistently argued for a fixed maximum housing figure in the South East development area and protection to be afforded to existing communities by a Green Belt. There may be some uncertainties about the future of regional planning, but rather than wait until these uncertainties are resolved it is my view that it is preferable to jointly progress a Framework for the expansion area rather than operate in a policy vacuum.

I trust that I have clarified the position of Central Bedfordshire Council.

Yours sincerely



**Councillor Mrs Tricia Turner MBE**  
**Leader of the Council**

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