

THE RUSHMERE ESTATE INTERIM FRAMEWORK: APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS

This is the minimum list of Stakeholders who have been invited to take part in the process.

Government Agencies

- Natural England
- Forestry Commission
- Environment Agency
- EEDA/Local Enterprise Partnership
- Sport England (SE and E Regions)
- East of England Tourist Board
- South East Tourist Board
- Government Offices (GO East and GO South-East)
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- English Heritage

Local Authorities

- Central Bedfordshire Council
- Aylesbury Vale District Council
- Buckinghamshire County Council
- Luton Borough Council
- Joint Technical Unit
- AV & MK Growth Vehicles
- Renaissance Bedford
- Milton Keynes Council
- Leighton Linlade Town Council*
- Dunstable Town Council
- Houghton Regis Town Council
- Heath & Reach Parish Council*
- Soulbury Parish Council*
- Eggington Parish Council*
- Stanbridge & Tilsworth Parish Council*
- Billington Parish Council*
- Stoke Hammond Parish Council
- Stewkley Parish Council
- Hockliffe Parish Council
- Great Brickhill Parish Council
- Woburn Parish Council
- Aspley Guise Parish Council
- Woburn Sands Parish Council
- Aspley Heath Parish Council
- Wing Parish Council

*Indicates members of the Rushmere Estate Town & Parish Councils Group

- Better Together – Central Bedfordshire LSP (including Environment & Economy Theme Group)
- Aylesbury Vale LSP
- Luton LSP

Interest/User Groups

- Stockgrove Country Park Users' Group
- BuzzCycle
- Cycle Touring Club
- British Horse Society
- Bedfordshire Natural History Society (covering all associated groups)
- Bucks Natural History Society
- Leighton Buzzard Archaeological Society
- Ramblers Association
- Leighton Buzzard Society
- Heath & Reach P3
- Leighton Buzzard P3
- Leighton Fun Runners
- Royal British Legion (Heath & Reach)
- Bedfordshire Geology Group
- South Midlands Orienteering Club
- Heath & Reach Allotment Trustees
- Central Bedfordshire Youth Inspectors
- Central Bedfordshire Youth Parliament
- CPRE
- Faith Woodlands Community Project
- Central Bedfordshire Access Group
- Dunstable and District Sports (DADS)
- Luton Wheelers

Community Groups:

- Leighton Buzzard Society
- Great Brickhill, Wing and Ivinghoe Local Area Forum
- North Houghton Regis Stakeholder Group
- Mayfield Centre Dunstable
- Downside Action Group (Dunstable)

Other professional stakeholders

- Joint Local Access Forum – Central Beds & Luton
- Local Access Forum – Bucks
- Bedfordshire Rural Transport Partnership
- Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity
- Buckinghamshire Rural Communities Charity
- Sustrans
- GoCycle

- British Waterways
- Sandpit Steering Group
- Ouzel Valley Park Steering Group
- The Chalk Arc Initiative
- The Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs, Northants & Peterborough
- Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust
- Cranfield University
- The Open University
- Greensand Ridge Local Action Group (and Programme Manager)
- Aylesbury Vale Milton Keynes Local Action Group (and Programme Manager)
- Milton Keynes South Midlands Cultural Partnership
- Signposts Luton
- Luton Gateway Ltd
- Sports Leaders UK
- Langley House Trust
- Crimebeat
- Community & Voluntary Service Bedfordshire
- Bedfordshire & Luton Community Foundation

Adjacent Landowners

- Private landowners
- Lafarge

APPENDIX B: LIST OF COMPLETED STUDIES AND REPORTS

- Rushmere Park Ancient/Veteran Tree Survey - Preliminary Report (Alderman, 2010)
- Rushmere Park – Mountain Bike Centre; Feasibility Study, carried out by CTC for Central Bedfordshire Council (2010)
- Rushmere Park, Oak Wood and Stockgrove Country Park Archaeological Survey (CBC Archaeology Team & Historic Environment Information Officer, 2010)
- Ecological Assessment of the Stockgrove Estate (Philip Irving, The Greensand Trust, 2010)
- Protected Species Summary (Philip Irving, The Greensand Trust, 2010)
- Stockgrove Country Park Historic Landscape Analysis, study for Central Bedfordshire Council (Oldakre Associates, August 2009)
- Hydrological Assessment of Rushmere Lake: Water Level Management in an Anthropogenically Altered Catchment (Gareth Thomas, MSc Thesis, School of Applied Science (Water Management), Cranfield University, 2010)
- Rushmere Country Park Commercial Opportunities Study (Vision XS, 2010)
- Rushmere Park, Stockgrove and Oak Wood Woodland Management Plans (Claire Wardle, Ancient Woodland Liaison Advisor, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group /Bedfordshire Woodland Forum, 2010)
- Deer Management Plans for Rushmere Park, Stockgrove Park and Oak Wood (Wardle, 2010)
- Educational Assessment (2010, The Greensand Trust)

Other background information held includes information relating to highways, buildings and other specific activities. This information is not held in report format.

APPENDIX C: POLICY AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Land Use Planning Policy

Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) provide the planning framework, comprising a suite of development plan documents that will determine the precise location of growth and associated infrastructure. They also set out core planning and development control policies that will guide decisions in the plan area.

Neither Southern Central Bedfordshire and Luton, nor Aylesbury Vale, has yet adopted an LDF. The respective 'Local Plan' for each area therefore remains the 'live' development plan document, with policies 'saved' until they are replaced by policies in the LDF.

In addition, the national planning policy framework includes a number of statements and guidance notes that demonstrate Government's commitment to meeting sustainable development objectives relating to the protection, enhancement and use of green infrastructure assets.

Relevant saved policies from the South Bedfordshire Local Plan Review (2004) that are not covered by Planning Policy Guidance Notes or Statements include:

Policy R4 'Proposals for the Provision of Recreational Open Space and Facilities' in Leighton-Linslade: this policy refers to the Ouzel Valley Park proposals. These proposals seek to implement a scheme of public open space and improved access.

The Rushmere Estate is located within the South Bedfordshire Green Belt and is therefore constrained by the policies within Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 'Green Belts'.

NE12: Proposals for sport and recreational activities requiring natural features or water The impact of activities upon both the environment and other interests/users will need to be considered.

NE4: Local planning approach for GI

Similarly, the following saved policies from the Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan (2004) remain relevant:

- GP59 – Preservation of archaeological remains
- GP60 – Development and Parks or Gardens of Special Historic Interest
- GP72 – Proposals for self-catering holiday accommodation and holiday homes
- GP73 – Proposals for camping and touring caravan sites
- GP91 – Provision of amenity areas
- GP93 – Safeguarding of community buildings and facilities

Rural Areas:

- RA4 – Considerations for countryside recreation
- RA29 – Proposals for new employment uses in the countryside

Bucks County Strategic Plan:

- GB2 – Extent of the Green Belt in Buckinghamshire
- LS3 – Areas of Attractive Landscape

Historic Environment:

- HE1 – Protection of key sites and features

Water environment:

- W2 – Protection of the water environment

Other relevant Planning Policy Statements or Guidance Notes include:

PPG2: Green Belts:

The part of the site that is in Central Bedfordshire is within the Green Belt. While the policies in PPG2 continue to apply in green belts, local planning authorities should ensure that planning policies in LDDs address the particular land use issues and opportunities to be found in the countryside around all urban areas, recognising its importance to those who live or work there, and also in providing the nearest and most accessible countryside to urban residents. Planning authorities should aim to secure environmental improvements and maximise a range of beneficial uses of this land, whilst reducing potential conflicts between neighbouring land uses. This should include improvement of public access (e.g. through support for country parks and community forests) and facilitating the provision of appropriate sport and recreation facilities.

PPS4 : Planning for Sustainable Growth

Policy EC7 'planning for tourism in rural areas' recognises the need for development to support the Government's tourism strategy and thus indicates that *'local planning authorities should support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit rural businesses, communities and visitors and which utilise and enrich, rather than harm, the character of the countryside, its towns, villages, buildings and other features'*. It establishes guidance that balances the need for providing facilities whilst protecting landscapes and sensitive areas and accepts, for example, that there may be a case for new or expanded holiday and touring caravan sites and chalet developments. Policy EC12 regarding 'determining planning applications for economic development in rural areas' similarly supports the re-use of buildings in the countryside for economic development and accepts small-scale development for economic benefit, employment social and environmental sustainability within sensible constraints.

PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

The Government's objectives for rural areas include:

- (i) To raise the quality of life and the environment in rural areas
- (ii) To promote more sustainable patterns of development

PPS7 states that planning policies should provide a positive framework for facilitating sustainable development that supports traditional land-based activities and makes the most of new leisure and recreational opportunities that require a countryside location. Planning authorities should continue to ensure that the quality and character of the wider countryside is protected and, where possible, enhanced. They should have particular regard to any areas that have been statutorily designated for their landscape, wildlife or historic qualities where greater priority should be given to restraint of potentially damaging development.

PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

The Government's objectives for planning are:

- **to promote sustainable development** by ensuring that biological and geological diversity are conserved and enhanced as an integral part of social, environmental and economic development, so that policies and decisions about the development and use of land integrate biodiversity and geological diversity with other considerations.
- **to conserve, enhance and restore the diversity of England's wildlife and geology** by sustaining, and where possible improving, the quality and extent of natural habitat and geological and geomorphological sites; the natural physical processes on which they depend; and the populations of naturally occurring species which they support.

PPG17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation

PPG17 states that assessments of need for open space, sport and recreation should be carried out looking at quantity, quality and accessibility criteria. Following the assessment, local standards for provision should be identified and then applied in relation to plan-making and development management activities. Although no PPG17 assessment has been carried out for the southern Central Bedfordshire area, significant work has been carried out as background to the creation of a Greenspace Strategy.

In relation to new open spaces PPG17 states that local authorities should seek to improve the local open space network and to create public open space from vacant land. Local authorities should also consider the use of land which is otherwise unsuitable for development and pursue public use of privately owned areas of land.

A consultation paper on a new Planning Policy Statement: Planning for a Natural and Healthy Environment was produced earlier in 2010, with consultation closing on 1st June. The new PPS aims to consolidate and streamline a number of early Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Planning Policy Statements (PPS9: Biodiversity and geological conservation, PPS7: Landscape protection, soil and agricultural land quality and forestry, PPG 17: Open Space, Recreation & Sport and PPG20: Coastal policy). It also attempts to look more holistically at the provision of open space and greenspace in relation to climate change, environmental benefits, nature conservation value and community and recreational infrastructure. The document embeds green infrastructure with the national planning policy context – the only significant shift from the existing suite of Statements and Guidance relates to the strategic provision of green infrastructure.

Southern Central Bedfordshire & Luton LDF: Core Strategy Submission Document (Consultation Draft - October 2010)

The “Safeguarding our Environment and Resources” chapter builds on the Core Strategy Vision of creating a sustainable community, and recognises the role that green infrastructure plays in this. It highlights the GI priority areas (from the Luton and southern Bedfordshire GI Plan) including the Ouzel River Corridor, within which the Stockgrove Estate is located.

The document also highlights existing deficiencies in open space within the area, at a local and district level, and identifies the opportunity for development proposed in Luton and southern Central Bedfordshire to contribute to and enhance the GI network.

Policy CS10 (Green Infrastructure) seeks a net gain in GI through the protection and enhancement of the area's GI assets, and the creation of connected multi-functional areas of green space that promote recreation, public access, biodiversity, tourism, and protection and enhancement of the local landscape and historic assets. It states that “development will

contribute towards the establishment, enhancement or ongoing management of local green infrastructure linking with the strategic green infrastructure in line with the strategic GI networks identified in the GI plans” and that “where on-site provision of green infrastructure is not possible contributions will be sought and used to enhance the strategic green infrastructure network as identified in the GI plans”.

Green Infrastructure Planning

The principle of Green Infrastructure (GI) and GI planning was developed as a response to growth proposals within the Milton Keynes South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy (2004). The concept of a multi-functional network of routes, corridors and green spaces was nothing new, but GI planning developed to ensure this important element of creating sustainable communities was considered alongside (or even in advance of) the development of hard or ‘grey’ infrastructure. A series of GI Plans has been developed, at different scales, from the strategic to the local, both sides of the Bedfordshire/Buckinghamshire border. The principles of GI planning have been incorporated and endorsed through spatial planning policy, both in the Regional Spatial Strategies and emerging Local Development Frameworks. Although the current Government intends to abolish the Regional Spatial Strategies, until this happens they remain a useful guide.

Both the Bedfordshire and Luton Strategic GI Plan (2007), and the Luton and Southern Bedfordshire GI Plan (2009) identify a GI ‘network’, priority areas for the protection of and investment in GI. The Estate is within the priority network at the strategic and district level. Both of these plans recognise the need to both create new and enhance existing GI to support the needs of current and future communities. The role of existing GI assets, such as Stockgrove Country Park, is equally as important as the need to create new greenspaces to support growth. The Buckinghamshire GI Plan (2009) identifies Stockgrove CP as an important “Countryside Access Gateway” to the Greensand Ridge, but all of the GI Plans recognise the fact that this site is at or over-capacity. This underpins the development of the Rushmere Estate and the need to shift visitor pressure away from the most sensitive areas.

A consultation draft Luton and South Bedfordshire Greenspace Strategy was produced jointly between Luton Borough Council, South Bedfordshire District Council and Bedfordshire County Council in 2007/8, to review existing provision of green space in the borough and district and to set quantity, quality and accessibility standards for the future. While this Strategy was not adopted, the Chalk Arc Initiative (a partnership of local organizations overseeing delivery of Growth Area Fund monies to green infrastructure projects) did appoint consultants to conduct detailed scoping work to identify options for the provision of at least 60 hectares of high quality, strategic multi-functional green space (MFGS) within the Luton/Dunstable/Houghton Regis/Leighton Linlode Growth Area – the GI Scoping Study 2009 (Kit Campbell Associates). The study identified 11 potential sites, one of which was ‘Rushmere Park’ as an extension to Stockgrove CP. The study recommended that:

- Ideally, strategic GI assets should be in public or quasi-public ownership
- Investment will be required to deliver the full range of potential public benefits
- New GI sites must include elements that will generate at least a significant part of the cost of managing and maintaining them;

- Collectively GI sites should offer the widest possible range of opportunities and experiences of the highest possible quality and “something for everyone” including tourists, in order to attract a wider spectrum of users than traditional countryside sites

At a local level the site is an important component within the ‘Green Wheel’, identified through the Leighton Linlade Big Plan (2007, revisited 2010) and supported by the Ouzel Valley Park Strategy.

Prepared by Bedfordshire County Council under the requirements of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the Bedfordshire Outdoor Access Improvement Plan 2006-11 (OAIP) is the ‘Rights of Way Improvement Plan’ (RoWIP) for Central Bedfordshire. The scope includes accessible green spaces as well as rights of way, and is therefore wider than the typical ‘RoWIP’. It identifies a number of key issues, including improved connectivity with existing and potential new communities, network severance, the need to create a green cycle network, and improve access to the countryside, especially near to where people live. It identified areas closest to the largest communities within which improvements would be focused - “Priority 1” areas. The Rushmere Estate lies within the Priority 1 area around Leighton Linlade.

As part of work to review the OAIP in 2010, Central Bedfordshire Council carried out an analysis of Rights of Way connectivity in 2009. Deficits were identified in the walking network east of Leighton Buzzard, with provision for cyclists and horse riders significantly poorer than for walking, with the area around Leighton Buzzard being an area of major deficit. The report recognises the role of the Rushmere Estate in improving accessibility to the countryside in the area. It lies in an important position on the Greensand Ridge Walk and can therefore help achieve the priority objective to reinforce the status of this route as a major spinal route.

Similarly, the Buckinghamshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2008-18 sets out the strategy in Buckinghamshire for the rights of way network for the next ten years. Issues identified as important are similar to those in Bedfordshire, and include maintenance, better provision of information, better and more integrated networks, providing strategic links and better access to green spaces, and delivering a range of benefits for health, the local economy and the environment.

Sustainable Communities

The size, strategic location and potential multi-functionality of the Rushmere Estate, combined with the fact that its purchase was supported by public funding require it to provide benefits for both local people and those from further afield. Stockgrove Country Park already attracts visitors from Milton Keynes, Luton, Dunstable, Houghton Regis and Aylesbury as well as more local visitors. The wider geographical catchment includes areas with significant levels of social deprivation and poor access to greenspaces and the wider countryside. The Central Bedfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-2031 recognises the importance of providing access to the countryside and recreational activities alongside housing growth, making the connection between this and a better quality of life and the need to reduce inequalities. It advocates more and better cycling networks to help people travel with less impact on the environment. The Buckinghamshire Sustainable Communities Strategy states that “In 2015, Buckinghamshire will have maintained its economic success and position as one of the most prosperous counties in England. At the same time it will enhance its environment and improve the well-being and quality of life of all its residents”. Key themes within the strategy are focused on creating a thriving economy, a sustainable environment, safe, cohesive and strong communities, health and wellbeing.

Transport Planning

Both Buckinghamshire County Council and Central Bedfordshire Council are currently consulting on their Local Transport Plan (3) documents in advance of production by April 2011.

Central Bedfordshire Council's LTP3, My Journey – Central Bedfordshire Transport Strategy 2011-2026 (January 2011, Draft), contains both modal strategies (cycling and walking) and 'Local Area Transport Plans', the latter covering more detailed delivery.

The vision for transport in Central Bedfordshire is "To improve the quality of life of all in central Bedfordshire, and enhance the unique characteristics of our communities and environment by creating an integrated transport system that is safe, sustainable and accessible for all". One of its key objectives is to "Enable access to a range of leisure, cultural and tourism facilities for residents and visitors". It is important that the Rushmere Estate provides a level of access consistent with the vision. The Leighton Linlade Local Area Travel Plan (Draft Implementation Plan, December 2010) has been developed to ensure schemes contribute to a more sustainable future, healthier environment, vibrant town centres and encourage economic growth in Leighton Linlade. It identifies the importance of promoting public transport, cycling and walking.

The vision of the Buckinghamshire LTP3 document is "To make Buckinghamshire a more successful, healthy and safer place to live, work and visit. Maintaining and enhancing the excellent environment, whilst ensuring that businesses thrive and grow the county's economy". This document summarises the focus of their strategy to 2016 and beyond.

Amongst improvements in terms of new infrastructure required, it identifies the following, which the Rushmere Estate can make a contribution to:

- Walking infrastructure (e.g. new or improved paths and crossings)
- Cycling infrastructure (e.g. crossings and cycle routes)
- Multi-modal interchanges (e.g. hubs linking walking, cycling, bus and rail networks)

It also highlights the importance of encouraging behaviour change, with the need for cycling, walking and public transport to be promoted for appropriate journeys, and travel plans prepared as part of the planning process. Promotion and education are also seen as crucial to helping people change behaviour, and Buckinghamshire County Council will work with charities and voluntary organizations to do this. For short trips it is felt that cycling and walking should be seen as the norm. To increase cycling and walking across Buckinghamshire new developments will be encouraged to be cycling and walking friendly, and recreational and leisure cycling will be encouraged with signed rural cycle routes. The benefits to health of walking and cycling are also recognized.

The Central Bedfordshire Cycling Strategy (Draft for Consultation, 2011) vision is to "Encourage more people to cycle, to cycle safely and to cycle more often".

The headline objective is to increase the number of people cycling, with further objectives to improve the quality of the cycling environment, improve the safety and perceived safety of the cycling environment, increase awareness of the benefits of cycling and increase access to a bicycle. The Rushmere Estate initiative can potentially support work towards all of these objectives, and benefits from being located close to Leighton Linlade, which has Cycle Demonstration Town status and has benefited from 3 years of work by GoCycle Leighton Linlade on exemplar development and the promotion of cycling.

The Strategy recognises the importance of 'leisure routes', which comprise both on and off-road routes on quiet country lanes and through rural parts of the area which form circular recreational rides, and also other rights of way in rural areas which may be used by cyclists.

The Strategy advocates the development of infrastructure, training and promotion as interventions, and the Rushmere Estate has the potential to contribute to and benefit from all three. Within the preferential hierarchy contained within the Strategy, cycling (alongside walking for shorter journeys) should be prioritised for journeys of less than 5 miles (which includes all of Leighton Linlade and Heath & Reach), and for journeys over 5 miles it should be prioritised alongside public transport.

The Rushmere Estate is located on the route of the proposed 'Greensand Ridge Cycleway', a project being led by Central Bedfordshire Council. It is intended to create a linear cycle route, with connections to attractions and other circular routes, bringing the access, health and economic benefits associated with such routes. It is intended that the Rushmere Estate will be a key destination on this route, with the potential for cycle hire and other associated facilities (which can help encourage cycling amongst those who do not own a bicycle).

Given the limited public transport options serving the Estate, cycle access is a vital element of enabling people to get to the site, including those who do not have access to a car. With its large size, cycling is also a potential method of exploring it and wider networks.

More People Walking (2010, draft) is Central Bedfordshire Council's Walking Strategy. The vision is to "Encourage people to walk, to walk safely and to walk more often". It covers both delivery of infrastructure and promotion elements. The headline objective relates to increasing the number of people walking, with other objectives looking to improve the quality of the pedestrian environment, improve the safety of pedestrians and increase awareness of the benefits of walking. The Strategy recognises the health, economic, climate change and social inclusion benefits walking can bring. Within the preferential hierarchy, the Strategy suggests walking should be prioritised for all journeys under 2 miles. Much of Leighton Linlade is within 2 miles of the Estate, so as much as is possible should be done to encourage safe walking access to the site.

Economic Development

There is also evidence and strategic direction to support the belief that the Rushmere Estate can become economically sustainable, helping to create revenue mechanisms that both contribute to the local rural economy and fund the future management and development of this and other key sites. The Estate is located within the area identified within the Greensand Ridge Local Development Strategy (2008-13), which has a central vision of enhancing the local rural economy through sustainable tourism activities (and similarly for the Aylesbury Vale Milton Keynes LDS). The Bedfordshire & Luton Tourism Growth Strategy (2007-12) highlights the need to boost the area's tourist economy, including sustainable tourism. The 'green offering' is highlighted as important to the area's tourism, and the Estate could make a significant contribution by developing activities which appeal to the family, 'visiting friends and relatives' and adult short break markets, particularly if an accommodation offering is included. The Leighton Linlade Tourism Growth Strategy (2008-15) also recognises the role that green infrastructure can play in promoting and enabling tourism development, and aims to promote a strong positive image for Leighton Linlade and the surrounding villages both locally and regionally through:

- Embracing a strong local culture by offering a quality programme of community events;
- Positioning Leighton Linlade as the gateway to strategically important green spaces.

The objectives of the Strategy are:

- Increase the number of day visitors to the town and nearby attractions;
- Raise the profile, accessibility and links between local attractions and events;
- Promote an increasing number of opportunistic visits by local residents and visitors;
- Help secure the investment to develop local attractions and Green Infrastructure.

It is clear that the development of the Estate can help achieve the aims and objectives through the creation of a high profile facility, hosting events and activities, and through provision of overnight stay accommodation.

The Rushmere Estate occupies a strategically important position, being central to the MKSM Growth Area. The creation of Local Enterprise Partnerships is intended to deliver the economic vision for an area (replacing the role of the Regional Development Agencies), bringing together businesses, universities, colleges, community groups, social enterprises and local government to work with Central Government to support inward investment, innovation, economic growth, new enterprise and job creation. The Government's White Paper 'Local Growth: realising every place's potential' listed 24 areas, including the South East Midlands, formally recognised as local enterprise partnerships. The 'South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership' includes Bedfordshire and Luton, Milton Keynes, Northamptonshire, Cherwell, Aylesbury and Dacorum.