

The Berkshire Unitary Authorities'

# JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING UNIT

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Our Ref:  
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Dear Mr Payne

## Re. Sub Regional Monitoring

Following your letter of 24/10/05 and my subsequent correspondence with Kate Aulman, I would like to raise the points listed below on behalf of the Blackwater Valley Western Corridor sub-region:

### 1. Geography .

I agree with the best fit approach of ward boundaries to the sub-region. I would suggest that these need to be provisionally fixed either prior to or at the EiP into the RSS as a lot of the technical work that has been undertaken on these boundaries will be subject, I suspect, to examination. They will of course be confirmed by the Inspector's report following the EiP. A side issue is, whether we still need to monitor in terms of settlement size with regard to employment and residential commitments.

### 2. Contextual Indicators.

My understanding is that these would be reviewed every couple of years or so.

#### (a) Population

I have the following reservations about the frequency of review:

- i. Currently the only consistent source of demographic estimates at sub-local authority area is the decennial census. I know that National Statistics (NS) have long promised to produce ward-level estimates based on the mid-year estimates but my understanding is that the provisional data still relates to 2002 and there is as yet no firm timetable in place to bring these in line with the mid-year estimates.
- ii. Furthermore, there is currently a debate going on in relation to the geography of these estimates. The recent NS consultation had a response from users for ward data but the requirement from NeSS (neighbourhood statistics) who fund the project is for Super Output Level, as this is what the 10 Downing Street Policy Unit want.



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- iii. Finally, NS population estimates are currently based on migration information relating to GP lists, the international passenger survey and changes in the electoral role, and not housing completions. Whilst in the immediate years following the census this would not represent too big a problem it has been a serious issue for areas of growth like Milton Keynes, and given the number of growth points in the region a significant delay in getting housing completions reflected in population increases.

(b) **Employment**

The only source I have been able to find in relation to ward-level employment other than the census is from the Annual Business Inquiry, but I have serious concerns about the suitability of the data for use in planning terms.

There are significant differences between the Census and the ABI, with the ABI showing a consistently higher number of jobs at District level, a difference which tends to increase with the greater geographical detail. The reliability, of the ABI in relation to the accuracy of the data at ward level must be questionable given disclosure control and the fact that it is a sample of businesses and the survey can vary from year to year.

3. Having raised my concerns with regards to the contextual indicators I cannot suggest any alternatives that could be employed on a consistent basis across the area. What I would suggest is that the limitations of the data sources be highlighted as part of an appendix.
4. **Output Indicators.**  
With regard to the output indicators, I welcome your reassurance that, in relation to employment monitoring, SEERA will be adopting external floorspace measurements rather than the suggested Internal measurements suggested by ODPM, which as far as I know is only measured by the valuation office. I would also hope that we could get early agreement on a definition over affordable housing so that the data can start being pulled together long before the next AMR.
5. **Additional Indicators**  
Turning to the need for additional sub-regional indicators, specific to the Western Corridor Blackwater Corridor:

WCBV1 and 2: I would see these being monitored through the information no doubt being collected at a regional level on the scale and distribution of housing developments and its split between greenfield and brownfield land.

WCBV3: As for WCBV1 and 2.

WCBV4: Again, presumably part of the regional collection of the scale and distribution of employment land release and its split between greenfield and brownfield.

WCBV5: Measured through, presumably, GVA per capita, which I assume the Assembly will be collecting region-wide. The use of this data for sub-regional monitoring will need to be separately assessed.

WCBV6: We will be developing a methodology for monitoring the provision of infrastructure and its relationship to progress with development. This will include working with partners across the other sub-regions to share best practice and relevant information.

WCBV7 and 8: These will be monitored by the groups of authorities responsible for them. No further activity at a sub-regional level is required.

WCBV9: The impact of the SPA on development pressures will need to be monitored, but this is not something specific to our sub-region. It will need to be discussed with colleagues in the

London Fringe, and with any authorities lying outside the sub-regions who are affected. The nature of the monitoring is likely to be affected by the nature of the policy instruments finally adopted to deal with the constraint of the SPA.

In the light of the above, I do not see a need to gather any further information specifically to monitor the impacts of our sub-regional policies.

Yours sincerely

**Bryan Lyttle**  
**Group Manager: Information, Minerals & Waste**