



Wolverton Town Centre Neighbourhood Plan Referendum – 30th July 2015 General Information for voters

About this document

On 30th July 2015 there will be a referendum for residents in Wolverton and Greenleys Parish on the Wolverton Town Centre Neighbourhood Plan. This document explains more about the referendum that is going to take place and how you can take part. It also gives you information about the Town and Country Planning system.

The Referendum

The referendum on 30th July 2015 will ask you to vote yes or no to a question. For this referendum you will receive a ballot paper with this question:
“Do you want Milton Keynes Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Wolverton Town Centre to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?”

How do I vote in the referendum?

You show your choice by putting a cross (X) in the ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ box on your ballot paper. Put a cross in only **one** box or your vote will not be counted.

If the referendum comes out in favour of the Neighbourhood Plan it will be adopted. If adopted, the Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the Development Plan.

The Town and Country Planning System

The planning system helps to decide what gets built, where and when. It is essential for supporting economic growth, improving people’s quality of life, and protecting the natural and historic environment. Most new buildings, major changes to existing buildings or major changes to the local environment need planning permission. Without a planning system everyone could construct buildings or use land in any way they wanted, no matter what effect this would have on other people who live and work in their area.

Milton Keynes Council, as the Local Planning Authority, is responsible for deciding whether most forms of development should go ahead within the borough. Decisions are based on national policy in the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) as well as on the local **Development Plan**.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be taken into account by communities when preparing neighbourhood plans and by local planning authorities when preparing local plans and making decisions on planning applications. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and this has to be reflected in plans, both at a district level and a neighbourhood level. The NPPF is accompanied by guidance – the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) which expands on the NPPF policies and helps in their interpretation and application.

The Development Plan

The Development Plan is a set of documents that set out the policies for the development and use of land across the local authority area. In Milton Keynes it is currently made up of the Milton Keynes Local Plan (adopted 2005), the Core Strategy (adopted 2013), the Woburn Sands Neighbourhood Plan and Central Milton Keynes Business Neighbourhood Plan, the Waste Development Plan Document and the Minerals Local Plan. Once other neighbourhood plans have been approved at referendum they will be included in the Development Plan and will add to the amount of guidance available when considering the development and use of land.

Local Plans

Local planning authorities, such as Milton Keynes Council, must prepare a local plan for their area which sets out the opportunities for development and clear policies on what will or will not be permitted and where. Plans must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with the NPPF. As part of the development plan, local plans are very important when deciding planning applications.

The Milton Keynes Local Plan (2005) includes policies that allocate a range of large and smaller sites for development as well as policies that provide detailed guidance which is used when dealing with planning applications for a wide range of development and land uses.

The Core Strategy (2013) sets out the vision for how the borough will be in 2026 and how we are going to get there. It includes strategic policies which identifies how much new development will be required across the borough over the plan's period and broadly where that new development should be located.

Work is at an early stage on two new plans for Milton Keynes which, once adopted, will form part of the Development Plan:

- The Site Allocations Plan is looking for small to medium sized housing sites that can be delivered in a relatively short timescale to make sure that Milton Keynes continues to have a 5 year supply of deliverable housing land.
- Plan:MK is a new local plan for the whole of the Milton Keynes area and, once adopted, will replace the Core Strategy and the remaining saved policies in the Milton Keynes Local Plan.

Neighbourhood Plans

What are they?

Neighbourhood planning was introduced by the Localism Act in 2011. It aims to help local communities play a direct role in planning the areas in which they live and work by showing how a community wants land to be used and developed in its area.

Neighbourhood Plans are required to meet certain “Basic Conditions” by having regard to national planning policy, contributing to the achievement of sustainable development, being in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan for the area (ie the Milton Keynes Local Plan and the Core Strategy) and being compatible with EU obligations and human rights requirements. They should not promote less development than is set out in the Development Plan or undermine its strategic policies.

Who prepares Neighbourhood Plans ?

Neighbourhood plans are prepared by Town or Parish Councils or Neighbourhood Forums and there is a statutory process that must be followed to make a plan.

How are Neighbourhood Plans made?

The plan must be prepared through a process of consultation with local residents and businesses before an independent examiner reviews the plan and checks whether it meets the basic conditions and other legal requirements. The examiner then reports whether any changes should be made to the plan and whether it should proceed to the next stage in the process which is the referendum stage.

The referendum asks those voting whether they want the Neighbourhood Plan to be used by the Local Planning Authority to help it decide planning applications in the area covered by the Plan. All residents registered to vote (i.e. those included on the electoral roll) within the referendum area are entitled to vote in the referendum.

What status do Neighbourhood Plans have?

If more than half of those voting in a referendum have voted in favour of the neighbourhood plan the local planning authority must make it part of the statutory development plan and use it when making decisions on planning applications in the Plan area.

The Wolverton Town Centre Neighbourhood Plan

The Wolverton Town Centre Neighbourhood Plan has been produced on behalf of Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council by a steering committee of stakeholders including Future Wolverton, local residents, Parish Councillors, local businesses, officers from Milton Keynes Council. It has been produced in accordance with the statutory requirements and following a recent independent examination has, subject to minor modifications, been recommended to proceed to referendum.

The key themes and policies in the Neighbourhood Plan aim to:

- Encourage the redevelopment of two key sites (the Agora and the Railway Works) to support the regeneration of the town centre.
- Ensure that new development is in keeping with the character of the conservation area and sensitive to the town's railway heritage.
- Maintain and improve the diversity of town centre uses to improve the shopping and leisure offer for residents and visitors.
- Support the provision for a street market.
- Encourage the provision of small, affordable units for local and independent retailers.
- Ensure that shopfronts and signage are of a good design to help promote a high quality shopping environment in the town centre.

Additional information in relation to neighbourhood planning is available on the following websites:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/neighbourhood-planning

<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/neighbourhood-planning/>

<http://locality.org.uk/projects/building-community/>

A copy of the Wolverton Town Centre Neighbourhood Plan is available at Milton Keynes Council's Civic Offices, Wolverton Library on Creed Street, and the Milton Keynes Central Library. The Plan is also available online at:

www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/wolverton-neighbourhood-plan