Section 4 Development Directions

Direction of Growth 2 - Development East of the M1 motorway

What does this direction of growth entail? What are the main features?

A considerable number of the ideas emerging from the Vision Workshops suggested growing Milton Keynes eastwards across the M1 motorway, as shown in Figure 4 'Direction of Growth 2 - Development East of the M1 motorway'. Recognising how Milton Keynes has grown over the last 50 years, some participants envisaged a 'mirror image' of the new city east of the M1 delivering longer term growth. The idea of development crossing the M1 motorway is not new, but has been resisted in the past due to concerns that the M1 represents a barrier to growth which makes effective connections difficult.

In the longer term, the development area identified on Figure 4 'Direction of Growth 2 - Development East of the M1 motorway' could deliver the region of around 26,000 homes together with associated infrastructure and facilities.

This direction involves development outside of Milton Keynes Borough into Central Bedfordshire. For this direction to proceed, there will need to be agreement and co-operation with Central Bedfordshire Council and the affected Parish Councils and residents and this will be discussed further with those groups and organisations should such a proposal be pursued.

It is intended that where new development grows around the existing villages, that the integrity and character of these villages will be protected. This could be by way of a landscape or green buffer or some other method of preserving the character of the settlement as was done for the many villages that are now embraced within the Milton Keynes urban area.

To be truly successful, the transport connections between any growth area on this scale to the east of the M1 and the existing Milton Keynes urban area need to be seamless and fully integrated, and will need to deliver effective, good quality road and public transport routes. Figure 4 shows that these connections would need to be put in place, but as yet we haven't done the work to identify how and where those would need to go, or how many would be needed, so the crossings shown on the map are purely indicative and illustrative at this stage and are not intended to show proposed locations.

What are the possible benefits associated with this direction?

This development direction could provide a focal point for longer term growth and a critical mass of residents which would help it sustain a full range of land uses, services and facilities including schools, leisure, a large local or district centre incorporating primary health care facilities, and employment opportunities. The size of development envisaged would enable the creation of a new growth area that could be relatively self-sufficient. There is potential that the scale of development in this location could even extend beyond that shown on the diagram if it was considered sustainable or desirable in the future.
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New road connections would need to provide efficient and effective connections for public transport as well as for car borne traffic and there may be opportunities to incorporate new technologies and modes of personal transport to make the link between the old and the new as seamless as possible.

The south-eastern extent of the potential growth area as shown on the diagram is within Central Bedfordshire. This part of the development would provide access to the East-West rail route that will run between Oxford and Cambridge and this presents opportunities for travel by rail, and also a possible rail freight interchange that could even be linked to a new junction on the M1.

There could also be opportunities to take advantage of the area’s proximity to the route of the Bedford to Milton Keynes waterway, which would provide additional leisure activities and could enhance property values for land adjacent to the waterway.

What are the possible risks associated with this direction?

Infrastructure delivery: At this stage no work has been done on the details of the primary infrastructure that would be needed to make this option work. The feasibility and viability of creating a number of new or improved transport links across the M1 requires considerable work, in particular to identify suitable locations for where that might be possible. Therefore, while we have highlighted possible infrastructure improvements and links, there are no current plans for these. The Department of Transport has been clear in its response to previous consultations that it has no plans for a new junction on the M1 in the location that the workshops identified, but looking longer term it is possible that the situation may change.

Speed of delivery: The planning and delivery of a large growth area, relatively disconnected from the existing urban area, would take longer to get off the ground than building a number of smaller sites within an established urban area. In established urban areas, the main elements of infrastructure (main roads, access to mains water and sewerage and utilities) are already in place. As the delivery of this development option will take time to get off the ground, there is likely to be a need for a hybrid approach which would deliver a mixture of smaller sites and/or redevelopment of sites in the urban area to ensure a short to medium-term supply of new development whilst the larger development areas are planned and brought forward.

Development funding: The delivery of this direction of growth will require the provision of a large amount of primary infrastructure up front. Schools and other community facilities need to be provided alongside new homes so that residents do not have to travel for them. We would need to put a new development funding mechanism in place so we can forward fund the early delivery of the critical pieces of infrastructure.

Cross-boundary development: This direction would involve development beyond the administrative boundary of Milton Keynes which could only proceed with the co-operation of Central Bedfordshire Council, the Parish Councils and residents in that area. The process of planning for a development such as this can take time and there could, therefore, be a potential delay to the delivery of any development in this location.
What are the possible benefits associated with this direction of growth?

There are some potential locations in the Borough that could have the potential to access the West Coast railway line from Wolverton station and then onto the future East-West rail route via Bletchley. In the longer term, it might be possible that new development could support the opening of a new railway station.

Development of satellite settlements could provide benefits in helping to deliver important infrastructure projects, for example route improvements or a bypass. Projects like this could ease traffic and air pollution, as well as easing traffic accessing Central Milton Keynes on arterial routes.

This development direction does not consider any locations outside of the Milton Keynes administrative boundary. Any proposal that did look outside Milton Keynes would require discussion and co-operation with neighbouring authorities, the affected Parish Councils and their residents.

A possible new junction on the M1 between the existing Junctions 13 and 14 is illustrated on the plan which would provide motorway access to a settlement or settlements located to the east of Milton Keynes. Major improvements to Junction 14 of the M1 are also shown as part of this direction, although for both of these schemes the point made below about the delivery of infrastructure should be noted.

What are the possible risks associated with this direction of growth?

Infrastructure delivery: At this stage no work has been done on the viability of any settlements to deliver the necessary supporting infrastructure. Whilst we have highlighted above possible infrastructure improvements and links, such as a new railway station or a new motorway junction, there are no current plans for these. The Department of Transport and Highways England are clear that there is no opportunity for a new junction on the M1 in the location that the Workshops identified, but looking longer term, it is possible that the situation may change.

Some possible locations for satellite settlements could be quite disconnected and existing road connections are less than optimal. Therefore, further work would be needed to look at transport connections, including how an efficient and effective public transport network could work across a dispersed pattern of development.

Design principles: By developing new settlements rather than building extensions to the urban area of Milton Keynes, it may not be possible to replicate the design principles of the city that many people think are important. The design and layout of any development would of course need to reflect the characteristics of its surroundings, but developments are unlikely to be of a scale or be suitable for delivering items such as, for example, grid roads.
Dependence on larger urban areas: Even with a range of services and facilities, it is acknowledged that any satellite settlement will have a degree of dependence on the larger urban areas in the surrounding area. This is particularly likely to be the case in relation to jobs and employment opportunities as many residents are likely to commute into Milton Keynes which, in turn, will have implications for traffic levels. Depending on the size of the settlement and decisions on how health care is delivered in the future, it is also possible that residents might have to travel outside of the settlement for primary care (i.e. GPs surgeries) or a hospital.

Speed of delivery: Enabling the development of a new settlement on greenfield land takes longer than building on a number of smaller sites within an established urban area, where the main elements of infrastructure (main roads, access to mains water and sewerage and utilities) are already in place. For this reason there is likely to be a need for a hybrid approach, which would deliver a mixture of smaller sites to ensure a short term supply of development whilst the larger development areas are planned and brought forward.

Development funding: The delivery of new settlements under this direction of growth would require the provision of a large amount of primary infrastructure up front. Schools and other community facilities need to be provided alongside new homes so that residents do not have to travel out of the settlement for these. A new development funding mechanism would need to be put in place so we can forward fund the early delivery of the critical pieces of infrastructure.

Question 12

Size of new settlement(s) (Direction of Growth 3)

Would it be better to have one much larger new settlement, like a Garden City, in the northern part of or adjacent to the Borough, which is large enough to be self-sufficient in terms of jobs, schools, health, shops and all other services? Or would you favour an approach of having several smaller settlements?

Question 13

Possible locations for new satellite settlements (Direction of Growth 3)

Are there any locations that you think would be suitable for a satellite settlement? And if so, why?

Question 14

Final extent of new satellite settlements (Direction of Growth 3)

If this approach were to proceed, should we define an eventual ‘final extent’ of development around any satellite settlement?