

STRATEGIC POLICIES

Background

3.1 The strategy of the Local Plan promotes the government's objective of creating a more sustainable pattern of development.

3.2 The Strategic Policies in this Local Plan are intended to take forward concentrating most new development on the City. The policies set out where new development will take place, not only in and adjoining the City, but also elsewhere in the Borough.

3.3 This includes defining settlement boundaries that may have been amended from the previous Local Plan to include new development sites; and identifying areas where there are major constraints to development.

3.4 The policies also define the roles of the two main centres within the City – Central Milton Keynes and Bletchley.

European, National, Regional and Local Planning Objectives

3.5 European Union legislation, directives and policies increasingly influence the national planning process, and are reflected in PPGs, government circulars and other guidance. This includes the recently published European Spatial Development Perspective, which has three main objectives - balanced development, integrated transport and communications, and protection of the natural and cultural heritage.

3.6 These objectives are to be achieved by greater integration and cooperation, including collaborative working across national boundaries. The Council is currently involved in "The Inclusive New Town" project with a number of Dutch, French and other British new towns under the INTERREG IIC programme. The project will help the Council to learn from different approaches to tackling problems in new towns, and planning effectively for new development.

3.7 National guidance is contained in Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) and more recently in Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). Many PPGs have been revised or replaced with PPSs to reflect the government's overall objective of a more sustainable pattern of development. Local authorities must take into account advice in PPGs/PPSs when producing development plans. Local Plans should be generally consistent with advice in PPGs/PPSs unless there are sound local reasons for taking a different approach. There are references to relevant PPGs/PPSs throughout this Local Plan.

3.8 Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) looks forward to 2016. Following a public examination in 1999, the government published the final guidance in 2001.

3.9 In the RPG, the Milton Keynes area is identified as a potential growth area over the next 20-30 years. The Milton Keynes & South Midlands Sub-regional Strategy was published in March 2005 and provides the framework for the future development of the sub-region (including Milton Keynes) to 2021 and providing strategic guidance to 2031. The revised guidance will feed into the preparation of the Milton Keynes Local Development Framework.

A background paper - "Local Plan Review: External Forces" (MKC, 1998) – summarises some of the global, European, national, regional and local forces that have influenced the review

RPG9 –Paras 12.60
–12.62 deal
specifically with
Milton Keynes

3.10 For the period up to 2011, the Local Plan inspector recommended that the scale of development to be accommodated in the Borough should be consistent with, what was then, the emerging Sub Regional Strategy housing provision for the urban area, supplemented by additional housing identified within the rest of the administrative area of the Borough. Although the Council became a Unitary Authority in 1997, the Structure Plan continues to be part of the “development plan” for the Borough, in respect of planning policy for minerals and waste ..

Other strategies

3.11 The Local Plan affects and is influenced by a wide range of other plans and strategies produced by the Council and other organisations, and all parts of the Council have been involved in preparing the Local Plan. Some of the other key plans and strategies produced by the Council include:

- The Community Strategy
- MK Community Partnership Plan
- Local Agenda 21
- Local Transport Plan
- Housing Investment Programme
- School Organisation Plan
- Economic Development Plan

3.12 These strategies are produced under different statutory requirements to the Local Plan and often cover different time periods.

3.13 The Council is also actively developing an integrated approach to “cultural planning”, incorporating social, human, educational and environmental issues. This is not only concerned with providing new facilities, although the economic impact of major new facilities (theatres, galleries, museums etc) can be substantial. It also recognises that successful towns and cities are more than the sum of their buildings and land uses, they reflect the ways in which people can shape, use and interact within them.

Policies

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Objective of policy

- To increase the sustainability of the Borough, and ensure the City can adapt to meet current and future concerns and needs
- To define development limits for the City, for the period up to 2011

3.14 Local Plans are required to make a major contribution to achieving the government’s objectives for sustainable development. The definition of sustainable development for the purposes of this Plan is development that complies with the vision, aims and targets set out in the previous chapter. Although there are many aspects of Milton Keynes that perform well against sustainability indicators, there is room for improvement, particularly in relation to transport.

3.15 The principles in Policy S1 identify some key ways in which sustainability can be maintained and improved in the Borough:

- Concentrating rather than dispersing development, to maximise accessibility and minimise travel distances to facilities and workplaces
- Maintaining a balance between jobs and homes, to avoid the need for increased longer distance commuting into or out of the Borough
- Planning new developments to reduce dependence on the car at the local as well as sub-regional level
- Making the best use of urban land by identifying brownfield sites for development before green field ones
- Concentrating development in and around existing centres (CMK, Bletchley, Wolverton, Stony Stratford, Newport Pagnell, Olney and Woburn Sands Town Centres, District and Local Centres), if they have good public transport access, and along public transport routes, to encourage journeys by public transport, by cycle and walking.
- Respecting environmental constraints, maintaining the City's reputation for innovative planning and research on environmental matters. Key environmental constraints include landscape features, high quality agricultural land and floodplains.

3.16 The principles set out in Policy S1 underpin other more detailed policies in the Plan, and will also be used to assess any development proposals that are not covered by more specific policies in the Plan.

3.17 The Local Plan defines the area within which development will be allowed up to 2011.

3.18 The changes to the development boundary of the City in this new Plan include the City Expansion Areas east, west and north of the City

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

POLICY S1

The scale and distribution of development in this Local Plan is based on the following key principles:

- (i) The pursuit of greater environmental, social and economic sustainability
- (ii) Concentrating new development at Milton Keynes City as defined by the development boundary on the Proposals Map
- (iii) Maintaining the existing balance between jobs and homes in the City
- (iv) Seeking to reduce the need for, and length of journeys by car
- (v) Adopting a sequential approach to identifying development opportunities
- (vi) Concentrating new development in or around existing centres, and around nodes along public transport corridors.
- (vii) Respecting key environmental constraints

(Policy S2 “Milton Keynes City” was removed from the Plan at 2nd Deposit Stage.)

CITY EXPANSION AREAS

Objective of policy

- To identify the main areas for new development up to 2011, over and above existing commitments

3.19 Work related to the review of the County Structure Plan in the early 1990s identified that new development areas would need to be allocated, over and above existing commitments, to meet housing requirements for the Borough up to 2011.

3.20 Potential sites around the edge of the City - including sites beyond the Borough boundary - were identified and evaluated in studies by the consultants, Llewelyn Davies. Those sites within the Borough have also been the subject of a “sustainability assessment”, using the Local Plan Aims, as agreed in the Directions Paper.

Milton Keynes
Expansion Study:
1992, and 1996
Update (Llewelyn-
Davies)

Milton Keynes Area:
Development
Potential Study
(Llewelyn-Davies,
1998)

3.21 Important factors in assessing the potential sites were identified in the Direction Paper as:

- The potential to support transport corridors
- The proximity to existing centres and facilities
- Avoiding the best and most versatile agricultural land, where possible
- Avoiding coalescence (between the City and nearby settlements)

3.22 The areas selected are based on a strategy of concentrating development in a few large areas, rather than dispersing smaller amounts of development around more sites. The main reason for this is that larger areas maximise the potential for adopting new approaches to layout, density, design and mix of uses, and encouraging greater use of public transport, cycling and walking. The location of the two main areas also builds on recent development in the East and West Flanks of the City.

3.23 Two smaller areas are also proposed for development to the north of the City, as an exception to the east / west strategy. In the case of the Northern Expansion Area, this allocation reflected its status (in part) as a brownfield site.

3.24 The Local Plan includes policies for each of the Expansion Areas, setting out the planning principles and requirements for these areas, and also the status of the “strategic reserve” area within the proposed new development boundary on the east of the City.

See also Policies
EA1 – EA7

3.25 The master planning process for the Expansion Areas may result in higher estimates of residential capacity. If this is so, the amount and timing of development will be controlled through Policy S4 and agreements with developers known as “planning obligations”.

CITY EXPANSION AREAS

POLICY S3

The following areas on the edge of the City are proposed for major new development:

- 1 East of the City – bounded by the A421, A5130 and the M1 motorway (Site MK1)
- 2 West of the City – west of Watling Street, north of H4 Danstead Way and south of The Ridgeway, Calverton End (Site MK2)
- 3 North of the City - Rocla Pipes site and adjoining land (Site MK3)
- 4 North of the City - land at Stantonbury Park Farm, north of Wolverton Road (Site MK 24)

The boundaries of these areas are defined on the Proposals Map.

PHASING OF THE CITY EXPANSION AREAS

Objective of policy

- To ensure that new development proceeds in a logical and orderly pattern, in step with the provision of infrastructure and facilities.

3.26 PPG12 states that timing of development within the period covered by a Local Plan may need to be controlled – or “phased” - because of issues relating to the provision of physical and social infrastructure or the adequacy of other services or resources.

3.27 Although Milton Keynes is a planned city, problems have arisen in some areas due to the time lag between housing being completed and the provision of facilities to serve the new residents. Given the large amount of new development to take place during the Local Plan period, the timing and sequence of development is a particularly important issue in Milton Keynes.

3.28 In the special circumstances of Milton Keynes, the Structure Plan recognised the need to control the development of additional land so that “housing construction only starts once the currently planned development is substantially complete”. However, the shortfall of housing development against the Structure Plan target during the last 10 years (1991-2001) has led the Council to remove this restriction from the Eastern and Western Expansion Areas, in the hope of increasing annual house-building rates in the City. Instead, ‘Priority Housing Sites’ have been identified for development within 5 years of the start of the Plan (2001-2006), consistent with best practice advice on the release of land for housing. To achieve the policy aim, applications for these sites will be dealt with expeditiously, taking into account all material planning considerations.

See Housing
Chapter - Table H4:
Priority Housing
Sites and ‘Planning
to Deliver -
the Managed
Release of Housing
Sites: Towards
Better Practice’
(DTLR, 2001)

3.29 The Council will continue to monitor performance on all allocated sites, in line with the ‘plan, monitor and manage’ approach.

3.30 The intentions of Policy S4 are:

- to make the most effective use of public investment in existing infrastructure; and
- to avoid sporadic pockets of development, with poor access to local facilities, which lead to greater use of the car for local journeys.

PHASING OF THE CITY EXPANSION AREAS

POLICY S4

Planning permission for the development of the Northern, Eastern and Western Expansion Areas will be phased to ensure that:

- (i) New development proceeds in a logical and orderly sequence, from existing developed areas
- (ii) New development is well related to existing and committed development facilities, and public transport services
- (iii) New development is linked to the provision of new infrastructure facilities, and public transport services

CENTRAL MILTON KEYNES

Objective of policy

- To set out a framework for achieving a more lively, varied accessible and inclusive city centre

3.31 Work began on a review of Central Milton Keynes (CMK) in the mid 1990s, prompted by the need to tackle new sustainability and transport objectives. From this work, which culminated in the production of the CMK Development Framework, it became apparent that completing CMK on the basis of existing land use and transport principles could eventually lead to gridlock in and around the city centre.

CMK Development Framework (October 2001)

3.32 There was also a concern to create a livelier and more vibrant city centre, that not only performs well functionally as a place to work and shop, but is also a place people want to live in, visit, and enjoy. This includes integrating different parts of the centre more effectively but relates to more than just the physical environment. The Council is actively involved in developing ideas under the broad heading of “cultural planning”, recognising the links between built form and the various activities that go on within a city centre.

3.33 CMK is seen as a focus for change in helping to realise new transport objectives in the City. About 30,000 people currently work in the centre, and in 2001 it was estimated that on average some 600,000 people visit each week. This means there is potential to achieve a major shift in the modes of transport used for journeys to and from CMK – away from the car and in favour of public transport, cycling and walking. High quality public transport will be necessary to achieve this switch in CMK; planning obligations will be sought from developers to finance its provision, in accordance with the tests set out in Circular 05/05, or its successor, and the Council’s adopted SPG on Planning Obligations for CMK.

3.34 Measures have already been introduced to promote the demand management of car use such as the CMK Parking Scheme and promote public

transport by developing Quality Bus Initiatives. Reducing car trips to CMK also creates the potential for a centre less dominated by roads and parking areas, leading to opportunities for a more mixed and intimate scale of development.

3.35 This process is far from complete. The changes being considered are sensitive ones, particularly in maintaining business and economic confidence. A CMK Partnership has been set up with a number of sub groups, to discuss and advise on different aspects of CMK. The Partnership includes Milton Keynes Council and English Partnerships as well as business interests, neighbourhood and parish councils, and local amenity groups.

3.36 The Central Milton Keynes Development Framework was commissioned in mid-2000 from EDAW consultants and others, on behalf of English Partnerships and Milton Keynes Council, with the CMK Partnership as key stakeholders. It was published in October 2001 and covers a 30-year period rather than the 10-year period of the Local Plan. It incorporates the findings of an earlier separate study for Campbell Park “The New Urban Framework Plan for Campbell Park “ prepared by Terry Farrell and Partners. It sets out a strategy for implementing a vision for CMK agreed by the key stakeholders, dealing not only with the physical development of the City centre but also issues associated with the implementation and delivery of development. These include joint venture and new working relationships between the Council and English Partnerships. Subsequent work is developing and refining these ideas.

3.37 The first deposit version of the Local Plan was produced before the CMK Development Framework had been completed. Key principles and proposals of the Development Framework have now been incorporated into this Local Plan. The CMK Development Framework was adopted by the Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance in January 2002. This has led not only to a significant increase in the number of policies for CMK but also to major changes to those CMK policies from the first deposit version.

See CMK Policies
CC1-CC19

3.38 The Council is seeking to achieve a balance between development in CMK and elsewhere within the City, with regard to the provision of public facilities matching that of private sector and commercial development

3.39 As the City grows, it can also support new facilities that serve a wider area than just the City or Borough – e.g. the new theatre and the indoor leisure activities at Xscape. This wider role was recognised in Structure Plan shopping policies where CMK was identified as an “emerging regional centre”. However, it is also important to take into account the possible impact of further development in CMK on the balance between homes and jobs in the City, and on other centres such as Bletchley.

CENTRAL MILTON KEYNES

POLICY S5

Within the Local Plan period, Central Milton Keynes will continue to develop as an emerging regional centre and a focus for retail, commercial and cultural development within the City.

The key objectives for Central Milton Keynes are to:

- (i) Achieve a broader mix of uses, within a finer grain of development, incorporating a high standard of design
- (ii) Promote a higher density of development, leading to a greater intensity of activity supporting and supported by high quality public transport
- (iii) Reduce the influence of the car in the design and layout of the area
- (iv) Encourage walking, cycling and the use of public transport for people travelling to, from and within the area with walking the first priority within Central Milton Keynes (CMK)
- (v) Integrate different facilities and quarters within the centre

See also Town Centres and Shopping (Policies CC1-CC9)

BLETCHLEY

Objective of policy

To set out a land use planning framework for assisting the regeneration and enhancement of Bletchley

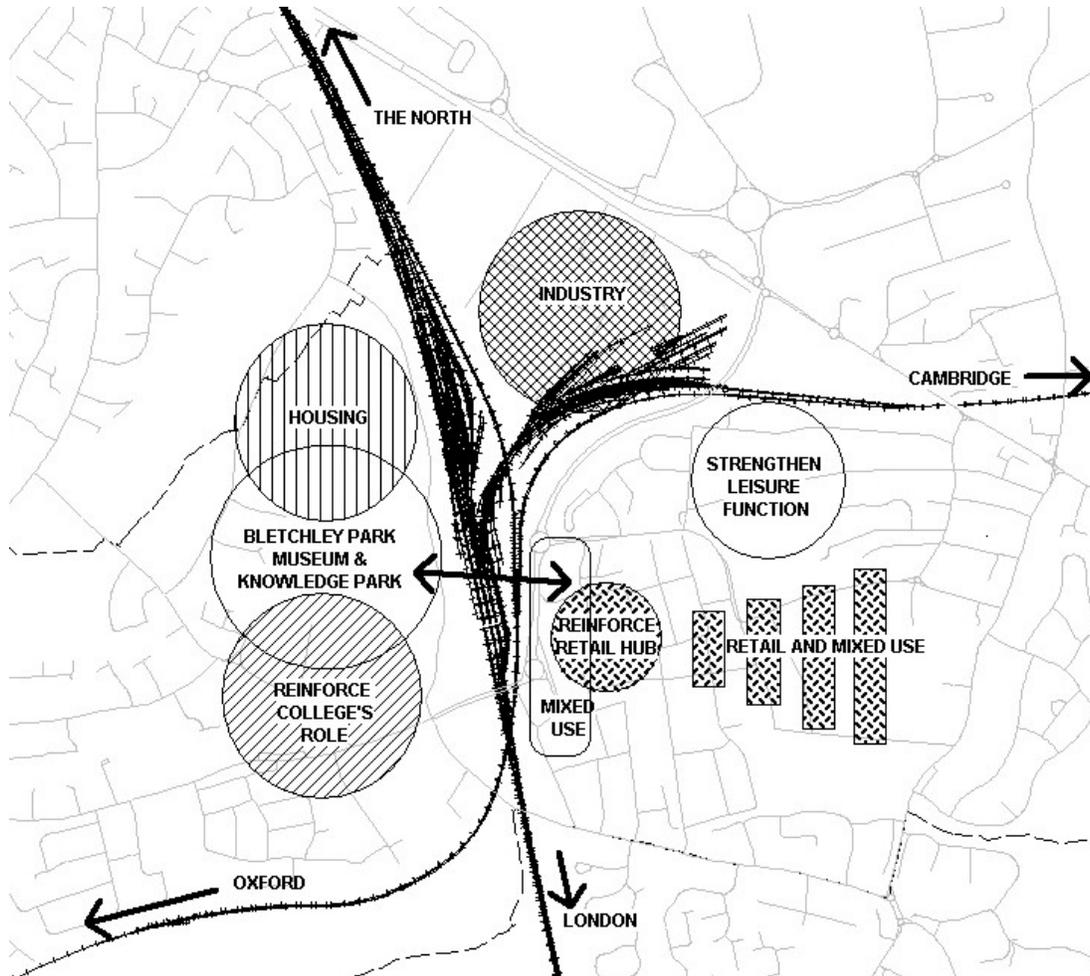
3.40 In the early years of City development, before the opening of the Shopping Building in CMK, Bletchley was the main shopping centre in the Borough. Since then, the centre has performed a more secondary role and apart from the refurbishment of the Brunel Centre, it has suffered from a lack of investment.

3.41 The Council is involved with partners in a number of regeneration initiatives in the Bletchley area, including the successful "Sustainable Town" bid under SRB5. The town centre is seen as providing a focus for these initiatives. With English Partnerships, the Council commissioned a study of the town centre and adjoining areas, which has helped to identify planning principles to guide the future of the centre.

3.42 The Local Plan presents an opportunity to promote and develop Bletchley as a District centre. Given the size and type of shops in Bletchley, the centre will continue to serve a more limited catchment population than CMK, complementing rather than competing directly with shops in the City centre. Because of its bus and rail links, Bletchley town centre is the second best activity node in the Borough after CMK. This enhanced status also reflects the potential of Bletchley Park, the proposals to redevelop and upgrade the Milton Keynes College campus, and the stimulus provided by the proposed East / West rail route, which will intersect with the West Coast main line at Bletchley.

SRB: Single Regeneration Budget

Bletchley Regeneration Study (EDAW, 2000)



PLAN S1: BLETCHLEY REGENERATION – STRATEGY DIAGRAM

3.43 While the new rail link way could stimulate commercial interest in Bletchley, the railway itself acts as a barrier to movement, separating the town centre from Bletchley Park and residential areas to the west. The regeneration study proposes ways of improving links across the railway, including:

- strengthening the retail core at the western end of the town centre close to the station
- in the longer term, office development above and alongside the railway, including a new station with direct access from the town centre to the east

See Policy TC15

3.44 These and other themes have been further developed in the Central Bletchley Regeneration Strategy which was adopted by the Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance on 20th July 2004.

BLETCHLEY

POLICY S6

Proposals that help to establish Bletchley as a secondary focus for commercial and cultural development within the City will be encouraged. The key objectives for Bletchley are to:

- (i) Upgrade the town centre as a focus for the regeneration of the town as a whole
- (ii) Improve access by public transport to and within the centre, including better interchange facilities and the segregation of pedestrian and vehicle traffic and linkages between different areas within and adjoining the town centre
- (iii) Improve retailing
- (iv) Improve the town centre environment
- (v) Maximise the potential of Bletchley Park, the Milton Keynes College Campus and adjoining land leading to a greater intensity of activity supported by high quality public transport
- (vi) Promote office development around the railway station

See also following policies:

- KS5: Bletchley Park, MK College and adjoining land
- TC14-TC17: Bletchley Town Centre

KEY SETTLEMENTS

Objective of policy

- To identify the most sustainable locations for development and new facilities outside the City

3.45 In the Rural Issues Paper, settlements outside the City were assessed in terms of their facilities and accessibility by public transport. The three largest settlements - Newport Pagnell, Olney and Woburn Sands - have the widest range of services, although in Newport Pagnell and Olney, the provision of new facilities has generally lagged behind the completion of new housing.

3.46 These settlements were also considered to have relatively good accessibility by public transport. Taking facilities and accessibility together, the three settlements were therefore considered to be the most sustainable locations for any new development outside the City. Following the Local Plan Inquiry and the Inspector's Report, Hanslope has been reclassified as a 'Selected Village' – see Policy S8.

3.47 Most discussion concerning these "Key Settlements" has focused on the amount and location of new housing development, although new sites are also allocated for employment, recreation and community facilities. As a result, there are changes proposed to the development boundaries of Newport Pagnell and Olney compared to those in the previous Local Plan.

KEY SETTLEMENTS

POLICY S7

The following settlements are identified as Key Settlements that act as service centres outside the City. Most development in the rest of the Borough will be concentrated in these settlements:

- 1 Newport Pagnell
- 2 Woburn Sands
- 3 Olney

The development boundaries for these settlements are defined on the Proposals Map

See New Housing Sites Chapter and policies in the Employment, Town Centres and Shopping, and Community Facilities chapters

SELECTED VILLAGES

Objective of policy

- To allocate some limited housing development, to support and improve local facilities, in those villages where there is parish council support for development

3.48 The overall approach to locating new development in this Local Plan is to concentrate it on the City and three Key Settlements. However, the Local Plan process has also raised the issue of village sustainability, including the need to support and improve village facilities, and achieve a broader mix of population and housing.

3.49 The identification of Hanslope and Bow Brickhill as Selected Villages is an exception to the strategy of concentration but was consistent with Structure Plan Policy H5. The development boundaries of these two villages have been amended to include the proposed new housing sites.

SELECTED VILLAGES

POLICY S8

In Hanslope and Bow Brickhill, small scale housing development is proposed on new sites on the edge of the settlements, as identified on the Proposals Map. Such development should be designed to be sympathetic to the character of the villages.

The development boundaries for these villages are defined on the Proposals Map

Site New Housing Sites Chapter – Sites HP1, HP5, and BB1.

OTHER VILLAGES

Objective of policy

- To limit new development in villages to infill development and barn conversions

3.50 In line with the strategy of concentration, new development in other villages will be limited to infill, conversion and redevelopment opportunities within the existing development boundaries. Infill development is defined as proposals within the limits of development of villages. Sites will need to be assessed for suitability in more detail at planning application stage. The overall amount of new housing in these villages will therefore be limited, although there will still be opportunities for “exception sites” outside development boundaries to meet identified rural housing needs.

The density of any new development must comply with Policy H8

See Policy H6: Rural Housing Needs

3.51 The consultation process identified a particular concern about the future of village schools, and whether in some cases, additional housing development would help to support and protect the long term future of these schools. Detailed consideration was given to national policy on rural schools, the Council’s own School Organisation Plan and past trends in school rolls and housing completions.

3.52 The Council concluded that, at this time, rural schools were not under threat, and that there was no case for allocating new housing sites in other villages. This work was updated in 2001 and trends in school rolls and forecasts of future pupil numbers will continue to be kept under review to see if this approach needs to be revised.

3.53 Other smaller villages and hamlets not identified in Policy S9 do not have defined development boundaries and will continue to be considered as open countryside under Policy S10. This approach is unchanged from the previous Local Plan.

OTHER VILLAGES

POLICY S9

In the other villages listed below, infill development and barn conversions, sympathetic to the character of the village, will be allowed within the boundaries defined on the Proposals Map:

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Astwood | 9 Newton Blossomville |
| 2 Castlethorpe | 10 North Crawley |
| 3 Clifton Reynes | 11 Ravenstone |
| 4 Emberton | 12 Sherington |
| 5 Lavendon | 13 Stoke Goldington |
| 6 Little Brickhill | 14 Wavendon |
| 7 Long Street | 15 Weston Underwood |
| 8 New Haversham | |

OPEN COUNTRYSIDE

Objective of policy

- To protect the countryside and to concentrate new development within and adjoining existing settlements

3.54 The term “open countryside” is a policy designation that applies to all land outside the development boundaries of settlements. It is not simply a descriptive term relating only to land that is open in character.

3.55 The overall strategic approach to development in the open countryside is deliberately restrictive and consistent with that in the previous Local Plan. However, other policies in the Local Plan cover specific types of development that may be acceptable as exceptions to this general approach, e.g. wind turbines (Policy D5). The Minerals Local Plan and Waste Local Plan are also relevant to parts of the open countryside. The Minerals Local Plan is currently under review.

3.56 New areas of woodland will be also be encouraged in the open countryside, particularly to the south and east of the City, linking up with the Brickhill woods and the Marston Vale Community Forest.

3.57 Proposals for agricultural or forestry worker’s dwellings will be assessed against the tests in PPG7.

Other policies relating to the open countryside:

- E5: reuse of rural buildings for employment use
- E6: new buildings in the open countryside
- L6: horse related development
- L10: conversion of farm buildings to form visitor accommodation
- L11: camping and touring caravan sites
- H11: low impact dwellings in the countryside
- HE8: conserving and enhancing landscape character
- R6: retail uses in the open countryside

OPEN COUNTRYSIDE POLICY S10

The open countryside is defined as all land outside the development boundaries defined on the Proposals Map. In the open countryside, planning permission will only be given for development that is essential for agriculture, forestry, countryside recreation or other development which is wholly appropriate to a rural area and cannot be located within a settlement.

PPG7: The Countryside – Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development – Annex I

AREAS OF ATTRACTIVE LANDSCAPE

Objective of policy

- To protect and enhance those areas of countryside identified as having county-wide landscape value

3.58 The “Areas of Attractive Landscape” (AAL) are a county designation shown in the Structure Plan. The Council recognised that the advice in PPG7 coupled with the Council’s new unitary status, made it imperative to both examine the criteria for designation (which were inherited from the County Council) and the boundaries of the AALs, to identify if modifications were needed to the way they have been defined in the Local Plan

Milton Keynes Landscape Character Study (2000)

3.59 The Landscape Study recommended some changes to the boundaries of the 2 AALs and confirmed that there were no other areas of the Borough that justified AAL status. Three additions have been agreed to the Ouse Valley AAL – east of Olney; south of Lavendon; and the Linford Lakes area west of Newport Pagnell.

3.60 The Landscape Study sub-divides the Borough outside the City into 7 broad landscape character areas. This study of landscape characterisation has been informed by other landscape character assessments that relate to the area. In particular, the Study is broadly consistent with the former Countryside Commission's "Countryside Character Map of England" and the Landscape Strategy for Buckinghamshire. The 7 landscape character areas serve as a local detailed refinement of the broader national study. It is envisaged that this information could be of assistance in guiding the form of new development within the proposed expansion areas and around the Key Settlements, so that it is designed to harmonise with the surroundings and wherever possible, to enhance landscape character.

See New Housing Sites Chapter –Site NP3

3.61 The boundaries of the AALs are broadly consistent with similar designations in adjoining districts and counties.

AREAS OF ATTRACTIVE LANDSCAPE

POLICY S11

The following areas are defined on the Proposals Map as Areas of Attractive Landscape:

- 1 The Brickhills
- 2 The Ouse Valley, north and west of Newport Pagnell

Within these areas, development should:

- (i) Not damage the special character of the area
- (ii) Enhance important landscape features where possible
- (iii) Protect and enhance features of nature conservation value
- (iv) Retain and improve public access and opportunities for countryside recreation

See also Policy NE4: Conserving and Enhancing Landscape Character; the supporting text and illustrative plan that show the location of the 7 landscape areas.

LINEAR PARKS

Objective of policy

- To protect and enhance the main river valleys running through and adjoining the City

3.62 The river valleys were key structuring features in planning the new City. They are multi-functional, providing a variety of formal and informal recreation opportunities, diverse wildlife habitats and flood storage. The Linear Parks are a mix of public and private land ownership and do not imply public right of access across all land within them. For the purposes of this Plan 'Countryside recreation' is defined as recreation or leisure activities, generally taking place outdoors, which are appropriate and in harmony with the countryside. They are usually informal but may include some formal, organised activities, e.g. equestrian centre, golf course, boating lake

Linear Park design principles are explained in the Milton Keynes Planning Manual

3.63 In the previous Local Plan, the Linear Parks were extended to include areas on the urban fringe of the City and Newport Pagnell, in the Ouse and Ouzel valleys

Other relevant policies include:

- L1: Facilities acceptable in the Linear and District Parks
- EA6: Northern Expansion Area
- EA3: Eastern Expansion Area

outside the former Designated Area. In the north of the Borough, Emberton Country Park performs a similar role to the Linear Parks in and adjoining the City.

3.64 The main changes to the boundaries of the Linear Parks from the previous Local Plan are the:

- **removal** of the Rocla Pipes site and adjoining land; this area is now designated for development, although there is a requirement for the development to contribute to achieving Linear Park objectives in the adjoining Linford Lakes area; and
- **extension** of the Broughton Brook Linear Park through the proposed Eastern Expansion Area, with possible future links to the Marston Vale Community Forest to the east
- **removal** of land at Eaton Leys, south of Watling Street and land r/o Penn Road, Fenny Stratford from the Ouzel Valley Linear Park south of the city
- **removal** of land at Stantonbury Park Farm from the Ouse Valley Linear Park and Linford Lakes policy area

LINEAR PARKS

POLICY S12

The following areas are defined as Linear Parks on the Proposals Map:

- 1 The Ouse Valley, from the Borough boundary at Passenham to the M1 motorway
- 2 The Ouzel / Lovat valley, from Water Eaton to the River Ouse, including the valleys of the Broughton and Caldecotte Brooks within the city
- 3 The Loughton Brook valley
- 4 Emberton Country Park

Development proposals in the Linear Parks should contribute to achieving the following objectives:

- (i) Protecting and improving the landscape
- (ii) Protecting and enhancing features of nature conservation value
- (iii) Retaining and improving public access to land and water areas for countryside recreation
- (iv) Flood control
- (v) Minimising any adverse impact on local residents and agriculture
- (vi) Protecting and interpreting areas of archaeological interest

AREAS LIABLE TO FLOODING

Objective of policy

- To maintain existing floodplains and ensure that flood risk is not materially increased as a result of new development.

Floodplains are defined by a combination of detailed maps for the watercourses in and adjoining the City and Newport Pagnell, and more "indicative" maps for those in the rest of the Borough.

3.65 The Environment Agency publishes updated flood maps on a regular basis. The Proposals Map shows areas that are at risk in a river flood with a 1% chance of occurring in any one year. They take into account evidence from the floods at Easter 1998 and in 1947; the latter remains the worst recorded flood in this area.

3.66 Less frequent and more severe events cannot be ruled out from that shown on the Proposals Map and do not mean that flooding will never occur outside these areas. The maps produced by the Environment Agency are 'indicative'. In relation to development close to the edge of the floodplain, the Council will seek information and advice from the drainage authorities such as known flood levels, the need for an accurate survey of site levels and a safety freeboard for flood levels.

There is a 25% chance of a a 1% flood event occurring in any 30 year period.

3.67 The Environment Agency will always consider any detailed, local information on ground levels and flood records, and whether such information justifies any amendment to floodplain boundaries. This Plan provides the opportunity for parish councils and others to comment on the accuracy of the floodplain boundaries, as shown on the Proposals Map, as requested by the Council's Flood Panel in 1998/99.

See Policies EA1 – EA6. See also reference to the MK Drainage Study in para 8.19

3.68 Within the City, the river valleys and their floodplains have been protected from development. Areas adjoining the River Ouse and its tributaries are identified on the Proposals Map as liable to flooding. The new Expansion Areas and other development allocations avoid areas liable to flood. Where necessary, policies include a requirement for developers of these areas to deal with both the loss of any flood storage capacity as a result of new roads and other infrastructure, and the faster rates of surface water run-off that will result from development.

For the most up-to-date maps showing areas liable to flooding, please visit the Environment Agency's website at www.environment-agency.gov.uk

3.69 Policy S13 is consistent with advice from the Environment Agency.

AREAS LIABLE TO FLOODING

POLICY S13

Planning permission will be refused for development if it would be likely materially to:

- (i) Impede the flow of flood water
- (ii) Restrict the capacity of the floodplain to store flood water, or
- (iii) Increase the number of people or properties at risk from flooding

3.70 The final version of PPG25 was published in July 2001 and was taken into account in discussions with the Environment Agency in considering objections to the first deposit plan.

PPG25: Development and Flood Risk (DETR)

PROTECTION OF THE BEST AND MOST VERSATILE AGRICULTURAL LAND

3.71 The Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) defines the best and most versatile agricultural land as that falling within grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification. Government policy is to protect land of this grade as a national resource for the longer term wherever possible. Once land is built on, the restoration of semi-natural and natural habitats and landscape features is rarely possible. Even the development of 'soft' uses such as golf courses can preclude a return to best quality agricultural use.

3.72 Government advice in PPG7 is to resist proposals for development of greenfield land, including the best and most versatile agricultural land, unless the possibility of using previously developed sites or land within urban areas has been assessed. Where the use of agricultural land cannot be avoided, then land of poorer quality should be used except where other sustainability considerations apply. These considerations could include: the land's importance for biodiversity, the quality and character of the landscape, its amenity or heritage interest, accessibility to infrastructure, workforce and markets and the protection of natural resources.

3.73 In considering proposals for development, the Council will seek advice on agricultural land quality from DEFRA where appropriate.

PROTECTION OF THE BEST AND MOST VERSATILE AGRICULTURAL LAND

POLICY S14

In assessing proposals for the development of greenfield sites, the Council will take into account information on agricultural land quality. Development involving the loss of agricultural land should seek to use areas of poorer quality land (grades 3b, 4 and 5 of the Agricultural Land Classification) unless other sustainability considerations suggest otherwise.