

DESIGN

Background

4.1 The Borough enjoys a generally high quality environment both in its urban areas and the open countryside. It is important to maintain this high standard of design in new developments and also reflect more recent concerns such as sustainability.

4.2 The meaning of “design” as used here is quite wide, covering many aspects of environmental impact and sustainability as well as visual appearance.

National, Regional and Local Objectives

4.3 Government guidance on this subject is set out in PPG1 General Policy and Principles. This requires Local Plans to include policies seeking development that is both well designed and sustainable. Other design guidance is included in PPG7 (on the countryside) and PPG3 (housing).

4.4 More specific guidance can be found in a trio of documents produced by the DLTR / DETR: “By Design”, “Better Places to Live”, and “Places, Street and Movement” and English Partnership’s Urban Design Compendium.

4.5 The Milton Keynes Planning Manual, produced by the Development Corporation in 1992, is still a valuable source of design advice for the City area.

This Local Plan

4.6 The “Quality of Development” Issues Paper raised 11 different design issues for public comment. This was followed, in the Directions Paper, with a suggested approach to the key issues. The main principle agreed was that policies in the Plan should encourage higher standards of design, with detailed design briefs prepared for specific sites or areas as supplementary planning guidance/supplementary planning documents.

4.7 The Local Plan Vision includes “a high quality of life for all” and Local Plan Aim No.9 refers to improving the quality of design.

Policies

By Design (DETR 2000), Better Places to Live (DTLR 2001), Places, Streets & Movement (DETR 1998), Urban Design Compendium (English Partnerships 2000)

Also “Planning for Sustainable Development – Towards Better Practice”, DETR, 1998

Living Cleaner, Greener (ODPM 2002) Places-Safer, (ODPM 2002)

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS ON LOCALITY

Objective of policy

- To prevent development causing harm to the site and the surrounding areas

4.8 Many proposals may appear to be acceptable on a site when viewed in isolation but possible off-site impacts need to be considered. Conversely, a proposal may have a minimum impact on the surrounding area but could adversely affect the site itself. This policy covers both on and off-site impacts arising from development. Where appropriate the Council will consult with other specialist bodies and be guided by their advice as to the significance of any impact. These include organisations such as Anglian Water, English Nature, the Environment Agency, the Highways Agency and Internal Drainage Boards.

4.9 Although the issue of light pollution is not covered in PPG24, it is accepted in current planning practice that it is an issue that can cause detriment. The Council will seek to ensure that no significant lighting overspill arises from new development and that external lighting is reduced to a minimum, through the careful design and implementation of illumination schemes in sensitive areas – e.g. in the AALs and open countryside.

The Institution of Lighting Engineers' Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Light Pollution (2000) is a useful source of information.

IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS ON LOCALITY

POLICY D1

Planning permission will be refused for development that would be harmful for any of the following reasons:

- (i) Additional traffic generation which would overload the existing road network or cause undue disturbance, noise or fumes
- (ii) Inadequate drainage, which would adversely affect surface water disposal, including flood control, or overload the existing foul drainage system
- (iii) An unacceptable visual intrusion or loss of privacy, sunlight and daylight
- (iv) Unacceptable pollution by noise, smell, light or other emission to air, water or land
- (v) Physical damage to the site and neighbouring property including statutorily protected and other important built and natural features and wildlife habitats
- (vi) Inadequate access to, and vehicle movement within, the site

Policies NE1, NE2 & NE4 cover the protection of natural features and Policies HE1 to H8 cover the protection of built features

URBAN DESIGN ASPECTS OF NEW DEVELOPMENT

Objective of policy

- To ensure that all new development is of a high standard of design

4.10 This Local Plan proposes a considerable amount of new development across the Borough. The successful integration of new development within the surrounding area will depend largely on the quality of its design and layout.

4.11 The Plan has to balance the need to provide a comprehensive development policy framework, with the requirement for brevity. More detailed design considerations will be covered in masterplans, development briefs and other supplementary planning guidance. Developers will be encouraged to prepare design briefs in consultation with the Council. Consultation with the local community and other bodies throughout this process will also be important.

4.12 All development proposals will be expected to achieve a high standard of design and should be based on a thorough analysis of the physical context and constraints of the site. A submission would be expected to include:

- Accurate information relating to ground levels, adjoining development, site boundaries, trees, planting and other existing features on the site

- An assessment of the features on the site that are statutorily protected, or that should be retained in the interests of public amenity or nature conservation
- An analysis of the impact of development on views and skylines.
- A statement explaining how the proposal complies with the Local Plan design policies

4.13 This policy sets out the general principles against which the design of a proposal will be assessed, in line with the good practice guidance. In particular, in line with PPG3, it is important that urban design principles are not subordinate to the rigid application of other design standards such as those for highways (see policy T9).

4.14 Further explanation of the design principles is given below:

- **Character:** where there are no significant local elements, as may be common in MK, the challenge will be to create new distinctive places
- **Continuity:** meeting this and other objectives is usually best achieved by using perimeter block built forms, focusing on creating well defined, high quality street environments
- **Public realm:** building entrances and ground floor windows fronting on the street should be used to provide activity and reduce the length of blank facades; on street car parking (parallel to the street) is a good way to provide more activity while not being visually too dominant
- **Movement:** the emphasis should be on creating a fine-grain network of well connected streets that accommodate walkers, cyclists and motor vehicles
- **Legibility:** building and layout design, planting and views should be used to form visual focal points and links; methods such as space syntax should be used to ensure that large developments are legible
- **Adaptability:** designs should be flexible to accommodate changes of use and circumstances, e.g. conversions in mixed use areas, houses meeting Lifetime Homes standard (Policy H9), live/work units and buildings that can be adapted and extended easily
- **Variety** such as mixed use is fundamental to creating a place with its own character, visual interest and activity; even in mainly residential areas this should be achieved by varying building height, dwelling size, tenure and materials

See also Policies T1, T2, T3, T5, T15 and T17.

URBAN DESIGN ASPECTS OF NEW DEVELOPMENT

POLICY D2A

Development proposals will be refused unless they meet the following objectives:

- i) Character in townscape and landscape by identifying and reinforcing better quality and locally distinctive design elements
- ii) Continuity of street frontage and enclosure of space by clearly defining public and private areas and locating main building entrances on the street.
- iii) Quality public realm consisting of spaces and streets that are accessible, attractive, well related to and overlooked by buildings providing natural surveillance, with active ground floor uses along main streets and with parked vehicles not being visually dominant

Compatible with
"Secured by Design"

- iv) Ease of movement by creating places that are permeable and well connected with safe, attractive, convenient routes along streets giving priority to walking, cycling and public transport
- v) Legibility by providing recognisable streets, junctions and landmarks to help people to find their way around
- vi) Adaptability of buildings and spaces, capable to use by a range of activities in response to changing conditions
- vii) Variety of layout, building form, use and tenure through the site

DESIGN OF BUILDINGS

Objective of policy:

- To ensure that all new buildings are well designed and relate well to the surrounding area

4.15 The successful integration of a new building into the surrounding context is of critical importance irrespective of whether it lies within one of the older settlements or is located within the new city. The policy below sets out the criteria which should govern the design of new buildings (and extensions to existing buildings) to ensure they make a positive contribution to the environment.

DESIGN OF BUILDINGS

POLICY D2

Development proposals for buildings will be refused unless they:

- i) Are in scale with other buildings in the immediate vicinity in terms of their height and massing, except where a greater scale is necessary to reflect the development's function and importance
- ii) Relate well to and enhance the surrounding environment
- iii) Provide access for those with impaired mobility
- iv) Allows for visual interest through the careful use of detailing, where this is appropriate to the character of the area
- v) Include landscaping and boundary treatments that integrate with those of the surrounding area
- vi) Have regard to the need to design layout and screening in the interests of the prevention of crime and the surveillance of the public realm

The extension of existing buildings will only be permitted providing the scale of the proposed extension does not detract from the character of the original building.

In line with the new
Part M of the
Building Regulations

CANALSIDE DEVELOPMENT

Objective of policy

- To maximise the potential of canalside locations

4.16 The 21km (13mile) stretch of the Grand Union Canal in the Borough passes through rural, semi-rural and urban landscapes. It is an important recreational and wildlife corridor. Development briefs exist for some areas where canalside development is proposed e.g. Campbell Park. Outside the city, opportunities for development will be more limited and different design approaches will be needed. The Milton Keynes Canal Corridor Management Plan (June 2000) produced by the Council, together with the Milton Keynes Parks Trust, English Partnerships and British Waterways sets out an inter-agency approach to accommodating canalside development which will be helpful in the formulation of canalside development schemes, wherever they are located in the Borough.

4.17 Several stretches of the canal have an extra pathway alongside the towpath, known as the “Broadwalk”, for use by pedestrians and cyclists. Where appropriate, the extension of the Broadwalk will be sought as part of canalside developments. The Council will consult British Waterways on all major proposals affecting the canal.

CANALSIDE DEVELOPMENT

POLICY D3

Development alongside canals should help meet the following objectives:

- (i) Improved public access to an enjoyment of the waterway, including those with impaired mobility.
- (ii) The protection and enhancement of wildlife habitats
- (iii) The retention and enhancement of significant waterside buildings and their settings
- (iv) Within employment areas, the provision of wharf facilities for freight transfer
- (v) New buildings should present a public face to the canal and be in keeping with local character in terms of scale, design and materials
- (vi) Development proposals in the vicinity of the Canal should also take into account the potential for localised flooding from the Canal

SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION

Objective of policy:

- To reduce the resource consumption of new development and to achieve zero carbon growth.

4.18 The whole life cycle of a building - from construction, through occupation and renovation, to eventual demolition – requires major resource inputs. These include

Refer to “Building a Better Quality of Life – a Strategy for More Sustainable Construction” (DETR)

energy, water, timber and aggregates. There is much potential to reduce these inputs and thereby reduce the environmental impact of their use and often reduce costs for developers and occupants.

4.19 It is intended to produce a supplementary planning document to help applicants comply with Policy D4 and explain what information the Council requires to accompany planning applications. Below are examples of measures that would satisfy the policy requirements:

- **Energy efficiency:** NHER rating 10, passive solar design, sheltered microclimate, high levels of insulation, heat recovery, passive ventilation, combined heat and power, better heating controls, condensing boilers, less wasteful street lighting and illuminated signs
- **Renewable energy:** solar water heating or photovoltaic panels, biomass fuel heating, wind turbines; ground source heating; the renewable element should be at least 10% of building energy use
- **Water conservation:** rainwater collection, grey water recycling, low water use WC's and appliances
- **Drainage:** soakaways, porous hard surfaces, swales, streams and balancing ponds; minimal use of pipes and culverts
- **Building materials:** timber, earth, straw, secondary aggregates, locally produced or recycled products; minimal use of plastic, steel and aluminium
- **Waste:** systems to reduce waste on site and / or to maximise reuse or recycling.

Waste Strategy 2000
– national target to
recycle 33% of
household waste

4.20 There is potential flexibility in complying with this policy whereby a strong emphasis on one element, e.g. renewable energy, may result in relaxing another, e.g. only needing an NHER rating of 9. The Building Research Establishment administers two environmental rating schemes; EcoHomes for residential and BREEAM for non-residential developments. Compliance with these schemes, at a rating level to be defined in the forthcoming supplementary planning document, will satisfy all the policy requirements, except for carbon neutrality. This element aims to achieve development in MK with zero carbon growth; preferably by reducing emissions from the development making use of renewable energy or, as an interim measure, by making payments into a carbon offset fund. This will be used elsewhere in MK to reduce carbon emissions by cutting energy use, producing renewable energy or tree planting.

SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION

POLICY D4

All new development exceeding 5 dwellings (in the case of residential development) or incorporating gross floorspace in excess of 1000 sq m (in the case of other development) will be required to include the following:

- (i) Energy efficiency by siting, design, layout and buildings' orientation to maximize sunlighting and daylighting, avoidance of overshadowing, passive ventilation;
- (ii) Grouped building forms in order to minimize the external wall surface extent and exposure;

- (iii) Landscape or planting design to optimise screening and individual buildings' thermal performance;
- (iv) Renewable energy production e.g. external solar collectors, wind turbines or photovoltaic devices;
- (v) Sustainable urban drainage systems, including rainwater and waste water collection and recycling
- (vi) Significant use of building materials that are renewable or recycled;
- (vii) Waste reduction and recycling measures;
- (viii) Carbon neutrality or financial contributions to a carbon offset fund to enable carbon emissions to be offset elsewhere.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Objective of policy

- To encourage the development of renewable energy production.

4.21 Government advice emphasises the need to limit the emission of greenhouse gases that cause global warming. Renewable energy can make a major contribution to achieving this objective and can be provided in many forms, both as purpose-built power generation plants and as additions to other buildings e.g. solar panels. Renewable energy includes both the generation of electricity and space or water heating.

PPG22: Renewable Energy (2004)

4.22 A study of the region has concluded that the main renewable energy potential in this area is from wood and straw fuels, passive and active solar heating, photovoltaic panels, waste combustion, landfill gas and wind energy. Possible locations for wind turbines include sites within the city, e.g. industrial premises distant from housing, or rural areas with high wind speeds, e.g. the Brickhills or the north of the Borough near the M1.

Eastern Region
Renewable Energy
Study 1997

RENEWABLE ENERGY

POLICY D5

Planning permission will be granted for proposals to develop renewable energy resources unless there would be:

- i) significant harm to the amenity of residential areas, due to noise, traffic, pollution or odour;
- ii) significant harm to a wildlife species or habitat;
- iii) unacceptable visual impact on the landscape.

Wind turbines should, in addition, avoid unacceptable shadow flicker and electromagnetic interference and be sited at least 350m from any dwellings.

MAINS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

Objective of policy

- To avoid the provision of overhead telecommunication services.

4.23 New development in the City been achieved with all services provided underground, avoiding a proliferation of unattractive overhead posts and wires. The Council is seeking to continue this approach for all new development.

MAINS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

POLICY D6

Electricity and telecommunications services to new development within the boundary of Milton Keynes City should be provided underground. Overhead services will only be acceptable if there are proven technical reasons why underground services cannot be provided.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS MASTS

Objective of policy

- To minimise the impact of telecommunication masts

4.24 Government guidance on telecommunications includes advice on matters that can be covered in Local Plan policies – such as identifying sites for tall masts, encouraging site sharing by different operators, and the external appearance of apparatus.

PPG8:
Telecommunications
(2001)

4.25 However, with the rapid increase in the use of mobile phones and other telecommunication products, there has been concern about potential harm to public health and visual amenity from transmitter masts. As well as Policy D7, the Council has also adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance to promote and encourage sensitive forms of telecommunication development, intended to reassure the community with regard to any perceived health risks and to limit the impact on the amenity of the area.

Telecommunications
Systems Policy
(MKC, May 2005)

TELECOMMUNICATIONS MASTS

POLICY D7

Planning applications for masts and other telecommunications apparatus should demonstrate that adverse impact on the built or natural environment is minimised.

To limit the visual impact of masts and other apparatus, operators must show that they have sought to:

- (i) Maximise the use of existing and proposed tall buildings
- (ii) Share masts and sites

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| (iii) Develop innovative design solutions |
| (iv) Provide additional structured screen landscaping, where appropriate. |

TEMPORARY BUILDINGS

Objective of policy

- To avoid a proliferation of temporary buildings in the Borough.

4.26 The term “temporary building” is often applied to a prefabricated building of relatively low capital cost, which because it is designed to have a short life, does not use durable materials or methods of construction. These buildings can be useful where there is a genuine short term need but where they are used as a cheap solution for a prolonged period, they are unsatisfactory. Often in these circumstances a lack of maintenance leads to rapid dilapidation. In order to limit the detrimental effect on the environment that can arise from the long term use of such buildings, their use will be restricted.

4.27 Policy D8 incorporates a new appendix on temporary classrooms. This reflects Council policy, restated in the School Organisation Plan.

Agreed by the Council's Education Committee in July 1997.

The School Organisation Plan (1999) sets out the Council's proposals for managing school places across the Borough over the 5 year period from 1999-2004. It is reviewed annually.

TEMPORARY BUILDINGS

POLICY D8

Planning permission will only be granted for temporary buildings to meet essential short-term needs. Consent will be for a limited period.

Proposals for temporary classrooms will also be assessed against the criteria in Appendix D8.