

Plan:MK Topic Paper - Issues Consultation Culture, Recreation and Quality of Life

September 2014



www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/PlanMK

Plan:MK

Plan:MK Topic Papers - Issues Consultation

Introduction

Plan:MK, a new Local Plan for Milton Keynes, will set out a development strategy for Milton Keynes up to 2031 with a range of detailed policies to guide development over this period.

It will replace the Core Strategy, adopted in 2013 and the existing Local Plan (2005) which together currently form the part of development plan for the Borough.

Once complete, Plan:MK and any Neighbourhood Plans, will be the starting point for planning advice, (other than for Minerals and Waste) and decisions made by the Council. It will set out how much development is expected over the plan period and the location of development sites across the Borough. It will also include detailed policies to ensure that all development is of high quality and respectful to the character of Milton Keynes, and that unplanned development only occurs where it is appropriate.

Plan:MK has to be prepared within the context of national planning policy and within the legislative framework set out by the Government. This Topic Paper is part of the first stage in the process where we are seeking initial view of the public and other interested parties on what should be in Plan:MK.



What is the purpose of the Topic Papers?

This is one of a series of Topic Papers published by the Council at this time. In total there are twelve Topic Papers covering:

- Growth in Housing
- Employment and Economic Development
- Town Centres and Retail
- Transport and Travel
- Rural Issues
- Provision of Physical and Social Infrastructure
- Quality of Place
- Culture, Recreation and Quality of Life
- Open Space and the Natural Environment
- Climate Change and Sustainability
- Duty to Cooperate
- The Way Forward: Preparing a Vision and Development Strategy for Plan:MK

Each of the Topic Papers is available on the Council website at <http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planmk>

The aim of the papers is to engage everyone with a stake in the future growth and development of Milton Keynes in the preparation of Plan:MK. They cover a range of topics, sometimes interlinked, which the Council have identified as being key to the development of the Plan.

Each paper summarises the background to the topic, setting out data and policy context, before highlighting key issues and posing questions for the reader - the responses to which will help the Council in the development of Plan:MK.

The final topic paper, "The Way Forward" draws together issues raised in the preceding papers and considers what they mean for the Vision and Development Strategy.

When we produce the final version of Plan:MK, the Vision and Development Strategy will be at the start of the Plan, setting the scene for the policies that will follow.

These Topic Papers are being published for consultation in accordance with Regulation 18 'Preparation of a local plan' of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.



How to respond

The Council would appreciate any feedback you have on the Topic Papers. In particular, if you can focus on the questions posed it will help with the development of the plan. Feedback can be submitted:

- Online via our consultation portal: <http://miltonkeynes-consult.objective.co.uk>
- Via email: PlanMK@milton-keynes.gov.uk
- In writing: Development Plans, Civic Offices, 1 Saxon Gate East, Central Milton Keynes, MK9 3EJ

All comments should be received by **5pm on Wednesday 3rd December 2014.**

How will the feedback be used?

The next stage of the process will be to develop a Preferred Options document, which will set out the Council's initial draft of Plan:MK.

Feedback from this Issues consultation will help to shape the options considered as part of the development of the Preferred Options. These options will evolve through further focused consultation with key stakeholders.

The Council expects to publish the Preferred Options document for consultation in 2015.

The overall aim is to get a final plan prepared by early 2016, at which time it will be submitted to the Government and be subject to independent examination.

Introduction

1 Milton Keynes, since its designation, has always had a very clear vision of promoting a high quality of life, and the guiding principles from the original plan for the city all work towards making sure that residents, visitors and workers have access to a high standard and wide range of opportunities, facilities and activities.

2 The original Plan for Milton Keynes (March 1970) recognised that as the city grew and as the pattern of increasing leisure time and disposable income continued, there would be the need to provide more opportunities for creative leisure. The Plan made provision for various types of sport and physical recreation including playgrounds, sports grounds, golf courses, indoor recreation (which would include ice or roller skating rink, swimming pools and bowling alleys), development of the canal and brooks and creation of lakes for water based recreation, bridle paths, and cycling and walking routes. To meet cultural and entertainment demands, the Plan considered the need to develop a theatre or music hall, a museum, cinemas and dance halls, spaces to spend time outside, and allotments to give residents the opportunity to grow their own food.



3 The arts have also been built into the fabric of Milton Keynes through the vision of the Development Corporation which placed artists in communities and commissioned public art as development

took place. The unique, innovative designs of many of the grid squares, as discussed in the Quality of Place Topic Paper, is further evidence of the individuality that was part of the original vision for the city.

4 This paper focuses on how quality of life can be improved providing cultural facilities, sports, heritage, public art and spaces for arts animation and performances across our communities to provide engagement and wellbeing. Maintaining and improving quality of life is also linked to many of the issues discussed in other Topic Papers, for example:

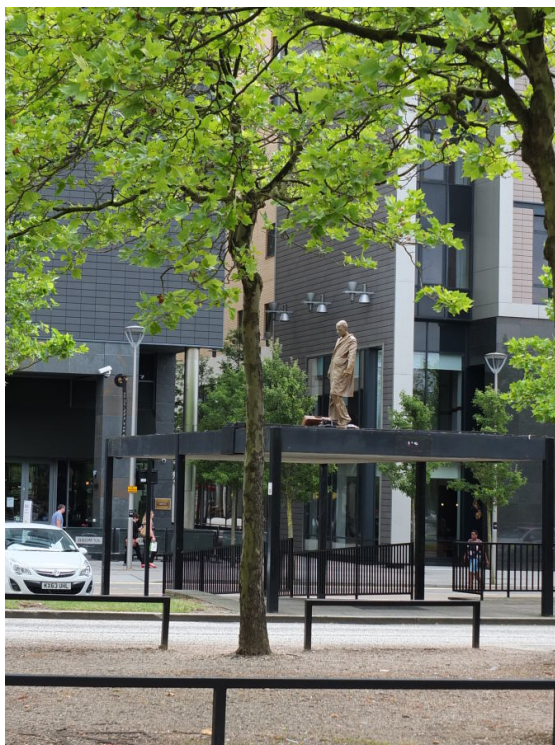
- meeting housing need, including delivering affordable housing or other specialist forms of housing (e.g. sheltered housing) - covered in the 'Growth in Housing' paper
- having a transport network that allows people to move around the Borough without unacceptable delays, and using a variety of forms of transport - covered in the 'Transport and Travel' paper
- ensuring residents have access to areas of open space for formal and informal recreation, and that the intrinsic value of the natural environment is maintained - covered in the 'Open Space and the Natural Environment' paper
- delivering the infrastructure and services needed to support growth alongside new development - covered in the 'Provision of Physical and Social Infrastructure' paper
- considering the sorts of employment opportunities we need to plan for, including allocating land for the right numbers and types of jobs, and creating an environment that employers and workers will want to establish themselves in, to maintain Milton Keynes as a key economic centre - covered in the 'Employment and Economic Growth' paper.

Policy Background

5 Quality of life, and the contribution that culture, the arts and recreation can make to maintaining health and wellbeing is reflected in national, sub-regional and local policy levels. In particular, at the local level, Milton Keynes Council has recently adopted a suite of strategies (see paragraph 13 below) which aim towards achieving 'European Capital of Culture 2023' status.

National

6 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, or Framework, March 2012) has 12 principles that the planning system should contribute towards. A key one that relates to the issues covered in this Topic Paper is that planning should "take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs".



7 The Framework goes on to say that Local Planning Authorities should plan positively for the provision and use of

shared space, community facilities and other local services, as part of delivering the social, recreational and cultural services and facilities that a community needs (paragraph 70). Similarly, the NPPF recognises that access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities (paragraph 73). Plan:MK will have a key role in ensuring that residents, visitors and workers in the Borough have access to such facilities, and their cultural and leisure needs are met.

8 'Great Art and Culture for Everyone' the ten year strategic framework for the Arts Council states that '*Arts and culture enrich our lives. They fire our imaginations, challenge, inspire, educate and entertain us. Everyone should be able to visit or experience a high-quality museum, library or live performance or participate in a cultural activity. These experiences open us to reflection, engender debate and critical thinking, and deepen our understanding of the world*'. The Arts Council support and invest in the arts, museum and library infrastructure in Milton Keynes. Their five goals are:

- Excellence is thriving and celebrated in the arts, museums and libraries
- Everyone has the opportunity to experience and to be inspired by the arts, museums and libraries
- The arts, museums and libraries are resilient and environmentally sustainable
- The leadership and workforce in the arts, museums and libraries are diverse and appropriately skilled
- Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts, museums and libraries.

Sub-regional

9 The South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) is preparing an 'Arts, Heritage, Sport, Visitor Economy, Cultural and Creative Strategy'

that identifies future opportunities across the sub-region. The next stage of this strategy will be to highlight the assets and contributions to the wider sub-region that exist within the Borough, and identify funding opportunities to enhance our cultural offer.



Local

10 Plan:MK will review and replace the existing policies in the Core Strategy (2013) and Local Plan (2005), but these extant policies set out the current policy position. The key Core Strategy policy is Policy CS17 'Improving access to local services and facilities' which aims to protect public open space, leisure, recreation, sport and community facilities, local centres and village shops, pubs and Post Offices. The Core Strategy also supports the International Sporting City agenda, which is discussed in more detail in paragraph 34 below.

11 The existing Milton Keynes Local Plan (adopted 2005) includes Policy PO4 'Percent for Art' which encourages developers to add visual interest to buildings and places through the use of public art. Other policies in the Plan also reflect the importance of cultural and leisure opportunities, for example through ensuring new library buildings are designed to be capable of being multi-use, to reflect the changing nature of libraries and the way they are used; and encouraging arts, entertainment and commercial leisure

facilities in Central Milton Keynes or other town and district centres where they are accessible by public transport.



12 Local Plan policies also cover recreation, including which locations across the Borough might be suitable for watersports or other noisy sports, and the recreational facilities we would expect to be delivered alongside new development.

13 Importantly, there is a wider suite of Council strategies that help to promote quality of life for residents, visitors and workers in Milton Keynes. These include the Heritage, Museums and Archives Strategy, the Arts and Public Art Strategy and the Sports and Active Communities Strategy, which all cover the period between 2014 and 2024. These linked strategies contribute towards three shared priorities; Enhance Identity, Increase Opportunities and Actively Celebrate. Plan:MK has a role in delivering the aims of these strategies. They are discussed in more detail later in this paper.

Issues

Culture & Recreation

14 In 2012 Milton Keynes Council refreshed its Cultural Statement and Vision as part of its work on the Arts and Public Art, Heritage Museums and Archives and Sports and Active Communities strategies and development of the Future Libraries Plan, adopting the following statement:

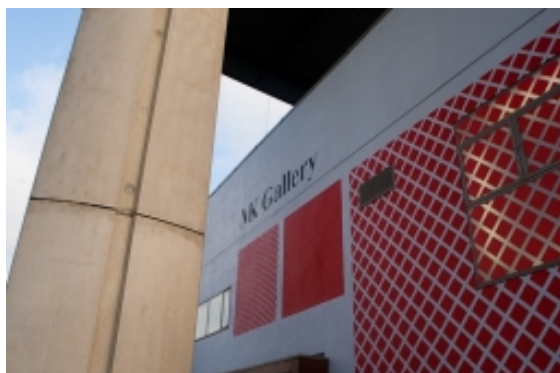
'Culture in Milton Keynes is a term that means different things to different people. We believe that cultural participation is where people of all backgrounds come together with shared interests and passions. Together with the environment in which cultural activities take place, culture includes all the things that define our lives, connect our communities and represent the values we pass on to other generations'.

15 The statement underpins the strategies and their delivery plans, which aim to take Milton Keynes from a regional city to an international one, which aspires to see Milton Keynes as the European Capital of Culture in 2023.



Arts and Public Art

16 Arts is an evolving and growing sector in Milton Keynes and the new Arts and Public Art Strategy promotes and supports the wealth of practising artists and arts organisations across the Borough that represent many different art forms including dance, visual arts, music, contemporary art, drama, poetry, design, craft, festival, carnival arts, digital media and sculpture. There is growth in international arts production, festivals and creative industries in Milton Keynes which helps animate and diversify our cultural offer. This includes the biennial Milton Keynes International Festival, featuring artists and companies from across the world. The MK Gallery is also expanding, with doubled exhibition space, independent cinemas, increased community and education facilities and a new café and shop to be completed by 2017. The SEMLEP Business Plan recognises the importance of arts and culture to the visitor economy, through the 'Creative and Cultural Showcase Sector'.



17 The Arts and Public Art Strategy⁽¹⁾ also identifies that in order to achieve 'World Class - distinctive arts' a number of challenges will need to be addressed through its delivery, namely:

- Identify new sources of arts funding and a long-term commitment.
- Empower communities to further engage in and advocate for the arts.
- Challenge and change negative image and perceptions of Milton Keynes.
- Retain and attract the best creative practitioners to live and work in Milton Keynes.
- Support arts leadership and develop sector skills and capacity to grow.
- Develop the arts infrastructure to meet growth demands and opportunities.

18 Milton Keynes is recognised internationally for its public art collection, lead artists and active commissioning programme, thanks in part to the importance public art had in developing the 'New Town' from commercially funded pieces delivered mainly in the city centre, to local pieces that helped bring communities together and those 'pioneers' moving to MK.

19 Public art in Milton Keynes is when we 'invite the vision, creativity and skills of artists to engage people freely with place in a well-considered way.' Using funding from planning obligations, public art has delivered high quality and

community engaged programmes. The Council adopted a policy of 'Percent for Art' in 1991 which encourages developers to allocate at least 1% of the capital costs (i.e. gross development costs) of their schemes towards public art. A Percent for Art in Schools programme launched in 2006 and eleven schools have benefited from artists and artwork being integrated into their new build programme. The benefits of this programme have been manifold, including enriching and broadening the curriculum across many subject areas, including with legacy projects, enhancing their school environment and providing positive and attractive learning spaces.



20 The Arts and Public Arts Strategy 2014 - 2023 promotes the use of the Percent for Art policy across all developments in order to integrate creative thinking and solutions into growth and regeneration. It advocates for good design and consideration of the cultural wellbeing of communities.

¹ Available on www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/art

Question 1

Arts and Public Art

- What is the role of arts and public art in raising the profile of a place?
- How can arts and public art contribute to quality of life, vibrancy and the built environment?
- What is missing, culturally from Milton Keynes?
- How could we develop a sustainable funding source for arts and culture?
- What will we want Plan:MK to do in relation to culture, arts and public art?



23 The strategy has also identified a number of challenges, including the following:

- **Image and Perception** - There is still a continuing (mostly external) perception that Milton Keynes is a New Town with little or no heritage, in spite of projects like MK Heritage Open Days, Milton Keynes Archaeology Day, Bletchley Park and MK Museum. Further marketing, promotion and profiling is required, particularly with the historic environment and the heritage of new and incoming communities.
- **Long-term Funding** - In spite of the success of the last strategy in bringing in over £15 million, it is evident that the heritage sector still requires major investment and research into endowments and trust models to secure sufficient income to protect historic sites and deliver a range of programmes, working with arts, libraries and the cultural sector.
- **Engaging All Communities** - Milton Keynes has an increasingly diverse range of ethnic minority communities all wishing to share and celebrate their heritage. The challenge is to remove barriers where possible and ensure that all communities have equal opportunity to publicly celebrate their heritage.
- **International Recognition** - Milton Keynes is unique and the area has had national and global impact at times in

Heritage, Museums and Archives

21 How we can conserve and enhance the historic environment and heritage assets is considered in the Quality of Plan Topic Paper. However, heritage has an important role in the cultural offering of a place, and it can enhance the quality of life for those who spend time there.

22 The Milton Keynes Heritage, Museums and Archives Strategy 2014 - 2023 sets out the vision, plan, major programmes and projects that have been identified as vital for the future of Milton Keynes, the needs of its growing number of 'citizens' and its reputation amongst ever-increasing visitors. The strategy recognises that heritage has a position within the Council's Corporate Plan under several of its themes, most prominently under 'World Class MK'; 'Milton Keynes will be recognised internationally for its distinctive arts and heritage'. The commitments in the Corporate Plan and the case studies in the strategy all highlight how heritage can both enhance quality of place and people's quality of life.

its history, but its heritage has suffered from a lack of profile. However, with greater access to collections, stories, sites and with new online media tools to hand, this is now possible and Milton Keynes can over the next decade showcase and achieve international recognition of its heritage.

- **Growth, Economy, Business** - Heritage naturally focuses on the past, yet it has a vital role for Milton Keynes' future. The challenge is to protect the sites, buildings and urban design of the New Town retaining its uniqueness, but ensure that modern economic development is not stifled so that heritage actively supports economic and tourism development.

Question 2

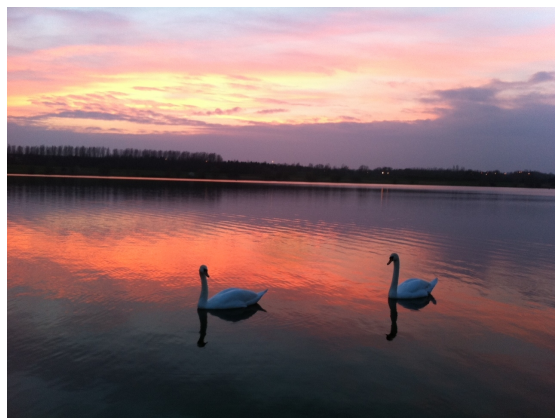
Heritage, Museums and Archives

- With the challenges presented within the new Heritage, Museums and Archives Strategy and how solving those challenges will enhance quality of place and/or life, how could Plan:MK assist in solving those challenges?
- What could Plan:MK do to promote Milton Keynes as internationally and culturally significant?

Healthy and Active Lifestyles

24 Planning has a role to play in addressing the increase in serious health issues facing modern society that are brought on by a combination of lack of physical activity and poor diet. The financial and social cost of increasing levels of poor health and the development of certain chronic diseases (including heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers) is something that could be addressed by

promoting design that encourages greater levels of daily physical activity in buildings and public spaces, and increased access to healthy and nutritious food.



25 The Design Council's guide 'Active by Design'⁽²⁾ looks at practical solutions that can be incorporated into new buildings or developments, or changes that could be made to existing places to encourage people to be more active and healthy.

26 Most parts of the city have access to the Redway network, a cross-city web of traffic-free paths and cycleways. This is a fantastic asset, but is underused, and Milton Keynes has very low levels of cycle use. In the 2011 Census, only 2.8% of the population travelled to work by bicycle (compared to 2.9% nationally, 3.4% in Bedford Borough, a near neighbour with higher levels of bicycle use, and the top performing cities of Cambridge, 29.9% and Oxford, 17.6%) and 7.1% on foot (compared to 9.8% nationally, and 12.3% in Luton for example). We want to find ways to encourage people to make better use of the Redway network for all sorts of journeys. The Transport and Travel Topic Paper discusses this in more detail, including the potential to create 'super-Redways' that provide a more direct route between key destinations, and make them more attractive for commuters.



27 Redways, cycling and walking trails and their leisure use are also explored in the Sport & Active Communities, Heritage, Museums and Archive, and the Arts and Public Art Strategies. It is believed that residents who use the trails for leisure use will see them as familiar, easy to use and safe, and then be more likely to consider using them for commuting to work.

28 The Provision of Physical and Social Infrastructure topic paper discusses the benefits of providing community facilities, and the services that people will need to access on a day-to-day basis near to their homes. This also supports healthy lifestyles, encouraging people to walk or cycle to these services instead of resorting to using their car. New facilities, such as Broughton Pavilion, have a “walk to use the centre” ethos as part of their Transport Plan and although it took time and effort, it is now reaping the benefits of not having the car park full up all the time or as many cars turning up when events are being held. The Open Space and Natural Environment paper discusses the benefits of providing allotments alongside major residential schemes, which helps residents get access to affordable, healthy and nutritious food.

Question 3

Healthy and Active Lifestyles

- What else can Plan:MK do to help encourage people to lead more active, healthier lifestyles?
- What can planning do to make walking and cycling more attractive options for making day-to-day journeys, including commuting to work?
- How can we ensure new developments contribute to improving the health and well-being of residents?

Sport and Active Communities

29 Sport and leisure, and being able to access a variety of different opportunities for active recreation, plays a positive role in many people’s lives, and can help to achieve wider social, health, economic and environmental outcomes for individuals and communities. The Council’s Sport and Active Communities Strategy (2014-2023) addresses this issue, and aims to increase opportunities to participate in sport and active recreation, for example through the Walking for Health programme, and investment in existing and new facilities, such as community sports pavilions in new development areas.



30 The Vision in the Sport and Active Communities Strategy is “to further build Milton Keynes reputation as a sporting destination, where facilities, events and

programmes inspire people to make the active choice, instil a sporting habit and create a lasting sporting legacy”

31 Plan:MK will have a role to play in helping to deliver the three main strategic priorities of the Sports and Active Communities Strategy: Enhance Identity, to enable the infrastructure that creates a sense of pride and place; to Increase Opportunities, working with others to create activities that raise participation; to Actively Celebrate, creating experiences, recognise achievements and share stories of success.

32 The new strategy seeks to maximise the use of facilities including community centres; and preserving, enhancing and providing playing pitches. Existing Local Plan policies already recognise these issues, and future policies should consider how they can best meet the aims of the Strategy.



33 The new Strategy is committed to

- Offer diverse sport and active recreation opportunities.
- Ensure that the 'offer' is available and accessible across the Borough within established and emerging communities.
- Capitalise on opportunities to sustain investment within the sport and active community sectors, additionally seeking new investment through strong partnerships, commitment to deliver and a strong track record of success.

- Use sport and active recreation to improve health, wellbeing, reducing early deaths and addressing health inequalities for the residents of MK.
- Enable people to make informed choices with the development, management and use of their local sport and recreation facilities.

34 This is also linked to the International Sporting City concept which aims to support regional, national and international facilities in Milton Keynes, to attract elite athletes and the local community alike to participate in events locally. The Core Strategy recognised that Plan:MK will have a role in helping to deliver the sites and policies that will support the development of MK as an International Sporting City, including exploring options around funding and delivery arrangements or opportunities for enabling development.

Question 4

Sport and Active Communities

- How can Plan:MK help to ensure that sport and leisure opportunities are realised?
- How can Plan:MK protect existing facilities from changes that affect the overarching strategic objectives?
- Should Plan:MK consider options around funding and delivery arrangements or opportunities for enabling development in the context of developing MK as an International Sporting City?

Community Facilities

35 Community facilities are considered in several Topic Papers. They are a key factor in the development of sustainable communities and in increasing the quality of life for residents. Two of the fundamental components of a sustainable community are that they should:

- ensure a community is well served with public, private, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to people's needs and accessible to all; and
- be fair, tolerant and cohesive with a strong sense of culture and other shared community activities.

36 Local facilities are important for the communities they serve because they enable volunteering, the establishment of community groups and are the means by which local residents can be genuinely empowered. For example, a community centre can host residents meetings, pre-school and toddler groups, adult education classes, social gatherings and host services that address a range of social needs.



37 Providing these facilities at a local level, in convenient locations, increases their accessibility for users and reduces the need to travel. These facilities further raise quality of life through creating community cohesion, reducing isolation, reducing fear of crime and creating opportunities for information sharing and participation in community activity.

38 There may be an opportunity to consider the change of use in underused buildings or land to serve the role of a more eclectic community centre. Religious communities are an example of groups that seek a building to serve a community that may not necessarily be local to it. The need for proper travel planning and the impact on other uses will also need to be considered as part of any application.

Question 5

Community Facilities

How can Plan:MK help to ensure that appropriate community facilities are provided and that existing facilities are protected?

Community Cohesion

39 A cohesive and healthy community is one that is both mixed and integrated, where there are good quality local services and facilities for the community to use. It also includes a choice of housing, where people feel safe, that they have an influence in decision-making, and, perhaps most importantly, have pride in the community that they are part of.

40 The development of cohesive and healthy communities plays an important role in reducing the levels of deprivation within the Borough and in addressing the existing spatial inequalities, particularly in health.

41 This could include developing a principle of 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods'. These are designed to be welcoming, accessible and inviting for everyone, regardless of age, background, health or disability, and are sustainable in terms of climate change, transport services, housing, public services, civic space and amenities making it possible for people to enjoy a fulfilling life and take part in the economic, civic and social life of the community.

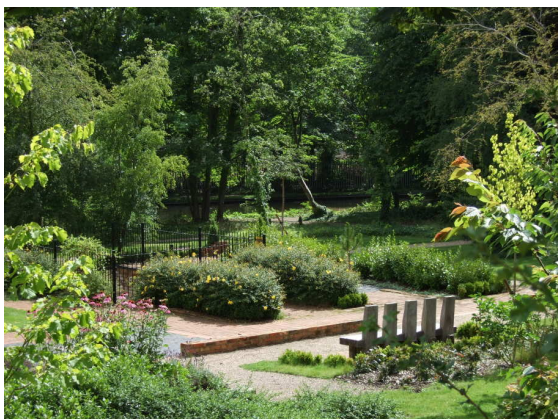


42 Good design helps people find their way around and creates well-used and safe places. Ensuring that neighbourhoods are safe places to be and that pedestrians' safety needs are balanced with vehicle access can foster community cohesiveness. This can also lead to the increased use of the space in a neighbourhood as a community resource.

Question 6

Community Cohesion

What measures do you think could be used to help create and maintain cohesive communities, that encourage diversity and reduce inequalities between areas, to help foster good community relations?



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