

# Plan:MK Topic Paper - Issues Consultation Provision of Physical and Social Infrastructure

September 2014



[www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/PlanMK](http://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/plan:mk>.

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](mailto: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** For a new community to be successful and sustainable, it needs to contain more than just homes to live in and places to work. There are many other uses that need to be provided to make a new development, estate or town function efficiently and a pleasant place to be, and they need to be provided in the right places, at the right time, and of the right size or type to meet the needs of a new community.

**2** Uses that accommodate community facilities or provide social services are referred to as social infrastructure, and includes things like schools, leisure centres, community centres, village halls, doctor's surgeries, hospitals, playing fields, parks, play areas, cemeteries, burial grounds and places of worship. Some of these types of uses are considered in other Topic Papers (e.g. the Open Space and Natural Environment paper and the Culture, Recreation and Quality of Life paper, which looks specifically at cultural infrastructure like libraries, museums and arts centres).



**3** As well as these community facilities (which sometimes will require the provision of physical infrastructure in the form of land and/or buildings), there is a range of other physical infrastructure that also needs to be provided to ensure that new development works effectively and does

not place an unnecessary burden on the wider area. Physical infrastructure includes things like

- transport projects, for example upgrades to key junctions or dualling of important routes, bus stops, improvements to the rail network or the provision of additional parking in places where there is high demand;
- extensions to the Redway system of pedestrian and cycling routes unique to Milton Keynes;
- the provision of utilities including sewerage, drainage, water, electricity and gas; and
- access to ICT (information and communications technology), for example broadband, mobile and landline telephone.

**4** Until we know the scale of development planned in the future, it is difficult to fully understand the infrastructure requirements that will need to be delivered to support it. The scale and nature of growth is discussed in the Vision and Development Strategy topic paper. The Local Investment Plan (LIP) process helps us with understanding the requirements. The current version published in October 2013<sup>(1)</sup> sets out the infrastructure projects that are needed to deliver the growth set out in the Core Strategy and the existing Local Plan. Future iterations of the LIP will do the same for Plan:MK, once we have a better idea of the level of development we are planning for, the size, quantity and location of development sites, and the needs and impacts that it will create.

**5** A key concern and a risk to the success of a development, in the provision of both sorts of infrastructure is timing, and the importance of having community facilities available when the first residents move in to a new development. This can be difficult because of the way such facilities are funded, but the concept of "I before

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planning-and-building/growingmk/local-investment-plan>

# Introduction

E”, or infrastructure before expansion, has become a central principle in the growth of Milton Keynes.



6 The nature of the development of MK, through the Development Corporation and the New Town Commission, and the use of a tariff for developer contributions to fund infrastructure has meant this has been achievable in the past. These mechanisms have allowed projects to be forward-funded, so they can be provided up-front and in advance of residents moving in. Changes to funding mechanisms, the timing and ownership of delivery, and the responsibility for ongoing maintenance of physical and social infrastructure, which is sometimes managed by securing a lump sum from developers through the planning process, will be critical issues to be addressed which will impact on the success of the new Local Plan. A further complication is that in the majority of cases, it is not the Council that is responsible for delivering the infrastructure. As discussed in this paper, the Local Planning Authority has a role in influencing providers to encourage delivery at the most appropriate time and in the most appropriate way, but it may ultimately be outside of the Council's control.

7 While infrastructure before expansion is a key principle in the city, it is also important that expansion needs to follow in a timely fashion after the infrastructure is in place. This has been an issue in Tattenhoe Park for example, where a new school was provided in advance of any houses being completed. The school has filled up with pupils from other estates, with the consequence that there is a shortage of spaces now that nearby homes have eventually been built.

8 Some infrastructure schemes cross local authority boundaries, or have impacts wider than just Milton Keynes, and these are issues that will be discussed with neighbouring planning authorities as part of the Duty to Cooperate (see the Duty to Cooperate Topic Paper). East-West Rail, for example, is a major project to re-establish a strategic railway connecting Oxford, Milton Keynes and Aylesbury (and eventually connecting Cambridge), to provide passenger and freight services, with the scheme due to be finished by March 2019<sup>(2)</sup>. The route will link up several key growth areas, potentially promoting jobs growth, easing traffic congestion and providing opportunities for new local and regional journeys that are very difficult at present. This is an example of an infrastructure project that requires us to work closely with a range of partners, including other local authorities, organisations and stakeholders to help deliver benefits across an area much wider than just Milton Keynes. The South East Midland Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) Infrastructure Investment Plan (see the section on Sub-Regional policy issues below) covers some of these projects.

2 <http://www.bucksherald.co.uk/news/business/business-news/updated-disappointment-as-east-west-rail-delayed-by-two-years-1-5970200>



9 As mentioned above, how infrastructure projects are funded is an important factor in their successful delivery. An important infrastructure funding source is contributions from developers, which historically has been in the form of Section 106 planning obligations or, in the expansion areas in the city, the Milton Keynes Tariff. Developers can often also provide ‘works in kind’ - or in other words, instead of paying a financial contribution to infrastructure they provide the infrastructure directly themselves for the same cost. In the future, this situation may change if the Council introduces a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) as a way of collecting developer contributions for infrastructure projects. There is further discussion about how new development can contribute towards funding infrastructure later in this paper. Developer contributions are also used to fund affordable housing provision and it can be difficult to balance these different priorities while allowing for the need to maintain the economic viability of the development in question.

10 The Milton Keynes Tariff is one example of a pioneering method of forward funding and delivering infrastructure that has been successful in Milton Keynes. Similarly, the Parks Trust model is an innovative way of managing strategic open space in the city, using the rental income from commercial property to manage the 2,000 hectares of parks, meadows, river valleys, woodlands, lakes and landscaped grid road corridors which are managed by the Trust on a 999-year lease. The Milton Keynes Community Foundation also provides a different approach that has been successful in the city, managing a portfolio of premises and land gifted from the Development Corporation, to ensure affordable, good quality and accessible space would remain available to the local voluntary sector. This includes the remaining undeveloped Reserve Sites that are discussed in more detail later in this paper. Milton Keynes has been successful in the past by doing things differently, and opportunities for taking pioneering approaches to infrastructure funding, delivery, ownership and maintenance should be explored in the future to try and continue that success, integrating infrastructure as opportunities arise through approaches including co-location of services (e.g. school, police station, community centre) and co-ordinated through the Local Investment Plan.

## Policy Background

**11** The need to ensure that development is supported by suitable infrastructure, provided at the right time, in the right place, and with the right level of capacity, is supported by planning policy at every level.



### National

**12** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF or Framework, March 2012) sets out the Government's policy on all aspects of planning. There are several sections within the NPPF that relate to infrastructure provision, including within the Core Planning Principles. These Core Principles state that planning should:

*"[3] proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs..."*

*[12] 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."*

**13** The NPPF also recognises the importance of advanced, high quality communications infrastructure, including high speed broadband technology, in

delivering sustainable economic growth and enhancing the provision of local community facilities and services (NPPF, para 42).

**14** Elements of paragraph 70 are also relevant to this topic paper. The Framework says that *"to deliver the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:*

- *plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;*
- *guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs;*
- *ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable, and retained for the benefit of the community; and*
- *ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services."*



**15** The NPPF also provides policy guidance on ensuring that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities (paragraph 72). In practice, this can sometimes be difficult to achieve if the funding received through planning obligations are insufficient to fund new places due to development viability issues, or if there is disagreement between the Local Authority and the developer over the need to provide a new school as part of a large residential development. In many cases, the number of children created by a new housing development far exceeds what was expected, and the size of school provided can quickly become over-subscribed.

**16** The Framework also places importance on improving access to high quality open spaces, protecting existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, and protecting and enhancing rights of way.

**17** The quality and capacity of infrastructure is identified in the NPPF (paragraph 162) as an issue that Local Planning Authorities should work with other authorities and partners on, including strategic infrastructure projects. Ensuring that there is sufficient capacity to meet forecast future demands is a key element of this.

**18** In many cases, infrastructure will be partly funded by developer contributions and planning obligations. However, the NPPF (paragraph 173) is clear that the costs of any requirements to be applied to a development (including infrastructure contributions) when taking account of the normal costs of development and mitigation, should not undermine the deliverability and viability of the development.



**19** Paragraph 177 of the Framework stresses the importance of the timing of infrastructure delivery, and the benefit of preparing policies for infrastructure alongside the work to determine development policies in a Local Plan. This Topic Paper is part of that process, to ensure that infrastructure planning is linked with the wider development strategy.

## Sub-regional

**20** At a 'larger than local' level, work is being done by the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) to look at infrastructure requirements across the partnership area, including projects that cross local authority boundaries. This includes the East-West Rail link, which is also included within the Government's 40 priority infrastructure investments in the National Infrastructure Plan 2013<sup>(3)</sup>.

**21** Milton Keynes sits at the heart of the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) area. SEMLEP have prepared an Infrastructure Investment Plan (published October 2013) that brings together the Local Investment Plans, Economic Development Plans and Infrastructure Delivery Plans for the authorities across the area, in an attempt to explain the linkages between employment and housing growth and the strategic infrastructure required to facilitate this. The plan explains what infrastructure is required where and when

<sup>3</sup> December 2013, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/263159/national\\_infrastructure\\_plan\\_2013.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/263159/national_infrastructure_plan_2013.pdf), Table 5.B

# Policy Background

to facilitate the development set out in adopted and emerging Core Strategies and Local Plans across the area.

**22** 'Infrastructure' is one of the pillars of the draft SEMLEP Strategic Economic Plan (SEP), which contains the sub-region's priorities for funding under the Single Local Growth Fund, a fund that pools together various funding streams and is devolved to SEMLEP to make allocations from.

**23** Where new development takes place near to our boundary, there can be an issue with the provision of infrastructure and how it is funded. For example, children may go to school in an adjacent authority area if new residential development takes place near to the boundary, so local authorities must work together to ensure that any developer contributions collected are shared appropriately to ensure the effects of development are most effectively mitigated. This is an issue that will be important to consider as part of the Duty to Cooperate, the Government's requirement for local authorities to work together on strategic issues.

**SEMLEP**  
South East Midlands  
Local Enterprise Partnership



South East Midlands  
Local Enterprise Partnership  
Infrastructure Investment Plan

## Local

**24** Planning policy at the local level also recognises that the provision of infrastructure is integral to the effective and sustainable delivery of development. The Core Strategy, adopted in July 2013, recognises the importance of infrastructure provision. One of the key 'drivers of change' is "*delivery of infrastructure to accommodate growth - major infrastructure (such as roads and schools) should be in place before developments have been completed*" (Core Strategy, July 2013, paragraph 3.4). This is mentioned in the Introduction as a principle that has been more achievable in the past in MK due to the availability of forward funding, but remains an important goal.

**25** There are several elements of the Core Strategy Vision that are intrinsically linked with infrastructure.

**26** The vision demonstrates the importance of timing, the different sorts of projects and services that could fall within the heading of 'infrastructure', and the role they have in supporting development. A set of Objectives and policies guide how the vision will be achieved.

**27** Similarly, there are policies within the existing Local Plan (2005), supported by a suite of Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance notes on planning obligations, that rely on, or relate to, the provision of infrastructure. Plan:MK provides the opportunity to review, revise and update these policies as necessary, and the Vision and Objectives that will guide them, to ensure the delivery of that infrastructure is appropriately addressed in future policies.

## Context and Issues

**28** Some infrastructure projects have quite a local impact and will only be used by nearby communities, for example a play area, a primary school or a particular highway improvement. In many cases, these projects will be identified by a Town or Parish Council when a new development is being proposed, and they may be funded by the developer to help mitigate the impact of the growth in population in that location. Other infrastructure projects have a much wider impact and will support development across the Borough, and in some cases even wider. These might include, for example, development at the hospital, dualling of the A421, East-West Rail or development of a strategic cultural site such as a City Archive.



**29** The Council and partners have to balance the provision of these different sorts of infrastructure projects, often having to prioritise one scheme over another when the availability of funding is limited. A key method for doing this is

through the Local Investment Plan, a document that is regularly updated, identifying the projects as 'critical', 'necessary', or 'desirable', progress and/or timing of when projects will come forward, sources of funding and delivery partners. The most recent LIP was approved by the Council in October 2013<sup>(4)</sup>.

**30** The current LIP (approved by Milton Keynes Council in October 2013) identifies circa £980m of investment required in the long term infrastructure requirements of the Borough (allied to the homes and jobs planned for the period up to 2026). While funding sources are already known for much of this investment, there is a shortfall of around £370m across the whole programme, with £60m of this identified against 'critical' infrastructure.



**31** A major difficulty in infrastructure planning, particularly in the current economic climate when there is limited government funding and lower levels of developer contributions due to viability issues, is trying to decide which projects

4 <http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planning-and-building/growingmk/local-investment-plan>

are the priority when comparing, for example, a school project, a transport scheme and a health facility. These are the sorts of issues that the LIP helps to deal with by categorising projects and demonstrating what the priorities are over the short, medium and long term. There is also an issue for developer contributions in balancing the need to fund infrastructure and the cost to a developer of delivering our affordable housing requirements (affordable housing is discussed in the Growth in Housing Topic Paper). In a difficult economic climate, it may not be viable for a developer to meet all of the Council's contribution requirements, so there is a need to determine what is acceptable on a case-by-case basis, considering the viability of each proposal. This will need to be looked at on a wider basis through the development of a new Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document, to replace the existing suite of policies.

**32** Viability is also an issue that will need to be considered on a borough-wide basis to ensure that the development proposed in Plan:MK in its entirety is deliverable.



**33** Another issue in the timing of when we can deliver infrastructure relates to the 'time lag' that exists with many of the funding sources we rely on. For example, increases in the funding we receive from Central Government as a result of population growth is not realised locally until that population is already here and resident, which means that any improvements to services or infrastructure

that we need to meet additional demand often has to be delivered retrospectively. While the Government wants us to deliver growth in the economy and build new homes, funding the infrastructure needed to support it can make that very challenging.

**34** A further challenge is developing certainty of revenue funding streams to operate new infrastructure. As an example it may be that funding is available to build a new health facility or community centre but there is uncertainty as to whether the facility can open and operate to serve the community in which it sits because of a lack of long term funding. New approaches to service delivery are being explored and both the private and the voluntary sectors may well run more 'public' services in future. Another approach is to look at the design of public facilities to incorporate a commercial element to help sustainability. Whilst this is an operational issue it does impact on when and where facilities are opened.

### Utilities

**35** Just as important as providing the big, visible pieces of infrastructure like roads and schools, is making sure that the utility networks supplying gas, water, electricity, sewerage, drainage and telecommunications have enough capacity to meet the needs of future development. Utility providers have a statutory responsibility to supply new development with power and water, however we want to ensure that the development is as straightforward as possible. Therefore, we have been discussing the future capacity of the utility networks with the various providers. We have shared information with regard to the quantum of development across the Borough from the adopted Core Strategy and early indications suggest there are no insurmountable issues at this stage, and that anticipated future demand can be met.

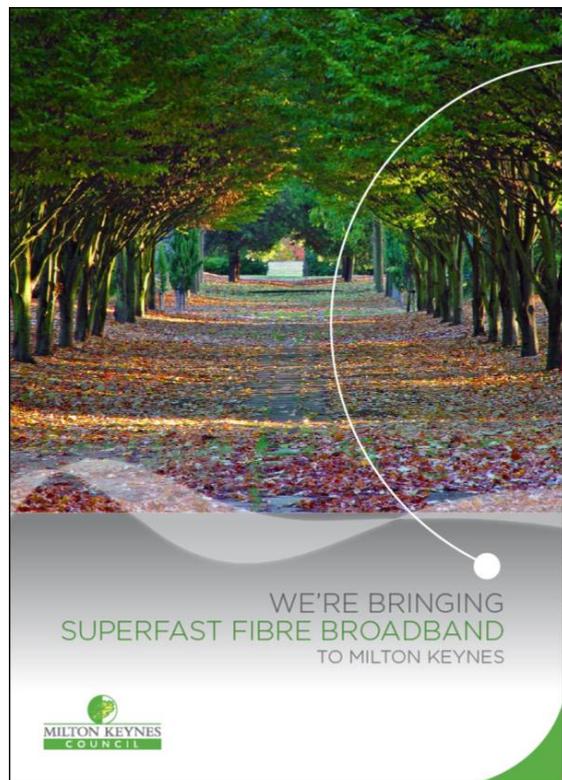


**36** To ensure we keep this situation under review and take account of any future capacity issues, MKC continues to be engaged with the main utility infrastructure providers through its business planning processes; the providers work to a five or seven year cycle, depending on the regulatory requirements for the industry. MKC has also been liaising with the providers with regard to their various strategies to deliver infrastructure as they emerge from their key investment programmes. We will, therefore, maintain a dialogue with these providers and make sure, once we know more about the timing, scale, location and type of development that will take place, that networks will be resilient and able to operate within capacity. We will assess future impacts of development (such as on the water cycle network) and look toward renewable and sustainable energy and water supplies.

### Broadband

**37** In terms of telecoms, this has become a key area of partnership working for the Council in recent years. Access to high speed broadband is an increasingly

important factor when deciding where to live or where to do business. As stated in the NPPF (2012, paragraph 42), *“Advanced, high quality communications infrastructure is essential for sustainable economic growth. The development of high speed broadband technology and other communications networks also plays a vital role in enhancing the provision of local community facilities and services.”*



**38** MKC works with commercial providers to facilitate the roll out of broadband infrastructure within the Borough. Under these commercial programmes we anticipate that 86% of premises will have access to superfast broadband by the end of 2014. MKC has also worked with BT Openreach in the past to deliver one of only two national ‘brownfield’ trials of connecting existing premises directly to a fibre optic network. Some 10,000 properties were targeted in Milton Keynes under this initiative.

**39** The importance of ICT (information and communication technology) connectivity and high speed broadband

provision is also reflected in the Council's involvement with the Central Superfast Broadband Project, a partnership between Milton Keynes Council, Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedford Borough Council and British Telecom. The project aims to bring access to superfast broadband infrastructure to 97% of the homes and businesses in Milton Keynes by 2016, through investing public money to supplement private funding where there is no automatic 'commercial' case to provide this type of infrastructure. Superfast broadband is broadband which delivers speeds of at least 24 Megabits per second (Mbps) which means data and media can be downloaded and sent much more quickly.

**40** MKC's ambition is that 100% of premises in the Borough (residential and commercial) will have access to superfast broadband and as a result we will have a high percentage of people using 'digital' services. It is expected that achieving that 100% target will rely on private, commercial investment rather than public sector funding.

**41** A key part of delivering the vision of high speed broadband access across the Borough is ensuring that new developments plan for and provide the necessary digital infrastructure. Central Bedfordshire Council, a partner in the Central Superfast Broadband Project have included a policy in their emerging Development Strategy which *"will expect new residential development of 25 units or more and all employment development to include provision for high speed next generation broadband infrastructure through a fibre optic network."*

**42** It is too early to tell how successful this policy will be in delivering high speed broadband. However, the policy puts the responsibility for provision on the developer, recognising that high speed broadband access can be a selling point for new properties, stating that *"where the minimum standards are not met, evidence will be required to demonstrate why this would not be feasible or viable."*

### Question 1

#### Broadband

- Should Milton Keynes Council include a similar policy in Plan:MK, which puts the responsibility for providing the infrastructure necessary to deliver high speed broadband with the developer?
- If so, how could that requirement be managed (e.g. through conditions or legal agreements)?
- Or should provision in new developments be delivered by other means, as with the existing, established parts of the Borough?

## Transport infrastructure

43 Transport infrastructure is an area that can have a huge impact on how successfully a settlement works, and how efficiently people can move around, which can affect people’s quality of life and how attractive a location is to employers, residents and people looking to visit an area. Milton Keynes’ transport network is unique, with its system of grid roads and redways, which link up the various employment, leisure and retail destinations across the city, with residential areas. To keep the city running as smoothly as possible, particularly as Milton Keynes continues to grow, some improvements to the transport network will be necessary. The Transport and Travel Topic Paper considers this issue in more detail, and considers how network improvements and other transport infrastructure projects can be planned in relation to growth and how new innovative schemes are being considered to help make the transport network more sustainable.



## Reserve Sites

44 Reserve Sites were an integral part of the original plan for Milton Keynes and have been carried through subsequent Local Plans. These are small sites that are planned in to new residential development areas that are left undeveloped to accommodate future, unforeseen local needs.

45 There are many reserve sites in long-established areas that are still vacant, where a suitable use has not yet been found or they have not yet been needed for their designated use. The existing Local Plan lists the remaining undeveloped reserve sites. They are designated for a range of uses, including social, voluntary and community uses (for example meeting places, health centres, places of worship, or sheltered housing), or commercial uses (shops, offices, private housing), but each site has a preferred use associated with it. Sites that have been transferred to the Community Foundation are intended to be used for social, voluntary and community uses<sup>(5)</sup>, and those that are now under the control of the Milton Keynes Development Partnership (MKDP) are more likely to be available for residential or commercial uses.



46 The sites under the control of the Community Foundation are subject to a ‘clawback’ mechanism that means if they

5 <http://www.mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk/Supporting-You/Property-and-Land/Community-foundation-land>

are developed for housing or commercial purposes, they need to repay a proportion of the land value to the original landowner (which diminishes at a rate of 2% per annum over a fifty-year period, from the date the land was originally transferred). This provision makes it difficult, therefore, for other types of development that would benefit the local community to come forward on those sites. Such uses could include children's nurseries, dentist surgeries, veterinary surgeries or other uses that are of benefit in a local community. In some cases, these sites are in a location or of a size that makes them more difficult for community development, and the Community Foundation would like the ability to be able to use proceeds from some of these sites to reinvest strategically for the benefit of the community. The 'clawback' provision does not make this economically viable. The Community Foundation proposes to write to the Treasury to ask that this provision is removed on some or all of their sites for this reason.

**47** The timing of when development on reserve sites takes place is another issue. Some reserve sites have a 'long stop' date, after which the plot is returned to the original landowner if a suitable use has not been found.

**48** For future reserve sites, we've learnt that it could be useful to position Reserve Sites next to schools or local centres, as these are the locations where further community-type facilities could be best located. This could particularly be the case for schools which sometimes need to be extended when there is greater demand for places than expected. Also, some types of development that would be suitable for Reserve Sites need a bigger plot, for example some religious groups are looking for a site which could accommodate a large amount of parking because of the size of the congregation, or where we have an unforecast need for a primary or secondary

school. In such circumstances, it could be useful to have Reserve Sites that are a little larger than those we currently have.

**49** However, there is an argument that by allocating further reserve sites, of whatever size, we may end up with even more vacant, undeveloped plots within the city that are waiting for a use that may never be found; meanwhile we have to develop greenfield sites elsewhere to meet our development requirements. Arguably, one of the main reasons for these sites being left undeveloped has been the 'clawback' provision which has effectively sterilised the development of reserves sites for alternative, and possibly more appropriate uses. It will be important to make sure that the flexibility and deliverability of development on any future reserve site allocations is considered to avoid vacant/sterilised development parcels.



## Question 2

### Reserve Sites

- Should we be more flexible about the sorts of uses that are considered appropriate on reserve sites?
- Should this only be on vacant sites in long-established areas, or should potential uses also be more flexible on new reserve site allocations?
- Are there any alternative uses that Reserve Sites could be put to?
- Do you think that the principle of residential development on Reserve Sites is acceptable?
- Should all new reserve sites be time-limited, so if a community-type use cannot be found within a certain period (c.10 years) the site is returned to the original landowner/developer? Or should reserve sites remain available in perpetuity, until they are required?
- Should we consider allocating larger Reserve Sites?
- Should we even continue to allocate Reserve Sites, considering a large proportion of them still remain vacant and unused?

### Facilities within the community

**50** Some aspects of social infrastructure are important to the way that a community works, and are key to ensuring that residents have a good quality of life, with access to things like schools, shops, public transport services, community centres, health facilities, a pub, areas of open space or other facilities for leisure and recreation, or other places where people can meet and spend time. Planning has a role in ensuring that these sorts of facilities are provided alongside new homes when we are developing a new community, but it is important that such facilities are also protected in existing, established areas. This can be particularly important in the rural part of the Borough, where the number of people living in a village and using these sorts of facilities may sometimes make it difficult to be economically viable even if there is a continued need for that sort of use. The loss of community facilities within the urban area is just as concerning, however, and the NPPF says that policies should guard against the loss of valued facilities particularly where it would reduce a community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs.



**51** Similarly, we also need to ensure that where new development takes place within an already developed area, perhaps through the redevelopment of an unused building, or on a vacant plot within an existing community, that there is capacity within existing community facilities to meet demand from the additional population, and that other infrastructure is upgraded or extended as necessary. This might include, for example, ensuring that a new development is linked into the Redway network or that there is capacity for new patients in the local doctor's surgeries.

**52** Other facilities that are also important within the community are buildings that faith groups can use. As mentioned above with regards Reserve Sites, sometimes these groups need quite large sites so they can meet all their parking needs. In some cases, existing but unused employment land or premises could be used for this purpose, as parking provision and the size of units can be better suited to their needs. This issue is discussed in the Employment topic paper.

**53** Another issue is around burial grounds. All the existing burial ground provision in the city is within the older settlements, and no new provision was made with the development of the New Town with the exception of a small amount of burial space at the crematorium at Crownhill. However, without extensions or new sites being found, all the existing burial ground sites are expected to reach capacity within the next ten years. Therefore, it is likely that a new burial ground will need to be allocated through the Plan:MK process.

### Question 3

#### Community Facilities

- How can our planning policies prevent the loss of community facilities, particularly if there are concerns over the economic viability of a use?
- What sort of facilities would you want to see provided alongside new development, to help create sustainable communities and walkable neighbourhoods?

#### Schools and Education

**54** Education facilities, including schools, higher and further education, and early years and childcare provision, are important types of social and community infrastructure, which are integral to making Milton Keynes an attractive place for families with children to live.

**55** The Council has a legal duty to secure sufficient early years education, primary and secondary school places. In recent years, changes to legislation have meant Councils have increasingly become commissioners of school places, rather than providers with an increasing number of schools becoming self-governing.



**56** Nevertheless, it is important that through Plan:MK, we ensure sufficient sites are allocated for education uses. New

housing developments currently produce greater numbers of school age children than established communities, and sometimes even more than expected. It is therefore important that new schools are designed with some flexibility to expand if necessary, to meet increased demand. This could include siting schools and reserve sites next to each other, so there is space available should a school need to expand. The section on Reserve Sites above considers this point, and the potential to have “super-reserve sites” which could address an unforecast need for an additional school. Similarly, there is an increasing need to find a site for a further secondary school in or around Central Milton Keynes to address the additional demand for school spaces from existing development areas.

**57** Milton Keynes is home to two unusual higher education establishments; the Open University is an international, distance learning and research university, with its main campus in Walton Hall, and the University Campus Milton Keynes, which is an integrated component of the University of Bedfordshire. Both institutions are important to Milton Keynes, providing higher education options for the local population and workforce; helping to attract knowledge-intensive businesses that would benefit from close proximity to the universities; and also providing employment opportunities (the Open University is one of the largest local employers).

**58** In 2008 Milton Keynes College opened a ‘University Centre’ within Central Milton Keynes, teaching Foundation Degrees awarded by partner universities. The University of Bedfordshire has been the principal Higher Education franchise partner. MK College and the university campus work in partnership on their separate but growing higher education programmes. MKC, through a partnership with the University of Bedfordshire,

supported the opening of the University Campus in September 2013 within the Council’s Saxon Court building.

**59** The University of Buckingham has also declared its ambition to create a medical school in Milton Keynes which it views as the first step in creating a bio-medical hub in the city.

**60** Just across the boundary in Central Bedfordshire is Cranfield University, a university that specialises in research and a close relationship with industry. Alongside the university is a technology park which was set up to provide a “dynamic cluster of science, technology and knowledge-based businesses, all of which would benefit from the proximity of the University’s distinctive expertise and skills base”<sup>(6)</sup>. Milton Keynes benefits from its proximity to the Cranfield Technology Park, but it being so nearby does mean it is difficult to have something similar within the city. The Employment topic paper discusses this in more detail.



**61** It is therefore intended that the future planning of Milton Keynes should make appropriate provision to support the development needs of the universities.

6 <http://www.cranfieldtechnologypark.co.uk/why-cranfield/>

## Question 4

### Education

What can Plan:MK do to make provision for education within the Borough, including ensuring we have planning policies which ensure we have sites for new schools and help to support the continued development of the universities?

### Healthcare

**62** Making sure that people can access healthcare, by being able to register at an easily accessible surgery that is able to provide appointments within a reasonable time, and have access to a modern hospital providing for the widest range of needs, is another infrastructure-related issue that can have a significant impact on people's quality of life. The planning process can try and influence this by promoting sufficient capacity in the healthcare system, for example encouraging new residential developments to make provision for a new doctor's surgery or by collecting planning contributions towards expansion of the hospital. This also includes making sure locations for new healthcare provision are accessible by public transport. However, we can't actually make the decision that a new surgery is needed: the decision of when a new facility is needed or how it will be managed is outside of the Council's control.

**63** The provision of health facilities is a responsibility that is split between two lead organisations following reforms brought in under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 (H&SCA). NHS England (through its Area Teams) is responsible for commissioning primary care services (including GPs, dentistry, optometry and pharmacies). A Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is responsible for commissioning secondary care services, including those provided at hospitals.

**64** MKC meets regularly with the NHS Area Team, MK CCG, and MK Hospital Trust to discuss and influence the planning and infrastructure requirements emerging from their various and respective strategies. We provide information on new developments and demographic changes. MKC negotiates with developers about contributions to support the provision of healthcare, and also advises on existing developer contributions collected to facilitate new or improved facilities. As the plans of the various health partners evolve we will work with them to determine long term infrastructure and funding requirements, capturing this in the Local Investment Plan. In the meantime we are using our joint working arrangements to ensure these important partners are informed of the scale and pace of growth across the Borough, including consulting them on planning policy documents (Development Frameworks, Development Briefs, etc, planning applications, and including them in discussions on s106 (funding) agreements with developers.

**65** We have been able to facilitate discussions directly between the NHS Area Team and developers to discuss the on-site developer building healthcare facilities (instead of the Area Team commissioning a separate construction firm) so provision is delivered early in the development thereby ensuring ease of access to GPs and saving costs. Developers have provided temporary facilities, such as at Broughton Gate, to support new communities before the full population has arrived.



**66** The planning process allocates the sites for new healthcare facilities and has provided space in the major development areas to build new provision at the heart of the communities, and looks at the composition of these areas to ensure complementary uses. MKC will continue to join up the work of the hospital and local healthcare to cater for our growing and changing population. An important consideration is not just finding the funds to build new facilities but to ensure there is funding to operate them. MKC will continue to support requests for adequate funding to run the healthcare services needed for Milton Keynes.

**67** Sometimes when there is a need for more GP spaces, for example, capacity can be increased through the way an existing centre is managed, rather than through new provision, which could include extending opening times, changing the way that appointments are booked, or reconfiguring space within the building. These are options that are generally outside of our influence, but we will work with providers and the CCG to ensure that demand from new developments is addressed.

## Summary

**68** This paper has set out some of the issues and challenges that are faced when trying to co-ordinate and deliver the physical and social infrastructure that is needed to help support growth. Planning policies will be developed through Plan:MK to help manage these issues.

## Question 5

### Infrastructure

- What policies are needed in Plan:MK to deliver the infrastructure we need to support growth?
- What do you think are the most important elements of infrastructure to fund?
- Are there any different or innovative approaches we could consider to help fund infrastructure and service provision?



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