

Plan:MK Topic Paper - Issues Consultation Quality of Place

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 Quality of Place is about more than just the design and quality of buildings; it is also about the spaces between them and our enjoyment of the environment. The design of a place is integral to the way it works; the way people use an area or travel around it; the way that people feel about it, and whether they enjoy spending time there; how easy it is to understand or interpret the space, what it is used for and how to move through it. The presence of buildings, features or spaces that are distinctive to the local area can reinforce the value and quality of a place to the people that use it, and how we live, work and play there.

2 Milton Keynes is an exceptional place, with a unique character. As a planned and designated New Town on a scale not seen before or since in the UK, the developments of the last fifty years make a significant contribution to the character and quality of Milton Keynes, including its city centre, Central Milton Keynes. These developments are set in a grid-pattern of roads, providing easy and quick journeys by car across the city. Alongside the modern developments are the original small towns, including Bletchley, Wolverton and Stony Stratford, and villages including Broughton, Simpson, Great Linford and Shenley Church End. Beyond the designated area, there are the thriving towns of Newport Pagnell, Olney and Woburn Sands, and many smaller villages surrounded by open countryside.



3 The combination of all of these places; the different character and styles of development; the presence and integration of valuable heritage, new and old; the types of activities that take place; and the way that the buildings, spaces, communities and neighbourhoods all fit together, is what makes Milton Keynes unlike anywhere else. This topic paper explores the issues around 'Quality of Place', looking at what you think is special and important about Milton Keynes and what we should do to ensure that future development in the Borough builds on the successes of the past to move towards a 'World-class' MK, an aim of the Council's Corporate Plan.

Introduction



4 One defining feature of the new city is the way that the existing historic villages and towns within the urban development area were treated as part of the creation and expansion of Milton Keynes. As stated in the Milton Keynes Planning Manual (1992), *"The Master Plan aimed to incorporate existing towns and villages into the new city, whilst seeking to maintain the individual identity of each as far as possible. The role of the existing towns has been strengthened and all thirteen villages within the Designated Area have undergone some enlargement, including infill development within village envelopes."*

5 There is also a wealth of Listed Buildings and other heritage assets within the Borough, including 27 Conservation Areas and 50 Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The historic environment makes a fundamental contribution to the distinctiveness and character of the built environment, shaping its sense of place and identity. This is the same for the elements of high quality modern architecture developed as part of the New Town period. It is important for those New Town assets to be properly identified and catalogued.

6 It is important to learn lessons from what has worked well in the past, and where things could have been done differently. The Plan:MK will provide the framework for the future of the Borough, and will include the detailed development management policies which will be used to determine planning applications for new development across the Borough. This Topic Paper helps to determine the sorts of issues that the policies will cover and the direction those policies will take, to help shape the future of the Borough and the way it will work, and influence the way that we live and spend time here.



Policy Background

7 The importance of good design in planning policy is recognised at all levels of guidance, from national policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, March 2012), down to local planning documents (like the existing Local Plan and the recently adopted Milton Keynes Core Strategy) which is further strengthened by additional guidance like the Council's New Residential Design Guide (2012) and the Public Realm Design Guides prepared for Wolverton (2012) and Central Milton Keynes (2006). At the neighbourhood level, some Town and Parish Councils are preparing plans for their own areas.



National

8 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's policy on all aspects of planning. The Framework demonstrates the Government's commitment to design in several of the 12 key principles that planning should deliver.

[4] - always seeks to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.

[5] - take account of the different roles and character of different areas...

[10] - conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.

[11] - actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable.

9 The NPPF also demonstrates the link between sustainable development and seeking improvements to people's quality of life (NPPF, paragraph 9).

10 As stated in paragraph 56 of the Framework, "Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people." This theme is continued through the whole of the Framework, with several sections identifying policy areas that are related to design, and the contribution that planning makes to creating high quality environments.

11 This includes:

- reducing journey lengths and encouraging opportunities to undertake day-to-day activities within walking distance of home by balancing land uses within an area and locating key facilities within walking distance of most properties (paragraphs 37 and 38);
- planning for a mix of house types, sizes and tenures to encourage mixed communities (paragraph 50);
- including policies that are based on stated objectives for the future of the area in relation to the quality of development that will be expected (paragraph 58); and
- promoting safe and accessible environments, where quality of life and community cohesion are not

undermined by crime and disorder (paragraph 69).

12 The importance of conserving and enhancing the historic environment is also demonstrated in the Framework. The NPPF states that a Local Plan should set out “*a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment*”, recognising that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance (paragraph 126). This is linked to the need to understand the defining characteristics of an area (paragraph 58), so that development responds to and reflects the character of the local surroundings. As discussed later in this paper, the work to prepare a Local Heritage List and a Design Audit will help inform our future policies. The NPPF also talks about place-making, and the role of planning policies in ensuring that developments establish a strong sense of place and create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit (paragraph 58).



Local

13 Quality of place, in terms of creating successful neighbourhoods, promoting sustainable design, ensuring high quality, well-designed places and conserving heritage assets is also reflected in planning policy at the local level. The Core Strategy, adopted in July 2013, includes policies on these topics, which are intended to help deliver some of the elements of the Spatial Vision, the ideal of how Milton Keynes will be in the year 2026.

14 The Vision is supported by some Core Strategy Objectives, three of which are particularly pertinent to Quality of Place.

[11] To embody Place Making as an overarching design objective for new development and require that the layout and design of new development creates safe, healthy, sustainable built environments with easy access to open space, public transport and every day facilities, delivering a high quality of urban design, architecture and public realm and creates places with identity.

[12] To protect, maintain and enhance the important environmental features, character and assets of the New Town and the towns and villages through the Borough.

[13] To encourage healthy lifestyles with the provision of recreation facilities and biodiversity by enhancing the linear park network and extending it into new developments while conserving and enhancing key landscapes and important habitats.

15 Policies CS12 (Developing Successful Neighbourhoods), CS13 (Ensuring High Quality, Well Designed Places), CS17 (Improving access to local services and facilities) and CS18 (Healthier and Safer Communities) in the Core Strategy are the

key policies that encourage good design and the creation of sustainable and successful neighbourhoods, which contribute both to quality of place, and the quality of life for the people that spend time in those developments. Policy CS19 (The Historic and Natural Environment) recognises the role that heritage assets, including elements of the design of the New Town, have in contributing to the character of the Borough. Plan:MK will include policies to replace and update these existing Core Strategy (and Local Plan) policies.



16 Locally, the importance that Milton Keynes Council attributes to good design in residential development has been further demonstrated in the 'New Residential Development Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document' adopted in April 2012. The guide is specific to the Milton Keynes context, and what makes this place special, building on those elements of a neighbourhood that have proved successful here. The New Residential Development Design Guide also sets out useful context about the design and character of Milton Keynes, ensuring its unique 'feel' is respected and retained.

17 There are also Conservation Area Reviews for some of the Borough's 27 Conservation Areas, which include character statements that identify and describe those features that are of special interest or which contribute to local character.

Neighbourhood

18 Some communities within Milton Keynes, led by their Town or Parish Council, are taking the opportunity to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. These documents will become part of the statutory Development Plan for the Borough and will be a key decision making tool when we determine planning applications in the area covered by the Neighbourhood Plan. However they are different to Milton Keynes Council-led planning documents as it is the community themselves that prepare the document (in conformity with strategic policies) which allows it to properly reflect local opinion and the aspirations of local residents and businesses.

19 Communities are using Neighbourhood Plans to try and retain what is special about their areas, or to try and make improvements that will enhance the quality of their town, village or estate, and make it a more pleasant place in which to live, work or spend time. They can also be used to take control of where new development might happen in or around a settlement, and influence the character of any proposals coming forward. Neighbourhood Plans are being prepared in areas as diverse as Central Milton Keynes, Wolverton Town Centre, Newport Pagnell, Lakes Estate in Bletchley, Bow Brickhill, Great Linford and Stony Stratford. When policies for Plan:MK are prepared, we will need to take account of any local Neighbourhood Plans.



Context

20 As part of the Milton Keynes Core Strategy (adopted July 2013), a 'SWOT' analysis was undertaken which highlighted the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of Milton Keynes. Many of these factors, both positive and negative, are intrinsically linked to the design of Milton Keynes and the way it works. For example, the strengths of Milton Keynes include the grid road system that allows quick vehicle movement and the strategically-planned network of multi-functional open spaces. The distinctive character of the older towns, and the sensitive treatment of the villages that are now within the Milton Keynes city area are also identified as strengths.

21 However, in Milton Keynes it can be difficult to operate a fast, frequent and attractive bus service, because the low density of development and the dispersed nature of employment locations, plus the network of grid roads means there are many alternative routes between destinations.



What makes Milton Keynes special? Overarching principles for Milton Keynes

22 The NPPF says that Local Plans should include policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected, based on stated objectives for the future and an understanding and evaluation of an area's defining characteristics. The defining characteristics of Milton Keynes are very diverse because of the mix of development types that exist across very different sorts of settlements in the Borough. For example, what makes Wolverton town centre special will be markedly different to what makes Weston Underwood, Brooklands or Loughton special.



23 Milton Keynes is a special and unique place, and there are features that have been very successful that should be emulated in new areas. As a New Town, the city was designed with six goals which became the guiding principles for development (The Plan for Milton Keynes, 1970)

- Opportunity and freedom of choice

- Easy movement and access
- Balance and variety
- The creation of an attractive city
- Public awareness and participation
- Efficient and imaginative use of resources.

24 The Topic Paper titled "The Way Forward: Preparing a Vision and Development Strategy for Plan:MK" considers these principles in more detail and considers whether they should form part of the vision for Milton Keynes moving forward.

25 Those design goals are embedded in the built form of the city, creating some of the striking characteristics of Milton Keynes which have provided the framework for how the city has developed. These characteristics include:

26 A grid pattern of main roads which keeps through-traffic out of the grid squares and provides several choices of routes between any two points and spreads traffic as evenly as possible across the road network. The Transport and Travel Topic Paper considers the grid roads in more detail.

- A mix of land uses dispersed across the city. The Employment and Economic Growth Topic Paper looks at the location of employment uses in more detail, and whether the dispersed pattern should continue.
- A city centre which contains a mix of uses (an exception to the general principle of dispersing land uses) which is geographically central and built with a higher density of development than elsewhere. The Town Centres Topic Paper discusses how Central Milton Keynes might develop in the future.
- A system of linear parks, which provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, establish a green image for the city and are part of a city-wide drainage and flood defence system. This is considered in more detail in

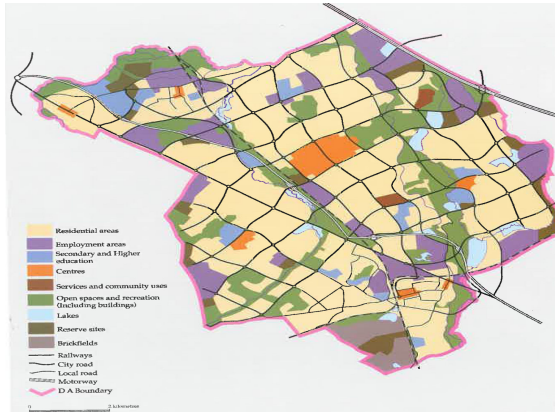
the Natural Environment and Open Space Topic Paper.

- 'Activity centres' where local or larger district facilities (shops, pubs, schools) are grouped together at points of connection, to be easily accessible for residents
- Safe and convenient pedestrian routes with underpasses and bridge crossings to make routes continuous and provide easy access to these 'activity' centres. This also includes the network of Redways and Leisure Routes that cross the city and also extend into the grid squares. Again the Transport and Travel Topic Paper considers this further.
- Overlapping catchments, so neighbourhoods are not exclusive or self-contained, but instead share facilities in nearby activity centres



27 The original Master Plan allowed for a degree of flexibility and as new estates were built over time, their design reflected the approaches and standards of the day, and social, economic and environmental changes that happened over time. Some of these principles were therefore modified to reflect those different requirements and the changing needs of communities, including the Government's planning principles of higher density development, the more efficient use of land and advances in sustainable construction. In many cases, this led to some unique and innovative designs and Milton Keynes has a wealth of unusual development approaches. However, the design and architecture of some more recent developments could be

accused of being anonymous and characterless, and could be seen replicated in any town across the country, rather than being distinctive, of high quality or continuing the innovation for which Milton Keynes is known across the globe.



28 The Heritage, Museums and Archive Strategy (MKC, March 2014; see paragraph 62 of this paper) identifies two key programmes of work that will help to document what is special about Milton Keynes, how the design and character has evolved over time, and the buildings and spaces that should be identified as contributing to its distinctive character. Once compiled, the Local Heritage List and the Design Audit will form part of the evidence base for Plan:MK, and help us to form a policy that sets out our expectations for development quality in the future.

29 In some of the more recent development areas, in the Eastern Expansion Area at Broughton Gate and Brooklands, and (completed and proposed) employment development at Magna Park and Fen Farm, the original principles from the Master Plan have been applied more flexibly. This area is a little different to the traditional development areas in Milton Keynes as it includes a mix of land uses (although the scale of the development area does maintain a degree of separation between residential and employment uses), and has a 'city street' running through the middle of the development. This change from the normal development model was a response to the edge-of-city location that

was considered less appropriate for an extension to the grid network, and where slower road speeds were suitable.

30 A city street is different to one of the traditional grid roads as it comprises a dedicated public transport route and a route for 'private' vehicles together with a cycleway and pedestrian route, which takes up much less space than the wide corridors that separate the high speed grid roads from development. Higher density development is located adjacent to the city street, meaning more people will live close by which should make public transport services (including the possibility of a new mass transit system in the future) more viable, and parallels the densities of historic towns like Stony Stratford and Wolverton. People living alongside the city street and using facilities nearby also means the route will be well used with activity throughout the day. The Transport and Travel topic paper discusses city streets and grid roads in more detail.

31 The Arts and Public Art Strategy and the Sports and Active Communities Strategy (both covering the period 2014 to 2023) outline a need for ensuring Milton Keynes continues to grow culturally to include public art and spaces for sports, arts and recreation.



32 The Vision and Development Strategy Topic Paper discusses the options that we have in how future development could take place. We'd appreciate your thoughts on the principles of how future development should be designed.

Question 1

What makes Milton Keynes special?

- Do you think we should continue to try and maintain the original principles and design characteristics in new development?
- Which characteristics work and which don't?
- Which are essential to maintain in the future?

Architecture and Design Standards

33 The appearance of buildings, finishing details and build quality of new development proposals has a fundamental influence on the overall feel of a place,

how well it works, or how attractive it is considered in years to come, and are key influences on the character of development and whether a sense of place is achieved. The NPPF reflects the importance of place-making and that development should take the opportunity to improve the character of an area (paragraph 64), and that local plans, like Plan:MK, should "develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area" (NPPF, paragraph 58).



34 In the original New Town developments, there was very little guidance given on architecture and residential layout. Variety in design was sought. Architects were given in effect a 'blank sheet of paper', with little need to be concerned by the surrounding context as each estate was separated from the next by grid roads and associated swathes of landscaping. The result was substantial innovation, and Milton Keynes was seen as a test bed for architecture, so that great variety with no predominant style and appearance result.

35 Some estates, some as Great Linford, were subdivided into parcels for a number of different architects to work on, with the result that there is great architectural variety within the estate. The variety in building appearance between estates however does not visually clash as the landscaping and grid roads maintain that separation.



36 In terms of building appearance there was hence no one identifiable character across the early estates. It could be argued therefore that Milton Keynes in its early years in terms of architectural appearance had a 'patchwork' character. The patchwork was generally created per grid square rather than within grid squares, so a clash of building appearances across streets did not generally happen.

37 There were also in the past some very innovative schemes which exhibited sustainable construction and energy efficiency/conservation techniques in housebuilding, including the Homeworld (1981), Energy World (1986) and Future World (1994) demonstration projects. There are also other more recent schemes, for example the Oxley Woods development which was part of the Government's Design for Manufacture competition, which carry forward a unique design philosophy and has established a very strong character and

sense of place. The integration of innovation with existing development is a sensitive and important challenge.

38 As well as the Council's own guidance on new residential development, design standards and best practice from the Government and other organisations, for example Secured By Design, Building for Life 12, Lifetime Homes, Manual for Streets and Active By Design⁽¹⁾ have a role to play in ensuring that new development coming forward is of a high standard. However, Plan:MK should include policies that set these standards in a local context, that reflects the character of Milton Keynes and that helps to deliver exemplar development, not "anywhere" development that lacks any real character or sense of place.

39 Lifetime Homes standards includes 16 criteria which can be incorporated into the design of any new home at minimal cost, which help to make dwellings easily adaptable to support the changing needs of individuals and families at different stages of life, and can encourage more mixed communities. In some cases however, there are concerns that these standards may not go far enough to address the needs of moderately disabled people who may not need specialist housing, but need to be able to adapt a home to meet their particular needs.

¹ Secured By Design <http://www.securedbydesign.com/>, Building for Life 12 <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/knowledge-resources/guide/building-life-12>, Lifetime Homes <http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/>, Manual for Streets <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/manual-for-streets>, Active By Design <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/projects/active-design>



40 A further option is the use of flexible and extendable housing principles. The Design Code for Tattenhoe Park requires 30% of new homes to be designed as 'Flexible and Extendable Homes' (FEH) which can be extended or adapted to meet changing circumstances over time and to accommodate diverse communities and lifestyles. Examples of FEH design principles include open-roof trusses to facilitate upwards extensions, semi-detached homes with attached garages to enable first floor extensions, and open or flexible floor plans.

Question 2

Architecture and Design Standards

- How can Plan:MK ensure new development proposals meet high standards of design quality?
- Should meeting best practice standards be mandatory through planning policies?
- How should the policies promote or reinforce local distinctiveness?
- Given the patchwork character across the city in terms of housing design, should new developments seek to build on this legacy so as to create places with interesting and varied architecture that helps to create a strong sense of place or identity?
- Should meeting the principles of flexible and extendable homes be a requirement for a proportion of homes on all major housing schemes?

Housing Density

41 Milton Keynes has historically been built at a relatively low housing density. Density is usually measured by the number of dwellings per hectare (dph), on a net basis that includes housing and directly associated uses (e.g. access roads within a site, private garden space, car parking areas, incidental open space and landscaping, and children's play areas). Major distributor roads, schools, open spaces serving a wider area and significant landscape buffers are not included in the net density calculation (although would be included in a measure of gross density).



42 The Milton Keynes Planning Manual (1992) looked in detail at the net densities of new developments that had been built at Furzton (29.9 and 25.6 dph), Two Mile Ash (28.6), Great Holm (28.5), Shenley Lodge (25.8), Crownhill (25.7), Shenley Church End (22) and Loughton (15.9). The developments were built at different densities as a product of the tenure, cost and size of homes planned in the areas and the topography of the sites, but fitted within an ideal range, with an average net density across the city of 27 dph.

43 In the older towns including Wolverton and Stony Stratford, net densities of up to 50 dph are common, due to the layout of narrow streets of terraced houses, lack of dedicated off-street parking areas and relatively small gardens. The 'city street' approach in some new developments on the edge of Milton Keynes has resulted in higher densities.

44 Within the city centre, as might be expected, some new developments have been built to densities as high as 147 dph at the Vizion development (above Sainsburys) and over 200 dph in the Hub.

45 In recent years, the Development Frameworks and Design Codes prepared for our major development areas have set a range of densities, which relate to the character of development proposed in different parcels or on different parts of the site. Closer to local facilities, bus stops, along transport corridors and at points of connection and key frontages, we

would expect higher densities of development as set out in the 2005 Local Plan. In the parts of the site that are next to linear parks or major areas of open space, we would prefer lower densities, to help form a more sensitive transition. This has been the case at Broughton Gate in the Eastern Expansion Area, where the overall average net density is approximately 40 dph, varying between 25 dph adjacent to the Broughton Brook and Brooklands Linear Park, and up to around 60 dph along the public transport corridor and city streets.



46 In part, this increase in density reflects the smaller household sizes for which new homes are built. There is a high demand for one- and two-bedroom properties, which can be built at a higher density and on smaller plots, than larger homes. Higher density developments are also supported by national planning policy which requires us to make the most efficient and sustainable use of the land that is available. This came to the fore in the late 1990s when the Government's Planning Policy Guidance note 13 required higher density development across the country. Over the last 15 years, new developments in Milton Keynes became more 'normalised', with net densities similar to those on other greenfield sites across the country.

47 What continues to be different about Milton Keynes however, is that overall gross densities tend to be lower than in other places. Gross densities include areas of open space, and other non-residential uses, so the substantial areas of open space, woodland and linear parks that have always been included alongside new developments

make gross development densities relatively low, even if the net density of the housing element of a development is high.

48 Higher and lower densities of development have their strengths and weaknesses. The table below sets out some examples:

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Higher density	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More efficient use of land, so it needs less land-take and less greenfield development • More people can live closer to key facilities, including public transport routes, which helps to make services and facilities more economically viable • Makes neighbourhoods more walkable, so people can access day-to-day facilities by foot or bike. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can feel overcrowded if poorly designed • Parking can become an issue if not properly planned • Can overlook requirements for open space, play areas and other 'holistic' quality of life factors
Lower density	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development will be more spread out, allowing larger private gardens and open space within the development • Can protect, incorporate and even improve access to historic and natural sites for greater environmental benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less sustainable in terms of land take • Encourages a dependence on private vehicles • Maintenance cost and responsibility of leftover open space • Lower 'population density' around key facilities and public transport routes, making them less viable.

49 The density of development can have a significant impact on the way a development looks and feels, more than just how close together buildings are situated. It will influence the design through landscape treatments; the types of units built; the building line; where parking is situated; the height of buildings; the street layout; and garden sizes. All of these issues are covered in the Council's New Residential Development Design Guide (April 2012).

50 The current Local Plan contains a policy that promotes lower densities in the smaller rural settlements outside the city, so that new development will be more compatible with the character of those

villages. It also promotes higher densities of 100 dph in CMK and Campbell Park, and 40 dph in the areas of the Borough that are well served by public transport (for example the areas adjacent to CMK, town centres at Wolverton, Bletchley, Stony Stratford and the district centres at Westcroft and Kingston).

Question 3

Housing Density

- Do you think it is right to continue the approach of having a mixture of housing densities on major development sites, which varies with the character and surroundings of the site?
- Do you think the approach of promoting lower densities in the rural villages should continue?
- Are there locations that we should specifically encourage or support higher density development?
- Should we continue with density zones as in the Local Plan, or should the density of windfall developments be considering on the basis of being sensitive to the surrounding area, without providing indicative figures in a policy?



Design Codes

51 A design code is a document that sets specific rules or requirements to guide the physical development of a site or place. The content of a design code could cover issues including:

- The shape, dimensions, location and orientation of buildings and streets.
- The design and layout of streets and how they accommodate people, cars, public transport, utilities, trees, etc.
- The palette of materials, and detailed design requirements for individual components (e.g. dimensions of windows) or buildings (e.g. landmark buildings or gateway features)
- How the open spaces and public realm, including parks, squares and streets, can be designed and maintained to a high standard and for safe use.
- The mix of land uses, density of development and location of community facilities.
- Requirements relating to sustainability, including adherence to standards of energy efficiency or the use of materials and methods of construction.

52 The NPPF (2012, paragraph 59) suggests that Local Planning Authorities should “consider using design codes where they could help deliver high quality outcomes.” Milton Keynes Council has used design codes successfully over the last decade in several major development areas, including at Broughton Gate and Brooklands in the Eastern Expansion Area, Oxley Park, Oakgrove and Oakridge Park. They are considered to be particularly useful in these large developments where several different housebuilders will be building out different parcels of land or where building could be phased over many years. The design codes ensure there is some consistency across the development, with common building materials or design features, or complementary layouts, while

still allowing the housebuilders the opportunity to create a distinctive scheme. Design codes could also be a benefit in self-build schemes, to ensure there is some consistency in the proposals where several plots are being developed separately.



53 The Council's New Residential Development Design Guide (adopted 2012)⁽²⁾ also covers these issues, including the character of new development, streets, parking and detailed design appearance of buildings amongst other design elements that make up residential neighbourhoods. It serves as a Development Management tool for assessing planning proposals and provides clear direction to developers as to what the Council expects in terms of design quality for new residential developments. Design codes, however, provide site-specific principles, rather than general approaches that should be applied Borough-wide, to new residential proposals.

54 As listed above, Design Codes often consider the sustainability requirements for new homes, and the construction standards that should be met. The Climate Change and Sustainability Topic Paper considers this in more detail with regards the sort of sustainable construction standards we expect new development to meet.

Question 4

Design Codes

- Do you think the approach of using Design Codes has been successful?
- How do you think they could be improved?
- Should they be more ambitious in terms of sustainability, establishing character or delivering high quality public realm?
- Should Design Codes be required through policy for use on development schemes of a certain size?

Space Standards

55 It is often reported that new homes in England are amongst the smallest in Europe and there are concerns about the impact this has on health and whether homes provide adequate space to undertake typical day-to-day activities⁽³⁾.

56 Space standards for public housing were originally introduced in the 1960s 'Parker Morris Standards' which included minimum internal floor areas based on functionality requirements and the space required for typical furniture and 'everyday activities'. Current national requirements for affordable housing are set out in the Homes and Communities Agency's Design and Quality Standards.

² <http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-applications-appeals-and-advice/new-residential-development-design-guide-supplementary-planning-guidance-spd-adopted-april-2012>

³ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/rabbithutch-britain-growing-health-concerns-as-uk-sets-record-for-smallest-properties-in-europe-9544450.html>



57 A recent Government consultation considered whether there was benefit in introducing national space standards for all homes, and it discussed the arguments for and against, and options for how it could be administered⁽⁴⁾. Many parts of the housebuilding industry argue that the market already effectively ensures that consumer interests are served, and requiring homes to meet a certain size would have an impact on affordability (for example, requiring all three-bedroom homes to meet a prescribed standard would raise the entry-level price of new housing, instead of there being a range of differently sized homes, priced accordingly). Several Local Planning Authorities have already introduced standards, varying from simple minimum internal floor areas for a small number of typical home types, to highly detailed standards setting out requirements for individual room sizes, widths and specific furnishing requirements. The success of such standards has not yet been measured.

Question 5

Space Standards

- Do you think requiring new homes to meet a minimum space standard would be beneficial?
- Or should Plan:MK include advisory space standards, which set out the room/dwelling sizes we would expect, but that would not be compulsory?

Self-build and Custom-build

58 Currently, around 10% of homes built in the UK each year are self- or custom-build compared to most of continental Europe where about half of all homes are custom-built⁽⁵⁾. As stated in the NPPF (para 50), Local Planning Authorities should “plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community” which includes people wishing to build their own home.

59 Self-build homes are often an extremely cost-effective way of delivering housing, and allows a home to be fully customised to fit the occupiers’ needs. They are not just ‘Grand Designs’ type homes; they can often provide more modest, affordable homes, including group or community self-build schemes. Self-builders invest in a place and create more settled communities, as on average they only move home once every 20 years, compared to everyone else moving every seven years on average. Self-build homes are usually built to very high levels of sustainability and energy efficiency, and to more generous space standards than volume housebuilders, and as trades people and materials are usually sourced locally,

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/housing-standards-review-consultation>

⁵ National Self Build Association, ‘Planning for Custom Build Housing - A Practice Guide’, 2012, http://www.ambervalley.gov.uk/raw/CoreStrategy/013%20Mr%20G%20Daniec/201211_nasba_planning_practice_guide.pdf

they can be a real boost to local economies⁽⁶⁾. However, Milton Keynes has very low levels of planned self-build activity; large housebuilders dominate the housing market in the Borough.

Question 6

Self-build and Custom-build

- Do you think the Council should find ways to support self- and custom-build housing?
- Should we allocate sites where we would expect development to take the form of self-build?
- Should we explore the potential to use a Community Land Trust to help enable group/community self-build?
- Should we require that a percentage of plots on large new housing developments are reserved for self- and custom-build homes?



Conservation and the Historic Environment

60 Local Planning Authorities are required to have regard to the historic environment when determining planning applications. The NPPF also places the

historic environment at the heart of achieving sustainable development and its own core principles.

61 There is a rich and varied range of heritage within the Borough of Milton Keynes. Milton Keynes Council is responsible for setting out in its development plan a 'positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats' (NPPF, paragraph 126).

62 The Council recently adopted its Heritage, Museums and Archives Strategy 2014-2023⁽⁷⁾ which, in setting out its vision, priorities and delivery programme, addresses elements of this requirement. However there is a need to address other aspects of the conservation of the historic environment, these are set out below.



63 In order to make informed decisions, the Council will need to have up to date evidence on the nature and significance of the Borough's heritage. The Council hosts and maintains the Historic Environment Record (HER) for the Borough. This is a Geographic Information System (GIS) based database that contains more than 8,000 records of archaeological sites, findspots, monuments, buildings, landscapes, parks and gardens. It is the core evidence base for Local Plan policy on the historic environment. Conservation area reviews

⁶ <http://www.planningresource.co.uk/article/1163597/five-things-councils-boost-self-build-housing>
⁷ <http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/leisure-tourism-and-culture/arts-and-heritage/museums-archives-and-local-studies>

engage local communities to re-evaluate existing designations, look closely at and define their significance, identify those parts that contribute positively (or detract) and amend boundaries where necessary. Whilst all conservation area reviews must go through the Council's own consultation and adoptions procedures, there are currently examples of reviews that are being progressed by local bodies such as parish councils, with the support of the Conservation and Archaeology Team. The Council will continue to undertake its own reviews and encourage the production of reviews by local stakeholders.

64 Thematic information about the types of heritage present in the Borough can also form part of the evidence base required for plan making and decision making. The continuing growth of Milton Keynes places development pressure on the historic environment. Heritage assets originally designed for agricultural or industrial use are the subject of a significant proportion of heritage development proposals. Such applications can range from conversion to an entirely different use, such as residential, through to development within their setting, or partial or total demolition. The type of asset may range from a simple farm hovel through to a site of strategic significance such as the railway works at Wolverton. Whilst some proposals received are based on a sound understanding of the significance of the assets affected, other schemes fail even the most basic of NPPF requirements, i.e to properly assess the significance of an asset or the likely harm arising from a proposal. Further investigation is required into the survival of these assets within the Borough and the significance that they retain. This evidence can inform new, specific development management policies and local planning guidance documents to ensure that the interest of these assets is not arbitrarily lost and that the local character and distinctiveness of Milton Keynes is preserved.



65 The NPPF requires that Local Planning Authorities produce a strategy to deal with those heritage assets at risk. The Council has compiled a draft list of assets that it and Town and Parish Councils consider to be at risk. It will re-evaluate these assets and publish a Heritage at Risk Register. The register will inform inspection intervals, encourage owners, the public and potential purchasers to work with the Council to find solutions to ensure the long term preservation of these assets or the use of statutory powers where necessary. It may also be used to attract third party funding or to inform proposals for enabling development where appropriate.

66 In addition to built heritage, Milton Keynes is also rich in archaeological remains and has, from the establishment of the MK Archaeological Unit in 1971, benefited from a dedicated staff resource. Indeed, it could be said that the area of the New Town is the most intensively investigated and researched archaeological landscape in England. In recent years the New Town has continued to expand into the surrounding countryside and through extensive programmes of survey and excavation several more significant prehistoric to post-medieval sites have been investigated, recorded, published and accessioned onto the HER. In producing a new Local Plan and accompanying policies it should be acknowledged that the principal reason for conserving or recording heritage through the planning system as set out in NPPF is for the public benefit it offers. And in this regard the Council should

consider inclusion of a policy encouraging public engagement with archaeological findings.

67 Other specialist areas of development affecting heritage assets may require specific guidance and/or development management policies. These may, for example, include shopfronts, advertisements, windows and doors. Some sites that possess a heritage interest may require the production of a development brief to encourage and guide redevelopment, ensuring that proposals are brought forward in an appropriate, sustainable manner.

Question 7

Conservation and the Historic Environment

Are there any heritage issues that you feel are not addressed above?

Local Heritage List

68 Within the Borough there are numerous designated heritage assets, in the form of 1,100 listed buildings, 27 conservation areas, 50 scheduled ancient monuments and three registered parks and gardens. Only three of these designations relate to New Town assets; the Shopping Building and the former bus station in Central Milton Keynes and the houses at Cofferridge Close, Stony Stratford. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognises that heritage assets are not only those assets which have been formally designated, but can include those on a Local Heritage List, or 'Local List'. Even though they are locally significant and their preservation is fundamental to the character and local distinctiveness of a place, many non-designated heritage assets remain unidentified.



69 Milton Keynes is the last, largest and most ambitious of the all the new towns. However, its unique character and wider significance (with regards planning, architecture, art, landscapes, public spaces and infrastructure) is yet to be properly catalogued. Without this information, there is a risk that the identity of its unique new town heritage will not be positively promoted and preserved. This could be because an owner or developer considering a development proposal might not be aware of the potential significance of an asset. Similarly, the Council needs to have robust evidence to help assess proposals, to be able to understand the impact that a development might have on the wider heritage context or on particular assets.

70 The most appropriate method for recording significance at a local level is through Local Heritage Listing, which involves stakeholders, the community and the Council to work together in identifying heritage assets that are valued as distinctive elements of the local historic environment.

Question 8

Local Heritage List

Do you support the preparation of the Local Heritage List as a way of establishing the wider significance of Milton Keynes and identifying those assets that contribute to it?

Local Design Review

71 The NPPF (para 62) advocates using a design review process to provide assessment and support to ensure high standards of design, and planning authorities should have local design review arrangements in place. A design review is an independent impartial evaluation process in which a panel of built environment experts assess the design of strategic proposals, giving feedback to help improve schemes, but does not redesign them. It also gives decision makers the confidence to support innovative, high quality designs, and resist poorly designed schemes, and provides a more objective view on architectural issues.

72 As well as reviewing strategic proposals, there would be benefit in using a Local Design Review arrangement to provide a similar assessment for significant heritage schemes, to ensure that the design of proposals that will have an impact on a conservation area or a listed building are also given appropriate scrutiny.



Question 9

Local Design Review

- Do you support the establishment of a Local Design Review panel for Milton Keynes?
- Do you agree that it should also review heritage-related proposals?

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