four

character
areas

character areas

4.1 Character Areas Concept

4.1.1   The development framework is divided into a number of Character Areas (see Figure 4.1). These areas are set out below:-

- City Street Environs - High density residential adjacent to public transport route
- Urban Core Area - Medium Density Residential
- Linear Parkland frontage – Medium and Lower Density Residential
- Northern Gateway
- Large Footprint Employment
- Parkside Employment

4.1.2   The Character Areas take into account a number of factors which include:-

- The traditional urban forms and character of settlements in North Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes (eg. streets, squares and blocks);
- The proposed land uses and in particular the location of new facilities;
- The pattern of open spaces and watercourses through the site and the location of retained vegetation;
- Nearby buildings and the surrounding landscape.

4.1.3   Each of these Areas will have a distinctive identity, which together will create a strong sense of place for this part of the development. The broad concept for each of the character areas is described below. Applications for individual developments which do not clearly meet the design strategy for each of the character areas and which fail to respond to the design guidance contained within PPG3 are likely to be refused. Character areas will run across density boundaries thereby producing a variety of development forms within a specific character area.

4.1.4   The illustrations and photographs set out in this chapter are used to demonstrate how urban form, scale and massing should be arranged in each of the character areas. They do not seek to prescribe particular architectural styles or typologies. At a later stage, design guidance in the form of development briefs and design codes will build upon the character areas to define particular architectural styles.

4.1.5   It should be recognised that this is a development for the 21st Century which should seek to develop innovative, quality housing at the cutting edge of design. At the same time, the new housing will need to respect the traditional urban form and historic character of neighbouring villages. It is envisaged that to achieve this, the design coding will promote sensitive use of traditional building materials in a contemporary manner.

KEY
- northern gateway
- city street environs
- urban core area
- linear parkland frontage
- large footprint employment
- parkside employment
- strategic reserve area
- landscape structure

Figure 4.1 Character Areas

city street environs

4.2 City Street Environs

4.2.1 The City Street Environs Character Area is situated along the City Street and covers the high density development situated on either side of the corridor. The City Street Environs area also includes the High Street and Local Centre areas. This Character Area forms the core of the Development Framework Plan.

Uses/ Activities	Predominantly high density residential, and the High Street retail, employment and community uses. A multi functional area, accommodating a range of uses to create a vibrant and active area.
Role	The urban form and scale of buildings should reinforce its role at the 'heart' of the development.
Street Layout	Traditional urban form with a network of streets and a series of spaces and squares. This pattern of streets will provide direct, safe and attractive routes for cyclists and pedestrians.
Public Spaces	A rich and varied townscape will be provided by a complex pattern of spaces which will help to create a very strong sense of place. Public spaces will be located at key nodes and overlooked by buildings.
Block Layout	Development will be arranged in the form of blocks with well defined perimeters and internal courtyards.
Relationship to other areas	There should be a high degree of integration between the High Street and Local Centres and the neighbouring residential areas.
Density	High density. The average density will be about 50dph.
Building Heights	Buildings should be a minimum of 3 and a maximum 4 storeys, with exceptions up to six storeys within the High Street area, at key corner locations, landmarks and gateways
Building Types	Dwellings should be arranged in terraces.
Building Line	Development of the blocks and variations in alignment of the edges creates squares contrasting spaces and varied townscape. The streets should be linear with a well defined building line. There should also be variations in the angle of the building line and alternating enclosed sections of streets allowing the creation of small incidental spaces and squares to create interest and legibility. The urban character will be reinforced by minimal building set backs from the pavement edge. There will be a minimum setback of 1m on the City Street, with buildings on the High Street either directly abutting the pavement edge, or if set back, under an arcade or canopy.
Gardens	The focus of the internal block space will be shared private gardens for all residents. Beneath or adjacent to this space will be parking courtyards.
Parking	Courtyards at the back of blocks will provide access to other dwellings and serve as parking areas. On street parking in layby should be possible on all city streets.
Security	There should be a clear definition of public and private areas. Dwellings located in the interior of blocks will provide natural surveillance over the internal space. Entrances to the courtyards should be through narrow gaps in the frontages with a defined threshold from the street.
Landscape/ Public Realm	To complement the character of the area the landscape treatment will have a strong urban quality.
Planting	Trees and shrubs should be planted within all streets, squares and courtyards to provide a softening effect, focal point or help reduced the impact of on street parking.
Street Design	The City Street should be a key design element of this area. Minor streets will be designed to follow Home Zone principles
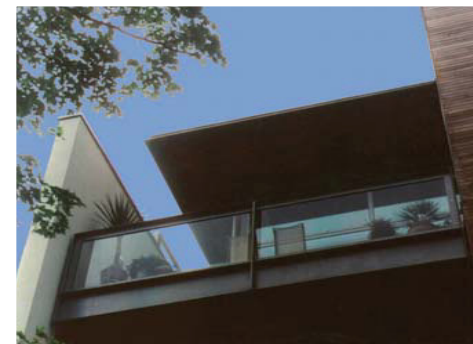
Examples of City Street Environs type development

urban core

4.3 Urban Core Area

4.3.1 The majority of the medium density residential development will be defined by the Urban Core Character Area. It will differ from the City Street Environs Character Area by having a lower average density.

Uses/Activities	Predominantly medium density residential.
Role	An attractive residential environment
Street Layout	This area should have a traditional urban feel, with a network of streets and a series of spaces, squares and greens.
Public Spaces	A rich and varied townscape will be provided by a complex pattern of spaces which will help to create a very strong sense of place. Public spaces, local parks and play areas will be located at key nodes and overlooked by buildings.
Block Layout	The blocks should be orientated to create streets which provide direct access to nearby local centres and local parks. Within this character area there will be an opportunity for formal elements such as squares and crescents.
Relationship to other areas	A close relationship with the City Street Environs
Density	The average density will be about 40dph
Building Heights	A mix of two and three storey buildings with only the occasional use of four storey buildings at prominent landmark locations, for example to terminate vistas. There can be variations in building height to create complexity and interest.
Building Types	The majority of dwellings should be terraced with limited detached and semi detached buildings.
Building Line	The streets should be linear with a well defined building line, with gaps in the frontages kept to minimum. There should also be variations in the angle of the building line and alternating enclosed sections of streets allowing the creation of small incidental spaces and squares to create interest and legibility. The urban character will be reinforced by minimal set backs to buildings from the back of shared surfaces, carriageways and footways.
Gardens	Development will comprise perimeter blocks with some private gardens for ground floor properties. The focus of the internal block space will be shared private gardens for residents of the first floor and above. Beneath or adjacent to this space will be parking courtyards.
Parking	Courtyards at the back of blocks should provide access to other dwellings and to serve as parking areas. On street parking, in a separate parking layby, will be a key feature of this area and will be an integral element of the Home Zone street design.
Security	There should be a clear definition of public and private areas. Dwellings located in the interior of blocks will provide natural surveillance over the internal space. Entrances to the courtyards should be through narrow gaps in the frontages with a defined threshold from the street.
Landscape/ Public Realm	To complement the character of the area the landscape treatment should have a strong urban quality.
Planting	Trees and shrubs should be planted within all streets, squares and courtyards to provide a softening effect, focal point or help reduced the impact of on street parking.
Street Design	The street will be designed to follow Home Zone principles

Examples of Urban Core type development

linear parkland frontage ▪▪▪

4.4 Linear Parkland frontage

4.4.1 The Development Framework identifies low and medium density residential development along the linear parkland edge. This character type refers to the majority of residential development adjacent to the linear park along the Broughton Brook and its tributaries, and also adjacent to the M1 wildlife corridor. Areas of higher density residential do directly abut the linear parkland area, where they are part of the City Street environs character type. Key features will be a mix of semi-formal, medium density housing and informally grouped, low density housing.

4.4.2 It should be noted that the alignment of the City Street moves away from the extreme west of Broughton Gate leaving some development outside the 400m catchment area. Lower densities at this point should minimise the number of residents outside the 400m catchment of the City Street.

Examples of Linear Parkland type development

Uses/Activities	Predominantly low to medium residential
Role	The character area has been devised to create a positive interface between the new development and linear parkland by facing all dwellings on to streets directly overlooking the parkland.
Street Layout	This area should have a traditional urban feel, with a network of streets and a series of spaces, squares and greens.
Public Spaces	A rich and varied townscape should be provided by a complex pattern of spaces linked strongly into the linear parkland. Public spaces, local parks and play areas will be located at key nodes and overlooked by buildings.
Block Layout	The low density residential should require an informal pattern of development. The medium density residential will have a semi formal character with opportunities for crescents and squares.
Relationship with adjacent areas	Access to the parkland corridor should be a key factor to the design of this character area. The area will provide the transition between the hard urban core and the green parkland character. The parkland itself will be a resource for formal and informal leisure and will provide a 'green link' for pedestrian and cycle movement throughout the development and beyond into the east Milton Keynes area. In the north, additional medium density residential will be located adjacent to the Local Park (POS1 in Figure 4.1).
Density	The average lower density residential area will be 30 dph. The average medium density residential area will be between 40 dph.
Building Heights	The low density areas will have predominantly two storey buildings, with opportunities for 3 storey buildings at key landmark positions and to allow increased surveillance over the parkland area. The medium density area will have 3 storey buildings overlooking the parkland.
Building Types	A significant feature of the low density housing will be semi detached and detached buildings in single plots. This area will have a higher proportion of larger properties with higher values. Having some lower density development in this sector of the EEA will provide a greater socio-economic mix. The medium density area will be characterised by predominantly terraced buildings overlooking the adjacent space.
Building Line	The low density area should have buildings set informally within a plot, with informal, flowing alignments to follow the meandering character of the brook. The medium density parkland areas are to create a clear semi-formal edge to the parkland edge, with a firmer building line.
Gardens	This character area is strongly defined by the character of the Broughton Brook floodplain and all properties should have front gardens in order to integrate the residential environment into the parkland landscape. The internal block will include a higher proportion of private rear gardens.
Parking	The lower density residential will have a higher proportion of off street parking closely related to the provision of front gardens. The medium density areas should have courtyards at the back of blocks which will provide access to other dwellings and should serve as parking areas. On street parking, in a separate parking layby, should be a key feature of this area and will be an integral element of the Home Zone street design.
Security	There should be a clear definition of public and private areas. Dwellings located in the interior of blocks will provide natural surveillance over the internal space. Entrances to the courtyards should be through narrow gaps in the frontages with a defined threshold from the street.
Landscape/Public Realm	This character type should have a strong landscape structure integrating the residential buildings into the parkland landscape.
Planting	Existing trees and hedgerows can be more easily retained within the parkland character area to help reinforce the naturalistic character of this area. This is particularly important for the linear parkland at Broughton Gate which leads directly into the Broughton Conservation Area. Space for new planting will be provided in the local play areas and incidental greenspaces and wide verges that will characterise this area.
Street Design	The highway design of the low density area should also respond to the character area through varied carriageway widths and informal footpath treatments. The medium density area street will be designed to follow Home Zone principles.

northern gateway

4.5 Northern Gateway

4.5.1 The northern gateway will be influenced by its close proximity to Junction 14 and the opportunity to combine transport related uses in one area, such as the lorry park, the Coachway and the park and ride.   In addition the opportunity for suitable 'gateway' uses such as technology and business facilities (eg meeting rooms/ conferences) should also be considered.

Uses/ Activities	The northern gateway is to be focussed around the Coachway and the park and ride facilities and will include a mix of uses to create a vibrant and active area. Additional uses which are ancillary to this gateway area will be considered such as a hotel, retail and A3 food and drink, technology and business facilities. Residential uses may be an acceptable component adjacent to Broughton Tributary, subject to meeting noise criteria.
Role	The northern gateway should create a high quality entrance to Milton Keynes and the Eastern Expansion Area. This area of mixed use should act as a landmark entry point to both the EEA and MK.
Street Layout	A perimeter block layout with buildings overlooking the street is to be provided.
Public Spaces	The entrance to the Coachway demands an attractive gathering space with space for seating and refreshments.
Block Layout	A formal block layout is to be used, positively addressing the Coachway access road and the City Street.
Relationship with adjacent areas	Close association with Junction 14, the City Street and the Broughton Brook corridor
Density	n/a
Building Heights	Changes in level are a significant constraint and opportunity in this area and there is a need for key buildings to have a vertical emphasis in order to act as landmarks. Buildings in this area should be 3-4 storeys in height, rising to 5-6 storeys at key corners and entrances, and reducing down adjacent to the linear parkland housing character area.
Building Types	The built form is to consist of groups of pavilion buildings. In terms of urban form the entrance to the Coachway building is of particular importance and demands a high quality architectural statement to celebrate this sense of arrival. There is an opportunity to develop a contemporary architectural character to this area.
Building Line	Strong building line with the Coachway buildings positively addressing the street.
Gardens	n/a
Parking	Parking for the mixed use area is to be provided in the interior of the block. The Lorry Park, the Park and Ride site and commercial uses, are significant land uses and require careful screening and planting to reduce their visual impact.
Security	There should be a clear definition of public and private areas
Landscape/ Public Realm	The focus of this gateway should be a piece of distinctive public art or sculptural building form.
Planting	The large area of vehicular parking and transport related infrastructure requires sensitive treatment in order to reduce visual impact and avoid a car dominated environment. Structural landscape and tree planting should play a key role in integrating these facilities into an attractive gateway environment.
Street Design	The area will accommodate sections of the City Street.

A successful combination of contemporary buildings and strong planting

employment areas ■ ■ ■

4.6 Large Footprint Employment

4.6.1 The large footprint employment allocated for Nova MK will have
a unique character and be of a contrasting scale to the rest of the
framework area.

Uses/Activities	Nova MK will accommodate large footprint manufacturing and warehousing development
Role	Employment area
Street Layout	In terms of the internal streets and the City Street a more urban character is proposed
Public Spaces	The central north south axis accommodating the City Street will require a high quality public realm.
Block Layout	Formal block layout
Relationship with adjacent areas	Close relationship with the linear parkland area
Density	N/a
Building Heights	Up to 20m
Building Types	Large footprint employment and ancillary buildings. The active elements of the buildings are to be orientated towards public areas (notably the City Street) and are suitably articulated architecturally to provide interest and reduce the mass of the buildings.
Building Line	Strong, formal building line. The location of parking away from the City Street will allow the building line to be brought closer to the carriageway, thereby reducing the width of the City Street and creating a more urban feel.
Gardens	N/a
Parking	Any parking and vehicle turning/servicing areas should be located away from the public side of the development (ie the A421, A5130 and the City Street). Parking within individual plots. Some shared parking should be provided for overflow from individual plots.
Security	The active elements of buildings will be orientated to maximise surveillance over public areas, particularly over the City Street.
Landscape/ Public Realm	In order to successfully integrate these large units in to the flat EEA landscape it will be necessary to provide a high quality landscape setting and sensitive ground modelling. The wildlife corridor concept should be applied to this character area, not only in relation to the linear parkland edge but also to the boundary with the A421. Structure planting in this area will also assist in screening the large footprint buildings. Existing visually intrusive bunding on the Fen Farm site is to be addressed through sensitive ground remodelling.
Planting	The development needs to consider the impact of the large footprint buildings on the wider countryside, in particular, the rising land to the south. Consideration needs to be given to protect this wider landscape from visual intrusion which is a significant issue for the Nova area through strong structure planting and sensitive ground modelling. The level of tree planting along the outer edge of the site, adjacent to the A421 and the linear park, will be particularly important in relationship to the Nova area in order to reduce the visual impact of these buildings. Other measures should include mounding and green roofs
Street Design	The City Street will run through the centre of this area.

The Large Footprint Employment area requires a high quality
landscape treatment to integrate the development

employment areas

4.7 Parkside Employment

4.7.1 The other employment area in the EEA will consist of small/medium scale B1/B2 employment and some B8 warehousing, and ancillary parking set within a very high quality landscape setting. The scale of development is the key difference between the Parkside Employment and Large Footprint Employment character type.

Uses/Activities	B1, B2 and B8 and ancillary uses
Role	This employment area will provide a noise and visual buffer from the M1 and will act as a visual transition point between the character of the large footprint employment and the residential core. Any warehousing units are to be located adjacent to the M1 and away from the City Street and residential areas.
Street Layout	Connected street layout linking into City Street.
Public Spaces	Public spaces for lunch time relaxation are to be strongly related to the linear parkland.
Block Layout	Formal block layout of pavilion buildings
Relationship with adjacent areas	Close relationship with the linear parkland area with a strong landscape boundary to this interface. Adjacent to the residential area and the City Street a more urban character is to be created by locating buildings closer to the carriageway with a more limited planting treatment. The smaller scale character of this area from the large footprint employment area will be the key factor in providing a transition from the Nova area to the residential core. B2 and B8 uses are to be located adjacent to the M1, away from residential areas.
Density	N/a
Building Heights	Up to 3 storey buildings, except for the area adjoining the City Street where heights in table 4.2 apply, providing this is compatible with adjoining housing
Building Types	Pavilion office buildings should positively address the City Street with active frontages located on to the City Street.
Building Line	Strong, formal building line. The location of parking away from the City Street will allow the building line to be brought closer to the carriageway, thereby reducing the width of the City Street and creating a more urban feel.
Gardens	N/a
Parking	Any parking and vehicle turning/servicing areas should be located away from the public side of the development (ie the City Street). Parking within individual plots. Some shared parking should be provided for overflow from individual plots.
Security	The active elements of buildings will be orientated to maximise surveillance over public areas.
Landscape/Public Realm	This area should have a very strong landscape boundary adjacent to the linear parkland which will maximise the opportunities presented by the creation of permanent balancing/storage areas within the flood plain of the Broughton Brook.
Planting	Structural landscape and tree planting will play a key role in integrating these buildings into the parkland landscape.
Street Design	The City Street will run adjacent to this area.

Lakes and wetland areas provide an attractive setting for commercial buildings