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## Context Appraisal

## 03. Context Appraisal

The context appraisal describes the physical, social, economic and policy contexts that have influenced the design proposals for the Site. It sets out and summarises the key findings and conclusions from the technical studies that accompany the application. The assessment also considers the Site and its relationship with the wider landscape and built environment, and the local character.

### Planning Policy Background

A detailed assessment of the planning policy framework is set out in the Planning Statement, which accompanies this planning application. This section focuses on the local planning policies most relevant to the design and access proposals for the development.

### 3.1 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

#### National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

At the national level the relevant policy guidance is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (June 2019). The NPPF sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and is a material consideration in the making of planning decisions, setting out the parameters by which planning applications are to be assessed in relation to:

- The presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- Decision-making.
- Delivering a sufficient supply of homes.
- Promoting healthy and safe communities.
- Promoting sustainable transport.
- Making effective use of land.
- Achieving well-designed places.
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

Paragraph 124 of the NPPF states that *"Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities"*.

Paragraph 127 provides a set of design criteria which new development should seek to achieve:

- Function well and add to the overall quality of the area over the lifetime of the development.
- Be visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping.
- Be sympathetic to local character and history, while not preventing or discouraging innovation.
- Establish or maintain a strong of place to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit.
- Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space).
- Create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being.

The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) explains how the NPPF policy should be implemented. Paragraph 006 (Reference ID 26-006-20191001) of the PPG provides further information on design in the planning process. It states:

*“Design impacts on how people interact with places. Although design is only part of the planning process it can affect a range of economic, social and environmental objectives beyond the requirement for good design in its own right. Planning policies and decisions should seek to ensure the physical environment supports these objectives. The following issues should be considered:*

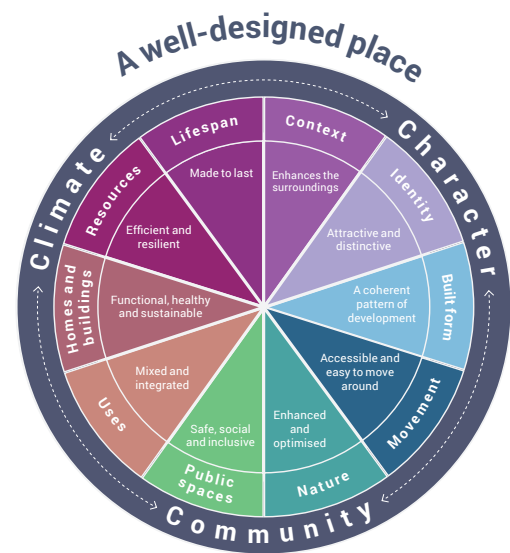
- *Local character (including landscape setting).*
- *Safe, connected and efficient streets.*
- *A network of greenspaces (including parks) and public places.*
- *Crime prevention.*
- *Security measures.*
- *Access and inclusion.*
- *Efficient use of natural resources.*
- *Cohesive & vibrant neighbourhoods.”*

**National Design Guidance**

In October 2019, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published the National Design Guide (NDG). The NDG has been put in place to advise local authorities and their officers when assessing planning applications, councillors when making planning decisions, applicants and their design teams when preparing a planning application and local communities and their representatives.

Whilst it seeks to inform development proposals and guide the assessment of them, it also supports paragraph 130 of the NPPF which states “planning permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.”

Part 2 of the NDG sets out the ten characteristics which help to nurture and sustain a sense of community. They work to positively address environmental issues affecting climate. They all contribute towards the cross-cutting themes for good design set out in the NPPF.



**The ten characteristics of well-designed places**

## 3.2 LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

The statutory development plan documents for this planning application are as follows:

- Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan adopted January 2004 (AVDLP2004) – saved policies, comprising the relevant statutory development plan for that part of the development within Aylesbury Vale.
- Milton Keynes Council Plan:MK 2016 - 2031 adopted March 2019, comprising the relevant statutory development plan for that part of the development within Milton Keynes.

AVDC is at an advanced stage of preparing a new Local Plan – the Submission Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan November 2017 (SVALP2017). In due course and once adopted, SVALP2017 will replace AVDLP2004. SVALP2017 allocates the Site for a mixed-use sustainable urban extension and includes design policies for new development.

### Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan (2004)

The current adopted development plan for Aylesbury Vale is the Aylesbury Vale District Local Plan 2004 (AVDLP2004). The Secretary of State issued a direction on the 24<sup>th</sup> September 2007 'saving' certain policies of the adopted Local Plan until such time as they are replaced by Local Development Framework policies. It is only the general development control policies that have been saved that are relevant to the determination of this application. The 'saved' policies which are of relevance to this DAS are as follows:

- **Saved Policy GP.8** – Protection of the amenity of residents – seeks to protect the amenity of residents by avoiding unreasonable harm to nearby residents. The potential amenity impacts on residents are assessed in the ES, the conclusions of which, report that no adverse impacts on the amenities of residents are predicted to result from the proposed development.
- **Saved Policy GP.24** – Car parking guidelines – seeks to ensure that car parking is provided in accordance with the standards contained in the adopted Parking Guidelines SPG (May 2000). The parking guidelines range from 1 space for a one bedroom flat to 3 spaces for a 4+ bedroom house. The proposed residential areas will provide sufficient car parking, with the exact amount to be determined at detailed design stage.
- **Saved Policy GP.35** – Design of new development proposals – identifies the key factors to consider in the design of new development, which in summary are the physical characteristics, existing building styles, the scale and context, natural features, and visual impact.
- **Saved Policy GP.38** – Landscaping of new development proposals - expects new development to incorporate landscaping and to complement existing features.
- **Saved Policy GP.39** – Existing trees and hedgerows - expects existing trees and hedgerows to be protected or replaced as part of development proposals.
- **Saved Policy GP.40** – Retention of existing trees and hedgerows - in particular seeks to retain trees and hedgerows which have amenity, landscape or wildlife value.
- **Saved Policy GP.45** – 'Secured by Design' considerations - relates to secured by design considerations, and expects development to incorporate measures to assist crime prevention and help reduce risks to personal safety.
- **Saved Policy GP.59** – Preservation of archaeological remains - expects development proposals affecting a site of archaeological importance to protect, enhance and preserve the historic interest and its setting.
- **Saved Policy GP.84** – Public rights of way – seeks to protect existing public rights of way. Weasel Lane, an existing bridleway and cycle route, and other public rights of way across the site, including the Milton Keynes Boundary Walk, will be retained and incorporated into the proposed development.
- **Saved Policy GP.86** – Provision of outdoor playing space – relates to the provision of outdoor playing space within development, with a standard of 2.43 hectares outdoor play space per 1000 persons, subject to existing open space provision in the locality. **Saved Policy GP87** (Application of open space policies) expects equipped play areas for children to be provided, and **Saved Policy GP91** (Provision of amenity areas) expects informal amenity open spaces to be provided within development.
- **Saved Policy GP.90** – Provision of indoor sports facilities – seeks to ensure that indoor sports facilities are provided, according to the need arising from the proposed development.

### Submission Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (SVALP2017)

The Site is identified as an allocation in the Submission Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (SVALP2017) for a mixed-use sustainable urban extension – Site Ref. NVL001: Land at South West Milton Keynes. All of the adopted and emerging policies referred to above have informed the design and layout of the proposed development. Policy GP35 of AVDLP2004, Policy SD15 of Plan:MK, and Policies NLV001 and Policy BE2 of SVALP2017 have particularly informed the design.

The draft allocation allocates the Site for the following uses:

- 1,855 mixed tenure buildings.
- Employment area (B1).
- Neighbourhood centre including retail (A1/A2/A3/A4/A5), community (D1/D2) and residential (C3) uses.
- A primary school and secondary school.
- A Grid Road Reserve.
- Multi-functional green space.
- Sustainable drainage system.
- Associated access, drainage and public transport infrastructure.

The other policies which are of relevance to this DAS are as follows:

- **Policy S1** – Sustainable development for Aylesbury Vale – sets out new development must comply with principles of sustainable development, which includes providing a mix of uses (especially employment to facilitate flexible working), facilitating access by public transport and providing new healthcare, education, retail and community facilities.
- **Policy BE1** – Heritage assets – encourages that heritage assets, including archaeological remains, should be retained in situ wherever practical.
- **Policy BE2** – Design of new development – establishes that all new development proposals shall respect the physical characteristics of a site and its surroundings, the local vernacular and the natural qualities and features of an area.
- **Policy BE3** – Protection of the amenity of residents – seeks to ensure that new development does not unreasonably harm any aspect of the amenity of existing residents and achieves a satisfactory level of amenity for future residents.

- **Policy BE4** – Density of new development – proposed densities should make an efficient use of land and reflect the densities of their surroundings. Large scale development should locate higher densities towards the centre of the sites, whilst the rural edge should be a lower density.
- **Policy I1** – Green infrastructure – sets out that new housing must provide accessible natural green space to meet the demand arising from the new development.
- **Policy I2** – Sports and recreation – establishes that new housing development must provide adequate provision for sports and recreation.
- **Policy I3** – Community facilities, infrastructure and assets of community value – sets out for residential development that the council will consider the need for new community facilities.
- **Policy I4** – Management of flood risk – new development should be informed by drainage strategies incorporating SuDS and must not increase flood risk elsewhere.
- **Policy T5** – Delivering transport in new development – development should ensure the provision of new, and the improvement of existing, pedestrian and cycle routes.
- **Policy T6** – Vehicle Parking – sets out new development must provide an appropriate level of car parking in accordance with the standards set out in the local plan.

### Aylesbury Design Guidance

Comprises:

- Building Materials (1995).
- SPG Parking Guidelines (2002).
- SPG Safety through Design (2001).
- SPG Sport and Leisure Facilities (2004).

Sport and Leisure Facilities SPG Companion Document Ready Reckoner (2005).

### **Milton Keynes Council Plan:MK (adopted March 2019)**

Milton Keynes Council recently adopted Plan:MK which will cover the period between 2016 - 2031. The relevant strategic objectives and policies which are of relevance to this DAS are as follows:

- **Strategic Objective 12** - To manage increased travel demands through:
  - Smart, shared, sustainable mobility.
  - Promoting improvements to public transport and supporting the development of the East – West Rail link between Oxford and Cambridge, including the Aylesbury Spur.
  - Encouraging an increased number of people to walk and cycle by developing an expanded and improved Redway network.
  - Extending the grid road pattern into any major new development areas.
  - Utilising demand management measures to reduce the growth of road congestion, whilst upgrading key traffic routes such as the A421, A422 and the A509.
- **Strategic Objective 14** - 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 everyday facilities, delivering a high quality of urban design, architecture and public realm and creating places with identity.
- **Strategic Objective 16** - To encourage healthy lifestyles with the provision of recreation facilities and biodiversity by enhancing the linear park network and extending and connecting it into new developments while conserving and enhancing key landscapes and important habitats.
- **Policy SD1** - Place-Making Principles for Development - sets out the principles that new strategic urban extensions, strategic scale development and, where relevant, other development within or adjoining the Milton Keynes urban area should demonstrate.
- **Policy SD9** - General Principles for Strategic Urban Extensions - sets out the principles which should guide strategic urban extensions.
- **Policy SD15** - Place-making Principles for Sustainable Urban Extensions in Adjacent Local Authorities - sets out the principles for development when and if development comes forward for an area on the edge of Milton Keynes, which is wholly or partly within the administrative boundary of a neighbouring authority in anticipation of the development having an impact on the infrastructures within Milton Keynes.
- **Policy HN1** - Housing Mix and Density - sets out the requirements in terms of tenure, type and size of proposed houses for developments larger than 11 or more dwellings.
- **Policy HN4** - Amenity, Accessibility and Adaptability of Homes - sets out the standards required for Class C3 dwellings.
- **Policy CT1** - Sustainable Transport Network - the Council will promote a sustainable pattern of development in Milton Keynes, minimising the need to travel and reducing dependence on the private car.
- **Policy CT2** - Movement and Access - development proposals will be required to minimise the need to travel, promote opportunities for sustainable transport modes, improve accessibility to services and support the transition to a low carbon future.
- **Policy CT3** - Walking and Cycling - The Council will support developments which enable people to access employment, essential services and community facilities by walking and cycling.
- **Policy CT5** - Public Transport - Development proposals must be designed to meet the needs of public transport operators and users.
- **Policy CT8** - Grid Road Network - opportunities for extending the grid road system design and Redway super network route into any major new development areas will be required to ensure that the grid continues to function effectively and sufficient land/corridors are safeguarded for future highway/transit links around the district to accommodate and manage increased travel demands changing and future travel demands.
- **Policy CT10** - Parking Provision - sets out the parking requirements for development proposals.

- **Policy EH1/EH2** - Provision of New Schools - Planning Considerations/Site Size and Location - sets out the requirements for the proposals for new schools.
- **Policy EH5** - Health Facilities - Proposals for new facilities will be permitted where they will meet an identified local need and in discussion with the Community Clinical Commission Group.
- **Policy EH7** - Promoting Healthy Communities - Milton Keynes Council is committed to reducing health inequalities, increasing life expectancy and improving quality of life of the Borough.
- **Policy INF1** - Delivering Infrastructure - sets out the requirements for new development that generates a demand for infrastructure.
- **Policy FR1** - Managing Flood Risk - new development must incorporate a surface water drainage system with acceptable flood control and demonstrate that water supply, foul sewerage and sewage treatment capacity is available or can be made available in time to serve the development.
- **Policy FR2** - Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and Integrated Flood Risk Management - new development is required to incorporate SuDS; in line with national policy and guidance and, which meet the requirements set out in national standards and the Council's relevant local guidance.
- **Policy NE3** - Biodiversity and Geological Enhancement - proposals will be required to maintain and protect biodiversity and geological resources, and wherever possible result in a measurable net gain in biodiversity, enhance the structure and function of ecological networks and the ecological status of water bodies.
- **Policy NE4** - Green Infrastructure - sets out that new development proposals will provide new green infrastructure to provide wellbeing benefits to people through access to nature.
- **Policy NE5** - Conserving and Enhancing Landscape Character - sets out that development proposals will need to demonstrate that they don't have a detrimental impact on landscape character.

- **Policy L4** - Public Open Space Provision in New Estates - new housing development will be required to provide new or contribute to improved open space and recreational facilities in accordance with the Council's adopted standards.
- **Policy D1/Policy D2** - Designing a High Quality Place/Creating a Positive Character - sets out the design objectives/principles required for new developments.
- **Policy D5** - Amenity and Street Scene - All proposals will be required to create and protect a good standard of amenity for buildings and surrounding areas.
- **Policy CC4** - New Community Facilities - sets out the standards for non-residential community facilities.

#### **Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document (adopted January 2016)**

The Parking Standards SPD was adopted in January 2016 and sets out the expected parking standards for different types of development, including new residential development.

#### **Residential Development Design Supplementary Planning Document (adopted April 2012)**

The Residential Development Design Guide SPD was adopted in April 2012 with the aim to ensure that new residential development is of a high quality. It provides guidance regarding the character of new development, streets, parking, and detailed design appearance of buildings.