



Astwood and Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan Referendum – 25th November 2021 General Information for voters

About this document

On 25th November 2021 there will be a referendum for residents in Astwood and Hardmead parish on the Astwood and Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan.

The Astwood and Hardmead Parish Council has prepared the Neighbourhood Plan for its parish and it has been agreed that the referendum area will cover the whole parish area. This document explains more about the referendum that is going to take place and how you can take part. It also gives you information about the Town and Country Planning system.

The Referendum

The referendum on 25th November 2021 will ask you to vote 'yes' or 'no' to a question. For this referendum you will receive a ballot paper with this question:

“Do you want Milton Keynes Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Astwood and Hardmead to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?”

How do I vote in the referendum?

You show your choice by putting a cross (X) in the 'Yes' or 'No' box on your ballot paper. Put a cross in only **one** box or your vote will not be counted.

If the referendum comes out in favour of the Neighbourhood Plan it will be adopted, and if adopted, the Neighbourhood Plan will become part of the Development Plan.

The Town and Country Planning System

The planning system helps to decide what gets built, where and when. It is essential for supporting economic growth, improving people's quality of life, and protecting the natural and historic environment. Most new buildings, major changes to existing buildings or major changes to the local environment need planning permission. Without a planning system everyone could construct buildings or use land in any way they wanted, no matter what effect this would have on other people who live and work in their area.

Milton Keynes Council, as the Local Planning Authority, is responsible for deciding whether most forms of development should go ahead within the borough. Decisions are based on national policy in the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) as well as on the local [Development Plan](#).

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be taken into account by communities when preparing neighbourhood plans and by local planning authorities when preparing local plans and making decisions on planning applications. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and this has to be reflected in plans, both at a district level and a neighbourhood level. The NPPF is accompanied by guidance – the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) which expands on the NPPF policies and helps in their interpretation and application.

The Development Plan

The Development Plan is a set of documents that sets out the policies for the development and use of land across the local authority area. In Milton Keynes it is currently made up of Plan:MK (adopted 2019), the Waste Development Plan Document, the Minerals Local Plan, the Site Allocations Plan 2018 and the made neighbourhood plans for: Woburn Sands, Wolverton Town Centre, Central Milton Keynes, the Lakes Estate, Great Linford, north and south, Walton, Olney, Woughton, West Bletchley, Castlethorpe, Sherington, Stony Stratford, Stantonbury, Campbell Park, Ravenstone, Hanslope, Lavendon and Newport Pagnell. Once other neighbourhood plans have been approved at referendum they will be included in the Development Plan and will add to the amount of guidance available when considering the development and use of land.

Local Plans

Local planning authorities, such as Milton Keynes Council, must prepare a local plan for their area which sets out the opportunities for development and clear policies on what will or will not be permitted and where. Plans must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with the NPPF. As part of the development plan, local plans are very important when deciding planning applications and must be kept up to date.

Plan:MK was adopted on 20th March 2019 and forms part of the Development Plan.

Neighbourhood Plans

What are they?

Neighbourhood planning was introduced by the Localism Act in 2011. It aims to help local communities play a direct role in planning the areas in which they live and work by showing how a community wants land to be used and developed in its area. Neighbourhood Plans include policies which provide controls over development that requires planning permission. Policies can provide criteria against which planning applications will be assessed and set out local standards for things like car parking

and open space. Policies can also identify local features that should be protected or enhanced and opportunities for new developments.

Neighbourhood Plans are required to meet certain “Basic Conditions” by having regard to national planning policy, contributing to the achievement of sustainable development, being in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan for the area (i.e. Plan:MK) and being compatible with EU obligations and human rights requirements. They should not promote less development than is set out in the Development Plan or undermine its strategic policies.

Who prepares Neighbourhood Plans?

Neighbourhood plans are prepared at a local community level by Town or Parish Councils or Neighbourhood Forums and there is a statutory process that must be followed to make a plan.

How are Neighbourhood Plans made?

The plan must be prepared through a process of consultation with local residents and businesses before an independent examiner reviews the plan and checks whether it meets the basic conditions and other legal requirements. The examiner then reports whether any changes should be made to the plan and whether it should proceed to the next stage in the process which is the referendum stage.

The referendum asks those voting whether they want the Neighbourhood Plan to be used by the Local Planning Authority to help it decide planning applications in the area covered by the Plan. All residents registered to vote (i.e. those included on the electoral roll) within the referendum area are entitled to vote in the referendum.

What status do Neighbourhood Plans have?

If more than half of those voting in a referendum have voted in favour of the neighbourhood plan the local planning authority must make it part of the statutory development plan and use it when making decisions on planning applications in the Plan area.

The Astwood and Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan

The Astwood and Hardmead Neighbourhood Plan has been produced by Astwood and Hardmead Parish Council. It has been produced in accordance with the statutory requirements including an independent examination.

Following the examination, Milton Keynes Council accepted the examiner’s recommendations.

The Plan includes a series of policies and proposals that set out how the parish council and the community would like to see development take place over the coming years. The plan includes policies relating to housing, employment and community facilities, as well as local green spaces, design and renewable energy.

Additional information in relation to neighbourhood planning is available on the following websites:

<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/neighbourhood-planning/>

<http://locality.org.uk/services-tools/neighbourhood-planning/>

<https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/>

<https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning>

The Plan is available online at: <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/astwood-and-hardmead-neighbourhood-plan>