

# Our New City Plan

Ambition and Objectives  
Consultation 2023

Development Plans, Planning and Placemaking





# Introduction

The New City Plan will take forward Milton Keynes City Council's Strategy for 2050 which set out a bold and ambitious vision for MK over the next 28 years, including equal opportunities for all, 'lifelong' homes that suit people at all stages of their life, and a pioneering mass rapid transit system.

The role of the New City Plan is to deliver on the vision set out in the Strategy for 2050 and to do so sustainably. It will also build on the award-winning previous Plan:MK from 2019 and will plan the city's development until 2050.

Delivering on the Strategy for 2050 is also a key part of the Council Plan to build an environment that is able to thrive, is progressive and delivers a sustainable future for new and existing residents.

The City Council wants to work with local people, businesses and organisations on the New City Plan, which it intends to be ambitious and innovative with a focus on high-quality sustainable growth, genuinely affordable housing and new job opportunities.

Development plans are only successful when different parts of the community come together to influence proposals and tell those in charge what really matters to them. It is a chance for local people to get involved and help build a prosperous future for the generations ahead and deliver growth that is well planned and protects those things that make Milton Keynes special.

This ambition and objectives consultation is the first opportunity to get involved and shape the direction of the New City Plan from the very beginning.



# What are the big issues we need to consider through the New City Plan?

Planning for the growth of the city up to 2050 is very ambitious and requires us to consider a wide range of connected issues. We are preparing a number of studies, as part of our evidence base, which will assist in refining our future options for you to comment on.



## Movement

The Strategy for 2050 is based around the development of a new and exciting Mass Rapid Transit network. This would allow residents and visitors to move quickly and easily around the city without needing to drive their own car. We have commissioned a study to work up this proposal in detail so we can understand how it could be delivered, alongside supporting a greater focus on walking/ cycling through our Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans. However, we have to expect there will still be those who drive their own car and could place additional pressure on some of our roads. Therefore, we are also preparing a new transport model so we can understand where there may be a need to deliver improvements to our existing highway network.

## Housing growth & regeneration

There is currently national guidance that identifies the number of new houses we should aim to deliver in the future. This is called our Local Housing Need and is currently around 1,900 dwellings per annum. It would represent a slight increase on our current plans (Plan:MK) and we would need to identify more areas to take new housing growth over the next 30 years. We also aim to ensure the housing we deliver in the future meets the needs of residents. This will include different types of buildings (e.g. flats, houses, bungalows) and the provision of more affordable housing. For some of our communities the plan will focus on how we can replace some areas of housing that do not meet our aim to provide high quality housing for all of our communities. Much of this will be informed by our new Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment which is currently being prepared.

## Economic growth

We know the city has performed very strongly over recent years and generated significant economic growth. This benefits our residents and businesses, and is something we are keen to maintain. We know from work recently undertaken by the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership that there is still very strong demand for warehousing. This could create a need for more development sites in the future that are well connected to our strategic road (and rail) networks. However, it is very difficult to understand the impact of the pandemic on new office space within the city centre. More people are now working from home for part of their week. This will be considered through the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment to ensure we are planning for a strong and vibrant economy.







## Green city

We are aiming for the new plan to create a strong positive environmental legacy to reflect the ambition in the Council Plan to reduce carbon emissions in MK to net zero by 2030. This also includes achieving net gain to biodiversity, strengthening our networks of parks and open spaces, and providing opportunities for everyone to easily access attractive open areas. To support this, we are preparing a Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy, which will identify how we strengthen our networks of parks, lakes, rivers and canals. We have also commissioned a Carbon and Climate Study that will ensure we can challenge developers to help meet our ambitions.

## Beautiful city

The design of Milton Keynes is unique and rightly treasured by many. Whilst some areas will experience change, as the city grows, we also need to ensure we protect our valued historic environments and buildings. Alongside these we will provide guidance that enables new developments to achieve our aspiration for high quality and innovate design, which will include the preparation of a new Design Code for the city.

## Central Milton Keynes (CMK)

We are seeing some major developments taking place in CMK, this varies from Santander's new headquarters (Unity Place) to residential redevelopments over 30 storeys (Saxon Gateway). There is a growing residential community within the city centre and an increasing number of taller buildings. We need to ensure we support the development of a city centre that supports a strong, healthy and vibrant community, and maintain its role as an economic driver for the wider city. This includes the need to provide a wide range of shopping and leisure opportunities that a growing city will need. Therefore, we are preparing a study to look at what growth may take place within CMK in the future and how this should be planned to create an attractive city centre.

## Infrastructure

This is always the first thing residents tells us and we aim to put "I before E" (Infrastructure before Expansion). We are preparing a very significant study that is looking at the future need for all future types of infrastructure (schools, electricity, gas, water supply, emergency services, health, etc). This will form a key basis for all of our future plans.



## National Planning Reform

The government requires us to prepare plans that are consistent with their National Planning Policy Framework. However, the government are currently proposing a programme of reform, which is likely to include changes to national planning policy. We may need to change some of our plans to respond to these changes, which also includes how new infrastructure will be funded and delivered.



# What does this mean for you?



In the future, the growth of the city could follow several patterns. These are not mutually exclusive and will be tested through the preparation of the plan and the Sustainability Appraisal process, as well as being informed by all of the evidence we are preparing. Taking the availability of land and constraints on development (such as flooding or habitat protections), the potential areas or patterns of growth that will be explored include:

- Further urban and brownfield development (such as regeneration or densification through further infill sites)
- Growth along public transit and transport routes, for example routes identified in our Mass Rapid Transit work
- Urban extensions to the city or towns
- A more dispersed pattern of growth across the borough, including villages in the rural area
- New settlements such as villages or small towns with active and sustainable modes of transport at their heart.

A key part of the New City Plan will be identifying those areas where new growth will take place. In the past, through Plan:MK, this has been focused on:

- Large urban extensions (such as Milton Keynes East close to Newport Pagnell and Moulsoe, and South East MK between Wavendon, Woburn Sands and Bow Brickhill)
- Growth around CMK (such as Campbell Park Northside)
- Smaller infill sites within the urban area
- Growth proposed through Neighbourhood Plans in the city and in the rural area





# Why do we need an Ambition and Objectives?

The New City Plan needs to contain a positive ambition and set of objectives to provide a focus to the plan and shape the spatial strategy and policies that will guide growth of the city to 2050. It will provide a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social, and environmental priorities and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings.

We have drafted an ambition and set of objectives, which we are publishing now for comment. This ambition and set of objectives reflect the ambitions and recommendations set out within the Strategy for 2050 that seeks to change some of the ways we plan and deliver development in MK. Of note is seeking to plan development to make greater use of active and sustainable methods of travel, and to improve the vibrancy of Central Milton Keynes.

We are consulting on the draft ambition and objectives to ensure communities and stakeholders are involved at this key early stage in setting the direction and scope of the New City Plan. After taking on board your views, an updated ambition and set of objectives will be used to guide the ongoing preparation of the New City Plan.

We are seeing significant change within the city centre and this will also need to be reflected in the ambition for our new plan. This will involve an ongoing dialogue with a range of partners over the coming months. However, we would also welcome your initial thoughts on what this could include.

## Our New City Plan Ambition

“By 2050, Milton Keynes City and its rural hinterland will have continued to evolve as an innovative and successful place, founded upon its unique history and special characteristics. Well-planned ambitious growth has created greater economic prosperity and a high quality of life and wellbeing for all. Communities enjoy access to a range of good-quality affordable homes that meet their needs, better and wider economic and cultural opportunities, and healthy and sustainable places to live, learn and work, supported by infrastructure that is characteristic of a thriving and sustainable place.”





## Economic and Cultural Prosperity Theme

**1. Strengthen Milton Keynes' important role in the regional and national economy, with Central Milton Keynes at the heart of a diverse and resilient economy, enabling better access to education, skills and training, and economic opportunities for its communities.**

**2. Strengthen Milton Keynes' role as a regional, national, and international centre of cultural and creative significance by conserving its unique**

**heritage and helping to create a greater diversity and quality of places where culture is produced and enjoyed.**

**3. Support the maintenance and creation of thriving centres for shopping and leisure.**

## High Quality Homes and Neighbourhoods Theme

**1. Provide a range of affordable homes to those who need them and to meet wider demands.**

**2. Support the renewal and regeneration of the built environment within those neighbourhoods and communities that need it.**

**3. Aid the delivery of social infrastructure required to enable people and communities within MK to prosper and have a high quality of life.**

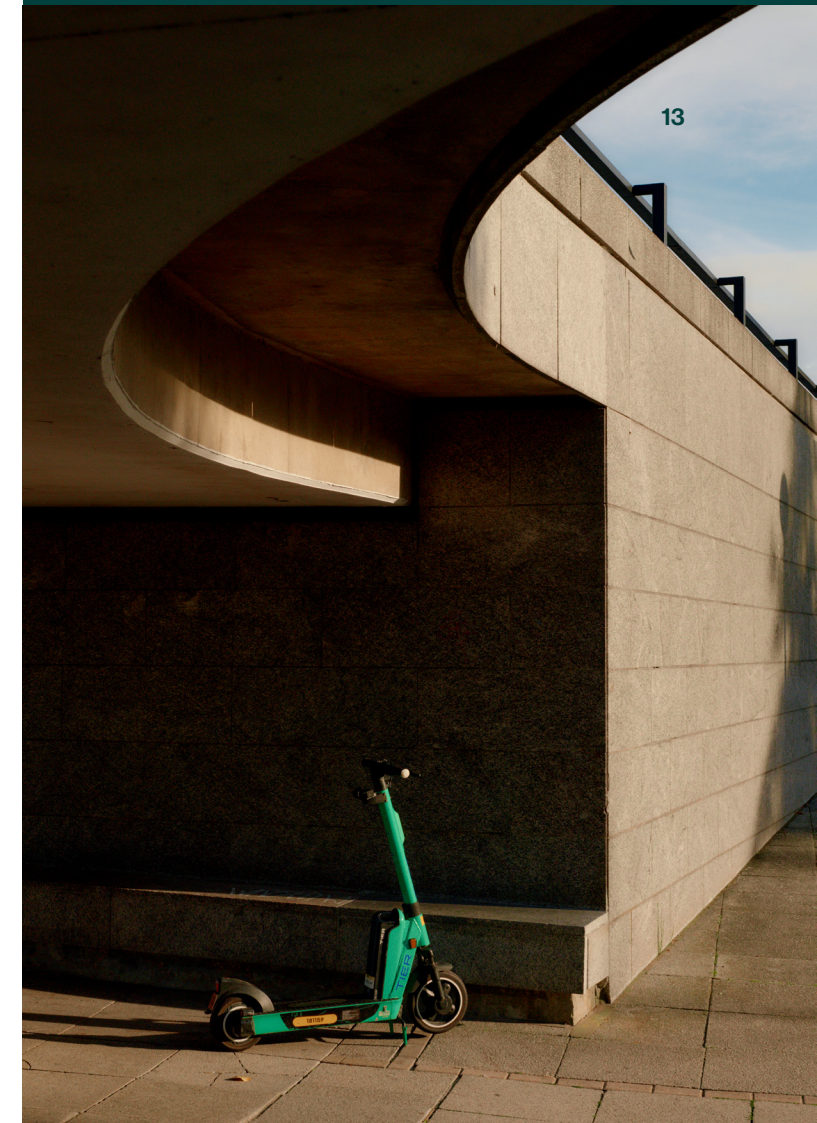
**4. Create walkable mixed-use neighbourhoods that allow people to access amenities, facilities, and services easily and safely through walking and cycling.**



## Healthy Places Theme

**1. Create inclusive and safe homes, neighbourhoods and places that encourage greater physical activity, social interaction, and healthier lifestyles.**

**2. Support the provision of facilities and infrastructure that promote good physical and mental health amongst communities in MK.**



## Climate and Environmental Action Theme

**1. Shape the built environment and transport systems to help achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030 and be carbon negative by 2050.**

**2. Support the efficient use of resources as part of a circular economy.**

**3. Enable a zero-waste economy by 2050 with waste managed as a valuable resource for meeting energy needs through low or zero carbon pathways.**

**4. Create space for nature and deliver significant gains in biodiversity.**

**5. Ensure that communities and nature cope well with and can bounce back from the predicted negative effects of climate and environmental change.**





How will we engage with you?

# How will we engage with you?

Engagement with the public and stakeholders is an essential part of plan preparation. We want to make sure that everyone can access information about the New City Plan and can have their say throughout the process.

Our emerging draft principles for engaging and consulting on the new local plan are:

- Inclusiveness: we will ensure that engagement and consultation is accessible to everyone and will make it easy for audiences with little or no knowledge of the planning process to get involved.
- Simplicity: consultation information produced for the local plan will be clear and concise and avoid jargon wherever possible.
- Clarity: the scope of the consultation will be clear from the start, so that everyone knows what they can comment on and how their comments will be taken into account.
- Transparency: whenever possible, feedback will be given to show how comments received have been used in the planning process.
- Creativity and Innovation: we will use digital engagement and consultation methods to make consultations easier, quicker and more attractive to some audiences who rarely take part. Digital approaches will be used alongside traditional methods, including printed media, exhibitions and meetings.





# How will we prepare the New City Plan?



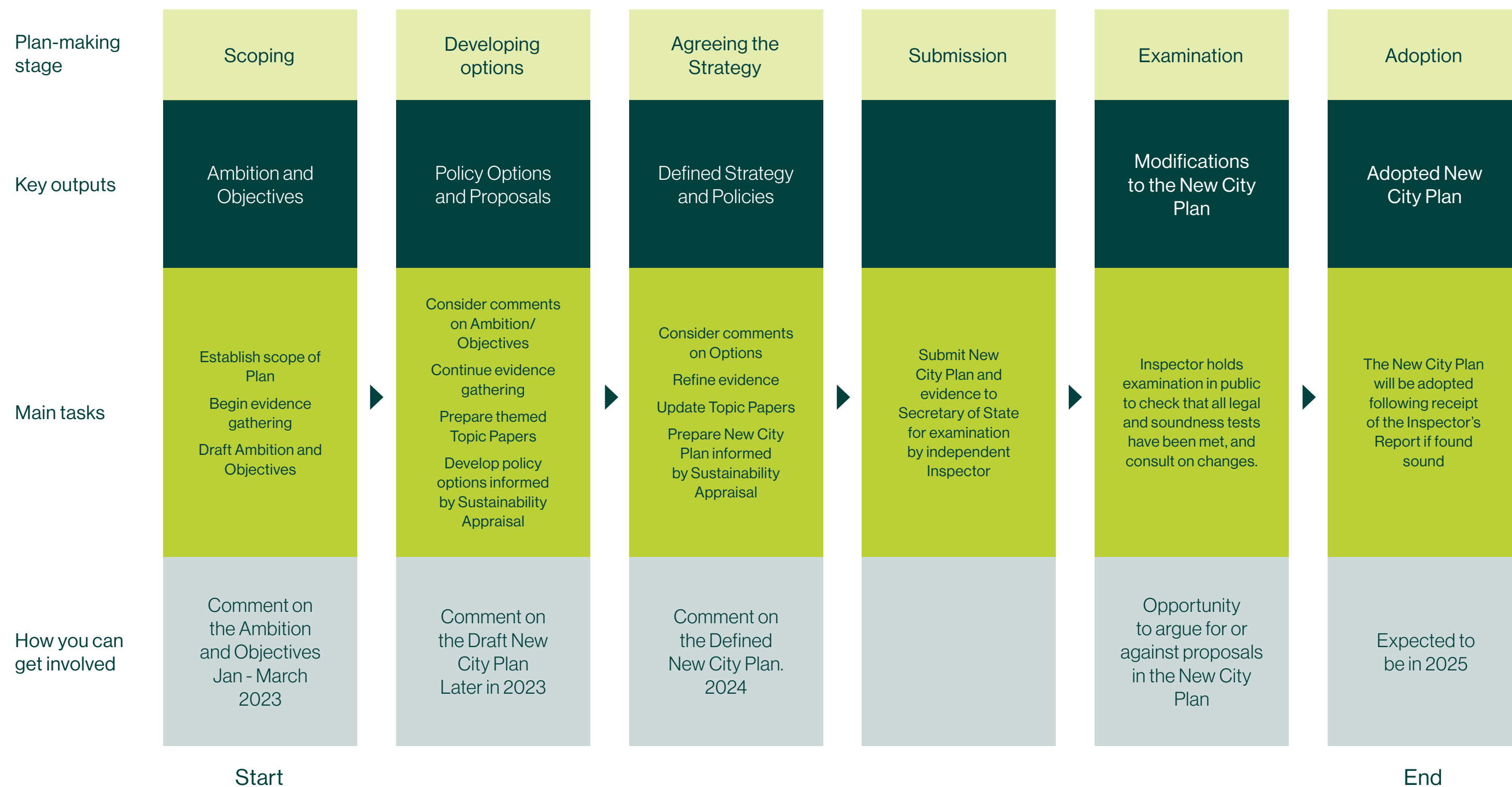
The New City Plan will go through several iterations and will be informed by many elements as shown in the diagram below. Some of these aspects are required by law or by national policy, and others follow good practice in making a local plan for places. They will all be carefully considered and balanced as the New City Plan is refined before we decide on our preferred plan. How we have done this will be explained as we go through the process.



**Figure 1.** The things that shape what we can and will do in the New City Plan



# The stages in preparing the New City Plan





# Impact Assessments



## Equalities Impact Assessment

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) measures the potential positive and negative impacts that the New City Plan's policies may have on different groups in society. It is an important tool in shaping policies as they evolve over the lifetime of preparing the New City Plan, and helps the Council meet its public sector equalities duty.



## The Sustainability Appraisal

Another key part of the process is the Sustainability Appraisal of the New City Plan. The NCP will be informed throughout its preparation by a Sustainability Appraisal. This will assess the relevant economic, social, and environmental objectives (including opportunities for net gains).

An initial step in this process is the scoping stage which includes consulting on a 'Sustainability Appraisal Framework' via a Scoping Report. The Scoping Report identifies the scope and level of detail of information to be included in the Sustainability Appraisal. It should set out the context, objectives, and approach of the assessment; and identify relevant environmental, economic, and social issues and objectives. We have published a Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report for comment.

## Habitats Regulations Assessment

The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) will assess the impacts of the New City Plan on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites (Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Ramsar sites). It is typically done at each statutory stage of consulting the draft and New City Plan.



## Health Impact Assessment

The Health Impacts Assessment will help us make choices about the strategy and policies within the New City Plan that promote a built environment which best prevents ill-health, promotes good health and reduces health inequalities. It provides an objective assessment tool for addressing the barriers and enablers for creating healthy places, providing evidence-based practical recommendations to promote and protect the health of local communities.



# Duty to Cooperate



# A Deliverable Plan

The growth proposals and policies for guiding them to be set out in the New City Plan need to be realistic otherwise we will not be able to adopt them. This means they need to be capable of happening in the timescales envisioned, are feasible in technical and practical terms, and are financially viable for developers and landowners. We are investigating novel ways of delivering growth differently to ensure the growth that happens provide

There is a requirement for local authorities and certain specified public bodies to cooperate with each other (known as the 'duty to cooperate') in the preparation of local plans. The duty requires local authorities and other public bodies to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to maximise the effectiveness of their development plans in so far as they relate to strategic matters. We will continue to work with the relevant organisations to ensure that we meet the duty and that our plans work well together.





# What next for the New City Plan?

We are making available the New City Plan Ambition & Objectives and Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report and inviting comments from members of the public, organisations and other stakeholders for a six-week period.

The consultations will commence on Monday 30 January 2023 and comments must be received no later than 5.00pm on Monday 13 March 2023.

A guidance note to accompany the consultation has been produced which contains more information about how to make comments.

The Ambition and Objectives will be reviewed and updated in the light of feedback received through this consultation. They will then be incorporated into the next round of consultation draft New City Plan later in 2023.



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