

WOBURN SANDS

NEIGHBOURHOOD

PLAN

Final

April 2013

1. Introduction

Woburn Sands is an established community on the outskirts of Milton Keynes. This Plan sets out the town's Vision for the future and specific policies under various headings in order to achieve that Vision. The Plan covers the civil parish of Woburn Sands and has been prepared by the Woburn Sands Town Council following an initial Issues Meeting held on 29 March 2012 (reported on in the following section). The Plan's adoption is subject to an Examination by an Inspector, the approval of the wider community through a referendum and subsequent approval and adoption by Milton Keynes Council, the planning authority for the area.

Once adopted the provisions of the Plan will be a Material Planning Consideration and all development proposals in the town will be required to comply with it. The Plan covers the period to 2026 (to coincide with Milton Keynes Council's Core Strategy).

2. Plan Preparation Process

Following the publication of the Localism Bill in 2011 which introduced the concept of Neighbourhood Plans, the Woburn Sands Town Council discussed whether or not to draft such a Plan for the parish. It was decided to do so since the town is a very attractive location on the outskirts of Milton Keynes which is already undergoing a major expansion (see Section 3.3 below); notwithstanding this there is also considerable pressure from developers anxious to build additional housing both in the parish itself and in the adjacent area. The town is designated as a Key Settlement in the draft Milton Keynes Core Strategy and recognises that it must play its part in the development of the wider Milton Keynes area; however it is essential that any development must enhance the town and ensure its future sustainability.

The provisions of the Localism Act came into force on 1 April 2012 and the procedure for preparing a Neighbourhood Plan was set out in various documents published prior to that date. The first step in preparing a plan is to consult local organisations to identify the key issues facing the local community. In particular there is a requirement to determine the area to be covered by the Plan. The Town Council therefore invited a range of local organisations to an Issues Meeting on 29 March 2012; in view of the geographic location of the town the adjacent Parish Councils of Aspley Guise, Aspley Heath and Wavendon were invited to send representatives. A list of the organisations represented at the Meeting is attached as Appendix 1.

2.1 History

The settlement now known as Woburn Sands was part of the original ecclesiastical parish of Wavendon along with part of Aspley Guise and Aspley Heath. Until about 1820 the settlement was known as Hogsty End although references to the name Woburn Sands appear in some letters written in the late 18C. In 1846 the railway arrived, sponsored by the Duke of Bedford. In 1865 the boundaries of the ecclesiastical parishes were re-drawn and the Woburn Sands parish established; at that stage it included part of Aspley Guise and Aspley Heath and it is for that reason that the Parish Church is located on the Heath. In 1907 civil parishes were established and the current boundaries with Aspley Guise and Aspley Heath were fixed. In 1972 the Woburn Sands Parish Council declared that Woburn Sands was a town and the Parish Council became the Town Council. For many years Woburn Sands was administratively part of the rural district of Newport Pagnell within the county of Buckinghamshire but the town became part of the Borough of Milton Keynes when that was established in 1974. Milton Keynes is now a Unitary Authority.

The town benefits from the fact that the central area is designated as a Conservation Area.

2.2 Location and Boundaries

The attached map (Appendix 2) identifies Woburn Sands' location and boundaries (shown in red). The town is approximately 5 miles South East of Central Milton Keynes and 2 miles from the M1. A feature of the town is the fact that the county boundary between Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire runs through the settlement. Broadly speaking the area to the East of Weathercock Lane and the South of Hardwick Road are in Bedfordshire (the parishes of Aspley Guise and Aspley Heath respectively). The population of the civil parish of Woburn Sands is approximately 3,000 but the wider population of the Woburn Sands area who regard the Woburn Sands High Street as their "centre" is about twice this number. The wider Woburn Sands population make use of the facilities in all three parishes which makes the planning of each of the parishes particularly challenging.

The consensus of opinion at the Issues Meeting was that, although the Plan should cover the parish of Woburn Sands and thus be sponsored by the Woburn Sands Town Council, the policies in the Plan should reflect the wishes of the residents of the wider Woburn Sands area. Accordingly the adjacent Parish Councils have been formally consulted on the Plan and, where appropriate, their views are reflected in the policies set out in the Plan. Although some attending the Issues Meeting suggested that the parish boundaries should be re-drawn (particularly in the area of Burrows Close and Weathercock Lane) it was recognised that this could be a difficult process and there was therefore no overwhelming majority to do so. However everyone attending the meeting was keen to ensure that all the parishes should work together in the provision of community services regardless of boundaries.

The Woburn Sands Town Council is keen to work with its neighbours but, equally, has a responsibility to ensure that the council-tax payers of Woburn Sands are not disadvantaged by planning and operational decisions made elsewhere. It is also important that the costs of the services and facilities of Woburn Sands are not solely borne by the residents of Woburn Sands and, to this end, the Woburn Sands Town Council will continue to engage with the adjacent Parish Councils to seek reasonable financial contributions from those parishes. Equally, it is recognised that residents of Woburn Sands use facilities in neighbouring parishes. It has therefore been agreed by all the Parish Councils involved that an underlying objective of this Plan is to minimise the adverse effect of the boundaries on the local population. This will be monitored by the existing Parish Liaison Committee (where representatives from Woburn Sands, Aspley Guise, Wavendon, and Aspley Heath meet).

2.3 Procedure

Milton Keynes Council approved the boundaries of the Plan in July 2012 following the procedure set out in the localism legislation.

Preliminary proposals were outlined for discussion at the Annual Town Meeting on 10 May 2012. A summary of the proposed Vision and Sustainable Objectives was circulated to all residents with the Council's Summer Newsletter 2012

Prior to preparation of the Plan a Sustainability Appraisal of the town was carried out in July/August 2012 and published in October following approval of the Appraisal by the Town Council in September. Copies of the Appraisal were sent to the relevant statutory consultees, the adjacent Parish Councils, and placed on the Town Council's website and in the Library. A Notice advertising the publication of the Appraisal was placed in the *Milton Keynes Citizen*. Comments were invited by the middle of November.

In view of the fact that the town is currently undergoing a major expansion (the Parklands development) which will ultimately result in a growth of approximately 55% in the housing stock (assuming the current Phases 4 & 5 applications are approved without reduction), the Sustainability Appraisal was not carried out *ab initio* since much of the work was carried out as part of the assessment of Parklands. The Sustainability Appraisal which was prepared in July/August updated the previous work; in particular the Appraisal noted:

- The balance of housing in the town was being significantly diversified through the proposed balance of Parklands.
- A number of community facilities were being enhanced by the Section 106 agreement (improved Medical Centre, provision of a new Community centre, transfer of the Library, and provision of a Sports Hall).
- New employment facilities would be provided as part of the development.

The statutory consultees made a number of comments on the Appraisal; in particular concerns were expressed over the lack of appropriate environmental objectives in the draft objectives set out in the Appraisal. A revised Final Consultation Draft of the Sustainability Appraisal was therefore prepared in December 2012 and was published at the same time as the Final Consultation Draft of the Plan itself.

Both documents were published for comment by the end of February 2013. This final version of the Plan, along with a final version of the Sustainability Appraisal, has been prepared following receipt of comments and approval by the Town Council in April 2013. A schedule listing the comments received and the Town Council's response to them accompanies these documents in the submission to Milton Keynes Council seeking their formal approval to proceed to the next stage (Examination by an Inspector).

It should be noted that, in its response to the Draft Final Consultation Plan, Milton Keynes Council stated "The approach, content, recommendations, and policies of the Woburn Sands Neighbourhood Plan are broadly supported by the Council". All the specific policies set out in Section 6 of the Plan were deemed to be "in order and supported". MKC also confirmed that the process in preparing the Plan "satisfied the statutory and best practice procedures" and indicated that the Sustainability Assessment is "proportionate to the Plan ...and can be accepted as adequate".

3. Background Information and Data

3.1 Environmental Considerations

The draft Milton Keynes Landscape Character Report defines the Woburn Sands area as being a Clayland Fringe overlooked by the Brickhills Greensands Ridge, and suggests that the overall landscape strategy should be to "Improve and Restore" the landscape and "to preserve the open views". No particular biodiversity characteristics have been identified in Woburn Sands by the Bucks and MK Diversity Action Plan. The area between the railway line and Frosts Garden Centre is however liable to flooding. Periods of heavy rain can also cause flooding down Aspley Hill and Church Road on to the roundabouts at the South end of the High Street.

The built environment is influenced by the fact that the town has been developed over a number of years. The central area is designated as a Conservation Area and contains a number of buildings of the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. Two buildings are Grade II listed (Shelton House and the Station House) and there are a number of other notable buildings (such as the Institute, the Ellen Pettit Memorial Hall, the Friends Meeting House, and the Methodist Chapel). The Conservation area was reviewed in 2010 and minor amendments made to the boundaries. (*Further details are given in Appendix B of the Sustainability Appraisal*)

3.2 Population

The population in April 2011 was estimated to be 2,900 (*Census*) and expected to grow as follows over the next few years based on current planning approvals, rate of completions, and predicted approvals for the final phases of Parklands (see 3.3 below):

April 2011	2900	
April 2014	3250	
April 2019	3800	
April 2026	4000	(End of Neighbourhood Plan period)

Figures from MKC Population Bulletin

The age breakdown at April 2011 was estimated as follows:

Pre School			150	5%
School Age	Primary (5 – 11yrs.)	160	430	15%
	Secondary (12 – 18yrs.)	<u>270</u>		
Working Age	Age 19 – 34	520	1,590	55%
	Age 35 - 60	<u>1070</u>		
Retirement Age	Age 61 – 74	430	730	25%
	Over 75 yrs.	<u>300</u>		
TOTAL			2,900	100%

It is estimated that the school age population will increase by about 100 once the Parklands development is completed.

According to the Council Tax database 438 properties were occupied by single people; after including the single people resident in the three residential homes for the elderly approximately 16% of the total population is single.

It is estimated that a further 2,800 live in the adjacent parishes of Aspley Guise (2,200) and Aspley Heath (600). *Central Beds 2010*

3.3 Housing Stock

In the tax year 2012/13 there were the following dwellings by tax band:

Band A	80	Single Occupancy	56
Band B	222		118
Band C	287		102
Band D	368		105
Band E	217		42
Band F	103		12
Band G	22		3
Band H	2		-
TOTAL	1301		438

(MKC Council Tax Database)

In October 2006 construction of the first two phases of the Parklands development (on the former Plysu and Nampak industrial site) began and 341 homes were constructed and sold by January 2013. Planning permission for a further 51 dwellings (which will complete Phases 1, 2 and 3) has been granted and construction is under way.

Taylor Wimpey submitted in January 2013 an application for the final phases (Phases 4 & 5) of development; permission is being sought for a further 157 dwellings but further discussions are currently being held between Taylor Wimpey, Milton Keynes Council and Woburn Sands Town Council which may result in an amended application.

A significant change in the stock of homes in Woburn Sands has been created by the Parklands development. Prior to the development approximately 14% of homes were flats; this will rise to about 22% on completion of Phases 1 – 3 and 25% assuming the proposals in Phases 4 & 5 are approved.

Once the Parklands development is completed the total housing stock in Woburn Sands will have increased by about 53% over about 7 years from approximately 980 to approximately 1500.

There are two residential homes for the elderly in the town (Burlington Hall and Devon Lodge) and a MKC Warden assisted complex of flats at Shelton Court. A further Local Authority block of Warden assisted flats lies just across the boundary in Aspley Guise (Hutton Court). There is also a private development of flats for the elderly (with a Resident Manager) on the boundary between Woburn Sands and Aspley Heath immediately adjacent to the High Street (Aspley Court).

3.4 Community Infrastructure

3.4.1 Education

There are no schools in the parish of Woburn Sands. Most primary age children in State Education attend Swallowfield Lower School which is located east of the Recreation Ground just over the Central Bedfordshire boundary (see Map). The school takes pupils up to age 9 and has approximately 290 pupils drawn from Woburn Sands, Aspley Guise, Aspley Heath and other parts of Milton Keynes. Transfer to Fulbrook Middle School takes place at the end of Year 4. There is also a pre-school facility on the Swallowfield site.

There are also Primary schools in Wavendon and Aspley Guise.

Secondary age children have a number of options – they can continue at Fulbrook School (a Middle School which has recently become an Academy covering Year 5 (age 9) – Year 8 (age 13) in Weathercock Lane) from where they can transfer to a number of Upper Schools in Bedfordshire. Alternatively they can leave Fulbrook after Year 6 and apply for places at schools within Milton Keynes, the nearest of which is Walton High.

In 2011/12 secondary age pupils living in Woburn Sands (other than those still attending Fulbrook) attended the following schools:

Walton High (Milton Keynes)	57 (transferred at Year 6)
Cedars (Central Beds)	60 (transferred at Year 8)
Vandyke and Redbourne (both Central Beds) have less than 5 W.S. pupils in each.	

In addition a number of Sixth Form pupils attended Milton Keynes College.

The different school systems in Milton Keynes and Central Beds present a choice for Woburn Sands parents.

Central Bedfordshire has advised that there is increasing pressure on both Cedars and Vandyke Schools in Leighton Buzzard particularly after 2015 and the facility for Woburn Sands pupils to transfer to these schools may be restricted. There is also a proposal to build a new Secondary School in the Strategic Land Allocation Area just to the north of Woburn Sands; this will be sized to take account of the Woburn Sands school age population.

3.4.2 Health

This is another area which is complicated by boundaries. Woburn Sands is served by Asplands Medical Centre (see map). Although located in the centre of the town Asplands is currently funded by Bedfordshire Primary Care Trust and will come under the umbrella of the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group wef March 2013. Asplands draws its patients from the wider Woburn Sands area; 95% of the patients referred to hospital are referred to Milton Keynes Hospital with the balance referred to Bedford Hospital. Asplands also runs a secondary centre in Woburn (Central Beds) and can offer a number of extra specialised clinics. The Centre benefitted from a modest extension funded by a Section 106 contribution arising from the initial phases of Parklands; although space is limited the practice does not wish to move from its present site.

There is also a Dental Practice in the town which is not of sufficient size to offer NHS care to all residents.

3.4.3 Shopping

Woburn Sands High Street provides a wide range of shops and services. These include:

- Two Banks, a Post Office, and a garage
- A small supermarket, a delicatessen, a baker, and a wine shop
- A number of boutiques, three hairdressers, and two jewellers
- A newsagent, two estate agents, and a travel agent
- A chemist, a hardware shop, a range of specialist shops, and two charity shops
- One pub, three restaurants/takeaways and a cafe
- Currently there are three vacant shops

In addition there is a pub, a takeaway, a restaurant, a hairdresser, and an estate agent at the south end of the High Street/Aspley Hill over the parish boundary in Aspley Guise.

As indicated above in Section 2.2 the High Street attracts customers from the wider Woburn Sands area, and some of the specialist shops from customers further afield.

There is limited parking in the High Street but a central shoppers car park is available although this can be full at certain peak times.

There is also a small collection of retail outlets at the northern end of Station Road (the Station Hotel, a newsagent, a large vacant shop, and two hairdressers are in Woburn Sands while a pub, carpet shop, and fish-and-chip shop are in Aspley Guise).

3.4.4 Recreation Facilities

- The Library moved to the refurbished Institute in February 2012. Under the Partnership Agreement between the Town Council and MKC the Borough has guaranteed to continue to provide a full service for 24 hours per week for the next three years. Approximately 30% of the users of the Library come from outside the parish of Woburn Sands and contributions from the adjacent parishes have therefore been requested towards the costs of running the facility. Other community uses of the building will be encouraged. Any income generated will be split between WSTC and MKC.
- There is one hotel in the Town (Greens) and another one in Aspley Guise.
- The Recreation Ground next to the railway provides a children's play area, adult fitness equipment, a skateboard area, a basketball hoop, and a small kick-about area with goal posts.
- There is a children's play area in the Parklands development.
- There are two halls for hire – the Memorial Hall in the High Street and the Summerlin Centre opposite the Recreation Ground; the latter hall was renovated under a Section 106 Agreement as part of the Parklands development and can house functions of up to 120 people.
- There are two small greens in the town – Mowbray Green (used for small community events) and Memorial Green where the War Memorial is located
- Edgewick Farm consists of approximately 23 acres managed by the Greensands Trust on behalf of the Town Council, assisted by the Friends of Edgewick Farm. The aim is for the area to be available for public access while encouraging the natural grassland through a managed grazing regime. It is used occasionally for community events such as the annual Folk Festival.
- There are 150 privately owned allotments at the west end of the town.
- There is a Bowls Club and a Tennis Club situated in the middle of the town although the future of these is uncertain given an outstanding Planning Permission to develop the Greens Hotel site as a Nursing Home and close-care facility.
- There are a large number of Clubs and Societies such as the Woburn Sands Band, the Gardening Club, the Bridge Club, the Guiding Association, the Sands Singers etc. Membership of all these organisations is drawn from both Woburn Sands and the neighbouring parishes.

3.4.5 Transport

Woburn Sands is located at the junction of a number of significant routes. The High Street is a direct North-South route between Junction 14 of the M1/the Kingston Roundabout and Woburn/the A5 at Hockliffe, and Woburn Sands is also a direct link between the A5 and Junction 13 on the M1. Although there are alternative routes the town's location results in a considerable volume of through traffic. This inevitably causes congestion (particularly in the High Street where there are two pedestrian crossings) and makes parking difficult. The additional traffic flows arising from the development of the Strategic Land Allocation Area to the North have yet to be assessed.

There are three bus routes serving the town:

Number 300 Woburn Sands – Central Milton Keynes

Number 49 Bedford – Leighton Buzzard

Number 17 Bletchley - Cranfield

There is also a railway station which links Woburn Sands with Bedford and Bletchley. In mid-2012 the Government announced that the line would be significantly enhanced and linked to mainline services in both Bedford and Milton Keynes and, through Milton Keynes, to Oxford and Reading. It is proposed that the line be electrified and carry more passengers and freight services. Network Rail is currently working up the details and these will be published in 2013. This enhancement will have a significant impact on Woburn Sands and is discussed in greater detail in para 6.10.2.

4. The Milton Keynes Context

Woburn Sands is designated as a Key Settlement within the Borough of Milton Keynes. The Milton Keynes Council has prepared a draft Core Strategy covering the period to 2026. This has not yet been finally approved by the Secretary of State but should achieve that status in mid 2013 following the Public Examination in July 2012 and the revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy (announced in March 2013). The key objective of that strategy is

To develop Milton Keynes as a major 21st Century city

The draft Core Strategy sets out a number of other Objectives which are relevant to Woburn Sands. These are set out below:

- To protect, maintain and enhance the important features, character and assets of the New Town and the towns and villages throughout the Borough
- To deliver land for 1200 homes in sustainable settlements in the rural area
- To seek the protection of existing key services and facilities in sustainable rural settlements and to encourage the development of further provision, including shops, education, community and health services
- To work jointly with neighbouring authorities and other key organisations on the planning of any development located on the edge of Milton Keynes (but outside the current MK boundary) so that these areas are integrated with the city and contribute to its role and character

In addition to these Objectives there are a range of others which apply across the Borough; these include ensuring that the supply of jobs keeps pace with the provision of housing, the promotion of learning, the development of next generation access to broadband and improvement of the digital infrastructure for residents and businesses, the development of cultural and sporting facilities, the reduction of health inequalities, the provision of diverse housing, the improvement of public transport, the minimisation of the impact of MK's growth on the climate, etc.

These Strategic Objectives are supplemented by a number of specific policies. The most relevant policies affecting Woburn Sands are as follows:

- *Policy CS1 Milton Keynes Development Strategy:* The provision of new homes and jobs will take account of the Settlement Hierarchy. The majority will be focused on, and adjacent to, the existing urban area of Milton Keynes.
- The Strategic Land Allocation Area to the South East of the city is categorised as an extension to the existing urban area (Policy CS5).
- Woburn Sands is categorised as a Key Settlement and not part of the urban area.
- *Policy CS2 Housing Land Supply:* This stipulates that sites identified for housing will follow the Settlement Hierarchy and be identified "after extensive engagement with the local community".

- *Policy CS3 Employment Land Supply:* This establishes the criteria for identifying land for employment. Woburn Sands is not identified as having any possible sites for such development other than the 1.3ha allocated within Parklands.
- *Policy CS4 Retail and Leisure Development:* The declared policy is to protect the retail role of town centres so that they provide convenience shopping and service facilities in order to reduce and minimise car dependency and to ensure ready access by non-car owning households and other people with limited or impaired mobility.

Woburn Sands is classified as a Key Settlement in the rural area. Para 9.1 (Development in the Rural Area) states “Only a limited amount of development should therefore take place in the other towns and villages in the Borough [which includes Woburn Sands] and any shortfall in housing completions in the city will not be affected by more development in the rural settlements”.

Table 5.2 of the draft Core Strategy gives proposed housing targets for various areas; the target for rural areas is as follows:

Total for Plan period	1760
Annual Total	110

These figures are not broken down by settlements.

Note. A preliminary note from the Inspector suggests a marginal increase on these targets.

The Core Strategy was drafted at the end of 2010. Since that time 92 dwellings have been completed on the Parklands development in Woburn Sands. A further 51 are either under construction or have planning permission. Assuming that Taylor Wimpey’s Phases 4 & 5 applications are granted approximately 300 dwellings (ie 92 plus 51 plus 157) have either been built or will be built in the town since drafting the Core Strategy. This will represent approximately 17% of the total requirement for rural homes over the period to 2026 and, furthermore, will be built within the next five years.

The existing Core Strategy covering Aspley Guise and Aspley Heath is currently under review by Central Bedfordshire (which came into being in 2010) and the resultant strategy has not yet been published.

5. A Vision for Woburn Sands

Over the last few years Woburn Sands has been significantly increased in size by the development of Parklands; by the time that development is completed the number of dwellings in the town will have been increased by over 50% and the town will have made a major contribution to the housing targets set out in the draft Milton Keynes Core Strategy. This has put a considerable strain on the infrastructure of the town (particularly in regard to the medical, highways, and recreational provisions) and the attendees at the Issues Meeting made clear that no further significant expansion should take place. While welcoming the additional population and diversity which Parklands has brought the attendees made clear that the town has already made a substantial contribution to the growth of Milton Keynes and should not be required to absorb any further growth. This view was subsequently endorsed strongly at the Town Meeting in May 2012.

In this connection it should be noted that the Inspector appointed to handle the Appeal by Taylor Wimpey’s application in respect of Phases 3 and subsequent phases stated in her Report of August 2010 “The 280 dwellings of phases 1 and 2, together with the 303 dwellings currently proposed, would increase the number of dwellings in the town by more than 50%. I share the Town Council’s view that this represents a substantial influx of dwellings and people, something that has the potential to materially harm the equilibrium and identity of the town and its community.” (Para 21)

The discussion at both the Issues Meeting and the Town Meeting also re-emphasised that Woburn Sands should remain an attractive and pleasant place to live and participants were clear that this characteristic should be maintained.

Both Meetings emphasised that residents of all the parishes value the open space around the town and adjoining parishes and the Conservation Area but expressed concern over the relative lack of leisure and recreational amenities particularly for young people.

The following Vision has been adopted:

Woburn Sands will remain an attractive and sustainable location which meets the aspirations of residents, the wider Woburn Sands community and all those who use the town's facilities.

When discussing sustainability the participants at both the Issues and Town Meetings emphasised the need to protect, enhance, maintain and encourage the current characteristics of the town. Specifically the following Sustainable Objectives were adopted:

- The existing environment (both landscape and built) will be protected and enhanced where possible; specifically
 - the existing open spaces within the town and the open spaces on the edges of the town will be preserved
 - links into the surrounding countryside in adjacent parishes will be maintained
 - the historic nature of the Conservation Area will be protected
 - the quality of the built environment will be maintained
(*Policies WS2 and WS5*).
- A balanced stock of housing, with no significant increase in either the number or diversity will be maintained once the Parklands development has been completed (*Policies WS5, 6 and 7*)
- The number and variety of retail and service businesses will be maintained and expanded in line with demand. (*Policy WS9*)
- The establishment of a limited number of employment opportunities for those who wish to work locally will be encouraged. (*Policy WS8*)
- The existing recreational facilities will be preserved and, where possible, expanded. (*Policy WS 12*)
- Community development will be encouraged through the promotion of community use of all the facilities in the town. (*Policy WS12*)
- Access to a full range of first class educational provision will be encouraged. (*Policy WS10*)
- The welfare of the population will be promoted through the encouragement of community health and social services. (*Policy WS11*)
- Public transport will be encouraged. (*Policies WS14 and 15*)

6. Policies to implement this Vision

6.1 The Ambience and Environment of the Town

It was unanimously agreed at both the Issues Meeting (including by the representatives from the adjacent parishes) and the Town Meeting, and subsequently confirmed in individual comments received from parishioners, that the single most important characteristic of Woburn Sands which must be maintained is the ambience and environment of the town. It is a pleasant place in which to live and visit and this atmosphere must not be degraded in any way. This means that there must be:

- No expansion of the built-up area.
- Maintenance of the Conservation Area
- Tight design and density parameters for any developments or building work.
- No loss of open spaces.
- Adequate parking facilities.
- Tight controls over traffic.

6.1.1 Design Parameters

Woburn Sands benefits from the fact that much of the central area is classified as a Conservation Area. Where appropriate the principles underlying this area will be extended to cover the whole of the parish over the next few years. Developments should also conform to relevant Government guidelines relating to construction sustainability.

Policy WS1 All developments in the town (including any extensions to individual properties) will be expected to comply with the Design Guide appended to this Plan (Appendix 3)

6.1.2 Open Spaces within the Current Built-up Area

There is little undeveloped open space within the built-up area of Woburn Sands; in this connection the Town Council and the wider community remain opposed to the development of the Greens Hotel site despite the planning approval granted on appeal. It is essential that no further encroachment into existing open spaces within the town should be permitted in order to preserve the ambience of the town. The retention of such open spaces (and the areas around the current Development Envelope - see para 6.2 below) will also help the town to adapt to the effects of climate change.

Policy WS2 The existing open spaces within the built-up area such as the Memorial Green, Mowbray Green and the Recreation Ground will be preserved and no development will be permitted thereon.

6.1.3 Traffic and Parking

There are no current restrictions on the weight of traffic through Woburn Sands. It is hoped to reach agreement on the downgrading of the A5130 between the Kingston roundabout and Woburn; if this can be achieved then weight restrictions can be applied to the High Street and Station Road. Bow Brickhill Road, The Leys and Hardwick Road are already classified as B roads with a weight restriction but enforcement is difficult for as long as the High Street remains an A road. The Parish Councils of Wavendon, Aspley Guise and Aspley Heath strongly endorse this policy.

Policy WS3 The Town Council will promote the introduction of all necessary measures to minimise heavy traffic through Woburn Sands.

All development proposals of whatever nature (residential, retail, or commercial) must make adequate provision for off-street parking and comply with MKC Parking Standards. It will not be acceptable for developers to assume that users of any new development can use existing parking facilities.

Policy WS4 All development proposals must make adequate provision for off-street parking and comply with MKC Parking Standards

6.2 Development Envelope

There are seven undeveloped areas outside the current built-up area but within the parish:

- Land to the East of Vandyke Close adjacent to the railway line
- Land off Cranfield Road surrounding Deethe Farm
- Land between Frosts Garden Centre and the railway line, and to the West of Frosts
- Land off Bow Brickhill Road extending to the parish boundary with Bow Brickhill
- The allotments to the West of the town
- Edgewick Farm
- The copse to the South West of Edgewick Farm

The second area has been the subject of a planning application for a major development covering both it and an adjacent area in Wavendon Parish; both the Woburn Sands Town Council and Wavendon Parish Council have objected in the strongest possible terms since there is adequate land for development adjacent to this plot in the approved Milton Keynes Strategic Land Allocation Area; the proposed development would also put an unreasonable additional burden on the infrastructure of both parishes. The first application was refused by Milton Keynes Council; a second application was also refused in October 2012.

The attendees at both the Issues Meeting and the Town Meeting were unanimous that neither the allotments nor Edgewick Farm should be developed since they represent invaluable amenities to the community.

The attractiveness of the wider Woburn Sands area depends to a very significant extent upon the preservation of the existing countryside both within the Woburn Sands parish and neighbouring parishes. It is essential for the health and wellbeing of the population that the current network of public footpaths and links through the wider area be maintained and this would not be possible if development encroaches on the countryside around Woburn Sands. This is the unanimous view of all the Parish Councils and residents in the area.

Furthermore the maintenance of the green spaces on the outskirts of the town is crucial in enabling the area to combat the possible effects of climate change.

Accordingly no extension of the current built-up area will be permitted.

Policy WS5 The preservation of the existing woodland and countryside within the parish is key to the future of Woburn Sands and no extension of the current built-up area will therefore be permitted; the footpaths and links to adjacent woodlands will be protected.

6.3 Housing Numbers and Balance

In numerical terms 341 dwellings have been completed and sold since the Parklands development commenced; 92 of these have been built since publication of the draft Core Strategy. Planning permission for a further 51 has been granted. Taylor Wimpey's Phases 4 & 5 application requests permission for a further 157 units. In total therefore Parklands will increase the housing stock by 549, of which approximately 300 will be built since publication of the draft Core Strategy. As reported above this will increase the number of dwellings by about 53% and the completed Parklands will represent a major proportion of the town's total dwellings. It is the unanimous view of the Town Council, residents and adjacent parish councils that this increase in the number of dwellings in the parish more than fulfils the town's obligation as a Key Settlement in the draft Core Strategy. Accordingly no further significant expansion will be permitted.

Policy WS6 The only housing development to be permitted once the Parklands development is completed will be small infilling between existing properties or replacement of demolished properties.

The town has a wide range of housing. The original town, built between the mid 19th and early 20th century, ranges from some large substantial houses to terraces; the second half of the 20th Century saw the construction of a number of estates and in-filling. Most of these properties have reasonable gardens and the majority have car parking spaces. The growth up to the end of the 20th Century was essentially organic rather than based on a deliberate planning policy to expand.

The position since the turn of the century has changed significantly due to the Parklands development which is very different from elsewhere in the town. There is a wide range of property types with a considerable number of flats; the planning approval by Milton Keynes Council also requires that 30% of the properties be occupied on an affordable housing basis, with the majority as social rented accommodation; priority is given to those with local connections. None of the properties have any substantial gardens.

As a result of the nature of development over the last hundred years or so Woburn Sands contains a very wide range of housing suitable for the whole community. Furthermore, as indicated in para 3.3 above, in addition to the usual range of housing, Woburn Sands also has a number of facilities dedicated for the elderly.

As far as the balance of housing is concerned there is only one category of homes of which there is a perceived shortage – starter homes (particularly 2/3 bed shared ownership houses), although this is being addressed to some extent in the Parklands development. The Issues Meeting was clear that there is no further need for care accommodation for the elderly. In this connection there is an outstanding planning approval for the conversion of Greens Hotel and the adjacent Bowls Green into a Nursing Home and close-care facility for the elderly. The Town Council and the community in general strongly opposed this application on the grounds of loss of amenity and no requirement for the facility. The Town Council's objection was supported by Milton Keynes Council and the original application refused. The application was, however, granted on Appeal in 2009 but work has not yet started.

There remains strong opposition to this proposal which will be repeated should the permission fall out of time and another application be made.

Policy WS7 Priority for any infilling development will be given to any proposal which provides starter housing for families who have a connection with Woburn Sands.

6.4 Employment

There is one major employer in the town – Frosts Garden Centre – with a second garden centre just over the Wavendon boundary. There is also a car repair facility in Cranfield Road (Aspley Guise) and the Cranfield Road is home to a number of small units. Others are employed in the High Street, Asplands Surgery and small professional firms.

In late 2009 the Town Council carried out a survey of households on a number of issues; just over 500 individual replies were received. 236 people indicated that they worked in the following locations:

11% worked from home
16% worked in the wider Woburn Sands area
37% worked in Milton Keynes
8% worked in London
28% worked elsewhere

This suggests that some 25% of the working population work locally either from home or in local workplaces which is broadly similar to the national average.

The proposals for the final phases of the Parklands development have just been submitted. At the Appeal Hearing to consider Phases 3 – 5 the Inspector suggested that 1.3 hectares of land adjacent to the railway line should be allocated to employment; this suggestion has been incorporated into the plans submitted by Taylor Wimpey. It is estimated that this will provide employment for 80 – 100 people. In effect this will replace about half the jobs which were lost following the closure of Nampak.

Policy WS8 Any application to provide land for employment purposes in Parklands will be welcomed but no further land within Woburn Sands will be designated for employment purposes.

6.5 Retail Development

As indicated in para 3.4.3 above, the High Street contains a good variety of shops and services. There is also a handful of shops along Station Road. In addition there are a number of retail outlets just across the boundary in Aspley Guise and Aspley Heath but essentially part of the Woburn Sands central shopping area. The High Street serves a wide area but suffers from occasional lack of parking. The Town Council is considering taking over responsibility for parking enforcement from Milton Keynes Council (including the employment of a dedicated Traffic Warden as suggested at the Issues Meeting) but this will not increase the quantity of available parking. There does not appear to be any way of alleviating this situation apart from a relatively inaccessible area of land between Asplands Close and the rear of properties on the west side of the High Street.

Despite the parking problems it is essential that the High Street remains viable; there are a significant number of residents in the wider Woburn Sands area who cannot easily shop elsewhere. It remains the hub of the community and no retail development should be permitted elsewhere in Woburn Sands.

Changes in the number and variety of shops in the High Street are inevitable due to commercial and market factors outside the influence of the local community. However significant changes will require planning permission which can be refused if they are regarded as detrimental to the community.

The Town Council, working with the Business Association, will promote initiatives to ensure that the High Street and all the individual retail outlets maintain high standards of presentation and remain attractive to users. Particular topics to be addressed will include, amongst others, the following:

- Monitoring the range of retail outlets and facilities.
- Encouraging a high standard of appearance by individual shops, including fascia and signage.
- Ensuring that public signage and street furniture are both informative and attractive.
- Endeavouring to ensure the availability and effective management of adequate car parking.
- Promoting public transport.
- Encouraging wider community usage and more public events in the High Street, particularly ones based on the Institute (Library).

Policy WS9 The Town Council, working with the Business Association, will promote any action to maintain the viability and vitality of the High Street, but no retail development which impinges on the health of the High Street will be permitted elsewhere.

6.6 Education Provision

The current education provision is set out in para 3.4.1 above. The quality of education provided is good and the differing age of transfer in Milton Keynes and Central Bedfordshire presents a valuable choice to Woburn Sands residents.

In the next few years significant development will take place in the Strategic Land Allocation Area between Wavendon and the M1 – the precise scale will depend on the outcome of the current consideration of the draft Milton Keynes Core Strategy. It is known however that this development will incorporate a number of primary schools and a secondary school; it has been agreed that the sizing of this latter school will take account of the school age population of Woburn Sands.

This will considerably improve the opportunities for children in Woburn Sands; as long as Central Bedfordshire schools continue to make provision at upper school level for pupils who wish to remain in the three tier structure parents will have the choice between the two different systems. There will also be a wider range of provision at primary level.

Consultation with all concerned have confirmed that both the schools and statutory authorities will continue to work together to promote choice to parents. There will also be increased cooperation to optimise transport provision to all schools in the wider area.

Policy WS10 A wide range of first class educational provision will be encouraged.

6.7 Medical Services

There is concern over the future of medical services in the area. The Asplands Medical Centre provides a range of services to the wider Woburn Sands area but is funded through Bedfordshire. The consequences of the current changes in NHS funding systems are not yet known but residents are very satisfied with the present level of service which they wish to have maintained. The Town Council, while having no direct responsibility for the provision of the services, will do everything it can to ensure that there is no deterioration; in particular encouragement will be given to any move which gives more responsibility to the medical practitioners who are familiar with the needs of the local community, rather than to any remote commissioning body.

Approximately 10% of the community is over 75 and it is important that there is appropriate community support for these individuals; the division of such support between Milton Keynes and Central Bedfordshire is unhelpful in this respect.

Policy WS11 Every effort will be made by the Town Council, working with the neighbouring parishes, to support the coherent provision of medical services to the community in all the parishes.

6.8 Recreation and Leisure

The transfer of the Library to the Institute has now been completed; this has already increased the use of the Library to the benefit of all residents of the wider Woburn Sands area. The Institute is also available to other community groups who would like to make use of the building. In the long term the Institute should become a well-used centre of community activity.

There is already a flourishing range of clubs and societies serving the wider area and these are expected to continue; for example the Dega Lunch Clubs (which provide support for the elderly and frail) and the Three Parishes Outings (which are available to all residents over 60) provide a valuable service and the Woburn Sands Town Council and neighbouring parishes will continue to work together to promote such activities.

The town is fortunate to be surrounded by attractive woodlands in the adjacent parishes and it is important that the footpath and bridleway links should be preserved. (See Policy WS5).

However sporting facilities are limited. There is no full size football or cricket pitch (although one exists in Aspley Guise), and the tennis and bowls facilities are under threat from the development of Greens Hotel. The Town Council and the community remain wholly opposed to this development and are committed to the retention of both facilities in their present form.

The 2009 survey of residents carried out by the Town Council indicated support for the following:

- More small play areas in Edgewick Farm (84% in favour)
- Small gym/fitness centre (65%)
- A full-sized football pitch (54%)

Participants at the Issues Meeting also expressed support for the construction of a swimming pool but the financial cost of constructing and maintaining such a facility make this unlikely.

The development of Edgewick Farm is governed by a restrictive covenant which states, inter alia, that the property may only be used for recreational purposes and used as open space.

Following discussions with Taylor Wimpey the plans submitted for Phases 4 & 5 of the Parklands development include a small hall suitable for badminton, short mat bowls, fitness equipment etc. The Town Council, working with the adjacent parishes through the Parish Liaison Committee, is committed to improving both the provision and usage of recreational facilities across the wider Woburn Sands area and available to all residents. To this end it has been agreed to undertake a detailed audit of all the recreational and leisure facilities in the wider area (including the schools) and to publicise this throughout the whole community.

Policy WS12 The preservation of all existing recreational and sports facilities across the wider Woburn Sands area will be a priority and every opportunity taken to develop new facilities particularly for the youth of the area.

6.9 Community Safety

Woburn Sands and Wavendon parishes fall within the Thames Valley Police area of responsibility while Aspley Guise and Aspley Heath are part of Bedfordshire Police's area. It is therefore essential that close liaison between the two Forces is maintained.

The area is fortunate in that levels of crime are low and all the parish councils and the two Police Forces are committed to ensuring that this remains the case. In due course it may be necessary to consider installing CCTV in the High Street and one or two other areas where there is occasional vandalism.

Discussions are in hand to close the existing Police Office in the High Street and transfer the police presence to the Institute which should encourage greater interaction between the general public and the Police; both Forces will use the new facility.

Policy WS13 Every encouragement will be given to ensure that the Police Forces of Thames Valley and Bedfordshire work more closely together.

6.10 Transport and Communications

There is concern over the level of traffic through the town and this is addressed in Policy WS3 above.

The town's existing public transport links are no more than adequate and under periodic threat – the 2009 Survey of residents carried out by the Town Council showed that those travelling to work used the following means:

On foot	19%
Bicycle	4%
Bus	8%
Train	4%
Car	65%

These figures seem reasonable and it seems unlikely that any significant modal shift away from the car can be achieved; indeed the figure of 12% by public transport is relatively high for a rural parish.

6.10.1 Bus Services

There has been a recent deterioration in the bus service to Central Milton Keynes (less direct and therefore slower) and other routes remain under threat.

PolicyWS14 The preservation and improvement of bus services, particularly to Central Milton Keynes will be encouraged.

6.10.2 Rail Services

There has recently been considerable progress in the planning of the proposed upgrading of the East-West rail line. The western extension of the Bedford – Bletchley line will provide a link from Bedford to Aylesbury, Bicester, Oxford and Reading; as part of the scheme the line, including the section running through Woburn Sands, will eventually be electrified. It is envisaged that the line will carry a significant amount of freight as well as passengers. Detailed planning will be undertaken by Network Rail during 2013 but it is envisaged that major work on the Woburn Sands section will take place in 2017.

There will be major implications for Woburn Sands. The most challenging issue will be how to deal with the level crossing and the pedestrian crossings. There are already times of the day when significant delays occur at the level crossing; the advent of more and longer trains will exacerbate this considerably and discussions have already started on how to mitigate this. It will be essential for the health of the town that the free flow of vehicular traffic between Woburn Sands and other parts of Milton Keynes is maintained. It is also important that the enhanced railway service supports the economy of the town both by providing a commuter link for residents and also by servicing the proposed employment units in Parklands.

Policy WS15 While appreciating the importance of improving the rail services to Woburn Sands the priority will be to seek measures to minimise delays at the level crossing and to ensure the safety of both cars and pedestrians crossing the railway.

6.10.3 Broadband

Given the fact that 11% of the working population work from home (which is a figure likely to increase if anything) it is essential that fast broadband should become available as soon as possible. Improvements are now under way and this is to be welcomed. It will however be important to ensure that the network is continuously upgraded.

Policy WS16 The continuous improvement of the broadband and internet connections to all premises in Woburn Sands will be encouraged

7. Next Steps

Before implementation this Plan will need to be approved by Milton Keynes Council, subjected to Examination by an Independent Inspector, and then approved by a local referendum, as required by the legislation.

8. Implementation and Review

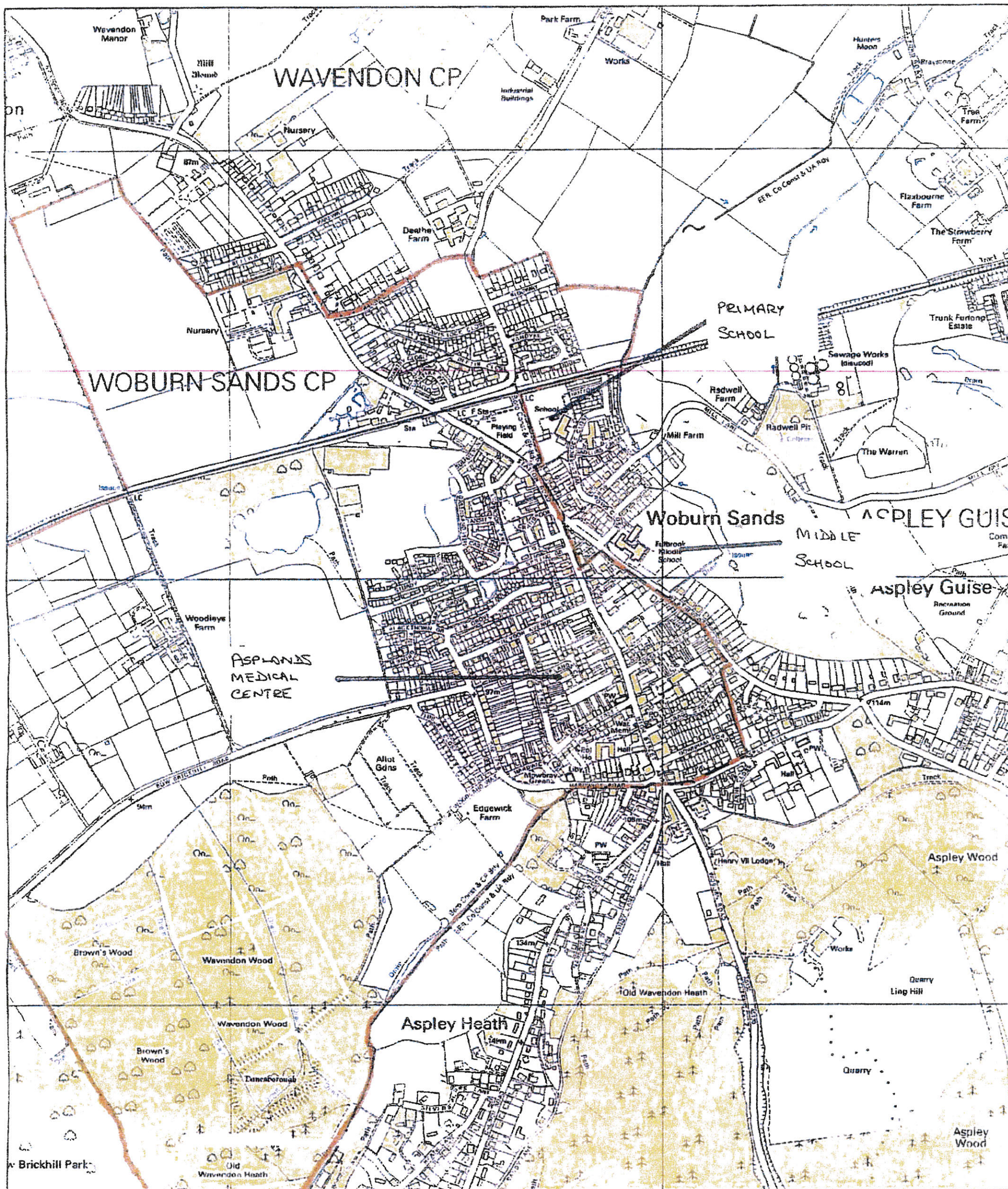
Once adopted the Town Council will consider all planning applications and other proposals in the light of the policies set out in this Plan. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate in their applications how they conform to the policies. The adjacent Parish Councils will be encouraged to do the same when they receive applications which will affect the wider Woburn Sands area.


The Town Council will report progress achieved under each Policy at the annual Town Meeting (held in May). Any proposals to change or amend the policies will be brought forward for discussion at that Meeting and, in order to be adopted, will require a majority vote of those attending the Meeting.

Organisations represented at Issues Meeting on 29 March 2012

Asplands Medical Centre
Asplands Patients Panel
Aspley Guise Parish Council
Aspley Heath Parish Council
Churches Together
DEGA Day Club (Pensioners Lunch Club run by Age UK)
Edgewick Farm
Encore Theatre Company
Fulbrook Middle School
Probus (Association for Retired Professionals)
Royal British Legion – Women’s Section
Wavendon Parish Council
Weathercock Lane Residents Association
Woburn Sands Allotment Society
Woburn Sands and District Society
Woburn Sands Christmas Fayre Committee
Woburn Sands Business Association
Woburn Sands Big Band Society
Woburn Sands Folk Festival Committee
Woburn Sands Bowls Club
Woburn Sands Tennis Club
Woburn Sands Garden Club
Woburn Sands Rangers

Woburn Sands



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Woburn Sands Neighbourhood Plan

Design Guide

“Good design is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people. The Government’s objective for the planning system is to promote good design that ensures attractive, usable, and durable places. This is a key element in achieving sustainable development”

Extract from the National Planning Policy Framework

Any developments in Woburn Sands should comply with the relevant standards set out in MK Council’s Design Guide and other publications such as the Government’s Code for Sustainable Homes. However the following points are of particular importance in Woburn Sands.

- The MKC Guide points out that the rural villages in Milton Keynes (which includes Woburn Sands) have their own distinctive vernacular character and any new developments within these villages should respect the existing character of the settlement.
- Any development which takes place in a Conservation Area is required to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area and is subject to tighter planning controls. This requirement will also apply to any development outside of the Conservation Area which would affect its setting.
- There are minimum parking standards for all residential dwellings but no maximum.
- The detailed design appearance of housing is important in that it can contribute to or undermine the character of the area. This is particularly important in Woburn Sands.
- Landscaping plays an important role in determining the acceptability of a development. Woburn Sands Town Council will require detailed landscaping plans as part of the initial planning application and the Council will not consider any application without such plans.

As a general principle the Town Council encourages applicants to consult the Council before submitting any formal application to Milton Keynes Council. Although this is not a legal requirement under current planning regulations it is good practice and in line with the Government’s localism agenda.

Woburn Sands Neighbourhood Plan – References

Milton Keynes Council Population Bulletin
Milton Keynes Council Council Tax Database
Milton Keynes Council Draft Core Strategy
Milton Keynes Landscape Character Assessment (2007)
Bucks and Milton Keynes Biodiversity Action Plan (2000; revised 2009)
Woburn Sands Conservation Area Review (2010)
Inspector's Report on Phase 3 & Subsequent Phases for Development of Parklands (August 2010)

Statistics from Taylor Wimpey (progress of Parklands); Fulbrook and Swallowfield Schools (pupil data); and Asplands (patient data)