



## **Central Milton Keynes Business Neighbourhood Plan Referendum – 7 May 2015 General Information for voters**

### **About this document**

On 7<sup>th</sup> May 2015 there will be referendums for residents and businesses in Milton Keynes borough on the Central Milton Keynes (CMK) Business Neighbourhood Plan. This document explains more about the referendums that are going to take place and how you can take part. It also gives you information about the Town and Country Planning system.

### **The Referendums**

Both the residents' and businesses' referendums on 7 May 2015 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 Central Milton Keynes 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 both referendums come out in favour of the Business Neighbourhood Plan it will be adopted. If both reject the Plan it won't be adopted. Where the two outcomes conflict with each other the decision about whether or not to adopt the Business Neighbourhood Plan will rest with Milton Keynes Council.

If adopted, the Business 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 National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) 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 National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) 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 set out the policies for the development and use of land across the local authority area. In Milton Keynes it is currently made up of the Milton Keynes Local Plan (adopted 2005), the Core Strategy (adopted 2013) and the Woburn Sands Neighbourhood Plan. 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.

The Milton Keynes Local Plan (2005) includes policies that allocate a range of large and smaller sites for development as well as policies that provide detailed guidance which is used when dealing with planning applications for a wide range of development and land uses.

The Core Strategy (2013) sets out the vision for how the borough will be in 2026 and how we are going to get there. It includes strategic policies which identifies how much new development will be required across the borough over the plan's period and broadly where that new development should be located.

Work is at an early stage on two new plans for Milton Keynes which, once adopted, will form part of the Development Plan. :

- The Site Allocations Plan is looking for small to medium sized housing sites that can be delivered in a relatively short timescale to make sure that Milton Keynes continues to have a 5 year supply of deliverable housing land.
- Plan:MK is a new local plan for the whole of the Milton Keynes area and, once adopted, will replace the Core Strategy and the remaining saved policies in the Milton Keynes Local 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 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 (ie the Milton Keynes Local Plan and the Core Strategy) 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.

### **What is a Business Neighbourhood Plan?**

Business Neighbourhood Plans are Neighbourhood Plans for areas that are primarily commercial to make sure that the business community in those areas is fully represented and involved in the plan-making process.

An important difference between business neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood plans is that there are two referendums for a Business Neighbourhood Plan – a referendum of residents (as is the case for a Neighbourhood Plan) and an additional referendum of businesses.

### **Who prepares Neighbourhood Plans ?**

Neighbourhood plans are prepared by town or parish councils or neighbourhood forums and there is a statutory process that must be followed to make a plan.

Where there is a Town or Parish Council, they still take the responsibility for preparing a Business Neighbourhood Plan but it is expected that the business community should be well-represented and closely engaged in preparing the 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. For a business neighbourhood plan, all residents and businesses registered to vote within the referendum area are entitled to vote in the referendum. For residents to be able to vote they need to be included on the electoral roll. For businesses, a separate business register has to be prepared by the local authority (ie Milton Keynes Council) especially for the referendum. In order to be able to be included on the business register, a business has to be a non-domestic rate payer within the referendum area.

### **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.

In the case of a Business Neighbourhood Plan, if a majority of those who have voted in one of the referendums vote in support of making the Plan and the majority of those who vote in the other referendum do not support the making of the Plan, it is the local planning authority (ie Milton Keynes Council) that must decide whether the Plan should be brought into force.

### **The Central Milton Keynes (CMK) Business Neighbourhood Plan**

The CMK Business Neighbourhood Plan has been produced by CMK Town Council in an alliance with local business leaders and with the involvement of Milton Keynes Council. It has been produced in accordance with the statutory requirements and following a recent independent examination has, subject to minor modifications, been recommended to proceed to referendum.

The key themes and policies in the Business Neighbourhood Plan aim to:

- Build a successful city centre –improving pedestrian routes; encouraging more mixed use developments and active frontages; creating more diverse street life and a safe night life.
- Encourage more small and independent shops as well as a new covered market hall to complement and enhance the outdoor market.
- Encourage development of a wide selection of homes alongside new facilities including sports, community and medical facilities.
- Promote public transport, walking and cycling as well as maintaining good provision for cars in the city centre, including revised car parking standards.

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

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/neighbourhood-planning](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/neighbourhood-planning)

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

<http://locality.org.uk/projects/building-community/>

**A copy of the CMK Business Neighbourhood Plan is available at all libraries in the Borough and Milton Keynes Council's Civic Offices. The Plan is also available online at:**

[www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/CMKBusinessNeighbourhoodPlan](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/CMKBusinessNeighbourhoodPlan)

**Contacts for further information:**

For questions about the CMK Business Neighbourhood Plan itself, the planning system and the process for preparing a business neighbourhood plan, please contact:

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