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Sent: 17 February 2026 20:44
To: NCP Engagement
Subject: MK City Plan 2050 Regulation 19 Consultation

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Dear Planning Policy Team,

Thank you for consulting us on your MK City Plan 2050 consultation.

West Northamptonshire Council welcomes the progress that is being made on the Plan and the opportunity to comment on the current consultation.

West Northamptonshire shares a boundary with Milton Keynes with the city providing key services and amenities for our residents who in turn contribute to the economy and functioning of the area. Recognition of this both within the document itself and during the development of the plan is essential and proposals to protect, sustain and improve services and infrastructure are welcomed and supported. As is a proposed spatial strategy that is regeneration and city led, followed thereafter by a number of strategic greenfield allocations.

The Council is pleased to note that it is reported that enough land has been identified through your Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment to enable the Milton Keynes housing requirement to be met within your administrative boundaries and that the published spatial strategy seeks to protect the character of the village and communities to the north of the city (paragraph 23) and is not proposing to allocate any standalone sites or extensions to rural settlements in that area, leaving instead town and parish councils to address local need through neighbourhood plans.

In respect of protecting the character of that area and its communities it is noted that large parts of the area are identified as being areas of search for new wind turbine and solar farm development (Policy GS7). Part of this area sits alongside one of West Northamptonshire's designated Special Landscape Areas ([South Northamptonshire Local Plan Policy NE2](#)) and we would suggest that the quality of the landscape and its sensitivity to change does not diminish at the county boundary and ask that further consideration is given to the areas of search and the potential impact of development in this area on the wider landscape and its designated heritage assets including the setting of villages such as Yardley Gobion and Grafton Regis and relationship of the Registered Historic Park and Gardens of Stoke Park and Easton Neston to the wider landscape.

Elsewhere to the north of the city it is noted that the draft plan proposes to remove the open countryside designation from Hanslope Park reconstituting it as a key employment site (Policy GS8). The draft plan also identifies that there may be the need, longer term, to expand the Hanslope campus to accommodate additional or changing needs, and there is the prospect of a wider masterplan and/or potential Local Development Order being prepared to guide how the campus can grow and change (para 76). Hanslope Park currently employs over 3,000 people making it one of the largest single employers in Milton Keynes however if it is to grow further care is needed to ensure such growth does not impact on the character of the wider area including through highways impacts. Existing and planned growth within West Northamptonshire needs to be considered in future decisions and it is pleasing to see that limb B of Policy GS8 now requires that transport statements and highways assessment to be undertaken for proposals that lead to the addition of employment and storage floorspace.

With regards to other employment sites paragraph 30 of the plan sets out that the logistics industry has exhibited strong growth in recent years, with many large warehouses constructed within the city. It also states that whilst demand in this sector remains strong that opportunities for further growth in Milton Keynes are diminishing due to the lack of suitable sites to accommodate the specific needs in this sector. Paragraph 38 continues to set out that there is a forecast need identified in your HEDNA for around 433 hectares of land for warehousing, office and general industrial purposes, most of which is for warehousing (310ha). The plan does not however make any significant allocations for strategic warehousing and logistics instead focussing on how other sectors and businesses of different sizes and maturity can be supported to maintain Milton Keynes' economic success through a variety of sectors and specialisms. Your proposed approach for achieving this is set out in Policy GS3 which includes 207ha of employment land allocations, mostly non-strategic in scale. This is an area of concern to this authority with the potential to be a soundness issue because if the identified need is not met locally, it could put pressures on other nearby authorities to meet this need, in addition to what has already been identified for their own areas. This is recognised itself in Paragraph 38 the closing sentence of which states that *'If suitable sites for warehousing development are not available in Milton Keynes, developers will seek to develop sites where suitable sites are available.'*

As previously stated, we are committed to continue to engage with you as Plan MK develops alongside the new West Northamptonshire Local Plan to ensure that cross border matters are appropriately considered.

Kind regards

Alan

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