

## **Consultation Response: Milton Keynes City Plan 2050 – Regulation 19 Consultation**

**From:** Beachampton Parish Council

**To:** Milton Keynes City Council

**Date:** 16<sup>th</sup> February 2026

**Subject:** Formal Response to the Milton Keynes City Plan 2050 Regulation 19 Consultation

### **Introduction**

Beachampton Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Milton Keynes City Plan 2050 – Regulation 19 Consultation. As a Parish Council, we are deeply committed to safeguarding the distinct character and unique qualities of Beachampton, whilst ensuring that the wider development of Milton Keynes City contributes positively to the well-being of all its communities, including our rural parish. We have reviewed the Proposed Submission document and offer the following comments, objections, and recommendations.

### **Summary of Key Concerns and Priorities**

Beachampton Parish Council acknowledges and generally supports the Plan's overarching ambition for sustainable and well-planned growth. However, our primary concerns revolve around the potential impacts of this growth on rural settlements and the integrity of the surrounding natural landscape, particularly in the western border areas of the City. Our key priorities include:

- **Protecting Rural Character and Valued Landscapes:** Ensuring Beachampton retains its distinct identity and is not subject to urban sprawl, disproportionate development, excessive solar/battery farm developments, or the erosion of sensitive natural boundaries such as the Shenley Ridge and the Whaddon/Nash valley.
- **Adequate Infrastructure Provision:** Clarification on how the 'Infrastructure First' approach will benefit, or at least not detrimentally impact, rural areas, specifically addressing concerns about increased traffic and surface water run-off exacerbated by urban expansion.
- **Environmental Safeguarding:** Robust protection for the open countryside, local landscapes, and biodiversity against the cumulative effects of urban expansion and ensuring development is consistent with national planning policy requirements to protect and enhance valued landscapes.
- **Appropriate Local Development:** Ensuring any development within Beachampton is driven by genuine local needs and respects the existing scale and amenities of the village, and that proposals for Gypsy and Traveller pitches are appropriately sited and proportionate.
- **Robust Evidence Base:** Concerns that some allocations lack a sufficiently wide-ranging and up-to-date evidence base, particularly concerning landscape impact beyond the immediate administrative boundary.

### **Response to Specific Policies and Sections**

**Our Ambition and Objectives (Pages 7-10)** We welcome the Plan's focus on sustainable development and on creating people-friendly, healthy places. We agree these principles are important in both urban and rural areas. However, for Tier 2 settlements such as Beachampton, it is essential that any development is appropriately scaled and reflects local character and constraints to ensure it genuinely supports these objectives

**Our Spatial Strategy (Policy GS1, Page 18)** Beachampton Parish Council strongly supports the designation of villages such as Beachampton as Tier 2 settlements. While Beachampton falls outside the administrative City of Milton Keynes boundary, its close proximity to the expanding urban area means it remains significantly impacted by the overall City Plan. Therefore, we agree that development within our parish, as a Tier 2 settlement, "should focus on meeting local needs, including locations identified in relevant made Neighbourhood Plans". This clear differentiation is crucial for preserving our distinct rural identity amidst urban growth pressures. We seek assurance that this policy will be strictly applied to prevent speculative development inconsistent with local character and that the specific approach for Tier 2 settlements will be robustly applied to Beachampton.

**Our Growth Strategy (Pages 12-17)** The strategy outlines ambitious growth targets and significant investment in infrastructure for the City. While we recognise the need for this, we are concerned about the cumulative impact of such large-scale growth on the wider rural environment, even for areas not directly allocated for expansion. Increased traffic, pressure on services, and visual intrusion from neighbouring developments could indirectly affect our parish. We note the Plan identifies an overallocated housing requirement with a 19% buffer (Page 13, Para 7, and Page 21, Policy GS2.A). This raises questions about the necessity of all proposed allocations, particularly those in sensitive landscapes.

**Protecting our Open Countryside (Policy GS6, Page 38)** We strongly support Policy GS6, which designates land outside settlement boundaries as Open Countryside and aims to maintain its openness and character. This policy is fundamental to Beachampton's distinct rural setting. We urge the City Council to apply this policy rigorously, particularly in scenarios where smaller-scale applications in the Open Countryside are considered, ensuring that exceptions are genuinely limited and justified. The Parish Council would appreciate further clarity on what constitutes "disproportionate" extensions or ancillary structures, as per section B.3.6., to ensure consistent interpretation in rural settings.

**Wind and solar development spatial strategy (Policy GS7, Page 41)** We object to wind and solar development which will impact Beachampton, the Open Countryside described above, adversely affect protected landscapes, cause cumulative and visual impacts that cannot be satisfactorily mitigated from view, and cause increases in surface water run-off adding to already worrying local flooding issues.

**Movement and Access (Policy GS10, Page 47)** We support the emphasis on sustainable travel, active modes, and public transport within the Plan. However, for a rural parish like Beachampton, the practical application of these principles differs significantly from urban areas.

- **Traffic Impact:** We are concerned that increased traffic from wider city growth, particularly on secondary routes, could lead to "rat-running" through Beachampton's lanes, compromising local road safety and tranquillity. We seek specific measures to prevent this and to ensure that Policy GS10.A, regarding "severe impact on the operation of the highway" and "unacceptable impact on highway safety," explicitly covers rural lanes and access points.
- **Public Transport:** While the Metro system is proposed for the city, rural areas often lack adequate public transport. Any future plans should consider how our residents can access services and employment without solely relying on private cars.
- **Active Travel:** We support the provision of safe and attractive walking and cycling connections (Policy GS10.B.2). We would welcome specific consideration for enhancing existing rural

bridleways and footpaths within and around Beachampton, integrating them into wider networks where appropriate, without undermining their rural character.

**Infrastructure First (Policy INF1, Page 82)** The 'Infrastructure First' approach is a commendable principle. However, we seek greater clarity on how infrastructure provision and funding will specifically address the needs of Tier 2 settlements. Policy INF1.A refers to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and Annex F benchmarks, but these appear predominantly focused on large-scale urban developments.

- **Rural Services:** We are concerned that essential rural infrastructure (e.g., adequate broadband, maintenance of rural roads, or even localised community facilities) may be overlooked in favour of large-scale city projects.
- **Funding:** We request clarification on how developer contributions, particularly from larger strategic allocations that may have indirect impacts on rural areas, could contribute to infrastructure improvements within or benefitting our parish.

**Strategic City Extensions – Shenley Dens (Policy GS19, Page 69)** Beachampton Parish Council objects to the inclusion of the Shenley Dens Strategic City Extension (SCE) in the Proposed Submission MK City Plan 2050 (Policy GS19). This 1,000-home site, located to the north of Whaddon and west of Grange Farm, would significantly impact the western border of the City and its sensitive rural landscape. Our objections are aligned with documented concerns from neighbouring parishes and historical planning decisions:

- **Breach of Shenley Ridge and Landscape Integrity:** This development would breach the Shenley Ridge, threatening the integrity of the Whaddon/Nash valley, a landscape with demonstrable physical attributes "beyond the ordinary." This directly contradicts the Plan's goal to "Conserve and, where possible, enhance the special character and key landscape qualities of the area" (Page 69, Policy GS19.C.3).
- **Lack of Justification against Alternatives:** The allocation is not justified against reasonable alternatives (e.g., further expansion east of the city beyond the M1, where the wider landscape is less sensitive and housing over-provision).
- **Inconsistency with NPPF:** The allocation is inconsistent with the latest National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requirements to protect and enhance valued landscapes, allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, and provide proportionate evidence.
- **Previous Planning Inspector's Findings:** This same site was previously proposed when the current Local Plan for Milton Keynes was being prepared back in 2003, but at that time it was known as Area 10.4, part of the Western Expansion Area. We highlight the findings of the Planning Inspector in 2004, who forcefully recommended the deletion from the then Local Plan due to its inappropriate nature in this sensitive landscape. We question what new evidence supports the reversal of this long-standing protection.
- **Inadequate Landscape Assessment:** Concerns exist that previous landscape reports stopped at the Milton Keynes administrative boundary and did not properly consider the wider Buckinghamshire context and the visual and physical association of Shenley Dens with the clay lowlands to the west.
- **Transport and Blue Infrastructure Deficiencies:** The Indicative Concept Plan for Shenley Dens (Figure 5, Page 71) appears to show little thought regarding transport and blue infrastructure. Specifically, there is no explanation of how surface water run-off, which will naturally flow into

the Whaddon brook catchment, will be managed without exacerbating existing flooding problems downstream in local villages and Stony Stratford. **This also impacts Beachampton's flood risk.**

- **Unwarranted Over-Supply:** Given that the MK City Plan 2050 already tallies approximately 60,000 homes, including a 19% buffer (Page 21, Policy GS2.A), the 1,000 homes at Shenley Dens could be considered an unwarranted and unnecessary over-supply that profoundly damages a tranquil rural landscape.

**Accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers (Policy HQH6, Page 149)** Beachampton Parish Council notes Policy HQH6 proposes 15 pitches for Gypsies and Travellers "West of Whaddon Road" (by 2030) and 15 pitches within the "Shenley Dens Strategic City Extension" (by 2035). We are concerned that placing a "disproportionate share of new pitches for Gypsies and Travellers on the western border of the city" is not justifiable. Furthermore, placing pitches in a remote corner of the Shenley Dens site, within an area designated for trees and a landscape buffer, lacks logical rationale and raises questions about suitability and accessibility to facilities for residents.

**Conserving and Enhancing Landscape Character/Special Landscape Areas (Policy CEA12, Page 185)** Beachampton is situated within a landscape context that holds significant value to our community. We strongly support Policy CEA12's objective to "conserve and enhance the landscape character". If Beachampton is located within or adjacent to a designated Special Landscape Area (SLA), we would expect the rigorous application of criteria C.1-4 to ensure "special character and key landscape qualities" are protected. We also advocate for considering "dark skies" as a key landscape quality, particularly important in rural areas, and request that Policy CEA7.K.4 on light pollution be strictly applied.

**Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and Integrated Flood Risk and Water Management (Policy CEA13, Page 188)** We note the Plan's commitment to reducing flood risk through SuDS. However, specific concerns arise from the Shenley Dens proposal. The lack of detailed blue infrastructure in the Indicative Concept Plan (Figure 5, Page 71) for Shenley Dens, combined with the natural water flow into the Whaddon brook catchment, is highly worrying. We request specific details on how run-off into the Whaddon Brook catchment will be addressed. Policy CEA13 must ensure that all new developments, particularly large-scale ones, provide clear, robust evidence of how surface water run-off will be managed without exacerbating existing flooding problems in downstream communities like Beachampton.

### **Proposed Solutions and Recommendations**

Beachampton Parish Council proposes the following:

1. **Deletion of Shenley Dens Strategic City Extension:** We recommend the deletion of the Shenley Dens Strategic City Extension (Policy GS19) from the Plan. The arguments relating to landscape sensitivity, inconsistency with NPPF, previous Inspector's findings, and over-provision of housing are compelling.
2. **Re-evaluation of Western Border Pitches:** Re-evaluate the allocation of Gypsy and Traveller pitches along the western border of the City, including those proposed at Shenley Dens and West of Whaddon Road, to ensure a more proportionate and suitable distribution across the city, with clear justification for chosen sites.
3. **Alternative Growth Locations:** Explore alternative growth locations, such as further expansion to the east of the City beyond the M1, which are less environmentally sensitive and potentially

better suited to accommodating larger-scale development, as identified in previous consultations.

4. **Refined Policy Guidance for Tier 2 Settlements:** We recommend the inclusion of supplementary text or a specific guidance note that clarifies how the Plan's policies, particularly those related to housing, infrastructure, and design, will be applied sensitively and proportionately to Tier 2 rural settlements, respecting their distinct character and local needs.
5. **Rural Infrastructure Audit:** We recommend a specific audit of existing rural infrastructure capacity and needs, separate from the primary urban IDP, to ensure that the Plan's 'Infrastructure First' approach truly benefits all communities. This must explicitly include assessments of downstream impacts of surface water run-off on rural areas.
6. **Traffic Management in Rural Areas:** Develop specific strategies or criteria within Policy GS10 to address and mitigate potential "rat-running" through rural lanes caused by urban congestion or new developments.
7. **Local Landscape Designation Review:** Ensure continuous review and, if appropriate, designation of local landscape assets within the parish, providing additional protection under Policy CEA12, and prioritising dark skies policies.
8. **Community Engagement on Design Codes:** Any future design codes affecting Beachampton should be developed in close collaboration with the Parish Council and local community to ensure they reflect our unique local character.

## Conclusion

Beachampton Parish Council appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the Milton Keynes City Plan 2050. We believe that with careful consideration and sensitivity to rural contexts, coupled with a robust and transparent evidence base that respects historical planning decisions and wider landscape values, the Plan can achieve its ambitious goals while preserving the valuable distinctiveness of villages like Beachampton. We look forward to continuing our engagement with Milton Keynes City Council throughout the adoption process and beyond, ensuring a prosperous and sustainable future for all residents.