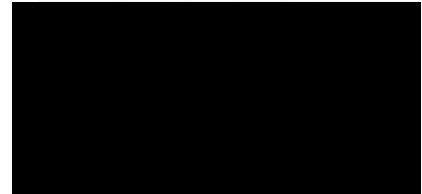


16 February 2026



**The Forest Centre
Station Road
Marston Moretaine
Bedfordshire MK43 0PR**

Milton Keynes City Council
Development Plans Team
1 Saxon Gate East
Milton Keynes
MK9 3EJ



Dear Sir/Madam

MK City Plan 2050 – Regulation 19 Consultation

The Forest of Marston Vale Trust is the charity leading on the delivery of the environmentally led regeneration of the Marston Vale by creating the Forest of Marston Vale. The Forest is one of 15 nationally designated Community Forests, with a Government set target to increase woodland cover to 30% by 2031. As one of England's Community Forests, the vision to create the Forest of Marston Vale benefits from both Government and national policy support. The National Planning Policy Framework states that:

“Community Forests offer valuable opportunities for improving the environment around towns, by upgrading the landscape and providing for recreation and wildlife. An approved Community Forest Plan may be material consideration in preparing development plans and deciding planning applications.” (NPPF, para 92)

Central Bedfordshire Council Planning Support

The delivery of the Forest is supported by Policy CS16 (Landscape and Woodlands) and Policy CS17 (Green Infrastructure) of the **Central Bedfordshire Core Strategy 2009**, which states that the Council will:

“Continue to support the creation of the Forest of Marston Vale recognising the need to regenerate the environmentally damaged landscape through woodland creation to achieve the target of 30% woodland cover in the Forest area by 2030” (CS16)

“Seek a net gain in green infrastructure through the protection and enhancement of assets and provision of new greenspaces as set out in the strategic, Mid Bedfordshire and Parish Green Infrastructure Plans.

Take forward priority areas for the provision of new green infrastructure in the Forest of Marston Vale (including Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway), the Ivel Valley, the Greensand Ridge, the Flit Valley and the Chilterns).

Require new developments to contribute towards the delivery of new green infrastructure and the management of a linked network of new and enhanced open spaces and corridors.” (CS17)

Central Bedfordshire Council Local Plan - Policy EE9 - Forest of Marston Vale

Central Bedfordshire Council will continue to support the creation of the Forest of Marston Vale to deliver the environmentally led regeneration of the area. Development proposals within the Forest of Marston Vale will be required to:

1. Demonstrate how they will deliver 30% tree canopy cover, within the public realm, across the development site. This can be achieved through a combination of retaining and protecting existing trees, woodlands and hedgerows, and the on-site planting of new trees, woodlands, and hedgerows; and
2. Contribute to the environmentally led regeneration of the Forest of Marston Vale, in line with the aims of the Forest Plan. Only where robust evidence agreed by the Council can demonstrate that 30% tree canopy cover cannot be delivered within the public realm on site, will alternative delivery mechanisms be considered.

Bedford Borough Council Planning Support

The Bedford Borough Local Plan includes specific policy support for developments to assist in the implementation and creation of the Forest (Policy NE21) as set out within the Forest Plan. The LDF Core Strategy has preserved the sentiment of this policy support in Policy CP24.

The Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 contains the following supporting policies:

- Policy 28s - Place Making
Development will be expected to contribute to good place-making. This will be achieved by requiring development proposals:
To contribute to the creation of the Forest of Marston Vale (when within or close to the Forest of Marston Vale area).
- Policy 35s - Green Infrastructure
The Council will work with developers and other partners to deliver the three strategic green infrastructure projects: The Forest of Marston Vale, the Bedford River Valley Park and the Bedford to Milton Keynes Waterway Park.
- Policy 36s - Forest of Marston Vale
To help the delivery of the 30% forest cover, developments within the Forest of Marston Vale will be expected to provide new tree cover on the development site. This can be in the form of woodland in a major development site, through to individual trees and hedgerows on smaller sites. The Council will expect proposals to

address the aims of the project as set out in Forest Plan 2000 and seek contributions towards its implementation, including the 30% woodland cover target.

Forest of Marston Vale: Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Adopted December 2022.

- The SPD sets out how the planning policies for the Forest of Marston Vale will be implemented, as set out in the Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council Local Plans. It has been produced jointly by the Forest of Marston Vale Trust, Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council. The Guidance relates to the Forest of Marston Vale (as designated by Government as one of England's Community Forests).
- The SPD provides design guidance on the scale and type of green infrastructure, and built design principles, that are required in the Forest of Marston Vale area. Its purpose is to demonstrate how development can contribute positively to the creation of the Forest – both in creating attractive wooded settings and in its built form, to strongly tie new development with the Forest ethos, and its developing 'sense of place' across the designated Forest Area. The SPD will be a material consideration in the determination of development proposals in the Forest of Marston Vale area.

Section 92 of The National Planning Policy Guidelines states:

Community Forests offer valuable opportunities for improving the environment around towns, by upgrading the landscape and providing for recreation and wildlife

The Government's 25-year Environment Plan promotes investing in natural capital, supports Community Forests, sets ambitious targets for tree planting, and sets out government action to help the natural world regain and retain good health. It aims to deliver cleaner air and water in our cities and rural landscapes, protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats. It calls for an approach to agriculture, forestry, land use and fishing that puts the environment first.

Development sites should contribute towards the achievement of the 30% woodland cover by maximising woodland or tree cover (with a 30% woodland cover target) across the development site. The trees and woodland should ideally be located within the public realm.

In accordance with its role as primary agent for the creation of the Forest of Marston Vale on behalf of Central Bedfordshire Council, the Forest of Marston Vale Trusts comments on applications to encourage developments within the Forest of Marston Vale to contribute to the delivery of the Forest, by providing tree canopy equivalent to 30% of the development site.

Site Specific Comments

The Forest of Marston Vale Trusts consistent approach to development within the Forest area is based on the fundamental issue of land availability for tree planting, applying a simple arithmetic approach to achieving the target of 30% woodland cover by 2031.

Delivering 30% of woodland or canopy cover could be achieved by any or a combination of the options below:

1. Plant a single area of new woodland of the required size;
2. Plant several areas of new woodland totalling the required size;
3. Integrate extensive individual and group tree planting into the development, over and above normal landscaping requirements and sufficient to ultimately yield >30% canopy cover utilising:
 - a) street trees
 - b) substantial tree planting to public realm/open space, including creation of woodland belts and trees within landscaping schemes
 - c) planting of new hedgerows with hedgerow trees
 - d) creation of woodlands as part of sustainable drainage (e.g. wet woodlands)
 - e) creation of community orchards
4. Financial contribution based on offsite planting delivered by Forest of Marston Vale Trust

Thank you for consulting the Forest of Marston Vale Trust on the MK City Plan 2050.

The MK City Plan 2050 Proposed Policies Map highlights an area called 'Eastern Strategic City Expansion' and is located along the southwestern boundaries of Central Bedfordshire and the Forest of Marston Vale. Although the proposed Eastern expansion area is outside the Forest Boundary there is precedent for developments building near to the boundary to deliver on the Forest Policy.

Planting areas of woodland along the Forest of Marston Vale boundary would create essential green corridors that boost biodiversity, mitigate climate change through carbon sequestration, and reduce flood risks. Green corridors also improve local air quality, reduce urban heat island effects, and enhance the physical and mental well-being of residents by providing accessible natural spaces.

Key reasons for planting woodlands:

- Environmental and Climate Benefits: Woodlands act as carbon sinks, helping to meet net-zero targets. They also help alleviate the impact of drought, reduce soil erosion, and improve air quality by filtering pollutants.
- Biodiversity and Habitat Connectivity: These wooded areas provide vital wildlife corridors that connect fragmented habitats, allowing species to move and thrive, thus supporting nature recovery.
- Flood Risk and Water Management: Strategically planted trees reduce the risk of flooding in vulnerable areas by slowing water runoff, protecting new homes from damage.
- Improving Quality of Life: Woodlands provide residents with recreational spaces, reducing noise pollution from traffic and improving mental and physical health.

- Mitigating Urban Heat Islands: Trees reduce ambient temperatures in built-up areas through shade and evapotranspiration, mitigating the "urban heat island" effect where concrete absorbs and releases heat.
- Sustainability and Compliance: New developments must often meet "biodiversity net gain" requirements, and planting trees is a key method to meet these legal and environmental responsibilities.
- Protecting Local Character: Creating new areas of woodland and open space would help protect the rural nature of Central Beds Councils Western boundary with Milton Keynes

Should you have any questions regarding the above then please contact me to discuss further.

Kind regards

Darren Woodward
Forest Development Manager