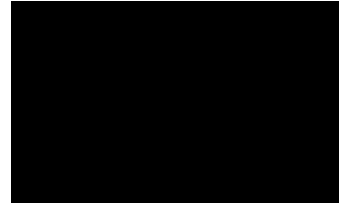


22 December 2025



Planning Policy Team
Milton Keynes City Council
Civic Office
1 Saxon Gate East
Central Milton Keynes
MK9 3EJ

Ollie Wheeler



By email to ncp.engagement@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Dear Sir / Madam

**MK CITY PLAN 2050 – DRAFT LOCAL PLAN REGULATION 19 CONSULTATION
OPEN UNIVERSITY**

We write on behalf of our client, the Open University, in response to the Council’s consultation (Regulation 19) as part of the preparation of the new Local Plan.

Background

The Open University was launched in 1969, focussed on widening education choice by providing open distance learning opportunities. Since then, more than 2.3 million people worldwide have achieved their learning goals by studying with the Open University. It is one of the largest universities in Europe with over 200,000 students and around 10,000 staff. The OU makes a significant contribution to both the Milton Keynes and national economy.

The Open University (‘OU’) is based at Walton Hall and the adjacent East Campus. Following on from changing working patterns after the pandemic, elements of Walton Hall campus are now underused and there are opportunities for alternative uses and redevelopment. However, the University’s first priority is to consider uses or development that align with (and have the potential to advance) its teaching, learning, research and commercial activities. Therefore we request that the housing targets set out for the Walton Hall brownfield site are amended accordingly.

General

The OU supports the ambition and objectives for growth in the MK City Plan 2050 and looks forward to being a key contributor to that ambition and growth, not least via the new Civic University Agreement signed between the OU, MKCC and other key local partners. We support in particular the ambition for People-Friendly and Health Places and Climate and Environmental Action.



Policy GS13 Redevelopment of Walton Campus

Walton Hall campus comprises:

- The main Walton Hall OU Campus (45 hectares)
- The Northern Reserve site (6.5 hectares)
- East Campus (2.8 hectares)

Walton Hall

The OU has taken the decision to remain predominately based at Walton Hall.

In this light, the University seeks to consolidate its presence at Walton Hall by continuing (and indeed enhancing) university / education uses across the campus. The OU's priority is to attract uses to the site which could complement and enhance the OU's teaching and research specialisms (or be otherwise commercially aligned with the OU's growth areas). The overall ambition is to create a university-centred hub for mixed-use development. This fits well with the Council's ambition set out within Policy GS3, the Strategy for Economic Prosperity.

Universities can be great catalysts for enterprise, either for existing firms that would benefit from collaboration with the OU or by creating start up space for small and medium enterprise with links to the OU, its students or alumni. New uses could be found within underused space within Walton Hall's existing buildings or established through new development. This form of co-location, if accommodated and nurtured in the right way, could be more beneficial to the OU and MK economy (by advancing the capabilities and reach of the University and its offer) than land receipts from non-university linked development.

In short, the University's first priority is its teaching, learning and commercial activities. So other types of development can only come forward if the OU is absolutely sure it will not need the land for its primary purposes. It is important therefore that the Local Plan reflects this approach.

Northern Reserve and East Campus

In line with the above, East Campus may become available for alternative uses and the OU is currently in pre-application discussions with the Council about a residential proposal. However, for the avoidance of doubt, if a University or University related use arises for East Campus then the OU is highly likely to prioritise that use over any potential redevelopment.

It is unlikely that the University will need northern reserve site for its primary purposes. However, the location of the site and proximity to the University do mean that commercial uses might be more appropriate for Northern Reserve site.

Therefore whilst the OU raises no objections to the principle of residential-led development of these sites, for complete transparency, the OU would like to make clear that it is still considering development options for these sites. This could include residential or commercial uses.

The University is also considering introducing activities that may support the aspiration for more partners and/or commercial occupiers. For example, enhancing leisure and sports facilities. This would enhance the attraction of the campus for staff/students, for partner organisations and help attract commercial occupiers.

We therefore propose the following changes to Policy GS13:

Policy GS13 Redevelopment of Walton <u>Hall</u> Campus
Policy type: Strategic
Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12,
Site/sub-area: Walton <u>Hall</u> Campus
<p>A. The Walton <u>Hall</u> Campus sites are <u>identified for use by the Open University. Development that is consistent with the University's teaching, learning, research and associated commercial activities will generally be supported.</u></p> <p>B. <u>In the event that land becomes available for redevelopment the sites could accommodate allocated to provide</u> mixed-use residential-led development with around 300 new homes <u>and/or commercial development</u> on site 1 (northern reserve) and around 150 homes on site 2 (East Campus).</p> <p>C. Development proposals will be required to meet the following criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provision of early years, primary, secondary and SEND education contributions appropriate to the scale and nature of <u>any residential</u> development proposal; 2. Primary and other health and social care provision as appropriate to the scale and nature of <u>any residential</u> development proposal; 3. An appropriate mix of community uses and facilities to support new residents and create a people friendly healthy neighbourhood that takes into account and complements existing community uses and facilities within 1000m catchment of the development proposal; 4. Provide at least 5% of the total dwelling plots as serviced dwelling plots for sale to custom builders in line with Policy HQH1; 5. Deliver an integrated green and blue infrastructure and open space framework in accordance with the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, the Council's Nature, Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy, and open space standards and which protects the existing grid road buffer and creates a link to the Ouzel Valley Linear Park; 6. Provide an integrated network of low- and zero-carbon energy infrastructure from building scale to neighbourhood or district scale; and 7. Incorporate transport infrastructure that follows the movement hierarchy set out in Policy GS4 to include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. New segregated routes and/or enhancements to existing routes for active travel that integrate well with the surrounding area and public transport networks; and b. Infrastructure and traffic management measures to mitigate impacts upon the wider highway network.

The OU acknowledges that the Council is under pressure to deliver land for housing and that the proposed amendments (and uncertainty) is not helpful in this context. However, the University has to prioritise its primary purposes, which in turn will support and deliver on the Plan's strategic priorities for growth, and the representations are made in that light. We will continue to liaise with the Council throughout the local plan period and provide updates as appropriate.

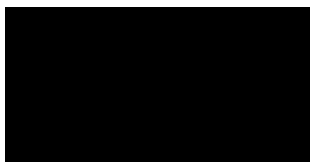
Conclusion

The OU welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Local Plan and supports the ambition and objectives for growth.

The priority for the University is of course the advancement of its teaching, learning, research and commercial activities and it needs to first consider whether development at Walton Hall can create a hub for opportunities linked to the OU's primary purpose. Plans for the remainder of Walton Hall Campus will develop over time, but commercial and residential development remain possible.

We would be grateful for confirmation that this letter of representation has been received, and that it will be taken into account. We would be pleased to engage with the Council's policy team and would welcome further discussion on the points raised herein through a meeting with Officers.

Yours faithfully,



Ollie Wheeler MRTPI
Savills