

## **WALTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

### **PLAN:MK STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTIONS CONSULTATION**

Walton Community Council (WCC) considered the Milton Keynes Council's Plan:MK Strategic Development Directions Consultation document at its Full Council meeting in February and at that meeting, established Plan:MK Working Group to consider the issues in further detail and to write a full and considered response to the document.

WCC welcomed the opportunity to respond to the consultation about the longer term growth of Milton Keynes and how that future growth could be accommodated. The Council also welcomed the statement that Plan:MK was being prepared in the context of plans being developed in adjacent areas, in particular Aylesbury Vale and Central Bedfordshire.

The Council welcomes the comment that Plan:MK will provide the strategic context for Neighbourhood Plans which had been prepared by Town and Parish Councils. However, this Council's Neighbourhood Plan, which is currently out for consultation has been prepared in accordance with the strategic policies as set out in MKC's Core Strategy. Since Plan:MK will replace the Core Strategy and so too, some of the strategic policies within the Core Strategy, Walton Community Council was concerned that this could significantly impact on its agreed Neighbourhood Plan which has gone through an open and transparent process of consultation. Existing Neighbourhood Plans should be honoured and taken into account, as approved.

The Plan:MK Working Group considered the document in detail and responded to each of the questions put in the document.

### **SECTION 3 – LONGER TERM VISION AND OPPORTUNITIES**

#### **Question 1 – Workshop Outputs for a Longer Term Vision**

**Do you agree that these bullet points are a useful starting point to be used alongside other inputs (including the outcomes of the MK Futures 2050 Commission) for a Vision for Plan:MK and Milton Keynes in the longer term?**

**Point 1** – The Council agrees with this to a point. The Council would suggest that MK should continue to grow in a sustainable way that respects the original concepts.

**Point 2** – The Council agreed with this statement.

**Point 3** – The Council would wish MK maintains easy movement throughout Milton Keynes through the retention of the grid roads and redways. However, the Council welcomes innovative ways to improve the use of public transport.

**Point 4** – The Council wholeheartedly supports this statement. The Council considers that the building of a university would help to develop Milton Keynes as an internationally recognised innovative city.

**Point 5** – The Council agrees with this statement but would caution that any future growth and change should respect Milton Keynes' original concepts.

**Point 6** – WCC is keen that fast broadband / fibre-optics should be in place and considered as much as a priority as utilities.

**Point 7** – WCC agrees with this statement

**Point 8** – WCC agrees that Milton Keynes welcomes diversity and would wish to see a thriving and fully integrated community throughout the whole of Milton Keynes.

### **Question 2 – Form of Vision for Plan:MK**

**When we come to write the Vision for Plan:MK do you think it would work best as a short, bullet point list or would there be value in expanding each aim with some explanatory text to provide more detail about what it covers?**

WCC would prefer to see an expanded description with explanatory text. However, to have a vision for MK would require details of how that vision was to be delivered. WCC believes that, through the Plan:MK process, Milton Keynes should concentrate on developing a strategy based on realistic plans with a specific direction rather than developing an aspirational vision.

### **Question 3 – Other Opportunities**

**What are your thoughts on this list of workshop outputs? Do you think there are any that should be considered further through Plan:MK?**

WCC is generally in favour of all the outputs listed.

WCC firmly believes that MK should retain and extend, where appropriate, an integrated transport system in CMK and beyond by using the grid roads and alternative methods of transport, including light rail, tram or an overhead system if feasible. MK is in need of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century public transport system in line with its 21<sup>st</sup> Century need.

WCC would wish to further promote MK as a place of innovation and setting high standards for new development and energy efficiency by providing 'homes of the future'

## **Question 4 – The next ‘big things’ for Milton Keynes**

### **What sorts of facilities or opportunities do you think Milton Keynes should try to develop in the future?**

WCC believes that MK should provide and take up opportunities for the development of the following facilities:

- A University with a Undergraduate Programme, complete with campus and halls of residence.
- Sports Training Facilities – to provide new opportunities and to support existing facilities (e.g. Stadium:MK)
- Better use of Existing facilities e.g. The Bowl
- Larger hospital
- ‘I’ before ‘E’ – to put in place the required infrastructure to support development such as hospitals, schools, GP surgeries, open space, retail etc to alleviate the pressure of existing facilities and the city centre.
- Better use of leisure facilities e.g Grand Union Canal

## **SECTION 4 – DEVELOPMENT DIRECTIONS**

### **Question 5 – Continued Outward Expansion of Milton Keynes Urban Area (Direction of Growth 1)**

**Do you think that continuing the outward expansion of the Milton Keynes Urban area in this direction is the best way to accommodate new development in the longer term?**

In general, WCC would consider a number of areas appropriate for development on the proviso that the appropriate amount of infrastructure was in place to support such developments.

However, WCC believes that this direction of growth is not the best way to accommodate new development in the longer term as considerable capital investment would be required to ensure this direction of growth was viable. WCC has suggested that other possible areas be considered for expansion, such as Hanslope and Castlethorpe, to the west of Milton Keynes. However, WCC recognises that there would be constraints which would restrict development in that particular direction and considers that as a consequence, Direction of Growth 1 is the most likely direction of growth which will bear the consequences of the constraints in other areas.

There is already considerable pressure on the A421 and as an alternative to that which is set out in figure 3, WCC would request that, instead, consideration be given for the building of a bridge / tunnel or possibly a grade separated junction.

Development south may be an option (extension of Salden Chase), although this area was outside of the administrative boundary. WCC considered that further development in the South East was inappropriate although development in the Southwest (Newton Longville) could be a possibility on the proviso that an appropriate amount of infrastructure was in place before expansion took place, the building of a southern bypass, the creation of a V0 and a moveable boundary.

#### **Question 6 - Sensitivity of areas of the edge of Milton Keynes to new development (Direction of Growth 1)**

**Are some areas of the edge of Milton Keynes identified in this direction more sensitive to new development than others? If so, which? Are there some areas identified in this direction that you think are more suitable?**

WCC believes that all development in this direction is sensitive.

#### **Question 7 – Final extent of outward expansion of Milton Keynes (Direction of Growth 1)**

**If Direction of Growth 1 were to proceed, should we define an eventual ‘final extent’ of development? If so, where should this be?**

WCC considers the ‘final extent’ as the status quo. Until more detail was available, WCC believes that this direction of growth is inappropriate and thus, inappropriate to define the boundaries. Development in the South West would be easier in that there are fewer constraints than in the South.

#### **Question 8 – Treatment of existing settlements in Direction of Growth 1**

**Is a green buffer the best way of protecting the character and integrity of the existing settlements that lie within the areas of new development identified in Direction of Growth 1? Or would you prefer to see them integrated in a similar fashion to the villages in the existing urban area, for example, Great Linford and Loughton?**

WCC would prefer to see green buffers integrated in the existing urban area.

**Question 9 – Scale of development east of the M1 (Direction of Growth 2)**  
**What do you think about the scale of the development suggested for east of the M1 in Direction of Growth 2?**

WCC believes that direction of growth 2 would concentrate development in too small an area which could lead to pressure around housing density. This approach is too unambitious and WCC suggests that development could be more extensive, possibly doubling the development proposals and extending development up to Cranfield. It would be important that the appropriate infrastructure was in place to support such a development and that the area should be 'attached' by bridges that are an extension of the existing grid system.

**Question 10 – Final Extent of development east of the M1 (Direction of Growth 2)**

**If Direction of Growth 2 were to proceed, should we define an eventual 'final extent' of development? If so, where should this be?**

This should include Cranfield and its airport. There should be no definable 'final extent' as the boundary should be moveable to ensure that sufficient infrastructure is in place to enable MK to grow in a sustainable way. There should be a sufficient bund between any residential area and the M1, or preferably to develop commercial area close to the M1 which would benefit business with easy access to the motorway. The road network should be an extension of the existing grid road system.

**Question 11 – Treatment of existing settlements in Direction of Growth 2**

**Is a green buffer the best way of protecting the character and integrity of the existing settlement that lie within the areas of new development identified in Direction of Growth 2? Or would you prefer to see them integrated in a similar fashion to the villages in the existing urban area, for example Great Linford and Loughton?**

See answer to question 8.

**Question 12 – Size of new settlement(s) (Direction of Growth 3)**

**Would it be better to have one much larger new settlement, like a Garden City, in the northern part of or adjacent to the Borough, which is large enough to be self-sufficient in terms of jobs, schools, health, shops and all other services? Or would you favour an approach of having several smaller settlements?**

WCC would favour development of a large area that could be masterplanned rather than smaller scale piecemeal developments. Such an area would have all the benefits of retaining a grid road system or, if the development was on the other side of the M1, WCC would be in favour of introducing a new junction of the M1.

**Question 13 – Possible locations for new satellite settlements (Direction of Growth 3)**

**Are there any locations that you think would be suitable for a satellite settlement? And if so, why?**

WCC would prefer to see a large satellite development in the areas of Hanslope / Castlethorpe on the proviso that appropriate infrastructure was put in place together with the development of an additional junction to the M1. WCC felt that this question was a difficult one to answer because of a lack of knowledge of any constraints in those areas e.g. risk of flooding etc.

**Question 14 – Final extent of new satellite settlements (Direction of Growth 3)  
If this approach were to proceed, should we define an eventual ‘final extent’ of development around any satellite settlement?**

WCC believes that the issue to consider is not necessarily the size of the development, but, instead to have a holistic and well-planned area of development with the appropriate infrastructure in place to support such development.

**Question 15 – Intensification and Redevelopment of the urban area (Direction of Growth 4)**

**Do you think that intensification and redevelopment of the existing urban area should take place alongside greenfield development as identified in the other directions of growth?**

WCC would favour the development of sites that had been earmarked for development e.g. the area located adjacent to the Jaipur restaurant. In particular, those areas that already have planning permission should be developed prior to any development outwards. There will be considerable pressure on the city centre and so areas with planning permission should be developed first and only then, brownfield sites should be further considered.

### **Question 16 – Types of Redevelopment of Intensification of the urban area (Direction of Growth 4)**

**Are there any of the redevelopment / intensification approaches mentioned above that you would particularly support, or that you think should not be considered? Are there any opportunities that have not been included?**

WCC believes that there should be no intensification within the urban area. Any suggestion to develop grid road corridors is totally unacceptable. Similarly, development of underused open space or amenity land is unacceptable unless it has been identified as suitable for possible development in an approved Neighbourhood Plan (e.g. Bergamot Gardens)

### **Question 17 – Other areas suitable for redevelopment (Direction of Growth 4) Are there any locations that you think would be particularly suitable for redevelopment?**

WCC would not wish to see a change in the character of the urban areas MK. However, WCC would wish to see refurbishment of housing stock at the end of its livable life prior to any re-development of the area. Further, WCC does not approve of the development of village streets in the place of grid roads.

### **Question 18 – Other approaches for longer term development**

**Do you think there are other possible development directions, beyond those that came out of the workshops, that should be considered?**

WCC considered that MK would benefit economically by investment in R&D. The Plan:MK document only considers development rather than taking a more holistic approach to development and including issues relating to employment and people's ability to travel around the Borough. Further, the document needs to provide a clear direction of infrastructure before expansion.

### **Question 19 – Your thoughts on the directions of growth**

**Are there elements of any of the directions that you particularly like or think have particular merit? Similarly, are there any elements that you think would be unworkable, even over the long term future? Are there any condition or requirements you would place on any of the approaches presented that would help to make them a sustainable direction of growth that you could support?**

Throughout the document, there is no thread to prioritise infrastructure before expansion. The document makes continual reference for the need for up front funding which places restriction on MK's vision for growth.

### **Question 20 – Order of preference of directions of growth**

**As mentioned at the start of this section, it is possible that the final Development Strategy in Plan:MK might involve a combination of parts or all of two or more of these directions of growth. Which of the directions of development would you consider to be the last resort, the one that you would find most difficult to support? Similarly, which do you think is the most sensible direction, that should be considered a priority?**

WCC believes it has already answered this question.