

Local Impact Report.

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Purpose	Local Impact Report on Green Hill Solar Farm (PINS reference EN010170)

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Local Impact Report (LIR) has been prepared by Milton Keynes City Council (MKCC) in accordance with the requirements of the Planning Act 2008 (the Act) as amended by the Localism Act 2011.
- 1.2 The LIR is the substantive position of the Council's in response to an application submitted by Green Island Power Ltd to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS), acting for the Secretary of State, for a Development Consent Order (DCO) authorising, in summary, the construction and operation (including maintenance) of a Photovoltaic (PV) panel array electricity generating facility, a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and supporting infrastructure.
- 1.3 The LIR provides details of the likely impact of the proposed development on the area and seeks to cover all themes that relevant to the impact of the proposed development.
- 1.4 In producing the LIR the Council has not sought the views of local parish councils and local interest groups as these parties have the opportunity, through the DCO consultation process, to make their observations directly to the Inspector.
- 1.5 The LIR is structured in the same order and covers the relevant topics from the applicant's Environmental Statement (ES). This considers the following local impacts relevant to the site within MKCC's boundary:
 - Climate change;
 - Landscape and visual impact assessment;
 - Ecology and biodiversity;
 - Hydrology, flood risk and drainage;
 - Minerals;
 - Cultural heritage;
 - Transport and access;
 - Noise and vibration;
 - Human health;
 - Arboriculture;
 - Agricultural circumstances; and
 - Cumulative effects.

2 Site description

- 2.1 The application site and constraints are clearly set out by the applicant within Chapter 3 of the ES, and MKCC are in the process of agreeing this within the Statement of Common Ground (SoCG).
- 2.2 The total site comprises 1,441.4 hectares of land that is located within the administrative boundaries of North Northamptonshire Council, West Northamptonshire Council and Milton Keynes City Council. It is understood that all three authorities will be submitting their own LIR to ensure that the Inspector is aware of the matters of concern to each authority.
- 2.3 Site G, which is located within the boundary of MKCC and the site of interest in this LIA, is approximately 170.9 hectares.
- 2.4 As agricultural land, Site G has had very limited formal planning history. This has not changed throughout the pre-examination process up to the date of writing this report.

3 Policy Framework

- 3.1 The PINS advice note for the preparation of LIRs refers to the inclusion of relevant development plan policies, supplementary planning guidance, development briefs or approved master plans. The LIR should also include the local authority's appraisal of the proposed development's compliance with local policy and guidance.

The Development Plan

- 3.2 [Lavendon Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2031](#) ('the LNP') (adopted 18 March 2020)

- Policy E1: Access to the countryside
- Policy E2: Biodiversity offset and development
- Policy E3: Trees and hedgerows
- Policy CD1: Conservation and heritage
- Policy FR1: Development and flood risk
- Policy HT1: Transport, highways and new development
- Policy HT2: Village highway enhancement

- 3.3 [Plan:MK](#) (adopted 20 March 2019):

- Policy DS5: Open countryside
- Policy CT2: Movement and access
- Policy FR1: Managing flood risk
- Policy FR2: Sustainable drainage systems and integrated flood risk management
- Policy FR3: Protecting and enhancing watercourses
- Policy NE1: Protection of sites
- Policy NE2: Protected species and priority species and habitats
- Policy NE3: Biodiversity and geological enhancement
- Policy NE4: Green Infrastructure
- Policy NE5: Conserving and enhancing landscape character
- Policy NE6: Environmental pollution
- Policy NE7: Protection of the best and most versatile agricultural land

- Policy HE1: Heritage and development
- Policy D1: Designing a high quality place
- Policy D2: Creating a positive character
- Policy SC2: Community energy networks and large scale renewable energy schemes
- Policy SC3: Low carbon and renewable energy generation

3.4 [Minerals Local Plan](#) ('the MLP') (adopted July 2017)

- Policy 18 – Minerals Safeguarding and Consultation Area

3.5 The Council also has adopted supplementary planning documents/guidance which is relevant to the proposal:

- Sustainable Construction SPD (2021)
- Planning Obligations SPD (2021)
- Health Impact Assessment SPD (2021)
- Biodiversity SPD (2021)
- Transport and Sustainable Transport SPD (2009)
- Milton Keynes Drainage Strategy - Development and Flood Risk SPG (2004)

3.6 The [Milton Keynes City Plan 2050](#) (MKCP) is also a material consideration. The first round of consultation closed on 9 October 2024. At the time of writing, a decision is scheduled to be made as to whether to proceed with the Regulation 19 consultation, with this intended to take place over November and December 2025. In accordance with paragraph 49 of the NPPF, weight can be given to emerging policies depending on the stage of preparation of the plan, the extent to which there are unresolved objections and their consistency with the NPPF. Owing to the current status of the emerging Milton Keynes City Plan and depending on the time it takes to complete the examination, the Inspector may need to seek a view from the Council as to the degree of weight which should be afforded to these policies, at the time of the decision. The following policies are relevant:

- Policy GS6: Open Countryside
- Policy GS7: Wind Turbine and Solar PV Spatial Strategy
- Policy GS10: Movement and Access
- Policy CEA6: Low and Zero Carbon Energy Provision
- Policy CEA7: Mitigating Wider Environmental Pollution
- Policy CEA9: Biodiversity and Habitats Network
- Policy CEA10: Protection and Enhancement of Environmental Infrastructure Network, Priority Species and Priority Habitats
- Policy CEA11: Urban Greening, Trees and Woodland
- Policy CEA12: Conserving and Enhancing Landscape Character/Special Landscape Areas
- Policy CEA13: Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and Integrated Flood Risk Management
- Policy CEA14: Protecting and Enhancing Watercourses
- Policy CEA15: Managing Flood Risk
- Policy ECP5: Heritage

3.7 The following evidence from the emerging Milton Keynes City Plan is also of relevance:

- Milton Keynes Review of Local Landscape Designations report (2024)
- Milton Keynes Landscape Character Assessment (2022)

4 Consideration of Local Impacts

- 4.1 The ES and supporting documentation sets out a wide-ranging assessment of the development proposal, its impacts and proposed mitigation measures. MKCC accepts that the chapters of the ES address the range of issues that are of a local concern to the authority. The following section sets out the Council's view of the local impacts of the development.

Climate change

- 4.2 Policy SC3 of Plan:MK states that the Council will encourage proposals for low carbon and renewable energy generation, particularly those led by or meeting the needs of local communities. For solar farms, these proposals will be supported unless there would be harm to amenity in residential areas, harm to wildlife, unacceptable landscape and visual impacts, including glint and glare, or harm to heritage assets.
- 4.3 The proposal is therefore supported in principle subject to applicant addressing the above concerns through the chapters of the Environmental Statement.

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

- 4.4 Policy NE4 of Plan:MK sets out that the network of green infrastructure throughout the borough will be protected, extended and enhanced for its biodiversity, recreational, accessibility, health and landscape value and for its contribution it makes towards combating climate change.
- 4.5 Policy NE5 emphasises the conservation and enhancement of landscape character, particularly in a manner which respects the particular character of the surrounding landscape. Part B of policy NE5 sets out that proposals will need to demonstrate that landscape character has been conserved and enhanced through sensitive design, landscape mitigation and enhancement measures. Part C sets out that proposals should take into account the findings of the Milton Keynes Landscape Character Assessment (2016) and any other relevant landscape and visual assessments or studies. It should be noted that the 2016 LCA has now been superseded by the 2022 LCA.
- 4.6 Policies D1 and D2 seek to encourage high quality design, and all proposals should be underpinned by a thorough analysis of the site and surrounding area, this includes considerations to soft and hard landscaping, boundary treatments and layout. Policy CD2 of LNP also reflects these principles, ensuring development is high quality and respects the character of the surrounding areas.
- 4.7 The proposed development would see the introduction of a large-scale solar farm which would result in landscape and visual effects over an extensive area which is currently undeveloped agricultural land. The solar PV panels on the south facing slopes will be highly visible from the roundabout intersection of the A428 and A509. The proposal is of an industrial scale and would introduce an urbanising feature into this area of open countryside. It should be noted that the presence of electricity pylons, which are visually passive and have a small footprint, does not mean the existing quality of the landscape is significantly diminished. The introduction of a solar panels, being large, solid and reflective surface, raised above the ground, and potentially moving with the sun, introduces a more industrialising feature to the landscape than the existing pylons.

- 4.8 As set out in the Landscape Character Assessment, Site G is within two Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). These are the LCA 1a Yardley Chase Wooded Wolds; described as gently undulating plateau with some woodland blocks, mainly in arable use, and LCA 2a Ouse Northern Undulating Valley Slopes, a gently sloping landscape mainly in arable use, with limited modern development.
- 4.9 Two field parcels within Site G (GF9 and GF13, east of Lavendon Bridleway BW15) impinge on land identified as locally attractive landscape and proposed as part of the Ouse Valley Special Landscape Area (SLA) under the MKCP, as informed by the Milton Keynes Review of Local Landscape Designations report (May 2024). It is considered that the development of these two parcels would be detrimental to the cohesiveness of the proposed SLA, which were proposed to be included to include the historic villages and surroundings within the north of the borough. Including these two parcels as part of the development would therefore be detrimental to the character of the SLA, given the industrialising nature of the development, in this location where it would be highly visible on the landscape, particularly in the area around Lavendon.
- 4.10 Further mitigation measures would reduce the visual harm. However, the success of this screening would be dependent on a number of factors, including speed of plant growth, and this mitigation would take a number of years to fully establish and cannot be relied upon to provide permanent screening or mitigation. Mitigation measures along the A428 south of the pylons which intersect parcel GF13 (viewpoint VP53), as well as along the edge of parcels GF10 and GF12 towards the north, and westwards from the Milton Keynes Boundary Walk, should be bolstered by the inclusion of further Native Woodland Copse/Shelter Belt (shrub and tree planting) instead of the proposed hedgerow. Further screening should also be introduced where BW15 crosses the A428. Without these changes, the proposal would fail to demonstrate adequate mitigation in line with Policy NE5 of Plan:MK.
- 4.11 Overall, the local effect on landscape and visual impact is a significant negative impact, with the potential for this to become minor negative/neutral following the inclusion of further mitigation in the form of additional planting and landscaping.

Ecology and Biodiversity

- 4.12 Policy NE1 of Plan:MK sets out the protection of sites which are of geological interest internationally. Policy NE2 of Plan:MK sets out that where there is a reasonable likelihood of the presence of statutorily protected species or their habitats, development will not be permitted unless it has been demonstrated that the development will not result in a negative impact on the species and habitats. Where a site contains priority species and/or habitats, development should promote their preservation, restoration, expansion and or re-creation.
- 4.13 Policy NE3 of Plan:MK advises that proposals will be required to maintain and protect biodiversity and geological resources, and where possible, result in measurable net gain in biodiversity. Mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures must be secured and be maintained for the lifetime of the development. This is mirrored within Policy E2 of the NLP.
- 4.14 Policy NE4 advises that the network of green infrastructure throughout the borough will be protected, extended and enhanced for its biodiversity, recreational, accessibility, health and landscape value and for the contribution it makes towards combating climate change.

- 4.15 There is concern regarding the lack of night-time bat walkover surveys, given the rarity of Barbastelle bats and the high number of passes recorded within Site G. There are also limitations associated with only collating data for 1 year, as this cannot determine long-term population trends or annual variations caused by varying weather conditions. More data is required to make an accurate assessment of potential impact on Barbastelle.
- 4.16 The proposed compensation strategy mitigating for the loss of Skylark territories would result in the displacement of 55.5% of recorded Skylark species across the whole application site. No information appears to have been gathered to establish whether surrounding land would be capable of absorbing the displaced pairs or whether this would have additional impacts on the wider population. It cannot be assumed that surrounding land would be capable of absorbing the displaced pairs.
- 4.17 The assumption that the loss of nesting opportunities will be offset by the increase in foraging opportunities is strongly disputed as both foraging and nesting opportunities are of equal importance for the survival of the population. One cannot replace the other and both are required to successfully maintain or increase the population. Whilst increasing foraging opportunities would constitute an enhancement and may have significant benefits to the population if foraging resource is currently a limiting factor to population growth (which is unknown); it cannot be used to compensate for the loss of nesting opportunities under the proposals as foraging resources and nesting opportunities provide different functions in a Skylark lifecycle. If the nesting resource is reduced by over 50% then the availability of nesting opportunities may become the limiting factor in maintaining the population and therefore, the proposals would likely to have a negative impact on the population regardless of how much foraging resource is provided. It is therefore argued that additional mitigation and compensation is required to ensure adequate compensation for the loss of nesting opportunities. Currently there would be harmful impacts on these species and it is questioned whether the proposal is currently compliant with policy NE2.
- 4.18 It is recognised that the applicant could enter into a District License scheme for Great Crested Newt (GCN) mitigation. However, this is optional, and the applicant is likely to choose to enter into the Natural England Protected Species licence, for all necessary licences, given the size of the site.
- 4.19 The Council welcomes the commitment to delivering Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and considers that these commitments would need to be secured within the DCO. However, the Council's Biodiversity SPD sets out that faunal enhancement measures such as inclusion of bat and bird boxes are as important as providing an overall net gain for biodiversity as they provide additional roosting or nesting opportunities which complement the additional resources provided through habitat creation. A lack of faunal enhancements would result in minor negative impacts to the bird and bat species, however given that there would be an overall BNG, the proposal would be compliant with policy NE3 of Plan:MK.
- 4.20 Overall, the Council's position is that there is potentially a negative impact from an ecological perspective without further information or mitigation measures applied. However, if further information and mitigation can be provided as described above, there is potential for the overall impacts to be neutral-positive.

Hydrology and Flood Risk

- 4.21 Policy FR1 of Plan:MK sets out the need for all new development to incorporate a surface water drainage system with acceptable flood control, and steer all new development towards the areas of

lowest probability of flooding. Development within areas of flood risk from any source of flooding, will only be acceptable if it is clearly demonstrated that it is appropriate at that location, and that there are no suitable available alternative sites at a lower flood risk.

- 4.22 Policy FR2 advocates the continuation of a strategic, integrated approach to managing flood risk, and that new development is required to incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). Policy FR3 requires all new development to be set back from any existing watercourses, and the Council will resist proposals that would adversely affect the natural functioning of rivers, watercourses, and lakes.
- 4.23 Policy FR1 of Lavendon Neighbourhood Plan sets out that all development should adopt sustainable drainage schemes, and surface water runoff should be attenuated on site wherever possible.
- 4.24 Solar farms are considered to have low risk to surface water when mitigation measures are in place. The site is almost entirely in Flood Zone 1, save for narrow buffers of Flood Zone 2 and 3, and at risk of surface water flooding, around the existing drains/watercourses on site, where no development is proposed. It is therefore clear that a sequential approach has been taken with regard to the developable area within Site G, and that a sequential test need not be applied. In any case, the solar panels will be mounted on frames and raised above ground level allowing any surface water to flow freely underneath, with a 9m buffer around watercourses maintained. Therefore, there will be no loss of floodplain volume as a result of the development and no increase in flood risk elsewhere.
- 4.25 It is recognised that the village of Lavendon, directly to the south, suffers from flood risk problems. It is understood that flood risk modelling is being undertaken separate to the DCO process to consider the potential impacts on the village of Lavendon, and any potentially betterment that could be provided. Although details of this have not been provided, it is considered that could represent a positive benefit of the scheme, but there appear to be no further detail of this work at this stage.
- 4.26 The Council has been working on proposals to improve the situation in Lavendon. However, the ES sets out that the 'Flood Alleviation Scheme' is no longer going ahead and therefore has not been considered within the ES. However, the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) advises that they are currently seeking to develop a Flood Alleviation Scheme for Lavendon, and therefore this statement is not correct. If the applicant is able to provide betterment, as part of their continued flood risk modelling, then this should be discussed further with the LLFA.
- 4.27 Overall, the local impact in terms for flood risk is considered to be neutral.

Minerals

- 4.28 The MLP sets out the principles to guide future working of minerals within Milton Keynes until 2032. It also sets out policies against which applications will be considered. It seeks to ensure the protection of mineral resources from the risk of sterilisation by development which potentially prevents future extraction.
- 4.29 The minerals resource map identifies three mineral resources within the vicinity of Site G. These areas are, however, outside the Primary and Secondary Focus Areas for mineral extraction designated by the MLP. It has been identified that the proposal would affect the three areas of safeguarded mineral reserves and areas identified to potentially contribute towards future mineral supply. However, it is also noted that working Site G for minerals would be constrained by highway infrastructure, nearby built development, public rights of way (PRoW), as well as the outcome of an assessment of Best and

Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land, and the fact that Site G is not currently allocated for extraction to serve current supply needs. In any case, it is considered that temporary sterilisation of these deposits during the operational phase would not have an impact on the short-to-medium term aggregate supply within Milton Keynes – particularly as the majority of the site falls beyond and safeguarding afforded by the MLP, further making extraction unlikely. The short and long-term impacts on minerals supply is therefore neutral.

Cultural Heritage

- 4.30 Policy HE1 of Plan:MK sets out that proposals will be supported where they sustain, and where possible, enhance the significance of heritage assets which are recognised as being of historic, archaeological, architectural, artistic, landscape or townscape significance. Permission for proposals that cause less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset will only be granted where the harm is demonstrably outweighed by public benefits delivered by the scheme. Policy CD1 of LNP also reflects the principles of the above policy, reinforcing the principles of the NPPF and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 4.31 The proposal would not have any impact upon the setting of nearby listed buildings or upon the Lavendon Conservation Area. A total of 10 Historical Landscape Character areas have been mapped within Site G.
- 4.32 An Archaeological Mitigation Strategy has been developed following the archaeological evaluation. Paragraph 12.6.33 of the ES identifies that 46 archaeological assets have been identified within Site G. The impacts on these assets would occur during the construction phase during the installation of the panels and cable routes.
- 4.33 The Council's Archaeologist is satisfied that the scope of the assessment carried out and field evaluation are appropriate and the mitigation strategy is acceptable, subject to its implementation being secured by a suitably worded condition. The local impact is therefore considered to be neutral.

Transport and Access

- 4.34 Policy CT2 of Plan:MK sets out the requirement for proposals to minimise the need to travel, promote opportunities for sustainable transport modes, and improve accessibility. Proposals will be permitted where they integrate into the existing sustainable transport network and do not have an inappropriate impact on operation, safety or accessibility to the local or strategic highway network. Impacts on the local or strategic highway network should be mitigated. Sites should also provide safe, suitable and convenient access for all users, as well as protect and where possible, enhance PRoWs. Policy E1 of the LNP also supports opening new footpaths and bridleways to improve connections.
- 4.35 Part B of Policy CT2 of Plan:MK sets out that development proposals that generate significant amounts of movement must be supported by a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment and will normally be required to provide a Travel Plan, with mitigation implemented as required.
- 4.36 Policy HT1 of LNP sets out that new developments are expected to achieve safe and satisfactory access, including the delivery of visibility splays to meet the requirements of the Highway Authority. Policy HT2 sets out how proposals which include measures to reduce the impact of traffic, improve the highway environment within Lavendon and the wider Parish and to increase use of non-car modes of transport will be supported.

- 4.37 As part of the proposal, the proposed cable route corridor passes Site F through agricultural fields, crosses the A509 and enters Site G within MKCC. Another construction and maintenance vehicle access (access G-1) is proposed from the A428, which would see the improvement of an existing field access.
- 4.38 The traffic movement forecast demonstrates an anticipated 8 HGV trips on average, with a peak of 18 two-way movements during construction. The applicant's routing plan clarifies that normal construction HGV traffic will enter the site from the north via the A509 and A428 (i.e. not through Lavendon, or Olney) from the A45. MKCC consider this acceptable as the preferred route for HGV to limit impacts on surrounding villages.
- 4.39 There would be 2 abnormal loads to site G, accessed from the A428 (access G-1) during construction; however, the impacts of these would be minimal and controlled to the two specific times during construction. It is noted that one of the specified routes for these abnormal loads is from Junction 14 of the M1 and through Olney, which has the potential to cause some localised impacts during these limited specific times. Provided this is managed effectively, the impacts would be short-term and limited.
- 4.40 The A428 access uses an existing field access which would be improved to 6.0m width with 6m radii. The full visibility splays for a 60mph road are available and the tracking for a large articulated lorry is provided. This is only for left in and left out, although these are the tightest movements. The left out is slightly contradictory as HGVs are meant to be travelling towards the A509 rather than left towards Lavendon, however it is accepted that this adequately demonstrates the tracking and that the routing plan is clear.
- 4.41 The key point here is that the tracking shows for the left in the full width of the access is required to make the movement so 2 HGVs or an HGV and a car or van could not enter and leave at the same time. This could cause waiting on the highway, although this situation is unlikely. Given the number of movements anticipated, conflict would not be frequent but is possible. It is not desirable for an HGV to have to wait unnecessarily on a main A road (A428), so it is suggested that this access should be further improved to allow two vehicles to pass at the same time. Similarly, for the left out movement, the vehicle has to make use of the full width of the A428 so improvements to the access would be required to address highway safety concerns and reduce the risk of potential collisions.
- 4.42 The A509 access is an improved existing field access. This access is for the cable route corridor and so although the number of HGV movements is not specifically given, it is assumed it will be low as it doesn't provide an access to the cable route construction compounds. Full visibility splays are available, but it is noted that for large vehicles leaving the site the full width of the A509 is required. It would need to be confirmed that very few large articulated lorries would make this movement. If this is the case, this should be acceptable and the impacts would be minimal. Without this confirmation, it is not possible to fully determine whether the proposal would provide a safe access, and whether this would result in impacts on highway safety.
- 4.43 In terms of employees working at the site during construction, workers who come from afar and stay at local hotels would be transported to the sites via a shuttle bus, it is anticipated that this would account for approximately half of all employees. The routing plan shows that employee these movements could be in both directions along the A509 and A428, including potential travel through Lavendon and Olney. A robust analysis of traffic impact and justification should be provided, including

likely hotel locations. It is not clear at this stage whether hotel accommodation is more likely to be in Northampton or Wellingborough, being closer to Sites A-F and in the necessitating travel north from Site G, or whether hotels in Milton Keynes might be used, which would require travel through Olney. Based on this information, Site G is forecast to generate 124 two-way movements per day made up of 114 cars/vans and 10 shuttles which has the potential to impact highway capacity during construction.

- 4.44 There are further calculations for the 3 cable route compounds given in table 5.3 of the ES. Each generate 2 shuttle trips, 16 car/vans and 22 HGVs.
- 4.45 In conclusion, it is acknowledged that vehicle movements to and from the site are only notable during the construction period and are likely to be fairly modest, with minimal impact on a localised level in terms of vehicle turning and access.
- 4.46 Before the level of impact on the broader highway network can be agreed a more robust approach to traffic generation is required. In particular, with reference to a very high percentage of workers coming by shuttle bus. Further the A428 access into Site G requires further improvement to allow two vehicles to pass.
- 4.47 The Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) that cross the site have all been identified and appropriate measures are outlined within the proposals to ensure they will remain usable. The commitment to keep PRoWs open as much as possible during the construction phase is seen as the appropriate manner with which to undertake this scheme. The proposals outline where work can be undertaken overnight or over a short duration, and this is welcomed. The suggestions within the application around buffer zones and repairing any issues caused as soon as practical are all noted and supported.
- 4.48 The provision of two permissive paths (covered in paragraphs 4.2.18 to 4.2.19 of the ES) is positive and provides a social benefit of the scheme to the public. This provides an example of a scheme taking an opportunity to provide better access facilities for users as set out within NPPF paragraph 105 and point A.8 of Policy CT2 of Plan:MK.
- 4.49 Therefore, in terms of local impacts there is likely to be a minor-moderate negative impact on local traffic and the highway network during construction, depending on whether the observations set out above can be addressed. However, during the operational phase, it is considered that there will be a positive benefit to countryside access through the provision of new permissive paths through the site.

Noise and Vibration

- 4.50 Policy NE6 of Plan:MK seeks to ensure that development will not have an unacceptable impact on with regard to noise and vibration on sensitive receptors, including not permitting proposals which would adversely effect the tranquillity of the countryside.
- 4.51 It is agreed that impacts during the construction and operational phases will be moderate to minor, and that impacts at receptors in the vicinity of Site G will be negligible to low, compared to the site's current agricultural use. The Council's Environmental Health Officer agrees that there are no sensitive receptors within the vicinity of Site G, and therefore the impact will not be significant. The local impact overall with regard to noise and vibration is therefore considered to be neutral.

Human Health

- 4.52 Policy NE6 of Plan:MK seeks to ensure that development will not have an unacceptable impact on human health, groundwater, general amenity, biodiversity or the wider natural environment.
- 4.53 Chapter 18 of the ES specifically addresses the impact of the proposal on human health, and this consideration is welcomed. However, the Council's Public Health team raise concerns relating to mental health mitigation. The information sets out that a Community Liaison Manager will be recruited. However, the extent of their role is not clear, and whether they would be present during the construction phase and whether they would have influence over works carried out. Given that this is a key mitigation of mental health impacts for the proposal, further information is required to fully determine the impact on human health.
- 4.54 With regard to physical health, it is acknowledged that PRoWs within Site G are not proposed to be closed during construction, with any temporary closures being overnight, ensuring that the PRoWs can be used for recreation throughout the lifetime for the development. Nonetheless, it must also be acknowledged that construction traffic, noise and disruption works may deter existing users of the PRoW for a short time. However, in the long term, the additional permissive paths through the site will provide more walking routes for users of this area of the countryside.

Arboriculture

- 4.55 Policy NE1 of Plan:MK seeks to prevent harm to irreplaceable habitat such as ancient woodland. Policy NE4 advises that the network of green infrastructure throughout the borough will be protected, extended and enhanced for its biodiversity, recreational, accessibility, health and landscape value and for the contribution it makes towards combating climate change. Policy E3 of the LNP supports the protection of trees and appropriate mitigation during construction.
- 4.56 The Council's Tree Officer broadly agrees with the submitted statements in the ES. The Arboriculture chapter of the ES and Arboricultural Impact Assessment sets out a clear assessment of the trees on and surrounding Site G, including Threshire Wood, which is considered ancient woodland. No trees are proposed to be removed within Site G, and buffers between trees and developable areas are provided. Provided the works are undertaken in accordance with the Outline Arboricultural Method Statement and that the tree protection measures and works are carried out by a competent, qualified and experienced tree surgeon, it is considered that the impact on trees will be neutral.

Agricultural Circumstances

- 4.57 Policy NE7 seeks to protect BMV agricultural land, taking into account the economic and other benefits of the land. Development involving the loss of agricultural land should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality unless other sustainability considerations suggest otherwise.
- 4.58 The relevant ES chapter sets out the Site G is 33% Grade 2, 42.7% Grade 3a, and 24.3% Grade 3b, meaning BMV land totals 127.3 hectares (75.6%) of this site. This is a significant amount of agricultural land that would be unusable as arable land during the life of the project. This is assessed through the ES as moderate and minor adverse effects, with the loss of Grade 2 and 3a land a being significant impact. This is considered to weigh against the proposal to a modest degree. However, it

is also agreed that the use of the site for solar farm would not permanently sterilise the use of the site for agriculture in the future. It is also noted that the chemical properties of the soil may change during the lifetime of the development, with the nutrients and organic matter compositions being altered as a result of the siting of the panels caused by shading and altered management practices. The cessation of agricultural use during the lifetime of the development could result in improvements to soil quality, provided that the recommendations for a Soil Management Plan are followed, which could result in minor to moderate benefits.

- 4.59 The conclusions of this chapter are agreed, in that there will be some negative impacts for the operational phase of the projects, and the potential benefits following decommissioning. However, given the lifetime of the project, it is considered that the loss of BMV agricultural land would be negative.

Other Matters

- 4.60 With regard to glint and glare, air quality, socio-economics, electro magnetic fields, ground conditions and contamination, and major accidents and disasters, or the Other Matters raised in Chapter 24 of the ES; the Council has no comments to make regarding local impact, subject to appropriate conditions.

Cumulative Effects

- 4.61 With regard to cumulative impacts from the proposal, these are considered to be limited to those outlined in the ES chapter and otherwise covered in the individual chapters of the ES, and the Council has considered these impacts in the individual topic areas comments above. The Council considers that the applicant has considered the cumulative impacts across the affected areas to an appropriate level in order for a robust assessment to be made.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 This LIR has undertaken a consideration of the potential impacts of the Green Hill Solar Farm at the local level in respect of the Milton Keynes area. It has considered both positive and negative impacts, within the context of its knowledge and understanding of the area.
- 5.2 In summary, MKCC consider that the following additional information is required to fully inform the decision:
- Further bat surveys;
 - Additional viewpoint;
 - Further analysis of traffic generation, particularly with regard to number of cars, shuttles and hotel locations and likely routing.
- 5.3 MKCC consider that the following aspects of the development at Site G should be secured, either through amendments or conditions as appropriate. If appropriate, the detail of these can be secured through the Statement of Common Ground:
- Removal of fields GF9 and GF13 from the proposal;
 - Widening of the existing access, proposed for construction, off the A428 to ensure two-way traffic and reduce waiting on the highway;

- Secure the proposed permissive paths between the existing PRoW as proposed in the application;
- Increased landscaping to A428 and PRoW; and
- Increase in faunal enhancements including bird and bat boxes.

5.4 Having regard to the above, MKCC have identified the following impacts, which can be summarised as follows:

- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – negative impact;
- Ecology and Biodiversity – negative impact- subject to the provision of further information and mitigation, potential for neutral-positive impact;
- Hydrology, Flood Risk and Drainage - neutral impact;
- Minerals - neutral impact;
- Cultural Heritage - neutral impact;
- Transport and Access – negative impact during construction, positive impact during operation;
- Noise and Vibration – neutral impact;
- Human Health – neutral impact;
- Arboriculture – neutral impact;
- Agricultural Circumstances – negative impact; and
- Cumulative Effects – neutral impact.

5.5 Where relevant, regard has been had to the public sector equality duty, as required by section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and to local finance considerations (as far as it is material), as required by section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), as well as climate change and human rights legislation (including Article 8 and Article 1 of the First Protocol regarding the right of respect for a person's private and family life and home, and to the peaceful enjoyment of possessions).

Attachments

Appendix 1: MKCC local policies

- Plan:MK (2019)
- Lavendon Neighbourhood Plan (2020)
- Minerals Local Plan (2017)

Plan:MK 2016 - 2031



www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy

4 . Development Strategy

Open Countryside

4.78 The term 'open countryside' is a policy designation that applies to all land outside the development boundaries of settlements, as outlined in the Settlement Boundaries Review (2017).

4.79 The open countryside that surrounds Milton Keynes provides distinct and intrinsic character for the whole community to enjoy. The benefits of open countryside are well established, documented and broadly accepted ⁽¹¹⁾ and the Council therefore recognises the importance of safeguarding its character.

4.80 Whilst other policies in Plan:MK cover specific types of development that may be acceptable in the open countryside, as exceptions, the objective of Policy DS5 is to inform and provide a vision for development proposals on land outside of the defined settlement development boundaries, aligning with the NPPF (e.g. paragraph 55) whilst ensuring the safeguarding of open countryside from inappropriate development. Notwithstanding the above, developers should also be mindful of Milton Keynes' Mineral Local Plan (2017), as it provides further useful guidance for development in the open countryside.

Policy DS5

OPEN COUNTRYSIDE

- A. The Council defines Open Countryside as all land outside the development boundaries defined on the Policies Map. Planning permission within the open countryside will only be granted for development which is essential for agriculture, forestry, countryside recreation, highway infrastructure or other development, which is wholly appropriate to a rural area and cannot be located within a settlement, or where other policies within this plan indicate development would be appropriate.
- B. Limited extensions or ancillary structures to existing buildings situated in the open countryside are acceptable in principle, provided that their scale and visual impact do not have a detrimental impact on the open character of the countryside.
- C. Replacement dwellings might be acceptable provided that the impact on the character of the open countryside is equal to or less than the dwelling it replaces. Replacement dwellings should meet the following criteria:
 - 1. Be compact and well-designed, in turn, retaining sufficient space around the dwelling to provide an attractive setting and to protect the character of the countryside.
 - 2. To not create a visual intrusion on the skyline or in the open character of the surrounding countryside.
 - 3. To be within similar scale of the existing dwelling it intends to replace.
- D. New dwellings which are of exceptional quality or innovative in the nature of their design might be accepted where they conform with paragraph 55 of the NPPF.

11 for example, as described in *Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) report* (2010), Natural England

Creating a Sustainable Transport Network

8.17 The Council will encourage individuals to choose to use more sustainable and lower carbon modes of transport, for example bus, coach, rail, taxi and private hire, community transport, shared mobility, pods & driverless vehicles, walking, and cycling.

8.18 This will be achieved by:

- Improving superfast broadband service to support agile working.
- Improving integration between active travel and sustainable transport modes.
- Providing incentives for using alternative fuel vehicles, and expanding the coverage of electric charging points.

8 . Transport and Connectivity

- Identifying barriers to using sustainable transport.
- Implementing behavioural change programmes to encourage a modal shift.
- Increasing the coverage of the cycle hire scheme, identifying gaps in the cycle network, increasing secure cycle parking and providing a range of parking available for all needs.
- Improving public transport access by improving network coverage and frequency, installing bus priority on key routes, and determining reasons for lack of bus satisfaction and addressing these.
- Promoting and improving the provision of cycling and walking routes and facilities in the borough.

8.19 These interventions aim to improve the accessibility of all residents, workers and visitors to key services and employment opportunities, with a particular focus on Central Milton Keynes, town and district centres, rural areas, and strategic urban extensions and large new developments and in particular to improve connectivity for access to key transport infrastructure such as the new east west railway when it comes on line in the 2020s in accordance with the government's wish to see the majority of "first-last mile" trips made as sustainably as possible.

8.20 Investment will be required to initiate these interventions, to develop transport hubs, fund electric car share and bike schemes, and contribute to incentivising the usage of shared transport schemes.

8 . Transport and Connectivity

Policy CT2

MOVEMENT AND ACCESS

- A. Development proposals will be required to minimise the need to travel, promote opportunities for sustainable transport modes, improve accessibility to services and support the transition to a low carbon future. Development proposals will be permitted that:
1. Integrate into our existing sustainable transport networks and do not have an inappropriate impact on the operation, safety or accessibility to the local or strategic highway networks;
 2. Mitigate impacts on the local or strategic highway networks, arising from the development itself or the cumulative effects of development, through the provision of, or contributions towards necessary and relevant transport improvements including those secured by legal agreement;
 3. Ensure that development proposals do not prejudice the future development or design of suitable adjoining sites;
 4. Provide safe, suitable and convenient access for all potential users;
 5. Provide on-site layouts that are compatible for all potential users with appropriate parking and servicing provision in line with the Milton Keynes Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document (January 2016);
 6. Do not result in inappropriate traffic generation or compromise highway safety;
 7. Offer maximum flexibility in the choice of travel modes, including walking and cycling, shared transport, and with accessibility for all potential users;
 8. Protect and where possible enhance access to public rights of way;
 9. Provide a public transport connection to the main points of service provision including nearest district or town centre, or community facilities; and
 10. Where possible incorporate the use of shared transport and low carbon "green" travel modes such as electric vehicle charging capacity.
- B. Development proposals that generate significant amounts of movement or impact on level crossings must be supported by a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment and will normally be required to provide a Travel Plan, with mitigation implemented as required. Development proposals which generate a significant number of heavy goods vehicle movements will be required to demonstrate, by way of a Routing Management Plan, that no severe impacts are caused to the efficient and safe operation of the road network and no material harm is caused to the living conditions of residents or the natural environment.

Walking and cycling

8.21 The National Planning Policy Framework states that planning policies should aim to achieve places which promote accessible environments containing clear and legible pedestrian routes, and that developments should be designed to give priority to pedestrians and cyclists.

11 Managing and Reducing Flood Risk

11.1 Milton Keynes, since its original inception, recognised the potential for new development to create additional flood risk and through its early masterplan sought to reduce existing risk via the development of an innovative approach based on a strategic water management system and planned green infrastructure provision.

11.2 The provision of a strategic system of linear parks along the main watercourses flowing through Milton Keynes ensured development within areas of flood risk was largely avoided, whilst the development of a number of large balancing lakes and smaller features along the River Ouzel and Loughton and Broughton Brooks provided compensation for the increased runoff from newly developed areas.

11.3 By designing this integrated drainage system on a strategic level with a view to the future development potential of Milton Keynes, the flood control measures successfully ensured that the risk of flooding reduced as a result of Milton Keynes' development, provided one of the first examples of sustainable drainage. Furthermore, the balancing lakes and linear parks system, offer multiple uses, providing Milton Keynes with recreation, wildlife and amenity value.

11.4 In recognition of the innovative strategic flood risk management system and its role in reducing the risk of flooding to the city and settlements downstream, the approach has been successfully continued throughout the development of the new town and more recently extended to account for the Eastern and Western Expansion areas and the Strategic Land Allocation.

11.5 However, as outlined in the Council's *Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2015)* (SFRA) there are a number of areas across the Borough at risk of flooding from various sources and it is expected that, even with no further development, the impacts of climate change are likely to increase this risk, making these areas susceptible to more frequent, more severe flooding in future. It is therefore necessary that a robust and sustainable approach is taken to reducing and mitigating the potential impacts that climate change may have upon the area and to ensure that all future development is considered in light of the possible increase in flood risk over time, whilst also taking the opportunities offered by development proposals to reduce the overall level of flood risk by, for example, the attenuation of flows, the reduction of existing discharge rates and volumes, and the implementation of sustainable drainage features designed to reduce the overall flood risk.

11.6 Aside from the potential impacts of climate change, the effects of weather events can be increased in severity as a consequence of decisions regarding the location, design and nature of future development. New development has the potential to interfere with existing drainage systems, decrease floodplain storage, reduce permeable surface areas and increase the volume and speed of runoff through a catchment, ultimately leading to dramatic changes to river catchment characteristics and subsequently increase flood risk.

11.7 Given the growth potential of Milton Keynes, the SFRA outlines that it is essential that the development management process carefully mitigates against the potential impact that climate change may have upon the risk of flooding to properties and that planning policy recognises the positive contribution that avoidance and management of flood risk can make to the development of sustainable communities.

11 . Managing and Reducing Flood Risk

11.8 Therefore, through policies FR1 - FR3, Plan:MK includes locally specific strategic flood risk management policies to maintain and continue the exemplar sustainable drainage model of Milton Keynes which prohibits development within the floodplain and seeks flood management and drainage infrastructure to be provided as strategically as possible and as part of a maintained, multi-functional blue-green infrastructure. The requirement to continue this approach is also outlined within the site-specific, strategic site allocation policies outlined within Chapter 5: *Spatial Delivery of Growth: Strategic Site Allocations*.

11.9 Furthermore, all new development proposals must take into consideration the Milton Keynes SFRA, *Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (2016)*, *Surface Water Management Plan (2016)* and all applicable local guidance documents. These contain useful local guidance and references for developers in relation to issues such as the preparation of flood risk assessments, and surface water management.

Policy FR1

MANAGING FLOOD RISK

- A. All new development must incorporate a surface water drainage system with acceptable flood control and demonstrate that water supply, foul sewerage and sewage treatment capacity is available or can be made available in time to serve the development. Suitable access is safeguarded for the maintenance of water supply and drainage infrastructure.
- B. Plan:MK will seek to steer all new development towards areas with the lowest probability of flooding. The sequential approach to development, as set out in national guidance, will therefore be applied across the Borough, taking into account all sources of flooding as contained within the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA).
- C. Development within areas of flood risk from any source of flooding, will only be acceptable if it is clearly demonstrated that it is appropriate at that location, and that there are no suitable available alternative sites at a lower flood risk.
- D. Development proposed in an area at risk of flooding will be required:
 1. To be supported by a site specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) (subject to the triggers set out below);
 2. To take into account all forms of flooding including, but not limited to: fluvial, groundwater, surface water and reservoir flooding;
 3. To ensure that opportunities to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding to the site and the surrounding area are taken as far as possible, in order to improve the existing situation, taking into account climate change. At a minimum, proposals will need to demonstrate no increase in flood risk to the site or surrounding area;
 4. To clearly demonstrate that the benefits of the development to the community, outweigh the risk of flooding when applying the sequential test and exception test (where required);
 5. When applying the sequential test, to clearly demonstrate that the impacts of climate change are taken into account;
 6. To demonstrate the application of a sequential approach to the site design and layout to ensure highest vulnerability land uses are located within areas of the site at lowest risk of flooding;
 7. To build resilience into a site's design;
 8. To ensure that a site's design and any flood mitigation measures implemented are designed with an allowance for climate change and the potential impact it may have over the lifetime of the proposed development⁽³¹⁾;
 9. To provide a safe access and egress route for future users of the development; and
 10. To attenuate surface water run-off in line with Policy FR2.

31 developers should refer to Environment Agency guidance on the use of climate changes allowances, available at: [Flood risk assessments: climate change allowances](#)

11 . Managing and Reducing Flood Risk

11. To consult the Fire and Rescue Service as to the feasibility of undertaking rescue and recovery operations during and in the aftermath of flooding events.

E. A site specific FRA will be required for:

1. All sites of 1ha or more in Flood Zone 1;
2. All sites within Flood Zone 2 or 3;
3. All sites highlighted as being at high risk from surface water flooding, or which are located within a Critical Drainage Catchment (CDC), as identified in the Milton Keynes Surface Water Management Plan. In this case the FRA will be required to demonstrate that the development will not increase the flood risk to the CDC and where possible will provide an improvement to the existing situation.

F. The FRA should include an assessment of flood risk to and from the proposed development, and demonstrate how the development will be safe, will not increase flood risk elsewhere and where possible will reduce flood risk overall in accordance with the NPPF and PPG.

Policy FR2

SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS (SUDS) AND INTEGRATED FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

- A. Plan:MK advocates the continuation of a strategic, integrated approach to managing flood risk which seeks the management of surface water to be planned at the largest appropriate scale for the new development and incorporated into the site at the earliest opportunity in the design process.
- B. New development is required to incorporate SuDS; in line with national policy and guidance and, which meet the requirements set out in national standards and the Council's relevant local guidance. It is expected that:
 - 1. Flood risk management and SuDS will be provided at a strategic scale and in an integrated manner, wherever possible;
 - 2. Space will be specifically set aside for SuDS and fluvial flood risk reduction features and used to inform the overall layout of development sites;
 - 3. Above ground attenuation will be provided in preference to below ground attenuation;
 - 4. SuDS will be designed as multi-purpose green infrastructure and open space, to maximise additional environmental, biodiversity, social and amenity value, wherever possible. The use of land to provide flood storage capacity should not conflict with required amenity and recreation provision - floodplains and floodplain habitats should be safeguarded;
 - 5. SuDS will be designed with an allowance for climate change and the potential impact it may have over the lifetime of the proposed development;
 - 6. Proposals for development within Critical Drainage Catchments, as identified in the Milton Keynes Surface Water Management Plan, should investigate the potential for the scheme to reduce or mitigate existing risk in the surrounding area;
 - 7. All surface water drainage proposals for new development must include full details of the means of achieving future management, maintenance and adoption of the systems, prior to approval of any planning permission, to ensure that it will function effectively over the lifespan of the development. This will include details of funding and should be formulated through discussion with the relevant responsible bodies, including Milton Keynes Council, The Parks Trust, Anglian Water and the Internal Drainage Board;
 - 8. Development will ensure no adverse impact on the functions and setting of a watercourse and its associated corridor;
 - 9. Development should avoid building over or culverting watercourses, encourage the removal of existing culverts and seek opportunities to create wetlands and wet grasslands and woodlands and restore natural river flows and floodplains.

11 . Managing and Reducing Flood Risk

Policy FR3

PROTECTING AND ENHANCING WATERCOURSES

- A. All new development must be set back at a distance of at least 8 metres from any main rivers, at least 9 metres from all other ordinary watercourses, or at an appropriate width as agreed by the Environment Agency, Lead Local Flood Authority or Internal Drainage Board, in order to provide an adequate undeveloped buffer zone. Development that restricts future de-culverting of waterways should be avoided.
- B. The Council will resist proposals that would adversely affect the natural functioning of main rivers, ordinary watercourses and wet or dry balancing lakes, this includes through the culverting of open channels, unless for access purposes.

12 Environment, Biodiversity and Geodiversity

What is Biodiversity?

12.1 This chapter sets out the Council's policies on the natural environment to ensure that new development proposals are sustainable and result in moving from a net loss of biodiversity to achieving net gains for nature.

12.2 Biodiversity refers to all species of animals and plants - everything that is alive on our planet. Biodiversity has intrinsic value but is also important to sustaining liveable and viable places for people⁽³²⁾.

12.3 An independent review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network⁽³³⁾ concluded that establishing a coherent and resilient ecological network of wildlife sites capable of responding to the challenges of climate change would effectively conserve biodiversity and ecosystem services, delivering many benefits to people. This imperative is reflected in national policy and legislation which recognises that the natural environment and biodiversity is a core component of sustainable development as it underpins our economic development and prosperity.

National Policy Context

12.4 All local authorities have a duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in exercising all their functions. The duty aims to make biodiversity conservation an integral part of policy and decision making.

12.5 The NPPF is clear that pursuing sustainable development includes moving from a net loss of biodiversity to achieving net gains for nature, and that a core principle for planning is to contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. The NPPF emphasises the importance of sustainable development and supports the objectives of the Natural Environment White Paper.

12.6 The aims of the White Paper include halting biodiversity loss by 2020, supporting 'healthy functioning ecosystems', and establishing 'coherent ecological networks'. The White Paper refers to the role of urban Green Infrastructure (GI) as completing 'the links in our national ecological network' and 'one of the most effective tools available to us in managing environmental risks such as flooding and heat waves'. It advocates that green spaces should be factored into the development of all communities.

Local Policy Context

12.7 The best sites for biodiversity or geology, are protected under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and are classified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). There are two SSSIs in this area (Howe Park Wood and Oxley Mead) plus a small part of Yardley Chase on the boundary with Northamptonshire, and Salcey Forest just inside that county. There is also Mill Crook SSSI that adjoins Castlethorpe Parish Council, but which is wholly located within Northamptonshire.

32 Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services,

33 Making Space for Nature: a review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network (2010)

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12.8 It is important to recognise that there are many other sites which can be equally important as SSSIs, but which do not have the same level of protection. Many of these sites have been identified in the Borough and are classified as Milton Keynes Wildlife Sites (MKWS). There are 16 MKWS and approximately 200 local wildlife sites in the Borough. MKWS are equivalent of Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) in other Buckinghamshire districts while our smaller local wildlife sites have a status of Biological Notification Sites (BNS).

12.9 As part of the local plan development process and in recognition of the increased pressure of development Milton Keynes and other Buckinghamshire districts have requested that all wildlife sites (BNS and BNS type sites in Milton Keynes Borough) should be assessed and either recognised as LWS or deleted as recognised sites, informed by surveys. Milton Keynes Council will regularly review its list of local wildlife sites and add new sites where they meet the criteria.

12.10 Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are designated by local authorities as habitats of local significance which contribute to both nature conservation and public appreciation and understanding of wildlife. There is one LNR in the Borough at present - Blue Lagoon, Bletchley.

12.11 Wildlife Corridors in Milton Keynes are a specific designation to Milton Keynes and represent linear pathways of habitats that encourage movement of plants and animals between other important habitats. These are treated in the same way as LWSs in Milton Keynes.

12.12 In 2013, the Natural Environment Partnership (NEP) was formed for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes as the county's version of a Local Nature Partnership (LNP). LNPs work at a strategic scale to develop a vision for the local environment, champion its interests and better integrate environmental objectives with social and economic goals. It is recognised that local planning authorities (through the duty to co-operate) should have regard to the views of LNPs on strategic planning matters.⁽³⁴⁾

12.13 The locally identified Priority Habitats and Species are listed as a priority for protection in the Forward to 2020: Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Biodiversity Action Plan, which was approved by the NEP Board in January 2015. These habitats and species are included in the BAP, either because they are nationally or locally rare, or in decline or are characteristic of the area.

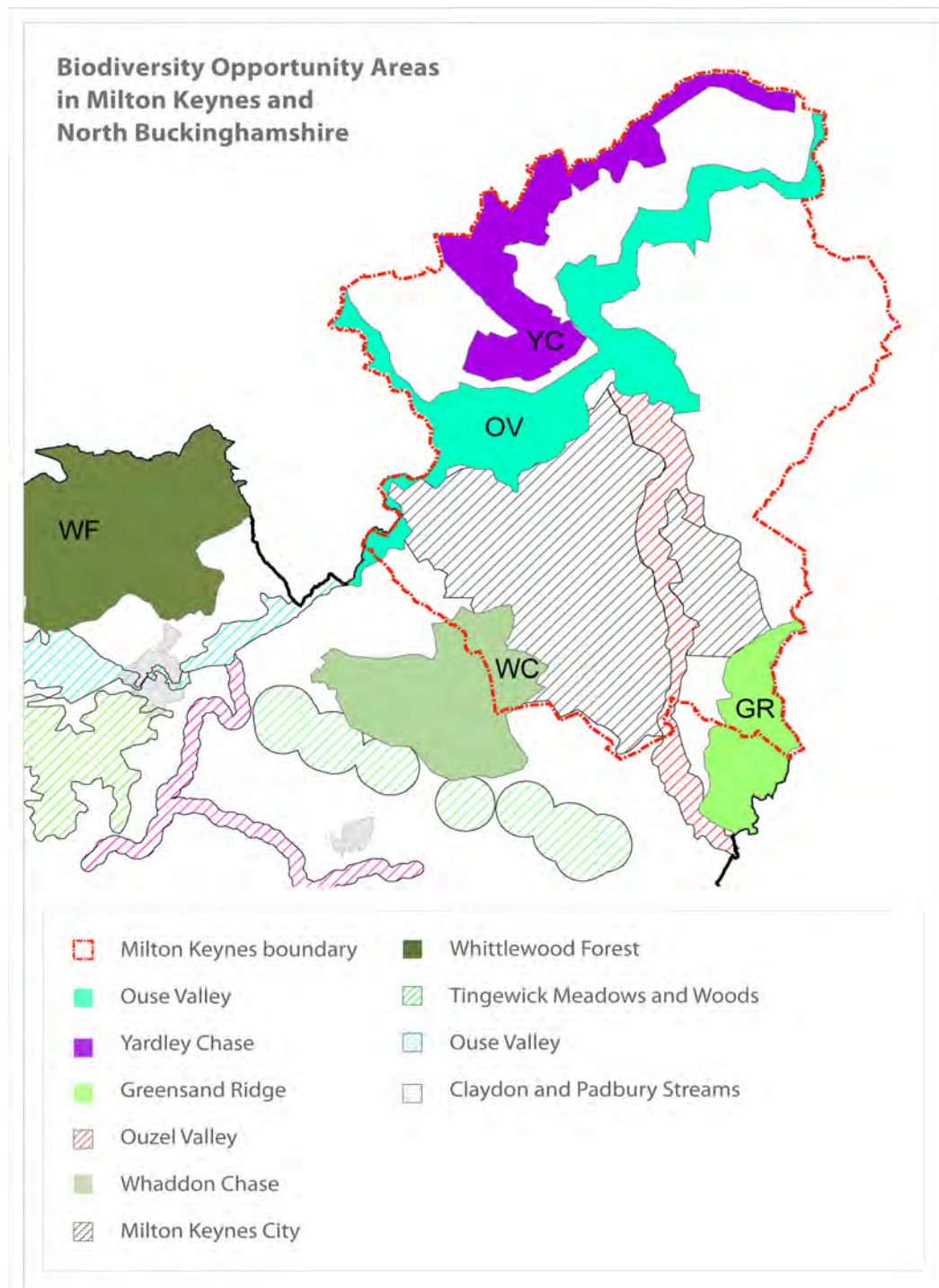
12.14 The BAP also includes a number of targets for the creation of each priority habitat between the years 2010 and 2020. Creation in this case includes restoration, which is bringing habitat that no longer meets the standards for priority habitat back into a system of management such that it does meet those standards. The target figures have been informed by the national targets for each priority habitat determined as part of the Biodiversity 2020 Strategy. While the targets differ for each habitat, the overall headline figure is to achieve an increase in the overall extent of priority habitats across Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire by 20%.

12.15 The BAP advocates a landscape-scale approach to achieving the overall habitat creation target. This means that efforts should be focused in the areas of the county already identified as being of high value for biodiversity with the potential for landscape scale biodiversity projects (Biodiversity Opportunity Areas). The BOA identified in Milton Keynes and adjacent to its boundaries are shown in Figure 12.1 'Biodiversity Opportunity

12 . Environment, Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Areas'. Where development is located in or adjacent to a BOA, its design and layout, planning conditions and obligations will be used to secure biodiversity enhancement to help achieve the aims of the BOA.

Figure 12.1 Biodiversity Opportunity Areas



12 . Environment, Biodiversity and Geodiversity

12.16 A borough-wide Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and an Assessment of the Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Turbine and Solar PV Development were prepared in 2016⁽³⁵⁾. The LCA identifies the distinctive characteristics of the landscapes across the Borough. It provides the basis for their protection and the enhancement of the landscape, plus guidance for future policies on development, restoration and management in the Plan:MK. There are a range of protection and enhancement measures within the Landscape Character Assessment, such as: restrictions on the level of development and the materials used within developments; promoting traditional methods of hedgerow management; promoting extensions of uncropped or grass field margins to enhance biodiversity; and retaining key views to local landmarks.

12.17 The Assessment of the Landscape Sensitivity to renewable energy developments looks at the sensitivity of each landscape character type within the Borough to wind turbine and solar photovoltaic development and identifies where particular areas may have greater or lesser capacity to accommodate such development. Plan:MK does not propose to allocate any sites for wind turbine developments.

12.18 In 2014 Milton Keynes Council with other partners published "Biodiversity and Planning in Buckinghamshire"⁽³⁶⁾. This guidance is part of the evidence base for Plan:MK and includes information on biodiversity that applicants may find helpful when submitting planning applications. The document reiterates a long-standing approach to the mitigation hierarchy which states that development will need to avoid impacts on protected species, and where this is not possible, mitigation or compensation will be necessary. Also, if there is a possibility that a development proposal will impact on a protected species, then surveys will need to be submitted with a planning application to determine the impacts; these surveys should not be made a condition of planning permission, since the Council will need this information to inform their decision.

35 LCA & Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Turbine and Solar PV Development are available at <http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/landscape-character-assessment>

36 The guidance is available at

Policy NE1

PROTECTION OF SITES

- A. Development proposals which would likely cause harm to the nature conservation or geological interest of internationally (RAMSAR sites, SACs and SPAs) important sites will not be permitted unless:
1. There is no suitable alternative to the development;
 2. There are imperative reasons of overriding public interest;
 3. All reasonable possibilities for mitigation have been put in place; and
 4. Compensatory provision in line with the mitigation hierarchy can be secured to ensure that the overall coherence of the site is protected and with the intent to achieve a net gain in biodiversity.
- B. Development proposals which would likely cause harm to a National Nature Reserve, Site of Special Scientific Interest or irreplaceable habitats such as Ancient Woodland will not be permitted unless:
1. There is no suitable alternative to the development;
 2. The benefits of the development, at this site, clearly outweigh the adverse impacts on the site;
 3. All reasonable possibilities for mitigation have been put in place; and
 4. Compensatory provision in line with the mitigation hierarchy to ensure that the overall coherence of the site is protected and with the intent to achieve a net gain in biodiversity.
- C. Development proposals which would be likely to harm the biodiversity or geological conservation value of a site of countywide or local importance ⁽³⁷⁾ as shown on the Policies Maps or which serve as a 'biodiversity offset site' will only be permitted where:
1. The local development needs significantly outweigh the biodiversity or geological conservation value of the site;
 2. All reasonable possibilities for mitigation have been put in place; and
 3. Compensatory provision in line with the mitigation hierarchy can be secured to ensure that the overall coherence of the site is protected and with the intent to achieve a net gain in biodiversity.

12.19 A number of priority habitats and legally protected and priority species and their habitats, as listed in the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Biodiversity Action Plan, occur throughout the Borough. Where there is a reasonable likelihood that priority habitats and protected or priority species, or the habitats upon which they depend, may be affected

37 Including MK Wildlife Sites, Wildlife Corridors, Local Nature Reserves, Ancient Woodland, Traditional Orchards, Local Wildlife Sites, Biological Notification Sites, Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and Local Geological Sites.

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by a development proposal, planning applications will not be validated until survey information has been submitted that shows the presence (or otherwise) and extent of the species or habitat over the course of the year.

12.20 The provision and long-term management of minimum buffer between development and irreplaceable habitats, such as ancient woodland and veteran trees, and hedgerows will be required in line with national standing advice, guidance and recognised good practice. Wherever possible, hedgerows should be retained. Where hedgerow loss is unavoidable, new hedgerows should be created in line with national guidance and recognised good practice.

12.21 In December 2016, Natural England announced four new policies for European Protected Species (EPS) (including Great Crested Newts) which shift the licensing focus from the protection of individual animals at development sites to the protection of colonies and larger habitats. Natural England believes these new policies will lead to:

- Greater flexibility in relocating EPS from development sites
- Creation of new habitats away from development sites where it is environmentally most beneficial
- Wildlife benefiting from habitat that is found on development sites, such as where quarrying has created ponds suitable for great crested newts
- Flexibility in exceptional circumstances to reduce surveying where the impacts of development can be predicted confidently

Policy NE2

PROTECTED SPECIES AND PRIORITY SPECIES AND HABITATS

- A. Where there is a reasonable likelihood of the presence of statutorily protected species or their habitats development will not be permitted unless it has been demonstrated that the proposed development will not result in a negative impact upon those species and habitats.
- B. Where the site contains priority species or habitats, development should wherever possible promote their preservation, restoration, expansion and/or re-creation in line with Policy NE3.
Priority Habitats are shown on the Policies Map accompanying this plan.

12.22 In line with the mitigation hierarchy, biodiversity losses resulting from a development should be avoided (by locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for on site, and off-site as an alternative.

12.23 Where mitigation and compensation measures are being proposed, these should incorporate proposals to enhance biodiversity and geological features which are appropriate to, and where possible compensate for, impacts on the immediate area and the site characteristics. Biodiversity offsetting is a proposed approach to compensate for habitats and species lost to development in one area, with the creation, enhancement or restoration

12 . Environment, Biodiversity and Geodiversity

of habitat in another area. Under this system any negative impacts on the natural environment would then be compensated for, or 'offset' by developers. The Council's preferred approach is that compensation should be done on-site. Where compensation is not possible on site, appropriate enhancements will be sought on other land by provision of replacement habitat of higher quality to achieve a net gain in biodiversity.

12.24 A Biodiversity Impact Assessment Matrix, based on the Defra metric or other recognised and locally-approved mechanism, will be used to measure biodiversity losses or gains due to a proposed development. The outputs of this quantitative assessment will be considered alongside qualitative matters when determining the overall impact upon biodiversity under policies NE1-3. A forthcoming SPD will set out how the metric should be applied.

12.25 The Council will also introduce a monitoring framework to ensure proposed net gains in biodiversity are achieved throughout the plan period, including remedial measures for non-compliance.

Policy NE3

BIODIVERSITY AND GEOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENT

- A. Development proposals will be required to maintain and protect biodiversity and geological resources, and wherever possible result in a measurable net gain in biodiversity, enhance the structure and function of ecological networks and the ecological status of water bodies in accordance with the vision and principles set out by the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes NEP.
- B. If significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for then planning permission should be refused.
- C. Development proposals of 5 or more dwellings or non-residential floorspace in excess of 1,000 sq. m will be required to use the Defra metric or locally approved Biodiversity Impact Assessment Metric to demonstrate any loss or gain of biodiversity.
- D. Mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures must be secured and be maintained for the lifetime of the development. Enhancement and compensatory measures should seek opportunities for habitat protection, restoration and creation to meet the objectives of the UK and Bucks & Milton Keynes Biodiversity Action Plan and aims of the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas. These measures should also create and enhance habitats to help wildlife adapt to the impact of climate change.

12.26 In 2016 the NEP published a report 'Vision for Green Infrastructure in Buckinghamshire', along with a set of 9 Principles which should be followed to achieve the Vision by 2030. The NEP expects that draft Local Plans prepared by the districts in the county will explicitly support the principles included in the document. In particular Local Plans should require all development to:

12 . Environment, Biodiversity and Geodiversity

- Focus on protecting, improving and providing a multi-functional GI network in Bucks and MK that improves economic, environmental and quality of life benefits.
- Seek opportunities to protect, enhance, extend, create and connect GI for all its benefits (including landscape-scale connectivity of habitats for biodiversity outcomes).
- Place emphasis on adequate access to high quality green recreation and productive space for community health and wellbeing (at least conforming to ANGSt standards at the strategic scale).
- Ensure the size and location of GI is suitable for the function it is intended to fulfil.
- Require GI management into the long-term, to ensure that it develops in accordance with its stated intention. Mechanisms to achieve this must be outlined in development proposals.
- Require the monitoring of GI improvement, and remedial measures if not achieving satisfactory GI condition within stipulated timeframes.
- Allocate and develop sufficient funding mechanisms to improve the quality, location and functions provided by GI. This could include developer contributions, biodiversity offsetting, and/or CIL payments.

12.27 The NEP emphasises that the above approach would require identifying (mapping) where current GI is, the functions it serves (to understand its potential importance), gaps in provision, and opportunities for how and where it should be improved. Natural England, *Nearby Nature: Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance*, March 2010 is a source of good practice ⁽³⁸⁾.

38 The guidance is available at:



Policy NE4

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

- A. The network of green infrastructure throughout the Borough will be protected, extended and enhanced for its biodiversity, recreational, accessibility, health and landscape value and for the contribution it makes towards combating climate change. This is in accordance with the vision and principles (and the large-scale zone maps of Green Infrastructure Opportunity⁽³⁹⁾) set out by the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes NEP.
- B. Development proposals will provide new green infrastructure or, if it is not possible, will contribute to the enhancement and strengthening of existing green infrastructure to provide wellbeing benefits to people through access to nature.
- C. Development proposals will ensure that existing ecological networks are identified and wherever possible maintained to avoid habitat fragmentation, and that ecological corridors, including water courses, form an essential component of their green infrastructure provision to support habitat connectivity.
- D. Green infrastructure protection, improvements and creation must be prioritised in locations where it can deliver most benefits. It should be multi-functional to deliver as many ecosystem services as the site requires, for example flood mitigation, access to nature (wellbeing benefits), plants for pollinators, carbon sequestration, and habitat for wildlife.
- E. The existing network of linear parks and linked parks and green spaces will be extended into the urban extensions and along the Ouse and Ouzel Valleys to the north to provide a well connected network of green infrastructure that:
 - 1. Is strategically planned.
 - 2. Is attractive and enhances the surrounding landscape.
 - 3. Is safe and well used for recreation.
 - 4. Meets the needs of existing and future residents.
 - 5. Is designed to provide a range of ecosystem services e.g. manage flood risk or provide flower rich habitats that supports a diverse range of pollinators.
 - 6. Is designed to support mitigation and adaptation to climate change e.g. through vegetation for carbon uptake (carbon sequestration).
 - 7. Achieves a net gain in biodiversity.
 - 8. Is managed into the long-term.
 - 9. Where possible improves connectivity with other green infrastructure networks e.g. by linkages to the urban parks.
 - 10. Where appropriate explores economic opportunities that will support the network's sustainability - for example in conservation, agriculture, renewable energy or outdoor environmental education or recreation; such activity must not result in a negative impact to the integrity of the network, the ecosystem services provided or on biodiversity.
- F. Where green infrastructure is provided outside the linear parks system, applicants should detail how it will address the above requirements.

12 . Environment, Biodiversity and Geodiversity

12.28 The 2016 LCA identifies the distinctive characteristics of the landscapes across the Borough. It provides the basis for their protection and the enhancement of the landscape, plus guidance for future policies on development, restoration and management in Plan:MK.

Policy NE5

CONSERVING AND ENHANCING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

- A. Where development in the open countryside is acceptable in principle under other policies in this plan, it will need to be undertaken in a manner that respects the particular character of the surrounding landscape.
- B. In particular, development proposals will need to demonstrate that the following aspects of landscape character have been conserved and where possible enhanced through sensitive design, landscape mitigation and enhancement measures:
 - 1. The locally distinctive natural and man-made features that contribute towards the landscape character and its quality.
 - 2. The historic setting and structure of the villages and hamlets.
 - 3. Important views e.g. of local landmarks.
 - 4. Tranquillity and the need to protect against intrusion from light pollution, noise, and motion.
- C. Development proposals should take into account the findings of the Milton Keynes Landscape Character Assessment (2016) and any other relevant landscape and visual assessments or studies. Where appropriate a site specific landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) will be required as part of a planning application and it must be demonstrated that the development proposal has been informed by a LVIA written in accordance with the standard method, Guidance for LVIA version 3 from the Landscape Institute.

Environmental Pollution

12.29 Planning of new development plays a key role in creating and sustaining healthy places and communities and avoiding or mitigating unacceptable risks to health and the wider environment from pollution.

Contaminated land and soil pollution

12.30 The Council will encourage proposals for the development and reuse of land that may be contaminated in line with national planning policy and the 1995 Environment Act.

12.31 When considering proposals on land which may be contaminated, the Council will need to assess whether development would be suitable (based on the type of contamination) and whether there are likely to be any unacceptable risks to health or to the environment that may arise from remedial works or proposed use of the site. For permission to be granted, the Council will need to be satisfied that there will be no unacceptable risks.

12 . Environment, Biodiversity and Geodiversity

The responsibility for decontamination rests with the developer or owner. After remediation, land should not be capable of being classified as contaminated land under Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

12.32 The Council will normally require developers to undertake a full investigation to establish the level of contamination in soils and/or groundwater/surface waters on such sites and undertake the necessary remediation measures, if necessary by imposing conditions on planning permissions. Where required planning applications must be accompanied by a full survey of the level of contamination and proposals for remediation measures. All investigations of land potentially affected by contamination should be carried out in accordance with established procedures, in particular BS 10175:2011+A1:2013: Investigation of potentially contaminated sites and the Environment Agency's '*Model Procedures for the Management of Land Contamination CLR 11*'.

Air pollution

12.33 Air pollution can have a significant influence on human health, quality of life and the health of the natural environment⁽⁴⁰⁾. Children, older people and those suffering from existing health problems have heightened sensitivity to air pollution⁽⁴¹⁾. Planning of new development has a key role in protecting and where possible improving air quality in order to protect health and the wider environment, in line with paragraph 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

12.34 Certain forms, types and scale of development can increase or introduce new sources of emissions and reduce air quality. Conversely, the location of certain types of development, such as schools and accommodation for older or vulnerable people, need to ensure they do not expose people who are particularly sensitive to existing or proposed sources of air pollution. The major source of air pollution in the borough is traffic emissions. This reflects the high levels of car ownership and the key strategic transport arteries which run through the borough such as the M1, A5 and A421 as well as other major and heavily trafficked roads which cross the city and extend into the rural areas. Dust and odour associated with existing uses and new development (including construction) can cause nuisance and be harmful to people and the natural environment, and therefore also need to be taken into account.

12.35 In line with its regulatory duties, the Council assesses air quality in its area and whether levels of air pollution exceed the national air quality objectives set by the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), establishing an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and publishing a Local Air Quality Plan where the objectives are not likely to be achieved. In 2017, the only AQMA within the borough is located in Olney, principally due to traffic emissions along the A509 through the town. Any development within or adjacent to areas designated as Air Quality Management Areas or areas with the potential to be designated as an AQMA must have regard to guidelines for ensuring air quality is maintained at acceptable levels.

12.36 In demonstrating compliance with Policy NE6, applicants will be required to follow the 'Guidance on Air Quality and Planning' published by the IAQM⁽⁴²⁾.

40 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
<https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/air-pollution/effects>

41 World Health Organization 2016, http://www.who.int/topics/air_pollution/en/

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12 . Environment, Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Noise and vibration

12.37 Noise and vibration can have a detrimental effect on health and the natural environment. National planning policy requires local policies to avoid giving rise to unacceptable noise impacts and give careful consideration to proposals that would have significant adverse effects. Planning Practice Guidance provides further information on how noise and vibration should be taken into account in the planning process, and Policy NE6 reflects this approach.

12.38 The siting, layout, landscaping and detailed building design of proposals, coupled with other noise-specific mitigation measures, should seek to avoid and minimise the adverse impacts of noise and vibration rather than rely upon expensive and ineffective retrospective measures. The Council will seek to ensure that noise-sensitive developments, such as housing, schools, residential and nursing homes, are separated from major sources of noise both to protect new occupiers and users and to avoid prejudicing existing development and uses. The Council will also seek to ensure that new development with a potential for causing noise nuisance are sited away from noise-sensitive land uses, both existing and known proposed developments. British Standard 6472-1:2008 Evaluation of human exposure to vibration within buildings will be used to evaluate exposure to vibration.

12.39 In considering noise and vibration aspects of proposals, the Council will take into account:

- Possible future increases in noise levels.
- The introduction of noisy activities into some residential and rural areas that have very low background noise levels.
- The nature of noise sources, such as intermittent sources of noise which can be more disruptive than constant or anonymous sources, and uses such as fast food restaurants, public houses and night clubs which generated noise from within the establishments and through the activities of users within the immediate area in the evening and late night activity.
- That whilst design measures such as orientation, layout and double glazing can reduce noise within buildings, such measures are less effective in reducing the level of noise experienced in external amenity areas. As far as possible residents should have access to a peaceful (below 50dBA Leq) external amenity space.
- Traffic associated with 24 hour warehousing and distribution, and other uses which give rise to significant HGV and other traffic generation.
- Noise issues created by the use and operation of development itself, such as plant and services.
- The effects on sensitive species and habitats e.g. bats that rely on sound to feed and travel.

Light pollution

12.40 Artificial light can be necessary for safety and security, and for maximising the use of buildings and facilities. However, light spillage from artificial light can be detrimental to both people and wildlife, and can change the character of an area at night, in particular the tranquillity and dark skies within the rural area. Artificial lighting therefore needs to be carefully sited and designed. In certain cases a landscape character and visual impact assessment or appraisal as appropriate, must include night time impacts assessing night sky glow, light spill and glare.

12 . Environment, Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Policy NE6

ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION

- A. When considering development proposals, the Council will adopt the approach set out below to ensure that pollution will not have an unacceptable impact on human health, groundwater, general amenity, biodiversity or the wider natural environment.

Contaminated land and soil pollution

- B. Planning applications for proposals for the following sites must be accompanied by a Preliminary Contaminated Land Risk Assessment to determine the likelihood of any ground, groundwater or gas contamination of the sites:
1. Land formerly used for industrial, commercial or utilities purposes.
 2. Land which is considered to be potentially contaminated, contaminated or impacted by adjacent contamination.
 3. Land where the proposed use is particularly vulnerable to the presence of contamination.
- C. Proposals which, by their nature, risk contributing to soil and water pollution will be required to demonstrate how this risk will be avoided or mitigated to an acceptable level.

Air Quality

- D. Prevailing air quality and potential impacts upon air quality arising from airborne emissions, dust and odour associated with the construction and operation of a proposal (including vehicular traffic) will be considered when determining planning applications. Proposals that would result in or be subject to unacceptable risk to human health and the natural environment from air pollution, or would prejudice compliance with national air quality objectives, will be refused.
- E. An Air Quality Assessment that demonstrates how prevailing air quality and potential impacts upon air quality have been considered, and how air quality will be kept to an acceptable standard through avoidance and mitigation, will be required for major and minor development proposals if any of the following apply:
1. The development is likely, due to the nature of the proposal, and through in-combination effects, to give rise to significant air pollution;
 2. The site is within an Air Quality Management Area;
 3. The site is within 50 metres of a major road or heavily trafficked route ⁽⁴³⁾;

43 A4146/V11, A421, A422, A428, A5,A509, A5130, M1

12 . Environment, Biodiversity and Geodiversity

4. The site is within proximity to a source of air pollution which could present a significant risk to human health; and/or
 5. The type of development would mean its occupiers would be particularly sensitive to air pollution, such as schools, health care establishments or housing for older people.
- F. The potential impact of proposals upon odour levels, or their sensitivity to prevailing sources and levels of odour, should be considered and addressed. Where appropriate, the Council will require an Odour Impact Assessment to be provided, including an Odour Management Plan where necessary.

Noise and Vibration

- G. A Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment will be required for proposals with the potential to cause disturbance to people or the natural environment due to noise and/or vibration and for proposals that are considered to be sensitive to noise and/or vibration. Proposals that would result in or be subject to noise pollution and/or vibration that is:
1. Very disruptive and would have an unacceptable adverse effect on human health or the natural environment or the tranquillity and enjoyment of the countryside will not be permitted.
 2. Disruptive and would have a significant adverse effect on human health or the natural environment or the tranquillity and enjoyment of the countryside will be refused unless the need for, and benefits of, the development significantly outweigh the harm and all feasible solutions to avoid and mitigate that harm have been fully implemented.
 3. Intrusive and would have an adverse effect on human health or the natural environment or the tranquillity enjoyment of the countryside will be resisted unless the need for, and benefits of, the development outweigh the harm and all feasible solutions to avoid and mitigate that harm have been fully implemented.
- H. Proposals adjacent or within 100m of existing or proposed major roads, heavily trafficked roads, and railways will be required to adopt setbacks and landscaping measures to provide screening and acoustic buffers to protect the amenity of proposed buildings and areas of outdoor amenity space.

12 . Environment, Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Light pollution

- I. Proposals that include external lighting schemes, including floodlighting, will be approved where it can be demonstrated through a Lighting Assessment that all of the following criteria can be satisfied:
 1. The lighting scheme is the minimum required for security and operational purposes;
 2. Glare and light spillage are minimised;
 3. The amenity of residential areas is not adversely affected;
 4. There would be no unacceptable adverse impact on the character and beauty, openness, tranquillity, dark landscapes or enjoyment of the night sky of the countryside;
 5. The visual character of historic buildings and conservation areas are not adversely affected;
 6. There would be no dazzling or distraction of drivers using nearby roads;
 7. There would be no unacceptable adverse effects on species, habitats or the wider natural environment.

The Agricultural Land Classification System

12.41 The Agricultural Land Classification System (ALC) provides a method for assessing the quality of farmland to enable choices to be made about its future use within the planning system and the presence of best and most versatile agricultural land should be taken into account alongside other sustainability considerations when determining planning applications. Best and Most Versatile Land is land defined as grades 1, 2, and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification.

12.42 Paragraph 112 of the NPPF requires that planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.

Policy NE7

PROTECTION OF THE BEST AND MOST VERSATILE AGRICULTURAL LAND

In assessing proposals for the development of greenfield sites, the Council will take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Development involving the loss of agricultural land should seek to use areas of poorer quality land (grades 3b, 4 and 5 of the Agricultural Land Classification) in preference to that of a higher quality unless other sustainability considerations suggest otherwise.

13 Heritage

13.1 The identity, heritage and historic environment of Milton Keynes is rich and diverse, the designated New Town contrasting the original villages within it and the surrounding rural landscape. Both areas contain heritage assets ranging in date from the last Ice Age up to the 20th Century. Milton Keynes' heritage is therefore unique and has a 'unique selling point' which is now being recognised for its international significance. The designated New Town incorporates 13 historic villages and the historic towns of Bletchley, Stony Stratford, New Bradwell and Wolverton. To the north and east lie small farming villages and historic market towns such as Olney, Newport Pagnell, Hanslope and Sherington. To the south and east are the villages of the Brickhills and the 19th Century resort town of Woburn Sands. Wolverton is a unique Victorian and Edwardian railway town and former works, whilst Bletchley is the location of the internationally significant, World War Two code-breaking facility, Bletchley Park. These different areas of Milton Keynes represent many distinct chronological periods over a long stretch of history.

13.2 The rich and varied historic environment of Milton Keynes makes a fundamental contribution to the distinctiveness of the area, influencing the character of the built environment and shaping its sense of place and distinct identity. It is intrinsically linked to the quality of life of Milton Keynes' residents, the success of its existing businesses and the wider cultural profile it projects to potential investors and visitors.

13.3 Supporting this rich heritage and historic environment is an equally significant network of museums, archives and heritage venues and organisations, formally recording and evidencing information for current and future generations through historic collections, exhibitions, interpretation and learning. These organisations play a vital role alongside the Historic Environment Record (HER) in ensuring heritage assets are valued and relevant to modern audiences. The original pioneer communities of the designated New Town also continue to play an important role in creating and managing the voluntary efforts and ethos of much of this work.

13.4 There is a wide range of documents and resources which record and characterise the heritage and history of Milton Keynes and provide evidence to support the planning process⁽⁴⁴⁾. A more detailed description of this rich heritage and heritage assets is provided in Appendix B, which should be used alongside other published records and evidence relating to the heritage of Milton Keynes to inform the consideration of heritage within the planning process. Future development in the borough will be required, in line with national planning policy and guidance and relevant legislation to have regard to this information to ensure heritage assets are where possible, sustained and enhanced.

Strategy for the Historic Environment

13.5 The NPPF requires that Milton Keynes Council sets out in its Local Plan 'a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats' recognising 'that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance'.

44 MK Historic Environment Record (HER); The National Heritage List for England (NHLE); MK New Town Heritage Register (Local List); MK Heritage at Risk Register; Milton Keynes Historic Landscape Characterisation; Conservation Area Reviews / Character Statements; Historic Towns Reports; Milton Keynes Heritage, Museums and Archives Strategy; MK City Development Atlas

Strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the Historic Environment

- A. In order to sustain and enhance the significance of Milton Keynes' rich and varied historic character, important local distinctiveness and its sense of place, Milton Keynes will implement a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment.
- B. Milton Keynes Council will:
 1. Review its 27 conservation areas in order to confirm that they justify their status because of their special architectural and historic interest. The reviews will set out each area's special interest and those elements that contribute to its significance. In determining development proposals, Milton Keynes Council will give weight, as a material planning consideration, to the adopted reviews. Each review and its definition of special interest will assist and inform applicants in bringing forward proposals.
 2. Establish an overview of the condition of heritage within the Borough by identifying those assets at risk or threat of decay, publishing it in a public register. This will enable the Council to:
 - i. Identify what assistance or intervention is required, acting more effectively to avoid damage to or loss of heritage assets.
 - ii. Work positively with owners of assets on the register to bring forward sympathetic schemes that sustain the significance of the asset by halting the decay or bringing the asset back into a permanent use or state of preservation.
 - iii. Use the statutory powers available to it under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 where urgent works or repairs are required to a listed building to preserve it. Where appropriate the Council will also use other legislation to address heritage assets whose condition is causing detriment to the amenity of an area.
 3. Establish and understand the wider value of Milton Keynes New-Town to planning, architecture, art, landscape, urban design and infrastructure, identifying those assets that contribute to it by undertaking the Milton Keynes New Town Heritage Register (Local List). The register will inform planning development decisions made by the Council as a material consideration. It will enable the Council to reinforce local distinctiveness and further promote Milton Keynes as a cultural destination for visitors, residents and businesses, contributing to projects 5 and 6 of the Milton Keynes: Making a Great City Greater, Milton Keynes Futures 2050 Commission, 2016. The Council will consider whether further planning documents, such as an SPD, are required in respect of providing further advice on the register and its use in planning decisions.
 4. Maintain and enhance the Milton Keynes Historic Environment Record.

13 . Heritage

Heritage and Development

13.6 Heritage is at the core of government policy, guidance and achieving sustainable development, it is not a discretionary or secondary function or material consideration. The government recognises the importance of 'protecting and enhancing our... historic environment' through the NPPF, by placing it within the definition of achieving sustainable development. Amongst the core planning principles that should underpin both plan-making and decision-making, the NPPF requires the planning system to seek 'positive improvements in the quality of the ... historic environment' and to 'conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations'.

13.7 Great weight must be given to the existing heritage statutory duties placed upon Local Planning Authorities by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. These duties require that 'special regard' be paid in respect of listed buildings and their setting, and that 'special attention' be paid in respect of conservation areas.

13.8 Heritage assets rarely prevent development schemes where their significance has been properly assessed and understood from the outset. Indeed, the most successful schemes often arise from this understanding and an appreciation of the social, cultural, economic and environmental value that can be gained from their retention, sympathetic re-use and successful integration.

13.9 A clear understanding of the significance of a heritage asset and its setting is necessary to develop proposals which avoid or minimise harm. Early appraisals, a conservation plan or targeted specialist investigation can help to identify constraints and opportunities arising from the asset at an early stage. Such studies can reveal alternative development or design options, such as more compatible uses or a more appropriate scale of development. Such schemes are more likely to minimise harm and deliver public benefits in a sustainable and appropriate way. Reports on heritage assets must be proficient, objective and impartial in order to be of greatest value to the decision making process.

13.10 Early engagement with the Council about forthcoming schemes that affect heritage assets is strongly encouraged. Pre-application discussions will provide applicants with the advice required to bring forward an acceptable proposal. Heritage related schemes that reflect the informal advice will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the formal decision making process by avoiding the submission of unsympathetic schemes that require amendment whilst simultaneously promoting better design.

13.11 Such discussions have the added benefit of allowing applicants to address matters that would be otherwise required by additional submissions or a planning condition, avoiding or minimising delays later in the process.

13.12 The Council considers it desirable that the significance of its heritage assets be sustained and enhanced by all proposals. Where proposals cause harm to heritage assets, they will be considered using the criteria, weighing exercises and balanced judgements set out in the NPPF, depending on the type of asset and the degree of harm.

13.13 The risks of neglect and decay of heritage assets are best addressed through ensuring that assets remain in active uses that are consistent with their conservation. Ensuring such heritage assets remain used and valued is likely to require sympathetic

changes to be made from time to time. In the case of archaeological sites, many have no active use, and so periodic changes may not be necessary, however this should be carefully considered as part of an ongoing management strategy.

13.14 The significance of heritage assets may be affected by direct physical change or by change in their setting. Being able to properly assess the nature, extent and importance of the significance of a heritage asset, and the contribution of its setting, is very important to understanding the potential impact and acceptability of development proposals (NPPF paragraph 128). Proposals will have regard to the current Historic England guidance on setting.

13.15 Where harm to or loss of heritage assets as a consequence of development is acceptable it will be necessary for developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of the affected assets in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact (NPPF paragraph 141).

13 . Heritage

Policy HE1

HERITAGE AND DEVELOPMENT

- A. Proposals will be supported where they sustain and, where possible, enhance the significance of heritage assets which are recognised as being of historic, archaeological, architectural, artistic, landscape or townscape significance. These heritage assets include:
1. Listed Buildings;
 2. Conservation Areas;
 3. Scheduled Ancient Monuments and non-designated Archaeological sites;
 4. Registered Parks and Gardens;
 5. Assets on the MK New-Town Heritage Register; and
 6. Other places, spaces, structures and features which may not be formally designated but considered to meet the definition of 'heritage assets' as defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF.
- B. Where appropriate, development proposals must provide an impartial and objective heritage assessment. Where necessary, the Council will require suitably qualified specialists to undertake the heritage assessment. The heritage assessment shall:
1. Assess and describe the significance of the heritage assets affected, identifying those elements that contribute to that significance and, where appropriate, those that do not. The level of detail shall be proportionate to the asset's importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of proposals on their significance. Limited and localised alterations to an unlisted building in a conservation area need not be supported by the level of detail required to convey the impact on significance caused by development in the setting of a listed building or by proposed alterations to the built fabric of a listed building.
 2. Be of an analytical and interpretive nature rather than simply provide a description of the assets and the proposed works.
 3. Provide a sound justification for the works, based on the economic, social and environmental benefits delivered by the scheme, for example, promoting the long term care for a heritage asset and/or its setting.
 4. Explain how the scheme has taken account of the significance of the assets in its scope, design and detail, in order to minimise or avoid harm to the heritage assets affected.
 5. Assess the nature and extent of any harm or public benefit arising from the scheme.
 6. Where harm is caused by the proposal, the assessment shall explain why such harm is unavoidable or required to deliver public benefits that outweigh the harm caused.
- C. Where applications seek to change the use of a listed building, evidence should be submitted to demonstrate that the proposal includes the full scope of works required to achieve that use (such as those that will be required by Building Regulations, The Fire Authority, Environmental Health etc.). Where a change of

use requires a significant alteration or structural works, an engineer's report shall be submitted to demonstrate that the building is capable of conversion, set out the full extent of works and show how they have taken account of 2 a) above.

- D. Granting of permission for proposals that result in substantial harm to or total loss of the significance of a designated heritage asset will only be exceptional or wholly exceptional in accordance with national policy and guidance.
- E. Permission for proposals that cause less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset will only be granted where the harm is demonstrably outweighed by public benefits delivered by the scheme.
- F. Proposals that result in harm to the significance of non-designated heritage assets will be resisted unless the need for, and benefits of the development clearly outweigh the harm, taking into account the asset's significance and importance, and only once all feasible solutions to avoid and mitigate that harm have been fully implemented.
- G. In assessing any potential harm or enhancement to the significance of a heritage asset(s) the following will be considered:
 - 1. Avoiding successive small scale changes that lead to a cumulative loss or harm to the significance of the asset or historic environment;
 - 2. Respecting the character, appearance, special interest and setting of the asset and historic environment;
 - 3. Retaining architectural or historic features which are important to the character and appearance of the asset (including internal features) in an unaltered state; and
 - 4. Retaining the historic form and structural integrity of the asset.
- H. Where 'enabling development' is proposed, the Council will expect the proposal to accord with Historic England's published guidance. The applicant will provide accurate evidence to establish that a 'heritage deficit' exists. It is not the role of 'enabling development' to reimburse owners or applicants who have paid above the market value of asset, that value being based on the current condition of the asset.

13 . Heritage

- I. Proposals will be accompanied by an appropriate desk-based assessment and field evaluation where development is proposed affecting an unscheduled site of known archaeological interest or with the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest (General requirement for applications affecting heritage assets).
- J. The ability to record evidence of our past should not be a factor in deciding whether the loss of significance should be permitted. Where harm to or loss of heritage assets occurs as a consequence of development it will be necessary for developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of the affected assets in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact (NPPF paragraph 141). Recording techniques should keep in step with current best practice and in particular the use of photogrammetry and fine grain LIDAR ground scans where unavoidable loss will occur. In the case of heritage assets of greater than local importance the results of this recording work should be published in the relevant local or period journal or in book form according to the scale and significance of the assets affected. Where significant archaeological remains are found, provision shall be made for public open days, exhibitions and/or popular publications/booklets. Where archaeological remains are preserved within public open space appropriate on-site interpretation and a strategy for long term care (and funding thereof) shall be produced as part of a holistic approach to the long term stewardship of the open space in question and agreed with the body responsible for the same. Where recording or assessment results in a physical archive for deposition at an appropriate museum or archive facilities, consideration of resources for its storage, interpretation and public access should be made in order to capture the heritage significance of that asset for future generations.

15 Design

15.1 The Borough enjoys a generally high quality environment both in its urban areas and the open countryside. Many early estates and areas of self-build were based on innovative housing design that created a strong character or identity for the development. It is important to maintain a high standard of design in new developments and build on the character of many early estates whilst also reflecting concerns such as sustainability.

15.2 The meaning of design as used here is broad, covering layout of development, landscape, scale, massing and the design of buildings as well as many aspects of environmental impact and sustainability. Together or individually they all influence the quality and character of a development. Government guidance on design is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in paragraphs 56-68, as well as in the Planning Practice Guidance. More detailed design guidance for new residential developments can be found in the New Residential Development Design Guide SPD.

Designing a High Quality Place

15.3 The objective of this policy is to ensure that all new development is of a high standard of design. Plan:MK proposes a considerable amount of new development across the Borough. The successful integration of a development with the surrounding context and its success as a place, to live, work and play in will depend largely on the quality of design.

15.4 More detailed design considerations that are applicable to the Milton Keynes context are covered in the New Residential Development Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2012). Strategic development sites will also require development frameworks and design codes which will detail site specific layout and design requirements.

15.5 All development proposals will be expected to achieve a high standard of design and should be underpinned by a thorough analysis of the site and its surrounding area. An application would be expected to include:

- Accurate information relating to ground levels, adjoining development / context, site boundaries, trees, planting and other existing features on site and surrounding area.
- An assessment of the features on the site that are statutorily protected, or that should be retained in the interests of public amenity or nature conservation.
- An analysis of the impact of development on views and skylines.
- A statement explaining how the proposal complies with the Local Plan design policies.

15.6 Further guidance on many of these issues is provided in the New Residential Development Design Guide SPD.

15.7 This policy sets out the general principles against which the layout and design of a proposal will be assessed and should be in line with good practice guidance.

15.8 Continuity and Enclosure: This objective is usually best achieved by designing layouts where front entrances of buildings face streets or other public spaces and private spaces are protected and secure behind buildings within the block normally abutting other private spaces. With respect to residential development these layouts can include all housing types and can occur at all densities. The degree of continuity and enclosure will depend on the context within which the site is located.

15.9 Public realm: this relates to the publicly accessible spaces between buildings. A high quality public realm can be achieved by the relationship of buildings to the public realm whereby entrances onto the street increase pedestrian activity and consequently better enliven and animate the public realm. Windows and active frontages that overlook the public realm particularly at ground floor level provide natural surveillance helping to make the public realm feel safer.

15.10 Landscape: The quality of hard and soft landscape proposals can make a fundamental contribution to the quality of the public realm and should be appropriate to its context. Street trees and soft landscaping can soften and green the streetscape as well as assist in breaking up the appearance of on-street parking. It is important that the specification and choice of design, materials and planting take into account the pressures placed upon the public realm through every day and infrequent activities (such as the movement of vehicles and people, or road gritting). Public realm design should take into account different abilities and levels of mobility, and accommodate those with specific needs and an ageing population, for instance through appropriate levels of lighting, provision of seating and public toilets (including fully wheelchair accessible toilets). The design of landscaping and the public realm should take account of the cost and practicality of maintenance over the longer term, avoiding where possible impracticable maintenance regimes to be required in order for the quality and visual amenity of the public realm to be maintained.

15.11 Hydrants should be provided and sited appropriately to facilitate safe and efficient use by emergency services. Measures to soften the landscape and improve green infrastructure and biodiversity, from building/plot scale to site wide scale, in development are encouraged. Appendix 2 of the NEP's "Vision and Principles for the Improvement of Green Infrastructure in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes" provides specific examples of such measures.

15.12 Movement: the emphasis should be on creating a hierarchical network of well-connected streets that prioritise pedestrians, cyclists and public transport over private motor vehicles, whilst supporting the transition toward this movement hierarchy within the wider urban area. Routes for pedestrians and cyclists should be clearly legible, safe, pleasant and wherever possible take the shortest route between main origin and destination points within and beyond the site. Access and roads should provide safe and efficient movement of fire appliances, other emergency service vehicles and refuse vehicles.

15.13 Legibility: The layout of the street network, and the positioning and design of buildings should be used to enable people to find their way around a development easily. Landmarks help achieve a legible place. There should be clear paths (streets), districts (neighbourhoods/estates/character areas), nodes (junctions), and edges (onto the rural area, major open spaces and grid roads).

15.14 Variety such as mixed use for large sites is fundamental to creating a place with its own character, visual interest and activity; even in mainly residential areas this should be achieved by varying layout, street types, setbacks, building form and landscaping.

Policy D1

DESIGNING A HIGH QUALITY PLACE

- A. Development proposals will be permitted if they meet the following objectives/principles:
1. The development proposals as a whole respond appropriately to the site and surrounding context.
 2. Continuity of street frontage and locating fronts of buildings to face the street or public space.
 3. Appropriate framing of space to define public and private areas, with front gardens designed to be clearly private through appropriate boundary treatments and use of hard surfaces that also maintaining an active frontage and passive surveillance of the street.
 4. The layout should maximise the surveillance of the public realm, prevention of crime and minimise the perception of crime.
 5. Soft and hard landscaping that continues the verdant and green character of Milton Keynes, enhances the quality of the public realm, is robust to the demands placed upon the public realm, and is appropriate to their context and can be maintained and managed without significant whole life-costs. In particular, street trees and planting are incorporated to soften the streetscape and ensure the public realm is not dominated by hard surfaces and boundaries and by parked cars.
 6. Landscape and boundary treatments integrate with and/or enhance those of the surrounding area.
 7. Ease of movement by creating places that are permeable and well connected with a safe, attractive and convenient hierarchical network of routes that balances the provision for walking, cycling and public transport with that for private motor vehicles.
 8. Legibility by providing recognisable streets, districts, nodes, edges and landmarks to help people to find their way around.
 9. Where applicable, a variety of layouts, street types, building sizes and forms, landscapes, uses and housing tenures across the development.

Creating Character

15.15 The objective of this policy is to ensure all new development has an identifiable character or sense of place. Character or sense of place / identity for a development, relates to the overall perception of a development and can be created through existing or new landscape, layout, massing/scale, land uses, historic buildings and the appearance of buildings.

15 . Design

15.16 A lack of positive character which surrounds a potential development should not be used as a justification for proposing and creating non-places, non-descript development and poor design.

Policy D2

CREATING A POSITIVE CHARACTER

- A. Development proposals will be permitted if they meet the following objectives/principles:
1. The layout, massing/scale, boundary treatments and landscaping of a development and appearance of buildings exhibit a positive character or sense of place for a development.
 2. The character of the development is locally inspired where appropriate (for example in or adjacent to conservation areas, or in existing areas with a strong positive character).
 3. Where there is no positive built form character on the site or surrounding area, new development is designed to create its own distinctive character or sense of place using existing site features, the layout of the development and the appearance of buildings.
 4. The design allows for visual interest through the careful use of detailing, where this is appropriate to the character of the area.

Design of Buildings

15.17 The objective of this policy is to ensure that all new buildings are well designed, relate well to the surrounding area and contribute to the character of the development. The design of new buildings is of significant importance irrespective of whether it lies within one of the older settlements, located within the existing city, or on a greenfield site on the edge of the city. The lack of positive character and high quality design in the surrounding area should not be used as justification for proposing or creating 'placeless' or nondescript design and architecture.

15.18 Buildings are among the most visible parts of a development and therefore are a key influencing factor in the creation of a character for a development. The appearance of buildings also helps with legibility and the generation of varying character across large developments in particular.

15.19 While it is considered most important for character to be generated along key frontages as these are most visible to passers-by and where a perception of an area or character area (for very large developments) can be most easily created, this does not obviate the need for character to be carefully considered throughout the development. It is also important for the transition between character areas to be carefully considered so there isn't an awkward juxtaposition of buildings along a frontage, for example. The arrangement of buildings (e.g. where gable ends face the street), materials and window detailing can also have a major impact on the character created.

17 . Sustainable Construction and Renewable Energy

17.17 The NPPF highlights that Local Plans should identify opportunities where development can draw its energy supply from decentralised, renewable or low carbon energy supply systems and for co-locating potential heat customers and suppliers.

17.18 There are significant opportunities in any new development area for an area-wide approach to low or zero carbon development and renewable energy provision. This is based on the potential to comprehensively plan energy efficient layouts in new neighbourhoods and the economies of scale provided by the size of the developments. This has already been achieved in Central Milton Keynes where a combined heat and power (CHP) system supplies many housing, retail and office developments. The Council supports further expansion of the CMK CHP network given the scale of existing and future energy demand occurring within Central Milton Keynes and the substantial opportunities arising from new development.

Policy SC2

COMMUNITY ENERGY NETWORKS AND LARGE SCALE RENEWABLE ENERGY SCHEMES

- A. Low carbon and renewable energy schemes will be attributed significant weight in their favour, and will be supported where it can be demonstrated that there will not be any significant negative social, economic, or environmental impacts associated with them.
- B. Proposals for over 100 homes and non-residential developments of over 1,000 sq.m. will be expected to consider the integration of community energy networks in the development. This consideration should form part of development proposals and take into account the site's characteristics and the existing cooling, heat and power demands on adjacent sites.
- C. All new developments in proximity of an existing or proposed combined heat and power (CHP), combined cooling, heat and power (CCHP) station or local energy network will be expected to connect to the network unless it can be demonstrated that:
 - 1. a better alternative for reducing carbon emissions from the development can be achieved; or
 - 2. heating and/or cooling loads of the scheme do not justify a CHP connection; or
 - 3. the cost of achieving this would make the proposed development unviable.

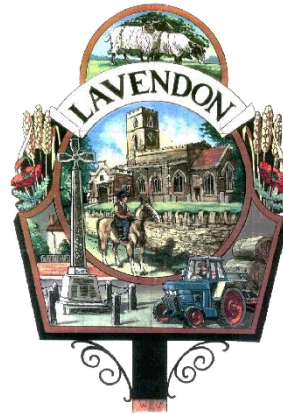
17.19 The NPPF says that Local Planning Authorities 'should recognise the responsibility on all communities to contribute to energy generation from renewable or low carbon sources' and that they should 'have a positive strategy to promote energy from renewable and low carbon sources'. However, a Written Ministerial Statement⁽⁵⁴⁾ on 18 June 2015 and amendments to national planning practice guidance introduced the new policy that restricts onshore wind energy developments in favour of other renewable energy technologies.

17 . Sustainable Construction and Renewable Energy

Policy SC3

LOW CARBON AND RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION

- A. The Council will encourage proposals for low carbon and renewable energy generation developments that are led by, or meet the needs of local communities.
- B. Planning permission will be granted for proposals to develop low carbon and renewable energy sources (including community energy networks) unless there would be:
 - 1. Significant harm to the amenity of residential area, due to noise, traffic, pollution or odour;
 - 2. Significant harm to wildlife species or habitat;
 - 3. Unacceptable landscape and visual impact on the landscape, including cumulative impacts;
 - 4. Unacceptable harm to the significance of heritage assets; and
 - 5. Unacceptable impact on air safety.
- C. In addition to the above criteria, wind turbines should avoid unacceptable shadow flicker and electro-magnetic interference and be sited an appropriate distance away from occupied properties, consistent with the size and type of the turbine. Proposals to develop solar PV farms should avoid unacceptable visual impact from the effect of glint and glare on the landscape, on neighbouring uses and aircraft safety. Proposals for large scale renewable energy in the open countryside should be informed by a satisfactory landscape and visual impact assessment.
- D. In the case of energy generation through wind power, permission will only be granted for proposals where:
 - 1. The proposed site is identified in a Neighbourhood Development Plan or other Development Plan Document as a suitable site for wind energy generation; and
 - 2. Following consultation with local residents, it can be demonstrated that the planning impacts identified can be fully addressed, and therefore the proposal has the backing of the local community; and
 - 3. The proposal complies with national and local guidance, including the Council's Wind Turbines SPD and Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Turbine and Solar PV Development document.



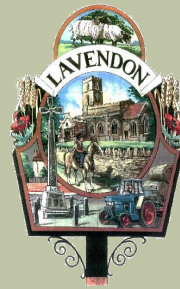
LAVENDON PARISH COUNCIL

Lavendon Neighbourhood Plan 2019 to 2031



Referendum Version November 2019

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LAVENDON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Contents

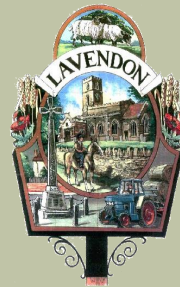
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Policies Map

Annex

Annex A: Ancient Monuments and Listed Buildings

Annex B: Glossary



5. Environment

Context and justification

- 5.1 The review of the Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire has revealed that the residents of Lavendon strongly support the protection and enhancement of green spaces, habitats and local wildlife. Therefore, under the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan there is an opportunity to implement several measures aimed to preserve and enhance the environment of the Parish.
- 5.2 Through the Neighbourhood Plan, opportunities to improve the environment and biodiversity of the Parish will be sought where possible for the benefit of existing and future generations. This could include new wildlife habitat and landscape features, alongside ensuring that new development protects existing landscape features and delivers a positive net gain in biodiversity.



Figure 11: Saint Michaels Church, Lavendon

- 5.3 The policies support proposals to improve access to the countryside including the delivery of connections between Lavendon and the surrounding villages. Proposals that encourage cycling and walking, aiding sustainable travel choices will be supported, subject to compliance with other policies in the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.4 Landscaping schemes should enhance the quality of the proposed development and surrounding area, using native species that benefit wildlife and biodiversity and using plants of a size and planting density that create a reasonable level of positive impact from the outset. Planting schemes that use inappropriate planting species or have plants that are too young and small taking a long time to become established should be avoided.
- 5.5 Proposals for low carbon and renewable energy projects will be supported where they meet the requirements of Plan:MK Policy SC3.

Objectives

- To promote access to the countryside for recreation and enjoyment where possible.
- To support the provision and enhancement of habitats for wildlife.
- To seek opportunities to enhance the quality of the environment within the Parish, including biodiversity and wildlife networks.
- To ensure any development proposals do not adversely impact natural features including mature trees and hedgerows.

Policies

POLICY E1: ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE

Proposals to improve public access to the countryside will be encouraged and supported, including the opening of new footpaths, bridleways and cycling routes to improve connections between Lavendon and the surrounding villages.

POLICY E2: BIODIVERSITY OFFSET AND DEVELOPMENT

Development proposals should enhance the natural environment and contribute to biodiversity net gains within the Parish in line with Plan:MK Policy NE3. Biodiversity Improvements will help in mitigating against the adverse effects that development has on the environment.

Development proposals should include baseline information on the environmental value of the site and demonstrate how its quality can be maintained or enhanced through the introduction of adequate mitigation. Proposals that would benefit the wider Parish will be looked at favourably.

Continued overleaf...

POLICY E2: BIODIVERSITY OFFSET AND DEVELOPMENT CONTINUED...

Planting of high-quality native trees and shrubs will be expected as part of the development landscaping scheme.

To avoid habitat fragmentation and maintain/enhance existing ecological networks, on-site mitigation will be encouraged. Where this cannot be achieved, development proposal will have to demonstrate why and contribute towards effective off-site mitigation projects.

Developers will be expected to maintain new planting schemes for a period of 2 years from completion of construction works, either directly or through the appointment of a management company. The developer will be expected to remove and replace any dead/dying/decaying vegetation identified within that timeframe.

POLICY E3: TREES AND HEDGEROWS

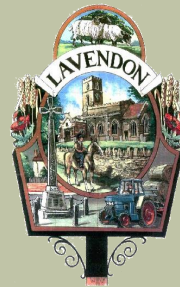
All development proposals should identify any significant trees within the site or affected by the proposals and demonstrate how these trees will be protected in accordance with BS5837 or the equivalent standards.

Mitigation and protection schemes must be implemented prior to construction work commencing and must be retained in good order throughout the construction period.

If the loss of trees and/or other established vegetation cannot be avoided, all development proposals will have to allow for clear, effective measures to offset the loss of biodiversity. This may include (but may not be limited to) planting new, high-quality trees and/or funding off-site planting schemes (although on-site mitigation is encouraged).

Implementation

- 5.6 These policies will be implemented through consultation with Milton Keynes Council during the planning application process. Early discussion and communication with the Parish Council when formulating a scheme will assist developers to obtain feedback on their proposals.



6. Character and Design

Context and justification

- 6.1 Lavendon has a distinct character that makes the village a special place to live and work. There are numerous buildings designated as heritage assets and attractive views through the historic core of the village along Northampton Road and the High Street.



Figure 13: View looking up Northampton Road

- 6.2 The Neighbourhood Plan allows the community to have a say in future development proposals and ensure that they respect the character and appearance of the village, the Conservation Area, Ancient Monuments and Listed Buildings.
- 6.3 The National Planning Policy Framework emphasises the weight that should be afforded to the protection of heritage assets. Proposals will be required to consider the significance of nearby heritage assets; the level of detail should be proportionate to the importance of the assets.

- 6.4 Good design should contribute towards making places better for people, providing buildings that are fit for purpose, adaptable and sustainable. The delivery of good design is key to the planning system and a requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework
- 6.5 The choice of high-quality building materials, stone walls and good landscaping will help development proposals to respect and blend into the character of the village. The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to ensure that the village evolves in a managed way for the benefit of future generations.



Figure 14: Cottages feature a blend of materials and some fine detailing



Figure 15: Relatively recent new housing within the village.

Objectives

- To maintain and enhance the character of the village, ensuring that changes are carefully considered to be harmonious with existing buildings and development.
- To safeguard, conserve and enhance the important open areas, buildings and features that contribute to the significance, character and setting of the Conservation Area and heritage assets.
- To integrate new development into the village, to avoid a sense of 'add-on' estates.
- To ensure that new buildings and extensions are designed to the very best standards and reflect the rural setting of the village and use high-quality materials that enhance the surroundings.
- To ensure that new development protects important views, buildings and character elements that the community cherish.

Policies

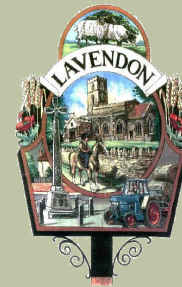
POLICY CD1: CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE

Development proposals should protect, conserve and, wherever possible, enhance the significance of heritage assets within the Parish, including the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, Listed Buildings, Ancient Monuments and their settings.

This will include consideration of the following:

- a) The setting of any nearby listed buildings and their curtilages.
- b) The setting of Ancient Monuments.
- c) Impact on the character and setting of the Conservation Area.
- d) Site specific design issues, including demonstration that proposals would make a positive contribution to the street scene, would be sympathetic to the character of neighbouring properties and would incorporate high-quality materials.

Development proposals that would harm the character and setting of the Conservation Area and heritage assets will be resisted.



7. Flood Risk

Context and justification

- 7.1 Lavendon is located on the slopes of the Great Ouse river valley, with the rolling landscape falling broadly to the south and west from higher ground in the north and east. This can lead to flooding situations occurring during storm rainfall, predominately caused by surface water run-off from the roads and fields overwhelming the drainage system.
- 7.2 The Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning identifies parts of the village as being at risk from surface water (Pluvial) flooding.

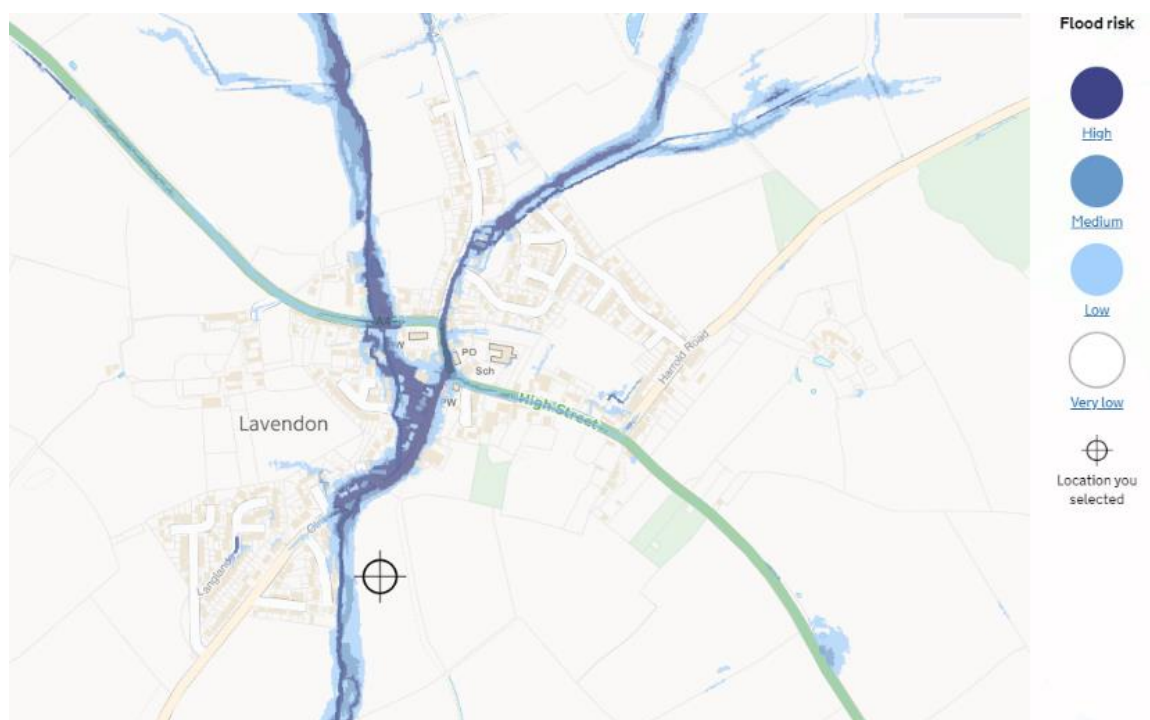


Figure 16: Environment Agency surface water flood risk map.

- 7.3 The Neighbourhood Plan promotes the creation of new flood attenuation measures and requires development proposals to adopt effective surface water management to ensure that the risk of flooding is not exacerbated elsewhere. In addition, development proposals should take account of the policies in Plan:MK on Managing and Reducing Flood Risk.

- 7.4 Other improvement works to the drainage system surrounding the village will be delivered through discussion with landowners surrounding the village to investigate ways of holding surface water in the higher catchment area to reduce the risk of storm water flooding in the centre of the village.
- 7.5 A programme of maintenance for the drainage systems within and around the village will also be investigated by the Parish Council, including establishing riparian ownership, to improve ditch capacity by regular clearance and maintenance. Opportunities to improve storm water flow and remove restrictions should also be sought and supported.

Objectives

- To promote sustainable development and respond to climate change.
- To require development to be safe from flooding and not exacerbate the risk of flooding elsewhere.
- To encourage the improvements in drainage systems to capture surface water run-off before it reaches the village where possible.



Figure 17: Example of a flood attenuation pond.

Policies

POLICY FR1: DEVELOPMENT AND FLOOD RISK

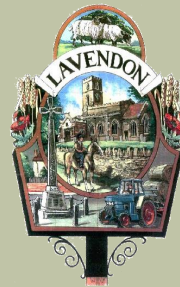
To promote sustainable development and combat climate change, all new development in the Parish will be expected to adopt sustainable drainage schemes.

Surface water runoff should be attenuated on site whenever possible, and if achievable, should be combined with semi-natural balancing ponds to provide enhanced biodiversity and new wildlife habitats.

Encouragement will be given to enhancement of up-catchment flood storage, to hold surface water runoff away from the village.

Implementation

- 7.6 The Neighbourhood Plan will deliver these policies through the planning application process when considering development proposals and through discussion and agreements reached with landowners and other agencies concerned with drainage in the village.



8. Highways and Transport

Context and justification

- 8.1 Lavendon is located on the main Northampton to Bedford Road, the A428. It also caters for traffic moving east to west from the Bedfordshire villages towards Olney and Milton Keynes.
- 8.2 Views on traffic, speeding and the risk of accidents were issues covered by the resident's survey questionnaire. It was evident that the around 75% of residents who responded felt that additional traffic calming, improved signage and average speed cameras were needed.



Figure 18: The A428 in the centre of the village.

- 8.3 Private cars dominate for journeys out of the village as to be expected for a rural area. The village has a limited bus service, which provides a vital lifeline for those residents who do not use a car and need to access services in the surrounding towns and was relatively well used by around 14% of respondents.
- 8.4 Presently, the speed limit changes from the national speed limit 30 mph at the village boundary when heading north and south on the A428. Olney Road has a similar arrangement changing from the national speed limit to 30mph on the edge of the village, although there is no gateway feature here.



Figure 19: Damage to the War Memorial following a road traffic accident.

- 8.5 The aim would be to unify the location of entrance signs into the village with the speed limit change and establish a clearer feature or signage that signals to drivers they have entered a settlement. Support will be given to the creation of new village entrances to better define the transition from rural roads to the speed limited and to help reduce vehicle speeds.
- 8.6 In addition, support will be given to alterations to the A428 through the village that improve pedestrian safety and the perception of safety, reducing the dominance of the carriageway as it passes through the village. This should be focused around the centre of the village, namely in the vicinity of the village store, the primary school and war memorial.

Objectives

- To ensure that footpaths, bridleways and cycling routes throughout the Parish are maintained and accessible.
- To consider ways to improve off-road car parking for existing properties, where this can be achieved without adverse impacts on the character of the village streets.
- To ensure that the new homes in the village have information available to promote non-car transport choices supporting sustainable development.

Policies

POLICY HT1: TRANSPORT, HIGHWAYS AND NEW DEVELOPMENT

New development proposals will be expected to demonstrate that a safe and satisfactory access can be achieved, including the delivery of visibility splays to meet the requirements of the Highway Authority.

Proposals should demonstrate how pedestrian access to village facilities and services can be achieved, with connections to the existing footpath network delivered wherever possible.

New development, including reserved matters applications on existing permissions will be expected to demonstrate how information will be made available to the first occupiers to help them make sustainable, non-car-based transport choices, including maps for walking and cycling routes and information on bus services.



Figure 20: HGV traffic passing through the village.

POLICY HT2: VILLAGE HIGHWAY ENHANCEMENT

Development proposals that include measures to reduce the impact of traffic, improve the highway environment within Lavendon and the wider Parish and to increase use of non-car modes of transport will be supported, subject to compliance with other policies of the Development Plan.

Implementation

- 8.7 These policies will be delivered in conjunction with the requirements of the Milton Keynes Residential Development Design Guide and will be applied through the consideration of planning applications. Parking standards are set out in the Milton Keynes Parking Standards SPD. Contributions will be sought from developments towards the village entrance improvements from development proposals.

Community project... improving car parking and reducing speeding

- 8.8 *A working group has been established to plan for and deliver an expansion of the car park serving the village hall to the rear of the building. This will greatly improve car parking capacity and reduce instances of on-street car parking in the area.*
- 8.9 *Speeding vehicles within Lavendon and the wider Parish is a significant concern to the community. A community speed watch group has been established, and this will continue on a voluntary basis. The Parish Council will investigate ways to secure appropriate signage and warnings to drivers to reduce speed upon entering the village, particularly where existing signage can be improved, whilst avoiding an over proliferation of signs.*
- 8.10 *The Parish Council will also investigate and promote the delivery of average speed cameras through the village, as seen within other communities along the A428.*

6 . General development considerations

Policy 18

Mineral Safeguarding and Consultation Area

Mineral resources of local and national importance within Milton Keynes include sand and gravel and the White and Blisworth Limestone formations. These resources will be safeguarded from unnecessary sterilisation by other development through the designation of Mineral Safeguarding Areas.

Planning permission will not be granted for non-mineral development that would lead to the unnecessary sterilisation of mineral resources within a Minerals Safeguarding Area unless it can be demonstrated that:

- the mineral concerned is not of economic value or evidence confirms the absence of mineral resources, the proposed development is temporary or of a nature that would not sterilise the mineral resource or hinder future extraction,
- the proposed development is temporary and would not sterilise the mineral resource or hinder future extraction,
- prior extraction can occur where practicable and environmentally feasible and within a reasonable timescale,
- there is an over-riding need for the development, or
- the development is exempt.

In determining whether prior extraction is feasible an assessment of the mineral resource including detailed site investigations should be undertaken to identify the quality, quantity and extent of the resource, the economic viability of prior extraction and the proportion of the mineral to be used on-site and saleable aggregate. The assessment should also take account of the size, nature and need for the (non-minerals) development as well as the proposed phasing of operations and construction of the non-mineral development.

In the event that the non-mineral development is delayed or not implemented the site must be restored to a stable landform and appropriate after-use.

Safeguarding minerals-related development and associated infrastructure

6.13 Existing commitments, site-specific allocations, associated infrastructure and other forms of minerals-related development (see Appendix 3 'Glossary') need to be safeguarded to prevent the encroachment of incompatible development that could prevent or prejudice use of the site.

6.14 The encroachment of incompatible development on mineral-related development can result in land-use conflict, potentially imposing constraints on sites, and reducing the viability of current or future operations as well as resulting in adverse impacts (e.g. environmental nuisance impacts such as dust, noise etc) on the proposed non-minerals development. The use of separation areas, and other mitigation measures, can help to prevent this.