

We welcome the opportunity to comment on the future of the Borough through this consultation and the openness in which it is being conducted.

SUMMARY RESPONSE

A combination of Directions of Growth 4+1 is the most expedient approach and limits the use of green field sites and would not massively expand the city's urban areas. It would create significant opportunities for redevelopment of existing underutilised or poorly designed areas. It would demand the least new transport infrastructure.

Direction of Growth 2 should only be considered when 4+1 have been fully explored and implemented and are unable to yield the necessary numbers of houses.

Direction of Growth 3, One or More Satellite Settlements in the Rural Area is unacceptable under any circumstances and should not be considered. This proposal would create enormous demands for transport connections to the main area of the city and cause massive damage to the rural communities and surrounding countryside which should be considered as an invaluable assets to the city,.

COMMENTARY

The consultation document makes much of 'respecting the original concepts' (p11) and 'maximising the image and identity'....'and distinctive character of the city' (p13) and this we support. The 'original concepts' having been denied in the recent past are perhaps now being recognised as the very things that make the city unique and worth preserving.

We question how two of the '4 Directions of Growth' proposed later in the document relate to the original concepts. These features had been largely ignored in the East Flank, a rabbit warren of endless houses with poor and congested access. A damage limitation exercise is being attempted on the West Flank that is now being built but it is too little too late, another pokey little 'satellite settlement' of the city is being created.

These elements should be more deliberately detailed and these should lead the future expansion plans. The costs of such features then have to be fitted into the planning gain raised by the developers' levy and other highways and environmental grants as may be available from central government. Plan:MK should not presume that such things are unattainable nor that government policy on housing should dictate the abandonment of such principles.

We believe the following characteristics are all key in making the city the success story it undoubtedly is.

- The openness of the city, with its parkland and green spaces infusing the entire scope of the 'ground area' and its low density housing. The wildlife corridors from East to west and South to North must be retained. The use of natural features such as streams and hedgerows to form the nexus of recreational activity in the city, not to mention flood control and management, must be retained. The adoption of a clear landscaping policy with regard to all roadside buffer planting and housing estate development should be a priority to guide developers' proposals. This is the most significant feel-good factor for residents.
- The grid road system is a very distinctive feature of the city which enables easy travel for all types of vehicles, not only cars but delivery lorries and vans. As repeatedly noted by all Milton Keynes vehicle users: road travel in most other built-up areas in the UK is a nightmare of frustration and delay. The principle of main North/south and East/west road links, dualled where necessary, surrounding both industrial and residential 'grid squares' is essential.
- In tandem with this a true cycleway independent of the road system is streets ahead of any development in the country and is a great asset for dog-walkers and both parents and pupils walking to and from schools all over the city as well as cyclists. It needs investment and publicising as the

exciting 'ahead-of-its-time' feature that it is. This requires bridges and subways where it crosses the main grid road network, not pedestrian traffic lights or redundant footbridges that are hardly used

In addition a fully integrate public transport system is now essential to supplement the road system. This is needed now. At peak periods roads are heavily congested and parking around the city centre and railway station impossible

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

Q1 Workshop outputs for a longer term Vision – (bullet points)

- *That has grown and developed in a sustainable way that respects its original concepts whilst embracing innovation and change.*
- *That provides quality of life through opportunity and choice for all (a place for everyone). That has succeeded in achieving easy movement and access for all.*
- *That is recognised internationally as a prosperous and competitive economy benefiting from a wide ranging skill base.*
- *That has taken advantage of growth and change to benefit the citizens of Milton Keynes and the surrounding area.*
- *Where infrastructure needs have been met through the smart use of resources and technology.*
- *With an international profile and reputation as an attractive and forward thinking, 'can do' place.*
- *With a variety of people belonging to diverse communities across the urban and rural area.*

In addition there should be ambitions that create civic pride e.g. "that takes pride in all aspects of its appearance" or "that is seen to set benchmarks for the standard and cleanliness of its infrastructure that other cities can aspire to"

Milton Keynes should be a champion for excellence in everything that is done here. That would truly be a way to put the city on the map. This could be linked to the high quality/high tech industry that exists here.

Q2 Form of Vision for Plan:MK - bullet point list only?

These outputs are wide ranging and non specific. They should be supported by examples or an explanation of what could be achieved and how. E.g. 6th bullet "Where infrastructure needs are met through smart use of resources and technology" .

Q3/Q4 Other opportunities (than Vision workshop list) / The next 'big things' for Milton Keynes

Milton Keynes does need to maximise its image and brand. It still is a modern city but much of its infrastructure is neglected and run down creating a negative image for the city. This should be reversed as visible neglect in public spaces leads to graffiti, poor behaviour and crime. This means investment in a thorough maintenance program.

The main infrastructure of Milton Keynes was conceived and designed around the motor vehicle. The ever-increasing population of Milton Keynes will create a growing requirement to move those people into and around the city. Building more roads to increase capacity is unsustainable, increase air pollution and will use space that should be used for housing, industry and recreation. Transport capacity should be increased with a modern and properly integrated public transport system including light rail or trams. These should be linked to the main rail stations and park and ride facilities at the main motorway junctions and other main entry roads, plus the football stadium, hospital and main retail centres

It does need to create attractions other than retail that will draw visitors to the city. Ideas like national sports facilities, specialist museums e.g. Aston Martin, F1 or railway which could be based around Wolverton

A campus University is an excellent way of attracting people to the city and creating employment opportunities at many levels. Perhaps the University could initially focus on courses related to industries that already exist in the city such as retail, high end vehicle technologies, logistics, railway engineering

Direction of Growth 1 – Development to the west, south west and/or south east of the city

Q5/Q6 - Consideration

This is a very good way to continue the expansion and the Milton Keynes urban area. The option is already served by several major transport links including the A421 and the A5. The paper identifies the transport links that would need to be enhanced and the potential barriers. An additional rail station to the west of Bletchley within the new development area should be considered as well as junction improvements on the main highway routes. This option will create redevelopment opportunities for Bletchley and Fenny Stratford as well as new sites.

Q7 – ...definition of ‘final extent’ of development.

The new development areas to the south east have the defined boundaries of the M1 east-west railway whilst those to the south west need firm definition.

Q8 - ...the best way of protecting the character and integrity of the existing settlements: green buffer or integrated?

The treatment of each existing settlement should be carefully considered on its own merit and after consultation with its residents.

Direction of Growth 2 – Development East of the M1 motorway

Q9 – Consideration

This appears to be option worthy of further consideration as a long term solution and alongside other options within the existing urban area that could meet housing demand in the short term. The difficulties of working with neighbouring councils and the DoT as well as forward funding of the necessary infrastructure cannot be under estimated.

The difficulties created by the M1 will be more than simply physical and great care should be taken to ensure that development to the East of the M1 is fully integrated with Milton Keynes and does not become thought of as somewhere with a separate identity. It should “feel like” Milton Keynes in all respects.

Q10 ...definition of ‘final extent’ of development.

It is essential that the boundaries are precisely defined so that all parties are aware of the implications

Q11 ... green buffer or integrated?

The treatment of each existing settlement should be carefully considered on its own merit and after consultation with its residents. It may be that Moulsoe, which is essentially a ribbon development could be sympathetically integrated whereas Salford could be protected with a green buffer.

Direction of Growth 3 – One or more satellite settlements in the rural area

Q12 - Size of new settlement(s) - one much larger new settlement?

RPC does not support this proposal.

This proposal as it stands is not sufficiently developed to be worthy of detailed consideration and responses can only draw attention to the generic issues associated with new developments in this area.

These rural areas have particular characters that need to be conserved as a facility for the city. Each of the existing villages has its own character that fits within the surrounding landscape. Many of the communities are located where they are because of the position within the landscape e.g in a sheltered valley by a stream or next to a river where a mill could be built. The landscape that provides the context for the existing rural communities should not be destroyed with large scale development and the infrastructure necessary to support it.

Travel from the rural areas and through it from the surrounding communities and into and out of Milton Keynes at peak periods is already a major problem. Any new development would require significant investment in infrastructure not only to link the new development with the city but also to any neighbouring developments

Q13 - Possible locations for new satellite settlements

No. RPC does not support development of any new satellite settlements.

Existing villages complement and add value to the urban area, allowing contrast and for those in the city breathing space, rural activities, and a place of retreat and recreation.

There are however opportunities for limited further expansion of Olney but these should be carefully considered so as to limit the impact on the surrounding landscape. Views across the Ouse Valley and from and to the adjacent villages should be protected. Any expansion of Olney should be strictly limited to bring it to such a scale that it merits and supports the infrastructure improvements that it already needs. Olney sits on one of the major routes from the north to J14 of the M1 and into the city. Traffic relief for the town is essential as would be significant improvement to the A509 and its junctions. There should also be a light rail/tram connection from Park and Ride facilities say to the north of Olney, through Newport Pagnell and into the city centre.

Q14 ...definition of 'final extent' of development.

RPC does not support this proposal

Direction of Growth 4 – Intensification and Redevelopment in the urban area alongside greenfield

Q15 - Consideration

Intensification and redevelopment of the existing urban area should be the first priority for Plan:MK rather than simply grabbing the apparently easier option of building on green field sites. However the open space of our parks and that surrounding our highways and redways are invaluable assets and these should not be diminished in any way.

Q16 – ...particular types of redevelopment/intensification

A comprehensive list of options has been included in the proposal and all should have immediate attention. Milton Keynes Development Corporation designed and built extensive provisions for services and drainage to support the grid squares. There are unused areas within many grid squares that could be developed without exceeding the capacity of existing services and drainage.

Q17 - Other areas suitable for redevelopment

Much of the early housing in MK was developed quickly when there was high demand in the 1970's when there were material shortages and a lack of skilled labour in the area. These estates could be completely demolished and rebuilt to a higher standard and higher density. Great care should be taken to ensure that proposed densities do not repeat the mistakes of some of the recent developments

Q18 - **Other approaches for longer term Development**

The approach adopted by Plan MK is at present at least cohesive with a limited range of options. Seeking random options at this stage is unlikely to uncover a large scale "silver bullet" to solve the problem and will most likely erode the cohesive nature of any proposal.

Q19 – **Your thoughts on directions of Growth**

The city has already grown well beyond its initially planned population and area. Travel is becoming difficult at peak periods as is commuting in and out by train. Trains are already extremely busy and parking near the station virtually impossible after 0900 each weekday morning. Whatever development plan is agreed it should clearly be an integrated part of the city and infrastructure in the immediate area in place well ahead of construction of new housing and business premises, and not put unnecessary and unwanted pressure on existing communities. Infrastructure improvement within the city itself to support further expansion should also be implemented ahead of new development.

Q20 – **Order of preference of directions of growth**

1. **Direction of Growth 4**
2. **Direction of Growth 1**
3. **Direction of Growth 2 This option should only be considered when 4+1 are exhausted.**
4. ~~Direction of Growth 3~~ **This is not an option that should be considered under any circumstances**

A combination of Directions of Growth 4+1 is the most expedient approach and limits the use of green field sites and would not massively expand the city's urban areas. It would create significant opportunities for redevelopment of existing underutilised or poorly designed areas. It would demand the least new transport infrastructure.

Option 2 should only be considered when Options 4+1 have been fully explored and implemented and are unable to yield the necessary numbers of houses.

Option 3 is unacceptable under any circumstances and should not be considered