

## Landscaping adoption and demographic growth

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### **Purpose**

To describe the process of adoption of public open space and demographic growth

### **Background Information**

Milton Keynes continues to grow and along with it areas of open space and highway related landscape. Developments have changed over time and there is now generally less incidental open space and greater concentration on larger parks with better facilities.

Policies in Plan:MK detail the expectations of development in terms of mitigating any loss of facilities and providing new facilities. Plan:MK policies are mainly contained Chapter 14 and Appendix C of the Plan, but specific requirements are also included in Chapters 4 (Development Strategy, DS6 – Linear Parks) and 5 (Strategic Site Allocations).

The preferred option in growth areas is that open space is adopted first by us and then transferred to a suitable third party such as the Parks Trust on a 999-year lease, funded through the tariff arrangement. The 'Tariff' is an amount of money per residential unit, or per hectare of employment development, that is payable by owners of land in the Urban Development Area (UDA). The UDA covers land to the north, east and west of the City where future expansion will, or is likely to take place. The Tariff money goes to funding infrastructure and services that are required to support the growth of the City. The Framework Agreement binds the landowners who have signed it to pay the Tariff and to its terms and conditions.

Outside of the tariff developers are required to include a management and maintenance strategy for all new or extended open space and green infrastructure, which shall include details of the proposed ownership of the open space/green infrastructure; the identity of the responsible maintenance (stewardship) body, financial and public accountability, and a suitable and sustainable financial arrangement to maintain the open space and green infrastructure in perpetuity.

Smaller infill developments are adopted by us where there is open space or play areas. A commuted sum is sought; through a S106 agreement, for the future maintenance and in some instances provision. However, wherever possible contributions are requested to enhance existing sites within the catchment of the development rather than creating additional areas of open space.

We draw down on maintenance sums received through S106 agreements each year in support of the landscape contract. Additional works are also undertaken to reduce the long-term maintenance through the transformation project, removing inappropriate features or planting in a poor condition due to age.

In all scenario's highway related landscape, i.e. adjacent to the carriage way, is retained by us as the highway authority and maintained through the landscape contract. Wider areas of landscape, such as those found on grid roads, follows the freehold transfer to us followed by 999-year lease.

The percentage growth element in the landscape budget contributes towards the costs of highway related landscape assets which are not covered by S106 or Tariff arrangements.

**Issues**

The previous Supplementary Planning Guidance was revoked at a Delegated Decision meeting on 23 February 2021 and replaced by the adopted Planning Obligations SPD 2021. The new SPD does not contain formulae as these are no longer permitted unless they have been through the Local Plan process. Therefore, there is less clarity for both ourselves and the developer on what is to be provided and the likely cost.

The Parks Trust have a formulae to calculate adoption costs based on an annual cost of maintenance multiplied by 28.571 to create a lifetime cost (an endowment). We have a similar approach based on a tendered schedule of rates, but sums are drawn down generally over 10 years.

Alternatively the use of quotations based on clear specifications would be acceptable in order to calculate the monetary obligations.

Our clear preference to sustain the proven MK approach and all strategic open space, including public open space, play areas and green infrastructure should pass to us as described above. To ensure this robust efforts are required throughout the planning and development stages. This was considered on 24 March 2020 "Landscape Management Companies" and a Delegated Decision was taken<sup>1</sup>. The Council has few formal powers available to require

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<sup>1</sup> <https://milton-keynes.cmis.uk.com/milton-keynes/Document.ashx?czJKcaeAi5tUFL1DTL2UE4zNRBcoShgo=oxgMcOigGkl72%2biXGVhb1iMo3LfTd6cv1c9lYl%2b4ckWBV6r9yN6tfg%3d%3d&rUzwRPf%2bZ3zd4E7lkn8Lyw%3d%3d=pwRE6AGJFLDNlh225F5QMaQWCtPHwdhUfCZ%2fLUQzgA2uL5jNRG4jdQ%3d%3d&mCTIbCubSFfXsDGW9IXnlg%3d%3d=hFfIUdN3100%3d&kCx1AnS9%2fpWZQ40DXFvdEw%3d%3d=hFfIUdN3100%3d&uJovDxwdjMPoYv%2bAJvYtyA%3d%3d=ctNJf55vVA%3d&FgPIIEJYlotS%2bYGoBi5oIA%3d%3d=NHdURQburHA%3d&d9Qjj0ag1Pd993jsyOJqFvmyB7X0CSQK=ctNJf55vVA%3d&WGewmoAfeNR9xqBux0r1Q8Za60lavYmz=ctNJf55vVA%3d&WGewmoAfeNQ16B2MHuCpMRKZMwaG1PaO=ctNJf55vVA%3d>

developers to follow the MK approach, but the decision sets out the steps it can take to encourage it using the powers it does have.