



Minutes of the meeting of the LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK ADVISORY GROUP held on 21 OCTOBER 2009 at 6.00 pm

**Present:** Councillor Galloway (Chair)  
Councillors Bristow, Ferrans, White, Hopkins and A Morris

**Officers:** N Sainsbury (Principal Urban Designer), D Blandamer (Urban Designer), B Stewart (Planning Officer) and J Zammit (Committee Manager)

**Also Present:** Councillors Bint, Exon, Miles and A Geary.

**Apology:** Councillors Potts

**Public:** 0

**LDF14 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: DESIGN GUIDE - NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**

It was noted that it had previously been agreed to produce Design Guidance that could provide answers and clear direction to both developers and Development Control officers from both the Council and Milton Keynes Partnership on many of the issues that were continually arising at pre-application discussions.

It was noted that the issues mainly related to:

- Ways to accommodate parking
- The character/identity of new developments and appearance of buildings
- The nature and design of shared surfaces
- Density
- The strategic movement network and blocks

It was reported that at the time the Design Guidance was proposed it could only be adopted as 'Technical Guidance', because the Core Strategy had not been adopted. The Design Guidance was therefore adopted as Technical Guidance by both the Council and Milton Keynes Partnership in November 2007.

In autumn of 2008 the Council was informed the Design Guide could be converted into a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which would have the benefit of giving the Guide much greater status and weight in guiding both developers about what the Council and Milton

Keynes Partnership expected from new residential developments Development Control in terms of helping determine planning applications.

A Steering Group of officers from both the Council and Milton Keynes Partnership was established at the end of 2008 to oversee the production of the SPD.

It was noted that the Design Guide primarily focused on the 'local' issues listed above, but has also been expanded to cover other important urban design principles and their relevance to Milton Keynes. It was noted that the Design Guide was not simply a repeat of best practice and national guidance, but while being informed by this, it had been adapted to deal with the Milton Keynes context.

The following comments were made by the Group, together with the response of Officers:

LDF Advisory Group Comment	Officer Response
<p>The Group welcomed the document and its presentation, the use of photography and diagrams was useful. Examples of best practice would be useful and comparisons to other similar documents would be helpful. This was a good first draft for such a document.</p>	<p>This document is specific to Milton Keynes so comparisons to other guides was felt largely irrelevant.</p>
<p>The Group noted that Milton Keynes was in danger of having a monopoly developer which would lead to a single overall design which was not desirable. It was noted that design principles that might work for urban areas might not be suitable for rural areas.</p>	<p>Agree – design guide intended to eradicate this.</p> <p>Most principles should be applicable. Tables 3 and 4 are intended to focus on site specific factors/elements.</p>
<p>It was felt that good design could be very subjective, but that a guide would be useful especially in Central Milton Keynes, though there was some risk that it would tie the hands of Development Control in the future, as Development Control Committee needed to rely on SPD's. Care needed to be taken in regards to safeguarding a favourable density/intensity of development.</p>	<p>Design Guide intended to minimise subjectivity in design.</p> <p>Design Guide supports a greater range of density.</p>
<p>There was concern that recent houses had mostly been designed with small gardens or communal gardens which caused a problem as it shifted the costs of garden maintenance onto the Council.</p>	<p>Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) and a section on flexible homes and gardens was felt covered this.</p>

The Group suggested that the document did not outline the various types of houses (family units, temporary units etc). There was a danger that this document could steer towards one design which would create a bland Milton Keynes. The document did not also recognise that in some areas a higher density was appropriate to support certain types of lifestyle/work patterns, working from home for example. If high density housing was to be built it needed to be done well like in Stony Stratford which remained attractive despite its high density. There needs to be recognition that high density housing hadn't always been built well within Milton Keynes.

Councillor A Geary noted that there was a need for caution as it appeared that the Council was moving away from original designs of low density and large amounts of greenery which were good. Parish councils would want to be re-assured on this matter.

Councillor Bint highlighted that the document would need to help us create the best sub-urbs possible and stop creating bad ones.

The Group noted that being different and distinctive did not always make a house better. People did often buy into properties which were produced in bulk. The document should highlight worst offenders, housing associations which made the dreariest designs. It should also have a section on learning from past mistakes and how not to repeat them.

Officers informed the Group that the consultation period on the Housing Design Guide was 6 weeks. The Group was concerned that this was a too short a time to consult and that it should be at least 8 weeks. The consultation needed to reach out to those who did not normally respond to consultation, for

Does talk around mix of homes. Section 3.3 calls for a range of house sizes and types. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMAA) and the market would also dictate housing type demand.

No won't lead to bland design – each neighbourhood was supposed to be different in appearance.

Disagree – design guide emphasises greenery/open space as one of Milton Keynes key attributes which must be maintained in the future. Lower densities in certain locations also advocated.

Agree – this is a key aim.

The design guide is formatted to include good and bad examples (through ticks and crosses) where appropriate.

Agree will consult for 8 weeks, but don't intend to focus on any particular group e.g. schools

example young people, as their views were important.

The materials buildings were made out of was an important factor, especially external materials, if they deteriorate they could look ugly. The document should champion Milton Keynes' record on building houses to a higher standard than normal. Milton Keynes has set a standard and should carry on doing so. Houses should look durable and preferably at least appear to be made of brick.

Members made the following comments with regards to a presentation detailing contentious points in terms of housing design and the housing design guide draft document:

- Character/Identity of a new development
  - An aim should be for houses that have some common design elements, but are individual and different from their neighbours. There should also be cross city diversity as well. This should be set out in the document.
  - Houses need space for people to do work at home.
  - In successful neighbourhoods you should not be able to tell the difference between public and private housing.
  - We should say that we expect sustainability to be a key design point.
  - The natural surrounds of Milton Keynes together with the locations, to build around shall be identified.
  - Dwellings for families should not be placed on/near roads and further away from parks.
  - The focus should be on the

Agree, robust durable materials should be promoted. All homes would have to meet in the future Code for Sustainable Home Level 4 and this along with Sustainable Construction SPD requirements will mean developers would have to use sustainable materials.

Guide won't however restrict materials to just brick.

Agree – will emphasise this. Each neighbourhood should have some common design elements (to be outlined in a design code), but otherwise allow for a variety of design elements. This will already be inherent as each neighbourhood will have different street types which have a different streetscape.

Covered in flexible homes section.

Agree – already mentioned and is best practice.

Already mentioned, but will add it as one of Milton Keynes's definable features.

Surely those without gardens are the one who should be close to open space (e.g. the apartments).

Need to ensure everyone lives within 400m of open space

<p>ageing population, bungalows were ideal if they are pepper potted around. There was a distinct lack of this type of housing in rural areas. Sensitivity needs to be shown to how and where housing for older people located.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Don't build leisure facilities for younger people near housing intended for older people.</li> <li>○ 'Landmark' buildings can often look out of place and will eventually lose their meaning/purpose. Key buildings are not the same as landmark buildings need not necessarily have any community value.</li> <li>○ People would walk around more if there are places that are worth walking to.</li> <li>○ Estates that work had identifiable character, villages were the obvious example.</li> <li>○ The density should be 35 houses per hectare density, but with land prices as they were, developers were building more towards 55 houses per hectare.</li> <li>○ There needs to be more affordable 3 bedroom homes and higher bracket homes to support a knowledge economy.</li> <li>○ Play areas and park land, there needs to be a rethink of the reasons for not having gardens and a mix of garden sizes should be ensured.</li> <li>○ To encourage creative thinking about housing, there should be design competitions for new</li> </ul>	<p>Covered in flexible homes section and section 3.3</p> <p>Agree, but is this relevant for design guide?</p> <p>Landmark buildings used to highlight a key frontage or corner</p> <p>Agree, but is this relevant for design guide?</p> <p>Agree, the Design Guide is trying to achieve this. Tables 3 and 4 were there to extract out key character of areas within which they sit</p> <p>Design Guide advocates a greater range of densities</p> <p>Section on flexible homes and section 3.3 calls for variety in houses</p> <p>A section on gardens is included, but can the Council advocate to developers gardens sizes?</p> <p>Agree for land the council owns – but not possible to force developers to hold a design competition.</p>
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<p>estates and young people coming out of college encouraged to go into design.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ There needs to be a mention that Milton Keynes was innovative for its time in terms of its character.</li> <li>○ There is no guidance for car parking in respect of flats, flats were possibly the one exception where rear parking might be acceptable.</li> <li>○ Car parking spaces need looking at, more room is needed for some types of cars, especially for families.</li> <li>○ It needs to be made clear whether the Council wants people to park on the road or not.</li> <li>○ Replace photograph at the bottom of p61</li> <li>○ Photo of central reservation in Oxley Park - is not a good example of a 'green' area, it would need more trees.</li> <li>○ The relationship between parking and green spaces needs addressing. Getting this relationship right needs to be in the document.</li> <li>○ Stantonbury garages (garages separate from the house) should not to be emulated.</li> <li>○ There seems to be a prevalence against building roads with a curved street scene, with straight lines being favoured. Too tight a curve can cause problems, with Fishermead as an example.</li> <li>○ The Housing Design Guide should be renamed to make it sound less like it relates to the interior of a</li> </ul>	<p>This was the purpose of section 2 and is hopefully mentioned enough</p> <p>We will add that HiMOs can't have tandem parking</p> <p>Highway design guide will state what dimensions car parking spaces need to be</p> <p>Guide calls for both types (on and off street) as both are appropriate</p> <p>Will do</p> <p>Disagree – trees are still young so will overtime make street greener</p> <p>Agree – para 3.2.19 emphasises this point</p> <p>Agree with point.</p> <p>Significant curves make walking distances longer – that is why in the main straighter streets and / or gentle curves are supported.</p> <p>Propose to call it “Design Guide for New Residential Development”</p>
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house or the design of specific houses.	
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In answer to a question officers informed the Group that Cul-de sacs were not prohibited in the housing design guide, but if the designs involved numerous Cul-de-sacs flowing from each other, officers would not judge the design as acceptable as it would:

- Reduces legibility
- Require lots of large turning heads
- Reduce connectivity
- Load the junction onto the primary street with lots of traffic
- Resulted in isolated enclaves of development which required unsurveilled pedestrian routes to connect them as well as properties backing onto open space making them more prone to crime; and
- Resulted in more crime

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That officers incorporate Member's comments into the Housing Design Guide where possible.
3. That the Housing Design Guide be brought to a future meeting of the Local Development Framework Advisory Group before being submitted for public consultation

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 9.30pm.