

Minutes of the meeting of the PLANNING CABINET ADVISORY GROUP held on
WEDNESDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2021 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillor Marland (Chair)(Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Planning)
Councillors Ferrans, D Hopkins, Legg, Taylor and Trendall.
H Chipping (SEMLEP).

Officers: P Thomas (Director of Planning and Placemaking), J Palmer (Head of Planning), A Turner (Planning Policy Manager), S Kupczyk (Principal Planning Officer) M Moore (Principal Planning Officer), J Williamson (Monitoring and Implementation Team Leader), D Blandamer (Senior Urban Designer), K Evans (Head of Communications), C Stevens (Principal Planning Officer) and D Imbimbo (Committee Manager).

Apologies: C Walton (Community Action), K Fraser (Youth Cabinet), V Shah (Youth Cabinet), R Mascarenhas (Youth Cabinet, chaperone)

CAG15 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed members and reminded the Group of the function of the Cabinet Advisory Group. He further advised that the recording of the meeting would be made available on the Council's You Tube channel.

CAG16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D Hopkins asked that the meeting note his declared interests in the register of members interests.

Councillor Marland asked that the meeting note his declared interests in the register of members interests.

In the interest of transparency, Councillor Ferrans and Councillor D Hopkins advised that they were on the board of the Milton Keynes Development Partnership.

CAG17 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Advisory Group held on 13 OCTOBER 2021 be agreed as an accurate record and the Chair to sign them as such.

CAG18 LOCAL PLAN OPTIONS AND FIRST PRINCIPLES

The Group received a presentation from The Planning Policy Manager on the Local Plan Options and sought comment from members of the Group.

In summary members made the following comments;

Plan Period

- The plan period should align with other Council plans and aim to cover up to 2050 with review periods.
- Contrary view that a shorter period might be better due to uncertainty (e.g. 2040 with a vision to 2050)
- Aligning the plans will assist in delivering the environmental goals that the Council has set, as expansion will have an impact.
- There was a need to consider fixing infrastructure assumptions and land allocation for a 2050 plan.
- Was there scope to phase land allocation and infrastructure planning.
- Would a longer plan period mean there was less chance of the Planning Inspector seeking an early review.
- 2050 would accord with existing large scale developments timeframes, such as MK East.
- It would be beneficial if neighbouring Authorities would take a similar approach.
- Could the Plan have a sequential approach to development on various sites to assist a longer timescale for it, allowing delivery of infrastructure before housing.

Key settlements and rural area / Balance of the strategy

- Should avoid large developments that are equivalent to Urban Sprawl.
- To ensure that each rural settlement has affordable housing,
- Any development that represents expansion requires a robust public transport infrastructure.
- Concern that Transit Oriented Developments assumes a single destination (e.g. CMK) for those living within them. Need to enable growth and transport that allows people to travel to/from multiple places sustainably
- Could existing properties be encouraged to be sub-divided to provide higher density accommodation rather than develop open spaces.
- Any Plan should seek development that builds communities and not just houses.

- There is considerable social disquiet with the continued Urban Sprawl, consideration should be given to building more multi-storey accommodation.
- There should be increased high-quality mixed-use high-rise development in Central Milton Keynes before encroaching on open countryside.
- Housing mix will be decided on evidential basis.
- The New Plan should complement Milton Keynes' stated aim to be a 'Green City', that does not accord with destruction of the Countryside.
- Settlements to be consistent with environment and transport strategies.
- The Plan should not advocate building 'upwards' at the expense of not providing traditional accommodation with gardens, the risk being people will relocate away from Milton Keynes to find houses they want.

The High Street / Economic strategy

- Need to consider how to plan for more working from home including in how homes are designed
- Changing Social Habits have seen a shift from the traditional High Street and a more diverse approach to development is needed to accommodate different needs for entertainment and leisure.
- Need individual policy approach for each high street/centre, recognising the diversity in our high streets (I.e. different offer and roles)
- The demand is for Industrial units that are generally smaller than those on existing Industrial estates built in the 1970's and 80's.
- Discussed using Kiln Farm as an example model to refer to but updated to reflect modern lifestyles/work practices.
- There was a need to provide suitable premises for present day technologies and businesses to attract commerce.
- Broadband and any future IT infrastructure must be robust to cater for the changing work patterns and practices (Work from Home).
- Scope for community uses in older employment areas.

- MK cannot be building warehouses for ever.
- The role of Milton Keynes in the Oxford – Cambridge arc needed to be considered as the risk is that the town becomes a dormitory provision rather than a hub. Plan to consider the need for innovative small scale businesses. Need to understand what would attract the small businesses coming out of Cambridge and Oxford to MK.
- Neighbourhood Plans need to be respected and supported by the new Local Plan.
- Ground floors of High Street or Town Centre multi-storey buildings should have active frontages.
- Small-scale housing development does not deliver infrastructure
- Central Milton Keynes needs to focus on becoming something that attracts younger professionals by developing the Leisure and Arts facilities on offer.
- The University should be a priority to negate the flow of youth away from Milton Keynes and attract businesses that are seeking new talent.
- To ensure that people want to locate in Milton Keynes it was essential that it was seen as a ‘business friendly city’, by providing space for companies to expand, and good transport links.
- Building housing units above High Street shops requires a strategy to ensure that the ground floor shops are not vacant.
- There have been significant changes in the habits of shopping and High Street strategy needed to take account of the shift from retail to service provision.
- There is a perception that Milton Keynes is a great place to retire and a great place to be a parent but provides little in terms of vitality for others, students were put off attending the Saxon Court arm of Bedford University due to there being no social opportunities for their age group in Central Milton Keynes
- MK’s retail offer needs to be protected and enhanced.
- There is a need to provide attractive opportunities for people who do not aspire to go to University but want to leave school and get a good job.

- Policies need to be flexible/nimble to account for lack of uncertainty in retail market and impact of COVID on shopping and employment behaviours.

The role of parking

- To achieve areas where no Parking was required a robust public transport system was required and/or a complete community with all local facilities easily accessed needed to be developed.
- The City centre seeks to accommodate several different types of movement, 'Through Movement', 'Local Movement' (including resident parking and taxi/public transport) and 'Visitor Movement' (including Delivery Transport). Impact of losing space for 'drop off' and loading areas needs to be considered alongside any loss of parking spaces themselves.
- With the spread of Milton Keynes, travel times into Central Milton Keynes have become comparable to travel times to other centres such as Bedford, initiatives to make Central Milton Keynes the destination of choice were required.
- The future was unknown in respect of parking requirements due to the rapidly changing technology, such as autonomous vehicles.
- Electric charging points needed to be a short-term priority.
- Consideration should be given to allocate land for public transport corridors.
- Parking requirements will be informed by what initiatives there are for alternative transport and the sequence of delivery of those initiatives.
- Parking requirements will also depend on the nature of development. Consideration of local movements, taxis, DRT's stops (slow streets, short term parking) is essential., need good links between lots of areas reflecting MK's current polycentric nature.
- Appropriate parking provisions around MRT stops to be considered.
- Any public transport system needs to provide for all needs with a fully integrated network allowing movement in multiple directions.
- There was no great desire to see continued urban spread and higher density areas of the Town should be considered.

- Support for 15 minute walkable neighbourhoods to enable movement by other means wherever possible

It was noted that the new Parking standards SPD would be considered at the next meeting. It was noted that due to the Pandemic work had been paused resulting in a delay in it being brought forward.

RESOLVED -

1. That the presentation be noted.
2. That the Planning Policy Manager, consider the comments and draw up a list of key points for future consideration.

CAG19

DRAFT LOCAL PLAN ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Principal Planning Officer introduced the report and gave the Group an overview of the proposed engagement strategy.

Members of the Group were, in general, supportive of the proposed strategy but asked that use of targeted Social Media be made a priority and lead in times for the various stages be considered and advance notice provided to Members.

Members of the Group stated that it was essential that certain standards be adopted, there was a need to be open and transparent at all times, Public Exhibitions should be conducted as much as possible, Parish and Town Councils must be involved at all stages. There should be debate of important issues at full Council.

The Planning Policy Manager asked whether the Group supported the idea of the initial engagement with the public being the technical Call for Sites and possibly the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Exercise, rather than a general launch. Members of the group expressed some concern that a general launch could lead to questions about why another consultation was being conducted in respect of Growth unless it was for a specific purpose.

RESOLVED -

That the report be noted.

CAG20

DRAFT DESIGNING DEMENTIA FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURHOODS SPD

The Senior Urban Designer introduced the Draft Designing Dementia Friendly Neighbourhoods SPD and invited comment from the Group.

The Group welcomed the initiative to introduce planning guidance in respect of the need to provide for people living with dementia and recognised that Milton Keynes Council would be one of the first Authorities to adopt such an approach.

Some members expressed some concern that this, as a standalone document represented another Planning Document that developers would need to consider and suggested that the principles may be added to an existing document such as the Residential Design Guide. Adoption of benches and consistency in the design of signage were also raised as issues.

Councillor Marland told the Group that he welcomed the SPD as a document in its own right as it demonstrated a forward-thinking Authority prioritising the needs of a group which had been largely overlooked in developments.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

CAG 21

FUTURE MEETINGS DATES

- 12 January 2022
- 2 March 2022.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 8:45 PM