



Points to consider when you respond to the Public Consultation on Rural Satellite Settlements

Milton Keynes Council is issuing a public consultation on Strategic Development Options which will run from 13th January to 6th April.

There are four options: increase housing density within the urban areas of Milton Keynes; expand to the south and west; expand to the east; and finally **to create “satellite settlements” of between 5,000 and 10,000 houses in the rural part of MK**, which means predominantly the north of the borough. To put the size in perspective, 10,000 houses is the size of a new garden city with a population of around 25,000 people, or almost twice that of Bletchley. Castlethorpe is one of the target areas that has been selected as an option.

The consultation can be seen at www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/PlanMK or at the Civic Offices and at all MK libraries. You can make your responses online through Milton Keynes Council’s consultation portal at <http://miltonkeynesconsult.objective.co.uk> or you can send them by email to planmk@milton-keynes.gov.uk or by post to: Development Plans Team, Milton Keynes Council, Civic Offices, 1 Saxon Gate East, Central Milton Keynes MK9 3EJ.

It is very important that you respond to this consultation by 5pm on 6th April

Please don't be complacent because this will affect YOU. If you are worried about the plan but don't bother to object, we could end up losing our rural identity and the facilities we have worked so hard to create and maintain if we are swallowed up in a huge new urban area and become just another estate on the fringes of Milton Keynes. So please make sure you do your part and send in your objection as soon as possible.

Here are some points you may like to consider when you send in your response.

- This whole consultation is meaningless without a projection of how the population will grow. Whether and where houses are built in practice depends on how many of them are actually necessary to meet population demand. No evidence-based housing demand exists beyond 2031 and there has not been any MKC debate or decision. Half of new UK housing demand originates from immigration but whatever government is in office or whether or not the UK remains in the EU, it is highly likely that levels of immigration will be reduced, with a consequent reduction in housing demand.
- A doubling of the size of Milton Keynes is totally contrary to current central Government plans to re-balance population and economy between the North and the South. The South-East of England is already the most densely populated territory in Europe, with exception of Malta, and our infrastructure is struggling to cope even with the current population levels.
- The urban part of MK was designed for a population of 250,000. The urban infrastructure will need to be expanded if the population is going to increase significantly above this level, regardless of whether or not the additional population is located within the existing urban boundary, as residents will inevitably use facilities within the urban area. In particular, the existing grid road infrastructure has been reported (by MKC Highways) as only having capacity for about 15% more traffic. Another obvious candidate would be expansion of the hospital and perhaps the railway station since a large number of residents commute out and another large number commutes in.
- From a purely financial perspective, the Head of Finance at MKC has said that for every 1,750 houses built (the current housing target), MKC faces a net increase in cost of £1 million. While there will be offsetting economic

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benefits, this will be outside the MKC budget i.e. in the private sector or in public services not administered by MKC such as the NHS. This begs the question of how the increase in population can be financed.

- More housing in the urban area would have many advantages both in social integration and in public transport infrastructure. MK is just too spread out and loses coherence. A tighter centre would give greater opportunity for an integrated transport system. This should be the preferred option because it will enhance the Borough whereas most other options detract from it.
- Development to the south and west also has a number of benefits mainly because Aylesbury Vale Council also wishes to develop there on adjacent land. The benefits of scale from the two authorities working together in terms of road infrastructure (e.g. link dualling the A421) would be significant though, again, protection must be offered to existing villages such as Whaddon, Nash, and Beachampton by a green belt. Another benefit of developing on this route will be proximity to the new East-West railway between Oxford and Cambridge.
- In the case of potential rural satellite settlements, the plan does not offer a green belt around the existing villages, leading to a complete loss of identity. The parishes would be transformed from rural villages into urban estates. The size of the proposed settlements is disproportionate – together with existing villages, it would make the new settlements twice as big as the largest existing parish in MK. It would compromise the unique character of MK with its mix of city, market town and rural village.
- In the case of Castlethorpe and Hanslope, a new settlement of this size would overwhelm the existing infrastructure and a new local centre would have to be built. This would leave the existing historic village centres derelict. The school buildings would be abandoned and the local shops, which have served us well for years, would probably be forced to close.
- A new road would have to be built. There are only two practical access routes – from the A508 and from Wolverton. The A508 route would either have to be along the existing Yardley Road which hasn't the capacity and would desecrate the historic canal bridge, pub and floodplain bridges. Or a new road would have to be built from the A508 to the new settlement which would have to cross the railway, canal and the River Tove.
- On the Wolverton route, the existing road through Haversham would not have the capacity – it already gridlocks in the mornings – and would be an unfair traffic burden on the residents. So the only possibility would be a new road probably from the roundabout with the Old Wolverton Road. This could follow two routes both of which have significant drawbacks. A route west of Castlethorpe would be along the Tove river valley and quarry workings, now wetlands, which would be an environmental disaster. A route east of Castlethorpe would pass through or very close to the “top secret” grounds of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office at Hanslope Park.
- It is also worth considering the construction phase. It would be essential that the new road was built *before* housing development starts. This is because a satellite settlement is unlikely to build at more than a rate of 1,000 houses a year and even that is probably ambitious. The impact for existing villages of construction traffic using the existing inadequate roads for an extended period of 10-20 years is totally unreasonable and unacceptable.
- One of the points mentioned in the plan is the possibility of a new railway station to serve the north of Milton Keynes. In the specific case of Castlethorpe, the existing station land has been sold and planning permission has been granted for low cost housing. In any case, there is no nearby land for parking! Of course, it would be possible to construct a new station further north but to what end? Not only would there be unlikely sufficient local demand for a station beyond Wolverton but there is not enough capacity on the West Coast main line and any increase in capacity would depend on how it is affected by HS2, which is too far in the future to be knowable.