

## **Strategic Planning and Major Planning Issues**

### **MK 2050**

Milton Keynes Council has been working on a strategy for the future of the Borough and council planning officers working on the project feel this will only succeed if it is created together with all our communities. The Council has produced a draft strategy to encourage discussion about its proposed approach – which itself developed from the work of the MK Futures 2050 Commission and their major programme of public engagement.

During the current engagement period, the council intended talking to people about the draft Strategy for 2050 (<https://www.mkfutures2050.com/>) and the future of Milton Keynes, and we supported this by organising a public meeting which was due to take place in the Memorial Hall in late March. For obvious reasons given the current circumstances that meeting was not able to take place and I shall ensure that we reset a public meeting as soon as possible once the current emergency subsides.

In the interim, if you read the draft strategy document you can send your comments to MK Council until the extended closing date of Friday 1 May 2020. Look out for references to Metropolitan Milton Keynes ... code for massive growth into Central Bedfordshire (among other areas) with a growth aspiration of achieving a population of 500,000 by 2050.

### **Wavendon Properties Appeal**

You may recall that this major plan for over 200 dwellings east of Newport Road (adjacent to Hillway, Parkway and Ridgway) and bordering Cranfield Road has been before various planning communities and even the Secretary of State over a period of several years. There was a final planning Inquiry held in 2019 and The Inspector's report has been sent to the current Secretary of State for consideration.

The Planning Inspectorate has written to confirm that a decision will be issued on or before 26th June 2020.

### **East West Rail**

The section of the route that passes through Woburn Sands will connect Oxford, Milton Keynes, Aylesbury and Bedford - bringing faster journey times and lower transport costs while easing pressure on local roads.

Work on this section has been split into two phases.

- Phase 1 was completed in 2016 and was delivered by Network Rail, Chiltern Railways, and local companies Carillion and Buckingham Group.

- Phase 2 is underway, with enabling works being delivered by the East West Rail Alliance, which was formed in 2015 by Network Rail. A route beyond Bedford and onwards to Cambridge was announced in January 2020.

This approach allows the following new services to be phased in over several years, with services between Oxford and Bicester already operating through Chiltern Railways. The first of the remaining services will be introduced by the end of 2024.

- Oxford and Bicester: three services per hour (delivered)
- Oxford and Milton Keynes: two services per hour
- Oxford and Bedford: one service per hour
- Milton Keynes and Aylesbury: one service per hour

East West Railway Company was set up in 2017 in part to work with the East West Railway Alliance to help drive and accelerate the work on Phase 2 quickly, safely, and at the best value for money. In time, the Western Section will join with the Central Section, allowing trains to run directly between Oxford and Cambridge.

Working with my colleagues on the town council we shall be monitoring progress on this much anticipated initiative to ensure the town benefits from the proposed enhanced services and, once the Coronavirus crisis is overcome, we shall be inviting representatives of the managing consortium to a public meeting in the town to enable residents to see first hand what is being proposed.

### **Expressway**

You will I suspect have either attended one of the public meetings in the town or you may have read about the levels of concerns locally concerning just what this proposal could have done to our local environment – literally threatening to cut our community in half. The Government's ambition had been for massive further growth within the so-called Oxford – Cambridge Arc (One million homes) that it feels could help make the Arc a world class economic hub. We were therefore relieved to hear in advance of the March 2020 budget that the project was to be shelved.

However, the budget announcement rather feel short of that definitive commitment stating simply that it was 'now pausing further development of the scheme while we undertake further work on other potential road projects that could support the Government's ambition for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, and benefit people who live and work there, including exploring opportunities to alleviate congestion around the Arc's major economic centres such as Milton Keynes'.

So, the campaigning continues (or at least it will do once things return to something closer to normality), until we get that definitive announcement that the Expressway project has been dropped once and for all.

### **Plan:MK 2 (innovate MK)**

Milton Keynes Council continues to plan the day to day ongoing growth of the city and this is set out currently in Plan:MK and is being updated in 2020 (or perhaps 2021 given the current national situation) through Plan:MK 2.

The Plan indicates Milton Keynes Council's commitment to realising the city's potential at the centre of the Oxford to Cambridge growth corridor, expanding the population of the Metropolitan MK to 500,000 by 2050, as indicated above.

These local plans are very much seen as interim plans, Plan:MK bridges the gap between the ongoing delivery of objectively assessed housing need and the transformational level of growth needed to fulfil the longer-term aspirations for the city Plan:MK has an imposed requirement for this early review (Plan:MK2), to be completed before the end of 2021.

The existing Plan:MK contains a commitment for the delivery of 3000 additional dwellings in the valley between Woburn Sands, Wavendon, Bow Brickhill and Old Farm Park. This was not due to come forward before 2023 at the earliest but now that the Expressway appears to be being abandoned this date could easily be brought forward.

### **Other Major Developments**

- Work has commenced on the 53 dwelling development at the former Frosts Landscape Contractors site, previously known as Wain Close.
- Work was well underway on the Strategic Land Allocation sites in Wavendon delivering over 4000 new homes and associated infrastructure over the coming ten coming years
- Work is delayed on the Abbey Development site in Wavendon. The site borders the Stables Theatre and the developer, MK council and the Theatre are in dispute over the developers need to sign a Deed of Easement (protecting the operation of the Stables) before development can commence.
- Plans to develop a major employment (warehousing) in Bow Brickhill were refused by MK Council. The applicant has appealed that decision to the Planning Inspectorate.
- A major development of a new school campus (Nursery through to age 16 – Year 11) at Glebe Farm is due to open in September 2022. Woburn Sands is included in its catchment area. The school campus will be managed by the Multi Academy Trust IftL (Inspiring Futures through Learning) following a competitive tendering process.