

Sustainable Communities Policy Review - Milton Keynes

Headlines

- Growth area: 70k homes projected to be built in next 25 years.
- Variety of initiatives in place to ensure growth is sustainable and well-designed.
- Challenges relate to funding gaps for issues like culture, and gaps in the regional framework.

Context

Between 2001 and 2016, in line with the MKSM Sub-Regional Strategy, 33,900 homes and 33,900 new jobs will be created. These homes and jobs are concentrated in several major project sites, for example:

- **Wolverton Park**

A brownfield canal side site comprising of three areas for regeneration situated at the north-west edge of Milton Keynes. The Triangular building is to be converted into a commercial space. The derelict railway buildings are to be converted into one and two bedroom residences. The third area is Wolverton Sports Ground which is to be demolished and relocated elsewhere to make way for apartments.

- **Central Building Exchange III**

A city centre development comprising of 400 apartments and commercial floor space. This development is part of the reshaping of the city centre to encourage more people to live there and to provide more opportunities for a range of businesses.

- **Broughton Atterbury**

A greenfield site of 1000 homes, with commercial space, a new school and mixed tenure situated east of central Milton Keynes. Affordable housing has been integrated with sale residences. Local facilities and services, including a school and a village centre as well as advanced infrastructure are being developed. Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) have been used and Ecohomes 'Excellent' has been achieved at this site.

- **Tattenhoe Park**

An edge of city development with 1310 homes (400 of which have inbuilt flexibility). Will provide a local centre with various facilities such as a primary school and a community facility. Reserve sites are also in place to accommodate future development of services or infrastructure. Super Flexible homes are being built here, see below.

Housing position

30% of new houses will be 'affordable'. Following a housing needs survey English Partnership divided this 30% into the following:

- 15% shared ownership
- 5% social rented
- 5% reduced cost
- 5% low cost market

BREEAM and Eco-homes

Milton Keynes has incorporated the construction of Ecohomes into certain sites including Broughton Atterbury. These homes have high levels of energy efficiency, low levels of water consumption and

the construction materials used originate from sustainable sources. Transport is another key feature of these homes as bus services are being improved, communal cycle storage is available and local services are in close proximity.

Super flexible homes

An important part of the Tattenhoe Park Masterplan. This type of housing is being developed in response to criticism of British housing as inflexible and difficult to alter once built. Super flexible homes are specifically constructed to make future extensions far easier. They contribute towards sustainability by lowering construction time, materials and cost and lowering the frequency of household moves as they can be altered to fit the changing needs of the resident.

Millennium Community

Oak Grove is an English Partnerships' Millennium Community. Housing is designed and constructed to provide a more sustainable way of living. This is a brownfield site and will provide 2000 homes with 10% renewable energy, CHP and a proposal for the reduction of carbon emissions by 60%.

Existing housing: Netherfields

An example of older housing stock built in the 1970s and is located south of central Milton Keynes. Housing is primarily comprised of rows of high density bungalows. Recent housing regeneration has included the replacement of flat roofs with pitched roofing. Other developments within the area include the provision of local services, such as a supermarket, enabling residents who have limited mobility to access services easily and without the need of a car.

Environment

The Milton Keynes Local Plan sets out the key pursuits for the development of Milton Keynes. Development will be compact and concentrated in MK Urban Areas, existing urban centres and along public transport corridors.

Although the Local Plan seeks to address environmental constraints such as flooding, greenfield development is continuing.

Further plans to address environmental concerns are set out in the Milton Keynes Local Plan Policy D4 (including carbon offset). This policy includes use of energy efficient designs, 10% renewables, water conservation and carbon neutrality/offset.

Society & economy

In the MK Plan a balance between homes and jobs in the area shall be established as the number of jobs far exceeds the number of people living in MK.

With substantial increases in homes and employment opportunities a number of requirements are needed in order to cope with the projected population growth in expansion areas. Milton Keynes Partnership and Milton Keynes Council are therefore to provide:

- 7 primary schools
- 2 secondary schools
- 5 sports/community facilities
- 4 new/expanded libraries
- Open spaces
- 2 new GP surgeries
- New university and college expansion

Governance/making it happen

The current strategies in place for the projected growth of MK focus on several expansion areas of which the MK Partnership has planning authority. The purpose of these Urban Development Areas (UDAs) is to ensure that the projected growth of Milton Keynes is managed by sustainable means.

The scale of growth has significant funding considerations. In the expansion areas a tariff has been introduced totalling £310m (plus extras). Employment shall contribute £33.46m while the residential development contribution is £277.5m. A total of £1.6 billion of funding is required for the infrastructure within growth areas between 2006-2016. The majority of this funding is from the Highways Agency, with significant proportions from the tariff, the MKC Local Transport Plan and other MK Developer SPG contributions.

Certain types of funding have been found to have gaps and/or are insufficient. These large gaps in funding were generally specific to the softer issues such as culture, provision of green spaces, sports/community facilities and universities which often fall out of funding arrangements.

English Partnerships has recognised the need for all future growth and development to be managed in accordance with specific standards. The English Partnership National Quality Price Standards are a set of minimum requirements that should be adhered to. These standards include design statements that incorporate both national and local interests and development designs that are safe, secure and of a high standard. Furthermore only proposals which are quality compliant are considered before the land bid is revealed.

MKC were particularly concerned about the role of a university within Milton Keynes and identified tensions between themselves and developers regarding the issue. MKC views the role of a university within the city as an important one for the ambitions of its residents and the progress of the city.

MKP outlined their monitoring strategy which is in place from the outset in initial dialogue with developers. A design assessment is used to ensure that proposals are in keeping with certain priorities including: safe and secure developments, high design standards and energy efficient designs. Once the assessment and construction is complete a post-construction review is conducted. This review should ensure that all criteria for design and construction have been met.

Forward planning is an important part of the designs of the various developments. One example which was discussed concerned an expansion area where a school had been opened in anticipation of future population growth in the area. Despite the fact that the school was not being used to full capacity the emphasis was placed upon the future needs of the area.

The role and level of support provided by government departments in relation to the provision of services such as schools and hospitals has been mixed. Whilst a lot of success has been achieved with the Department of Education the same cannot be said for the Department of Health which was recognised as a significant challenge.

Concerns were expressed about the gaps in the regional framework, most significantly environmental services. Insufficient attention is being given to the issues of water and energy provision in particular.

Furthermore the scale of environmental initiatives that can be implemented is regarded as a key concern. With only limited resources available the only viable options are to implement either lots of smaller-scale projects or fewer larger ones. This is clearly a substantial constraint upon the levels of environmental improvement that can be achieved.