



Unitary Councillor

Cllr David Hopkins

Report from your local December 2025

Focus on the local plan and moving towards the Planning Inspectors enquiry in the spring.

I, along with the town clerk, attended a NALC Planning Seminar in Aylesbury on 24 November focusing on local plans and the Bucks Local Plan and the MK Local Plan, MK2050 in particular. The seminar was titled Futureproof Planning, and the slide set will be circulated to fellow councillors separately.

However, headlines from the event

Expect an announcement from government on its changes to NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) on 19 December. Major changes expected

- Restrictions on additional 'evidence' presented at planning appeals
- Neighbourhood Plans would be valid for only 5 years (currently 10)
- Changes to National Development management Policies. Unlike the broader National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which guides plan-making and decision-taking, NDMPs are intended to directly influence planning decisions by overriding local policies where there is a conflict.
- The Secretary of State will 'call in' any planning decisions for sites with over 150 dwellings
- Parishes will no longer be considered as statutory consultees
- New combined authorities being promoted
- Housing delivery is currently at a 10-year low
- MK has a 7.31-year land supply (min acceptable is 5 years) but Bucks varies from area to area from 3.62 years to 0.75 years in south of the county.

What we don't know

- The role of 'community engagement' moving forward
- What will be the revised 'Neighbourhood Priority Statements' – these are supposed to be focused mainly on local issues, priorities and ideas drawn from forms of thorough survey and not move on – at that stage – to what initiative might be best to deliver on those priorities

- The status of climate change as it seems that Environment Outcome Reports will replace Strategic Environment Assessments. This means a developer simply pays a sum in compensation or creates an alternative environment to replace areas destroyed in development. Whilst the government always sites bats or spiders etc this also applies to dormice and badgers!

So

- Is it a system in turmoil
- Is the government attempting to achieve more from less
- Does the government, as it appears, view parishes as 'blockers'?
- And therefore, town and parish councils are being driven to lead on behalf of their respective communities

Conclusions

- A move towards multi parish neighbourhood plans and joint neighbourhood spatial strategies, scenario planning and the use of professional specialist consultants.
- Local Plans do not think spatially, strategic planning councils choose the least worse options in its planning decision
- The Government has now published new planning practice guidance (PPG) on Green Belt land which outlines the steps to be taken by Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in assessing Green Belt land to identify grey belt, assessing development proposals on grey belt land and the Golden Rules (specifically accessibility to green space).
- Town and Parish Councils must make themselves aware of their rights under Rule 6 status. An Inquiry procedure also enables interested parties to apply for 'Rule 6' status. This means that parishes can actively engage in the inquiry process and will provide a Statement of Case, proofs of evidence and cross examine at the inquiry.
- Government also views 'nature' as a blocker to planning. However, the Planning and Infrastructure Bill look at establishing the Nature Restoration Fund and thereby create the opportunity for housing and infrastructure to do more for environmental recovery.
- Under the mitigation hierarchy the developer pays money to natural England with which they would acquire alternative sites for displaced nature elsewhere. But there will be the loss of specific habitats. However, it is claimed that developers actually prefer to retain green spaces as they add to the value of the built environment. A new Nature Bill is due in 2026.
- People are urged to review the *Wild Justice Report at <https://wildjustice.org.uk/general/lost-nature-report/>
- National research reveals that only *53% of green features are ever delivered in the finished developments

The seminar then referred to the Local Plan for Buckinghamshire

<https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-planning/buckinghamshire-local-plan/>

And the Natural Environment Partnership, which is the Local Nature Partnership for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes

<https://bucksmknep.co.uk/> and <https://bucksmknep.co.uk/nature-strategy/>

Note: The seminar also heard that it was both lawful and encouraged for parishes to use s106 monies for the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans.

What can the s106 Receipts can be spent on by town and parish councils?

Regulations state that this proportion of funds must be used 'to support the development of the local area by funding

- (a) The provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure; or
- (b) Anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on an area.'

This gives Parish and Town Councils considerable freedom to spend their proportion of s106 on things that address the impacts of developments on the area.

Examples include:

- Improvements to village halls, playparks, footpaths, streetlights etc.
- Preparation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan (providing it addresses the demands that development places on the area)
- Planning Application Fees – monies can be used towards a planning application fee that relates to community proposals

Other Matters

- **A Strong and Robust Economy** - I attended a Scrutiny Meeting at which MKCC members were briefed on the state of the local economy The Milton Keynes economy is the seventh largest city economy in England worth over £16.7bn, home to over 12,500 businesses, 200,000 jobs and is already larger in size than Cardiff's economy. Productivity in Milton Keynes is 25% above national levels, and the economy is performing well locally.
- **Creative and Cultural Strategy 2027 – 2035 – Strategic Priorities** - I also attended the scrutiny meeting examining the developing MKCC Cultural Strategy. Milton Keynes has evolved significantly since the previous cultural strategy was adopted in 2017, with substantial changes in population, demographics, economic conditions, and cultural participation patterns. The new strategy therefore seeks to ensure that Milton Keynes continues to grow as a vibrant, inclusive, creative city that supports innovation, strengthens local identity, and maximises cultural and creative opportunities for all residents
 - **Sports Strategy 2025-30** – I also attended the launch of the MKCC Sports Strategy.
 - **SGS - I have also met with** Richard Bryce, Sports Ground Services regarding the costs of recovering the cricket table in the recreation ground to a safe, playable condition for use by the new Wavendon Cricket Club.
 - **Del O'Sullivan Area Manager Dott Bikes UK** www.ridedott.com asks that we review the mapping of the potential locations for a bike hub
<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1ykwMXAHouGikHbLthc1zH-IcfJh3MNA&ll=52.04917580574174%2C-0.6976458412541464&z=12>
 - **Planning Enforcement Report** - Reference: ENF/2025/0168 At: Woburn Sands Garden Centre, Newport Road, Wavendon, Milton Keynes, MK17 8UF - Further to undertaking our investigation in line with the Local Enforcement Plan (LEP), I write to inform you that we closed the case on 28/11/2025 for the following reason.... A site visit was conducted to assess compliance with the approved landscaping plan for the ongoing development. It was

observed that several trees, shrubs, and bushes had failed at the site. Following this observation, MKCC Landscape Officer was requested to attend the site to determine whether any Tree Preservation Order (TPO) trees were affected or if there were any breaches of planning control. The Landscape Officer attended the site with the approved landscaping plan for the development. Upon inspection, it was confirmed that the trees which had been removed were shown on the approved plans. The officer also engaged in discussions with the contractors and the site owner, who confirmed that the landscaping works are part of an ongoing project and that replanting will be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme. No breaches of planning control or conditions attached to the approved application were identified during this visit.



Artist impression of the proposed new conference centre and entertainment venue to be located in CMK.

- I have been in conversation with officers at the Bucks and MK Fire Authority regarding Fire Prevention in the Danesborough & Wavendon Woods (Greensand Ridge) and the suggestion of a possible joint exercise with Bedfordshire Fire in 2026.
- I have been in conversation with Bedford to Bletchley Rail Users Association regarding East West Rail and the future of the station at Woburn Sands and a new Woodleys Farm bridge
- Highways Gully Cleaning

This was the response provided to the enquiry by MK City Council:

MKCC apparently follow a risk-based approach to gully cleansing. This is in line with its Codes of Practice which sets out how it will carry out the maintenance of its 75,000+ gullies and drainage infrastructure. They maintain that as they can't do everything, they use a method of prioritising maintenance actions so that areas with recorded flooding issues are done more frequently.

MKCC apparently assess requests for gully cleaning based on flood risk; photographic evidence or site visits; when we last visited or if there is a planned visit; last recorded silt level. After this assessment has been made, the enquiry will be either Critical, High, Moderate or Low Risk.

Critical areas: they report will be visited twice a year to make sure all the roadside gullies are working to capacity.

High Risk: will be done once every two years.

Medium Risk: will be done every four years.

Low Risk: we will attend once within a six-year period.

The councils gully tanker is in constant use and so if it attends a site as part of its cleaning programme and cannot access the gully due to parked vehicles, it is likely that we will be unable to attend again until the next planned cleaning date.



the road roundels along Newport Road have been removed by Ringway. However, the imprint of the 40 remains! Residents still ask why there cannot be 30 MPH repeater signs installed and the official explanation is *'in the UK, you generally do not see 30 mph repeater signs in areas with streetlights because the streetlights themselves (3 or more lamps, under 200 yards apart) automatically define the limit as 30 mph, making repeaters redundant unless a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) is in place for exceptions (like a 20 mph zone or if lights are off). A proper 30 mph limit is set by the lights; if a road with lights isn't 30 mph (e.g., 40 mph), then those limits require repeaters'*.

- Please see below a link to the St. Marys CoE Primary School bulletin:

<https://sway.cloud.microsoft/I5F84VW1qwUwLzlh?ref=Link&loc=mysways>

Noise issues alongside the A421 and M1 – Eagle Farm South and Glebe farm. Environmental Health advise as follows ...there are two aspects to the noise issue.

1. Did a new or altered road increase levels beyond the statutory limits in the Noise Insulation Regs to existing properties?

2. Do new properties built next to the road suffer from noise levels exceeding the planning conditions or planning policy guidance?

For 1.

Noise Insulation Regulations (Roads)

- Primary legislation: Noise Insulation Regulations 1975 (amended 1988).
- Purpose: To protect residents living near new or significantly altered roads from excessive traffic noise.
- Key criteria for eligibility:
 - o The property must be within 300 metres of the new or altered road.
 - o Predicted or measured noise level at the building façade must exceed 68 dB LA10 (18-hour) after the road opens.
 - o Noise must increase by at least 1 dB due to the new or altered road.
- Mitigation measures provided:
 - o Double glazing for habitable rooms.
 - o Acoustic ventilation systems (to allow windows to remain closed).
- These measures are usually free to the property owner if the criteria are met.

Typically, the impact expected by new roads is determined by noise modelling and highways authorities will use mitigation like barriers or mounds or road surface specification to ensure no acoustic treatment of existing houses is required. These mitigations also have the benefit of reducing levels outside relevant properties . Gardens etc. (The acoustic double glazing required is not something I'd want in my property as it involves a substantial air gap between glass panes and a mechanical acoustic treated ventilation system)

MKDC used to have a team doing this assessment re the grid roads and new development.

To see if there may be a problem the obvious thing to do would be to set up an environmental noise meter in accordance with the requirements of the regulations for a five or seven day period at the property nearest to the road. (NB the Level may increase with height so if flats are involved it may need a noise meter on a balcony). If levels are above then this would support lobbying of the Highways authority for a proper assessment.

Other issues. The road scheme may have required an environmental statement (inc. noise and pollution?) under the Planning Act 2008. The Environmental Noise (England) Regulations 2006 Requires: Noise mapping and Noise Action Plans for major roads. Identification of Noise Important Areas (NIAs) where mitigation is prioritized. These plans guide long-term strategies for reducing transport noise. They were published in 2022 – see gov.uk and may give an insight into areas of concern and there similarity

For 2

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE):

- Planning decisions must avoid significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life.
- Developers must mitigate and reduce noise impacts through design and layout.

Local authorities often require:

- Noise Impact Assessments for developments near major roads.
- Compliance with BS 8233 (guidance on internal noise levels).
- Use of ProPG: Planning & Noise for residential schemes.

- BS 8233
 - Provides specific internal noise level targets, e.g.:
 - o Bedrooms: 30 dB LAeq,8h (night)
 - o Living rooms: 35 dB LAeq,16h (day)
 - o Gardens: 50–55 dB LAeq,16h (day)
 - Historically based on WHO 1999 guidelines.
 - Emphasis on technical design measures (façade insulation, glazing, ventilation).
- [weattune.com]
- **Introduces a two-stage process:**
 1. Initial Noise Risk Assessment (categorizes site risk based on external LAeq levels).
 2. Acoustic Design Statement (ADS) demonstrating mitigation and good design.
 - Promotes passive measures first (site layout, orientation, barriers) before relying on insulation.
 - Key principle: Achieve internal targets with windows open where possible.
- Whether any of the above applies depends on if it was conditioned by planning. I'm out of touch with this process. Gillian Clark in Environment Health may be able to help. But the standards could be used to show a problem.

Showing an air quality impact is likely to be more of a problem as the Council has been monitoring for years including in areas which would be expected to be at most risk and as far as I'm aware has not identified a problem in MK. Contact Nicola Adshead in the environmental protection team for more info.

The way forward.

- You could explore with Gillian Clark in Env Health if she could allow some monitoring to be done in the area using MKCC noise kit. She is the Council noise expert. Or use it as a training exercise for one of her team. Capacity might be an issue.
- The OU used to have a strong acoustics capability and may be persuaded to help.
- The Institute of Acoustics is situated in CMK
- ANV a supplier of noise kit is located in Knowlhill MK

Other than that, it is seeing how much a local consultancy would charge – here's a report I found at random as an example.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66b20896ce1fd0da7b593377/Noise_Assessment_July_2024_CHECKED.pdf

Chris Londy

Team Leader Emergency Planning



Parishes Forum

The Parishes Forum (online only this time) was hosted by MKCC on 4 December and included

- **AI – Artificial Intelligence – Cloudy IT**

David Hall (Managing Director)

Steve Walker (Head of AI)

- **MKCC and AI**

Lisa Beckett (MKCC – Head of Customer and Insight)

- **Parish Successes – AI (A Parish Perspective)**

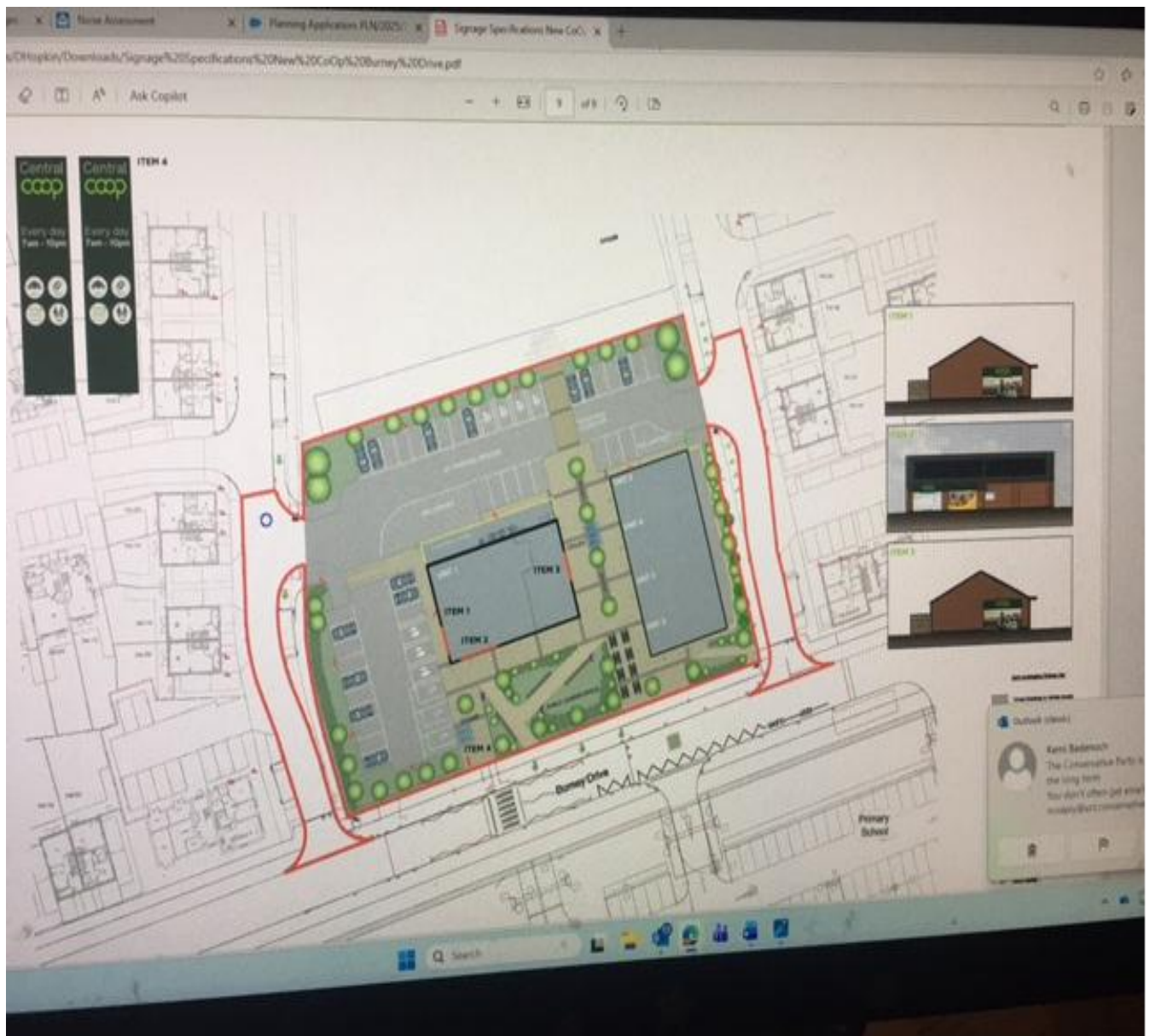
Lynne Compton (Town Clerk – Stony Stratford Town Council)

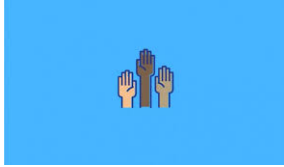
- **Good News and Hot Issues – Sports Strategy Update**

Kelly Sutton (MKCC - Sports Partnership Officer)

Sarah Gonsalves (MKCC - Director of Customer and Community Services)

- **Design layout (below) of the new Co-Op and associated retail opposite Glebe Farm School**





East West Rail

Subject: *You Said, We Did* – Autumn Update now published

Good morning,

*East West Rail's **You Said, We Did** report has been published. This report outlines how our designs have evolved, shaped by extensive public consultation and detailed technical design work. The updates show how feedback from communities and stakeholders has directly influenced the development of the project. It also explains where there is still more work to be done.*

For further detail, the report can be found attached, and on our website here:
www.eastwestrail.co.uk/you-said-we-did .

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the project further, please contact us at
contact@eastwestrail.co.uk

We look forward to continuing to engage with you as we design a railway that delivers benefits for generations to come.

Yours sincerely,

David Hughes - Chief Executive Officer (East West Rail)

New Town, New Town

Why MK City Council feels Milton Keynes should continue to grow as a new, new town in addition to the planned expansion of 60,000 dwellings contained in the local plan. **MKCC Presentation** below




Belfast, proposed as the Mass Rapid Transport Solution

Glider buses, such as these in

New Towns - MKDC Councilor Briefing Session

18:20

Map Out Chat People Share Search View Notes More



2. Why should Milton Keynes continue to grow?

As the largest and most successful of all the post-war new towns, Milton Keynes was **designed for growth**. The success of the city stems from the plan-led way in which it has grown. Since 1967, the city has grown from 60,000 to more than 300,000 people. Developing at scale means we can make sure we also deliver all the **jobs, infrastructure and other facilities** that successful places and communities need to thrive.

Growing helps us to **attract investment into the city**, to benefit existing residents as well as future generations of people born here or who move to Milton Keynes. Attracting more companies to locate in the city, or help existing businesses to grow here, means there will be more **jobs and opportunities** for residents. Investment also helps us to create the sorts of facilities that will help to make **Greater Milton Keynes an even better place to live**, for example a new Events Venue in the city centre, and much better public transport to help us all move around the city more easily.

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Search

New Towns - MKDC Councilor Briefing Session

18:25


Map Out Chat People Share Search View Notes More

3. What about infrastructure and dealing with our existing challenges?

We know that residents are concerned about the **impacts of development** on their city and the cost of providing infrastructure whilst maintaining all the other important services that a growing community needs. Growth will not solve all of these problems, and there is always uncertainty in the economy which adds a layer of risk.

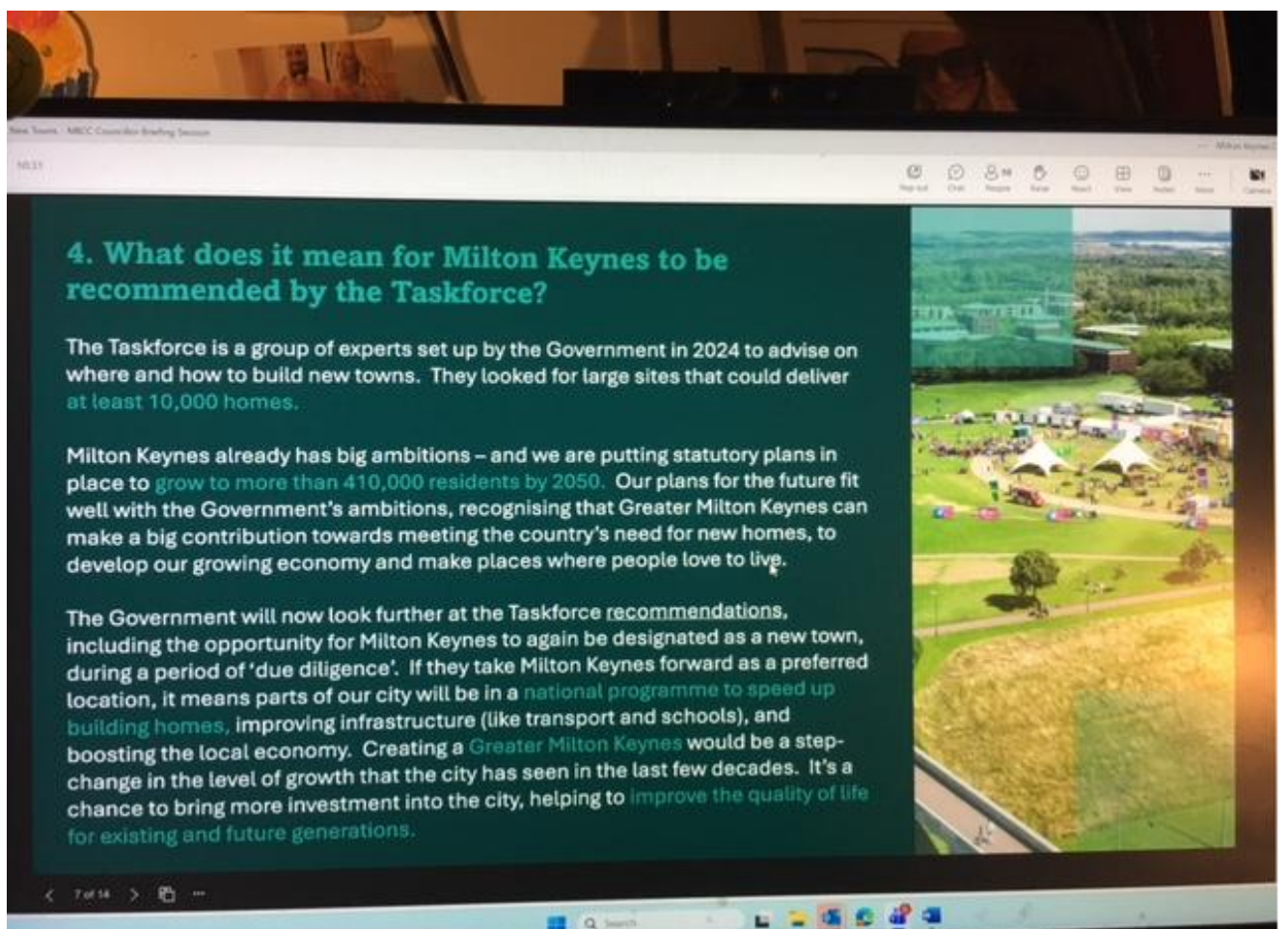
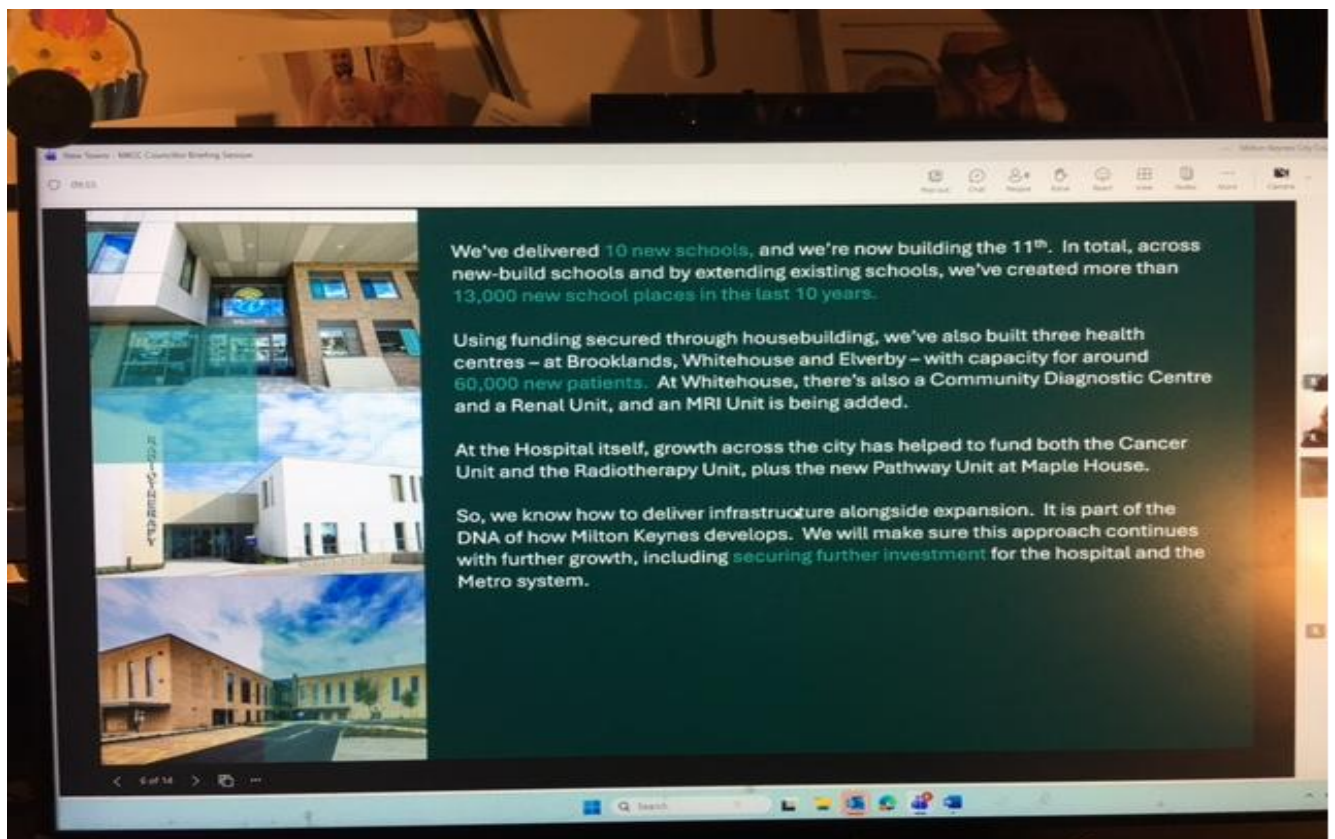
However, **delivering infrastructure** – like transport, roads, schools, healthcare, green space and other facilities – alongside new development is a key part of how Milton Keynes grows and will also be integral to our new town plans. We've already demonstrated we know **how to grow well**.

More than **£300 million** has been collected from **developers** across our big new expansion area in the east, south-east and west of the city which has helped to pay for lots of essential infrastructure.




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Search



15:34

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7. How does this affect the MK City Plan 2050? What does it mean for other things that the City Council does?

The growth proposals for the city centre and east of the M1 that would form part of the new town programme are already in the emerging **MK City Plan 2050**. The northern area isn't in the emerging plan and we await guidance from Government as to how it will treat 'additional' sites.

Having taken legal advice, and in line with the Government's response to the Taskforce Report, the City Council is continuing with its current local plan process.

In terms of the impact on other local services or council tax, no immediate changes are planned. Over time, the improvements from being a new town should lead to **even better services and quality of life** for everyone.

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8. What kind of places will be built?

We want to make sure all of these new communities are people-friendly and healthy places to live and spend time in, so they'll need a **wide variety of facilities alongside a range of types and sizes of homes**.

Across the different parts of the new town area, a mix of homes will be built, including many affordable homes, family homes, homes for people that want to live in the city centre and homes for older people, key workers and students. The New Towns Taskforce set an expectation that **at least 40% of new homes should be affordable**.

In **Central Milton Keynes** in particular, we expect there will be more flats and apartments – but we also want to see more townhouses and family homes to create a **mixed urban community** in the city centre.



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9. Who pays for all this? What does Milton Keynes get by being part of the programme?

The Government is expected to provide some funding as part of their support for the New Towns programme; this could be in the form of grants and/or loans. A Development Corporation would also work with developers to make sure more of the increase in land value is reinvested into infrastructure like roads, schools, public transport and utilities.

An important part of how any funding will be used is to help pay for a bus rapid transport system which we call Metro. Metro will use tram-like vehicles – similar to the Belfast Glider – initially on a network of three lines which will serve key locations including Central Milton Keynes, the hospital, Bletchley and new expansion areas. The system will give everyone more choices in how they move around the city, without needing access to a car.

We would also aim to put in place a cashflow mechanism – similar to the Tariff approach that already operates in our major growth areas – that allows us to continue to deliver infrastructure ahead of expansion.

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18:53

10. What happens next?

The Government has said it will carry out a six-month period of 'due diligence' where it will be looking in particular at a Strategic Environmental Assessment to consider the impacts of growth in the places it is looking at.

We'll also put in place arrangements within the City Council and with key partners, including developers/landowners, to help the process. We will also continue moving forward with our MK City Plan 2050 process.

This all means that we expect to know if MK will be included in the first wave by the spring.



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If you or someone you know has been diagnosed with a terminal illness, MK City Council can help

If you or a loved one has received a terminal diagnosis, you will no longer have to pay council tax. MKCC understand this is an incredibly difficult time, and worrying about bills should not be part of it.

This support is available through our Council Tax Reduction Scheme. It means the full amount of council tax will be covered from the date of diagnosis, so you can focus on what matters most.

If you need this support, or know someone who does, please visit our website <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/benefits/cost-living-support> or contact us on 01908 253794.

MK City Council is here to help make things a little easier.

MK City Council Cultural Strategy is coming out for consultation soon....

The Six Priorities / Themes are:

A. Cultural Identity & Values

What makes Milton Keynes unique culturally?

How do we tell our story to ourselves and others?

B. Access, Inclusion & Participation

Who's currently engaged in cultural life? Who isn't?

How do we ensure broader and deeper participation?

C. Spaces, Places & Infrastructure

What's working and what's missing – venues, public space, digital infrastructure?

D. Skills, Talent & Workforce

How do we nurture creative careers and retain talent?

What partnerships are needed for education/training?

E. Funding, Investment & Sustainability

What would a sustainable funding ecosystem look like? How do we build resilience?

F. Collaboration, Leadership & Governance

How do we better work together as a sector?

What models of cultural leadership work for MK?



Public Advice: bird flu

DEFRA has confirmed cases of avian flu among some wild birds collected locally. While human infection is extremely rare, there are sensible precautions to take, such as not feeding ducks and other wild birds at present.

Read them here: <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/avian-flu-guidance>



Don't forget we are now in the Regulation 19 consultation phase for the **Milton Keynes City Plan 2050**. At this stage, MK City Council is asking for comments on whether the plan is legally compliant, based on strong evidence, and consistent with national planning policy.

This plan sets out how Milton Keynes can grow in a way that delivers new homes, attracts investment and creates well-connected communities. It focuses on making sure people have access to schools, health services, shops and green spaces, while protecting the environment and putting infrastructure in place from the start.

Since 2023, MKCC has run a wide-ranging engagement programme, including events across the city and an online campaign. Around 7,000 comments were received, and your feedback has helped shape the policies now included in the plan.

Before we submit the plan to government for independent examination, we're asking for comments specifically on its legal soundness and alignment with national planning policy.

If you'd like to share your views or suggest changes to help ensure the plan meets national requirements, you can do so **until 22 December at 5:30pm**.

For further information about the consultation and details on how to respond, please visit: <https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/mk-city-plan-2050/mk-city-plan-2050>



The Parks Trust offers free water safety assemblies to help encourage children to stay safe around water. With winter upon us, it's important to remind students about the hazards of cold water and ice.

MK is home to numerous lakes, long stretches of river, a canal and many ponds across the parkland. This gives lots of opportunities to explore interesting habitats, but they can be dangerous if people don't know how to act around them or what to do if they get into trouble.

To book a water safety assembly please contact the outdoor learning team on outdoorlearning@theparkstrust.com or visit the Parks Trust website.

<https://www.theparkstrust.com/schools-groups/primary-schools/assemblies/>

The Centre for Ageing Better picks out the policies likely to have the biggest impact on older people and the work they do at Ageing Better.

The Chancellor has announced tax increases totalling £26 billion in the face of forecasts of weaker economic growth, faster inflation and higher unemployment.

The budget announcement follows weeks of frenzied speculation as to what the Chancellor might announce with up to 13 potential tax policies mooted in the weeks before today's official unveiling in Parliament. The policies confirmed during the Chancellor's Speech in the Commons and official Budget papers include:

- A £150 cut to the average household energy bill from April next year as the government removes a large proportion of energy efficiency subsidies off electricity bills and scraps the energy company obligation (ECO) scheme.
- The government will provide an additional £1.5 billion capital investment to tackle fuel poverty through its warm homes plan.
- The freeze on the thresholds for when people start paying different levels of income tax has been extended and will result in 1.7 million people paying more tax. But the government has said that pensioners whose sole income is the basic or new State Pension will not have to pay the tax due when the state pension rises above the £12,570 threshold for paying 20% income tax.
- Basic and new state pension payments will go up by 4.8% from April, more than the current rate of inflation, under the triple lock.
- More than £800 million in funding over the next three years announced as part of the government's Youth Guarantee which gives every young person a place in college, an apprenticeship or personalised job support.
- Training for apprentices is to be free for under 25-year-olds at small and medium-sized companies as part of the programme.
- Salary-sacrificed pension contributions above an annual £2,000 threshold will no longer be exempt from national insurance from April 2029.

Leader of the Council Announces Retirement

After 12 years as Leader of Milton Keynes City Council, Councillor Pete Marland has announced that he will be stepping down from the role and will not stand for re-election as a councillor in May 2026.

Councillor Marland has represented Wolverton Ward since he was first elected in May 2011, becoming leader in May 2014.



Cllr David Hopkins – Representing Wavendon *(including Eagle Farm South and Glebe Farm) at MK City Council