

## **Sherington Parish Council Response to MK City Plan 2050 Regulation 18 Consultation Document.**

On behalf of the village of Sherington, the Parish Council would like to make the following response to MKCC regarding the City Plan 2050 Regulation 18 Document as requested. Our response is based principally on the perceived impact of the MK 2050 plan on Sherington and its population.

We believe and understand that this response will be considered in full within the process of taking the plan forward to its Regulation 19 stage.

Whilst we accept that the significant future growth and development of MK as a city is inevitable, there is a general consensus within our community that the City Plan 2050 provides for that growth to be unnecessarily aggressive. In particular, the outward expansion to the Northeast of Milton Keynes and the resulting increase in population together with the loss of open countryside and farmland has been a matter of serious concern.

The confirmation of the details of the City Plan 2050 proposals in the Regulation 18 document have not removed the general concern regarding the speed and scale of the planned expansion, but it has at least provided some certainty about what our community must expect. There is acceptance however that the plan is in place and is already being implemented, and that we must work within its policies as far as possible to preserve and protect our community, its assets, and its unique character.

The overriding concern and anxiety of the Sherington community in respect of the MK 2050 plan has understandably been that the village could be subjected to enforced unwanted and unnecessary housing expansion within its boundaries.

We are therefore relieved and encouraged to note the consistency throughout the Regulation 18 document with which the desire and intention to actively protect rural communities such as ours from unneeded housing development is stated and emphasised.

### **In response to Question 2/c. – Spatial Strategy**

We agree, and are in accord with, the statement in the Spatial Strategy of the Regulation 18 document that specifically seeks to protect the character of our villages located to the North of the city. It thankfully proposes not to allocate sites for strategic new developments but expects relevant town and parish councils to identify opportunities to deliver the growth “that their communities need” through a locally prepared plan.

### **In response to Question 3/c- Strategy for Homes**

We agree also with the statements in the Growth Strategy of the Regulation 18 document that delivery of the plan must be achieved by balanced growth, and in particular with the statements “there is need to protect the separate identity of rural settlements”, and “to minimize the impact of growth on the open countryside and rural communities”.

Sherington has the benefit of a current Neighbourhood Plan – valid to 2031, under which significant new housing development opportunities are already identified and have, in part, been implemented. The fact that demand for such new housing development in Sherington does not exceed supply is evidenced by the fact that, of the allocation of a total of 45 new homes identified and made available in the 2016 Neighbourhood Plan, only 36 have to date been built, with the remaining 9 (20% of the allocation) still not taken up.

This allocation of 45 new homes in the current Neighbourhood Plan was in direct response to Sherington’s designation as a ‘selected village’ in the Core Strategy of Plan MK, and exceeded the 40 new dwellings which that document advised that the village could provide. It represented an increase in housing in the village of approximately 11.5% at the time, and this has proved to significantly outweigh the demand and/or need for such homes in the village.

It is the intention of the Parish Council to conduct a review of the current Neighborhood Plan at the appropriate time which will seek to comply with the guidance contained in the Regulation 18 document to include a nominal new housing allocation (of at least one dwelling) to be applied to any review.

We are mindful of the role of Neighbourhood Plans as identified in Policy GS1 of the Regulation 18 document which states that “any development in rural settlements should focus on meeting local needs and be located within defined settlement boundaries”. We will also consider the guidance in Policy GS2 which states that “Neighbourhood Plan-led development within villages and rural settlements should be of a scale appropriate to the size of the relevant settlement”. We agree with the document’s emphasis of the importance of the above policies, and we hope and strongly believe that they should be taken forward and written into the Regulation 19 document.

We acknowledge the message in the Consultation Document that local communities are expected to plan for growth that responds to their own local ambitions and needs through Neighbourhood Plans. We will therefore take great care to properly identify any future growth needs of the village in our Neighbourhood Plan reviews and processes. In this way we will actively seek to ensure that the Regulation 18 guidance is applied so that inappropriate and unnecessary housing development does not take place.

**In response to Question 7/c – Policy GS6 Open Countryside and Question 54 – Policy CEA12- Conserving & Enhancing Landscape Areas.**

We acknowledge and welcome the Consultation Document’s declared strategy to carefully manage new development within open countryside and rural settlements like ours.

We agree with Policy GS6 which defines any land outside defined settlement boundaries as Open Countryside and restricts planning permission in Open Countryside areas to proposals which will conserve and enhance the character of the surrounding landscape – together with satisfying various other stringent criteria. We believe and hope that this will help to conserve and maintain the distinct historic & open rural character of the village, its heritage assets, and its beautiful surrounding open countryside.

We also agree with Policy CEA12 which states the need to conserve the historic setting and character of villages and important views, including local landmarks.

We will seek to apply these various elements of the MK City Plan 2050 into any review or renewal of our Neighbourhood Plan and will subsequently expect to be fully supported by the planning department in respect of requirement for any application received for sites within our boundaries to comply with them in every respect.

**In response to Question 10/c – Policy GS10 Supporting Growth with Infrastructure**

An inevitable consequence of such rapid and extensive growth in housing will be pressure on education, medical, social and other vital services. We acknowledge that the draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan claims to ensure that new and improved services will be in place to accommodate the population growth, but there remains a belief and expectation that services will become significantly more difficult for most. There is also a belief that the “infrastructure first” claims in the publicity for MK 2050 will not be delivered in practice or provide sufficiently for the unavoidable additional pressure on services and infrastructure that the growth plans will create.

Access to GP surgery appointments is an issue which villagers already experience difficulty with and have concerns about with the area population at its current level. The prospect of such a huge increase in the population requiring access to these facilities is, unsurprisingly, widely believed to inevitably worsen this problem for the Sherington community. Whilst there is reference in the plan to an increase in local GPs and hospital beds & services, it is a significant concern that the plans for these increases and the delivery of them will not be adequate or sufficiently timely.

School places have been a serious problem for the Sherington community and other small communities to the North of Milton Keynes for some time already. We acknowledge that the MK 2050 plan and the draft Infrastructure Plan provide details of the aspiration to provide the necessary facilities to solve this problem in the future. The generally held belief however is that the plans for growth will simply compound and worsen this issue for our community.

As it remains unclear precisely what effect on public transport as it currently operates for the Sherington community is expected under the Regulation 18 document, it is difficult to respond to this element. The impact of the huge growth in population in the future immediately to the South of our community will clearly affect public transport and it is felt that this effect is unlikely to improve services for Sherington.

In terms of road traffic, we would wish to ensure that the issue of regular flooding of the only road between Sherington and Newport Pagnell is properly addressed in the infrastructure planning for the Eastern Strategic Extension. This route, and the regular closure of it due to flooding, is already a very significant problem for the Sherington community. The huge number of additional dwellings planned for Tickford fields and the Eastern Extension will inevitably increase the pressure on this stretch of road and further exacerbate the problem.

The safety and maintenance of the public footpath along this same stretch of road is another problem for our community as it is frequently unusable safely because of encroachment. This issue would make any increase in road traffic hazardous as well as unwelcome.

It is our belief and wish that there should be a red route beside the Sherington Road from the B526 junction to the Newport Road/Chicheley Hill junction. This would greatly improve pedestrian and cycle safety along this stretch of road (subject to the previously mentioned flooding issues). We consider that this should be treated as an absolute priority in terms of infrastructure delivery in connection with enormous increase in local road, cycle and pedestrian traffic in connection with the Tickford Fields and Eastern Extension schemes, and we are concerned that it does not appear to feature in Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan

These matters should be carefully considered in terms of both the currently planned and/or approved developments, and any subsequent proposals.

**In response to Question 15– Eastern Strategic City Extension**

As a community we are not in agreement with Policy GS14 simply because of the scale and speed with which it is being imposed on us. All of the reasons and comments given in the above responses to other questions relate to this response.