

1 Information sent out on 19.3.2024 on behalf of NPSG below

Dear All

I am writing on behalf of the Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) to share an update on the status of our developing Neighbourhood Plan (NP).

As you may remember an informal community consultation was conducted this January to seek feedback on policy ideas which had emerged from previous workshops and consultations. The NPSG would like to thank all those who gave up time and energy to support or attend these sessions, particularly the members of the two task forces. At its last two meetings (in February and March) the NPSG considered both the experience and the outcome of the January consultations alongside other activities which are currently taking place in Bletchley, most importantly, the progress which is being made with the New City Plan for Milton Keynes and potential developments within the Town Deal.

It was evident from our NP consultation that residents in Bletchley are unclear about the many different activities taking place in our community now and particularly about how they fit together. This is hardly surprising given the many individual projects going on eg the Town Deal projects, the Bletchley Pathfinder, the Lakes Regeneration, EW Rail and the NP as well as the New City Plan. There has been a lack of accessible integrated information about the town's redevelopment as so many agencies are involved. Our own experience with the NP consultation has been supported by other recent pieces of work undertaken locally on behalf of the Town Deal by engagement experts. Their reports stressed the importance of presenting a "bigger picture" to residents and developing a cohesive narrative for the town and its future which more people could understand and engage with in a meaningful way.

Following meetings I have held on behalf of the NPSG with senior officers at MKCC, including the Deputy Chief Executive and the Director for Planning and Placemaking, and on advice from our planning consultants and feedback from our volunteers, the NPSG has agreed to revisit the timetable for the NP. Previously we had hoped to move to a formal Regulation 14 consultation (ie a formal pre-submission draft plan consultation) in May this year but we recognise we will not be ready to do this and further community consultation is necessary. Furthermore, MKCC has now advised that they will not be in a position to share their final Land Availability Assessment (LLA) outputs until their consultation on their draft local plan (New City Plan probably in early July 2024). The LAA outputs are essential to produce the NP as they will identify sites for development in our area. We had previously expected to have this information before the pre-election period which starts next week.

Therefore, we will continue with informal consultations over the summer months on focussed aspects of the NP. We will also work with MKCC on a range of other public consultations eg on the transport hub and the public realm improvement project in the Town Deal. These will take place after the May elections and we expect that information from these exercises will also inform our evidence base for the NP. The NPSG now expects to produce our draft plan in the autumn ready for formal (Regulation 14) consultation no earlier than October 2024 though this timetable may be affected by a general election and other pieces of work going on in the town.

Although delay is regrettable, after all the work which has been put into the NP already, the NPSG felt it was essential to undertake more community consultation and to ensure that any policies developed are compatible with those in the New City. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me and I will also share any feedback from you with the NPSG.

Yours sincerely

Town Clerk

- 2 www.bfsnp.org.uk – website currently being updated by town council officers as time permits
- 3 Next meeting of steering group 18 April 2024