

5.0 DEVELOPMENT TESTS

INTRODUCTION

Policy SA2 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan sets seventeen 'Principles' for the future development of the MVNV. The Policy SA2 principles and the wider policy wording is provided at Appendix B. The principles of Policy SA2 must be integral to future development proposals in order to comply with the requirements of the policy.

This Development Brief provides six 'Development Tests' which are drawn from the principles of Policy SA2. Once the Development Brief is endorsed by the Council's Development Management Committee, these Development Tests will be:

- (a) a material consideration for the determination of any **future planning application**, **design codes** and **Reserved Matters Application (RMA)**; and
- (b) used as a key tool for the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to assess if **development proposals** achieve the principles of Policy SA2 and therefore help to deliver the overall vision and Concept for the MVNV described in this Development Brief.

The Development Tests also address the wider policies of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan and therefore will guide compliance of applications and schemes with the Plan as a whole.

Each Development Test is supplemented by a series of 'Aims', which provide further detail to describe how applications and proposals can meet the Test in question.



FIGURE 5.1: THE DEVELOPMENT BRIEF IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

Test 1 – Placemaking for the Marston Vale New Villages

Development should deliver a new vibrant and distinctive village character respecting the pattern and form of existing settlements whilst looking for opportunities to positively connect and integrate communities.

Development should provide a range of housing to meet local needs, including flexible housing to meet the changing needs of an ageing population.

The MVNV presents the opportunities to cement the Vale's position as Central Bedfordshire's economic gateway. Development here should support the prosperity of its communities by enabling the economic growth of its high-tech industries.

Policy SA2 Principles to be addressed: 1a, 1b, 5.

Additional Emerging Local Plan Policies to be addressed: SP1, H1, HQ1, HQ3, H1, H3, H4, H6, H7, EMP1, EMP4.

Aim (I) – The MVNV will be a unique and exceptional place to live and work. It will be an exemplar sustainable development, maximising the opportunities presented by its central location within the Oxford – Cambridge Arc, the Forest of Marston Vale and the alignment of the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway.

Aim (II) – An ambitious design quality will be established so that each village will be distinct in terms of its identity and character, set within an outstanding multifunctional, rich landscape framework. This will be secured through the approval of detailed design codes.

Aim (III) – The development of the site will provide approximately 5,000 new homes. This will include:

- new market homes;
- a broad range of affordable housing;
- a variety of housing types across a range of densities to ensure choice and diverse communities; and
- opportunities for self and custom build properties.

Aim (IV) – The development will provide a range of accommodation for older people. Where possible, this will be located close to or as part of a mix of uses within community hubs to benefit from proximity to community facilities, services and public transport provision.

Aim (V) – To realise the unique economic potential of the gateway to the Marston Vale and the heart of the Oxford – Cambridge Arc, approximately 30ha of dedicated employment uses will be delivered within the employment area of MVNV. Applications for these uses will:

- provide opportunities for residents to live close to where they work and access workplaces by sustainable means with new employment uses connected by excellent walking, cycling and public transport services;
- be connected to key public transport nodes so that new employment uses benefit from the step change in connectivity between connections to Milton Keynes, Bedford, Oxford and Cambridge through the delivery of East West Rail; and
- provide a range of accommodation to meet the needs of occupiers including flexible 'start up' and 'follow on' space to support start-up and fledgling enterprises.

Aim (VI) – Development which provides a wide range of new jobs through the delivery of mixed uses within the community hubs and facilities serving the MVNV including through tourism, education, leisure and recreation uses will be welcomed.

Aim (VII) – Development should respond positively to changing working patterns and the growing trend for home and remote working accelerated by the COVID-19 crisis in 2020/21. The resulting evolution in workforce demands and priorities should be understood and reflected in development proposals. This could be through providing homes which are adaptable to include space for home working; by including flexible shared workspace as part of the mix of uses at community hub; or by seeking to co-locate supporting uses such as nursery provision, café, gyms, parcel collection/ local distribution hubs, and local retail at the identified community hubs.

Test 2 – Delivering an Outstanding Marston Vale Landscape

MVNV should benefit from a landscape which unites existing fragmented and inaccessible features within the Forest of Marston Vale, improves the natural environment and provides the framework and context for development offering protection for the setting of the existing villages.

It will be an outstanding natural resource enriching the lives of all residents of the Marston Vale and will provide exceptional access to high quality open spaces, leisure and recreational opportunities leading to improved health and wellbeing within its communities.

The design of the green infrastructure at MVNV will reflect the Core Components of the Vision, specifically through its location within the Forest of Marston Vale, and the opportunities for landscape and built form arising from the delivery of the B&MK Waterway.

Policy SA2 Principles to be addressed: 1f,3,4,5,9

Additional Emerging Local Plan Policies to be addressed: EE1, EE2, EE3, EE4, EE5, EE8, EE9, EE10, CC1, CC2, CC3, CC4, CC5, CC7

Aim (I) – A holistic strategy must be established for the design and delivery of new green infrastructure as part of outline application(s). This strategy will be governed by the following requirements:

- to utilise the allocation site’s existing landscape character, features and assets as a framework for the development;
- to deliver landscape and ecological enhancements to support the wider environmental regeneration of the Marston Vale;
- to draw upon the diverse landscapes of the adjoining Millennium Country Park so that its natural environment and character extends through the development adding richness and diversity to the public realm and living environment;
- to be integrated with the existing green infrastructure network surrounding the MVNV to create a connected, holistic and integrated landscape for the benefit of all communities of the Marston Vale;
- to create new networks between new villages and current communities, while enhancing and protecting the existing natural and historic environments;
- to provide a landscape which supports a wide range of open space based recreational, leisure, sporting, play and educational uses and activities, drawing upon CBC’s Leisure Strategy and Sport England Active Design Principles;
- to include opportunities for food production including allotments and orchards which can also be incorporated within the streetscape; and
- to ensure areas of tranquillity are maintained and/or created.

Aim (II) – As a Core Component of the vision, the character and feel of the MVNV will be heavily influenced by its prominent location within the Forest of Marston Vale. The design, function and approach to management and maintenance of the different forms of tree and woodland planting required as part of meeting this Component will be detailed at **outline** and subsequent planning stages (**Design Codes** and **Reserved Matters**), informed by stakeholder engagement including with the Forest of Marston Vale Trust with opportunities for consultation through this process.

Applications for green infrastructure, open space and public realm within MVNV will be expected to:

- make a significant contribution to the environmental regeneration of the Marston Vale and meeting the objectives of the Forest Plan through the creation of a visually exciting and functionally diverse environment;
- provide a varied treed character as a defining feature incorporated throughout all aspects of the development (street tree planting, trees in private gardens, informal and formal open space, civic and educational areas, employment and community hubs) whilst contributing to the delivery of the required 30% tree canopy cover. This can be achieved through the retention of and improvements to existing woodland, and creation of gladed areas, wet woodland, dense

woodland, scattered trees, orchards, tree belts and coppice. This varied woodland character will complement and support the creation of a mosaic of new habitats and should be a key part of new landscapes providing opportunities for:

- » informal recreation;
- » sport;
- » artistic and cultural events; and
- » to support educational and learning opportunities for surrounding schools and community groups.

- consider the opportunities for the production of biofuels, timber and wood products; and
- consider the provision of associated employment opportunities as part of the planting and management of woodland areas.

Aim (III) – A fundamental part of the MVNV surface water drainage system (see Test 4 Aim 4) is the new section of B&MK Waterway Park which will be designed as a continuous, multifunctional feature running through the centre of the site and will comprise both retained and enhanced channels, to create a defining feature of MVNV and a significant natural asset for Central Bedfordshire and the region.

The B&MK Waterway will:

- create a key green corridor between Brogborough Lake, the Millennium County Park and Stewartby Lake, and support a range of ecological habitats and recreational and tourism activities;
- be designed to recognise its potential as a significant recreation, tourism, ecological and economic asset;
- present more formal opportunities for supporting waterside leisure as a setting for cafes and other businesses and be an important feature informing the character of the villages;
- take account of B&MK Waterway Trust (www.b-mkwaterway.org.uk/) design guidance, relevant policies of the Emerging Local Plan and any future adopted standards and should support the opportunity for waterside living with direct access for homes to the waterfront, personal moorings facilitating canoe and small craft trips;

- incorporate the flooded former clay pits Brogborough Lake and Lidlington Pit as major placemaking, recreational, biodiversity and water management resources, facilitating their continued restoration and protecting and enhancing their ecological and amenity value;

- draw upon the character of existing watercourse features including the flooded tramways created through and remnants of the sites brickmaking heritage;

- incorporate permanent open water, with storage freeboard, into the fabric of the development by extending blue infrastructure features through the new villages in a way that enables climate change adaptation, also offering leisure use where appropriate and recognising water's value in defining development character;

- maximise the potential for both existing and new communities to safely access and enjoy the enhanced blue infrastructure resource; and

- comprise an integrated sustainable drainage system to attenuate and discharge surface water drainage to mitigate flood risk and to complement the *Marston Vale Surface Waters Plan*.

Aim (IV) – The development of the MVNV should maximise opportunities to protect and enhance its important habitats, ecological features and species. Existing features should be well integrated into development layouts and linked through the creation of new habitats as part of a varied landscape framework. **Any outline application(s) must** be accompanied by a comprehensive strategy for the delivery of a net gain in biodiversity, informed by a baseline assessment to establish the ecological context of the MVNV and enable the identification of the appropriate mitigation measures which should be incorporated.

Aim (V) – The long-term management and maintenance of the comprehensive provision of new green and blue infrastructure will be secured in perpetuity **through the S106** so that it continues to provide the intended ecological services and quality of life benefits.

Test 3 – Vital Communities and Thriving Villages

The MVNV will offer the opportunity for a full range of community, sporting activity and civic engagement so that residents of the new development and existing communities can thrive.

Policy SA2 Principles to be addressed: 1c, 1d, 1e, 1f

Additional Emerging Local Plan Policies to be addressed: EE13, HQ2, HQ3, HQ4.

Aim (I) – The MVNV will be supported by a range of new civic facilities to be provided in community hubs which support the co-location, sharing of facilities and integration of services so that they are a focus for community activity and engagement. These requirements are set out in Policy SA2 and include:

- formal education and nursery provision to meet the needs of the new communities;
- multi-purpose community buildings including community library space to support a range of activities;
- primary healthcare facilities;
- formal indoor sports facilities;
- an appropriate mix of retail and leisure uses; and
- at least one drinking establishment.

Aim (II) – New education provision will be a key defining element of the MVNV and will provide a valuable asset to the emerging community. Provision of facilities will be made in line with Policy SA2 and should:

- be located at the heart of walkable neighbourhoods;
- demonstrate an ambitious design to ensure the highest aesthetic quality and integration with their surroundings;
- be delivered through consideration of the role of and relationship to existing local school provision; and
- be located to support multi-purpose trips and as a focal point within villages encouraging social integration and community development.

Aim (III) – The delivery of new schools represents a significant investment in new community facilities.

S106 agreements should seek to ensure that the design and management of schools allows for appropriate community access to these facilities when they are not in use by the schools.

Aim (IV) – Development at MVNV will provide for the health and wellbeing of its community by:

- providing opportunities for new health and social care facilities at the heart of the community;
- supporting healthy lifestyles through the creation of walkable neighbourhoods so that as a priority, a range of services, facilities, and public transport options are accessible by active travel including walking and cycling;
- delivering lively, busy, streets and spaces and clustering a range of community facilities at key centres (community hubs) to promote social interaction and integration;
- providing a range of open spaces including play and formal sports opportunities, and placing amenity and leisure uses within multifunctional green infrastructure to encourage active lifestyles and awareness;
- promoting inclusive design principles to create places that are suitable for the whole population regardless of age or disability; and
- providing opportunities for healthy eating by providing opportunities for local food production.

Aim (V) – New development will meet CBC's standards for formal open space including formal sports provision described within the Council's *Leisure Strategy*.

Aim (IV) – New development will respond to CBC's *Children's Play Provision Guidance* (January 2020), in respect of the following targets for accessibility to play facilities set out therein, providing every new home within:

- 100m of a Local Area for Play (LAP)
- 400m of a Local Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)
- 1,000m of a Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)

Play should be designed as an integral aspect of each New Village and be integrated with the landscape framework. **Design Codes** should consider opportunities for play in the natural environment and a design reflecting the context of the Forest of Marston Vale should be encouraged. Play provision should benefit from natural surveillance and good proximity to walking and cycling routes. The design of play facilities should be given careful consideration so that they respond to their context and offer a range of activities and challenges.

Test 4 – Embedded and Adaptable Sustainability

MVNV has the ability to deliver an intrinsically sustainable development which will enable and encourage sustainable living in a supporting environment.

Master plans, design coding, detailed design of buildings, infrastructure and landscape will together play a critical role in safeguarding natural resources and will set out opportunities to limit the effects of climate change.

Policy SA2 Principles to be addressed: 2,8,9,10,13,14,15

Additional Emerging Local Plan Policies to be addressed: T5, CC1, CC2, CC3, CC6.

Aim (I) – All applications should be accompanied by an energy strategy for the development. This must be flexible and able to respond to regulatory changes, market forces and embrace technological advances over the lifetime of the development. They should be ambitious and seek to meet the highest viable standards.

Aim (II) – The development of the MVNV will accord with the requirements of relevant Policies of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan. Development proposals should consider all opportunities to reduce the energy demands of the development by:

- supporting non-motorised options as the primary transport choice by providing a mix of uses within walkable neighbourhoods and connected to each other by a comprehensive and permeable movement network for non-motorised users;
- supporting sustainable travel to local services and facilities and to key strategic locations by maximising access to an integrated network of public transport services. This should include providing strong walking and cycling access rail provision at Millbrook, Lidlington and Ridgmont stations and to future East West Rail facilities;
- ensuring that the design of development parcels considers passive measures to reduce energy demands;

- considering all opportunities for viable connections to alternative sustainable energy supplies, which could include the recovery of the heat generated by the Rookery South Energy Recovery Facility;
- considering opportunities to integrate and manage emerging 'smart' energy infrastructure to future-proof the delivery of all renewable and low carbon energy technologies; and
- future proofing the delivery of electric vehicle charging and providing electric vehicle charging points as appropriate, practicable and viable in accordance with Policy T5 of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan.

Aim (III) – Design Codes for new development should:

- consider opportunities to incorporate climate change adaptation measures which take account of projected climatic changes such as increased rainfall and temperatures;
- consider opportunities to incorporate renewable and low carbon technologies;
- adopt a fabric first approach to reduce energy demands before considering the use of mechanical or electrical services systems and renewable/low carbon opportunities to reduce the energy demands of the development; and
- identify viable passive and active measures to reduce the energy and water demands of key buildings to meet occupier demands including setting a target for a maximum of 110 litres per person per day for residential development and the BREEAM 'very good' standards for water efficiency for commercial buildings.

Aim (IV) – MVNV will incorporate a comprehensive, holistic and site wide sustainable drainage system formed by a network of drainage solutions including as a principal element the B&MK Waterway. The sustainable drainage system will be incorporated into public and open spaces of the development in order to contribute to the multifunctional use of these spaces and to realise a great range of placemaking benefits including through amenity, biodiversity and environmental improvements.

The sustainable drainage system will:

- be informed by a detailed site-specific flood risk assessment which will identify the necessary strategic measures to reduce flood risk through attenuation and discharge surface water run-off at reduced levels where possible, and at least at a rate no greater than if the site were undeveloped and to reduce existing downstream risk;
- be informed by the guidance contained within CBC's adopted Sustainable Drainage Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (May 2015).
- manage surface water 'close to source' and on the surface wherever possible and the principles of the SUDS 'management train' should be applied.
- maximise biodiversity enhancement, mitigation of visual landscape impacts, flood risk reduction, maintenance and safety, when considering their location and relationship to neighbouring sites and uses.
- identify measures to ensure that the passage of water between individual parts of the system are using natural conveyance (e.g., swales and filter trenches).
- be designed so that the delivery of each part of the system provide a comprehensive sustainable drainage solution for each phases.
- be designed to facilitate effective management and maintenance.

Aim (V) – Applications for development should ensure that uses within the site that are vulnerable to flood risk are located outside of areas of flood zones 2 and 3 and areas at high risk of surface water flooding. Flood capacity shall be retained on site.

Aim (VI) – Waste from site clearance and throughout the construction of the development will be managed through a commitment to a best practice approach to waste prevention, preparation for reuse, material recover, energy recovery and disposal.

Aim (VII) – An operational waste strategy must be developed so that the development meets waste reduction targets through behaviour change.

Aim (VIII) – Appropriate potable water and foul sewage infrastructure will be provided.

Test 5 – Connecting Places and People

Sustainable movement networks will be a priority for the MVNV so that these modes of travel can be the first choice for residents. Investment in new infrastructure must mitigate transport impacts of the development. The provision of new safe walking and cycling routes alongside new public transport provision should be a priority to connect key destinations. Existing public rights of way must be integrated with the pedestrian, cycle and equestrian network within the site.

Policy SA2 Principles to be addressed: 2,3,11,12,13

Additional Emerging Local Plan Policies to be addressed: T1, T2, T3, T4, EE12.

Aim (I) – As a founding principle, walkable neighbourhoods will be created to reduce the need for travel and to promote sustainable options as the primary transport choice.

Aim (II) – The MVNV must maximise the unique and exceptional benefits of its proximity to new East West Rail services including through the delivery of new walking and cycling connections to Millbrook, Lidlington and Ridgmont Railway Stations. **Outline application(s)** should be accompanied by a comprehensive sustainable transport strategy which prioritises access to an integrated and comprehensive public transport offer.

Aim (III) – Applications which adopt a flexible, adaptable and responsive approach to changing transport patterns over the lifetime of the development so that evolving travel demands can be proactively managed through the delivery of appropriate local and strategic transport measures will be encouraged. Development proposals should seek to include or enable innovative transport solutions which could be identified in the future.

Aim (IV) – Development proposals and the design of the highway network will consider carefully the context of the existing local road network, particularly in respect of the main points of access to the strategic road network which will be via the C94. The design of the road network should ensure that appropriate design measures and management regimes are established to limit access to the existing villages via the existing road network whilst maintaining the necessary opportunity for existing residents to access new services and facilities.

Aim (V) – In identifying existing conditions on the local road network through transport assessments undertaken at planning application stage.

Aim (VI) – Opportunities to address these issues through the design of the MVNV should also be identified.

Aim (VII) – Development will be structured within walkable neighbourhoods which enable sustainable movement between key destinations within the New Villages and to the wider Marston Vale by:

- delivering a comprehensive network of attractive, permeable and safe walking and cycling routes between the villages, their centres, community hubs, key facilities, open spaces and public transport interchanges;
- facilitating the creation of a cycle/pedestrian connection between Stewartby Lake and Ridgmont Railway Station;
- providing green corridors and other traffic-free pedestrian routes to complement the permeability provided by the street network;
- ensuring integration with existing public rights of way including pedestrian, cycle routes and bridleways and improving alignments where possible;
- giving priority to sustainable transport modes in street and junction design; and
- Ensuring that the PRoW network become an integral part of the development and enhanced, directional signage should be incorporated into the public realm as part of a comprehensive and consistent waymarking strategy.

Aim (VIII) – The creation of walkable neighbourhoods will be supported by the early delivery of public transport provision so that sustainable patterns of travel behaviour are established.

Aim (IX) – An appropriate car parking strategy will be established for each phase of development in accordance with Council’s adopted standards and design guidance. Car parking strategies will:

- establish a level of provision aligned with the general principle to provide walkable neighbourhoods;
- ensure that car parking is integrated with proposed landscaping and planting so that it does not dominate the street scene;
- consider all opportunities for shared parking provision in Community Hubs, in proximity to schools and mixed-use areas;
- provide electric vehicle charging and cycle parking provision in accordance with CBC’s policies and standards.

Aim (X) – The proposed development will deliver a strategy for the future integration and utilisation of existing highways including the C94 with the principles established through an outline planning application.

Aim (XI) – The layout of new streets should provide direct and legible routes between key designations within and beyond the MVNV. Design coding for the design of new streets should have regard to CBC’s *Highway Construction Standards & Specifications Guidance* (July 2019).

Test 6 – Enhancing Inherited Assets

Applications and development proposals should be informed by a detailed understanding of the historic environment so that the design of MVNV secures all opportunities to conserve, enhance and interpret heritage within the public realm to enrich the lives of its communities

Policy SA2 Principles to be addressed: 6, 7

Additional Emerging Local Plan Policies to be addressed: HE1, HE3.

Aim (I) – Outline application(s) will include an archaeological heritage statement and geophysical survey. These will set out the archaeological context of the MVNV and describe the significance of any heritage asset with archaeological interest affected by the MNVN, and where appropriate, this will include an assessment of their setting to that significance. An appropriate assessment of built heritage will also be undertaken.

These assessments will set out measures to minimise harm to the heritage assets. If necessary, appropriate mitigation measures for the MVNV could include:

- appropriate offset between proposed development areas and existing scheduled ancient monuments, with their settings incorporated into the open space and landscape design;
- view corridors;
- limitation on development building heights in proximity to affected scheduled ancient monuments; and
- interpretation as part of a heritage and public art strategy.

Appropriate mitigation measures will be secured through the outline planning permission and carried forward into **Design Codes** and detailed **Reserved Matters applications**.

Aim (II) – Where the development proposals will lead to the loss of heritage assets with archaeological interest a full programme of archaeological investigation, analysis and publication will be undertaken. This will be secured through conditions on any outline planning consent(s) and will be undertaken in order to record and advance understanding of their significance.

Aim (III) – Opportunities to learn from and interpret heritage can make a positive contribution to people's lives and promote a common understanding of the environment in which they live and their communities. Where appropriate, development proposals will provide opportunities for community engagement and enjoyment of the historic environment through the creation of interpretation schemes and suitable management of archaeological remains.

Whilst located outside of the MVNV allocation boundary, opportunities for interpretation of the existing Scheduled Monuments close to the site should be considered as part of detailed design schemes. The industrial history of the MVNV presents an opportunity to provide information and interpretation on the history of the clay pits and associated structures within the public realm.

Aim (IV) – The former conveyor lines will be utilised where possible as part of the surface water drainage system serving the development continuing their relevance and part of the local geography.

Aim (V) – The defining features of the industrial past include the former clay extraction pits at Brogborough Lake and Lidlington Pit. These features will be retained and enhanced in applications and development proposals and will serve as a key part of the green and blue infrastructure integral to the built development.