

Community-Led Regeneration and Estate Renewal Strategy

2020



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Foreword by Councillors Carole Baume and Emily Darlington

Our vision for estate renewal and regeneration is to build stronger communities, where every Milton Keynes resident can live safely and securely in the greenest and most sustainable city in the world.

This strategy, to be followed by a detailed delivery plan, sets out how this vision will be delivered together with residents and other organisations, to achieve real improvements on the most deprived estates in Milton Keynes and build stronger communities.

We remain committed to regeneration, but it must be about more than just housing and focus on jobs, skills and life chances built around estate renewal. Milton Keynes Council cannot do this alone. We will work with partners and the community to make real change happen.

Over the past two years, as we have moved forward with plans for the Lakes Estate and Fullers Slade, it has become obvious that the current process is too slow and that the word regeneration has become mired in negativity around demolition. It is very clear that we need a better approach to supporting these communities to improve. We need to draw a line under one era and start a new one that is free from the fear of wholesale demolition.

Our new approach is about building stronger, healthier communities. We need to shift the focus from demolition of specific estates to renewal, with jobs and improved health and life chances of our residents at its heart. We will improve estates and we will build new houses, in addition to spending £165m on improving council homes across Milton Keynes between now and 2023/24. But the clear and overwhelming message from residents is that regeneration is about more than bricks and mortar. We want to invest in people, their communities and the places in which they live.

The strategy needs to be deliverable and have long-term relevance in light of the possible implications of COVID-19, and maintain a focus on the important issues such as the climate emergency and the need for residents to have access to high quality, safe, secure, affordable housing. COVID-19 has had and will continue to have far reaching effects on our economy and on the lives of residents. This strategy will play a key role in the delivery of the Council's COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan, intended to support local people and businesses to respond, adapt and recover in the wake of the pandemic. Delivering community-led regeneration and estate renewal plans, shaped with and for local people, will help create a sense of belonging and community and improve the quality of life of our residents.

Our vision

The community-led regeneration and estate renewal programme is an opportunity for residents to work with the Council and its partners to improve the lives of local people. The previous regeneration strategy focussed on seven priority estates which were identified due to their levels of deprivation. While we have a commitment to deliver on these estates first, we recognise that there are other areas across Milton Keynes that need investment. This strategy is fully inclusive and provides an opportunity for local people across Milton Keynes to play a part in improving their area or neighbourhood.

We are committed to a programme which is shaped and informed by people who live locally, local representatives, voluntary and community organisations and other stakeholders like business owners and service providers such as health professionals.

Our vision for regeneration and estate renewal is to build stronger communities, in which every resident of Milton Keynes can live safely and securely in the greenest and most sustainable city in the world.

Our strategic priorities and commitments

The Community-Led Regeneration and Estate Renewal Strategy aims to improve our estates and build healthy, safe and sustainable communities.

We will achieve this by bringing together local residents and community leaders, such as parish and town councils, to identify where we can invest in our communities by improving facilities and opportunities for local people, repurposing existing buildings and building new council homes.

We will keep environmental sustainability at the forefront of any regeneration activity and will promote health and wellbeing so that everyone has the same opportunities to live a long and healthy life.

Milton Keynes Council is responsible for delivering a range of vital services for people and businesses in MK. We play a crucial role in facilitating the social and economic growth of the city, working with partners across the public, private and voluntary sectors to ensure the delivery of housing, infrastructure and community facilities to meet the needs of our growing population. As a major stakeholder, the Council will be the lead organisation in delivering this strategy and in doing so will:

- Be open and honest
- Use language that is easy to understand
- Put local people at the heart of the process and work collaboratively from decision making to delivery
- Strive to find solutions that are affordable, achievable and offer value for money
- Work with communities to identify and measure social value and the wider benefits of regeneration and estate renewal
- Use accurate, up to date evidence to inform decisions
- Ensure strong governance and clear accountability
- Contribute to the Council's commitment to be the world's greenest and most sustainable city
- Only embark on schemes after full consultation and thorough assessment and clarity of the benefits of a project

Our strategic priorities for community-led regeneration and estate renewal are based around six key themes:

- **Housing:** increase the supply and quality of council homes¹ to meet housing need and tackle the housing crisis
- **Communities:** improve the quality of the local environment with better green and open spaces, supported by good infrastructure and community facilities

¹ All references to council homes are properties held within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

- **Environmental sustainability:** reduce our carbon footprint and contribute towards the aim for MK to be carbon neutral by 2030 and carbon negative by 2050
- **Health and wellbeing:** promote a high quality of life for people of all ages and backgrounds in connected and healthy neighbourhoods, with a focus on prevention and early intervention
- **Community safety:** tackle crime and antisocial behaviour (ASB) to ensure that people feel safe and secure in their homes and neighbourhoods
- **Better jobs and skills:** enable people to maximise economic opportunity in Milton Keynes through targeted support for training, employment and enterprise

Priorities

We will achieve our vision by working with local communities to develop plans which focus on six priorities. Under each priority are some of the actions that we will take. These are not exhaustive lists and will be different for each community, depending on the needs identified:

Housing

- Increase the supply and quality of council homes to meet housing need and tackle the housing crisis, and increase the number of council homes in the city overall
- Prioritise council investment in existing council homes and work with council tenants to agree a new Milton Keynes Homes Standard
- Identify and develop solutions for existing council homes where further investment would not be economically viable
- Build market homes for sale, where appropriate, to provide further investment in council housing
- Provide homes which meet the size requirements of those in housing need, taking into account the importance of storage space, floor layouts, space standards, accessibility and support for independent living
- Fully consider and minimise any negative impact of building additional homes such as demand on car parking, community facilities and local public services
- Consider and minimise the impact on homeowners, landlords and private tenants, and ensure they have opportunities to engage and share their views

Communities

- Enhance access to and provision of high quality outside space, including play areas, playing fields, communal gardens or courtyards, communal terraces or roof gardens, individual allotments or balconies, and features to enhance biodiversity and wildlife habitat
- Deliver community and open spaces that are fully inclusive and accessible for the whole community, where the needs of everyone are taken into consideration from the outset, including older people and those with physical disabilities
- Create community facilities which can be used by the whole neighbourhood, not just people living on an individual estate
- Support established local community groups with their aspirations to manage local community buildings
- Use and strengthen local assets to improve the ties between people living in the same neighbourhoods, which is the key to building stronger, resilient communities
- Address a lack of play and recreational leisure spaces for children and young people by engaging with user groups and investing in refurbishment projects, as well as improved ongoing maintenance

- Recognise the vital role that nurseries, schools, voluntary groups and local businesses play in building stronger communities, and work with them to develop and deliver local plans
- Promote sustainable transport and accessibility to the neighbourhood by supporting improvements to local public transport, and the creation of attractive and safe pedestrian and cycling access routes and cycle storage
- Use cultural and public art programmes and commissions to enable local people to have an informed and active role in helping to create a sense of community

Environmental sustainability

- Plan and build sustainably designed homes and neighbourhoods that reduce carbon consumption, air and noise pollution levels and prevent energy and water wastage
- Include green energy generation schemes on new developments
- Use energy efficient and carbon passive technology on new and existing homes and buildings
- Reduce waste and increase reuse and recycling
- Support communities to be more environmentally conscious through locally targeted projects and campaigns
- Design and create green and bio-diverse community and open spaces
- Use procurement approaches to drive low carbon suppliers
- Consider how new housing might support viable mass rapid transport, allowing all residents to easily access destinations they wish to visit and reduce reliance on cars

Health and wellbeing

- Focus on prevention and early intervention to keep people healthy, recognising that families are the most important influence on a child in the early years and that good emotional health and wellbeing improves a person's life chances
- Develop plans which promote improved health and wellbeing, with advice and support from community health and public health services
- Develop plans that will help tackle poverty in MK
- Review the delivery of public services within the area to improve access and relevance for the community; this might involve co-locating services together to make it easier for people to access the advice and help they need in one location
- Use local community facilities to signpost people towards social activities that support mental wellbeing and free physical activity opportunities
- Promote greater pedestrian, cycle and other non-motorised accessibility, linking the neighbourhood with nearby shops, green spaces and facilities
- Develop local infrastructure that enables people to build physical activity into their daily lives.
- Encourage participation in a range of sport and physical activities by promoting and establishing new programmes in line with our Active Lives for Active People Strategy

- Ensure tighter control over the letting of commercial units to minimise unhealthy food outlets, especially close to schools and community facilities

Community safety

- Work in partnership with Thames Valley Police at a local level to tackle crime and ASB
- Ensure residents can report ASB and other community safety issues easily and that swift action is taken to address concerns
- Develop cohesive and resilient communities by working with and supporting the plans of the SaferMK partnership, such as holding community safety public engagement events, developing new opportunities for engagement and piloting a localised neighbourhood approach to community cohesion and tackling neighbourhood crimes and vulnerability
- Address security features of communal areas and entrances to reduce nuisance and anti-social behaviour
- Ensure that the layout of new buildings and public realm create safe public open spaces to increase their usage, for example, by having footpaths and redways overlooked by housing

Better jobs and skills

- Develop a local employment programme on a small, deliverable scale, to support access to work, particularly for the most vulnerable members of the community
- Ensure targeted support for training, employment and enterprise is available and accessible to all
- Increase the overall attractiveness of areas to businesses, such as improving the public realm, retail and commercial space within neighbourhoods to revitalise the local economy
- Encourage local enterprise and the creation of jobs within the area, including arrangements for local labour placements to be provided on renewal schemes
- Help economically active households who contribute to the Milton Keynes economy to live locally by increasing the availability of truly affordable homes; this will also attract new residents to Milton Keynes
- Recognise the value that many residents bring to their communities, not necessarily through work and economic activity, but through volunteering and local support initiatives

Value for money

Delivering value for money is an integral part of regeneration and estate renewal. Value for money is about:

- Investing in the right things at the right price
- Delivering cost-effective, good quality services to residents
- Evaluating success and checking that the right outcomes have been achieved

Measuring the tangible costs and outputs is straightforward, and all schemes will have their financial viability rigorously assessed. However, before considering whether a scheme should or should not progress, we will also consider the wider social and economic benefits that regeneration and estate renewal can bring.

To make the best use of resources available, we need to understand, measure and realise the social and economic benefits and how they contribute to the sustainability of the community. These wider benefits are likely to include but not be limited to:

- Improved health and wellbeing for residents
- Reduced social isolation for community members
- Strengthened public and civic engagement
- Carbon reduction through sustainable behaviours
- Reduction in crime and the perception of crime
- Improved access to local facilities and consumer services
- Improved life satisfaction
- Increased employability of local people

While these benefits clearly have value, it is difficult to give them a financial value. There are Social Return on Investment (SROI) tools available that can produce a description of how a regeneration project creates value and a ratio that states how much social value (in £) is created for every £ of investment. We will consider investing in an SROI tool but will also explore other ways in which we could measure and evidence social value. Most importantly, we will work with each community to understand the social value measures that are most important to them.

Community engagement

We are committed to a community-led regeneration and estate renewal programme which is genuinely shaped and informed by local people; those who live and work in Milton Keynes, local councillors, business owners, and service providers.

We will take a different approach to community engagement, one which is wholly inclusive of all community stakeholders. We will engage as widely as possible, working with parish and town councils, MKC recognised residents' associations (if one exists in the renewal estate), ward councillors and all other interested stakeholders such as local schools, businesses, faith groups and voluntary organisations.

For those estates prioritised by the Council for renewal, we will work with and support each community to establish Estate Renewal Forums. Each forum will select their own priorities from the six key themes contained within the strategy and establish subgroups to lead on the selected themes. The forums and subgroups, made up of community stakeholders, will be supported by a Community Engagement Officer and will be the main avenues for engagement. They will be supported by the Council and other relevant organisations, including independent advisors where appropriate, to co-create and deliver effective plans and programmes of work. This engagement approach will give local people a level playing field in shaping proposals and ensure that estate renewal and regeneration is genuinely community-led.

COVID-19 is impacting on how we engage. We cannot rely on traditional methods of face to face engagement but recognise that digital engagement could exclude some community members from taking part. Through our early discussions with stakeholders, we will agree the community engagement requirements and develop a range of opportunities so that everyone can be involved.

Delivery and monitoring

The Community-Led Regeneration and Estate Renewal Strategy sets out ambitious priorities which can only be achieved through the collective commitment of the Council and its key partners and stakeholders. It must be recognised, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, that resources will be limited and so we need to prioritise our investment carefully.

We are committed to delivering renewal on the five remaining 'priority' areas from the previous regeneration strategy and we will start community engagement with these estates first; these are Beanhill, Bradville, Coffee Hall, Netherfield and Tinkers Bridge. For the Council to identify which other estates and neighbourhoods are most in need of investment, we will consider a range of local data and information including:

- The quality of council housing
- Environmental ratings of council housing stock
- Localised police data on crime and ASB
- Indices of Multiple Deprivation, including:
 - Income Deprivation
 - Employment Deprivation
 - Education, Skills and Training Deprivation
 - Health Deprivation and Disability
 - Crime
 - Barriers to Housing and Services
 - Living Environment Deprivation

Using these criteria, a scoring process will be developed to identify which estates and neighbourhoods are most in need of investment. This will enable the Council to prioritise estate renewal resources based on need. Community engagement will commence with those areas scoring the highest, and Estate Renewal Forums established, with subgroups developed based on locally selected priorities from the six themes.

Working with the Estate Renewal Forums and their subgroups, we will bring together the relevant organisations to support the co-creation and delivery of local plans. This will include MKC services such as Public Health, Placemaking, Education, Economic Development, Transport and Public Realm, as appropriate. It will also include other agencies and partners such as Thames Valley Police and other emergency services, the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Clinical Commissioning Group, the voluntary sector and local businesses, depending on the subgroup themes. If the delivery of local plans requires skills and expertise that are not available through the Council or its partners, we will seek to procure the required skills externally where appropriate.

Being mindful of the economic impact of COVID-19 and the financial challenges we are likely to be faced with, we will ensure where possible that costs can be met from within existing budgets or that they are cost neutral to the Council, using external funding and cross subsidy as required. As local plans are developed and delivered, we will maintain an open and honest dialogue with communities about what is achievable, and tackle barriers to delivery by working in partnership.

We will measure our success with clear targets that relate to the six strategic themes, including:

- Better homes
- Quality of open space and community facilities
- Improved energy efficiency of homes, reduced waste and higher rates of recycling
- Reduction in crime and ASB
- Better health and wellbeing outcomes and reduction in poverty levels
- Higher levels of employment

Such measures will enable us to ‘test’ community resilience in the longer term and help ensure that community impact is sustainable. Some of these are long term measures and it could be several years before we start to see the impact of regeneration activity. We will therefore, where possible, develop shorter term measures to measure the impact, such as perception surveys of residents and local stakeholders.

We will monitor progress of the estate renewal and regeneration programme robustly and transparently and ensure that barriers to delivery are challenged at the most appropriate level.

We will:

- Develop a delivery plan, and monitor and review progress on a quarterly basis
- Monitor and review progress against local delivery plans (as they are developed) quarterly
- Report progress against the strategic priorities and the delivery plans to Cabinet twice a year and publish details of our progress on the Council’s website
- Review local data and information used to identify priority areas as it becomes available, and keep the scoring process updated to ensure that resources are prioritised based on need

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