

**Wards Affected:**

Wolverton, Hanslope Park, Stony Stratford, Bradwell, Stantonbury

**DELEGATED DECISION**  
**25 SEPTEMBER 2012**

**WOLVERTON TOWN CENTRE NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA APPLICATION**

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**Executive Summary:**

In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012, Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council submitted an application to designate an area of Wolverton Town Centre as a Neighbourhood Area, which was advertised for six weeks public consultation between 13 June and 25 July 2012. Three responses were received and considered by the Town Council and Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee.

This report recommends that the proposed Neighbourhood Area is approved as originally submitted.

**1. Recommendation**

- 1.1 That the Neighbourhood Area application for Wolverton Town Centre, as shown in Figure 1, Annex A, be approved in accordance with Section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990 (as amended).

**2. Issues**

- 2.1 Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council submitted an application to Milton Keynes Council on 31 May 2012, to designate an area of Wolverton Town Centre as a Neighbourhood Area. This area is shown in ANNEX A. This application was made in accordance with Regulation 5 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012, which requires a Parish Council submitting an area application to include:
- a map which shows the area to be designated;
  - a statement explaining why the Parish Council considers the area to be appropriate for designation; and
  - confirmation that the Parish Council concerned is the relevant body for the purpose of neighbourhood planning for that area.
- 2.2 In accordance with Regulation 6 of those regulations, Milton Keynes Council published the area application, and held a six week public consultation period between 13 June and 25 July 2012. This was advertised in the MK News, on the Council's website, and through information circulated to all Members and Town and Parish Councils. Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council, and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee also undertook some further awareness-raising in Wolverton through their own mailing lists.

- 2.3 Three responses were received to the Wolverton Town Centre Neighbourhood Area application. The first, from Emberton Parish Council, advised that they had no objection to the designation of the Neighbourhood Area. Responses were also received from New Bradwell Parish Council and Cllr Marland, Ward Member for Wolverton. These responses raised concerns with the proposed Neighbourhood Area, and made recommendations that it be amended. These points are summarised in ANNEX B.
- 2.4 The consultation responses have been considered by Milton Keynes Council officers, and by Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee. Comments from these organisations are included in ANNEX B to address the concerns raised in the consultation responses. Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council agreed their responses as shown in ANNEX B at their Town Council meeting on 30 August 2012.
- 2.5 As shown in ANNEX B, the consultation responses raised concerns that the Neighbourhood Area should not include the 'Railcare site' as it is a major site that has a strategic role which should not be considered within a Neighbourhood Plan, and that including it within the Plan could cause a delay to its preparation process. It is intended that the Neighbourhood Plan would simply set out the overarching principles that the community would wish to see addressed in any future redevelopment of the site, and will not plan for the site in any significant detail. This advice has been acknowledged by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee and they assert that the Plan will be prepared on that basis. It is therefore considered that the inclusion of the Railcare site within the Neighbourhood Area is appropriate.
- 2.6 The second main concern raised through the consultation responses was that the St Georges Way housing area should be included within the Neighbourhood Area. The inclusion of this area had already been considered at an earlier stage in the plan process. However, following liaison with colleagues in the Housing team about the future work they are proposing to do in the area, it is considered that the timescales for the Neighbourhood Plan would mean that it is inappropriate to include St Georges Way in the Neighbourhood Area at this time. This would not prevent a future Neighbourhood Plan (or an alternative piece of work, for example a Development Brief) being prepared for this area, and the residents of St Georges Way will continue to be involved in the work on this plan.
- 2.7 Having regard to the responses received and the comments made to address these points, it is therefore considered that it is appropriate to designate the Wolverton Town Centre Neighbourhood Area as originally proposed by the Town Council as shown in Figure 1, ANNEX A. This conclusion has been supported by Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee.
- 2.8 Since the consultation on the Neighbourhood Area, Officers have considered whether the area should be designated specifically as a Business Neighbourhood Area. The Localism Act 2011 states (61H of Schedule 9) that a Local Planning Authority can designate a neighbourhood area as a Business Area if it considers the area is "wholly or predominantly business in nature". This is not considered to be the case in the proposed area as the majority of units are (or contain) residential dwellings, therefore designation as a Neighbourhood Area is considered the most appropriate approach in this circumstance. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee intends to continue and strengthen their engagement work with the local business community, and any suggestion coming

from that work that the plan should become a Business Neighbourhood Plan will be assessed.

### 3. Options

3.1 Once a Neighbourhood Area application is submitted, the 2012 Regulations require the Council to come to a view on it and publicise that decision. This report recommends that the area originally proposed by the Town Council is approved as a Neighbourhood Area. However, if it is considered that this recommendation is not appropriate, the Neighbourhood Area application could be refused. Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee could then choose to submit a revised application to Milton Keynes Council which will then be subject to further advertisement and consultation.

### 4. Implications

#### 4.1 Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out that Neighbourhood Plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan. Neighbourhood Plans should reflect these policies and neighbourhoods should plan positively to support them. Neighbourhood Plans and Development Orders should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies. In Milton Keynes, the strategic policies are set out in the adopted Milton Keynes Local Plan and the emerging Core Strategy.

Once a Neighbourhood Plan has successfully passed all of the stages of preparation, including an examination and referendum, it is 'adopted' by the local planning authority, forms part of the authority's Development Plan and is a material consideration when considering development proposals. In terms of the planning policy hierarchy, a Neighbourhood Plan, once adopted carries more weight than a Supplementary Planning Document.

#### 4.2 Resources and Risk

The Localism Act and the 2012 Regulations place new duties on local planning authorities in relation to Neighbourhood Planning. These new duties have implications for staff resources as the Council has a duty to support Parish Councils wishing to undertake Neighbourhood Planning. Staff resources to support Neighbourhood Planning will come from the existing staff within the Development Plans team. Decisions on any significant resource issues for the Council as a result of officer involvement in Neighbourhood Planning will be taken separately, as necessary.

N	Capital	N	Revenue	N	Accommodation
N	IT	N	Medium Term Plan	N	Asset Management

#### 4.3 Carbon and Energy Management

The proposal does not impact on carbon and energy management

#### 4.4 Legal

Neighbourhood planning is part of the Government's initiative to empower local communities to take forward planning proposals at a local level as outlined in Section 116 of the Localism Act, 2011. The Act and the subsequent 2012 Regulations confer specific functions on local planning authorities in relation to neighbourhood planning.

At its meeting of 25 July 2012, Cabinet agreed the decisions in the Neighbourhood Planning process that would be delegated to the Cabinet Member responsible for Strategic Planning. This scheme of delegation included the decision of whether to accept and designate a Neighbourhood Area, as is recommended in this report.

#### 4.5 Other Implications

Stakeholders:

The proposed Neighbourhood Area application has been the subject of consultation for six weeks and the views of stakeholders are reported in this report and set out in ANNEX B.

Consultation and involvement of stakeholders is an important part of the neighbourhood planning process and will ultimately be tested by a single issue referendum at the end of the process.

N	Equalities/Diversity	N	Sustainability	N	Human Rights
N	E-Government	Y	Stakeholders	N	Crime and Disorder

**ANNEX A** – Figure 1: Wolverton Town Centre Neighbourhood Area

**ANNEX B** – Table summarising consultation responses to the Wolverton Town Centre Neighbourhood Area application, and Milton Keynes Council and Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council comments.