

Delegated Decisions report



29 November 2022

DEVELOPMENT BRIEF FOR THE FORMER FIRE AND POLICE STATION SITE, BLETCHLEY

Name of Cabinet Member	Councillor Pete Marland (Leader of the Council)
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Exempt / confidential / not for publication	No
Council Plan reference	Delivery Plan reference C3
Wards affected	Bletchley Park, Bletchley East & Bletchley West

Executive Summary

In collaboration with Milton Keynes Development Partnership (MKDP), the council has prepared a Draft Development Brief for the former fire and police station site, located on Sherwood Drive, Bletchley (see red-line plan at **Annex A**).

Situated adjacent to the railway station entrance, and close to the emerging Institute of Technology at MK College, this is a strategically important site in the context of realising our renewal aspirations for Bletchley and capitalising on the generational opportunities flowing from the delivery of East West Rail. Furthermore, the site is the focus of a redevelopment project proposed in the MK: Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Town Investment Plan [2020].

MKDP is the freehold owner of this 1.25 ha site, and the Development Brief has been prepared in accordance with the Council's adopted protocol for preparing development briefs for MKDP sites, to include stakeholder engagement.

A key purpose of the Development Brief is to provide clear planning and design guidance for the site which will then help MKDP to attract high-quality bids and provide potential developers with clarity when preparing planning applications. As such, The Brief will play an important role in paving the way for an appropriate redevelopment scheme and subsequent site disposal.

Public consultation on the Draft Development Brief was undertaken over a six-week period extending from 26 August to 7 October, inclusive.

This report details comments received during the consultation period and the Council's proposed response. Where, following the receipt of consultation comments, amendments to the Draft Development Brief are considered appropriate these are shown in a 'track-changed' version of the document.

Finally, the report seeks approval of the Development Brief, as amended in the light of the consultation responses received.

1. Decisions to be Made

- 1.1 That representations received during a six-week period of public consultation on the former Fire and Police Station site, Bletchley, Development Brief (Consultation Draft, August 2022), attached at **Annex C** to the report, be noted.
- 1.2 That the former Fire and Police Station Site, Bletchley, Development Brief, as amended following consultation, and attached at **Annex D** to the report, be approved.
- 1.3 That authority be delegated to the Director - Planning and Placemaking to finalise the arrangements for completion of the Development Brief to include any graphical, typographical, and grammatical corrections.

2. Why is the Decision Needed?

- 2.1 The decision is needed to enable and facilitate redevelopment of this strategically important site, located adjacent to Bletchley railway station.
- 2.2 The site is in the ownership of MKDP, and Town Deal 'accelerated' funding has already been expended on the demolition of the former fire station and associated site remediation.
- 2.3 From an MKDP perspective, the Development Brief represents an important step which will facilitate site marketing and subsequent disposal.
- 2.4 Redevelopment of the site represents a good strategic fit with policy aspirations and will help to realise:
 - renewal opportunities flowing from the delivery of East West Rail Connection Stage 1 [NB now estimated to be operational by December 2024];
 - strategic site principles and ambitions set out in Policy SD16 of Plan:MK 2016-31 [2019];

- the renewal vision set out in the Central Bletchley Prospectus [2019];
 - redevelopment of a key site within the MK: Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Investment Plan [2020];
 - the opportunities for comprehensive redevelopment at Bletchley, as highlighted in the MK 2050 Strategy [MKCC / MK Futures 2021];
 - placemaking ambitions and design principles set out in the Central Bletchley Urban Design Framework Supplementary Planning Document [adopted 2022]; and
 - the ambitions for high-quality placemaking and the use of East West Rail and the Town Deal to leverage investment and support the regeneration of Bletchley town centre, as set out in the Council Plan 2022-26 [approved June 2022].
- 2.5 Following an Officer Decision taken on 24 August, a public consultation on the Draft Development Brief was undertaken over a six-week period extending from 26 August to 7 October, inclusive.
- 2.6 During consultation the Draft Development Brief was made available on the Council’s website. An associated press release was issued by the Council on 6 September and an e-mail alert, with a circulation of circa. 17k subscribers, on 22 September.
- 2.7 In addition, details of the consultation were posted to the Groundbreaking Bletchley and Fenny Stratford website which draws together a range of information about improving the area’s future prosperity and economic growth, including Town Deal related developments.
- 2.8 Landowners in the vicinity of the site were alerted at the commencement of the consultation process on 26 August.
- 2.9 A presentation on the Draft Development Brief was made to West Bletchley Council’s Environment Committee on 4 October and to the Milton Keynes City Council’s Planning Committee on 6 October.
- 2.10 An extended period of time was granted to West Bletchley Council and Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council for the submission of responses [i.e. until 17 October] due to the impact of the Queen’s mourning period on their scheduled meetings. An extended period of time for response submission was also granted to Milton Keynes City Council’s Planning Committee [i.e. until 17 October] on the grounds that its meeting ‘cycle’ did not dovetail with the consultation period.

Consultation Responses and Resulting Amendments Proposed

- 2.11 Comments and representation from 13 stakeholders were received. A summary of consultation representations and proposed responses are detailed in **Annex C**.

3. Implications of the Decision

Financial	Y	Human rights, equalities, diversity	N
Legal	Y	Policies or Council Plan	Y
Communication	Y	Procurement	N
Energy Efficiency	Y	Workforce	N

(a) Financial Implications

Consultation on the Draft Development Brief was undertaken utilising existing resources.

Once approved, the Development Brief will help MKDP to market the site for redevelopment leading to its eventual disposal, probably via a building lease arrangement.

Town Deal Accelerated Capital Funding expenditure in the sum of £200k has been made by the Town Deal Board on the demolition of the former fire station and associated site remediation. These works have helped to de-risk disposal and redevelopment of the wider site.

The Town Deal Innovation Hub project is focussed on the former Fire and Police Station site and is allocated £3.05 million funding out of a £22.7 million Towns Fund award. The approved Development Brief will, therefore, help to underpin the associated Town Deal business case and so unlock significant Towns Fund investment.

(b) Legal Implications

Development Briefs prepared and approved by the local planning authority are a legitimate tool to inform developers and other interested parties of the opportunities and restrictions of a site in planning terms. While it is possible to adopt a development brief as a supplementary planning document [SPD], it is not proposed that this Development Brief be adopted as an SPD, according to established MKDP principles. Moreover, it can be noted that the site is already covered by the Central Bletchley Urban Design Framework SPD [adopted, April 2022]. Therefore, it is not necessary to consider whether the document meets the legal requirements for SPDs.

Whilst not forming part of the Council's Local Plan or constituting a formal planning document, following stakeholder consultation and subsequent approval by the Council, the Development Brief will, potentially, constitute a minor material consideration in the determination of planning applications for the site.

Given the document's status, there is no identifiable risk to the Council should it take the recommended action.

The Development Brief appropriately references and responds to the various policies that the proposed site is subject to bearing in mind the effect of s.38(5) of Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (PCPA 2004) which sets out how to deal with conflicts in policy. Section 38(5) of the PCPA 2004 provides that if, to any extent, a policy contained in a development plan for an area conflicts with another policy in the development plan, the conflict must be resolved in favour of the policy which is contained in the last document [to become part of the development plan].

(c) Other Implications

(i) Communication and E-Government

During consultation the Draft Development Brief was made available on the Council's website.

Consultation details were also posted to the Ground-breaking Bletchley and Fenny Stratford website, which draws together a range of information about improving the area's future prosperity and economic growth.

A press release, highlighting public consultation on the Development Brief, was issued by the Council on 6 September. An associated e-mail alert, which is understood to have a circulation of 17k subscribers, was issued on 22 September.

Presentations on the Draft Development Brief and the associated consultation process were made to West Bletchley Council's Environment Committee on 4 October and to Milton Keynes City Council's Planning Committee on 6 October.

Ongoing communication about developments affecting the former Fire and Police Station site, following approval of the Development Brief, should be undertaken to keep local stakeholders fully informed. Such communication should dovetail with the Town Deal stakeholder engagement strategy and MKDP's communication strategy.

(ii) Carbon and Energy Efficiency

There are no carbon and energy management implications associated with the production of the Development Brief itself. However, the Draft Brief does reference the need for sustainable design and alludes to sustainable standards set out in Plan:MK and the Council's Sustainable Construction SPD. The site is also located near to a significant public transport interchange and within walking distance of Bletchley town centre which creates opportunities for sustainable and active travel options.

(iii) Equalities

The site is located within a wider area which is designated for mixed-use residential-led development in the Local Plan [i.e. Central Bletchley Prospectus Area]. The Development Brief will provide the possibility, therefore, of delivering a policy compliant scheme with 31% affordable housing provision.

The site also forms part of a portfolio of redevelopment sites which sit under the MK: Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Deal 'umbrella'. The Towns Fund forms part of the Government's 'levelling-up' the regions agenda and is focussed on addressing issues such as deprivation.

(iv) Policies and / or Council Plan

Production of the Development Brief represents a good 'fit' with policy.

The former Fire and Police Station site is located within the Central Bletchley Prospectus Area, as designated in Plan:MK 2016-31. Policy SD16 of Plan:MK states that development within the Central Bletchley Prospectus Area will be guided by several principles. One of the principles cited is "Exploring options for the early redevelopment of the Police and Fire Station sites."

Moreover, the site is covered by the Central Bletchley Urban Design Framework Supplementary Planning Document which, whilst not planning policy in its own right, nevertheless provides supplementary guidance to Policy SD16 in Plan:MK and aligns with the aspirations of the MK: Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Town Deal programme.

The Brief also delivers to an outcome cited in the Council Plan 2022-26; notably, the use of East West Rail and the Town Deal to leverage investment and support for the regeneration of Bletchley town centre.

4. Alternatives

- 4.1 The 'do nothing' option is not to approve the Development Brief, as proposed for amendment following public consultation. This is not considered appropriate since it would fail to provide the necessary design guidance to inform site redevelopment proposals. As a consequence, MKDP's prospects of attracting high quality bids with a view to subsequent site disposal would be diminished.
- 4.2 Such a scenario would impact adversely on delivering to the the holistic vision and principles set out in the Central Bletchley Urban Design Framework SPD [approved 2022] and proposals for delivery of a key project in the Town Investment Plan.

- 4.3 From a strategic perspective there would be a risk of failing to capitalise on the generational opportunities for comprehensive redevelopment at Bletchley; renewal opportunities flowing from the delivery of East West Rail Connection Stage 1 would not be grasped in a timely fashion.
- 4.4 The recommended option is to approve the Development Brief, as proposed for amendment following public consultation. An approved Development Brief will provide clear planning and design guidance to inform high-quality redevelopment proposals/submissions which fit with and deliver to the Council's renewal aspirations and placemaking outcomes.
- 4.5 It represents the next, sequential, step in a process to facilitate site disposal and leverage investment to capitalise on the economic opportunities that will flow from the enhanced connectivity and accessibility provided by East West Rail.

5. Timetable for Implementation

- 5.1 If the Delegated Decision to approve the Former Fire and Police Station site Development Brief is taken, then the Brief will become effective, subject to the expiration of the associated 'call-in' period, on 9 December 2022.
- 5.2 A five-part business case for the Town Deal Innovation Hub project is programmed for completion and submission to the Department of Levelling-up, Housing and Communities, in January 2023.
- 5.3 Approval of the Development Brief will pave the way for MKDP to commence site marketing in Spring 2023.

List of Annexes

Annex A	Former Fire and Police Station Site, Bletchley: 'redline' boundary plan
Annex B	Former Fire and Police Station site, Bletchley, Development Brief (Consultation Draft, August 2022),
Annex C	Summary of representations received on the former Fire and Police Station site Development Brief (Consultation Draft, August 2022)
Annex D	Former Fire and Police Station, Bletchley, Development Brief 2022 (Amended Draft to be approved, November 2022)
Annex E	Former Fire and Police Station, Bletchley, Development Brief 2022 (Document highlighting tracked changes to the brief)

List of Background Papers

- [Plan:MK \(adopted 2019\)](#)
- [West Bletchley Neighbourhood Plan \(made 2019\)](#)
- [Central Bletchley Urban Design Framework Supplementary Planning Document \(adopted 2022\)](#)

