



Unitary Councillors Report –

September 2026 (Little Brickhill).



Examination of Milton Keynes City Plan

2050 - Matters, Issues and Questions identified by the Inspectors

The Inspectors will hold hearing sessions. Hearing Sessions will open at 10am on Tuesday 15th September 2026 at Margaret Powell House, 417 Midsummer Blvd, Milton Keynes, MK9 3BN

I know you have this in hand, but it is worth looking at what the Planning Inspector is considering in relation to the Local Plan sites close to the Brickhill's.

Policy GS18 – Levante Gate Strategic City Extension

5.70 How has the overall number of homes for the allocation been identified?

5.71 Is the overall scale of housing envisaged realistic and supported by robust evidence?

5.72 Is the allocation justified in principle?

5.73 Is Policy GS18 sufficiently clear on the number of homes for older persons and specific and specialist need housing that is expected to be developed within the allocation? Will it be effective?

5.74 What effect would the allocation have on the valued characteristics of the Brickhill's Special Landscape Area? Is Policy GS18 sufficiently clear on any strategic landscape mitigation measures that may be necessary.

5.75 Is the requirement for contributions towards primary healthcare provision that

would be located within other allocations justified?

5.76 Is Policy GS18 sufficiently clear on the number, scale, and location of new retail facilities proposed within the allocation. Are they justified and supported by evidence? Will it be effective?

5.77 Is there clear evidence that the allocation will not result in adverse effects on the strategic and local highway networks?

5.78 Are the transport measures set out in GS18(9) justified and supported by evidence?

5.79 Is Policy GS18 sufficiently clear about when the various aspects of the transport network are required by?

5.80 How will the required infrastructure be phased in relation to the development proposed and what mechanisms are there to ensure that these are provided at the right time?

5.81 Are the expectations of the indicative concept plan sufficiently mirrored in Policy GS18?

5.82 Are any potential Main Modifications necessary to Policy GS18 for soundness?

Policy GS17 – South Bow Brickhill Strategic City Extension

5.55 How has the overall number of homes for the allocation been identified?

5.56 Is the overall scale of housing envisaged realistic and supported by robust evidence?

5.57 Is the allocation justified in principle?

5.58 What effect would the allocation have on landscape character and the proposed Special Landscape Area? Is the policy sufficiently clear about the mitigation required to protect the character of the area?

5.59 Is the policy sufficiently clear on the number of homes for older persons and specific and specialist needs housing that is expected to be developed within the allocation? Will it be effective?

5.60 Are the requirements for education provision, healthcare infrastructure retail, sports and leisure, green infrastructure justified and will they be viable? How will these be funded?

5.61 What quantities of green and blue infrastructure would be required to support the allocation in addition to the District Park? Is the plan sufficiently clear on the amount of such infrastructure?

5.62 Is the policy sufficiently clear on the number, scale and location of new retail facilities proposed within the allocation? Are they justified and supported by

evidence? Will it be effective?

5.63 Is there clear evidence that the allocation will not result in adverse effects on the strategic and local highway networks?

5.64 Are the transport measures and requirements set out in criterion C.10 justified and supported by evidence?

5.65 Is the policy sufficiently clear about when the various aspects of the transport network are required by?

5.66 How will the required infrastructure be phased in relation to the development proposed and what mechanisms are there to ensure that these are provided at the right time?

5.67 Is the indicative concept plan in Figure 3 supported by evidence and should it be referenced in the policy?

5.68 In order to be consistent with paragraph 193(c) of the Framework, should the policy make specific reference to the protection of Ancient Woodland?

5.69 Is it justified for the policy to require a pre-determination archaeological evaluation and is it clear what such an evaluation would involve? Should specific reference be made to the scheduled Magiovinium Roman town? Is the Council's suggested modification to this part of the policy as set out in Document CD28 necessary for soundness?



Regionalism - What is Devolution?

Devolution is the transfer of powers, funding and decision-making from Whitehall to local areas.

The Government's stated objective is to enable decisions about economic growth, transport, skills, housing and public service reform to be taken closer to the communities they affect.

The Government argues that many of the issues facing communities now operate across wider economic geographies rather than individual council boundaries. These include:

- Labour markets.
- Housing markets.
- Transport networks.
- Strategic infrastructure.
- Skills systems.
- Economic investment.

The purpose of devolution is therefore to create a new strategic tier of government capable of coordinating these issues across wider areas.

Devolution does not remove the powers or responsibilities of local councils, and Central Bedfordshire Council would continue to deliver:

- Children's Services.
- Adult Social Care. • Housing Services.
- Public Health
- Environmental Services including waste collection and recycling.
- Local Planning Functions.
- Community Safety and Public Protection.
- Leisure and Libraries.
- Environmental Services.
- Most Local Highways Functions.

Strategic Authorities would focus on those issues the government feels are best addressed at a wider strategic scale. _____



**CURRENT
VIEW - 2026**

**POSSIBLE
VIEW - 2050**

Levante Gate

Levante Gate Planning Application (PLN/2026/1114) is currently going through the consultation phase with Milton Keynes City Council, and an exact date for it to come before the Regulatory Committee has not yet been formally published on the Milton Keynes Planning Committee Meetings Schedule. (<https://www.be.milton-keynes.gov.uk/pr/s/detail/a0lWS000004VUtx>)

(<https://milton-keynes.moderngov.co.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CommitteeId=141>)

To view the Parish Council response

http://www.littlebrickhillparishcouncil.gov.uk/UserFiles/Files/Documents/LBPC-PLN_2026_1114%20-30.07.2026.pdf



Hospital Consultation

We would like to invite you to come and see our proposals for a new hospital building and help shape the future of the hospital. The building will provide a new home for maternity and children's services, alongside additional surgical inpatient capacity. As one of the UK's fastest-growing cities, Milton Keynes needs a hospital that can meet the needs of its growing and changing population. Funded through the government's New Hospital Programme (NHP), the new hospital building represents a once-in-a-generation investment in MKUH and the communities we serve. It will help us respond to the needs of our community, provide an improved environment for patients, families and staff, and ensure our hospital is fit for the future.

The New Hospital Programme (NHP) is a government initiative to deliver a new generation of hospital buildings across England. Through modern design, innovative construction and digital technology, the programme is creating healthcare facilities centred on the needs of patients and staff. MKUH has secured funding through the programme to deliver a new hospital building that will help shape the future of healthcare in Milton Keynes.

Opportunities

To ensure there are multiple opportunities to learn about and comment on the proposals, the consultation will also include:

- A self-guided public exhibition in the hospital main entrance from 8 to 11 September 2026.
- An online consultation running from 8 to 25 September 2026, where all consultation materials, supporting information and the feedback form will be available.

You can find further details about the proposals at www.mkuh.nhs.uk/mkview



United Nations International Day of Older Persons.

1pm – Thursday 1 October 2026 MK Rose, MK9 4AJ

Mayor of Milton Keynes, Councillor Paul Trendall and Older Persons' Champion, Councillor David Hopkins invite you to join them to celebrate the International Day of Older Persons.

The event recognises the opportunities and challenges of ageing populations, while promoting the development of a society that works for people of all ages.

Hear from Older Persons' Champion Councillor David Hopkins about this year's UN IDOP theme of **the Age of Longevity: Rethinking Systems for Longer Lives.**

Organisations and individuals with an interest in social connection or wellbeing for older people are encouraged to attend. Light refreshments available afterwards at MK Gallery.

There are a range of parking options a short walk away: [CMK parking](#)



International Day
of Older People

Older
Persons'
Board





Gymnastics Club

Milton Keynes Gymnastics

August 2026

Official MKCF statement

Milton Keynes Community Foundation is proud to have supported MK Gymnastics for 26 years, providing more than £1 million in rent subsidy at our gymnastics centre in Kingstons.

Following careful consideration, our Property Committee has decided not to offer a new lease when the current lease expires in February 2027. The existing lease and rent subsidy will remain in place until then, and we continue to be in conversation with the charity's management team and trustees.

After almost three decades of support, we are now looking for a different operator to continue serving the Milton Keynes gymnastics community. We wish MK Gymnastics well and hope it secures alternative premises suited to its future needs.



Thames Valley Police - Update

Top reported crimes	
Most commonly reported crimes in Danesborough during July 2026	
Violence and sexual offences	48
Anti-social behaviour	28

Public order	17
Criminal damage and arson	16

Crime Prevention Stand

10:00AM - 2:00PM, Sat 12 September 2026

Woburn Sands Market, Woburn Sands

Coffee with a cop

12:00PM - 1:00PM, Mon 21 September 2026

Esquires Coffee Shop, Burney Drive

Crime Prevention Stand

2:30PM - 4:00PM, Wed 30 September 2026

Tesco Express, Fyfield Barrow, Milton Keynes



MKALC

The Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils held its AGM at 7:30pm on Wednesday 19th August 2026 at the Campbell Park Community Council Hub, Springfield Boulevard, Springfield, Milton Keynes, MK6 3JS

Agenda

14/26 Milton Keynes Bowl Concerts:

15/26 Presentation:

By Cllr Jane Whild on sustainability, and how Parish / Community & Town Councils can lead this agenda in their communities.

18/26 To discuss the future of the association, direction and work programme

19/26 To agree the appointment of representatives to external committees:

a) To agree the appointment of one (1) representative to the B&MKALC Executive Committee due to resignation of Cllr Kevin Smith.

b) To agree the appointment of one (1) representative to the MKALC Executive Committee.

c) To agree the appointment of a rural representative to the Milton Keynes City Council Sustainable Stakeholder Forum.

d) To agree the appointment of a representative to the Planning Cabinet Advisory Group (PCAG). 1 x vacancy representative from an urban Parish Council following the resignation of Cllr Kevin Smith.

e) To agree the appointment of a representative to the Alderman Kevin Wilson Trust. Subject to the update from the MKALC Chair on the position of the trust.

20/26 To discuss topics of interest for future MKALC meetings

21/26 To raise any agenda items for the next Parishes Forum meeting

22/26 To note the Milton Keynes Parks Trust report – Cllr Richard Pryor:

23/26 To note the financial report:



Community Action AGM

The next Community Action: MK Annual General Meeting takes place on Thursday, 15 October 2026, from 10:30 AM to 2:00 PM at The Chrysalis Theatre in Milton Keynes.

<https://www.instagram.com/comactmk/>

<https://www.transitiontownmk.org/our-events/community-action-mk-agm26/>

Event Details Date: Thursday, 15 October 2026 - Time: 10:30 AM – 2:00 PM

Location: The Chrysalis Theatre, Camphill Communities MK

Theme: Working collaboratively to achieve greater and more meaningful impact

<https://www.transitiontownmk.org/our-events/community-action-mk-agm26/>

What to Expect

Keynote Speaker: A representative from NCVO speaking on collaboration in the voluntary sector.

Local Insights: Presentations from local groups on cooperative community impact.

Networking: Opportunities to connect with charities, social enterprises, and public sector partners.

Registration: You can book your spot via the AideCRM Event Page

<https://events.aidecrm.co.uk/communityactionmk>

Changes to NPPF for Parish Council

For larger applications, committee consideration remains possible but will not be automatic. Whether a significant proposal is referred to committee will depend on the joint judgement of a designated planning officer and a designated committee member (most likely the chair).

The government is introducing a new National Scheme of Delegation, which comes into effect from 31 October 2026 and sets the level at which decisions on certain planning matters should be made. This has been subject to consultation with the government's response and statutory guidance published in June 2026. The majority of Town/Parish Councils should already be aware of these reforms, given they stem from previous consultation and have been widely reported (ie. the legislation and associated regulations have been fairly high profile).

However, the changes do have implications for all local authorities who are having to make arrangements at pace to meet the government-imposed deadline of 31 October. This means our Officer Scheme of Delegation on Development Management Matters (SoD) must be updated to align with the National Scheme. Failure to implement this change would have significant implications for the Council. In particular, we would risk issuing decisions on planning applications that are no longer legally compliant (ie. we would be acting unlawfully). The government guidance states that "where local planning authorities do not comply with the Regulations from the date they come into force (31 October 2026) and their planning committees make decisions on applications which must be delegated officers, those decisions may be subject to judicial review by anyone aggrieved by the decision. This may lead to the quashing of the decision."

Planning Committee will consider the changes at the September meeting. The statutory change introduced through the National Scheme of Delegation is limited to how and when applications are referred to Planning Committee. Currently, we have provisions enabling Town/Parish Councils to require that applications are determined by Committee. However, the national scheme effectively makes these types of local arrangements unlawful, and they cannot be carried forward.

The changes will not affect how we will engage with Town/Parish Councils through the planning process. They will continue to play a valuable role in shaping development through their comments on applications, which will help determine whether an application is considered at committee, as well as being able to register to speak at Planning Committee.

Following consideration by Planning Committee, Council will then consider the updated arrangements in either September or October.

Under the new national rules taking effect on 31 October 2026, town and parish councils will no longer be able to independently call in planning applications for a decision by a planning committee.

Note: The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has not published a prominent standalone national response specifically indexed under that exact title, but the broader local government sector—including the Local Government Association (LGA) and bodies like the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA)—has raised unified concerns regarding the government's Planning Committees and the National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions

Key Concerns Raised by Parish and Town Councils

Reduction of Local Democratic Input: Parish and local councils highlighted that placing minor applications, householder developments, and smaller residential schemes under mandatory officer-only delegation (Schedule 1) removes local accountability.

<https://www.richardbuxton.co.uk/news/will-i-still-have-my-say-what-the-new-national-scheme-of-delegation-will-mean-for-communities-parish-and-town-councils/>

<https://democracy.arun.gov.uk/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=13171&Opt=3>

Marginalisation of Consultee Objections: Under the new framework, local objections or contrary views from a parish or town council will no longer automatically trigger a referral of an application to a main planning committee.

(<https://democracy.arun.gov.uk/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=13171&Opt=3>)

Section 106 and Enforcement Deficits: NALC and local representatives pushed for stronger requirements on developer accountability, asking that parish and town councils be meaningfully consulted on Section 106 agreements (both new and renegotiated) before finalization. (<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/resource/nalc-calls-for-stronger-enforcement-and-local-input-in-planning-reforms.html>)

Flexibility on Infrastructure Spending: Local councils have lobbied for expanded discretion to utilize developer contributions for community-level needs, such as local leisure and recreation infrastructure, rather than rigid top-down allocations

The New National Scheme of Delegation

The UK Government is implementing the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026. These rules replace existing local council constitutions regarding how planning applications are delegated.

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-committee-reform-draft-regulations-and-guidance/planning-committees-and-the-national-scheme-of-delegation-of-planning-functions-draft-guidance-for-local-planning-authorities-in-england>)

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-committees-and-the-national-scheme-of-delegation-of-planning-functions-guidance-for-local-planning-authorities-in-england/planning-committees-and-the-national-scheme-of-delegation-of-planning-functions-guidance-for-local-planning-authorities-in-england>)

Officer-Only Decisions (Schedule 1)

Smaller or routine proposals—such as householder extensions, minor commercial works, and small residential schemes—must be decided directly by planning officers.

(<https://www.richardbuxton.co.uk/news/will-i-still-have-my-say-what-the-new-national-scheme-of-delegation-will-mean-for-communities-parish-and-town-councils/>)

Presumed Officer Delegation (Schedule 2): Larger developments are also presumed to go to officers first. (<https://www.richardbuxton.co.uk/news/will-i-still-have-my-say-what-the-new-national-scheme-of-delegation-will-mean-for-communities-parish-and-town-councils/>)

Strict Committee Referrals: Unilateral call-ins by town councils, parish councils, or individual ward councillors are prohibited. Instead, sending an application to a committee requires joint agreement between a senior planning officer and a nominated committee member, and it must meet strict tests for local significance. (<https://www.freeths.co.uk/insights-events/legal-articles/2026/a-new-era-for-planning-decisions-the-national-scheme-of-delegation-explained/>)

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-committees-and-the-national-scheme-of-delegation-of-planning-functions-guidance-for-local-planning-authorities-in-england/planning-committees-and-the-national-scheme-of-delegation-of-planning-functions-guidance-for-local-planning-authorities-in-england>)

www.richardbuxton.co.uk/news/will-i-still-have-my-say-what-the-new-national-scheme-of-delegation-will-mean-for-communities-parish-and-town-councils/)

As outlined by Richard Buxton Solicitors, these reforms significantly narrow the circumstances in which local elected members will debate applications. Town and parish councils will remain statutory consultees, meaning they can still submit comments on applications, but they lose the power to force a committee hearing.

How Drought Affects Highway Infrastructure



Drought is most commonly associated with water shortages and impacts on agriculture, but it can also have significant consequences for our highway infrastructure.

Many highway maintenance activities are scheduled during the summer months when conditions are generally drier. Surfacing and road lining works rely on hot materials and typically require dry conditions to achieve the best results. Similarly, drainage maintenance benefits from drier pipe networks, allowing CCTV inspections and jetting operations to be carried out more effectively.

However, prolonged periods of extreme heat can create additional challenges. High temperatures can affect the cooling time of surfacing and lining materials, delaying the reopening of roads to traffic. Electrical equipment within the highway network, including traffic signals and street lighting, can also overheat, increasing the risk of equipment failures.

One of the most common long-term effects of drought is the drying and shrinking of clay-rich soils. Many roads in the UK are built on such foundations, which expand when wet and shrink when dry. This movement can lead to cracks, deformation and uneven road or redway surfaces. Milton Keynes was built on heavy clay soil which drains poorly and dries hard and cracks during the summer.

Vegetation may also become stressed and die back, reducing root stability and increasing the risk of soil erosion when rainfall eventually returns. Prolonged heat can soften asphalt surfaces, resulting in rutting and accelerated deterioration, particularly on heavily trafficked routes leading to defects appearing more quickly or existing small defects becoming worse.

These moving ground conditions can also affect buried utility services. Utility companies are increasingly having to undertake emergency repairs to water, gas, electricity and telecommunications infrastructure, which can result in additional road closures and disruption.

While the Council works closely with utility companies to coordinate planned works and minimise inconvenience to road users, emergency repairs cannot be planned for and may coincide with scheduled highway works. Once works are underway, it is not always possible to stop or reschedule them especially where excavations have already taken place or expensive plant equipment is in use.

By law, we cannot refuse a permit for utility companies to carry out essential work on their infrastructure, although every effort is made to manage activity on the network and reduce disruption wherever possible.

To view all works on the highway, visit One.Network. <https://one.network/en-gb>

Signing up for a free account will also allow you to check further ahead for planned works or set an alert for a specific area so you can be notified about any approved permits uploaded to the site.

Electric Cargo Bike Loan Scheme

The Council is offering Parish Councils the opportunity to loan one of our three electric cargo bikes to use them on a regular basis.

The bikes are available through a standard rental arrangement with the Council and are free of charge. In return, we're looking for users who can demonstrate how cargo bikes can be used as a practical alternative for local journeys and day-to-day tasks.



You can view more details about electric cargo bikes on our sister site, Get Around MK.

Successful users will be asked to:

- Commit to using the bike regularly
- Showcase its potential benefits within their organisation or community
- Provide feedback and a short case study on their experience
- Arrange insurance cover for the bike during the rental period

Electric cargo bikes can be a great option for a wide range of activities, including transporting equipment, carrying supplies, making local deliveries, undertaking site visits, or supporting community events, all while reducing vehicle use and emissions.

If you'd like to know more, contact the team, cycling@milton-keynes.gov.uk.

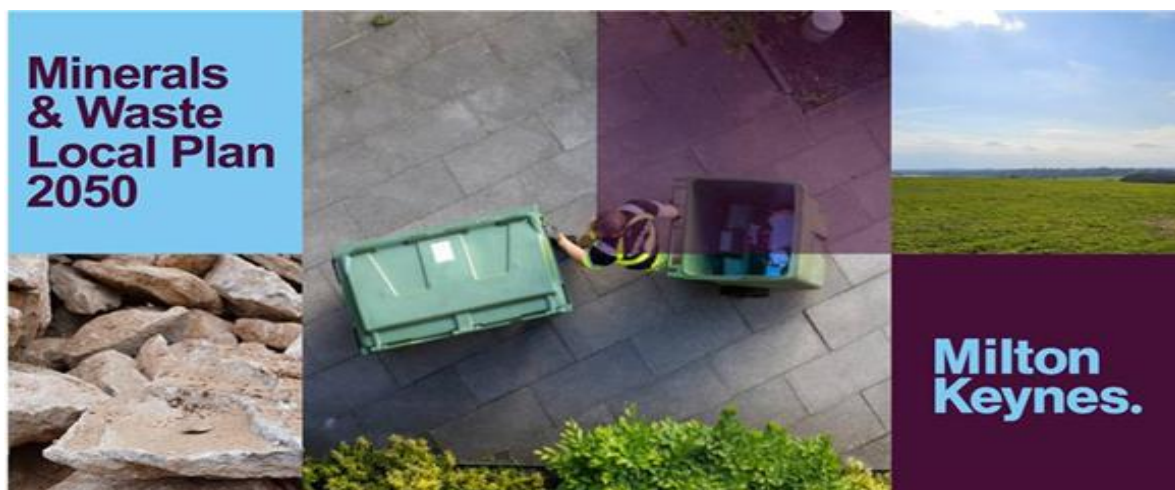


Introduction to the Minerals & Waste Local Plan

An introductory session on the Minerals and Waste Local Plan will be held on Monday 28 September. The time will be confirmed nearer the date. This session will explain the importance of minerals and waste planning for local communities and introduce the process of preparing a new Minerals and Waste Local Plan for the City.

We will also outline upcoming consultation and engagement opportunities, helping councillors understand how they, and the communities they represent, can get involved and contribute to the plan as it develops.

We encourage all councillors to attend to learn more about the plan, ask questions and explore how they can support engagement within their local communities.



The session is open to all City Councillors and Town, Parish & Community Councils.

More information will be provided, including the link to the online session nearer the time



LOCAL PLAN for
Buckinghamshire
Shaping the future together



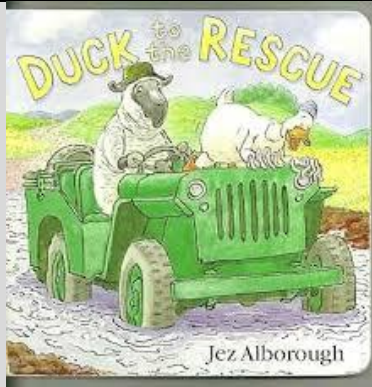
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LOCAL PLAN REGULATION 19 CONSULTATION

Representations on the Buckinghamshire Local Plan 2045 must be submitted by 11.59pm on Sunday 6 September 2026. This Publication (Regulation 19) stage is the final opportunity to make formal representations before the Plan is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for independent examination. Late representations will not be accepted.

We strongly encourage member councils to review the available resources and consider whether a formal response is appropriate.

<https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/planning-building-and-environment/policy/buckinghamshire-local-plan/reg-19-consultation/>

	Councillor Must Know: Operation Ford and policing crime against elected members The LGA has published new guidance on Operation Ford, outlining strengthened measures to protect the safety of councillors. The guidance explains how dedicated Force Elected Official Advisers can provide security support through advice and guidance and sets out how ordinary policing of crime against elections takes place alongside this new provision. The resource aims to clarify the role of these new operatives and provide councillors with all the information they need to utilise them effectively. https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/must-know-operation-ford-and-policing-crime-against-elected-members?utm_source=Dynamics%20365%20Customer%20Insights%20-%20Journeys&utm_medium=email&utm_term=N%2FA&utm_campaign=Conservative%20bulletin%3A%2017%20August%202026&utm_content=Conservative%20bulletin%3A%2017%20August%202026#msdynmkt_trackingcontext=3d29c27c-59a8-4d72-b4ca-2d8508b00100
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Animal rescue (16/08/26)

One crew from West Ashland and the water rescue team from Newport Pagnell attended an animal rescue.

Firefighters assisted with the rescue of four ducks that had become trapped in a dried-up pond containing deep mud. Crews used a rescue sled to safely reach and recover the animals.

Once rescued, the ducks were handed into the care of Milton Keynes Swan Rescue.

Location: Little Brickhill



Although all birds were recovered alive at the scene, two have since died from complications sustained from being trapped in the pond.



East West Rail – note to residents

We wanted to make you aware that East West Rail will be commencing door-to-door visits to properties where we have not yet received a completed Land Interest Questionnaire (LIQ).

As part of our ongoing work to update records of land ownership and occupation along and adjacent to the proposed railway route, we have written to landowners requesting completion of an LIQ. It is important that we hold correct information to ensure that we contact everyone with an interest in land directly impacted by our proposals and that they have an opportunity to have their say on our proposals and participate in the planning process.

Where a completed LIQ has not been returned, members of our Land Team may visit properties in person. The purpose of these visits is to confirm that the LIQ has been received, answer any questions landowners may have and provide support with completing and returning the questionnaire.

If no one is available when we call, a calling card will be left with details of how to contact the team.

Should you be approached by a landowner with questions about this activity, we would be grateful if you could direct them to the contact details provided in their correspondence or to our LIQ webpage: East West Rail | Land Interest Questionnaires (LIQs).

<https://eastwestrail.co.uk/planning/land-and-property/land-interest-questionnaires>

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions.

Rachael Pengelly
Local Government Relations Manager
M: 07971 224921

East West Rail



East West

- Rail's upgrade will consolidate nine stations into four, increasing frequency and capacity Discontinuous electrification chosen for cost-effectiveness; mainline integration will close or upgrade 30 level crossings
- Stewartby's new station and others redesigned to serve future Universal Resort and rising passenger demand
- The Marston Vale Line could be transformed under East West Rail plans, but proposals to close or relocate stations might not prove popular with some local people, as CHRIS HOWE explains (Rail magazine).

The £6bn project to reconnect Oxford and Cambridge with a modern mainline railway has entered a crucial phase, with the final East West Rail consultation closing on June 9.

The final consultation would normally be referred to as a statutory consultation, meaning it must be completed before a Development Consent Order (DCO) application can be submitted. But this requirement was removed with the passing of the Planning and Infrastructure Act in 2025.

This meant that EWR Co., the company developing plans for East West Rail, was no longer obliged to run a third consultation. However, in this instance, EWR Co. decided it was important to complete the consultation before submitting the final application.

It was perhaps correct to have provided local stakeholders with a final chance to have their say. Especially as the next phase of EWR will see the construction of a new railway and significant changes to an existing railway.

The existing railway in question is the Marston Vale Line, between Bletchley and Bedford. The line is currently served by an hourly service during weekdays operated by London Northwestern Railway, which transferred to public ownership in February 2026.

The 16-mile-long railway has modern signalling throughout and is largely two-track. Despite this, the permissible line speed is only 60mph, and capacity is limited due to the number of level crossings along most of its length.

The proposals put forward for East West Rail could see the passenger services increase to five trains per hour (tph), with additional capacity for freight. The line speed would also be increased to 75mph.

To achieve this, EWR Co. proposes the closure of a significant number of level crossings, a package of substantial upgrades and the closure of half of the existing stations.

The so-called “consolidation option” that was presented during the 2024 non-statutory consultation proposed closing five out of the nine intermediate stations. This, it was argued, would allow for the construction of larger, fully accessible stations that would have car parks and improved drop-off facilities.

Four new stations would be constructed to replace Woburn Sands, Ridgmont, Lidlington and Stewartby, which will be moved to provide the room needed for the enlarged stations. The new locations were selected to mitigate the closure of other stations, while Stewartby will be relocated to better serve the Universal United Kingdom Resort.

This option is being taken forward but has been refined somewhat since 2024. Feedback provided by local stakeholders during the consultation has been taken into account, although the plans for the new resort have perhaps impacted the proposals for EWR the most.

Plans for EWR were being developed before those for the development of a new resort close to the small village of Stewartby. The railway was therefore not initially designed to cater for large numbers of visitors and was mainly being developed to reconnect Oxford and Cambridge.

However, the plans for the resort were acknowledged during the 2024 consultation and EWR Co. has refined the proposals so that EWR is better able to accommodate the predicted significant increase in passenger demand.

The prospect of permission being granted to build the resort also had an impact on initial plans for the introduction of a new service between Oxford and Bedford by 2030.



Capacity is limited due to the number of level crossings on the line. This is Woburn Sands, where there is a proposal to replace the station with a new one.

The £240 million accelerated works package was announced in 2024 by the previous Conservative Government.

This was intended to fund an initial upgrade using existing Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) powers. The 2020 TWAO for the reopening of the line between Bicester and Bletchley included provision to close and/or replace several level crossings on the Marston Vale Line.

The accelerated works were to involve building new overbridges, allowing for the closure of Manor Road and Marston Road level crossings. In addition, several foot-crossings were to be closed and rerouted.

It was anticipated that this would provide sufficient capacity to enhance the existing service with an hourly limited-stop service between Oxford and Bedford, to be introduced by 2030.

Plans for the resort led EWR Co. and the Department for Transport (DfT) to reassess the service, as it was thought there was a risk that the new service could become overwhelmed by the expected number of passengers.

The updated plan, therefore, is to continue with some of the interventions for which powers exist but delay the introduction of new passenger services until further upgrades are completed.

The existing TWAO will allow Network Rail to progress some works, such as the replacement of the bridge which carries the railway over Saxon Street in Bletchley. This bridge is already wide enough to accommodate the second track required to re-double the section to Bow Brickhill. However, the existing bridge is in a poor condition, so it will have to be replaced. Ground investigation work took place in January ahead of the bridge replacement work.

Marston Road level crossing, to the north east of Lidlinton, will also be replaced with a new overbridge as part of the accelerated works. Network Rail is working with local authorities to develop proposals to replace other level crossings for which powers exist. These plans are being further refined to take into account planned housing developments before work begins.

Although Network Rail can progress some closures, further ones will be required, and new stations will be built before the service can be enhanced. There are currently 30 level crossings between Bletchley and Bicester that must be closed altogether, closed and replaced with an overbridge or upgraded.

Somewhat surprisingly, despite the proposed service frequency and line speed increase, not all of the level crossings will be closed. Foot crossings that will be retained will be upgraded with “miniature stop lights” to improve safety.

The remaining road crossings will likely be used by fewer motorists, as the new road bridges proposed by EWR Co, housing developers, and as part of the Universal United Kingdom Resort, should provide better alternatives.

The existing powers only allow for the closure of five of those; the remainder will be contained within the DCO application. Work on the remaining level crossings can therefore only progress once the DCO has been granted, which may not be until 2027. This means that the introduction of new services will be delayed until the early 2030s. However, the enhanced service could initially see up to four trains per hour serving Stewartby station - rather than the single additional service initially proposed as part of the accelerated works.

If the DCO is granted, Stewartby station will be replaced by a new station constructed approximately 1.6km (1 mile) to the north east of the existing station. The new station, which will have up to four 200m-long platforms, will serve the resort. The additional platforms will provide more flexibility, allowing trains to start and terminate at Stewartby. This could allow services starting from Stewartby to head to Oxford and or Cambridge, should the need arise.

The size of the new stations proposed as part of the consolidation option has changed since the publication of the 2024 consultation document. The new stations will now have 200m-long platforms capable of accommodating 5-car trains. Again, this has been driven by the expected passenger demand generated by the resort.

The decision to use longer five-car trains also means that the platforms at Winslow, which were only constructed two years ago, will have to be lengthened by 24m.

The new high-level station at Bletchley will also be heavily modified to improve connectivity and to increase passenger capacity. There has been a long-standing ambition to build an eastern entrance at Bletchley that would better connect the station to the town centre and bus station. However, this wasn't included within the original scope for the reopening of the line between Bicester and Bletchley.

The eastern entrance has since been included within the latest proposals for EWR and now forms part of a wider upgrade that will include building a new accessible overbridge. This new bridge, constructed towards the southern end of the platforms, will connect platforms one to six with platform seven (high-level platform). A new mezzanine level constructed beneath the high-level platforms will provide step-free access from the new bridge to platform eight. The new mezzanine will also connect the new accessible bridge to the eastern entrance.

Although the new eastern entrance will be included within the DCO application, it is still subject to third-party funding. This means the local authority may have to contribute towards its construction.

At the eastern end of the railway, EWR Co. proposes the relocation of Bedford St. Johns station. This will allow the track to be realigned to provide a straighter alignment leading to Bedford railway station, which in turn will allow the line speed to be increased.

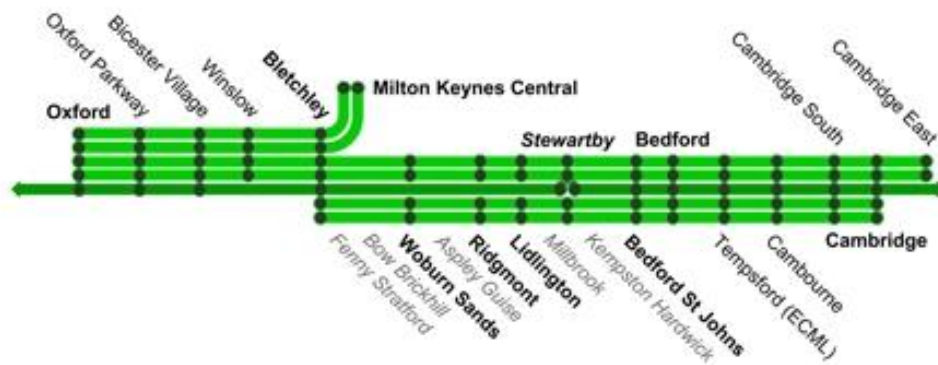
The new station will be situated closer to the hospital, necessitating the removal of a significant number of parking spaces. A new multi-storey car park is therefore proposed to mitigate the loss of the existing car park situated next to the hospital.

The updated passenger modelling hasn't significantly changed the proposals for the other new stations, except for the platform lengths. The locations of the new Woburn Sands, Ridgmont and Lidlington stations are therefore broadly in the same locations set out during the 2024 consultation.

The consolidation of nine stations into just four is perhaps the most controversial element of the upgrade, which is bound to disappoint residents who use what they see as more conveniently situated stations.

To mitigate the loss of the stations, EWR Co. is in discussions with local authorities and bus providers about how best to improve bus links. They also say that active travel links (walking, cycling, "wheeling") to the stations will be improved.

Given that the plans for EWR will effectively incorporate the Marston Vale Line into a main line, this sort of compromise was always going to be unavoidable. And it is clear that accommodating up to five 200m long trains per hour in each direction was never going to be achievable with the current number of stations and level crossings.



The proposed final EWR service pattern.

It has been confirmed that the line will be electrified as part of the overall upgrade. The current electrification strategy will see the use of discontinuous electrification. This means that only key sections will be electrified. The section within which the Marston Vale Line falls will begin at a point immediately to the west of Bletchley high-level station and extends to the proposed Tempsford station.

Although the line is relatively flat with few overbridges, electrification will still provide some challenges. Station Road level crossing in Ridgmont for example, will now have to close, whereas previously it was proposed that this would remain open. EWR Co. states that it “wouldn’t be possible to run overhead electrification over the level crossing at a safe height given how low these wires would need to be to pass under the adjacent A507 bridge”.

It seems the electrification strategy has surprised many in industry, and some have questions why the railway between Bicester and Bletchley will not be electrified. In response to this question EWR Co. says: “The decision to use discontinuous electrification on East West Rail reflects the Government’s decarbonisation ambitions, whilst also delivering affordability and ensuring the benefits of the East West Rail line can be delivered as soon as possible.

“Rather than wiring the route end-to-end regardless of cost or complexity, the project is taking a pragmatic, whole-system approach - electrifying where it delivers the greatest benefit and reducing construction risk in certain areas where utility diversions might be needed. This strategy does not preclude further electrification in the future.”

While the consolidation option and the electrification strategy may not please everyone, it seems that the current proposals reflect a mandate from within the Government to present a cost-effective proposal, which is ultimately deemed deliverable.

If the DCO is granted by mid to late 2027 and funding commitments are provided, then it is conceivable that the upgrade of the Marston Vale Line could be completed by the early to mid-2030s. This will allow services to terminate at Stewartby initially, until the upgrade of Bedford station is complete. Trains will then operate to Bedford following completion of the upgrade in the mid-2030s and before the new railway to Cambridge opens. That section is slated for completion between the mid to late 2030s.



proposal

RMT rejects East West Rail's Driver Operated Only

Bucks & MK Fire Exercise in Brickhill Woods

Bucks & MK Fire Authority undertook an exercise on 28th July. See email from the Head Forester from the Estate.

Barring emergencies, the exercise will go ahead, with most of the appliances arriving around 10.00. The Rendezvous point was the Longslade Lane car park, the one with the green barrier.

Nick Milner - Head Forester



Following the exercise a letter was received from BMKFA ...

Letter from Bucks & MK FA

Thank you for taking the time to reflect on the exercise and for providing thoughtful, detailed feedback that also recognised the professionalism, commitment and attitude of the crews and supporting teams involved, as well as the significant undertaking required to plan and deliver an exercise of this nature.

Exercises are designed to test our plans, challenge our assumptions and identify opportunities for improvement, so constructive feedback from observers is invaluable. I appreciate the time and consideration you have given to documenting your observations, particularly around communications, mapping, water supply arrangements and vehicle capabilities.

As the wildfire lead for Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service, I can assure you that the learning identified through this exercise, alongside feedback from participants, observers and partner agencies, will be captured and used to inform future planning, training and operational preparedness. Wildfire risk continues to evolve, and exercises such as this help ensure we remain focused on improving our capability, resilience and interoperability.

I was also pleased to read your comments regarding the contribution of the Bedford Estates forestry team. The value of local knowledge, land management expertise and early intervention cannot be overstated, and

we will continue to explore opportunities to strengthen collaboration with key partners who have an important role to play in preventing and responding to wildfire incidents.

Whilst no exercise can perfectly replicate the complexity of a real incident, the issues you have highlighted are exactly the types of considerations we seek to expose through exercising. Your observations will therefore form a useful contribution to our ongoing review and development work.

Thank you again for your support and engagement. As you rightly point out, the increasing frequency and severity of rural fire incidents mean we cannot be complacent. Through continued investment in learning, partnership working and preparedness, Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service remains committed to ensuring a professional and effective response to Wildfires as well as educating our communities within the rural-urban landscape to reduce the number of preventable fires from breaking out in the first instance.



Adam Moore - Station Commander West Ashland

Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters, Stocklake, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP20 1BD



Reference: 23/00352/ENF

Alleged breach: Continued change of use from agricultural field to car sales / car storage use (Sui Generis) (23/00735/COU refused) at Indus Motors Ltd, Woburn Sands Road, Bow Brickhill, Milton Keynes

Milton Keynes City Council has issued a Planning Enforcement Notice relating to Indus Motors Ltd, Woburn Sands Road, Bow Brickhill, Milton Keynes on 3rd September 2026, for the unauthorised change of use of the land from an agricultural field to vehicle sales and vehicle storage, together with associated unauthorised operational development, including a covered structure, metal container and hardstanding, as identified under refused planning application reference 23/00735/COU.

The requirements of the notice are:

1. Permanently cease the use of the land for vehicle sales and vehicle storage.
2. Permanently remove the covered structure and metal container from the site.
3. Permanently remove all vehicles stored within the area identified in the notice.
4. Permanently remove the hardstanding from the site.
5. Permanently remove from the site all materials and debris arising from carrying out the above steps.

Unless an appeal is made, the notice will take effect on 6th October 2026 and the required steps must be completed within 12 months of that date, as specified in the notice. Any appeal must therefore be received by the Secretary of State before 6th October 2026.

Planning Enforcement Team
Milton Keynes City Council

Highways and Transport Drop-In Session



The next Highways and Transport Drop-In Session will take place on Thursday 10 September, from 10:00am to 12:00 noon, at the Campbell Park Community Council Hub, Springfield Boulevard, Milton Keynes, MK6 3JS.

Open to everyone, these sessions offer a fantastic opportunity to speak directly with officers and managers from across the Highways, Parking and Transport teams.

You'll be able to:

- Discuss local projects and planned works
- Get updates on ongoing issues, schemes, and projects
- Find out about live consultations
- Ask questions about the services we provide
- Log new enquiries
- Check on the progress of longstanding concerns

We encourage you to come along, meet the team, and learn more about the work happening in your area.

The next drop-in session after this will take place at the same location on 12 November.

Cllr. David Hopkins - Danesborough – September 2026.