

Wolverton Health Centre, Wolverton

Open Space Assessment

ON BEHALF OF NHS PROPERTY SERVICES

October 2023

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Open Space Assessment has been prepared by Nexus Planning on behalf of NHS Property Services (the 'applicant') to support a pre-application submission relating to a proposal for nine residential units on land at Wolverton Health Centre, Wolverton (the 'site').
- 1.2 Milton Keynes City Council ('MKCC') have requested that applicant provides an Open Space Assessment to support a formal pre-application submission. The requirement for an Open Space Assessment is set out at [Policy L3 \(Change Of Use Of Amenity Open Space\)](#) of Plan:MK. In this regard, the Open Space Assessment must contain an audit of existing open space versus proposed open space, and should refer to relevant sections of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (the 'Framework').
- 1.3 This assessment will consider various factors, including the site's locational characteristics, local and national planning policy context, the site's credentials as open space, other existing open spaces in the vicinity before then drawing conclusions as to whether development of the site for the purpose proposed is justifiable in open space terms.
- 1.4 This Open Space Assessment deals specifically with the site's status as open space as described above and in summary, it concludes:
 - The site does not perform a vital function as amenity green space and has deficiencies against the quality standards set out within policy documents; and
 - There are alternative open spaces in close proximity to the site which perform a more important role than the site in terms of their function for different types of activities.

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The site is located in Wolverton, Milton Keynes and is under the jurisdiction of MKCC. The 0.6 ha site is bound by Gloucester Road to the east, and V5 Great Monks Street to the south. To the north the site is border by existing residential development and a footpath link to the Redway Network is to the west of the site.



Figure 1: Photo of access point from western footway.



Figure 2: Photo of access point from Health Centre.

- 2.2 The former Wolverton Health Centre site originally included a health centre building (which has since been demolished (LPA Ref 11/00345/FUL)), car parking and open space. Following the demolition of the original health centre building, the area of open space has been neglected.
- 2.3 Whilst an assessment of the site as open space is made later in this document, the photographs overleaf, taken by Nexus Planning on 7th October 2023, demonstrate that at the time of writing, the site is not well maintained, with signs of anti-social use.
- 2.4 The site and locality benefits from good transportation connectivity.
- 2.5 A Sustrans pathway runs to the west of the site referred to as WO05 (getaroundMK.org). The site is well connected to the Redway Network, with H2/Railway Walk around 400m away, which provides excellent pedestrian and cycle links to the local and city wide area.
- 2.6 A bus stop, situated around 70m away, provides convenient access to numerous locations in Milton Keynes and up to Northamptonshire, providing sustainable connections to open spaces which may be further afield.

3. Adopted Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

3.1 The most recent iteration of the Framework, was published in July 2021.

3.2 Paragraph 99 states that:

‘Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- a) **an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus requirements; or**
- b) **the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or**
- c) **the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.’**

Local Policy

3.3 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning decisions to be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

3.4 The adopted Development Plan for the area comprises the Plan:MK 2016 – 2031 which was adopted in March 2019 and the Site Allocations Plan (July 2018). The Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council also had a Neighbourhood Plan adopted in 2015 “Wolverton Town Centre Neighbourhood Development Plan 2015 – 2025”.

3.5 Referencing the local Town Council website, this document is now under review as: **‘The current plan is becoming out of date and as such Full Council met at the end of 2019 to discuss refreshing this plan. It was agreed that a new Neighbourhood Plan should be developed. The ‘new’ plan will be broader than the original plan and will encompass the rest of the parish areas to include: Hodge Lea, Stacey Bushes, Greenleys and Old Wolverton, Wolverton Mill and Wolverton.’** The new plan will cover the Neighbourhood Plan area but at the time of writing, there is little further information on the status of neighbourhood plan review.

3.6 As such, the 2019 Plan:MK holds the most weight and material consideration in the determination of the proposed development.

3.7 The Open Space policy section within the plan also lists a number of Local Policy Assessments and Strategies that have fed into Plan:MK and hold material weight. These include:

- MK Public Open Space: Management Framework for MK 2013-2023;
- Public Open Space, Leisure and Recreation;
- MK Tree Management Strategy 2017-2027; and
- Milton Keynes Green Infrastructure Strategy 2018.

3.8 The site triggers a number of policies including:

- Policy L3: Amenity Open Space;
- Policy CC3: Community Facilities – Existing;

- Policy DS1, DS2: Development Boundary - Milton Keynes City;
- Policy CT8 :Transport Corridor; and
- Policy L2: Wildlife Corridor.

3.9 The following development policies are of most relevance to the application in terms of open space for this assessment:

- [Policy L2 - Protection Of Open Space And Existing Facilities](#)

A. Planning permission will be refused for proposals involving the loss of public open space, civic space, or facilities used for leisure and recreation unless:

1. An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space or leisure and recreational facilities to be surplus to requirements(45) and the development would not have a detrimental effect on the open space, environmental, landscape character or wildlife value of the Open Space Network. Developments must not be detrimental to the delivery of the Sport and Active Communities Strategy; or
2. The development will significantly enhance the Open Space Network as a whole, particularly in areas requiring improvement, and help to achieve the Council's aims for the Open Space Network, as set out in the Open Space Strategy. In some cases, enhancements could be provided at nearby locations off site, for instance replacing an amenity on one site with one nearby on the same linear park (enhancements should still be in the same catchment areas); or
3. The loss of open space resulting from the development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location that is clearly and demonstrably acceptable to the local community or main users of the existing space; or
4. The development is for other types of sports or recreational provision or ancillary development associated with the Open Space, and the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

B. In considering proposals involving the loss of amenity open space, the council will take into account the criteria set out in Policy L3.

- [Policy L3- Change Of Use Of Amenity Open Space](#)

A. Planning permission will only be granted for the change of use of amenity open space, including the incorporation of such areas into private garden land, if:

1. The land has been subject to an assessment which shows the open space to be surplus to requirements;
2. The land does not fulfil a useful purpose in terms of its appearance, landscaping, recreational use or wildlife value;
3. The land does not host an element of semi-natural habitat useful in creating a stepping stone to another habitat or any other feature of value to wildlife to a greater extent than would be the case if it was planted as a garden. In some cases, the continued protection of the land as open, natural garden land and type of enclosure may be regulated by conditions;

4. The loss of amenity open space would not set a precedent for other similar proposals which cumulatively would have an adverse effect on the locality or the environment;
5. The continued maintenance of the land for public amenity purposes would be impractical or unduly onerous; or
6. Open space lost should be replaced by land of equivalent size or greater following an assessment justifying this need.

B. Change of use of amenity open space will be considered given the availability and accessibility of open space in the surrounding area, based on distances in Appendix C.

C. In certain cases, the loss of amenity open space may be acceptable if it is adequately compensated by proposals for improvements to the quality of green infrastructure and appearance of amenity space elsewhere in the locality or the wider open space network.

- [Policy CC3 - Protection Of Community Facilities](#)

A. Proposals that involve the loss of an existing community facility or the loss of a site allocated for such a purpose, will only be supported where:

1. There is no longer a need for the facility for any type of community use, and this has been robustly evidenced by research and consultation; or
2. An acceptable alternative facility can be provided elsewhere.

B. Where surplus education land is identified, planning permission will be granted for other uses provided it can be demonstrated that:

1. The income from the sale of the land will be reinvested to secure improvements to Milton Keynes schools or further education as appropriate; and
2. The proposed development will include the provision of facilities for the local community where there is a proven need for such provision locally and it fairly and reasonably relates to the development proposed. If required, a Community Use Agreement should be implemented.

Emerging Policy

- 3.10 Coinciding with The New City Plan 2050, Milton Keynes City Council is currently finalising the Open Space Assessment (Study Review 2021) which will review and update the findings of the Milton Keynes Open Space Assessment (2018) which informed formulation of policies in the Plan:MK. At the time of writing, there is no public access to the Study Review.

4. The Site's Open Space Credentials

- 4.1 The Open Space Assessment (2018) does not provide the results of all individual site assessments and so it is not possible to review the assessment made of the site when the document was prepared.
- 4.2 To undertake a comparable assessment of the site's quality as an open space, we have qualitatively assessed it against the categories in the Site Audit Form (Open Space Assessment Note Stage A July 2016, Appendix B). A copy of the Site Audit Form, undertaken on the October site visit can be found in **Appendix 1**.
- 4.3 The assessment is made based on a combination of a site visit (conducted in the afternoon of 07 October 2023) and utilising the functions provided by Google Maps and Street View. This software looks back over the available dates at which Street View has captured images of the site, in this case between September 2008 and April 2023.

Assessment

Accessibility & Connectivity (A Welcoming Place)

- 4.4 The location of the site is well-connected to the community and sustainable transport links.
- 4.5 However, accessibility of the site is incredibly poor and prevents use, due to:
- The overgrown nature of the site;
 - Lack of footpath or clear footway;
 - The uneven ground levels and low lying vegetation; and
 - Lack of through-visibility provides the site to be deemed as an unsafe route.
- 4.6 Due to the level of litter, it is clear that the site is used by some informal users, however it is believed that these users are not positively using the space.

Attractive & Appealing Places (Clean and Well Maintained)

- 4.7 The site is not maintained, with self-seeded and overgrown vegetation blocking access points and preventing through routes within the site.
- 4.8 The site also suffers from litter and fly tipping. There are signs of antisocial behaviour with barbeque charred grass in places.

Sustainability (Biodiversity, Heritage and Conservation)

- 4.9 There are no biodiversity, heritage or conservation listings for this site.
- 4.10 The overgrown nature of the site does provide some biodiversity benefit. A small number of birds were noted on the site visit, it is assumed that there are more species. However, due to the small size of the site, the biodiversity habitat value of is limited. In addition, the self-seeded vegetation is competing in an unsustainable environment and would require future management intervention to remove trees that are too close together.

Activity, health & well being (Healthy, Safe and Secure; Marketing – cultural role)

- 4.11 There is no play or sports equipment provided on site so there is no opportunity for either formal or informal play.

4.12 Due to the inaccessibility of the site, the value of the to the community is negligible.

Community Benefits (Healthy, Safe and Secure)

4.13 Whilst there is an element of natural surveillance from Horners Croft, views are limited by vegetation and built form setback. Due to the inaccessibility and lack of surveillance of the site, the value of the to the community is negligible. Furthermore, the level of litter is present dangers to users and wildlife.

4.14 Facilities which may enhance user comfort, usability, and overall experience are not available and this detracts from the value of the site as viable and appealing open space.

4.15 Some users may consider these amenities essential to their enjoyment of an open space, for instance the absence of toilets limits the duration of visits and may discourage usage by families with young children or the elderly. Google Street View photographs over the years show no form of engagement or use of the site as compared to other surrounding open spaces with these facilities.

4.16 Whilst not to be expected in all open spaces, the absence of cafes or refreshment facilities deprive visitors of opportunities to relax and socialise and may encourage people to use other open spaces.

4.17 The absence of seating limits the opportunity for users to rest, while the lack of well-maintained footpaths restricts the movement of individuals with mobility issues, forcing them to navigate only certain areas within the open space particularly the low lying areas on the western section of the site. These limitations make the site less inclusive and accessible.

Summary

4.18 The assessment undertaken above demonstrates that the site has significant deficiencies when considering whether it makes a successful open space. In particular, the assessment has demonstrated that:

- The site is inaccessible to most users due to overgrown vegetation, undulating levels, signs of antisocial behaviour and lack of a clear route.
- General uneven terrain could pose difficulties for individuals with mobility issues, whilst a lack of surveillance measures and low levels of lighting infrastructure lead to safety and security concerns for users of the site and adjacent neighbours as crime may be easier to hide.
- In terms of vegetation, the site is not well-maintained and is significantly overgrown and littered. It could be said that there is an opportunity to create a more engaging and enjoyable environment for visitors.
- Regarding ancillary accommodation, the absence of facilities such as toilets, cafes, seating, and well-maintained footpaths significantly detracts from the usability and comfort of the open space. If the site were to be maintained, the lack of amenities like toilets limits the duration of visits, whilst the absence of seating and accessible footpaths restricts movement and enjoyment for individuals with mobility limitations.

4.19 The findings of the analysis indicate significant deficiencies in accessibility cleanliness, security, and ancillary accommodation.

4.20 Addressing these issues may require extensive and costly modifications that are not likely to be feasible or justifiable when there are other more suitable open spaces that users may use instead.

4.21 Notably, the recreational ground off Maron Road around 100 metres to the north and offers facilities such as basketball hoops, swing set, seating area and open grass spaces, and play areas for the surrounding residents.



Figure 3: Instances of fly tipping found on site



Figure 4: Overgrown extent of vegetation prove the site to be mostly impermeable



Figure 5: Photo depicting the uneven ground which renders permeability, accessibility and safety for users

5. Open Space Provision in the Wider Area

5.1 An aerial shot of the site (Google Maps, 20230 indicates the variety of Open Space Provision in the wider area.

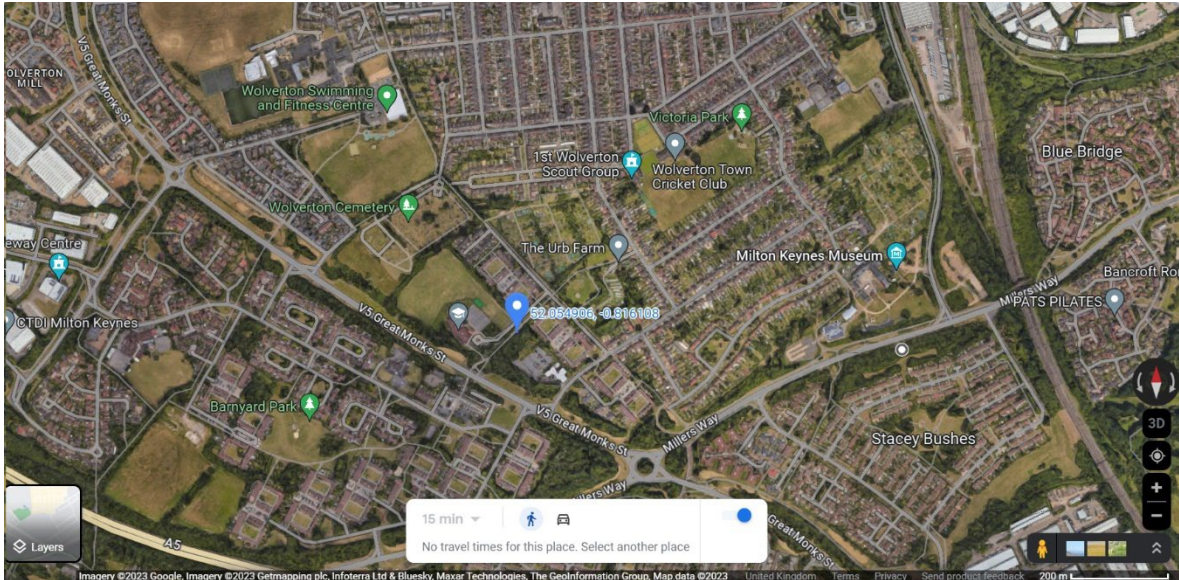


Figure 6: AERIAL PHOTO OF THE SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

5.2 With reference to the Milton Keynes Open Space Assessment 2017, the area of Wolverton and Greenleys in which the site is located benefits from the below areas of Open Space:

Wolverton and Greenleys			
Local Plan Areas Totals m2	Amenity Land Totals (Landscape) (excluding highways) m2	Highway (Landscape) m2	Amenity Land Totals m2
2204129	2204129	96739	2391213

5.3 To undertake a comparable assessment of local Open Space provision quality, we have made a qualitative assessment using the table found in Plan:MK 2016 – 2031 (Appendix C Open Space and Recreation Facility Provision)

5.4 The assessment is made based on a combination of a site visit (conducted in the afternoon of 7th October 2023) and utilising the functions provided by Google Maps and Street View. This software looks back over the available dates at which Street View has captured images of the site, in this case between September 2008 and April 2021.

Categories of Open Space/Facilities	Minimum Size	Catchment Area or Standard (the latter applicable only to playing fields)	Characteristics	Principles	Open Space Assessment Analysis Commentary
SECTION 1					
District Parks	District Parks – minimum 20ha	1200m	These are spaces that actively attract visitors from a wide catchment, typically further than 10 kilometres. They offer unique or novel experiences that extend visiting time.	<p>Normally would be part of linked network of multi-functional open space.</p> <p>Needs to include a major visitor attraction. Must have very good public transport accessibility.</p> <p>Must have adequate parking.</p>	<p>Loughton Valley Park 1.2km Ouse Valley Park (1.34 km) Stanton Low Country Park (3km) Bradwell Lake (3km)</p> <p><i>A variety of large and attractive areas of open space with a range of facilities and landscape to accommodate different needs in the local and wider community.</i></p>
Local Parks	Minimum 1-2ha	600m	Urban parks, rural parks and formal gardens, open to the general public that provide opportunities for various informal recreation and community events. A local park may include children’s play, sitting out areas, landscaped environment, community events area, kickabout area and playing fields if the park is large enough. Local Parks will vary in size, but will be expected to be a minimum of 1-2ha.	<p>Normally would be part of linked network of multi-functional open space unless local circumstances would justify a standalone local park.</p> <p>Should, where appropriate, include opportunities for some woodland, natural planting or other wildlife feature to foster biodiversity. Must be in accessible location and accessible from various locations. Must have very good public transport accessibility.</p> <p>If segregated pedestrian routes provide access to the park they must feel safe and be overlooked. Should have the fronts of housing facing at least 1 side of park.</p> <p>If includes playing fields, requires adequate provision of parking.</p> <p>Must include high quality paths on and around the edge of site.</p>	<p>Barnyard Park (500m) Western Road Recreation Ground (530m) Victoria Park (590m) Playground, Stacey Bushes (700m)</p> <p><i>A variety of play areas with a mixture of play equipment, sports posts and open field recreation.</i></p>
Pocket Parks	Up to 1ha	300-400m	Includes small areas of inviting public space	Normally would be part of linked network of multi-	Marron Lane Recreational Field (120m)

Categories of Open Space/Facilities	Minimum Size	Catchment Area or Standard (the latter applicable only to playing fields)	Characteristics	Principles	Open Space Assessment Analysis Commentary
			that has an overall coherent landscape design approach and tend to be well integrated into and have a positive relationship with the surrounding development. Provides for informal play and passive recreation. Should include seating. Can include play areas but such provision should not take up more than 50% of the park and must be of a type and scale that has been appraised against the potential noise impact on nearby residential properties.	functional open space unless local circumstances would justify a standalone pocket park. Should, where appropriate, include opportunities for some woodland, natural planting or other wildlife feature to foster biodiversity. Must be integrated into the surrounding development. Adjacent development must front onto and overlook park. Must be in highly accessible location, e.g. should be on key pedestrian route such as redway. There should be direct routes leading to pocket park that are safe and overlooked.	<i>The site offers a large expansion of open space for informal sports and leisure. In addition there are a number of covered seating opportunities, a basketball hoop area and a swing set.</i>
Amenity Open Space	Up to 1000m ²	400m	Commonly found in housing areas, they predominantly comprise grass areas. The primary purpose of these spaces is to provide opportunities for informal activities close to home or work, as well as visual amenity to help break up the built form. Can be used to incorporate on street parking.	Should be in accessible locations and integrated into the surrounding development. Should be overlooked by the fronts of housing. To soften the visual impact of on street parking it should, when appropriate, allow opportunities for unallocated visitor parking around the edges of amenity open space.	Marron Lane Recreational Field with play and seating equipment (120m) Western Road Recreation Ground (530m) <i>Although the area lacks formal sports provisions the area is well serviced by large mown field areas for informal sports play and leisure.</i>
Local Play Areas (LPAs)	0.04ha (excluding 20m separation buffer between activity zone and residential properties)	300m	Includes equipped play areas predominantly for those under the age of 8 years, close to their homes. This provides opportunities for play, physical activity and social interaction.	Co-location of the LPAs with linear, district, local or pocket parks is preferable. Unless the co-location is not possible (mostly when parkland is outside the LPAs catchment area) then LPAs could be provided as standalone areas within the development. Activity zone to be at least 20m from residential property	Marron Lane Recreational Field with play and seating equipment (120m) Western Road Recreation Ground (530m) <i>Options for informal play and formal play (sports posts and play equipment) are available within the local area.</i>

Categories of Open Space/Facilities	Minimum Size	Catchment Area or Standard (the latter applicable only to playing fields)	Characteristics	Principles	Open Space Assessment Analysis Commentary
				<p>boundaries and 30m from roads. Must be easily accessible on key pedestrian routes/redways. There should be direct pedestrian routes/redways leading to play areas that are safe and overlooked.</p> <p>To be overlooked by the fronts of housing. Mainly for children up to age 8.</p> <p>For unsupervised play close to home. Approximately 5 items of play equipment and small games area. These quantities will need to be greater in areas of higher density family housing.</p>	
Neighbourhood Play Areas (NPAs)	0.3ha (excluding 30m separation buffer between activity zone and residential properties)	600m	Includes equipped play areas, ball courts, skateboard areas and teenage shelters with the primary purpose of providing opportunities for play, physical activity and social interaction involving both children and young people. Can include multi-use game areas (MUGAs). MUGAs are totally enclosed games areas which provide facilities for a range of sports, normally 5-a-side football, basketball, netball etc. MUGAs are available for free public use all year round.	Co-location of the NPAs with linear, district, local or pocket parks is preferable. Unless the co-location is not possible (due to parkland being outside the NPAs catchment area) then NPAs could be provided as standalone areas within the development. Active zone to be at least 40m from residential property boundaries and 30m from main roads or other potential hazards; if noisy sports facilities e.g. wheeled sports, are included an assessment of the potential noise impact upon residential properties or other sensitive land uses must be undertaken and a sufficient buffer distance be allowed for and/or noise mitigation measures be incorporated. Must be easily accessible on key	<p>Marron Lane Recreational Field with play and seating equipment (120m)</p> <p>Western Road Recreation Ground (530m)</p> <p><i>Options for informal play and formal play (sports posts and play equipment) are available within the local area. Teenage seating is available at Marron Lane.</i></p> <p><i>The extent of formal play is limited with the area lacking MUGAs and enclosed sport pitches.</i></p>

Categories of Open Space/Facilities	Minimum Size	Catchment Area or Standard (the latter applicable only to playing fields)	Characteristics	Principles	Open Space Assessment Analysis Commentary
				<p>pedestrian routes/redways. There should be direct routes leading to play area that are safe and overlooked. For all children, but emphasis on 8+.</p> <p>For unsupervised play. Approximately 8 items of play equipment and ball games areas, goal wall, cycle area, larger more adventurous equipment.</p> <p>These quantities will need to be greater in areas of higher density family housing.</p>	
<p>Playing fields and Outdoor Sports Facilities</p> <p>(Does not include school playing fields as these are not publicly accessible).</p>	N/A	<p>As per provision standards included in most recent Playing Pitch Strategy. The required standard for the quantity of provision for playing field area is 0.52 ha per 1000. (Playing pitch strategy, 2015)</p>	<p>Is a wide ranging category of open space, which includes both natural and artificial surfaces for sport and recreation that are either publicly or privately owned, but are publicly accessible. They include playing pitches, athletics tracks, bowling greens and golf courses with the primary purpose of participation in outdoor sports.</p>	<p>Co-location of playing fields with linear, district or local parks is preferable. Must include adequate provision of parking</p> <p>If publicly accessible should have accessible network of pedestrian routes around and across site. Fencing around playing pitches may be considered for the development of the standard of play for the local sports clubs in order to meet the National Governing Bodies of Sport current guidelines and ensure a safe environment for the activity /sport. However, prior to erection informal consultation will be sought with the local communities and must adhere to planning regulations. New playing pitches must meet Sport England standards for formal participation of training and matches.</p>	<p>Wolverton Town Cricket Club (400m)</p> <p>Western Road Recreation Ground (530m)</p> <p>Marron Lane Recreational Field (120m)</p> <p><i>Options for informal play and formal play (sports posts and play equipment) are available within the local area. The extent of formal play is limited with the area lacking MUGAs and enclosed sport pitches.</i></p>

Categories of Open Space/Facilities	Minimum Size	Catchment Area or Standard (the latter applicable only to playing fields)	Characteristics	Principles	Open Space Assessment Analysis Commentary
Allotments and Community Growing Areas	In areas of high demand based on current allotment waiting lists	700-1000m	Allotments and Community Growing Areas.	Normally would be part of linked network of multi-functional open space unless local circumstances would justify a standalone allotment. Must include adequate amount of parking.	Hodge Furze Allotments (160m) The Urb Farm (250m) Wolverton Community Orchard (within 400m) Stacey Hill Allotments (0.7miles) <i>There is a healthy selection of community growing and allotments in the area which benefit the whole community.</i>
Sports Facilities	As per provision and quality standards included in most recent Sports and Active Communities Strategy				
SECTION 2					
Linear Parks	N/A	3,200m	Key structural component of MK, usually but not always following the water bodies and flood plains across the city, they have an important green infrastructure role: mitigating flood events; preserving archaeology; as pedestrian and cycle corridors; ecological corridors for wildlife; and space for informal outdoor recreation. The character of the linear parks changes across the city, more formal in urban areas and more rural on the periphery. They are often multi-functional and incorporate other types of open space such as playing fields, play areas, paddocks and allotments.	Only required where an urban extension incorporates a significant watercourse. Will be characterised by a linked network of multi-functional open space that includes many other typologies of open space. Must have very good public transport accessibility Key green. infrastructure role: mitigating flood events, wildlife corridors, preserving archaeology, pedestrian and cycle corridors. Must have adequate parking.	Loughton Valley Park 1.2km Ouse Valley Park (1.34 km) Stanton Low Country Park (3km) Bradwell Lake (3km) <i>Milton Keynes green network of Valley and Country parks is boastful and well located to the site.</i>
Green Access Links	Depends on existing	N/A	Provide green corridors along certain transport routes and	Most appropriate to associate with and follow historic rights of way and /	V5 Great Monks Street

Categories of Open Space/Facilities	Minimum Size	Catchment Area or Standard (the latter applicable only to playing fields)	Characteristics	Principles	Open Space Assessment Analysis Commentary
	site features		public rights of way (footpaths, redways, roads other than grid roads) as well as historic hedgerows. They may support a range of habitats important for nature conservation and / or provision for walking, running and cycling.	or hedgerows to be retained in new development. Should be fairly considerable in length and provide direct access to reach key facilities within a development. Should be made to be as accessible as possible from the wider area.	a footpath link to the Redway Network is to the west of the site <i>The site is highly connected to the green network.</i>
Areas of Wildlife interest - Natural and semi natural	Depends on existing site features	N/A	Space includes woodlands, copses of trees, scrubland, grasslands (e.g. meadows and non-amenity grassland), wetlands and river corridors, ponds, lakes, nature reserves and brown field land with a primary purpose of wildlife conservation and biodiversity. They also perform visual amenity functions and depending on size can provide an important recreation function. They can include formal and/or informal pedestrian routes.	Existing wildlife sites should be used to structure a development such that wildlife site is well integrated into the development and provides visual amenity. In this regard development should front onto wildlife sites. If appropriate, footpaths should be included through the site especially if they form part of or help create direct pedestrian routes linking wider destinations.	Semi-natural transport buffer along V5 Great Monks Street provide habitats Abbey Field Wildlife Conservation Area (2km) Stony Stratford Nature Reserve (2.5km) Linford Lakes Nature Reserve (4km) <i>The site is not designated for wildlife, however the transport buffer adjacent to the site would allow for easy translocation. In addition, there are numerous maintain wildlife areas within the local area.</i>

5.5 In order to undertake a comparable assessment of local Open Space provision quality, we have made a qualitative assessment using the table found in Plan:MK 2016. In terms of the site itself and other open space opportunities nearby, Marron Lane Recreational Field (located 120m north), Western Road Recreation Ground (located 530m west) and Victoria Park (located 590m north) are considered more than adequate in meeting the day-to-day recreational needs of the local community in terms of amenity green space and grassland. In addition, these locations also offer opportunities for formal and informal play, including play areas, and basketball. It also benefits from a broader network of made footpaths with associated seating opportunities and rubbish bins. Therefore these local sites represents a more attractive proposition for residents than that provided by the site.

Summary

- 5.6 The open space at the application site is solely overgrown and mostly inaccessible amenity grassland, with no features of formal open space and with generally very limited qualitative value.
- 5.7 There are other, more useable open spaces close to the site, in the form Marron Lane Recreational Field (located 120m north), Western Road Recreation Ground (located 530m west) and Victoria Park (located 590m north). These provisions boast facilities that the site does not and are more suitable for a wider range of activities often associated with the use of open space.
- 5.8 Further amenity green space is located close to the site and throughout Wolverton and wider Milton Keynes, with many sites of this type remaining available for use by those specifically seeking to visit areas similar in nature to the site.

6. Assessment and Conclusions

- 6.1 This Open Space Assessment supports a pre-application request for a residential development comprising nine units. The requirement for an Open Space Assessment is set out at [Policy L3 \(Change Of Use Of Amenity Open Space\)](#) and [Policy L2 \(Protection Of Open Space And Existing Facilities\)](#) of Plan:MK. The assessment demonstrates compliance with part A.1 and part B of [Policy L3](#). Compliance with [Part B](#) demonstrates acceptability, given the availability and accessibility of open space in the surrounding area, based on the distances outlined in [Appendix C of Plan:MK](#).
- 6.2 It seeks to provide a robust assessment of the site's status as open space, and to form a view as to whether it can be 'lost' to provide much needed residential development. The undertaking of this assessment directly meets the requirements set out in [Policy L2 \(Part A-1\)](#).
- 6.3 The MKCC Open Space Assessment 2017 reports a nourished supply of amenity green space and open space provisions in the local area of the site. The loss of the site would not harm the total value and quantity of the MKCC provision and therefore, meets the requirements set out in [Policy L3 \(Part A-1\)](#) to justify a change of use.
- 6.4 When coupled with the mixed assessment of the site's qualities, including the inaccessibility, overgrown vegetation, signs of antisocial behaviour and limited ancillary facilities and the presence of more appropriate facilities in terms of the Marron Lane Recreational Field, Western Road Recreation Ground, and Victoria Park it is considered that the site does not play an important role in the provision of open space in this part of Wolverton and Milton Keynes. Thus, aligning with requirements of both [Policy L3 \(Part A-2\)](#) and [Policy CC3 \(Part A-2\)](#).
- 6.5 Satisfying [Policy L3 \(Part A-2\)](#), it is clear that the site does not perform well against the requirements for an open space to have a clear and intended use.
- 6.6 open space assessment demonstrates compliance with part A.1 and part B of [Policy L3](#). Part B being acceptable given the availability and accessibility of open space in the surrounding area, based on the distances outlined in [Appendix C of Plan:MK](#).
- 6.7 Therefore in accordance with Local Plan [Policy L2 \(Protection Of Open Space And Existing Facilities\)](#) , [Policy L3 \(Change Of Use Of Amenity Open Space\)](#) and [Paragraph 99](#) of the Framework, it has been demonstrated that the site is surplus to its current open space function and the City wide standards set out in policy are maintained. The site is not capable of fulfilling other unsatisfied open space needs due to its size and topography.
- 6.8 Furthermore, when balanced against the requirement for additional homes, the Open Space Assessment concludes that there is adequate provision of sufficient quality open space in close proximity to the site to allow it to be released for development.

Appendix 1: Site Audit Form - Open Space Assessment Note Stage A July 2016, Appendix B)

Area of Assessment	Score (5 (high) – 1 (low))	Site Observations / Comments
Accessibility & Connectivity (A Welcoming Place)		
well located close to a community	5	Situated along a footpath, the site also borders a primary school to the west and a health centre to the east
meets requirements of users with mobility difficulties or visual impairment	1	The extent of overgrown shrubs and unmanaged trees makes the site unnavigable in most places. In addition, the ground is dangerously uneven and unsuitable for most users
provides surfaced high quality paths	1	There are no pathways
connects with other transport modes	5	Situated along a footpath which links to the Redway Network and a bus stop along V5.
allows easy movement in and between places	1	Easy access can be achieved along the bordering footpaths but the site does not provide any easy and clear route through
accessible entrances in the right places	1	Access points are over grown and at times illegible
Attractive & Appealing Places (Clean and Well Maintained)		
attractive with a positive image	1	With illegible access points the area doesn't reflect it's role as public open space. The overgrown nature of the site with cases of fly tipping is not attractive for users or passers-by. Signs of inappropriate use and social disorder.
quality materials, equipment and furniture	1	The site holds no such features
attractive plants and landscape elements	1	Planting is now semi-wild and overgrown
well-defined boundaries and welcoming entrance areas	1	Overgrown and illegible access points
spaces and facilities in clean, safe and usable condition	1	Overgrown planting dangerous for users and cases of fly tipping, litter and bbq/fires. Signs of inappropriate use and social disorder.
low levels of litter and adequate provision of bins	1	cases of fly tipping and litter. No provision of bins
low levels of dog fouling	3	Overgrown grass proved hard to identify any dog fouling if present. Nature of site likely unattractive for dog walkers to allow dogs access.
Sustainability (Biodiversity, Heritage and Conservation)		
contributes positively to biodiversity	3	Overgrown nature provides habitat for wildlife
habitats large enough to sustain wildlife populations	1	Self-seeded trees are in too close of a proximity to one another for sustainable long-term growth
offers a diversity of habitats	3	Tree, shrub and long grass habitats

connects with wider green networks	3	Proximity to wider green network remains
contributes to coherent and resilient ecological network able to provide a range of ecosystem services e.g. storing carbon or flood mitigation	1	Unmanaged nature does not utilise area efficiently.
part of the wider landscape structure/ setting	3	Proximity to wider green network remains
contributes positively to townscape role	1	With illegible access points the area doesn't reflect it's role as public open space. The overgrown nature of the site with cases of fly tipping is not attractive for users or passers-by. Signs of inappropriate use and social disorder.
heritage assets	N/A	No value noted
Activity, health & well being (Healthy, Safe and Secure; Marketing – cultural role)		
provides places for a range of outdoor activities	1	Walking through is difficult
diverse play, sport and recreational opportunities	N/A	
providing places for social interaction	1	Lack of attractiveness and accessibility suggests the area is avoided for positive social use.
adaptable to changing needs and uses	1	Destruction and relandscaping would be required.
Community Benefits (Healthy, Safe and Secure)		
safe and welcoming with no evidence of antisocial behaviour	1	Signs of inappropriate use and social disorder.
community involvement in management	1	No signs of any management
good level of natural surveillance	1	Site too dense. Some overlooking housing to the North but little surveillance possible,
appropriate lighting levels	n/a	
good routes to wider community facilities	5	Proximity to wider Sustrans network and facilities remain
distinctive and memorable places	1	Little value given

Nexus Planning

One Express, 1
George Leigh St,
Ancoats,
Manchester
M4 5DL

T 0161 819 2277

nexuplanning.co.uk