

WEST BLETCHLEY COUNCIL

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

February 2024

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Section 1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Strategy

Green Infrastructure is a network of multi-functional green space and other green features, which deliver quality of life benefits for people and environmental benefits enhancing habitats and biodiversity. Achieving good connectivity across an area for people and wildlife is a key element of Green Infrastructure.

Green infrastructure also provides social and economic benefits, including:

- creating places that can be a focus for community activity and events;
- providing opportunities to keep fit and healthy;
- helping support the local economy;
- creating links to countryside and recreational facilities, helping people access facilities sustainably; and
- helping reduce our reliance on cars.

Importantly, Green Infrastructure is a resource- it can be protected, nurtured and developed. Its role can be enhanced and so add to the richness of the environment, and its value and enjoyment. Green Infrastructure can make an important contribution to tackling climate change, and addressing species reduction. As a critical resource, opportunities need to be identified to develop it further and to manage the resource in ways that ensure its contribution can be optimised.

Green Infrastructure can embrace a range of spaces and features that provide environmental and wider benefits. It can, for example, include parks, playing fields, other areas of open space such as greens and verges, woodlands, allotments, private gardens, green roofs and walls, street trees, hedgerows and the ‘blue infrastructure’ of swales, streams, ponds, canals and other water bodies.

The purpose of this Green Infrastructure Strategy is to set out projects and proposals to enhance the green spaces in the parish and so create a network of dynamic attractive spaces, which benefit both people and wildlife. Not all of the Green Infrastructure within West Bletchley falls under the responsibility of the parish council. Where responsibility does not lie with WBC then it is recommended that WBC work in partnership with the owners to secure the changes that are required.

Perhaps unlike other land use proposals, such as built development where people often feel threatened by change and negative impacts, there is a direct positive relationship between people and outcomes across the community from Green Infrastructure. Residents and businesses can become involved in greening their own gardens and workplaces, they can take on the management of green space and are users of parks and green routes. In this way an understanding and a positive commitment to the environment can result.

1.2 Background

West Bletchley Council (WBC) commissioned Andrew Hiorns Limited (AHL) to produce this Green Infrastructure Strategy for the parish. The strategy assesses the existing Green Infrastructure provision across the parish as a whole and in each of the individual character areas, identifying how to enhance Green Infrastructure for the benefit of both people and wildlife.

The brief for the strategy requested that the document focussed on delivering Green Infrastructure improvements through projects and proposals. So, we have not generally repeated information that is available elsewhere and particularly in two previous documents produced for WBC -the **West Bletchley Character Assessment – December 2017** (AHL) and the **West Bletchley Biodiversity/Habitat Survey - March 2021** (AHL). The analysis and information from these previous strategies has been used to inform the Green Infrastructure Strategy and should be read alongside this Strategy.

1.3 The Document

The document is presented in seven main sections, as follows:

Section 1. Introduction - outlines the purpose of the document.

Section 2. Review – considers the existing Green Infrastructure in West Bletchley and identifies the key issues and opportunities.

Section 3. The Vision – defines what the strategy hopes to achieve and the Key Objectives for Green Infrastructure in the parish.

Section 4. The Strategy, Themes and Projects – sets out the strategy and resulting themes, projects and activities to achieve the Green Infrastructure objectives.

Section 5. Projects by Character Area – reviews the 17 Character areas in the parish and their key needs and opportunities for Green Infrastructure enhancement.

Section 6. Implementation Approach and Programme – sets out an initial programme to implement the strategy.

1.4 West Bletchley in Context

Location and Landscape Character

West Bletchley is located on the south-western edge of Milton Keynes, approximately 55 miles north of London.



Figure 1.1: Location Plan

The topography of West Bletchley is shown in Figure 1.2. The parish lies on a gentle ridge, sloping from higher ground in the west to lower ground in the east. The landscape character is that of a lowland clay plateau divided by shallow river valleys.

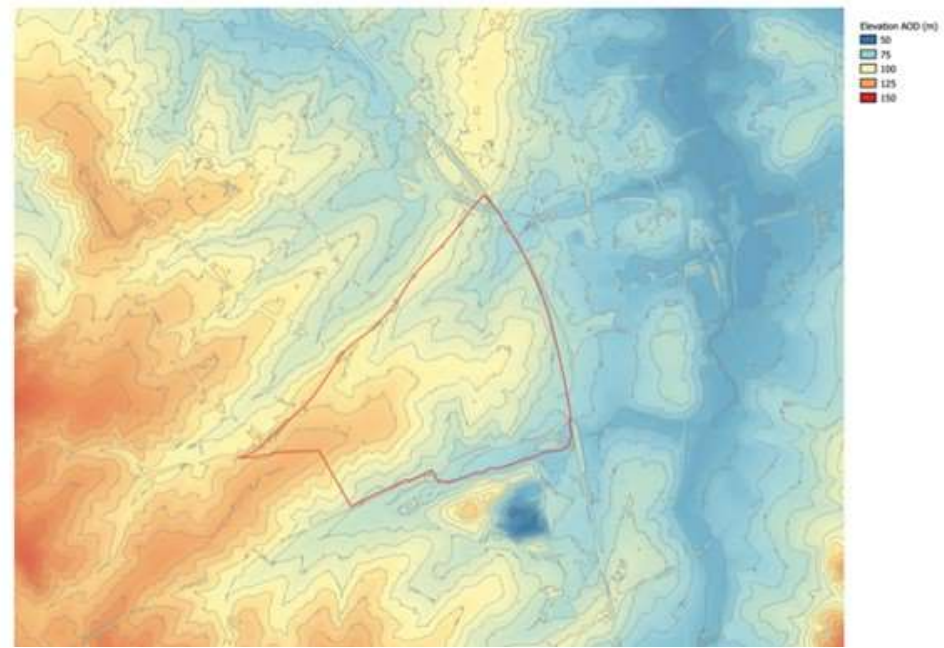


Figure 1.2 Topography of West Bletchley

The ridge forms the watershed between land draining to the river valleys of the Ouse and Ouzel. The land on the northern side of the parish drains to Loughton Brook feeding into the Ouse, and land on the southern side of the parish drains to Water Eaton Brook feeding into the Ouzel. The Ouzel joins the Ouse at Newport Pagnell. The Ouse then proceeds north-east and flows into The Wash and out to the North Sea.

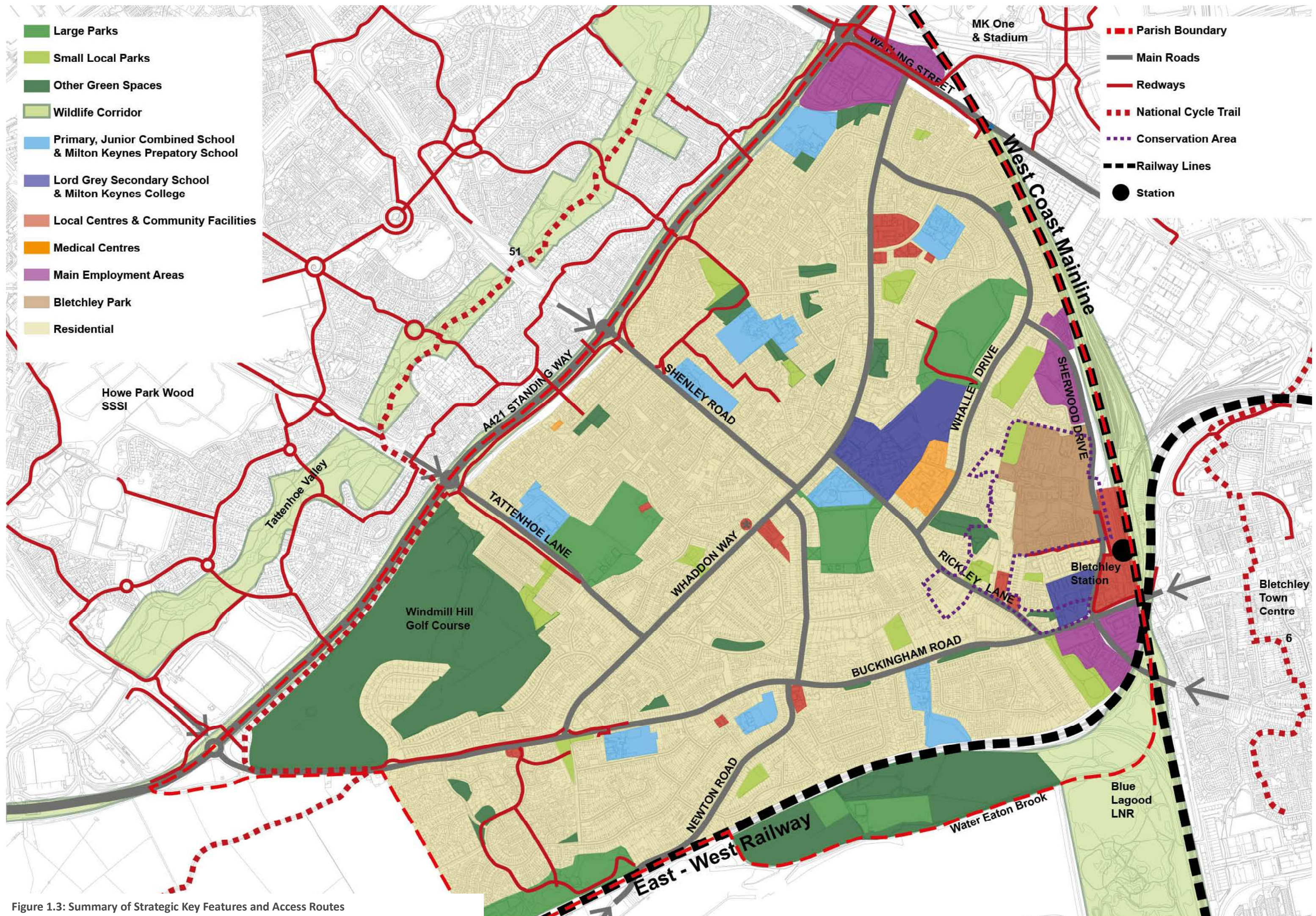


Figure 1.3: Summary of Strategic Key Features and Access Routes

Some Recent History

The village of West Bletchley expanded significantly in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries because of its good accessibility at the junction of east-west and north-south railway lines. This expansion included large-scale industrial brickmaking particularly on the southern edge of the parish.

In 1883 Sir Herbert Leon, purchased the Bletchley Park estate in the east of the parish. He expanded the existing farmhouse into a large country mansion with large gardens, parkland and a cricket pitch. He donated considerable amounts of land to the parish for public and educational uses and represented the constituency as a Liberal MP. After his death, Lady Leon became a Bletchley Urban District Councillor promoting the expansion of the town so that even before the First World War new social housing was being built. In 1938, the mansion and 38 acres of land immediately adjacent to Bletchley Station with direct links to London, Oxford and Cambridge was sold to Admiral Sir Hugh Sinclair, head of the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6).

The following year Bletchley Park was established as the top-secret Government Code and Cypher School. The house, gardens and cricket pitch were retained but the remainder of the estate was developed to support the intelligence work, predominantly with rapidly constructed wooden huts. In recent years, we have learnt the extent to which the code-breaking carried out at the Park had a significant impact on the successful outcome of the war.

Before the war ended Bletchley was recognised as an ideal location to re-house parts of overcrowded and war damaged London. The character of the settlement of West Bletchley largely reflects various phases of planned development mostly between the 1930s and the 1970s.

In 1967, West Bletchley was included within the area defined as Milton Keynes New Town. The parish today sits within a distinct triangular area bounded by rail lines on its east and southern boundaries and the A421 H8 grid road along its third northern boundary. These strong road and rail boundaries restrict lateral movement reducing connectivity to Bletchley Town and the rest of Milton Keynes in the context of the surrounding Green Infrastructure network, which includes large tracts of land such as the Greensand Ridge and the Ouse and Ouzel River Valleys.

The key land uses and strategic features are shown in Figure 1.3. The plan illustrates that the predominant land use is residential and that the boundary roads and rail lines limit access on foot, bike or vehicle in and out of the parish to a few locations.

1 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment>

Green Infrastructure Policy Context

National

National planning policy recognises the value of Green Infrastructure as a concept of a network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity. The National Planning Policy Framework promotes Green Infrastructure and identifies the benefits that are associated with it, stating that:

“Green infrastructure is a natural capital asset that provides multiple benefits, at a range of scales. For communities, these benefits can include enhanced wellbeing, outdoor recreation and access, enhanced biodiversity and landscapes, food and energy production, urban cooling, and the management of flood risk. These benefits are also known as ecosystem services.” Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 8-005-20190721 Revision date: 21 07 2019

Within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Green Infrastructure is identified within the key Strategic Policies. Policies within the Framework, which are appropriate to West Bletchley are included in **Appendix A**.

Local

Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environmental Partnership (NEP) has brought together a range of individuals, businesses and organisations and produced a “Vision and Principles for the Improvement of Green Infrastructure in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes” (2016).

Milton Keynes Council have produced a “Milton Keynes Green Infrastructure Strategy March 2018” which ties in with adjacent strategies developed for Aylesbury Vale, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire. The strategy includes a plan **Strategic Green Infrastructure Priorities Figure 1.4** that shows Milton Keynes in the context of the surrounding Green Infrastructure network, which includes large tracts of land such as the Greensand Ridge and the Ouse and Ouzel River Valleys.

The urban area of Milton Keynes is identified as having elements that contribute to the Green Infrastructure network and also green corridors along all the grid roads. West Bletchley is evident for its lack of Green Infrastructure. The eastern part of the parish is identified as an area for “Targeted urban greening”. We have not been able to find any explanation in the MK Strategy as to what this means or how it will be achieved.

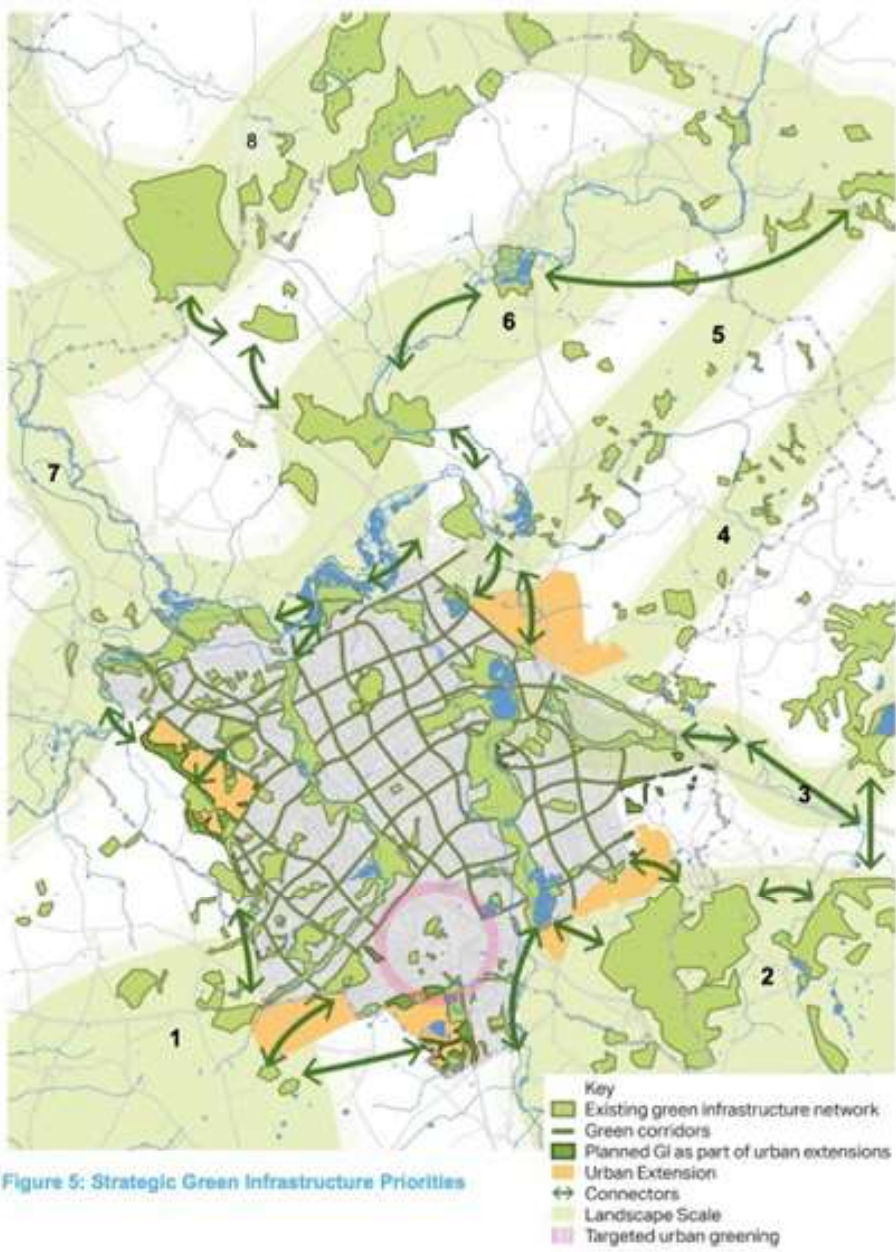


Figure 1.4 Milton Keynes Council - Strategic Green Infrastructure Priorities

Plan: MK 2016-2031 the Local Plan for the area does not include any specific policies or commitments to improving the Green Infrastructure provision in West Bletchley. **Policy NE4 Green Infrastructure** is included as **Appendix B**.