

## THE CONTEXT FOR POLICY FOR THE ACQUISITION, DISPOSAL OR DEVELOPMENT OF LAND

APPROVED BY THE BOARD: 25 March 2010

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- 1 The primary object of The Parks Trust is to provide, maintain and equip parks, gardens, landscaped areas, woodlands, open spaces, playing fields, playgrounds and recreational amenity spaces within the Borough of Milton Keynes and the environs, for the benefit of the inhabitants and visitors to the area. This land is referred to as the Green Estate.
- 2 The secondary objects of the Trust are to advance public education in the area of benefit, with particular regard to horticulture, arboriculture, wild plants and wildlife and to provide or assist in the provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation, in the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the conditions of life for the inhabitants and visitors to the area.
- 3 The Parks Trust is a self-financing independent charity. It receives no annual grants or funding from central or local government and funds most of its work through earnings from its Green Estate and income generated from its commercial property and other investments.
- 4 The Trust's Green Estate comprises around 4,500 acres of parks, meadows, river valleys, woodlands, lakes and the landscaped corridors along which run the main grid roads – about 20 percent of the new city area.
- 5 For more information about the Trust and its land and its way of working please see the sections 'about The Parks Trust' and 'frequently asked questions' on the Trust's website [www.theparkstrust.com](http://www.theparkstrust.com).
- 6 Most of the Trust's Green Estate is held under a 999 year lease from Milton Keynes Council and was handed to the Trust by Milton Keynes Development Corporation with an endowment of around £20m in 1992. The endowment was mainly in the form of commercial property in Milton Keynes.
- 7 The Trust is committed to maintaining its Green Estate to a high standard and to continually improve its quality. Many of the parks were built with the intention that facilities such as toilets, cafes and play areas would be introduced at a later date and over time the Trust is ambitious to provide such facilities and services. The Trust also aims, over time, to increase the total area of Green Estate.
- 8 The Trust has a responsibility to ensure it is financially sustainable in the long term and therefore it has a financial strategy with two main aims:
  - generating regular and sustainable annual income in sufficient quantities to fund all the work it wants to do to maintain and enhance the Green Estate, and
  - building an asset base of sufficient size to mean that it can, in time, invest it in low risk investments to reduce its exposure to any future economic downturns
- 9 It was always envisaged by the Development Corporation, that Milton Keynes would continue to grow and that the Green Estate would need to change and at times be reconfigured as the City evolved. A key part of the planning right from the start, was to build in flexibility and make the City 'future proof' as far as it was possible to do so. The Trust considers that it has a responsibility to respond to changing circumstances of different generations and civic and national priorities and to help the city develop and grow.

## POLICY CONCERNING THE ACQUISITION, DISPOSAL OR DEVELOPMENT OF LAND

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- 1 The Trust will keep its Green Estate under review and from time to time it will:
    - a. consider whether there are any areas that may be of relatively low value as open space that might be considered for disposal or development.
    - b. consider sites where development might enhance the overall attraction of that area of park and
    - c. consider land that it might acquire in order to provide more greenspace within the Borough of Milton Keynes and the environs thereof.
  
  - 2 Where the Trust has chosen to consider the disposal, development or acquisition of land, the need for it to achieve long-term financial sustainability will be one factor but not the overriding factor in its decision making process. The Trust will take into account the social and ecological value of the land in question, including the age of the existing use of the land and its degree of uniqueness or scarcity. The Trust will consider the land's statutory designation (if any such as SSSI), the views of the local authority and what might be determined through the local democratic processes.
  
  - 3 The Trust will use the following factors to assess any land to be considered for acquisition, disposal or development:
    - its use for informal leisure eg walking, quiet contemplation
    - its importance for the continuity and coherence of the park network
    - its productivity eg hay crop/grazing, cricket bat willows
    - the biodiversity of the site
    - its use for recreation, sport and formal leisure use
    - the quality and visual attractiveness of the landscape
    - any income the site may generate for the Trust
    - its historical or other cultural significance
    - whether it has any specific functional use eg flood control/water management or noise attenuation
    - the sensitivity of the site to any change of use eg its proximity to residences or its prominence.
  
  - 4 Where development is proposed within the highway corridor, the Trust will not normally dispose of Green Estate land if the proposal eliminates current flexibility to provide either a dual carriageway or a separate public transport route in the future. The Trust may support development at some 'points of connection' - those places on the grid road corridors where a redway (and sometimes a local road) pass under or over the grid road, connecting the two communities on either side of the grid road and where people connect to the public transport network.
  
  - 5 Any decision to dispose, develop or acquire land will be subject to the approval of the Trust's Board and must comply with the requirements of the Charity Commission, which include that of the Board taking professional advice and being satisfied that the terms proposed are the best that can reasonably be obtained.
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