

# North Crawley Neighbourhood Plan 2021-2036

**EVIDENCE BASE DOCUMENT:**

## **BRIEFING PAPER ON THE FUTURE HOUSING REQUIREMENT FOR NORTH CRAWLEY**

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**THE FUTURE  
OF NORTH  
CRAWLEY  
PARISH**

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Briefing Paper has been prepared to support the North Crawley Neighbourhood Plan. It seeks to justify a proposed level of growth of 30 to 35 dwellings (10% of the existing housing stock), over the 15 year period of the plan. The plan covers the entirety of North Crawley Parish; for the purposes of this report though the terms ‘village’ and ‘parish’ are used interchangeably.
- 1.2. In 2011 census data the parish is split into three separate output areas within the wider ‘Sherington’ output area. All information referred to in this paper is cumulative across all these output areas (which have the reference numbers E00084774, E00084775, and E00084776). Where relevant this census data is supplemented with results of a questionnaire undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan steering group in July 2017. The questionnaire is more up to date than but not as comprehensive as the census, with recorded results from 237 households as opposed to 317 in the census. However, both are considered to represent valid data sources for the purpose of this Briefing Paper. The shortfall in households represented by questionnaire data is explained by virtue of the fact that the census is a compulsory exercise.
- 1.3. The Briefing Paper is intended as a generalised summary of the factors affecting housing need in North Crawley, rather than a precise calculation or an equivalent to the ‘objectively assessed need’ approach that informs Local Plans.
- 1.4. The NPPF Paragraph 66 explains that “strategic policies should ... set out a housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas which reflects the overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development and any relevant allocations. Once the strategic policies have been adopted, these figures should not need re-testing at the neighbourhood plan examination, unless there has been a significant change in circumstances that affects the requirement.”
- 1.5. In Plan:MK, Policy DS1 states that “development will occur within villages and other rural settlements at locations identified in made neighbourhood plans. Milton Keynes Planning requires Neighbourhood Plans in villages and rural areas to allocate at least 1 new dwelling, other than this there is no specific housing requirement specified for these areas.
- 1.6. NPPF paragraph 67 makes clear that “the local planning authority should provide an indicative figure, if requested to do so by the neighbourhood planning body. This figure should take into account factors such as the latest evidence of local housing need, the population of the neighbourhood area and the most recently available planning strategy of the local planning authority.
- 1.7. Milton Keynes Planning Officers have agreed that it is appropriate for North Crawley to allocate more than the required number of new homes, based on employment trends and market signals, identified in the Milton Keynes Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2016 – 2031.
- 1.8. Therefore, in fundamental terms, the allocation of any quantum of housing in North Crawley is appropriate and consistent with existing policy. This matter is explored in the accompanying basic conditions statement submitted with the plan.
- 1.9. The remainder of this paper focuses on the rationale for selecting the particular level of growth in the plan (30 to 35 dwellings).

## 2. Housing Market Area

- 2.1. North Crawley is a small village that has no geographical or socioeconomic characteristics that indicate it should be treated as its own housing market area.
- 2.2. Like many villages in the rural area of Milton Keynes, its attractiveness is mostly due to its rural environment combined with its connectivity with Central Milton Keynes, the M1, and Cranfield all within easy reach. The village has a school, shop, two pubs, and sports associations with facilities that realistically all enhance the likelihood of a prospective purchaser wanting to move to the area or an existing resident looking to remain. However, none of these factors exert a quantifiable influence over housing need above that found elsewhere in the rural area of Milton Keynes.
- 2.3. The future housing needs of the village are therefore more appropriately considered through the use of the demographic and economic information considered below.

## 3. Household projections

- 3.1. The household projections published by the Department of Communities and Local Government indicate that households across the Milton Keynes area as a whole will increase from 110,000 in 2018 to 131,000 in 2033. This represents a 19% increase.
- 3.2. Projections naturally lose accuracy when disaggregated to smaller output areas. However, if North Crawley was broadly consistent with the rest of Milton Keynes, the existing 317 households in the village would be expected to increase by 60 across the Neighbourhood Plan period.
- 3.3. The neighbourhood plan allocates a level of housing (30 - 35 dwellings) that is around half of this for several reasons:

## 4. Local Supply

- 4.1. Household formation within the parish is less likely to occur in a “self-contained” fashion because individuals that live in the village (e.g. with parents) that wish to establish their own household are just as able to do so locally in another parish as they are within the village itself. This effect is a natural result of projecting household formation at a micro scale but is nevertheless supported by specific local circumstances. For example, Newport Pagnell, a short way to the west is accommodating a level of growth that exceeds its own population projections. Households forming in North Crawley will therefore have the opportunity to still remain “local” even if they are ultimately established outside the village. Household formation in North Crawley will not be constrained by local supply because the village does not comprise its own housing market area and there is therefore considerable choice from other significant sources of supply in the local area.

## 5. Household formation rates

- 5.1. More importantly, household formation in the existing village population will not be as high anyway due to the relatively large proportion of households without dependent children. 196 out of 237 (82.3%) households responding the questionnaire said they have no children, which is broadly consistent with the 243 out of 317 (76.6%) in the 2011 census. The national household projections indicate that the wider Milton Keynes area has proportionally 15% fewer households with no dependent children (67,000 out of 103,000: 65%). This means that formation rates in North Crawley will be lower than the local average as households without children do not generate additional households other than through specific circumstances such as divorce.
- 5.2. There is no direct correlation between having 15% more childless households and allocating 50% fewer dwellings than projections suggest. However, considered against the local supply, economic drivers, and existing strategic policy factors outlined elsewhere in this report, it is clear that there are cumulative reasons for the allocation of 30 dwellings to be considered sound.
- 5.3. Using a simplistic analysis that ignores migration, 30 dwellings would accommodate just under 75% of the dependent child population (41) identified in the 2017 questionnaire. In reality, household formation will display a far lower ratio against existing numbers of children as the majority will either wish to move away from the village or will remain in their childhood homes as young adults. 30 dwellings therefore represents an allowance that balances the needs of the existing population against the likelihood of continued migration. Notably, unlike self-contained formation, migration does not have any defined limit; it is likely that North Crawley could allocate an extremely high number of dwellings and still not completely satisfy the 'need' generated by those who would seek to move to the village from elsewhere. It is therefore entirely appropriate and lawful for the Neighbourhood Plan to establish its own limit to this and indeed explore means of restricting some elements of its supply to genuinely local needs.

## 6. Economic drivers

- 6.1. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Milton Keynes (2017) explains that population growth across the Borough is heavily influenced by economic performance with a substantial amount of households generated through job creation and subsequent inward migration. North Crawley has no specific economic driver of its own that indicates a higher level of growth should be planned for. Indirectly, growth in an attractive rural village might accommodate some of the need generated by 'executive' job creation elsewhere in Milton Keynes. However, there is no evidence that suggests that there should be a specific uplift for this in North Crawley as opposed to any other village in Milton Keynes.
- 6.2. The possible exception to this is the village's proximity to Cranfield, where there are potentially significant increases in jobs planned. However, this is a cross-border matter and Neighbourhood Plans are not subject to the duty to cooperate that might otherwise require Councils to proactively plan for growth in neighbouring areas. It is again entirely appropriate and lawful for the Neighbourhood Plan to choose not to apply a specific uplift to reflect its proximity to Cranfield.

## 7. Existing strategic policy

- 7.1 Partly due the economic circumstances outlined above, the prevailing strategic policy for housing growth in Milton Keynes recognises the intrinsic difference between the rural and urban areas of the Borough. Growth has historically been accommodated in the urban area with less growth in the rural area, particularly outside of 'key settlements' or 'selected villages' (neither of which apply to North Crawley). The 'policy on' approach to growth would therefore also suggest a lower level of growth is appropriate to North Crawley, notwithstanding the fact that Neighbourhood Plans may lawfully allocate growth over and above strategic policy.

## 8. Windfall sites

- 8.1 Like any development plan document, the level of growth in the neighbourhood plan is not a rigid cap to additional development. From time to time over the plan period it is likely that small "windfall" developments of 1 or 2 dwellings will arise that will supplement the allocations made in the neighbourhood plan. Such developments typically include the subdivision of larger dwellings or the unexpected availability of small sites in appropriate locations.
- 8.2 The annual allowance for windfall development in the rural area of Milton Keynes as a whole is 30 dwellings per annum. This cannot be aggregated accurately on a village-by-village basis but if 450 homes are delivered on windfall sites over the next 15 years, it is likely that at least some of these will be in North Crawley. Over the 10 year period 2010 to 2020, 7 new dwellings were completed in the parish of North Crawley, while this number cannot simply be replicated over the plan period, owing to limited infill opportunities within the settlement boundary, it is sensible to propose that windfall opportunities could account for 5 additional dwellings over the 15 year plan period.

## 9. House prices

- 9.1 House price data for the area indicates that average values have increased by 57% over the last 10 years. This is based on 91 sales and is somewhat skewed by several large transactions that do not reflect the typical housing stock of the village.
- 9.2 Increases in house prices are consistent with local, regional and national trends yet have complex links to housing need. A more useful indicator of how prices should affect future growth is affordability. However, there is no information available on household income in North Crawley.
- 9.3 Questionnaire results for the neighbourhood plan indicated a strong preference for both affordable housing and privately owned dwellings. The questionnaire also favoured a level of growth of no more than 35 dwellings. This indicates that the proposed amount of development has a strong basis in the community's self-assessment of need. Notably, 30-35 dwellings is a level of development that would result in affordable housing provided that a suitable site for 11 or more houses is allocated.

## 10. Conclusion

- 10.1 This Briefing Note has been prepared to characterise the circumstances that affect housing need in North Crawley and justify how the North Crawley Neighbourhood Plan reflects these.
- 10.2 The Neighbourhood Plan allocates around half the number of dwellings that would be required according to the government's household projections for the wider Milton Keynes area. However, the village diverges from the average socio-economic conditions across the Borough, specifically in terms of likely household formation rates, other local sources of supply, and its lack of individual economic drivers.
- 10.3 In Plan:MK, Policy DS1 states that "development will occur within villages and other rural settlements at locations identified in made neighbourhood plans. Milton Keynes Planning requires Neighbourhood Plans in villages and rural areas to allocate at least 1 new dwelling, other than this there is no specific housing requirement specified for these areas.
- 10.4 Milton Keynes Planning Officers have agreed that it is appropriate for North Crawley to allocate more than the required number of new homes. Planning officers have provided this statement in support of the allocation of 30 to 35 homes in North Crawley Neighbourhood Plan:

*"Milton Keynes Council has set an indicative housing figure of 1 home for all neighbourhood plans in the Borough. It is, however, important to note that this is not a maximum figure and neighbourhood plans are encouraged to plan positively for development in their areas, including allocating more development, where that is sustainable and in general conformity with the development strategy of Plan:MK. The Council believes that an allocation of up to 35 dwellings in North Crawley is sustainable and in general conformity with the development strategy of Plan:MK."*

*In addition, plan:MK is clear in Policy DS2 that the housing requirement of 26,500 over the plan period is a minimum figure and that neighbourhood plans that are being prepared form part of the housing strategy to contribute towards achieving this requirement. The provision of the extra units proposed within the North Crawley NP will provide additional flexibility in terms of number of units and type/location of units which will aid the delivery of the overall housing requirement as set out in Plan:MK. This is in line with the approach set out in both Policies DS1 and DS2 of Plan:MK."*

- 10.5 The allocation of any form of growth in the Neighbourhood Plan is demonstrably consistent with existing strategic policy. 30 – 35 dwellings is a quantum of housing that reflects an appropriate balance between the needs of the existing village population and the likelihood of the village to continue to attract people moving in.

## Appendix 1 – Local Context:

- i. The questionnaire results, representing 70% of households, indicate that 30 to 35 new dwellings is an acceptable rate of growth over the 15 year plan period.
- ii. The types of homes most frequently requested are 2 bedroom homes suitable for first time buyers and older residents wishing to downsize and 3 and 4 bedroom homes for families.
- iii. Residents are in favour of a small amount of affordable housing; a development of 11+ homes is required in order to fulfil this objective.
- iv. Affordable Housing, as defined in Plan:MK, paragraph 7.13 will consist of a mix of affordable rent provision, provided at a range of rent levels up to 80% of market rents, including a provision for properties at a level equivalent to social rent. A proportion of units may be provided as Low-Cost Home Ownership options (shared ownership) if the development is considered capable of delivering this form of affordable housing.
- v. In Plan:MK paragraph 7.22 and 7.33 it explains that Starter homes are not included in the definition of affordable housing in Milton Keynes Council's planning policies. It states that "The Housing and Planning Act 2016 has introduced a requirement for Starter Homes to be provided as part of all developments. For the purposes of policy development, the current NPPF definition of affordable housing does not include Starter Homes and evidence provided within the Strategic Housing Market Assessment concluded that it is unlikely that Starter Homes would reduce the identified need for affordable rented housing products, as they are unlikely to be affordable to those households identified as being unable to afford market housing. The Council therefore will not consider Starter Homes to be a form of affordable housing when considering development proposals. Should regulations be introduced by Government on this matter, then the approach set out in Policy HN2 will be reviewed as part of the early review of Plan:MK."
- vi. Only 10% of residents responding to the questionnaire agreed that new homes with 5+ bedroom houses were required.
- vii. The village has an ageing population. Almost 20% of the resident population is retired – 7% higher than the Milton Keynes average. 13.2% of homes in the 2011 census were occupied by 1 person over the age of 65 (42 houses). 14.5% of households in the 2011 census were occupied by one family entirely over the age of 65 (46 houses).
- viii. Some older residents currently living in large, family homes and looking to downsize are unable to remain in the village, as there are limited numbers of 2 bedroom bungalows available.
- ix. A development of council owned bungalows, built in the 1970s and designed specifically for older residents has, over the years been sold off under the right-to-buy scheme and most are now in private ownership and inhabited by residents of working age.
- x. In order to ensure that the village community is sustainable – in particular the school, local shop and two pubs, allowing young residents to remain in the village in their own homes and attracting young families into the village are important objectives.

- xi. North Crawley is close to the economic growth areas of Cranfield and Milton Keynes. Demand for rural housing is high. Houses in North Crawley rarely come on to the market and when they do, they sell quickly.
- xii. AECOM Planning consultants carried out an assessment of 15 sites around the village, the report published in March 2021 identifies 5 sites that are suitable for development.
- xiii. Further work by AECOM working with the Steering Group, landowners and site developers has led to indicative site plans and design guides that provide viable plans for 30 to 35 new homes, allocated across the 5 suitable sites.