

Wavendon Snippets – January 2024

Happy New Year

This year has been one of incredible international turbulence and over the last few months this has generated strong views and emotions within each of our local communities.

I think that we are all proud that we have excellent community relations and friendships between and within communities in Danesborough & Walton and that these values allow us to live in peace alongside each other.

I remain incredibly proud of how our communities have responded to crises in recent years – from the incredible outpouring of community action and neighbourly support shown during the pandemic, to the generosity of people donating money and time to help those facing the impacts and outcomes of the cost of living pressures.

Take extra care during these shorter days and darker evenings; please hold tight to your community spirit and keep a closer eye on neighbours.

Seeing out one year and welcoming in a new one is traditionally a time for celebration – it is also a time for reflection and setting goals for the year ahead.

2023 has not been without its challenges. All local authorities are facing huge demands on finances and the town, community and Parish Councils in our ward are not immune.

Improving efficiency and reducing costs has driven much of the work of each and every local council over the last three years and I am certain will do in 2024 with every part of the ward looking at where we can bring improve efficiencies without impacting on the most local of services.

Over the next year, local priorities will I am sure continue to be to continue to support the most vulnerable adults and children, help with the cost-of-living pressures, protect and enhance our beautiful environment and focus on building a strong local economy where there are good, well-paid jobs for all.

Combatting Climate Change will continue to be a big priority for us all five Parishes with each promoting suitable and effective local schemes that address these challenges at a truly local level. And, of course, we will be scrutinising all of our daily services such as roads and traffic management, wheelie bins, schools, adult social care, and strategic (and local) planning to ensure MKCC is held to account at each and every level.

Every New Year brings new opportunities, a chance to take things forward and to develop and grow. I have no doubt 2024 will bring unexpected demands and challenges. The only certain thing is that we must expect the unexpected as well as preparing for local, Police and Crime Commissioner and probably national elections.

I also have no doubt that as a ward and as a collective of parish councils we are ready, able, and very willing to take them on.

Can I wish everyone a (perhaps belated!) happy and prosperous 2024.

David Hopkins – ward Councillor and

Chairman at Wavendon Parish Council

<https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/highways/winter-services>

Winter Services

The MKCC winter service crew are monitoring the road surface temperatures on a daily basis and will make an assessment based on this data as to where or if they will be gritting, and how much salt they will be using. The routes are calculated to cover the maximum amount of areas on the key grid and residential estate roads including access to health facilities, schools etc. using the available gritting lorries. For this reason, it is not possible to deviate from these routes to cover any additional roads. There may also be issues with large gritting lorries turning in smaller streets.

Any areas with excess standing water are also being assessed and gritting crews are notified of these locations.

All the yellow MKCC grit bins are checked in autumn ahead of the winter season. If needed, they are topped up.

The location for these bins can be viewed on the My MK Mapping tool on the MKCC website. The grit bin locations are shown with a G inside a yellow box. The gritting routes are also shown on this map under 'Winter Maintenance'.

New CEO for East West Rail

I note the EWR Company is recruiting a new Chief Exec for East West Rail...

Chief Executive Officer - Milton Keynes | East West Rail Careers

<https://careers.eastwestrail.co.uk/en/postings/d27dd697-50bc-4428-87ed-0174e4707324>

<https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/investigation-into-the-east-west-rail-project-oxford-cambridge/>

Investigation into the East West Rail project (Oxford – Cambridge) - National Audit Office

East West Rail represents a £6-7 billion investment to support growth in a part of the UK that the government regards as economically important, but it is not yet clear how the benefits of the project will be achieved nor how it aligns to other government plans for growth in the region. As with many transport projects, the rationale for East West Rail does not rest on the strength of the benefit–cost ratio for the project alone – which is poor – but on its wider strategic aim of overcoming constraints to economic growth in the Oxford–Cambridge region.

This rationale has underpinned DfT’s decisions to approve and continue with the project to date. However, achieving the necessary value from the government’s investment in East West Rail will require stronger strategic alignment across government. Improved communication and joint working between central government and local bodies are needed to overcome barriers to progress and achieve the goals of the project over the long term.

Homelessness

I have been helping to deal with a homelessness issue in Woburn Sands and this prompts me to forward the contact details for such issues should you experience a similar issue locally.

Homeless.Enquiries@milton-keynes.gov.uk

To contact the Rough Sleepers Team for those people who are sleeping rough again they can be contacted via 01908 691691 or roughsleeperteam@milton-keynes.gov.uk alternatively if you are concerned that someone is rough sleeping you can use www.streetlink.org and describe where the person is – this alert comes directly through to the MKCC Rough Sleeping Team for follow up, this may not be until the next day.

Enquiries to Louise.Kinton@milton-keynes.gov.uk
Rough Sleeper Deputy Manager

To speak with Louise: Call 07385 489738
Milton Keynes City Council | Civic, 1 Saxon Gate East | Milton Keynes | MK9 3EJ
www.milton-keynes.gov.uk

Michael Gove speech on future planning

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/falling-back-in-love-with-the-future>

Red Bull Team Principal Christian Horner(based at Tilbrook) is to receive a CBE in King Charles III's New Year Honours list, with it being an upgrade on his OBE.

In 2013, Horner was awarded an OBE (Officer of the British Empire) - the second rung on the British Honours system after MBE (Member of the British Empire) - for services to motorsport after guiding the team to its first four World Championship doubles between 2010 and 2013 with Sebastian Vettel.

In further recognition of his services to Formula 1 and motorsport, Horner's honour is to be upgraded to a CBE (Commander of the British Empire). The next highest honour is a knighthood.

BMKALC - Biodiversity Model Template and Notes

As Town and Parish Councils we have a duty to consider within our powers, what actions and policies we put in place to consider biodiversity. Many of you have already taken steps and this consideration is now a foundation block of all your activities. However, a few councils have found it hard to get going. There is a legal obligation for certain steps to have been put in place already, don't panic if you haven't, you can't do what you can't do, but get this on to your next agenda as a priority item if you fall into this group!

I've attached some notes and a model template policy. I do not claim that this is a definitive policy but its a good starting point for you to work from. Thank you to my colleagues in the County Officer community for sharing the source documents for this. BALC will be co hosting a seminar day in March next year on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. You'll find a link in the notes accompanying the template.

Land in SEMK in the control of O&H north of the railway

Discussions are ongoing between O&H and EWR over the details of the potential Station re-location and until there is at least some preliminary conclusion to those discussions I don't think O&H will feel enabled to submit a 'northside' application.

The discussions were getting more detailed toward the end of last year so there has been progress but as far as timing is concerned a lot will depend on how much EWR will want to commit prior to having their full 'statutory consultation' package put together. That will probably determine whether we see the northside plans this side of of the summer or not.

Tragic deaths of two women prompt urgent call for safety improvements at dangerous A5 slip road in Little Brickhill, Milton Keynes.

<https://www.miltonkeynes.co.uk/news/people/tragic-deaths-of-two-women-prompt-urgent-call-for-safety-improvements-at-dangerous-a5-slip-road-in-milton-keynes-4464876>

Inadequate signage means motorists commonly drive the wrong way down the road.

A coroner is calling for urgent safety improvements after two women died at a busy A5 junction where the No Entry signs for drivers appear to be inadequate.

Sean Cummings, assistant coroner for Milton Keynes, has taken the unusual step of issuing a Prevention of Future Deaths report before a full inquest has been held into the tragedy.

His move comes after receiving reports of several other near-misses at the same spot – on the “off” slip road from the A5 at Little Brickhill.

On November 20 last year, 38-year-old Amal Mohamed Ahmed was killed when driving her Peugeot 208 and using her satnav to take her to Queensway in Bletchley.

She turned onto the slip road and drove down in the wrong direction, colliding head-on with an oncoming VW Tiguan. Ms Ahmed died at the scene and her passenger was critically injured. The female driver of the VW died later in the John Radcliffe Hospital.

The 'No Entry' signs appear to be badly positioned and the area is unlit, meaning that motorists do not always see them, said Mr Cummings in his report.

“After the collision attending police officers saw three further vehicles perform exactly the same manoeuvre as Ms Ahmed and attempt to travel down the sliproad in the wrong direction,” he states.

"Local residents have contacted police and complained that it is a very common occurrence for drivers to mistakenly travel down the slip road in the wrong direction."

The report states: "The exit point of the A5 "off" slip road at the Little Brickhill junction is wide. The signage indicating No Entry appears to be inadequate as there are two No Entry signs which are widely spaced at the junction. One is positioned to appear to forbid entry to the road over the bridge leading over the A5 and does not obviously relate to the slip road. The second is positioned such that it obliquely faces the road over the bridge and would not be visible to a driver turning right onto the slip road until they had completed the manoeuvre placing them at risk.

"There is a No Right Turn sign as the junction is approached. There is also No Entry in large white letters at the mouth of the slip road junction, however, this may be (1) obscured by vehicles leaving the slip road and (2) the junction is unlit and was said by a witness as being 'pitch black'.

"The slip road is long and allows for the build up of considerable speed in turn facilitating what the police describe as a high energy impact."

After the collision, temporary No Entry signs were positioned at the slip road junction. But they were quickly removed apparently because the original signs were deemed to comply with necessary regulations.

"That seems wholly irrelevant to me because drivers are clearly commonly not seeing the signs because of the large numbers who mistakenly drive the wrong way onto the slip road," said Mr Cummings.

He has sent his report to the chief executives of MK City Council and of National Highways.

They have until February 14 to respond, either explaining what action will be taken or outlining why it is felt that nothing need be done.

Regarding the H10 extension

Broadly speaking it starts off with some vegetation clearance works in January and then we have the investigation works and some reinforcement works to do on the existing roads. We get started on the temporary road construction later in February running into March.

The main construction works are unlikely to start until September next year given the extension of the current main highways contract and the deferral of the commencement of the new one.

The timetable for progress on the SEMK applications

... is still uncertain but I think we are all fairly much aligned on the fact that there will not be any opportunity for any decisions before March. Beyond that there is an opportunity in April but I think that is a receding one, although still not ruled out, and if April is missed then you are talking about mid-June and beyond.

EWR

There are still talks going on around EWR but these are slow moving and again they are fairly resigned now to their statutory consultation not happening in the first half of next year.

Regarding the new MKCC City Plan

It appears this has been delayed, which to be fair is not unusual at all for local plans, but the timetable ...

https://milton-keynes.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s14538/Publication%20of%20Local%20Development%20Scheme_Annex.pdf

is still the one MKCC is working to. January's Cabinet Advisory Group has been cancelled but that is probably because some of the important work on sustainability appraisal and the growth strategy isn't likely to be available, even in draft, until February earliest.

H10 (Bletcham way Extension)

Don't forget the Project Manager to address any concerns regarding the work just commencing on H10 extension is

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Ward Boundary Review

The Commission will review initial submissions and make a final decision on the size of MK City Council from 2026 onwards in mid March 2024.

The attached briefing note details the progress / work undertaken to date including information on the Council size, electorate forecasts, warding patterns and consequential work prior to all out elections in May 2026 for new wards.

Parishes Forum

Presentations from the December Forum are attached to this update.

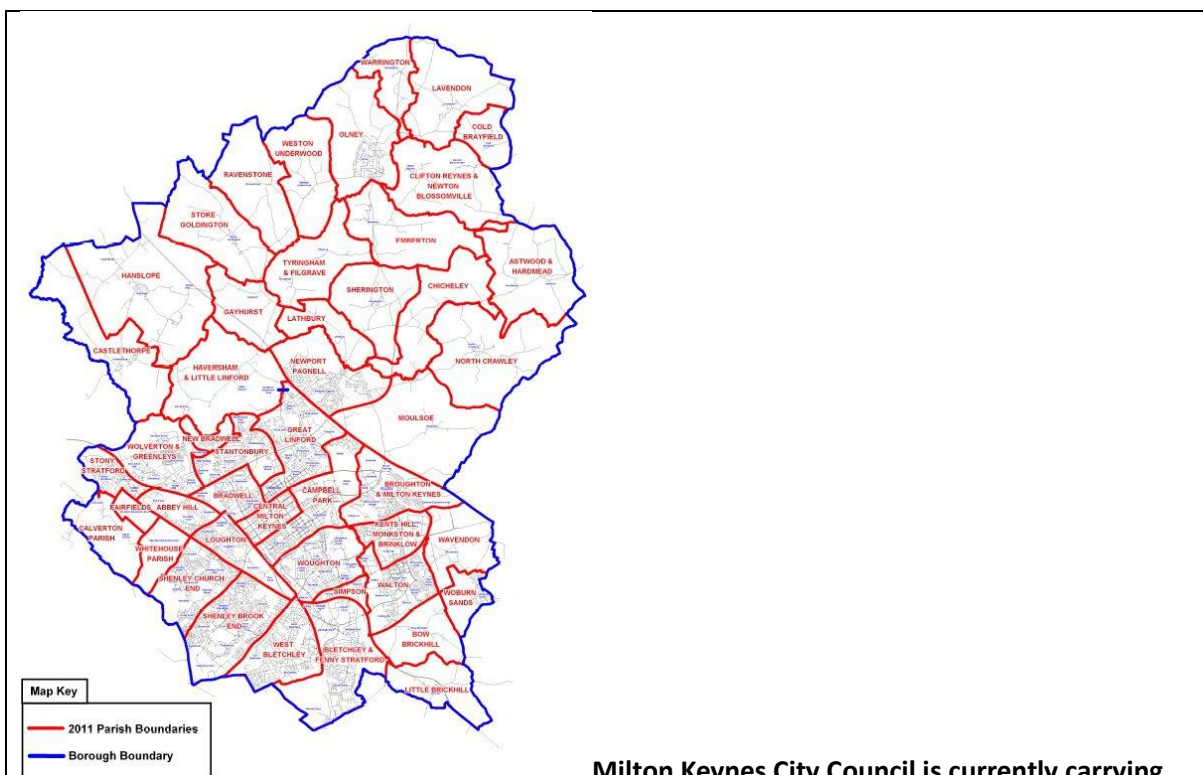
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Milton Keynes City Council is currently carrying out informal engagement to help shape its New City Plan. The city council is asking local people to share their thoughts and experiences of how they use their local neighbourhood. The New City Plan is an important planning document which will describe the environment needed to deliver the city council's 'Strategy for 2050'. The Strategy, which was finalised two years ago following extensive public consultation, sets out a bold and ambitious vision for Milton Keynes including equal opportunities, new jobs, affordable and 'lifelong' homes that suit people at all stages of their life, and a pioneering mass rapid transit system.

To help develop the New City Plan, Milton Keynes City Council will be holding a series of specialist workshops and groups over the next year, as well as running surveys around specific themes. The city council has published a survey asking people about how they use their local neighbourhood, such as whether they find it easy to shop, take children to school, and enjoy green space; what changes would improve their mental and physical health; and what would make them more likely

to use local facilities. It runs until 23 February 2024. We ask that Town and Parish Councils help to promote this survey and encourage residents to take part.

It's also asking for feedback on an early draft of what's called a 'design code' for Milton Keynes. Design codes are used by planners to set standards for how communities should be designed, thinking about what makes a place attractive, distinctive, and high quality. This consultation closes on 19 January 2024.

Before the surveys were launched, the city council held information sessions for ward members and town and parish councils to introduce the New City Plan and set out the next steps. There will be further opportunities to get involved and have your say next year

EWR

Track laying is nearly finished along first connection stage of East West Rail (EWR) as the New Track Construction (NTC) train completes its 58th and final shift.

With passenger services due to begin between Bicester and Bletchley in June 2025, the milestone brings the benefits of EWR one step closer for local communities – enabling better access to jobs, education and healthcare, while making it easier to see family, friends and travel for leisure.

Once complete there'll be 66km of new track between Bletchley and Bicester with the final welding, stressing and 'tamping' (track alignment) works to be completed in early 2024.

Installation of the signalling and telecoms equipment needed to operate the railway is also well underway, and once completed, will be followed by dynamic train testing before the railway reopens in 2025. Once open this section of line will provide direct passenger services between Oxford, Bletchley and Milton Keynes for the first time in over 50 years.

Progress at Bletchley station

Work to complete the new high-level platforms at Bletchley is also progressing well. At Bletchley, cladding is being installed to the exterior of the building, whilst the footbridge and accessible lift linking two new platforms to the main station are also now in place.



Universal Studios – Just 20 minutes up the line!

Excitement has been building in and around Bedford over the last 24 hours after a respected theme park website reported on evidence suggesting Universal Studios could be expanding its theme park empire into the UK, with Bedford Borough as the most likely location.

Orlando Park Stop has published financial records, details of land purchased, and further evidence that by 2030, the only Universal Studios theme park resort in Europe could be right on our doorstep in Kempston Hardwick.

Now, the Bedford Independent can exclusively reveal that Universal Studios has confirmed it has purchased land near Bedford, which it is exploring as a possible theme park site.

A spokesperson from Universal Destinations & Experiences told the Bedford Independent, “We recently acquired land in Bedford [Borough] and are at the early stages of exploring its feasibility for a potential park and resort at this site.

“It will be many months before we are ready to make a decision to proceed and we look forward to engaging with all relevant stakeholders and the local community.”

They said that no creative content of the park has yet been determined and stressed that “we are still very early in planning this potential project”.

The company confirmed that it is always on the lookout for new park locations around the world and with a large population, strong creative industries, thriving tourism and transportation infrastructure at the heart of Europe, the UK is an ideal destination.

Hollywood, Orlando, Beijing, Osaka, Singapore... and Bedford

The Universal Destinations & Experiences spokesperson told the Bedford Independent that Bedford’s connectivity to London and Europe was a factor in their decision to begin looking at the feasibility of a park in the area.

They said, “We support Bedford’s vision of becoming a prosperous place to live, work and visit and we take a proactive approach to partnering with local communities and stakeholders, like Bedford Borough Council, when pursuing potential projects.”

The site’s proximity to London, the Harry Potter Studios near Watford, and the cities of Oxford and Cambridge make Bedford the ideal location for anyone planning a tourist trip to the UK.

240 acres purchased

Rumours which have now been confirmed to the Bedford Independent by Universal Destinations and Experiences – show that Universal Studios’ parent company, Comcast, purchased a construction company called Cloud Wing UK Limited in 2023.

This purchase brings a 240-acre parcel of land titled “Kempston Hardwick New Settlement” with it.

The land, which is close to public transport links to Bedford and, crucially, the M1 had already been suggested as a possible site for a business park, with several projects previously being put forward.

Theme park fans have speculated that the park’s design could be based on Universal Studios Beijing, which has more indoor attractions than its Florida counterpart, to help visitors avoid the wetter British weather.

The report also suggests the UK resort would be unique to the US parks so it did not “cannibalize the company’s overseas travel market.”

They add that this park may “debut with new attractions not found in Orlando” to attract visitors from other markets, as well as theme park fans in the UK.

However, the Universal Destinations and Experiences spokesperson said that no creative content had yet been confirmed.

Economic boost

Investment on this scale will have a significant impact on the local area.

Market research company, IBIS World reports that income in the UK amusement & theme park sector has grown at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 1.1% over the past five years, and reached an estimated £972.7m in 2023.

Employment opportunities for the area would also be in the thousands. While it’s not known how many would be employed at Universal Studios, as a guide Alton Towers employs 2,500 people.



Review of 2023



In January MKCC announced plans to use funding received from housing developers to help build a new radiotherapy unit at MK University Hospital. The unit will open in spring 2024 and will save MK patients a very long round trip to Oxford for their essential treatment.



In February, MKCC organised a visit from King Charles III to meet local community groups and charities who were involved in and represented our successful bid for city status.

The MKCC Youth Justice and Support Service was praised by the Ministry of Justice for their early support for young people at risk of being involved in knife crime and was featured in national guidance to be used by other Youth Justice teams.



During each school holiday Milton Keynes City Council arrange free activity sessions where children can also get a healthy meal, to help families whose children usually receive free school meals and who might otherwise struggle during the break. This Easter MKCC established up around 4,000 sessions.



The MK City Council streetlighting upgrade programme which started in 2014 reached its final phase.

MKCC spend more than £2m every year lighting MK's roads and these lower-energy lights are more efficient and will save the council money as well as helping it reach its carbon zero target.

The MKCC Anti-Social Behaviour Team had a positive legal result in a complex case where a local woman had been exploiting vulnerable people and stealing their money. Through Operation Intercept the council has been prosecuting offenders and protecting local people.



The Local Elections were the first to require photo ID for voters. More than 60,000 people in Milton Keynes (a turnout of around 31%) voted. Behind the scenes, 865 MK City Council employees helped the elections run smoothly, from dealing with 24,778 postal votes to staffing polling stations and counting votes.



MKCC demolished Mellish Court which was its last council-owned residential block in the city and helped 200 families into new homes after it determined these 1960s buildings would need too much work to bring them up to new fire safety standards.

MKCC shared a refresher on how it operates and what's important to how all council staff work in the *What Makes Us Milton Keynes City Council* booklet and got some great feedback.



MK City Council heavily sponsor IF: Milton Keynes International Festival, which happens every other July, to help keep events free or low cost for local people. This year's was the most inclusive yet, around 56,000 people were in attendance with around 180,000 more experiencing free public events as they passed. 83% of the programme was free to attend.



Milton Keynes was named as the UK’s ‘most competitive city’ in an independent study by the University of Cardiff and Nottingham Business school. Cities were ranked based on how well they’re set up to help businesses flourish, the number of business start-ups, the proportion of high tech and skilled businesses, and the productivity of workers.

MK City Council secured £750,000 of funding to provide free training for people who work in pubs and clubs so they can spot and tackle inappropriate behaviour, to help make nights out safer.



MK City Council rolled out the new greener and modernised waste collection service including wheelie bins that separate paper and card from plastic, metal and glass. This has helped the council to increase how much is recycled by more than 35%.



MKCC committed funding to help residents who are facing food and energy insecurity during the cost of living crisis, not only helping individuals but reducing pressure on our services and those of our partners.



The first global AI Safety Summit was held at historic Bletchley Park, where world leaders and tech entrepreneurs created The Bletchley Declaration. MKCC also held a civic reception during which we announced the artists shortlisted to create a new public artwork in Bletchley in tribute to Alan Turing.

White Ribbon is a global campaign that encourages people, especially men and boys, to change the culture that leads to abuse and violence against women. MKCC is a White Ribbon Accredited organisation and it encourages Parishes to also become Ambassadors for the cause.



**December:
Plans announced for new centre for
residents with complex needs**

**Inside MKCC:
Festive hampers were organised by children's centres**

MKCC was delighted to announce its new dedicated short break and day services centre for local people with complex disabilities. Work on the new centre located on the outskirts of Linford Wood will begin in the summer. We look forward to being able to move teams into Linford Wood Place.



**Thank you for your work this year to
make such a difference for local people**