

## 6. Spatial & Design Strategy

- 6.1 The spatial and design strategy set out in this chapter establishes the framework by which future development is guided to contribute to the vision and principles of the Plan. The general and site specific policies that flow from this strategy are defined in Chapter 8 (General Policies) and Chapter 9 (Site Specific Policies). Indicative land uses are shown in Chapter 11 (Proposals Plan).
- 6.2 The challenge in preparing the Plan is to provide the flexibility that will encourage further investment and development in CMK, whilst firstly, protecting existing and future investors and developers from poorly considered and low quality interventions by others; and secondly, promoting spatial distributions of uses and specific design parameters that will complement the overall attractiveness of the city centre and secure its long-term economic viability. The CMK that has grown so successfully from nothing in 40 years is a CMK that has been most carefully designed and quality-controlled. This has given confidence to investors, developers and occupiers, and is a lesson of history that must not be overlooked.

### Flexible Land Uses and Mixed-Use

- 6.3 A key theme that underpins the spatial and design strategy is to broaden the mix of uses across CMK, and to create a finer grain of development that will widen competition and diversity and provide variety. A successful city centre needs to have a diverse street life and a safe night life, to which the intensity of use contributes together with the mixture of different uses – offices, shops, restaurants, theatres and flats, all built in close proximity, creating ‘comings and goings’ from early morning to late evening, on weekdays and at weekends.
- 6.4 The point has now been reached in the development of CMK where it is appropriate to move away from previous coarse land use ‘zoning’ approaches. With the exception of the Primary Shopping Area, the *CMKAP* does not designate any special ‘quarters’ or ‘districts’ for predominant class uses, such as a ‘Business District’.

- 6.5 The Plan seeks to achieve the following objectives:-
- » To reinforce and extend CMK’s ‘magnet’ areas of greatest attraction for people and movement;
  - » To encourage the spread of pedestrian footfall along key pedestrian routes between the magnet areas;
  - » To achieve a good mix of activities during both day and evening hours, and on weekdays and weekends, and through the seasons to stimulate both the daytime and night-time economies;
  - » To create enhanced social, cultural and civic spaces across the city centre for animation and public assembly;
  - » To increase variety and competition in the Primary Shopping Area, including the provision of small retail units; and
  - » To disperse uses to reduce peak load traffic hotspots on the CMK grid.
- 6.6 Existing uses, site constraints and key objectives have been carefully considered in proposing the broad mix of land uses for undeveloped or under-developed sites in CMK for the period of this Plan.

- 6.7 A flexible approach will be taken to the indicative land uses shown in the Proposals Plan and associated schedule (Chapter 11). Alternative land uses will generally be acceptable if they achieve the same objectives for the site, but unwanted or displaced land uses on one Blocklet of land will have to be made up on other land in CMK if the Council's own *Core Strategy* policies are to be achieved. Parts of CMK are still in first growth, and it will not be helpful for landowners and developers to try to play 'pass the parcel' on the broad distribution of uses suggested in this Plan. With the offered flexibility to investors and developers comes the responsibility to help Milton Keynes build its city centre.
- 6.8 Management and monitoring by MK Council is necessary to achieve the spatial strategy for CMK, and the amounts of commercial and retail floor space, as well as the number of dwellings, as set out in the Council's *Core Strategy*. A monitoring regime will be instituted to ensure that CMK is developed in accordance with the vision of this Plan (see Chapter 13).

### Three Magnets of Activity

- 6.9 Two existing areas, the Station End and the Primary Shopping Area, act as hubs or 'magnets' for visitors, employees and the residents of Milton Keynes. This Plan seeks their expansion and diversification. A third, new magnet, is planned for Block F1, north of Campbell Park, which is reserved for major development of strategic importance to Milton Keynes bringing significant activity to that part of the city centre. The three magnets are illustrated in Figure 5.

#### Magnet One: The Station End

- 6.10 The Alliance sees the Station End as a key area for employment growth, business visitors and leisure activities. An important objective is to extend late evening and ideally 24-hour activity in the area, to take advantage of and stimulate better public transport choices. The indicative land use proposals around the station include leisure facilities focusing on urban sports; a large international hotel and business conference centre; an expanded retail offer; and social facilities for young people.

- 6.11 Block B4 which sits on the south-eastern edge of the Station End, offers the opportunity to add to the attraction. It is one of the best undeveloped city centre sites in the region. Within easy walking distance of the station and the Primary Shopping Area, this site is reserved within the Plan for major developments of strategic importance which will raise the national or international profile of Milton Keynes.

#### Magnet Two: Primary Shopping Area

- 6.12 The second magnet that draws people to CMK from across the region and elsewhere is the retail and cultural core at the eastern end of Midsummer Boulevard.
- 6.13 The strategy is to turn the retail core, with its inward looking shopping malls, into a more outward looking driver of the city centre as a whole, with visitors exploring a diverse and mixed network of Boulevards and Streets. Through its heart runs Midsummer Boulevard East. Places will be created to stimulate animation, celebration and congregation, possibly to include a civic space or square that will be at the heart of the city centre.

### Magnet Three: North of Campbell Park

6.14 Like Block B4, the undeveloped Blocklets in Block F1 are some of the best, undeveloped city centre sites in southern England. Containing over four hectares of undeveloped land in an attractive location overlooking Campbell Park, they are within a few minutes walk of the retail and cultural core. They, too, are reserved for major developments of strategic importance that make a significant contribution to the life and reputation of the city, such as the headquarters of international companies, pan-European institutions or indeed the university.

### The Public Realm

6.15 The Plan seeks to improve the pedestrian experience across the city centre. CMK was designed to have a clear and well-structured system of pedestrian movement, both within the centre and connecting it to adjacent areas, but the way in which it has been implemented has led to some routes being active, animated and well overlooked with a mix of uses along their length, whilst others lack these qualities. Linkages are sometimes indirect and indeed, uninviting.

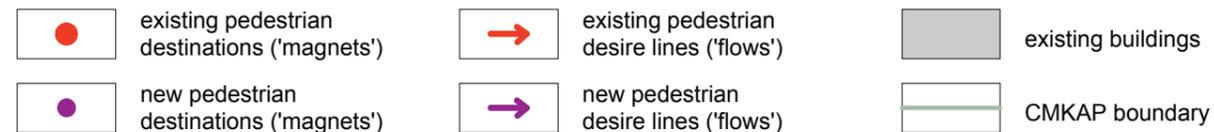
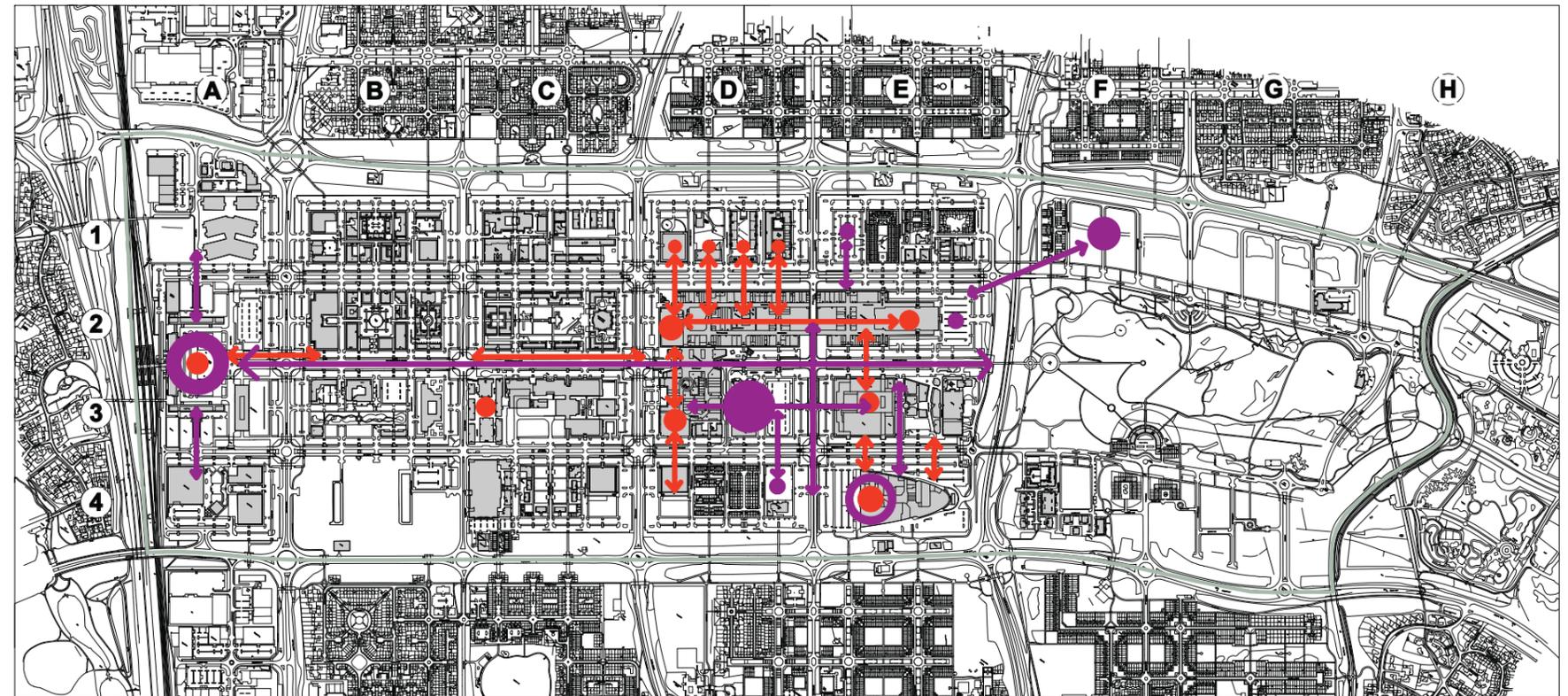


Figure 5: Activity Magnets (Illustrative)

- 6.16 The Plan aims to improve the experience of using CMK day to day. As the city centre is so large, the network of pedestrian routes that cover the city centre is inevitably extended. The Plan therefore requires a degree of mixed uses at ground level to be established along Boulevards and Gates (see Figure 10), thus bringing life and animation to key routes and moving away from buildings designed as inward-looking corporate boxes. Midsummer Boulevard is the primary route along which such mixed use will be enhanced, especially between the Station and Saxon Gate.
- 6.17 The original layout for CMK showed Blocks of development land divided into four Blocklets by Streets running north to south, and also east to west in the case of the Campbell Park grid square. To create larger development Blocks, some of these streets were omitted or removed by later development. An objective of the *CMKAP* is to welcome and promote a finer grain of development as CMK grows, with more pedestrian and cycling access or 'permeability.' Consolidation of development into whole Blocks or super Blocks is now to be avoided, as what would have been public Streets, Boulevards or Gates would become instead impenetrable private land.

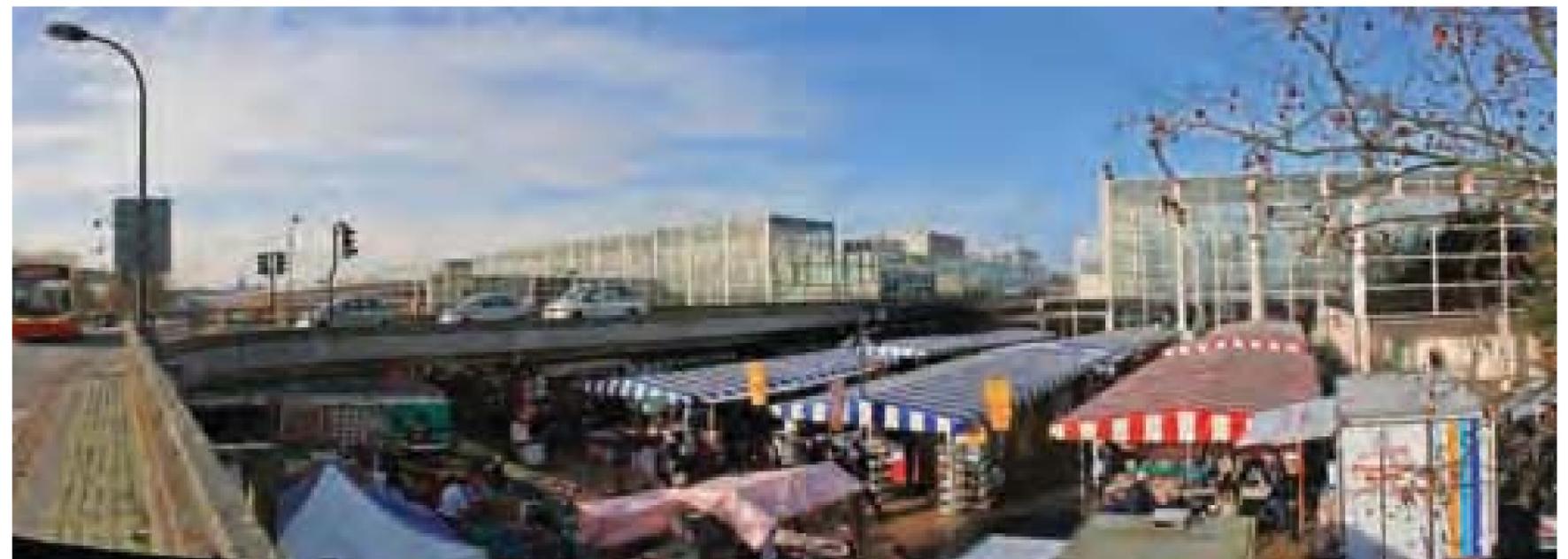
### **Creating and Improving Public Spaces**

- 6.18 The Plan retains the classic CMK infrastructure which gives the city centre its distinctive sense of place and international identity.
- 6.19 Within the grid created by the infrastructure, there is a network of public or semi-public spaces that can contribute to the experience of walking around CMK. However, some of these spaces that form part of the public realm in CMK can sometimes feel uninviting and windswept. The Plan protects the overall quantity of public space and seeks to ensure that any new or regenerated spaces feel secure and are sociable and encourage animation and interaction.
- 6.20 The Plan protects the network of green spaces across CMK but does not preclude their improvement and their animation. It sets high standards for Campbell Park which is of a scale and design unequalled in any other contemporary urban park in Europe. The Green Frame around CMK is also retained, as an essential part of the city centre's setting.

- 6.21 This Plan celebrates the famous special character of CMK: a meticulous sophisticated modern infrastructure, with tree-lined Boulevards, set in a landscaped perimeter, could only be the city centre of Milton Keynes.

## The Primary Shopping Area

6.22 The Primary Shopping Area is defined in the *Core Strategy* as Blocklets D2.1 to 4, E2.1 to 4, D3.1 to 4 and E3.1 to 4, comprising thecentre:mk, Midsummer Place, the Point, the adjacent temporary car park, the Food Centre and the Theatre District (see Figure 11). This zoning presents a dilemma for the Plan. The success of retailing in CMK is based on the regional and national draw of the shopping centres with their award-winning accessibility and sunlit high arcades and meeting places. Their millions of visitors have led to thousands of jobs being brought to CMK, and the evidence suggests that investors are expressing great interest in further expansion even though MK Council has approved major retail developments in out-of-centre locations elsewhere in Milton Keynes. The two main CMK centres are mostly occupied by national multiple retailers and have tended to develop to be inward looking, presenting to some Boulevards a blank elevation. Visitors are drawn to the sunlit high arcades, and are not encouraged to explore the wider CMK and to spread custom to other businesses.



CMK Primary Shopping Area including the Grade II Listed Shopping Building and outdoor market

- 6.23 The Alliance's strategy is to transform this area to become a driver of a much wider spread of economic, social and cultural activity, through a number of interventions:
- » To diversify the retail offer with independent traders and small shops;
  - » To create a covered market hall as a centre of excellence for specialist small traders who would benefit from agglomeration;
  - » To expand community and cultural facilities;
  - » To promote the development of more hotels and some apartment living; and
  - » To create opportunities for a wider range of commercial leisure.
- 6.24 The Plan encourages continuing investment in large retail units, meeting the requirement of national and international chains. Significant growth is provided for in the MK Council's adopted *Core Strategy*. However this will need to be carefully planned to be outward facing as part of an integrated, interesting and enticing city centre, rather than just another out-of-town centre that happens to be downtown.

- 6.25 A study by the British Council of Shopping Centres (June 2007) highlighted the importance of smaller units to accommodate independent retailers, which contribute to creating vital and differentiated places. Through workshops and online comments during the preparation of the *CMKAP*, a number of respondents also highlighted this need. Whilst planning cannot control the occupiers of buildings, it can influence the size of units. In order to improve the vitality and diversity of the retail offer in the city centre, the provision of small retail units within new retail development will be encouraged.
- 6.26 Retailing that cannot be accommodated within the Primary Shopping Area will be encouraged to spill into the remaining Blocklets in Blocks D and E; along Midsummer Boulevard West; and around the Station End.



***Independent and specialist trading in the proposed covered market hall will further enhance CMK's retail offer***



- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
|  university facilities              |  sports/ leisure         |  community/ cultural facilities |  existing buildings |
|  hotel/ conference exhibition space |  cultural/ arts facility |  community facility             |  CMKAP boundary     |

0 25 50 100 150 metres



Figure 6: Proposed Culture, Community and Leisure

## Residential Use Across the City Centre

- 6.27 The Plan seeks to create a living city centre, not only in response to demand but also to increase animation and encourage a sense of security through natural surveillance from doors, windows and balconies. Thus the Plan promotes housing development across CMK, whilst remaining sensitive to potential environmental problems such as noise and nuisance. Although there is a proposed concentration of housing sites around Campbell Park, housing elsewhere in CMK is encouraged. Preferred sites are located around the perimeter of the city centre and are set back from the frontages of Boulevards and Gates, to avoid excessive noise disturbance.
- 6.28 An appropriate mix of types, sizes and tenures across the area will be promoted with an emphasis on dwellings that meet the needs of younger and older households without children. Essential facilities and services are required so that CMK is seen to be a good place to live long term, not transiently.
- 6.29 In order to accommodate the requirements of MK Council's *Core Strategy*, densities of

residential developments will generally be 250 dwellings per hectare between the Station End and Marlborough Gate, and 100 - 200 around Campbell Park, with the objective of providing around 5,000 additional dwellings across CMK in the plan period. The Alliance has received assurances that the market for that scale of development will exist, probably as housing for private rental and the scale of provision has been confirmed in the adopted *Core Strategy*.

## Offices: Quantity and Diversity

- 6.30 The Plan's indicative land proposals exceed MK Council's *Core Strategy* aspirations for office employment growth, because the Alliance considers it necessary to have a choice of investment sites available to the market at any one time and also has an ambitious vision for CMK, seeing it become a major regional centre for investment in office development in the plan period. Evidence suggests that nationally, occupiers are increasingly seeking city centre locations over out-of-town business parks to satisfy the demands of staff for access to better public transport and more facilities and more socialising out of office hours; in Milton Keynes,

which has lacked some of the advantages of city-centre working, migration to out of centre grid squares has undermined office values. The intention of the *CMKAP* is to reverse this trend and dramatically expand the office stock in CMK.

- 6.31 Associated with the expansion in office accommodation will be an increase in the number of hotels in CMK linked to conference facilities, one of which might be a more substantial international conference or congress hall with associated exhibition space.

## Encouraging the 24 hour Economy

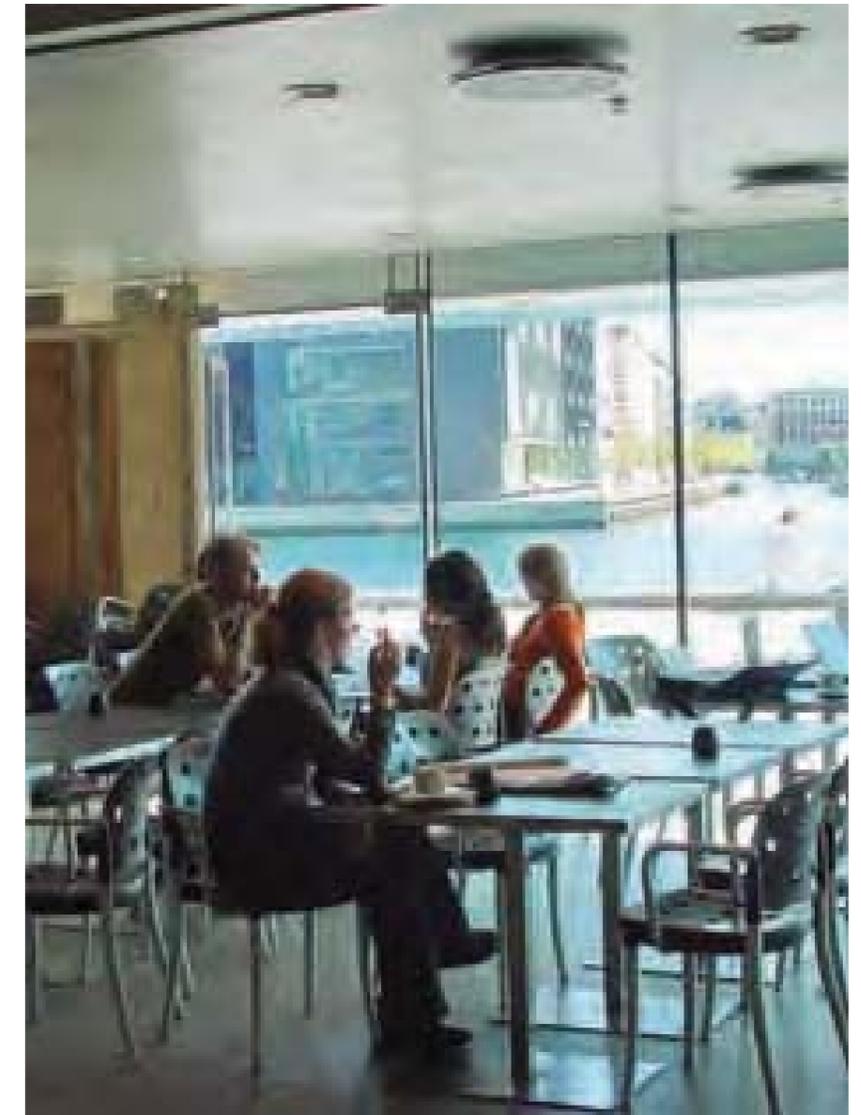
- 6.32 Likewise, the *CMKAP* promotes a considerable increase in commercial leisure provision. This includes: clubs, bars, restaurants, hotels, spas, gyms, sports provision, cinemas, and other cultural and leisure outlets. While additional facilities will cluster in the retail core and Xscape, the mixed use policy encourages leisure uses being located along the Boulevards and Gates, particularly Midsummer Boulevard.
- 6.33 The Plan offers opportunities to expand leisure uses that help create a vibrant night-time economy around the Station End.

## A Mix of Cultural, Sporting and Community Uses

- 6.34 A wide range of cultural, sporting and community facilities enrich the quality of life in a city centre: they are major contributors to the prosperity of the centre by making it a more interesting and sociable place to live and work in, thus making it a more attractive place in which to invest.
- 6.35 CMK falls short in the range and number of facilities that are found in a regional centre, which include:
- » **Sports:** indoor sports centres, swimming pools, urban sports facilities, exercise trails;
  - » **Performing and visual arts:** small theatres, concert halls, dance studios, dance venues; galleries for temporary and permanent exhibitions and the sale of art work, sculpture gardens, artists' studios;
  - » **Culture and civic:** crown court, museums, civic rooms, churches and places of worship for different religions; and
  - » **Community and voluntary sector:** meeting rooms, drop-in centres, community cafés and shops.
- 6.36 The indicative land use proposals plan and schedule includes sites for the following uses and facilities (as illustrated in Figure 6):
- » Accommodation for Milton Keynes to grow a major university centre with associated lecture theatres, faculties and student accommodation;
  - » Sports and leisure space: a major urban sports centre; dance studio, etc;
  - » Cultural spaces, for performing arts, a major concert hall, a city museum, and a much expanded city gallery;
  - » Community space: meeting halls and civic rooms; offices and other provision for the voluntary sector; space and facilities for young and old people;
  - » A community medical centre; and
  - » Visitor facilities associated with Campbell Park.
- 6.37 When regeneration takes place, existing provision for the voluntary sector is to be retained or relocated with equivalent or improved provision, such as:
- » The ice rink in the redevelopment of the Leisure Plaza; and
  - » Voluntary sector facilities currently located in the Food Centre.
- 6.38 On the indicative proposals plan and schedule, provision for cultural, sporting and community activities are either shown on sites for which the facility is the sole use, or around the Primary Shopping Area, on sites where the facility is integrated with commercial provision.
- 6.39 The contribution a development makes to the provision of these facilities is either as required under the planning obligations, or where integrated, the provision of accommodation as shown on the indicative schedule and in accordance with policy *CMKAP* SS4.
- 6.40 This strategy will be to the benefit of both commercial and cultural developments, attracting visitors and offering them diverse activities. It is essential that this provision is actively pursued.



*A variety of facilities are needed, CMK isn't just about shopping*



*Community facilities encourage people to congregate and feel part of the neighbourhood*

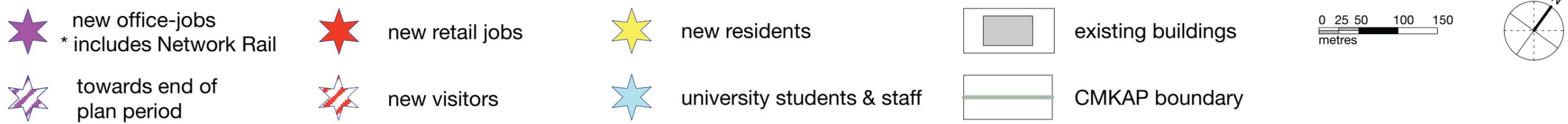
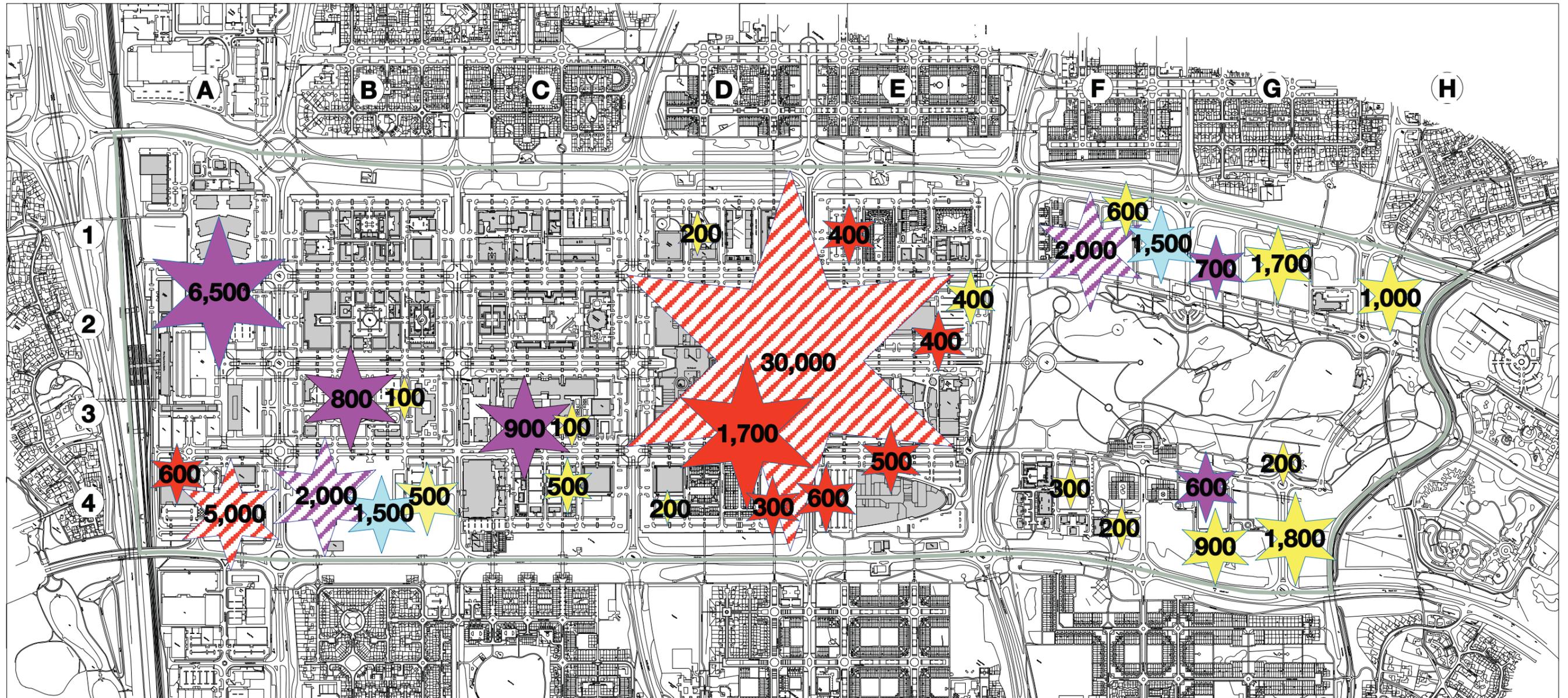


Figure 7: Additional Workers (per day), Visitors (per day), and Residents in 2026