

MK Gallery Plans Ambitious Expansion



Milton Keynes Gallery is planning a programme of major expansion over the next few years, which will transform it into a community arts hub, double its exhibition space and attract visitors from across the country.

The £10 million scheme will include three new cinemas for screening independent films, education and community facilities, a bar, café and bookshop. The new extension will be located behind the existing gallery, adjacent to Marlborough Gate. Arts Council England is funding £2.9 million of the cost of the scheme.

This expansion will add greatly to the range of cultural offerings in CMK, and the Town Council commends MK Gallery for its commitment to providing new facilities for the community. Whilst we have some technical concerns about the design of the building, we strongly support this project overall and believe this is an example of the kind of projects CMK needs to become a regional centre of culture.

A planning application for the expansion has been submitted to Milton Keynes Council and is currently awaiting a decision. CMK Town Council will update you on progress via our website.



NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REFERENDUM ON ELECTION DAY

A public referendum on whether to adopt the CMK Alliance Business Neighbourhood Plan will be held on May 7, the same day as the local and national elections. As highlighted in previous issues, the plan is the result of a three-year collaboration between CMK Town Council, local business leaders and Milton Keynes Council.

The Alliance Neighbourhood Plan is a blueprint for developing CMK over the next fifteen years. It promotes high quality mixed-use developments, innovative parking and public transport, and community and cultural facilities. In contrast to the recently approved multi-storey car park near John Lewis, the Alliance Neighbourhood Plan encourages development encompassing a variety of uses and services to benefit all users of the city centre, including residents, workers and shoppers. In addition to providing a long-term vision for the future of CMK, the plan also supports retaining the classic design and infrastructure of the city centre.

If the CMK Neighbourhood Plan passes at the referendum stage, it will become a key part of local planning policy, guiding and influencing developments and planning applications for years to come.

Residents Express Their Views in Town Council Questionnaire

The Town Council recently distributed a questionnaire, asking residents for their views on a range of local topics and issues. So far over two hundred responses have been received, an impressive result that has enabled us to get a much clearer picture of the views and needs of local residents.

Responses have been received from every residential area in CMK, from Buckingham Square in the west to Campbell Heights in the east. Many of the responses went into great detail on the problems facing their areas, providing us with vital information to inform our future work. Already clear priorities are beginning to emerge, including strong interest in providing litter bins and salt bins in many areas. Once our analysis is complete, the detailed results will be made available on our website. The Town Council would like to thank everyone who filled out and returned the questionnaire.



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New City Art Prize Raises CMK Profile

The Milton Keynes Gallery recently played host to the first annual New City Art Prize, raising the national profile of the city in the art world. The prize was won by sculptor Siobhan Hapaska, whose work was exhibited in the gallery along with the other shortlisted artists over the Christmas period.

Silbury Boulevard Office Conversions

An application has been submitted to convert the office buildings at 809 and 811 Silbury Boulevard to residential use. These are the two brown brick buildings near North Thirteenth Street, where the Job Centre was formerly located.

Milton Keynes Council Announces Budget Cuts

Milton Keynes Council have announced that they need to cut costs by £22 million. Significant cuts are proposed to grants to many charities that operate in the city centre, such as YMCA and Citizens Advice Bureau. The final budget will be decided at a public meeting of MK Council in the Civic Offices on the 18th of February.

Mid-Winter Fire Festival Delights Crowds

The Mid-Winter Fire Festival in Campbell Park in December proved to be a great success, with large crowds gathering to watch the stunning fire performances and lantern parade. It is hoped the fire festival will become an annual event in Campbell Park every winter.

Follow CMK Town Council on Twitter

You can now follow Central Milton Keynes Town Council on Twitter! Our username is @CMKTownCouncil – feel free to tweet us with any questions or thoughts, and follow us for all the latest news and events in CMK.

New Hotel Development Planned for Theatre District Site

Plans for a new hotel to the south of the Theatre District were submitted to Milton Keynes Council in November 2014. The six-storey building will front onto Avebury Boulevard, but will be built further back from the road than other neighbouring buildings. The development is also planned to include new retail and leisure facilities. Premier Inn are currently in line to be the hotel's operator.

UGS MK Ltd., who are behind the project, say the £7 million scheme is part of a wider "masterplan" intended to regenerate the run-down Theatre District area. The public consultation on this proposal has now closed, and the application is expected to be determined by Milton Keynes Council in the near future. Please check our website for further updates.



Parking Changes Proposed for CMK

Plans to create three new areas of temporary parking will be decided at a meeting of the main Milton Keynes Council on the 9th of February. MKC are also proposing to increase parking charges from 40p to 50p an hour for the purple standard bays, and from £1.40 to £2 an hour for the red premium bays.

The three sites in question are all vacant plots earmarked for future development. The

parking is initially intended to be in place for three years, with an extension possible if no development plans come forward for those sites. The sites are located:

- behind Saxon Court on South Row
- behind Westminster House on South Row
- south of Avebury Boulevard between Toys 'R' Us and Sainsbury's (known as block B4).

CMK Town Council supports the principle of increasing the number of parking spaces in Central Milton Keynes, but does not support the proposals to increase parking charges or cut parking discounts for local businesses at the present time. Our full detailed response to these plans can be found in the News and Views section of our website.



Multi-Storey Car Park Gets the Green Light

The proposed new multi-storey car park next to John Lewis was given the green light by Milton Keynes Council at their planning committee meeting on the 8th of January. The scheme, which CMK Town Council opposed throughout, will see a 1,400 space multi-storey car park built on the present surface car park next to John Lewis.

Dr. Rebecca Kurth, Chair of CMK Town Council, said "The granting of this application has thrown away the opportunity to build an innovative mixed-use development on this key city centre site. It will effectively blight the area for a generation or more."

The plans attracted strong criticism from a wide range of organisations, including other neighbouring parish councils, the Milton Keynes Development Partnership, the Parks Trust, MK Gallery, the Milton Keynes Bus Users Group, and more.

"Here we go again," said Bus User Group chairman Peter Ballantyne. "Justifications are being made saying the new development will only delay buses at peak times and that traffic lights at the end of Midsummer Boulevard will be the answer. So more delays to bus users are deemed acceptable."

Several members of the Planning Committee also spoke out against the scheme, but some went on to vote in favour despite this. In the end, Milton Keynes Councillors Andrew Geary, Ric Brackenbury, John Bint and Keith McLean voted in favour of approval, while Councillors Martin Gowans, Martin Petchey and David Lewis voted against. Councillor Rex Exon abstained.



New Residents' Forum Aims to Connect Local Groups

Representatives from residents' groups from across CMK and Campbell Park are being invited to come together for the launch of the new CMK Residents' Forum. This new group aims to enable residents to work together on issues important to them, from litter and paving through to crime and anti-social behaviour. The quarterly meetings are being coordinated by Town Councillor Hilarie Bowman, with the CMK Street Warden Rob Harriman also helping to facilitate solutions to any issues raised. Representatives from key agencies such as Thames Valley Police and Milton Keynes Council will also be attending some of the meetings.

While some areas already have resident and neighbourhood associations, others do not, and in those areas the Town Council is looking for local residents who are interested in representing their building, block or street at the meetings. If you are interested, please email Hilarie at hilarie.bowman@centralmk-tc.gov.uk, or call the office on 01908 766176.

CMK Town Council: Understanding Our Role

A number of comments in response to the residents' questionnaire have highlighted a confusion between us (Central Milton Keynes Town Council) and Milton Keynes Council.

Milton Keynes Council (MKC) is the council for the whole borough of Milton Keynes, representing about 250,000 residents. MKC provides most of the local services for residents, such as street lighting, road repairs, refuse collection, social services and council housing. These services are supported by your Council Tax payment, which is currently about £1,400 per year for Band D households.

In contrast, CMK Town Council (CMKTC) is the parish council for the city centre area, representing about 3,000 residents. Our work focuses on influencing the borough council (MKC) and other bodies to deliver better services and to make better decisions for our residents. We also partner with MKC on a number of projects to improve the quality of life for local people. The work of the Town Council is supported by the parish precept, which is currently about £34 per year for Band D households.



As a parish council, CMKTC is not responsible for services like household refuse collection and landscape maintenance, but we do follow-up any issues raised by residents and work with MKC to find ways of providing better services for our parish. We spend a lot of time responding to planning applications, as many areas in CMK and Campbell Park are not yet built and proposed developments can have a major impact on local residents.

The Town Council also supports a wide range of events and activities in CMK, as well as contributing funding to the CMK Street Warden, who monitors and takes action on a number of different issues around CMK such as graffiti, litter and safety.

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**Saturday 7 February:
Buszy Comedy
Fundraiser**

An evening of stand-up comedy starts at 7.30pm at the Buszy youth centre, in the former Central bus station. The event includes local comedian Jimmy James Jones, along with many others. Tickets cost £5.

**Thursday 12 February:
Comic Making
Workshops at
MK Library**

There will be two free comic making sessions for anyone aged 12 and above on 12th February and 12th March. Space is limited so registration is essential.

**Saturday 21 February:
Bark in the Park
Registration Session**

Register for the 2015 group dog walking sessions in Campbell Park, an ideal opportunity to get to know other dog owners.

**Friday 13 March:
Skipping Day at
MK Rose**

Skip along to the MK Rose in Campbell Park for National Skipping Day! Meet at 11am for an interactive skipping event.

**Saturday 14 March: Live
Music at MK Gallery**

Live performances from three acts in a fascinating range of styles ranging from dark pop to experimental folk music. Tickets cost £5 on the door.

**Until 22 March: How
to Construct a Time
Machine**

An ongoing exhibition at MK Gallery of over twenty-five historical and contemporary works based around the theme of how artists use media to transform our experience of time.

For more details of these events and others, please see our website at www.cmktowncouncil.org

Bark in the Park: Fun for Furry Friends

Make new friends at the "Bark in the Park" walks in Campbell Park. These events are an ideal opportunity to meet other dog owners, let your dog interact with other furry friends and discover interesting new walking routes around Campbell Park and the canal. The walks are suitable for healthy dogs aged 12 months and over, and will last approximately one and a half hours at a moderate pace, with some sections of off-lead walking where conditions permit.

Registration Day for the "Bark in the Park" sessions will take place on Saturday 21 February, meeting at the Cricket Pavilion at the east end of the park, near the cricket ground, at 10am. It costs £2 per dog and there will be a short on-lead walk on the registration day. There is plenty of space, so no need to book ahead. For more information, please email the Parks Trust at events@theparkstrust.com.



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A Night of Live Music at MK Gallery



For something different and exciting, head to the Milton Keynes Gallery for a night of live music on Saturday 14 March. The acts performing will cover a

range of styles, from dark pop through acoustic performance to experimental folk music.

The artists performing include Shield Patterns, a pop act consisting of Claire Brentnall and Richard Nox, who released their debut album *Contour Lines* in June. The album has been described as having a "unique, intricate and detailed sound" and received strong praise, including a five star review from *The Skinny* magazine.

Also performing is *Esperi*, the artistic name of Chris James Marr, a talented musician whose music ranges from acoustic storytelling through to sampled electronica, using a variety of instruments including acoustic guitars, samplers, bells and toys.

The night will conclude with *Lost Harbours*, an experimental folk duo from Southend, playing a blend of psychedelic folk, *musique concrète* and drone music. The show starts at 7.30pm, with tickets available on the door for £5.

Comic Making Workshops at MK Library

Comic making workshops at MK Library provide a unique and fun opportunity to learn new skills and discover your inner artist. The free sessions will teach the art of writing, designing, colouring and publishing comics and are open to anyone aged twelve and above.

Digital artist Jade Sarson will be leading the two sessions, held on the first floor at Milton Keynes Central Library.

There are only 25 spaces on the workshops, so registration is essential.

The sessions will take place as follows:

Creating Characters:

Thursday, 12th February 2015

Drawing Emotions: Thursday, 12th March 2015

If you're interested, you can register for these sessions by visiting the Enquiry Desk on the first floor at the Central Library.

Alternatively you can telephone 01908 254075 for more information, or email digitalis@milton-keynes.gov.uk.



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