

Plans to replace landmark approved



It has been seven years in the making but the final plans for replacing MK's iconic Point with a new leisure/retail development were approved this March.

MK Council originally gave planning permission for this important building to be demolished several years ago, agreeing to the basic layout and scale of the new development. However the designs put forward by Hammerson, which owns the site, were widely rejected as being a poor pastiche of the original and which lacked local features such as colonnades. Among other stakeholders, the Town Council pushed for interactive public workshops, and, after Hammerson's architects Benoy worked hard to produce a completely fresh design our position changed from 'object' to 'support'.

As Councillor Andy Thomas puts it, "The addition of colonnades for weather protection and aligning the main entrance with the porte cochere crossing will make life easier for pedestrians, while the way the building sits within the rigorous lines of the grid will now provide more interesting views for residents as well as visitors. Also, the simplified facades and quality materials means the new building will complement the established character of CMK whilst also having a distinctive presence of its own."

The developer now has two years to start work on the site, and while thousands will regret the demolition of this much-loved landmark it is hoped that the new development will revive a long-neglected area in the heart of CMK.

Station Square in the spotlight

Milton Keynes Development Partnership recently held two workshops focusing on the future of Station Square, and specifically how to make the area more of a destination.

But should the area be seen as a new destination, or as a vital public transport hub? Dr Rebecca Kurth, Chair of CMK Town Council, said: "It's already a destination – and probably the biggest destination of all in CMK! Thousands of commuters go in and out of there every day, and that figure is set to rise. Its raison d'être is as a public transport hub. Therefore any changes to Station Square have to be driven by public transport and not by trying to create a new leisure destination. My question is 'How do you make the area a better destination for public transport?' MK Council and the MK Futures Commission are all indicating that the population of MK, or its larger metropolitan area, will double in size by 2050. This puts an enormous strain on public transport and on the grid road system. The only solution is better public transport and Station Square is critical to that."

A public exhibition will be held later in the year.



MEET OUR NEW COMMUNITY MOBILISER

CMK Town Council welcomes Sue Nelson from Community Action as our new Community Mobiliser. Sue will be working with your Town Councillors for one day each week to promote community spirit through projects such as replanting neglected areas, supporting residents' neighbourhood groups and finding out people's views through a parish-wide survey. She will also be researching the facilities that are available for community use in CMK and Campbell Park so we can update the information on our website and through the regular newsletters. You may well see Sue out and about on Fridays and can also meet her at the next police/residents' forum at 7pm on May 20th at Centrecom.

Also, don't forget that some money is set aside from the Town Council Budget each year for grants to support 'grassroots' residents' projects that help foster pride in the neighbourhood or bring people together. If you have ideas for community projects that might qualify for a modest amount of funding (usually a maximum of £500) please contact our Town Clerk, Paul Cranfield via clerk@cmktowncouncil.gov.uk and he will be able to explain the grants process.





2019/20 Precept

This year's parish precept, a small part of your overall council tax bill, will increase by 4.8%. Councillors approved the increase to enable the introduction of new initiatives, including a new Community Mobiliser and developing planting schemes for the granite quadrants, which are in need of attention. This equates to an increase of 36p per month for a Band 'D' property, which still keeps the CMK precept among the lowest of the urban parish and town councils within Milton Keynes.

Look out for the survey

CMK Town Council will be undertaking a residents' survey. It will help us understand what matters most to residents; what facilities you would like to see in the parish – from grit bins to benches, and what kind of sports activities and community events you would like to feature in the locality. The survey will be landing on doormats shortly. Please return the survey in the pre-paid envelope.

Issues for the next Police Forum

Drug use, anti-social behaviour and car cruising are the issues that will be the focus of the next Police Forum at Centrecom (Centrecom Meeting Place, 602 N Row, MK9 3BJ) on Monday, May 20, from 7pm. All residents are welcome to attend. The Residents Forum will follow from 8pm for anyone who wants to get more involved in local issues to join the conversation.

The annual meeting of the parish will be held in the early evening on Thursday, June 13. Residents are invited to hear from the town council about the past year's activities, while also looking forward to new initiatives in the coming year.

'Packaged' living near The Hub

The trend for 'private rental schemes' continues in CMK. The latest application is a quality proposal designed by Assael architects to build nearly 300 apartments between the new Moxy hotel and the CBX building. The development, called Aubrey Place, faces Avebury Boulevard and reaches 17 stories at its highest point (near the CBX).

Early designs included a large unit for a restaurant and a new open space fronting the boulevard. Following positive discussions with the Town Council, an exhibition and public workshops, the developers, Packaged Living, have made significant improvements. These include adding colonnades to keep pedestrians dry in rainy weather and roof gardens for residents to enjoy.

However CMK lacks modern, affordable meeting space and people attending the workshop asked for a flexible community space to be incorporated into the ground floor, which could open up onto the outside space. In addition, the idea of anchoring the space in the work of MK's most

famous artists, Boyd and Evans, came forward as a way of adding a uniquely artistic aspect to the public areas of the building.

The Town Council is working to secure these aspirations for the benefit of residents old and new; but it has raised concerns over the amount of parking. Packaged Living, however, believe the numbers are right because people living in this type of development typically own fewer cars than average. In due course, MK Council's Development Control Committee will have to decide if the numbers add up, or not, in this part of town.



Competition for MK:U design is launched

Milton Keynes Council and Cranfield University have begun their search for a landmark design for the MK:U campus, which will be built on a 10.1 hectare block across from Sainsbury's in CMK.

The competition launched at the end of January, and architects have been asked to consider MK's distinctive character and modern heritage as well as creating an instantly recognisable building that meets the university's aspirations as a 'digital playground' with pioneering ways of teaching.

The design must also meet the highest sustainability standards,

suitable for a city with a long established reputation for innovation.

CMK Town Council is pleased to be joining the judging panel. Dr Rebecca Kurth, Chair of the Town Council, will take the position and represent the interests of local residents.

The winning design will be revealed in the summer.

Planters to brighten up town



CMK Town Council has agreed to renew eight quadrant planters in CMK. The planters are in poor condition following years of budget pressures on MK Council with old and dying shrubs and weeds instead of the once thriving

beds of greenery. "In their current state the planters give a poor image of CMK for residents, workers, shoppers and visitors," said Councillor Hilarie Bowman, "Renewing these will make the area much more attractive, and hopefully nurture a sense of local pride."

The chosen planters are at key locations close to residential streets north of Silbury Boulevard and south of Avebury Boulevard. If additional funding is received from Milton Keynes Council, the scheme could be doubled to take in 16 planters.

The Town Council is now looking for volunteers to help brighten up the town by helping to clear the old shrubs and plant up new ones. Volunteers are also being sought to ensure regular maintenance once the initial work has been completed.

If you are interested in getting involved please email the Town Clerk, Paul Cranfield, at clerk@cmktowncouncil.gov.uk

Wyevale site springs back to life



After ten years in the doldrums the site of the old Wyevale garden centre, opposite Xscape, is set for a new lease of life. MK Council has recently granted planning permission to Abbeygate Developments to build 328 apartments. The one and two bed apartments will be available for private rental and include 34 units that will be offered at affordable rents. There will also be a range of retail units on the ground floor and a central garden, visible from Avebury Boulevard, which will occasionally be open to the public. Although several nearby residents objected to the development, saying their privacy and sunlight would be seriously reduced, MK Council accepted the applicant's solar studies showing that this would not be an issue.

Northside development issues

CMK Town Council has challenged MK Council's decision to approve the Campbell Park Northside Development Brief which promotes the building of around 1500 new homes.

The Town Council believes there is no need to alter the classic infrastructure in the area – including access roads, parking bays, rows of trees and pedestrian underpasses. If these areas are 'reimagined' and development is brought forward, closer to Silbury Boulevard, Skeldon Gate and Overgate, it would disrupt the unique layout of the town centre, interfering with traffic flow and the safety of pedestrians.

"The development brief says the developer should be given wriggle room to 'reimagine' these areas and even build at-grade pedestrian crossings over Skeldon and Overgate. That might save money for the developer, but we firmly believe that housing should be set back from traffic and pedestrians should be kept safely away from busy roads by building new

underpasses or bridges," said Dr Rebecca Kurth, Chair of CMK Town Council.

The Town Council is also concerned that if developers build right up to the edge of Silbury Boulevard traffic flow and public transport would be seriously affected. "Road-blocking doesn't happen in CMK very much," said Rebecca, "because taxis, delivery vans and so on can come off the boulevard into the 'slow' or side streets to pick up or drop off people and goods. Compared to other cities, the traffic flows freely through CMK. Also, the Northside of Campbell Park has single carriageways in each direction. Over 50 buses an hour go down this stretch of Silbury Boulevard and if vehicles start pulling up on the boulevard to drop off passengers through-traffic would come completely to a halt and the delays would be disastrous."

Following an urgent mediation meeting, MK Council has agreed to revisit the Development Brief in light of the Town Council's concerns.

Get in the saddle for off-road cycle trail

The Parks Trust has created a new off-road cycle trail through Campbell Park.

Building on the success of last year's Central Cyclo-cross League race, hosted in the park, the new route takes riders along a mown-grass trail through lesser-used parts of Campbell Park including the base of the Belvedere and the Woodland Ridge. A lap of the trail is 2.5km and is suitable for riders of all abilities with mountain bikes, cyclo-cross or gravel bikes.

"The cyclo-cross race was extremely popular with riders who voted Campbell Park the best course of the season. We'd already seen an increase in people cycling in the park so our new trail is inspired by the race course but takes riders around parts that are currently under-used," said Landscape and Operations Director Rob Riekie, "this fits in with our ambition for Campbell Park to be a hub for outdoor sports including mountain biking, cyclo-cross, duathlon and cross country running".



The MK City Duathlon will use the Campbell Park World Cyclo-cross Circuit as part of its course. There will be a choice of three distances on offer at the brand new MK event on April 21. To enter, visit www.britishtriathlon.org/events/mk-city-duathlon_10750

Let's spring clean the canal!

Volunteers will be welcome at the Spring Canal Clean-up of the Grand Union Canal this April. The two day event (April 5 & 6) will cover the area from Fenny Stratford to Wolverton, and passes through Campbell Park on Friday, April 5.

Participants are welcome, whether on boat or on foot,

and you can litter-pick from the towpath and hedges, or work aboard a boat to retrieve items from the canal or the opposite bank.

Hi-vis jackets, gloves and hard hats will be provided, but you'll need your own safety footwear - on workboats, steel-capped boots are mandatory.

"Several tonnes of rubbish are collected each time," said Les Franklin, from the IWA MK branch. "As well as the usual supermarket trolleys, bikes and household rubbish, crime related items such as guns and blown safes have been found".

To volunteer contact pat.durham@team.waterways.org.uk

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Every Saturday Stories, Songs and Rhyme Times for the Under 5s

Milton Keynes Central Library hosts the 30 minute sessions weekly, at 11am. Entry is free, but voluntary donations are appreciated.

Sunday 19 May The Great Get Together IFTAAR

The Parks Trust invites you to join them at Campbell Park Pavilion for a celebration of the opening of the Fast during the blessed month of Ramadan. A collaboration of faiths and cultures, you are invited to attend with family and friends and bring food to support unity, diversity and togetherness for all. From 7.30pm.

Confirm attendance by calling 07702 894940 or email kurshidamirza@gmail.com

Saturday 8 June Soapbox Derby

The second annual event will take place along a 200m course on Midsummer Boulevard, with added live entertainment.

For entry details visit www.mksoapbox.co.uk

The event is free for spectators.

Saturday 15 June & Sunday 16 June MK Festival of History

The family friendly biannual celebration of history and heritage returns with re-enactments, stalls and stage entertainment across the two days in Campbell Park.

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

Milton Keynes Gallery re-opens

After a break of more than three years, Milton Keynes Gallery opened its doors again earlier this month, with the ambitious exhibition The Lie of the Land.

The show, which continues until May 26, features works by more than 85 artists, and includes pieces by Canaletto, Lowry and Gainsborough.

Gallery director Anthony Spira says the forthcoming shows are in response to community engagement: "Everything we've done has been in response to people's words, which encouraged us to think about putting on a much broader programme," he said.



The Crowning by Yinka Shonibare at MK Gallery © Jonathan Hordle PA Wire

And the art hub is giving a nod to Milton Keynes' past with its new look, which was designed by 6a architects.

"We've tried to engage with the history of MK throughout the design of the building," Anthony said. "Every design decision has been made to tell the story of MK. Milton Keynes was at the forefront of interesting cultural stuff. It was really at the heart of the most exciting cultural development at that time."

One welcome addition to the expanded space is the inclusion of a café for visitors – and the bright décor also gives a nod to the early years of Milton Keynes. "The café has been inspired by the architects office in use when they built MK," Anthony said.

Funding from the Margaret Powell Foundation Fund through the MK Community Foundation means the building is also equipped with a Changing Places toilet, which will meet the needs of people with profound learning and physical disabilities, including spinal injuries, multiples sclerosis and muscular dystrophy. It means that the art on display really will be accessible to all.

Artist goes international

Milton Keynes artist Melanie Watts has been getting creative from her temporary base at Margaret Powell House in the heart of CMK, having recently returned from a four week artist residency in India.

Mosaicist Melanie is currently creating a new piece of art for an international audience, thanks to support from Milton Keynes Community Foundation, which recently awarded her a bursary.

The mosaic will be displayed at the Musiwa International Art and Contemporary Mosaic exhibition, in Florence.



Melanie's barn owl mosaic, Autumn Splendour, a stunning and colourful creation for the Gyosei arts trail at Bolbeck Park, was discovered on social media by the event organiser, renowned Italian artist Francesco Chiementi.

The Florence exhibition will take place in June.

If you haven't already discovered the Gyosei Art Trail it makes for a pleasant walk along the Grand Union Canal. At some point in the future the Town Council is interested in extending the art trail to take in Campbell Park as well.

www.cmktowncouncil.gov.uk



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CMK LIFE is published by CMK Town Council (CMKTC), which is the parish council elected by residents living in the City Centre and Campbell Park. CMKTC is independent of MK Council and is not affiliated with any political party. Any opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of CMKTC. Contact us on 01908 766176.