

3. Vision, Principles & Objectives

3.1 This is the Alliance's vision for CMK:

Our Vision

By 2026, CMK will be the dynamic centre of one of the fastest-growing regions in the South-East. It will support thousands of new jobs and wide-spread prosperity as:

- » One of the most accessible city centres in the UK, pioneering sustainable yet convenient transport choices for workers, visitors and residents;
- » The home of an expanding university, delivering innovative approaches to higher education and nurturing new business ventures in technological and creative hubs across the centre;
- » A vibrant and safe place, with an increasingly regional and national role, that welcomes, surprises and delights workers, visitors and residents alike, with a rich mix of shopping, leisure, sports, cultural and social facilities offering an exciting street life and a diverse night life;
- » An admired, prestigious city centre, with its distinctive cityscape and high quality infrastructure respected, reinforced and celebrated;
- » The home of people and organisations working to reduce their carbon footprint;
- » An inclusive place, encouraging participation and interaction, connecting people, stimulating ideas, and inspiring future generations; and
- » The centre of civic life for Milton Keynes.

The Most Accessible City Centre

- 3.2 Ease of access to and from Milton Keynes, and above all within it, has attracted residents, investors and businesses to CMK from its beginning.
- 3.3 Everyone has benefited from the excellent infrastructure whatever their chosen mode of travel – pedestrians, cyclists, bus and train passengers, and above all car users.
- 3.4 The Plan faces up to the challenge of retaining or improving accessibility for all users, whatever their age and physical mobility, whilst growing CMK. Provision for all modes has to be improved and increased. Greater mobility by greater numbers using CMK has to be well managed.
- 3.5 The Plan requires greater accessibility by the public transport system and at the same time improving the efficiency and management of parking spaces as they proportionately reduce in number.
- 3.6 CMK has the highest numbers of car parking spaces in proportion to development of any city centre in the country. Milton Keynes also

has a car ownership rate much higher than other urban centres, comparable to affluent Rural districts⁶. In addition, it has the lowest number of public transport passengers. As CMK grows, it simply will not be possible to build an equivalent number of parking spaces, because land is running out and the cost of multi-storey or underground parking is high. And with unlimited parking, even our famous grid road network will become grid-locked with congestion. However, the *CMKAP* does require more parking to be delivered, as a better balance is needed between current provision and what is needed to ensure we do not hinder economic growth and prosperity in future.

- 3.7 We all make or complete our journeys on foot. CMK was designed to be easily accessible throughout for people with impaired mobility, which also makes it convenient for those with full mobility. The Plan maintains these high standards, improves on them where possible and ensures that new developments are pedestrian friendly.
- 3.8 The Plan also improves the cycling network and associated facilities for cyclists across CMK.

A Learning City

- 3.9 City centres are places where not only trade but also the exchange of knowledge and learning takes place.
- 3.10 In the daily life of the centre, learning goes on all the time. Shop workers are trained. Apprentices are engaged. Employees go on day release to vocational courses. In nurseries and crèches, young children are stimulated and learn. And informally, we exchange news, information and understanding either face to face or through the internet.
- 3.11 Milton Keynes is the largest town in the country that is without a university for students resident in the locality (students of the Open University are taught at a distance).
- 3.12 The first steps are being taken in establishing a university for Milton Keynes, which could be a new kind of university, with learning taking place throughout the city and students being based for part of their courses in existing businesses and institutions.
- 3.13 This model for the university, with the aspiration to have 5,000 students studying locally by

2025, would complement the approach to the city centre as a whole, being a place for learning. But the University will need a home with some of the traditional facilities, such as lecture theatres, administrative offices, tutorial rooms and residential provision for students.

- 3.14 And across the centre, the Plan promotes the creation of places where formal and informal learning can take place.

Vibrant and Safe

- 3.15 The key feature that sets apart the ‘centre’ from other parts of the city is the concentration and diversity of activities and interactions that take place there. It is the hustle and bustle of commerce, the comings and goings of people from all walks of life, the interesting things to see and do that are the essential qualities that make the heart of the city.
- 3.16 The most successful city centres have a vibrant intensity, a diverse street life and safe night life – offices, shops, restaurants, theatres, and flats all built in close proximity, creating a lively and animated place from early morning to late evening, on weekdays and at weekends.

⁶ *Milton Keynes Local Transport Plan (LTP3)*

- 3.17 The 1967 plan for Milton Keynes laid out a generous area for the city centre – whilst the surrounding residential areas comprise one ‘grid square’ each, CMK comprises three grid squares, laid out as 26 ‘Blocks’ with a large central park.
- 3.18 This generous approach to the planning of CMK has provided ample space for the city centre to grow and is one of the reasons for its economic success. This approach has also produced a city centre that is three to five times larger in area than the centres of other cities of comparable population. It is this ‘spaciousness’ that is both an asset and a challenge – activities and people are spread out, making the centre more convenient to get around, yet also making it feel less busy and animated than other city centres.
- 3.19 In understanding this challenge, we can better address it. The Plan aims to increase and concentrate activity along the front of key pedestrian routes, whilst bringing a greater diversity of uses into every Block. Encouraging and enticing pedestrians along routes that feel lively and look interesting will better connect the different parts of the city centre, bringing ever more activity and interaction onto the street, which helps create a strong sense of place.

Distinct and Admired

- 3.20 The distinguishing feature of CMK is the extent, layout and quality of the public realm. No other city centre in the UK has a complete grid of boulevards, gates and streets designed and built as the framework within which buildings sit and activities take place. It is a unique framework for prosperity – a city centre like no other.
- 3.21 Campbell Park is one of the largest and finest contemporary urban parks in Europe. Across the city centre, the high quality of generous landscaping surprises and delights workers, visitors, and residents alike. It too makes the city more attractive to potential investors and new businesses.
- 3.22 Some of the infrastructure is beginning to show its age – it will need to be repaired and arrangements put in place for its proper maintenance.

- 3.23 The listing of the Shopping Building (trading as ‘thecentre:mk’) further demonstrates that CMK has made a significant contribution to contemporary British urban design and architecture. Public art has also played an important role in the development of CMK and is a major feature of CMK’s distinctiveness.
- 3.24 The Plan creates more places that encourage animation and will support and expand the existing programme of cultural activities, thus enlivening the city centre’s public spaces.

A Social and Inclusive Place

- 3.25 The city centre will be the place where people connect with other people - businesses with their customers and other businesses, friends meeting friends, families celebrating together.
- 3.26 City centres are places of communication, interaction, trade and creativity. The unconventional and new are to be encouraged, especially amongst the young. What was Bill Gates doing in his garage in Seattle in 1972?

- 3.27 The Alliance is looking for investment by the development industry, but is also examining innovative ways of creating places which will allow the free reign of ideas.
- 3.28 Citizens of Milton Keynes and visitors are to be welcomed to CMK: this is an open, curious and friendly society that helps people from all backgrounds to realise their potential.
- 3.29 We call it a social place, which creates opportunities for all, has welcoming places in which people interact and offers ways in which ideas can be developed.
- 3.30 It is all too easy to create a culture that rejects minorities and the less fortunate and pushes them elsewhere to pursue their dreams. In CMK, we will invest in creating an inclusive place.

Key Principles

- 3.31 The proposals and policies in the *CMK Alliance Plan* have been informed not only by the vision for the city centre, but also by a set of key principles and values. Underpinning the Plan, these principles provide benchmarks against which its implementation can be assessed.

1. To maintain and enhance the city centre as a distinctive place by:

- » Promoting the formal geometry of the grid and its classic infrastructure;
- » Enhancing its green landscaped setting and linkages (the 'Green Frame'); and
- » Protecting its tree lined Boulevards and Gates.

2. To be sensitive in the approach to development by:

- » Understanding and responding to the unique qualities of CMK;
- » Recognising the value of outstanding twentieth century architecture of CMK;
- » Where appropriate, refurbishing and improving the building stock to be sustainable; and
- » Understanding and responding to the context of CMK.

3. To manage the growth of CMK to complement and enhance MK as a whole by:

- » Ensuring that the economic benefits created by the growth of CMK benefit the rest of Milton Keynes; and
- » Complementing the distinct role of the older towns and district centres.

4. To ensure ease and choice of access for all by:

- » Using a multi-modal approach to respond to the travel needs of all CMK users;
- » Improving the pedestrian experience;
- » Improving the quality of pedestrian and cycling connections into CMK from surrounding areas;
- » Developing high quality public transport interchange facilities;
- » Recognising the importance of the car to the city's success; and
- » Taking an holistic approach to the management of city centre parking responding to the needs of different users.

5. To embrace diversity by:

- » Reflecting and responding to the multi-cultural diversity of MK;
- » Encouraging more varied patronage of CMK; and
- » Responding to the needs of all residents.

6. To recognise the importance of green and open spaces in CMK by:

- » Promoting and improving key civic spaces and focal points;
- » Making a clear distinction between public and private spaces;
- » Encouraging greater animation of public and green spaces; and
- » Recognising Campbell Park as one of the finest urban parks in Europe.

7. To make CMK a social place by:

- » Promoting a safe and secure city centre through good design;
- » Diversifying and integrating the commercial, residential, retail, cultural and leisure offer; and
- » Encouraging social interaction through a high quality public realm and places and spaces for community activity.

8. To be respected and admired as an important city centre by:

- » Achieving high quality architecture that is a dignified addition to CMK;
- » Promoting CMK as the focal point of an international city;
- » Promoting CMK as having a unique story to tell and as an attraction for tourists; and
- » Promoting CMK as the prime location for headquarters of major companies.

9. To foster creativity, learning and success by:

- » Providing opportunities in CMK for lifelong learning;
- » Supporting the initiatives to establish a university in CMK;
- » Focusing on the development of the knowledge based economy; and
- » Ensuring that CMK is at the leading edge of information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure.

Strategic Objectives

3.32 Preparation of this business neighbourhood plan has been guided by the following strategic objectives for CMK in policy CS7 of the Council's adopted *Core Strategy*:

1. Achieve higher quality buildings and spaces around them, with greater attention to human scale and more detail and variety of uses within proposals;
2. Promote a higher density of development in appropriate locations;
3. Achieve growing visitor numbers from outside the city to further enhance CMK's status as a regional and national destination for shopping, culture and leisure;
4. Offer a range of travel options which collectively will support an increase in visitor numbers to the city centre and increased average travel distances;
5. Develop as an attractive focus for all the residents of the Borough, whilst recognising its role as a District Centre for most of the surrounding estates;
6. Encourage greater access to and within the area by walking, cycling and public transport;

7. Provide more pedestrian -friendly routes and spaces between new and existing buildings and public areas;
8. Improve integration between the facilities and defined quarters of the area;
9. Accommodate the expansion needs of tertiary Higher Education such as the University Campus Milton Keynes (UCMK);
10. Offer an attractive urban living environment for the residents of current and future dwellings.

3.33 There are also quantitative objectives that MK's adopted Core Strategy has set as CMK's capacity for the growth in the number of new dwellings and office and retail floor space over the next 15 years. These are:

- ☒ 180,000 m² gross floor area for offices;
- ☒ 110,000 m² gross floor area for retail; and
- ☒ 5,000 new dwellings.

3.34 These objectives reflect the projected need for more jobs and the demand for more goods that will come from the growing population in the wider Milton Keynes borough such as in the Eastern and Western Expansion Areas. they also reflect the desire, as expressed in the *Core Strategy*, to meet these needs with a weighting towards CMK as a way of identifying the city centre.

3.35 As is true of all Neighbourhood Development Plans, the *CMK Alliance Plan 2026* must generally conform to the local authority's *Core Strategy* or Local Plan, so MK's adopted *Core Strategy* has been used to guide the quantum of development and the indicative land use proposals in this Plan.



High quality architecture and facilities for new investment

