

7. Access, Transport & Parking Strategy

- 7.1 Ease of movement and access by all modes - including walking, cycling and public transport - was one of the founding principles in the design of Milton Keynes. Anticipating the need to plan for the comfort and convenience of private cars in modern life led the designers of CMK to design the grid road system and to incorporate generous quantities of free, highly visible surface car parking spaces. These special features have been critical to the success of CMK over the past 40 years and despite the introduction of parking charges, the ease of car access and parking remains a major competitive advantage over ordinary town and city centres.
- 7.2 However, CMK was designed to meet the needs of 250,000 people in MK and more in the wider catchment. The current population of Milton Keynes is now approaching the originally planned size, and the *Core Strategy* expects the city to grow a further 25% (to 300,000) by 2026 or soon thereafter. In addition, as an emerging regional city centre, the number of workers and visitors attracted to CMK from beyond the Borough is also expected to increase. MK Council's adopted *Core Strategy* identifies CMK for more intense and larger scale development over this period in order to accommodate many of the new jobs that will be required to support the expected growth (see Figure 7)¹¹. So present movements from within MK to the city centre are projected to increase, as well as flows of people to CMK from the wider region.
- 7.3 The adopted *Core Strategy* addresses the need to retain ease of movement across the city as the growth unfolds, transforming the public transport system to provide attractive, fast, frequent, convenient and efficient movement in the city and together with the *Local Transport Plan* sets out transport objectives for CMK, from which we distinguish two key goals, in our words:
- » To offer a range of travel options which collectively support an increase in visitor numbers to the city centre; and
 - » To encourage greater access to and within the area by walking, cycling and public transport.
- 7.4 One of the key challenges for the Alliance Plan is to address the significant increase in the number of journeys to CMK (particularly journeys to work) and to avoid ever-increasing demands for space for car parking and the congestion that follows, and the need to make public transport, cycling and walking the superior choice for as many people as possible. The challenge is several-fold:
- » In the next plan period the grid network of City Roads surrounding CMK will be reaching its originally-planned capacity for vehicle movements (i.e. to serve a population of 250,000); and
 - » The adopted *Core Strategy* has set ambitious targets for the future growth of CMK - increasing the number of jobs and visitors by 50% and more than doubling the number of CMK homes during the plan period.

¹¹ Numbers calculated using DCLG's employment densities (e.g. jobs per NIA of office or retail space). For visitor numbers, TRICS data for retail shopping malls have been used for trip generation with a 40% Parker Factor reduction for cross-purpose trips.

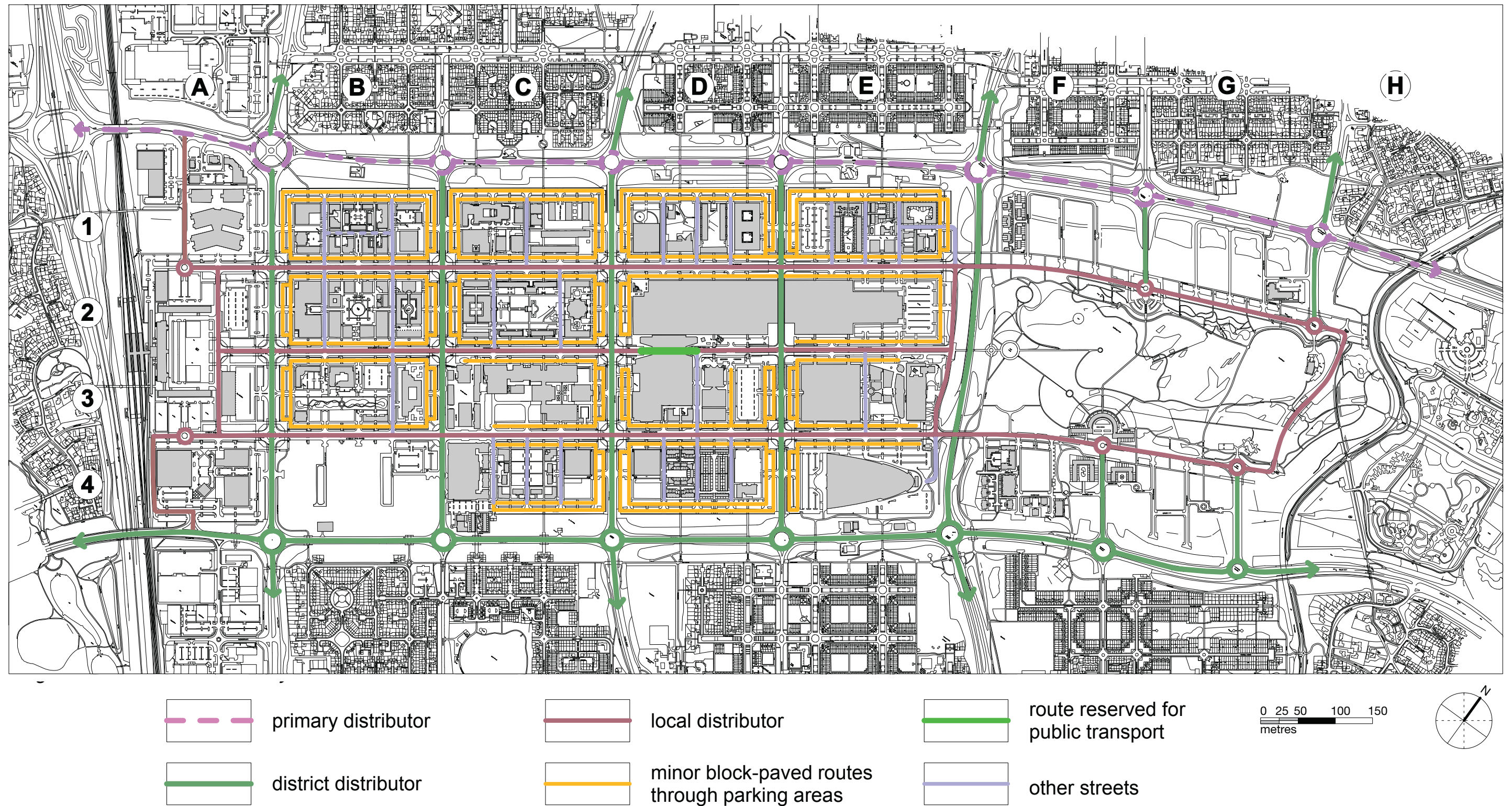


Figure 8: CMK Road Hierarchy

- 7.5 The Plan promotes public transport, cycling and walking as the preferred mode of choice for more people coming to and enjoying CMK. About 10% of journeys into CMK are currently made by bus, and the Plan, in line with previous MK Council transport studies¹², assumes that this can be increased to 20-25% by the end of the Plan period. Part of this shift could also be made by other interventions such as car share, working from home, cycling and walking, staggered work times, and park & ride on the edge of the city. This is an ambitious target, at the limits of what's considered feasible.
- 7.6 The shift to 20-25% of peak period journeys by public transport by 2026 still requires nearly 60% of journeys to be made by car, which even then will only achieve the 70:30 modal split on which the transport design of the original CMK plan was predicated. To put this plainly, use of public transport to get to CMK has to be greatly increased even to reach the expectations of the early 1970s.

- 7.7 The starting point for the transport strategy for CMK is therefore to acknowledge that good provision for cars remains a competitive advantage for CMK, which is of regional importance. In the pursuit of sustainable development, it's important not to 'discourage' car users with higher parking charges and fewer parking spaces, but to *encourage* people, where possible, to switch to public transportation, walking and cycling through improving the attractiveness of such choices with better infrastructure and greater convenience. We must also acknowledge that people will continue to come to CMK from many more directions and at more varied times of day than could ever be served by public transport alone, and from distances that are beyond the reach of cycling and walking.
- 7.8 Second, the transport strategy for CMK will evolve - transport solutions that work today for a population of 250,000 - 300,000 may not work forever. Our strategy must provide the flexibility to 'transition' to new transport choices, rather than trying to design and build 'permanent' solutions to these challenges.

It's important to future-proof transport in CMK by protecting the movement corridors that keep options open for different transport solutions in the future

- 7.9 With this understanding in mind, the Alliance's strategy for access, transport and parking has these strands:
- » Enhance highways and car parking capacity for future growth and development;
 - » Transform public transport to provide attractive high quality, greater capacity, flexibility and choice;
 - » Encourage walking and cycling through better public realm - safer and more attractive streets and Redways; and
 - » Restrain car parking provision while shifts to alternative transport modes take place – but it serves no purpose to restrain the car if there is no convenient and attractive alternative way for people to move around.

¹² 2007 MKP Transport Strategy Review

Enhancing CMK's Highways Capacity for Growth & Development

- 7.10 A key element of the CMKAP's access and transport strategy is to maximise CMK's highways capacity to support future growth and development. Firstly, the Plan promotes the retention of the Gates, Boulevards, Streets and the inter-connected 'slow streets' through perimeter parking areas.
- 7.11 Secondly, the Plan encourages new development to create greater 'permeability' – more routes for walking and cycling, in particular.
- 7.12 Thirdly, the Plan encourages the distribution of land uses in order to disperse entry and exit points around CMK and spread the traffic load on the surrounding junctions. The Plan suggests 'indicative' land uses for development sites, with an emphasis on finer grained mixed-use and wider distribution of employment activity. The land uses shown are not precisely fixed and an alternative mix to help achieve this Plan's objectives may be justified to the Council's Development Control Committee which will monitor the overall delivery of the adopted *Core Strategy's* targets and the Alliance Plan's strategy.
- 7.13 The wider MK City grid roads, and CMK's Gates, Boulevards and Streets are vital infrastructure that supports future growth and development in CMK by providing flexibility of movement and minimising congestion by distributing all modes of transport through multiple choices of routes. This is key to delivering one of the founding principles for CMK of 'combining the vitality of traditional city centres with the unhindered accessibility of an out of town centre.'
- 7.14 The highway hierarchy for CMK is illustrated in Figure 8:
- » Gates (district distributor roads) running north-south are the portals to CMK from the H5 Portway and H6 Childs Way. They provide access, via the surface level car parking, to development Blocks, and to service delivery points;
 - » Boulevards (local distributor roads) running east-west;
 - » Streets (access roads) running north/south which divide the Blocks of development land;
 - » North and South Rows, running east west and providing longer term parking areas for CMK, as well as access to development Blocks; and
- » The 'slow streets' through all the parking areas in the Gates, Boulevards and Rows.
- 7.15 This hierarchy is summarised in the *Milton Keynes Local Plan (2005)*.
- 7.16 Integral to the design of the Gates, Boulevards and Streets are parallel rows of public parking space that define and serve the Blocks of development land. The importance of the perimeter parking areas that surround most Blocks in CMK cannot be underestimated, as these areas establish a width of the main movement corridor which can be shared by varying different modes over time. Far from simply providing surface-level parking places, these areas, which are Adopted Public Highway for which MK Council has maintenance responsibility and which cannot be closed without special formal Closure procedures:
- » Provide through routes to North and South Rows as well as access to individual development Blocks;
 - » Provide inter-connected routes between the parking areas adjacent to the Boulevards in particular (named 'slow streets' in the *Plan for Milton Keynes (1970)*);

- » Provide alternative through routes for cyclists;
- » Provide service delivery access, where HGVs can manoeuvre and temporarily park to deliver goods, without obstructing traffic on the busier Boulevards and Gates;
- » Contain porte cocheres which offer pedestrians weather protection and greater safety as they identify key crossing routes; and
- » Accommodate corridors for common trenches and ducts for utility services.

7.17 The space can also be used to accommodate alternative transport modes in future – maybe cycle hire stands, parking and cycle interchanges, small transport interchanges or simply more taxi ranks. The space enables future-proofing of accessibility and transport.

7.18 The final strand of our strategy to maximise highways capacity is to distribute land uses across the city centre. This is particularly relevant to employment land use (e.g. offices and institutions) because work patterns tend to concentrate journeys into and out of the city centre over shorter time spans (the morning

and evening ‘rush hour’) compared to other uses, such as retail and leisure. By distributing the mix of uses across the city centre, the traffic load on roads and junctions will be more dispersed, which creates greater capacity.

Increasing public transport capacity, flexibility and choice

7.19 The Alliance Plan public transport strategy builds on the Council’s third *Local Transport Plan (LTP3)*. Firstly, the *CMKAP* promotes the creation of a second transport ‘interchange’ in the heart of the city centre, in addition to the one recently completed at Station Square. Secondly, the Plan promotes the delivery of an intra-CMK rapid transit network, such as a shuttle service.

7.20 The Alliance encourages MK Council to seek the powers of a Passenger Transport Authority (PTA), which would enable better planning of public transport throughout the Borough. Such an idea cannot be proposed in this plan for CMK in isolation, however.

7.21 Key improvements to public transport are already in progress at Central Milton Keynes

station: the enhanced public transport interchange opened in July 2012, and an upgrade of the station building is underway. The interchange includes an extended pedestrian concourse in front of the station which it is hoped might one day be weather protected, increased capacity for buses and coaches, separate taxi and pick-up and drop-off areas, and improved cycling provision.

7.22 *LTP3* and other transport studies have identified the need for a second public transport interchange near the retail core in CMK. To support the future delivery of such an interchange, the Alliance Plan has identified a strategic site for this second interchange - the public car parking areas alongside Secklow Gate (see Figure 9).

- 7.23 The second strand of the strategy to improve transport is to deliver an intra-CMK ‘rapid transit’ network, such as a shuttle or more advanced system, provided at a nominal charge at the point of delivery. Described in *LTP3* as a ‘short-term delivery objective,’ which implies a welcome degree of urgency, the Alliance seeks a shuttle service circulating CMK using primarily Silbury and Avebury Boulevards. This would quickly and directly connect local destinations in CMK, including MK Central Station, the Hub, thecentre:mk, Xscape, and the Theatre District.
- 7.24 A pilot programme should be run to test whether a shuttle service can be implemented in an efficient and cost-effective way that proves popular with workers and visitors. Subsidies may be possible by local businesses benefitting from the service. Passengers could transfer between the city-wide ‘MK Star’ bus services and the local shuttle at either the rail station or Secklow Gate / Marlborough Gate interchanges.

Encouraging walking and cycling

- 7.25 A key deliverable of *LTP3* and adopted *Core Strategy* is to encourage other modes of transport, particularly walking and cycling.
- 7.26 A key part of the *CMKAP* Spatial and Design Strategy is to improve the pedestrian experience within CMK and the linkages to the surrounding estates. Many of the Plan’s general policies – active frontages, for example – which are aimed at increasing the vibrancy of the city’s streets, will also encourage walking as a mode of transport.
- 7.27 Milton Keynes’ 280 kilometres of world class Redway network is an under-utilised resource. Whilst approximately 40% of journeys to work within Milton Keynes are less than five kilometres in length, the proportion of walking and cycling trips for journeys to work in Milton Keynes (10%) is below the regional and national averages (13%). However, this is mainly due to fewer people walking, as the National Census 2011 shows that whilst only 2.8% of MK residents cycle to work, this is the same as the national average.
- 7.28 The Redway network approaches CMK from many directions, though inside CMK cyclists generally share the same street system as everyone else. A north-south Redway has recently been built across CMK, running alongside Saxon Street, to form part of a cycle ‘cruciform’ that would allow north-south and east-west access.
- 7.29 MK Council’s *LTP3* and 2013 Adopted *Cycling Strategy for Milton Keynes* identify the expansion of the Redway network into CMK as a ‘short-to-medium term deliverable.’ This includes:
- » Completing the ‘cruciform’, ie. a Redway running east-west through CMK;
 - » Re-routing National Sustrans Cycle Route 51, which currently runs through car parks with no distinct surface or prioritisation and with cyclists having to dismount at Midsummer Place. There needs to be a clear identification of where the route will run in the future, and consideration should be given to re-routing NCR 51 utilising the H5 Portway and/or H6 Child’s Way Redways leading to/from Campbell Park.

- » Upgrading other key Redways arriving in CMK (those running alongside H5 Portway, H6 Childs Way, V6 Grafton Street, and V8 Marlborough Street), possibly as part of the 'Super Redway' initiative; and
- » Improving cycle-way signing within CMK and on the approaches to CMK, possibly as part of a wider re-design of all cycling on the Redways.

7.30 Future longer term proposals include:

- » Further improvements for cyclists within Station Square (e.g. a 'Cycling Hub' with storage, information, repair shop and sales, café);
- » Dedicated changing facilities near the Station (potentially in the former MK Central Bus Station and / or the new Community Sports facility behind new Network Rail offices) and other key locations on the Super Redway network;
- » Cycle hire within the city centre and subsequently across the Borough.

7.31 The Alliance plan supports these aspects of the LTP3 strategy.



CMK's wide, day-lit underpasses encourage pedestrian movement

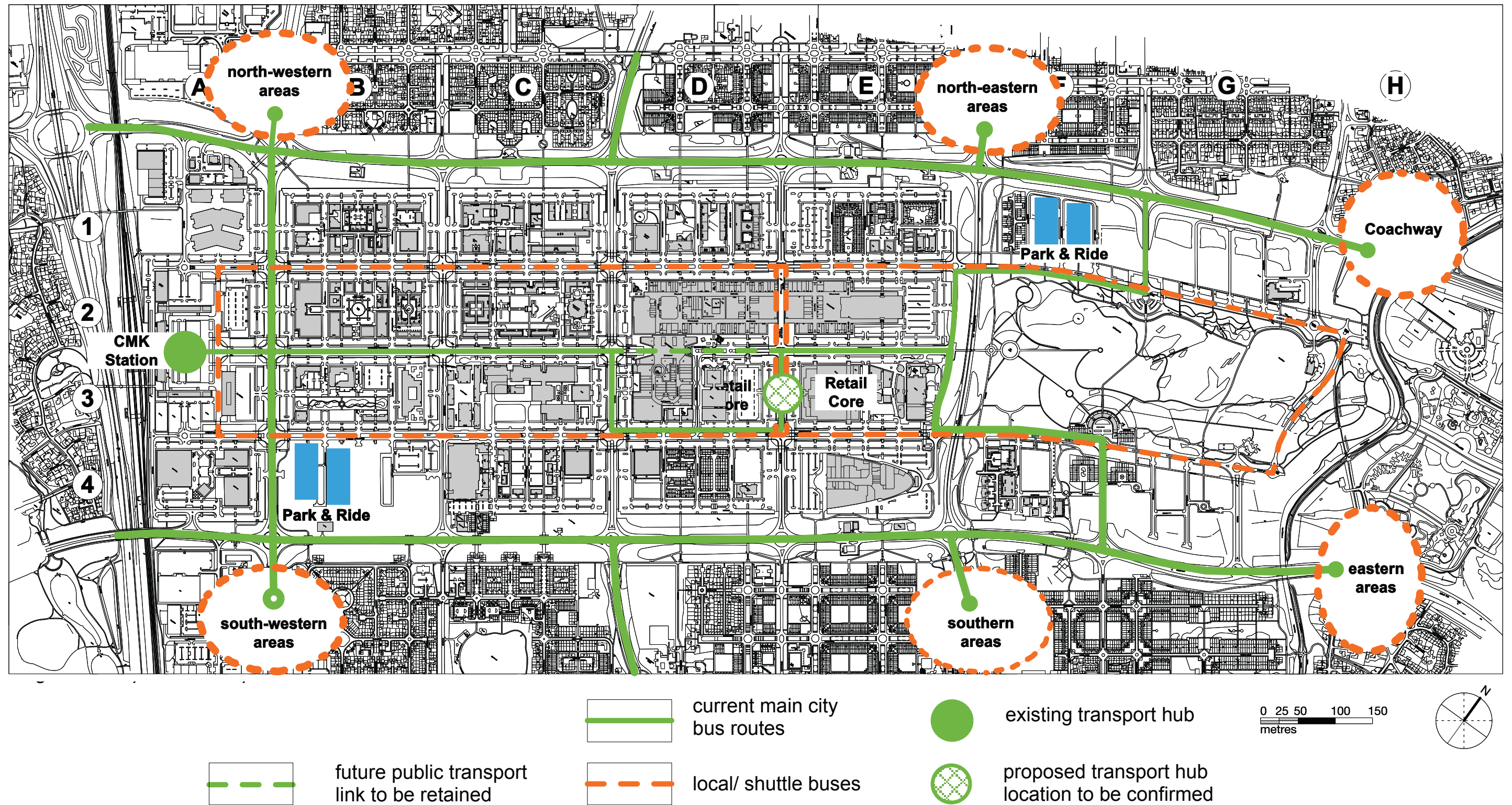


Figure 9: Proposed Transport

Better aligning and delivering parking provision

- 7.32 One of the most difficult problems in developing sustainable transport for CMK is balancing the transition from high levels of private car use to public transport without losing the convenient accessibility that gives CMK a competitive advantage compared with other towns and cities. 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 high level of car ownership and a low number of public transport journeys.
- 7.33 As CMK grows, it simply will not be possible to keep building surface-level parking spaces, because we're running out of land and even our famous grid roads will eventually become grid-locked with congestion. Car parking provision in CMK must serve to maintain the economic vitality of Central Milton Keynes as a place to live, work and visit, whilst recognising parking management as a tool that can and must be utilised to promote a shift to more sustainable modes of transport.
- 7.34 Current CMK parking policy restricts on-plot

provision of parking to 30% of the standard, with the remaining 70% provided off-plot, mainly via planning obligations to support the delivery of multi-storey car parks (MSCPs). Unfortunately, an insufficient value for the planning obligation (only £2,500 per parking space versus an actual cost of over £10,000 per space), and the lack of a planning and institutional mechanism to co-ordinate the delivery of the MSCPs, have meant that MSCPs have not been delivered.

- 7.35 The Plan supports the aspiration to provide parking in MSCPs at gateways in the outer Blocks – locations where there is easier access and greater capacity. These MSCPs should be integrated or enclosed within some commercial, retail or residential development, as these facilities have proven more popular than stand-alone MSCPs. Funding would need to be provided through revised planning obligations and the possibility of exclusive use of some off-plot MSCPs spaces should be explored for new office developments. This would most likely need 'forward funding' for some of these MSCPs, as current levels of parking charges will not provide sufficient income to attract investment.

- 7.36 Milton Keynes Council's current Parking Standards are specified in two documents - the *2005 Parking Standards SPG and 2009 Addendum*. The *2009 Addendum* identifies four 'accessibility zones' across Milton Keynes, with Zone 1 covering CMK (excluding Campbell Park), Zone 2 covering Campbell Park and other town and district centres, Zone 3 covering the rest of 'urban' MK, and Zone 4 the rural parts of the borough.
- 7.37 Zones 1 and 2 have reduced levels that are 30% and 60% respectively of the amount of parking allowed on average in Zones 3 and 4. Since the parking levels for Zone 3 represent in general the standards that existed in local policy prior to 2005, the *2005 Parking Standards SPG* effectively caps new parking provision in CMK at 30% and Campbell Park at 60% of the previous standard, respectively. This severe restriction of new parking requires a 'step-change' in the number of future journeys to CMK by public transport, cycling and walking, or the growth of jobs and visitors in the city centre will be significantly curtailed.
- 7.38 Provision for residential parking was revised by the *2009 Addendum*, which increased allocated parking to a minimum of two spaces

per dwelling for dwellings with three or more bedrooms in Zones 1 and 2. Unfortunately, the *2009 Addendum* left out un-allocated (i.e. visitor) parking which had been included as a requirement in the original *2005 Parking Standards SPG*.

- 7.39 Provision of a greater number of un-allocated residential parking is not needed in CMK because there are sufficient public car parking spaces around the perimeter of most developments (local residents are issued scratch cards by MK Council so their visitors can use these bays). However, this is not the case for the Campbell Park grid square or where perimeter car parking has been removed.
- 7.40 The *Consultation Draft* of this Plan proposed that Zone 2 parking standards be adopted for all land uses in CMK and Campbell Park. Whilst this was welcomed by a number of respondents during public consultation, others were critical of this proposed change, which was interpreted as a backward step in efforts to increase public transport use and improve sustainability. The challenge we face is that severely restricting additional parking provision can lead to unintended consequences – firstly,

that CMK's economic development stalls because it becomes less attractive as a place to do business, and secondly, that we set up a perverse incentive to develop in out-of-centre locations, where parking is plentiful and free and public transport is poor, rather than in the city centre.

- 7.41 After reviewing all of the representations regarding the original parking proposals (both for and against), the Alliance have re-visited the parking standards and have identified two key issues – parking for office developments in CMK and visitor parking for residential developments in the Campbell Park grid square. This revised *Examination Draft* of the Plan now changes only these two elements and retains the existing parking standards for other land uses.
- 7.42 It cannot be over-emphasised that even with these changes to the parking standards, a step-change to alternative transport modes is required during the plan period if CMK is to achieve the growth aspirations set out in this Plan and in the *Core Strategy*. Currently only 10% of journeys to work in CMK are made by public transport. This will need to increase to 20-25% over the next 15 years¹³. At the

same time the number of workers will greatly increase, which means the number of journeys to work using public transport will have to increase nearly 5-fold (from fewer than 2,500 bus journeys to work today to greater than 10,000 - 12,000 in 2026). This is considered to be at the outer limit of what is feasible. Furthermore, even with this best-case scenario for a transformation of public transport usage, the number of car journeys for workers in CMK will have to increase, from approximately 20,000 today to 25,000 – 30,000 in 2026, which means that more parking spaces are required.

¹³ 2007 MKP Transport Strategy Review

7.43 Available CMK parking is relatively inefficiently used. During weekdays, many of the parking spaces surrounding the retail area in eastern CMK lie empty whilst the businesses in the western area complain about the lack of parking. The reverse is true during weekends.

7.44 The proposed CMK shuttle service will encourage better use of existing parking places and temporary parking on development land (such as any new Park & Ride facilities that may be provided in Blocks F1 and B4 will help (see below). In addition, the *CMKAP* provides policy support for an improved and expanded Variable Messaging System (VMS) which will direct drivers to available parking more efficiently, further making best use of the available parking stock.

Park & Ride facilities

7.45 The Spatial and Design Strategy identifies two sites to be reserved for major development of strategic significance: F1 Block on the north side of Campbell Park, and B4 Block south of Avebury Boulevard between Grafton and Witan Gates. These Blocks are the best undeveloped sites remaining in CMK, and

the Alliance is of the view that these sites should be reserved for major development of strategic significance, such as a University, major corporate HQ or international institution that would bring significant numbers of skilled jobs and prestige to Milton Keynes. In the meantime, the ‘meanwhile use’ of these sites for temporary Park & Ride facilities will be encouraged: they would provide parking

spaces for the growing city centre, events in Campbell Park, and use the CMK shuttle service as the ‘ride’ part of the service. When the B4 and F1 sites are eventually developed, these additional parking facilities should be eliminated without any need for replacement as the Council completes its intended transformation of public transport across the whole of Milton Keynes.

