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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The CMK Alliance Plan 2026 is a pioneering business neighbourhood plan prepared by an alliance of local residents and business leaders, working in partnership with Milton Keynes Council. The Alliance's plan for CMK (Central Milton Keynes) builds on the success of the last forty years and plans its continuing growth over the next fifteen.

The plan celebrates CMK's distinct design and heritage – its renowned grid of roads, wide pedestrian underpasses and porte cocheres (covered walkways), its generous and convenient car parking, the remarkable landscaping and stunning Campbell Park, all of which contribute to the commercial attractiveness and quality of life in our city centre. The plan also promotes CMK's emerging role as the centre of a prosperous and growing sub-region, through greater and more diverse development that contributes to the economic, social and environmental well-being of Milton Keynes.

There are over 60 hectares (150 acres) of land yet to be fully developed in CMK, where the Plan proposes to:-

- expand and diversify the retail core of CMK;

- build many more offices to create new jobs;
- reserve key sites for major opportunities, such as the proposed expansion of the university;
- complete over 5,000 new dwellings;
- enrich its social, sporting and cultural life with new facilities; and
- increase the range of leisure options.

To achieve growth within the existing grid layout and plots, the plan supports building at higher densities than those assumed when CMK was originally planned. With buildings up to eight stories high but generally no higher, the planned growth can be achieved without changing the spacious, tree-lined street scene.

The plan provides investors, developers and landowners considerable flexibility in how they develop their plots, but asks them to take greater responsibility in helping us build a successful city centre – improving pedestrian routes, bringing more animation through greater mixed use and active frontages, creating a diverse street life and safe night life. This will drive growth in both the daytime and night-time economy.

As well as offering more space to large stores in the primary shopping area, the plan encourages

the provision of small and independent specialist shops, and a new market hall to complement and enhance the outdoor market. The Alliance's aspiration is to transform Midsummer Boulevard between Secklow Gate and Midsummer Place into the 'heart' of the city: an exciting public space – a destination in its own right – with animated public art and programmed events, a place where Milton Keynes meets, celebrates and demonstrates.

Land is reserved on two prime sites for major institutions and headquarters of a scale and reputation to raise the profile of Milton Keynes nationally and internationally. The plan supports the aspirations of the University Centre Milton Keynes (UCMK) as the first step in establishing a university for Milton Keynes. A new kind of university, learning will take place throughout the city: students will be based for part of their courses in existing businesses and institutions.

It's important that the centre remain a desirable place to live, particularly for younger individuals and couples working in the centre and for older 'empty-nesters.' Ease of access to what the city centre has to offer draws not only visitors but new residents to CMK, whose presence also contributes to the liveliness of the centre. The plan encourages the development of a wide selection of flats and townhouses with different tenures and at a range of lower and higher urban densities.

New housing will be designed to encourage the creation of strong communities, sharing responsibility for their surroundings. To support residents as well as those working in CMK, the plan identifies sites for the provision of new sports, community and medical facilities.

Finally, the Alliance recognises the critical role that ease of access and convenient parking has played in the success of Milton Keynes from its beginning. Across the UK today, many town centres are declining and high streets are fading as problems with parking and congestion, combined with inadequate public transportation, have driven shoppers and businesses to out-of-town shopping centres and business parks. Our problem is that CMK was designed as the centre for a city of 250,000 - Milton Keynes is now approaching this population and is projected to reach 300,000 by the end of the plan period. There is a long-term need to make public transport, cycling and walking the preferred mode of choice for more people coming to and enjoying CMK, and the plan promotes these modes of transport. At the same time, good provision for cars remains a competitive advantage for CMK, helping its economic development which is of regional importance and in the national interest.

### **A Place to be Proud of**

At the heart of a city well placed to drive the national economic recovery, what happens in CMK is of national significance. The Alliance plan prepares CMK to fulfil its role through a balanced approach, promoting growth and development whilst retaining its competitive advantage as a distinctive place with a high quality of life.

The Alliance looks forward to seeing local people, businesses and Milton Keynes Council rising to the challenge of transforming CMK into the centre of a regional city, a place of which we will all continue to be proud.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### What is a business neighbourhood plan?

The Localism Act 2011 created new ways for local people to achieve their own ambitions for their community or 'neighbourhood.' One way is a new approach to local planning policy, called a 'Neighbourhood Development Plan,' which aims to make the planning system more democratic by letting the people who know about and care about an area undertake the planning for it.

Neighbourhood planning is about building neighbourhoods and planning positively for development – not stopping growth. *Business Neighbourhood Development Plans* are neighbourhood plans for areas that are primarily commercial to ensure that the business community is fully represented and engaged in the plan-making process.

The CMK Town Council, local business leaders and Milton Keynes Council have come together to create an alliance of CMK residents and businesses to prepare this pioneering business neighbourhood development plan for CMK – the CMK Alliance Plan 2026.

### Why do we need a new plan for CMK?

The main planning documents for CMK were prepared over 10 years ago, and since that time, much has changed. In particular, the 2001 CMK Development Framework<sup>1</sup> proposed far-reaching changes to the original plans for CMK – changes that were not sufficiently tested or challenged at the time, and which are no longer considered achievable or even desirable. That is why, in July 2010, Milton Keynes' Cabinet resolved that a revised Development Framework for CMK should be prepared, as it viewed the 2001 Framework as 'no longer fit for purpose.'

In addition, over the past 10 years there have been significant changes to policy at a national, regional and local level, including the removal of the regional tier of planning policy, the adoption of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and the preparation of the draft MK Core Strategy.

The new CMK Alliance Plan (CMKAP) takes into account lessons learned from the implementation

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<sup>1</sup> adopted by the Council in 2002

of the 2001 CMK Development Framework and the principles contained in the revised Framework, which is currently in public consultation.

At the end of the neighbourhood plan process, if successful, the CMKAP will become part of Milton Keynes' Local Development Framework (LDF) of planning documents. It will be a statutory plan which will be used by MKC when making decisions on planning applications.

Perhaps more importantly, the CMKAP is a clear statement of intent in terms of how local people and businesses want to see our city centre to develop in the coming years, providing guidance and certainty to investors, residents and businesses alike.

At a time when many town centres in the UK are declining and high streets fading, we cannot afford to rest on our past success. We must also acknowledge and learn from our past mistakes. Our future prosperity is not guaranteed - we must actively work together to achieve it.

### How does this plan relate to other plans?

In preparing the business neighbourhood plan, we must have regard to a number of documents, including the recent National Planning Policy

Framework (NPPF), MK's draft Core Strategy and 2005 Local Plan.

The CMKAP must be in general conformity with the Core Strategy and its policy for CMK (Policy S7). The CMKAP must support the quantitative objectives that the draft Core Strategy has set for the number of new dwellings and additional amount of office and retail floor space in CMK over the plan period to 2026.

All relevant policies in the Core Strategy, when adopted, will apply to development in CMK, so there is no need for the CMKAP to repeat elements of the draft Core Strategy. For example, despite the absence of a specific policy on sustainable design and construction in the CMKAP, all new development in the city centre should reflect efficient use of natural resources and methods to reduce environmental damage, in accordance with policy CS14 of the Core Strategy.

The CMKAP must also be in general conformity with the strategic objectives for CMK in the 2005 Local Plan (Policy S5). However, once adopted, the CMKAP policies will replace the CMK-specific policies in the 2005 Local Plan, policies CC1 through CC19.

As noted above, the Council is currently in public consultation with a revised CMK Development

Framework. We have worked closely with MK Council, which is one of the Alliance partners, to ensure both plans present consistent approaches. The revised CMK Development Framework sets out the vision for CMK and includes general design and development principles in order to more generally guide the form and nature of development in the centre. The CMKAP builds on those principles with more detailed policies and land use proposals.

### **What have we done so far?**

During January and February 2012, the CMK Alliance Steering Group considered several options for the scope or extent of the plan, project timelines and approaches for community engagement.

The Plan has gone through several phases of community and stakeholder involvement thus far. The CMK business neighbourhood planning process was launched through a newsletter delivered to all residents and businesses in the CMK parish in late April and early May 2012.

The first phase of public engagement involved preparation and publication of a series of 'seed' papers on a 'wiki' website ([www.cmkalliance.com](http://www.cmkalliance.com)). A wiki is a collaborative internet tool that allows anyone who registers to

make revisions and comments to documents on the website. The 'seed' papers provided background information and sought feedback on a range of questions and topics about CMK, including retail, businesses and jobs, tourism, residential accommodation, leisure and recreation, and civic pride and diversity. The wiki was 'open' for comments and editing during April and May 2012. During this time, over 800 people visited the website and 150 registered as users.

The second stage involved a series of eight public workshops covering many of the topics and issues raised through the online wiki papers. These were run during April and May 2012 and were attended by around 80 people.

The third stage involved four 'expert panel' sessions and over 30 stakeholder meetings to test the emerging proposals and options. These were conducted from June to August 2012.

Throughout the community and stakeholder engagement process, the CMK Alliance Steering Group met monthly and often weekly, to discuss feedback and debate the issues and options.

The preparation of the Consultation draft of the Plan has therefore been informed by a great deal of community and stakeholder involvement and consideration of a range of issues. A Statement

of Consultation on Community Involvement will be prepared as an Appendix to the Plan following formal consultation during October and November 2012.

### **Which area does the CMKAP cover?**

When an area is parished, the Localism Act says that the parish or town council has responsibility for neighbourhood planning. The CMK Town Council is therefore the lead or 'governing' body for the CMKAP and its parish boundaries determine the area covered by the plan.

As delineated by the red line in Figure ZZ, the area covered by the CMK Town Council and the CMKAP is bounded on the north and south by the H5 Portway and H6 Childs Way grid roads, respectively, and on the east and west by the Grand Union canal and railway lines.

### **What does the CMKAP deal with?**

The CMK Alliance Plan is made up of a number of different sections, which together form a comprehensive basis for managing development in the city centre up to 2026. The first section captures the aspirations and strategic objectives of the plan. These are guided firstly by a vision and set of key principles, as set forth by the draft Core Strategy and revised CMK Development

Framework. These should frame development in the centre over the plan period. An overall spatial and design strategy outlines the main direction and types of development and how the centre will look and function. This is supported by the access, transport and parking strategy.

More detailed policies and proposals are included in the second section. These include policies which will guide all developments across the city centre, as well as site specific policies for areas identified as major opportunities.

The third section addresses implementation and monitoring, and includes indicative land use allocations in the Proposals Map and associated schedule.

### **Sustainability Appraisal**

A sustainability appraisal (SA) is a tool that highlights any significant environmental, social or economic effects of a plan. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that an SA should not repeat policy assessment that has already been undertaken. It is optional for neighbourhood plans.

It has not been necessary to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal as part of the processes of making this Plan, because the matters

addressed are already covered by MK Council's *Adopted Local Plan* and *Draft Core Strategy*, which have been subject to the necessary appraisals.

### **Next steps**

Once a neighbourhood plan has been prepared, it must undergo formal public consultation – one conducted by the parish or town council and one by the local authority. Responses received during the consultations will be reviewed and checked against the plan, which may result in changes to the plan.

The regulations then require an independent examiner to check that the plan meets the right basic standards. The independent examiner will mainly check for consistency between the plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and MK's draft Core Strategy document. If the plan contradicts or doesn't meet the standards as set-out in the over-arching policy documents, the examiner will recommend changes.

If the examiner recommends significant changes, the CMK Alliance Steering Group may decide to consult again with the local residents and business community before proceeding.

The neighbourhood planning regulations require the local authority to organise a referendum on any plan that passes independent examination. This ensures that all members of the community – not just the members of the Steering Group – have the final say on whether a neighbourhood plan comes into force.

For neighbourhood plans, residents living in the neighbourhood who are registered to vote in local elections will be entitled to vote in the referendum.

For business neighbourhood plans, it is expected that two referendums will be held – one by the residents and one by the business community.

Regulations on how the business referendum will be organised have not yet been published, but it is likely to be based on one-vote per business-rate-payor.

If the majority of the residents and local businesses voting in their respective referendums support the plan, then the local planning authority must bring it into force. If it passes one referendum but fails the other, then the local council will have the final say whether to adopt the plan or not.

Once a neighbourhood plan is in force, it carries real legal weight. Decision-makers will be obliged,

by law, to take what it says into account when they consider proposals for development in the neighbourhood.

## 2. UNDERSTANDING CMK

*A city that will last through all horizons of history.*<sup>2</sup>

In the long sweep of the history of human civilisation, cities developed by accident or design in places of strategic importance: locations were mostly strategic places of connection and market places on trade routes, or were chosen to suit the politics of oppression (to control a local population) or defence (to protect a local population).

Our own city of Milton Keynes occupies an unusual place in history. One consequence of the Second World War (1939 -1945) was the creation of an opportunity for radical changes to come about. People felt they deserved better homes and a better life after what they had been through together.

Following the first General Election after the War, a welfare system provided old age pensions, unemployment pay, and help for those in need; and **the right to develop land was nationalised.**

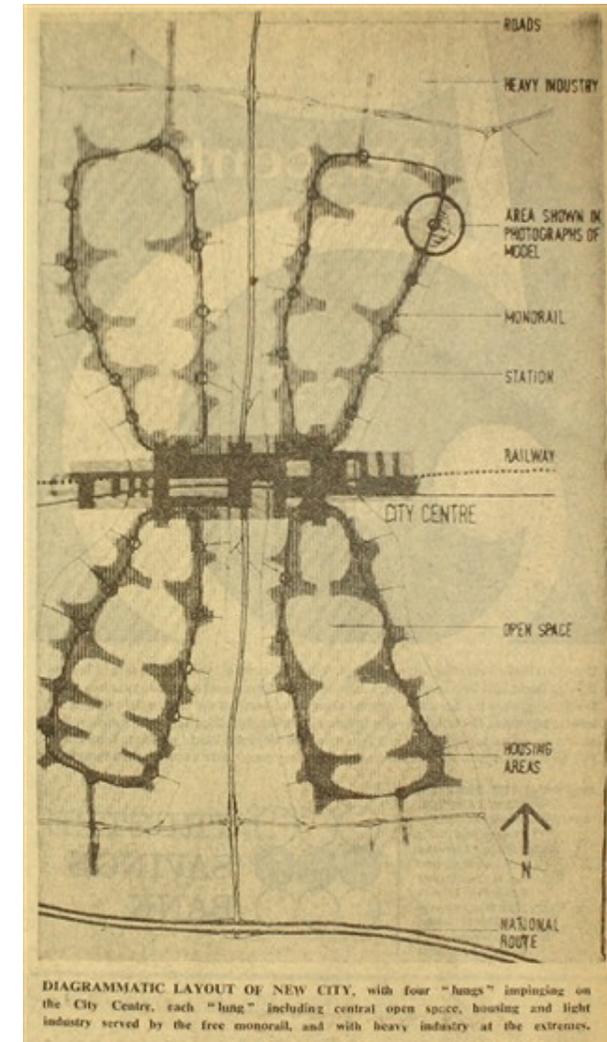
This last point is really important with regard to the story of Milton Keynes. The Town and Country Planning Act 1947 gave every town hall the

responsibility to make plans for their area, including making Green Belts around the major cities to stop them sprawling into the countryside.

Buckinghamshire County Council was particularly aware of these pressures. Under the guidance of the County Planning Officer Fred Pooley, in 1964 Buckinghamshire County Council decided that the best defence against the pressures for development in the south of the County, was to create a new town in the north, in the vicinity of the existing towns of Bletchley, Stony Stratford and Wolverton.

The Government was impressed by the suggestion from Buckinghamshire County Council, and took up the idea. Much to the dismay of the County, however, the Government appointed a New Town Development Corporation to create the new city, and that organisation decided to commission a fresh master plan<sup>3</sup>.

The master plan, approved in 1967, provided for a city of 250,000 people with employment to serve a wider population drawn from the surrounding countryside. It proposed a great grid of city streets



which gently followed the landscape and created pockets of development land roughly 1km by 1km in size.

The founding principles were beautifully simple and brief.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Campbell of Eskan, 1973

<sup>3</sup> the consultants were Llewellyn Davies Forestier Walker Weeks and Bor

- Opportunity and freedom of choice
- Easy movement and access, and good communications
- Balance and variety
- An attractive city
- Public awareness and participation
- Efficient and imaginative use of resources.

### CMK Master Plan

The Master Plan for CMK, like the rest of the city, was for low density, mixed development with generous landscaping.

Safe, convenient access was vital and engineers and architects worked closely together to create a robust infrastructure. Unusually, the infrastructure was more important than the buildings, which they expected would come and go over time. The infrastructure was to be the eternal skeleton, muscles, arteries and nervous system of the entire urban body, bringing it to life.

The plan created an exceptionally safe, spacious, flexible and relaxed way to keep goods, people and services flowing, as the centre grew.

Parking and pedestrian movement was at ground level. CMK was one of the first cities designed for

the needs of parents with prams, the elderly and disabled, providing 'barrier-free' access for all, using underpasses and kerbs at a level with pavements in parking areas and along slow streets. Even the main H6, V8 and H5 grid roads sink, as they pass the city centre, to create continuous ground level footpaths connecting surrounding estates.

Delivery trucks had separate service bays, away from the main roads, and pedestrians were carefully segregated from traffic. They used a network of safe, shallow underpasses, and numerous covered walkways or 'porte cocheres' which flagged up safe places to cross the tree-lined boulevards.

Milton Keynes, with a planned population of 250,000 or thereabouts, was always envisaged to have a "sub-regional" function within the South East Region.

From the beginning, CMK was designed to fulfil four roles simultaneously, as a:-

- Local centre
- District centre
- City centre
- Sub-regional / Regional centre

### CMK as a Local Centre

The residents of CMK, just as in any neighbourhood, need a number of facilities within easy walking distance of their home, such as local shops, local services, a local health centre, pubs and places to eat. Space was not planned for schools in CMK.

### CMK as a District Centre

While "Central Area Housing" and the CMK blocks between them were planned to provide for local needs, taken together the population would be able to support some activities on the scale of District Centres in Milton Keynes: major supermarket shopping, recreation facilities such as swimming pools and sports halls, places of worship, large health centres, garages and petrol filling stations, and larger restaurants.

### CMK as a City Centre

It was always understood that the new city would need a central place for city-scale institutions, major social and civic gatherings, and for the highest possible level of shopping which would meet the needs of people from all over MK and its hinterland. This was the place for the traditional attractions and functions of town and city centres to be accommodated - the central place.

As the centre for the whole city, this was obviously the place for the town hall, major civic institutions such as the Library, the city church Christ the Cornerstone, the main railway station, law courts, major government offices, the Milton Keynes Theatre and Art Gallery, and the central park (Campbell Park). It was also the appropriate place for concentrations of bars and nightclubs, restaurants and all types of spaces and places for social gathering, and for the major city open air market.

For office developments, CMK provides a more urban choice than is available in the wide variety of employment areas around the city. The proximity of Milton Keynes Central railway station remains an advantage, though the range and quality of train services has deteriorated since the new platform in 2010 allowed fast trains to pass straight through.

Expert advice in the early 1970s was that CMK could support about 50,000 square metres of shopping. In an act of bravado - the Development Corporation had the vision of "city" now firmly in its grip, and its aspirations for the new city centre were that it should be a place of national or even international prominence - it was decided to create arcaded streets and squares of high quality shopping of twice the scale recommended by the experts - 100,000 square metres. The

Development Corporation built the largest shopping building in Europe at the time, an astonishing building which English Heritage listed in 2010. Envisaged as the 'covered' high street of CMK, the building offered an interesting, idealistic mix of shopping, leisure, internal plantings and civic space.

The shopping centre was critical to MK's success, both at home and abroad. "It was visible proof of commitment. It helped us sell the whole city to big industrialists. We had the prospectus, the plan, and we were delivering it too."<sup>4</sup>

### CMK as a Regional Centre

In 2003 Milton Keynes became one of four strategic growth areas for the South East Region. The same year, the "Oxford-Cambridge Arc" - with Milton Keynes and Cranfield University at its fulcrum - was promoted as having intellectual and commercial connectivity and productivity of national importance.

It was now officially recognised that Milton Keynes was a place of regional growth potential and national importance. CMK could not be considered as the centre of a self-contained new

town, but formed the heart of a project of very great significance.

A Sub-Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) was developed for an area covering (clockwise) Milton Keynes, Aylesbury, Bicester, Brackley, Daventry, Northampton, Kettering, Wellingborough and Corby, Bedford and Luton. As the largest town in the cluster by far, and with most diverse and strongest economy, and also centrally located and with a positive attitude, MK now had the opportunity to assert itself and grow to be a true regional centre. More intense development was planned for CMK.

These officially planned strategic growth schemes ran into local political difficulties. There was opposition to the idea of building an increasing number of high rise apartments in CMK, with the resulting loss of daylight and sunlight in the street, and the swirling winds of the CMK plateau-like location. There was also the strong feeling at the time that now that Milton Keynes was emerging as a regional city, its city centre land should not be used up to build blocks of flats or residential dwellings that could be more readily accommodated elsewhere in MK. The land in CMK might be needed for regional scale activities, such as major office developments, government administration and local civic buildings, commerce and leisure attractions.

<sup>4</sup> Bob Hill, Commercial Director at MKDC.

The local political difficulties which stalled the plan for Milton Keynes to grow to the scale of being a regional centre, as envisaged in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Spatial Strategy, have been followed by national political difficulties and the economic recession. However it has emerged that all local planning authorities are required to provide not only the homes and jobs that are needed in their area, but also to co-operate with neighbouring councils to provide for growth to aid the national recovery (this is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published 28 March 2012). In the absence of hard data it seems reasonable to assume that the physical expansion of Milton Keynes will be actively at the planning stage, once again, within very few years.

The South East Plan, the statutory regional plan, identifies a number of "Regional Hubs" of which Milton Keynes is one.

The network of 22 regional hubs will vary in precise function and scale but they will be a focus for:

- investment in multi-modal transport infrastructure both within and between hubs, supported by initiatives to re-balance travel patterns through behavioural change;

- other new infrastructure, including health, education, social and green infrastructure, and public services;
- new investment in economic activity and regeneration, including skills and training investment;
- new market and affordable housing, to support the creation of higher density 'living centres';
- new major retail and employment development.

Milton Keynes is also one of the "regional hubs" identified as being capable of stimulating prosperity, with further growth being unlocked through targeted investment in infrastructure. The South East Plan summarises its vision for Milton Keynes as being a major administrative and commercial centre. It is considered to have high level of access to strategic rail and road networks, and be a key interchange point between inter-regional, intra-regional and local rail services, with the scope to improve opportunities for public transport through development of East-West rail corridor.

All this is in addition to what The South East Plan has to say about the importance of town centres in general. The priority, which nests inside what is still Government policy expressed in the NPPF, is to promote their vitality and viability. This is to be

achieved by planning for the growth and development of existing centres through focusing development in the centres and encouraging a wide range of services in a good environment, accessible to all. Development includes business accommodation, residential, leisure, arts, culture, tourism and retail.

### The Future

CMK has largely fulfilled its promise of becoming a local and city centre. 25,000 people work in CMK and it attracts over 30m visitors a year. The night-time economy has grown markedly over recent years with further development likely. The latest company to relocate its headquarters here is Network Rail, bringing in 3,000 jobs and creating more via suppliers.

It is certain that in preparing a plan for CMK for the next 15 years or more, CMK will achieve the status in practice and reality of being a regional centre, with all that means in terms of its scale of commercial civic and cultural functions and attractions .

It is also certain in preparing a plan for CMK, that to be successful in the long-term, 'CMK must remain true to itself.' It is the public space that is the most important "building" of all in CMK. The public domain of CMK is its greatest achievement,

providing a framework in which the buildings and activities of the city centre might come and go over time, with only the best of these given long term protection as heritage assets. It is the quality and extent of the public domain in CMK that asserts its status as a true city centre with great ambitions.



### 3. VISION, PRINCIPLES & OBJECTIVES

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:-*

- the most accessible city centre 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 greater regional and national role, that welcomes, surprises and delights workers, visitors and residents alike, with a rich mix of shopping, leisure, sport, cultural and social facilities offering an exciting

- street life and diverse night life;
- an admired, prestigious city centre, celebrating its distinctive cityscape and high-quality infrastructure;
- 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

Ease of access to and from Milton Keynes, and above all within it, has attracted residents, investors and businesses to CMK from its beginning.

Everyone has benefited from the excellent infrastructure whatever their chosen mode of travel: pedestrians, cyclists, bus and train passengers, and above all car users.

The Plan faces up to the challenge of retaining or improving on accessibility 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.

CMK has the highest numbers of car parking spaces in proportion to development of any city centre in the country. Milton Keynes also has one of the highest levels of car ownership and 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 we’re running out of land and the cost of multi-storey or underground parking is high. And with unlimited parking, even our famous grid network will become grid-locked with congestion. However, the Plan does require more parking to be delivered, as a better balance is needed between the constraints and what is needed to ensure we do not hinder economic growth and prosperity in future.

The Plan also 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.

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.

The Plan will improve facilities for cyclists, and improve the Redway links.

### **A Learning City**

City centres are places where not only trade but also the exchange of knowledge and learning takes place.

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.

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).

The University Centre Milton Keynes (UCMK) is the first step in establishing a university for Milton Keynes. A new kind of university, learning will take place throughout the city: students will be based

for part of their courses in existing businesses and institutions.

This model for the university complements 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.

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

### **Vibrant and Safe**

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's the hustle and bustle of commerce, the comings and goings of people from all walks of life, the interesting things to see and do – these are the essential qualities that make the heart of the city.

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.

The 1970 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.

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 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.

In understanding this challenge, we can better address it. Our 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 key 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**

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.

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.

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. Some of the planning gain for future development will be sought to uplift the public realm.

The listing of the Shopping Building (known 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.

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.

The Plan develops a city centre that functions well but in which visitors wander around, surprised and delighted.

### A Social and Inclusive Place

The city-centre will be the place people connect with other people - businesses with their customers and other businesses, friends meeting friends, families celebrating together.

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?

We are looking for investment by the development industry, but we are also examining innovative ways of creating places which will allow the free reign of ideas.

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.

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.

It is all too easy to create a culture that rejects minorities and pushes them elsewhere to pursue

their dreams. In CMK, we will invest in creating an inclusive place.

### Key Principles

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. Since these principles underpin the plan, they provide broad benchmarks on whether the plan in general and development opportunities in particular, are achieving our aspirations for the future.

#### a) To maintain and enhance the city centre as a distinctive place by:

- promoting the geometry of the grid and its classic infrastructure;
- enhancing its green landscaped setting and linkages (the 'Green Frame');
- protecting its tree lined boulevards and gates;

#### b) To be sensitive in the approach to development by:

- understanding and responding to the unique qualities of CMK;
- recognising the value of the twentieth century architecture of CMK;

- where appropriate refurbishing and improving the sustainable building stock; and
  - understanding and responding to the context of CMK.
- c) To manage the growth of CMK to complement and enhance MK as a whole**
- to ensure that the economic benefits created by the growth of CMK benefit the rest of Milton Keynes.
  - complement the distinct role of the older towns and district centres
- d) To ensure ease and choice of access for all by:**
- recognising the importance of the car to the city's success;
  - improving the pedestrian experience;
  - improving the quality of pedestrian and cycling connections into CMK from surrounding areas;
  - developing high quality public transport interchange facilities;
  - using a multi-modal approach to respond to the travel needs of all CMK users; and
  - by taking an holistic approach to the management of city centre parking responding to the needs of different users
- e) To embrace diversity by:**
- reflecting and responding to the multi-cultural diversity of MK
  - encouraging more varied patronage of CMK
  - responding to the needs of all residents
- f) 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; and
  - encouraging greater animation of public and green spaces.
  - recognizing Campbell Park as one of the finest urban parks in Europe;
- g) To make CMK a social place by**
- promoting a safe and secure city centre through good design
  - diversifying and integrating the commercial, residential, retail and leisure offer
  - encouraging social interaction through a high quality public realm and places and spaces for community activity.
- h) 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 the prime location for headquarters of major companies
- i) To foster creativity, learning and success by:**
- providing opportunities in CMK for life-long 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 ICT infrastructure

## Strategic Objectives

Preparation of our business neighbourhood plan has been guided by the strategic objectives set by the Council's draft Core Strategy.

### Policy CMKAP S1

Central Milton Keynes is a modern and carefully planned new city centre. It will retain and enhance its role as an emerging regional centre and the city's focus for retail, office, hotel, leisure and cultural development, together with new housing and community facilities.

The key objectives for CMK are to:

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
9. Accommodate the expansion needs of tertiary Higher Education such as the University Centre Milton Keynes (UCMK)
10. Offer an attractive urban living environment for the residents of current and future dwellings

There are also quantitative objectives that MK's draft Core Strategy has determined to be CMK's capacity for new dwellings and office and retail floor space over the next 15 years. These are:-

- 180,000 m<sup>2</sup> gross floor area for offices
- 110,000 m<sup>2</sup> gross floor area for retail
- 5,000 new dwellings

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.

As is true of all Neighbourhood Development Plans, the CMK Alliance plan must generally conform to the local authority's Core Strategy, so MK's draft Core Strategy targets have been used to guide the quantum of development and land use allocation proposals.



## 4. OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

### Opportunity one

#### To support the development of an internationally-recognised university

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).

The University Centre Milton Keynes (UCMK) is the first step in establishing a university for Milton Keynes. A new kind of university, learning will take place throughout the city: students will be based for part of their courses in existing businesses and institutions.

This model for the university complements the Plan's approach to the city centre as being a 'smart city' with a flexible knowledge-based economy. 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.

The Plan seeks to support this endeavour in several ways – by reserving 'strategic' sites within the city centre for its possible expansion; by

highlighting the need for a wider leisure offer for young people, from small venues for live bands to new sports facilities; and by planning for more convenient and inexpensive transport options within the city – cycle paths, pedestrian routes, local buses and shuttles.

### Opportunity two

#### To transform the primary shopping area into the cultural heart of Milton Keynes

*A place to go and be in, to be anonymous or dress up for; to be able to watch the world go by; to see and be seen; a place to find out what is going on and to participate in events.*<sup>5</sup>

The city centre is often perceived as just a large shopping centre, offering chain store brands and franchised restaurants, with activities concentrated inside private malls rather than outside public spaces. Residents and visitors seem to go to the centre for specific shopping needs or leisure purposes but not simply as the place 'to see and be seen,' the place to meet friends and colleagues to simply enjoy and experience the 'heart' of city life. There are also

few activities for those with limited resources and that can be felt as exclusionary.

CMK is economically successful, and the plan supports the draft Core Strategy's goal of expanding it as a regional shopping centre. But the consumer dimension tends to dominate the civic and social dimensions of life in CMK. There is a need to create a stronger sense of place, a vital and exciting 'heart' to the city.

In particular, there is an opportunity to transform the largely functional experience of the primary shopping area into something that contributes to a deeper social and community sense of belonging in Milton Keynes. There is an opportunity to create an exceptional public space around and including Midsummer Boulevard north of the Point and west of Market Square, and for it to become a destination in its own right, with a diverse and varied offer for people of all ages and all purses. Part of this transformation includes diversifying the retail offer, to include smaller, independent shops, and to expand the number and breadth of cultural facilities. This will build on the success of the MK Theatre and tempt more visitors further along Midsummer to the gallery, and the delights of Campbell Park beyond.

<sup>5</sup> The Plan for Milton Keynes, 1970

## Opportunity three

### To leverage localism to help drive delivery of the Plan's aspirations

One of the problems in driving growth and prosperity in CMK is that no one person or agency has actively championed CMK consistently over an extended period of time. Various CMK boards and bodies have come and gone, each leaving a legacy of plans and 'lessons learnt.' English Partnership, now Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), has controlled most of the undeveloped land in CMK, and it has been the main driver of development over the past ten years, but this has often focussed on residential dwellings. Most of HCA's land-holdings in CMK are expected to transfer to MK Council by the end of 2012.

The Localism Act (2011) introduced a series of measures to promote a substantial and lasting shift in power away from central government and towards local people. One measure is Neighbourhood Planning which gives new rights and powers to local communities to have a greater say in planning decisions that affect them.

The preparation of the CMK business neighbourhood plan has brought together an engaged and committed alliance of people

representing local residents and businesses, in partnership with the Council. Localism provides an opportunity for the local community to more actively monitor and follow-up on the results of the plan, for the benefit of businesses and residents alike.

## Challenge one

### To retain accessibility whilst transitioning to more sustainable modes of transport

Accessibility is CMK's key competitive advantage and a critical factor in the success of Milton Keynes. Across the UK today, many town centres are declining and high streets are fading as problems with parking and congestion, combined with inadequate public transportation, have driven shoppers and businesses to out-of-town shopping centres and business parks. But the design and layout of Milton Keynes is different - its grid road network, distributed employment and district centres, and plentiful parking in the city centre have made it the most accessible and convenient city for car users in the UK.

The problem is that CMK was designed as the centre for a city of 250,000 - Milton Keynes is now approaching this population and is projected to reach 300,000 by the end of the plan period. So CMK is beginning to reach its originally planned

capacity for car movements in and out of the city centre.

In addition, the Core Strategy has set ambitious targets for future growth of CMK - to increase the number of jobs and visitors by 50% and more than double the number of residential dwellings during the plan period. This planned intensification of CMK increases the challenge of retaining CMK's attractiveness for car users in terms of ease of access and parking.

Finally, the long-term need to establish a significant shift from cars to more sustainable public transportation is complicated by the distributed, low-density infrastructure of Milton Keynes as a city. Many workers are also commuting from outside the Borough to jobs in CMK, making public transportation even less convenient for these workers.

Maintaining accessibility whilst transitioning to more sustainable modes of transportation is the most important challenge for the CMK Alliance Plan.

## Challenge two

### To balance short-term development pressures with longer-term economic growth

*'What we are doing is city building, not property development'<sup>6</sup>*

The second biggest challenge for the Plan is to balance short-term development pressures with the long-term growth potential of the city centre. This will become an even greater challenge when the remaining undeveloped land in CMK is transferred from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to Milton Keynes Council. In an effort to recoup its investment, there is a risk that 'any' development is considered better than none – that the bird in hand is better than two in the bush.

On the one hand, the Plan seeks to encourage development through a flexible mixed-use approach throughout most of the city centre. On the other hand, the Plan aims to reserve key sites of strategic importance and to protect CMK's unique infrastructure and public realm.

<sup>6</sup> David Lock, Town Planner, CMK Alliance Steering Group member

Two prime blocks are reserved by the Plan for proposals that have strategic value for the city – these represent some of the best undeveloped sites in the whole of the South-East, and offer exceptional opportunities for transforming the business and institutional make-up in the city. It will take courage to turn down good, but not great developments in the shorter-term, in the expectation – some might say false hope – of greater possibilities to come.

Also at risk of short-term development pressure is CMK's infrastructure – for example, the rows of public parking lining the perimeters of CMK's blocks. The temptation is great, both to developers and those preferring a traditional 'city street', to build over the perimeter car parking and bring the 'building lines' forward, closer to the boulevards and gates. Yet this perimeter parking and the set-back building lines are part of the spaciousness of CMK which contributes to the quality of place. This surface level parking can also be re-purposed in future for public benefit in other ways - for rows of 'Boris bikes' (cycle hire) or 'Zipcars' (electric car hire), or for new public transport corridors, interchanges or stations, or simply landscaped 'linear parks' for the enjoyment of workers, visitors and residents alike. Just as with natural resources, we need to carefully weigh any loss of our 'public resources' - the public

space and infrastructure – with the benefits that private development may bring.

## Challenge three

### To provide flexibility for development whilst protecting CMK's heritage

In many ways, it is the public space that is the most important "building" of all in CMK - the three grand and spacious boulevards lined with London Plane trees that will grow to six storeys high and provide a protective canopy from one frontage to another, the granite kerbs, the portes-cocheres which gently nudge the flow of pedestrian traffic to safer crossing points and provide weather protection, the granite faced underpasses open and wide and gently sweeping to give comfort, convenience and the feeling of safety. The public domain of CMK is its greatest achievement, providing a framework in which the buildings and activities of the city centre might come and go over time, with only the best of these given long term protection as heritage assets.

It is the quality and extent of the public domain in CMK that asserts its status as a true city centre with great ambitions.

But it is a public domain that surprisingly has proved in need of constant defence against

destruction and degradation: neglect and poor quality maintenance, and the chipping away at its unusual features by officials and developers who have not learned to appreciate its purpose or understood its significance. It is its very difference from everywhere else in England - the fact that it is "other" - that is both its strength and vulnerability.

During the past ten years, residents, landowners and developers have wasted much time and effort in conflict over policies and plans that sought to change CMK into something it isn't - a traditional city centre. The third challenge for the CMK Alliance Plan is to protect CMK's distinctive identity and quality of place, whilst providing appropriate flexibility to future development opportunities.

As custodians of the public realm for future generations, we bear great responsibility for decisions that alter the fabric and structure of our amazing city centre or that allow public space to be sold into private ownership. The challenge is to dispel the misconception that economic growth and development are held back by protecting the public realm and infrastructure. With over 60 hectares (150 acres) of undeveloped and under-developed land in CMK, the emphasis should shift to promoting CMK for its high quality, convenient living and working, with its distinctive urban design

and with a strengthened retail, leisure and cultural offer worthy of its ambitions as a regional city centre.

## 5. ECONOMIC STRATEGY & QUALITY OF PLACE

In the Centre for Cities Outlook 2012, Milton Keynes is identified as one of five cities to watch:

*Cities such as Milton Keynes and Aberdeen are well placed to drive the national economic recovery in this difficult economic climate.... This is because of their high numbers of business start-ups, high percentage of knowledge workers and more innovative economies.*

This economic success is a tribute to the original master plan of Milton Keynes and to the energy and creativity of those who have chosen to live and work here. The following factors have been particularly important:

- **accessibility:** Milton Keynes is both well placed between London and Birmingham, Oxford and Cambridge, and its grid road network make it the most accessible city by car in the UK;
- **investment:** the creation of a publicly funded infrastructure for the City created a framework within which private sector investment has flourished;
- **a distinctive place:** the unconventional grid layout and extensive landscaping provide a convenience and quality of life that attracts both investment and workers.

- **a pioneering spirit:** the new city has attracted people of energy, creativity and aspiration, helping to build an open, engaged and collaborative society.
- **a strong community and voluntary sector:** for a new place, voluntary organisations have been established in unusually large numbers, helping build communities and teaching new skills.
- **Public and private partnership:** a history from the early days of close working between the two sectors.

The six priorities of the Milton Keynes Council's Economic Strategy 2011 are:

- **Diverse and competitive knowledge based economy:** Create an environment that will foster business and employment growth within a diverse, more knowledge based and competitive economy by encouraging innovation, enterprise and skills improvement.
- **Economic regeneration:** Improve access to training and job opportunities, especially for those with no skills or low skill levels, to provide greater opportunities for individuals to obtain sustainable employment.
- **Skills and learning:** Improve the overall skills and qualifications profile of the resident

population through education and training provision, to ensure that the skills of the resident population are able to meet the needs of employers, especially in relation to higher level skills and the development of the University Centre Milton Keynes.

- **Business support:** Encourage business growth through focused interventions such as support for innovation, assistance for startups and ensuring an appropriate range of commercial space is available.
- **Articulating a compelling 'MK Offer':** Promote Milton Keynes as a premier location for inward investment and as a visitor destination.
- **Enabling infrastructure:** Create, maintain and improve the appropriate infrastructure for growth, especially in relation to transport and digital infrastructure.

The CMK Alliance Plan is focused on these priorities.

### Quality of Place

A study<sup>7</sup> by the London School of Economics identified a strong link between skilled workers

<sup>7</sup>  
[http://aws1.cloud.globalmetrosummit.net/media/nue/2010\\_NUE\\_PolicyLessons\\_gmm.pdf](http://aws1.cloud.globalmetrosummit.net/media/nue/2010_NUE_PolicyLessons_gmm.pdf)

and attractive, distinctive cities. The study found that:-

*'human capital, quality of life and quality of place agendas have merged with the knowledge economy agenda.... Superior quality of life has acted as a magnet for attracting international talent and innovative companies.'*

CMK has a strong identity or 'brand' as a place, and the Plan recognises and supports CMK's unique public realm as a key way to differentiate our city from others.

The investment potential of over sixty hectares of land in CMK will be promoted by re-establishing a clear framework for further development. The proposed land uses favour investment in offices, retail and leisure, generating a mix of employment opportunities for both high and low-skilled workers. The Plan places these employment opportunities in a rich and diverse offer of cultural, community and sports provision, attractive to employers and employees alike.

## 6. SPATIAL & DESIGN STRATEGY

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 Maps).

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

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 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.

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 Plan does not designate any special ‘quarters’ or ‘districts’ for predominant class uses, such as a ‘Business District’.

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 principal 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 create an enhanced social, cultural and civic space for public assembly which serves as the ‘heart’ of the city
- to increase variety and competition in the Primary Shopping Area, including the provision of small retail units;
- to disperse uses to reduce peak load hotspots on the CMK grid;
- to locate residential development away from the noisiest roads and footpaths – behind commercial frontages, or within outer blocks, or adjacent to Campbell Park.

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.

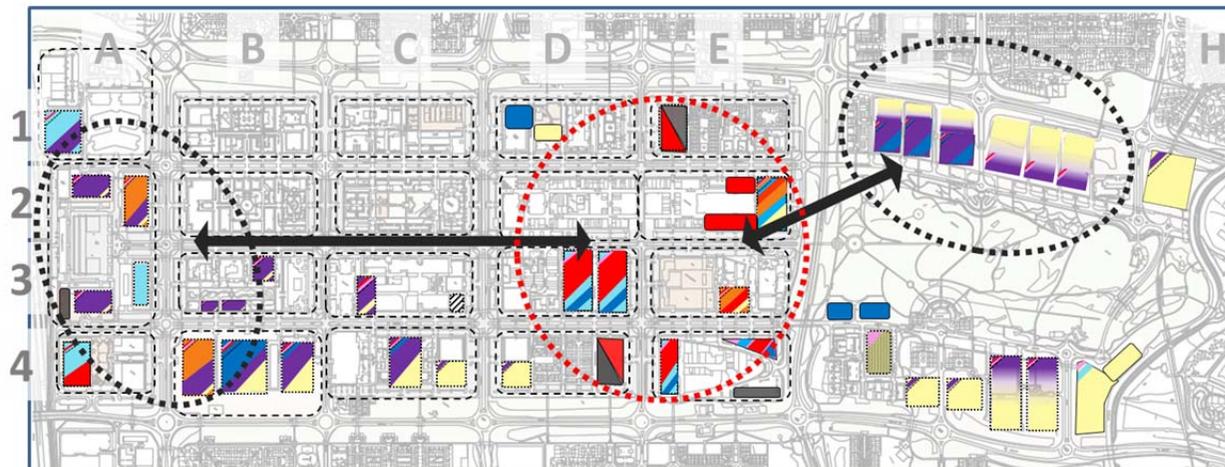
A flexible approach will be taken to the indicative land uses shown in the Proposals Maps and associated schedule (Chapter 11). Alternative land uses may be acceptable if they achieve the same objectives for the site, but unwanted or displaced land uses on one blocklet of land will have to be made up on other land in CMK if the Council’s own draft 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.

Management and monitoring by MK Council is necessary to achieve the spatial strategy for CMK, and the targeted amounts of commercial and retail floor space, as well as the number of residential dwellings, as set out in the Council's draft 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

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, which will bring significant activity to that part of the city centre. The three magnets are illustrated in the figure below.



#### Magnet One: The Station End

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.

Block B4 which sits on the south-eastern edge of the Station End, 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 – that which will raise the national or international profile of Milton Keynes.

#### Magnet Two: Primary Shopping Area

The second magnet that draws people to CMK from across the region is the retail and cultural core at the eastern end of Midsummer Boulevard.

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. At its heart will be a major civic space for celebration and congregation.

#### Magnet Three: North of Campbell Park

Like Block B4, the undeveloped blocklets in Block F1 are some of the best, undeveloped city centre sites in southern England. Containing six hectares of undeveloped land with 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 or pan-European institutions.

### Improving Principal Pedestrian Routes

The Plan seeks to improve the pedestrian experience along principal routes and, if opportunities occur, elsewhere. 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 principal 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.

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

identifies principal routes along which mixed uses at ground level are to be established, thus bringing life and animation to what would otherwise be inward-looking corporate boxes. The most important of these principal routes is Midsummer Boulevard along its whole length and especially between the Station and Saxon Gate, and the linkages to surrounding estates.

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 Plan 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

The Plan retains the classic CMK infrastructure which gives the city centre its distinctive sense of place and international identity. Spaces within the public realm in CMK can sometimes feel uninviting and windswept. The Plan seeks to ensure that any

new or regenerated spaces are sociable and encourage animation and interaction, and feel secure.

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.

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

### The Primary Shopping Area

The Primary Shopping Area is defined in the draft Core Strategy as Blocklets D2.1 to 4, E2.1 to 4, D3.1 to 4 and E3.1 to 3, comprising the centre:mk, Midsummer Place, the Point, the adjacent temporary car park, the Food Centre and the Theatre District. 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.

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 ;
- to create opportunities for a wider range of commercial leisure.

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 draft 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.

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 Plan, 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.

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 Station Square.

## Residential Use Across the City Centre

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 housing development is promoted 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.

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.

In order to accommodate the requirements of MK Council's draft Core Strategy, densities of residential developments will generally be 150 - 250 dwellings per hectare between the Station End and Marlborough Gate, and 100 - 150 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, though it is Mk Council that must evidence the scale of provision in proving the soundness of their draft Core Strategy.

### Offices: Quantity and Diversity

The Plan's indicative land proposals exceed MK Council's draft Core Strategy target 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 a ambitious vision for CMK as becoming a major regional centre for investment in office development in the plan period. Evidence suggests that 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.

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

Likewise, the Plan promotes a considerable increase in commercial leisure provision. This includes: clubs, bars, restaurants, hotels, spas, gyms, sports provision, cinemas, and other leisure outlets. While additional facilities will cluster in the retail core and Xscape, the mixed use policy encourages leisure uses being located along principal pedestrian routes, particularly Midsummer Boulevard.

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

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.

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:** law courts, museums, civic rooms, churches and places of worship for different religions;
- **community and voluntary sector:** meeting rooms, drop-in centres, community cafes and shops.

The land use proposals map and schedule includes sites for the following uses and facilities:

- 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;
- visitor facilities associated with Campbell Park;

When regeneration takes place, existing provision for the 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;

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, the facility is integrated with other commercial provision.

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 schedule and in accordance with policy CMKAP SS3.

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.

## 7. Access, Transport & Parking Strategy

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 even with the imposition of parking charges, the ease of car access and parking remains a major competitive advantage over ordinary town and city centres.

However, CMK was designed to meet the needs of 250,000 people and the current population of Milton Keynes is now approaching that size, and the statutory development plan expects the city to grow a further 25% (to 300,000) by 2026 or soon thereafter. MKC's current Draft Core Strategy identifies CMK for more intense and larger scale development over that period. 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. So present movements from within MK to the city

centre are projected to increase, as well as flows of people from the wider region.

The MK Draft Core Strategy sets out two key transport goals for CMK:

- to offer a range of travel options which collectively support an increase in visitor numbers to the city centre
- to encourage greater access to and within the area by walking, cycling and public transport

One of the key challenges for the Alliance Plan is to address the significant increase in the number of journeys to CMK and, to avoid ever-increasing demands for space for car parking and the congestion that follows, 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 CMK will be reaching its originally planned capacity for car movements.
- The MK Draft 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. This

planned intensification of CMK further increases the challenge of retaining CMK's attractiveness for car users in terms of ease of access and parking, as well as the need to increase use of public transportation.

- The necessity of making public transport, cycling and walking the preferred mode of choice for more people coming to and enjoying CMK still means that most journeys will still be by car - only about 10% of journeys into CMK are currently made by public transport, and previous transport reviews suggest that increasing this to 20% by 2031 is a stretch target. 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. The shift to 20% public transportation use by 2031 still requires 60% of journeys to be made by car.
- Good provision for cars remains a competitive advantage for CMK, helping its economic development which is of regional importance and in the national interest.

The starting point for the transportation strategy for CMK is therefore not to "punish" 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.

Second, the transportation strategy for CMK will evolve - transportation 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

With this understanding in mind, the Alliance's strategy for access, transport and parking has these strands:

1. Enhance highways and car parking capacity for future growth and development;
2. Increase public transport quality, capacity, flexibility and choice;
3. Encourage walking and cycling through better public realm - safer and more attractive streets and Redways;
4. Restrain car parking provision while shifts to alternative transport modes take place - it serves no purpose to restrain the car if there is no realistic alternative way for people to move around.

### Enhancing CMK's Highways Capacity for Growth and Development

A key element of the plan'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.

Secondly, the plan encourages new development to create greater 'permeability' – more routes for walking and cycling, in particular.

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. As illustrated in Figure xx and described in detail in later sections, this 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 Core Strategy's targets and the Alliance Plan's strategy.

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. It 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.'

The highway hierarchy for CMK is illustrated in Figure XX below:

- Gates 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 running east-west;
- Streets running north/south which divide the blocks of development land;
- North and South Row, running east west and providing longer term parking areas for CMK, as well as access to development blocks;
- the "slow streets" through all the parking areas in the Gates, Boulevards and Rows.

This hierarchy is summarised in the Milton Keynes Local Plan (2005)



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:-

- 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 through routes for cyclists who generally avoid using the Boulevards and Gates but instead use the safer routes created within the parking areas, where slow moving traffic, cyclists and pedestrians safely mix and complement the freedom of car movement offered by the Boulevards and Gates;
- 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

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

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**

The Alliance Plan public transport strategy builds on the Council's Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3). Firstly, the plan supports the creation of a

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 tram-like shuttle service.

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

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 imminent. 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 (from 6 bus stops to 12), separate taxi and kiss-and-ride areas, and improved cycling provision.

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 choice of two strategic sites for this second interchange - the public car parking areas alongside Secklow and Marlborough Gates.

The second strand of the strategy to improve transport is to deliver an intra-CMK shuttle service. Described in LPT3 as a "short-term delivery objective," which implies a welcome degree of urgency, the Alliance seeks a tram-like bus shuttle service circulating CMK using primarily Silbury and Avebury Boulevards. This would quickly and directly connect local destinations in CMK, including Central Milton Keynes Station, the Hub, thecentre:mk, Xscape, and the Theatre District. A nominal charge may be made, with a desire to provide a free service if funded by local businesses benefitting from the service. Passengers could transfer between the cross-city MK Star bus network and the local shuttle at either the rail station or Secklow Gate / Marlborough Gate interchanges.

### Encouraging walking and cycling

A key deliverable of LTP3 and the draft Core Strategy is to encourage other modes of transport, including walking and cycling.

A key part of the plan's 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 and principal pedestrian routes – which are aimed at increasing the vibrancy of the city's streets, will also encourage walking as a mode of transport.

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%).

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, for those who wish to pass through.

MK Council's LTP3 identifies the expansion of the Redway network into CMK as a "short-to-medium term deliverable". This includes:

- Completing the 'cruciform', ie a Redway running up Midsummer Boulevard within the central median
- Making National Sustrans Cycle Route 51 (which runs east west through CMK) clearer through signing, and cyclable throughout (at present cyclists must dismount at Midsummer Place)
- Upgrading other key Redways arriving in CMK (those running alongside H5, H6, V6, V8)

- Improving cycle-way signing within CMK and on the approaches to CMK
- Future longer term proposals include:
- Further improvements for cyclists (more storage, information, repair shop and sales, café) within Station Square
- Dedicated changing facilities (potentially in the former CMK Bus Station and / or new Community Sports facility behind new Network Rail offices)
- Cycle hire within the city centre and subsequently across the Borough

The Alliance plan supports these aspects of the LTP3 strategy.

### Better aligning and delivering parking provision

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 one of the highest levels of car ownership and the lowest number of public transport passengers. 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.

The Plan supports the aspiration to provide parking in Multi-storey Car Parks (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 and retail development, as these facilities have proven more popular rather than stand-alone MSCPs. Funding would need to be provided through planning obligations, however, the Council would most likely need to 'forward fund' some of these, as current levels of parking charges (30p per hour at the standard rate) will not provide sufficient income to attract investors.

Milton Keynes Council's current Parking Standards are specified in two documents - the 2005 Parking Standards SPG and 2009 Addendum. The 2005 SPG identifies four 'accessibility zones' across Milton Keynes, with Zone 1 covering CMK and Campbell Park, Zone 2

covering other town and district centres, Zone 3 covering the rest of 'urban' MK, and Zone 4 rural parts of the borough.

Zone 1 is described as covering areas with 'the highest level of public transport accessibility and consequently the lowest maximum parking levels,' and it aims to severely restrict the amount of new parking spaces provided through future development. Zone 2 is described as covering areas with 'good accessibility,' essentially town and district centres, but the subsequent 2009 Addendum re-classified large parts of these areas as Zone 3 (which is less restrictive), since 'accessibility falls away sharply as you move away from the core' of the town and district centres. The Addendum also re-classified Campbell Park from Zone 1 to Zone 2 for residential dwellings and HiMOs.

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 effectively cap new parking provision in CMK and Campbell Park at 30% of the previous standard. 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 number of

jobs and visitors in the city centre will be significantly curtailed.

Through the preparation of this plan, it has become evident that the expected shift to alternative transport modes which underpins the 2005 Parking Standards for CMK is not achievable. Even assuming a *doubling* of public transport patronage within the plan period (from 10% to 20%, considered to be at the outer limit of what is feasible), the targets set for CMK by the draft Core Strategy cannot be achieved unless parking provision is increased, and more specifically, that parking standards are raised to be more in line with Zone 2 as for the other town centres.

The number of parking spaces in CMK is currently 25,000 (consisting of approximately 20,000 public spaces, 4,000 private non-residential spaces, and 1,000 spaces at the Station). To meet the Draft Core Strategy's targets of increased residential, office and retail growth over the next 15 years, at least 7,000 additional parking spaces will need to be provided in addition to several thousand replacement parking places. However, current parking standards which classify CMK as Zone 1 will not deliver this level of parking.

Current CMK parking policy further 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 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 public MSCPs have not been delivered in the past 10 years, and planning obligation money has been returned to developers unspent.

The Alliance's parking strategy recognises the 'lessons learnt' from the past 10 years. Firstly, it adjusts the CMK parking standards to align with those of other town centres in Milton Keynes (i.e. as Zone 2). Secondly, it removes the 30% restriction of on-plot parking provision. Finally, it offers flexibility to development in the retail core by permitting off-plot provision in nearby outer blocks.

It is important to note that even with re-classifying CMK parking standards to Zone 2, there will still be required a significant and challenging shift to other modes of transport if the city-centre is to support the Draft Core Strategy growth targets.

Available CMK parking is relatively inefficiently used. During weekends, many of the parking spaces surrounding offices in western CMK lie empty while shoppers complain about the lack of

parking close to the shops. The reverse is true during weekdays.

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 F1 and B4 blocks (see below)) will help. In addition, the plan 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

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 an University, major corporate HQ or international institution that would bring significant numbers of skilled jobs and prestige to Milton Keynes. In the meanwhile, the temporary 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 temporary Park & Ride facilities may be shifted to other undeveloped sites further away from the city centre. As improvements to public transportation are realised, the need for these additional parking areas should be eliminated.