

Oakgrove Public Art Commission, Milton Keynes

We are looking to appoint a specialist creative practitioner or collaborative creative practice who have significant and demonstrable experience of developing and delivering exceptional public art commissions.

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Introduction to Milton Keynes and Oakgrove Context

An Introduction to Milton Keynes

Conceived in 1967, Milton Keynes is the most ambitious social project ever to be realised in the UK. Guided by a set of founding utopian principles: the very best place to live; freedom of choice; ease of movement; everyone welcome; and jobs for all, the city is one of the world's most successful new towns. Milton Keynes has a current population of 267,000 and by 2050 the population of the city and surrounding areas will be at least 400,000.

Milton Keynes has one of the fastest growing economies in the UK, with an exceptionally high number of business start-ups, particularly within the digital and high-tech arenas. The city is located at the very heart of the proposed Oxford to Cambridge Growth Arc – a major centre of the UK's high-tech manufacturing and research industries. Other major industries within the Arc include agriculture, tourism, construction, entertainment, education, retail and finance.

Milton Keynes is known for its unrivalled green spaces, with ancient woodlands, extensive linear parks, local parks and waterways. Miles of wildlife corridors filled, a 30mile off-road bridleway and a 'Tree Cathedral' planted in the design of Norwich Cathedral. Managing much of this superb green infrastructure is an independent charity, The Parks Trust – a truly successful model, endowed with assets to ensure that MK's green spaces are managed in perpetuity, with a long track record of implementing positive climate action policies.

Public art has always been part of Milton Keynes' DNA and the city now boasts over 250 artworks within the public realm. Public art became an important part of the city's formation and communities were given the opportunity to work hand-in-hand with artists, creating artworks that would define the city's identity –including our most famous bovine ambassadors –our Concrete Cows.

Milton Keynes Council's ongoing commitment to an ambitious and strategic public art commissioning and percent for art policy ensures that ambitious new public artworks respond to and reflect our changing city and communities, whilst making a significant contribution to wider debates and dialogues within the public art sector.

Oakgrove Context

Oakgrove is a residential district in Milton Keynes. Developed by Crest Nicholson in early 2000, and known at the 'Millennium community', the district includes a small retail centre and is characterised by a linear park at its western end, managed by The Parks Trust, which accommodates the flood plain of the river Ouzel, a tributary of the river Great Ouse.

Oakgrove is bounded by grid roads Brickhill Street to the east and Chaffron Way to the south and by the Ouzel to the west and north. Nearby areas of Woolstones to the west and Middleton in the east have a very different character to Oakgrove.

The name of the district is based on the 1685 estate map, which used the name Oak Grove for part of this area. Formerly a quarry, providing gravel stone for nearby Broughton, the area is treated as a brownfield site for planning purposes. Archaeological investigations have revealed a Bronze Age barrow, a Saxon farm and an Iron Age village.

Oakgrove is situated along its western end by Ouzel Valley Park, this area of rich parkland is abundant with wildlife and across the river at one of the villages incorporated by the new city Woolstone, there are grazing areas and medieval fishponds.

Oakgrove itself has a SuDS (sustainable urban drainage system) with managed green space running through the heart of the community, designed for surface run off into surrounding water courses. Also, a key wildlife corridor for many species including Great Crested Newt. There a few play areas around Oakgrove installed by developer to be taken on by The Parks Trust in time

Aims for the Commission

Milton Keynes Council (MKC), The Parks Trust and Broughton and Milton Keynes Parish Council are looking to appoint an experienced creative practitioner or practice to deliver a new public art commission in Oakgrove, Milton Keynes,

This will be the first permanent public art commission in Oakgrove and therefore needs to be of the highest quality and showcase innovative thinking and approaches to site, community and context specific working.

Through this commission, we are keen to demonstrate the value that creative practitioners can bring to public spaces, and evidence how public art interventions can enhance the lived experience and meaningfully engage local communities.

The total commission budget is £340,000 ex VAT. This includes all fees, fabrication/delivery costs, PM costs, marketing and publicity and maintenance. The commission budget is split into two tranches – with the appointed creative practitioner/practice awarded between £65,000 - £70,000 (contract sum) to cover all of their fees and expenses. The remaining commission budget will be administered by Milton Keynes Council in accordance with the agreed commission delivery budget and procurement processes.

Aims for this commission can be summarised as:

To develop and deliver a permanent public art commission, which is inspired by and specific to Oakgrove as a place and as a community.

To work closely with commissioning partners and Oakgrove residents in the development of commission ideas, being sensitive to the mixed tenure and diversity of the community.

To explore the green landscapes within and around Oakgrove and consider how best to make connections, encourage recreation, exercise and community well-being.

To investigate the rich heritage of the local area and surrounding villages and consider how this might be reflected and celebrated within the final commission.

To invest time and resource in engaging the community in the process and ensure this informs the commission ideas.

To work collaboratively and respectfully within the existing public realm, taking into consideration any existing constraints and sensitivities.

To work with the highest quality materials and fabrication processes, with a life span of 25+ years, ensuring the commission continues to contribute positively to the local area over a long period of time.

Consideration should be given to environmental impact of the commission.

The proposed commission can be of any material and scale. It could be a series of small and intimate interventions or a larger and more substantial work. There could also be a connection and narrative that run between a series of works. These choices and approaches should be outlined in first stage response and can be further detailed if shortlisted.

The commissioning partners are particularly interested in the principles of co-design and co-authorship, and any community involvement in the commissioning process would be welcomed. Again, this thinking and approach should also be detailed in your response.

Social Value

We want to achieve maximum social value through this commission for the benefit of Oakgrove residents and the wider community. This means providing opportunities for MK businesses and residents through the delivery of this commission wherever possible.

Considerations

- Consideration must be given to health and safety implications of the commission.
- Consideration should be given to the future care and maintenance needs.
- The appointed applicant will be required to support any planning applications or other permissions required for commission delivery.

- The appointed applicant will be expected to work closely with the Oakgrove Public Art Commission Project Manager to oversee all aspects of production and delivery.
- Sufficient time and resource should be allocated to community engagement from the outset and consideration should also be given to marketing and publicity throughout commission development and delivery.
- Evaluation mechanisms must be considered and fed into the overarching evaluation strategy.
- Consider, if appropriate an 'exit' or repurposing strategy for the commission which will mitigate any negative environmental impact.

Stakeholders and Local Partner Engagement

There are many creative practitioners, makers and fabricators in Milton Keynes, as well as a rich variety of cultural organisations. It is important that applicant creative practitioners and practices are aware of this context. Additionally, Milton Keynes has an exceptionally strong third sector with many local community groups, clubs and societies.

The Oakgrove Public Art Commissioning Group can offer advice and support to those shortlisted for stage-two of the application process.

Some useful websites about Milton Keynes include:

www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/culture

www.TheParksTrust.com

www.broughtonandmkv-pc.gov.uk

www.destinationmiltonkeynes.co.uk

www.aha.org.uk

Budget

The total commission budget is £340,000 exclusive of VAT. This does not include the £3,000 fee awarded to shortlisted applicants to develop a second-stage proposal.

The overall commission budget of £340,000 must include all fees, , research and development, travel and expenses, permissions, fabrication/installation costs, project management and maintenance costs.

£65,000 (this contract sum) has been allocated to cover all fees and expenses of the appointed creative practitioner/practice. The remaining budget of £275,000 will be administered by Milton Keynes Council in accordance with the agreed commission budget.

Marketing and Communications

The appointed creative practitioner/practice will be required to work with Milton Keynes

Council, The Parks Trust and Broughton and Milton Keynes Village Parish Council's Marketing and Communications teams to co-ordinate the delivery of a marketing and communications campaign. Additionally, Pickles PR will support external comms and deliver an agreed PR campaign for the commission, as part of a wider MK public art PR contract.

Evaluation

Qualitative and quantitative evaluation methodologies will be developed by MKC to ensure that feedback and data is captured from the outset and throughout commission delivery.

Additional Support

A dedicated Project Manager (MKC) will be assigned to support the delivery of the Oakgrove Public Art Commission. Additional support will be provided by stakeholders and partners as required.

Exclusions

We will not accept proposals for existing artworks; projects that do not meet the timescales or budget or approaches that do not respond to the local context.

How to apply and selection process

If you are interested in this opportunity please visit Milton Keynes Council's e-Tendering portal - <https://in-tendhost.co.uk/milton-keynes/>

You will need to register to view the tender documents and make a submission.

Selection process:

- Understand the site, context and aspirations of the Oakgrove Public Art Commission and submit a first stage outline proposal, via INTEND as detailed in the information above.
- Up to 5 artists/creative practices will be shortlisted and given a research and development fee of £3,000, to undertake a site visit and further develop their ideas.
- The shortlisted artists/creative practices will submit a second-stage proposal and undertake an in-person presentation to the Oakgrove Public Art Commissioning Group (Covid-19 guidelines allowing).
- A final proposal will be awarded for up to £65,000 for the commission. The successful applicant will be expected to further develop their proposal working in close collaboration with MKC, The Parks Trust, Broughton and Milton Keynes Village Parish Council, the local community and other stakeholders. This process may require revisions to the original concept and necessitate the submission of a revised commission budget and timetable.

Deadline:

The deadline for receipt of applications via INTEND is Monday 7th February 2022 at 12 noon