

MILTON KEYNES:

**MAKING A  
GREAT CITY  
GREATER**



Milton Keynes Futures 2050 Commission



We are grateful to receive this report from the MK Futures 2050 Commission. It provides a strong starting point for a constructive debate throughout Milton Keynes about the future of the city. We hope this debate will build a consensus about an ambitious new vision for how our beautiful city might change and grow, while maintaining its essential character and the features that have enabled its current success. It provides a basis for further dialogue with our neighbouring areas and with Milton Keynes people about shared opportunities and with Government about how Milton Keynes can continue to contribute to the nation's prosperity.

We established the Commission as an independent body to explore potential long-term futures as Milton Keynes emerges as a UK city and economy of increasing significance. While the Commission has drawn on independent research and expertise we are very pleased with how it has addressed our requirement to engage the Milton Keynes community in all its variety and vibrancy. We would like to thank all those people who have contributed to the Commission's work.

The future of our city will be shaped by many people already living here, particularly our young people, and others who will choose to move here. Businesses already located in Milton Keynes, and those who choose to invest here, will drive the city's future prosperity. Our community groups and parish councils also have important roles to play in the city's future. We see the Council's role as enabling all those with a stake in the future success of Milton Keynes to work together to make our great city greater.

Finally, we would like to thank Sir Peter Gregson and the Commissioners. We are grateful for your hard work, your insights and objective analyses but most importantly we thank you for the passion you have shown for helping to make Milton Keynes an even greater place.



**Cllr Pete Marland**

Council and Labour  
Group Leader



**Cllr Edith Bald**

Conservative  
Group Leader



**Cllr Douglas McCall**

Liberal Democrat  
Group Leader

# FOREWORD

Milton Keynes is the fastest growing city in the UK. This is driven by the people who feel the city is a great place to live and entrepreneurs and companies who decide it is a great place to invest. Milton Keynes is also a truly beautiful city with its trees, lakes, parks and canals, and Central Milton Keynes (CMK), Campbell Park, the grid roads as parkways and the network of Redways. There is no other city in the world like it.



No city stands still – it either grows or declines. We urge that Milton Keynes commits to continuing to grow its population to 2050 and seizes the opportunity to create an even stronger, high-performing economy, a true regional economic centre. Equally, we urge that future plans respect the city’s distinctive heritage – Milton Keynes’ landscape is a gift that keeps on giving – and ensure that future generations will enjoy the city’s beauty. And we urge Government to sign up to a ‘New Deal’ for Milton Keynes that enables these things to happen.

In this report, we set out a vision for Milton Keynes in 2050 and our views on how to make a great city greater. We see two central drivers defining this vision for 2050. First, Milton Keynes’ citizens must have access to the best education and training opportunities in Europe. Second, Milton Keynes must offer sustainable mobility for all. We are in no doubt that the city must rediscover the ‘think big’ approach that has served it well. We propose that the delivery of ‘Six Big Projects’ should start now. We also propose that the city needs a ‘[Strategy for 2050](#)’. Together, these comprise a huge new commitment to its future.

In considering these proposals, and our vision as a whole, we believe it is important to recognise that there are serious challenges facing the city and risks associated with a business as usual strategy for the future. Milton Keynes is successful today, but this is no reason for complacency.

Milton Keynes Council established our independent Commission to take an objective, long-term view of the city’s future. We were asked to consider its role and significance in the regional and national economy, its distinctive character, and the opportunities and challenges ahead of it.

Commissioners have drawn on their wide range of experience, and knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of cities, and the challenges that they are likely to face. Our work has been shaped by an extensive programme of research and engagement with the citizens of Milton Keynes. This has helped us understand the rapidly growing and distinctive ‘we love Milton Keynes’ culture of innovation. This culture fuels every debate about the city and, more importantly, is providing the energy now ‘making a great city greater’.

Milton Keynes is, and is known to be, a great place to raise a family. As Commissioners we will know that we’ve made a difference if, in the future, young people also want to stay in the city and it is a great place for growing old.



The report is underpinned by a suite of research papers that are accessible to all. This final report is a vision inspired by what we, the Commissioners, have learnt through this intensive programme of work.

At the time of going to press the UK has voted to leave the European Union. In the context of the immediate economic uncertainty that has resulted we feel it even more necessary for the city to adopt a clear vision and set out a positive long-term strategy for growth

We would like to thank the Council for the opportunity to contribute to discussions about the future of this extraordinary place and its people. We invite all those with an interest in the city to share our vision for Milton Keynes in 2050, contribute to the delivery of the ‘Six Big Projects’, and engage in preparing the ‘[Strategy for 2050](#)’.



**Sir Peter Gregson**  
Chairman

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# THE ART OF THE CITY – A VISION FOR MILTON KEYNES IN 2050





Better by design, Milton Keynes is loved by the 400,000 people who live here, and in the nearby surrounding communities, and admired by urban leaders around the world.

Known as an international centre of learning and innovation with outstanding green spaces and a cutting edge cultural scene. Milton Keynes is where 'they just get it right' and is the location of choice for growing families, young entrepreneurs and innovative thinkers alike...

# THE ART OF THE CITY – A VISION FOR MILTON KEYNES IN 2050

Building on its long-held reputation as an economic powerhouse – thanks to a perfect combination of accessibility, land options, and skilled workers – Milton Keynes' economy is a honeypot for advanced technology, knowledge-driven firms. Following a shared focus on education by the Council and its partners, business growth is driven by a highly skilled workforce, many of which were 'made in Milton Keynes' and educated at one of the city's outstanding schools.

Happily, it's 'brain-gain' rather than 'brain-drain' in Milton Keynes. By 2050, the city has established a virtuous circle where leading advanced technology companies locate in Milton Keynes to take advantage of MK:IT's graduates, who then drive the growth of these companies, which invest in MK:IT's research, development and teaching programmes.

Students are just one group who make the most of Central Milton Keynes. By 2050, the city centre offers a unique mix of independent boutiques, leading international fashion and technology flagship stores, and a diverse mix of restaurants, clubs, and galleries, with new experiences for everyone.

Many residents are inspired creators in the city's arts scene, leading to new generations of internationally active artists, directors, writers and musicians shining the spotlight on their home city. Milton Keynes is known as an exceptionally diverse, cohesive, international city with a commitment to creativity and innovation in every aspect of its life.

Green is a state of mind as well as defining the essence of Milton Keynes. The landscape helps to ensure that local air quality is one of the cleanest in the world. Over the past thirty years, the taller buildings in CMK, and the four storey housing in the transit oriented development corridors elsewhere, have not detracted from the city's spacious, open atmosphere.

Having long been a leading low carbon city, in 2050 Milton Keynes shows how every city can contribute to global carbon reduction targets. Many eco-companies have relocated to be near like-minded others, as well as firms seeking the prestige of being based in the most environmentally sustainable city in Europe.

Milton Keynes Council's own energy company buys locally-generated green energy to help balance the city's needs. Energy pricing policies contribute to achieving



Vision for a city design that could inspire a future Milton Keynes

Established in 2017, MK:IT is Britain's 21st century university - offering a mix of academic and vocational opportunities underpinned by a research programme shaped by 20+ global technology companies. It's at the heart of the cluster of high-performing universities in the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford arc that's leading the UK's successful effort to compete in the advanced industries driving global economic growth. MK: IT graduates are among the most employable in Europe.



the city's social and economic goals. All recently built homes, and most of the older housing, is extremely energy efficient. Residents appreciate the low running costs.

By 2050 Milton Keynes Council is one of the strongest local authorities in the UK. This has enabled substantial investments in learning, the replacement of older infrastructure, and high-quality public spaces. Milton Keynes has long been admired for the way developers contribute to infrastructure. The funding mechanism built in to Milton Keynes' Local Delivery Vehicle gives certainty to landowners and developers about their obligations, and has ensured that facilities that are provided to support the arrival of new residents.

Similarly, the city's established communities have gained massively from ongoing investment into their neighbourhoods from the cash and additional rate income generated by the city's growth and regeneration. In 2050, all the city's schools, health facilities, parks, sports and leisure facilities, roads, and utilities are better than they've ever been.



The fear of gridlock from growing travel demand stimulated the city to invest earlier than most others in the provision of smart, sustainable, shared transport. Many citizens now pay a monthly fee to the Milton Keynes Mobility (MKM) service that provides a flexible range of travel options. Personal use of pre-booked electric cars and readily available shared bicycles remain popular choices. However, MKM's driverless cars and shared electric taxi service are often the first thought for journeys within the city. They are cheaper, provide door-to-door transport, and dispense with the hassle of car parking. MKM's Bullet and other rapid electric shuttle buses operate on priority express routes; they offer even lower cost journeys to and from main destinations.

The widespread use of MKM's services has reduced the number of vehicle movements. Milton Keynes' relatively uncongested grid roads continue to be one of the city's strengths.

Homes close to priority routes and transport interchanges are especially sought after. The city was the first to establish a new-style local transport authority that used new technologies to provide through ticketing, booking and journey choices enabling MKM's on-demand integrated transport offer.

Across Europe and beyond, the UK Government promotes Milton Keynes Council's strategies as examples for others to follow, especially those that build on the city's long pedigree of partnership working.

A good example is how public, private and community and voluntary sectors work together. People recognise Milton Keynes as a place that offers choices on how they can live their lives and where health and wellbeing is valued and supported. Residents in all neighbourhoods live longer and healthier lives.

In 2050, people who have grown up in Milton Keynes are applying their skills to jobs in the city. MKM makes travel easy for work and play. Homes of all different sizes, types and tenures are readily available at reasonable prices and rents.

Milton Keynes is a regular feature in lists of the most desirable places to live in the UK, helped by a beautiful landscape, the success of MK:IT and the local lifelong learning ethos, by Milton Keynes Mobility, by its vibrant city centre, and its commitments to creativity, innovation, and low-carbon living. As the old tourism commercial said: 'Wouldn't you like to live in Milton Keynes?' The answer for many people is a resounding yes.



# 1. MILTON KEYNES TODAY: DOING WELL, FACING CHALLENGES



We started the Commission's work by asking the people of Milton Keynes to share their views about the city today. We met with 1,051 people, and a further 23,105 people participated through social media.

We learnt much about the city:

*“All the acknowledged great cities benefit from scale. They are large enough to attract all sorts of businesses and activities. Population density makes frequent public transport both a necessity and economically viable.”*

*“Somewhere that is diverse, that is healthy, and provides opportunities for all.”*

## WHAT MAKES A GREAT CITY?

*“A sense of public pride that you live there.”*

*“A place where inequalities are removed, and people’s lives become better year on year. A place where leaders feel supported to make good decisions and not just those which will lead to political power.”*

*“We are a very modern city, not afraid to do things differently.”*

*“The feeling that it is still growing and that there is plenty to discover both new and old beyond the residential area in which you live.”*

*“It’s a city built for convenience.”*

## WHAT MAKES MK GREAT?

*“Green spaces and ease of movement.”*

*“Excellent employment opportunities that continue to grow and change with demand.”*

*“The community spirit within individual estates.”*

*“There is no central hub that you feel proud of in MK, and the one thing MK misses compared to some older cities that have a great central atmosphere.”*

*“At least one landmark piece of public architecture – one that is good enough to win an architecture award.”*

## WHAT COULD MAKE MK GREATER?

*“Prioritising opportunities and culture for intelligent and socially mobile youth.”*

*“There needs to be a coherence of movement, not dependent on individual vehicles.”*

*“Having a well educated population is essential to success.”*

You will find more quotes from people who participated throughout this report<sup>1</sup>.

Today Milton Keynes has many strengths but it is also facing real challenges. To build on these strengths and address these challenges, we need to understand:

- **our economy** – continuing to be a ‘great place to do business’;
- **our people** – their health and wellbeing providing ‘more opportunities for all’;
- **our place** – ensuring the city is sustainable and ‘fit for the future’;
- **our culture** – from adolescence to adulthood; and
- **the financial challenges** facing Milton Keynes Council, and public and voluntary sector partners.

The following pages set out our independent view of what is important to understand in formulating a broad way forward to 2050. Two themes run through this mix of statistics and impressions: the importance of the natural environment, which needs to be sustained, and a real concern that the city is not seen as a great place for young adults, which needs to change.

## OUR ECONOMY – A GREAT PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

### THE FASTEST GROWING ECONOMY IN THE UK

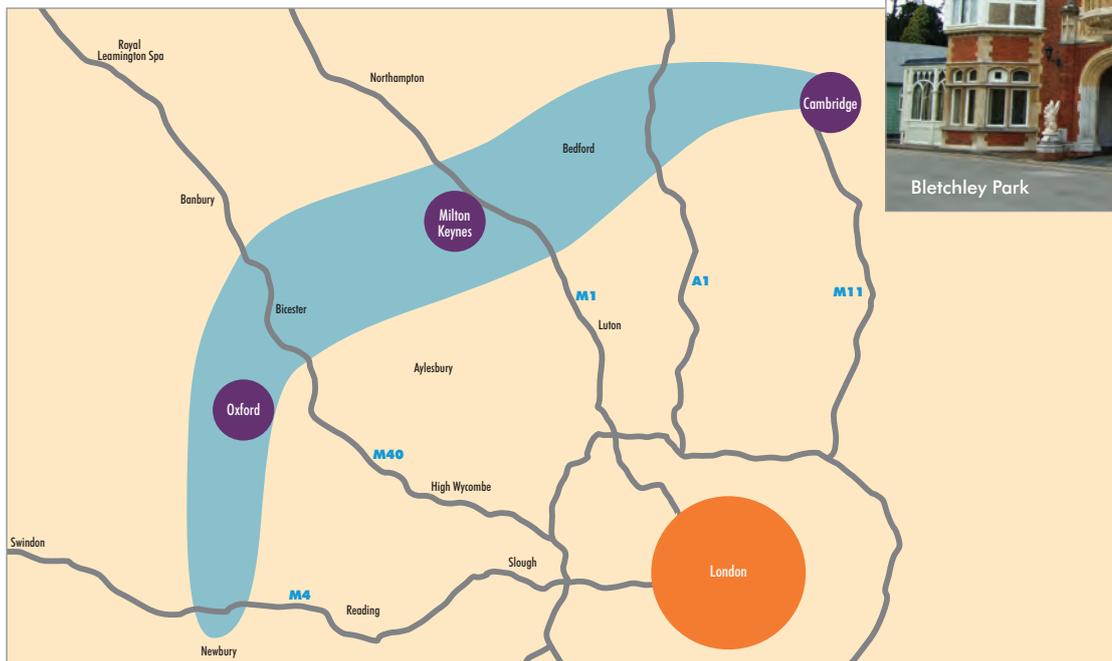
Milton Keynes is an economic success and a “great place to do business in the UK”<sup>2</sup>. Between 1981 and 2013, Milton Keynes was the fastest growing economy in the UK<sup>3</sup>, both in terms of employment and output<sup>4</sup>.

The UK motorway network provides ready access from Milton Keynes to the nation’s consumer markets. The West Coast Main Line offers frequent, fast rail services to London, the Midlands and the North West. The new High Speed Two (HS2) rail services will free up capacity on the West Coast Main Line. The city offers a ready supply of homes for rent and for sale in all prices, and a labour catchment of over 18 million people within a 60-minute commute<sup>5</sup>.

### HOME OF COLOSSUS: HUB OF THE CAMBRIDGE–MILTON KEYNES–OXFORD ARC

Over 70 years ago, one of the world’s first computers, Colossus, was invented at Bletchley Park. Located on the ‘varsity line’ railway (now closed but to be reopened) linking Oxford and Cambridge, this was the ideal location for some of the world’s leading mathematicians to work together. Going forward, Milton Keynes is becoming the hub of the Cambridge–Milton Keynes–Oxford arc, one of the most innovative areas in the UK<sup>6</sup>.

Figure 1.1: Map of the Cambridge–Milton Keynes–Oxford arc and national infrastructure investments.



Milton Keynes is already a major urban centre with a total resident population of 267,000 people and almost 162,000 jobs.<sup>7</sup> Central Milton Keynes is the metropolitan centre of a moderately sized city region<sup>8</sup>; it is by far the strongest commercial centre (particularly for retail and leisure) between London and the West Midlands and between Oxford and Cambridge<sup>9</sup>.

In 2011, 90,600 (71%) of Milton Keynes residents lived and worked in Milton Keynes. Around 28,000 residents commuted out of Milton Keynes for work, 41% of these to neighbouring areas (including Central Bedfordshire, Aylesbury Vale<sup>10</sup>, Northampton and Bedford). Around 44,500 commuters travelled into Milton Keynes, 42% from neighbouring Central Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Aylesbury Vale. This is clear evidence of the strength of the city's relationships with its hinterland. Commuting flows have increased substantially since 2011.

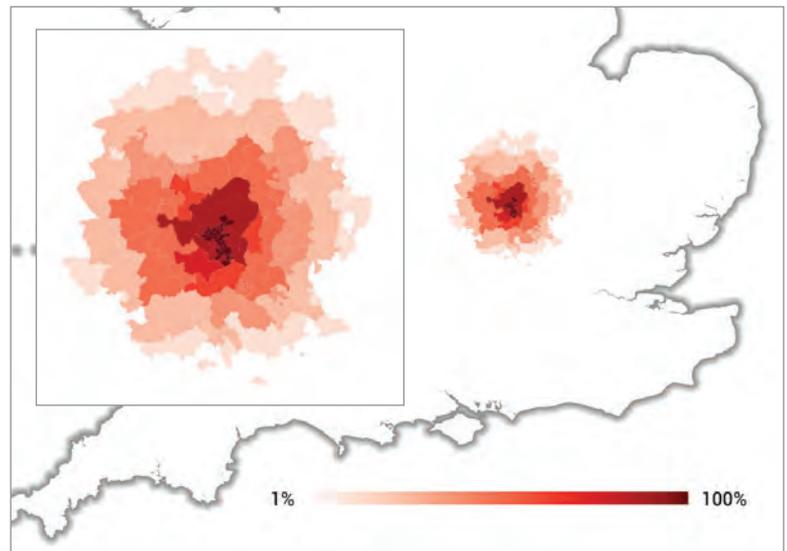
Over the next decade, the upgrade of the East West Rail route will be completed along with the A421 Expressway, both providing fast transport between Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge. These national infrastructure investments will provide the spine for the arc.

As a result of all these national infrastructure investments – to the north, south, east and west – Milton Keynes will become an even stronger growth hub. It will be more attractive to inward investors and a more attractive place to live. More people will commute in to work in Milton Keynes and from the city to elsewhere.

### SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO UK GROSS VALUE ADDED AND GREAT PRODUCTIVITY

In 2014 (the latest available data)<sup>11</sup>, Milton Keynes produced £10.3 billion of Gross Value Added (GVA, a measure of total economic output). This was the highest across the SEMLEP area and represented around a fifth of total GVA within the SEMLEP area. Milton Keynes' companies employ one of the most productive workforces in the UK. In 2013 Milton Keynes produced GVA per job of over £59,800; this productivity is much higher than any of the Core Cities, Outer London, and the rest of the Cambridge–Milton Keynes–Oxford arc. Only parts of London and Berkshire have a better performance<sup>12</sup>.

Figure 1.2: Milton Keynes city region.



In 2014 (the latest available data), there were almost 162,000 jobs in Milton Keynes<sup>13</sup>, an increase of 19,200 jobs or 13% growth since 2009<sup>14</sup>. Most work in the private sector; for every public sector employee in Milton Keynes in 2014, there are four jobs in the private sector. This is a higher ratio than for the UK as a whole or indeed for London<sup>15</sup>.

The largest employment sectors in Milton Keynes are currently **retail and education**, with additional concentrations of jobs in **warehousing and transport, computer programming, consultancy and financial services**<sup>16</sup>. There is also significant employment in the **arts, entertainment and leisure sector**. This diversity means that the Milton Keynes economy is more resilient than most<sup>17</sup>. Milton Keynes has attracted investment in **higher value, more knowledge-based activities** as they have emerged<sup>18</sup>. One-third (34%) of employment is in the knowledge-intensive business sector, compared to just over a quarter for the UK as a whole<sup>19</sup>. This includes an above average presence in 'new economy' activities and these have all shown considerable growth in recent years<sup>20 21 22</sup>.

Although MK's growth has brought jobs to the area it has also shifted away from encouraging innovative businesses and forward thinking housing. //



// There are a lot of young people whose lives are being wasted and it needs fixing. //

### ATTRACTIVE PLACE TO RELOCATE OR START A BUSINESS

The number of businesses in Milton Keynes has increased by 1,700 or 16% over the last five years, with particularly strong growth in the professional services and ICT sectors<sup>23</sup>. In total, there were around 11,000 enterprises active in the area in 2014, the fourth highest density of businesses of any UK city<sup>24</sup>. Many are concentrated in the city centre, benefitting from strong rail links and agglomeration effects. Milton Keynes also has the third highest business start-up rate of any UK city<sup>25</sup>. With the rate of new starts rising year-on-year since 2009, there is considerable potential for further growth<sup>26</sup>.

The fourth highest density of businesses of any UK city

There is one further education (FE) college in Milton Keynes and some additional provision in nearby communities. All secondary schools have sixth forms. Looking at these, and the results of students at the FE college, A-level attainment in Milton Keynes (68% of students achieved three or more grades A\*-C) is significantly below national performance (78%)<sup>31</sup>. Some 55% of the 3,500 young people leaving school each year in Milton Keynes go on to participate in higher education. Most leave the city to do so<sup>32</sup>.

### A PROSPEROUS CITY TODAY BUT NO ROOM FOR COMPLACENCY

In 1967, there were some 21,350<sup>33</sup> jobs in the Milton Keynes area. In 2014 there were around 162,000<sup>34</sup> jobs; an average increase of 3,000 per annum over almost five decades<sup>35</sup>. If the targets in the approved Core Strategy are achieved, the number of jobs in the city will increase to 185,000 by 2026<sup>36</sup>.

Much of this job growth will come from existing businesses and companies moving to or expanding in CMK, taking advantage of the historically high number of available sites. Yet there are real challenges that must be overcome to enable these job growth targets to be achieved. There is only a limited supply of sites suitable for large logistics facilities<sup>37</sup>, the retail industry is going through a period of significant change, and generally housing growth is lagging behind job growth, thus increasing the pressure from commuters on the city's road network.

In addition, it is widely accepted that innovation economies rely on attracting highly-skilled creative knowledge workers that establish and drive them, and that they in turn tend to locate in places with a vibrant cultural scene, and that are recognised as open, diverse, tolerant and creative<sup>38</sup>. Realising Milton Keynes' full economic potential means ensuring that the city is more attractive to such knowledge workers.

### A LESS SKILLED RESIDENT WORKFORCE/BELOW AVERAGE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENTS

Although the skills profile of those working in Milton Keynes is similar to the national profile, residents are less skilled than in the South East. For example in 2014, only 35% of residents aged 16-64 had higher-level qualifications compared to 39% in the South East. At the same time, a relatively high share of employed residents (12%) are in elementary, administrative, and service occupations<sup>27</sup>.

Today in Milton Keynes, 85% of state-funded primary schools and 75% of the twelve secondary schools (including nine academies) are rated by OFSTED as 'outstanding' or 'good'. Three secondary schools are rated as 'requiring improvement'. No further education provider in the area is rated as 'outstanding'. The majority are currently rated as 'requiring improvement' or 'inadequate'<sup>28</sup>.

At least two significant challenges must be addressed: the poor performance of young people from white, British, low-income families (in common with the UK as a whole) and the relatively poor attainments at the city's secondary schools<sup>29</sup>. For example in 2014, pupil attainment at GCSE level was below the average for England, with 49% achieving 5+ A\*-C grades including English and Maths compared with 53% nationally<sup>30</sup>.



Dan Bonner,  
owner of Concrete Cow Brewery

# OUR PEOPLE – PROVIDING MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

Our city’s people are its most valuable asset. For most, Milton Keynes provides opportunities to enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives, but this is not the case for everyone.

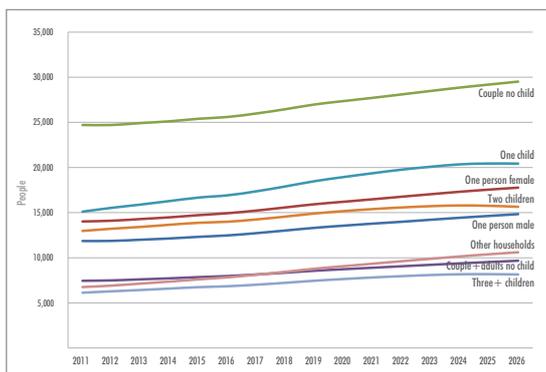
In 1967, when the Government decided to develop a new city, around 60,000 people lived in the area now known as Milton Keynes. In 2016, some 267,000 people live here<sup>39</sup>. This increase is an average of over 4,000 people per year. In the decade to 2014, Milton Keynes grew faster than almost all other local authorities<sup>40</sup>. Milton Keynes is accustomed to delivering this rate of growth.

If the targets in the approved Core Strategy are realised, Milton Keynes will continue to grow at this rate to 309,000 people by 2026. Around half of this increase will comprise net migration from elsewhere in the UK and beyond, and the other half from the natural growth of the people living here<sup>41</sup>. Elsewhere in the UK, various ‘public sector reform models’, most notably the devolution deals, see expenditure on integrated services as investments in a city’s long-term economic future<sup>42</sup>. The high rates of population growth planned for Milton Keynes bring considerable opportunity to further strengthen its productivity.

## OVER HALF OF HOUSEHOLDS ARE SINGLE PERSONS/COUPLES WITHOUT CHILDREN

In 2016, there are 106,550 households in Milton Keynes. Of these, 26% are single-person households and 32% are couples without children, with or without a further adult. Together, these make up 58% of the households in the city<sup>43</sup>.

Figure 1.2: Household mix in Milton Keynes.

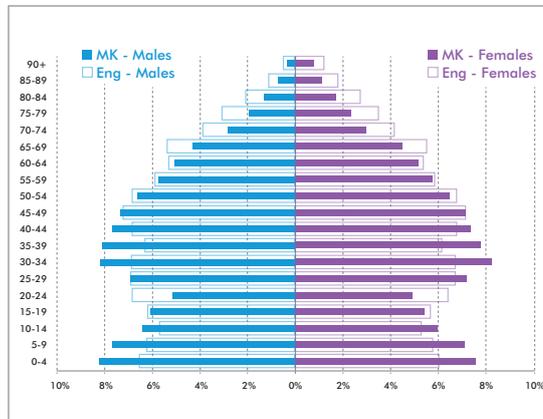


Milton Keynes is seen to be, and undoubtedly is, a popular place to raise a family. Yet, only around one in three households (35%) have children<sup>44</sup>. Of all these households with children, around 24% are one parent families<sup>45</sup> 46. Projections indicate that this pattern will continue through to 2026 and beyond. There will continue to be many more single person and couples without children households than families with children<sup>47</sup>. This has significant implications for many aspects of the city’s future<sup>48</sup>.

## OUR RELATIVELY YOUNG POPULATION – GROWING OLDER AND YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVE

In 2014, the population of Milton Keynes was substantially younger than that of England as a whole. With the exception of the 15–19 and 20–24 age groups, Milton Keynes has a higher proportion of people in all age groups up to age 49 and a lower proportion from age 50 onwards than England as a whole. Today, this relatively youthful population is a strong economic asset<sup>49</sup>.

Figure 1.3: Age structure of Milton Keynes and England.



Going forward to 2026, the population of Milton Keynes will remain much younger than in England as a whole, although the differences in the proportions of older groups will narrow<sup>50</sup>. There will be a 26% increase in the number of people aged 5–19. By 2026, one in four people will be over 60<sup>51</sup> and there will be a 74% increase in those 70 or over<sup>52</sup>. Thus the demand for school places, and care services for the elderly, will increase.

These statistics mask the fact that many young people move away from Milton Keynes when they finish secondary school. Some go to university; others are drawn to London to work. Many never return. More generally, our discussions with young people indicated that many do not see Milton Keynes as an exciting place to live or work<sup>53</sup>.



Bricks and mortar don’t make a city great, people make it great. //

## A DIVERSE POPULATION

In the 2011 Census, 26.1% of the people living in Milton Keynes said they were from a black and minority ethnic (BME) group by comparison with 13.2% in 2001<sup>54</sup>. This is a very significant increase and one of the city's strengths. In 2015, 40.3% of the students enrolled in the city's mainstream school population were from a BME family compared with 20.7% in 2005<sup>55</sup>. About 41% of children in reception classes are from a BME family<sup>56</sup>.



## HEALTH CHALLENGES

Life expectancy in Milton Keynes is 78.7 years for men and 82.5 years for women, compared to 79.2 and 83.0 years, respectively, in England<sup>57</sup>. The three 'major killers' with the greatest impact on life expectancy in Milton Keynes are circulatory diseases, cancer<sup>58</sup> and respiratory diseases<sup>59</sup>. Levels of early deaths due to cancer are higher in Milton Keynes than the national average. Milton Keynes also has higher than average levels of smoking-related deaths<sup>60</sup>.

Historically, rates of early deaths from heart disease and stroke were higher than those reported nationally, but since 2015 have dropped below the national average<sup>61</sup>. Milton Keynes has lower than average rates of diagnosed diabetes cases, drug misuse, road deaths and suicide rates<sup>62</sup>. Obesity has long been considered an important issue within Milton Keynes<sup>63</sup>. Almost three-quarters of adults in Milton Keynes are overweight or obese; this is the highest proportion in the South Midlands and Hertfordshire NHS region<sup>64</sup>. Some 18.6% of Year 6 children in Milton Keynes are obese – slightly lower than the national average<sup>65</sup>. Many older people suffer from depression (rising to 40% for people aged 85) and have high levels of alcohol use; 65% of all hospital admissions are for people over 65<sup>66</sup>.

According to Cities Outlook 2016, Milton Keynes is in the top ten UK cities with the highest per capita carbon emissions; all the others are much older industrial cities<sup>67</sup>.

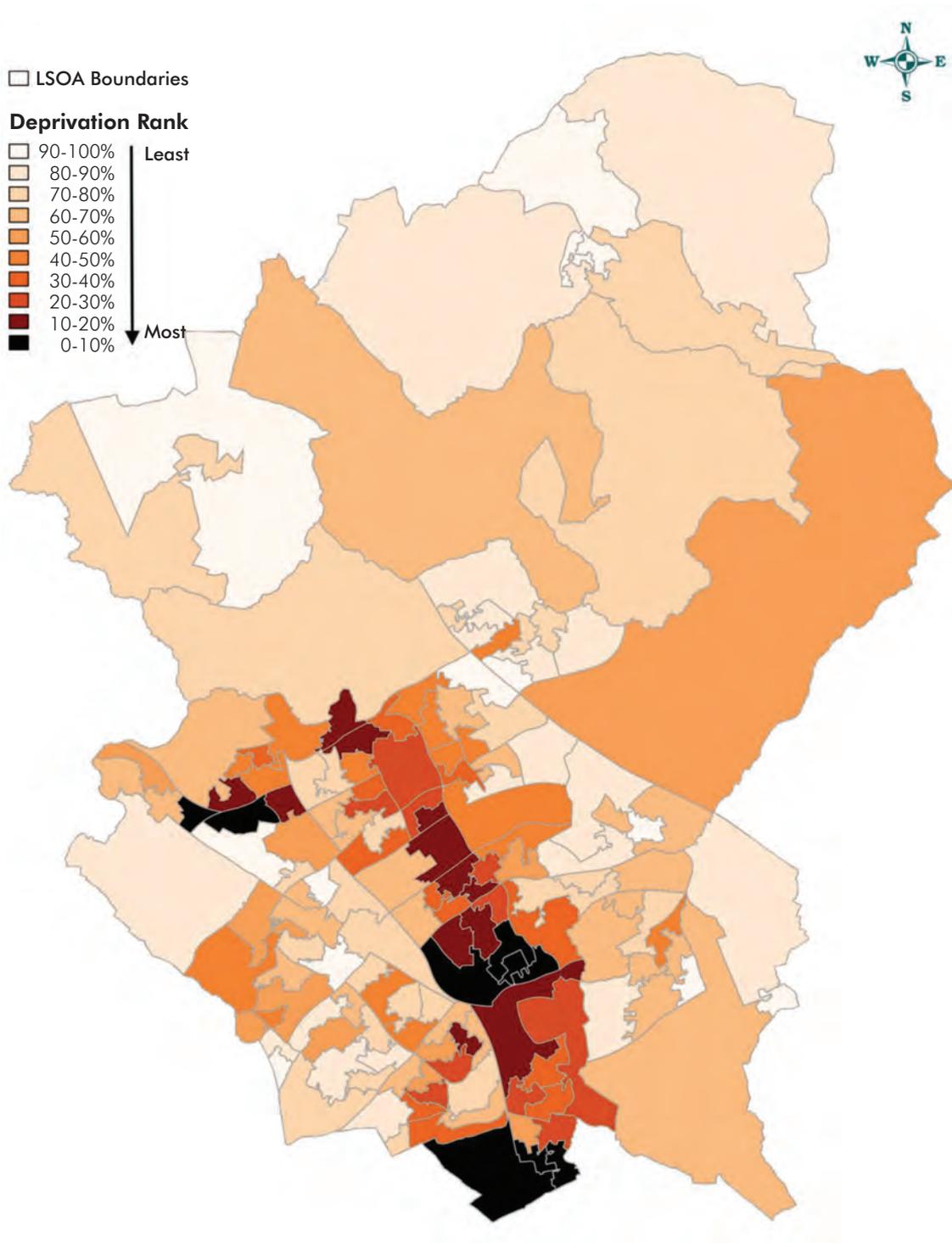
According to the Government's 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), Milton Keynes is ranked at 181 out of 326 local authorities in England (with 1 being the most deprived area). This compares with a rank of 211 in 2010 and a rank of 212 in 2007. Deprivation in Milton Keynes is increasing relative to the rest of England<sup>68</sup>. Bedford, Northampton and Luton have more deprivation than Milton Keynes<sup>69</sup>.



People living in Fullers Slade, Hodge Lea, Tinkers Bridge, Beanhill, Netherfield, Coffee Hall and the Lakes Estate are in the most deprived communities in Milton Keynes. These are some of the most deprived in England as a whole. Some 23,200 people live in these areas<sup>70</sup>; this represents some 8.8% of the people living in the city as a whole<sup>71</sup>. The average life expectancy of men residing in the most deprived areas of Milton Keynes is 7.1 years shorter than those who live in the least deprived areas. Average life expectancy for women in the most deprived areas is 5.3 years shorter<sup>72</sup>.



Figure 1.4: Concentrations of deprivation in Milton Keynes, 2015.



These communities are the focus of the council's Regeneration MK programme. Of course, deprived households live throughout the urban and rural areas of the city and using the IMD overall index of deprivation, some 32,300 or 12.9% of the city's residents are deprived<sup>73</sup>. In Milton Keynes, a person from a BME Group is less likely to live in a deprived community<sup>74</sup>. This is evidence of the strength of the city's diverse population.

In 2012, using 2009 data, the Milton Keynes Child Poverty Commission reported that there were nearly 12,500 children living in poverty; then just over 20% of the child population. Three-quarters of these children lived in a lone-parent household, just over half live in families with at least one child under five, and just under half live in families with three or more children<sup>75</sup>. According to a 2015 assessment using a different methodology, 11,255 children in Milton Keynes live in poverty<sup>76</sup>.

**Redevelop the early estates that were built to a low standard of construction, excessively low density, and with an insufficient mix of housing types.**

# OUR PLACE – SUSTAINABLE AND FIT FOR THE FUTURE

## HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Milton Keynes' **parks, lakes, canals and diverse landscape** are some of its most valuable assets. The Milton Keynes Parks Trust is responsible for the long-term stewardship of the most important 'city-wide' assets and is one of the most innovative and high-performing bodies of its type anywhere in the UK<sup>77</sup>. The city's environmental assets are in safe hands and opportunities to strengthen the Trust's role and remit merit further exploration.

Most residents highly value the **spacious feel and the lush landscaping** of the open space in their neighbourhoods and the city as a whole, and are proud of their home's place in that landscape. Thus, when proposals emerge for different neighbourhoods to provide more and improved housing, for the RegenerationMK programme estates or elsewhere, it will be important that these add value to the landscape and quality of environment generally.

Overall, "the quality of place" offered by all of Milton Keynes' urban and rural communities will continue to be a key factor in the city's efforts to attract new residents, especially "creatives" and highly skilled "knowledge workers". It is therefore also an important part of the city's competitive advantage.

Milton Keynes offers one of the widest choices of homes for sale in all price ranges anywhere in the UK. Generally, housing for sale is more affordable than elsewhere in the South East but there is an ongoing severe shortage of affordable rentable housing. Today the quality of homes for rent is a more complex picture. Some of the social housing estates developed in the 1970s and 1980s have aged well; others are urgently in need of investment. Almost 20% of the city's housing stock is now privately rented<sup>78</sup>.

Going forward, Milton Keynes faces three difficult housing challenges. First, the supply of allocated and consented **land for housing is now under the control of a very small number** of national land owners (who do not build housing) and actual housebuilders, and this may limit the supply of homes coming on to the market each year<sup>79</sup>. Second, **private landlords** are now a very important element of the city's housing market and the main source of homes available to those who cannot afford to buy. These are mainly buy to let landlords, often owning houses that were formerly part of the social housing stock. There is a significant risk that these landlords will not invest sufficiently to maintain these homes in good condition. At present the Council does not have a clear view on how to address these challenges.



**The Parks Trust**  
MILTON KEYNES

However, the third challenge—securing the **regeneration of many of the older social housing estates** — is a Council priority. The Council has recently entered into a long-term partnership with Mears to undertake a regeneration programme for many of the older predominantly social housing estates<sup>80</sup>. This is starting with a stock condition survey. In partnership with the communities in those estates, plans for refurbishment and redevelopment will be prepared. It is likely the programme will take between 10 and 20 years to complete.

Since 1967, most of Milton Keynes has been developed at a **relatively low gross density** by comparison with most other places built in the UK, but the **net densities** of many of the housing estates are broadly similar to elsewhere<sup>81</sup>. In part, this is because during the 1970s and 1980s, the Government's cost ceilings for social housing were applied in the same way across the UK, and in part because private developers have a clear view of their customer's expectations in each market segment.

There is a **modest** capacity to accommodate additional homes in most of the already built area, arising from 'reserve sites' as in the original plan for the estates. This will not be sufficient to accommodate most of the future growth of the city.



## TRANSPORT 2050: MOBILITY FOR ALL?

Today, it is easier and faster to journey around Milton Keynes by car than in any other UK city of comparable size. It is estimated that 80% of households have a car. Recently, 80% of bus users reported that they were satisfied with their service (although this is the lowest in the country where this is measured)<sup>82</sup>. 73% of journeys to work are made by car and 8.7% by public transport. The proportion of journeys to work by public transport journeys are lower than the national average<sup>83</sup>. 29% of journeys to school are by car, higher than the national average<sup>84</sup>.

It is difficult to provide commercially viable bus services from low-density residential areas in villages and in city estates to dispersed employment sites and retail areas. Buses that only operate along grid roads have lower levels of accessibility, but benefit from faster journey times. Services that run through estates have higher levels of accessibility, but are prone to lower levels of reliability and relatively long journey times.

Milton Keynes' 280 kilometres of world-class Redway network is an underutilised resource, and seen as a leisure rather than commuting asset. The proportion of local walking and cycling trips for journeys to work (10%) is currently below the regional and national averages (13%).

At the rate of growth planned in the approved Core Strategy, by 2026 there will be a 57% increase in travel demand at peak times. This includes a 25% increase in car trips. However, the capacity of the grid road network, particularly the junctions, can only be redesigned to accommodate around half of this demand.

Peak period congestion at some grid road junctions, particularly those serving the M1 and the A5, is now already severe. With the ongoing growth of Milton Keynes to deliver the approved Core Strategy, congestion on the city's road network will increase substantially over the next decade. With a network already close to capacity, the forecast impact of this growth will be to increase total travel times in the morning peak by 54%<sup>85</sup>. Monitoring of actual traffic growth to date is consistent with the forecasts when the impact of the recent slowdown in growth and development is factored in. How best to approach this challenge is set out in Chapter 4.

Figure 1.5: Modal share of journeys to work.

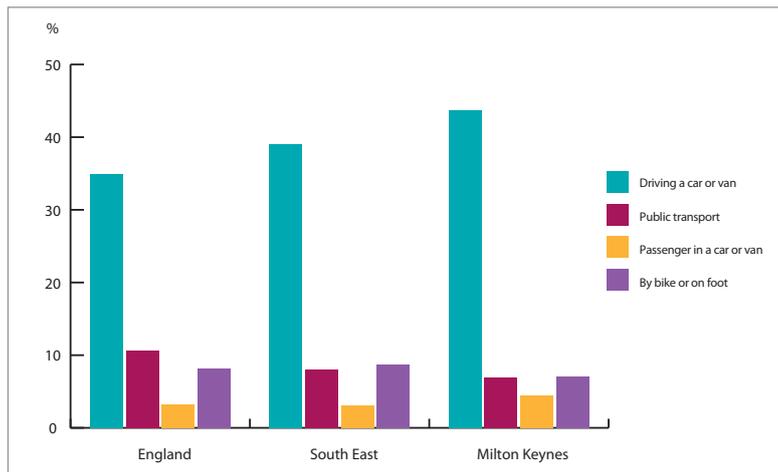


Figure 1.6: Forecast of congestion hotspots by 2026.



## OUR CULTURE – FROM ADOLESCENCE TO ADULthood

Milton Keynes is at a critical moment of cultural transition. It is moving from adolescence to adulthood, but risks embalming itself through fear of change, swapping a spirit of innovation for one of convention.

This is happening whilst cultural production and consumption is changing radically, partly through globalisation and digitisation. Local culture, identity and quality of life are globally decisive success factors for cities in attracting and retaining talent and business. The city's future depends on its people and a culture of experimentation and creativity. Yet people feel Milton Keynes can be complacent and lacks spontaneity, and that a more experimental and subversive 'try and test' approach to culture should be taken.

To create a total cultural asset base like that of Milton Keynes would be unthinkable now. In fact, the city is a uniquely created cultural artefact in its own right, made with the intention of improving the way people can live, which is a massive strength to play to. But its cultural offer can appear fragmented and pulled in too many directions, making the focus required for global excellence hard to achieve. Milton Keynes has a lot to celebrate and could shout louder, but it could also radically improve its cultural offer, further internationalising the city and growing its visitor economy.

Cultural participation levels as a percentage of the population are high: arts at 65%; museums 52%; parks and gardens 44%; and volunteering levels are above average. But more people across more communities need to be engaged, including disengaged young people. The reasons behind a lack of participation are complex, but include a lack of awareness, transport, cost, or just feeling 'it's not for me'.

By investing in cultural programmes within and between communities, Milton Keynes could make more of its diversity, showing its youth and older people how valued they really are. This could help counter isolation and social segregation, triggered by the city's relatively high levels of obesity, perhaps linked to the car culture, and the grid-square structure that – despite its strengths – has resulted in 'island communities' in deprived areas, linked to monolithic housing and income levels. Depression is high among older people, rising to 40% for people aged 85. Older people have high levels of alcohol use and 65% of all hospital admissions are for people over 65.



“Milton Keynes is different, and to those that know the city it makes it a special place.”

## INTERNAL VERSUS EXTERNAL PERCEPTIONS

Milton Keynes is loved by residents (98% satisfaction in some surveys) and many visitors, but its external perception can be poor, with a sense of cultural insularity. Sometimes things seem to face inward, not outward: its grid squares; buildings that appear austere but are enjoyable inside; activity that is highly locally focused; internally loved, externally misunderstood. None of that is wrong, and may be a by-product of what it takes to build a place and community from scratch. But now the city needs to look outward more.

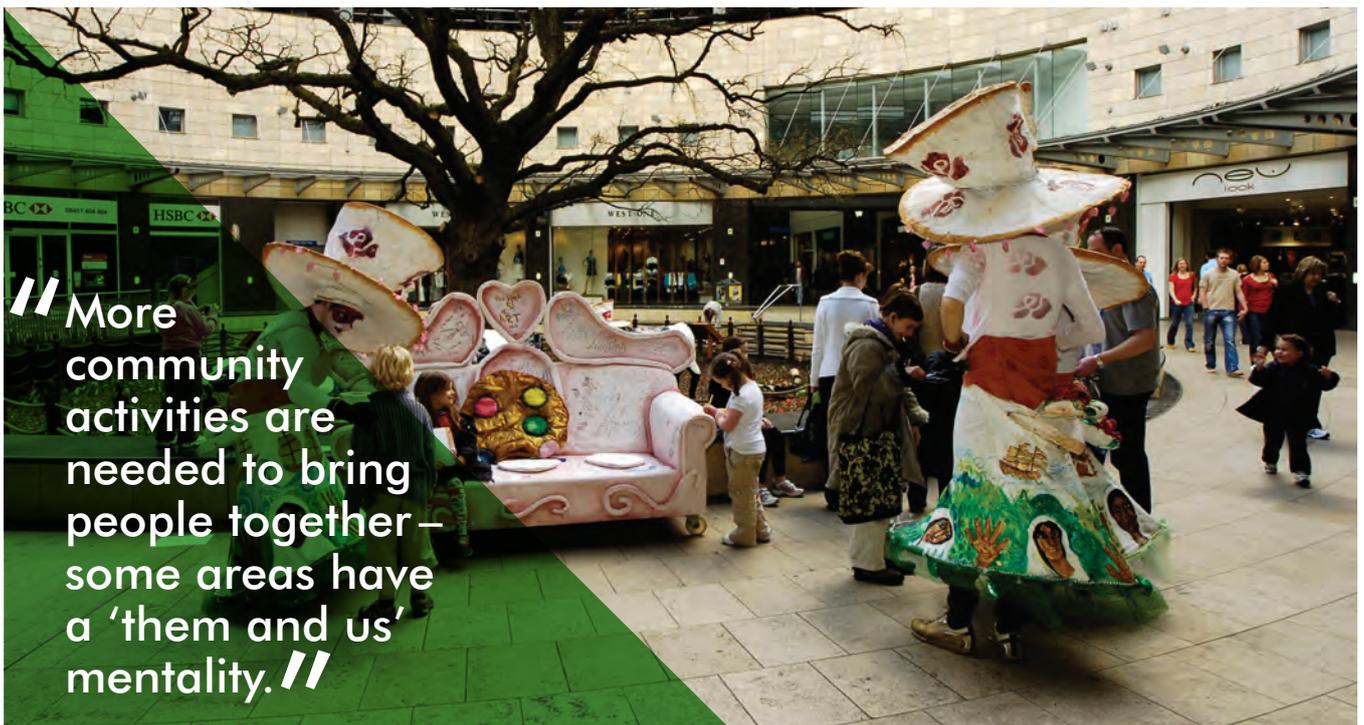
The city should not, however, spend money on promotional campaigns that will look inauthentic or defensive. Instead Milton Keynes needs to think big about cultural projects and programmes built on what is here, that establish a strong, authentic narrative and connect with the world, speaking to who and what Milton Keynes is and aspires to be. Let the world then tell Milton Keynes how great it is.

## FINANCIAL CHALLENGES FACING MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL AND PARTNERS

The impact of the Government's austerity measures and reforms of local government finance on Milton Keynes Council shape our view of how the city moves forward, at least in the short and medium term. As a result of Government funding reductions and an increase in demand for services the Council has had to reduce and redirect £68m of spending since 2011, with a further reductions and redirections of £54m by 2021/22. For any local authority, these are challenging targets but only show part of the overall financial picture that the Council faces.

By 2020, the Government will completely abolish Revenue Support Grants for local government. Instead local authorities will be able to retain their additional business rate income. However, for Milton Keynes, Government will still retain 70% of each additional pound of business rate to subsidise lower yield authorities. The full details are still being developed but this reform means that funding will continue to lag significantly behind the services required by a rapidly increasing population. Problems also exist due to limitations on the Housing Revenue Account, the integration of health and social care, and the Better Care Fund.

Moreover, Milton Keynes as a 'new town' faces legacy financial pressures arising from the fact that a significant proportion of the city's original infrastructure was developed in a short period of time, and thus in need of renewal and replacement all at once. These legacy pressures include social housing, the grid roads and underpasses, the volume of open spaces and the maintenance and ongoing provision of cultural facilities. The original Parks Trust, and new Council innovations for regeneration, and the creation of a fund with prudential borrowing to invest in infrastructure replacement will address some but not all of these legacy needs.



“More community activities are needed to bring people together – some areas have a ‘them and us’ mentality.”

## STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

In terms of growth requirements, the Council regularly estimates the costs of all ongoing capital infrastructure projects relating both to the development of the city and its maintenance in its Local Investment Programme (LIP). This includes the cost of investment for education and health where the Council is not the primary funder. The current shortfall on the LIP is £73m for critical infrastructure essential to unlock housing and employment land space delivery, and £145m of necessary infrastructure to deliver sustainable growth. Part of the gap may be uncertainty about funding from Government for health and education projects.

### The current shortfall on the LIP is £73m for critical infrastructure

The scope for capturing the growth in land value arising from development is also changing. In the Eastern and Western Expansion areas, essential infrastructure (roads, schools, environment, social and health facilities, etc.) was funded in advance with grants from Government loans from English Partnerships/the Homes and Communities Agency. These are being repaid through the yield from the innovative Milton Keynes Tariff as each home is completed; this is enabling the completion of 15,000 new homes and 500,000 m<sup>2</sup> of employment space.



For future development areas, current Government policy is to use the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to fund essential infrastructure. However, CIL monies would be received after the sites are developed and so cannot be used to fund advanced infrastructure and CIL provides a lower yield than the Tariff. Currently CIL does not appear to provide an adequate replacement for the Tariff and the Council has decided not to develop a CIL. As set out in Chapter 6, a new deal with Government is needed to capture land value, invest in infrastructure to support greenfield growth and enable the retention of sufficient funding from business rate yield to enable the Council to provide appropriate services to a growing population.

The city has many strengths. Its economy has been growing faster than any other in the UK, is one of the most productive, and makes significant contributions to national output. It is a great place to do business, with a high proportion of knowledge-intensive jobs.

The city's rate of population growth is higher than almost anywhere else in the UK, is still relatively young and exceptionally diverse. And it offers one of the widest choices of homes for sale at more affordable prices than most other communities in the South East. It's easy to move around by car. The culture, leisure and sporting offer is strong, and becoming stronger.



The city also faces many challenges. Many people face multiple deprivations. Life expectancy of those living in the most deprived areas is significantly shorter than in the most prosperous areas. There is an ongoing severe shortage of affordable housing. Even though there is enough land allocated for housing to achieve planned rates of growth, this land supply is under the control of a small number of developers.

We are particularly concerned about three challenges. First, the resident workforce is less qualified than in many other communities, and educational attainments are below national averages at GCSE and A levels. Second, there is a need for a new strong university in the city. Finally, we see the prospect of congestion on the grid road system increasing rapidly and the challenge of moving around by public transport becoming even more difficult. There is a strong need for a low-carbon transport strategy to facilitate the move to smart shared mobility for all.

## 2. GLOBAL DRIVERS: SHAPING THE FUTURE



In 1968, the Plan for Milton Keynes (the Plan) was based on the then best assessments of the key factors that would drive and shape the growth of the city.

For example, high rates of population growth were projected for the South East over the next 50 years. Actual growth has been even higher than was envisaged. To accommodate some growth, the Government promoted Milton Keynes as what was thought to be one of the best locations in the UK to build a new city. This has proved to be the case. On the other hand, forecasts about the balance between manufacturing and service employment, car ownership, and subsidies for social housing have not proven to be very accurate.

All of these drivers, and many others, have had a significant impact on Milton Keynes. Of course, the authors of the Plan knew that forecasts should be treated as “well, just forecasts”, not certainties. Thus, they prepared the Plan for Milton Keynes as a broad, flexible strategy, not a detailed blueprint. In many ways these flexibilities have served Milton Keynes very well.

Similarly, in starting the process of building our vision for Milton Keynes we looked at some of the factors that would shape the city over the next 50 years and beyond. We too can be more certain about some of these than others.

#### HIGH PROJECTED NATIONAL AND REGIONAL POPULATION GROWTH

In May 2016, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published a new set of population projections<sup>86</sup>. These show that the population of England will increase from 55.2m in 2016 to 63.2m in 2039. They also show a projected increase for London and the South East, together for 3.6m people. This includes an increase in London itself. (ONS also projects that Milton Keynes’ population will increase from around 267,000 in 2016 to 328,000 in 2039, although it does not specify what assumptions it uses about the increase in the city’s housing stock.)

Whilst these are projections, and will certainly change, Government will expect that every local authority will plan to accommodate a fair (but as yet undefined) share of this growth. For Milton Keynes, this is an exceptional opportunity.

Up to now, the city has successfully harnessed significant growth, providing benefits for the people and the businesses who have chosen to settle here. It must decide what is the best way of doing so in the future.

#### UK ECONOMIC GROWTH WILL BE DRIVEN BY INNOVATION

The **UK economy will continue to expand**<sup>87</sup>. In some years it will grow more slowly than in others and there will be unforeseen economic shocks that will impact on the UK, and on UK cities including Milton Keynes<sup>88</sup>. The globalisation of trade will continue and the balance of power will continue to shift towards China, India and Brazil, and other emerging economies<sup>89</sup>.

Generally, **UK economic growth** will be driven by productivity improvements, accelerating innovation in advanced technologies, shifts to a low-carbon economy with far more investment in recycling previously used materials to move towards a circular economy, and the growth of the sharing economy<sup>90</sup>. We know that investments in technologies, automation, and connectivity are boosting the productivity of many jobs. A range of advances in manufacturing technologies promises changes in the structure and global locations of manufacturing activities. For example, 3D printing allows on-demand, local production. This will have far-reaching implications for supply chains, production networks and working patterns as will the advent of ubiquitous ultra-fast connectivity through the development of 5G telecommunications systems. Milton Keynes’ established track record in attracting investments in advanced technologies provides a strong basis for continuing to do so<sup>91</sup>.

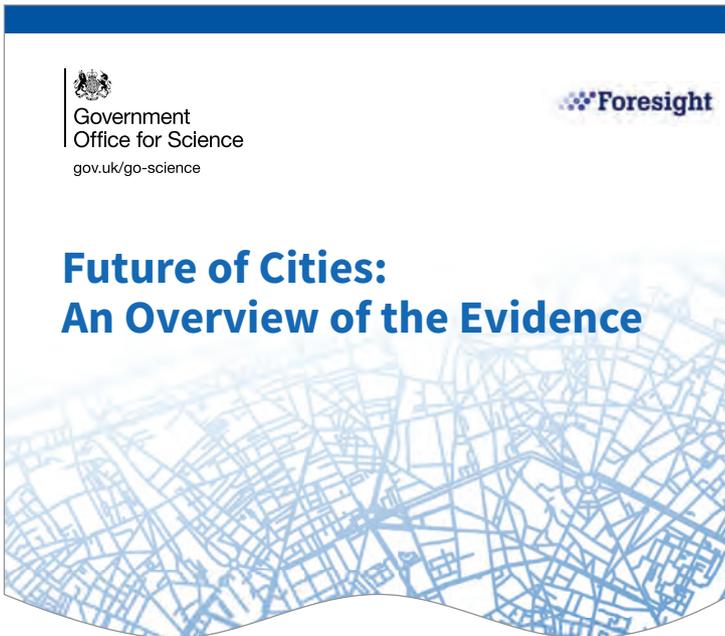
## FORESIGHT: COMPETITIVE CITIES

The Government Office for Science's recent Foresight report, *Future of Cities: An Overview of the Evidence*<sup>92</sup> takes a "longer term view of the future of cities... For example, we are still living with the health impacts of the decision to promote car-oriented design in cities almost 50 years ago..."<sup>93</sup>. The Foresight project identifies the "key challenges and opportunities for UK cities."<sup>94</sup> Drawing on this evidence, and a wide range of other sources, we identify the key trends and areas of uncertainty that we believe are material to the future of Milton Keynes.

More generally, as part the **London mega-city region**<sup>95</sup> – the most prosperous in the UK – Milton Keynes is well placed to continue to prosper. Furthermore, **smaller and medium sized cities** like Milton Keynes are growing faster than others<sup>96</sup>. Yet, the **performance of UK cities will continue to differ**<sup>97</sup>, and Milton Keynes needs to take steps to ensure it continues to prosper.

There are different, sometimes contradictory, views on the relationship between economic performance and city size, and little is known about the long-term benefits of **agglomeration**<sup>98</sup>. However, it is widely recognised that businesses and people in larger cities benefit from a wider range of commercial, cultural, educational, sports and leisure opportunities which can act as a magnet for talent and business. Milton Keynes is well placed to offer such benefits.

There is considerable debate about whether **economic specialisation** is the key to a city's long-term economic performance and ability to withstand economic shocks. According to Foresight, "A city or region specialised in heavy capital-intensive sectors may end up being far less adaptable over time than a city specialising in knowledge-intensive information capital-based activities"<sup>99</sup>. Thus, Milton Keynes with its relatively high proportion of knowledge-intensive business services is likely to be more resilient than many other UK cities.



Foresight highlights the importance of a city's **competitiveness**, how a city's assets work together to influence the willingness of business to invest there, the desire of people to live and work there and the effectiveness and efficiency with which the city's activities operate. A city's competitiveness is a dynamic process. Of course, how well business, and the city itself, adapts to the ever-shifting threats and opportunities that arise in the global economy determines whether companies remain competitive<sup>100</sup>. The steady flow of investment driving the growth of the Milton Keynes economy, and the growth of the population, constitutes evidence that the city is competitive, so far.

One element of a city's competitiveness is the quality of the **urban environment**. With its beautiful, spacious, tranquil parks and landscapes – enhancing air quality, and nurturing biodiversity – along with stimulating and vital city centres and towns, Milton Keynes provides an exceptionally attractive offer to citizens, businesses and investors. And in all directions the countryside is on its doorstep.

### HUMAN CAPITAL: THE KEY TO FUTURE COMPETITIVENESS

Foresight highlights the importance of a city's human capital in driving economic performance: "Evidence indicates that between 1994 and 2005, a third of the UK's economic growth was considered to be a result of the expansion of higher education. Universities play an intrinsic role in the UK economy, supporting economic growth and contributing to regional growth by increasing skills, supporting innovation, and attracting investment and talent. In the UK, 60% or more of growth is generated by those with tertiary education."<sup>101</sup>

Fundamental shifts in almost every aspect of the higher education system in the UK are now under way. These started with policy and market changes introduced by Government and will continue to reshape the system for at least the next five years and probably much longer. As an example, since the removal of quota controls, demand has moved towards those universities regarded as most attractive, with a sharp fall in demand for places in lower rated institutions<sup>102</sup>.

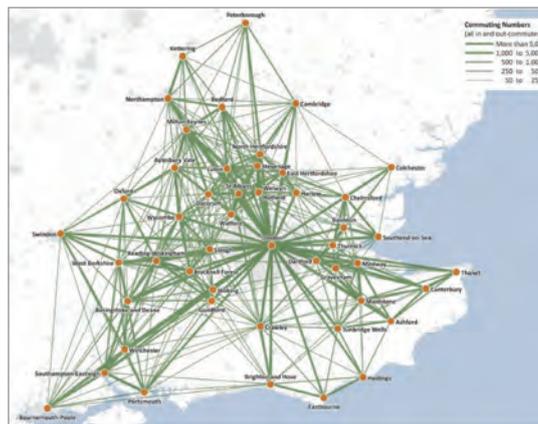
Now, there are real indicators that the supply of places exceeds demand. However, it is likely that from 2020 onwards, overall demand for post-secondary education will start rising. Research by PA Consulting has identified seven global themes that are reshaping provision by universities around the world: new pedagogies; student-driven flexible study modes; integration of learning with working practice, mobility and transferability; uses of technology; uses of student data analytics and unbundling of provision<sup>103</sup>. In May 2016, the Government published a white paper on the future of higher education. This included provision for the establishment of new universities and for introducing further competition into the sector<sup>104</sup>.

Milton Keynes has the opportunity to take advantage of these innovations.

### STRONG DEMAND FOR HOUSING WILL CONTINUE

As part of the London mega-city region<sup>105</sup>, with already excellent road and rail links, it appears likely that demand for housing for sale and for rent in all price ranges in Milton Keynes will remain strong. This will be due to high rates of household growth in London and the South East, the difficulties of increasing London's housing supply, and because most communities in the South East/South Midlands are reluctant to promote substantial new housing. Milton Keynes has considerable experience of developing housing in anticipation of potential demand and building new cohesive communities. Moreover, Milton Keynes is well placed to take advantage of this demand with good prospects for economic growth, an ample supply of housing land for over a decade, and (if past trends continue) house prices that are lower than comparable communities in the South East.

Figure 2.1: London mega-city region.



### MOVING TO A LOW-CARBON 'METABOLISM'

Foresight emphasises the need to understand a city's **urban metabolism** as a basis for understanding the 'city-scale action' that can contribute to **reducing carbon emissions** and help the UK achieve the legally binding global targets agreed at the 2015 Paris climate conference (COP21)<sup>106</sup>. "In the future, cities will inevitably face some external 'shocks' from a range of factors, including the impact of climate change, so they will need to adapt and be resilient. For example, they may decide to develop localised ecosystem services such as green infrastructure, to mitigate flood risk or have greater reliance on local energy production."<sup>107</sup> In the UK, one of the 12 underpinning principles in the National Planning Policy Framework is "to support the transition to a low carbon future..."<sup>108</sup>. Going forward, Foresight evidence on successful urban forms provides very clear guidance: "...developing new places in a dispersed way was likely to result in increased costs per capita in terms of public service delivery and provision of energy, water and transport infrastructure"<sup>109</sup>.

We understand that, so far, the surface water management schemes arising from the original Plan for Milton Keynes have mitigated the adverse impacts of climate change on the city. Milton Keynes has embarked on the journey to reducing carbon emissions by adopting a [Low Carbon Living Strategy](#) (October 2010)<sup>110</sup> and there are proposals in the [Plan:MK Topic Paper 'Climate Change and Sustainability'](#) to deliver this<sup>111</sup>. Significant additional opportunities could be seized. As described in [Commission Working Paper 17](#), these include the decentralised renewable electricity generation schemes in new housing developments<sup>112</sup>.

Milton Keynes is currently struggling with the challenge of modifying the basic form, density and structure of the city to enable its metabolism to reduce carbon emissions which, as noted in Chapter 1, are among the highest per capita of UK cities. Significant opportunities exist in Milton Keynes to reduce carbon emissions by introducing new transport technologies and 'selective densification' in CMK and along transport corridors<sup>113</sup>.

#### ON THE ROAD: INNOVATIVE TRANSPORT TECHNOLOGIES

Milton Keynes does see, clearly, that a wide range of innovative transport technologies are coming down the road. For example, with local trials of driverless vehicles already under way, and new commercial models of shared and on-demand mobility emerging rapidly, many believe there will be dramatic changes in the way people move around cities, although we do not yet know at what scale and pace. Foresight states "...driverless vehicles could be in widespread use in cities over the coming 50 years. One outcome of such a scenario could be that high-value real estate, currently used for car parking, would not be needed as the cars could park elsewhere. As a consequence, it could be freed up for higher-value uses. However, there are multiple uncertainties..."<sup>114</sup> [Commission Working Paper 11: Intelligent Mobility on Demand](#) highlights the wider range of potential new transport technologies including various smart data applications<sup>115</sup>.

Foresight also advises: "Evidence suggests that cities will need to develop long-term evidence-based investment plans to be able to identify infrastructure schemes with high economic, social and environmental value and impact, as well as the institutional vehicles to engage the private sector to deliver them."<sup>116</sup> As set out later in the report, such a plan for Milton Keynes would highlight how established low-carbon modes of travel (cycling and walking) would be promoted alongside and integrated with the staged introduction of new technologies, including through end-to-end journey planning, booking and payment services across modes.

#### ENABLING HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

Foresight highlights opportunities to combine planning for a low-carbon future with **enabling healthier lifestyles**. Marmot's 2010 recommendations state spatial planning should: "Fully integrate the planning, transport, housing and environmental and health systems to address the social determinants of health in every locality and prioritise policies and interventions that both reduce health inequalities and mitigate climate change"<sup>117</sup>. Many cities are choosing to do this and the NHS is mounting its Healthy New Towns initiative<sup>118</sup>.

Today, some aspects of Milton Keynes already make significant contributions to healthier living. Foresight evidence says: "Tree lined avenues and community woodlands lock up carbon and absorb particulates from the atmosphere, both improving air quality and benefitting people's health by reducing respiratory diseases."<sup>119</sup> There are ample opportunities to walk and cycle, although this is seen as a leisure rather than a commuting activity. However, planning for existing neighbourhoods and new expansion areas does not yet focus on how best to enable healthy lifestyles by adopting the approaches set out in the Healthier New Towns Initiative<sup>120</sup>.



## AN AGEING POPULATION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

To 2050, older people will represent a significantly higher proportion of the total UK population as more people live longer. Foresight reminds cities that the key challenges presented by an ageing population are “a greater prevalence of chronic illness and long term frailty/disability, both of which affect individual mobility. There is also likely to be a requirement for living spaces which are adaptable to the needs of older populations, including serving as sites of long term health care”. Yet, **an older population provides opportunities** for cities, “as the proportion of older people participating in work, education, leisure, and cultural pursuits increases, they will have a key role to play in the socio-economic sustainability of the city...”<sup>121</sup>

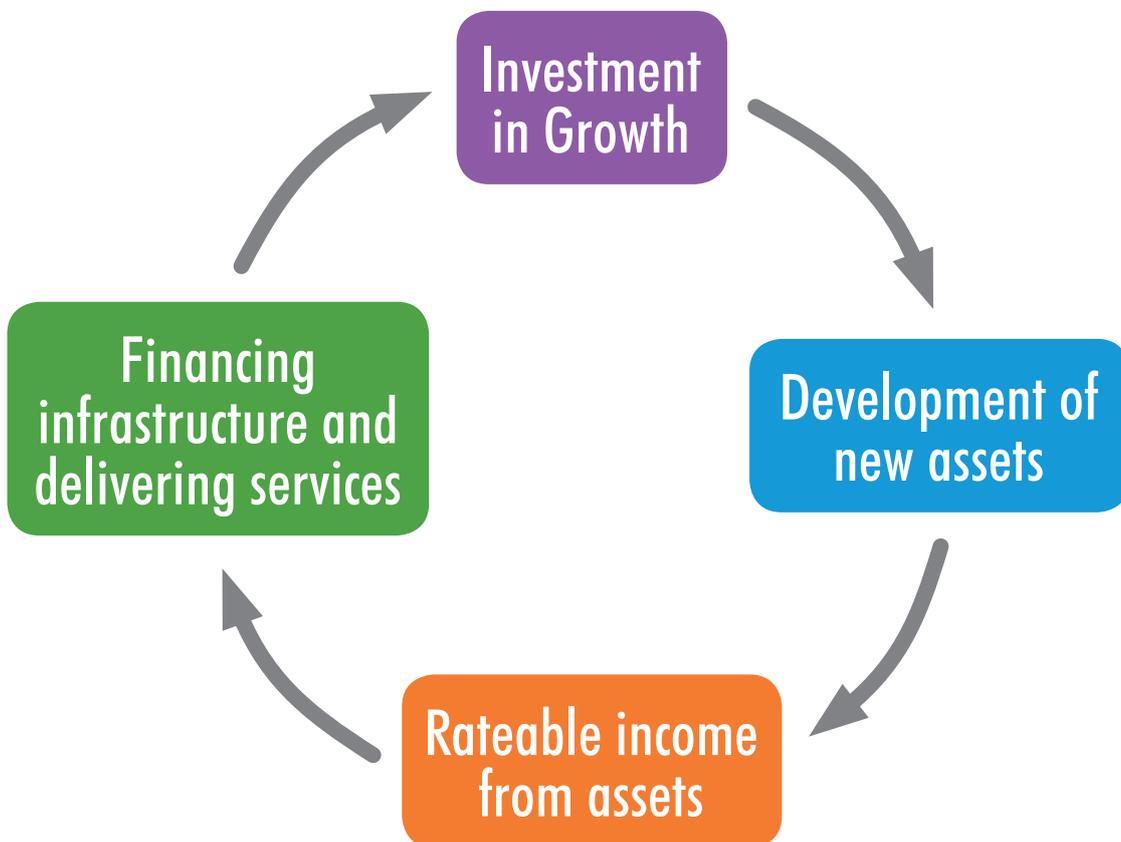
Milton Keynes’ population is growing older. Cambridge Econometrics has prepared draft forecasts of the household and age profile of Milton Keynes under different growth scenarios. Whilst they are using national population projections as these are the parameters that are available, they advise that under any scenario there will be significant growth in the older population. This is an area where additional city-specific modelling is needed to support the development of the Strategy for 2050.

## MAKING INVESTMENTS FOR TODAY’S RESIDENTS

Finally, we believe that it is prudent to assume that with regard to central Government expenditure “**austerity and devolution**” will be the “**new normal**”. This has important consequences for local authorities generally. We believe Government will provide incentives to local authorities that choose to go for population and job growth and build their asset base. These local authorities will be far better placed to create a virtuous circle: investing in growth to enable the creation of new assets, which produce rateable income to meet service needs and finance infrastructure, which then enable the creation of further new assets”.

This new normal has specific implications for Milton Keynes. Much of the city’s original infrastructure was built over a short period of time and much of it now is in need of investment. Today, the city cannot afford to replace or improve existing infrastructure, not to mention extend it. Furthermore, the city cannot afford to invest more in education, training or any other services. **To make the required investments, we need to expand the city’s asset base**, particularly its non-domestic property asset base. This is the only way that we can be confident of raising the necessary revenue to support the expenditure needed.

Figure 2.2: The growth virtuous circle.



Expansion and development should be based on the needs of the residents. We need more disabled access and care programmes for the elderly. //

// There must be a drive to encourage local business and social activity – young entrepreneurs and small to medium sized enterprises. //

## TWO FUNDAMENTAL UNCERTAINTIES FACING MILTON KEYNES

We are relatively certain that this is the direction of travel for key drivers. The pace of change is far more uncertain and many other ‘**unknown unknowns**’ will arise. Nevertheless, we are confident to conclude that by harnessing these drivers, Milton Keynes could continue to prosper.

However, and this is a strong warning, we are uncertain about whether Milton Keynes can harness two of these principal drivers of change: **the need to strengthen our human capital** and the **need to harness transport innovations to provide mobility for all**. These are the areas where we see the potentially biggest challenges emerging as the city grows. If we do not harness these drivers, the future prosperity of the city is at risk. Thus, as we see it, in the 21st century...

The most competitive cities will offer **education and training – for young people, for everyone – that matches the best** in Europe – and the rest of the world. This includes opportunities in schools, colleges, universities and in work-based learning such as apprenticeships. In the past, the most prosperous cities were those with the best rail, road and air connections. In the 21st century digital world, the aspirations, qualifications and skills of the citizens – **human capital** – will determine a city’s wealth. As we set out below, over the past few years, Milton Keynes has recognised the importance of a stronger university presence in the city; so far it has only made limited progress. Today, by any measure, educational performance in Milton Keynes is at best, ‘average’ and ‘could do much better’. Unless it does so, the city is at risk of falling further behind.

Similarly, the most competitive cities **will enable everyone to travel** – to work, to learn, to shop and to play – easily at a reasonable cost. So far, Milton Keynes’ success is partially due to the ease of travel by car within the city, for those who have access but not for others. However, as set out in Chapter 1, we see congestion at key grid road junctions and intersections with main arterial routes is increasing rapidly and will continue to do so.

Many in Milton Keynes realise that new transport technologies, and the further expansion of the city, provide opportunities to provide better mobility for all. Creating an integrated transport system will require investment in new transport infrastructure to help attract many people who use the city to new modes of travel. It is not clear whether the city will rise to this challenge.

Our vision of Milton Keynes in 2050, ‘the Art of the City’, is based on our understanding of these drivers of change. We see the particular need to address those about which we are most uncertain – improving the education and training on offer, and making it possible for everyone to travel easily around the city. If we get these two factors right, then Milton Keynes is well placed to harness the nation’s population growth and economic growth for the benefit of the city’s existing residents. In the next sections of this report, we set out why we believe that Milton Keynes must make a commitment to inclusive growth along with Six Big Projects and a [Strategy for 2050](#) to realise our vision

// We need commitment by leaders to learning, in particular from evidence and experience of successful cities, and who are willing to work in robust partnership with communities. //



# 3. INCLUSIVE GROWTH TO 2050



Today, Milton Keynes is a prosperous city. This is because Milton Keynes meets the needs of many seeking a new home in an attractive community and the needs of businesses seeking a great place to invest. To achieve this success, Milton Keynes has responded to the key drivers of change in the UK over the past 50 years.

## A COMMITMENT TO INCLUSIVE GROWTH

As we have already identified, we will only be able to realise our vision for 2050 if Milton Keynes renews its commitment to continuing to grow. Furthermore, this must be **inclusive growth**. According to the OECD, “inclusive growth is economic growth that creates opportunity for all segments of the population and distributes the dividends of increased prosperity, both in monetary and non-monetary terms, fairly across society”<sup>122</sup>. The Royal Society of the Arts has just launched a Commission on Inclusive Growth to examine how these outcomes can be secured. It is particularly important that inclusive growth enables people to live healthier, longer lives.

We see six reasons why it is essential for Milton Keynes to promote growth through to 2050 and why this must be inclusive growth:

First, for the city to prosper, it will be necessary to meet the **future housing needs of those who already live in Milton Keynes**. This will entail steadily building homes for sale and for rent, in all price ranges at a rate that matches the forecast increase in households generated by the city’s existing population. Many of these new ‘local’ households will be able to afford to buy their home, either outright, or on a shared ownership basis, but some will need access to social housing. When Government policy enables building more affordable housing for rent (which it does not at the moment), Milton Keynes with its ample supply of land for housing is ideally placed to meet the ongoing needs of those who live here now.

Second, Milton Keynes has the opportunity to benefit from a **fair share of UK population growth through to 2050** – and would be expected to do so. More specifically, the ongoing **demand for new housing in London and the South East will continue** for the foreseeable future. Some of this demand will not be met in those areas where the demand arises. Much of this will come from London itself, but some will come from South Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and the other communities in the Cambridge–Oxford arc.

Historically, accommodating this demand from elsewhere has helped to create our prosperous city. We do not see any reason to depart from this winning formula. With our strong economy, housing capacity and our diverse community, Milton Keynes can readily accommodate a fair share of this regional demand for homes for owner occupation in all price ranges and affordable housing.

Third, in parallel, Milton Keynes is ideally placed to **attract the investment driving the growth of the UK economy**. The UK economy will continue to grow, faster in some years than in others, and the investment to drive this growth creates jobs and wealth for the communities where the growth is located. Some of this growth will arise from the further application of digital technologies, some from the expansion of the circular and sharing economies. Both those already in the Milton Keynes labour market, and those entering the labour market for the first time, need the jobs that this growth creates.



// Young local businesses will bring excitement, variety and show the true spirit and culture of the area. //

// MK is a brilliant city with everything that a family could need... //



Martin Wakley, owner  
Buskers Coffee Shop

Continuing to attract investment in new jobs is the key to providing more opportunities for all. **When combined with better education and training**, job growth provides opportunities for those now excluded from the labour market. Again, with a track record in attracting inward investment, and the expansion potential of companies already here, the further growth of the city can provide more opportunities for all, in ways that many other English cities cannot.

Fourth, we know that **Milton Keynes needs investment**, to replace and improve ageing infrastructure, to build a new university, to improve school performance, and to improve public services generally. To make the necessary investments – and provide better services – Milton Keynes Council will have to become much stronger in financial terms. Growth will create a stronger tax base, particularly the non-domestic tax base. Growth will also create additional land value that can be reinvested to enable the city to provide more opportunities for all. Those more reliant on social services, social housing, and who would benefit most from better education and training will benefit from this investment.

Fifth, promoting the ongoing growth of Milton Keynes will lead to **CMK continuing to become a stronger, regional centre** for shopping, employment, culture, leisure and education. In common with most other cities, the city centre provides the full range of job opportunities, often for those entering the labour market and those who are less skilled. At the hub of the Cambridge–Milton Keynes–Oxford arc, and the centre of a city region in which many of the local authorities expect to be promoting growth, CMK is ideally placed to provide more opportunities for all.

Finally, in a very basic sense, the ongoing growth of Milton Keynes to 2050 will **honour the original commitment** to those who have moved here so far, particularly businesses and families whose children, and whose children’s children, moved to share in the city’s prosperity. In other words, ongoing inclusive growth will enable the city to realise the ambitions of the people and businesses who are already in Milton Keynes, and for those who want to move here.



## TURNING AWAY FROM INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Conversely, there are significant potential consequences for the people now living in Milton Keynes if the city decides to try to stop growing. There will still be ongoing pressure on the city to accommodate a fair share of regional and national population growth. This might push house prices up faster – if the city remains attractive – but this will make it more difficult for those growing up in Milton Keynes to afford a home.

If Milton Keynes decides it will be ‘finished’, it will be more difficult for retailers, a wide range of businesses, and private investors to make further commitments. Milton Keynes, particularly CMK, will be a far less attractive investment opportunity. This will inevitably lead to lower job growth than will otherwise be the case and in due course, undermine the resilience of the city’s economy.

The growth of the city’s non-domestic tax base will start to slow. As a result, Milton Keynes will have fewer resources to invest in improving education, social services and transport infrastructure. The burdens arising from this lack of resource will fall particularly heavily on disadvantaged people.

Thus in many respects, it is not in the interests of the citizens and businesses in the city today to turn away from promoting inclusive growth.

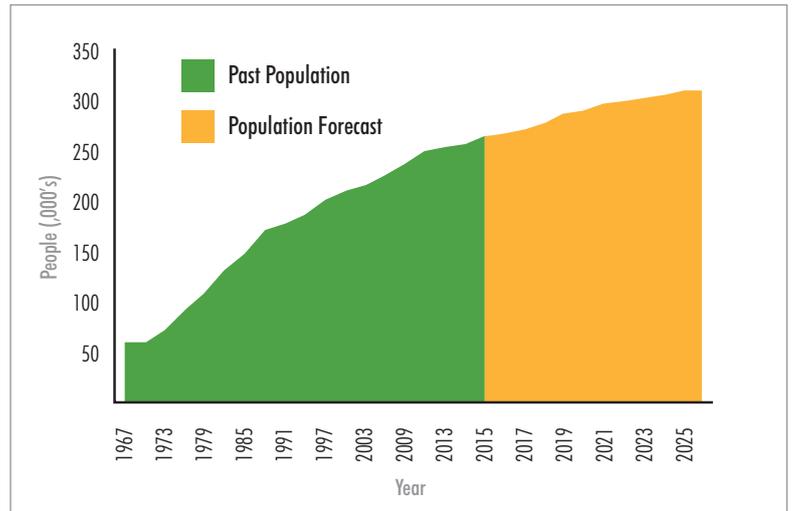
### GROWTH TO 2026/2030

In broad terms, the rate and location of the city’s growth to 2026 is set by the approved Core Strategy for Milton Keynes<sup>123</sup>. As noted earlier, Milton Keynes Council projects that the population will increase from around 267,000 people in 2016 to 309,000 people in 2026<sup>124</sup>. They project that the number of households will increase from almost 107,000 to 127,000 over the next ten years<sup>125</sup>.

**The number of households will increase from almost 107,000 to 127,000 over the next ten years**

These projections are based on the growth of the local population (births exceeding deaths), net in-migration (more people moving in than leaving) and assume that the housing targets in the approved Core Strategy are achieved. This entails building a further 20,000 homes over the ten years to 2026 or an average of 2,000 homes per annum<sup>126</sup>; this is a much higher rate than has been achieved in recent years.

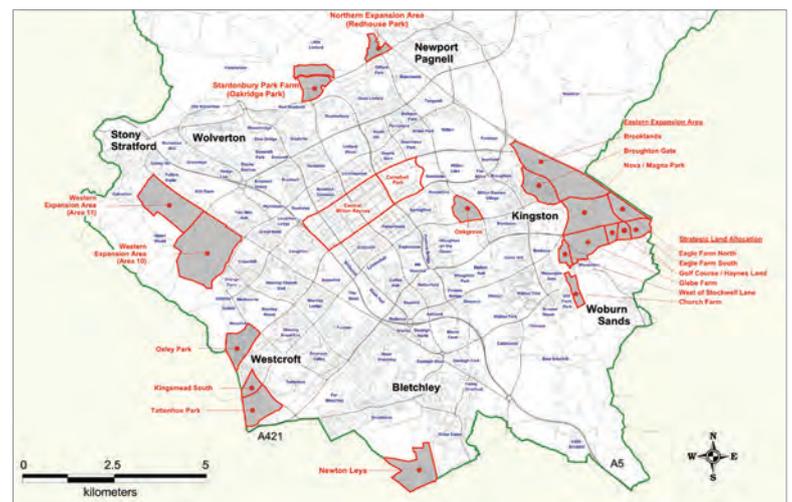
Figure 3.1: Historic and projected population growth, 1967 to 2026.



This population and household growth will be achieved although it is less clear whether it will be by 2026 or a few years later. This will depend on the rate of housing completions. If going forward the rate of completions stays at 1,400 per annum, then the approved Core Strategy growth targets will not be achieved until 2030. We return to this below.

The Core Strategy also identifies the main locations for growth to 2026. At April 2016, land for just around 22,000 homes had either been granted planning permission (outline or full) or allocated in the local plan<sup>127</sup>. Even though this land supply exceeds that needed to achieve the Core Strategy targets, Milton Keynes Council has started the process of identifying further land for growth during its Plan:MK process because it recognises the national population growth pressures and its need to accommodate its share of that growth.

Figure 3.2: Locations of new housing development to 2026.



## IMPLICATIONS OF DIFFERENT RATES OF GROWTH POST-2026

In order to inform the Commission's work, Milton Keynes Council commissioned Cambridge Econometrics (CE) to assess the implications of different rates of population growth beyond 2026 to 2041 (See [Commission Working Paper 5](#)). This started with Milton Keynes Council's projections of population growth<sup>128</sup>, summarised above. The draft CE work uses national population projection assumptions post-2026 as those are the available parameters to apply. As noted earlier, if 2,000 homes per annum are completed to 2026, the population of Milton Keynes will increase from 267,000 today to 309,000 by 2026. Three sets of projections were prepared for the period between 2026 and 2041:

- CE's central projection is based on ONS population projections for Milton Keynes but does not assume that the Council is planning further housing completions after 2026 in accordance with Milton Keynes' approved [Core Strategy](#)<sup>129</sup>. On this basis, the city's population will increase further to 347,000 people by 2041. This projection suggests a challenging change in demographics: "The dependency rate in Milton Keynes will continue to increase; reflecting an increasing share of the population represented by those of pensionable age. The expansion of the 'grey' population, allied to little growth in the working age population, will undoubtedly provide challenges in delivering both public and private sector services.<sup>130</sup>" This projection also assumes virtually no growth in the child population<sup>131</sup>.
- CE's continued expansion scenario is based on an average of 1,750 completions per annum between 2026 and 2041. On this basis the city's population will increase to 387,000 people. The working age population grows much faster by comparison with the central projection but the OAP population twice as fast. Along with the increase in the child population, this still leads to an increase in the dependency rate<sup>132</sup>.

### The city's population will increase further to 347,000 people by 2041

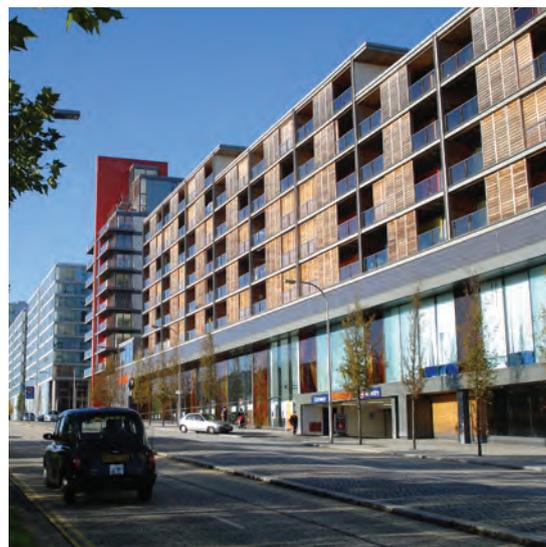
- CE's accelerated expansion projection assumes a further 50% increase to 2,625 homes per annum. The population increases to some 443,000 by 2041. This shows steady growth in the child population and much faster growth of the working age population. (The OAP population grows even faster.)

It is unlikely that the rate of house building assumed in the accelerated expansion scenario could be achieved as it is dependent on exceptionally strong demand for private housing, developers choosing to respond to this demand, and much stronger commitments from Government to fund affordable housing, particularly social housing. Indeed, the rates assumed in the central projection or the continued projection are both higher than recent performance.

Nevertheless, in light of these findings, we strongly believe that it is in the city's best interest to promote a higher rate of growth through to 2050 at "the continued expansion rate" somewhere between 1,750 and 2,000 homes per annum. In due course, if successful, it might be sensible to try to move to higher rates. This will provide the strongest possible foundation for the provision of better quality services for the city's existing population. It will also provide a strong basis for a new deal with Government. This should be the starting point for further plans. Of course, considerable further work will be required to assess the optimum rate of growth including further testing and refining the draft CE work.

## ACCOMMODATING INCLUSIVE GROWTH

In due course Milton Keynes, and adjacent local authorities, will have to decide how best to accommodate this growth after 2026. [Commission Working Paper 12, Density](#)<sup>133</sup> shows that there are considerable benefits from higher density development including improved mobility, a reduction in carbon emissions and efficient use of resources. [Commission Working Paper 11: Intelligent On-Demand Mobility](#) highlighted the advantages of boosting public transport catchments both through the infill and redevelopment of existing built-up areas and in any new areas<sup>134</sup>.



We do believe that the city would be more prosperous if a **significant share of the future growth** were accommodated in the existing built-up area. There are three reasons for this. First, by encouraging higher density (but not high density) infill and redevelopment, it will be possible to create **Transit Oriented Development Corridors**; it will be easier to provide higher quality, lower cost, conventional public transport services for those without access to a car. The regeneration<sup>135</sup> investment programme for the older estates provides opportunities to do this. One of the Six Big Projects set out below is **Smart, Shared, Sustainable Mobility**; this project will define these corridors.

Second, almost two-thirds of the households in Milton Keynes are and will continue to be **single-person households** or **couples without children**<sup>136</sup>. In 2026, 27% will include at least one person aged 65 or older, compared to 22% in 2015<sup>137</sup>. These smaller households will live throughout the city as a whole; many will welcome the opportunity to live in apartments and homes with smaller gardens in closer proximity to local shops. More generally, ‘city living’ in or near city centres is becoming more popular in the UK. The principles defining the potential locations for higher (not high) density infill and redevelopment opportunities should be defined in the Strategy for 2050 and Plan:MK as in Chapter 5.

Finally, both the approved Core Strategy<sup>138</sup> and the CMK Alliance Plan<sup>139</sup> propose that new development and redevelopment in **CMK should be at higher densities** than in the past. This is essential to create the thriving city centre that Milton Keynes needs for the future.

Thus, based on the research prepared for the Commission, and the consultations in support of the Commission’s work we draw three simple conclusions:

- There are many opportunities to accommodate a significant share of the city’s future growth, up to 2026 and beyond, through developing/redeveloping selected sites in the existing built-up area at higher densities – this would improve the city’s overall offer to residents today.
- However, it will not be possible to accommodate most or even a large minority of the city’s growth in this way without undermining the city’s unique, distinctive spacious qualities – we are in no doubt that this is a view shared by many of the city’s existing residents.
- Therefore, it would be desirable to accommodate much, but by no means all, of the city’s additional inclusive growth to 2050 in substantial new developments; these would be adjacent to the city (possibly even on the east side of the M1) and elsewhere inside the wider functional economic area.

We also have a clear view, in very broad terms, on where some of this additional growth on greenfield land should be accommodated to 2050. The Government’s commitment to investing in significant improvements to the rail and road links between Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford is an exceptional opportunity. We believe it is essential that Milton Keynes does whatever it can to accelerate investment in these two important elements of the national infrastructure network. Rail improvements are based on the existing rail lines and the National Infrastructure Commission has just commenced a study to identify the best route to upgrade the A421 to become an ‘expressway’.<sup>140</sup> This is likely to be a new road around the edge of the city.

The most sustainable and financially prudent approach to plan for the expansion of Milton Keynes beyond the existing built-up area would be to use these two major infrastructure projects to link new expansion locations with the city. This is discussed further in one of the Six Big Projects: Hub of the Cambridge–Milton Keynes–Oxford Arc.

#### **GOING FOR GROWTH: SIX BIG PROJECTS AND PLAN:MK**

We see the benefits of a fast rate of inclusive growth for Milton Keynes to 2050. Growth inside the built city should be accommodated in higher density developments in CMK and in transit-oriented development corridors. Outside the built-up area should be focused on strengthening the Cambridge–Milton Keynes–Oxford arc. Each of these views needs to be tested further.

There are two ways of doing this. For those proposals that are compatible with existing policies for Milton Keynes, we suggest that these should now be pursued as ‘Six Big Projects’ as in Chapter 4. Changes of policy should be considered as part of the development of a Strategy for 2050 for the Borough. This is described in Chapter 5.



**// The layout which makes MK great means that public transport will always struggle because the population density isn't there to make the economics work. //**

# 4. SIX BIG PROJECTS



In our first working session in Milton Keynes with stakeholders, they asked us to ensure that our work reignited bold ambitions for the future of the city.

We hope that this report will do that.

So far, Milton Keynes is built with a very strong ‘can do’ attitude – *carpe diem*. To start the process of realising our vision, our work focused on identifying projects that could be pursued today, that would:

- meet the three primary challenges facing the city today – improving educational attainments, securing investment in a new strong university, and providing mobility for all;
- provide direct benefits for the people and businesses by addressing the challenges facing the city;
- contribute to driving economic growth and accommodating population growth;

- ensure that this is inclusive growth;
- strengthen the city’s asset base; and
- foster better external perceptions of the city.

All of these projects are consistent with current policy. Focusing on these projects now is the best way of demonstrating that ‘business as usual’ is not an attractive option.

Our proposed Six Big Projects are:

**Project One: Hub of the Cambridge–Milton Keynes–Oxford arc** Realise the arc’s full economic potential as a single knowledge-intensive cluster as envisaged by HM Treasury.

**Project Two: MK:IT** Provide lifelong learning opportunities at a new university to promote research, teaching and practice which provide realistic solutions to the problems facing fast-growing cities everywhere.

**Project Three: Learning 2050** Ensure that the city provides, and is known for providing, world-class education for all its young people; and the Milton Keynes Promise.

**Project Four: Smart, Shared, Sustainable Mobility** Everyone who lives, works, studies or does business in the city is able to move freely and on-demand by harnessing the flexibility of the city’s grid roads and Redways.

**Project Five: Renaissance: CMK (Re)create** an even stronger city centre fit for the 21st century.

**Project Six: Milton Keynes: The Creative and Cultured City** Harness the energy and motivation of the city’s most important asset – its people.

“MK is unique, that’s why we love it - don’t dilute it.”

# PROJECT ONE: HUB OF THE CAMBRIDGE–MILTON KEYNES–OXFORD ARC

The idea of the Cambridge–Milton Keynes–Oxford arc has been around for well over a decade<sup>141</sup>. In the March 2016 Budget, HM Treasury and the National Infrastructure Commission highlighted the arc’s potential as a single knowledge-intensive cluster<sup>142</sup>.

Today, this potential is starting to be realised. Both Oxford and Cambridge Universities are undertaking research on driverless vehicles and smart cities. These ideas are being developed, on the ground, in a real-life city test bed environment, Milton Keynes. With the Transport Systems Catapult in Milton Keynes, the autonomous test track facility being developed at Cranfield, and Millbrook as a centre for testing low-carbon transport technology, the arc is already the home of a globally competitive cluster in cutting-edge transport solutions.

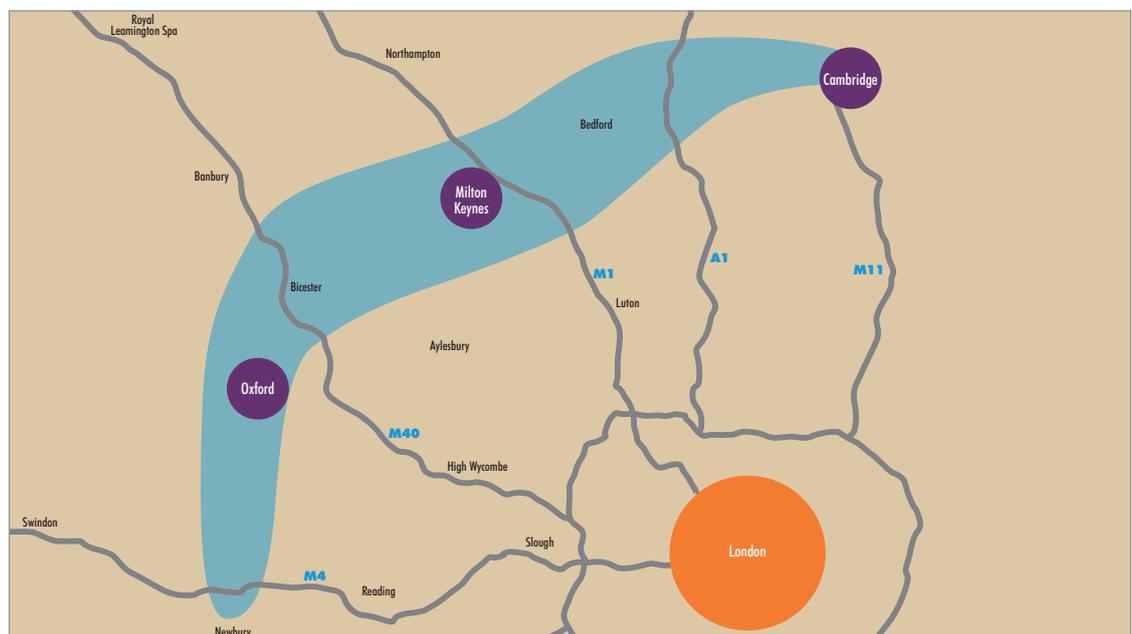
More generally, the arc offers the potential to strengthen – significantly – the UK’s international competitive advantage in a wide range of emerging technologies. We see the potential for Milton Keynes to become a much stronger hub of the arc. Planned road and rail improvements will enable Milton Keynes to accommodate the expansion of companies now based in Oxford and Cambridge. As set out later, our proposals for MK:IT – a new style of university for Milton Keynes – will contribute to this goal. Together with Cambridge, Oxford, Cranfield, the Open University and the University of Bedfordshire, this will provide a research and development resource unmatched in Europe.

It will be necessary to build stronger partnerships across the arc to shape this globally competitive single knowledge-intensive cluster. Foundations for this already exist with the South East Midland Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) as it encompasses much of Milton Keynes’ functional economic area and the Fast Growth Cities Group already includes Oxford and Cambridge<sup>143</sup>.

One of the tasks for these partnerships will be to undertake a critical assessment of the economic potential of key assets across the arc. For example, the airport at Cranfield is already proving to be a valuable resource in a ‘digital airport’ research and development programme; it is also ideally placed to be developed as a hub for business air charter services.

Milton Keynes and partners are now contributing to the study for HM Treasury/the National Infrastructure Commission of the investments needed to improve East West Rail services and to upgrade the A421 to an ‘expressway’. The first part of the study is reviewing the economic case for investment and identifying infrastructure constraints. The second stage will focus on the priority infrastructure needs.

Figure 4.1 Map of the Cambridge–Milton Keynes–Oxford arc and national infrastructure investments.<sup>144</sup>





Government is expecting the full study to be completed in time to feed into the Autumn Statement 2017 and will include the sites required to meet housing needs in smart and sustainable communities, and to accommodate inward investment.

We believe that Government interest in investing in the arc is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for our city. Milton Keynes should take a strong view on a **preferred location for the A421 Expressway** and press for upgrading **East West Rail** infrastructure, and services, as soon as possible. These nationally significant projects will strengthen the city's competitive advantage and could be an integral part of its approach to smart, shared, sustainable mobility.

We see an exceptional opportunity to use the rail upgrade and the construction of the expressway as Treasury investments that could serve new locations for the further expansion of Milton Keynes. The Council's recent consultation on Strategic Development Directions<sup>145</sup> identifies this opportunity but does not explore the full benefits.

Even though these growth locations are outside the boundaries of the Milton Keynes Council area, developments connected to the city by East West Rail, and the expressway, could prove to be the most sustainable pattern of growth.

Thus establishing Milton Keynes as the hub of the arc will entail working through SEMLEP and the Fast Growth Cities Group to clearly define the economic role that Milton Keynes could play as part of the arc along with the investments that will be required. It will mean much closer working with neighbouring authorities to determine the best route for the A421 Expressway and to evaluate whether much of the future expansion of Milton Keynes should take place along these routes. There is considerable urgency to do this to take advantage of the HMT/National Infrastructure Commission study now under way.

In due course, we recognise that to establish Milton Keynes as the hub of the arc may need new forms of joint devolved working by local authorities. Similarly, if it proves to be the case that the most sustainable pattern for the expansion of Milton Keynes is to promote growth along East West Rail and the A421 Expressway, mainly in adjacent areas, then this will almost certainly require some form of statutory cooperation. We discuss this further in the next chapter.

### The next steps are that the Council should:

- decide that it wishes to establish Milton Keynes as the **hub of the arc** as the framework for the creation of MK:IT, the realisation of Renaissance CMK and the delivery of Smart, Shared, Sustainable Mobility;
- take full advantage of the HMT/National Infrastructure Commission study by urgently formulating views on the **best route** for the A421 Expressway, and how both this, and East West Rail improvements could be used to **accommodate the future growth of the city** – ideally in partnership with adjacent authorities; and
- win SEMLEP and Fast Growth Cities Group support for the Hub concept, agree the economic role of Milton Keynes in the arc and **consequent investment priorities**.

**// One of the other great strengths of the city is its fantastic location. It is fast becoming the connecting agent for economic activity in the UK. //**

## PROJECT TWO: MK:IT

For well over two decades, Milton Keynes has had a declared ambition to establish a significant higher education institution in the city.

Of course, the Open University is in the city but it doesn't enrol resident undergraduates and has not aimed to recruit, particularly, from Milton Keynes. Cranfield University, nearby, very successfully focuses on recruiting postgraduates from national and international markets. The University of Buckingham, also nearby, focuses on undergraduates mainly from international markets.

In the early 1990s, De Montfort University (then Leicester Polytechnic) opened a campus at Kents Hill, which closed in 2003. In 2008, Milton Keynes College entered a partnership with the University of Bedfordshire to provide franchised courses; in 2012, this arrangement was relaunched as the University Campus Milton Keynes in partnership with Milton Keynes Council. Enrolment reached only 200 students but is expected to increase. With 3,500 students leaving Milton Keynes schools each year, and 55% going on to higher education, most need to leave Milton Keynes to study<sup>146</sup>.

The proposal to locate a new university in Central Milton Keynes now features in plans for the city, most notably the [CMK Alliance Plan 2026](#)<sup>147</sup>. This envisages that a new university would give a much needed 'buzz' to CMK as a whole, will stimulate the development of small businesses and act as a magnet for young entrepreneurs.

It is now time to realise this long-established ambition to create a substantial university in CMK. This would be part of the city's effort to become the hub of the Cambridge–Milton Keynes–Oxford arc and a key component of Renaissance CMK. We call this MK:IT, and have given some thought as to what it might be.

MK:IT will be the first university anywhere designed as a response to the challenges facing cities today and in the future – a radically different approach to how cities, businesses and higher education can develop and grow together. Thus, MK:IT's mission will be to promote research, teaching and practice that provide realistic solutions to the problems facing fast-growing

cities. These include moving people and things around without congestion or pollution, sustaining healthy inclusive communities, encouraging enterprise and creativity and designing human spaces for 21st century working and living.

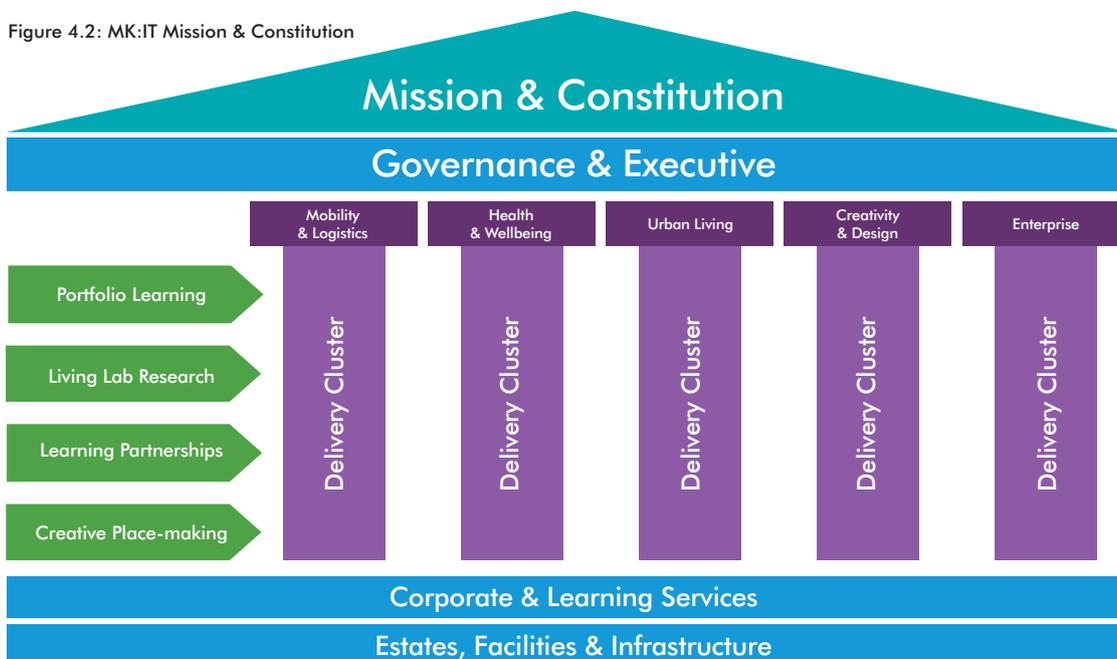
The new institution will operate very differently from conventional universities, building on four 'platforms' that reflect our changing understanding of the place and impacts of higher education in modern life. These are:

- **Portfolio Learning** – providing a wide range of lifelong learning opportunities for everyone from school leavers and undergraduates to in-career professionals, integrating cross-disciplinary learning with real-world problem-solving.
- **Living Lab Research** – engaging with the city as a living laboratory for developing and testing new thinking in the five thematic areas, drawing in national and international academic and business partners and working with local communities on the solutions to these problems.
- **Learning Partnerships** – developing a thriving talent and innovation ecosystem where employers, learning providers and public agencies and individuals work together to articulate future-looking workforce capability needs, to develop those skills and to utilise them in innovative business and enterprises.
- **Creative Place-Making** – recognising the powerful impacts that the physical presence of MK:IT will have in Milton Keynes and the immediate region, creating a vibrant and busy creative 'village' in CMK, bringing together students, staff, existing and new businesses, with cultural and social venues, residences and learning provision.

Civic and business partners would have a strong role to play on the Board, to keep the focus on its mission and it will need to be designed with an assumption that it will need to earn its keep. It is estimated that when fully operational MK:IT will have 10,000 FTE students, both full and part time, drawn from the city, region, national and international markets.

// Innovation driven by the local community must be at the heart of the city's future if it is to reach its potential. //

Figure 4.2: MK:IT Mission & Constitution



The range of the proposed portfolios is as follows:

Learning Objectives	Contingent Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short courses</li> <li>• Add-on modules</li> <li>• Research projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vendor/OEM badges</li> <li>• Jointly-provided CPD</li> <li>• DIY portfolios</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open learnings</li> <li>• MOOCs</li> <li>• Peer/interest groups</li> </ul>
	Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combined awards</li> <li>• Accredited programmes</li> <li>• Joint ventures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Degree apprenticeships</li> <li>• Corporate degrees</li> <li>• Theme-based projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online professional programmes</li> <li>• SPOCs</li> <li>• Accredited MOOCs</li> </ul>
	Academic Awards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge programmes</li> <li>• Project-based learning</li> <li>• Flipped learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Block release</li> <li>• Executive programmes</li> <li>• Sponsored programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online programmes</li> <li>• In-house programmes</li> <li>• Business satellites</li> </ul>
		Campus-Based	Mixed Mode	Work-Based

We envisage MK:IT would extend its remit into the whole lifelong learning infrastructure of the city, helping to shape and accelerate the Learning 2050 programme, working through its learning lab research and portfolio learning approaches to ensure all in Milton Keynes realise their full potential. We envisage that the process of creating MK:IT could be led by a founder’s board.

This would be drawn from senior people from sponsoring partners including a multi-faculty university to provide academic trust and authority, one or more major corporate sponsors to provide credibility with industry and employers, and civic and/or government representation. International credibility would be an asset. This would be a shadow organisation, funded and charged with bringing MK:IT into being over the next five years.

**The next steps to establish MK:IT would be for the Council to:**

- welcome this broad **concept of MK:IT as an ambitious** way for the city to realise a long-held goal to establish an additional international university – and identify the investments and their sources that would be needed to support this;
- enter into formal discussions with local educational institutions to select a **lead champion** for the concept and to define how each institution might wish to participate;
- invite this lead institution to establish and execute a process of securing **global business and academic partners**.

## PROJECT THREE: LEARNING 2050

Today, educational attainments and aspirations across the city as a whole are, at best, average. We know we have to make steady progress so that by 2050 – and steadily over the next decade – Milton Keynes will be known for providing world-class education for all of its young people<sup>148</sup>.

This will require a community of interest to develop as Milton Keynes Council's ability to influence education is increasingly limited.

To accelerate progress, we intend to introduce the **Milton Keynes Promise** – our community's commitment that every young person leaving school who wishes to study at university, or a vocational equivalent, will be guaranteed an opportunity to do so. The creation of **MK:IT**, providing world-class vocational and degree study opportunities on their doorstep, will help to deliver this promise.

Our aspiration is that the city's entire education system, with our strong primary school performance, overall and our engaged secondary and FE provision would operate within the 'ecosystem' of **MK:IT**. Thus, all education in the city would benefit from a strong tradition of **collaborative working and problem solving**, supported by 'living lab' research **engaging with local communities**. This would be focused on those communities where deprivation has been associated with poor school performance and low levels of attainment. It would help improve performance in the weaker primary schools (which is masked by the overall picture of strong performance) and in many secondary schools. It would also enable much stronger connections between local

business, schools and higher education. For example, it would build on initiatives such as the MK:Smart Urban Data School, which is working with schools in Milton Keynes to enable pupils to analyse complex smart city data sets.

Our vision constitutes a radical change from the way in which the city's educational system currently works. We believe that such a systemic change is needed to realise substantial uplifts in school leaver attainments. This means sustaining our currently strong primary school provision along with adoption of innovative ways of working for the whole of the post-primary system. Over time, this will translate into a strong network of relationships for all schools with MK:IT. These schools will still be council run or independently led academies.

To move forward, we see Milton Keynes Council, the educational community, other partners and the MK:IT founders board developing the initial five-year Learning 2050 programme. This would draw on the extant evidence of 'what works' in the UK and beyond, including the new Public Sector Reform models that are emerging in cities across the UK, for example based on the Troubled Families initiative, which aligns services around people's needs, reducing costs, improving outcomes.

// Innovation driven by the local community must be at heart of the city's future if it is to reach its potential. //



// Focus on developing health care and education that is nationally recognised as outstanding. //

The programme would comprise:

- a step change in the amount of **effective collaboration** between schools, and between schools and colleges to raise performance in the system as a whole; this would be informed by further research into what forms of collaboration are most likely to drive improvement both within institutions and across the system as a whole;
- a concerted effort to encourage **parents in low-income households to engage** with schools and support their children's learning – including actively targeting support for primary schools with high percentages of children classed as 'vulnerable' – informed by research into the engagement most likely to reduce the gap between those who are disadvantaged and their peers; given the concentration of some of these families on RegenerationMK estates this could become an opportunity for those communities to redefine their relationships with local schools;
- schools being repositioned as the **local centres for family-focused** services such as public health, justice, welfare and children's services as part of an integrated and preventative approach to secure better outcomes for families;
- closer links across services focusing on **early years** and prevention, using an 'invest to save' model with flexibilities for multi-year budgeting built in from government; and
- **employers and business leaders** being repositioned as a consistent source of support and influence for schools and colleges to work with, influencing the curriculum, and providing links into work placements and apprenticeships.

Over time, the focus and structure of Learning 2050 will vary and better levels of attainment should be visible within the first five years. We recognise that the education sector is going through a period of significant structural change. Learning 2050 would add to this change but underpin wider efforts by the Council to enhance education provision.



The next steps for Learning 2050 are for the Council to:

- **champion the idea of Learning 2050** with the city's education and wider community and provide seed corn funding;
- establish a **Learning 2050 board** to prepare a **broad strategy and initial five-year plan** and establish effective working linkages with the **MK:IT founding board**;
- invite the Boards to define the **Milton Keynes Promise** in detail and agree how best to deliver it; and
- seek the views of all education providers on how the Council can best **protect and enhance** provision in the city.

## PROJECT FOUR: SMART, SHARED, SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

Mobility for all is a key part of our vision for the future of Milton Keynes<sup>149</sup>. Everyone who lives, works, studies or does business in Milton Keynes must be able to move freely and on demand.

Services should be attractive, flexible and affordable – and must be planned in an intelligent and integrated way to enable smooth journeys using multiple modes of transport.

Mobility is a crucial driver for sustaining economic growth, investment and relocation (business and personal). The city's current approach has not addressed the mobility needs of the 20% of the households who do not own a car and the much higher proportion of the population who do not have daily access to a car. Moreover, planned employment growth to 2026 will lead to a 40% increase in travel demand to CMK, and if other Big Projects go ahead – such as MK:IT and Renaissance CMK – additional travel demand will worsen congestion further.

The city cannot meet the very high costs of rebuilding key road junctions and other network improvements that would be needed to avoid gridlock and keep pollution under control. Other ways must be found to provide mobility for all, and those options must be more attractive and convenient than using the car. Personal choice, rather than restriction, should be the driving force behind a successful Milton Keynes mobility system.

The grid road and Redways networks both offer huge capacity that should be exploited. Because many will still choose personal travel by car as one of many future mobility options, the city must ensure that low-emission vehicles, such as electric cars and buses, are an integral part of future provision. We envisage that new intelligent systems such as ride-sharing apps and, in the longer term, driverless cars and other technologies will enable commuters to share transport. This will reduce the number of individual vehicles on the road.



Milton Keynes is in a good place to take this next step, as it has been extraordinarily successful in establishing itself as the UK's leading city for transport innovation. It is the Government's ambition to see the UK develop as an international leader in these fields and it is the right time to make the case for Milton Keynes to be the flagship smart transport city.



Image taken from the Future of Highways report © Arup

Our vision for Smart, Shared, Sustainable Mobility is:

*"...bookable services across a flexible range of travel options, including through subscribing to a mobility service provider. This will include the use of individual electric cars alongside booking rides in driverless cars or in shared electric taxi services that will be popular because of the lower cost, delivery to the exact destination, and lack of parking hassle. Other forms of mass transit such as the Milton Keynes Bullet rapid shuttle and electric buses will operate on priority express routes and provide even lower cost journeys to and from the main destinations within the city and neighbouring areas. The new mobility options will reduce the number of vehicle movements so that the relatively uncongested grid roads continue to be one of the city's strengths. A new style local transport authority will use new technologies to provide through ticketing, booking and journey choices that support the early emergence of on-demand transport and bookable mobility services".*

Three key areas should be prioritised for strategic investment to realise this vision:

- **City-wide travel integration systems** – the city should invest in the ability to integrate transport systems in order to enhance existing services and pave the way for new forms of public mobility. The Motion Map, which is at the centre of the successful MK:SMART programme, should be enhanced through the large-scale deployment of ‘busyness sensors’ throughout the city to provide mobility data that is accessible to travellers and transport providers in real time as a practical resource. Systems that provide bookable services across a flexible range of travel options should be introduced, as should strategies that encourage walking and cycling.
- **Low-emission shared transport provision** – building on the significant achievements of the UK’s most comprehensive electric vehicle charging infrastructure and first wirelessly charged electric bus service, the city should invest in next-generation and emission-free shared transport for all. This spans from traditional fixed route and fixed timetable buses, through on-demand buses, shared taxis, car clubs and car shares, to short-loan bikes and electric bikes delivered alongside the unique facility of the city’s extensive Redways.
- **Transformative new mobility systems** – continuing its outstanding track record of fostering innovative transport developments, Milton Keynes should invest to encourage future-proof transformative solutions. Low-Speed Autonomous Transport Systems (L-SATS, or driverless pods) are expected to become convenient and cheap ‘last-mile’ options in areas where cars might in the future be excluded. At the other end of the spectrum, flexible low-emission mass transit for small cities could be demonstrated. Many places have populations below the level needed to support traditional metro or light-rail solutions, and are searching for proven, affordable solutions.

The strategy to provide Smart, Shared, Sustainable Mobility cannot be designed or delivered by one agency alone. A new collaborative mobility partnership body comprising public, private and other providers should be shaped alongside options for city development so that mutual advantages can be engineered (for example) by creating a virtuous circle between denser development along selected transit corridors and transport options serving that route.



### The next steps would be for the Council to:

- adopt the **long-term vision of Smart, Shared, Sustainable Mobility** and articulate what that would mean in practice as a cornerstone of the city’s long-term strategy.
- establish a new **collaborative mobility partnership** comprising public, private and other providers of transport to formulate the key components of a low-emission Smart, Shared, Sustainable Mobility strategy plan with investment options to achieve it, including:
  - city-wide travel integration systems
  - low-emission shared transport provision
  - transformative new mobility systems
- incorporate the low-emission Smart, Shared, Sustainable Mobility strategy into the next **strategic transport plan and to seek funding** for elements of it through the Local Investment Plan and as part of the National Infrastructure Commission’s East West route study.

## PROJECT FIVE: RENAISSANCE: CMK

CMK today is the heart of the city and will be even more so in 2050. It already provides 25% of the city's employment<sup>150</sup>. CMK is the strongest city centre retail and leisure offer between London and the West Midlands.

With fast frequent rail services to London, and the North West, it is an ideal location for businesses in many sectors seeking to expand.

For Milton Keynes to prosper through to 2050, CMK must prosper. Yet, today, some of the stakeholders in the city believe that **CMK has 'lost its way'**. Many of the public spaces and much of the infrastructure feels 'tired' and in need of better maintenance and renewal. With the notable exception of Network Rail's magnificent new offices, and the Pinnacle, there has been no new office developments for over a decade – and only a couple of schemes are in the pipeline. Whilst once CMK was the premier location for the best shops outside London, today it is not. Indeed, for many, some 'ordinary high streets', with their mix of independent shops and national traders, café culture, and street entertainers, are more lively and inviting.

We, and others, see the need for **Renaissance: CMK**. It is at the heart of our vision for 2050<sup>151</sup>. It will provide an even higher proportion of the city's employment in future. It will strengthen the city's offer as the hub of the Cambridge–Milton Keynes–Oxford arc.

It will be the home of MK:IT and the key to demonstrating how Smart, Shared, Sustainable Mobility works in practice. In one sense, Renaissance: CMK has already started with the CMK Alliance Plan 2026<sup>152</sup>, a pioneering business neighbourhood plan prepared by CMK Town Council and business leaders working in partnership with Milton Keynes Council. The Milton Keynes Development Partnership (MKDP) is promoting a few sites and is formulating more ambitious ideas for some of the others.

The CMK Alliance Plan celebrates CMK's distinctive design and heritage. It shows that there are almost 50 hectares of land yet to be developed in CMK. The Plan highlights the need to expand and diversify the CMK retail offer and promote new office developments, confirms the need to make provision for a new university, develop almost 5,000 new dwellings and enrich the city's social sporting and cultural life with new facilities. The Plan endeavours to set an "enabling framework for developers" whilst carefully protecting the historic framework of boulevards and the rest of CMK's unique infrastructure.

The Plan has many strengths. It reserves sites for major developments, highlights the need for an 'inset action plan' for Midsummer Boulevard East, and in particular, sets out the need for flexibility in applying policies for exceptional developments. These would "demonstrably raise the profile of Milton Keynes nationally or internationally, would make a substantial contribution to the economic, employment and social and other key objectives of the Plan and city prosperity"<sup>153</sup>.



Artists' impressions of a city design that could inspire a future Milton Keynes





## PROJECT SIX: MILTON KEYNES: THE CREATIVE AND CULTURED CITY

City-to-city competition is increasing and those that win will have a vibrant cultural base, and will be perceived as open, tolerant and creative places to be.

Equally important is the role of culture as an economic draw, establishing Milton Keynes as a destination for residents, visitors, businesses and future residents (for sports, culture, art, innovation, business and community).

Milton Keynes is not always seen as culturally vibrant by outsiders, and has an increasingly diverse community that can feel excluded, and/or deprived. Sometimes local people feel Milton Keynes lacks spontaneity and that its cultural offer is fragmented.

The city can meet these challenges and reposition itself by leveraging its cultural assets, people and creativity as a tool for success, building a distinctive new offer based on what is already here but going further, recapturing its **spirit of invention** for a new age – MK: The Creative and Cultured City.

A programme of connected projects starting now and leading to 2050 are needed, focused on the cultural challenges Milton Keynes faces, laying the foundations for a different offer that is relevant to residents, creates a destination of choice and an international cultural hub, radiating out from a vibrant 24-hour economy in the centre across the grid and villages. Success can be measured by participation and visitor figures, but more importantly by how Milton Keynes feels, and how others talk it up. The establishment of MK:IT and Renaissance: CMK will add richness to that offer and for their part be enriched by it.

This programme will **harness the creative energy and motivation** of Milton Keynes' biggest assets, its people, to ensure that by 2050 Milton Keynes has the vibrant cultural scene and world-class amenities to match their aspirations. It will lead the field in using culture as a tool to address issues of health, social cohesion and inclusive growth and will also develop new facilities, like a cultural quarter and cluster of sporting assets that become a magnet for talent, tourism and creative industry.

Milton Keynes will become a leading member of the UNESCO Creative City Network because it is a place that applies creative processes not only to the arts, but to dealing with planning and policy, addressing urban challenges with its collective imagination. A culture of shared leadership and participation across all the cities should be aimed for, prototyping new approaches. This

will fundamentally change the image of Milton Keynes without spending a penny on promotion, making it the place other cities look to for ideas and where the world finds inspiration.

Milton Keynes has a **priceless asset base** on which to build the Creative and Cultured City. Stadium MK, MK Dons; Xscape; Milton Keynes City Orchestra; Festive Road; Arts and Heritage Alliance MK; Arts Central; MK Arts Centre and its workshops; Inter-ActionMK; Living Archive; the Theatre and MK Gallery; The Stables; The Parks Trust and its landscapes; the Bowl; Westbury Arts Centre; its artistic community including well-known artists like Boyd and Evans. The International Festival and a tradition of community celebrations. A high density of listed buildings, traditional orchards, country parks, heritage woodlands; MK Museum; Bletchley Park; Bradwell Windmill; a large canal network; City Discovery Centre. A diverse population, including an Islamic Arts, Heritage and Culture organisation. A growing informal culture with the fastest growing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender venue in the country.

Milton Keynes is itself a uniquely created cultural artefact, probably the world's most successful, thoughtful New Town incorporating medieval villages and world-class green spaces. Building on what and who is here already, Milton Keynes also has a rare opportunity to kick-start this project with its 50th Anniversary Celebration in 2017. This is a chance to **show the world what Milton Keynes can do**, a gateway to a different cultural future and creative image for the city. In the eyes of others, the anniversary is Milton Keynes' draft Capital of Culture bid, and to be credible, the visitor economy will need to grow. But this moment cannot be grasped through a business-as-usual approach.

As a starting point, the HomeWorld project led by MKDP in Central Milton Keynes is intended to demonstrate best practice in housing and place making, to drive forward the supply of more, higher quality homes, accessible to all income ranges and help build our reputation as a leading smart city.

At the heart of Milton Keynes is the higher purpose of helping people lead a better urban life. With over 50% of the world living in a city today rising to 70% by 2050, this is a truly global theme with local relevance that can be explored through culture, developing a Capital of

// Make it easier for independent restaurants, shops and bars to open. We have almost nothing but chains in the centre. //

Culture bid as a next step towards the Creative and Cultured City.

An International Festival of Creative Urban Living should be held in Milton Keynes addressing critical urban issues through culture and creativity. This will herald the establishment of an Urban Living Department at MK:IT, with the city reclaiming its place as a bold urban pioneer, showcasing its reinvention, the unique way its urban form incorporates green space, writing excellence into everyday living. This is a city-wide conversation about the future, based on action today. The Festival might include:

- **a festival of urban green space**, architecture and design curated by an international figure like Thomas Heatherwick, animating the parks and the city, creating temporary structures, housing, street furniture, pop-up independent retail outlets, bars and cafes;
- designating a **'grid square of sport'**, for example around the MK Bowl, to create critical mass, hosting an 'Urban Games', including digital gaming;
- **arts, music and dance** programmes can all explore what living well in a city means and have distinct urban forms. Gilbert and George met the year Milton Keynes was founded and love the place. Their involvement could leverage a world-class programme with competitions for young artists; and
- connecting to Milton Keynes' **rich heritage** placing it front and centre, with trails of artefacts around the city, using local and national heritage organisations to interpret and animate.

As well as attracting people and attention to Milton Keynes, each activity should aim to increase the quality of life for local people, improving health, inspiring young people, connecting to older people, helping residents to actively mix between cultures, communities and grid squares. 'Whole-life cultural value chains'

rather than single projects. In doing so the city will make more of its exciting diversity, show its young people how valued they really are and engage its dynamic group of volunteers.



### The next steps for the Council and its cultural partners are as follows:

- **Ambition:** the Council to adopt that ambition of MK: The Creative and Cultured City and to agree the 50th Anniversary and Capital of Culture bid with an International Festival of Creative Urban Living as a starting point.
- **Delivery:** with the city's cultural networks and institutions including the universities, to establish and empower an independent leadership board with external representation to commission these programmes.
- **Financing:** to explore a joint Memorandum of Understanding between Milton Keynes and the cultural funding agencies, leveraging finance and preparing for Capital of Culture.
- **Engagement:** undertake 'action research', engaging people in cultural activity to understand in more detail the link between participation rates and the Milton Keynes cultural offer, specifically what facilities and approaches are needed to engage residents and realise the Creative and Cultured City.

# 5. DELIVERY



Realising our vision, "Art of the City", must start with the next steps on the Six Big Projects. We urge that the Milton Keynes Council sets out their commitment to the Six Big Projects in a detailed delivery programme covering the 24 months from 1 October 2016.

## STRONG LEADERSHIP: BUILDING ON THE CITY'S TRACK RECORD

When faced with significant opportunities, Milton Keynes' leadership often takes bold decisions quickly. This started with the Milton Keynes Development Corporation mobilising the resources for the UK's largest New Town investment programme. Building on this foundation, Milton Keynes Council has taken some exceptionally bold actions. Recent examples include the decisions that led to stadiummk for the MK Dons, the purchase of £32m of property assets from the Homes & Communities Agency, and the establishment of the MK Development Partnership to attract investment to develop these assets.



We hope that Milton Keynes Council – in partnership with the city's businesses, voluntary organisations and principal educational institutions – will set out even bolder ambitions and make a strong commitment to realise them.

It is for the Council to build a city-wide consensus around a bold vision and then harness all the city's resources to deliver. Hopefully, our report starts that process.

Success will require consistent and strong leadership. In addition to preparing the detailed delivery programme as set out above, we see the following key actions are needed to secure the city's future success.

### ESTABLISH NEW DEVOLVED FORMAL PARTNERSHIPS

To make the most of the opportunities offered by the Cambridge–Milton Keynes–Oxford arc it will be necessary to ensure that existing partnerships (particularly SEMLEP) see this as a priority, and to establish new devolved formal partnerships with adjacent authorities, particularly in light of their commitments to growth. This will not be easy. Of course, the future governance arrangements for Milton Keynes are for the Council and partners to determine in light of evolving local needs.

### CAPTURE LAND VALUE AND THE REVENUE FROM GROWTH

A major ongoing challenge facing Milton Keynes is to ensure that the city funds the investments in essential infrastructure with a share of the increase in land value arising from growth. The innovative Milton Keynes Tariff is the most recent response to this challenge. The original New Towns Act enabled Government to establish the Milton Keynes Development Corporation. The Corporation then borrowed funds from Government to acquire the land for the city, mainly at agricultural prices, and develop infrastructure, and much of the housing and community facilities. These loans, and significant additional surpluses, were then repaid.

Figure 5.1 Tariff Contributions.

£'000	Housing Development – Contributions for Local Infrastructure	Housing Development – Contributions for Strategic Infrastructure	Employment Development – Contributions for Strategic Infrastructure	Totals
Education	63,195	–	–	63,195
Higher Education	–	14,985	4,995	19,980
Transport	–	86,490	24,660	111,150
Health	–	23,520	–	23,520
Leisure & Community Facilities	15,110	–	–	15,110
Open space & play areas	43,900	–	–	43,900
Libraries & Lifelong Learning	3,720	–	–	3,720
Crematorium/burial grounds	1,080	–	–	1,080
Heritage	3,600	–	–	3,600
Waste management	4,020	–	–	4,020
Public art	990	–	–	990
Social care	5,480	–	–	5,480
Other:	–	11,411	3,799	15,210
<b>Total Contributions</b>	<b>141,095</b>	<b>136,406</b>	<b>33,454</b>	<b>310,955</b>

Let's be a bit braver about making difficult decisions about its future; trying new things even if it is different to the way things have been done in the past, or might be unpopular in the short term. //

In the March 2016 Budget the Government announced their intention to update the New Towns Act. This is likely to include proposals to establish locally controlled development corporations, particularly when asked to do so by one or more local authorities. These would be able to borrow funds both from Government and private institutions.

Milton Keynes could use this updated legislation to work with partners and Government to establish a new development organisation, tailored to local needs, to attract investment in the growth of the city. This would be a new modern body that, unlike the original arrangements for Milton Keynes, would be ultimately accountable to local authorities but would work independently on a day-to-day basis. It would aim to realise the aspirations of those now living in the city.

This new, locally accountable, statutory development body would work with the owners of the land identified for the long-term growth of the city. It could also form new partnerships with the owners of the remaining land in the existing eastern and western expansion areas to secure the timely development of these already allocated sites. This would entail agreeing delivery programmes in line with the targets as in the [Core Strategy](#) and in due course, the new [Plan:MK](#).

A parallel challenge facing the city is to secure the necessary revenue needed to provide the services needed by an expanding population. For many years, local authorities received substantial undue burden payments from Government to reflect this need and Milton Keynes now receives New Homes Bonus payments. However, from our perspective, payments are not sufficient – or of sufficient duration – to meet the ongoing revenue costs (including the costs of repaying investments needed to improve existing infrastructure)<sup>154</sup>.

### STRENGTHEN THE CITY'S EXISTING CAPACITY TO DRIVE GROWTH

Realising bold ambitions needs entrepreneurial people. Realising big plans needs 'big people' and these people must have strong roots in the city. Thus we must strengthen the city's capacity to drive growth.

Even if a new development body is established in due course, it is important to look again at the organisational capacity to drive the growth of the city. Essentially, this means reviewing the roles, remits and resources available – within the Council, in the Milton Keynes Development Partnership (MKDP), and in any other organisations who play a primary role in driving the city's growth. Realising our vision – making our great city greater – will require strengthening these teams and devoting more resources to do so. Initially, it will be necessary for the Council to invest these resources; they will be easily recovered from additional capital receipts, received faster and from additional business rate income. If a new development

organisation is established under the updated New Towns Act as set out above, it might be appropriate to recover these investments through this body.

### PREPARE A STRATEGY FOR 2050

Many stakeholders in the city have advised that the city needs a [Strategy for 2050](#). We share this view but note that Milton Keynes has many strategies that have taken far too long to produce and have delivered relatively little.

We urge, in the strongest terms, that Milton Keynes Council should start the process of enabling the delivery of the Six Big Projects now; this must be the Council's priority. Yet all of these projects are intertwined, and successful delivery of each will contribute to the bigger vision. A [Strategy for 2050](#) sets out this bigger picture – so that the city's leadership knows how each part fits in the whole. Moreover, starting the process of delivering the Six Big Projects will, in itself, create a new confidence and energy across the city.

A [Strategy for 2050](#) is the natural next step following on from our work on a vision for the future of Milton Keynes – and to highlight the changes in policy needed to realise this vision. It needs to be truly built by, and owned by the city's residents, elected councillors, businesses, voluntary groups, adjacent local authorities and Government. It must not 'aim low – and miss'.

Today, there is no city-wide consensus about the future of Milton Keynes and this is hindering the city's progress. Moreover, we see the need for a new agreement which features genuine, in-depth contributions from the city's younger people – their future is the city's future.

Milton Keynes needs a genuinely supported community-wide agreement about the city's future for four reasons. First, the city benefits from a strong 'grass roots' interest in **neighbourhood planning**; any future strategy for the city should take those neighbourhood plans into account when they are aligned with the interests of the city as a whole. Second, the city's prosperity will depend on building a strong **taxable asset base**, particularly the commercial/business asset base, to enable further investment. To date this requirement has not featured in discussions and this is a severe weakness. Third, we see some of the preferred locations for growth as **beyond the boundaries** of the Milton Keynes Council area in adjacent local authorities – a position that will be in some tension with the need to build the city's taxable asset base. So far, debates about the city's future growth have not focused on these opportunities.

Finally, the goals, policies and actions that would flow from a [Strategy for 2050](#) are **much broader than the relatively narrow focus of the statutory planning process**. A [Strategy for 2050](#) would provide a framework for private investment and for the work of many different public service providers. It would be complemented by the statutory development plan



but not hindered by either its built-in bureaucracy or its limited scope. A [Strategy for 2050](#) will therefore provide the necessary foundations for delivering a great future for Milton Keynes and the wider area.

### THE AGENDA: A STRATEGY FOR 2050

This report sets out our views on many (but not all) of the big challenges and opportunities facing Milton Keynes to 2050. Some of these views are based on the evidence in the [Commission Working Papers](#); others flow from discussions by the Commissioners drawing on experience from elsewhere.

In a broader sense, our report provides the starting agenda for a [Strategy for 2050](#). Some of the most important (but not the only) matters that need to be addressed are:

- **the scale and pace of population and economic growth of the city** – testing our view that the city should continue to grow at the same rate (circa 4,000 people per annum) through to 2050 ([Plan:MK](#) will consider the position up to, say, 2036);
- **the capacity of the city to accommodate additional growth** – testing our view that there is substantial capacity for additional housing in the built-up city (but we do not know how much), taking account of the ‘Big Project’ work on transit-oriented development corridors, and the extent of expansion required along the East West Rail routes and the A421 Expressway;
- **the housing requirements of the existing and new population** – considering how best to increase total completions from sites with permission, how to increase affordable housing completions, and how to take account of the diverse needs of the population including the balance between families, students and other single person/couple households, older people and the needs of BME communities;
- **the long-term role of Milton Keynes as the strongest regional centre between London and Birmingham** – taking account of the economic opportunities arising from the city as the Hub of the Cambridge–Milton Keynes–Oxford arc, the growth plans of adjacent authorities, and Renaissance CMK work including independent assessments of retail and office potential;
- **the flexibilities of the city’s existing grid road and Redway networks** – exploring how they can be harnessed to enable improved mobility for all and incorporating the initial work on Smart, Shared, Sustainable Mobility into a long-term strategy;
- **Milton Keynes as Britain’s first learning city** – setting out how Milton Keynes Council, the NHS, major private employers and higher education providers will alter their plans and policies to harness the momentum established from MK:IT and Learning 2050;
- **enabling all to live healthier, longer lives** – defining the planning, employment, transport and health-related policies, and public and private investments in health and care services which will be required and taking on relevant lessons from the Healthy New Towns programme and the Marmot Review and addressing inequalities across the Borough;
- **towards a zero-carbon city** – identifying the changes in spatial planning, design and transport policies needed to increase the city’s contributions towards global carbon reduction targets;

- **the beautiful biodiverse city** – outlining the next steps in the city’s shared efforts to ensure that the original ‘city of trees’ is fit for the 21st century, including enhancing the city parks, local parks, lakes and canals, and parkways (aka grid roads and their reservations);
- **a creative cultural hub** – setting out efforts required to ensure that the city is capable of growing, attracting and retaining talent to drive its innovation economy, and also providing a place where people feel safe, valued and inspired; and
- **new and future technologies** – ensuring that the city is best positioned to attract investment in the companies developing and using these new technologies as they emerge;
- developing policies to ensure the urban and rural communities in the **rest of the Borough outside the city** are supported and share the benefits of the vision for 2050; and
- **delivery mechanisms** – ensuring that long-term, effective delivery organisations are in place to attract necessary public and private investment, with strong leadership and delivering the aspirations of strong local partnerships.

#### **THE STRATEGY FOR 2050 AND THE STATUTORY PLAN:MK**

In proposing that a Strategy for 2050 is prepared for Milton Keynes, it is for Milton Keynes Council to decide whether to do so. If the Council endorses our proposal, then it needs to decide how this would fit with completing the statutory Plan:MK. We understand that the Council intends to complete the statutory process and submit to Government for examination in

spring 2018 and we think this would align well with the process of preparing the Strategy for 2050.

The process and content of the Strategy for 2050 would not be limited by the constraints on the statutory planning system. It could therefore address and resolve the more controversial items that are currently hindering progress in Milton Keynes. Plan:MK would then be the statutory plan that concentrates on the spatial elements of that overarching strategy to, say, 2036. Further policy documents would be prepared by the Council with partners to address the other non-spatial elements of a Strategy for 2050.

One of the Six Big Projects is ‘Hub of the Cambridge–Milton Keynes–Oxford Arc’, aimed at maximising the potential offered by East West Rail and the A421 Expressway. This work will feature in a Strategy for 2050 and considers how Milton Keynes Council would wish to work closely with the local authorities who are responsible for the arc, and particularly with neighbouring authorities, Aylesbury Vale and Central Bedfordshire. The Council will also work closely with partners in the SEMLEP area, the Hertfordshire LEP and the Greater London Authority. The process of preparing a Strategy for 2050 will provide ample evidence that the Council is seeking to constructively engage with partners and therefore meeting the statutory ‘duty to cooperate’ test.

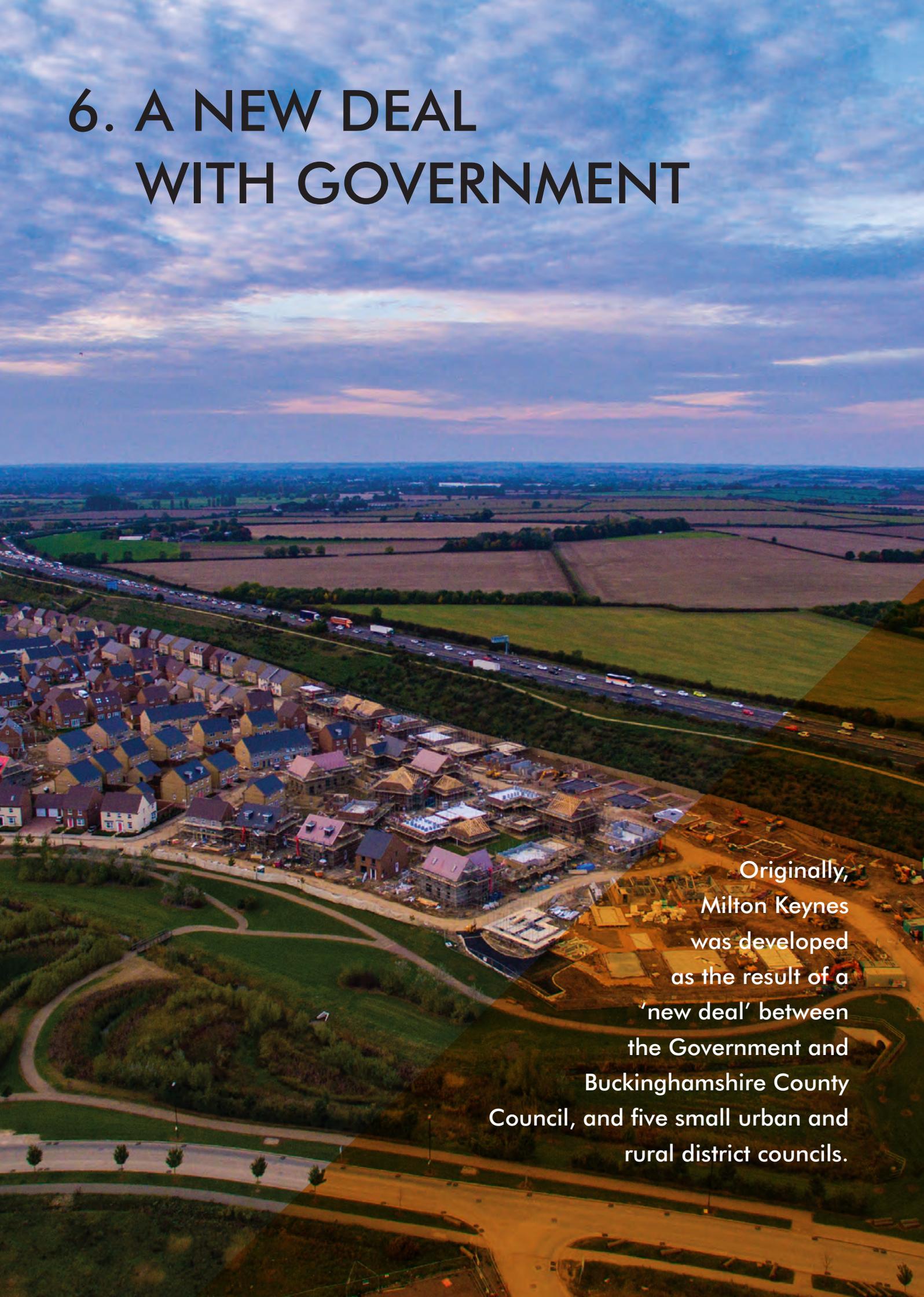
As with the Six Big Projects, Milton Keynes Council must be prepared to invest additional resources to make progress with a Strategy for 2050 as well as for Plan:MK in a timely manner. This is key to ensuring that the wider perspective features in the longer-term proposals as well as in the statutory plan.

#### **The next steps are for the Council to decide to:**

- prepare a **detailed delivery programme** for each of the Six Big Projects for the 24 months from 1 September 2016;
- build on ongoing **dialogues with adjacent authorities**, consider what type of devolved formal partnerships would be most effective;
- decide whether, in due course, it wishes to invite Government to establish a new **locally controlled development organisation** under the New Towns Act to capture a fair share of the increase in land value arising and take responsibility for driving growth;
- in the interim, decide how best to strengthen the city’s existing **capacity to drive growth** following a review of the role and remit of the MKDP and other teams engaged in driving growth; and
- prepare a Strategy for 2050, to lead this process; set the timetable, decide how it aligns with the statutory Plan:MK process; formulate a brief and allocate resources.



# 6. A NEW DEAL WITH GOVERNMENT



Originally, Milton Keynes was developed as the result of a 'new deal' between the Government and Buckinghamshire County Council, and five small urban and rural district councils.

Government established a development corporation to acquire the land needed at agricultural value and allowed the corporation to borrow, at market rates, the funds needed to build the city. Government also provided substantial subsidies to the corporation's housing revenue account and 'undue burden' payments to the local authorities to offset some revenue costs of providing public services. Local authorities had little influence over key decisions.

Government did this because it was **clearly in the nation's interest** to develop Milton Keynes. The development corporation attracted the inward investment needed to create jobs, enabled the development of tens of thousands of homes, and repaid all the loans. Moreover, through the Commission for the New Towns (currently the Homes and Communities Agency) the Government earned significant further receipts from the sale of the remaining development sites.

### TIME FOR A NEW DEAL

Now, even though Milton Keynes is nearing its original target population, it is not complete. In particular, it faces the challenges of providing better education for its residents, investing in maintaining the city's original infrastructure, and more generally providing the promised high-quality public services. Moreover, the city offers exceptional opportunities to continue to contribute to the nation's future economic prosperity and make substantial contributions to housing requirements in South East England. **For the nation, and the people of Milton Keynes, to benefit from these opportunities, the city needs a new deal with Government.**

Milton Keynes' new deal with Government should underpin the future development of the **Cambridge–Milton Keynes–Oxford arc**. The potential of the arc has already been recognised by Government. On 16 March 2016 the Chancellor wrote to Lord Adonis as Chair of the National Infrastructure Commission to ask him to "...make recommendations to maximise the potential of the Cambridge–Milton Keynes–Oxford corridor as a single, knowledge-intensive cluster that competes on a global stage whilst protecting the area's high quality environment and securing the homes and jobs the area needs. The Commission will look at the priority infrastructure improvements needed, and assess the economic case for which investments would generate the most growth". The Infrastructure Commission opened a call for evidence on 16 May 2016 and plans to report in time to provide input to the 2017 Autumn Statement<sup>155</sup>.

### WORKING WITH PARTNERS

Milton Keynes, Oxford and Cambridge, along with Norwich and Swindon, comprise the **Fast Growth Cities Group**. All five cities now play a key role in driving the UK's economic growth, particularly by attracting international investment. They perform strongly on several key economic indicators, such as productivity, share of knowledge-based jobs, and contributions to the nation's wealth. (For example, Milton Keynes generates around twice as much in taxes as is paid to the city in government expenditure.)

This Group has already articulated a draft set of 'shared asks' of Government. These include establishing an Infrastructure Fund to enable strategic developments; greater flexibility to invest funds over the short and long term; that Swindon and Norwich are included in the National Infrastructure Commission study of the arc, greater freedoms to borrow through the Housing Revenue Account; and financial and policy freedoms to replace those social rented homes being sold with affordable rented homes. Also, SEMLEP is currently formulating a series of 'shared asks' for the immediate sub-region. We see value in Milton Keynes Council in working with both the Fast Cities Group and SEMLEP.



### ELEMENTS OF A NEW DEAL WITH GOVERNMENT FOR MILTON KEYNES

It will only be possible to realise our vision for the city, and particularly to make progress with the Six Big Projects, if Milton Keynes Council – and partners – reach a new agreement with Government about the future of the city. We know that the Council must establish a stronger working partnership – ideally through SEMLEP – with adjacent local authorities. Such a new partnership would be best placed to persuade Government to support local efforts to secure the best future for the city and surrounding communities.

The main elements of this ‘new deal’ between Milton Keynes, local partners and Government should comprise:

- Milton Keynes Council will work with **adjacent local authorities** to prepare a non-statutory Strategy for 2050, and then submit Plan:MK for examination by spring 2018; and with active contributions from Government, this process will feature:
  - the **scale, rate and location of the city’s growth** through to 2050;
  - the size of Milton Keynes’ **contributions to housing needs** in the South East;
  - how Milton Keynes can best contribute to the nation’s **economic growth** including performing as the **hub of the Cambridge–Milton Keynes–Oxford arc**;
  - how the benefits of growth and investment can be **leveraged for local communities**; and
  - how best to increase the supply of **affordable housing** for rent and for sale.

Following Milton Keynes Council and adjacent local authorities coming to a view, they should reach agreement with Government on the **best mechanisms for delivering this housing and economic growth** – either using a new locally controlled development body established under amended New Towns Act or other statutory mechanisms (in the interim, the Council will use the MKDP as a delivery mechanism for appropriate aspects of some of the Six Big Projects in the city itself).

- Government will actively support the city’s efforts to attract investment in **MK:IT** and to support local efforts to promote and finance **improvements in secondary educational and training provision**; this will include consideration of social investment bonds;

- Milton Keynes Council and Government will work together to assess the ongoing costs of maintaining, completing and replacing the **infrastructure, public realm, social housing and other legacy assets** for which Milton Keynes Council is now responsible – and how to meet these costs;
- Milton Keynes Council and Government will agree what proportion of the future **business rate income generated in the area will be ring-fenced to support the new university, educational improvements, and infrastructure investments as above**;
- Government will support the alignment of **cultural funding agencies’** delivery into Milton Keynes (e.g. through a Memorandum of Understanding);
- Government will support Milton Keynes Council’s application for powers to **regulate bus services** in the city in line with the new Bus Reform Act; and
- Government and the NHS will provide **certain plans** for local and regional provision of **healthcare services** so that infrastructure improvements can be planned to develop sustainable communities.

These are the key elements that should feature in a new deal with Government. This would strengthen Milton Keynes Council’s efforts, with local partners, to lead the process of making our great city greater.



## COMMISSIONER PROFILES

**Sir Peter Gregson**

Peter is the MK Futures 2050 Commission's Chairman. He is Chief Executive and Vice-Chancellor of Cranfield University and was previously President and Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University Belfast. He is a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering and the Royal Irish Academy. He has been a Non-Executive Director of the Rolls Royce Group plc and served on the Councils of the Royal Academy of Engineering and the Central Laboratory of the Research Councils (2004 to 2006).

**Oliver Dean**

Oliver is a digital entrepreneur, based in Milton Keynes, with a successful portfolio of specialist digital businesses as well as an established radio presenting career. Oliver is a Managing Director of APpload Limited, specialists in digital, offering a range of services including a digital agency, 'MK21' and New Age Leisure, a division of APpload working within the nightclub and bar industry.

**Andrea Edmunds**

Andrea is Head of Insight & Innovation at the Future Cities Catapult, where she works to ensure people are at the heart of urban innovations. Andrea has practiced human-centred design for more than 20 years, previously heading up the service design practice as Portfolio Director at global design firm IDEO. Trained as an engineer, she has applied design to a wide range of public and private sector challenges, including sustainability, finance and health.

**Andrew Carter**

Andrew is Deputy Chief Executive of the Centre for Cities and has overall responsibility for the Centre's research and policy programme. He is also Deputy Director of the What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth. He has over 20 years' experience of working on urban economic policy issues for public and private development agencies, consultants and research institutes. He has also spent time in the USA as part of the Churchill Foundation's Fellowship Programme reviewing urban economic development policy and practice in American cities.

**Eleri Jones**

Eleri has led the Foresight Future of Cities project in the Government Office for Science for the last three years, which looks at the opportunities and challenges facing UK cities over the next 50 years. Prior to leading the Future of Cities project, Eleri led the Foresight Future Identities project and held a variety of posts in the Cabinet Office and DCLG.

**Chris Murray**

Chris took up the post of Director of the Core Cities Group in 2006. Chris has recently been made a Visiting Professor of Practice at Newcastle University and is an Honorary Fellow of the Heseltine Institute at Liverpool University, both focusing on urban policy. He is an Advisory Board member of the Prime Minister's Regeneration Investment Organisation and is also the Chairman of award-winning social enterprise company Fusion21, an intelligent procurement organisation that recycles profits into training unemployed people and helping them into work. Chris has had a long association with economic development, regeneration, culture and public policy, which began during his 15 years resident in MK.

**Lee Shostak OBE**

Lee is an economic development planner. He works with local authorities, public-private partnerships and private developers to promote major investments. He specialises in vision building, new towns, scenario development, economic and regeneration strategies, and impact assessments. Prior to establishing Shared Intelligence in 2001, he established a new design and planning practice with Sir Terence Conran in 1980 (now part of AECOM) and before that he was the Director of Planning at the Milton Keynes Development Corporation. He was Chair of the Town and Country Planning Association between 2008 and 2014.

### Judith Sykes



Judith is Director at Useful Projects, specialists in sustainable development and environmental design. With a background in civil engineering consultancy and infrastructure masterplanning, Judith has 20 years' experience of developing and delivering sustainable projects around the world. Her work includes the London 2012 Olympics, HS2 Euston redevelopment and she is currently working with the City of Sao Paulo on a 4,000 home social housing masterplan. She is an industrial advisor to UCL's Centre for Sustainability and Urban Resilience.

### Pete Winkelman



Pete moved to Milton Keynes in 1993 and established Great Linford Manor as one of Europe's leading residential recording studios following a successful and varied career in the music industry in London. Since that time Pete has become one of Milton Keynes best known citizens and ambassadors through both his ownership of Milton Keynes Dons FC and the outstanding development of Stadium MK and the surrounding MK1 retail and leisure offer. Recognised by the business community for his lifetime achievement and by three local universities awarding him honorary doctorates for his contribution to the community, Pete continues to seek to make a significant contribution by supporting and working with local and regional organisations on issues of interest to Milton Keynes.

### Special Advisor

#### Sir Alan Wilson FBA, FAcSS, FRS



Alan is Professor of Urban and Regional Systems in the Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis at University College London. From 1 August 2016, he will be seconded as a Faculty Fellow to the Alan Turing Institute for Data Science. He is Chair of the Home Office Science Advisory Council. From 2013-2015, he was Chair the Lead Expert Group for the Government Office for Science Foresight Project on The Future of Cities. He writes the Quaestio blog on research and interdisciplinarity: [www.quaestio.blogweb.casa.ucl.ac.uk](http://www.quaestio.blogweb.casa.ucl.ac.uk). He was Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leeds from 1991 to 2004 when he became Director-General for Higher Education in the then DfES. From 2007-2013 he was Chair of the Arts and Humanities Research Council. He is a Member of Academia Europaea, an FBA, an FAcSS and an FRS. He was knighted in 2001. His recent books include Knowledge power (2010), The science of cities and regions (2012), his five volume (edited) Urban modelling (2012) and (with Joel Dearden) Explorations in urban and regional dynamics (2015). Two edited books on Global dynamics are in the press with John Wiley.

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154. Milton Keynes Council, Council Budget 2016/17 Report to Cabinet - 8 February 2016, p8/9, <http://milton-keynes.cmis.uk.com/milton-keynes/Document.ashx>.
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## LIST OF COMMISSION WORKING PAPERS

- 1 What Makes a Great City? Milton Keynes Council
- 2 Results from the Commission's Engagement Programme, Milton Keynes Council
- 3 Milton Keynes Today: Where We Are Now, Milton Keynes Council
- 4 A Resilient Milton Keynes Economy, Shared Intelligence
- 5 Draft - Economic Prospects of Milton Keynes to 2050, Cambridge Econometrics
- 6 Milton Keynes: Where have we been? Where are we going? Centre for Cities
- 7 Milton Keynes and the Sub Region, Shared Intelligence
- 8 Housing in Milton Keynes, Shared Intelligence
- 9 Infrastructure, Maintenance, Renewal, and Investment for Growth, Shared Intelligence
- 10 Transport and Structure of the City, Shared Intelligence
- 11 Intelligent On-Demand Mobility, Arup
- 12 Milton Keynes Density Report, Useful Studio
- 13 MK: The Cultured and Creative City, Building a Tradition of Innovation, Chris Murray and Charles Landry
- 14 Health and Wellbeing Needs, Milton Keynes Council
- 15 Education and Skills, Shared Intelligence
- 16 Options and opportunities for university education in Milton Keynes, PA Consulting
- 17 Milton Keynes: A Low Carbon City, Shared Intelligence
- 18 Water Sustainability Report, Liz Varga, Cranfield University
- 19 What makes a great city? Arup









# Milton Keynes Futures 2050 Commission

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