

2. context for change

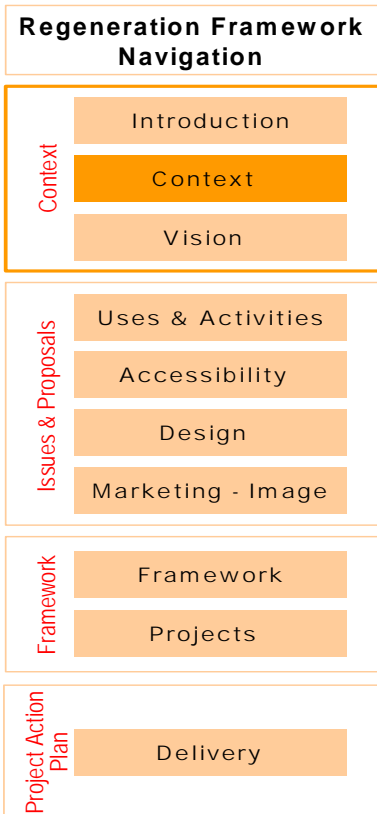
The Regeneration Framework is based upon a comprehensive understanding of where Bletchley has come from and, from the outputs of stakeholder engagement, where it wants to be. The 1999 Bletchley Regeneration Study provided the background to this Framework, in identifying and analysing the problems that have beset Bletchley over recent decades.

Bletchley’s recent history has shown that the town has experienced periods of both growth and decline, which has influenced the form of the town today. Between 1969 to 1979, Bletchley experienced rapid growth and prosperity. Bletchley became the commercial centre for the ‘new city’ of Milton Keynes, with the town providing services and facilities for the rapidly expanding city. However, its status as the principal shopping centre was overtaken in September 1979 with the opening of the Shopping Building in Central Milton Keynes (CMK), which offered one million square feet of covered retail floorspace and large areas of surface parking. Bletchley was unable to keep pace with this change and failed to evenly compete with the new centre. Since 1979 Bletchley Centre has been in decline.

Commercially, and in policy terms, Bletchley functions as a secondary District Centre to Central Milton Keynes, along with those in the north, east and west of the city. During its unprecedented years of growth, Bletchley provided the first office developments in the City, however at present, there is little commercial presence. Stephenson House provides the only significant office space, but today it remains empty awaiting for significant refurbishment or redevelopment.

The shopping centre has also declined significantly. The Brunel Shopping Centre although arguably the ‘best’ shopping in Bletchley is outdated and unattractive, although it houses important retailers in WH Smith and Boots, with J Sainsbury to the rear. Queensway is a traditional high street which has become increasingly characterised by discount stores and charity shops, set within a tired and rundown environment. The Market has also been in decline although relocation from the market site to the centre of Queensway appears to have given it a new lease of life.

The railway station, despite being on the main London to Birmingham Line, is in poor condition and separated from the town by Saxon Street. The western entrance prevents easy access to the town centre, limiting potential footfall and spend. With the bus station on the eastern side of Saxon Street, the potential for integration of public transport modes is limited. Large areas of land around the station are used as rail sidings and an aggregate depot (RMC) operates from the town-side of the station, creating further severance and a poor sense of arrival for visitors to the town.





Bletchley Leisure Centre: a significant local resource but failing to meet current standards

Bletchley Park, to the immediate west of the station, is also largely vacant and underutilised. Set within the secluded, mature landscape environment is over 25,000m² of vacant floorspace dating from the war time period and afterwards. The Trust that owns a large part of the park has a strategic plan to transform the Park and SEEDA is establishing the Milton Keynes Enterprise Hub at the Park, but otherwise its rejuvenation and interpretation as an historic asset is hampered by the lack of a historic plan. Recent planning applications for residential development to the north of the Park have been submitted, but these do little to integrate with the Park more widely or help to bring about its reuse – reinforcing the need for a considered plan for the Park.

The other major site in the town centre is the Leisure Centre. Developed in the 70s as a sub-regional ‘attraction’, its role is now much more limited. The once iconic pyramid-topped swimming pool will become functionally obsolete within five years, and other facilities fail to meet current sporting standards.



Queensway: Bletchley market well supported

These components of the town’s built fabric and ‘assets’ all fail to meet the needs of Bletchley now or in the future. Continuing decline and uncertainty about these elements and other components of the Bletchley infrastructure must now move forward and the lack of investment reversed. The lack of investment has led to a poorer environment and quality of retail and employment space; fewer people are using the centre, which in turn is leading to a lack of expenditure and investment. This is compounded by pockets of relative deprivation in the local population, and the apparent complexities of redevelopment, in comparison with alternative development opportunities in the city centre. It is this cycle of decline that must be reversed.

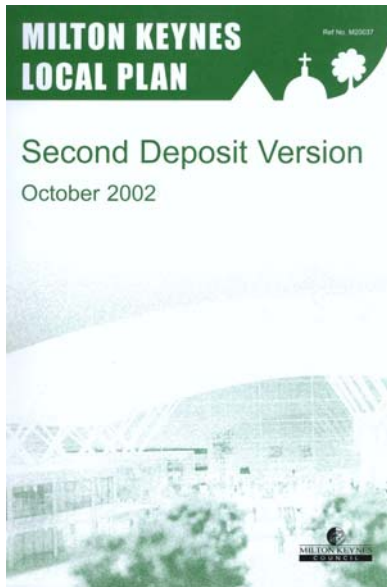
However, the town still possesses many strengths and inherent assets that can drive the longer term regeneration of Central Bletchley:

- **Queensway** – offers a more human scale retail environment to that on offer at Central Milton Keynes, with a varied building stock which supports a range of small independent retailers and high street multiples;
- **Bletchley Park** – a heritage attraction of international significance but currently of limited scope, with development opportunities set within a mature parkland environment,
- **Railway Station** – offering frequent and direct rail services into London and onto Birmingham, with the potential reopening of the East West Rail Line improving connections further;
- **Leon Recreation Ground** – a substantial mature green open space in the heart of Bletchley, providing links into neighbouring communities;
- **MK College** – providing a HE and FE presence in the town; and
- **Acceptance to change** – a strong and active local community willing to engage in the process to bring about change.



Railway Station: Frequent services to London and Birmingham

Central Bletchley must now adapt and change to address these issues arising from the first cycle of development to create the pre-conditions for the next generation of urban and community development in the town. Despite some weaknesses, the town has good underlying core assets outlined above from which to launch its transformation. It is this context which provides the basis of the Regeneration Framework.



Milton Keynes Local Plan:
Planning policies support
regeneration of Central Bletchley



1999 Bletchley Regeneration
Study: Study Priorities informed
local planning policy

2.1 DRIVERS OF CHANGE

The 1999 study identified a number of key opportunities, discussed above, that can help to deliver the vision for a progressive, yet distinctive contemporary town. Whilst these opportunities remain important, new drivers have now emerged that, if correctly managed, can aid delivery of the Regeneration Framework.

Milton Keynes Local Plan

Since the completion of the 1999 Bletchley Regeneration Study, the Milton Keynes Local Plan has commenced a local plan review process. This will update the Local Plan's policies regarding the nature and form of future development within the Borough of Milton Keynes. Importantly for this study, the review process has enabled Milton Keynes Council to adopt the principles of the 1999 study and incorporate them into planning policy.

The Council published its 'Second Deposit Version' of the Local Plan in October 2002, in which it seeks to promote Bletchley Town Centre as the secondary focus for commercial and cultural development within the City through Policy **S6: Bletchley**. The objectives set out in the policy strongly complement those set out in the 1999 Study. They are to:

- 1 Upgrade the town centre as a focus for regeneration of the town as a whole
- 2 Improve access to and within the centre, including bus and rail interchange, and links between different areas within and adjoining the town centre
- 3 Improve retailing, particularly food shopping
- 4 Improve the town centre environment
- 5 Maximise the potential of Bletchley Park, the Milton Keynes College campus redevelopment and adjoining land
- 6 Promote office development around the railway station

As well as setting out these strategic objectives for the future development of Central Bletchley, the Local Plan also includes detailed policies that promote Bletchley as the 'secondary focus for commercial and cultural development in the City, and as a Town Centre meeting the weekly shopping needs of the local population'.

Supplementing this is a policy that promotes an integrated mixed use form of development, including a foodstore, smaller retail and office units and residential flats.

The incorporation of the 1999 Study principles into the Local Plan should begin to focus developer and property market confidence in investing in Central Bletchley. The policy will ease delivery of projects, importantly saving both time and money – increasing the chances of early development taking place within Bletchley. As well as provide confidence to the market, the Local Plan policy will also safeguard Bletchley from development that doesn't conform to the 1999 Study, substantially reducing the risk that inappropriate development will come forward which would prejudice the delivery of the Regeneration Framework.



Spotlight on Bletchley: SRB 5 Programme delivering key community projects

Single Regeneration Budget 5 Programme

The SRB 5 Programme, 'Spotlight on Bletchley', is already delivering key regeneration projects within parts of Central Bletchley, with a budget of £1.75m. Since its establishment, the Programme has provided much needed catalytic funding for key projects such as the demolition of the leisure centre multi-storey car park and clearing the site formerly occupied by Bletchley Market. Spotlight on Bletchley monies are also helping to fund the early public realm initiatives that will transform the old market site and create Elizabeth Square, providing street furniture, performance space, planting and the resurfacing of the Square. Essential early projects such as these are helping to raise community confidence in the town, helping to show that change is taking place – that Bletchley is already moving forward.

Milton Keynes and South Midlands Study

The Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG 9), published by the Government in March 2001, acknowledged Milton Keynes' success in achieving economic and housing growth over the last 30 years and identified the area as a future regional growth-point. The Guidance proposed that an interregional study should be undertaken to consider the further development potential of the Milton Keynes sub-region, in terms of the long-term potential household and employment growth.

This interregional study, the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Growth Study, was published in September 2002. The study identified Milton Keynes as a preferred option for future growth, recommending growth of over 70,000 homes in and around the town over the next 30 years.



Bletchley Bus Station: Housing growth will require improved transport infrastructure

Following this, further work was commissioned tasked with testing the feasibility and timing of growth to 2016, providing confirmation of the pattern, timing and phasing of development and showing how the area could be developed in the most sustainable way. This work was published in July 2003. The study stated that short term housing growth should maximise the potential of previously developed land, encouraging the renaissance of urban centres such as Bletchley. It also proposed that both short and long term housing growth should be accommodated south east of the city to be coordinated with improvements to the rail and road infrastructure improvements.

The findings of study suggest that the broad 'catchment area' of Central Bletchley will achieve rapid growth over the coming years, resulting in an opportunity for Bletchley town centre to capture a greater level of patronage and spend – improving viability of existing and future services and facilities.

The requirement of the housing growth to be brought forward with rail and road improvements will provide an opportunity for Bletchley to improve its transport infrastructure – as the town will become an important transport node within the sub-region, linking east-west and north-south rail services.

However, if Bletchley is to capture this economic growth potential and fulfil this important future role in sub-regional growth, then the town centre must begin to change now and the Regeneration Framework sets-out the physical opportunities for this change.

Of all the changes since publication of the 1999 Study, the prospect of sub-regional growth offers the greatest potential for the town. In many ways it is also a key ‘threat’ as if the processes of change are not initiated now, then the preconditions for Bletchley to benefit will be limited and the economic focus will go elsewhere.

Existing Planned Growth

Beyond the growth forecast in the Milton Keynes Growth Study, housing expansion is already planned to take place within the wider Bletchley area. A planning application has been submitted for a mixed use community of around 1,650 dwellings and associated employment and services development at Newton Leys, whilst large residential led developments are being planned for development on the West Ashlands site and in the future at The Bowl site.



Ashlands: Site of Greyhound Stadium proposed for residential development

Central Bletchley has the potential to become the natural ‘central place’ to serve these expanding communities. Through increasing the population catchment serving Central Bletchley, there will be an increase in the numbers of people using and spending money within the centre. This increased patronage will help to increase the viability of Central Bletchley’s existing and future services and facilities, improving the town’s chances of attracting a wider range and better quality of service provision – in terms of retail, leisure, social and civic uses.

However, to fully benefit from this planned growth, Central Bletchley must begin to change – or new residents will go elsewhere in Milton Keynes for their everyday needs. Furthermore, these developments focus on the need for a co-ordinated transport strategy that reinforces the role of Central Bletchley as a node for public transport but also focusing on accessibility by car, walking and for cyclists.

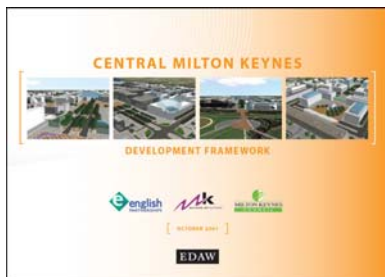
Central Milton Keynes

The planned growth that will come forward within Central Milton Keynes, through the delivery of the CMK Development Framework, will potentially provide a significant driver to the transformation of Central Bletchley. There is a strong possibility that the town centre could receive financial contributions from the Joint Venture put in place to oversee the delivery of the CMK Development Framework, helping to pump-prime key catalytic projects.

The conditions in Central Milton Keynes are considerably different from those at the time of the 1999 study. At that point the planned build-out of CMK was anticipated to be complete by 2020 which would have provided Bletchley with the potential to absorb future growth potential in commercial space in particular. The CMK Development Framework seeks to prepare the city centre for its role as a major sub-regional focus and to provide a more balanced city-centre ‘offer’, with a further generation of growth planned.

This will have ‘knock on’ impacts for Bletchley. As part of a co-ordinated strategy for the new city, in the context of sub-regional growth, both centres should be able to work together in complimentary roles.

However, there are risks that if there is not a focus on new public involvement and commitment in Bletchley (and the older towns) and all efforts are focused on CMK, then the potential benefits will be lost. Shops, businesses and



CMK Development Framework: Proposes significant expansion for CMK

potential dwellers wanting a highly accessible town centre location, but where CMK is not viable for them, should find opportunities in Central Bletchley as the new city's second centre.

This does not mean that Central Bletchley is second best, but that it is different and of interest in its own right. However, there is currently little prospect of maximising this opportunity. Whilst the environment in Central Bletchley continues to be of poor quality with very few attractive sites for retailers, employers or dwellers, these key new stakeholders will look elsewhere.

Stadium MK



Denbigh North: Site of proposed Stadium MK

At the time of the 1999 Study, the development of Stadium MK at North Denbigh had not been proposed. The stadium developments are related to bringing professional football to Milton Keynes. The attraction of a major football club is exciting and is a fundamental component in the continuing growth and development of the new city. The arrival of professional football (although highly controversial) is important in adding to the social, cultural and sporting infrastructure of the new city and carries considerable support locally.

The Stadium proposals will be 'anchored' by the professional football team but the development package is far wider than a football stadium. The proposal encompasses:

- A multi-purpose sports and spectator stadium incorporating a performance arena, a community hub (comprising learning centre and children's activity centre) and conference/banqueting facilities;
- Enabling development in the form of an Asda Wal-Mart Supercentre including a petrol filling station, and a non-food retail (DIY) store; and
- Complementary "Media Village" development comprising Class B1 business space, a hotel, a health and fitness facility and restaurants.



Queensway: Potential for increased footfall in town centre with development of Stadium M

The delivery of this stadium-led development whilst an important element in the social and cultural infrastructure of Milton Keynes is also a key opportunity for Bletchley. Its development will help to bring a significant 'people attractor' to Bletchley, increasing potential footfall and spend into the town centre – with spectators, employees, shoppers and other users of the development potentially making the short journey into the town centre.

However, the walking distance to the town centre and poor pedestrian connectivity, together with the scale and nature of proposed retail focused enabling development could work against the regeneration of the town centre. For both the town centre and stadium proposals to work successfully together:

- The strategy for Central Bletchley needs to be broad-based, focussing on improving and diversifying the range of uses and activities in this 'central place';
- The stadium proposals must link well physically with the town centre in both public transport and walking routes; together with clear support in improving the experience of arrival in Bletchley and to the quality of the central area environment in the short term and enduring in the long term; and



Saxon Street: Route of 'Stadium Way'

- Close working between the promoters of the stadium and potential occupiers and the Regeneration Partners to ensure there is constantly a relationship between the two projects and undisputed support for the principle and reality of regeneration in Central Bletchley.

However, to contribute to Central Bletchley Regeneration, the stadium proposals must go further in supporting links between the two if the impacts of the proposals are to be positive. The route from Central Bletchley to the stadium site (and on to Milton Keynes) is highlighted in the sub-regional strategy as an important Transit Corridor and area for urban intensification. The stadium provides one component in delivering this aspect of sub-regional strategy. To contribute positively, the stadium proposals should focus on the following inter-relationships:



Public Transport: Events days will demand improved public transport provision into Bletchley town centre

- Clear, direct and high quality pedestrian and cycle routes are essential from the doors of the stadium down Saxon Street into the heart of the town centre and to the door of a new eastern entrance of the railway station. By focussing pedestrian and public transport on this corridor, creating a new 'Stadium Way' which will be busy and active on the football matches and stadium events, will assist in encouraging movement between the two and in promoting spend in Central Bletchley. Such priority will also dissuade pedestrians from using the western side of the station and the future Bletchley Park Avenue and therefore reduce the potential of negative impact on predominantly residential communities of West Bletchley.
- A clear strategy for public transport routing for events which focuses services and shuttle buses to Bletchley Stadium and the transport interchange on Saxon Street and not to Central Milton Keynes, strengthening relationships between the stadium and town centre.
- Make a positive contribution and act as a key driver to delivery of the eastern access to Bletchley Railway Station and the associated improvements to public realm to create a quality point of arrival in Bletchley (and the stadium environs more widely) and to enable the effective management of people at times of peak flow.
- Positive support for public transport services both on event days and at other times on the Transit Corridor, enhancing accessibility to the station and to the range of functions and services in Central Bletchley.

The response must be to create an environment in Central Bletchley that is distinctive and of high quality. The Stadium proposals include elements that are characteristic of out of town provision including a large foodstore, bulky goods retailing and fast food restaurants. The key challenge probably comes from the non-food retailing, which will focus on value for money retailing. Central Bletchley is already faced with similar competition in the vicinity on Watling Street, but not to the same scale. The town centre must respond with a complementary offer that sets Central Bletchley and the range of amenities it offers apart from the Stadium proposals and other out of town centre provision locally.



Queensway: Provides a complementary offer to CMK

This is the most fundamental impact of the stadium proposals that should support and complement Central Bletchley in a number of ways.



Bletchley Park: Major tourist attractor

However, the stadium has the potential to become an important element of the cultural and social infrastructure of all the communities in Milton Keynes and to bring it forward, it is understood that enabling development is required. The opportunity here is for Central Bletchley to build on the potential increased footfall and spend in the centre created by the Stadium MK users, and rise to the challenge presented by the enabling development – creating a ‘distinctive’ and complementary retail offer that attracts visitors on its own merits.

Bletchley Park

Bletchley Park is probably Bletchley’s USP – Unique Selling Point. As the birthplace of the computer age and the scene of so much wartime and subsequent intrigue, the Park already attracts between 60,000 and 100,000 visitors per annum. However, although many visitors arrive by train, few will venture into the town centre.

More importantly, Bletchley Park places the name of Bletchley on a national and international stage. Locally, Bletchley may be regarded as a town in need of regeneration. Internationally, it will only be associated with the work of the war time pioneers. This offers a great marketing opportunity for Bletchley to work with Bletchley Park in promoting both the town and the Park. However, visitors and potential investors will expect that the town centre and Park match the marketing messages: reinforcing the need to transform the local environment as a tool in regeneration.



Bletchley Park: Birthplace of the computer age

Since the 1999 study, Bletchley Park Trust has secured a long term land ownership interest in the historic core of the Park. Sites to the north and south east of the Park have been sold to developers who have brought forward a residential scheme for the northern area.

The Trust has also established a Strategic Plan which seeks “to secure a long term future for Bletchley Park by building on the pioneering work of the codebreakers who probably shortened the war by two years.” The plan would provide a focus for world-class learning and knowledge-based development in the future – building on the unique inheritance at Bletchley Park to promote innovation and enterprise in the twenty-first century.

This is a compelling vision for Bletchley Park based around creating a heritage-technology park including:

- **‘history’** – to tell the story of wartime Bletchley Park’s activities and their impact on the technology we take for granted;
- **‘knowledge’** – to promote scientific innovation and enterprise;
- **‘conference’** – to share the unique environment of the Park and to generate income and support for the Trust’s work, particularly by promoting conferences that draw on relevant markets such as computing, intelligence work, languages and mathematics; and,
- **‘learning’** – to engage with the local community and the educational communities in the UK and overseas and to open up the Park to support the regeneration of Bletchley.



Employment at Bletchley Park: cut-off from town centre

A number of projects and business initiatives are emerging but have not come forward due to a lack of funding resources and the difficulty in securing planning consent for any major proposals.



Existing key employer:
Opportunities to diversify
employment base

These themes of innovation and knowledge-based growth have also been championed by SEEDA. The Park is also home to SEEDA's strategic enterprise hub in Milton Keynes. Planning permission has already been gained and it is expected to be fully operational by early 2004. This element is a key part of bringing new thinking and enterprise to Bletchley Park to aid in its renaissance. It is also a major element in the regeneration of Bletchley; creating a unique setting for employment generation and mixed-use development focused on encouraging knowledge-based industries within the context of the heritage asset. Bletchley/Milton Keynes also plays a central role in the Oxford to Cambridge 'Technology Arc' – a series of connected initiatives to build on the creative and business spin-out of technological industries from these major (but highly constrained) research centres.

Clearly, Bletchley Park contains buildings and a landscape setting of considerable historic value. It also contains a considerable amount of underused floorspace and poor quality landscape that detracts from its visual quality and the ability to interpret the history of the park. A lack of clarity over the relative merits and value of individual buildings or sites – together with a holistic rationale for the future of the wider Park area is also hindering it making a full contribution to regeneration in Bletchley, or for any development or re-use of buildings to take place as it has not been possible to secure a planning consent for any substantive change at Bletchley Park.

Responding to this position, and a growing body of work on wartime military developments, English Heritage and Bletchley Park Trust commissioned David Evans, an architectural historian with significant experience of war time buildings and establishments to research an authoritative and independent report on the quality and value of the built fabric at Bletchley Park – including those buildings where Bletchley Park Trust has a significant land interest and the land sold to developers.

This work provides the basis of a conservation plan for Bletchley Park, to clarify priorities for investment and funding applications, and to inform decisions about the development and future use of the built assets and landscape which would be brought together as part of a wider Park Masterplan.



Milton Keynes College:
Redeveloped campus offering
FE and HE courses

However, the heritage elements of the Park are not the only opportunities available in the Park environs. MK College has expanded its campus and is now offering a wider range of FE and HE courses at Bletchley. Much of their surplus land assets are also coming forward for development as residential and commercial space. The current position, described above, highlights the complexity of delivering a sustainable and enduring future for the Bletchley Park area that meets the requirements for conservation and interpretation of the historic assets, and regeneration needs including the development of existing sites and buildings to introduce new active uses to Bletchley Park and support regeneration of the town centre.

Leisure Facilities Strategy

Milton Keynes Council has now adopted a new Leisure Facilities Strategy for 2003-2008 for all key facilities in the Council's area. Bletchley Leisure Centre is already identified as being out of date, yet it is also the Council's most popular centre and is a key component in meeting local sporting, recreation and community needs in Bletchley and the south of Milton Keynes. In the



Bletchley Leisure Centre: a significant city-wide resource

context of sub-regional growth and a focus on Bletchley as a growing central place, the leisure centre holds the potential for further patronage.

The Leisure Facilities Strategy proposes a redevelopment of Bletchley Leisure Centre to form an eight lane, 50m swimming pool, diving area, teaching pool, changing village and associated car parking and landscaping improvements. The sports halls and other facilities at the current centre (with the exception of Bowls provision which would move to Shenley Leisure Centre) would also be replaced.

A 50m swimming pool would provide a sub-regional facility and although the growth of Milton Keynes and the sub-region may eventually support such provision, the strategy indicates that this would not be a proposal supported by the Amateur Swimming Association Facilities Strategy and would lead to an over-supply of swimming capacity in Milton Keynes.

However, the existing iconic pool with pyramid roof is in need of substantial improvement. Fundamentally, it does not meet modern swimming requirements for the new city.



Bletchley Leisure Centre: offers a range of pursuits

The existing site also sits away from the majority of town centre facilities and is isolated by car parking and landscaping. The community facilities are well used but are not flexible to meet a variety of local needs.

The potential of improving the centre was put forward in the 1999 Regeneration Study. Indeed, the Spotlight Bletchley SRB5 programme has supported many cosmetic works to improve access and the 'front of house' facilities. With further work leading to the Leisure Facilities Strategy the prospect now exists to fully update the facilities and relocate it to a site which fronts onto Queensway. This will assist in linking the leisure provision with the rest of the retail and evening economy 'offer' of Central Bletchley promoting additional use of the community facilities and some shared trips.

The community facility should re-provide the key elements included in the existing centre particularly bookable space for local groups and the 'loft' project for young people, together with flexible performance space to replace the Jenny Lee Theatre.

Furthermore, the link between leisure, sport and healthy living should also be explored with the potential to provide new primary care facilities within the project and potentially initiate a full Healthy Living Centre in Bletchley.



Quality leisure facility: Leisure Strategy proposes redevelopment of existing leisure centre

The building of a new centre is a key regeneration opportunity for Bletchley which will not only add considerable confidence that progress is being made, but it also goes to meet many of the key objectives of improving the take-up of sport and availability of modern facilities.

Decisions need to be made soon regarding the replacement of the Leisure Centre as it is understood the current swimming pool has only five years 'life' remaining before considerable expenditure is required.

The current operators of Bletchley Leisure Centre are interested in becoming involved in the procurement and running of a new centre through introduction of equity but also bringing their experience of designing new leisure facilities across the country.

The Leisure Facilities Strategy includes a recommendation that discussions should be opened with the operator Leisure Connection regarding a public private partnership project. Such a PPP project would provide a key element of funding for the centre with remaining elements required from alternative sources which might include limited lottery funding. As a key project in the Regeneration Framework funding for the centre should also be a priority. Land released by redevelopment needs to come forward for uses appropriate to the regeneration strategy, but which also provide a cross subsidy to the new provision. Furthermore, one of the impacts of the Stadium MK is to reduce the number of available playing pitches at Denbigh North. If acceptable, and if sufficient alternative pitch provision exists, the mitigation funding for this loss should feed into the new facility in Central Bletchley. It is clear, however, that there will be a funding gap which Milton Keynes Council and the other regeneration partners will need to consider carefully

Milton Keynes Long Term Public Transport Vision Study

A study of Long Term Public Transport Options for Milton Keynes was completed in July 2003. It sets out the potential to substantially improve transport provision in the new city and also looks to the potential offered by planned growth.

The study has recommended a two stage improvement to the public transport network:

Stage 1 - In the short term (up to 6 years), improvements of the existing bus network focussed on 8 core diameter bus services focussing on central Milton Keynes. Two of these routes will serve the central Bletchley area. Improvements will include both rationalisation and simplification of the timetabling of services and infrastructure improvements to increase the frequency, speed and reliability of the buses on these routes.

Stage 2 - In the longer term (by 2021), the development of two core public transport corridors with a higher level of public transport provision; a north-south corridor, which will pass into Bletchley town centre, and an east-west corridor converging in Central Milton Keynes. These would take advantage of the increased patronage that will result from the projected expansion of Milton Keynes to deliver a system of dedicated busways on these routes. It is anticipated that the north-south corridor would run along Saxon Street into Central Bletchley. It is likely that this would involve dedicating two of the four lanes in Saxon Street to the public transport route with associated reduction in capacity for normal traffic.

The study has indicated that the viability of a high quality public transport route on the north-south route would depend to some extent on an increase in the density of development both within and along the route to Bletchley.

Milton Keynes Council Relocation

A further change since the 1999 study is the real potential of Milton Keynes Council relocating many of its 'back office' functions to Bletchley as part of a fundamental reorganisation and review of their accommodation strategy.

Milton Keynes Council's lease on their Saxon Court accommodation in Central Milton Keynes expires in 2008 and the Council is currently evaluating alternative premises. An option being tested is to redevelop the Knowle School site in Central Bletchley to meet future educational need but also to provide office space for around 1,000 to 1,200 'back of house' council employees. The development of council office facilities within Bletchley will help to stimulate a significant lunchtime economy within the town centre, presenting opportunities to develop a food and drink focus within the centre, as well as offering opportunities to strengthen retailing and early evening economy.

With a fundamental review of office accommodation, there is also a need to consider how 'front of house' services are delivered to the public. Access to public services is a key element, particularly in areas of relative deprivation where the local population have a greater need to use both council and other public services.

Currently, there is no civic focus in Bletchley. In a town that is the second centre of Milton Keynes, there is a clear opportunity to bring together access to public services, learning skills provision (with a relocated library) and community meeting and exhibition space into a new facility. This would be similar in its concept to the Civic Hub proposal for Central Milton Keynes, but where the city centre facility would have a citywide or sub-regional reach, the Central Bletchley facility would be focused on the needs of the town and its immediate locality.

The aim is far reaching: building a new pride in the people of Bletchley for their town which is still apparent but has no tangible focus following the reorganisation of local government in 1974. However, the new facility should be about Bletchley's role in the future, as an integral part of the new city. In many ways the new facility would need to be a 'forum' for the town, increasing community participation and engagement in how it is run, provide access to learning and other community resources and to convey a positive external image. Clear event programming of flexible space would be part of the Central Bletchley 'offer' to attract new visitors to the town, but also 'sell' the town to its residents and employers by celebrating the heritage as exhibitions of new development and future proposals which will characterise the town's regeneration.

The potential is great, but the start of the 'forum' could be a quite modest building, such as the new Town Council premises in Queensway.

The full scope needs to be built up with local people including the town councils and also the key public service delivery agencies.



Bletchley Development Board: A key partner in delivering the Framework

Bletchley Development Board

One of the most important drivers of change since the 1999 Bletchley Regeneration Study is the establishment of the Bletchley Development Board, combining the resources, influence and knowledge of the Bletchley / Fenny Stratford and West Bletchley Town Councils, with involvement also from the town's business sector. The Development Board, representing the various communities within Bletchley, will ensure that proposals put forward will have the communities' support and will increase the sense of ownership – aiding delivery.

As part of a wider partnership for delivery of regeneration in Central Bletchley, the role of the Development Board is crucial. This is a mobilised local delivery 'arm' with some resources from the town councils and a constituency that can channel community commitment to delivery of the Regeneration Framework.

English Partnerships & SEEDA

Bletchley Town Centre is one of the 43 strategic projects identified by English Partnerships. This brings a national focus and the potential to drive support for best practice and quality urban renaissance schemes. Complemented by the work of SEEDA in bringing forward an Enterprise Hub in Bletchley Park, there is a new priority to initiate change in Bletchley.

The prospect of sub-regional growth places a high focus on Bletchley from these national and regional bodies. This commitment brings experience and resources from both organisations, and they are in a position to ensure that the regeneration and investment needs of Bletchley are placed high on the regional agenda amongst many competing pressures.

The real driver for change is not the individual involvement of these organisations but the potential there is now to deliver projects in Bletchley through joint working of the Bletchley Development Board, Milton Keynes Council, SEEDA and English Partnerships as 'regeneration partners'. Each brings a distinct element to the delivery of the wide ranging proposals for change in the town.

HARNESSING THE DRIVERS OF CHANGE

Since the 1999 Study, much has happened to set the preconditions for regeneration. Now, more than at any time in the past, there is the potential to deliver change and transform Central Bletchley. The implications are fundamental. Given the project emerging and the proposals for sub-regional growth, Bletchley must prepare itself for change and each of these drivers of change have very important implications for the future development and regeneration of Central Bletchley. Indeed, how Bletchley responds to these changes may determine the future prosperity of the town and impact upon the sub-region as a whole.