

7. marketing and image

OVERALL IMAGE AND ROLE OF THE CENTRE

Unlike the neighbouring parts of Milton Keynes, Bletchley has its own longstanding character and sense of place. However, as stated in the 1999 Study, the many positive elements of this have been eroded over time by inappropriate development and a lack of co-ordinated investment which jars with the established and evolved urban form of the town.

Central Bletchley is now dominated by elements such as the Brunel Shopping Centre, highway engineering and poor quality public realm and open spaces. Furthermore, there is little awareness of the town’s wider civic, cultural or historic identity. Current building form, public realm and materials have little positive impact in reinforcing a distinct and memorable Bletchley identity or image.

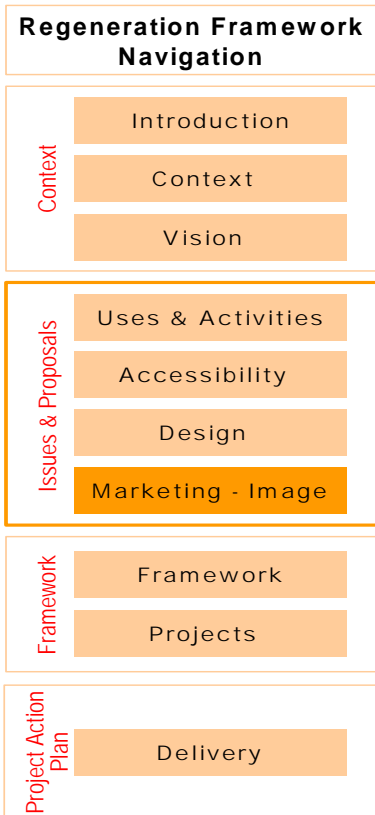
These images dominate perceptions of the town – particularly from those living elsewhere in Milton Keynes.

The need for Bletchley to become an attractive, convivial place in which people will want to choose to live, work and raise a family is still relevant today. To achieve this, the town needs to strengthen its identity, building on positive aspects of its past – that are relevant to today and the future - including its pioneering history as the birthplace of computing and the information age. Creating a strong sense of place will ensure that the town becomes a destination of choice – and not of last resort.

In responding to these issues, the Regeneration Framework proposes key catalytic projects including:

- new and upgraded retail floorspace;
- leisure and recreation facilities;
- a new station; and
- prioritises the need to bring forward Bletchley Park.

However, these physical changes need to be reinforced with a strong and co-ordinated approach to changing perceptions and aspirations for Bletchley; so that it is no longer considered to be solely a place for value retailing. Only by such an approach will the benefits of investment be fully realised. This is particularly important given the relative success of other centres in the new city including Stony Stratford and Central Milton Keynes.



MARKETING AND PROMOTION

There is a need therefore to reinforce marketing and promotion focussed on Bletchley.

This needs to focus on:

- **External perceptions** – potentially through Invest in Milton Keynes (iMK) and part of the GO~MK Campaign;
- **Perceptions in Milton Keynes** – through positive press and media coverage and through Milton Keynes Council; and
- **Locally in Bletchley** – through the work of the Bletchley Development Board and the two town councils.



Bletchley Market: Enforces Bletchley's identity

The role must be to reinforce the distinctive identity and potential of Bletchley within the wider Milton Keynes area.

Development and Investment as a Marketing Tool

A progressive approach to celebrating the successes of implementing the Regeneration Framework, and commitment of the Regeneration Partners should be brought forward. The aim is to:

- reinforce the **growing confidence** in the area by improving the reputation and image, not only from a development but also from wider city and local community perspectives, in order to enhance civic pride and sub-regional competitiveness;
- focus on projects and activities which are capable of making a **material difference** in achieving the Vision (particularly 'catalytic' projects);
- to improve the **media image** and cultural representation of the area ;
- to increase the frequency with which Bletchley is **referred to positively** in the media; and
- to continuously improve people's **awareness** of Bletchley's different attributes over time.

Presenting Key Messages and Identifying Targets

As part of a continuing marketing programme, it is recommended that there is a clear marketing strategy and programme, which embraces a range of target audiences. It is suggested that the project should be focused on four key target markets, promoting Central Bletchley as a prime location for:

- **New retail investment** including a broader shopping offer with cafes, bars and restaurants: **Target audience retailers and their agents, property media.**
- Investment in a range of contemporary, **flexible office and new workspace provision**, including an innovation centre at Bletchley Park: **Target audience the technology, cultural, professional & financial services sectors (including electronics, media and digital design) and their agents.**
- **Quality urban living**, with good transport connections, housing opportunities and cultural and leisure facilities nearby, all at reasonable cost: **Target audience house builders, their architects and estate agents and occupiers.**



New investment in the town to include bars and cafes

USING THE RIGHT TOOLS – MEDIA, PROMOTION AND ACTIVITY

If the Regeneration Framework is to be used as a tool to market and change perceptions of (and in) Bletchley, there will need to be an enhanced level of co-ordination from the Regeneration Partners and other key public sector players. It will also be important to secure the clear involvement and endorsement of private sector operators and investors – including major companies, retail operators and organisations such as business ‘clubs’ and the Bletchley Business Forum.

The partners must, for each target sector:

- identify a **core message/image of the area** to be conveyed to potential visitors, investors and other organisations;
- create ‘**area branding**’ via image style and tone of publicity material which focuses on quality, technology, design, knowledge, diversity and contemporary character;
- continue to develop an ongoing **media relationship** and PR to generate positive reporting and interest in visiting the area; and
- provide a **range of information** which keeps people informed about the nature of the emerging Bletchley and the changes it accommodates.

Messages

For Bletchley, there are two key messages to put forward

- Bletchley – as the **Birthplace of the Information Age** – playing upon the pioneering work at Bletchley Park and the relationship between the Park and the town, and
- Bletchley – as an **attractive mature town** but a place to visit, work and live.

Pro-Active Relationships

Currently, Bletchley is portrayed as a town rather down at heel and few positive messages come forward. Bletchley rarely features in the co-ordinated Milton Keynes-wide GO~MK marketing campaign.

There needs to be a Bletchley focussed approach – not one that cuts across new city-wide promotion but makes sure that the local issues and scene is properly represented.

- **Locally** – all groups and organisations in the town should **pool resources** to promote Bletchley to the townspeople and further a field. Considerable resources are fed into the newsletters and promotional activities of both town councils, business group publications, promotion of the leisure centre and in advertising activities at Bletchley Park. In the future, there is also likely to be a local dimension to the events at StadiumMK. Working together as ‘**Promote Bletchley**’, a co-ordinated approach will enable a far wider audience to be reached and clear messages to be put forward. Furthermore, the collection of material and activities into a single source will demonstrate the diverse and active life of the town today – whereas separate sources dilute the message. The co-ordinated messages should come through a variety of forms including leaflets, flyers, magazines, area newsletters – but also a variety of new media forms.



Events programmes will draw a broader cross section of people to Bletchley

- **More Widely** – the Regeneration Partners already have considerable **marketing resources** mobilised to promote business, property and activities in Milton Keynes and more widely. An appropriate and complementary campaign needs to be developed using Milton Keynes Council and English Partnerships' marketing teams with close liaison through Invest in Milton Keynes and the Visitor Information Centre
- **Media Relations** – for the approaches both locally and more widely, there should be a co-ordinated approach to working with all media. Positive engagement with the press and other media should be focussed through one source and consistent messages given.

Activities and Animation

Fundamental to changing the perceptions of Bletchley is for things to actually change! Building and development will be key components of this but an important component of marketing the town is to establish key activities and animation to draw people to Central Bletchley.

- Queensway will be transformed into a place for **festivals and events** to take place. This should be the centre of activities across the town – potentially a focus for the summer festivals and events arranged by both town councils.
- Throughout the year street animation and a **consistent programme of events** should be focussed in the town – using Queensway and other key public spaces. Such work should also relate to events at Bletchley Park. This should be seen as part of the core activities of 'Promote Bletchley'.
- **One-off Spectaculars** should also be considered – bold temporary public art installations or attracting open-air performance – should be included.
- On **football and event days**, there is potential to attract visitors to the town with activities and animation in the street and around the station, that should accompany event promotional material and travel information. Event day activity and those at other times should be supported by and sponsored by the StadiumMK and the development at Denbigh North.

USING THE RIGHT TOOLS - PHYSICAL MARKERS

Throughout this Framework document the need for co-ordination in delivering physical change has been stressed, whether this is through the use of street furniture or lighting, or the need to improve the quality of development across the town. An extension of this is to consider how the town can reinforce its identity and distinctiveness through 'branding' – at a city wide, area wide and at a local scale.

The branding for Bletchley should be subtle – building upon the 'Birthplace of the Information Age' element and the 'golden age' of the Inter War period – and dependant on the site, development proposed and the funding available



Branding through street furniture

City-Wide

Branding proposals could include:

- **Welcome to Bletchley – Birthplace of the Information Age** signage at gateways to the town (and more locally to Central Bletchley) to highlight the positive and progressive attributes of the town;
- **A clear signage and Wayfinding Strategy using Brown Visitor Signs** that enable people to know how to get to Central Bletchley (by all modes), where to park, and how to access key functions (shopping, station, leisure centre, Bletchley Park, etc) – which should replace the poor and un-co-ordinated approach to date; and
- **A major project of signage and environmental improvements related to the station** to quickly and substantially improve the quality of arrival both by rail passengers and by pedestrians who use the station environs to get to the central area.



Branding through public realm

Central Bletchley – Area Wide Branding

- Create a new bespoke range of high quality **contemporary street furniture** building on the 'golden age' – drawing on references of Art Deco or early Modernism in its design – which should be applied consistently to all new projects in the Central Area.
- Use street materials and public spaces to aid **navigation** around the town centre – with clear references to 'places' in signage – rather than functions.
- Use **lighting and colour** to improve key buildings and spaces – particularly Stephenson House and the Buckingham Road rail bridge – turning negative landmarks into interesting focal points to highlight change.
- Reinforce **visual green links** with Leon Recreation Ground and the Bletchley Park environs through a co-ordinated green strategy linking the two with tree planting, landscaping and greening of the town by encouraging sustainable development which reduces air and noise pollution.

Local Branding

At a local scale, relating to individual buildings or squares, individual bespoke components can be drawn through – but should not undermine the co-ordinated approach to city-wide or area-wide elements. For example:

- A series of **contemporary banners** designed by local artists or schools depicting key images or events in Bletchley's history could be employed in Queensway;
- Distinctive paving and banners should mark the length of **Stadium Way**; and
- The use of **locally developed and commissioned public art** – both in the public realm and in the design of buildings.

Each of these elements should be worked up in relation to individual projects.



Use of lighting to improve key public spaces

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

A final, but fundamental aspect of marketing and promotion of Central Bletchley is the role of local people and their views in the future of the town.

Regular and co-ordinated programmes of public engagement must be initiated. Without the support, encouragement and understanding of local people to change in Bletchley, the Regeneration Framework will not succeed. This should include:

- **Initial consultation on the Framework** – before it is finally signed off and implemented – through exhibitions and promotional events;
- **On-going commitment to regular consultation** on key developments as proposals come forward;
- An **annual update** on implementation of the Regeneration Framework; and
- **A place where people can learn and ask questions** about proposed changes – potentially linked to the town council's offices in Queensway and ultimately to the public Forum.

These are essential components in delivery. If people or businesses want to comment or become more involved, then mechanisms such as 'Promote Bletchley' should embrace their commitment and support.