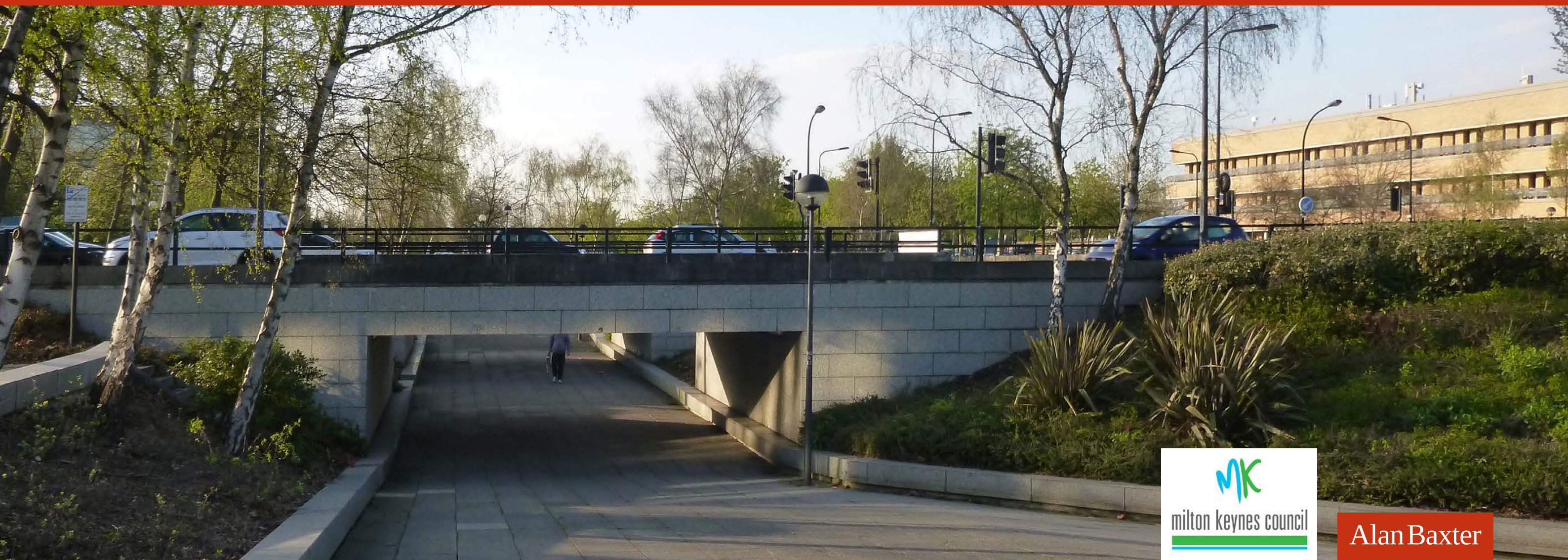


# Milton Keynes New Town Heritage Register Statement of Significance Prepared for Milton Keynes Council November 2017







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Prepared for Milton Keynes Council  
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## Contents

Executive Summary.....	1	4.0 Significance.....	44
1.0 Introduction.....	2	4.1 Assessing Significance.....	44
1.1 Purpose and structure of report.....	2	4.2 Context: the most successful British New Town.....	44
1.2 Methodology and assessment area.....	2	4.3 Statutory designations.....	45
2.0 Historical Development.....	3	4.4 Significance by Values.....	46
2.1 Origins of Milton Keynes.....	3	4.5 Summary Statement of Significance.....	48
2.2 1970 Plan.....	6	Appendix 1: Sources.....	49
2.3 1970s development.....	8	Appendix 2: List descriptions.....	51
2.4 1980s development.....	23		
2.5 After 1992.....	25		
2.6 Phasing Drawings.....	26		
3.0 Component Parts.....	28		
3.1 The Grid.....	28		
3.2 Central Milton Keynes.....	30		
3.3 Residential Grid Squares.....	35		
3.4 Employment Areas.....	41		
3.5 Green Spaces.....	42		
3.6 Public Artworks.....	43		





# Executive Summary

## Historical Development

Milton Keynes (MK) emerged out of the post-war New Towns programme aimed at dispersing London's overcrowded population and creating better places to live. Designated more than twenty years after the start of the New Town programme, MK is very different in character from its predecessors, reflecting contemporary concerns about traffic in towns and new theories about how cities should function, while anticipating the effects of the social and economic changes which were then underway in Britain. Founded in the 1960s, MK was sustained by the ambition and imagination of that decade, through the 1970s and 1980s and beyond.

Bigger than any previous New Town and conceived as a new type of urbanism – flexible and mobile, dispersed yet connected, a non-hierarchical and a green city. The masterplan was created between 1967 and 1970 by a team led by Richard Llewelyn-Davies and supported by experts on planning, transport, landscape, economics and other fields. It envisaged a very low density city, divided into roughly equal squares connected by a grid of roads. It was to have a city centre but also smaller district centres, unlike the traditional hierarchy of city centre and suburbs. The body charged with implementing the plan was the Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC), funded by central government, endowed with wide-ranging powers over development and staffed with enthusiastic and skilled planners and architects.

Building began in 1970, with infrastructure, housing and employment as the highest priorities. Landscaping was worked out in general terms, with the aim of creating a 'city in a forest'. Central Milton Keynes (CMK) could only be developed when a critical mass of population had developed in the city to support it, so many of the most important buildings did not appear until the late 1970s or early 1980s, e.g. the Shopping Building (1979) the library (1981) and railway station (1982).

Early buildings were designed by MKDC architects, using a self-effacing Modernist idiom (no matter what the building type). The earliest housing was influenced by government cost limits and pressure to build quickly. At the time it was widely admired in the architectural press, but a reaction soon set in against the regimentation of the first housing. A greater involvement of private developers and a mixture of consultant architects led to more varied treatment, and some of the best housing of the period in the UK.

In the 1980s, the employment emphasis shifted from factories to offices while more up-market housing was built (with a resulting reduction in density). Private development played a greater part in the development of MK in the 1980s. It was associated with a move to higher value housing and an eclecticism of architectural style in both housing and office developments. Inevitably this had mixed results. Major entertainment buildings such as The Point opened in CMK. These facilities, combined with the ease of movement created by the grid, meant that CMK became much more like a traditional city centre than had been intended in the original vision of multiple local centres dispersed throughout the grid.

In 1986 the Government decided that MKDC would be wound up in 1992. MKDC's architectural work from mid-1987 onwards was performed by Planning Design Development Ltd (PDD). Thus after 25 years, the development corporation model which contributed so much to MK's unique character, was abolished.

## Summary Statement of Significance

In summary, Milton Keynes New Town is significant for the following reasons:

- As the largest, most ambitious and most economically successful British New Town
- For its illustration of an important moment of transition in the history of British architecture and town planning, from utopian modernism to a more nuanced engagement with place-making, site context and existing buildings, and environmentally- and community-focussed design
- For the inherent adaptability and flexibility of the 1970 Plan as a framework allowing for future growth, spatially embodied by the Grid: a unique aspect of Milton Keynes and its single organising and unifying principle, important both for the infrastructure of the roads and the grid squares that it defines
- For the role of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation as a political entity, with one of the leading public sector architects' departments of the era
- For the contribution of nationally significant figures in architecture and planning
- For the consistent high quality of landscaping and public realm, with generous provision of trees, planting, parkland and public art
- For the architectural set-piece of Central Milton Keynes, which includes some outstanding buildings, most notably the Shopping Building, and has a distinctive character due to its low-rise skyline and tree-lined boulevards
- For design innovation in the modernist and high-tech manner as exemplified by early projects by the Milton Keynes Development Corporation, including housing for rent, industrial buildings, the Shopping Building and commercial projects
- For the above average architectural quality of housing in informal suburban layouts and the creation of local distinctiveness between grid squares
- For a strong identity which is recognised nationally (and internationally) and valued locally
- For the identification, protection and incorporation of pre-existing buildings, villages and landscapes, and integration of sympathetic schemes into these areas.



# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose and structure of report

This report has been prepared by Alan Baxter Ltd for Milton Keynes Council.

It summarises the historical development of Milton Keynes under the Development Corporation, 1967–92 (Chapter 2.0), outlines the constituent parts of the New Town (Chapter 3.0), and assesses its heritage significance (Chapter 4.0).

It is the first of two documents commissioned to inform the initial stages of the production of the Milton Keynes New Town Heritage Register of locally significant buildings. The second document, *Selection Criteria*, builds on the assessment of significance in this report to propose a list of selection criteria for adding example assets for the Heritage Register.

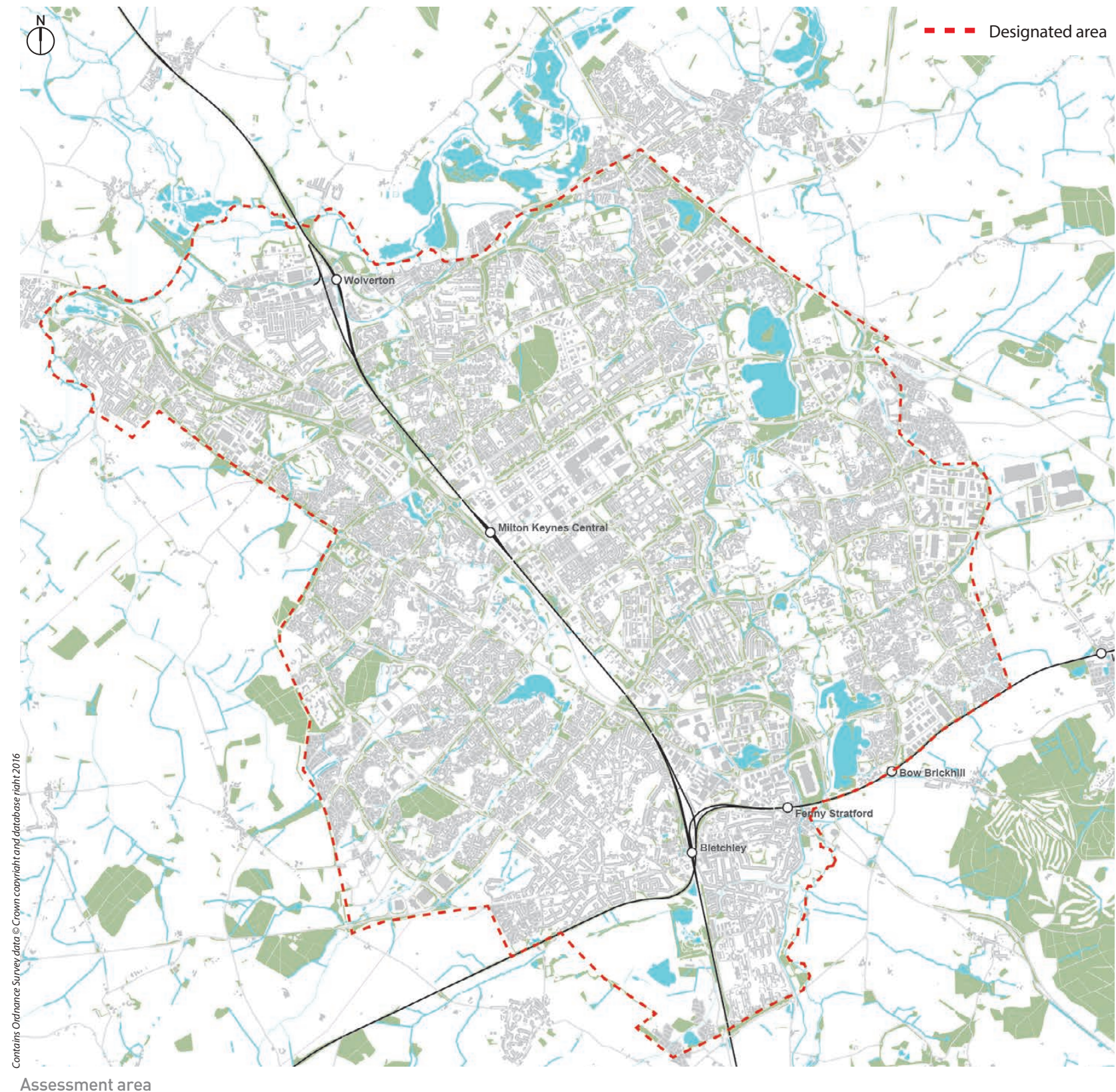
For more information on local heritage listing, please see Local Heritage Listing. Historic England Advice Note 7 (Historic England 2016, available at <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/local-heritage-listing-advice-note-7/>).

## 1.2 Methodology and assessment area

This report is based on site visits carried out in January–April 2017; primary and secondary sources (as listed in Appendix 1); a meeting on 7 March 2017 with representatives of Milton Keynes Forum and Milton Keynes Heritage Association; a roundtable discussion with former MK planners, architects and surveyors on 6 April 2017 arranged by MK Forum and hosted by MK Council; and a seminar organised by the Fred Roche Foundation on 21 April 2017.

This report has been revised following public engagement on the July 2017 version from 24 July to 15 September 2017. We are particularly thankful to the helpful responses from MK Forum, CMK Town Council and the Parks Trust.

The assessment area is the designated New Town boundary and the historical scope is the era of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation, 1967–92.





## 2.0 Historical Development

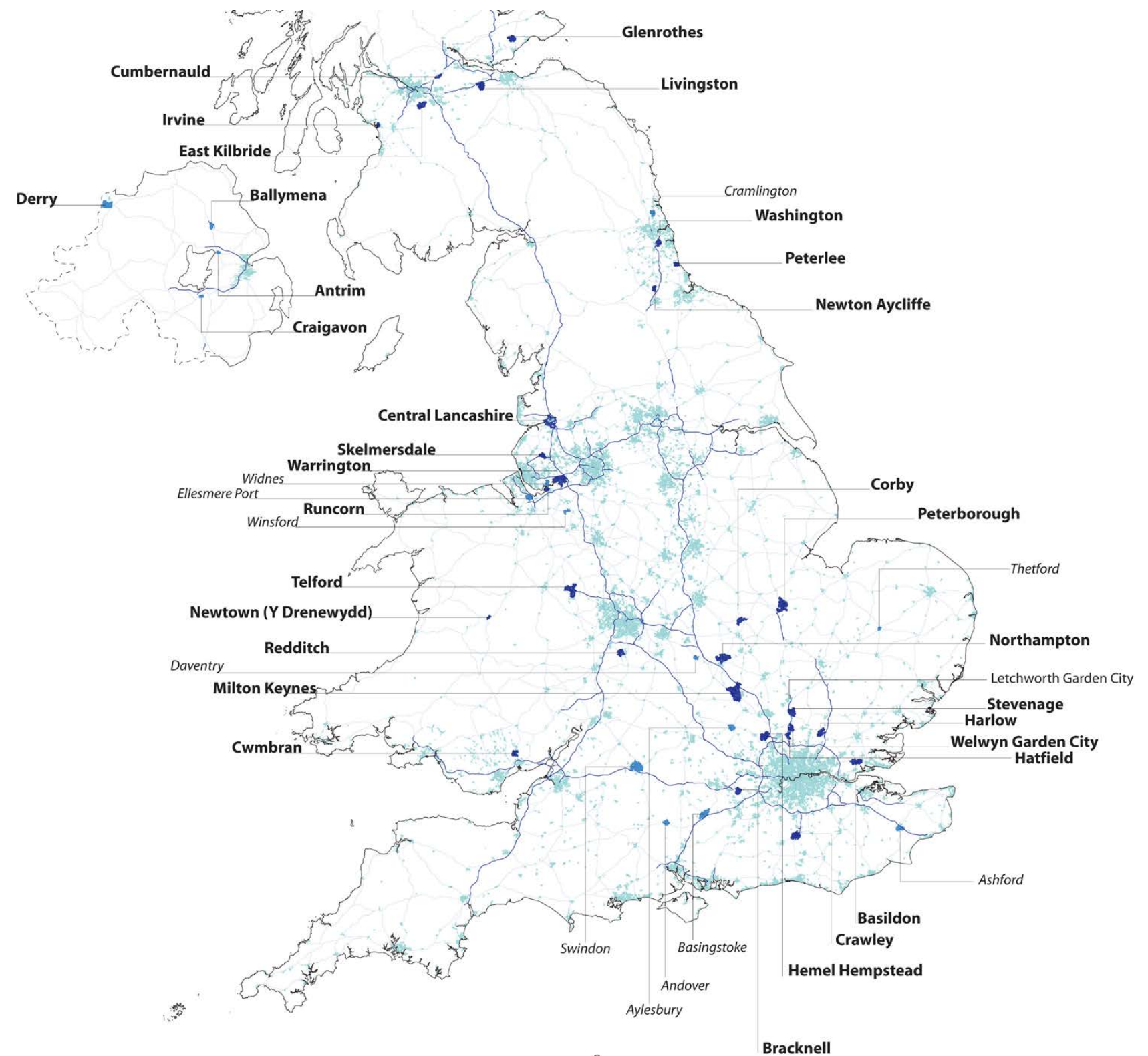
### 2.1 Origins of Milton Keynes

#### 2.1.1 The New Towns programme

The creation of MK is the most significant achievement of that wave of newly planned or re-planned towns and cities which spread across Britain from the 1940s onwards. Central government's overarching policy, of which the New Towns Programme was a major part, was one of planned decentralisation. The Greater London Plan of 1944 aimed to reduce the population of the city by 1 million, with some 515,000 moving to New Towns beyond London's Green Belt. By the time planned decentralisation officially ended in 1976 around a million Londoners had relocated, two thirds of a million to New Towns and a third of a million to expanded towns. Although the policy formally ended in 1976, by that time the New Towns, including MK, had taken on a life of their own and continued to grow, albeit in different ways.

The initial aims were to move people out of London (and to a lesser extent other cities) and to continue the work begun by the Garden City Movement of creating better places to live and work, particularly for 'ordinary' men and women. The importance of planning had already taken hold in local authorities and the architectural profession by 1939, but the destruction wrought during the war gave the opportunity to put theory into practice. The first generation of New Towns – the likes of Stevenage, Hemel Hempstead, Harlow and Basildon – show their 1930s and 1940s influences in their distinctive mixture of Garden City planning and modern architecture.

Meanwhile, existing cities such as Coventry, Bristol and Plymouth all had their centres re-planned, to address issues of traffic management and poor-quality housing and to provide modern amenities. In Plymouth, Abercrombie 'produced a microcosm of what was to become the national plan, by decentralising the population into a series of satellite suburbs around the city edge. These followed similar design principles outlined for the New Towns – well-defined neighbourhoods of several thousand homes around a local centre containing shops and other basic facilities.' (Alexander 20)



Map of New Towns in Britain and Northern Ireland created or expanded by New Town Development Corporations, and (in italics) towns with large expansion in 1952-60

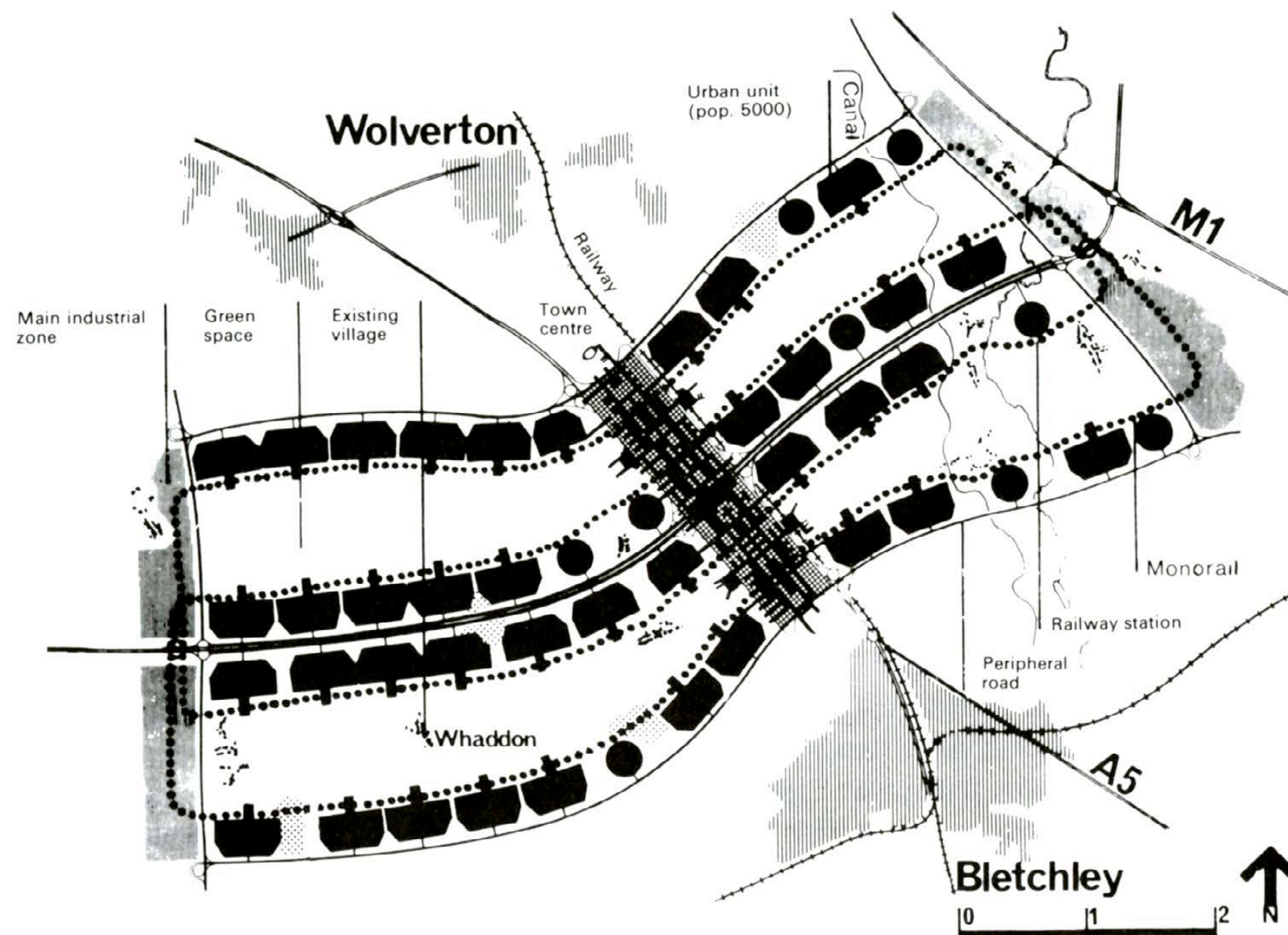


### 2.1.2 North Buckinghamshire

MK was designated after several years of debate about a New Town in north Buckinghamshire. The area between Bletchley in the south and Wolverton in the north had strategic advantages: it was only 30 miles from the border of Greater London, on main transport routes such as the A5 and M1 roads and the West Coast Main Line railway. The existing landscape was bleak and monotonous, with relatively few trees, and of little agricultural value. It was also largely undeveloped, leaving plenty of space for new building and for big ideas.

Bletchley had already been designated under the 1952 Town Development Act (Expanded Towns Act) and its local councillors pursued ambitious plans for expansion in partnership with the London County Council. They had run into difficulties. Buckinghamshire County Council's response was to put forward proposals for a new city of 250,000, formulated by the County Architect, Fred Pooley. It was conceived as a group of small townships surrounding a city centre and linked by a free monorail system.

When Buckinghamshire County Council decided they were unable to deliver a new city, the decision was taken out of their hands by central government. Concerned at the failure of existing New Towns to expand fast enough to accommodate their intended share of London's overspill, and alarmed by predictions of significant population increase in London and the south east, the government was prepared to contemplate an ambitious expansion of the New Towns programme and the feasibility of North Buckinghamshire had already been established. This reflects the preoccupations of the time: principally population increase and managing traffic in towns. As the Ministry of Housing saw it, the new city would be lower density than earlier New Towns, and 'multicentred', so that leisure and employment were not all concentrated in one place, avoiding unmanageable traffic flows in and out of the centre. (Bendixson Platt 6).



Fred Pooley's plan for a New Town in North Buckinghamshire







## 2.2 1970 Plan

### 2.2.1 New Town Designation

In January 1966 the government announced the draft designation of the New Town in North Buckinghamshire, absorbing three existing towns – Bletchley, Wolverton and Stony Stratford – and intended one day to have a population of 250,000 inhabitants. After a public inquiry which recommended a significant reduction in size, a total area of 21,900 acres (8,870 hectares) providing homes and jobs for 150,000 people was designated on 23 January 1967. This was reduced from the draft designation, by excluding a small area on the east side by Broughton and a larger area on the west side between Stony Stratford and Whaddon. Nonetheless, it would still be bigger than any previously designated New Town.

The masterplan for MK was created between 1967 and 1970. It was published in 1970 as *The Plan for Milton Keynes* and was officially adopted in 1971. As with the other New Towns, MK was planned and brought into existence by a development corporation: the Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC). The first General Manager (although he was called the Managing Director) was Walter Ismay (1967-71). Fred Lloyd Roche, an architect who had worked on the radical but low-rise New Town in Runcorn, Cheshire, was appointed General Manager in 1971.

### 2.2.2 Consultant team

A closed competition was held to find a masterplanner, which was won by Llewelyn Davies, Weeks, Forestier-Walker and Bor. Had one of the three other firms invited to bid been selected, a very different city may have emerged. The firm was well connected – Llewelyn-Davies was a friend of Housing Minister Richard Crossman, and his predecessor Anthony Greenwood and Lord Campbell, first chairman of the MKDC – and very much in tune with the government's thinking on dispersal. A number of experts on social and economic development, planning, transport, agriculture and other fields acted as consultants and advisers during the plan-making process. (Clapson, Dobbin, Waterman eds. 3).

One departure from earlier New Towns was that the Development Corporation was formed before the consultants were appointed, and worked alongside them (David Donnison, quoted in Clapson, Dobbin, Waterman eds. 10).

### 2.2.3 Planning the New Town

#### Influences

The consultant team were influenced by the theories of Christopher Alexander, architect and design theorist, in their desire to disperse uses across a decentralised plan. He wrote 'that urban associations were not based on the earlier New Town pattern and centre, neighbourhood and home (likened to the roots, branch and leaf of a tree), but followed a more equal pattern. The chance meeting of pedestrians in the streets was to be replaced by voluntary association based on the home, telephone and motor car.' (Harwood 41)

There was also a strong American influence on the masterplan, principally through urban theorist Melvin Webber from the University of California, who became a consultant to MKDC. He argued that an affluent society, based around the car and telecommunications, needed different, more dispersed urban forms. Washington New Town, Sunderland (designated 1964), by the same masterplanners as MK, was also important for the innovation of overlaying a lattice plan onto existing towns and villages, albeit on a mile rather than kilometre grid (the original plan had been a kilometre grid but this was subsequently ruled out due to the interaction with surrounding roads).

#### The Grid

MK was to be a radical departure from the historic, nucleated city plan and even from the zoned development of other New Towns. It was planned to be very low density (12 houses per acre/ 30 per hectare), to allow unconstrained use of cars, and give a high degree of individual privacy and opportunities for leisure. Within the designated area, the land was divided by a network of roads into roughly equal squares of about 1km by 1km, a completely new morphology in Britain. The grid squares were not merely to be satellites of the city centre – each would have its own 'activity centre', located on the grid roads, to be shared by the rest of the city. This was intended to disperse traffic flows and give flexibility and choice in the way people lived. If they did not like their own local centre, which was close at hand, they only had to continue on a little further to reach the next.

Nevertheless, two grid squares – equivalent to the size of London's West End – were earmarked for the central area where the main shopping area would be located. Linear parks following the Grand Union Canal and River Ousel took up 20% of the city's area.

#### Transport

Although generally characterised as a city built for private car use, the need for people on low incomes who could not afford a car was also anticipated: 'right at the beginning an integral part of our plan was the minibus service.' (Walter Bor, quoted in Clapson, Dobbin, Waterman eds. 12) 'The Board...made it quite clear that they expected easy movement with all forms of transport including the car, without congestion. That was one of their very firm goals.' (Walter Bor, quoted in Clapson, Dobbin, Waterman eds. 10) Fred Pooley's monorail concept lingered on in the planning phase, but was eventually abandoned as unsuitable because it would have imposed a single dominant form of transport – militating against flexibility and choice – and was in any case considered unimplementable (as discussed in Clapson, Dobbin, Waterman eds. 10)

#### Architecture

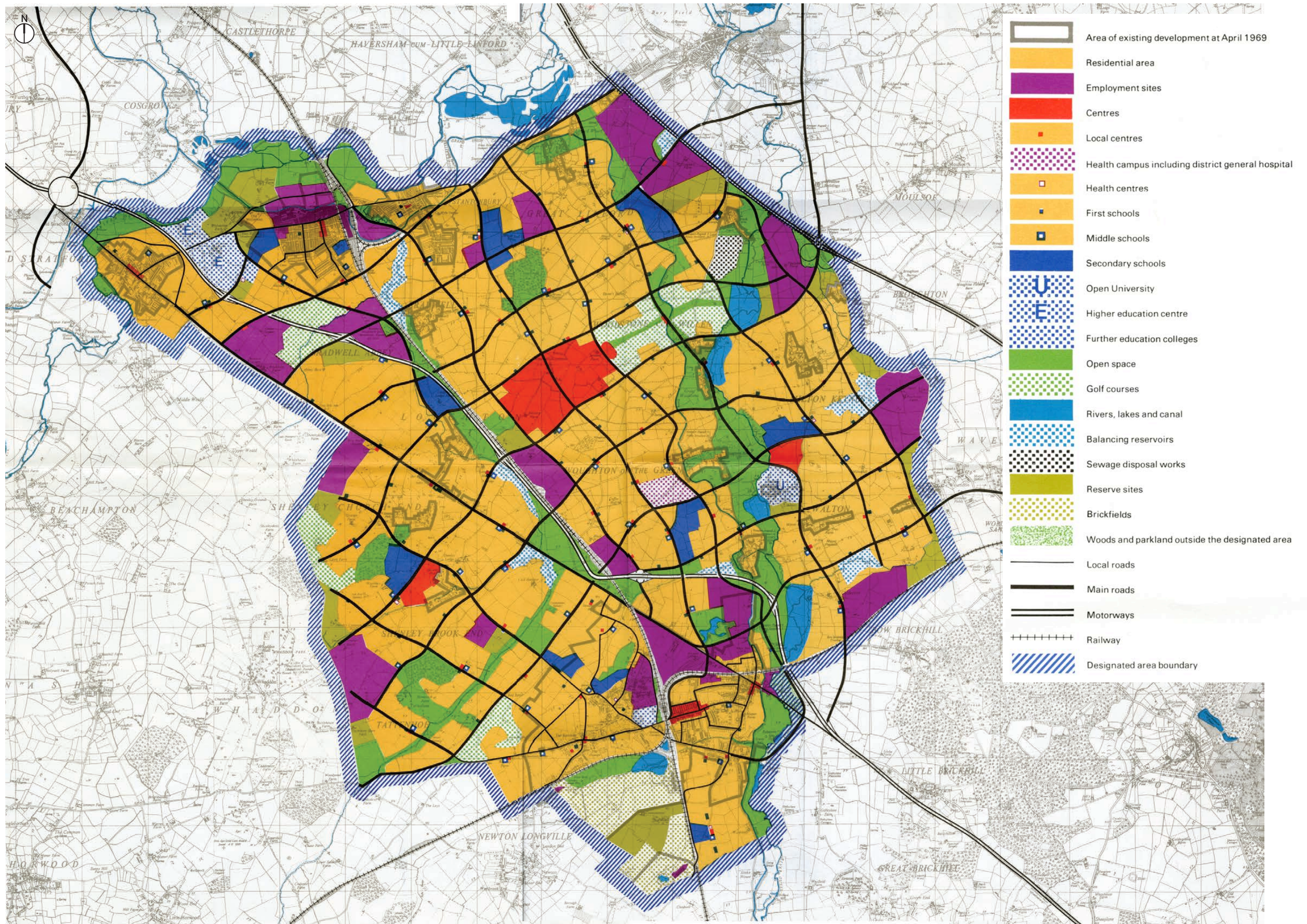
The masterplan deliberately did not specify what the buildings of the new city would look like. This reflected Webber's belief that planning should be enabling, not prescriptive, and needed to move away from the architecture-driven concepts that had dominated ideas of planning throughout the twentieth century. Urbanism should not be seen in terms of buildings or land-use patterns, 'but as quality and a diversity of life'. (Quoted Jeffrey 106) 'The plan was explicit that social matters merited as much detailed analysis and planning guidance as did the economic and physical development of the city. The plan entered original territory for New Towns with its programme for social development.' Although previous New Town developments had addressed social issues, the approach taken in MK was distinctive in its breadth.

#### Landscape

Peter Youngman (President of the Institute of Landscape Architects 1961–63) served as landscape consultant to the masterplan. His obituary in *The Guardian* by Tom Turner in 2005 claims that MK 'would be a much harsher place without Youngman's input. An American grid of horizontal and vertical distributor roads had been proposed. Youngman walked the site, appreciated its gentle undulations and persuaded the planning team to convert the rectilinear grid into a curvaceous mesh, flowing with the landscape. He also argued, successfully, for a town forest to absorb the highways and create a framework for housing and recreational areas.' It is worth noting, however, that Youngman's own view of his involvement was much more modest (as set out in Harvey, 1987).

Ecology was covered to a limited degree by a general survey carried out by students from University College London, but there was no retained ecology consultancy commissioned to work on planning of MK.





The 1970 Plan



## 2.3 1970s development

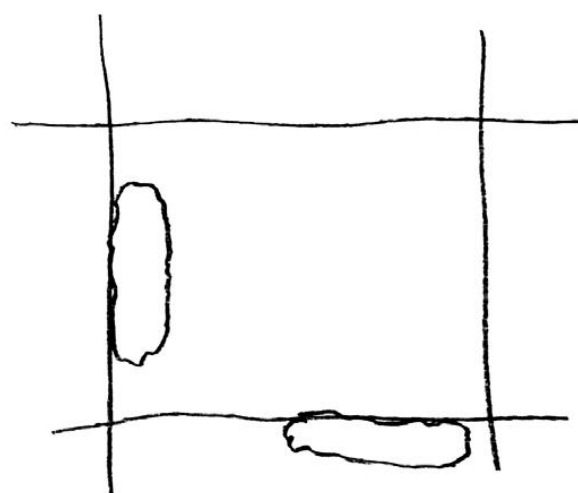
### 2.3.1 Translating the masterplan

Because the masterplan had little to say about architecture, the MKDC architects had scope to pursue their own ideas, although in the 1970s the Board also took a close interest in design. The major influence in the design of MK in its first decade was Derek Walker (1929–2015), Chief Architect to MKDC 1970–74 and Chief Executive (and lead designer) for CMK, 1974–76. Under Walker, senior architects were appointed to oversee individual areas of design, such as CMK, central area housing, industry and commerce, landscape, and northern and southern MK. He set out to attract talented architects, both within MKDC, but also to work as consultants. To avoid confusion, the term *MKDC architects' department* is used here to refer to architects employed directly by MKDC.

Construction began in earnest after the publication of the masterplan in 1970, starting in the existing towns and villages and working towards the centre (Williamson 486). Grid roads were constructed even where there was no development, so that the concept could not be compromised later. Although on plan the grid looked like that laid down in the masterplan, there was in fact a crucial change from an extensive but conventional street grid with regular crossroad junctions, to a network of dual carriageways connected by roundabouts. The faster traffic reduced the appeal of the masterplan concept of local centres facing onto the grid roads and thereby able to serve the wider city, not just their own neighbourhood (though some were built, e.g. Neath Hill).

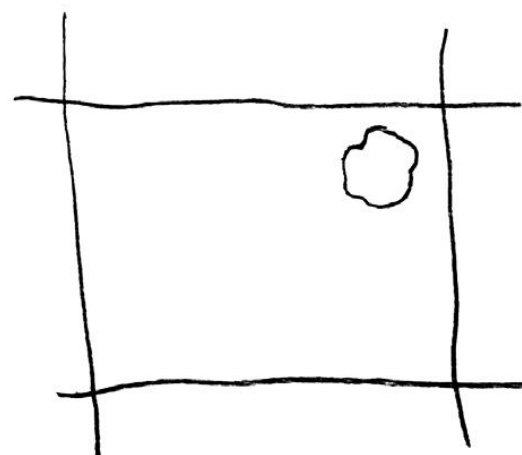
Despite the excitement of creating a new city, with a new urban form, MKDC was aware of the need to find an appropriate way to treat the existing settlements within the designated area. Planning studies were carried out for Bletchley, Wolverton, Stony Stratford and New Bradwell and a group within MKDC worked up proposals for the villages, with conservation as much as development in mind. Historic buildings were identified and incorporated within the New Town, and many were listed. 20 conservation areas were designated (conservation areas were only legislated for in 1967), and a comprehensive archaeological programme was carried out during construction.

1970 Plan



- Slow traffic with crossroad junctions
- Each grid square to have a local centre fronting the grid road

As executed



- Faster traffic with roundabouts
- Local centres incorporated into inward-looking grid squares





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Visualisation of CMK in 1990 by artist Helmut Jacoby

### The architects of MK

There were essentially three forms of architectural commission that contributed to the design of buildings in MK: MKDC architects' department, private architects employed by MKDC, and development by other bodies (such as private housebuilders).

Derek Walker (1929–2015) took the helm of MKDC architects' department, as Chief Architect and Planner, in 1970. He oversaw the recruitment and organisation of the department and set about developing the 1970 Plan into an aesthetic project. This extraordinary vision was vividly rendered in the visualisations of MK by artist Helmut Jacoby, one of the foremost architectural draughtsmen of the twentieth century.

The department was split into seven major teams: CMK, Central Area Housing, Industry & Commerce, Village and Linkage Elements, Northern MK, Southern MK and Infrastructure Elements. The list of those who made notable contributions to the design of MK is far too long to reproduce here. MKDC architects included Stuart Mossdrop (Project Leader for CMK), Christopher Woodward, Jeremy Dixon, Edward Jones, Mike Gold, Christopher Cross, Trevor Denton, Peter Hall, Gavin Hinton Cook, Geoff Davies and Wayland Tunley. Ernest Pye was the Chief Engineer.

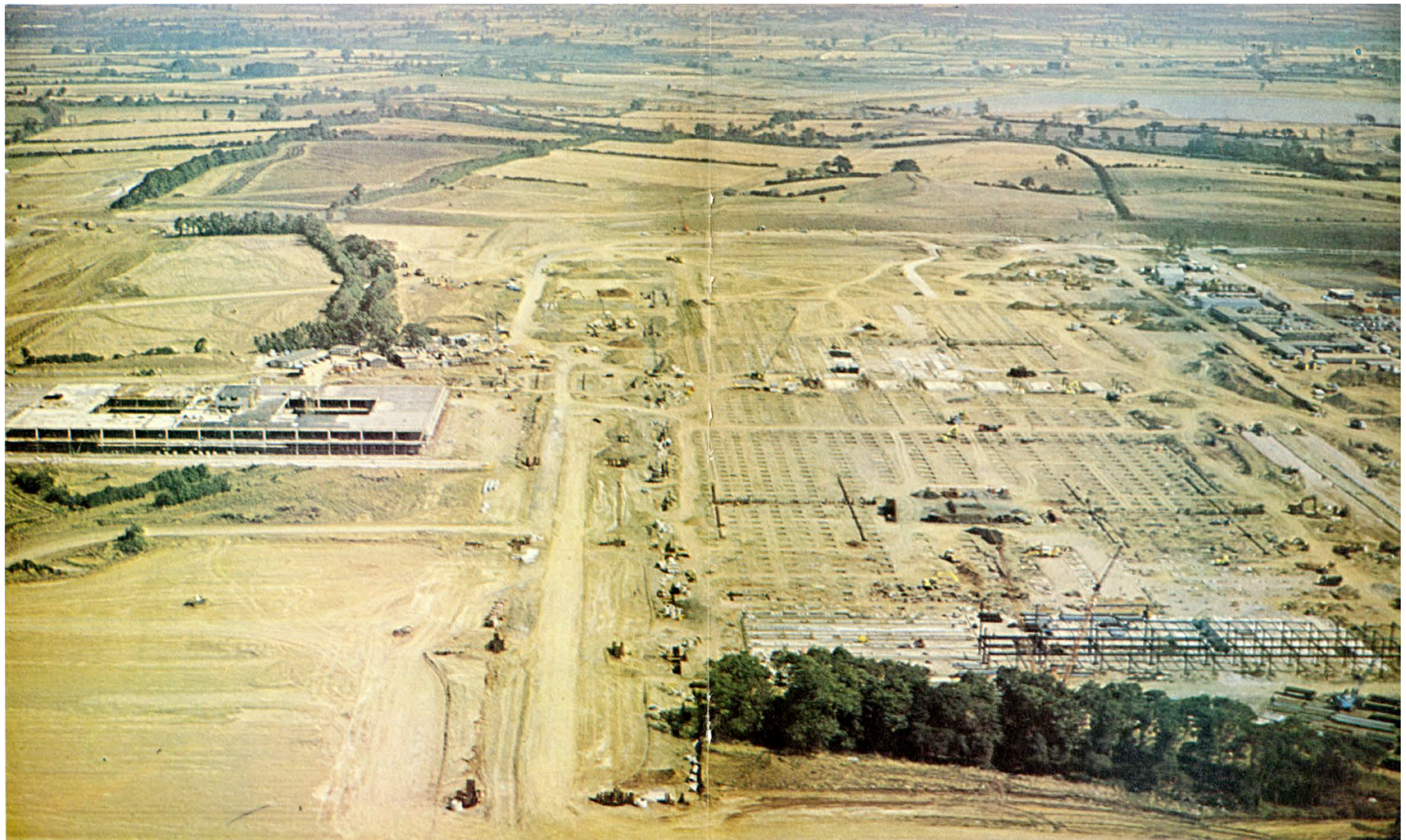
From 1977 the Central Landscape Unit was led by Neil Higson, supported by Tony Southard, whose creativity built on the strategic landscape thinking of Andrew Mahaddie.

After Walker left MKDC in 1976, the responsibility for architecture was split into two multi-disciplinary teams under Nigel Lane and Stuart Mossdrop before being combined under Keith Revill as the Building Directorate in 1980. Following Keith's departure in 1987 to head Planning Design Development Ltd, responsibility for the design of the city passed to John Billingham as Director of Design and Development.

Among the private consultant architects who worked for MKDC were Norman Foster; Ralph Erskine; Edward Cullinan; John Winter; Aldington, Craig and Collinge; MacCormac and Jamieson; Martin Richardson; Gillespie, Kidd and Coia; and Phippen Randall Parkes.

An equally eminent list of architects produced designs for MK which were never realised: James Stirling, Norman Foster, YRM, Terry Farrell and Nicholas Grimshaw, and engineer Anthony Hunt.





Aerial photograph of CMK under construction in 1975, showing Lloyd's Court (left) and foundations of Shopping Building (right)



### 2.3.2 Public realm, art and landscaping

As much attention was paid to the public realm as to individual buildings by Derek Walker's team. This was seen as a return to an older urban tradition in which infrastructure and the spaces between buildings made a positive contribution to the city. This tradition had, Walker believed, been lost in the modern system of planning which was focused on individual buildings (Walker 17). The public realm was given a holistic treatment extending from the grid road verges and underpasses to the bus shelters, benches, litter bins, signposts and lighting columns, which all received the attention of the MKDC designers, leading to bespoke designs. The MK seat, which has since become ubiquitous across Britain, was designed in 1974 by MKDC architect Brian Milne.

Landscaping was worked out in general terms in 1971 but received more detailed attention after 1977 when a team of landscape architects was formed under Neil Higson. Derek Walker's concept was to create 'a city in a forest' (Walker 13), using trees to soften the hardness typically associated with urban areas.

The verges either side of the grid roads were densely planted, in part to shelter the activities within the grid square either side, but also to 'edit' the views of drivers from their cars so that the city became more legible and comprehensible (Walker 31). They had been intensively planted with some fast-growing species to create rapid visual impact and make the city look less 'raw' (following the failure of some early planting schemes due to drought).

Like earlier New Towns, the provision of public artworks was another key part of MKDC's brief, particularly in prominent locations outside MKDC buildings. Early pieces were commissioned or acquired from prominent artists 'including Elisabeth Frink, Liliane Lijn, Bernard Schottlander and Wendy Taylor' (Historic England 2016).



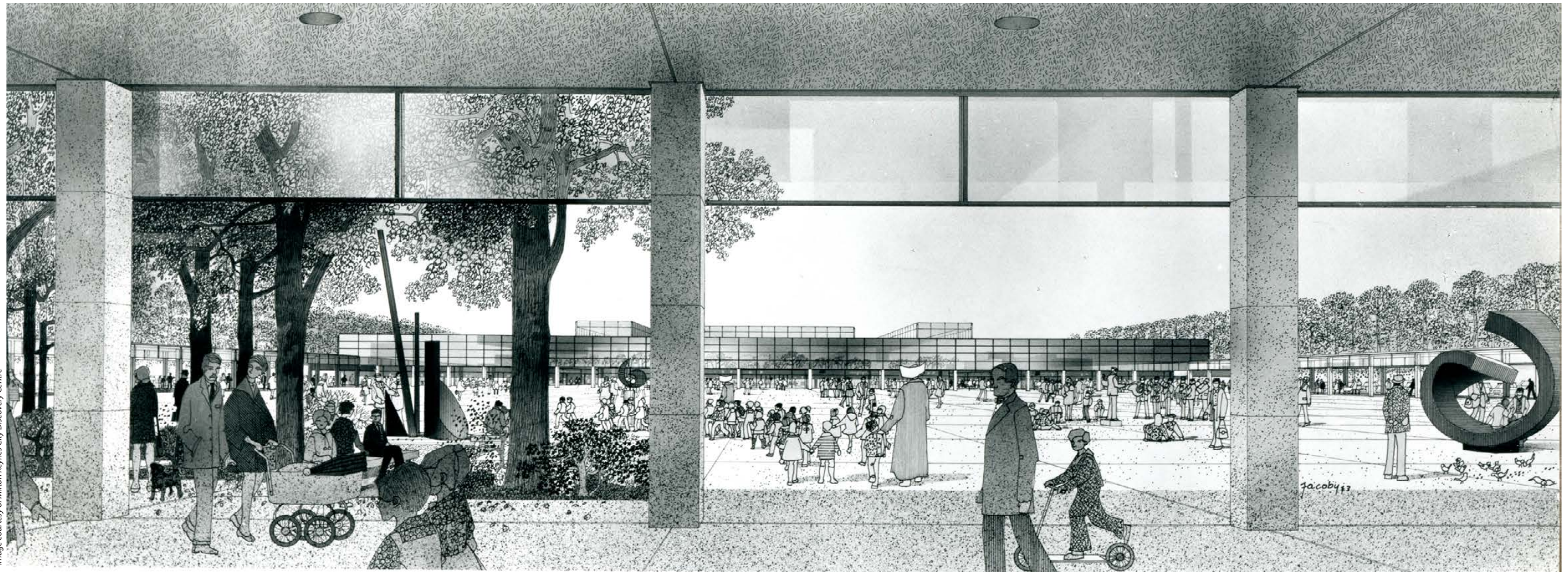
Public realm in CMK



Black Horse (1978) by Elisabeth Frink, outside Lloyds Court (1972–74), by Stuart Moss crop and Ivan Pickles, MKDC architects' department: the first building to be completed in CMK

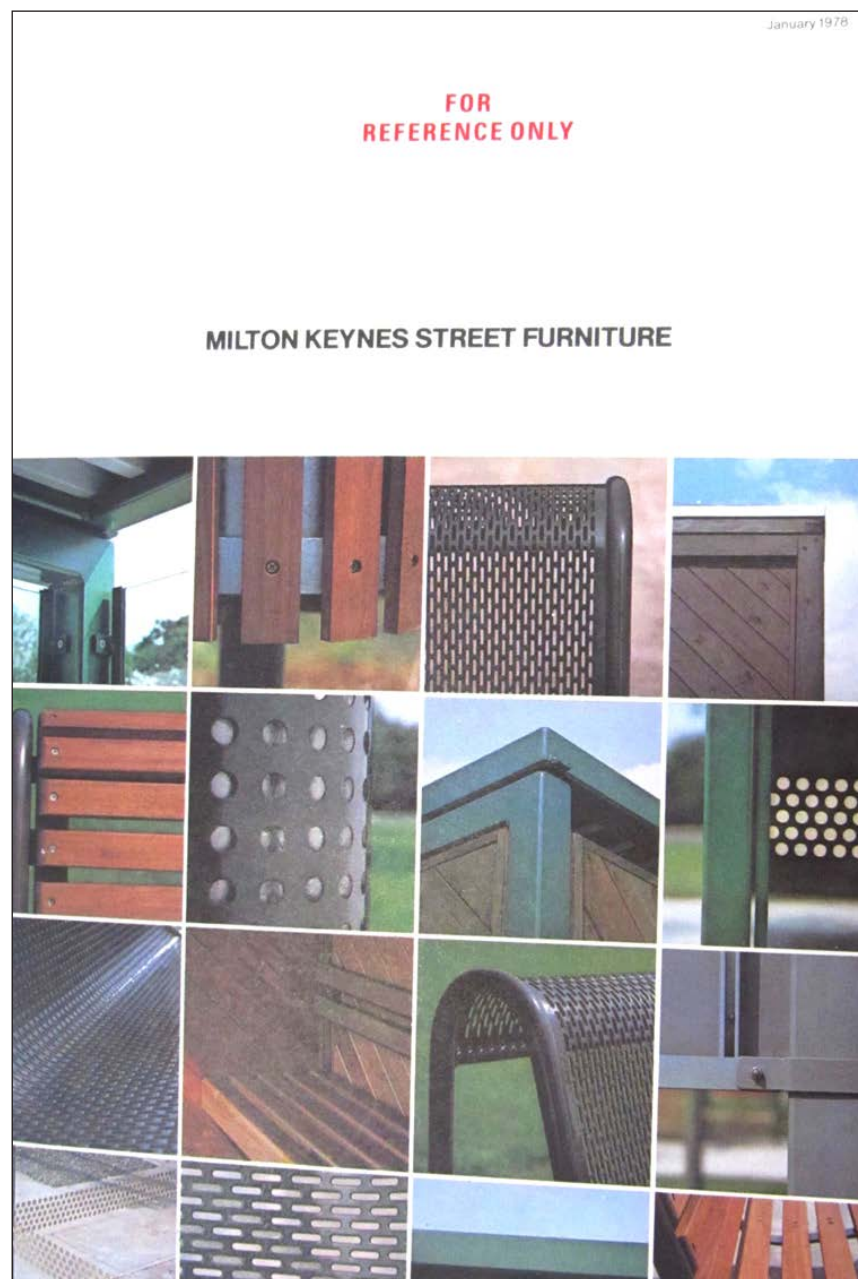


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Image courtesy of Milton Keynes City Discovery Centre



Visualisation of CMK public realm, showing City Square (now largely built over) and the west elevation of the Shopping Building, by artist Helmut Jacoby





MKDC street furniture manual, 1978



© Tim Skelton (MK Forum)

An original MK Seat, in Denbigh. Note the large round holes in comparison with the rounded rectangular slots of later versions



### 2.3.3 Housing

#### Early housing by MKDC

At a practical level, there was an urgent need in the early seventies to build houses quickly. Houses for rent were built first by MKDC, to attract younger, more mobile people on lower incomes, as well as construction workers and the employees of new companies. Ambitious targets were set for construction – 3,000 houses per year initially – which, within Government restrictions on spending on housing, could only be met by significant amounts of standardisation and simple construction. This resulted in unconventional new designs which were often later plagued by material defects.

The use of repeated pre-fabricated components is powerfully apparent in the immense scale and austere aesthetic of early Southern Area schemes such as Netherfield (1972–77) and Beanhill (Foster Associates 1973–77), though finer-grain schemes were being built at the same time, e.g. at Fullers Slade (1971–73) in the Northern Area. Central Area schemes such as Fishermead (1972–73) offered another model, with terraces arranged in full or half quadrangles around semi-private courtyards, 'like an inside-out garden square' (Williamson 524).



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© Tim Skelton (MK Forum)

Housing in Netherfield by Edward Jones, Christopher Cross, Jeremy Dixon and Michael Gold, MKDC architects' department, soon after completion in 1977, and today



**Mid-1970s shift**

By the mid-1970s there was already a reaction against the regimentation and defects of the first housing. MKDC sought and won from the government agreement for higher standards of housing, which bore fruit in areas such as Fishermead and Springfield. Outside the centre, including the villages, a wonderful diversity of housing designs, by a mixture of MKDC and private architects flourished.

Brick and tile, pitched roofs and traditional masonry construction took the place of the earlier experiments with pre-fabrication. Neath Hill (Wayland Tunley for MKDC, 1975–80), Stantonbury (Gillespie, Kidd & Coia 1973–76) and Heelands (Henning Larsen 1975–81) were developed in this period. Areas with individual plots for self-build housing were also provided in a pioneering scheme by MKDC.

**Role of private developers**

Developers also showed interest in building in MK early on. Eaglestone (1972–75, planned by Ralph Erskine) was developed in partnership with Bovis: an early example of the sort of arrangement that would become more common in the 1980s, e.g. at Two Mile Ash with Whelmar, Barratt, Broseley and Wimpey.

In the early days MKDC sought either to design, build and sell houses itself, or give developers 'approved architects' for their schemes. Some would-be developers were put off by the level of design control exercised by MKDC and by the relatively modest number of houses MKDC were prepared to allow them to build per scheme. As a consequence of this, MKDC set up its 'Private Housing Unit' in 1978. This multi-disciplinary team of surveyors and architects was tasked with liaising with private developers of all scales to ensure that a high standard of housing would continue to be achieved as they became increasingly responsible for MK's housing.



Kernow Crescent in Fishermead Gavin Hinton Cook, MKDC architects' department, soon after completion in 1982

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Housing by Bovis at Eaglestone

© Tim Skelton (MK Forum)



### 2.3.4 Employment buildings

Just as housing was initially seen to benefit from standardisation and pre-fabrication, so MKDC, in its drive to create employment in the city, chose to develop standardised but flexible structures for industrial and office use. MKDC architects' department developed a pioneering system known as SBI (System Building for Industry) for providing speculative Advance Factory Units (AFU) using pre-fabricated structures and panels. This was at the forefront of what would later be termed high-tech architecture: employing dry-assembly building techniques borrowed from industry and creating maximum flexibility of internal arrangement.

An impressive array of industrial buildings were created through the 1970s, from Wavendon Tower, the MKDC headquarters, to the Cotton Valley Sewage Works of 1970–75, the AFUs at Stacey Bushes and Kiln Farm and the John Lewis Building at Blakelands. One of the other distinctive aspects of these employment areas was the quality and spaciousness of the landscaping.

Early office buildings provided by MKDC were unsurprisingly influenced by the latest practices: notably the introduction of open plan layouts, imported from America in the mid-1960s. Those built outside CMK in the 1970s included the AFU at Wavendon Tower and the Sherwood Drive offices in Bletchley.

A number of other buildings in employment areas were built by owner-occupiers on sites bought from MKDC.

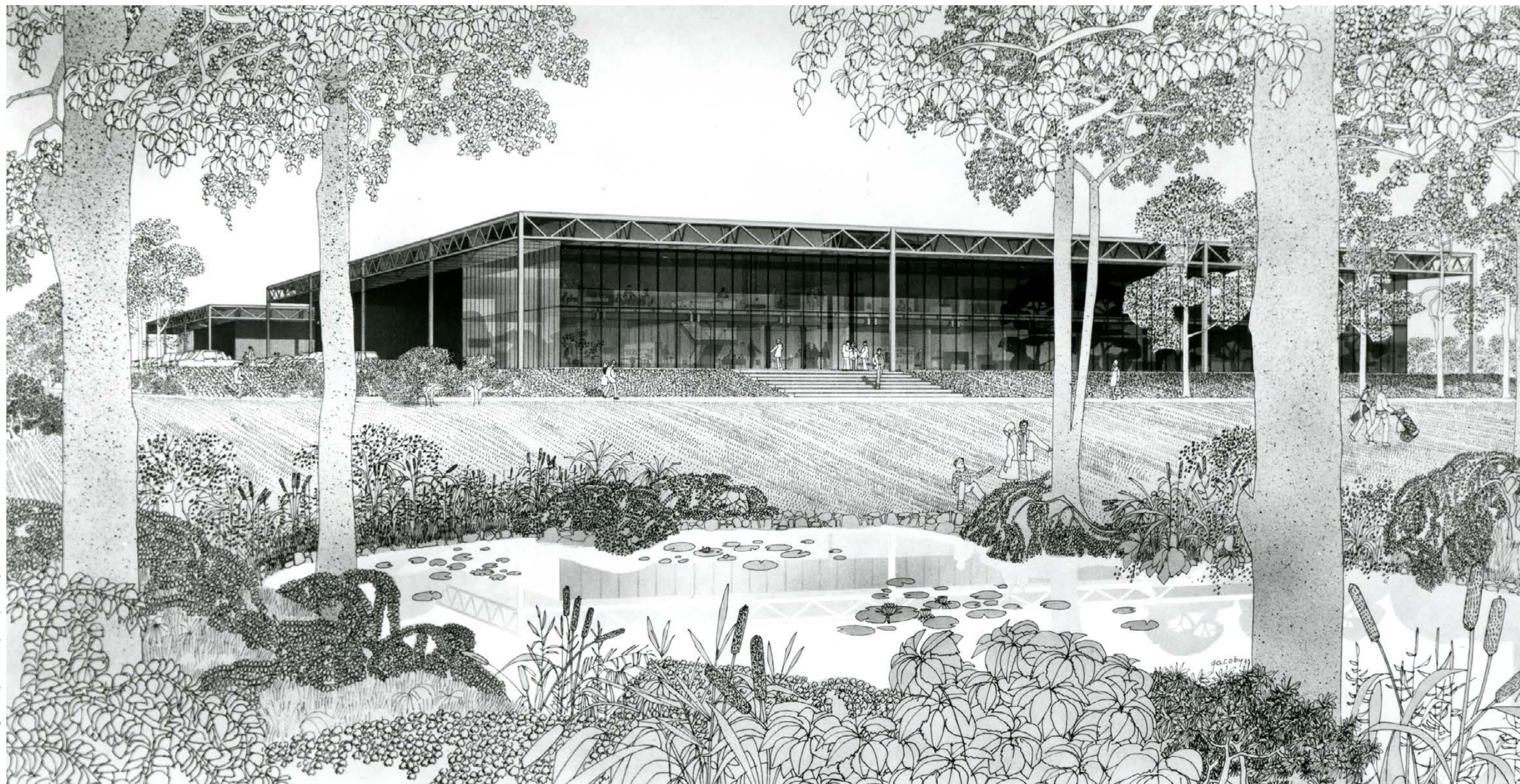


Advance Factory Unit in Kiln Farm



Office in Kiln Farm





Visualisation of the warehouse and distribution centre for Steinberg and Butte Knit in Kiln Farm by artist Helmut Jacoby



### 2.3.5 Central Milton Keynes

Early plans for CMK envisaged a largely pedestrianised area, with parking pushed to the perimeter. Walker wanted a 'downtown strip' (Harwood 44) and the plan became strictly rectilinear, with three broad, straight boulevards running the length of the central area. Rather than car parks fringing the centre along the grid roads, parking was laid out around buildings. The length of the boulevards and the vastness of Station Square give CMK a large-scale urban grandeur absent from other New Towns.

Other towns and cities were studied to find spaces that were 'both manageable and human in scale' (Derek Walker quoted in Bendixson 133): Grosvenor Square in London was chosen as an appropriate unit for the main subdivisions of the centre. This reference to historical precedents was radical for the time. In keeping with the principle of flexibility, there was no central megastructure (such as at Cumbernauld or Runcorn) but instead a series of separate plots that could be developed independently.

CMK could only be developed when a critical mass of population had developed around the centre to support it, so residential development was focussed first in several clusters around the provision of employment, rather than growing outwards from a central nucleus as traditional cities did. By 1975 the population of the city was already 64,000, but the only building in CMK was Lloyd's Court (1974–1977). The earliest designs by MKDC were influenced by the slick rectilinear buildings of celebrated Swiss-American modernist architect Mies van der Rohe: 'excellently done in a sleek Miesian steel-framed and glass-clad style that suits the rectangular grid' (Williamson).

The conventional wisdom of the time was for a modern city to have high-rise buildings, but MKDC deliberately chose a different model, that of low-rise buildings set in a spacious public realm and unified by infrastructure on a grand scale.

Although some buildings were designed early in decade, it was not until the second half of the 1970s that buildings started to open and CMK came to life: Lloyd's Court opened in 1977, the Shopping Building in 1979 and Norfolk House and Ashton House in 1980.



Aerial photograph of CMK showing the Shopping Building (compare with 1975 view on p.9)

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Visualisation of Silbury Boulevard by artist Helmut Jacoby



### Shopping

The opening of the Shopping Building in 1979 put in place the key building of the city centre (and probably still the city's finest building), at the same time signifying the city's newfound maturity.

It was commercially successful right from the beginning: by November 1981 it was attracting 214,000 shoppers a week (Bendixson 150). It was also architecturally successful. Then the second largest shopping centre in the UK, at over a million square feet, it was consciously designed to be more civic than other large shopping centres of the time, such as Brent Cross (completed 1976). Walker cited the Crystal Palace, as had Ebenezer Howard when describing a glass covered shopping centre in his 1898 prospectus for a Garden City (quoted in Alexander, 83), as well as Mies van der Rohe's (unbuilt) Mannheim Theatre and the covered shopping arcades of Italy.

Another building in CMK, which was never built despite being given serious consideration, indicates the ambition and imagination of MK in the early days. What started as a proposal for a set of family leisure facilities grew into a concept for an enormous 'city club', combining the characteristics of 'Disneyland, Tivoli Gardens, Soho and the Houston Astrodome' (Bendixson 136). Derek Walker was a keen proponent of the idea of a club, or 'fun palace', encompassing many different facilities and activities – discos, cafes, pools and cinemas – which would bring together the widest possible range of the city's population and attract people from outside the city.



Shopping Building in the 1980s

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Visualisation of Middleton Hall in the Shopping Building at Christmas, by artist Helmut Jacoby



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Derek Walker's leafy vision of communal housing areas, as illustrated by artist Helmut Jacoby



## 2.4 1980s development

### 2.4.1 Political shift

With the arrival of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government, the year 1979 is often seen as a watershed for Britain as a whole, and so it was with MK. Policy had switched decisively toward private rather than public investment in development, with profound effects on the New Towns. The government cut MKDC's budget and demanded the sale of assets.

The effect of this political shift was an increase in private sector development. The original target in MK for sale and rental housing provision was 50:50. At the same time, MKDC's strict planning requirements for such development was gradually relaxed. While this had mixed results in terms of housing, and led to some very high quality private developments, new buildings put up in CMK after about 1985 became increasingly aesthetically divorced from the architectural consistency of the early buildings.

### 2.4.2 Housing

#### Role of private developers

The cuts to budgets for rental housing forced a move towards shared-ownership housing and straightforward private sector development. Private developers had been active in MK in the 1970s, but in the 1980s they took over development of more of the land in the outer grid squares and became more influential in the way the city looked. The market imperative loosened the hold of MKDC over design and much of the new housing in outer areas was conventionally suburban in character, rather than reflecting a new sort of urbanism. Where they were filling in grid squares in which some development had already taken place, this introduced variety in building design as the developer housing was aimed at owner-occupiers.

One effect of the Government's change of policy was that MK achieved a social mix, which set it apart from the 'glorified council estates' (Bendixson 226) that the other New Towns had become. It took from 1970 to 1984 for the number of owner-occupied homes to reach 20,000 and only another seven years for it to reach 40,000 (Bendixson 231). The rise in house prices outstripped the national average in the 1980s house price boom.

#### Housing design

Even before 1979 there had been a move towards something less hard-edged than the ruthless lines of Netherfield or the formal planning of Fishermead. It was areas such as Neath Hill which became the model for the more interesting later developments: more intimate in scale and complex in layout, with small houses in a variety of groupings, using traditional materials. In the 1980s a clear tendency arose to make historicist architectural references in house designs. In Bradwell Common for example a number of houses have a rustic Italianate flavour, while in Downhead Park the influence of American architect Frank Lloyd Wright is noticeable. The ultimate expression of this tendency was the development of mock half-timbered houses with real thatched roofs at Woolstone by Bovis in the mid-1980s.

#### Connectivity between grid squares

Parallel to this shift in housing design was the move towards rethinking the overall layout of grid squares and the connectivity between them, stimulated by early criticism about the location of local centres. Urban designer Stroud Watson was called to set up the Urban Design Group in the late 1970s. This reviewed the first decade of MK's development in relation to the ideals set out in the Plan, and set out a series of principles for future development, published in 1980. Notably this included the idea of the 'Main Local Route' in which 'Local Distributor Roads' passed directly between grid squares to improve connectivity for residents. This was to be realised in the eastern and western parts of MK which were developed in the 1980s (e.g. Willen – Willen Park – Bolbeck Park – Giffard Park).

#### Energy conservation

Another shift in MKDC architects' department's focus around 1980 was towards energy conservation, with pioneering housing schemes, e.g. housing for rent in Pennyland (1979–81), which demonstrated ideas about passive solar gain.



Shared ownership block of flats and maisonettes (1982) by Gavin Hinton Cook for MKDC architects' department in Oldbrook



Houses in Allison Court (c.1985) by Bovis in Woolstone



### Housing Exhibitions

In the 1980s, MKDC organised two architectural exhibitions, aimed at pushing the boundaries of housing design but perhaps more importantly to raise MK's profile.

Homeworld 81 at Bradwell Common was a 'live architecture' exhibition, displaying the latest in design and technology for housing, with a particular focus on energy efficiency. MKDC invited developers from a variety of countries to take part and the result was 36 unique houses, by 20 developers/designers. The houses were sold off, in situ, after the exhibition.

Homeworld was followed in 1986 by EnergyWorld, another housing exhibition, located at Shenley Lodge. It was the culmination of many years work with the Open University on energy efficient housing projects across the city. This laid the foundations for what would later become the Energy Performance Certificate, a standard requirement for every house sale in England.

A third exhibition, Futureworld, took place in 1994.



HomeWorld House (1981) in Bradwell Common

### 2.4.3 Central Milton Keynes

Writing in 1982, Derek Walker foresaw that MK was nearing 'the social and economic thresholds' where the sort of activities that flourish spontaneously in the public space of established cities would be possible.

Many elements of the city centre fell into place in the 1980s: the Public Library and Art Gallery (1981) the railway station (1982), Divisional Police HQ (1984), Health Centre (1985) and County Court (1986) combined to give some of the essential attributes of a city and a civic heart to CMK.

Leisure opportunities also expanded with the opening of the Point Cinema, the first ten-screen cinema in Britain, in 1985, the Food Centre in 1988 and the Leisure Plaza in 1990. While the Food Centre was a continuation of the early, Miesian MKDC house style, there

was a general move towards greater diversity in the design of CMK's buildings, in tandem with increased levels of private development. Inevitably this had mixed results, with some more successful than others, but the grid remained firmly in place to bring order to the eclectic mixture of new buildings.

Following the completion of the shopping building in 1979, MKDC's focus for CMK turned to offices. This was in part a recognition of the rise of the service sector in the British economy but also of the viability of CMK as a location for offices. In response to investor demand, MKDC planned an ambitious mixed development of offices, a hotel, shops and leisure facilities, called the Central Business Exchange (CBX), funded with private money. The hotel opened in 1986 and the first offices completed in the same year. A second phase of CBX opened in 1991, though it was never completed as originally planned.



Public Library (1979-81) by Paul Markcrow, for Buckinghamshire County Council architects' department, and Council Offices (1977-79) by Faulkner-Brown Hendy Watkinson Stonor



## 2.5 After 1992

By 1992, when MKDC was formally abolished, development had touched almost every grid square. Moreover, it had established itself as a real place with its own character. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s the city gained more and more leisure attractions, sources of employment and landmark buildings. The National Hockey Stadium opened in 1995 (later demolished), the Theatre and Gallery opened in 1999 and the Xscape complex in 2000 (another first for MK, this was home to the UK's first indoor snow, as well as providing the longest ski slope in the country at the time) and stadiumMK in 2007.

As architectural historian Elain Harwood has observed, making New Towns self-contained also made them introverted. Their concentration on skilled manual industries made them vulnerable when those industries suffered an irreversible downturn in the 1980s. Inevitably, even for a city as new as MK, some of the early buildings have been demolished, poorly maintained or substantially altered. The quality of residential areas dominated by social housing has typically suffered from the effects of right-to-buy and insensitive repair programmes. This has affected some of the early housing in MK too, but its wider variety of housing means that it has retained more of its character.

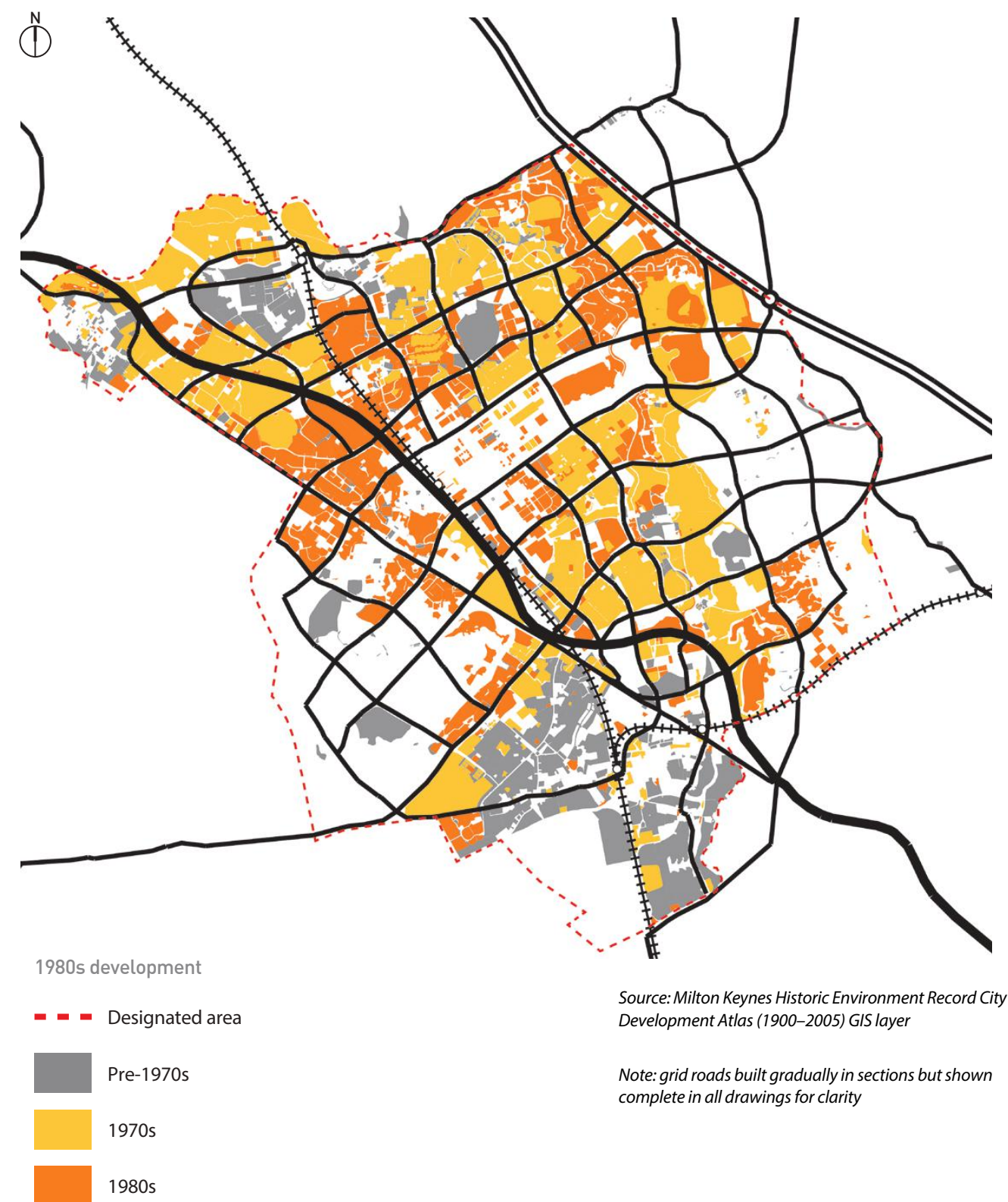
The New Town centres never approached the vitality of historic towns and even rebuilt city centres such as Coventry and Plymouth are now being rebuilt again. 'Only in Milton Keynes, with its broader social base and greater economic infrastructure, can something of the new town idealism and sense of opportunity still be experienced.' (Harwood 45).



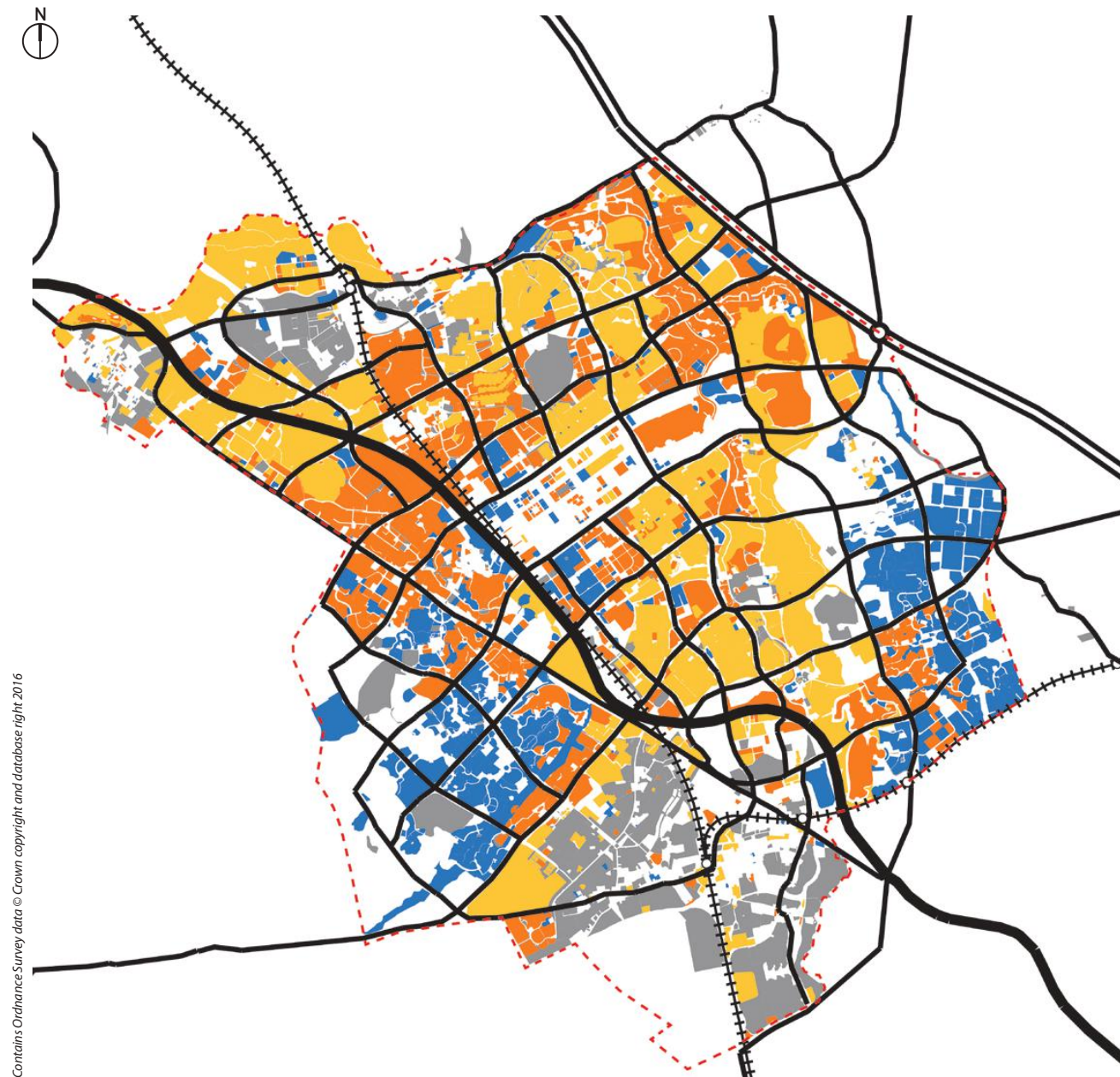
1980s and later large-scale commercial office development in CMK



## 2.6 Phasing Drawings







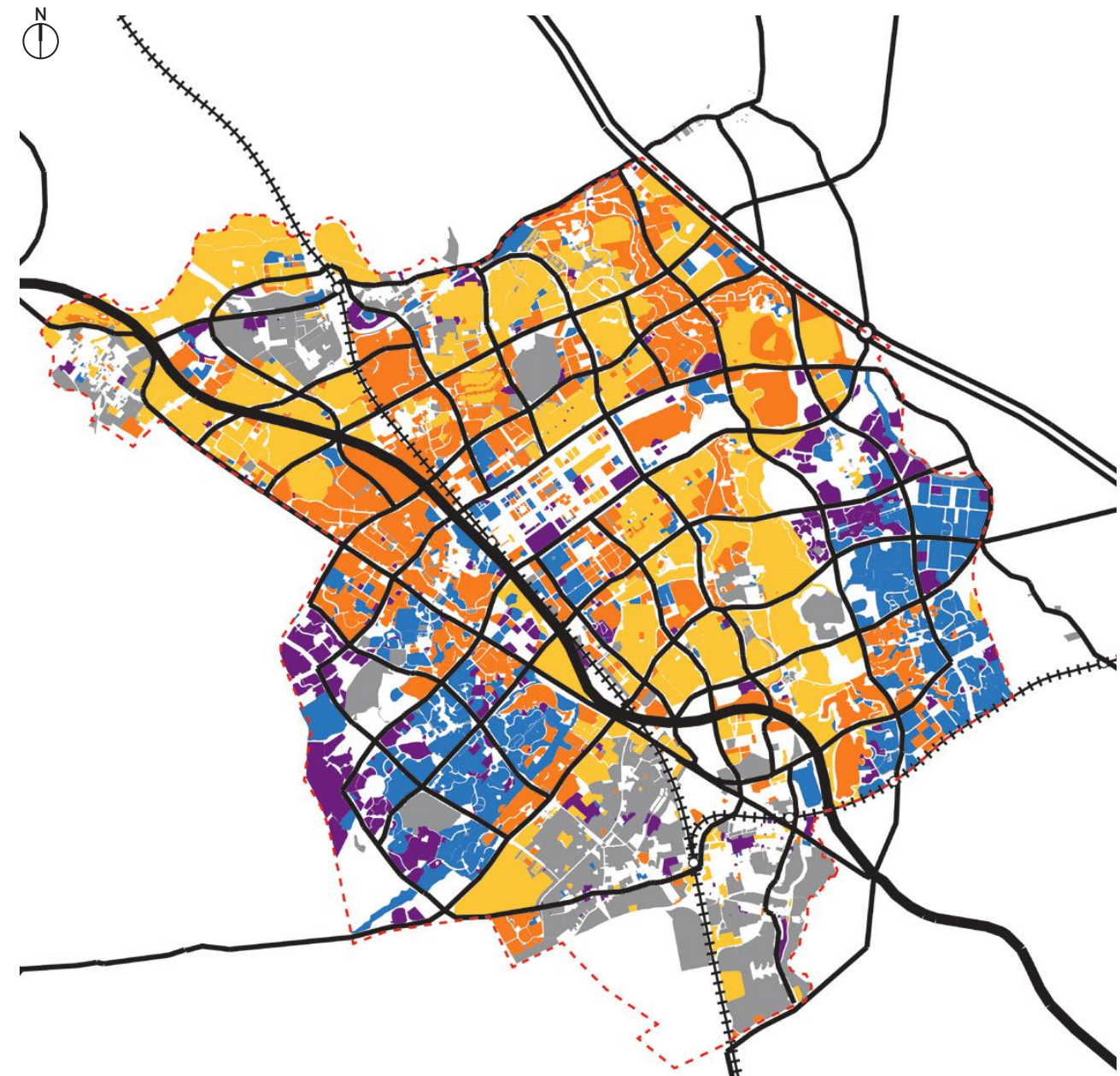
Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2016

1990s development

- Designated area
- Pre-1970s
- 1970s
- 1980s
- 1990s

Source: Milton Keynes Historic Environment Record City Development Atlas (1900–2005) GIS layer

Note: grid roads built gradually in sections but shown complete in all drawings for clarity



2000–05 development

- Designated area
- Pre-1970s
- 1970s
- 1980s
- 1990s
- 2000–05

Source: Milton Keynes Historic Environment Record City Development Atlas (1900–2005) GIS layer

Note: grid roads built gradually in sections but shown complete in all drawings for clarity



# 3.0 Component Parts

## 3.1 The Grid

### 3.1.1 Layout

The Grid is the overarching organising principle of MK New Town. It is most visible, on plan, by the network of roads that define the ‘grid squares’ of roughly 1km square.

Spatially, this was executed as envisaged in the 1970 Plan, though its operation was fundamentally changed by the introduction of faster traffic, roundabouts, and inward-facing grids. The grid roads are underpinned by a pedestrian and cycle network of ‘redways’. Named after the use of red tarmac, these travel between grid squares in underpasses beneath the roads, or, less frequently, bridges over.

For the purpose of discussing the component parts of MK today (2017), the grid squares can be defined in four categories:

- Central Milton Keynes (CMK)
- residential neighbourhoods with local centres and other amenities, sometimes incorporating pre-existing settlements
- employment areas
- green spaces.

### 3.1.2 Planting

The parkway landscapes alongside both sides of the grid roads extend for 112 miles (180 km). These are one of the most characteristic aspects of the Milton Keynes landscape. These areas alongside the roads remain as part of the highways network, though The Parks Trust owns and manages the landscapes, with the exception of the first few metres adjoining the road edge, the roundabouts and the central reservation on dual-carriageways. However, the wider areas contain much underground infrastructure and utility cables and pipes, to which access must be provided.

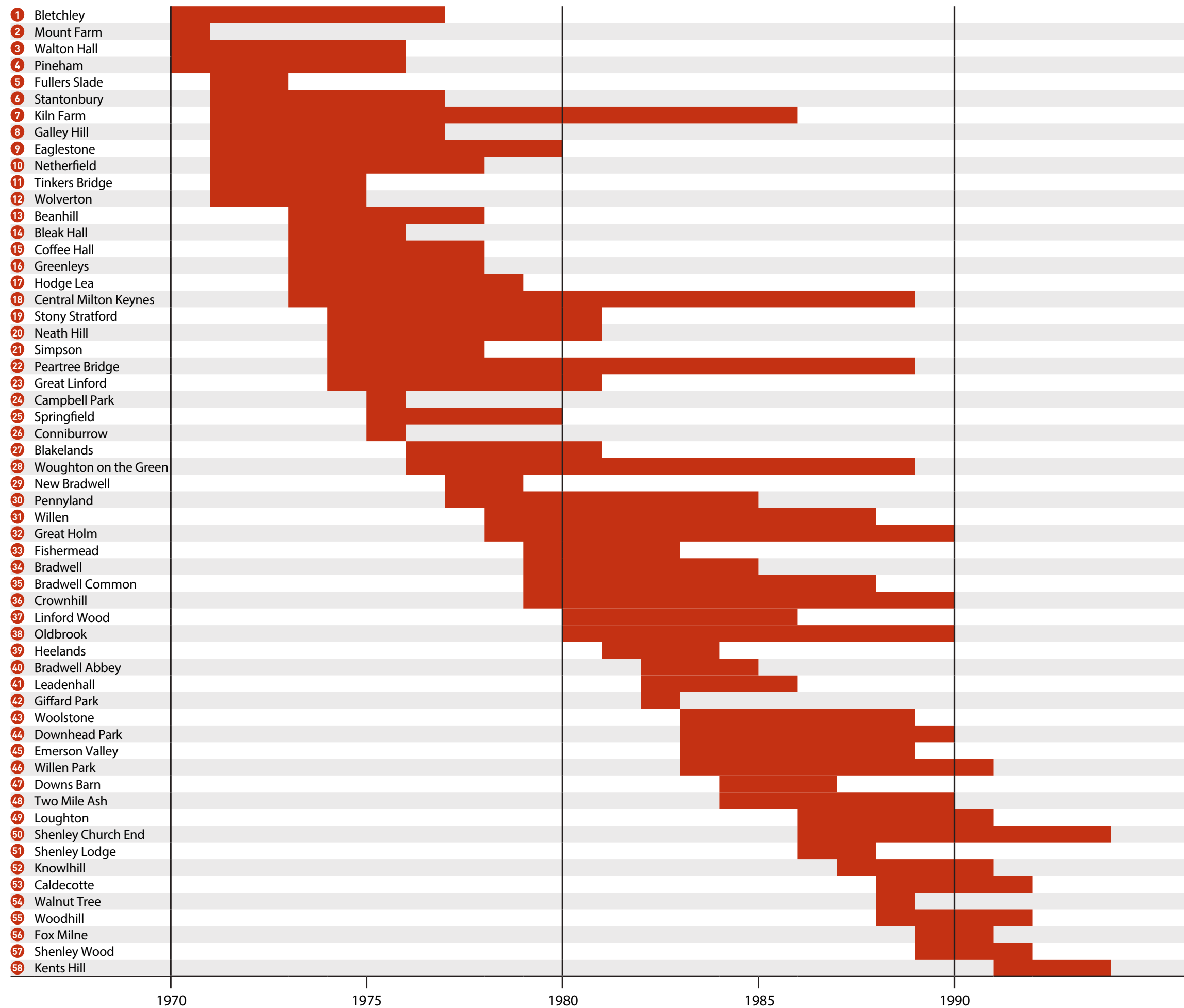
Differing landscape treatments and tree and shrub species were used to create the distinctiveness of each grid road. Each roundabout’s landscaping is different, with some, such as Midsummer and Avebury, designed to communicate characteristics of their name. The dense planting of the verges alongside the grid roads has required extensive thinning and coppicing to achieve a healthy and attractive landscape as originally envisaged. Some rapid-growing species were used which are relatively short-lived and more long-lived species are needed as the landscape ages.

1	Bletchley	59	Calverton End
2	Mount Farm	60	Wolverton Mill South
3	Walton Hall	61	Wolverton Mill
4	Pineham	62	Stacey Bushes
5	Fullers Slade	63	Bancroft
6	Stantonbury	64	Bradville
7	Kiln Farm	65	Tongwell
8	Galley Hill	66	Bolbeck Park
9	Eaglestone	67	Shenley Brook End
10	Netherfield	68	Milton Keynes Village
11	Tinkers Bridge	69	Middleton
12	Wolverton	70	Broughton
13	Beanhill	71	Tattenhoe
14	Bleak Hall	72	Walton Lake
15	Coffee Hall	73	Walton
16	Greenleys	74	Wavendon Gate
17	Hodge Lea	75	Fenny Stratford
18	Central Milton Keynes		
19	Stony Stratford		
20	Neath Hill		
21	Simpson		
22	Peartree Bridge		
23	Great Linford		
24	Campbell Park		
25	Springfield		
26	Conniburrow		
27	Blakelands		
28	Woughton on the Green		
29	New Bradwell		
30	Pennyland		
31	Willen		
32	Great Holm		
33	Fishermead		
34	Bradwell		
35	Bradwell Common		
36	Crownhill		
37	Linford Wood		
38	Oldbrook		
39	Heelands		
40	Bradwell Abbey		
41	Leadenhall		
42	Giffard Park		
43	Woolstone		
44	Downhead Park		
45	Emerson Valley		
46	Willen Park		
47	Downs Barn		
48	Two Mile Ash		
49	Loughton		
50	Shenley Church End		
51	Shenley Lodge		
52	Knowlhill		
53	Caldecotte		
54	Walnut Tree		
55	Woodhill		
56	Fox Milne		
57	Shenley Wood		
58	Kents Hill		



Source: Buildings of England





Approximate chronological development of selected grid squares (source: Buildings of England)



## 3.2 Central Milton Keynes

### 3.2.1 Layout and infrastructure

CMK was laid out as two grid squares, running east-west between the railway station and Campbell Park. The grid here is at its most spacious and visible, with a clear sense on the ground of the roads running in wide boulevards and the separate nature of the pedestrian routes. The three east-west boulevards—Silbury, Midsummer and Avebury—create four rows of buildings between the grid roads, in an admirably logical plan.

At the west end is the transport hub formed by the Railway Station (1982–86), the matching office blocks (Phoenix House and Elder House) flanking Station Square, and the MKDC Bus Station (1982). These buildings were typical of MKDC's steel-and-glass house style; the low freestanding Miesian pavilion of the bus station is the exceptional building. The Railway Station is aligned on the central axis of Midsummer Boulevard, which originally extended unbroken to Campbell Park but is now interrupted by the 'intu' shopping centre (opened 2000), adjacent to the Shopping Building.

CMK also includes Campbell Park, but this is described in 3.5 Green Spaces.





### 3.2.2 Public realm and planting

The public realm is well-landscaped, generously planted and with high quality materials and detailing, e.g. granite to the underpasses and planted beds. Much of the street furniture was also purpose-designed by the MKDC Architects' Department, from the distinctive portes cochère to the benches and lamp posts. Large areas of surface car parking are provided around the buildings.

Around the edges of CMK, the skyline is defined by the grid-road landscapes that were planted in the 1970s and 1980s and now reaching maturity. They are mostly deciduous, generating enjoyable varying textures and colours.

Within CMK, the avenues of single species trees along the boulevards and edging the car-parks accentuate the formal structure of the city centre. At each intersection different tree and shrub species, deciduous and evergreen, provide local distinctiveness. The formal parks of Fred Roche Gardens, Grafton Park and Bouverie Square, as well as the restoration of the historic Secklow Mound are other important landscape features, as are the smaller tree and shrub plantings amongst the granite features of the CMK infrastructure.

Within the Shopping Building, remnants of the original exotic and full-sized trees and shrubs along each mall survive in specially-designed planting beds. Queen's Court's landscapes were substantially altered in 2011.



Silbury Boulevard



Station Square (1982–86)



Portes cochère



Formal MK Central Bus Station (completed 1982), now incorporating early 2000s skatepark



### 3.2.3 Portway-Silbury Boulevard

The northern row features major civic buildings by private and Buckinghamshire County Council architects including the Council Offices (1977–79), Public Library (1979–81), Divisional Police Headquarters (1982–84) and County Court and Registry (1985–86). These share an austere and monumental modernist style, while the later Magistrates' Court (1988–91) veers towards post-modernism in its use of curving symbolic forms.

There are also the earliest MKDC office buildings here: Lloyd's Court (1977), and Norfolk and Ashton Houses (1978–79). The latter are two identical parallel blocks in the sleek steel-and-glass aesthetic shared by the Shopping Building, with a generous landscaped garden between them. Later private office buildings are in mixed commercial styles, although the use of elements imposed by MKDC's planning requirements such as brick cladding and colonnaded ground floors create some consistency, at least in pre-1985 buildings, after which the standards were relaxed (Williamson 489).



County Court (1985–86)



Council Offices (1977–79)



Ashton House (1978–79) and Octo sculpture by Wendy Taylor (1979–80)



Lloyd's Court (1972–74)



### 3.2.4 Silbury Boulevard-Midsummer Boulevard

This area was largely completed during the MKDC era. Most significantly, it includes the celebrated Shopping Building (1975–79), by the MKDC Architects' Department. Its rational architectural design and monumental 650m-long plan is generated by repeating a strict structural steel module (12 x 6 x 6m), infilled with shop fronts and mirrored glass. It is celebrated both as a local emblem of MK and 'as the outstanding post-war retail development in England' (Historic England, 2010).

Facing the west elevation of the Shopping Building is the Church of Christ the Cornerstone (1988–91), described in the *Buildings of England* as 'grotesque' and 'clumsy' in its use of classical motifs (Williamson, 489). To the south of that is Fred Roche Gardens, named after MKDC's influential General Manager during 1970–81, and more conventional office buildings leading down to Station Square.



Shopping Building (1975–79): north elevation



Shopping Building (1975–79): interior of east end



Church of Christ the Cornerstone (1988–91)



3B Series No. 2 (1968–70) by Bernard Schottlander in Fred Roche Gardens



### 3.2.5 Midsummer Boulevard-Avebury Boulevard

This section of CMK was much less complete by 1992. The only noteworthy leisure buildings of the MKDC era are the Point cinema (1985), a ziggurat of mirrored glass with non-structural but bright red steel ridge girders, and the Food Centre (1987–89), in a similar architectural style to the Shopping Building, but a decade later. Prior to the construction of later large scale development such as Xscape, the Point was the tallest building in CMK, and one of its most noticeable landmarks, especially when lit up at night. The Central Business Exchange (1983–86) is also located here.

### 3.2.6 Avebury Boulevard-Childs Way

Largely built (as with the Xscape complex) or demolished and redeveloped after 1992. Exceptions include the tightly-knit network of housing between Saxon Gate and Secklow Gate (completed 1981), and Saxon Court, an office building where MKDC was based until 1992, as well as its sister building, originally Sentry House but now Westminster House, which was started first.



Point Cinema (1985)



Food Centre (1987–88)



Housing between Saxon Gate and Secklow Gate (1981)



Saxon Court



### 3.3 Residential Areas

#### 3.3.1 Layout, infrastructure and public realm

The residential grid squares evade most visitors to CMK: looking inwards and hidden from the road network by thickly planted verges, as intended by the MKDC architects.

The residential grid squares are connected to one another by footpaths and redways and, in many cases, roads that go either over or under an intermediary grid road. The best access between them is via the underpasses beneath the grid roads, which are helpfully signposted with signs stating the name of the grid square you are entering. They were conceived with the idea of walking distance to local centres, and good bus connections, though ultimately the population density was too low to support a bus service that was sufficiently frequent and reliable, exasperated by the fact that the grid network generates a multiplicity of available routes compared to a layout based upon arterial roads.

Throughout the housing areas, landscaping was a crucial part of the overall design, providing tree-lined roads, play areas, informal parkland and hard and soft landscape design features interspersed among the houses.

The residential grid squares can be broadly understood in two categories; early formal layouts and later informal layouts, though equally many areas (e.g. Bradwell Common) mix elements from both categories.

#### 3.3.2 Pre-existing settlements

Several residential areas incorporate pre-existing settlements. These are the towns of Bletchley, Wolverton and Stony Stratford and thirteen villages and hamlets:

- Milton Keynes
- Willen
- Great Linford
- Bradwell
- Shenley Brook End
- Shenley Church End
- Loughton
- Simpson
- Woughton on the Green
- Walton
- Great Woolstone
- Little Woolstone
- Broughton

Historic streets were woven into the grid layout, and new buildings were designed by MKDC to fit into their historic context, such as the Coffridge Close shopping centre in Stony Stratford (1970–76). This helped to preserve the distinctiveness of the local communities.



Between residential grid squares



Typical underpass leading to residential grid square, in this case entering CMK on a redway



### 3.3.3 Formal Grid Squares

As a general rule, early MKDC layouts are formal: i.e. repetitive designs laid out on strictly rectilinear road layouts. This applies to the early housing for rent in the central (e.g. Fishermead), northern (e.g. Galley Hill and Fullers Slade) and southern (e.g. Coffee Hall and Netherfield) housing areas. This was primarily for reasons of cost and efficiency, as well as the modernist attitudes and backgrounds of the architects and planners involved.

It was most economical and practical to build long terraces, in repeated units, utilising innovative 'dry' building techniques. Frame and cladding allowed for quick construction, by low-skilled labour. Norman Foster's design for 569 houses in Beanhill for instance employed the 'Quickbuild' system of aluminium roofs and wall panels, on a timber frame. Though technically interesting and rigorously composed, these grand groupings, e.g. at Netherfield, can seem monotonous in their scale and repetition.

Some of the most distinctive aesthetic qualities of this early housing have often been altered. The key changes are the replacement of defective flat roofs with pitched roofs (though, added by MKDC in the 1980s, these can be striking in themselves), and the personalisation of elevations and gardens by tenants. Though their consistency has been diluted, the ambitious vision of the architects remains apparent.







Fishermead



Personalised housing in Bradville



Coffee Hall



Netherfield

© Tim Stelton (MK Forum)



### 3.3.4 Informal Grid Squares

More informal layouts, with a wider variety of housing on looser plans with curved roads, closes and cul-de-sacs, were designed from the early 1970s onwards, e.g. by Ralph Erskine at Eaglestone (from 1972) and MKDC architects' department at Neath Hill (from 1974). They were therefore part of MK's housing provision from almost the beginning. However, while informal approaches were responsible for the minority of grid squares until the mid-1970s, they came to become by far the most common type of development in MK.

The move towards more informal layouts was partly a result of the political and economic shifts around 1980 (described in 2.4 above), and the commercial pressure of housebuilders to make streets and houses attractive for purchasers. It can also be seen in the context of changing architectural fashions away from a radical modernist idiom, and towards contextual design, taking design cues from the historic and natural environment.

In contrast with formal grid squares, informal grid squares combine many more, smaller scale schemes by different architects, giving an increasing sense of architectural diversity. Early schemes by consultant architects in informal grid squares include Eaglestone, Great Linford and Bradwell Common. At the same time, informal grid squares combined rented and private housing with increasingly less distinction (Williamson 500).

At first glance these informal grid squares appear similar: well-kept leafy suburban areas made up of brick houses with front gardens. However, the houses within a particular grid square are often given a distinct group identity through shared materials and detailing. Layouts are often based around a distinctive public space or feature, sometimes dating from pre-existing settlements as at Willen or Great Linford (Williamson 500). They appear broadly well-looked after today and retain some sense of their local characters.



Great Linford





Woolstone



Great Holm



Downhead Park



Eaglestone



### 3.3.5 Community Buildings

As well as housing, grid squares aimed to combine the building types needed to sustain a community: local shopping centres, and other facilities including schools, churches and sheltered housing.

Local centres were designed by MKDC's architects' departments, and are typically in the architectural mode of the wider grid square. They occasionally act as landmarks with tall (clock) towers, such as Neath Hill Local Centre (unusually, fronting the grid road in the manner intended by the 1970 Plan) (Williamson 501). Churches were designed by private architects.

Schools were provided by Buckinghamshire County Council in dialogue with MKDC. The intention was to have a first and middle school in each grid square, and at most for three grid squares; the catchment for secondary schools was much wider. Buckinghamshire County Council's forward-thinking vernacular school architecture was at odds with the initial tranche of MKDC housing but soon blended in as MKDC's styles broadened in the late 1970s (Franklin 250).



Neath Hill Local Centre (1974-80) by Wayland Tunley and Dudley Allison for MKDC architects' department



Summerfield School, Bradwell Common



Church (1986) in Downs Barn by Trevor Denton and Wayland Tunley, Denton Tunley Scott



Hodge Lea Meeting Place (1973-76)



### 3.4 Employment Areas

The industrial grid squares appear to have been economically successful, and many of the innovative early MKDC buildings remain in use, alongside a variety of other building types including units purpose built by owner-occupiers, mini factories and offices.

The early buildings generally retain their original appearance, though many have been re-painted (e.g. the AFUs at Kiln Farm were originally bright yellow as shown in magazine articles) or in some cases re-clad, with various other minor alterations typical of buildings in industrial use.

The buildings are set in generous planted landscapes which sets these areas apart from other industrial estates across the country.



AFUs, Kiln Farm



Bradwell Abbey workshop units



WD40 Headquarters, Kiln Farm



Blakelands North AFUs



### 3.5 Green Spaces

A characteristic of MK planning is that large areas of the grid squares are given over to green space.

There are three 'linear parks': one along the River Ouzel valley (flanked by the Canal Broadwalk alongside the Grand Union Canal), one along the south side of the River Great Ouse, and another following the Loughton Brook. These also incorporate grand landscape features as public amenities including reservoirs, or 'balancing lakes', and an amphitheatre (the National Bowl). The lakes vary from busy places for active recreation to tranquil spaces for quiet activity. They were designed as part of MK's engineering infrastructure, to manage water flow to prevent flooding.

Campbell Park (40 ha) and The Tree Cathedral are both grand landscapes designed by MKDC landscape architects Neil Higson and his team, based on concepts developed by Andrew Mahaddie. There are also fine local and district parks distributed throughout the residential areas, such as Great Linford, Kent's Hill and Tattenhoe. These were designed as part of the New Town to provide for casual and active recreation; some have distinctive design features.

In addition, three large ancient woodlands were adapted for public access by MKDC. These are: Linford, Shenley and Howe Park Woods, as well as other small woodlands and plantations. The three semi-natural ancient woodlands were mentioned in the Domesday Book and are being restored using historic woodland management techniques, while also serving landscape, biodiversity and public access objectives. Howe Park Wood is a designated SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Importance) and this and other woods and sites are Local Wildlife Sites.

The remnant of formal gardens at Great Linford Manor that were severed by construction of the Grand Union Canal is another local park, and Heritage Lottery Funding is being used by The Parks Trust to prepare for restoration of many of its historic landscape design features. Many green spaces within MK, such as The Toot at Shenley Church End, are also Scheduled Ancient Monuments which are managed to minimise effects on archaeology while continuing to enable public access. These were studied, protected and interpreted by MKDC during the development of the New Town and are now managed, by light grazing, as parkland areas.



The central axis of CMK in Campbell Park, looking west, showing Milton Keynes Rose sculpture (2013) by Gordon Young (outside the MKDC period)



The central axis of CMK in Campbell Park, looking east, showing Light Pyramid sculpture (2012) by Liliane Lijn (outside the MKDC period)



Willen Lake



Grand Union Canal between Downhead Park and Willen Park



### 3.6 Public Artworks

The post-war period saw a shift from commemorative sculpture to artworks which made an aesthetic contribution to the public realm. New Towns saw this as an opportunity to use art to create an emblem of civic renewal and social progress. MMKDC embraced this idea and developed a policy of commissioning and acquiring outdoor and indoor works for public display. Public Art is still an integral part of the design and development of Milton Keynes's built environment and the early MKDC vision and policy is still in place today, underpinned by securing funding through the planning process.

Public Art invites the vision, creativity and skills of artists to enliven and enhance public spaces and places. MKDC commissioned and purchased artwork for many prominent sites outside significant buildings, as well as carrying out a pioneering Community Art programme in the newly established residential areas. This programme was very popular and helped new residents contribute to the local identity of their grid square.

As a result of this, there is a large collection of public sculptures and artworks in MK, many by high profile artists, including: Black Horse by Elisabeth Frink (1978), The Whisper by Andre Wallace (1984), Concrete Cows by Liz Leyh (1978), and Triceratops by Bill Billings (1979).



Sculptures in Fred Roche Gardens 3B Series by Bernard Schottlander: No. 4 (left) and No. 6 (right) (1968–70)



The Whisper (1984) by Andre Wallace outside the Public Library



Detail of Fiction, Non-Fiction and Reference (1984) by Boyd and Evans in the Public Library



## 4.0 Significance

### 4.1 Assessing Significance

Assessing significance is the means by which the cultural importance of a place and its component parts is identified and compared, both absolutely and relatively. The purpose of this is not merely academic, it is essential to effective conservation and management because the identification of elements of high and lower significance, based on a thorough understanding of a site, enables owners and designers to develop proposals that safeguard, respect and where possible enhance the character and cultural values of the site. The assessment identifies areas where no change, or only minimal changes should be considered, as well as those where more intrusive changes might be acceptable and could enrich understanding and appreciation of significance.

Statutory designation is the legal mechanism by which significant historic places are identified in order to protect them. The designations applying to MK New Town are listed below (section 4.3).

However, it is necessary to go beyond these in order to arrive at a more detailed and broader understanding of significance that considers more than matters archaeological and architectural-historical. Here, this is achieved by applying the criteria set out in Historic England's *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* (2008), a document that has helped to bring a much-needed clarity to the use of the term 'significance.'

*Conservation Principles* describes four different value groups that contribute to the significance of a place:

- **Evidential value:** derives from the potential of a place to yield primary evidence about the past. It can be natural or man-made and applies particularly to archaeological deposits, but also to other situations where there is no relevant written record;
- **Historical value:** derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. A place may *illustrate* some aspect of the past, and thus helps to interpret the past, or be *associated* with an important person, event or movement;
- **Aesthetic value:** this may derive from conscious design, including the work of the artist or craftsman; alternatively it may be the fortuitous outcome of the way a building or place has evolved; and,
- **Communal value:** regardless of their historical or aesthetic value, many places are valued for their *symbolic* or *social* role, often as a source of identity to people and communities. This may encompass a spiritual or commemorative role.

The assessment of significance is usually an amalgam of these different values, and the balance between them will vary from one case to the next. What is important is to demonstrate that all these values have been considered. This is achieved by assessing the significance of the whole site relative to comparable places, and the relative significance of its component parts.

### 4.2 Context: the most successful British New Town

An assessment of the significance of MK New Town is necessarily underpinned by its status as a post-war New Town. As discussed in section 2.1, the British New Towns programme comprised three phases:

- Mark/Phase One, designated under the 1946 New Towns Act e.g. Stevenage, Harlow, Crawley
- Mark/Phase Two, designated after 1961 as additions to single existing settlements e.g. Skelmersdale, Livingston, Runcorn
- Mark/Phase Three, designated in 1967 onwards as new settlements incorporating several existing settlements e.g. MK, Peterborough, Telford.

Designated over a period of over 20 years, the design of these New Towns reflected changing attitudes in architecture, planning and politics. Nonetheless, there are some common characteristics, including:

- Neighbourhood units with local centres
- Zoning of activities (more pronounced in earlier New Towns)
- Low density residential areas
- Generous landscaping around major roads
- Segregation of traffic and pedestrians.

While incorporating these established principles of New Town design, MK stands out by virtue of its unique plan and urban design, sheer size, strategic location, flexibility and adaptability. As a result of this, and as discussed in more detail below, it is widely agreed to be 'the most successful of all the New Towns' (Alexander, 49).



## 4.3 Statutory designations

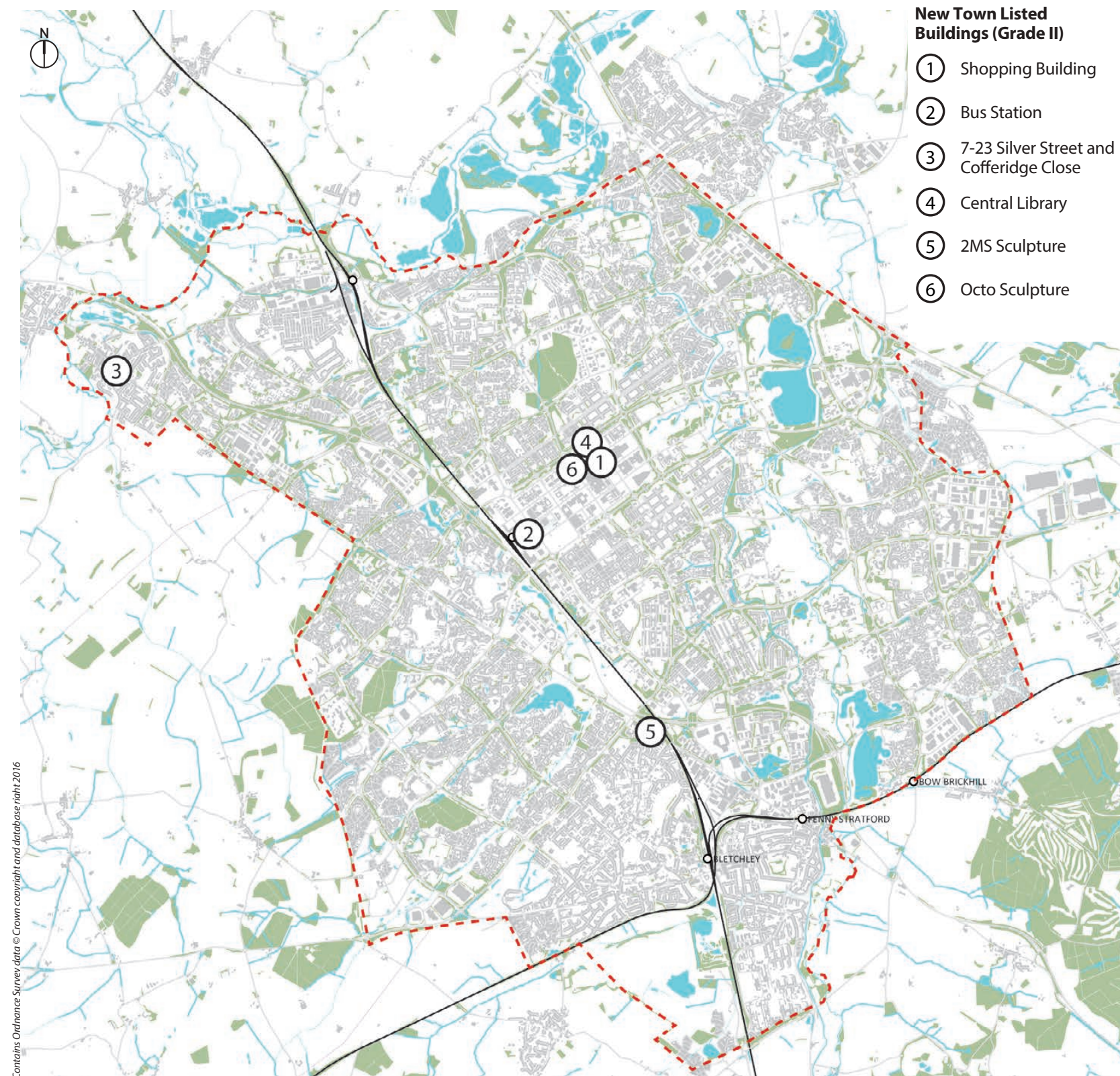
### 4.3.1 Listed Buildings

To our knowledge, Historic England has never carried out a comprehensive designation assessment of MK New Town, though many of its buildings have been looked at as part of thematic studies (e.g. Public Art 1945–1985 and Post-war Office Buildings), or for spot-listing or certificate of immunity applications.

There are six Grade II listed New Town structures in MK:

- Shopping Building (built 1975–79) and Bus Station (1982–83) by Stuart Moss crop and Christopher Woodward for MKDC architects' department under Derek Walker
- 7–23 Silver Street and entrance to Coffridge Close (1970–76) by Derek Walker and Wayland Tunley for MKDC architects' department
- Central Library (1979–81), by Buckingham County Council's architects department led by Paul Markcrow, including three artworks: the painting 'Fiction, Non-Fiction and Reference' by Boyd and Evans, and the sculptures 'The Whisper' by André Wallace and 'Mirror Sculpture' by Csáky
- Two sculptures: 2MS Series No.1 by Bernard Schottlander (1970, installed later) and Octo by Wendy Taylor (1979–80).

The list descriptions are reproduced in Appendix 2.





#### 4.3.2 Conservation Areas

There are 11 conservation areas within the MK New Town boundary:

- Great Linford
- Wolverton
- Stony Stratford
- Shenley Church End
- Loughton
- Old Bradwell
- Willen
- Milton Keynes Village
- Woughton on the Green
- Bletchley
- Broughton.

These are designated to protect the historic core of settlements which pre-date MK New Town (most were designated in 1978 during its design and construction). Only Wolverton, Loughton and Broughton currently have review documents, although MK Council is currently carrying out a programme of producing new appraisals for all of its conservation areas.

#### 4.3.3 Register of Historic Parks and Gardens

There are currently no registered historic parks and gardens within the MK New Town boundary.

### 4.4 Significance by Values

#### 4.4.1 Historical Value

MK represents the zenith of the British New Towns programme in terms of scale, ambition, execution and social and economic success.

It is the most vivid illustration of that historical moment, itself the culmination of modernist ideas in British architecture and planning, in the tradition which descends from the Garden City movement of the early twentieth century. Rather than being an archetypal embodiment of the British New Town, the grid plan and low-rise buildings mark MK out as a unique historical experiment, enacted in the 1970 Plan.

At the same time, MK embodies the shift in British architecture and planning in the 1970s and 1980s: away from the utopian modernism of the post-war period, towards emerging thinking about place-making, site context and existing buildings, and environmentally- and community-focussed design. MK also exemplifies an important turning point in the role played by conservation and archaeology in planning and development at the time.

The grid itself is a physical demonstration of new ideas about traffic planning and low-rise, low-density development, including the influence of American practice. It was envisaged and executed as the framework for a new settlement, as set out in the 1970 Plan. The introduction of faster traffic, roundabouts and inward-facing grid squares was a significant departure, though important in itself for defining the distinctive character of MK.

The guiding principles of MK—the spacious grid, its rigorous planning and long vistas, separation of traffic and pedestrians, and generous and high quality landscaping, planting, street furniture and public art—is most strongly illustrated in CMK. There, too, the architectural image of the New Town is most apparent: in the key buildings which demonstrate the MKDC architects' house style of long, mirrored-glass blocks, especially the Shopping Building, Railway Station, and Norfolk and Ashton House.

Early, formal Grid Squares such as Netherfield and Coffee Hall, where radical young architects capitalised on the efficiencies of modern building technologies to meet state housing need, are uncompromisingly modernist in design and spirit. This modernist, high-tech mindset was also reflected in the designs for standardised industrial buildings under MKDC's 'System Building for Industry' programme.

Early informal Grid Squares, beginning with Neath Hill and Eaglestone, have historical value as innovative examples of low-rise suburban housing development, with some of the best housing in Britain of the period. The meandering layouts and detached houses with private gardens which emerged from this would, ultimately, become the dominant model of the residential grid squares.

This was, in part, due to the increasing cooperation between MKDC and private housebuilders into the 1980s, as a result of external political shifts. Although MKDC continued to impose strict requirements on housing quality, towards the end of the MKDC era it became increasingly less distinct from housing built across Britain at that time.

MK is associated with many important people and organisations. These include, most obviously, MKDC itself; its key politicians, planners, architects and factions; local volunteer groups and community organisations; and nationally and internationally significant architects.



#### 4.4.2 Aesthetic value

MK has a unique aesthetic which is the direct result of having been planned and constructed as a New Town.

The sheer consistency of this aesthetic and the high quality of the materials and execution is most noticeable and remarkable in the treatment of landscaping, planting, and street furniture. At the same time, there is sufficient difference in the treatment of grid squares to give a sense of variety and local identity. The thought and care which was given to these aspects of the New Town design by MKDC remains a strong part of its aesthetic value today.

The buildings themselves have generally less aesthetic value than the grid framework and treatment of public space.

In CMK there is aesthetic value in the consistency between buildings in terms of materials (largely either steel and mirrored glass or brick cladding), low massing following the rectangular footprint of the grid, and architectural features such as plainly treated, monolithic façades and ground floor steps and colonnades. Public art in a variety of styles adds further visual interest to the streetscape. There are a few outstanding, stand-alone buildings: including the Shopping Building, Food Centre, Railway Station and Square, and Library. Equally, however, there are many individual buildings and developments which do not contribute to this aesthetic value.

Similarly, within individual residential grid squares, the overwhelming aesthetic value of the buildings is the consistency of shared massing, materials and details, within the strong landscape framework imposed by the grid. This varies from the long streets of regular, if monotonous, terraces in the formal grid squares, to the fine grain cul-de-sacks and pedestrian and cycle networks of the informal grid squares. The incorporation and framing of pre-existing landscapes and historic buildings adds an additional layer of picturesque, seemingly fortuitous aesthetic value.

The aesthetic value of the industrial grid squares is most impressive in its contrast with the residential grid squares: large individual buildings off wide roads, though the landscaping is just as carefully considered. The Advance Factory Units constructed under MKDC's 'System Building for Industry' programme have aesthetic value for their unusual design and construction in concentrated groups. The generous landscaping also sets the industrial grid squares apart from the thousands of industrial estates across the country.

#### 4.4.3 Communal value

At a national level, MK has had a derided reputation as the land of roundabouts and concrete cows, but this is gradually being superseded by more respectful perceptions of its qualities, aided by the publicity surrounding the 'MK50' celebrations in 2017.

Locally, the communal value of MK cannot be overstated. It has fostered an intensely proud and satisfied local community of 250,000\* people, as well as a successful and growing economy. Despite its age, at just 50 years since designation as a New Town, and less than 40 years since its maturity as a settlement with the opening of the Shopping Building in 1979, it has strong social value as a source of identity, distinctiveness, social interaction and coherence. In the historical settlements incorporated by the New Town, this has deeper roots.

MK also has communal value nationally and internationally for academics and students of architecture and town planning, and other individuals interested in late-twentieth century architecture and design.

\*248,800 in the 2011 census, with all but 23,000 living in the main urban area

#### 4.4.4 Evidential value

The evidential value of MK New Town as a place is negligible: it was built and inhabited in such recent memory that it does not have any archaeology. Primary evidence detailing its planning, design and construction is held in the archives at the Milton Keynes Discovery Centre and the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies, Aylesbury. Furthermore many of the architects and planners involved in its development are still willing and able to tell the story, though there is a need to record this with a comprehensive history.



## 4.5 Summary Statement of Significance

In summary, Milton Keynes New Town is significant for the following reasons:

- As the largest, most ambitious and most economically successful British New Town
- For its illustration of an important moment of transition in the history of British architecture and town planning, from utopian modernism to a more nuanced engagement with place-making, site context and existing buildings, and environmentally- and community-focussed design
- For the inherent adaptability and flexibility of the 1970 Plan as a framework allowing for future growth, spatially embodied by the Grid: a unique aspect of Milton Keynes and its single organising and unifying principle, important both for the infrastructure of the roads and the grid squares that it defines
- For the role of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation as a political entity, with one of the leading public sector architects' departments of the era
- For the contribution of nationally significant figures in architecture and planning
- For the consistent high quality of landscaping and public realm, with generous provision of trees, planting, parkland and public art
- For the architectural set-piece of Central Milton Keynes, which includes some outstanding buildings, most notably the Shopping Building, and has a distinctive character due to its low-rise skyline and tree-lined boulevards
- For design innovation in the modernist and high-tech manner as exemplified by early projects by the Milton Keynes Development Corporation, including housing for rent, industrial buildings, the Shopping Building and commercial projects
- For the above average architectural quality of housing in informal suburban layouts and the creation of local distinctiveness between grid squares
- For a strong identity which is recognised nationally (and internationally) and valued locally
- For the identification, protection and incorporation of pre-existing buildings, villages and landscapes, and integration of sympathetic schemes into these areas.



# Appendix 1

## Sources



## Journals

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# Appendix 2

## List descriptions





Historic England

## 2MS Series No.1 sculpture

### List Entry Summary

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: 2MS Series No.1 sculpture

List entry Number: 1431445

### Location

Challenge House, Sherwood Drive, Bletchley, Buckinghamshire, MK3 6DP

The listed structure is shown coloured blue on the attached map. Pursuant to s.1 (5A) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('the Act'), structures attached to or within the curtilage of the listed structure (save those coloured blue on the map) are not to be treated as part of the listed structure for the purposes of the Act.

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:

District: Milton Keynes

District Type: Unitary Authority

Parish: West Bletchley

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 19-Jan-2016

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

### Asset Groupings

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

### List entry Description

#### Summary of Building

'2MS Series No.1', welded steel sculpture of 1970 by Bernard Schottlander, in the grounds of Sherwood House (now Challenge House).

#### Reasons for Designation

The welded steel sculpture '2MS Series No.1', of 1970 by Bernard Schottlander, in the grounds of Sherwood House (now Challenge House), is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons: \* Artistic interest: scale, colour and equipoise are exploited to create a striking and surreal piece of outdoor sculpture; \* Historic interest: an example of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation's programme of acquiring art for public display in the new town; \* Sculptor: an important work by the acclaimed abstract sculptor Bernard Schottlander.

#### History

The period after 1945 saw a shift from commemorative sculpture and architectural enrichment to the idea of public sculpture as a primarily aesthetic contribution to the public realm. Sculpture was commissioned for new housing, schools, universities and civic set pieces, with the counties of Hertfordshire, London and Leicestershire and the new towns leading the way in public patronage. Thus public sculpture could be an emblem of civic renewal and social progress. By the late C20 however, patronage was more diverse and included corporate commissions and Arts Council-funded community art. The ideology of enhancing the public realm through art continued, but with divergent means and motivation.



Visual languages ranged from the abstraction of Victor Pasmore and Phillip King to the figurative approach of Elisabeth Frink and Peter Laszlo Peri, via those such as Lynn Chadwick and Barbara Hepworth who bridged the abstract/representational divide. The post-war decades are characterised by the exploitation of new – often industrial – materials and techniques including new welding and casting techniques, plastics and concrete, while kinetic sculpture and ‘ready mades’ (using found objects) demonstrate an interest in composite forms.

Milton Keynes was designated a new town in 1967 and planning control was delegated to the Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC). Like earlier new towns it developed a policy of commissioning and acquiring outdoor works for public display, developing a significant collection including works by Elisabeth Frink, Liliane Lijn, Wendy Taylor and the German-born sculptor Bernard Schottlander.

'2MS Series No.1' was amongst four large-scale, welded steel works by Schottlander acquired by MKDC after a 1972 solo open-air exhibition of his work at Park Royal, London. The title 'MS Series' relates to Schottlander's initials (BMS) and his chosen medium, mild steel. '2MS Series No.1' was located in the grounds of Sherwood House (1972-74, now Challenge House), an office building designed by MKDC and originally jointly occupied by MKDC and the new Borough of Milton Keynes. The piece was originally sited on an earth platform adjacent to the southern entrance but was later relocated to its present position location alongside Sherwood Drive. The other Schottlander sculptures were in 1983 re-sited at the City Gardens (later renamed the Fred Roche Gardens).

Bernard Schottlander (1924–99) was born in Mainz, Germany into a Jewish family of art enthusiasts. He fled Nazi Germany in 1939, arriving at Leeds where he worked in a factory as a welder whilst attending evening classes in sculpture at the Leeds College of Art. After war service, Schottlander became a British citizen in 1946. Subsequently he received a grant to study sculpture at the Anglo-French Centre in St John's Wood, London, followed by a course in Industrial Design at the London County Council Central School of Arts and Crafts. In 1951 he began his own industrial design workshop, notably creating the 'Mantis' series of lamps. In 1963 Schottlander resolved to concentrate solely on sculpture and had his first solo show in 1964 at the Architectural Association in London. He also featured in the group show 'Six Artists' at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London and had his second solo exhibition

in 1966 at the influential Hamilton Galleries. A series of commissions for public outdoor works followed, combining his experiences as a maker, an industrial designer and a sculptor. By the 1960s he had developed a simple, abstract, geometric style on a scale which suggested a move from the gallery to the public realm (Worsley 2007, pg. 8).

## Details

'2MS Series No.1', a welded steel sculpture of 1970 by Bernard Schottlander, in the grounds of Sherwood House (now Challenge House).

This abstract sculpture of welded mild steel is painted bright red and is approximately 8.4m in length. Two trapezoidal forms with undulating profiles, the upper turned at 90 degrees, are balanced against each other, touching only at a single point. The weld marks have been removed, leaving a seamless form. The piece is signed 'BS / 1970'. The sculpture has no plinth and stands in the landscape.

## Selected Sources

### Books and journals

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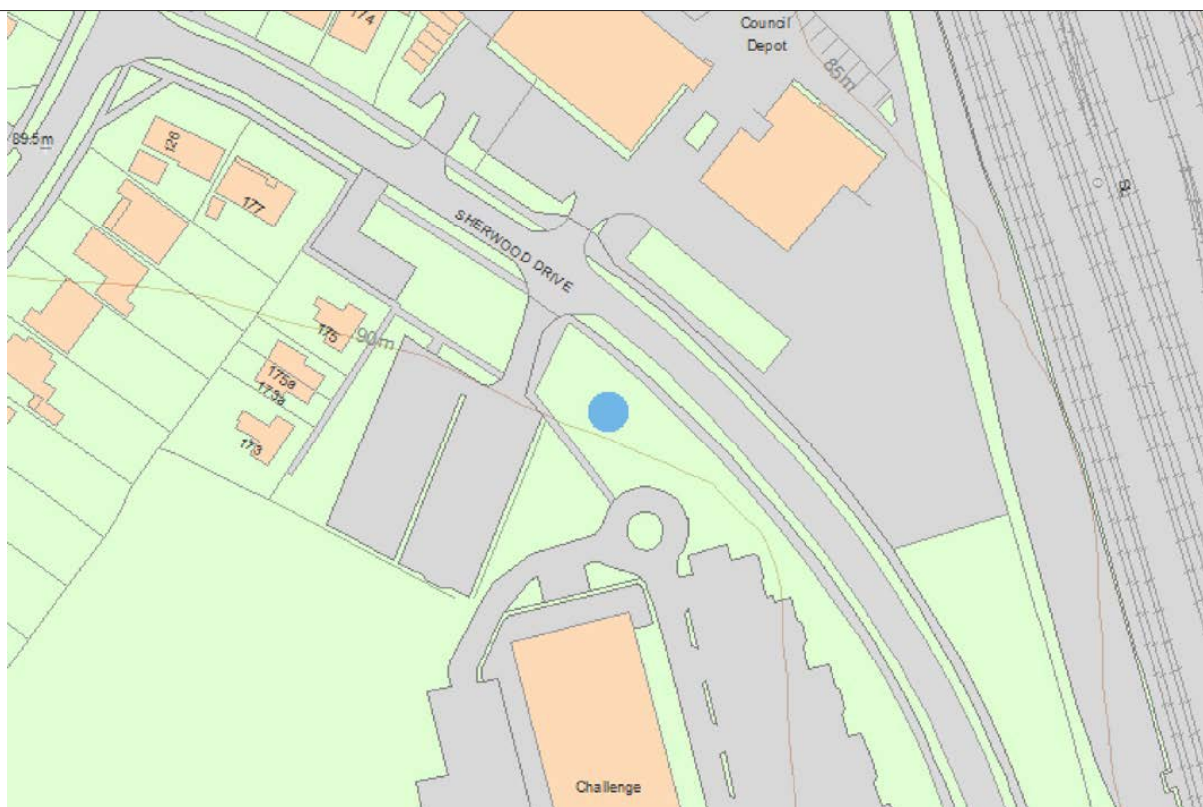
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National Grid Reference: SP8657634509

## Map





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 For a copy of the full scale map, please see the attached PDF - [1431445 .pdf](http://mapservices.HistoricEngland.org.uk/printwebservicehle/StatutoryPrint.svc/497029/HLE_A4L_Grade|HLE_A3L_Grade.pdf)  
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End of official listing





Historic England

## Former bus station, Station Square, Milton Keynes

### List Entry Summary

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: Former bus station, Station Square, Milton Keynes

List entry Number: 1416117

### Location

Former bus station, Elder Gate, Station Square, Milton Keynes

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:

District: Milton Keynes

District Type: Unitary Authority

Parish: Central Milton Keynes

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 17-Jul-2014

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

### Asset Groupings

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

### List entry Description

#### Summary of Building

The former bus station, 1982-3, by Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC), architects under Derek Walker, with structural engineer Felix J Samuely; contractors, Costains Construction. Walkways, ramps and parapet walls beyond the footprint of the bus station and its canopy are not included in the listing.

#### Reasons for Designation

The former bus station, 1982-3, by Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC) architects, is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

\* Architectural interest: bus station in the form of a freestanding pavilion, that draws on seminal buildings by the acclaimed modernist architect Mies van der Rohe, whose ideology inspired the new town plan and its buildings; \* Structural interest: deep projecting canopy slung from exposed steel girders supported on lightweight steel columns; \* Use of materials: core building clad in travertine and detailed to an unusually high standard for a bus station; \* Plan: internal and external naturally-lit waiting areas, where built-in seating and tables are treated sculpturally; \* Contextual interest: designed as part of the transport hub to serve the new town of Milton Keynes.

#### History

Milton Keynes is significant as the most ambitious new town to be planned and built in England during the post-war period following the New Towns Act of 1965. Designated as a new town in 1967, it was laid out on a grid plan that overlay or incorporated the established towns of Bletchley, Wolverton and Stony Stratford. The new town, from its infrastructure, through its principal buildings, to residential areas, was set out and designed by the Development



Corporation (MKDC) under Derek Walker its chief architect. The centre was intended as a 'downtown strip', an American-style grid lined with sleek, urban buildings inspired by the philosophy and work of the acclaimed modernist architect Mies van der Rohe, and most successfully realised in the Shopping Building (Listed Grade II) which was the focus of the commercial centre of the town.

Initially Milton Keynes was served only by the existing stations at Bletchley and Wolverton. Station Square was laid out as the gateway to the new town, at the foot of Midsummer Boulevard, the main axial route through the town running from the railway station to the Shopping Building; the new station linking Milton Keynes with the intercity rail network. Whereas the Shopping Building was the focus of the commercial centre, 'the station was the key to opening up the western end [of Milton Keynes] and establishing CMK (Central Milton Keynes) as a major employment centre.' (Bendixson and Platt, 1992, 133-6). The station and square were developed jointly by British Rail and MKDC, one third of the costs met by BR and two thirds by MKDC. For MKDC, the scheme was designed by MKDC architects Stuart Mosscrop, Derek Walker and Christopher Woodward; project architect David Hartley, assisted by Barry Steadman and Christopher Moxham; structural engineers Felix J Samuely. British Rail was responsible for the station concourse, footbridge and platform structures, the team comprising Jim S Wyatt, BR regional architect, and project architect John H Kitcher, assisted by Colin Eades.

The square was enclosed to the west, north and south by three commercial blocks: Station House, Phoenix House and Elder House: Station House contains the station concourse which leads to the footbridge, platforms and station buildings beyond it (the structures outside Station House not included in this assessment). The square acted as a transport hub, trains connecting with bus services served by a separate pavilion-like bus station, to the road grid and pedestrian walkways, and with parking behind the office blocks. The design responded to the brief for an uncluttered uninterrupted space where buses could park and people could circulate.

Bringing together facets of Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion (Spain) and IIT Crown Hall, Chicago (US), the pavilion-like bus station embraces the modernist, Miesian philosophy applied throughout the new town. It was considered by Building Design on completion to be a strikingly simple building of stunning quality. The bus station was commended by the Structural Steel Design Award in 1983, the judges commenting that the 'mainly exposed steel frame provides an elegant and carefully made

structure. The wide spans achieved with relatively light steel construction ensure minimum interface with passenger and vehicular circulation.' The Award entry also noted that the scale, form and structure were particularly important to its identity, avoiding 'an unattractive roofscape'.

## Details

Bus station, in the form of a precisely calculated pavilion, designed by MKDC (Milton Keynes Development Corporation) architects under Derek Walker with structural engineer Felix J Samuely; contractors, Costains Construction. Estimated budget £1.5 m.

PLAN Designed to provide an interchange for bus passengers, a deep canopy sheltered both inside and outside waiting areas. Beneath it the two-storey building also included on the ground floor a snack bar, an information kiosk and booking office, a newsagents and public lavatories, all accessible to the disabled. United Counties Bus Company offices and staff facilities were placed on the upper floor. Buses drew up at diagonally-aligned bays on the northern side while they could also draw up on the Elder Gate frontage to the south.

Symmetrically placed ramped walks and steps at either end of the building connect the bus station with the town's infrastructure of pedestrian walkways, the walkways defined by low parapet walls and dividers, between planters and beds. (Walkways, ramps and parapet walls beyond the footprint of the bus station and its canopy have not been assessed for listing.)

MATERIALS AND STRUCTURE The bus station comprises a double-height space beneath a roof suspended from steel girders supported on steel columns; steel was chosen to achieve a lightweight structure incorporating wide spans. A 4250 sq m (117m x 36m) steel-framed canopy is suspended from exposed steel frame girders supported on 20 specially manufactured steel columns bolted to pile caps. These carry ten, 36.2m long steel beams, each weighing 12.5 tonnes, welded on site at ground level from two sections. The beams are spaced at 12m centres with a span between columns of 21.6m and cantilevers of 7.3m. The suspended roof is covered in plasticised pvc sheeting. Beneath the canopy is an enclosed two-storey structurally independent core, clad in horizontally laid rectangular buff granite panels.

EXTERIOR A deep canopy extends over a concrete paved podium which defines the extent of the bus station, the 'I' beams exposed at each end of the



roof, which is supported on each elevation on slender square-section steel piers set back from the perimeter. Rectangular light wells in the canopy bring natural light to the external seating area. The steel girders which are exposed above the roof are visible from above but not at ground level or close proximity.

Of the two-storey building beneath the canopy, the end bays of the main elevations and eastern wall are blank and clad in granite blocks. The central six bays on both main elevations are defined by rectangular granite clad piers, set forward from a fully-glazed ground floor screen wall and door units to the concourse and waiting room, providing views out to the buses. Above, again on both elevations, the upper floor has continuous top-hung casement windows beneath shallow clerestory glazing, set flush with the façade and high beneath the roof. On the northern elevation the fenestration steps down to light the foyer at the head of an external steel stair which gives access to the upper floor. Entrances on both elevations have sliding door units opening on to the foyer and ticket office. The western end is also glazed, lighting an internal stairwell. The name 'Milton Keynes Central Bus Station' is applied to both main elevations, in lettering consistently used throughout Milton Keynes.

The external seating area at the eastern end has concrete benches with tile seats, set either side of low spine walls or seat backs.

The podium which defines the bus station, and distinguishes pedestrian from vehicular areas, is slightly raised above street level and indented on the northern side to define the bus bays. Steel frames set at an angle adjacent to the bus bays formerly supported travel information panels. To the east and west the podium merges with the paving to provide uninterrupted access to walkways.

INTERIOR The waiting room is fitted with solid timber tables, benches and seating lining the walls, supported on steel frames; the bench and table ends are channelled. The western internal stair is of masonry with a steel balustrade and moulded timber rail. Previous fixings suggest that the balustrade has been altered.

Selected Sources

Books and journals

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National Grid Reference: SP8442338062

Map



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End of official listing





Historic England

## Central Library

### List Entry Summary

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: Central Library

List entry Number: 1424282

### Location

Milton Keynes Central Library, 555 Silbury Boulevard, Milton Keynes, MK9 3HL

The listed building is shown coloured blue on the attached map. Pursuant to s.1 (5A) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('the Act'), structures attached to or within the curtilage of the listed building (save those coloured blue on the map) are not to be treated as part of the listed building for the purposes of the Act.

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:

District: Milton Keynes

District Type: Unitary Authority

Parish: Central Milton Keynes

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 30-Apr-2015

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

### Asset Groupings

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

### List entry Description

#### Summary of Building

A public library of 1979-81 by Buckinghamshire County Council. The plant room to the rear of the building is not of special architectural or historic interest.

#### Reasons for Designation

The Central Library, Milton Keynes, a public library of 1979-81 by Buckinghamshire County Council, is listed at Grade II, for the following principal reasons: \* Architectural interest: a commanding façade with skilful articulation of the geometric colonnade incorporating contrasting curved elements and details in rich russet brick; \* Interiors: subtly detailed principal spaces that are carefully arranged with the massing of spaces and ceiling heights appropriate to the activity, and on the first floor a clever integration of clerestory lighting and bespoke lighting fixtures; \* Artworks: a small but diverse collection of painting and sculpture made or installed in direct response to the library spaces, the period in time, and the new town; \* Group value: located directly opposite the listed shopping building, it is a contrasting and complementary composition designed as a prestigious addition to the civic and commercial town centre.

#### History

Milton Keynes is the most ambitious of the post-war 'New Towns' built following the Act of 1965. It amalgamated a number of existing smaller towns, one of which it was named after, and the new town centre was based on an American-style 'downtown strip', lined with sleek, Miesian buildings. A library



had been part of the plan for central Milton Keynes since 1974, and in 1978 gained approval. Designs were by Buckingham County Council's architects' department, led by Paul Markcrow, with deputy county architect John Sexton, studio architect Tse-Chiu Ng, and assisted by Graham Fenn and Jim Foster-Turner.

The site for the library was in the commercial centre of the town, facing onto Silbury Boulevard, opposite the newly-built Shopping Building (Listed Grade II). An entire block of the geometric grid of the town centre was allocated, excluding a scheduled archaeological site to the north. The library as it stands today (2015) is the first phase of a what was intended to be a much larger building, which would have included a museum and offices, had it been completed. It was built with flexibility in mind, in order to meet changing requirements and to accommodate the secondary phase. There was a temporary church hall on the ground floor, which ceased use as such in 1992 when the nearby Church of Christ the Cornerstone was completed; it then became the local studies library, and then an education centre.

The library was well-received by the architectural press when it opened in 1981, though the Architects' Journal noted that the promise of the ultimate building weakened the success of the first phase, the internal layout and circulation of which was to be quite changed with the addition of the second phase. Conversely, elsewhere it was noted that even the first phase of the library was one of the town's outstanding buildings, and warranted attention from architects and librarians alike.

The Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC), established in 1967, had an ambitious programme of public art and this tradition is ingrained in the library, for which the MKDC commissioned a number of pieces from its inception and has a rotational display of temporary works of art. Upon opening John Csáky was commissioned and created 'Mirror Sculpture' which hangs in the children's library and was intended to catch and reflect the light at different times of the day. 'Fiction, Non-Fiction and Reference' was painted between 1984 and 1988 by Fionnuala Boyd and Les Evans while they were Artists in Residence to the MKDC; it is a large painting within the stairwell of the library which depicts, as the title suggests, a variety of fictional and real characters, including Margaret Thatcher and Arthur Scargill. It plays on Seurat's 'Bathers of Asnieres' and includes various architectural features of the town. Smaller studies for the painting are displayed nearby. 'The

Whisper', 1984, by André Wallace, stands outside the front of the building; it is an over life-size bronze sculpture depicting two women, balanced on a railing, sharing a secret.

## Details

A public library of 1979-81 by Buckinghamshire County Council's architects' department, led by Paul Markcrow, with Deputy County Architect John Sexton, studio architect Tse-Chiu Ng, and assisted by Graham Fenn and Jim Foster-Turner.

**STRUCTURE AND MATERIALS:** the library has a steel frame encased in concrete and clad in russet brown brick laid in stretcher bond. The roof, hidden by a parapet, has two hipped sections covered with asbestos cement slates. Door and window frames are bronze-coloured anodised aluminium.

**PLAN:** the building occupies a rectangular plot facing south-east onto Silbury Boulevard and bounded by North Eighth and Ninth Streets. The main entrance of the two storey building is central to the main façade, and leads to a large entrance hall with exhibition space and the former church hall on the left, and the reference library on the right. The stair to the first floor is at the rear of the lobby, leading to the main adults' and children's libraries.

**EXTERIOR:** the principal elevation has 17 bays articulated by a colonnade of rectangular pillars with full-height sections resembling a giant order rising to the parapet, alternating with single-storey sections to the height of the first floor. The colonnade is arranged slightly asymmetrically: 2:2:3:3:2:3:2, with full-height bays at either end, and with the corner pillars omitted from the composition, leaving a wide opening. The elevation, set back behind the colonnade, has rounded corners, in contrast to the strictly orthogonal colonnade. The ground floor has strips of glazing in aluminium frames, with cills clad in vertically laid brick with rounded corners. The lintels are similarly detailed, but overhang slightly and continue to form a course around the building, above which the elevation is blind. The entrance is within the three central low bays; it has three sets of double doors with full-height windows in between, glazing above, and aluminium panels to either side. A cantilevered fascia box projects over the central section and has modern signage. The colonnade continues on the return elevations, which are arranged 4:2:1, with the giant order on either side. The soffit of the arcade is weatherboarded.

The rear elevation, intended to be built upon in the second phase, is painted



common brick with the projecting uprights of the frame. The elevation is recessed in the four left hand bays, and windows light the library offices on the first floor. The rear elevation, while clearly a part of the building, is of considerably lesser special interest than the remainder. A plant room, excluded from the listing, projects from the elevation, and there are loading bays and access doors on the left hand side.

**INTERIOR:** the interior of the building is deliberately restrained and plainly detailed. Walls are plastered and ceilings have areas of textured plaster, and sections of aluminium matchboarding. Ceiling heights vary according to the function of the space, and large open plan rooms are supported by plain circular structural pillars. Internal walls often join with curved corners, echoing the form of the exterior. Joinery is in ash, and doors retain original aluminium cylindrical knobs. Window cills are quarry tiled and windows have aluminium catches and stays.

The entrance lobby has a quarry tiled floor, and leads to a second set of doors. The central area of the entrance hall has a dropped ceiling with spotlights, behind which it is open to the dog-leg stair, which rises to a central landing (intended to be enlarged into a mezzanine floor in the second phase of building) with Boyd and Evans' mural covering the wall between the storeys. There is a domed lantern in the roof above, which, with the mural, creates a dramatic transition between floors.

The ground-floor reference library, which occupies the depth of the building, has high ceilings, supporting pillars, and an aluminium boarded ceiling. Original ash bookshelves line the walls, curving at the corners; these typically have five shelves with cupboards below; the shelving here and in the adult lending library and children's library (see below) was thoughtfully designed and contributes to the special interest. There is a curved enquiry counter beneath a suspended ceiling adjacent to the entrance, which is through a timber screen with double doors, the glazing pattern of which recalls the external colonnade. On the opposite side of the entrance hall are the exhibition gallery and former church hall, both of which are plainly detailed.

On the first floor the adult lending library occupies the great proportion of the space. It has an acoustic ceiling which opens up around the external walls to clerestory roof lights. There is a central enquiry desk beneath the central domed roof light. Round domed lamps, each with three spotlights, punctuate the ceiling on the south side of the room. Shelves, as in the reference library, line sections of the external walls and are freestanding elsewhere. The

children's library is to the north; like the adults' lending library it has an acoustic plastered ceiling and clerestory lighting to the perimeter. Shelving is as per the other libraries but miniaturised. There is a story-telling area that can be separated off by curtains.

There are a number of offices and meeting rooms, and a staff room; all are plainly detailed and have timber matchboarded ceilings.

**ARTWORKS:** the bronze sculpture 'The Whisper', by André Wallace, stands to the right of the main entrance. Boyd and Evans' large mural painting 'Fiction, Non-Fiction and Reference' lines the inner wall of the stairwell between the ground and first floors. Csáky's stainless steel geometric 'Mirror Sculpture' is suspended from the ceiling of the children's library.

**SUBSIDIARY FEATURES:** a steel porte cochere, as found throughout the town centre, leads to the main entrance.

Pursuant to s.1 (5A) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('the Act') it is declared that the plant room to the rear of the building is not of special architectural or historic interest.

## Selected Sources

### Books and journals

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'Milton Keynes Central Library' in Architects' Journal, , Vol. 174, (), 641-53

'Zentral Bucherei in Milton Keynes' in Baumeister, , Vol. 79, (), 800-802

### Websites

Andre Wallace, accessed 14/01/2015 from <http://www.andre-wallace.co.uk/public-commissions> [↗](#)

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National Grid Reference: SP8517239087

## Map





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End of official listing





Historic England

## 7-23 Silver Street, including the covered entrance to Cofferridge Close, Stony Stratford, Milton Keynes

### List Entry Summary

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: 7-23 Silver Street, including the covered entrance to Cofferridge Close, Stony Stratford, Milton Keynes

List entry Number: 1407948

### Location

7-23 Silver Street, including the covered entrance to Cofferridge Close, Stony Stratford, MK11 1JS

The terrace of houses and covered entrance forms the southern boundary of Cofferridge Close which is located at the heart of the historic market town of Stony Stratford.

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:

District: Milton Keynes

District Type: Unitary Authority

Parish: Stony Stratford

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 30-May-2012

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

### Asset Groupings

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

### List entry Description

#### Summary of Building

Terrace of five town houses and four flats that incorporates the southern vehicular entrance to Cofferridge Close.

Designed as an integral part of Cofferridge Close, 1970-76 by Derek Walker, chief architect to the Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC), project architect Wayland Tunley.

#### Reasons for Designation

7-23 Silver Street, Stony Stratford, including the covered entrance to Cofferridge Close, is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons: \* Architectural interest: a skilfully designed and integrated terrace of town houses which survive as an early phase of the significant post-war contributions of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation, under architects Wayland Tunley and Derek Walker. \* Planning interest: flexibly-planned town houses that form the southern boundary and integrated covered entrance to the contemporary shopping centre; their enclosed courtyard gardens and first floor principal living space with balconies respond to the open green space, historically an orchard, of the wider development; \* Materials: expressive use of brick, a modern interpretation of the local vernacular tradition; \* Degree of survival: high level of intactness of plan form, original materials, fixtures and fittings; \* Historic interest: an integral part of Cofferridge Close, a commercial and residential development,



set within a carefully-designed landscape that reflected the historic use of the site. It was the first phase of development by the well-known Milton Keynes Development Corporation, establishing it in the existing historic market town of Stony Stratford.

## History

Cofferidge Close, a commercial, retail, community and residential development, was designed and built between 1970-76 by Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC) under Derek Walker, coinciding with his period in office as chief architect to the MKDC, and project architect Wayland Tunley. Work started on site in July 1973. It lies within the Stony Stratford Conservation Area (designated 6 August 1975).

Milton Keynes is significant as the most ambitious new town to be planned and built in England during the post-war period following the New Towns Act of 1965. Designated as a new town in 1967, it was laid out on a grid plan that overlay or incorporated the established towns of Bletchley, Wolverton and Stony Stratford. While the residential areas reflected the informal village character they replaced, the centre was intended as a 'downtown strip', an American-style grid lined with sleek, urban buildings of a Miesian character (referencing the work and style of the architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, 1886-1969), most successfully realised in the Shopping Building (Listed Grade II).

Stony Stratford is a historic market town laid out on a linear plan that straddles the historic route of the A5 (Watling Street), close to the River Ouse. To the south of the High Street deep plots, following the medieval burghage pattern, run back to Silver Street, the historic back lane. Set back from the High Street to the north-west and south-east of Cofferidge Close are the Market Square and Horsefair Green. Historically Cofferey's Close was an open space, that by the late C17 was bounded by buildings, and in the early C18 was recorded as a fruit orchard. Prior to the development of Cofferidge Close, the site was divided between a number of owners and tenants, the principal player being Flemings agricultural hardware business fronting the High Street, which also had yards to the rear, while the southern end of the site was laid out with gardens and orchards, largely owned by the local authority.

The land was acquired by the MKDC but care was taken to integrate the development into the existing fabric and market town economy of Stony Stratford, working to a brief to provide flexible commercial, small-scale retail,

communal and residential facilities. With MKDC as the main users of the office space this would ensure their occupation and established MDKC's presence in the town. While the shopping centre reflects the Miesian philosophy that underlies the plan and structure of the new town, it was designed at a scale and using carefully chosen materials that were considered sympathetic to the local vernacular tradition. The height of the development was restricted so that it did not exceed the surrounding buildings; hand made brick cladding reflected the local preponderance of brick-built buildings.

The building was enlivened with street sculpture in the form of Christine Fox's bronze fountain, Batrachian Cascade, placed near to the supermarket entrance and with hanging and wall-mounted signage which reflected the tradition of street and shop signage in the town. Consideration was given to reduce the impact of the development by rich landscaping which retained many of the existing trees and introduced green partitions between the building and car parks, in the form of planted pergolas framing the walkways, and with seating. At the boundaries of the development small scale projects such as the extension to the rear of 27-31 High Street knitted the new development into the existing building stock. Subsequently the north-eastern block facing the High Street was extended at the rear and the fountain was removed. The seating has also been removed and while some of the hanging and wall-mounted signs remain in place, the majority have been dismantled. A separate Health Centre was built to the north-west of the site, outside Cofferidge Close.

## Details

**MATERIALS:** reinforced concrete frame with load-bearing external brickwork and cladding in Colliers handmade Georgian Red facing bricks, a textured brick laid with deep joints that was also used for the main building at Cofferidge Close.

**PLAN:** the southern edge of the site is bounded by the three-storey row that comprised five town houses, three single-bedroom flats and a studio above the vehicular entrance to Cofferidge Close. Each has two outlooks, over the urban setting of Silver Street to the south and the open landscape of the Close to the north. Although some have been subsequently subdivided, the majority retain their original floor plan.

The three-bedroom town houses were laid out on three floors, with the main



living area at first floor level. Each house opens onto a small enclosed garden at the rear and a large balcony at first floor level that gives an open view over the gardens and southern end of the main building. The project team considered that small courtyard gardens were sufficient because the wider aspect provided by the Close acted as a garden extension. The ground floor comprised an entrance hall with a WC leading off it, a kitchen and dining room overlooking the garden and a small multi-purpose room at the front. The first floor was laid out as an open plan living room for which the balcony effectively forms an outside extension and leading off the living room at the front, a small study. The upper floor had three bedrooms and a bathroom.

EXTERIOR: Silver Street elevation in seven bays, of which the sixth bay includes a two-storey entrance to the Close. Houses are of three-storeys, the upper storey having an asymmetrically-pitched mansard roof. As with the main building at Cofferridge Close, each unit is recessed between full-height piers that are flush with the cornice. The ground floor is clad in vertically-ribbed panels with matching front doors, punctuated by narrow full-height windows. Horizontal first floor window units, in black anodised aluminium, each of six lights, fill each bay between flush brick panels. The upper floor has a continuous glazed mansard.

At the rear, each unit is contained behind a high brick wall forming a small courtyard garden, each with a small outside shed. Full-width ground floor rear windows in the manner of a glazed wall, and set back beneath the balcony, open onto the courtyard. Similar full-width first floor rear windows are set back under brick soffits and open onto secluded first floor balconies, each set between brick party walls. Balconies have timber balustrades or deep planters and afford views over the open leafy landscape at the southern end of Cofferridge Close. The upper floor is lit by a continuous glazed mansard similar to the south facing elevation.

Covered vehicular entrance with brick lined soffit and exposed brick-clad beams; the opening is flanked by brick clad piers, brick kerbs and paviers and enlivened with wall-mounted signage to Cofferridge Close.

INTERIOR: most houses retain their original floor plan, where the internal structural piers are exposed. Flexible ground and first floor plan where fully-glazed rear walls and quarry tiled ground floor flooring diminish the barrier between inside and outside spaces. Stairs have a solid, timber framed balustrade and timber handrail. Flush-panel internal doors and fitted cupboards, some with original door furniture.

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'Architectural Design' in , , Vol. XLV, (6/1973), 348-399

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### Other

Housing at Cofferridge Close, sale details (nd),

National Grid Reference: SP7873340255

## Map





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End of official listing





Historic England

## Octo sculpture and reflecting pool

### List Entry Summary

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: Octo sculpture and reflecting pool

List entry Number: 1432576

### Location

Square to east of Norfolk House, Saxon Gate, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire

The listed building is shown coloured blue on the attached map. Pursuant to s.1 (5A) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('the Act'), structures attached to or within the curtilage of the listed building (save those coloured blue on the map) are not to be treated as part of the listed building for the purposes of the Act.

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:

District: Milton Keynes

District Type: Unitary Authority

Parish: Central Milton Keynes

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 19-Jan-2016

Date of most recent amendment: 15-Feb-2016

### Asset Groupings

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

### List entry Description

#### Summary of Building

'Octo', a stainless steel sculpture of 1979-80 by Wendy Taylor, mounted on a reflecting pool.

#### Reasons for Designation

'Octo', a stainless steel sculpture of 1979-80 by Wendy Taylor, mounted on a reflecting pool, is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons: \* Artistic interest: the sculpture's formal clarity, equipoise and a sensitivity to its setting combine to create a striking yet harmonious work; \* Sculptor: this is an important work within Taylor's oeuvre; \* Historic interest: 'Octo' is an early example of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation's public art programme; \* Historic association: for the 1983 commemoration of Richard Llewelyn-Davies (1912-81), planner of Milton Keynes.

#### History

The period after 1945 saw a shift from commemorative sculpture and architectural enrichment to the idea of public sculpture as a primarily aesthetic contribution to the public realm. Sculpture was commissioned for new housing, schools, universities and civic set pieces, with the counties of Hertfordshire, London and Leicestershire and the new towns leading the way in public patronage. Thus public sculpture could be an emblem of civic renewal and social progress. By the late C20 however, patronage was more diverse and included corporate commissions and Arts Council-funded community art. The ideology of enhancing the public realm through art continued, but with divergent means and motivation.



Visual languages ranged from the abstraction of Victor Pasmore and Phillip King to the figurative approach of Elisabeth Frink and Peter Laszlo Peri, via those such as Lynn Chadwick and Barbara Hepworth who bridged the abstract/representational divide. The post-war decades are characterised by the exploitation of new – often industrial – materials and techniques including new welding and casting techniques, plastics and concrete, while kinetic sculpture and ‘ready mades’ (using found objects) demonstrate an interest in composite forms.

Milton Keynes was designated a new town in 1967 and planning control was delegated to the Milton Keynes Development Corporation (MKDC). Like earlier new towns it developed a policy of commissioning and acquiring outdoor works for public display, particularly outside buildings designed by MKDC. In this way a significant collection was developed, including works by Elisabeth Frink, Liliane Lijn, Bernard Schottlander and Wendy Taylor.

Wendy Taylor CBE (b 1945) studied at St Martin's School of Art, London (1962-67) and soon came to specialise in permanent, site-specific commissions. Her abstract sculptures explore themes of equilibrium, materiality and fabrication, presenting familiar materials such as brickwork, steel sections and chains in unfamiliar and sometimes paradoxical situations and juxtapositions. In 1988 Taylor was awarded a CBE and was the subject of a South Bank Show documentary, and in 1992 her work was profiled in a monograph by Edward Lucie-Smith. From 1986 to 1988 she was design consultant for the Commission for the New Towns.

'Octo' has origins in an aluminium maquette made for a full-scale work in stainless steel but with no specific commission in mind. Taylor then constructed a plywood model at full scale and had both maquette and model photographed by the architectural photographer John Donat. Derek Walker (architect to the MKDC) and Donald Ritson (assistant to the general manager Fred Lloyd Roche) noticed Octo in Donat's portfolio and after visiting Taylor's studio commissioned the work for Norfolk and Ashton House, an office development of 1978-79 designed by MKDC for a central site near Saxon Gate.

Taylor suggested mounting the sculpture on a reflecting pool, in order to bridge the gap in scale between passers-by and the large office blocks, whilst echoing their mirror-glass surfaces. To demonstrate the importance of the water feature the plywood model was sprayed silver and set up in Taylor's studio yard, which was flooded to simulate a reflective setting.

'Octo' was one of the first public artworks to be installed in Milton Keynes. It was unveiled in 1980 and in 1983 chosen by Baroness Llewelyn-Davies to commemorate the role of her husband Richard Llewelyn-Davies (1912-81) in the design of Milton Keynes. Llewelyn-Davis was founding partner in Llewelyn-Davies, Weeks, Forestier-Walker and Bor, the practice which prepared the 1970 master plan of Milton Keynes.

## Details

'Octo', a stainless steel sculpture of 1979-80 by Wendy Taylor, mounted on a reflecting pool.

This stainless steel figure-of-eight, c4m in height, is mounted in the centre of a square reflective pool. An extruded hollow section is twisted into a Möbius strip (with a double rather than a single twist). It is placed, without visible means of support, on a shallow reflecting pool. This comprises a dark slate-like platform edged by a water channel and a granite surround. A play of shifting reflections is established between the polished surface of the sculpture, its reflections in the pool, and the mirror glass of the adjacent buildings. The surrounding landscaping was remodelled in the early 1990s by Quartet Design.

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National Grid Reference: SP8496538953

## Map





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End of official listing





Historic England

## SHOPPING BUILDING

### List Entry Summary

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: SHOPPING BUILDING

List entry Number: 1393882

### Location

SHOPPING BUILDING, MIDSUMMER BOULEVARD

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:

District: Milton Keynes

District Type: Unitary Authority

Parish: Central Milton Keynes

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: II

Date first listed: 16-Jul-2010

Date of most recent amendment: 09-Jan-2012

### Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 503491

### Asset Groupings

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

### List entry Description

#### Summary of Building

The Central Milton Keynes Shopping Building, the Milton Keynes new town's shopping centre; designed 1972-73, built 1975-79 by the Milton Keynes Development Corporation's Architect's Department under Derek Walker, design architects Stuart Mosscrop and Christopher Woodward, project manager Syd Green; FJ Samuely and Partners, Frank Newby, Mike Conacher consultant engineers. West End extended 1993-94 by PDD Architects.

#### Reasons for Designation

Milton Keynes's Shopping Building of 1973-9, designed by the Milton Keynes Development Corporation, is listed at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

\* Architectural interest: a highly-regarded, little altered, 650-metre long steel and glass structure whose design was heavily influenced by the work of the leading early-mid C20 architect Mies van der Rohe; its rigour, consistency, luminosity and user-friendliness all denote its success as a new approach to retail design \* Exemplar: as the outstanding post-war retail development in England, successfully drawing on American inspirations but creating a singular shopping centre, realised on a monumental scale \* Materials: for the high quality and consistent deployment of materials and finishes, all executed to careful standards of finish \* Intactness: the public elements of the shopping centre are little-altered and retain the original appearance of



the design \* Adaptability: the success of the complex lies in part in its ability to accommodate fast-changing retail stores while retaining its overall architectural integrity \* Artistic interest: for its public artworks, notably Liliane Lijn's Circle of Light, which endows this retail complex with prestige and meaning \* Town planning: as the purpose-built centrepiece of Britain's last, largest, and in planning terms most innovative new town, which created a retail space realised on a civic scale

## History

Bletchley was identified for development to take overspill from the south of Buckinghamshire and from London in the 1964 South East Regional Plan. Subsequently, in January 1967, the decision was taken to designate a larger new town which would envelope a number of existing towns and villages and be named after one of them, Milton Keynes. This was planned between 1968 and 1972 as a series of kilometre grid squares divided by roads and strips of parkland. While many of the residential grids evolved a post-modern idiom, or responded to the village character of existing buildings, for the two kilometre grid designated as the 'city centre' a very different system was imposed. It was to be a true 'downtown strip', an American-style grid comparable in size with London's W1 postal district, and lined with sleek, urban buildings of a Miesian character. In practice only the earliest commercial buildings designed by the Milton Keynes Development Corporation's architects fulfil this brief: Lloyds Court, Ashton and Norfolk Houses, and - most successfully - the Shopping Building. Originally sponsored by the Development Corporation with joint funding from the Post Office Pension Fund, in 1989 the building was sold to a consortium led by the latter's successors, Hermes, and the Dai-Ichi Bank.

The Shopping Building was conceived in reaction to the many Arndale Centres and other enclosed malls then being erected, such as Brent Cross (1976), and in particular to the American out-of-town malls such as Victor Gruen's Northlands, Detroit, and Southdale, Minneapolis. Instead, as Moss crop has explained, the design team here studied the history of European shopping arcades. German source books demonstrated the evolution of the arcade from the first, eastern-inspired models which appeared in Paris in the 1790s, and through their expansion as iron-frame technology grew. Derek Walker (RIBA Journal, May 1979) likens the building to the Crystal Palace, which it resembles in size, and there is indeed some similarity in the use of transepts, set-back clerestories and an all-dominating grid. Moss crop says that his aim was to make the building the centre of the

city in the way the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele (1865-67) dominates shopping and entertainment in Milan, though in plan it more closely resembles Cluysenaur's equally monumental Galleries St Hubert, Brussels, of 1846-47. Derek Walker's Architecture and Planning of Milton Keynes confirms the mix of late Mies van der Rohe (his Mannheim Theatre project particularly), and his use of exotic marbles, and C19 galleries. John Winter (Architectural Review, September 1980) compares its cool framework with that of Covent Garden Market, then recently refurbished and which it also somewhat resembles on plan. 'Here we have in built form the "highly serviced neutral technological frame" so beloved by students in the '50s, the recessive ordering structure which is yet strong enough to contain and control an ever-changing scenario within. It succeeds well, for the shops have their commercial fun and their coloured lights, but in no way ruffle the majestic calm of that long mirror-glass facade' (p.152). As a synthesis of Victorian iron technology, Miesian detailing and post-war notions of 'plug in' architectural grids, the Shopping Building works intellectually, and architecturally, on a series of levels.

The Shopping Building was of a scale unprecedented in Britain, and at 650m long, the largest covered arcade then built. The estate agents Healy and Baker helped draw up the brief and Woodward found out what retail firms wanted. Visiting Cumbernauld and Runcorn, he was shocked by the extent of mechanisation and services required to make such megastructures on the Gruen model work. The Shopping Building is very different. It stands at a relatively high point in the city, which counteracts its low height. The large and continuous clerestory glazing of the arcades makes this one of the few shopping centres where natural light dominates, an important feature. The original design of the city centre and its grid - and thus the shopping centre, which was integral to the plan - was informed by the play of natural light and the arcades are aligned so that on Midsummer Day, the sun sets along the arcades. Explicit reference to this concept is made in the names of the avenues and arcades of CMK: Avebury, Silbury, and Midsummer.

## Details

MATERIALS Steel, glass, and internally travertine marble dominate.

PLAN Parallel 650m long glass and steel arcades provide the twin spines for flanking and linking walks and shops with anchor shops at east and west ends. There are two courts: covered Middleton Hall to the east and open-air Queen's Court to the west (this was converted to a food court in 2010).



**EXTERIOR** The shopping Centre consists of a single very long block, designed in a Mies van de Rohe-inspired idiom, which stands in the centre of the town. Intended to serve as a 'high street' for this car-centred city, it stands beside a car park and is hemmed in by arterial and access roads. The steel frame sets up a rigid 6m and 12m grid. Great care was taken with both the finish of the steelwork which was produced by Boulton and Paul by a process called 'upward teeming' which gave a smooth surface, and with its erection for which very fine tolerances were set for alignments. The walls of the perimeter shopping centre and the pair of parallel ranges at the upper level are expressed externally as a glazed curtain whose external frame is filled with mirrored or clear glass set in neoprene gaskets. The building provides shopping facilities on a single storey, with stores and service areas for the shops above, and rooftop servicing and delivery facilities reached by a single raised road over the development, Secklow Gate. While the overall planning of the complex was successfully managed, the service facilities - such as heating and air-conditioning apparatus - are understandably much-modified and are not of special interest.

There are 18 entrances from a long car park cum service road set slightly below Silbury Boulevard and Midsummer Boulevard to north and south. These parallel entrances give on to the two long arcades and there are no steps anywhere within the building enabling access. The shops are divided into three bands served and separated by two 12m wide and 14m high weather-protected and naturally-lit pedestrian arcades (Midsummer and Silbury Arcades) which run the length of the building. The middle band of accommodation contains the department stores and two public squares, to the west an open square (Queen's Court) and to the east an internal market place (Middleton Hall) used for fairs and exhibitions. Queen's Court was adapted for use as a food court and re-opened as such in July 2010. The two main anchor stores are at the east and west ends: John Lewis projects proud to the east; The original west end of the building, Dickens and Jones (now House of Fraser), was reconstructed wholesale after an arson attack; Marks and Spencer is set in a western extension that was originally envisaged and actually added in 1993-94 by PDD Architects. This extension encroached on the City Square (originally conceived as a large public square featuring pavilions, flagpoles and public amenities) and was designed in the same materials as the original building, although the full-height glass shop front is of a predominantly vertical design, as opposed to the linear arrangement of the original building. This late-C20 addition is of lesser architectural interest yet it demonstrates the ability of the original concept to accommodate change and enlargement. The bands to the north and south house smaller

shops which have frontages both to the internal arcades and to the building's perimeter. Linking the bands of shops are secondary and considerably lower pedestrian walks 12m wide run at 90m centres connecting Midsummer and Silbury Arcades to either side and giving access to the exits (the doors here are later additions).

The public squares and the arcades are the most important elements in design terms, having a clear and precise Miesian form which is unique for a shopping building. In addition to the clean lines created by the planting and seating the shop fronts are set back behind the line of the building grid and projecting signs are not permitted. The individual fit-outs to the shops are not generally of special interest, but they were originally conceived to a design guide which respects the dominance of the original frame and some retain stainless steel surrounds. Originally the building had no doors and it was intended that it should be a focus of Milton Keynes life outside shopping hours as well as during the day, but the building has been closed at night for some years. Deliveries are made in daylight, from the roof, which is reached by a single raised road over the development, Secklow Gate.

The large Midsummer Place extension to the south of Marks & Spencer cuts across Midsummer Boulevard but this is separated from the older building by a gap and is not included in the listing.

Overall the Shopping Building survives largely as originally built. The special interest is confined to the public aspects of the envelope of the shopping centre.

**INTERIOR** The many entrances give on to the two long and airy arcades, whose tall, glazed upper sections allow dramatic skyscapes to unfold. The volume and airiness of the large Middleton Hall contribute to the spatial interest of the interior, as well as providing an interesting multi-functional space. Throughout a pale brown travertine marble is used for floors and wall veneer, filled for the former and unfilled for the latter; in some areas this has been renewed by another kind of similarly-coloured limestone. Running down the two arcades are 47 narrow, rectangular, travertine planters with exotic planting including palm trees. Along the edge of the planters are long travertine bench seats. Some stainless steel seats and railings have subsequently been set in to these, and this metalwork is not of special interest. The internal small shop fronts are mostly later and not of special interest; however, where original finishes do survive, such as travertine stall-risers and fragmentary survival of stainless steel surrounds, these are of



special interest (an audit of the shopfronts completed in 2011 shows that about seven shops retain their stainless steel, or chrome, surrounds and about five retain travertine upstands or other travertine entrance detail). Exposed stanchions with sloped feet (added in the 1990s to help repel rubbish and dust) contribute to the aesthetic as well as forming the structure. The outside (but internal) wall of John Lewis is faced up to about 4m with various shades of brown tiles that pick out 'John Lewis' in large blocky lettering; John Lewis also retains original stainless steel surrounds and travertine upstands to its interior shop front. The interiors of the shops, being subject to change, are not regarded as of special interest; this includes the windows and doors, which have in many instances been replaced.

The Shopping Building has a number of artworks. Of particular interest for its design and position is Liliane Lijn's Circle of Light, designed in 1977 and commissioned by Milton Keynes District Council in 1978 as part of its ambitious and successful public art programme. Suspended above Midsummer Arcade this takes the form of 23 armatures wound with copper wire - a reference to electric motors - hung to form a large copper disc 6m in diameter. Electric motors slowly rotate the individual rod-like armatures, and hanging like a great rising or setting sun it picks up on the arcade's alignment with the setting sun on Midsummer's Day.

Other artworks of special interest include: the market clock in Midsummer Arcade; 'Dream Flight', 'Flying Carpet' and 'High Flyer' (bronze figures) by Philomena Davis (1989), now located in Silbury Arcade; 'Vox Pop' (a group of cartoon-like bronze people) by John Clinch (1979) in Queen's Court (although not the original location within it); at the time of listing, 'Bollards and Sundial' (an outside sundial with the solstice points marked), by Tim Minett (1979) was in storage awaiting reinstatement in the building; and a section of a C4 mosaic pavement from the nearby C4 Romano-British Bancroft Villa, mounted on a wall internally.

### Selected Sources

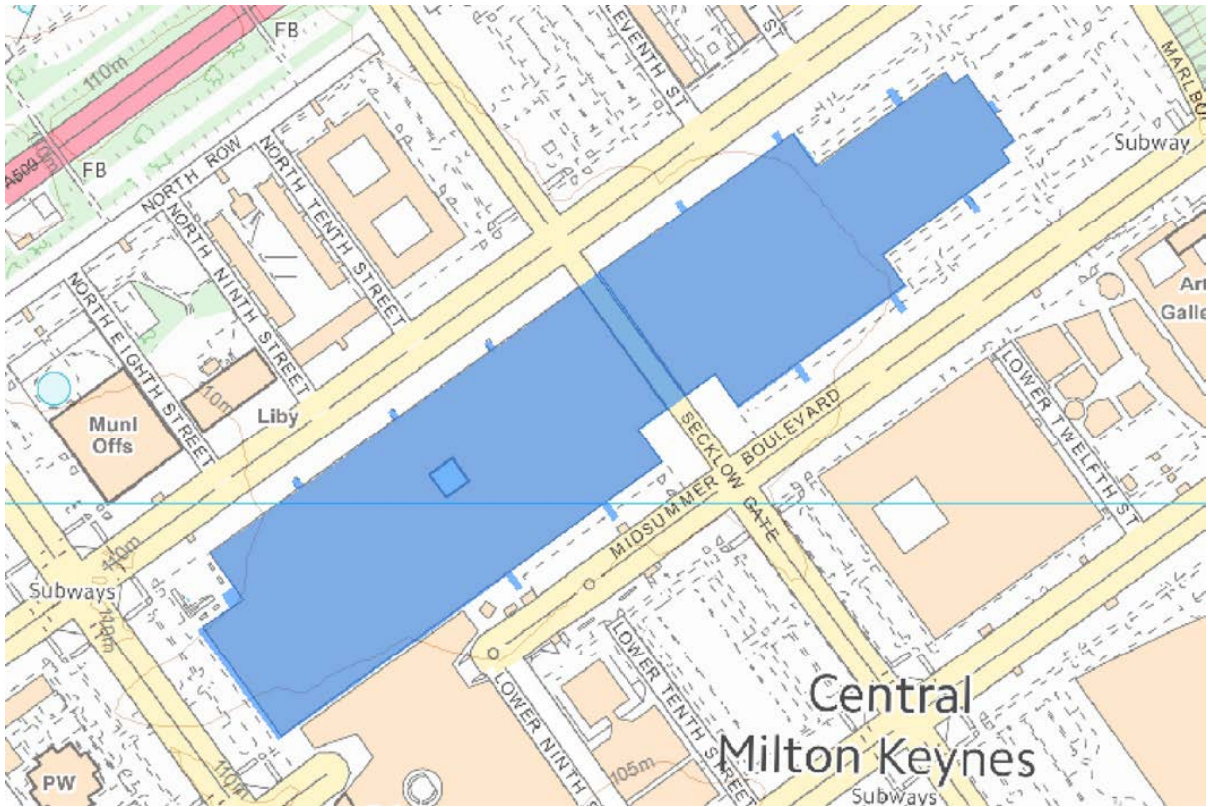
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National Grid Reference: SP8545839075

### Map



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# Alan Baxter

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