

MILTON KEYNES
COUNCIL

CMK Handbook for the Public Realm

Part A

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introduction

1

The role of the CMK Handbook is to provide guidance on the design of the public environment to ensure it is co-ordinated, attractive, easily understood and easy to move around.

The guidelines provide clear and robust design recommendations for:

- the way we arrive or move around the centre by foot, cycle, public transport or car;
- the relationships between movement patterns and the design of streets and spaces in the centre; and
- creating a co-ordinated approach to the design of the environment – whether owned and managed by the public sector, or part of projects led by and ultimately managed by developers and investors.

The design of the public realm and the inter-relationship of this with the design and use of transport and movement systems is one of the most significant elements in shaping the future character and image of CMK. Careful and informed design of the public realm and the way we move around is fundamental to the quality of future development, and will contribute greatly to the attractiveness and vitality of the city centre.

1.1 Area of Study

The CMK Handbook addresses the whole city centre (Figure 1). This includes Campbell Park, stretching from the railway station in the west to the Grand Union Canal in the east. It's bounded to the north by Portway (H5) and the south by Childs Way (H6) and interfaces with footbridge and underpass connections.



Figure 1 - Central Milton Keynes

1.2 The Rationale for the Handbook

Implementation of the CMK Development Framework (adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by Milton Keynes Council in January 2002) poses a number of challenges for the public realm in CMK.

Design guidance and principles for how the public realm should be implemented is, therefore, essential if CMK is to become a place that is attractive to visit, live, work and invest.

1.3 Using the Handbook

The Handbook will be used for projects that have an impact on the public realm, including those which involve movement through, and access to, the city centre.

The Handbook will be used by developer's design teams for all future CMK projects.

It will also be the main resource informing all design decisions for the Homes and Communities Agency, Milton Keynes Council and all decision-making bodies and groups operating in CMK.

1.4 Handbook Objectives

In drawing together the purpose, rationale and use of the Handbook a series of objectives have been identified:

- to provide a common coherent strategy and approach to the public realm and movement within CMK;
- to provide the basis for all decisions relating to the public realm and movement;
- to put in place design principles to ensure that the public realm is designed to the highest quality and is appropriate for the future role and image of CMK;
- to ensure that CMK is seen as a whole, and its design and movement patterns are co-ordinated; and
- to improve the pedestrian environment – ensuring that the way people move around the public realm is an attractive, safe and memorable experience whether they travel on foot, by cycle, public transport or by other modes.

1.5 Handbook Structure

The Handbook is set out in two parts:

- **Part A** provides the overarching vision and design principles for achieving a high quality and connected public realm within CMK;
- **Part B** provides more detailed information and specifications for each of the major elements of the public realm, including the design of highways, cycle and pedestrian routes. Typical specifications and scenarios are included. Part B is designed to be a ‘live’ and continually reviewed document.

vision

2

As the city grows the form and function of the public realm in CMK will evolve. The Handbook will guide the design of both standard and bespoke areas and create a new ‘family’ of design components across the centre.

The public realm is a key component enabling CMK to fulfill its role as the principal destination for residents of Milton Keynes as well as a regional centre into the future. Its streets, squares and other public spaces must be of high quality, in their design, management and maintenance, to set the context for the city centre as an attractive place to live, visit, do business and invest. The public realm should reflect the best of modern practice, embracing new technologies whilst maintaining the best of the character of the original design.

An attractive and safe public realm will contribute to the quality of life and economic prosperity of the city centre, creating a place where businesses choose to invest and people want to live. CMK must be accessible to all, easy to understand and inspiring and enjoyable to be in.

The public realm will be robust and able to adapt to changing needs. It will build upon and enhance the principles that have successfully guided the physical, economic and social development of CMK over the past forty years.

The identity and character of the public realm in CMK will complement development and provide a setting for new, exciting development opportunities.

Across the centre, a co-ordinated, contemporary ‘family’ of street furniture and materials will establish a new identity for the CMK streetscape and have a close relationship with the movement principles set out in the Handbook. This ‘family’ of components will ensure distinctiveness and will provide a strong context for design decisions. This ‘family’ and the overall approach to design will also influence the design of publicly accessible, but privately owned, space within development projects and the ‘special areas’ of high quality civic and central places in the city centre.

2.1 Enhancing CMK's Character

The future design of the public realm will recognise and enhance the important features and structuring principles of today's CMK. These structuring elements are part of the defining character of CMK. The new structure of the public realm is intended to maintain, enhance and celebrate these characteristics, but reorder how they are applied, to include the following:

Grid structure – CMK's main grid structure of Boulevards and Gates dominates the movement network, the public realm and is a key characteristic of the city centre. This will be maintained and enhanced as a primary structuring element and a new finer-grain, regular grid will add to the existing structure in accordance with the principles for future development set out in the CMK Development Framework (Figure 2). The finer-grain grid will take its cues from the existing street and plot structure.

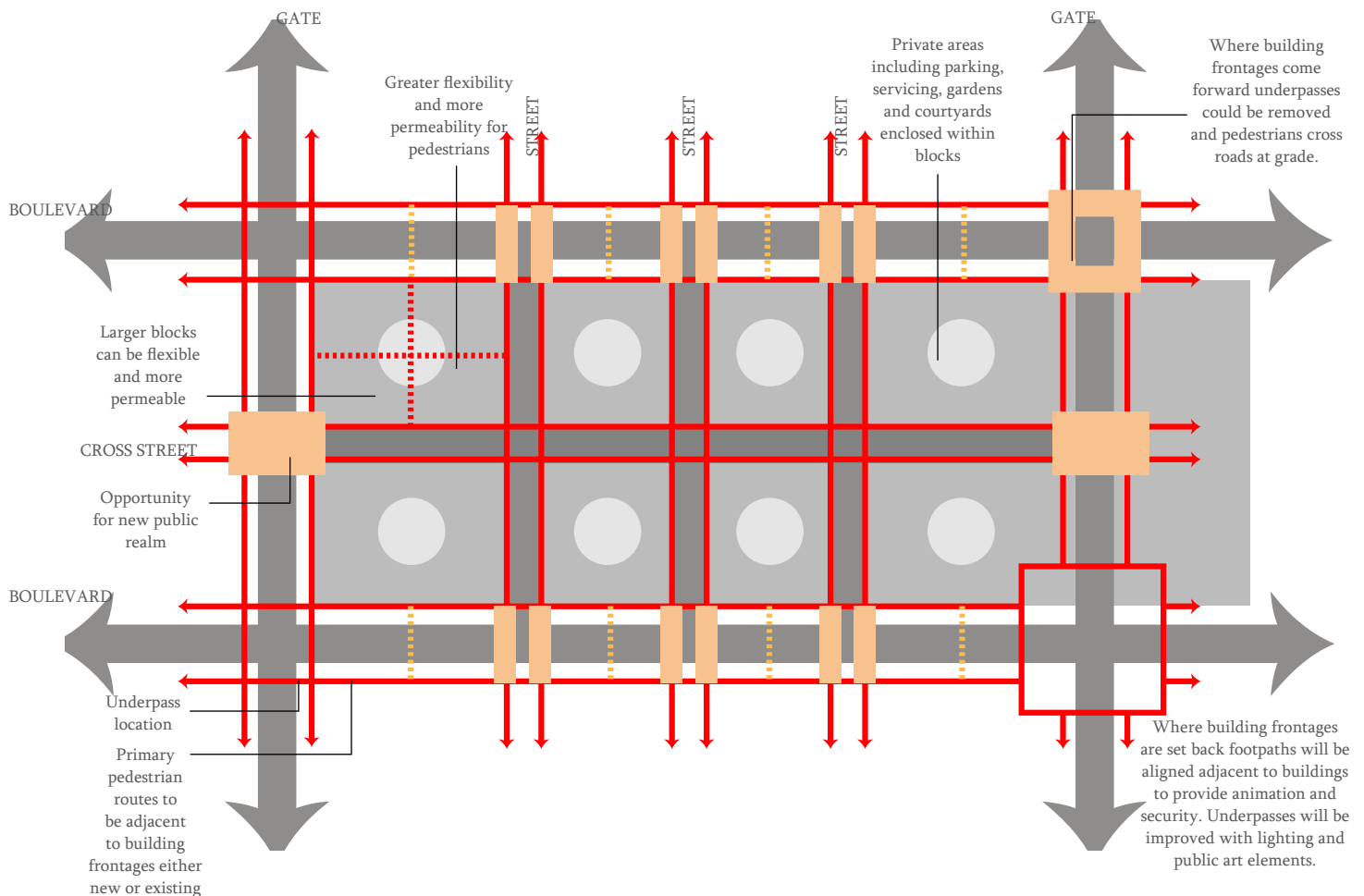
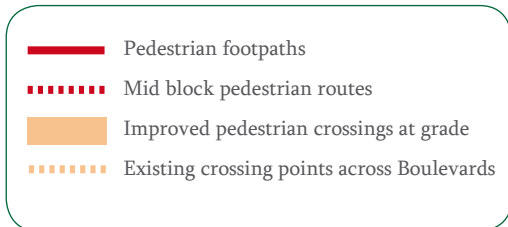


Figure 2 - Typical CMK block structure



Tree lined boulevards are key elements of the landscape structure

The new grid will help address some of the drawbacks with the original grid structure, seeking to:

- provide an improved pedestrian environment by narrowing street proportions, primarily by building on some of the surface parking areas;
- introduce a sense of enclosure creating a comfortable, walkable environment; and
- establish an interconnected network of streets and squares directly related to their relative importance within the city structure.

Landscaping - A major component of the original master plan for Central Milton Keynes was the inclusion of a formal tree planting structure. Key elements of which are the tree-lined Boulevards and Gates, using the London Plane and Chestnuts, together with a consistency of hard landscape materials and detailing, to create a very strong urban form and spatial quality.

The landscape structure is integral to the formal urban design characteristics of CMK, however, as the Development Framework is implemented there is a need for the landscape structure to respond and develop in tandem with the built design objectives.

As building lines move closer to Boulevards and Gates, the scale and space available for landscaping will change. A new tree and planting strategy will ensure that the overall cohesion of the landscape structure is maintained and forms an integral part of the developing urban character of CMK. Refer to MKC Guidance and Requirements for Street Trees.

Family of street furniture and surface materials –The original concept for CMK delivered a high quality public realm with a uniform approach to detailing, street furniture, colour and materials.

Recent new developments have moved away from this original concept but not necessarily in a co-ordinated manner.

In developing a new coherent approach, there is the opportunity to review existing elements to ensure they are consistent with the principles of the CMK Development Framework.

The Handbook re-establishes a co-ordinated strategy for street materials and signage, street furniture, typical detailing, lighting, pedestrian signage and planting.

The new ‘family’ of public realm components and strategy for implementation must properly address present management and maintenance issues, financial considerations, accessibility, mobility standards and embrace new technologies, standards and efficiencies.

Street furniture, materials and finishes will be selected using this criteria to deliver a high quality public realm capable of meeting the challenges of a growing city.



The original concept delivered a high quality public realm

2.2 Public Art

Public Art in Central Milton Keynes engages people in different ways and contributes significantly to making the city centre distinctive, design focused and desirable. Public Art adds soul, energy and dynamism, making Central Milton Keynes an emotionally and visually stimulating place to live, work and visit. Conceived and built as a totality, Central Milton Keynes is a piece of Public Art itself.

Public Art can be described as any work of visual art, craft or design produced by an artist, designer or maker and sited in a location that is freely accessible to the public.

The term Public Art incorporates artistic involvement in a wide range of architectural, urban design, environmental, social and cultural projects. This may include playground design, signage, street furniture, lighting schemes and landscape designs as well as the internal detailing of a building, its furniture, flooring or glasswork (though this is not an exclusive list). Public art can be a creative process as a physical artwork, however all projects and programmes should be place specific, people specific and freely accessible.

In Central Milton Keynes, Public Art is an integral part of the design and development of public spaces and places. There are four ways in which this is achieved:

- Inviting artists to be part of the design teams for all the Special Development Areas.
- Commissioning permanent and temporary public art programmes along Midsummer Boulevard including Campbell Park and Station Square.
- Working with developers on all design schemes in CMK to integrate public art.
- Ensuring all public art commissioning follows the strategic guidance and direction outlined in the Public Art Strategy for Milton Keynes.

2.3 Advertising & Sponsorship

All advertising and sponsorship that falls within the public realm should comply with the MKC Outdoor Advertising Policy. In order to preserve the aesthetics of CMK, ad hoc forms of advertising will not be permitted. Suitable advertising units, which fit within the street furniture 'family' will be considered, the size and type appropriate to their location. The position of advertising units should not add to physical and visual street clutter.

understanding the public realm

3

Within the context of the CMK Handbook the public realm is defined as all the spaces between buildings that can be freely accessed by the public. It encompasses, therefore, all outdoor areas including streets, parks, squares, pedestrian areas, cycle routes and other areas that enable seamless movement through a network of spaces. It includes areas, both publicly and privately owned and managed, that are accessible by the public.



A vibrant environment

3.1 What Makes A Good Public Realm?

'By Design' (CABE, 2001) identifies a good public realm as:

"a place with attractive and successful outdoor areas."

Various individual components will contribute to this success which will depend:

"on the arrangement of its paving, planting, lighting, orientation, shelter, signage, street furniture, and the way it is overlooked, as well as the routes which pass through it, and the uses in and next to it" (By Design, CABE, 2001, p24).

Consequently, there is a close relationship between the design of the public realm and the movement networks which access CMK. In addition:

"how attractive public space is, and how well people treat it, will partly depend on the arrangements made for its management and how easy it is to maintain".

Long-term management strategies are, therefore, important elements in the continued provision of a successful public realm.

The CMK Handbook relates to the design and development of all the public realm in the city centre. The intention, however, is not to be overly prescriptive in providing structuring principles for design but allows room for imaginative design treatments in the future, in locations where this is considered appropriate.



Meeting the needs of all groups, including the young

3.2 Standard Areas

The Handbook sets out the future approach towards public realm design for the network and hierarchy of streets and spaces throughout the city centre. It considers how different users will move around the city centre and the measures and design treatments that should be put in place to ensure that the public realm is accessible to all.

Part B of the Handbook details the new palette of public realm components that are to be rolled out in CMK. This palette of materials, street furniture, landscaping, etc is to be seen as the standard approach and ‘family of parts’ in all areas of public realm. There are particular locations within CMK, however, where a different approach may be appropriate. These are designated as Special Areas.



A high quality waiting environment

3.3 Special Areas

There are particular locations within CMK where an imaginative design treatment is required. These locations are referred to as Special Areas, and can be identified in Figure 3.

The Special Areas include some of the key spaces and places within the city centre. Their future design requires a specialised and distinctive approach.

Within these areas, there will also be a strong commitment towards integrating public art to enliven and engage people with these special areas.

An artist will be invited to be part of the design teams for each of these areas.



Imaginative design treatment

The Special Areas include:

- 1 Station Square** – a future landmark public space of international quality giving a welcoming first impression of CMK and providing a focus for new development and activity.
- 2 Midsummer Boulevard** – a dynamic and active spine through CMK that offers places of enjoyment and interest for all with different elements of character and experiences throughout its length.

- 3 Church Square** – a high quality open space that provides a strong setting for the Church and improved connectivity across Saxon Gate.
- 4 Campbell Park Link** – a new development ‘deck’ spanning Marlborough Street and creating a seamless pedestrian connection between Midsummer Boulevard and Campbell Park.
- 5 Marina and Canalside** – a new waterside destination for recreation, leisure, business and living within the Campbell Park grid-square.

Special Areas are to be designed to the highest quality. The basis for all design work will build on the principles and guidance set out within the Handbook, although a different but complementary palette of materials may be sought. More detailed guidance in the form of Design and Development Briefs will be issued as Special Areas come forward.

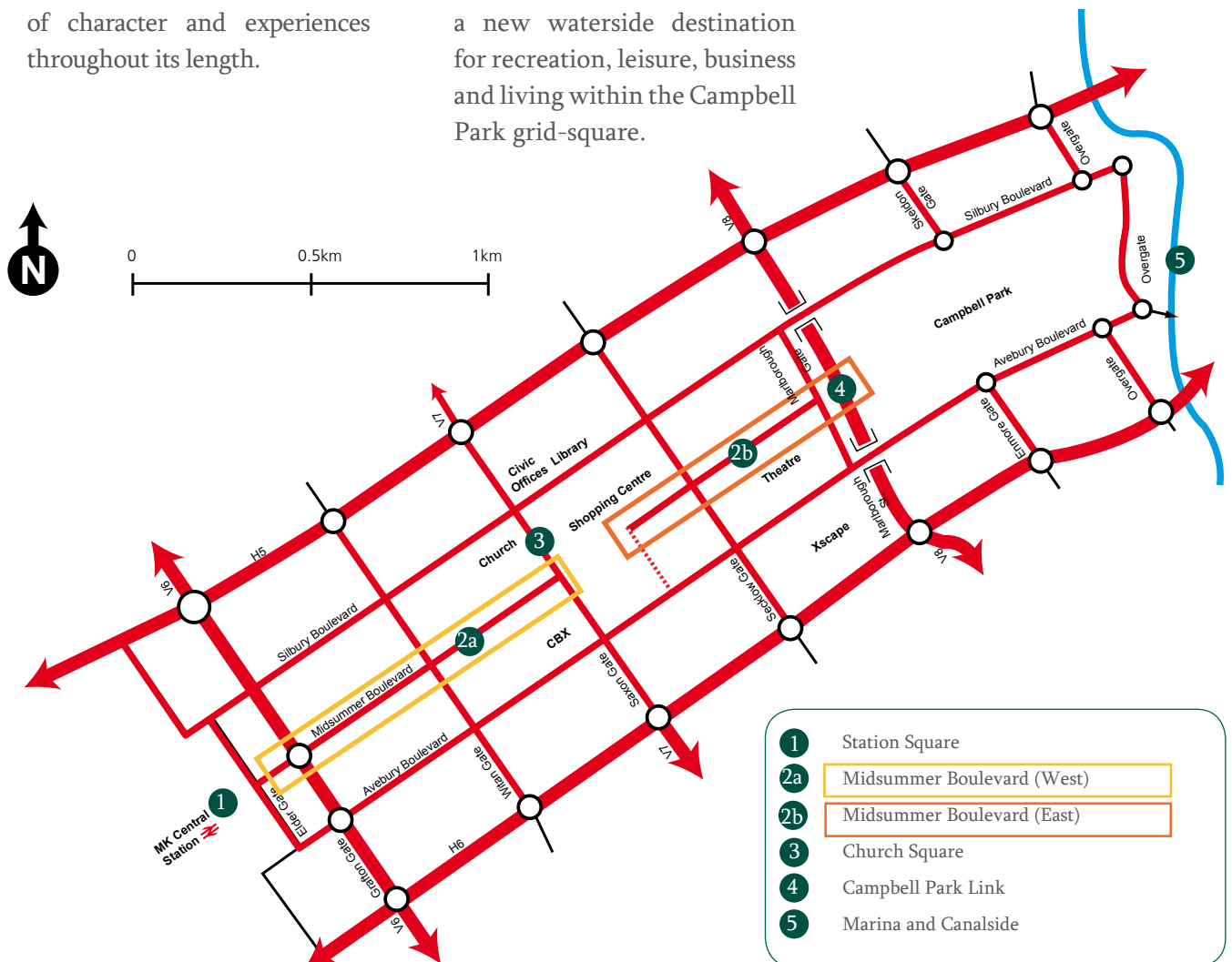


Figure 3 - Plan of Special Areas

3.4 Delivering Best Practice in the Public Realm

There is a range of policy and guidance that sets out principles for the successful and sustainable design of public realm in our cities. Such guidance has reinforced the importance of city centres as the focus for social and economic life.

The importance of providing a high quality pedestrian environment to complement the diverse retail, commercial and leisure attractions in city centres is embedded within best practice.

Best practice and CMK-specific principles should guide all future design development proposals and projects within the public realm. A number of relevant principles can be drawn from best practice documents to form the basis of all new proposals within the CMK public realm. These are set out in Table 1.

Drawing these principles together and applying the new 'family' of materials and furniture should offer the quality and co-ordinated approach to the public realm that is sought by this Handbook and is underpinned by the CMK Development Framework.



Animation and visual interest

- **Design of the highest quality** – not compromised for isolated development or operational imperatives.
- **A unifying design approach** – where there is consistency and co-ordination of approach, with room for richness and imagination in ‘special areas’.
- **Improving the pedestrian environment** – with safe, accessible routes and interest at street level.
- **Easy movement and access for all** – with priority given to walking, cycling and public transport.
- **Creating diversity, variety and richness** – where there is a choice of routes, spaces and places to visit or move through – giving people reasons to come to CMK and return.
- **Appropriate and varied scale** – which adds interest and defines character, from informal walkways to grand boulevards. CMK will benefit from a network of public spaces and routes that vary in scale and activity, from the smallest courtyard to large civic and ceremonial spaces.
- **Clear orientation and connections** – encouraging people to investigate and aiding navigation through landmark buildings and structures, particularly at intersections; together with signage, colour, lighting and public art.
- **Creating memorable places and spaces** – with a streetscape punctuated with memorable places and spaces each offering a distinct aspect and atmosphere.
- **Meeting the needs of all groups in society** – meeting the requirements of a wide range of people, including the young and old, visitors and residents and special user groups.
- **Removing clutter** – ensuring that any new elements form part of a ‘family’, and are of high quality, placed and designed to meet aesthetic and functional standards.
- **Animation and visual interest** – with active frontages, art, lighting and events focussed on key pedestrian routes and destinations.
- **Integrating Public Art** - inviting the vision, creativity and skills of artists makes spaces distinctive by responding to the site, and the people who use and engage with it.
- **Designing a safe environment** – where all streets and open spaces (whether publicly or privately owned) should be overlooked and bordered by frontages and active uses to provide natural surveillance of the public realm. Opportunities for casual surveillance should be created through the sensitive positioning of building entrances and design of access routes, car parking, cycle routes, etc.
- **Creating a welcoming microclimate** – where spaces need to be sensitively located and carefully designed to capture the sun, provide shelter from the wind and encourage active use.
- **Ongoing management and maintenance** – highest standards of management and maintenance will be met for all aspects of CMK public realm.
- **A sustainable approach** – where materials and maintenance regimes are selected to minimise adverse impacts on the environment.
- **A collaborative approach** – all stakeholders working together, will help meet the aspirations for a high quality public realm with Homes and Communities Agency and Milton Keynes Council working in partnership to co-ordinate the design and decision making process.

Table 1 - Best practice principles for public realm in CMK

how we move around the public realm

4

For CMK to continue to grow and prosper it is essential that all types of user can freely move around and access all areas of the city centre.

This section describes how design can influence how people move around CMK's public realm. It considers three main issues:

- as the CMK Development Framework is delivered, important elements of the access and movement strategy can be promoted and delivered;
- the interaction of access and movement with the public realm in public spaces, streets and boulevards and at road junctions; and
- in order to promote a fair, equitable and sustainable transport system within CMK the specific needs of different individuals or groups including pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users and motorists can be addressed.

4.1 Delivering the CMK Development Framework

The CMK Development Framework delivers a number of important changes within the city centre that will influence how individuals move around now and in the future:

- as building frontages come forward along Avebury Boulevard and Silbury Boulevard, the street scene will change significantly, the amount of surface parking will reduce and pedestrians will interact with other modes;
- new multi-storey car parks will be located at the periphery of CMK. As these facilities develop, motorists will complete their journey on foot from these car parks to their end destination. CMK should feel less dominated by car movements;
- an improved public transport system will be created linking the mainline railway station to key work, shopping and leisure locations, and will provide excellent interchange facilities with all other city-wide public transport services. The aspiration is that these improvements will contribute to increased use of public transport in the future; and
- at a national and local level there is a desire to encourage more sustainable forms of travel. A number of further initiatives, including a Cycling Strategy and Wayfinding Strategy will support walking and cycling trips.



Surface parking will be replaced and facilities for other modes improved

4.2 How Access and Movement Interact with the Public Realm

Wherever practical, the palette of public realm components (set out in the Handbook Part B) should be located with general regard to all traffic and safety regulations, whilst providing a clean and uncluttered approach to design and place-making.

Part B also provides examples of how detailed design and movement considerations should be approached in relation to public spaces, typical streets and boulevards and at different junctions.

A further key aspect of how access and movement can influence the long term sustainability and presentation of the physical environment in CMK is through a coordinated approach to the management and maintenance of the public realm. Key issues and considerations are set out in Part B.



A clean and uncluttered approach to design and place making

4.3 The Different Users of CMK

In access and movement terms there are four primary users of CMK:

- pedestrians;
- cyclists;
- public transport users; and
- motorists.

Pedestrians

Pedestrians are currently segregated from traffic by underpasses, overbridges and the design of the Boulevards and Gates. In the future, less constrained pedestrian movement will be encouraged to increase activity on streets in a safe manner and this will be supported by:

- improved wayfinding and orientation that promotes key walking routes and pedestrian access into and through CMK;
- the introduction of multi-storey car parks on the periphery of CMK and the reduction of surface parking;
- the promotion of safe at-grade crossing points at appropriate junctions; and
- the introduction of an improved public transport system within CMK with regular stopping points.



Current pedestrian access through CMK



Cycling will be promoted on all roads within CMK
within CMK

Cyclists

Cycling will be encouraged and promoted in the following ways:

- improved wayfinding and orientation that promotes key cycling routes;
- streets designed to restrain vehicle speeds and create cycle friendly environments; and
- provision of improved cycle parking facilities at appropriate locations throughout CMK.

While cycling will be promoted on all roads within CMK, north-south and east-west routes will be identified for cyclists wishing to cross CMK (Figure 4).

Public Transport

Public transport, which includes buses, coaches and taxis, will be promoted and encouraged with the specific intention of significantly increasing the number of people using public transport on a regular basis.

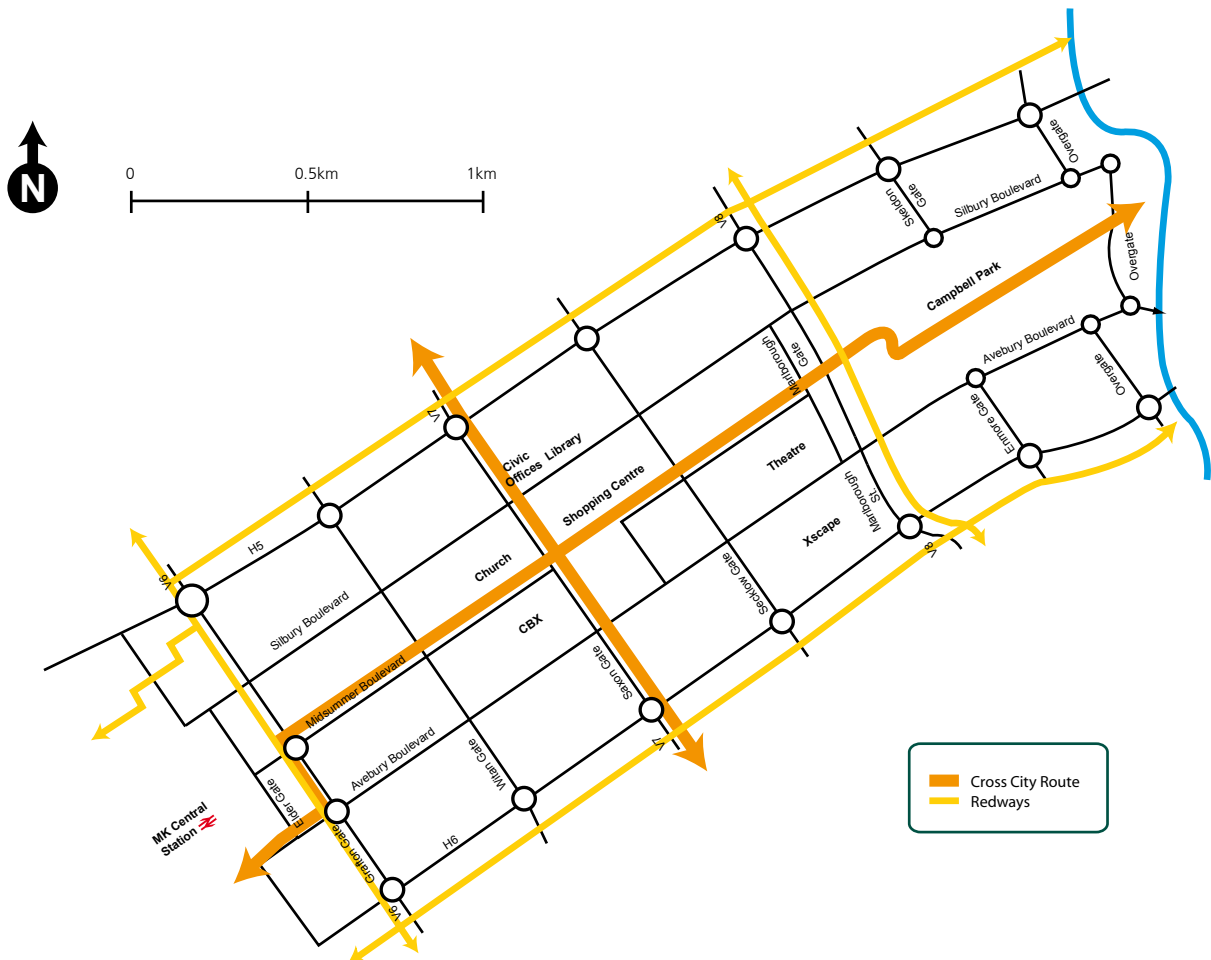


Figure 4 - Cycling Framework

A framework for bus movement has been identified giving priority to buses over other vehicular traffic on a main route between the Station and the Central area. Waiting facilities along this route will be improved. On other streets, a variety of bus priority techniques are proposed.

Taxi facilities are proposed in the following areas:

- Station Square; and
- Central CMK

Coach pick-up and set down will serve a number of key locations in CMK.

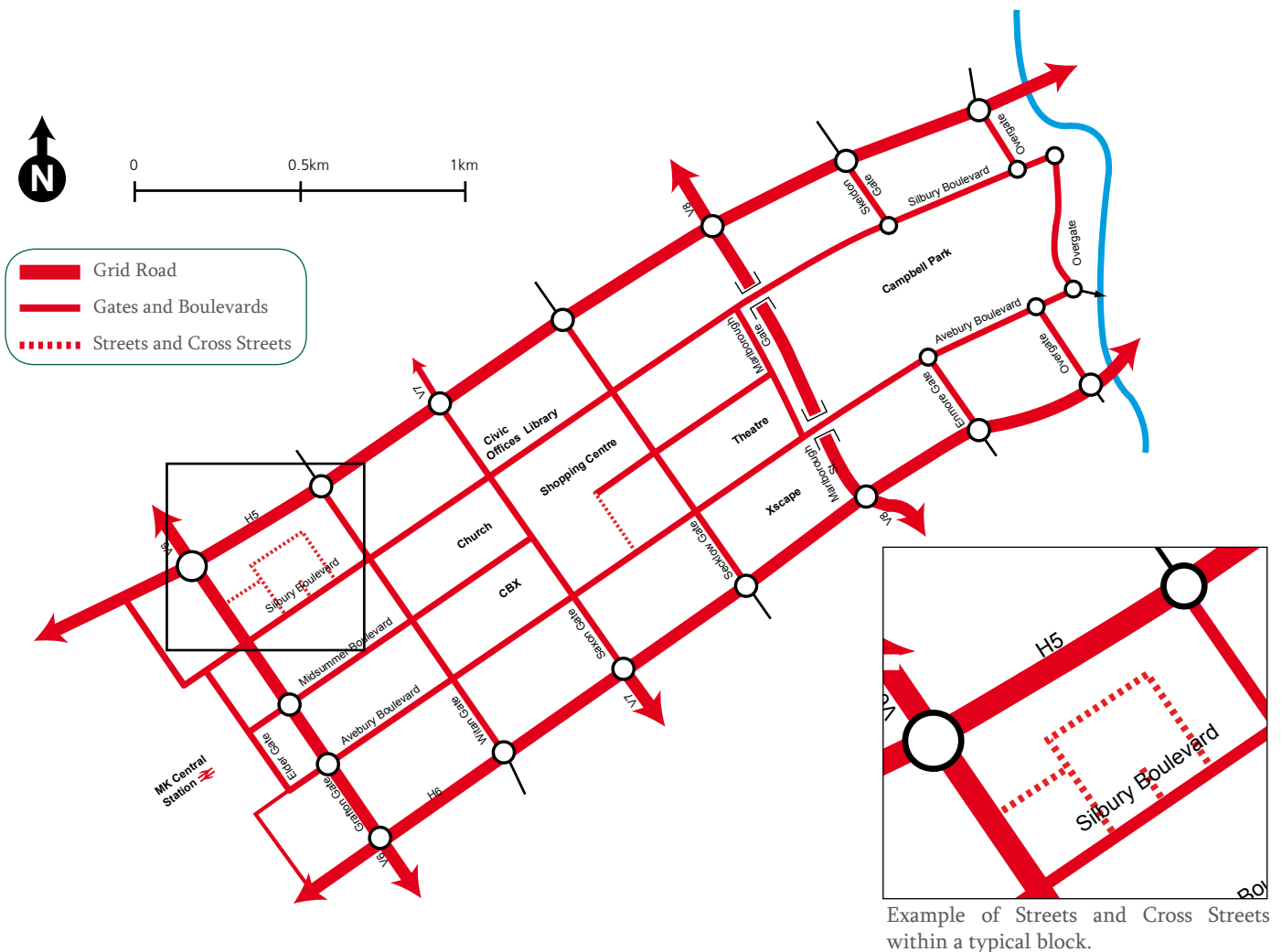


Figure 5 - Street Hierarchy Framework

Motorists

For the economic prosperity of CMK to be maintained and enhanced it is vital to continue to provide good facilities for motorists. While the needs of other users are being addressed, motorists will also find that their experience of CMK will change.

Cross CMK movements by car will be discouraged by locating most car parking close to the gateways into CMK. Variable message signs will provide real-time information on the availability of parking and reduce unnecessary driving looking for a space. Short stay on-street parking, disabled parking and loading will be accommodated on nearside spaces or bays.

Table 2 summarises the access and movement principles.

- **CMK to be accessible to all** - all visitors will be able to enter and exit with clear directions and signing. Road space will be sensibly shared between the different modes of travel and will be equally accessible to those with impaired mobility.
- **Modes to be integrated and sustainable** - the different modes of travel will be integrated through appropriate signage, routeing advice and travel information.
- **An environment that is easily navigable** - all visitors will have information provided to ensure that they successfully navigate CMK. High density areas, gradients, crossing points and landscaping will be appropriately designed to encourage use.
- **Safety is a priority** - at all points in the design process the relevant guidance, regulations and design standards will be considered. All materials and equipment will be maintained to a high standard.
- **Supporting growth** – as CMK develops the transport system will expand to accommodate new users and offer appropriate levels of service to ensure that investors are attracted to CMK.
- **Promotion of non car modes** – public transport services will allow interchange between services and modes, and provide a flexible and responsive service to attract long term patronage.

Table 2 - Access and movement principles

4.4 Utilities

The principles for the servicing of utility sites in CMK still follow those laid down during the city's establishment in 1974, with all being routed within a 'primary corridor' along each Boulevard's central reservation. Individual sites are serviced by branches off the 'corridor' typically at the position of the Portes Cochere.

Alternate Portes Cochere incorporate a utilities plant room in which gas governors, telecoms and electrical switchgear for Public Lighting are housed. Developments may also be serviced by other routes, for example along the Gate footpaths.

The permanent servicing of new sites will be by underground distribution and it is essential that co-ordination of this activity is undertaken by the developer in close liaison with all stakeholders, and in particular Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and Milton Keynes Council (MKC), from planning stage to implementation.

Where new developments occur and Boulevard frontage 'infilling' is undertaken, the Portes Cochere will be displaced. Developers are required to provide accommodation for all utilities apparatus which are presently contained in Portes Cochere plant rooms within public areas.



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