

- 2.7 The master plan, approved in 1967, provided for a city of 250,000 people with employment to serve a wider population drawn from the surrounding countryside. It proposed a great grid of city streets which gently followed the landscape and created pockets of development land roughly 1km by 1km in size (see Figure 4).
- 2.8 The founding principles were beautifully simple and brief:
- » Opportunity and freedom of choice;
  - » Easy movement and access, and good communications;
  - » Balance and variety;
  - » An attractive city;
  - » Public awareness and participation; and
  - » Efficient and imaginative use of resources.

## CMK Master Plan

- 2.9 The master plan for CMK, like the rest of the city (see Figure 4), was for low density, mixed development with generous landscaping.
- 2.10 Safe, convenient access was vital and engineers and architects worked closely together to create a robust infrastructure. Unusually, the infrastructure was more important than the buildings, which they expected would come and go over time. The infrastructure was to be the eternal skeleton, muscles, arteries and nervous system of the entire urban body, bringing it to life.
- 2.11 The plan created an exceptionally safe, spacious, flexible and relaxed way to keep goods, people and services flowing, as the centre grew.
- 2.12 Parking and pedestrian movement was at ground level. CMK was one of the first city centres designed for the needs of parents with prams, the elderly and disabled, providing 'barrier-free' access for all, using underpasses

and kerbs at a level with pavements in parking areas and along slow streets. Even the cross-city grid roads sink, as they pass the city centre, to create continuous ground level footpaths connecting surrounding estates.

- 2.13 Delivery trucks had separate service bays, away from the main roads, and pedestrians were carefully segregated from traffic. They used a network of safe, shallow underpasses, and numerous covered walkways or 'porte cocheres' which flagged up safe places to cross the tree-lined Boulevards.
- 2.14 Milton Keynes, with a planned population of 250,000 or thereabouts, was always envisaged to have a 'sub-regional' function within the South East Region.
- 2.15 From the beginning, CMK was designed to fulfil four roles simultaneously, as a:
- » Local centre;
  - » District centre;
  - » City centre; and
  - » Sub-regional / Regional centre.

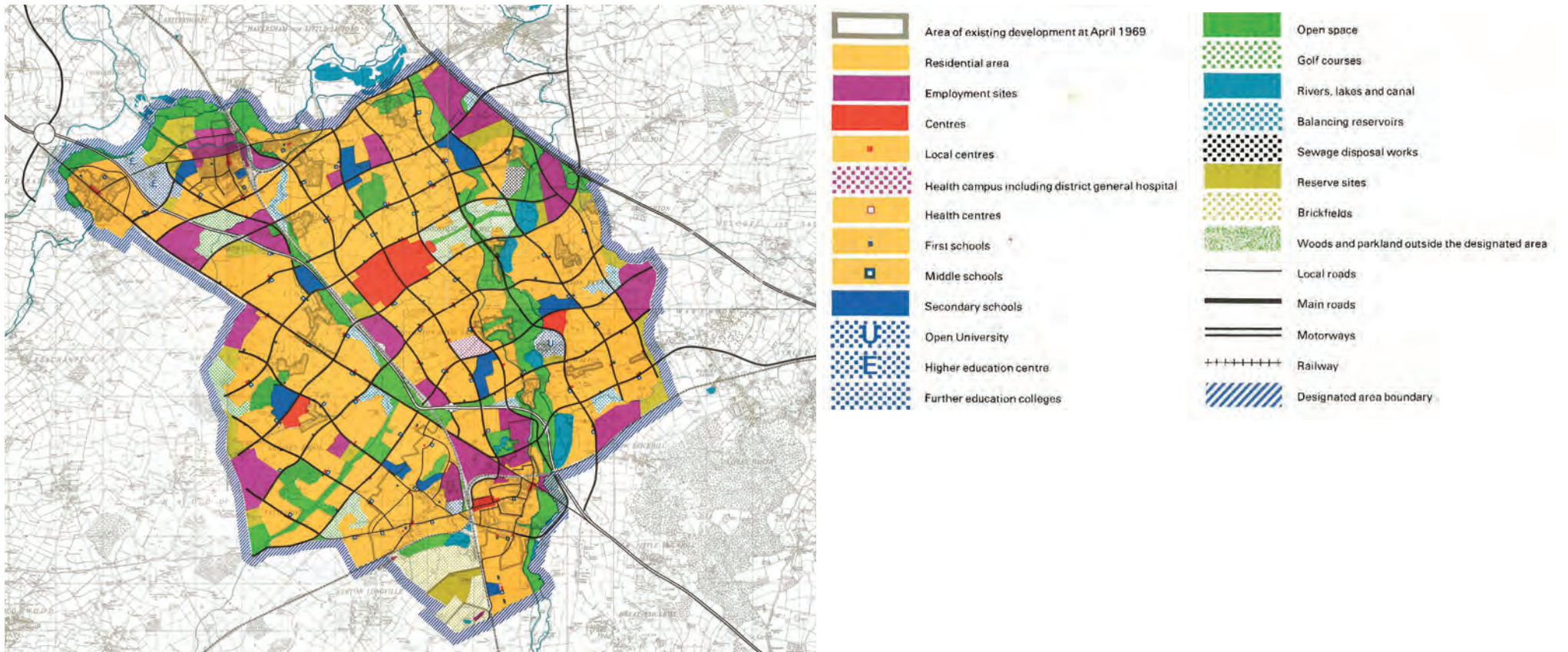


Figure 4: Master plan for Milton Keynes, 1967

## CMK as a Local Centre

- 2.16 The residents of CMK, just as in any neighbourhood, need a number of facilities within easy walking distance of their home, such as local shops, local services, a local health centre, pubs and places to eat. Only primary schools were proposed for CMK, but none have been built due to its low population of children and spare capacity in schools surrounding CMK.

## CMK as a District Centre

- 2.17 While 'Central Area Housing' and the CMK Blocks between them were planned to provide for local needs, taken together the population would be able to support some activities on the scale of District Centres in Milton Keynes: major supermarket shopping, recreation facilities such as swimming pools and sports halls, places of worship, large health centres, garages and petrol filling stations, and larger restaurants.

## CMK as a City Centre

- 2.18 It was always understood that the new city would need a central place for city-scale institutions, major social and civic gatherings, and for the highest possible level of shopping which would meet the needs of people from all over MK and its hinterland. This was the place for the traditional attractions and functions of town and city centres to be accommodated - the central place.
- 2.19 As the centre for the whole city, this was obviously the place for the town hall, major civic institutions such as the Library, the city church Christ the Cornerstone, the main railway station, law courts, major government offices, the Milton Keynes Theatre and Gallery, and the central park (Campbell Park). It was also the appropriate place for concentrations of bars and nightclubs, restaurants and all types of spaces and places for social gathering, and for the major city open air market.
- 2.20 For office developments, CMK provides a more urban choice than is available in the wide variety of employment areas around the city. The proximity of Milton Keynes Central Station remains an advantage.

- 2.21 Expert advice in the early 1970's was that CMK could support about 50,000 square metres of shopping. In an act of bravado - the Development Corporation had the vision of 'city' now firmly in its grip and its aspirations for the new city centre were that it should be a place of national or even international prominence - it was decided to create arcaded streets and squares of high quality shopping of twice the scale recommended by the experts - 100,000 square metres. The Development Corporation built the largest shopping building in Europe at the time, an astonishing building which English Heritage listed in 2010. Envisaged as the 'covered' high street of CMK, the building offered an interesting, idealistic mix of shopping, leisure, internal landscaping and civic space.
- 2.22 The Shopping Centre was critical to MK's success, both at home and abroad. *'It was visible proof of commitment. It helped us sell the whole city to big industrialists. We had the prospectus, the plan, and we were delivering it too.'*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Bob Hill, Commercial Director, MKDC.

## CMK as a Regional Centre

- 2.23 In 2003 Milton Keynes became one of four strategic growth areas for the South East Region. The same year, the 'Oxford-Cambridge Arc' - with Milton Keynes and Cranfield University at its fulcrum - was promoted as having intellectual and commercial connectivity and productivity of national importance.
- 2.24 It was now officially recognised that Milton Keynes was a place of regional growth potential and national importance. CMK could not be considered as the centre of a self-contained new town, but formed the heart of a project of very great significance.
- 2.25 A Sub-Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) was developed for an area covering (clockwise) Milton Keynes, Aylesbury, Bicester, Brackley, Daventry, Northampton, Kettering, Wellingborough, Corby, Bedford and Luton. As the largest town in the cluster by far, and with the most diverse and strongest economy, and also centrally located and with a positive attitude, MK now had the opportunity to assert itself and grow to be a true regional centre. More intense development was planned for CMK.
- 2.26 These officially planned strategic growth schemes ran into local political difficulties. There was a strong feeling at the time that now that Milton Keynes was emerging as a regional city, its city centre land should not be used up to build blocks of flats that could be more readily accommodated elsewhere in MK. The land in CMK might be needed for regional scale activities, such as major office developments, government administration and local civic buildings, commerce and leisure attractions.
- 2.27 The local political difficulties which stalled the plan for Milton Keynes to grow to the scale of being a regional centre, as envisaged in the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Sub-Regional Spatial Strategy, have been followed by national political difficulties and the economic recession. However it has emerged that all local planning authorities are required to provide not only the homes and jobs that are needed in their area, but also to co-operate with neighbouring councils to provide for growth to aid the national recovery (this is set out in the *National Planning Policy Framework*). In the absence of hard data it seems reasonable to assume that further expansion of Milton Keynes will be planned.
- 2.28 The Regional Spatial Strategy of *The South East Plan*, which was recently revoked on 25 March 2013, identified a number of 'Regional Hubs' of which Milton Keynes was one.



- 2.29 The network of 22 regional hubs varied in precise function and scale but they were intended to be a focus for:
- » investment in multi-modal transport infrastructure both within and between hubs, supported by initiatives to re-balance travel patterns through behavioural change;
  - » other new infrastructure, including health, education, social and green infrastructure, and public services;
  - » new investment in economic activity and regeneration, including skills and training investment;
  - » new market and affordable housing, to support the creation of higher density 'living centres;' and
  - » new major retail and employment development.

- 2.30 Milton Keynes was also one of the 'regional hubs' identified as being capable of stimulating prosperity, with further growth being unlocked through targeted investment in infrastructure. *The South East Plan* summarised its vision for Milton Keynes as being a major administrative and commercial centre. It was considered to have high level of access to strategic rail and road networks, and be a key interchange point between inter-regional, intra-regional and local rail services, with the scope to improve opportunities for public transport through development of the East-West rail corridor.

- 2.31 All this is in addition to what *The South East Plan* had to say about the importance of town centres in general. The priority, which nests inside what is still Government policy expressed in the *NPPF*, is to promote their vitality and viability. This is to be achieved by planning for the growth and development of existing centres through focusing development in the centres and encouraging a wide range of services in a good environment, accessible to all. Development includes business accommodation, residential, leisure, arts, culture, tourism and retail.

## The Future

- 2.32 CMK has largely fulfilled its promise of becoming a local, district and city centre. Over 30,000 people work in CMK and it attracts over 30m visitors a year. The night-time economy has grown markedly over recent years with further development likely. The latest company to relocate its headquarters here is Network Rail, bringing in 3,000 further jobs and creating more via suppliers.
- 2.33 It is certain that in preparing a plan for CMK for the next 15 years or more, CMK will achieve the status in practice and reality of being a regional centre, with all that means in terms of its scale of commercial civic and cultural functions and attractions.

2.34 It is also certain in preparing a plan for CMK, that to be successful in the long-term, 'CMK must remain true to itself.' It is the public space that is the most important 'building' of all in CMK. The public realm of CMK is its greatest achievement, providing a framework in which the buildings and activities of the city centre might come and go over time, with only the best of these given long term protection as heritage assets. It is the quality and extent of the public realm in CMK that asserts its status as a true city centre with great ambitions.



*Aerial View of CMK*

## 3. Vision, Principles & Objectives

3.1 This is the Alliance's vision for CMK:

### Our Vision

By 2026, CMK will be the dynamic centre of one of the fastest-growing regions in the South-East. It will support thousands of new jobs and wide-spread prosperity as:

- » One of the most accessible city centres in the UK, pioneering sustainable yet convenient transport choices for workers, visitors and residents;
- » The home of an expanding university, delivering innovative approaches to higher education and nurturing new business ventures in technological and creative hubs across the centre;
- » A vibrant and safe place, with an increasingly regional and national role, that welcomes, surprises and delights workers, visitors and residents alike, with a rich mix of shopping, leisure, sports, cultural and social facilities offering an exciting street life and a diverse night life;
- » An admired, prestigious city centre, with its distinctive cityscape and high quality infrastructure respected, reinforced and celebrated;
- » The home of people and organisations working to reduce their carbon footprint;
- » An inclusive place, encouraging participation and interaction, connecting people, stimulating ideas, and inspiring future generations; and
- » The centre of civic life for Milton Keynes.

### The Most Accessible City Centre

- 3.2 Ease of access to and from Milton Keynes, and above all within it, has attracted residents, investors and businesses to CMK from its beginning.
- 3.3 Everyone has benefited from the excellent infrastructure whatever their chosen mode of travel – pedestrians, cyclists, bus and train passengers, and above all car users.
- 3.4 The Plan faces up to the challenge of retaining or improving accessibility for all users, whatever their age and physical mobility, whilst growing CMK. Provision for all modes has to be improved and increased. Greater mobility by greater numbers using CMK has to be well managed.
- 3.5 The Plan requires greater accessibility by the public transport system and at the same time improving the efficiency and management of parking spaces as they proportionately reduce in number.
- 3.6 CMK has the highest numbers of car parking spaces in proportion to development of any city centre in the country. Milton Keynes also

has a car ownership rate much higher than other urban centres, comparable to affluent Rural districts<sup>6</sup>. In addition, it has the lowest number of public transport passengers. As CMK grows, it simply will not be possible to build an equivalent number of parking spaces, because land is running out and the cost of multi-storey or underground parking is high. And with unlimited parking, even our famous grid road network will become grid-locked with congestion. However, the *CMKAP* does require more parking to be delivered, as a better balance is needed between current provision and what is needed to ensure we do not hinder economic growth and prosperity in future.

- 3.7 We all make or complete our journeys on foot. CMK was designed to be easily accessible throughout for people with impaired mobility, which also makes it convenient for those with full mobility. The Plan maintains these high standards, improves on them where possible and ensures that new developments are pedestrian friendly.
- 3.8 The Plan also improves the cycling network and associated facilities for cyclists across CMK.

## A Learning City

- 3.9 City centres are places where not only trade but also the exchange of knowledge and learning takes place.
- 3.10 In the daily life of the centre, learning goes on all the time. Shop workers are trained. Apprentices are engaged. Employees go on day release to vocational courses. In nurseries and crèches, young children are stimulated and learn. And informally, we exchange news, information and understanding either face to face or through the internet.
- 3.11 Milton Keynes is the largest town in the country that is without a university for students resident in the locality (students of the Open University are taught at a distance).
- 3.12 The first steps are being taken in establishing a university for Milton Keynes, which could be a new kind of university, with learning taking place throughout the city and students being based for part of their courses in existing businesses and institutions.
- 3.13 This model for the university, with the aspiration to have 5,000 students studying locally by

2025, would complement the approach to the city centre as a whole, being a place for learning. But the University will need a home with some of the traditional facilities, such as lecture theatres, administrative offices, tutorial rooms and residential provision for students.

- 3.14 And across the centre, the Plan promotes the creation of places where formal and informal learning can take place.

## Vibrant and Safe

- 3.15 The key feature that sets apart the 'centre' from other parts of the city is the concentration and diversity of activities and interactions that take place there. It is the hustle and bustle of commerce, the comings and goings of people from all walks of life, the interesting things to see and do that are the essential qualities that make the heart of the city.
- 3.16 The most successful city centres have a vibrant intensity, a diverse street life and safe night life – offices, shops, restaurants, theatres, and flats all built in close proximity, creating a lively and animated place from early morning to late evening, on weekdays and at weekends.

<sup>6</sup> Milton Keynes Local Transport Plan (LTP3)



- 3.17 The 1967 plan for Milton Keynes laid out a generous area for the city centre – whilst the surrounding residential areas comprise one ‘grid square’ each, CMK comprises three grid squares, laid out as 26 ‘Blocks’ with a large central park.
- 3.18 This generous approach to the planning of CMK has provided ample space for the city centre to grow and is one of the reasons for its economic success. This approach has also produced a city centre that is three to five times larger in area than the centres of other cities of comparable population. It is this ‘spaciousness’ that is both an asset and a challenge – activities and people are spread out, making the centre more convenient to get around, yet also making it feel less busy and animated than other city centres.
- 3.19 In understanding this challenge, we can better address it. The Plan aims to increase and concentrate activity along the front of key pedestrian routes, whilst bringing a greater diversity of uses into every Block. Encouraging and enticing pedestrians along routes that feel lively and look interesting will better connect the different parts of the city centre, bringing ever more activity and interaction onto the street, which helps create a strong sense of place.

## Distinct and Admired

- 3.20 The distinguishing feature of CMK is the extent, layout and quality of the public realm. No other city centre in the UK has a complete grid of boulevards, gates and streets designed and built as the framework within which buildings sit and activities take place. It is a unique framework for prosperity – a city centre like no other.
- 3.21 Campbell Park is one of the largest and finest contemporary urban parks in Europe. Across the city centre, the high quality of generous landscaping surprises and delights workers, visitors, and residents alike. It too makes the city more attractive to potential investors and new businesses.
- 3.22 Some of the infrastructure is beginning to show its age – it will need to be repaired and arrangements put in place for its proper maintenance.

- 3.23 The listing of the Shopping Building (trading as ‘thecentre:mk’) further demonstrates that CMK has made a significant contribution to contemporary British urban design and architecture. Public art has also played an important role in the development of CMK and is a major feature of CMK’s distinctiveness.
- 3.24 The Plan creates more places that encourage animation and will support and expand the existing programme of cultural activities, thus enlivening the city centre’s public spaces.

## A Social and Inclusive Place

- 3.25 The city centre will be the place where people connect with other people - businesses with their customers and other businesses, friends meeting friends, families celebrating together.
- 3.26 City centres are places of communication, interaction, trade and creativity. The unconventional and new are to be encouraged, especially amongst the young. What was Bill Gates doing in his garage in Seattle in 1972?

- 3.27 The Alliance is looking for investment by the development industry, but is also examining innovative ways of creating places which will allow the free reign of ideas.
- 3.28 Citizens of Milton Keynes and visitors are to be welcomed to CMK: this is an open, curious and friendly society that helps people from all backgrounds to realise their potential.
- 3.29 We call it a social place, which creates opportunities for all, has welcoming places in which people interact and offers ways in which ideas can be developed.
- 3.30 It is all too easy to create a culture that rejects minorities and the less fortunate and pushes them elsewhere to pursue their dreams. In CMK, we will invest in creating an inclusive place.

## Key Principles

- 3.31 The proposals and policies in the *CMK Alliance Plan* have been informed not only by the vision for the city centre, but also by a set of key principles and values. Underpinning the Plan, these principles provide benchmarks against which its implementation can be assessed.

### 1. To maintain and enhance the city centre as a distinctive place by:

- » Promoting the formal geometry of the grid and its classic infrastructure;
- » Enhancing its green landscaped setting and linkages (the 'Green Frame'); and
- » Protecting its tree lined Boulevards and Gates.

### 2. To be sensitive in the approach to development by:

- » Understanding and responding to the unique qualities of CMK;
- » Recognising the value of outstanding twentieth century architecture of CMK;
- » Where appropriate, refurbishing and improving the building stock to be sustainable; and
- » Understanding and responding to the context of CMK.

### 3. To manage the growth of CMK to complement and enhance MK as a whole by:

- » Ensuring that the economic benefits created by the growth of CMK benefit the rest of Milton Keynes; and
- » Complementing the distinct role of the older towns and district centres.

### 4. To ensure ease and choice of access for all by:

- » Using a multi-modal approach to respond to the travel needs of all CMK users;
- » Improving the pedestrian experience;
- » Improving the quality of pedestrian and cycling connections into CMK from surrounding areas;
- » Developing high quality public transport interchange facilities;
- » Recognising the importance of the car to the city's success; and
- » Taking an holistic approach to the management of city centre parking responding to the needs of different users.

**5. To embrace diversity by:**

- » Reflecting and responding to the multi-cultural diversity of MK;
- » Encouraging more varied patronage of CMK; and
- » Responding to the needs of all residents.

**6. To recognise the importance of green and open spaces in CMK by:**

- » Promoting and improving key civic spaces and focal points;
- » Making a clear distinction between public and private spaces;
- » Encouraging greater animation of public and green spaces; and
- » Recognising Campbell Park as one of the finest urban parks in Europe.

**7. To make CMK a social place by:**

- » Promoting a safe and secure city centre through good design;
- » Diversifying and integrating the commercial, residential, retail, cultural and leisure offer; and
- » Encouraging social interaction through a high quality public realm and places and spaces for community activity.

**8. To be respected and admired as an important city centre by:**

- » Achieving high quality architecture that is a dignified addition to CMK;
- » Promoting CMK as the focal point of an international city;
- » Promoting CMK as having a unique story to tell and as an attraction for tourists; and
- » Promoting CMK as the prime location for headquarters of major companies.

**9. To foster creativity, learning and success by:**

- » Providing opportunities in CMK for lifelong learning;
- » Supporting the initiatives to establish a university in CMK;
- » Focusing on the development of the knowledge based economy; and
- » Ensuring that CMK is at the leading edge of information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure.

**Strategic Objectives**

3.32 Preparation of this business neighbourhood plan has been guided by the following strategic objectives for CMK in policy CS7 of the Council's adopted *Core Strategy*:

1. Achieve higher quality buildings and spaces around them, with greater attention to human scale and more detail and variety of uses within proposals;
2. Promote a higher density of development in appropriate locations;
3. Achieve growing visitor numbers from outside the city to further enhance CMK's status as a regional and national destination for shopping, culture and leisure;
4. Offer a range of travel options which collectively will support an increase in visitor numbers to the city centre and increased average travel distances;
5. Develop as an attractive focus for all the residents of the Borough, whilst recognising its role as a District Centre for most of the surrounding estates;
6. Encourage greater access to and within the area by walking, cycling and public transport;

7. Provide more pedestrian -friendly routes and spaces between new and existing buildings and public areas;
8. Improve integration between the facilities and defined quarters of the area;
9. Accommodate the expansion needs of tertiary Higher Education such as the University Campus Milton Keynes (UCMK);
10. Offer an attractive urban living environment for the residents of current and future dwellings.

- 3.33 There are also quantitative objectives that MK's adopted Core Strategy has set as CMK's capacity for the growth in the number of new dwellings and office and retail floor space over the next 15 years. These are:
- 180,000 m<sup>2</sup> gross floor area for offices;
  - 110,000 m<sup>2</sup> gross floor area for retail; and
  - 5,000 new dwellings.

3.34 These objectives reflect the projected need for more jobs and the demand for more goods that will come from the growing population in the wider Milton Keynes borough such as in the Eastern and Western Expansion Areas. they also reflect the desire, as expressed in the *Core Strategy*, to meet these needs with a weighting towards CMK as a way of identifying the city centre.

3.35 As is true of all Neighbourhood Development Plans, the *CMK Alliance Plan 2026* must generally conform to the local authority's *Core Strategy* or Local Plan, so MK's adopted *Core Strategy* has been used to guide the quantum of development and the indicative land use proposals in this Plan.



*High quality architecture and facilities for new investment*





## 4. Opportunities & Challenges

### Opportunity One

#### To support the development of an internationally-recognised university

- 4.1 The first steps are being taken to establish a university for Milton Keynes in CMK. The aspiration is for a new kind of university, with learning taking place throughout the city: students could be based for part of their courses in businesses and institutions.
- 4.2 Such a model for a university complements the Plan's approach to the city centre as being a 'smart city' with a flexible knowledge-based economy. But the university will need a home with some of the traditional facilities, such as lecture theatres, administrative offices, tutorial rooms and residential provision for students.
- 4.3 The Plan seeks to support this endeavour in several ways – by reserving 'strategic' sites within the city centre for its possible expansion; by highlighting the need for a wider leisure offer for young people, from small venues for live bands to new sports facilities; and by planning for more convenient and inexpensive transport options within the city – pedestrian and cycle routes, local buses and shuttles.

### Opportunity Two

#### To transform the primary shopping area into the heart of Milton Keynes

*A place to go and be in, to be anonymous or dress up for; to be able to watch the world go by; to see and be seen; a place to find out what is going on and to participate in events.<sup>7</sup>*

- 4.4 The city centre is often perceived as just a large shopping centre, offering multiple chain store brands and franchised restaurants, with activities concentrated inside private malls rather than outside public spaces. Residents and visitors seem to go to the centre for specific shopping needs or leisure purposes but not simply as the place 'to see and be seen,' the place to meet friends and colleagues, to simply enjoy and experience the heart of city life.

- 4.5 CMK is economically successful, and the CMKAP supports the adopted *Core Strategy's* goal of expanding it as a regional shopping centre. But the consumer dimension tends to dominate the civic and social dimensions of life in CMK. There is a need to create a stronger sense of place, a vital and exciting heart to the city.
- 4.6 In particular, there is an opportunity to transform the largely functional experience of the Primary Shopping Area into something that contributes to a deeper social and community sense of belonging in Milton Keynes. There is an opportunity to create an exceptional public space around and including Midsummer Boulevard north of the Point and west of Market Square, and for it to become a destination in its own right, with a diverse and varied offer for people of all ages and all purses. Part of this transformation includes diversifying the retail offer, to include smaller, independent shops, and to expand the number and breadth of cultural facilities. This will build on the success of the MK Theatre and tempt more visitors further along Midsummer to the MK Gallery, and the delights of Campbell Park beyond.

<sup>7</sup> *The Plan for Milton Keynes, 1970*

## Opportunity Three

### To leverage localism to help drive delivery of the Plan's aspirations

4.7 One of the problems in driving growth and prosperity in CMK is that no one person or agency has actively championed CMK consistently over an extended period of time. Various CMK boards and bodies have come and gone, each leaving a legacy of plans and 'lessons learnt.' English Partnerships, now the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), has controlled most of the undeveloped land in CMK, and it has been the main driver of development over the past ten years, but this has often focussed on dwellings. Most of HCA's land-holdings in CMK were sold to MK Council and then transferred to the Council's wholly-owned subsidiary, Milton Keynes Development Partnership, at the beginning of 2013.

4.8 The Localism Act (2011) introduced a series of measures to promote a substantial and lasting shift in power away from central government and towards local people. One measure is Neighbourhood Planning which gives new rights and powers to local communities to have a greater say in planning decisions that affect them.

4.9 The preparation of the *CMK Business Neighbourhood Plan* has brought together an engaged and committed alliance of people representing local residents and businesses, in partnership with the Council. Localism provides an opportunity for the local community to more actively monitor and follow-up on the results of the Plan, for the benefit of businesses and residents alike.

## Challenge One

### To retain accessibility whilst transitioning to more sustainable modes of transport

4.10 Our biggest challenge is that CMK was designed as the centre for a city of 250,000 and Milton Keynes is now approaching this

population and is projected to reach 300,000 by the end of the plan period. So CMK is beginning to reach its originally planned capacity for car movements in and out of the city centre.

4.11 In addition, the adopted *Core Strategy* has set ambitious targets for future growth of CMK - to increase the number of jobs and visitors by 50% and more than double the number of dwellings during the plan period. This planned intensification of CMK increases the challenge of retaining CMK's accessibility by all modes of transport, including by car.

4.12 The long-term need to establish a significant shift from cars to more sustainable public transport is complicated by the distributed, low-density infrastructure of Milton Keynes as a city. Many workers are also commuting from outside the Borough to jobs in CMK, making public transport even less convenient for these workers.

4.13 Maintaining accessibility whilst transitioning to more sustainable modes of transport is the most important challenge for the *CMK Alliance Plan 2026*.



## Challenge Two

### To balance short-term development pressures with long-term economic growth potential

*'What we are doing is city building, not property development'<sup>8</sup>*

- 4.14 The second biggest challenge for the *CMKAP* is to balance short-term development pressures with the long-term growth potential of the city centre. This has become an even greater challenge now the remaining undeveloped land in CMK is owned by Milton Keynes Development Partnership. In an effort to recoup the Council's investment, there is a risk that 'any' development is considered better than none – that the bird in hand is better than two in the bush.
- 4.15 On the one hand, the *CMKAP* seeks to encourage development through a flexible mixed-use approach throughout most of the city centre. On the other hand, the Plan aims to reserve key sites of strategic importance and to protect CMK's unique infrastructure and public realm.

- 4.16 Two prime blocks are reserved by the Plan for proposals that have strategic value for the city – these represent some of the best undeveloped sites in the whole of the South-East, and offer exceptional opportunities for transforming the business and institutional make-up in the city. It will take courage to turn down good, but not great developments in the shorter-term, in anticipation of greater possibilities to come.
- 4.17 As well, CMK's infrastructure is at risk of short-term development pressure – for example, the rows of public parking lining the perimeters of CMK's Blocks. The temptation is great, both to developers and those preferring a traditional 'city street,' to build over the perimeter car parking and bring the 'building lines' forward, closer to the Boulevards and Gates. Yet this perimeter parking and the set-back building lines are part of the spaciousness of CMK which contributes to the quality of the place. This surface level parking can also be re-purposed in future for public benefit in other ways - for rows of cycle hire stands and electric cars for hire, for new public transport corridors, interchanges and stations, or for simply landscaped 'linear parks' for the enjoyment of workers, visitors and residents alike.

## Challenge Three

### To provide flexibility for development whilst protecting CMK's heritage

- 4.18 The public domain of CMK is its greatest achievement, providing a framework in which the buildings and activities of the city centre might come and go over time, with only the best of these given long term protection as heritage assets.
- 4.19 But it is a public domain that surprisingly has proved in need of constant defence against destruction and degradation: neglect and poor quality maintenance, and the chipping away at its unusual features by officials and developers who have not learned to appreciate its purpose or understood its significance. It is its very difference from everywhere else in England - the fact that it is 'other' - that is both its strength and vulnerability.
- 4.20 During the past ten years, residents, landowners and developers have wasted much time and effort in conflict over policies and plans that sought to change CMK into something it isn't - a traditional city centre.

<sup>8</sup> David Lock, Town Planner, CMK Alliance Steering Group member



- 4.21 The third challenge for the *CMK Alliance Plan* is to protect CMK's distinctive identity and quality of place, whilst providing appropriate flexibility to future development opportunities.
- 4.22 As custodians of the public realm for future generations, we bear great responsibility for decisions that alter the fabric and structure of our amazing city centre or that allow public space to be sold into private ownership. The challenge is to dispel the misconception that economic growth and development are held back by protecting the public realm and infrastructure. With almost 50 hectares (120 acres) of undeveloped and under-developed land in CMK, the emphasis should shift to promoting CMK for its high quality, convenient living and working, with its distinctive urban design and with a strengthened retail, leisure and cultural offer worthy of its ambitions as a regional city centre.



*Striking architecture encourages prospective businesses to the area*

## 5. Economic Strategy & Quality of Place

- 5.1 In the *Centre for Cities Outlook 2012*, Milton Keynes is identified as one of five cities to watch:

*Cities such as Milton Keynes and Aberdeen are well placed to drive the national economic recovery in this difficult economic climate... This is because of their high numbers of business start-ups, high percentage of knowledge workers and more innovative economies.*

### The Economy of Milton Keynes

- 5.2 Data from the *Centre for Cities Outlook 2012* indicate that the MK local economy was robust during a period of national economic difficulty.
- 5.3 The annual population growth rate of Milton Keynes from 2001 to 2011 remains the highest in the country (with Peterborough and Swindon close to MK's rate of 1.6%): this has been the case since the early 1970's and is predicted to continue.
- 5.4 Although the housing stock from 2010 to 2011 increased by only 1,290 dwellings, rating MK 40/63, the rate of increase of 1.3% was the highest in the UK.

- 5.5 Business start-ups per 100,000 population in Milton Keynes remain high, with MK ranked 4th in the UK, only behind London, Aberdeen and Reading. With patents running at 6.4 per 100,000 population from 2010 to 2011 (national average 4.1) MK is rated 11th nationally, or 4th after Oxford, Cambridge and Aldershot in the Greater South East.
- 5.6 The employment rate for MK from 2010 to 2011 was 74.4% (national average 70.1%) which placed the city 6th out of the 18 cities in the Greater South East. Whilst the UK private sector employment rate declined by 1.4% from 2009 to 2010, the rate for MK increased by 0.7% rating it 8th out of 18 in the Greater South East.
- 5.7 The ratio of private to public sector employment rates MK 5th out of the 63 cities in the UK.
- 5.8 The growth in average weekly earnings from 2010 to 2011 was £22 at 2010 prices, rating MK 1st out of the 64 cities in the UK.

### The Economy of CMK

- 5.9 There is little data for the economy for the city centre, let alone data comparing it with other city centres.
- 5.10 However, employment figures by sector in 2011 are available (*Local Economic Assessment*, MK Council, March 2013) – see Table 2.
- 5.11 CMK is by far the largest employment area in Milton Keynes. Its economic health has a significant impact on the city and the region. It is the focus of employment growth in Milton Keynes.
- 5.12 Whilst office based jobs comprise by far the largest percentage of jobs in CMK, other sectors are significant and should not be ignored in planning for the future, especially the retail sector.

Industry	Workers	%
Professional, scientific & technical	6100	17.84
Retail	5600	16.37
Business administration & support services	5400	15.79
Financial & insurance	4100	11.99
Information & communication	2800	8.19
Accommodation & food services	2700	7.89
Transport & storage	2300	6.73
Public administration & defence	1900	5.56
Arts, entertainment, recreation	1500	4.39
Health	600	1.75
Property	500	1.46
Wholesale and Motor trades		0.88
Construction	200	0.58
Education	200	0.58
<b>Total</b>	<b>34,200</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 2: CMK Employment by Sector, 2011<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Source: ONS - Business Register and Employment Survey

- 5.13 This economic success is a tribute to the original master plan of Milton Keynes and to the energy and creativity of those who have chosen to live and work here. The following factors have been particularly important:
- » **Accessibility:** Milton Keynes is both well placed between London and Birmingham, Oxford and Cambridge, and its grid road network make it the most accessible city by car in the UK;
  - » **Investment:** the creation of a publicly funded infrastructure for the city created a framework within which private sector investment has flourished;
  - » **A distinctive place:** the unconventional grid layout and extensive landscaping provide a convenience and quality of life that attracts both investment and workers;
  - » **A pioneering spirit:** the new city has attracted people of energy, creativity and aspiration, helping to build an open, engaged and collaborative society;

- » **A strong community and voluntary sector:** for a new place, voluntary organisations have been established in unusually large numbers, helping build communities and teaching new skills; and
- » **Public and private partnership:** a history from the early days of close working between the two sectors.

5.14 The six priorities of the Milton Keynes Council's *Economic Development Strategy 2011* are:

- » **Diverse and competitive knowledge based economy:** Create an environment that will foster business and employment growth within a diverse, more knowledge based and competitive economy by encouraging innovation, enterprise and skills improvement;
- » **Economic regeneration:** Improve access to training and job opportunities, especially for those with no skills or low skill levels, to provide greater opportunities for individuals to obtain sustainable employment;

- » **Skills and learning:** Improve the overall skills and qualifications profile of the resident population through education and training provision, to ensure that the skills of the resident population are able to meet the needs of employers, especially in relation to higher level skills and the development of the University Centre Milton Keynes;
- » **Articulating a compelling 'MK Offer':** Promote Milton Keynes as a premier location for inward investment and as a visitor destination;
- » **Business support:** Encourage business growth through focused interventions such as support for innovation, assistance for start-ups and ensuring an appropriate range of commercial space is available; and
- » **Enabling infrastructure:** Create, maintain and improve the appropriate infrastructure for growth, especially in relation to transport and digital infrastructure.

5.15 The *CMK Alliance Plan* is focused on these priorities.<sup>10</sup>

## Quality of Place

5.16 A 2010<sup>9</sup> study by the London School of Economics identified a strong link between skilled workers and attractive, distinctive cities. The study found that:

*Human capital, quality of life and quality of place agendas have merged with the knowledge economy agenda.... Superior quality of life has acted as a magnet for attracting international talent and innovative companies.*

5.17 CMK has a strong identify or 'brand' as a place, and the *CMKAP* recognises and supports CMK's unique public realm as a key way to differentiate our city from others.

5.18 The investment potential of almost 50 hectares (120 acres) of land in CMK will be promoted by re-establishing a clear framework for further development. The indicative proposed land uses favour investment in offices, retail and leisure, generating a mix of employment opportunities for both high and low-skilled workers. The Plan places these employment opportunities in the context of a rich and diverse offer of cultural, community and sports provision, attractive to employers and employees alike.

<sup>10</sup> [http://aws1.cloud.globalmetros Summit.net/media/nue/2010\\_NUE\\_PolicyLessons\\_gmm.pdf](http://aws1.cloud.globalmetros Summit.net/media/nue/2010_NUE_PolicyLessons_gmm.pdf)



## 6. Spatial & Design Strategy

- 6.1 The spatial and design strategy set out in this chapter establishes the framework by which future development is guided to contribute to the vision and principles of the Plan. The general and site specific policies that flow from this strategy are defined in Chapter 8 (General Policies) and Chapter 9 (Site Specific Policies). Indicative land uses are shown in Chapter 11 (Proposals Plan).
- 6.2 The challenge in preparing the Plan is to provide the flexibility that will encourage further investment and development in CMK, whilst firstly, protecting existing and future investors and developers from poorly considered and low quality interventions by others; and secondly, promoting spatial distributions of uses and specific design parameters that will complement the overall attractiveness of the city centre and secure its long-term economic viability. The CMK that has grown so successfully from nothing in 40 years is a CMK that has been most carefully designed and quality-controlled. This has given confidence to investors, developers and occupiers, and is a lesson of history that must not be overlooked.

### Flexible Land Uses and Mixed-Use

- 6.3 A key theme that underpins the spatial and design strategy is to broaden the mix of uses across CMK, and to create a finer grain of development that will widen competition and diversity and provide variety. A successful city centre needs to have a diverse street life and a safe night life, to which the intensity of use contributes together with the mixture of different uses – offices, shops, restaurants, theatres and flats, all built in close proximity, creating ‘comings and goings’ from early morning to late evening, on weekdays and at weekends.
- 6.4 The point has now been reached in the development of CMK where it is appropriate to move away from previous coarse land use ‘zoning’ approaches. With the exception of the Primary Shopping Area, the *CMKAP* does not designate any special ‘quarters’ or ‘districts’ for predominant class uses, such as a ‘Business District’.

- 6.5 The Plan seeks to achieve the following objectives:-
- » To reinforce and extend CMK’s ‘magnet’ areas of greatest attraction for people and movement;
  - » To encourage the spread of pedestrian footfall along key pedestrian routes between the magnet areas;
  - » To achieve a good mix of activities during both day and evening hours, and on weekdays and weekends, and through the seasons to stimulate both the daytime and night-time economies;
  - » To create enhanced social, cultural and civic spaces across the city centre for animation and public assembly;
  - » To increase variety and competition in the Primary Shopping Area, including the provision of small retail units; and
  - » To disperse uses to reduce peak load traffic hotspots on the CMK grid.
- 6.6 Existing uses, site constraints and key objectives have been carefully considered in proposing the broad mix of land uses for undeveloped or under-developed sites in CMK for the period of this Plan.

- 6.7 A flexible approach will be taken to the indicative land uses shown in the Proposals Plan and associated schedule (Chapter 11). Alternative land uses will generally be acceptable if they achieve the same objectives for the site, but unwanted or displaced land uses on one Blocklet of land will have to be made up on other land in CMK if the Council's own *Core Strategy* policies are to be achieved. Parts of CMK are still in first growth, and it will not be helpful for landowners and developers to try to play 'pass the parcel' on the broad distribution of uses suggested in this Plan. With the offered flexibility to investors and developers comes the responsibility to help Milton Keynes build its city centre.
- 6.8 Management and monitoring by MK Council is necessary to achieve the spatial strategy for CMK, and the amounts of commercial and retail floor space, as well as the number of dwellings, as set out in the Council's *Core Strategy*. A monitoring regime will be instituted to ensure that CMK is developed in accordance with the vision of this Plan (see Chapter 13).

### Three Magnets of Activity

- 6.9 Two existing areas, the Station End and the Primary Shopping Area, act as hubs or 'magnets' for visitors, employees and the residents of Milton Keynes. This Plan seeks their expansion and diversification. A third, new magnet, is planned for Block F1, north of Campbell Park, which is reserved for major development of strategic importance to Milton Keynes bringing significant activity to that part of the city centre. The three magnets are illustrated in Figure 5.

#### Magnet One: The Station End

- 6.10 The Alliance sees the Station End as a key area for employment growth, business visitors and leisure activities. An important objective is to extend late evening and ideally 24-hour activity in the area, to take advantage of and stimulate better public transport choices. The indicative land use proposals around the station include leisure facilities focusing on urban sports; a large international hotel and business conference centre; an expanded retail offer; and social facilities for young people.

- 6.11 Block B4 which sits on the south-eastern edge of the Station End, offers the opportunity to add to the attraction. It is one of the best undeveloped city centre sites in the region. Within easy walking distance of the station and the Primary Shopping Area, this site is reserved within the Plan for major developments of strategic importance which will raise the national or international profile of Milton Keynes.

#### Magnet Two: Primary Shopping Area

- 6.12 The second magnet that draws people to CMK from across the region and elsewhere is the retail and cultural core at the eastern end of Midsummer Boulevard.
- 6.13 The strategy is to turn the retail core, with its inward looking shopping malls, into a more outward looking driver of the city centre as a whole, with visitors exploring a diverse and mixed network of Boulevards and Streets. Through its heart runs Midsummer Boulevard East. Places will be created to stimulate animation, celebration and congregation, possibly to include a civic space or square that will be at the heart of the city centre.

### Magnet Three: North of Campbell Park

6.14 Like Block B4, the undeveloped Blocklets in Block F1 are some of the best, undeveloped city centre sites in southern England. Containing over four hectares of undeveloped land in an attractive location overlooking Campbell Park, they are within a few minutes walk of the retail and cultural core. They, too, are reserved for major developments of strategic importance that make a significant contribution to the life and reputation of the city, such as the headquarters of international companies, pan-European institutions or indeed the university.

### The Public Realm

6.15 The Plan seeks to improve the pedestrian experience across the city centre. CMK was designed to have a clear and well-structured system of pedestrian movement, both within the centre and connecting it to adjacent areas, but the way in which it has been implemented has led to some routes being active, animated and well overlooked with a mix of uses along their length, whilst others lack these qualities. Linkages are sometimes indirect and indeed, uninviting.

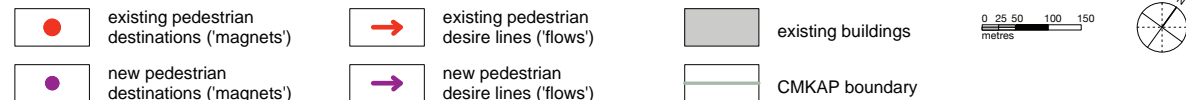
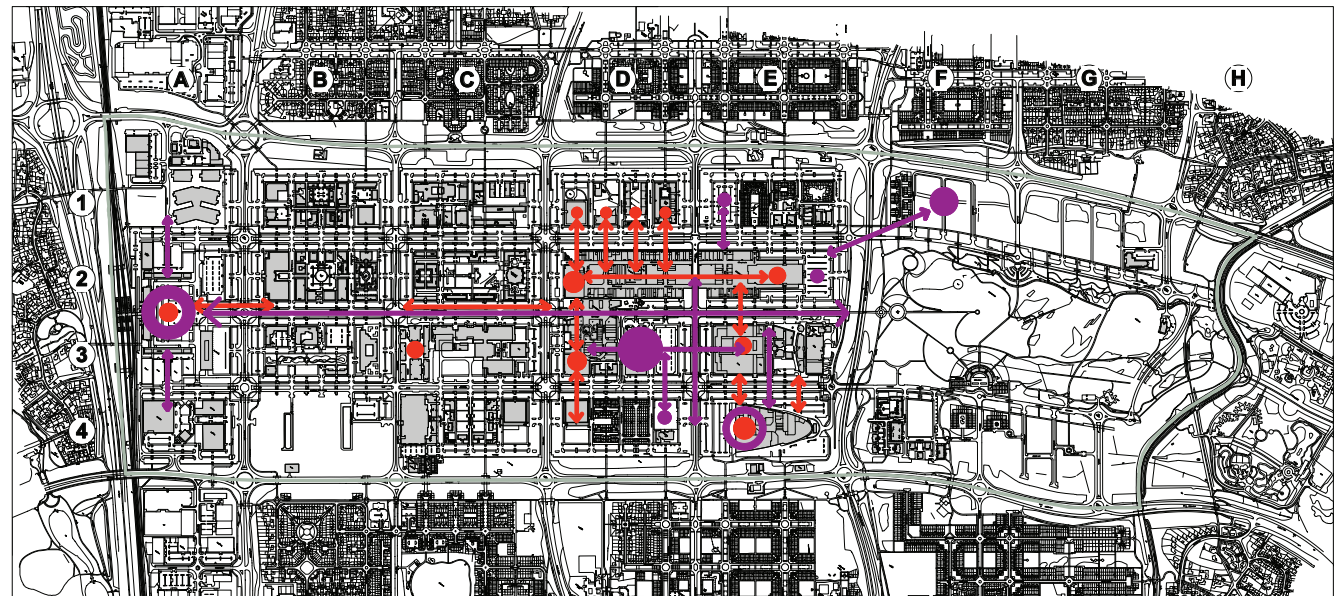


Figure 5: Activity Magnets (Illustrative)

- 6.16 The Plan aims to improve the experience of using CMK day to day. As the city centre is so large, the network of pedestrian routes that cover the city centre is inevitably extended. The Plan therefore requires a degree of mixed uses at ground level to be established along Boulevards and Gates (see Figure 10), thus bringing life and animation to key routes and moving away from buildings designed as inward-looking corporate boxes. Midsummer Boulevard is the primary route along which such mixed use will be enhanced, especially between the Station and Saxon Gate.
- 6.17 The original layout for CMK showed Blocks of development land divided into four Blocklets by Streets running north to south, and also east to west in the case of the Campbell Park grid square. To create larger development Blocks, some of these streets were omitted or removed by later development. An objective of the *CMKAP* is to welcome and promote a finer grain of development as CMK grows, with more pedestrian and cycling access or 'permeability.' Consolidation of development into whole Blocks or super Blocks is now to be avoided, as what would have been public Streets, Boulevards or Gates would become instead impenetrable private land.

## Creating and Improving Public Spaces

- 6.18 The Plan retains the classic CMK infrastructure which gives the city centre its distinctive sense of place and international identity.
- 6.19 Within the grid created by the infrastructure, there is a network of public or semi-public spaces that can contribute to the experience of walking around CMK. However, some of these spaces that form part of the public realm in CMK can sometimes feel uninviting and windswept. The Plan protects the overall quantity of public space and seeks to ensure that any new or regenerated spaces feel secure and are sociable and encourage animation and interaction.
- 6.20 The Plan protects the network of green spaces across CMK but does not preclude their improvement and their animation. It sets high standards for Campbell Park which is of a scale and design unequalled in any other contemporary urban park in Europe. The Green Frame around CMK is also retained, as an essential part of the city centre's setting.
- 6.21 This Plan celebrates the famous special character of CMK: a meticulous sophisticated modern infrastructure, with tree-lined Boulevards, set in a landscaped perimeter, could only be the city centre of Milton Keynes.



## The Primary Shopping Area

6.22 The Primary Shopping Area is defined in the *Core Strategy* as Blocklets D2.1 to 4, E2.1 to 4, D3.1 to 4 and E3.1 to 4, comprising thecentre:mk, Midsummer Place, the Point, the adjacent temporary car park, the Food Centre and the Theatre District (see Figure 11). This zoning presents a dilemma for the Plan. The success of retailing in CMK is based on the regional and national draw of the shopping centres with their award-winning accessibility and sunlit high arcades and meeting places. Their millions of visitors have led to thousands of jobs being brought to CMK, and the evidence suggests that investors are expressing great interest in further expansion even though MK Council has approved major retail developments in out-of-centre locations elsewhere in Milton Keynes. The two main CMK centres are mostly occupied by national multiple retailers and have tended to develop to be inward looking, presenting to some Boulevards a blank elevation. Visitors are drawn to the sunlit high arcades, and are not encouraged to explore the wider CMK and to spread custom to other businesses.



CMK's Primary Shopping Area including the Grade II Listed Shopping Building and outdoor market