

Milton Keynes Creative and Cultural Strategy 2027 – 2035

Revised Strategic Priorities. First Presented 23 October 2025.

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Introduction:

Fiona Boundy, Creative and Cultural Strategy Manager, Milton Keynes City Council.

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Culture For All – a leading city for cultural inclusion; a world class offer; celebrating the city's USP.

- Deliver accessible pathways for young people to progress to a wide range of sector employment opportunities.
- Invest in MK's homegrown cultural ecology; support creative practitioners, empower start-ups and employ locally.
- Invest in existing and new cultural infrastructure – respond to current and future trends in creative production.
- Celebrate and champion the city's USP.
- Spotlight on CMK – a five-year programme inspired by the city centre's unique urban form, delivering cultural tourism and an enhanced night-time economy.

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Resilience: support for the sector; smarter ways of working; entrepreneurship.

- Support for the capacity, resilience and sustainability of the sector.
- Embed cultural provision within city planning frameworks ensuring culture at the heart of future thinking.
- Ensure that culture is aligned to other strategic agendas – including health and well-being, growth opportunities and place-making; economic development, education and the environment.

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New technology: new ways of working; research/development, reaching new audiences.

- Embrace advances in technology as part of the city's cultural landscape; support the sector to explore new mediums and sites for cultural production and dissemination.
- Work with partners to research and explore how new technology can be used to reach push creative boundaries and reach new audiences.

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The Milton Keynes City Plan 2050 and the New Town agenda:

Fiona Robinson, Strategic Lead for City Projects, Milton Keynes City Council.

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MK City Plan 2050

- Takes forward our Strategy for 2050 vision and includes policies relating to...
 - Growth targets.
 - Spatial strategy with site allocations.
 - Strategic policies.
 - Development management.
 - Focus on people-friendly and healthy places, and backed by extensive evidence base.
- Growth alongside jobs, infrastructure, community facilities, public transport improvements, etc.

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What else is in the plan?

- Sites for c.60,000 homes (equivalent to Local Housing Need + 19% buffer).
- Greater focus on urban development vs greenfield than previous plans.
- Bus rapid transit – Metro – to improve sustainable methods of transport.
- Area-based affordable housing targets – 15k+ homes, primarily as social rent.
- Intensification in CMK with new placemaking principles and major public realm proposals including Midsummer Boulevard Greenway.

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Economic and Cultural Prosperity in the plan

- Recognises the role of culture in our economy and enhancing quality of life.
- CMK and town/district centres as focus for cultural uses.

Where we are now

- Regulation 18 consultation in 2024; 600 reps, 7,000+ comments.
- Six-week Regulation 19 consultation starts next month (November 2025) with submission in March 2026.

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Old New Town to New New Town?

- New Towns Taskforce recommended MK in the list of 12 potential locations.
- A mix of urban and greenfield sites:
 1. a new urban neighbourhood in Central Milton Keynes.
 2. continuing major expansion to the East of the M1 motorway.
 3. a developer-led proposal for major expansion North of Milton Keynes.
- CMK and East of M1 already in the Plan.
- Six months of due diligence from MHCLG/Homes England including SEA.

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Economy and Tourism in Milton Keynes.

Sophie Lloyd, Head of Economic Development, Milton Keynes City Council.

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Milton Keynes as an economic powerhouse.

- 12,500 businesses and c.190,000 jobs, with 1/3 of jobs in the tech sector.
- UK's highest levels of business start-ups and high levels of job creation.
- A highly productive economy, worth over £15 billion.
- Excellent north-south and east-west connectivity.
- A "Tiger" city economy with potential for further economic growth.

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Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor

- MK economy is the seventh biggest economy in England – around the size of the cities of Oxford and Cambridge combined.

"Milton Keynes will be a key enabler of the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor, having the largest and most productive economy in the Growth Corridor – with a GVA per worker 128% of the UK average."

Public First Supercluster report:

- We have the space that businesses in the corridor need to grow and scale, and a pro-growth approach to economic and housing growth.

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Tourism and the Visitor Economy

- New Tourism Strategy for Milton Keynes – to be adopted alongside the Creative and Cultural Strategy.
- Visitor economy is growing – We are in top 10 destinations for business visitors, visits to Milton Keynes growing higher than the national average. 30 minutes away Universal Studios site.
- Identifies three growth markets for Tourism in Milton Keynes – families, business meeting/event organisers, mini breakers.

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Universal Resort

- Biggest tourist destination in the UK. 8.5m visitors expected in 2031.
For comparison:
 - Disneyland Paris - 5.7m visitors pa
 - Legoland UK - 2.42m pa
 - Alton Towers - 2.35m pa
- Creation of over 8,000 jobs at UDX.
- Universal Orlando had a substantive impact on the local creative industries economy.
- Net visitor expenditure in Milton Keynes and Luton could be as high as £175m pa, est. £45k of which on accommodation.

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Central Milton Keynes: Adam Sciberras, Director Special Projects and Planning, Milton Keynes Development Corporation.

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Map of CMK showing the 3 large development areas of Lower Westside, Midsummer Boulevard East and Campbell Park North.

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Images of Station Square – *Walk With Your Dreams*, Yinka Ilori MBE. Launched 2 October 2025, an example of the major placemaking projects planned for Central Milton Keynes.

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Images of Milton Keynes Market with new branding and relaunch.

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Milton Keynes Market:

- Operated directly since 2023.
- 100+ traders in 500+ pitches, *plus* casual pitches.
- Shipping container trail successful, Phase 2 in production, Phase 3 in design.
- F&B focus, then 'Maker Merchants'.
- Pitches from £35 per day available.

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CMK Events Venue:

- 3,500 capacity indoor venue (mid-scale).
- Live music and entertainment focus.
- 250+ events per year, with over half being main auditorium events.
- 350,000+ visitors to CMK every year.
- Transformative for night time economy and street scene.
- Catalyst for cultural ecology.
- £75m investment by MKDP in the city centre.
- £157m monetised wider benefits (HMT, MHCLG, DCMS).
- Targeting opening Q1 2029.

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To Conclude - MK60: 2027 (Fiona Boundy)

- An amazing opportunity to kick off the 2027 - 2035 Strategy with collaborative programme across the New City.
- TODAY - Launch of our new Portal www.mk60.uk for ideas and proposals.
 - Dec 2025 – draft Main Programme begins to take shape – funder talks.
- Jan 2026 – Clear way forward for aligned approach to applying for funding bids (Arts Council, Heritage Fund, etc).

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