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Consultant Brief – Public Art Plan Brief

Closing Date for Proposals: 6th March 2026

Client: Milton Keynes UK ELP Limited

Location: Axis Park, Blackhill Drive, Wolverton Mill, Milton Keynes

Project: Development of a Public Art Plan

Purpose: To guide the commissioning, design, and installation of a permanent public artwork that celebrates local heritage and responds to the site's contemporary identity.

Background:

Axis Trade Park is a new commercial development located at Wolverton Mill, part of the historic industrial heart of Milton Keynes. The site's name — *Axis* — references both its position within the Milton Keynes grid system and the city's reputation for planned geometry, innovation, and connectivity. The Wolverton area, with its rich legacy in milling, railways, and manufacturing, provides a deep context for artistic interpretation.

Project Objectives:

The Public Art Plan will:

- Provide a clear vision and framework for a permanent public artwork at Axis Trade Park.
- Reflect and celebrate the heritage and industrial history of Wolverton Mill.
- Respond to the concept of 'Axis' — exploring ideas of orientation, balance, connection, and movement.
- Enhance the sense of place for users, visitors, and the wider community.
- Ensure the commission complements the architectural and landscape design of the site.
- Identify opportunities for community engagement and interpretive storytelling, that support the formation of the artwork and its immediate surroundings.
- Consider the potential for artwork to have public use into the future.

Scope of Work

The appointed consultant will:

- Conduct site analysis and contextual research (heritage, geography, community, environment).
- Develop themes and artistic direction in collaboration with Milton Keynes UK ELP Limited and key stakeholders.
- Conduct inclusive consultation with residents, community groups, developers, parish councils, and MKCC departments.
- Facilitate workshops or focus groups to gather input and build local ownership of the plan.
- Recommend scale, materials, and typologies suitable for permanent public art.
- Outline commissioning, fabrication, and installation and ongoing maintenance processes.
- Propose a budget framework and delivery timeline.
- Prepare the Public Art Plan as a guiding document for the selection and commissioning of the art which summarises the engagement findings and makes recommendations.

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Deliverables

- Draft Public Art Plan (for review and feedback).
- Final Public Art Plan for formal submission to the Council (illustrated, with cost estimates and delivery roadmap).
- Presentation of key recommendations to client and stakeholders.

Consultant Requirements

The consultant should demonstrate:

- Proven experience in developing public art strategies and plans for development sites.
- Strong understanding of place-making and heritage interpretation.
- Familiarity with Milton Keynes' planning and cultural landscape (advantageous).
- Excellent communication and stakeholder engagement skills.

Timescales once appointed

- Appointment: 13th April 2026
- Inception Meeting: Within 2 weeks of appointment
- Draft Plan: Within 12 weeks
- Final Plan: Within 4 weeks of receiving comments

Budget

- A fee proposal is requested from interested consultants, inclusive of all expenses and VAT.
- A separate budget will be used to deliver the public art plan, this is funding secured through the planning process. Currently there is in the region of £70,000 available for the delivery.

Application Process

Interested consultants should submit:

- A proposal (max 4 pages) outlining approach, methodology, and indicative timeline.
- Examples of relevant previous work.
- CV(s) of lead personnel.
- Total Fee and fee breakdown by person and deliverables required.
- The successful applicant will need to have public liability insurance to cover the activities they undertake with the public.
- Before working with young people, the appointed consultant may be required to undergo an Enhanced DBS Check (formerly Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check) and must be willing to provide the information required under that process. The cost of the Enhanced DBS check will be met by project.
- References will be required.

Deadline for proposals: 6th March 2026

Submission contact: djeal@chancerygate.com & gdickens@chancerygate.com

Selection interviews (if applicable): 16th March 2026

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Further Information about Public Art in Milton Keynes

Public Art has always been part of Milton Keynes' DNA and the city now boasts over 250 artworks within the public realm. Milton Keynes City Council's ongoing commitment to an ambitious and strategic public art commissioning and percent for art policy, ensures that ambitious new public artworks respond to and reflect their changing city, whilst making a significant contribution to wider debates and dialogues within the public art sector.

In Milton Keynes consider public art 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. As set out in the Creative and Cultural Strategy 2018 – 2027, MKCC recommends that new commissions should be:

- Artist specific
- Place specific
- People specific

'Place Specific' means a work of art devised in response to a specific location – spatially through a sensitivity to scale and positioning; through the selection of materials and processes that are relevant to the site; and also designs that respond and explore the heritage and unique character of the site.

'People Specific' means a work of art devised in response to a specific community – whether that be a community defined geographically or by a shared interest. This can be through direct involvement of communities, but most commonly is based on an artist developing an understanding of the local community and then devising a project proposal that they feel will address the needs and aspirations of that community.

'Artist Specific' means a bespoke work of art, craft or design produced by an artist, designer or maker that is created specifically for the site and in answer to the requirements of the brief. Most importantly this recognises the creative role that the artist holds in the process and supports the artist in bringing their own unique skills and interests to the project.

More information on Public Art and Culture in Milton Keynes can be found on the Milton Keynes City Council Culture webpages at www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/culture