

# Regulation 19 Representation DRAFT

Milton Keynes City Plan 2050 (MKCP 2050)

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## 1. Summary

This representation suggests refinements to MK City Plan 2050 (MKCP 2050) to strengthen the way the Plan enables innovation-led growth and knowledge-intensive development in Central Milton Keynes (CMK).

## 2. Strategic Context

The draft MK City Plan 2050 recognises that Central Milton Keynes plays a central role in accommodating future growth, jobs and facilities, including a range of mixed-use development, innovation. It highlights the need for a tech and innovation quarter as a home for innovation and higher education in the city centre.

However the Plan should undergo strategic revision to better take into account :

- 1 the role of the Universal Studios complex at Stewartby, linked by rail and road to MK, as an engine for generating MK City Centre visitor demand for hotel, shopping and 24/7 leisure facilities at CMK.
- 2 To recognise that the policy (active over the past 10 years) to have a University based at the city centre has not been successful and has harmed the local institutions approached (U. Bedford, Cranfield U. Open U) by diverting focus and for the OU creating high costs via greatly delaying OU post-covid development. It is not the role of the University sector to support 24/7 leisure facilities at the city centre.
- 3 The City has a strategic position in the Oxford-MK-Cambridge Arc which requires being made more visible and substantive to residents and inward investors; An Arc-Universities Institute and Arc technologies gallery/museum both located at CMK are proposed.

This representation supports the Plan's ambition but urges significant updates to the local plan to take into account strategic recent reorientation of MK higher education integration (2026) as well as the major recent regional influences of Universal Studios and Oxford-MK-Cambridge Arc road and rail development.

### 3. Suggested Representation by Policy Area

#### Policy CMK2 – Central Milton Keynes Development Framework Area

The draft Plan explicitly supports development in Central Milton Keynes for a wide range of uses, including higher education facilities and innovation-linked jobs and floorspace.

#### Representation:

To reinforce the strategic role of CMK as a location for knowledge-intensive development, we suggest that Policy CMK2 is read and applied in a way that explicitly recognises:

- Hotel accommodation in relation to CMK station area with its links to local (Universal Studios Complex) demand and National Rail access.
- Reinstatement of Rapid Transit route to the Open University from CMK and consideration of improved transit routes to Cranfield University from CMK including CMK Station, in order improve knowledge economy links to CMK.
- Higher education provision should focus on student interests of affordability, including low accommodation costs, low transport and parking costs, all of which does not favour CMK location. Nearly all other UK cities with excellent Universities do not burden their very centres with student based congestion. The City should embrace it's current higher education spatial distribution and not interfere further.
- Facilitating and communicating Innovation will require funding commensurate with its role, (compare to £70m provided for entertainment venue near CMK station). The [Arc Universities group](#), if supported by an Arc Universities Institute at CMK would facilitate MK companies and institutions access to world class knowledge sources right across the Arc. Communicating what technological advancements have been make in MK and the Arc in a tech Gallery or Museum at CMK would to its residents and inward investors.
- Co-locating the OU at B4 in the city centre was costed by the OU at just under £900m current prices and would take some 10 years of disruption to achieve. In a highly connected world, the OU being located 4 miles from the city centre and with rapid transit connection is co-located enough and the OU's money is better spent on education, research and innovation.

This will ensure that the policy's implementation supports proposals that co-locate research, innovation and related economic activities — contributing to a vibrant, high-value city centre which is connected to a similarly vibrant established University sector around the city.

## **Policy on Education, Skills and Community Infrastructure**

The draft plan emphasises the need for a wide range of infrastructure to support growth, including schools and community facilities, and mentions plans for a university in CMK. ([Milton Keynes City Council](#))

Representation:

We support and encourage the Plan's approach to strategic education and skills infrastructure. In addition, we suggest that the Plan makes it clear that:

- It reflects the reality that the city has a wide range of Higher Education institutions of very high quality.
- It liaises with and maintains good communication with the University sector to aid innovation rather than focusing on where education is located.

## **Town Centre and Mixed-Use Policies**

The draft Plan promotes CMK and the city centre as a place for a diverse mix of uses, including retail, leisure, housing, and employment.

Representation:

Town centre policies should be read to support proposals that:

- Integrate research, innovation and enterprise uses into mixed-use developments;
- Recognise that higher education facilities are not currently located at the city centre and that the bulk of higher education will not be at the city centre.
- Student cost of living should be prioritised. This will reflect that most MK students are living at home or are commuting to study. 24/7 transport frequency and cost remains a vital ingredient to any 24/7 city centre leisure involvement.
- Economic development of the city centre shopping and leisure economy is much more likely via the visitor and hotel spend arising from the Universal Studios Park at Stewartby than by struggling low income students.

## **Design, Place-Making and Sustainability Policies**

The draft Plan emphasises high-quality design, sustainability and movement, including active travel and public transport connections across the city.

Representation:

We support these objectives and suggest that:

- Policies should encourage place-making approaches that integrate built environment, public realm and innovation-linked uses;
- A Gallery or Museum celebrating MK tech achievements and the achievements of the Oxford-MK-Cambridge Arc would constitute a major

advance in place making for the city and for the city centre technology ambitions.

- Sustainable transport and mobility improvements should be recognised as enablers of knowledge-intensive activity and cross-sector collaboration in Central Milton Keynes.

This reinforces the Plan's high-quality growth ambitions.

#### **4. Rationale for the Representation**

The representations above are based on the following strategic rationale:

- Historically Milton Keynes has not leveraged its position in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and its attendant knowledge economy and this remains a major opportunity. Some suggestions have been made to redress this.
- The Universal Studios development at Stewartby has the ability to boost the CMK hotel, shopping and leisure economy with higher spenders than would have been possible relying on student led 'buzz' and spend at CMK.
- The Higher Education landscape has changed significantly in 2026 since the objectives of the MK 2050 draft plan was drawn up and the city should enhance the existing institutions rather than direct them to the city centre.

#### **5. Summary of Requested Outcomes**

- Innovation, research and knowledge economy requires new structures to better improve communication between the commercial players, the council, MK residents and inward investors.
- Design, sustainability and mobility policies should support the integration of these uses with broader regeneration and public realm ambitions.

## **Conclusion**

This representation contends that draft MK City Plan 2050 needs updating to reflect the new (2026) direction Higher Education is taking in the city and make more of the fast-evolving regional context of the Arc and United Studios plan. These are strategic refinements to ensure the policy framework is sufficiently enabling to support future opportunities for innovation-led growth and knowledge-intensive development in Central Milton Keynes, consistent with the Plan's overall objectives.