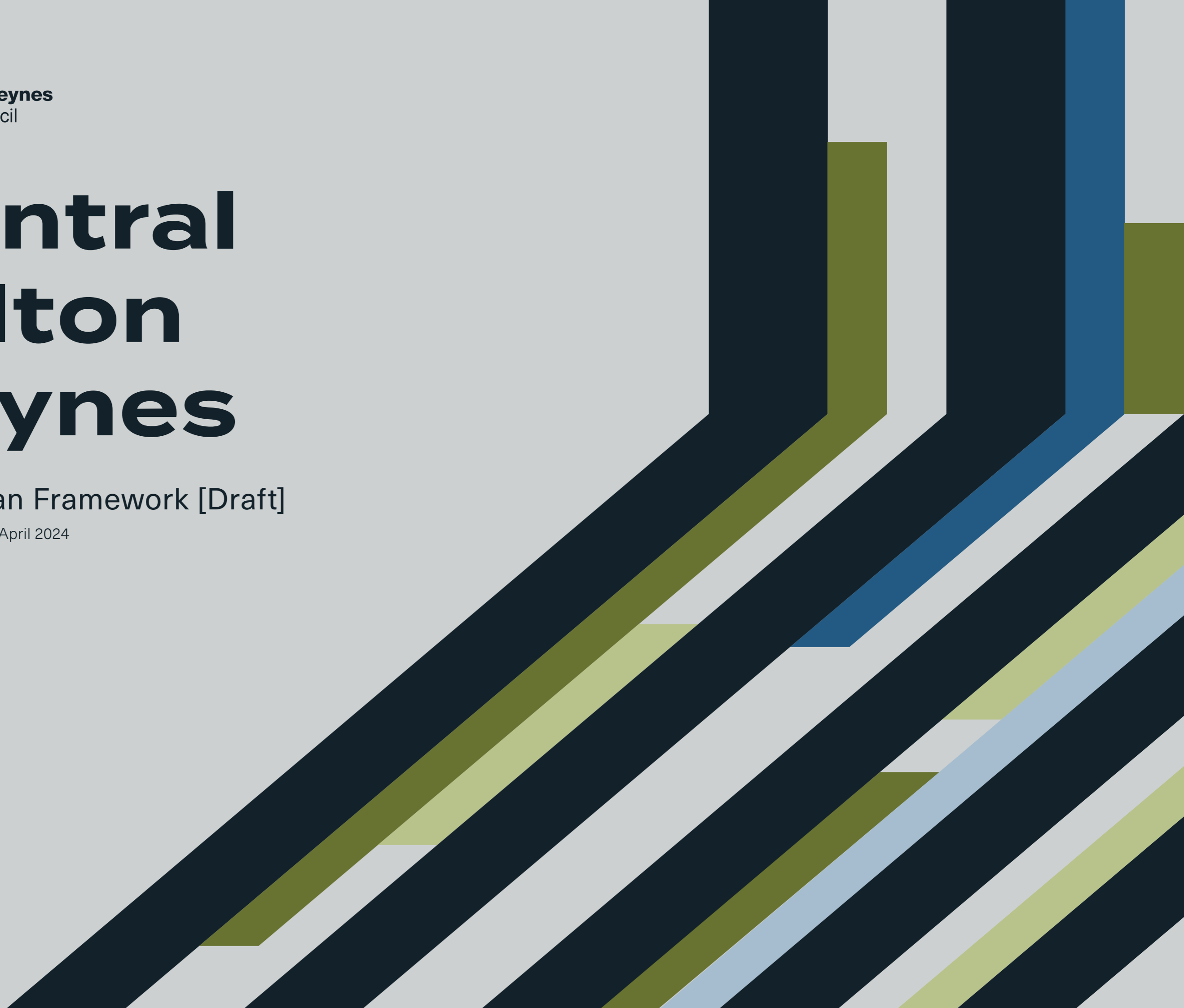


Central Milton Keynes

Masterplan Framework [Draft]

23090 - 8003 - 04 | April 2024



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Revision Log

Revision	Date	Notes
00	15.11.23	First Issue
01	04.12.23	Interim draft work in progress
02	13.12.23	Workshop
03	14.03.24	Leader feedback
04	04.04.24	Consultation draft

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Contents

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Foreword	
Masterplan Study Area	6
A Vision for CMK	9
Placemaking Principles	13
Emerging Masterplan Framework	24
Key Components	33
Place comparators	44
Benefits	46
Indicative Timeline	48

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 **MONTAGU
EVANS**

gleeds

Foreword

Milton Keynes represents the high point of New Town Planning in Britain, but it has yet to realise its place potential.

The opportunity is there to celebrate Central Milton Keynes's legacy modern architecture, its uniquely gridded layout and its carefully coordinated public realm, while also realising its largely untapped potential to develop a sense of place that residents and visitors will cherish, underpinned by the critical mass of population needed for the City's 2050 vision to be achieved. For MKCC to honour its motto - 'better by design' - however, this needs to be approached in a way that is profoundly respectful of its legacy.

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CMK's original layout actively provided for pedestrians, but it doesn't feel this way. Its boulevards appear green and pleasant, but they are designed for cars alone, and they are not streets. Its grid roads are indeed very accessible, but they are closer in spirit to LA than Paris. Buildings sit back from car parks, and they do not interact with each other to enclose pedestrian friendly spaces. The 'international style' of its modernist architecture 'could be anywhere', yet in a British context, it could hardly be anywhere else.

A lot has changed since Milton Keynes was conceived, however, and it faces challenges that were much less of a concern when CMK was first built: radically altered patterns of shopping and working, a national shortage of housing, public health issues and the global climate emergency. But addressing these challenges brings with it opportunities that CMK is uniquely placed to grasp: a renewed focus on mixed-use walkable neighbourhoods, new uses with better quality public realm, prioritising people over cars, and, above all, a wider range of housing opportunities provided at densities that can sustain its vision for a better future.

Masterplan Study Area



Masterplan Study Area

Masterplan Study Area

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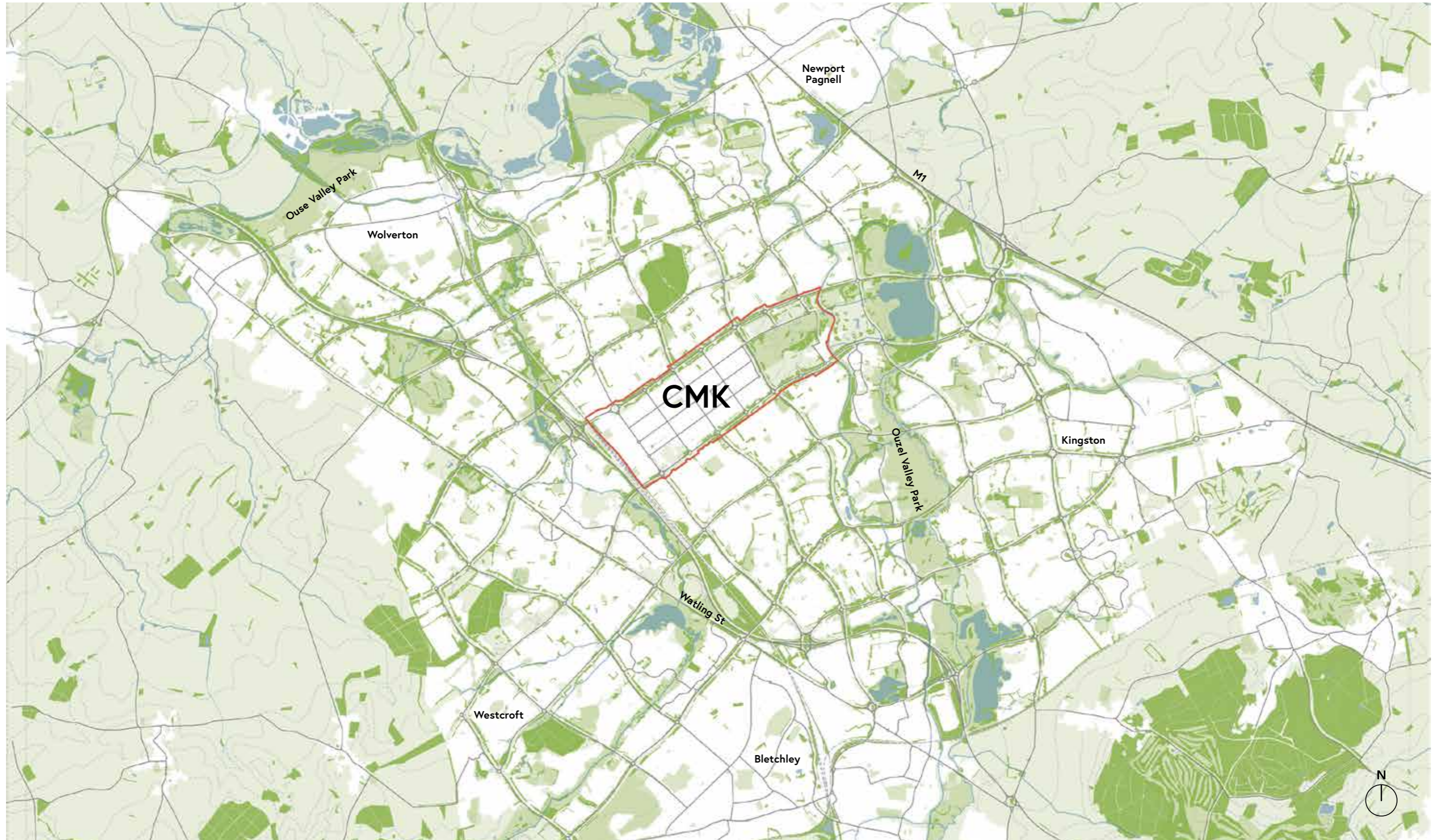
Key Points:

The Masterplan Framework and associated Growth Study has been commissioned by Milton Keynes City Council (MKCC) to set out a strategy for growth in Central Milton Keynes (CMK) that will:

- Find ways to work with the design of the city centre, including its distinctive built heritage and urban form.
- Address a range of challenges, both global and local, to ensure we are creating healthy, inclusive environments.
- Enable the ongoing success of the local economy.
- Make sure the city centre has all of the facilities and opportunities that successful cities should have.
- Inform the new City Plan.

The Masterplan Framework sets out a strategy for facilitating and coordinating CMK's potential for growth. It is not a 'blueprint'.

Wider Context



A Vision for CMK



A Vision for CMK

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“A place simply to go and be in, to be anonymous or dress up; 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.”

The Plan for Milton Keynes, 1970

The Plan for Milton Keynes, 1970

The original vision for Central Milton Keynes is as relevant today as when it was written into the 'Plan for Milton Keynes' in 1970, but the social, environmental and economic landscape in which it sits, has changed drastically:

- Moving away from 'zonal' town planning, which tended to allocate specific areas to particular uses such as shopping, towards a preference for mixed uses;
- Moving away from car-dominated highways design to people oriented streets and active travel;
- Moving away from shopping centres and high streets towards on-line buying and home delivery.



The Milton Keynes Strategy for 2050

The Council's Strategy for 2050 recognises the City's successes and challenges. It articulates seven big ambitions for the city as a whole which also put people at the centre of its thinking.

Building on the aspirations for CMK articulated in the Plan for Milton Keynes and the Milton Keynes Strategy for 2050, the following pages set out a vision for the Central area that will inform the emerging growth strategy and masterplan framework.



A Vision for CMK

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A Thriving City

We're a thriving centre for innovation, learning and culture, with all of the things you'd expect to find in a city: shops, businesses, restaurants, cafés, bars and entertainment.



A Bustling Hub

We're attracting people to live, work and study in the city, with high-quality jobs and inward investment, and making it easier for people to get in and around.



A Natural Neighbourhood

We're bringing nature, streets and buildings into harmonious balance, providing a new townscape setting for public life, play, health and wellbeing.



Milton Keynes

Better by Design



A Unique Place

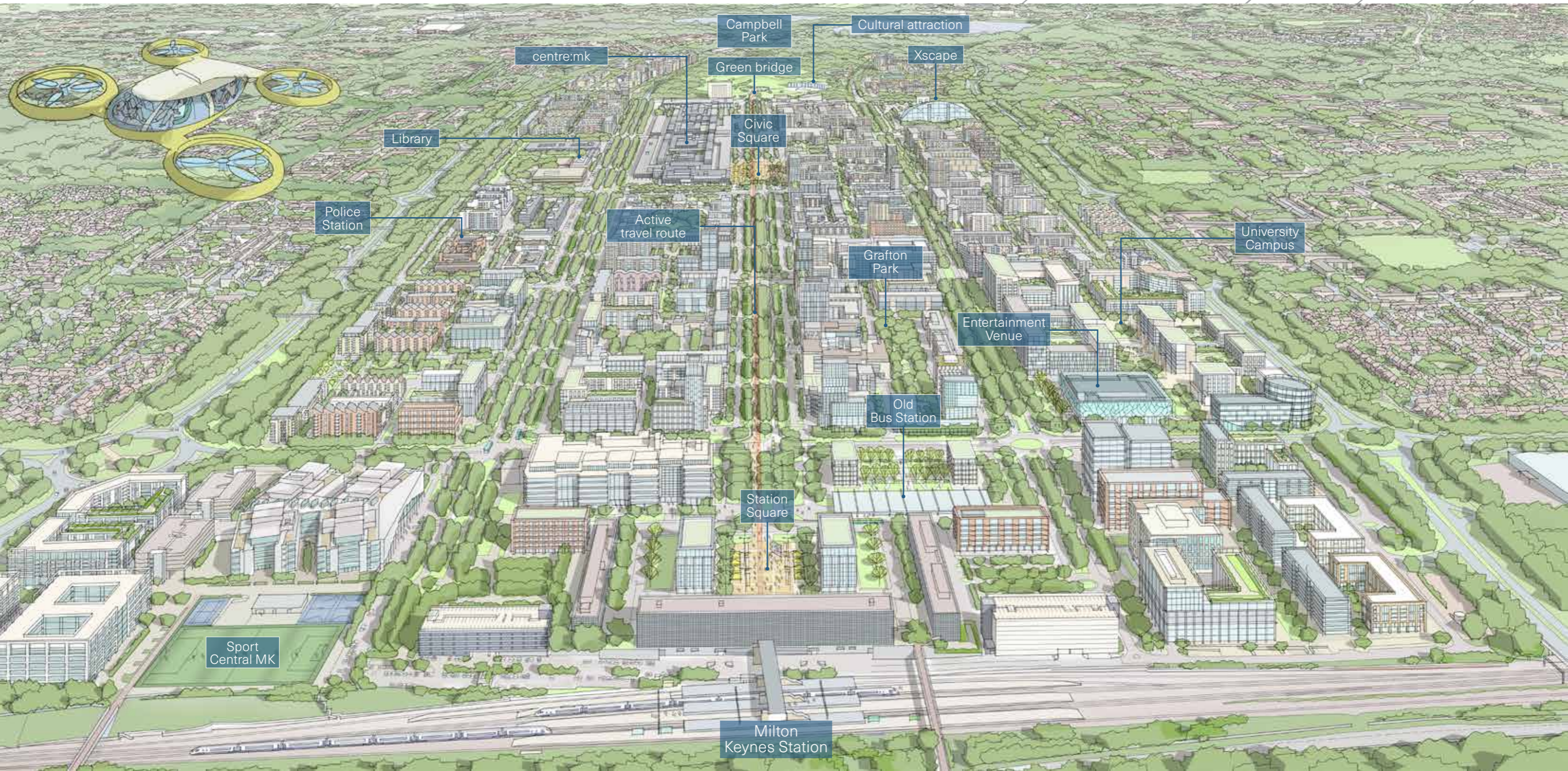
We're safeguarding CMK's unique public art, its modern design and its classic infrastructure for future generations to appreciate.



A Healthy Home

We're inviting new communities to make their home in CMK, with all the services and facilities they need within easy walking distance.

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centre:mk

Campbell Park

Cultural attraction

Xscape

Green bridge

Library

Civic Square

Police Station

Active travel route

Grafton Park

University Campus

Entertainment Venue

Old Bus Station

Station Square

Sport Central MK

Milton Keynes Station

Artist's impression

Placemaking Principles



Placemaking Principles

Placemaking Themes

The following principles encapsulate the key drivers informing the emerging masterplan framework for CMK.

For clarity and continuity, the placemaking principles and proposals set out in the following pages reflect the topics in the same running order and using the same terminology as they are presented in the Council's unpublished Placemaking Principles Review document, dated March 2023.



Placemaking themes explored by the Council's March 2023 Review (unpublished)

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Land Use



Movement



Parking



Block & Grid Structure, and the Street Hierarchy



Streets & Pavements



Gardens, Parks & Green Spaces



Density & Height



Building Design



Culture, Heritage & Community

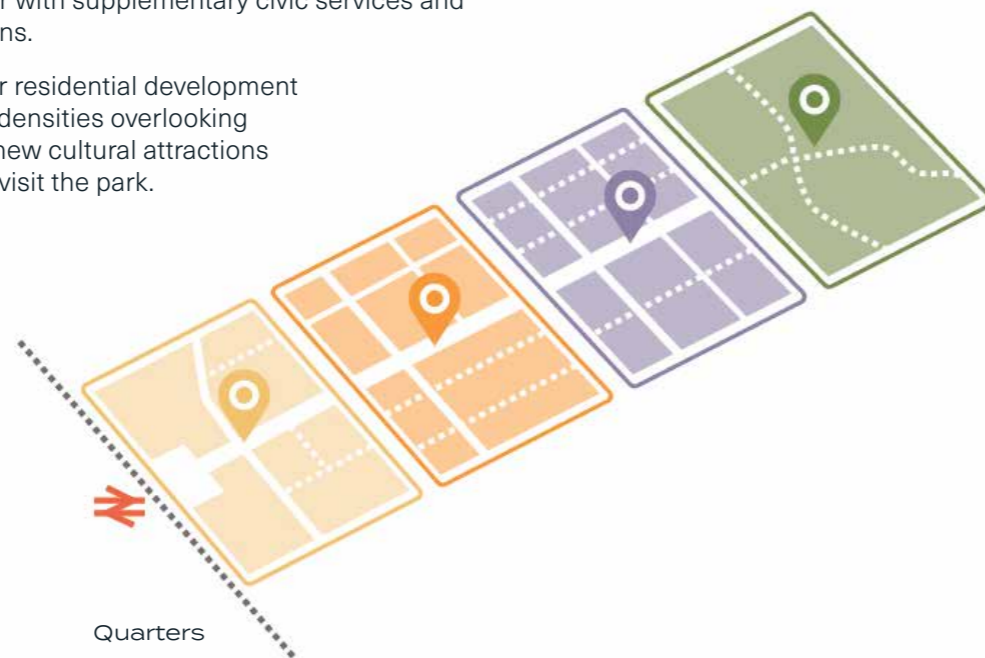
Continue to promote a mix of uses and diversity of spaces, while maintaining flexibility to adapt to changing priorities and available opportunities.

Placemaking Proposal 1:

Four mixed-use city quarters with a distinct sense of purpose and character for each: downtown; midtown; uptown and park side.

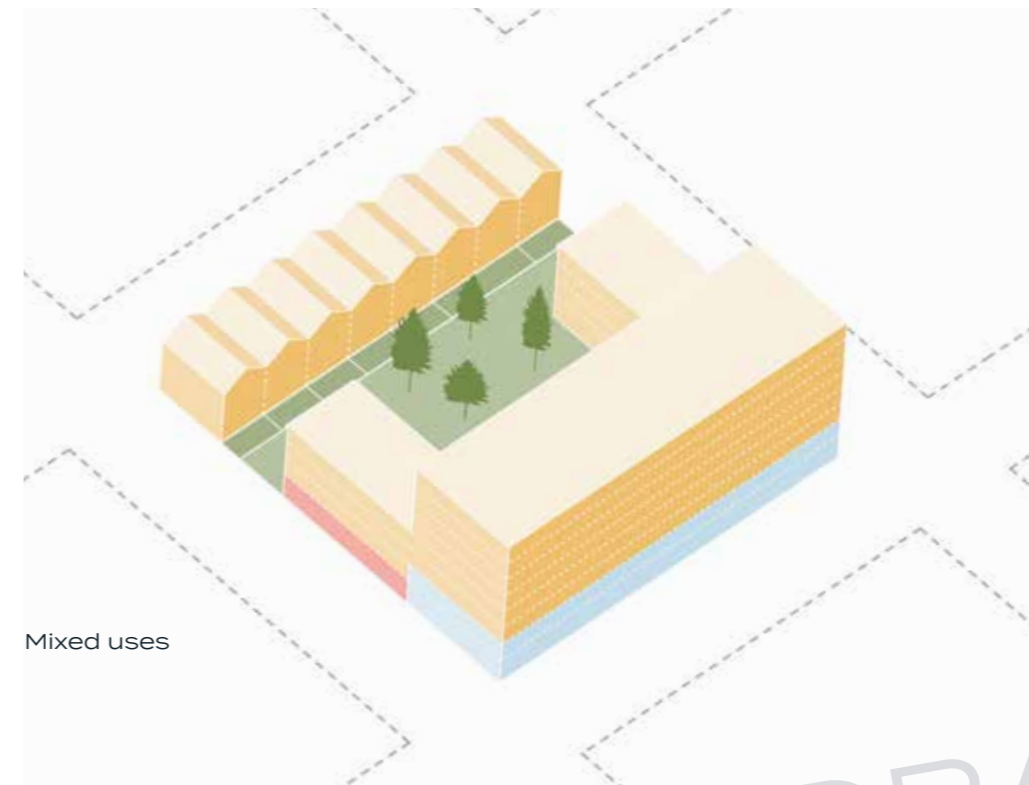
Four city quarters will be joined together by a green active travel route:

- 1 Downtown:** the knowledge and innovation quarter - providing a hub for commercial activity and third level education.
- 2 Midtown:** the residential quarter – promoting a mixed-use residential neighbourhood with supporting community services within easy walking distance.
- 3 Uptown:** the retail, civic & cultural heart of the city – consolidating CMK’s heritage assets and reinforcing its civic and cultural character with supplementary civic services and new cultural attractions.
- 4 Park Side:** a focus for residential development at sustainable urban densities overlooking Campbell Park, with new cultural attractions and more reasons to visit the park.



Placemaking Proposal 2:

Promote mixed-use urban blocks with a diverse range of flexible and adaptable building types to populate the city centre.



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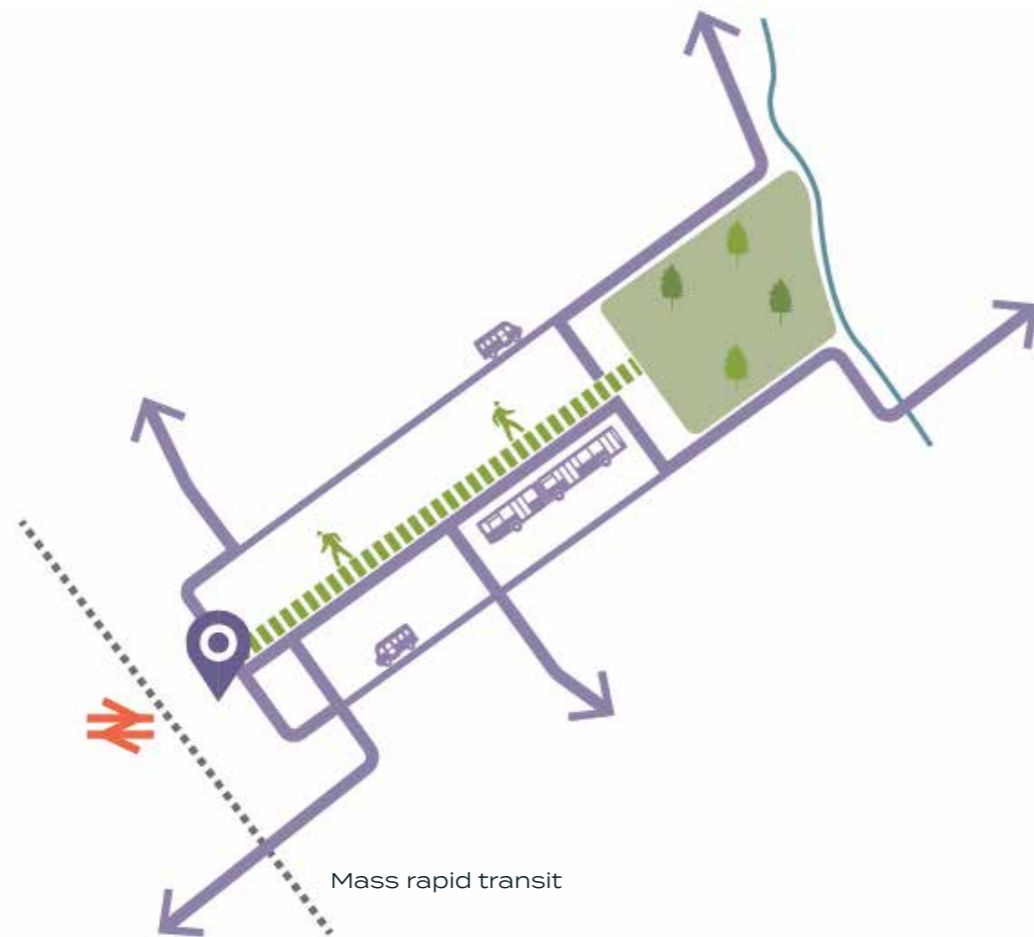


Movement

Continue to plan for delivery of a sustainable public transport system (MRT), encourage active travel and prioritisation of people over cars.

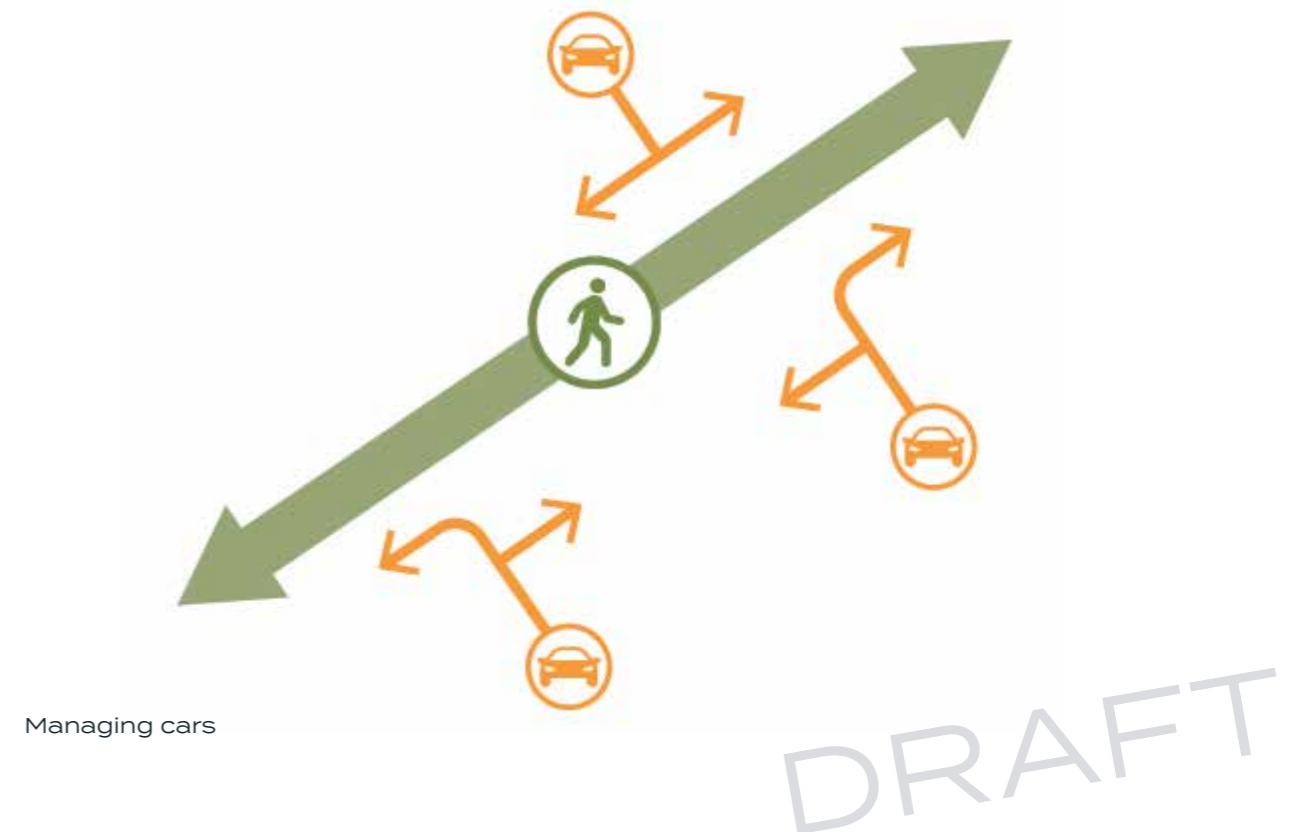
Placemaking Proposal 1:

Route proposed MRT along Midsummer Boulevard via interchanges at Station Square and the shopping centre and rerouting City Bus routes along Silbury and Avebury Boulevards to maximise accessibility across the whole city centre. Free up Midsummer Boulevard as a greenway that promotes active travel.



Placemaking Proposal 2:

Limit vehicular access to blocks via Midsummer Boulevard to allow a free-flow of safe pedestrian and cycle movement along the proposed Midsummer greenway.



P Parking

Reassess the amount of surface parking needed to support a vibrant city centre, while maintaining high levels of convenience.

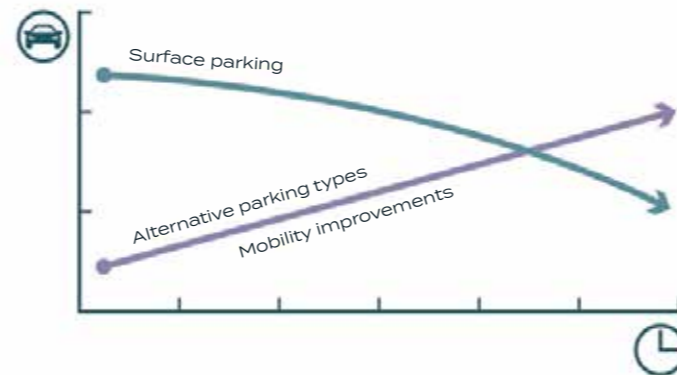
Placemaking Proposal 1:

Coordinate the phased reduction of 'front of house' surface car parking areas along boulevards with introduction of MRT, promotion of green routes for active travel and other pedestrian improvements.



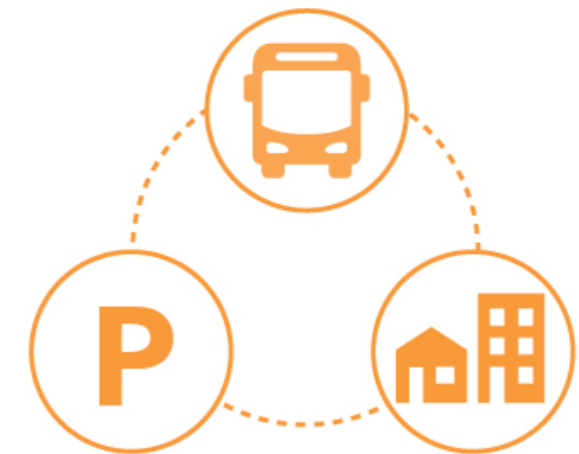
Placemaking Proposal 2:

Gradual reduction of surface car parking as densification increases over time.



Placemaking Proposal 3:

Reduce parking requirements in tandem with improved public transport provision. Manage retained parking areas to allow flexible usage to meet different demand profiles.



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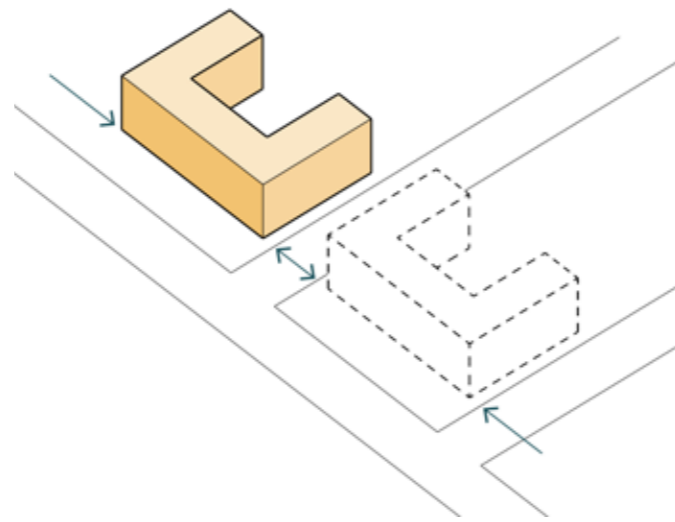


Block & Grid Structure

Celebrate the grid structure and street hierarchy established by CMK's classic infrastructure.

Placemaking Proposal 1:

Retain and reinforce the established historical building line along the long side of the blocks fronting Silbury and Midsummer Boulevards.



A consistent building line along Silbury and Midsummer boulevards

Placemaking Proposal 2:

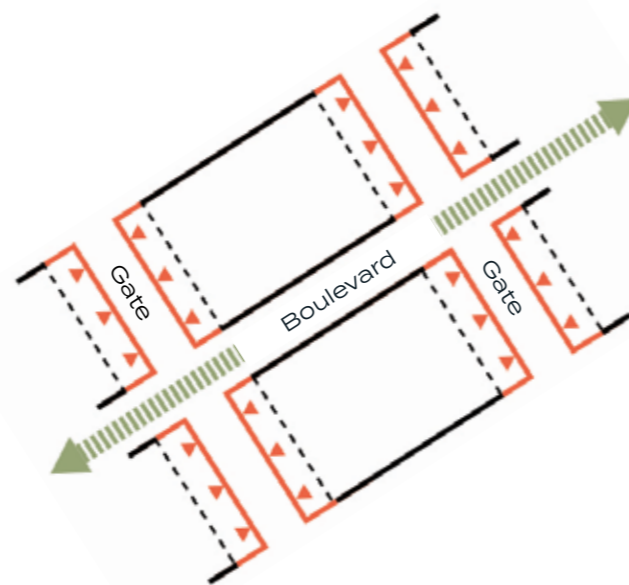
Comprehensive masterplan approach to B4 may follow building lines established by recent and adjoining developments on Avebury Boulevard.



A tighter building line along Avebury Boulevard following recent precedents

Placemaking Proposal 3:

Allow the building line along the short sides of the blocks fronting Gates to flex in order to make more efficient use of land.



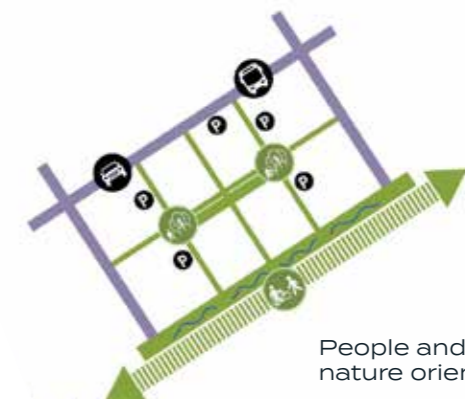
Extending towards the Gates

Placemaking Proposal 4:

Green the grid by peripheralising car movement and parking to create more pedestrian-friendly spaces and improved permeability within the blocks. Stop cars crossing Midsummer Boulevard at Witan and Saxon Gates to allow free movement for pedestrians and bicycles (retaining provision for public transport).



Car and parking dominated



People and nature oriented

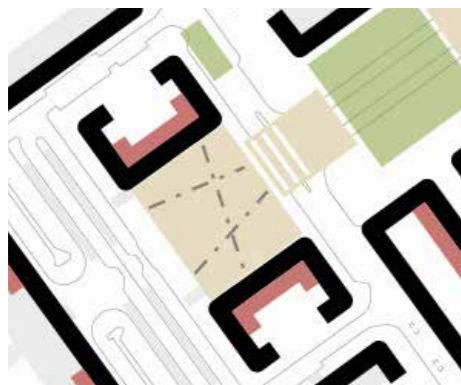


Streets & Pavements

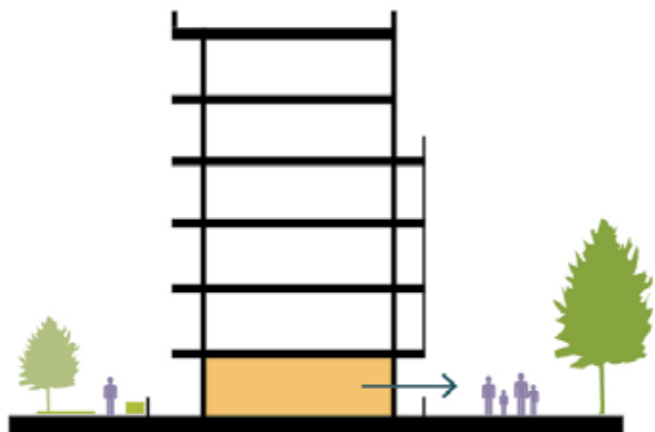
Ensure the Boulevards prioritise active ground floors and are overlooked to make them feel safe and pleasant to use.

Placemaking Proposal 1:

Set out key locations and nodes where active (e.g. commercial) ground floors will be required. Minimise inactive ground floors (e.g. bike & bin storage) along other frontages, including Gates.



Active ground floors (commercial)



Active ground floors (residential)

Placemaking Proposal 2:

Retain classic infrastructure that is part of CMK's heritage and identity, such as portes cochère. Ensure new public realm design respects coherence of legacy design in terms of materials and street furniture etc.



Porte Cochère

Placemaking Proposal 3:

Retain underpasses serving Midsummer Boulevard junctions while providing at-grade crossings along desire lines and from Station Square and following Midsummer Boulevard axis (facilitated by stopping Witan and Saxon Gates to cars at Midsummer Boulevard).

Reconsider the future of underpasses along Avebury Boulevard in order to facilitate intensification of development in line with recent precedents and to provide at-grade crossings along desire lines.



Existing underpasses

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Continue to make the city greener by making more of CMK's green character, encouraging better use of green spaces and improved access to Campbell Park.

Placemaking Proposal 1:

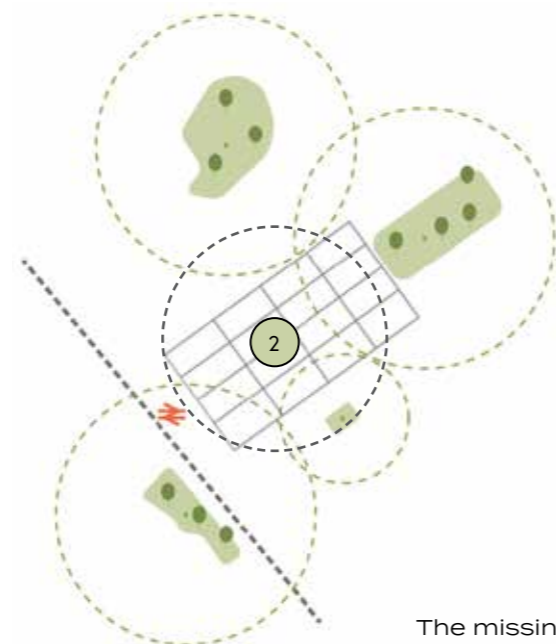
Reconceive Midsummer Boulevard as a linear greenway promoting active travel, pop-up uses, biodiversity, mental wellbeing and sustainable drainage.



Reprioritising streets for people before cars

Placemaking Proposal 2:

Incorporate some of the district level open space functions that are missing from CMK's Green Infrastructure network, in order to maximise accessibility to open space.



The missing middle

Placemaking Proposal 3:

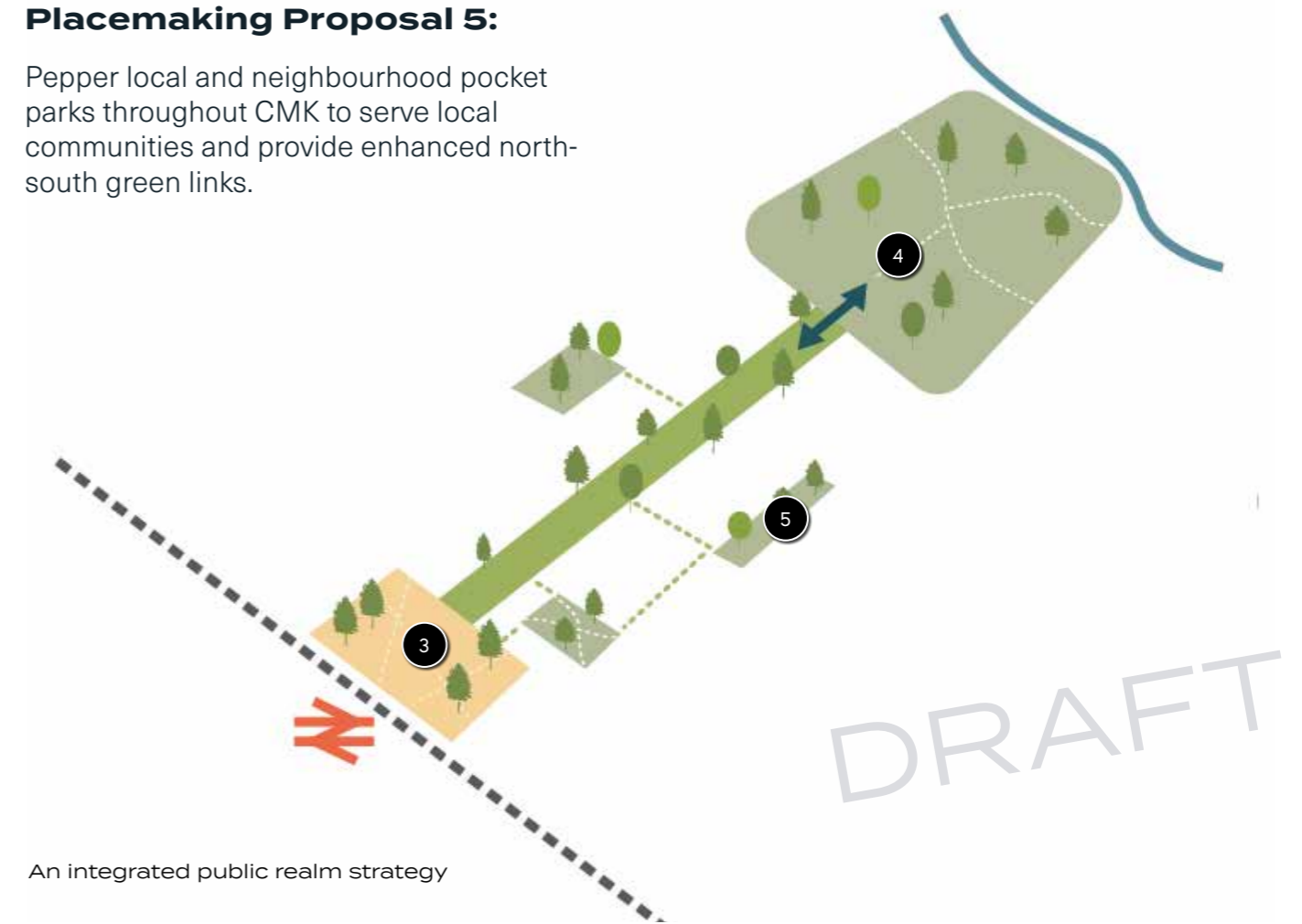
Reconfigure Station Square as a civic place of arrival, and create a new amenity space adjacent to the former bus station / proposed MRT interchange, with potential for both spaces to be activated by new buildings.

Placemaking Proposal 4:

Provide an enhanced physical and visual connection to Campbell Park in the form of a 'green bridge'.

Placemaking Proposal 5:

Pepper local and neighbourhood pocket parks throughout CMK to serve local communities and provide enhanced north-south green links.



An integrated public realm strategy

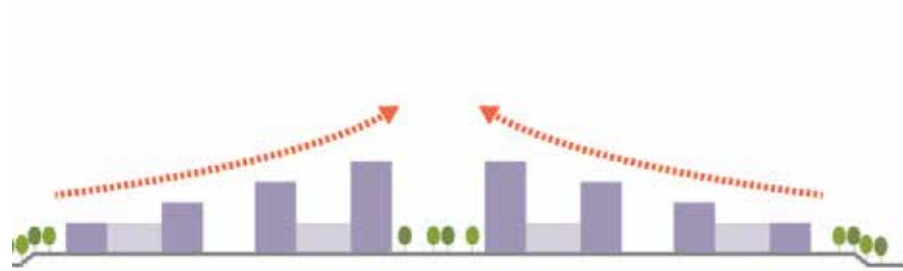


Density & Height

Use height and density to promote the sustainable use of land in ways which reinforce CMK's existing urban structure and character and impart a distinctive skyline.

Placemaking Proposal 1:

Allow higher buildings in vicinity of public transport nodes and corridors, stepping down to peripheral low-rise neighbourhoods.



Calibrate building heights

Placemaking Proposal 2:

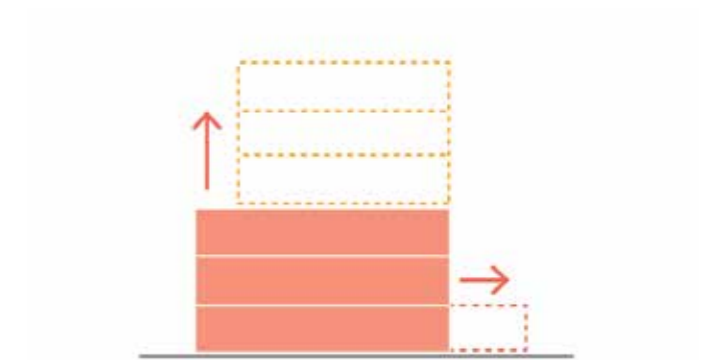
Consider 'gateway' higher buildings at key locations including Midsummer Boulevard, Station Square and Campbell Park.



Celebrate the gateways

Placemaking Proposal 3:

Encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings recognising it may be preferable to demolish buildings in some circumstances to unlock more sustainable overall use of land.



Encourage adaptive reuse of suitable buildings

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Building Design

Require sustainable buildings with a clear distinction between ‘public’ fronts and ‘private’ backs while continuing to support high quality innovative and forward-looking design.

Placemaking Proposal 1:

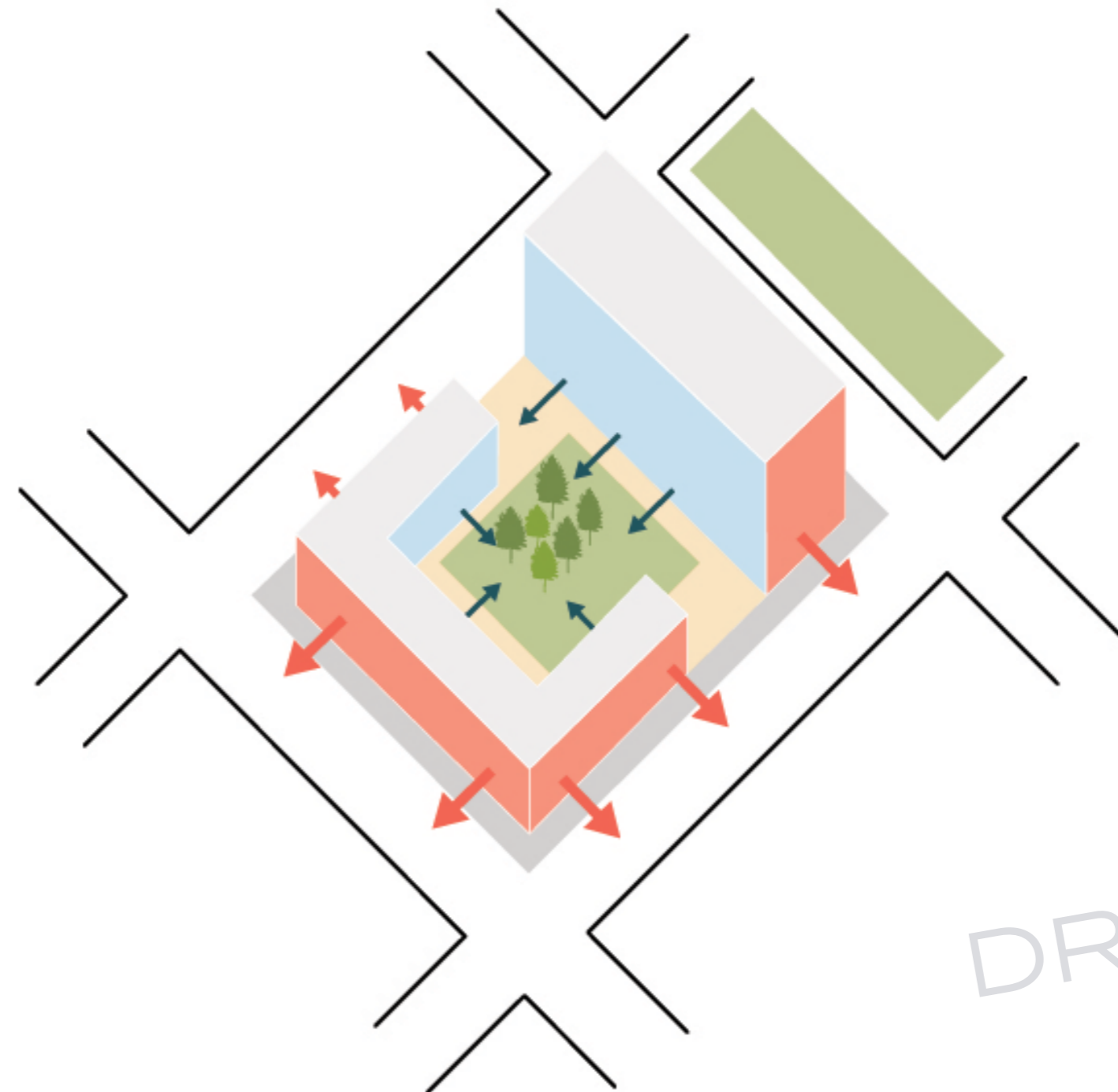
Promote more efficient perimeter block typologies incorporating a diverse range of building types that clearly distinguish between fronts, backs and sides.

Placemaking Proposal 2:

Consider limiting the proportion of north-facing flats and setting an overall limit to the quantum of single aspect residential units permitted by any given planning application.

Placemaking Proposal 3:

Prepare a Design Code for CMK that will set out mandatory requirements and advisory guidance to ensure a consistent approach to design quality, while also engaging Design Review Panels (DRPs) to vet individual development proposals.



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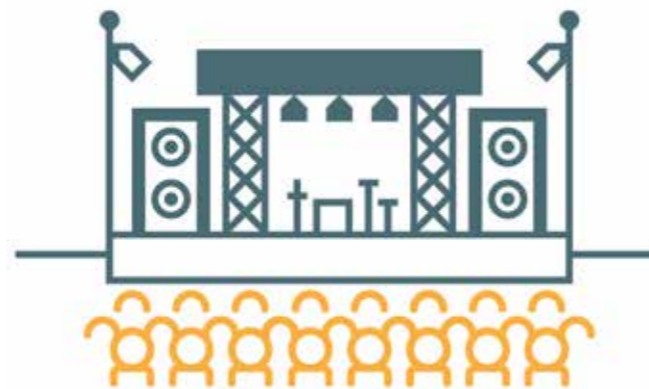
Culture, Heritage & Community

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Create opportunities for people to get together, including residents and visitors.

Placemaking Proposal 1:

Facilitate delivery of a major venue.



Placemaking Proposal 2:

Utilise new parks and greenways for meanwhile uses and pop-up uses supported by a programme of events and festivals.



Placemaking Proposal 3:

Provide a new cultural attraction within Campbell Park.



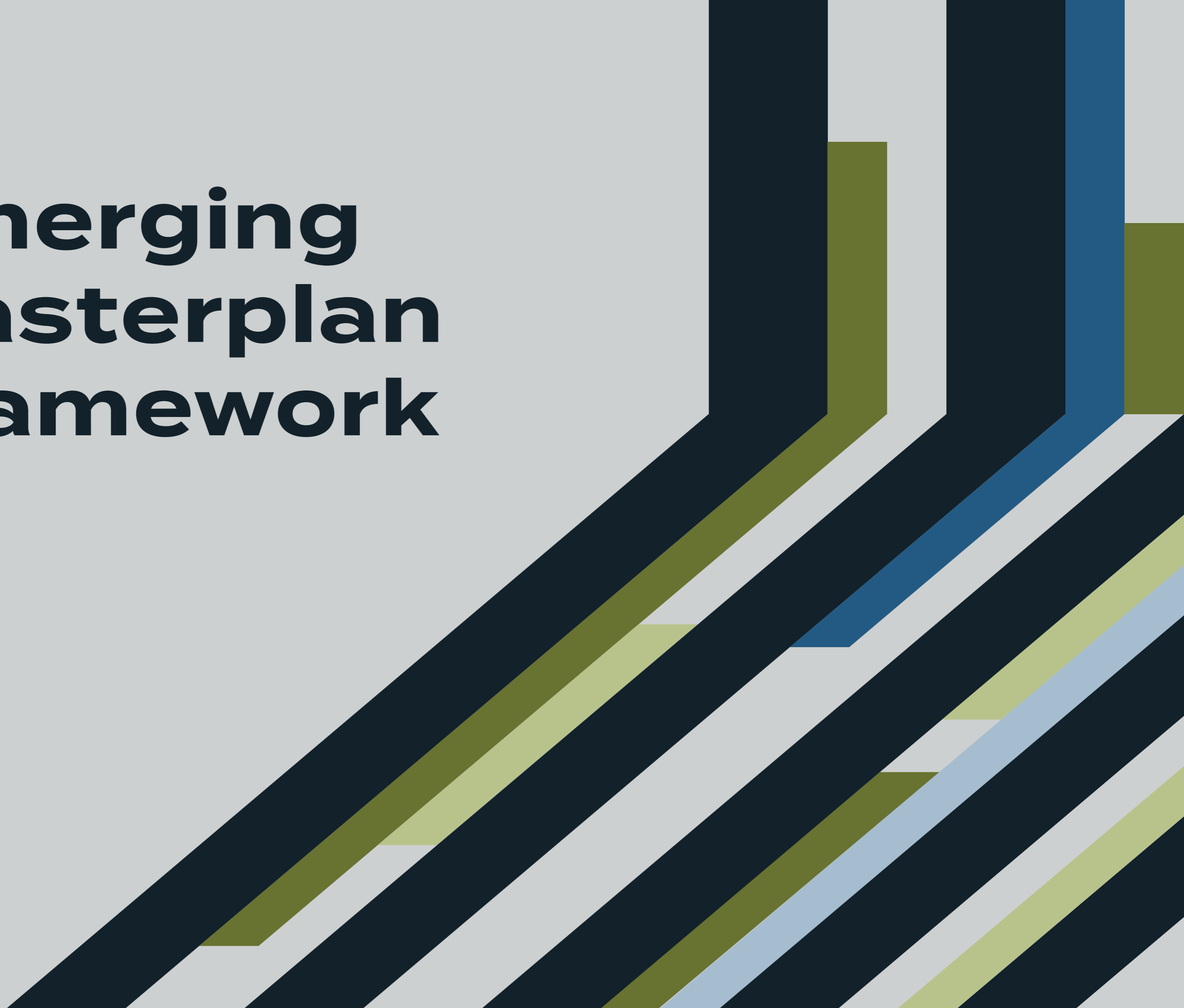
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Placemaking Proposal 4:

Promote a network of local services to serve the existing and incoming residential communities as well as people working in CMK, within easy walking distance.



Emerging Masterplan Framework

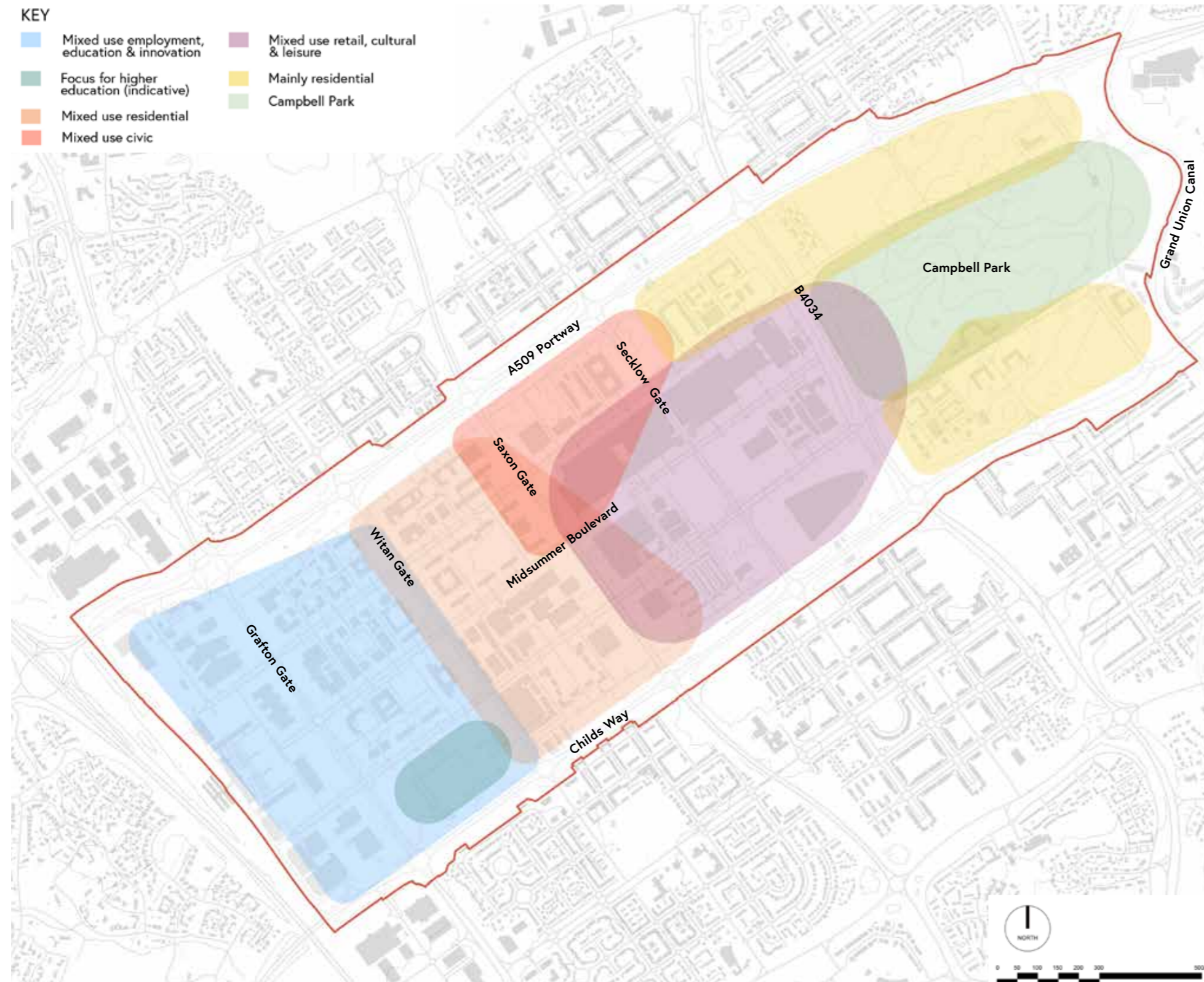


Emerging Masterplan Framework

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Land Use Strategy

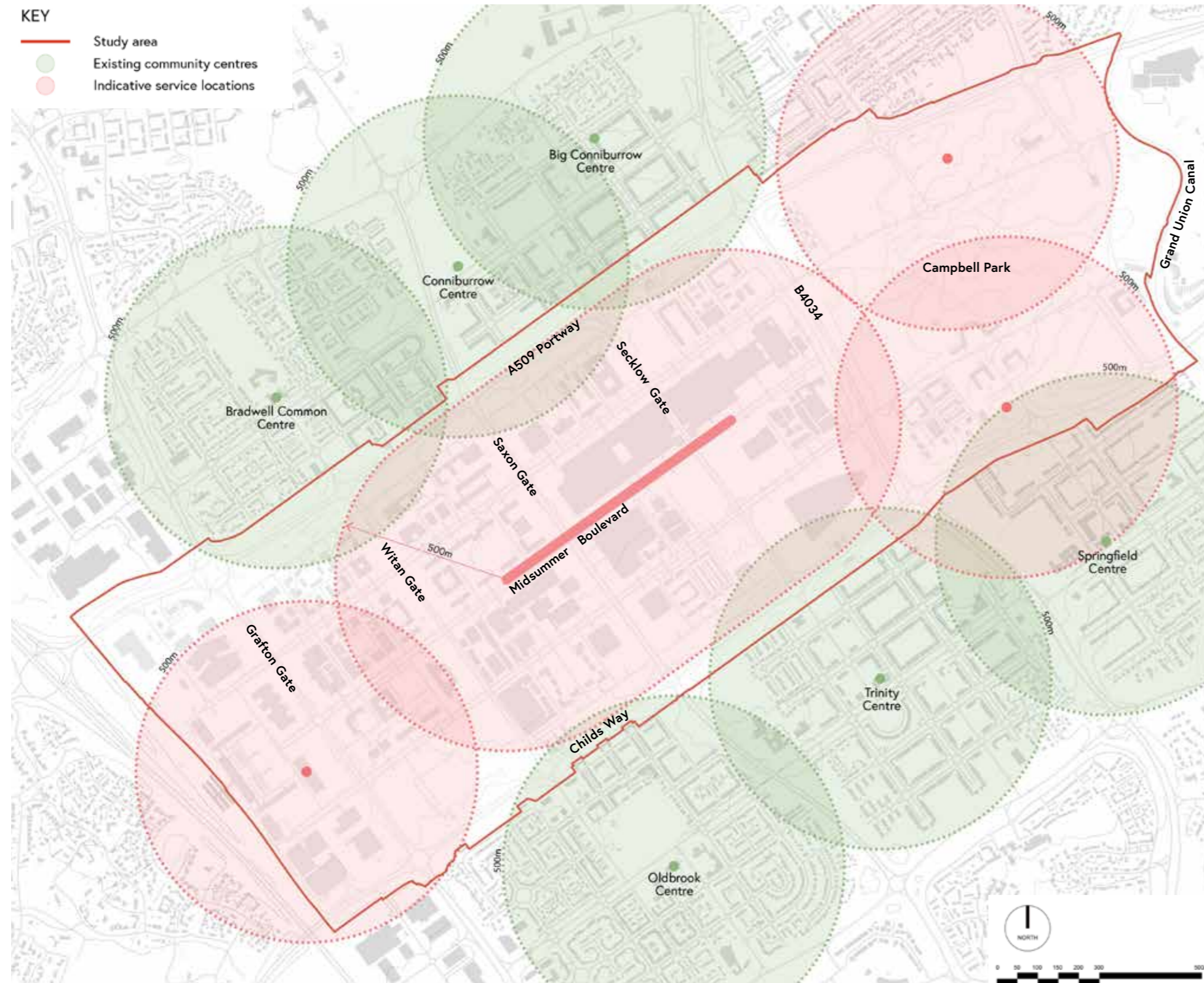


Key Points:

- Allows and encourages a mix of complementary uses and avoids mutually exclusive 'land-use zoning'.
- Reinforces existing employment focus 'downtown' with potential synergies around academia / emerging MKU proposals.
- Reinforces potential for consolidating residential focus 'midtown'.
- Reinforces existing focus of retail, leisure and cultural uses 'uptown'.
- Potential for significant residential focus around Campbell Park.

Note: the land use strategy plan will inform the approach to land use that will be taken by the New City Plan, and, as such, should be read in conjunction with the emerging New City Plan.

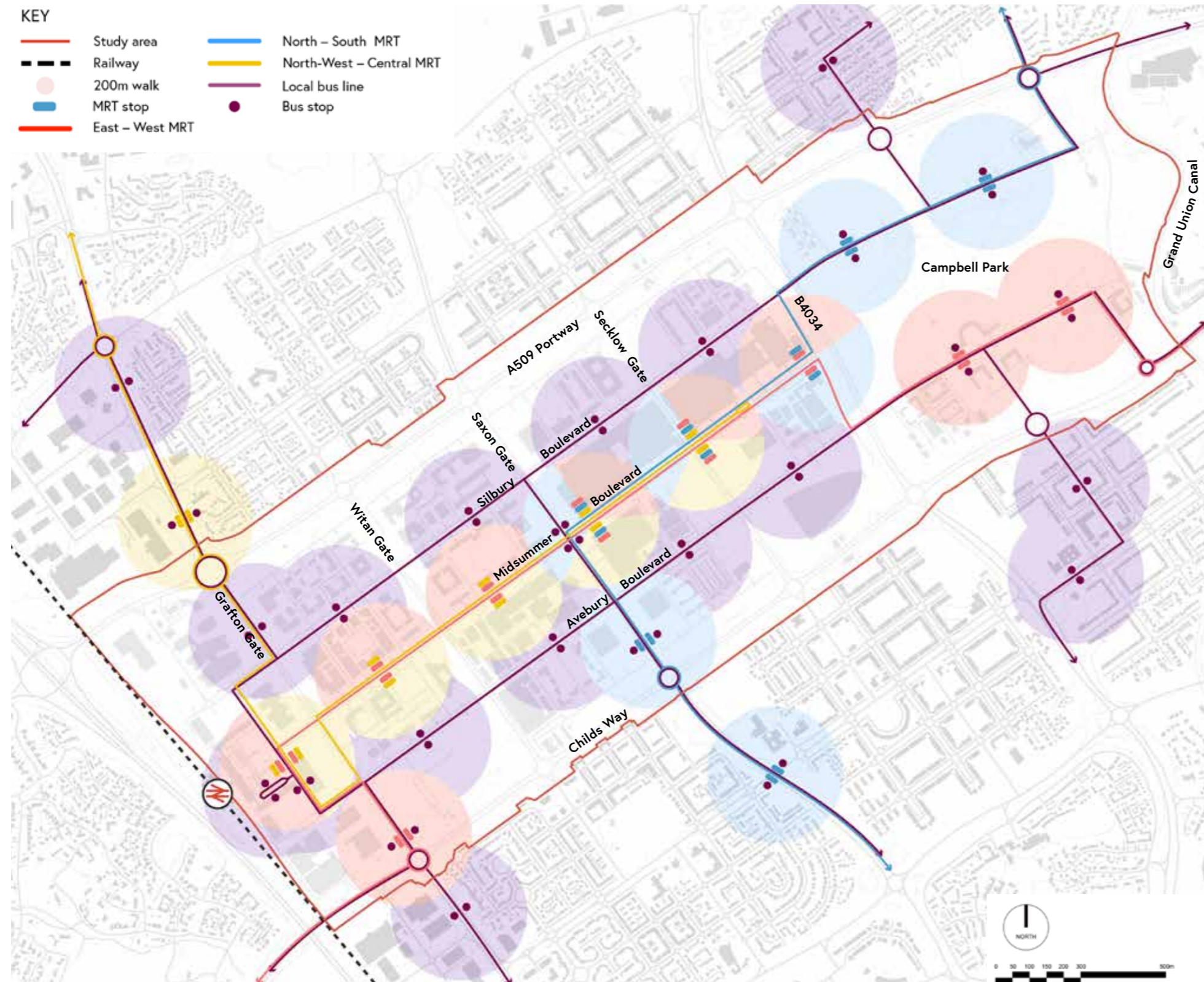
The emerging framework diagrams overlay broad strategic direction for land uses, community services, public transport, landscape priorities and intensification of urban form, based on the high-level recommendations articulated in the placemaking principles.



Key Points:

- There is no specific requirement for community services to be co-located in a single building.
- In general terms distribution of community services along Midsummer Boulevard should be encouraged because this will help activate the proposed Greenway and maximise walkability for residents and workers alike.
- Traditional family housing typologies will largely remain peripheral to CMK. Consequently specific provision for primary education has not been identified within CMK, however emerging models for urban primary schools with limited land-take should be explored.

This diagram shows optimal illustrative locations for local services to serve incoming communities (including workers) within walking distance of their homes and workplaces (e.g. access to ‘corner shop’, local nursery, cafe etc.).



Key Points:

- Facilitates creating a fitting place of 'arrival' to CMK by removing barriers to pedestrian movement, reducing visual clutter and creating a more meaningful piece of public realm for people to use and to enjoy.
- Frees up Midsummer Boulevard for partial pedestrianisation and cycle usage, and as an enhanced landscape corridor and active travel route.
- Allows Silbury and Avebury Boulevards to remain activated by city busses.
- Extends bus stop catchment to a broader swathe of CMK, with most areas potentially within a 2-3 minute walk to a stop.
- Avoids direct competition between MRT and city bus services.
- Enables an interchange of all three MRT Lines at Saxon Gate/Midsummer Boulevard, between the Midtown and Uptown areas and adjacent to the retail core.

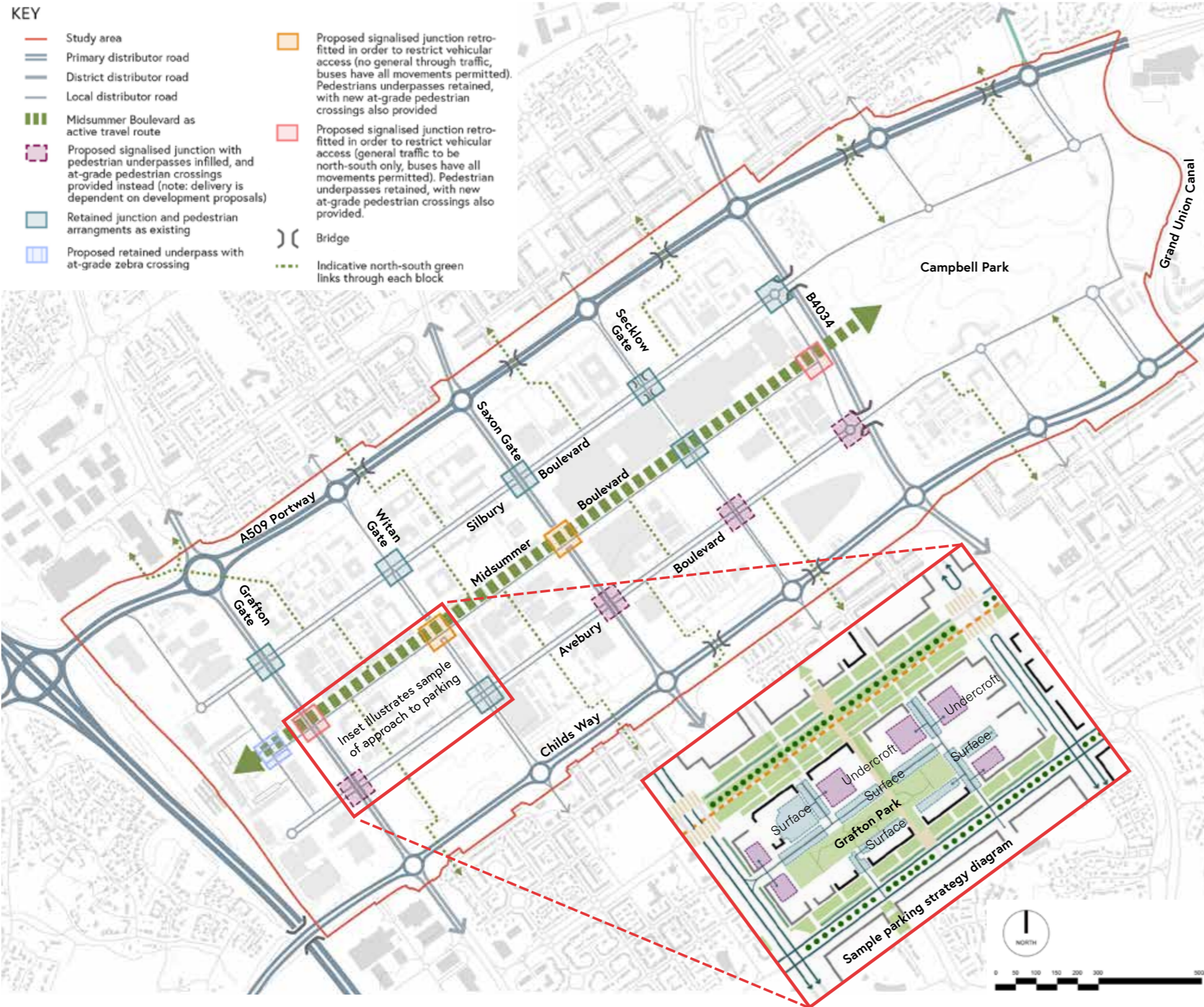
Note: the public transport strategy plan illustrates the longer-term vision for MRT to be re-routed through Midsummer Place, however it is recognised that a shorter-term solution could be devised which avoids this building pending agreement of a comprehensive masterplan for this area.

The public transport strategy maximises accessibility across CMK for all uses, providing interchanges at the most important nodal points - the Station and the retail core - while serving homes along its route.

Vehicular Movement Strategy

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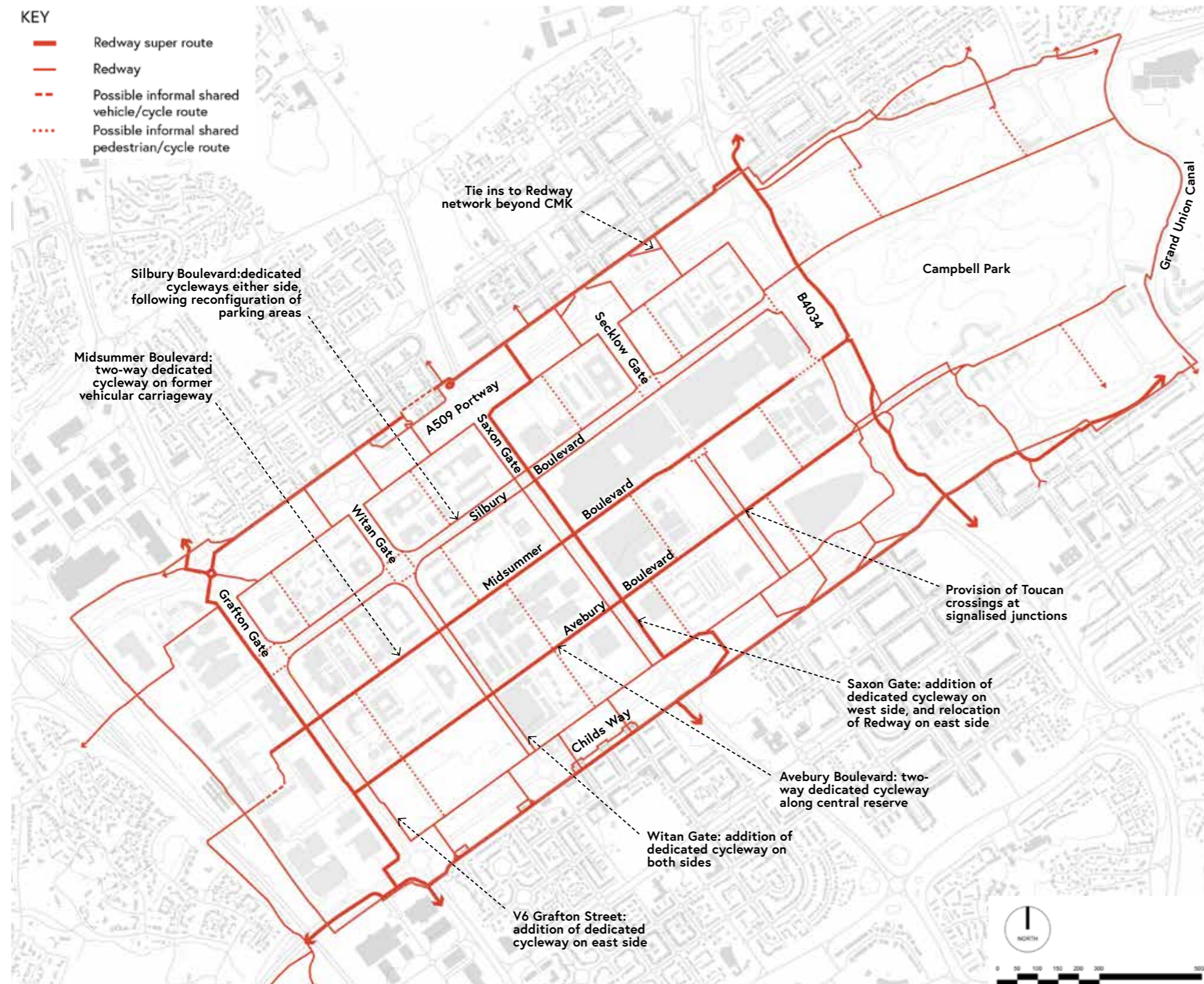
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Key Points:

- Stopping Witan Gate and Saxon Gate at junction with Midsummer Boulevard to support free movement and active travel along the proposed greenway, together with retention of single carriageway for City Buses and emergency services.
- Active travel route along Midsummer Boulevard with at-grade crossings of (part pedestrianised) Witan Gate and Saxon Gate to supplement retained underpasses along this route.
- Potential filling of selected underpasses along Avebury Boulevard to follow existing precedents and enhance development potential of adjoining development parcels, where considered holistically as part of appropriate development proposals.
- Each block will differ in its parking need, capacity and opportunities for relocation, however it is clear that the existing provision is overly generous.

The movement strategy for CMK puts people before cars, while retaining accessibility for all modes. Reliance on surface parking will be gradually reduced over time and peripheralised in tandem with greater modal shift.



Key Points:

- Formalisation of the existing informal cycle network through CMK (which is currently via underpasses and car parking access roads). Provision of more dedicated cycleways through CMK as an extension to the Redway network.
- New Redways follow alignment of Midsummer Boulevard, and Avebury Boulevard (central reserve).
- Extend Redways network through reconfigured surface car parking areas, (following the existing precedent on Saxon Gate).
- Tie-ins to existing wider Redway (outside CMK).

The cycling strategy is mutually supportive of the other movement and access strategies, including new Redways into and through the city centre.



Key Points:

- Reconceive Midsummer Boulevard as a linear greenway with the same attractions as a district level park.
- Midsummer Boulevard northern carriageway repurposed for active travel with southern carriageway retained for MRT and emergency access.
- New development proposals to replace existing forecourt parking with designed landscape space to improve biodiversity and manage rainwater runoff.
- Provide for a green grid of pocket parks (illustrative sizes and locations dependant on detailed proposals) to serve new residential development - including childrens' play - that are interconnected by green and blue infrastructure.
- Create a new city park amenity space as part of a potential development opportunity adjscnt to the old bus station.
- Maximise green links and pedestrian connections to the surrounding area via existing pedestrian bridges.
- Make better use of the informal 'green frame' for SuDS and childrens' play.
- Provide for playing pitches outside of CMK, but with good transport links for CMK residents.

The green infrastructure and open space strategy for CMK echoes the original green grid structure for wider Milton Keynes. While greening the east-west boulevards, it also seeks to introduce better north-south green connections.

Skyline Strategy

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KEY

- Site area
- Opportunities for mid- to high-rise (up to 30 storeys*)
- Opportunities for mid-rise (up to 15 storeys)
- Opportunities for low- to mid-rise (up to 6 storeys)

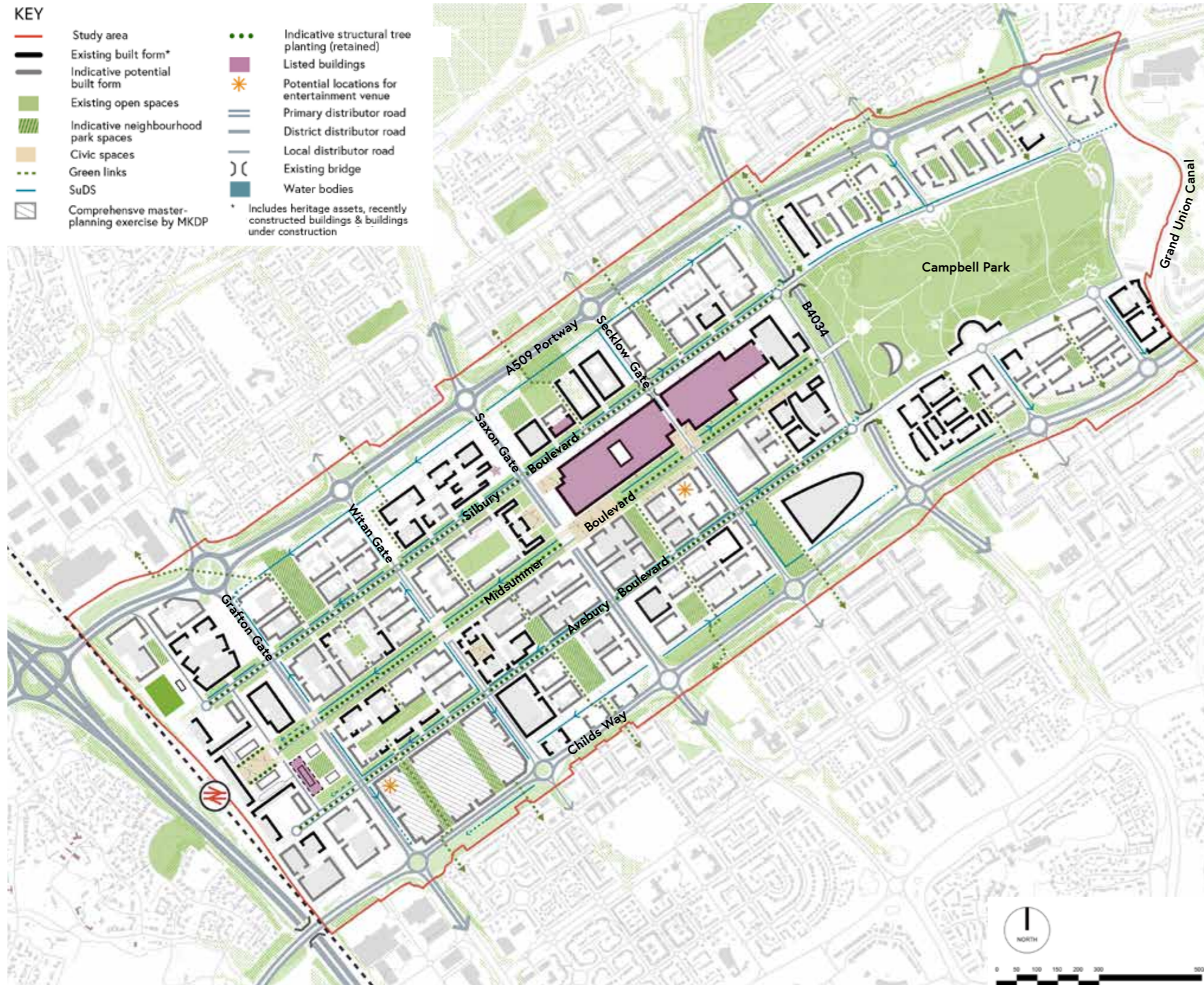
Note: Proposals exceeding 30 storeys in height should be considered on a case-by-case basis on their individual merits.



Key Points:

- Maximum heights ranged along Midsummer Boulevard, stepping down to Silbury and Avebury Boulevards, and towards the suburban edges.
- Heights respond to designated and non-designated heritage assets.
- The strategy takes account of existing and future public transport accessibility, access to open space and topographical considerations.
- It also provides for development at key 'gateway' locations of townscape significance such as Station Square, Campbell Park and Gates.

The skyline strategy shows how the placemaking principles relating to height, built form and townscape could be implemented. The strategy takes account of a wide range of constraints and suitability criteria.

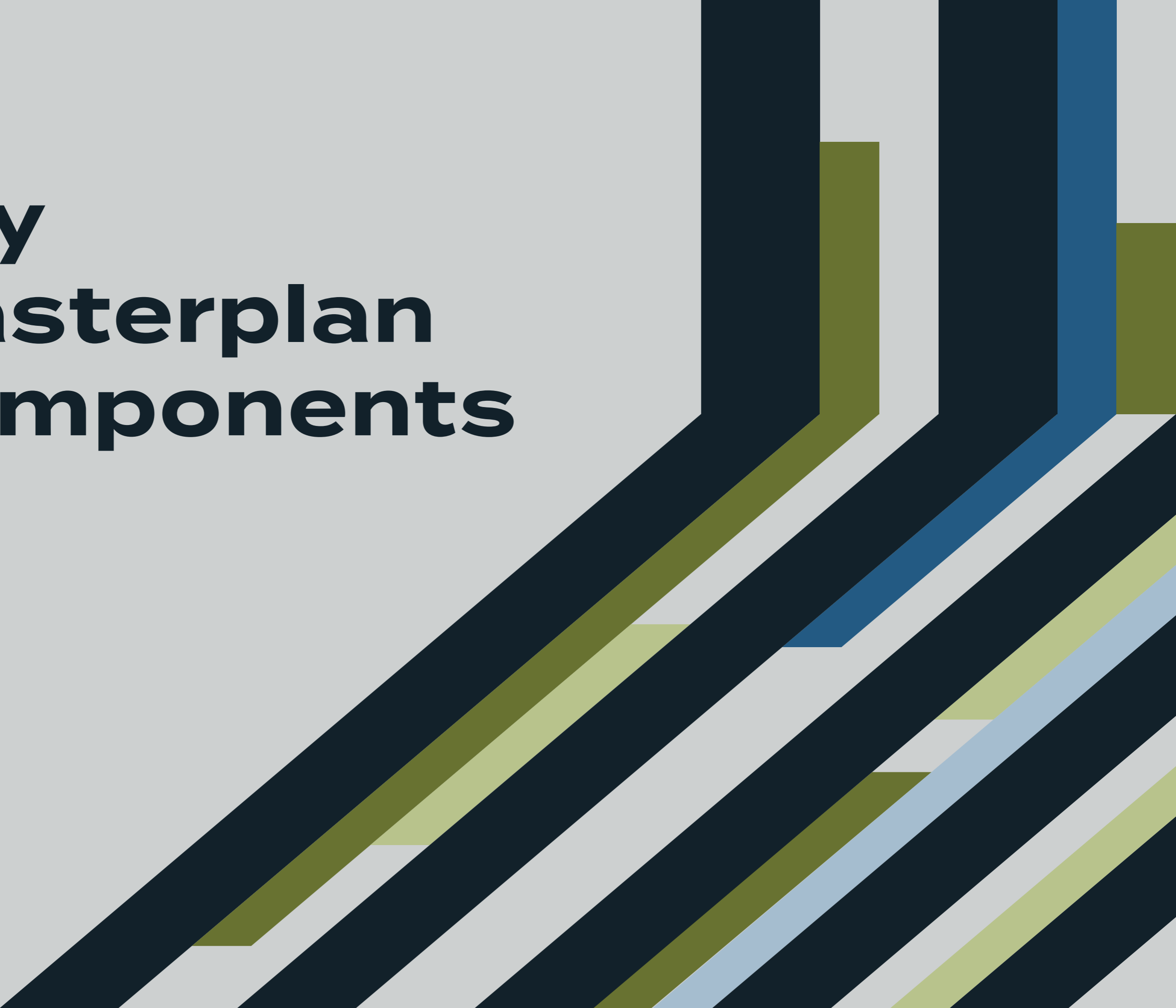


Key Points:

- The masterplan framework provides a place-led approach to managing CMK’s potential for intensification and growth. It is not a ‘blueprint’ for development.
- The diagram illustrates a degree of growth potential over a period of time that could well exceed the life of the City Plan.
- It is acknowledged that the demand for growth will change over time both in terms of its quantum and profile.

The masterplan framework brings together the key spatial strategies within a place-led integrated urban design framework diagram, showing how CMK’s development potential could be realised in a coordinated and cohesive way.

Key Masterplan Components



Key Components

Station Square

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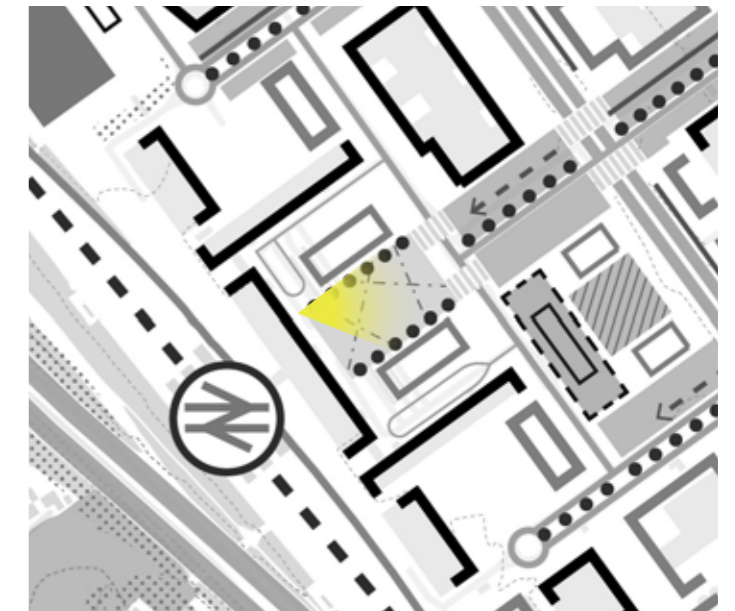
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Artist's impression

Key Points:

- Prioritise pedestrian movement and visual connection towards Midsummer Boulevard.
- Reposition taxi drop-off and city bus interchange to sides to free-up public realm for events.
- New buildings serve to create a more human scale and improved sense of space enclosure.



Approximate location and direction of view

The proposals will create a more welcoming place of arrival that is people-centred, legible and easy to navigate.

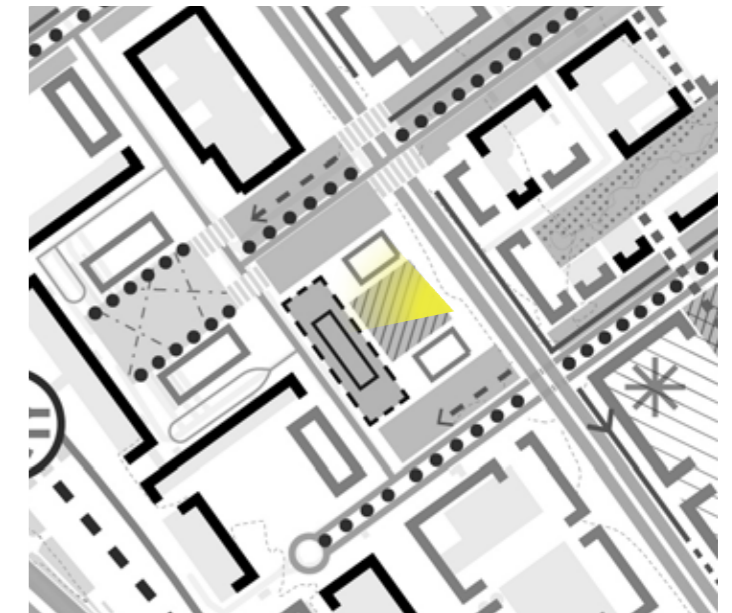
Old Bus Station



Artist's impression

Key Points:

- Potential to develop the surface car park adjacent to the old bus station with high quality public realm / amenity space between new buildings.
- Contribute a 'stepping stone' of high quality public space between the Station Square and Avebury Boulevard.



Approximate location and direction of view

This space has the potential to frame the Old Bus Station in a sensitive way, and to create a new public space between the buildings.

Midsummer Boulevard



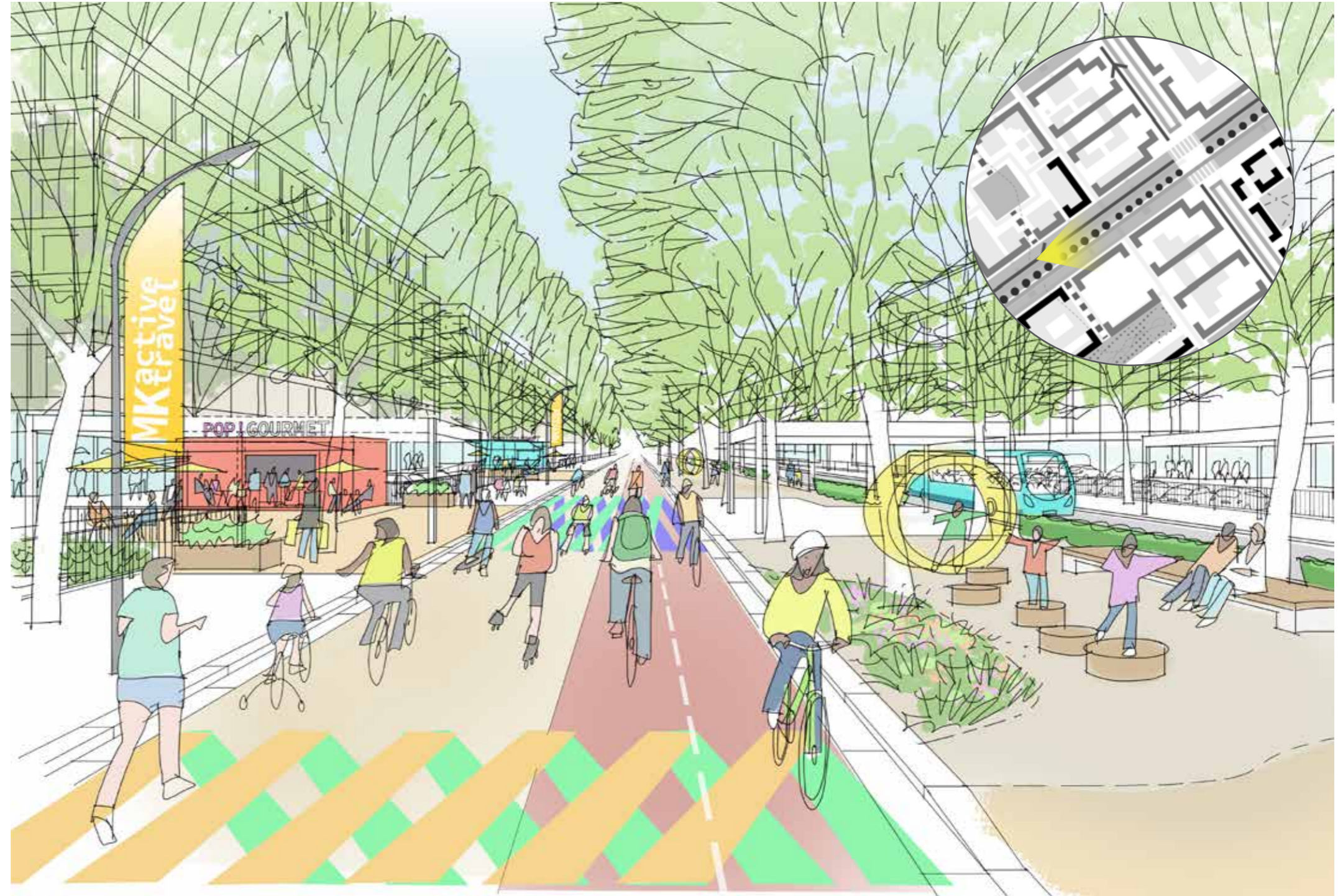
As existing: Vehicle oriented, low biodiversity



Step 1: Re-purpose northern carriageway



Step 2: Add 'play on the way' / public art / seating



Step 3: Continue to improve public realm for rainwater management, biodiversity, health and wellbeing - Enjoy

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Gradual Greening of Boulevard Parking Areas



As existing: Surface parking, low biodiversity



Step 1: Increase attenuation of surface water



Step 2: Add Sustainable Urban Drainage



Step 3: Continue to improve public realm for rainwater management, biodiversity, health and wellbeing - Enjoy

Midsummer Boulevard - Step 1



Key Points:

- Retain existing infrastructure.
- Close mid section of Boulevard to cross-town traffic.
- Repurpose (sunnier) northern carriageway for active travel.
- Retain southern carriageway for City Busses and in the future, for Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) vehicles.
- Encourage pop-ups and colonisation of existing public realm.

Retaining the existing road infrastructure and repurposing it for active travel through low-cost, reversible interventions such as changing the surface texture and/ or colour, will achieve maximum gain for minimum cost, while respecting the heritage value of its classic infrastructure.

Midsummer Boulevard - Step 2



Key Points:

- Introduction of Mass Rapid Transit (MRT).
- Gradual greening of forecourt parking areas for SuDS and planting as new development proposals come forward to meet BNG and Urban Greening requirements.
- Incremental investment in low cost / high impact street furniture / public art / play on the way.

Allowing the change in regime to bed-in, will build confidence and attract new users, raising the value and attractiveness of the surrounding buildings as places to live and work. Incremental improvements such as 'play on the way' and public art will help to forge a stronger identity and a better quality of environment for Midsummer Boulevard, at the heart of the city centre.

Midsummer Boulevard - Step 3



Key Points:

- Further incremental improvements to public realm.
- Continued greening of forecourt parking areas.
- Newer and higher-density developments support consolidation of public realm, making CMK a more attractive place to live and work.
- Aligns with best practice and Government Policy by promoting active travel, biodiversity, physical and mental wellbeing.

Over time, as existing trees mature, development increases and further greening takes place, Midsummer Boulevard will cement its position as an exemplar of sustainable urbanism, improving the lives of its inhabitants and bolstering MK's international image as the greenest city in England.

Extending towards the Gates



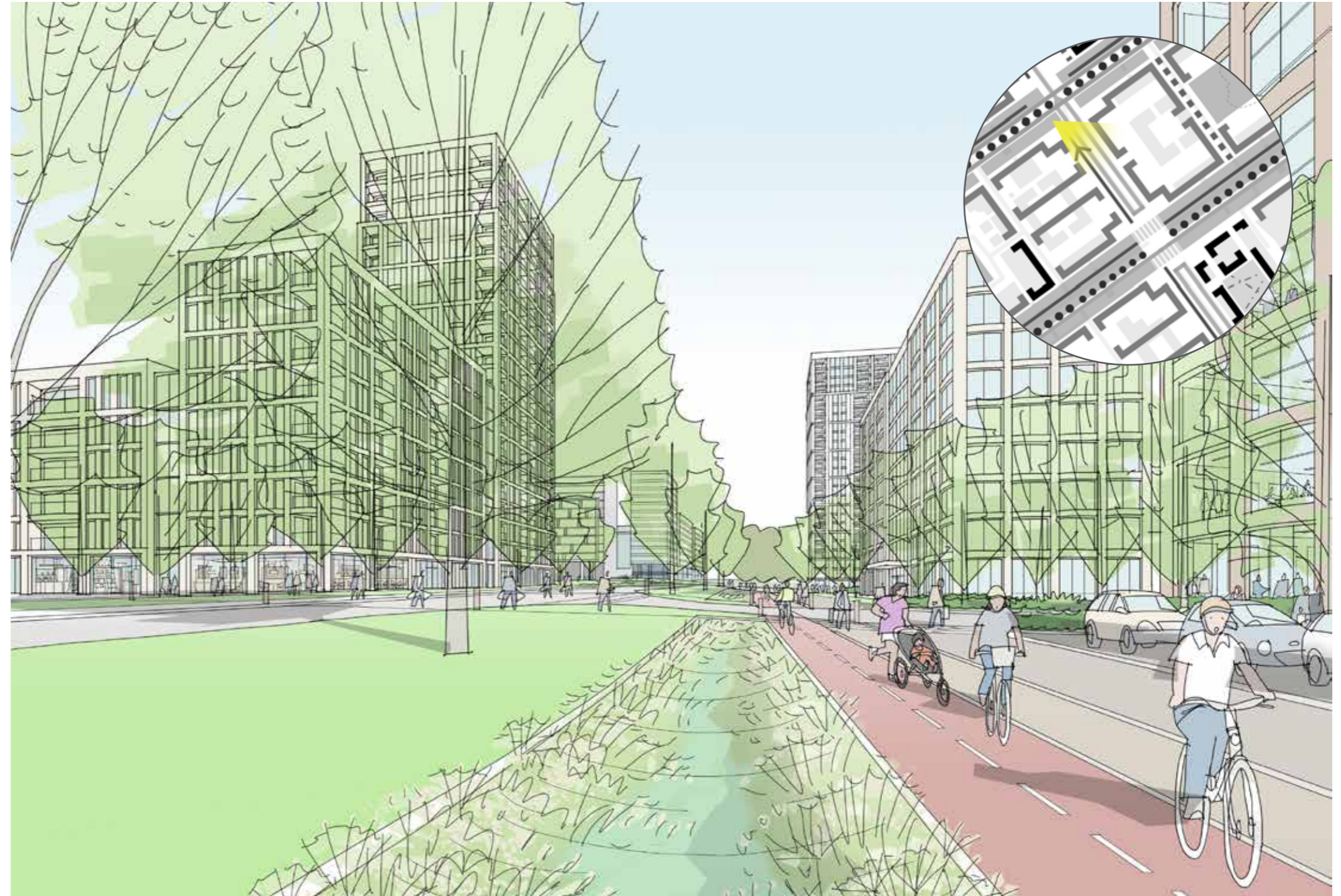
As existing: Surface parking, low biodiversity



Step 1: Allow build-out alongside formalised movement

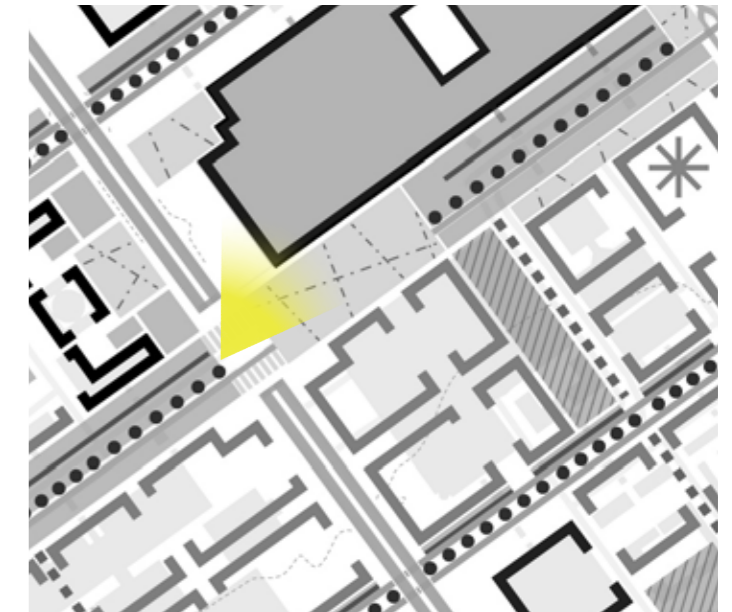


Step 2: Further development activates streets



More efficient use of development land with improved public realm for rainwater management, pedestrian and cycle movement

Civic Square



Approximate location and direction of view

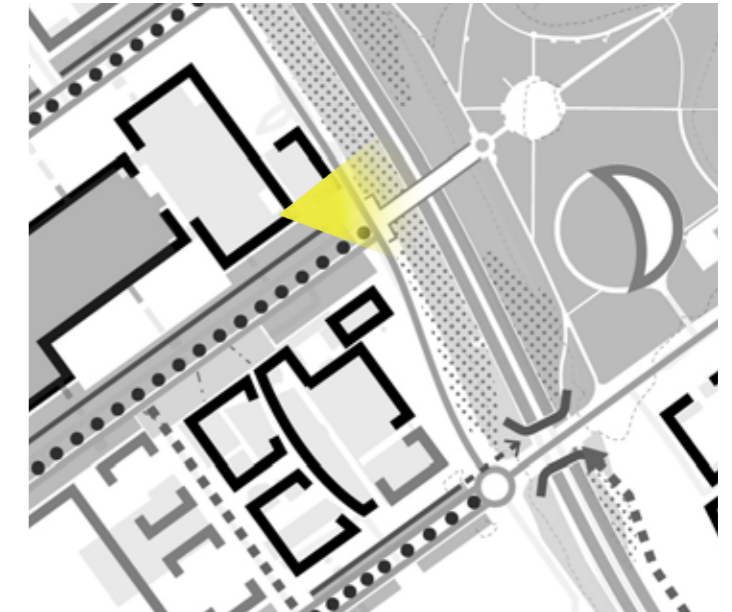
Reinstating the integrity of the Listed shopping centre and activating its frontage, brings with it the opportunity to create a new civic space in the heart of the city centre, serviced by the an interchange for the proposed MRT, and clear linkages to both Station Square and Campbell Park.

Artist's impression

Campbell Park



Artist's impression



Approximate location and direction of view

A generous green bridge at the same level as the proposed active travel route following Midsummer Boulevard, could complete the journey from Station Square to Campbell Park, bringing a stronger physical and visual connection between the city and the park, and a new cultural attraction.

Place comparators



Place comparators

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Knowledge quarter

City living quarter

Civic & retail quarter

Park side



Central Station, Rotterdam



Elephant & Castle Regeneration Masterplan, London



Kamppi Centre, Helsinki



Billancourt Park, Paris



Novartis Campus, Basel



Klyde Warren Park, Dallas



The Tide, Greenwich



Musee Moesgaard, Aarhus



Station Hill, Reading



Tanner Springs, Portland



Coolsingel, Rotterdam



Victory Park, Stratford

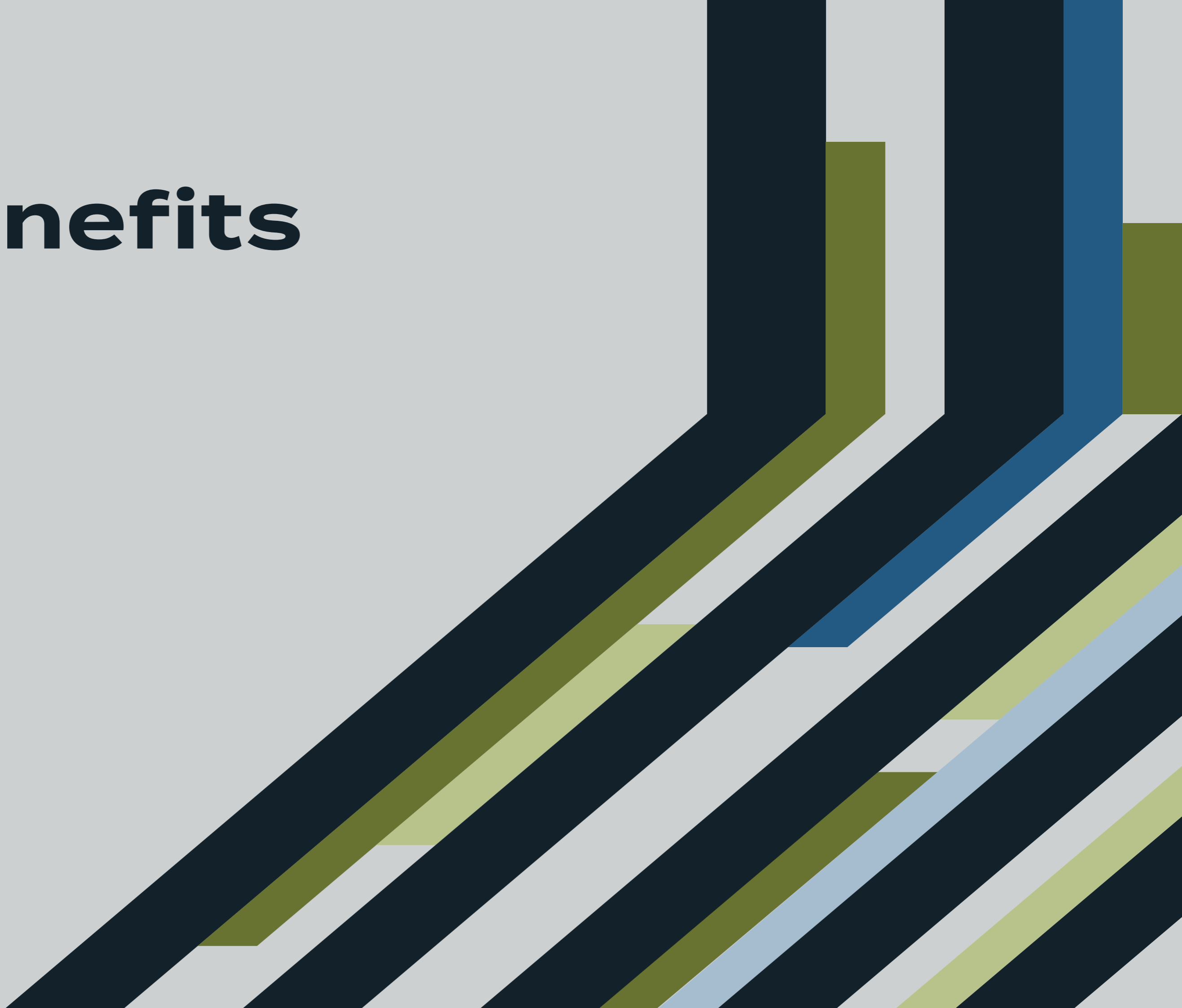
Downtown

Midtown

Uptown

Park side

Benefits



Benefits

Delivering sustainable growth

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Sustainable growth needs to be guided at the appropriate level by a visionary yet deliverable masterplan framework in order to generate tangible environmental, social and economic benefits for the city as a whole.

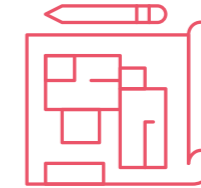
Environmental benefits:

- Biodiversity.
- Water management (SuDS).
- Air quality.



Masterplan framework:

- Vision.
- Guiding principles.
- Strategic direction.



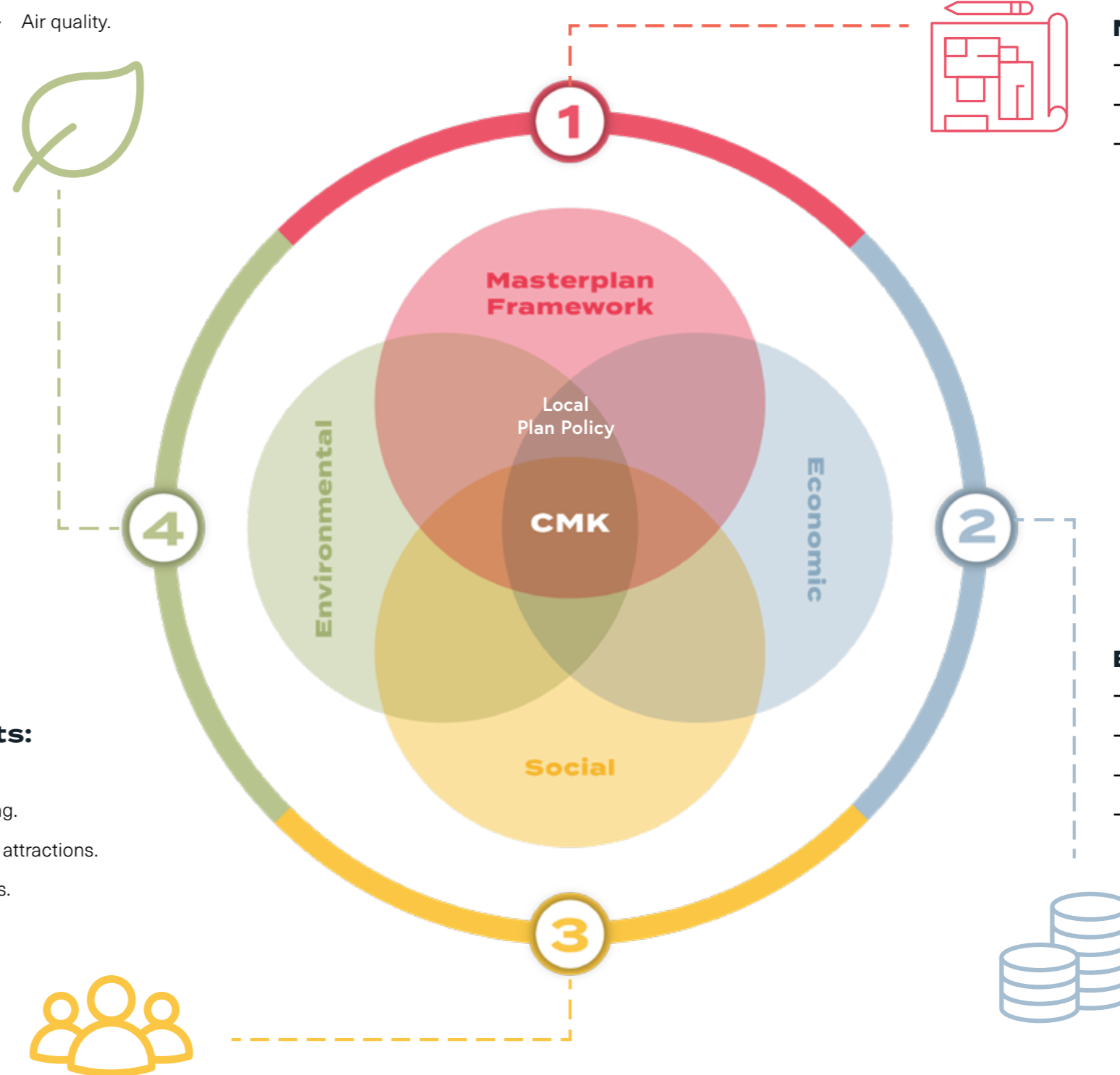
Social benefits:

- Housing choice.
- Health and wellbeing.
- Cultural and leisure attractions.
- Community services.



Economic benefits:

- More jobs.
- Increased foot fall.
- Greater local spend.
- Capital receipts.



Indicative Timeline

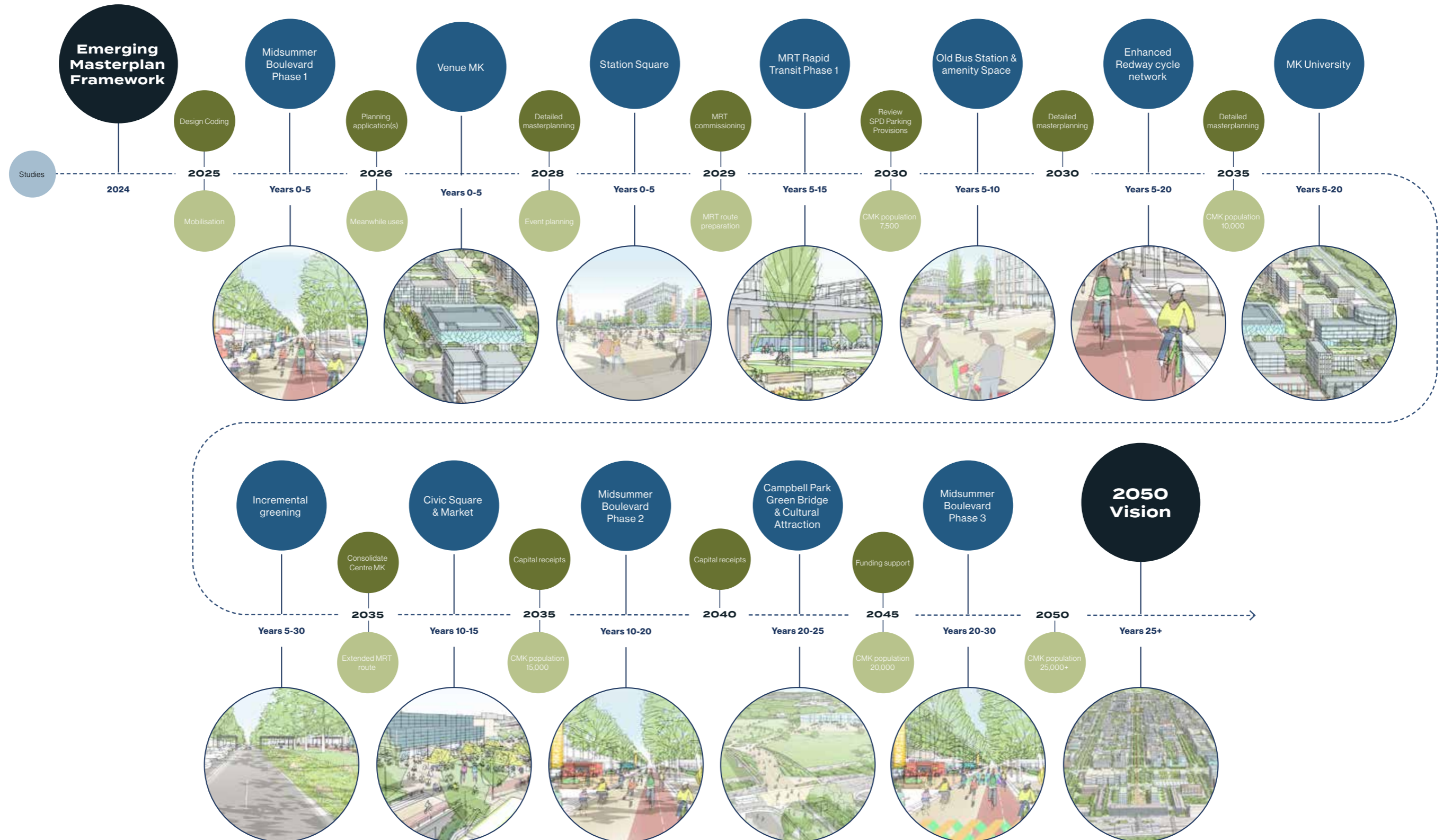


Indicative Timeline

Achieving the vision

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GROUP**
REGISTERED
PRACTICE


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