

# Milton Keynes Strategy for 2050

Adopted January 2021  
Refreshed January 2025



**Milton  
Keynes.**  
Better by design

# Milton Keynes: Better by design

**The Milton Keynes way has always been to look ahead, think differently and create our own future.**

That is why, in 2015, I established the MK Futures 2050 Commission to help us think about the future of our great city, and what we should do to make sure Milton Keynes continues to thrive and create opportunities for its residents. Building on the Commission's recommendations, we adopted our long-term Strategy for 2050 in January 2021, using detailed research and, more importantly, by listening to our citizens and businesses.

**Our Strategy for 2050 sets out how we will keep and strengthen those things that make Milton Keynes special and which our residents love – our beautiful green spaces and trees, being able to move around easily using our grid roads and Redways, our vibrant economy, and our diverse communities and strong community spirit.**

But the uncertainty and disruption that we've seen over the last decade – from the COVID-19 pandemic to the 'cost of living' crisis – make it even more important to have a clear and ambitious vision. We must continue tackle threats to our success and wellbeing, including the global challenge of climate change, the affordability of homes, and the fact that many children in our thriving city live in poverty.

No great city sits back and waits to see what happens. We want everyone living in Milton Keynes to lead happy, healthy lives and believe that growing our city and economy is the best way to provide this.

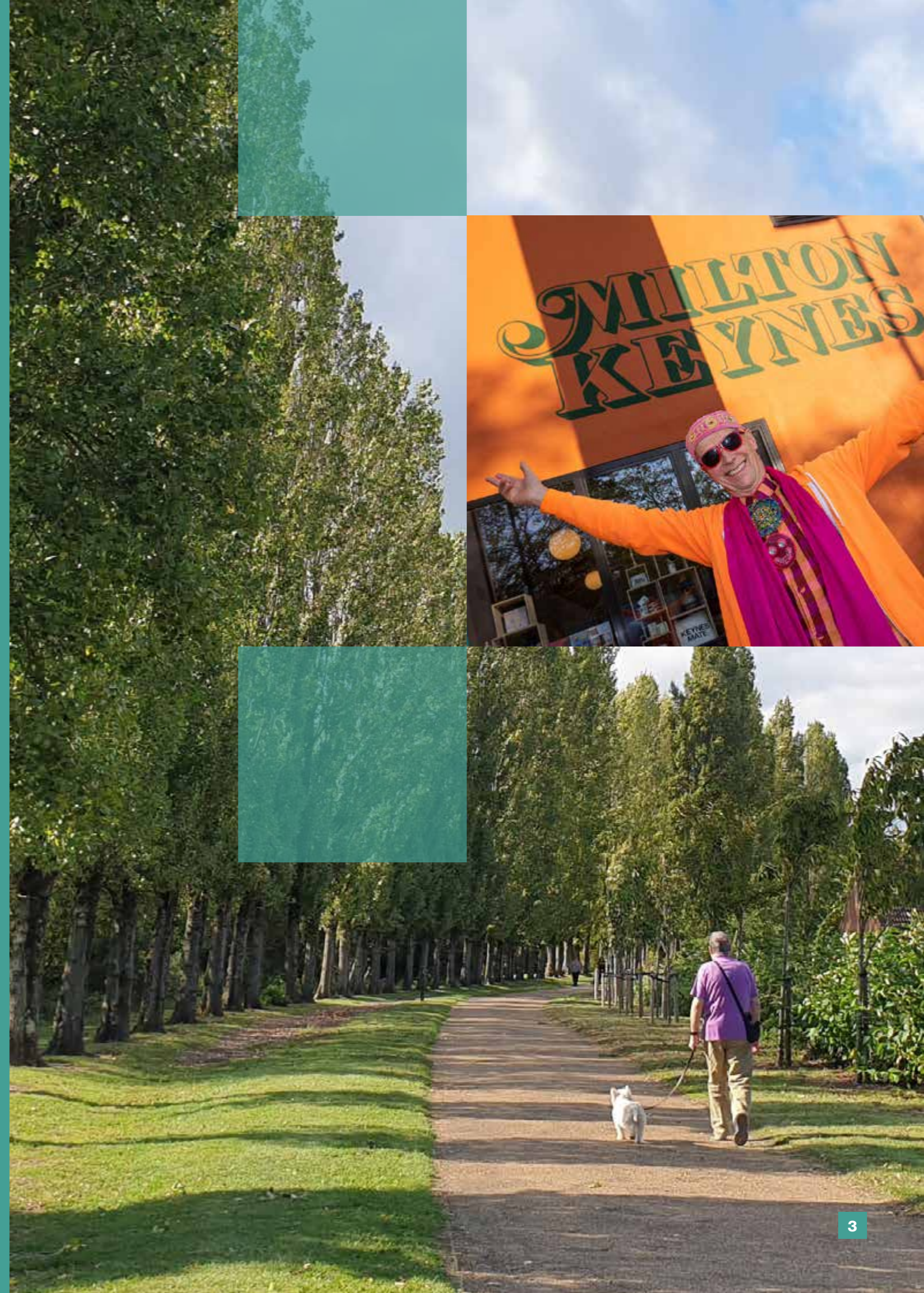
Since we adopted the Strategy for 2050, we've already seen the value that our long-term thinking can bring to Milton Keynes. In 2022, we were granted City Status, recognising how Milton Keynes has matured to the successful, thriving city that the original Plan for Milton Keynes envisaged back in 1970.

We've also made great progress on preparing a new Local Plan, using the Strategy for 2050 as its overarching vision. We consulted on the first stage of the MK City Plan 2050 over the summer of 2024. When adopted, the new plan will set out the statutory policies that will help to deliver people-friendly and healthy places.

Our Strategy takes a flexible approach to planning for the future. This 'refresh' has allowed us to update references and data throughout the Strategy, but it does not change our overarching vision.

**I stand by our ambition for low-carbon growth and an excellent quality of life for everyone in Milton Keynes, especially the children and young people who will be our future citizens, and those who choose to move here and join us in the ongoing story of our great city.**

**Cllr Pete Marland – Leader, Milton Keynes City Council**



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## Chapter One | Introduction

Our city is a special place. Everywhere, rich, peaceful landscapes surround our homes. Our networks of parks and lakes are gifts which keep on giving.

Our city centre is one of the nation's most popular places to go shopping. We can easily travel around the city by car and our Redways provide traffic-free routes for walkers, cyclists and e-scooters. Being a good place to do business has made Milton Keynes the fastest growing city in the country.

Since the early 1950s, this part of North Buckinghamshire has been popular with families moving from London. Pioneers moved to a Bigger, Better, Brighter Bletchley and then to Milton Keynes: City of Trees.

We have thrived by welcoming newcomers from all parts of the world and our diversity is an immense strength. Now, much of our growth comes from our children, and their children, building their families here.

But today, not everyone shares in this prosperity. It can be difficult for some residents to get around our city or to access a good job. Too many of our young people live in poverty and do not gain the skills that they need to make their way in life.

By 2050, some 410,000 people will live in Milton Keynes borough, part of a Greater Milton Keynes of around half a million. Our Strategy for 2050 starts with some big promises to the residents of Milton Keynes today and in the decades to come. We will strengthen those things that make Milton Keynes special and deal with our weaknesses.

This Strategy is for everyone, but especially our children and young people who are the future of our great city.

This **Milton Keynes Strategy for 2050** sets the way forward for the next era of making our great city greater. It is a strategy for everyone living in Milton Keynes today, especially the children and young people who will be our future citizens, as well as those who will choose to move here to be part of a globally leading green city. Our city is a place different to any other, with our network of parks and lakes within a few minutes' walk of homes and our distinctive grid road system, Redways and iconic city centre, animated by our extensive public art collection.

We have created the largest designed city in Europe, internationally known for our modern heritage. Our individual grid square estates are complemented by our older towns and villages, each with its own character and community. Our vibrant economy has provided jobs with good prospects for young people, and we can walk and cycle safely and move around by car more easily than in any other place.

**It all adds up to MK being a successful, attractive and popular place to live, work and spend time, and this Strategy for 2050 protects those qualities.**

Since the early 1950s, this part of North Buckinghamshire has been popular with families moving from London. Pioneers moved to a Bigger, Better, Brighter Bletchley and then to Milton Keynes: City of Trees. In 1970, the original Plan for Milton Keynes provided a vision to the 60,000 people living here then, the families who were to move here and their children born here, of the thriving city we live in today.



That original plan was flexible to adapt to new circumstances which meant not everything that happened followed the Plan.

Back then we didn't know that the way we lived would contribute to climate change or how computers (pioneered at Bletchley Park) would change the way we earn a living, communicate, shop and travel. And the Plan did not anticipate a Milton Keynes where so many of our families live in poverty and where people in some of our communities die 7.5 years earlier on average than their near neighbours.

We are already seeing the impact of climate change with more frequent and extreme weather events. Global warming threatens our economy, our quality of life and our natural environment.

We need to be bold and imaginative so we can meet our ambition of Milton Keynes being carbon neutral by 2030 and carbon negative by 2050. Earlier in the decade, the COVID-19 pandemic made us all think about how we live. The crisis accelerated the trends we were already seeing in online shopping and homeworking and has helped us to see different possibilities for the future.

During the pandemic lockdowns, many people appreciated being in a place with fewer cars and cleaner air and enjoyed walking and cycling as part of their daily exercise.

Our network of green spaces, parks and lakes never seemed more precious and we became more aware of the value of caring for each other.

Instead of trying to get back to 'normal' we wanted to make things better for our residents, particularly those that haven't been able to share fully in the success of Milton Keynes so far. Our city has grown up through major economic crises and enormous social change over the last several decades and we know that having a flexible, long-term plan has helped to create a great place. The Milton Keynes way has always been to look ahead, think differently and create our own future.



*"The Plan is a beginning. It is a masterplan in the sense it provides a strategic framework in which the city can be developed. But, as with all good strategies, it defines the main aims whilst retaining flexibility to allow adjustments to new situations as they develop."*

**The Plan for Milton Keynes, 1970**



# Seven Big Ambitions for Milton Keynes in 2050

We want everyone living in Milton Keynes to lead happy, healthy lives and we believe that growing our city and economy is the best way to provide this. Our aim is to grow by a steady population increase to around 410,000 people living in the borough by 2050. Our flexible development framework can support growth beyond this total under the right conditions.

**This Strategy for 2050 offers Seven Big Ambitions which together act as our promise to those living here today and those who wish to make their homes here in future. We will:**

- Strengthen those qualities that make Milton Keynes **special**
- Make Milton Keynes a **leading green and cultural city** – by global standards
- Ensure everyone has their own **decent home** to rent or buy
- Build safe communities that support **health and wellbeing**
- **Provide jobs for everyone** by supporting our businesses, and attracting new ones
- Offer better opportunities for everyone to **learn** and develop their skills
- Make it **easier for everyone** to travel on foot, by bike and with better public transport.



## Planning positively for growth

The original 1970 ambition for the new city was to grow to around **250,000** people and we've already exceeded that point. Our great location and transport connections mean this momentum will continue. And our proximity to places like Oxford and Cambridge will boost our economy even further. But continuing to grow does not by itself guarantee success.

**We must plan to strengthen what works well and make sure every resident in every part of Milton Keynes can benefit from our prosperity.**

This includes making available the infrastructure and services such as transport, health, social care, schools, shops, leisure, sports and cultural facilities that are essential for our existing and new communities. By planning this upfront we can make the case for investments that will serve us well into the future, rather than reacting as pressures arise. Knowing how big our city is

likely to be long-term has recently helped Milton Keynes University Hospital to make the case for investment from government to create a new Women and Children's Hospital.

Milton Keynes is a living example of how well-planned growth can produce better lives and better places. We will continue to provide city-wide green space alongside other essential infrastructure and services and make sure we join up our approach so that development does not put pressure on our communities and environment.

For example, as our economy grows, we will ensure our residents have the education and skills to access the new jobs and provide affordable homes for our expanding workforce. This will help to address poverty and reduce pressure on house prices and the need for in-commuting, which in turn will reduce carbon emissions.



By planning, we will have more local democratic control over development so we can ensure it is done well and that local people are involved in decisions about their communities.

If we lack a clear vision and fail to plan, housebuilders will have greater influence over where and when development occurs, which would mean unplanned growth without all the infrastructure our communities need.

Failure to build enough homes would lead to even greater increases in house prices than in recent years, making it ever more difficult for our residents and their children to afford a home to buy or rent.

**Aiming to slow or stop the city from growing and changing would undermine our economy so fewer jobs would be created and we would have less to invest in public services and the upkeep of our existing infrastructure.**

The heaviest burdens would fall on our most disadvantaged people, a risk that is even more severe as we face the economic challenges triggered by the cost of living crisis.



**Figure One** – The Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor, with Milton Keynes at the centre

Milton Keynes sits at the centre of an area identified by the Government for ongoing growth over the decades to come. This includes the area referred to as the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor (as shown in **Figure One**), an area of world-leading universities and research institutions with

many businesses in areas such as technology and high-performance engineering that will be important for the UK's future economy.

Milton Keynes is well placed to benefit from these opportunities and to grow strongly. In 2017, a National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) study of the corridor suggested that Milton Keynes could be reestablished as “a development location of national significance, through the intensification and expansion of the town to a population of at least **500,000**”.

### **Our growing population**

Our current local plan for Milton Keynes, Plan:MK, was agreed in March 2019. It set an annual housing growth target to meet the needs of our growing population and economy for the years to 2031 and identifies sites where those homes can be built. On those sites, plus others that already have planning permission, there are plans for around **29,000** new homes. Just building these homes would see the number of people living in the borough increase to at least **340,000** people from the **290,000** that live here today.



## **Milton Keynes at the heart of the UK's growth agenda**

The need for a new strategy was identified by the MK Futures 2050 Commission established by Milton Keynes Council in 2015 to help us create a vision for the next phase of our city's journey.

The Commission's report, Making a Great City Greater, was published in July 2016 and recommended that we take forward Six Big Projects and prepare this Strategy for 2050.

The Commission also proposed that Milton Keynes should grow to a population of around **400,000** people by 2050 and set out a broad approach for where that development could happen.

The vision and direction of their findings received unanimous support from the different political groups on the City Council and provided the basis for this Strategy.





Around **330,000** people live in Greater Milton Keynes today (which includes the **290,000** people that live within Milton Keynes borough).

Advanced plans exist for around another **10,000** homes to be built in the parts of Greater Milton Keynes outside the borough, including major developments at Marston Vale and Salden Chase.

These are shown on the map at **Figure Two**. We estimate that by 2050 there might be a further **10,000** more homes built in those neighbouring areas. When added to the growth we expect within the borough this means a total population across Greater Milton Keynes of around half a million people at some point in the middle of this century.

This Strategy for 2050 does not specify development sites in our neighbouring areas;

we know that is a decision for the relevant councils and that any homes built are counted towards their housing targets.

But we have considered how development might work best across boundaries, especially when thinking about how people move around for work and their day-to-day needs and which areas are likely to continue grow over the coming decades.

We have also thought about the natural environment and other constraints and opportunities that cut across council boundaries. We hope to work with our neighbours to develop plans that create high quality development and joined up infrastructure and services to benefit the residents of the borough of Milton Keynes and those who live in its neighbouring areas.

**Figure Two** – Greater Milton Keynes, including major development locations already in local plans (in 2021).

With more people being born here, and with people moving to the city because it is an attractive place to live, we expect Milton Keynes will continue to grow beyond 2031 at around the same rate, or slightly higher, to reach a population of at least **410,000** people in 2050.

So, in addition to the homes we know will already be built, this Strategy plans for a further **30,000-35,000** homes across the borough by 2050.

The rate of housebuilding is affected by many factors including the economy, the availability of building materials and access to skilled tradespeople.

We have designed our Strategy to be flexible to cope with uncertainties and recognise that the population of **410,000** could be met earlier or later than 2050.

We will support growth beyond this level under the right conditions including investment in affordable housing, our mass rapid transit system, and other key infrastructure that helps to manage the impacts of growth.

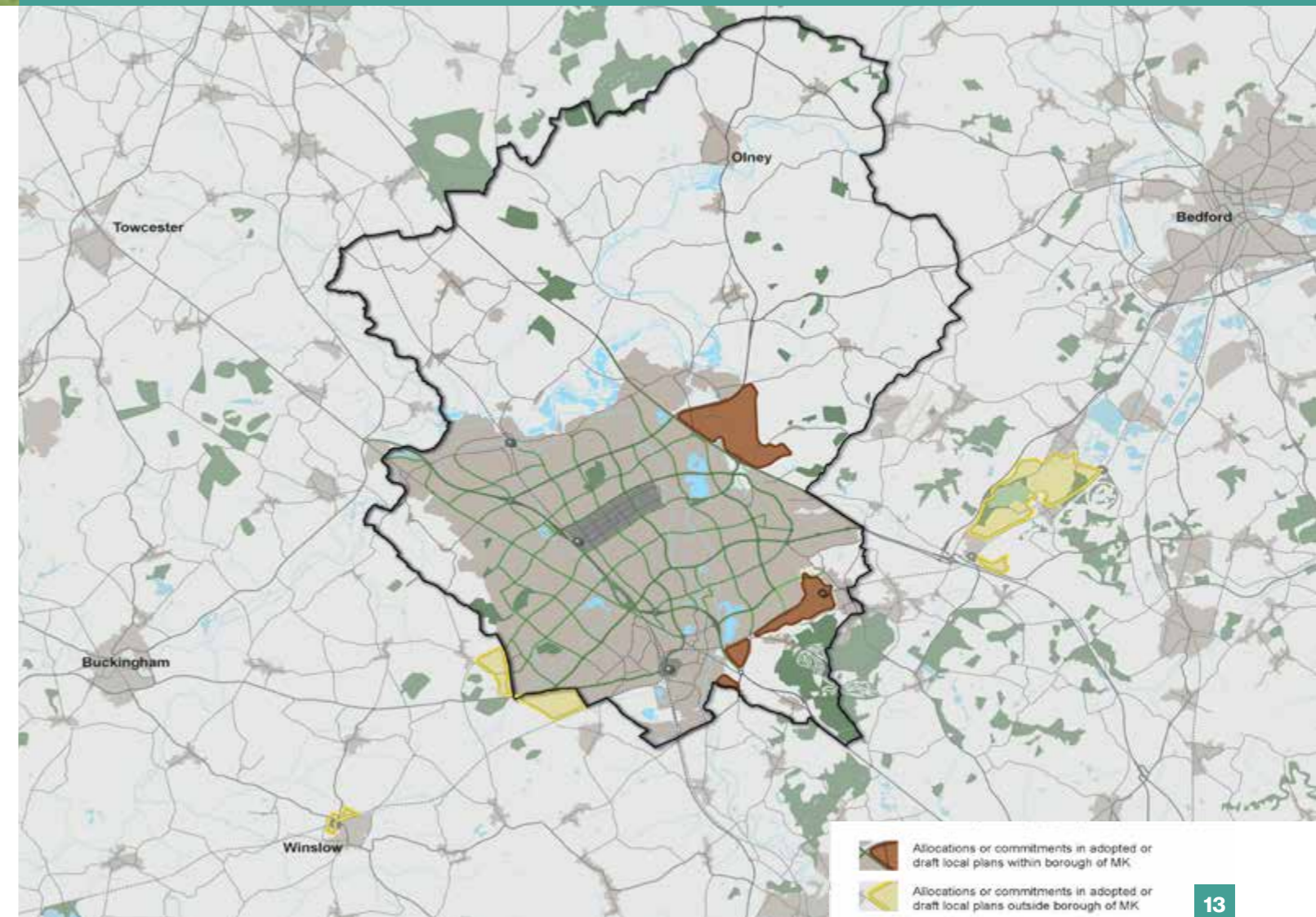
Through our MK City Plan 2050, the new local plan for Milton Keynes which will replace our existing Plan:MK, we will set out the planning policies that will show how, where and when these homes should be built.

**The City Plan 2050 will use this Strategy for 2050 as its vision for how to guide growth to create a healthy sustainable and inclusive future for Milton Keynes and all our residents.**

### Greater Milton Keynes

This Strategy for 2050 is about the future development of Milton Keynes borough, but we have also thought about the wider area and economy because people travel across council boundaries for day-to-day access to work, shops, leisure and other services.

We think of this area as a 'Greater' Milton Keynes that covers the immediately neighbouring parts of Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire and Central Bedfordshire. Their towns and villages add to the area's attractiveness and prosperity.



# Postcards from the future

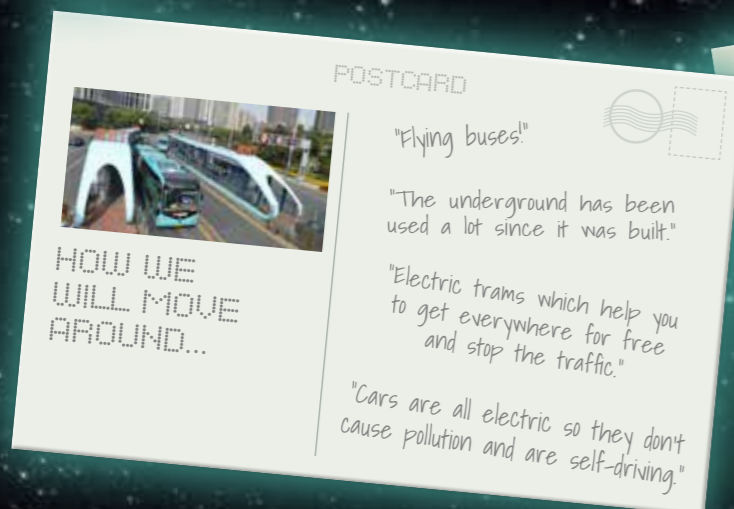
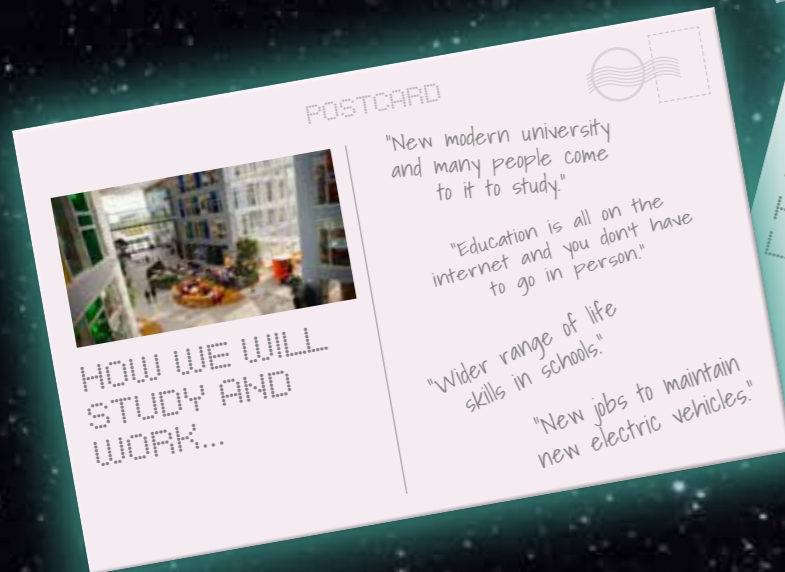
## The voices of our young people

We wish to create the best possible future for all our people, especially our young people.

As we developed our Strategy, we invited some of our future citizens to share their visions of Milton Keynes in 2050.

What did they think their city would look like? What would be important to them, their family and friends?

The quotes are from the 'Postcards' they wrote from their imagined future.



## Chapter Two

### Our successes, challenges and opportunities

Today, our green and beautiful Milton Keynes is home to around 290,000 people. Many people have moved here, attracted by a job, a good home and a good life. As our families continue to grow and we attract more newcomers, our population remains younger than most other UK cities but is growing older at a faster rate.

Our iconic landscapes and city centre, our grid road network and Redways, our ready supply of homes in vibrant communities – and our workforce – have also attracted thousands of entrepreneurs and companies to invest in Milton Keynes. We have a productive, resilient economy and unemployment is low compared with other UK cities. And sitting between Oxford and Cambridge, digital, engineering and technology will be important to our future economic strength.

Yet, some of our neighbourhoods are among the most deprived in England. Our public transport system does not

always provide ready access to job opportunities so our residents without access to a car can be at a disadvantage. Those living in the most deprived areas die up to 7.5 years earlier, on average, than those in the wealthiest neighbourhoods. Child poverty is high.

And our skills levels and schools should be much better for a place with such high ambitions for its residents. Inevitably, the cost of living crisis has had a higher impact in more deprived areas.

Our Strategy to 2050 sets out how we will continue to promote economic growth and play our part in the global climate emergency, side by side with ensuring that everyone who lives here can share the benefits of this growth.

Accelerating social mobility – making it easier for those in deprived communities to gain further skills, secure a good job, and live in an affordable home in a healthy neighbourhood – will be key to our collective future prosperity.



# Milton Keynes Today

Milton Keynes residents love their city for all the things that make it different. As the largest and most successful of the UK's new towns, it was built for growth and it has delivered on that purpose as the country's fastest growing city over several decades. Our success is driven by the people who recognise MK as a great place to live and the entrepreneurs and companies who have invested here. Our city has thrived through welcoming newcomers from all parts of the world and from people born and raised in MK who choose to stay and raise their families here.

## Our people

Our people are our greatest asset, and we have made it a priority to nurture our communities. In the first days of the new city, community development workers helped the early pioneers make their home here. Our high levels of volunteering and our many active community, sports and other local interest groups demonstrate the city's strong community spirit. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, our voluntary and community organisations played an essential role in our communities and many new local groups sprang up to support our vulnerable residents.

We are a highly diverse place, which is an immense strength. Around half of the children in our schools are from a BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) family and around **30%** have a first language that is not English. Whilst our population is comparatively young, our proportion of older people is increasing at a rate well above the average for England.



## Our place

As we continue to grow, we want to protect those things that are so important to the city's character. Our network of open spaces, parks, woodlands, lakes, canals and rivers, linked by paths and Redways, provide beautiful, accessible places for people to exercise and spend time – so valuable for our mental and physical health. This network also provides important habitats for wildlife and plants, manages flood risk, helps to improve air quality and reduce our carbon footprint.

Milton Keynes borough includes a large rural area, with thriving market towns at Woburn Sands, Olney and Newport Pagnell, and many smaller villages set in an attractive landscape which complements the urban nature of our city. In the Greater Milton Keynes area beyond the borough boundary, there are small, characterful towns and villages that relate closely to Milton Keynes and our economy and facilities.

Creating new communities is in our DNA and today we are recognised as one of the best places for 'good growth' that balances jobs, skills and health alongside relatively affordable housing, transport, work-life balance and the environment.



## Our economy

Our prime location, at the crossroads between London and Birmingham, Oxford and Cambridge, has helped build a strong economy and we are rated as one of the most productive UK cities. Around **191,000** people work in our borough across a wide range of sectors, with around a third of our jobs in the tech sector.

We are particularly strong in knowledge intensive business sectors including digital, engineering and technology, business, financial and professional services and the logistics and distribution sector.



## Our city centre

Central Milton Keynes (CMK) demonstrates the modernist principles of the new city and still has space to grow alongside the employment, leisure, retail, cultural and residential activity we see today.

Around a quarter of our jobs are in CMK and many new developments have recently been completed or are underway in the city centre, including new apartment buildings, canal-side homes, hotels and high-spec offices.

Unity Place, Santander's new UK technology hub opened in 2023, with space for **6,000** of the bank's employees and provides office space for other companies within the building. And the 261 room Hotel LaTour opened in 2022 with views across the city.

## Our connections

Our distinctive network of highspeed grid roads makes car travel generally fast and easy, with little congestion outside peak hours and quicker average journey times compared to other cities. East West Rail (EWR) will boost our excellent transport connections further, providing new rail links to Oxford (due to open in 2025) and to Cambridge (due to open in the 2030s). Bletchley and Milton Keynes Central will be key stations, connecting EWR and the West Coast Mainline. Our strong north-south connectivity will also be improved when HS2 opens, releasing space for more frequent services to London and the Midlands on the West Coast Mainline.



## Our innovation

Milton Keynes is famous for being "better by design" and for its fresh thinking. We had the UK's first solar powered house, built the first shared ownership homes and led the way on carbon off-setting policies. Our innovation continues today with autonomous delivery robots and trials of driverless vehicles.

The structure of our city was designed to be flexible and help us adapt to new circumstances over time. In our neighbourhoods, sites were reserved to provide space for future community facilities and our grid network was built with room to introduce new forms of transport. We can now take advantage of this forward thinking.

Innovation can also be seen in how our homes and communities were designed. Individual estates each have a unique character, building up a patchwork effect across the city. Some of our early estates were designed by up-and-coming architects and MK experimented with new methods for building sustainable homes, such as the Energy and Home World exhibitions in the 1980s.

# Our Challenges

## Our health and wellbeing

Despite our strengths and the good quality of life enjoyed by most of our people, we face challenges that mean many residents risk being left behind as the city grows. Some live in neighbourhoods that are among the most deprived in England and others do not have the skills needed to access good local jobs. This is not always the easy-to-navigate, welcoming city that the original pioneers and planners intended.

It can be hard for some of our residents to get around by public transport, making it difficult to get to workplaces or other opportunities, especially for those who don't have access to a car.

This can make poverty and deprivation even worse as car ownership is often lowest in our more disadvantaged areas. We know that child poverty in MK is at a high level and the number of children eligible for free school meals increased by **70%** between 2019 and 2023.

The health of our residents is unequal across the city with big differences in life expectancy between neighbourhoods and earlier deaths from coronary and cardiovascular disease in some parts of our city compared to national averages. As was seen across the rest of the country, COVID-19 had a higher impact in more deprived areas from both a health and financial perspective.

## Our carbon agenda

Today, there is widespread global recognition that we must change how we live, work and travel to preserve the planet's scarce natural resources. We have set an ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030 and carbon negative by 2050. Milton Keynes already has made significant progress; by 2022 we achieved a **43.5%** reduction in carbon emissions per head of population since 2013.

We must continue this trend with a strong focus on emissions from transport as these have seen no reduction over the same period. And as individuals and businesses, we will all need to take action that contributes to meeting our ambitious targets.

## Our CMK challenges

Our city centre has been doing well and prior to the COVID-19 pandemic the shopping centre had bucked the national trend of declining footfall. But there remains a lack of buzz. Only around **4,800** people live in CMK today and despite the large numbers of companies based in the city centre, parts of it sometimes feel deserted.

We're also missing the flexible, popup or cheaper spaces suitable for independent retail, leisure, culture and entertainment ventures. The COVID-19 pandemic added to the challenges by accelerating trends in online shopping and home working, both of which impact on our city centre economy and footfall.



# Our Strategy for 2050

## Our affordability

In some ways, our strong local economy has added to our challenges.

As jobs have been created, the number of houses built has not always kept up and we have exceeded the historic target of creating 1.5 additional jobs for each new home.

This places upward pressure on house prices. Private rents and our affordability ratio (house prices compared to earnings) have sharply increased and more people are homeless or in temporary accommodation.

## Our skills

The average skill and qualification levels of our residents are now slightly above the national average, but many local companies still struggle to find local workers with the right skills. To be resilient to economic shocks, such as the cost of living crisis, and meet our ambition for truly inclusive growth, we need to boost the skills of residents so that everyone can benefit from the city's economic success. Without a better balance of jobs and homes and a skilled local workforce we will rely more and more on workers commuting into Milton Keynes with the resulting carbon emissions, congestion and lower incomes in local communities.

Ofsted outcomes for schools and early years settings in Milton Keynes are above those seen nationally and performance outcomes are broadly in line with national. This means that most children and young people in Milton Keynes get access to a high quality education. We work closely with the education system to support potentially vulnerable children and young people, to ensure that they are not left behind and can take a full part in the future of our city.

**Our Strategy for 2050 gives us the opportunity to create a stronger, healthier future for our city and young people.**

**We will build on our strengths to address our challenges. The following chapters set out our approach for how we will achieve this ambition.**



# Chapter Three

## A Sustainable and Green City

Half a century ago, when the original Plan for Milton Keynes was published, there was little concern about climate change anywhere in the world. Today, there is widespread global recognition that we must change how we live, work and travel to preserve the planet's scarce natural resources.

Our citizens and businesses – and the City Council – passionately recognise the need for the city to become carbon neutral by 2030. Our Strategy to 2050 sets out the next steps in this journey. The Strategy highlights the need to make a major change in how our city works over the coming decades.

As transport is now the largest source of carbon emissions in Milton Keynes, we must minimise the need to travel by car. We will be promoting walkable, compact mixed-use developments, making

walking and cycling the first choice for shorter journeys, and developing a Mass Rapid Transit system for longer journeys.

Since the early 1980s, we have been pioneers in promoting energy conservation, recycling and solar energy generation. We will encourage private investment, and continue to invest ourselves, in waste recovery and recycling, energy generation from renewable sources, reducing emissions and energy conservation.

And, of most importance, we will continue to invest in and expand our 'green and blue' infrastructure – our parks, lakes, and wildlife areas that are loved by our residents and provide major health benefits. This will ensure that Milton Keynes is still a green city leading the world.

# Acting to address climate change

Since the early days of the new city, we have been pioneers in promoting energy conservation, recycling, and solar energy generation.

Alongside our many other 'firsts' were the UK's first solar heated house in 1972, being the first council to adopt energy standards in buildings and introducing the UK's first kerbside recycling collection in 1992.

**We aim to continue this strong track record and for Milton Keynes to be recognised as a green city leading the world.**

When the original Plan for Milton Keynes was published, there was little concern about climate change anywhere in the world.

At that time, quality of life and lower energy bills were the drivers for change rather than concern over global warming.

**Today, there is widespread recognition of the need to act urgently and we are committed to playing our part.**

We have set a challenging ambition for Milton Keynes to be carbon neutral by 2030 and carbon negative by 2050. There is great passion amongst our residents to live more sustainably and we will work with them and local businesses on the new approaches that are needed to make this possible. An Action Plan adopted in 2021 sets out how the Sustainability Strategy will be delivered.

*"Milton Keynes can be the world's greenest and most sustainable city, using the opportunities of growth to tackle the challenges of climate change and resource competition to create a more prosperous city for all our people and future generations which is carbon negative by 2050."*

**Milton Keynes Sustainability Strategy, 2019-2050, Vision**





## Land use and travel

Planning policy can make a major contribution. We aim to make more efficient use of land through higher density development in appropriate locations. We will give priority to reusing “brownfield” sites that have previously been developed and to places that are, or will be, well served by public transport.

We have shown national leadership in promoting electric cars and buses and will continue to do so. But even when all cars are electric powered, and more of the nation’s electricity comes from renewable sources, transport will still be a major source of carbon emissions.

A major part of our strategy is to introduce a Mass Rapid Transit network for the city, described in Chapter Six, that will help us all to move about in a more energy efficient way. And in **Chapter Eight** we explain our approach to creating neighbourhoods that are more compact and walkable with services and facilities within easy reach so that the need to travel by car is reduced.

## Sustainable neighbourhoods and buildings

Milton Keynes has been a world leader in eco-homes and sustainable design since the city’s Home World, Future World and Energy World exhibitions in the 1980s and 1990s. These demonstrated how homes could be more sustainable and energy efficient. We will continue to be a pioneer in green construction.

**The design of new communities and the changes we can make in existing neighbourhoods will help to create more sustainable lifestyles and improve our resilience to climate change.**

We will require new buildings and development schemes to meet the highest standards of sustainability.

### This will include:

- the building materials used
- minimising construction waste
- positioning buildings to maximise solar gain
- using solar panels and green roofs
- installing water and energy efficient appliances and technologies
- electric vehicle charging points
- replacing gas heating.

Our approach will include schemes like BREEAM and Passivhaus that rate the energy performance of buildings as these can help enforce high standards.

We will also help our residents to understand how to manage their homes in the most sustainable way, including the most efficient way to heat or cool their property.

**Meeting our ambitious carbon reduction targets will require the building industry to make major changes to the way it operates.**

This may add costs and lead to concern about whether some development schemes will be financially viable. But research by the UK Green Building Council has looked at the cost and design challenges in achieving net zero carbon performance and recognises that new technology in the coming years will make these targets more achievable and affordable. The requirement to improve sustainability must be balanced against the urgent need to provide homes that are affordable to buy or rent, and to live in.



## Waste recovery and recycling

Since bringing in wheelie bins in 2023, the volume of recycling in Milton Keynes has risen by a third and we are in the top 25% councils nationally for recycling.

And by using innovative technology, we generate renewable energy from the waste that cannot be recycled, minimising the amount that goes into landfill. The Milton Keynes Waste Recovery Park was opened in March 2018 and continues our pioneering approach to sustainability. It brings together state-of-the-art technologies to treat residual waste collected from homes in Milton Keynes.

Together, the technologies increase the amount of recyclable materials which are removed from the waste, in turn cutting the amount of rubbish sent to landfill. The treatment processes generate enough energy to power around **11,000** homes.

Energy generated from waste in this way is used to power our low emission council vehicles including refuse collection lorries and street cleaning services, and potentially electric bus services.

This creates a ‘circular’ economy, where a waste product from one process is used in another. We are exploring ways to extend this circular economy approach including using organic food and garden waste to produce gas and provide compost that can be used in our city parks.



We will support the creation of community energy networks that help communities work together to save and generate energy through measures such as collectively switching electricity suppliers and installing neighbourhood solar energy schemes. New developments provide the opportunity to install local heat and power schemes upfront alongside other infrastructure.

Energy storage systems can help manage the peaks and troughs of daily and seasonal demand for power by storing energy when it is in surplus and later releasing it back into the network when it is needed more. These systems work particularly well for managing wind and solar systems which do not generate a steady and predictable supply of power.

To accelerate the delivery of energy projects we want to create an Energy and Carbon Hub. This will bring together a team with the professional skills to secure investment and develop projects that will contribute toward our net zero ambitions.



## Energy Generation, Consumption and Storage

All new development and buildings will be required to meet the highest standards for the efficient use of energy and we will retrofit existing buildings and operations to bring them up to the same level. These changes must be cost-effective for residents and building owners so that the benefits, including lower utility bills, can be shared by all. As an example, through the regeneration of the Lakes Estate, new homes will benefit from reduced energy bills for residents and a lower carbon footprint for each household through solar panels and air source heat pumps. We will continue with the approach of our Carbon Offset Fund that has run since 2008.

**This uses money from new developments to fund improvements in older homes in the city, including cavity wall and loft insulation and providing cashback on new, efficient boilers.**

We will also reduce carbon emissions by having more energy generated from renewable sources, such as biomass heating systems and wind and solar farms.



## Reducing water consumption

And, while our residents use less water each day than average (131 litres each, compared to 150 litres nationally in 2020), a growing population and the risk of increased drought through climate change mean we must use our water resources more effectively.

Our aim is to reduce use to fewer than 100 litres of water per person per day – and 80 litres per person per day in our larger strategic developments – through approaches like the harvesting and storage of rainwater, stormwater and ‘grey’ water (which is waste-water, other than from toilets, from people’s homes).

**We will also design communities to be water ‘smart’. The use of hi-tech sensors in water pipes and systems can help to pinpoint leaks.**

Within homes, sensors can be linked to apps and allow households to monitor and manage how they are using water, helping sustainability as well as cutting costs.



## A Green and Blue City

Everywhere in Milton Keynes, rich, peaceful landscapes surround our homes.

**Our ‘green’ network of open spaces, parks and woodlands and our ‘blue’ network of lakes, rivers, canal and brooks are gifts which keep on giving.**

Their value was reinforced during the COVID-19 lockdowns when we used them for exercise, leisure and active travel which helped our mental and physical health.

Our green and blue networks also provide important habitats for wildlife, support water management and help to reduce air pollution and store carbon. These benefits were a carefully planned aspect of Milton Keynes and today our ‘parkland city’ is widely admired – Campbell Park was awarded Grade II Registered Park and Garden status in 2020.

We have an ambition to be the greenest city and our aim is that around 40% of the city will continue to be green and blue space. The principle of early planning and delivery of green and blue infrastructure is central to our approach. We will create more large-scale open spaces as we grow, including new country parks and major extensions to the linear park network to the south, east and west of the city, attracting people from across greater Milton Keynes.

As a first stage in planning those strategic spaces, we have developed a proposal that shows how our major green and blue infrastructure networks might look by 2050, as shown in **Figure Three**.

This includes the concept of green gateways at key entry points to the city, which help to display our commitment to our green character. As new growth areas are proposed and designed through the plan-making process, this vision of strategic green spaces will evolve.

**Everyone should be within a few minutes’ walk of a beautiful, open space that connects into the wider network of such spaces.**

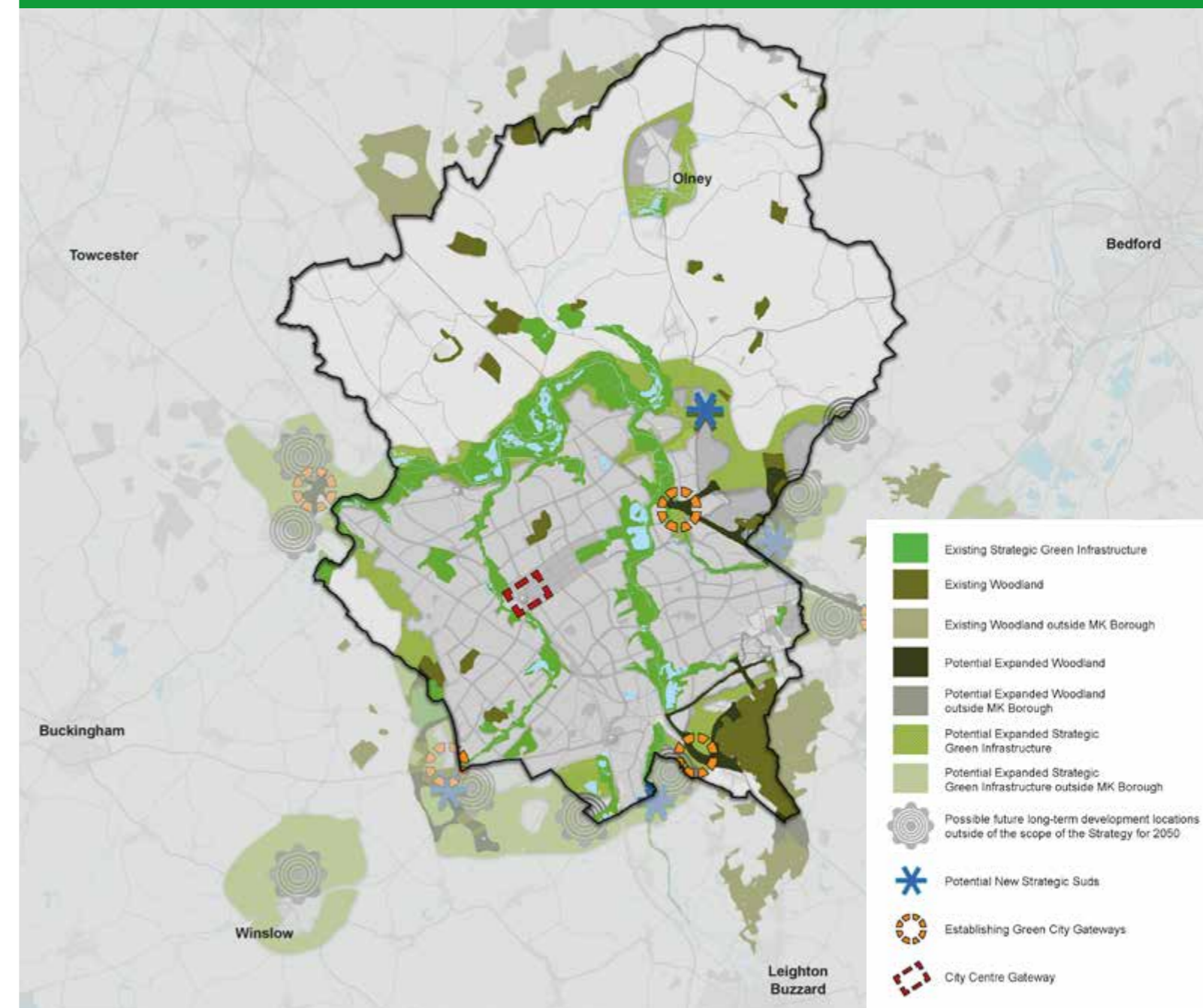
Individual new developments will be required to provide new parks, paths and wildlife habitats. This will include many more trees and planting to help to make local neighbourhoods attractive and add to our quality of life, as well as maintain our green character.

The example of Stanton Low Park illustrates how new development can help produce the net gain in green space and nature that we seek. The park was created through funding contributions made by the housing developer at Oakridge Park.

It covers 57 hectares with meadows and grassland wildlife habitats, play equipment and informal open space that serve the residents of the 530 homes on the estate and beyond.

We will also improve connections in the existing networks, such as linking the Blue Lagoon to Waterhall Park, and fixing missing public rights of way to improve footpaths and bridleways to neighbouring settlements and new developments, as well as ensuring residents in our existing communities have excellent access to high quality open spaces near to their homes.

**Figure Three** – A concept for future Green Infrastructure in Milton Keynes, delivered as part of future development.



## Milton Keynes – City of Trees

In his interview for the post of Milton Keynes’ first Chief Architect, the late Derek Walker said that his ambition was for Milton Keynes to be “a forest city greener than the surrounding countryside”.

In its early days, millions of trees and shrubs were planted from the Development Corporation’s own nurseries and we will ensure trees continue to be a defining feature of our great city.

We have made a commitment in our City of Trees Urban Tree Planting Strategy (2023 – 2030) to the principle of “**Right Tree, Right Place**”, to increase our stock of trees and tree canopy cover with a range of species. This will help to provide habitats for nature and shade and will also improve air quality and help prevent floods. Our approach will include creating an inventory of our existing stock, plan a phased replanting of trees in urban locations and plant a wider variety of species to improve bio-resilience.

## Biodiversity

Biodiversity refers to all the variety of life, including plants, animals, fungi and micro-organisms as well as to the habitats in which they live. We aim to create a net gain in biodiversity as we grow through conserving and restoring wildlife habitats and by creating new areas for plants and animals to flourish. We will be more ambitious than national policy requires. So, whilst we will protect Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Wildlife Sites and nature reserves, we will go further by creating connected wildlife habitats across the borough and beyond.

Local authority boundaries are arbitrary when it comes to landscape features and habitats and we will work with neighbouring councils and other partners, including the Environment Agency and Anglian Water, to make sure we join-up across borders.

This includes working with partners across the region to create a plan for the area that covers natural capital and ecosystems.



## Maintenance and long-term stewardship

The maintenance of most of our green spaces is to a good standard but sometimes we cannot afford essential maintenance. In such places we may need to prioritise quality over quantity.

This could mean supporting infill development on some small unbuilt areas within the city, especially where this generates funding to enhance other green spaces or helps to meet our ambition for inclusive growth in sustainable, walkable communities.

### The long-term stewardship and maintenance of open space needs to be planned upfront.

The Parks Trust was set up in 1992 to own and manage the city's strategic open space network in perpetuity, and today cares for about 25% of the city area.

This is supported by the rental income from its commercial property portfolio and allows the

Parks Trust to focus on the management and protection of our open space network without having to compete with other public services for funding.

We will continue to support the Parks Trust model and involve them at the earliest stages of designing new open spaces and planning long-term maintenance. The timing of delivery is also important.

**We want as much of the green infrastructure provision within a new development to be put in place early, before residents move in.**

This helps the housebuilder by making a new neighbourhood look its best and gives residents pride in their new home with green spaces they can spend time in straightaway.

**But we need to make sure these spaces are well maintained and looked after long into the future so that Milton Keynes will continue to be the beautiful green and blue city we know today.**

## Managing water and preventing flooding

A consequence of climate change is the increased risk of surface water flooding and repeated property flooding. Our green network integrates with the blue infrastructure network of lakes, rivers, canal and other drainage systems and this helps protect us from all but the worst flood events. The original design of the city included balancing lakes such as those at Willen and Caldecotte which act as flood storage areas to direct flood water away from residential areas. Our blue network also provides further space for both wildlife and recreation.

We will continue to plan for water management at a city-wide level for existing areas as well as for future development areas, using our green and blue infrastructure network. The frequency of high rainfall events is changing so we need to prioritise work to identify our flooding and drainage requirements as well as explore potential solutions, which may include new balancing lakes, local wet/dry ponds, and strategic river maintenance and management.

We also appreciate that in some of the older parts of Milton Keynes, the drainage networks can lack the capacity needed to be resilient against the climate changing and future growth, so we also need to assess requirements and solutions for those systems as a priority.

At the city scale and beyond we will work with our partners on strategic water management. This is especially important where we need to work across boundaries on shared issues such as managing the catchment area of the Great Ouse river. We will also continue our support for other projects like the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway and the restoration of the Buckingham Canal.



# Chapter Four

## Affordable and High-Quality Homes

In 1967, government decided to build Milton Keynes to meet the urgent housing crisis in the south east of England. As the largest new town, the government saw the city as a project of national importance. Fifty years later, the National Infrastructure Commission recommended that Milton Keynes should again be a “project of national significance” at the heart of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. The government agreed. Initially, most of the homes in the city were built in large social housing estates to very tight budgets. Some of these homes were subsequently bought by their tenants and, in due course, offered for private rent. From the mid-1980s onwards, private house developers built mainly for owner occupation and, today, first-time buyers are offered more opportunities here than anywhere else in the UK. Yet, rents and house prices are far less affordable, relative to incomes, than in the past. We face very severe shortages of affordable housing.

Our Strategy to 2050 highlights the importance of meeting this challenge. We will aim to achieve a very significant increase in the supply of ‘truly affordable homes’ particularly council housing, and we will provide a much wider choice of tenures and types of housing. And we will improve the quality of our existing council homes and homes in the private sector. Many of the estates built in the 1970s are now in need of substantial investment to ensure that the homes meet modern standards. We have already been working closely with the communities on the Lakes Estate and Fullers Slade; but there is much more to do right across the city. We will learn from this experience in our approach to regeneration and enable our residents to gain further skills and access good jobs as well as investing in the quality of homes – these are the keys to improving life chances, reducing poverty and enabling people to live healthier, happier lives.

### Affordable homes for all

More than fifty years ago, Milton Keynes was established as an ambitious national project to meet the urgent housing crisis in the south east of England. The 1970 Plan for Milton Keynes highlighted the importance of having different types and tenures of homes at all levels of affordability so the city could become a place that all sorts of people could call home.

We are good at growing – as a new town, that is what we are designed for. However, we know a consequence of our economic success has been the rising unaffordability of housing as the supply of new homes has not always kept up with demand. More households are now homeless or in temporary accommodation and the quality of life for many residents is being impacted.

Our founding vision of MK as a place where everyone can find a home and thrive is increasingly under threat.

The pressure on our housing market may increase as people seek to relocate from London to places like Milton Keynes due to the rising costs in the capital and in search of homes with more space as they work remotely and commute less. We also know that some of our existing homes and neighbourhoods need investment.

**Living in poor housing conditions has a serious impact on mental and physical health but many people live in homes that do not meet decent standards.**

As well as providing new affordable homes for those who need them, we need to make sure today’s homes are healthy places to live.







## Getting the right mix

To be successful, our ambitious plans for economic growth must be matched by building enough homes for our expanding workforce and the families of our existing residents. And for that growth to work for everyone, we must address our affordability crisis through providing more homes to meet the diverse needs of our residents.

The 1970 Plan for Milton Keynes aimed for at least half of the households in the new city to own their home. It was felt then that too many council houses and too few homes for sale on the open market would restrict people's housing choices. Today the risks are very different. Most homes are now built by the private sector and because of government restrictions, very few by the council for rent. And through 'right to buy', many council-built homes are now in the private sector. This means we don't have enough decent homes for social and affordable rent, private rent or purchase at prices that many of our residents can afford.



## Increasing the supply of affordable options

We have a council policy that requires affordable homes to be built as part of new housing developments but the definition of 'affordable' is based against market values rather than income levels so may not be genuinely affordable for many. Affordable homes are often built by housing developers, transferred to housing associations and then rented to households on waiting lists or sold with a discount through schemes like 'Help to Buy' or on a shared-ownership basis.

They are an important part of the solution and we will continue to require affordable homes to be built as part of new housing schemes. We will also encourage other housing providers, which could include community land trusts or cohousing co-operatives, to increase their delivery of homes at affordable prices, as well as opportunities for households to build equity in their homes.

We aim to provide many more affordable homes for rent in a variety of tenures and types. We will build and buy many more council homes for rent over the next decade.

On schemes where the council is the lead developer, we will build a higher number of affordable homes than our policy requires. Our recent proposals at Netherfield and the Lakes Estate included a significant proportion of the properties to be available for rent from the council, including all 66 units at Cripps Lodge. We have also invested in 70 modular homes in Fishermead for homeless families.

Today, around **10%** of our households live in council-owned homes. Increasing the number of council homes in the city will help us to be an affordable place for all our people, so through our housebuilding programme we will aim for 15% of the overall housing stock to be council-owned.

## Regeneration and our existing homes

Many of our existing homes and estates, including some of the earliest areas built as part of the New Town, need major investment to bring them up to a decent standard for our residents. Improving these areas is not just about 'bricks and mortar' – it must also be about improving access to good jobs and skills that are

equally important in improving life chances and addressing poverty. A major part of our Strategy is to improve the quality of our existing council homes. Major investment is planned alongside our wider regeneration and renewal plans.

Homes in the private sector must also be of a higher standard and we will monitor their condition and take enforcement action against rogue landlords where improvements are not made.



Urban living is becoming more popular with older people who wish to live as part of a wider community. As well as developments designed for the over-55s we will need homes within mixed communities that are suitable for our older residents. Homes must be built to Lifetime Homes standards and be adaptable to changing needs so that people can age without leaving them should their health or mobility decline. Modular homes that are built section-by-section in a factory before being put together on site may be especially adaptable. We also want to see bungalows and homes with space to adapt for wheelchair accessibility.

And more dwellings that are adaptable to be multi-generational will be required as it will be common for two or more adult generations to live together. We also need our homes and communities to be designed to help to meet our ambition to be a Dementia

Friendly City. This includes measures such as good lighting, reducing excess noise and improving wayfinding. These 'universal design' principles are features that make a better living environment for everyone.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the trend of more people working from home so designs that allow one or more people to work or study from home will be important.

**People appreciate having access to private outdoor space, so as well as new houses with gardens we want to see apartments that have a balcony or access to a shared garden or terrace for all residents.**

And because of the impact that living in poor quality places can have on health, we will resist unsuitable conversions of office and other buildings into homes and ensure that all new homes meet minimum space standards.

## Widening our range of homes

As we grow, we will encourage a wider variety of types and tenures of homes, including more self- and custom-build homes and new affordable opportunities. We wish to see a wider variety of designs that reflect the changes in the diversity, age, composition and lifestyle preferences of our communities than the relatively standard homes built in recent years and we will encourage more small- and medium-sized housebuilders as one way of increasing innovation. We will also continue to be green housing pioneer and a trailblazer for testing new technologies and designs that help to create healthy, affordable homes for our residents.

In future, more of us will live alone or as couples without children, rather than in traditional family groups, so we will need to adapt.

**Places with good access to retail, leisure and culture that are close to places of work and well-served by public transit are popular with young professionals and will be important to many of the students who will study in the city centre.**

Student accommodation will be provided as part of our city centre university proposals and through the MK City Plan 2050 process we are developing a framework for CMK which will also consider how to house a growing student population.



# Chapter Five

## Our Diverse and Inclusive Economy

**F**or over 50 years, we have attracted investment from companies around the world to create an exceptionally diverse and resilient economy. With around 191,000 people working in MK, we are an economic powerhouse, one of the most productive cities in the UK. We are confident about our future prospects. By 2050, there will be a further 50,000-90,000 jobs in the borough. As our population grows, so will our 'foundational economy' – creating jobs to meet everyday needs.

We will promote high quality jobs as an important route out of poverty. Our construction and logistics sectors will remain strong. Yet, it will be our 'knowledge-intensive' industries, such as technology and high performance engineering, which will drive our growing economy.

The city has a global reputation as a centre for innovation. With our track record in sustainability we will continue to be attractive for companies investing in the green economy.

The city's economic success depends on whether our workforce has the skills to match the needs of our employers.

Today, for some of our residents this is not the case. To address this, we want to achieve high standards in all our secondary schools and provide more STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) opportunities.

Our Institute of Technology is now open in Bletchley and Cranfield University are also expanding their MK:U project to produce graduates with the skills needed for the digital economy.

We are also working with the Open University who are exploring the potential for in-person teaching in Central Milton Keynes.

Many of the new knowledge intensive jobs will be located in CMK. To take full advantage of East West Rail linking us with Oxford and Cambridge, Bletchley will also become a popular business base.

We have plenty of vacant employment land throughout the city and there is also scope to redevelop some of our original employment areas.

We are ready to meet the needs of 21st century companies.

Milton Keynes is an economic powerhouse and one of the most productive cities in the UK – in the five years to 2019, Milton Keynes contributed **18%** of all employment growth across the authorities between Oxford and Cambridge.

We are confident about our future prospects but know that the benefits of living in one of the UK's most successful cities are not felt by all our residents. An economy that provides jobs for all is not enough by itself to make MK a fairer place.

Before COVID-19, over three quarters of our children living in poverty were in households where at least one adult was working. To tackle the deep-seated issues of deprivation and child poverty, we will need better access to good quality jobs for everyone, and a strong focus on education and skills development. This is even more important as the impact of recession and the cost of living crisis have fallen most heavily on our more disadvantaged residents. The impacts of Brexit have also brought further economic uncertainty.



### **An inclusive and flexible economy; jobs in a range of sectors**

As our city grows, so will the 'foundational economy' that covers those basic goods and services on which every Milton Keynes citizen relies and which keep us safe, sound and civilised. Care and health services, food, housing, energy, construction, tourism and retailers on our high streets are all examples of the foundational economy. The health and social care sectors already employ around

1 in 10 of the working population and, as our population ages, that is likely to grow further. Those working in the caring professions and the service sector were valued more than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic.

All our jobs must be good quality jobs. Milton Keynes City Council is an accredited Real Living Wage employer, a standard that is based on paying workers the true cost of living as a way of addressing in-work poverty. We will continue to champion the adoption of this standard across all the city's employers.

It will be 'knowledge-intensive' businesses, such as finance, digital, and technology, and green jobs in low carbon industries, that drive our future economic growth and help us to compete successfully with other global city economies.

The creative industries will also be important as our high-tech businesses will need people who can think creatively and integrate design with technology. Our existing strengths in these business sectors, together with our central position between Oxford and Cambridge and skills initiatives like MK:U and the Institute of Technology, make this ambition realistic.

The great majority (97.4%) of our 12,300 businesses are independent, small and micro-businesses which are the lifeblood of our economy. In the technology sector, these businesses have established networks and regular meet-ups to help them innovate and support each other. These provide a vital foundation for growing the industries of the future, so we will provide support to help them thrive.

**We also want to encourage innovation networks that link university and business research and development facilities across the city to support collaborative working between businesses, academics and technologists.**

In planning our new Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) network we will look at how best to provide routes that link these facilities and bring to life an idea we call a city-wide 'innovation campus'. You can read more in Chapter Six about our MRT proposals.

Our construction and logistics sectors will remain strong. Logistics covers the management of transportation, goods and information from one place to another to supply business needs and, increasingly, internet shopping.



## Skills for the future

Our economy will succeed by having a future workforce that has the right skills to match the changing nature of work and the needs of employers. We know that around one in five of the jobs in Milton Keynes today are in business sectors that are likely to shrink due to automation. We have a high proportion of residents without higher-level qualifications and around 16% have no formal qualification. To make our economy work for everyone, we must make sure all our people have the skills needed to get good quality jobs. Our council regeneration policy will help people in our most deprived neighbourhoods to improve their life chances through early childhood intervention, skills development and better access to jobs.

And we aim to raise the aspirations and attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other groups who do less well than their peers at every stage of education.

This will include helping all our secondary schools achieve high standards and supporting new approaches in which businesses are working closely with our education providers to create new opportunities for all students.

We will also encourage pupils to consider applying to university and the council will show leadership by providing apprenticeships and other opportunities for young people to train and gain work experience.

**Having our own undergraduate university will help reduce the flow of talented young people who leave to study elsewhere in the country.**

Plans for MK:U, a new city centre university led by Cranfield University, are part of our approach to developing high level skills. Industry partners have been closely involved in designing a curriculum that will create work-ready graduates with transferable skills.

We are also working with the Open University (OU) who are exploring the opportunity to create an in-person teaching offer in Central Milton Keynes, for up to 7,000 students.

Through their OU Campus 2030 project, the OU is working with the City Council and Milton Keynes Development Partnership to explore how their proposals could be part of a wider tech and innovation quarter within CMK.

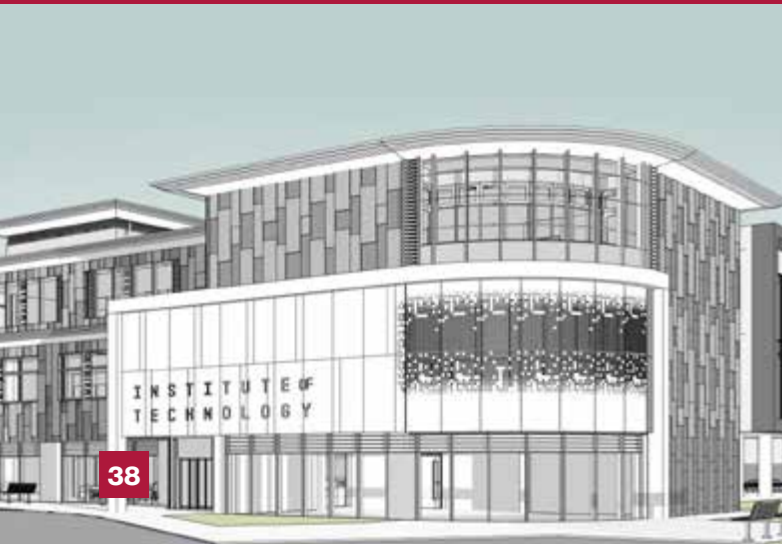
Both projects will help to attract new talent. MK:U intends to focus on the digital economy and use the city as a 'living laboratory', building on our global reputation for new technologies such as driverless cars and delivery robots.

And in Bletchley, the South-Central Institute of Technology (IoT) specialises in developing skills for the digital sector, providing higher level technical learning for more than 1,000 students.

**These new initiatives will add to our existing education provision which includes Milton Keynes University Hospital (with the University of Buckingham) and Milton Keynes College.**

Our Learning 2050 project focused on improving Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) teaching across schools at every level and MAKE, the Milton Keynes Cultural Education Partnership, is working to help students develop the creative thinking skills that are important in innovation.

The logistics sector is a major part of our economy and locations like Magna Park will continue to be of major importance because of our strong road and rail links and the ongoing demand for the movement of goods. But the industry is facing changes from trends such as autonomous vehicles and new approaches to last mile delivery. It is likely that the number of logistics jobs will fall over time and the remaining jobs will change to become more tech-based and more highly skilled.



## The scale of jobs growth

Growing the economy at the same rate as we have seen over recent years would create around **60,000** additional jobs by 2050 and take the overall total number of jobs across the borough to **240,000**.

The National Infrastructure Commission's analysis of the economic potential of the area previously referred to as the Oxford-

Cambridge Arc showed that a very ambitious level of investment and support could more than double the rate of growth to produce around **130,000** additional jobs in the borough by 2050. In the light of COVID-19 and the associated recession, we revised that net growth to **50,000-90,000** jobs in the years to 2050. If we take no action it is likely that the jobs growth will be towards the lower end of this range.

But we know our economy has great potential so we will plan to achieve the higher end of the jobs range by creating the right conditions for growth, including;



Full delivery of our Mass Rapid Transit system to better connect the city



Achieving our ambitions for a new undergraduate university in the city centre



Promote the growth of existing businesses together with national and international inward investment, building the reputation of Milton Keynes as a leading European business city



Targeted investment in green and environmental businesses



Improved knowledge sharing and innovation through developing self-employed and small-to medium-enterprise (SME) networks.



Delivery of our housing ambitions and better housing affordability.



## The location of jobs growth – where will people work?

We have a good supply of vacant employment land to support the future growth of our economy – the local plan already identifies 282 hectares across the borough. We cannot predict with certainty what more will be required up to 2050 but we will provide new employment areas in future local plans – including the emerging MK City Plan 2050 – to meet a variety of employer requirements.

Milton Keynes was designed to have employment dispersed across the city in places like Kiln Farm, Knowlhill, Tongwell and Mount Farm. But over recent decades the attraction of CMK as a location means that many jobs are now based there. Of the **191,000** jobs in Milton Keynes today, around **43,000 (23%)** are within CMK, including almost half our knowledge-intensive jobs. Predicting the need for different types of employment space is complicated by the rapid changes we have seen in where and how we work.

The shift we have seen in recent years to greater levels of homeworking means we might expect a drop in demand for new office space, but we also anticipate an increase in companies looking to relocate out of London and other big cities to set up a base here.

**We also expect more demand for flexible workspaces and shared facilities where desks or meeting spaces can be hired on an ad-hoc basis.**

Excellent internet and digital connections are vital to support these new work patterns and for knowledge-intensive businesses. Investment by CityFibre to provide Gigabit internet access to homes and businesses in all parts of the city is an important step.

Over the medium and longer term, we expect companies to continue to encourage their workers to attend centralised office locations because face-to-face working will still be valued. Knowledge-intensive businesses have traditionally located in city centres where people, ideas and innovation come together.



The planned level of investment in CMK and the benefits of being located close to similar businesses mean it will remain the focus for office-based activity in the city. Based on our revised expectations for the overall growth of jobs in Milton Keynes, by 2050 we expect that CMK could see some **10,000-18,000** net additional jobs.

We don't know exactly what sort of space will be needed, but CMK has plenty of vacant land and buildings and redevelopment sites to accommodate the predicted demand and more.

**Central Bletchley is also an opportunity for economic growth because of its location at the intersection of the West Coast Mainline and East West Rail.**

This will bring stronger links with Cambridge, Central Milton Keynes and Oxford. The opening of the Institute of Technology and the legacy of Bletchley Park means that Central Bletchley has the potential to become a significant location for technology companies. The existing approach to dispersed employment at locations across the city will continue.

**Within major new neighbourhoods there will be employment areas for office, manufacturing and knowledge-intensive jobs.**

And in our local centres there will be flexible workspaces where homeworkers might spend some of their time, and small-scale business units where jobs in the service, retail, social care and education sectors might be based.

The logistics industry will continue to need large, flat sites that have good links to the transport network. We may see a continued need for large floorplate warehouses to stockpile goods in case supplies of goods are disrupted in future, as happened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We also expect to see new approaches to help manage the increased levels of online shopping and delivery vans we have seen recently. An example of this is to develop urban consolidation centres on the edge of the city to combine 'last mile' deliveries and reduce the number of vehicle journeys (and the emissions and congestion they create) into and within the city.



# Chapter Six

## Mobility for All

In the 1960s, when the original Plan for Milton Keynes was prepared, most people felt that the motor car had an assured future, largely because of the advantages it offers for door-to-door travel. Today, it is easy to move around our city by car; this is one of the keys to our success. But now our world is very different. We know we have to mitigate the impact of climate change and to promote more active travel to live longer, healthier lives.

Congestion on our grid road system is increasing rapidly and we need to make sure that everyone can move around the city easily to access jobs, services and healthcare, not just those with use of a car. This is an important part of our approach to tackling poverty. We need to make walking, cycling and scooting our first choice for shorter trips. Our world class Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) system will be best for longer trips. As demand builds up, our MRT network will open in phases but by 2050 all routes will be fully operational.

Of course, cars (powered by electricity and some self-driving) will still be the 'go-to' choice for some for a good while. But because the alternatives will be so attractive, many will choose not to own a car. Our Strategy is about providing everyone with more options in how they move around.

As envisaged in the original plan, our grid road corridors will be adapted so that they are suitable for our MRT vehicles as well as other forms of public transport and cars and with space for bikes too.

And our range of mobility options, including a fleet of self-driving taxis, will be provided as a seamless service with common ticketing and booking systems and linked-up schedules.

Today, transport is the largest source of our carbon emissions. By 2050, our transport revolution –providing mobility for all – will help to make sure our carbon footprint is lower than any other UK city and one of the lowest in Europe.

# “Easy movement and access, and good communications...”

...was one of the six goals of the original 1970 Plan for Milton Keynes and this has been achieved for many people.

A fundamental part of our Strategy for 2050 is to maintain this advantage over other places by giving people more choice in how they travel around the city.

Our city was created using a design and policies that have made travel by car easier than other means.

For many people, cars will be the 'go-to' option for the foreseeable future and the increasing use of electric cars will mean a reduced impact on the environment, but our approach is to

change the balance and make 'active travel' through walking and cycling more attractive for many journeys and make public transport and new mobility services the obvious choice where that isn't suitable. This will reduce carbon emissions and pollution and help improve our health.

### The importance of mobility for all

Everyone should be able to move easily around the city. Households in the parts of Milton Keynes with the highest levels of deprivation tend to have the lowest levels of car ownership.

This means their residents are often the least able to access jobs, services and healthcare where journeys are difficult by public transport – half of all bus users indicate that they have no other transport option.

We also know many young people choose to not own a car, and opt instead to walk, cycle, or use public transport or taxis.

Our Strategy will make it easier for everyone, including our younger and older residents and people with disabilities, to enjoy easy movement and access.

## The impact of our mobility choices

Vehicle emissions are a major contributor to the climate change emergency. When the 1970 Plan for our city was developed there were few concerns about sustainability and our use of natural resources. We now recognise the need for urgent action. We have shown national leadership in promoting electric cars and buses and will continue to do so but decarbonising transport alone will not solve our wider mobility challenges.

Traffic congestion in the city is not at the levels seen in other UK towns and cities but is becoming worse. Some key grid road junctions will exceed their capacity, although increased hybrid working means this will likely be later than the previous forecast of 2031.

The 'grid lock' that will result if we fail to act would hold back our economic ambitions and damage our quality of life. Constructing new

road capacity does not provide a long-term solution as increasing road space is proven to create more traffic, so we will find ways to use our generous road space more efficiently.

The illustrations in **Figure Four** demonstrate the road space needed to move 180 people along one of our grid roads in a range of different vehicles. Moving away from single-occupancy vehicles to other means of travel will not only help provide mobility for all but will also allow our existing road infrastructure to carry more people.

Our parking provision is generous because of our historic focus on cars, especially in our city centre, where we have a high ratio of parking spaces to jobs and relatively low parking charges.

More than one fifth of the valuable space in our city centre is car parking so attractive alternatives to the car will create possibilities to use some of that space differently.

## More cycling and walking

During the COVID-19 lockdown, many people enjoyed walking and cycling more. Walking and cycling help to address congestion, encourage more visible life in our public places and bring more activity into our day-to-day lives.

Our city benefits from an extensive 320km Redway network of shared walking and cycling routes that are segregated from traffic, but they tend to be used for leisure cycling rather than commuting. We will improve and extend the network through providing more direct routes for commuting and giving Redway users priority over road users at appropriate locations. Through our 'Super Routes' we are investing in upgrades to the cross-city Redways that run parallel to the grid roads and making them safer and more attractive. We are also investing more in the maintenance of our wider Redway and footpath network.

Our future communities will be designed to encourage more cycling and walking, including cycle hubs at transport interchanges and extending the cycle network to new growth areas to link up with existing communities.

In locations where we have a very high number of cycle users, we will consider segregated space for cyclists and pedestrians to improve everyone's safety – this might become even more important as we see more e-scooters and other forms of powered micro-mobility.

Figure Four – The road space needed for different vehicles.





## A Mass Rapid Transit network

The original 1970 Plan for Milton Keynes created our grid road network with the flexibility and space for a fixed-track public transport system. Through long-term planning we can deliver a modern version of this in the form of a Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) network.

**This would be a public transport system with frequent services to and from our key destinations, capable of carrying many passengers at times of peak demand with competitive ticket prices.**

New electric-powered vehicles, similar to a tram in functionality and quality, can run on road surfaces rather than expensive, fixed rail infrastructure, and in future will be driverless. To be attractive, journey times must be reliable, so our MRT vehicles cannot be caught up in traffic. The generous space built into our grid corridors means we can create lanes alongside or within the existing carriageway (for example, by using one of the lanes of a dual carriageway).

The illustrations in **Figure Five** and **Figure Six** show examples of how that could work.

**Dedicated routes for MRT will also be created to link with new or existing settlements nearby.**

In some places, our MRT vehicles might run within traffic for short distances with measures that ensure they are given priority.

Using the flexibility built into our design, initial modelling showed that about 90% of our network could be on segregated routes. The network could also accommodate smaller, connected and autonomous vehicles as such solutions emerge.

**Figure Five**  
An illustration of how one side of a dual carriageway could be used for Mass Rapid Transit services.



**Figure Six**  
An illustration of how an additional carriageway could be created for Mass Rapid Transit services.



## The route network

Our MRT network will connect key journey origins and destinations across the city as well as those places (both existing and new) that have the greatest potential for future development. Our emerging plans for the initial routes are shown in **Figure Seven**.

Following low levels of use in 2022/23, our bus use has increased to around 7.7m journeys each year in 2024. Our Strategy takes a long-term view and we expect that demand for public transport will continue to increase again.

**To allow flexibility to cope with uncertainties about demand, we will build up our future network in a phased way, with an initial roll-out of some core routes that can be expanded and supplemented over time.**

The most notable journey patterns today are from people travelling into CMK. This will continue with more jobs, as well as other services and activities, located in our city centre in future.

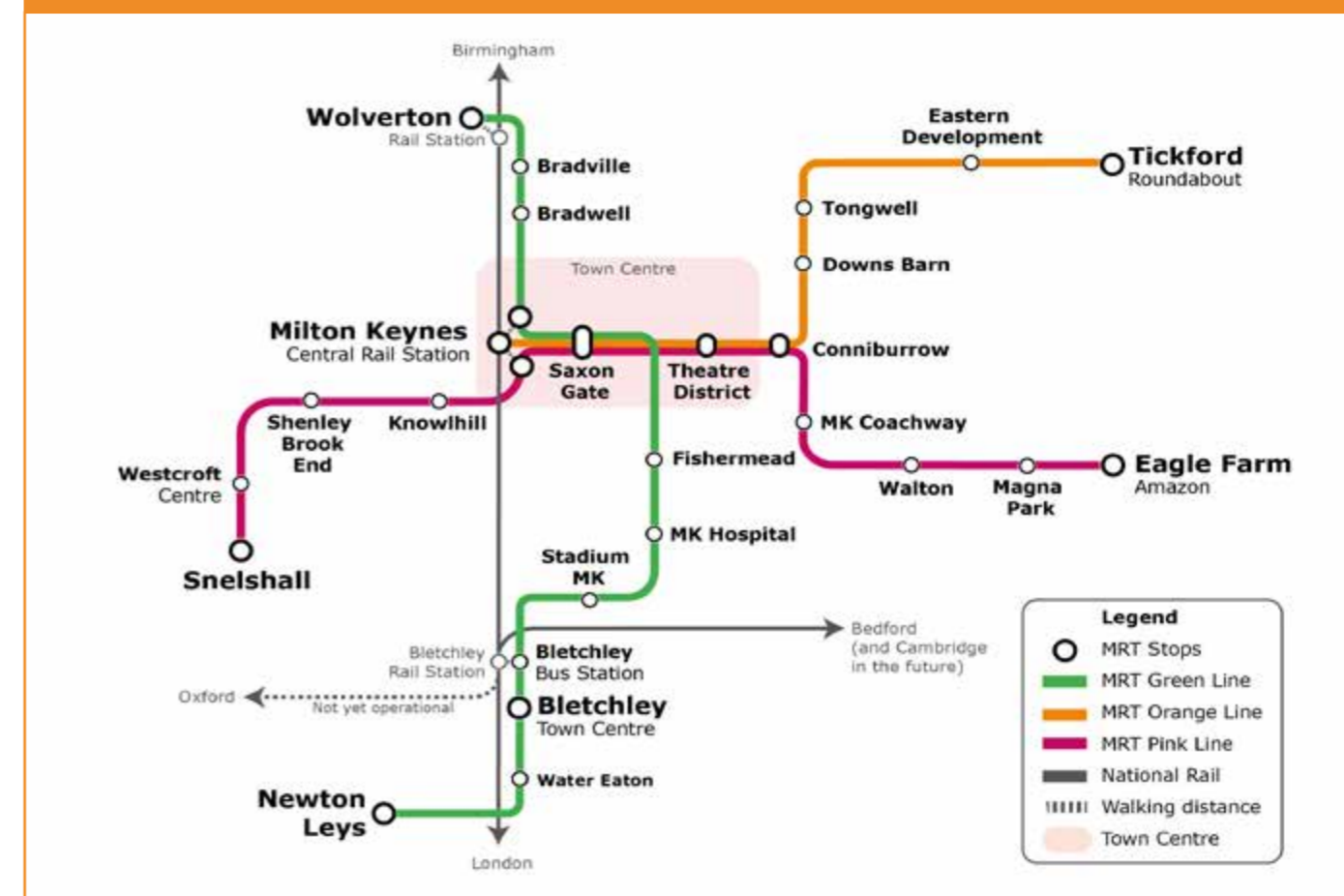
The initial network includes cross-city routes passing through CMK. As in other locations, routes would be segregated from normal traffic by using one side of the boulevards for the MRT vehicles, leaving space for other users on the other carriageway.

**Further work is needed to define the final network of MRT routes and the engineering solutions for junctions and stops.**

As a first step we will identify the sections of our future network routes where bus/MRT priority and junction improvements will be necessary, for example those roads and corridors which have the greatest congestion.

We will also make improvements to bus route infrastructure using developer funding, government grants and other sources of funding. And we will develop Enhanced Bus Partnerships on some future network routes to run high quality, low- or zero-emission vehicles prior to the introduction of dedicated MRT vehicles.

**Figure Seven** – Emerging plans for the initial routes for the Mass Rapid Transit network.



### A joined-up policy approach

Our transport, parking and land use approaches will work together to deliver our improved mobility network. For example, with 'park and ride' services we will ensure the overall service is more attractive in cost and time than driving to and parking in our city centre. And MRT services will be made attractive through having priority over regular traffic, where necessary, and fares that are competitive with parking charges.

**In some locations, the area around MRT stops will provide an opportunity for future development.**

This in turn will mean more people living along the line and more users of the services. We will use transit-oriented development principles and the walkable neighbourhood concept (see Chapter Eight for more detail on this approach) to design communities that are people-friendly and that provide excellent access to the mobility network. Places that are not dominated by cars can instead be shaped around our residents, perhaps by restricting car movement in some areas or by lowering speeds – our existing policies already require new estate roads to have a 20mph limit. This will improve road safety and benefit the health and wellbeing of our residents.



## The wider mobility network

### Demand Responsive Transport and local bus services

The new MRT network will be phased over some years but even when fully implemented the fixed routes will not provide a stop on a route for every community. And we know our rural areas have very poor access to public transport at some times of the day or week. So to make sure everyone can access alternative modes of transport, we will have a wider network of mobility services in place

that supplements and integrates with our MRT system. Unlike our MRT system, some of the routes on this wider network may not be separated from road traffic but, where appropriate, they could be served by the same vehicles and share the 'look and feel' of the rest of the MRT network.

We also expect local buses to continue to serve parts of our borough, although some of these routes will be replaced by the MRT network in time.



### How innovative mobility services can help

Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) is one of a mixed economy of innovative mobility services that is emerging in Milton Keynes. DRT services have already replaced some low demand bus routes.

DRT is based on minibuses and taxis that alter their routes based on the demand from customers rather than sticking to a fixed route or timetable. Route-planning software enables shared rides for some journeys making it cheaper than private hire. Such flexible services help passengers in areas that aren't served directly to link quickly to the core MRT routes and other public transport services. They will also help access parts of the city that do not have an MRT stop close by.

**We are now served by city-wide bike and e-bike hire and we were the first UK city to trial commercial e-scooter hire.**

These schemes will be enhanced by our improved cycling infrastructure. We will also support car clubs and flexible car hire services so that people can access a car for those journeys that are not feasible by other means.

Technology also allows people to plan journeys across different transport modes, book on-demand shared services and pay for journeys or parking through a single payment system that covers all transport providers.

This principle of Mobility as a Service (MaaS) is building momentum in cities across the world and the first stage of a Milton Keynes single payment platform is due to be introduced shortly.

### The road network

Most of Milton Keynes is laid out as a loose grid of 1km squares bound by our unique network of highspeed grid roads.

**We will maintain this existing grid road network and ensure it is well-connected with new development areas.**

Our grid network can be thought of as providing multi-modal corridors which have the room to cater for a range of transport options, including cars and our Mass Rapid Transit vehicles.

The design of new roads to link up with new communities will be future-proofed to accommodate our planned MRT system and infrastructure. This means providing corridors that are wide enough for a range of solutions without making walking difficult between areas or undermining our principles for placemaking in new developments.

Even though the number of slight casualties in traffic accidents has fallen over time, an average of 57 people were killed or seriously injured on our roads between 2018 and 2022, so we must continue to address our road safety challenges.

**We will use the grid road principles of safe crossings and paths for pedestrians and cyclists, and green planting and wildlife corridors along routes, and ensure that they are adaptable to future needs.**

In all cases we will ensure that road layouts respect the form and character of existing neighbourhoods, villages and towns, and manage the traffic impact of new development; there is no 'one size fits all' approach. Underpasses have been an important asset for our grid network. We will give critical consideration to grade separation and road crossings as our road network expands and as we design new neighbourhoods.



# Central Milton Keynes

## The role of CMK

The 1970 Plan for Milton Keynes knew that CMK would be the focus of the city for many activities. Today, CMK is an important location for employment, with almost a quarter of the borough's jobs. Only a relatively small number of people live in CMK today, but it is an increasingly popular place to live with more than 5,000 new homes already planned.

CMK is also home to many of our cultural, retail and leisure facilities and is blessed with one of our most iconic green spaces in Campbell Park. It will be even more important in 2050 as the city centre for all those people living in greater Milton Keynes and as a major urban centre within the sub-region.

**There is much to celebrate about the iconic modernist design of CMK, but some elements create challenges.**

Our network of step-free paths and covering structures (including our porte cocheres and ground floor colonnades on many buildings) provide shelter and an accessible environment for pedestrians, wheelchair users and parents with pushchairs.

But our wide boulevards and rows of parking in front of low density, spread-out buildings mean we lack a sense of vibrancy and activity on the street.

*"A place simply 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."*

**The Plan for Milton Keynes, 1970**



## Chapter Seven

### Central Milton Keynes and Our Centres

**A**s planned more than fifty years ago, Central Milton Keynes (CMK) is the heart of our city. We are the most popular shopping destination in the region and CMK is the best office location between London and Birmingham.

And our culture, entertainment and leisure attractions bring visitors from far and wide. But we are seeing a revolution in how we shop and where we work. The rapid growth of online retailing and remote working means there is no room for complacency about the core of our city.

Yet we are confident that by 2050, CMK will be the vibrant centre of a prosperous Greater Milton Keynes serving many millions of people within a 45-minute journey.

Thousands of students will come to the city centre every day to study. This will help to attract the companies who will create a further 18,000 jobs in CMK.

Some companies will relocate from London to provide HQ offices closer to where their employees want to live, and work from home for part of the week. Including Campbell Park, some 25,000 or more people will call CMK home. They will find everything they need for a rich life within a short walk, scoot or bike ride; CMK will be the exemplar people friendly place. Bletchley is set to see its economy grow strongly thanks to new links to Cambridge, Central Milton Keynes and Oxford. With Bletchley Park and the Institute of Technology, we expect many technology companies will choose to locate in Bletchley. The original vision of a Bigger, Better, Brighter Bletchley will finally be realised.

Every community will continue to enjoy easy access for their day to day needs from a local centre. And the historic towns of Stony Stratford, Newport Pagnell, Olney, Wolverton and Woburn Sands will continue to offer their own distinctive speciality shopping offers.

## New opportunities in the city centre

We want more people spending more time in our city centre. Inevitably, CMK felt the impacts of the COVID-19 lockdown, with lower footfall as fewer workers, shoppers and other visitors spend time there.

But even before the pandemic lockdowns, high street retail was already suffering from the growth of online shopping, so long-term success will rely on us creating new reasons for people to visit and spend time in CMK safely.

**We want a diverse offer with more variety and independent businesses, retailers and places to eat, drink and play.**

We may benefit from more companies relocating from London to provide offices in locations closer to where their employees want to live, and work from home for part of the week. We have room to provide more offices and space

for homes, retail, community, cultural and leisure facilities. Some land is already vacant, or has never been built on, and there are vacant or under-used buildings ripe for refurbishment or redevelopment.

There are some places in CMK where it would be appropriate to build at greater heights and densities. Hotel La Tour, a 14-storey luxury hotel overlooking Campbell Park, is an example of a high quality taller building in CMK, having opened in 2022. We have the space and opportunity to deliver a stronger CMK, whilst retaining the iconic structure and character that contributes to our distinctive heritage.

Our principles (discussed in Chapter Eight) for creating high quality places also apply to development in the city centre. CMK should be the ultimate people-friendly place where residents, visitors and workers can easily walk, scoot, wheel or cycle between different areas.



## A future framework for CMK

Our overall strategy for our great city requires a clear vision for CMK that helps us create a stronger city centre with a thriving economy and where different activities are in the right locations and fit together well.

It will also help us to integrate commercial and public sector projects as they come forward and to understand which types of facilities and activities we might want to encourage in which places.

**To guide these decisions, we are creating a framework for growth and investment in CMK that will sit alongside our MK City Plan 2050.**

The CMK framework will help bring investment to address some of the challenges we face in the city centre, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the changes in the way people shop, work, live and travel.

We want to create a city centre that links up people-friendly public spaces and activities that serve a wide range of visitors. This will build on the new developments that are already underway in CMK.

We have plans for Station Square (the area around Milton Keynes Central Station) that will improve its role as one of the major gateways for those arriving in the city.

We also have a project to extend and improve our open market and are considering how Midsummer Boulevard East, the area between the shopping building and the Point and towards Campbell Park and the Gallery, could become a space that can be used for a variety of events and purposes.

The framework will also look at other opportunities along with the facilities our city centre should provide for our people in the future. A new university in CMK will create a major focus for city life with businesses and venues that cater to our new student population. And we have an ambition for a new city centre music venue to complement our successful theatre and art gallery.

**As the city grows, we will be able to invest in the projects, venues and activities that any big city should have, bringing new opportunities for residents and visitors alike.**

## Central Bletchley

Bletchley was one of our towns that already existed when the area for the new city was designated. It grew during the Victorian era as the crossing point of the London and North Western Railway and the Oxford-Cambridge 'Varsity Line', and Bletchley Park is famous as the home of the World War II Codebreakers.

Bletchley is again well placed for strong economic growth with excellent and improving transport connections. Stronger links to Cambridge, Central Milton Keynes and Oxford will give the town the opportunity to become a significant technology hub that builds on the legacy of Bletchley Park. This is further supported by the Institute of Technology. The town's future economic potential creates the opportunity for comprehensive redevelopment which is described in our prospectus for Central Bletchley.

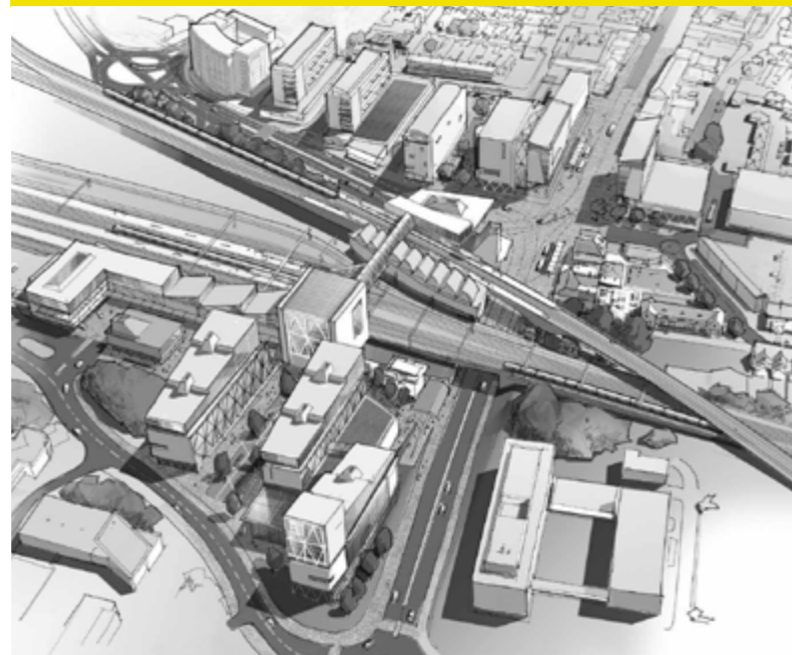
Bletchley has the flexibility to see an increase in a range of uses. This could include office-based employment space and new retail and leisure facilities to support existing and new residents and employees. There is scope to build new homes at higher densities and above shops and offices to create a more vibrant mix of uses and support local services. The Institute of Technology and MK College campus will form a learning hub within the town.

We also have the opportunity for comprehensive development around the station which will help create a positive experience for those arriving by train. We want to transform Queensway to become a much stronger high street for Bletchley and improve pedestrian links from the station to the town centre. The opportunities for Central Bletchley work well alongside those in CMK and will help provide regeneration and investment to this important part of our city.

**The Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Deal programme started in 2020 when the area secured £22.7m of funding.** The programme will run to 2026 and has been developed with the Town Councils, local residents associations and the community. It includes delivery of seven ambitious projects for the town, including an Education Centre, Transport Hub and public realm improvements and we are developing a long-term vision for the town.

*"To offer an alternative but complementary lifestyle to much of Milton Keynes: create a desirable, higher density, metropolitan urban hub around excellent transport links that revitalises the town centre for existing and new residents, workers and visitors to Central Bletchley."*

**Central Bletchley Prospectus,  
December 2019**



## A rich network of Local Centres

The original Plan for Milton Keynes recognised the importance of every community having easy access to day-to-day services. It established a layout for the urban area that included local centres, often shared between grid squares to encourage people to move between estates.

Our local centres provide a variety of shops, schools, community and health centres, places of worship, pubs, cafes and takeaway restaurants. They are complemented by larger centres at Kingston and Westcroft, each focussed around a supermarket and other retail units and facilities.

The town centres of Wolverton, Bletchley and Fenny Stratford, and Stony Stratford pre-date the new city. Outside the urban area are the historic market towns of Woburn Sands, Newport Pagnell and Olney, and a variety of other smaller villages, many with a few shops and facilities to support their local communities.

**Our villages and other small settlements are the heart of our rural communities.**

Our dispersed pattern of facilities and services in local centres right across the city means that most residents are within an easy walk of somewhere that can serve their everyday needs – an example of a walkable, people-friendly place.

During the COVID-19 lockdown we know that many people appreciated this and shopped locally, perhaps as part of their daily exercise, rather than going to a large supermarket.

**Local centres will continue to be part of the design of new neighbourhoods. They provide a focal point for activity and spaces where our residents can come together.**

Local groups play an important role in looking out for vulnerable and isolated people, creating support networks and reducing isolation and loneliness. We want to maintain this community spirit and to encourage investment in our Local Centres by their landlords.

Local centres provide the perfect location for stops and interchanges on our mobility network. New, as well as many existing, local centres will be suitable places to encourage higher density development as part of mixed-used schemes that are designed using 'transit-oriented' principles. We will make sure centres are well-served by our mobility network and Redways so that residents can access them easily.

Local, district and town centres are likely to be locations for further employment space. We anticipate there will be more demand for flexible work and meeting space from those based at home for much of their working week.

This will help to increase the diversity and viability of our centres as more people use them for a range of different purposes.



## Supporting our rural communities

Development of the right kind in the right places in our rural areas can help to sustain services and facilities within our villages. Our rural communities can be isolated without access to the services and facilities in the city through poor public transport services, and many have suffered from the closure of local shops and pubs.

Many of our Parish Councils have led their communities in developing a Neighbourhood Plan to guide new development that delivers much needed housing and investment to their area, growing communities, providing homes for people who grew up locally and bringing in new residents to help support the life of their village. We support the idea that sensitive growth in our rural communities can help to sustain our vital local services.



# Chapter Eight

## Healthy and Creative Places

**T**he health of residents has always been important for the city, but in the early days, this focused more on NHS services in our network of local health centres and, of course, the Milton Keynes University Hospital.

**N**ow, we understand that the structure of a city itself can help people to stay healthy – particularly by avoiding obesity-related illness and supporting our mental health.

The key is an active lifestyle – more walking and cycling and more active leisure and sport – and continuing to provide beautiful landscaped open space and parks. This proved especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our Strategy for 2050 highlights the importance of creating walkable, people-friendly neighbourhoods – providing almost all the services that people need to on a day-to-day basis within a short walk, scoot, wheel or cycle for most of us. Our new neighbourhoods will be designed to achieve this ambition.

But it also means attracting more activity and investment in our existing network of local centres and making sure everyone feels safe moving around by foot or bike.

Furthermore, we have a full range of city and regional scale sports and leisure attractions, but we will continue invest in further facilities. Side by side with the commitment to healthy living is our belief that creativity and culture is vital to the quality of our lives – and the city's economic prosperity. We already have a rich cultural heritage with public art and city design known around the world, our gallery, our theatre, and our museums and other venues.

Our festivals and events often feature international performers and Bletchley Park and The Stables attract visitors from around the world. Creative talent and thinking is an economic asset in its own right – these skills define an adaptable workforce fit for the future. The city's successful efforts over the past fifty-plus years to promote culture and creativity are just the beginning.

## Our commitment to quality placemaking

Our aim is to design places that improve our residents' health and quality of life, and that inspire people to play an active part in our city.

We call this 'placemaking' and it applies to places at all scales, from small, infill developments to new neighbourhoods and our city centre.

## Milton Keynes was designed to be different and will always have a distinctive identity.

Our **'Better by design'** tagline demonstrates this ethos. But we want to learn from our own experience and from other places about how we can design places to help us seize our opportunities and address our challenges, whilst maintaining our character and distinctive heritage.



## Everyday facilities on your doorstep

At the heart of our ambition is for everyone in Milton Keynes to live in a place that has easy access to facilities and services. People should be able to walk, scoot, wheel or cycle a short distance, no more than fifteen minutes in most cases, to services they use on a day-to-day basis. This includes shops, schools, a community centre, a local café or takeaway, playing fields and open space. Our vision is that these can all be accessible without needing to use a car, although we appreciate that for some people, and in some circumstances, car use may be necessary. This "15-minute neighbourhood" idea – which we like to think of as 'people-friendly and healthy places' – is gaining international support and fits with the original Milton Keynes principle of local centres within easy reach of home. It also links to the trend we have seen of more people working

from home where they can, and using local places to take 'time out'. In the future, we expect more people will choose to spend some of their working day based in a shared workspace or even a local coffee shop.

Sport is a major part of our city's life. We are proud to be the home of the MK Dons whose stadium is one of the landmark developments in the city and hosted Rugby World Cup matches in 2015. Major events such as being European City of Sport in 2020 and hosting matches for the football Women's Euros in 2022 inspire more people to take part in sport and to exercise regularly. And we know having leisure and sports facilities that are easily accessible for everyone plays an important part in encouraging healthy lifestyles.

Sports pitches, including the potential for facilities to be shared with schools, must be part of all new neighbourhoods.

## Welcoming to everyone

Our residents need spaces where they can come together to take part in activities that build welcoming and diverse communities. Access to a range of free and affordable activities is important for all of us, but especially our young people. It is also essential for our many voluntary organisations and the work they do for our communities. Community spaces can help to reduce isolation and loneliness and so contribute to managing our mental health.

### Schools play an important role as hubs for local communities and this can include sharing the use of their facilities.

Growing and sustaining our community and voluntary sector is an important part of our strategy. We will continue to support the model of the Milton Keynes Community Foundation which provides land and income for local charities and other community facilities, and Community Action:MK who play an essential part in supporting and representing our community and voluntary organisations and helping local people to play a role in their community.

## Everyone deserves the opportunity to live in a decent home they can afford in a place where they feel proud to live.

Our neighbourhoods should have a mix of homes to suit the varied cultural and social needs of our city's households. This is fundamental to making everyone feel welcome and living a happy, healthy life.

The diversity of neighbourhoods is made richer by homes and buildings that work for people at all stages of their life. This will mean that even if our health, mobility or cognitive functions decline, we can stay as part of our community. Designing dementia-friendly places in which streets are safe and easy to navigate and building to Lifetime Homes standards should be the norm. Designing safety into places is important for everyone, especially our young people who say they often feel unsafe in Milton Keynes. We will make sure that paths, road crossings, underpasses and places where people gather are overlooked, well-lit and well maintained.

### Busier places can feel safer too – with more people around we can all look out for each other.





## How we move around

Our movement choices can help both our health and the environment. Our strategy to provide mobility for all and to make walking, wheeling and cycling the first choice for most local journeys, will mean we can all make more sustainable and healthy travel choices. This will be supported by working with Thames Valley Police to reduce road speeds within developments and having excellent paths and Redways that link to our wider mobility network. Secure and convenient cycle storage will be important at homes and destinations, with shower facilities at workplaces for active commuters. We should look at different ways to provide parking, especially as community pool car schemes and other new approaches to mobility emerge.

## Involving communities

Our approach to placemaking will apply to proposals within our existing settlements as well as new development areas.

### **We will work with communities to design schemes that are sensitive to their local surroundings.**

This will include redevelopment or intensification in some locations that can benefit our existing communities. We hope the approach will also be applied by our neighbouring councils in designing new communities close to our boundaries.

## Green and beautiful

Everyone must have access to high quality spaces where they can spend time outside. Our individual neighbourhoods will contribute to our green city by including many more trees and local open spaces that join up to our city-wide green infrastructure network.

And we aim to secure a net gain in biodiversity, so any impact on our wildlife and habitat networks from development will be offset by the creation and improvement of habitats elsewhere.

We will design places that work with the character of their local area and take opportunities to be pioneering and ambitious to fit with our “better by design” heritage.

The new city of Milton Keynes sensitively incorporated historic towns and villages within the designated area and those original settlements are still recognisable in places like Woughton on the Green and Loughton.

We will continue this approach where development takes place around a village to protect its character. We recognise the role that our modern heritage offers in creating a sense of place for new communities and we will encourage new developments with a variety of designs, layouts and densities that fit with our patchwork character.



## Our Creative and Cultured City

Creative talent and thinking is an economic asset in its own right – such skills will be essential to building an adaptable workforce fit for the future. The city's successful efforts over the past fifty years to promote culture and creativity are just the beginning. Culture makes a place attractive and vibrant and contributes to our wider ambitions for achieving a good quality of life. It helps attract people to live, work, spend time or study here and is an important way of creating a sense of belonging for our residents, especially newcomers to the city. Events hosted by different parts of our community, from a range of cultural traditions, are one way in which we celebrate our diversity.

**As Milton Keynes grew from its new town beginnings, public art projects were an important part of building new communities.**

The Development Corporation had an ambitious public art programme and over 50 works were commissioned. The programme involved the early pioneer citizens in the works, the most famous of which is Liz Leyh's Concrete Cows which have become world famous as a symbol of our city.



## Growing our culture

Cultural events and activities can support our economic growth and community development through providing opportunities for people to spend time together, safely, and helping bring more life into our city centre. We need vibrant public spaces where street art and open-air events can take place. We all feel safer and engaged when there is visible activity happening around us. People are encouraged to walk between places when their journey has stimulating features to look at along the way, such as art installations and interesting buildings.

**We aim to make our activities and venues welcoming and inclusive.**

We will use the recommendations from a recent report by MK Arts and Heritage Alliance to make sure that everyone feels able to engage in the city's cultural offer. We will extend our cultural sector in other ways. We are developing plans for a new multi-purpose events venue in CMK for around 4,500 people.

We also need smaller and cheaper studios, galleries and venues right across the borough to support independent cultural groups and

artists. Opportunities to provide these spaces may be created by the changing demand for office space or using some of our existing vacant space. Venues like MK Museum and our Arts Centres also need investment. We have great breadth and depth in our cultural and creative organisations, but COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis have hit the sector hard and we need investment to nurture our homegrown talent. As part of this, we have developed a Cultural Infrastructure Plan to identify the range of venues and opportunities that we will need for our growing city.

**The creative industries are one of the UK's fastest growing economic sectors.**

We aim to provide better creative and cultural education in schools so that we build the creative thinking and skills that will help our future workers adapt to new challenges. As automation in the workplaces increases, creativity will become even more important in future job roles.

We understand the importance of defending, investing in and developing our cultural sector and will integrate creativity, heritage and public art as part of our approach to making great places in our great city.

**The design of the city and its celebrated new town heritage are also elements of our cultural legacy that provide Milton Keynes with an international reputation.**

Today, we are taking further steps to develop our cultural identity through big community events such as Feast of Fire which celebrated our 50th birthday in 2017, our event to celebrate the award of city status in 2022 and the biennial International Festival (IF) that brings artists from all over the world to Milton Keynes.

We enjoy participating in 'culture' in its widest sense. This ranges from attending events at our theatre, gallery and music venues through to big community celebrations at our annual World Picnic, Pride and cultural and religious festivals and our thriving independent dance scene.

But despite the diversity and vibrancy of the sector, there are still gaps to address if we are to be a leading creative and cultural city.



# Chapter Nine

## The 2050 Spatial Strategy

More than five decades ago, the original Plan for Milton Keynes set a flexible framework for the city's growth. A series of statutory local plans – most recently Plan: MK – followed. Now we already have allocated or given planning permission for around 29,000 homes – one of the largest supplies of housing land in the UK. But planning and construction takes a long time and we have to start thinking now about how many homes our growing population will need into the future and where that growth will happen.

Our Strategy for 2050 proposes that we will need some 30,000-35,000 additional homes to meet the needs of future residents, including those already living in the city as they form new households and their families grow, and for our expanding workforce.

We have carefully examined where these homes should be built. First, we suggest that we should complete and

possibly extend existing development areas as set out in Plan:MK. Second, we should identify sites for sensitive and selective development within or adjacent to existing communities.

And third, we should develop new communities beyond the existing urban area of Milton Keynes, in the right locations and with the right infrastructure and links with today's city.

We will discuss with neighbouring councils how to link up with development that might happen close by in their areas.

As with the original Plan, our Strategy for 2050 offers a flexible framework – setting a direction of travel. It is not the role of the Strategy for 2050 to allocate specific parcels of land or specify number of homes and other uses.

These are details that are being worked out with the involvement of local communities as we develop our MK City Plan 2050.

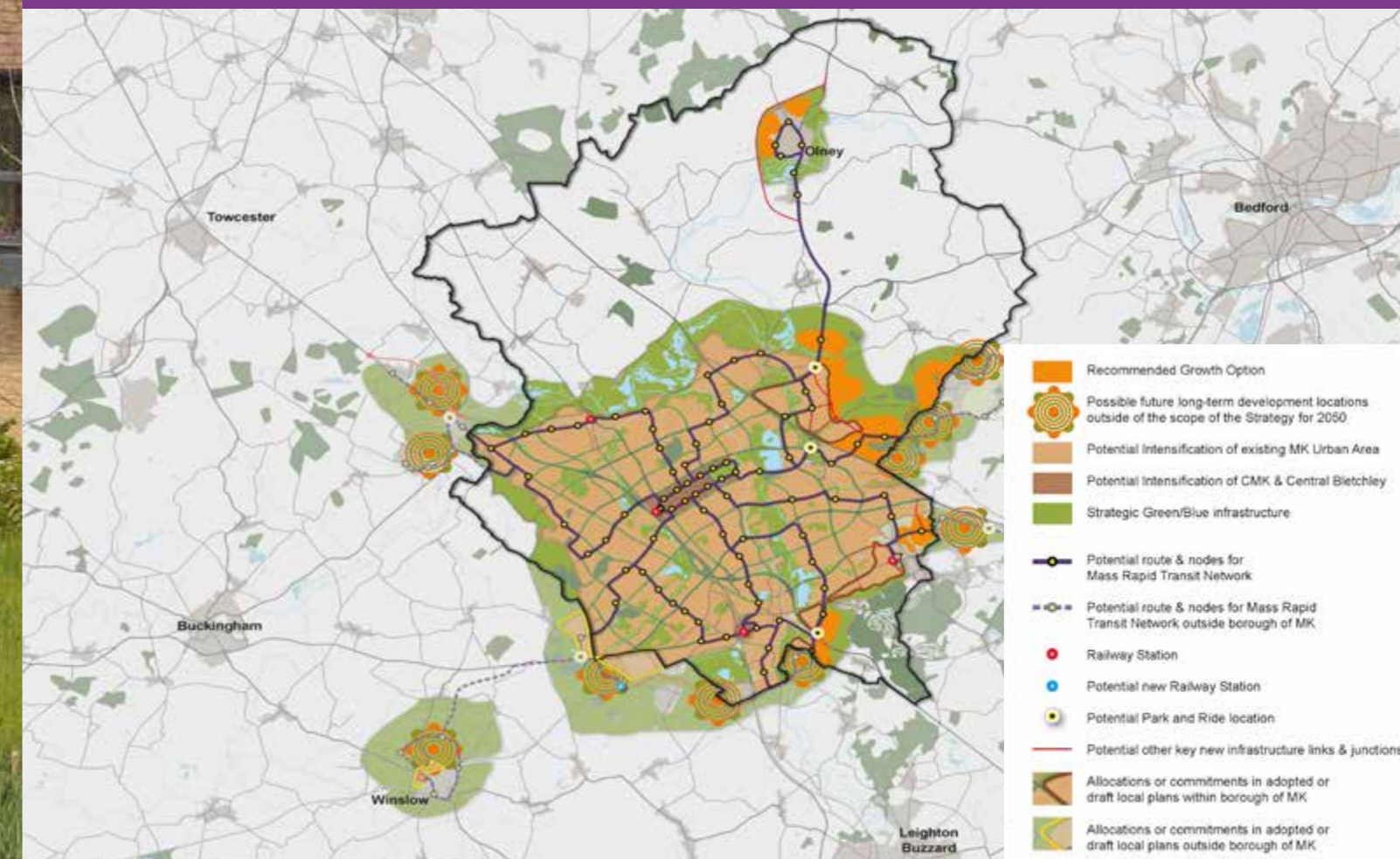
Our Strategy for 2050 provides a framework for decisions about how future growth and development can benefit all our residents. This includes where development should take place. Through Plan:MK and existing planning permissions, we have already committed to **29,000** homes being built and this will mean around **340,000** people living in the borough by the early 2030s. Many of these homes are part of large, complex developments that often take many years to be fully completed, so even sites started in 2025 could still be under construction in 2030 or even 2035.

You can see those major growth locations in **Figure Two** at the start of this Strategy.

**Because of the time it takes to plan and deliver new homes and infrastructure we must start thinking now about what happens after, and alongside, our existing commitments.**

This spatial strategy provides a flexible framework for where **30,000-35,000** additional homes could be located over the coming decades to meet the needs of the 410,000 people that we expect to be living in Milton Keynes in 2050.

**Figure Eight** – The recommended Spatial Strategy for Milton Keynes, at January 2021.



### Our Recommended Strategy

In 2016, our MK Futures 2050 Commission put forward a recommendation for how development should be distributed (see box, over page). Our approach to 2050 follows this broad pattern. It uses the directions of growth that have been confirmed through Plan:MK, and considers constraints and opportunities, to outline locations for the next phase of development for Milton Keynes, as shown in **Figure Eight**. The general locations shown on the plan are places where new development could happen but do not necessarily indicate the scale or extent of development. And the areas indicated will also include significant amounts of open space and other uses alongside homes.

*“There are many opportunities to accommodate a significant share of the city’s future growth, up to 2026 and beyond, through developing/redeveloping selected sites in the existing built-up area at higher densities – this would improve the city’s overall offer to residents today.*

*However, it will not be possible to accommodate most or even a large minority of the city’s growth in this way without undermining the city’s unique, distinctive spacious qualities – we are in no doubt that this is a view shared by many of the city’s existing residents.*

*Therefore, it would be desirable to accommodate much, but by no means all, of the city’s additional inclusive growth to 2050 in substantial new developments; these would be adjacent to the city (possibly even on the east side of the M1) and elsewhere inside the wider functional economic area.”*

**Making a Great City Greater, 2016, p37**



1

## Complete and enhance existing and emerging growth allocations

Plan:MK already includes major growth allocations which are underway or due to be developed in the coming years. Wherever possible, these sites should be designed (or at least future-proofed) to meet our ambitions for high quality, sustainable communities where Mass Rapid Transit is properly integrated.

**There is capacity for some of these existing growth locations to be extended further in the long term, for example the area east of the M1.**



2

## Sensitive and selective development within or adjacent to existing communities

Within the urban area there are opportunities for redevelopment or infill developments that maximise the use of brownfield and other sustainable, accessible sites and that will not undermine the city’s existing character. There are also sites in and around our towns and villages across the borough. Proposals must be sensitive to their location and development will not be appropriate everywhere.

**Our approach will be selective and give priority to brownfield sites – those that have been built on before but can now be redeveloped – to make the most sustainable use of land.**

This could include redeveloping employment sites that are underused or no longer fit for purpose while retaining land, of the right type and in the right locations, for future businesses.

Town, district and local centres and CMK are particularly important locations where opportunities like this will be considered, as well as the ‘Reserve Sites’ across the city that have already been safeguarded for future development.

**Stops on our new mobility network are also likely locations for sustainable future development and our work to determine the most appropriate routes for MRT services will explore the possibilities for where this can happen.**

There is the capacity for many more people to live in Central Milton Keynes, alongside our planned growth in jobs, leisure, culture, retail and community facilities.

Central Bletchley is also poised for major regeneration and will be home to many more residents alongside wider investment as an important rail hub.

**In all cases, proposals will be designed at a scale and density, and with a mix of house types, sizes and tenures, that enhances the character and attractiveness of the area.**



### Development of new communities beyond the existing urban area of Milton Keynes which

- a) are based around transport links, including Mass Rapid Transit services,
- b) maximise links with existing and planned infrastructure, and
- c) continue existing directions of growth.

Beyond our city boundary are other sensible locations for long term growth. This includes opportunities for extensions to existing directions of growth such as East of the M1 where a new bridge over the motorway will provide access to a development of 5,000 homes, with around 1,500 homes built by 2031 alongside a new health centre and primary school. There is potential for further development beyond this over the long-term.

The east-west corridor to the south of the city and into north Buckinghamshire and Central Bedfordshire will benefit from new rail services as part of East-West Rail.

Our MK Futures 2050 Commission and the National Infrastructure Commission both recognised this will create opportunities for development over the coming decades,

including around train stations and other areas that would be linked with our MRT network. Our neighbouring council areas may also pursue development opportunities created by East-West Rail and that could link with our mobility network. We believe there is potential beyond the plans already committed in our neighbouring areas to grow the population across the Greater Milton Keynes area to around half a million people without creating an undue burden on the area.

Proposals in areas beyond the Milton Keynes boundary are outside the remit of this Strategy but we hope to work closely with our neighbouring councils to develop joint proposals for growth that reflect the economic, social and physical links across our formal boundaries.

**All developments will be designed using our placemaking principles to create walkable, people-friendly places that have strong links to our mobility network and other services, including our open space and Redway networks, so that residents enjoy an excellent quality of life and sustainable travel options.**

We will also use measures such as green landscape buffers to help protect and preserve the character of existing settlements.



## Discounted options

In developing this spatial approach, we discounted some options as being unsuitable for our city's development to 2050. This includes the potential for major growth to the north of the city due to the scale and cost of the infrastructure that would be required to build connections into the existing city across the floodplain of the River Great Ouse and the environmental impact when compared to other options.

We have also discounted the development of a large new 'sister' town within or near to the borough as this would divert investment and economic growth away from Milton Keynes, to the detriment of our residents. We believe our approach will provide benefits and investment for the whole of Milton Keynes, with a diverse range of sizes, types and location of sites for future development.

## Building Communities

**This Strategy is about the healthy, inclusive communities and strong economic future we are trying to achieve for our residents, not about housing numbers.**

However, effective planning requires some idea of our city's future scale to help us to understand the sorts of facilities and services our communities will need to thrive. We will design new neighbourhoods at a scale that can support the delivery of infrastructure.

A development of around **5,000** homes, which could include existing homes nearby, is often considered to be the right size to support a secondary school and local centre with the right range of facilities.

**Another broad principle we have assumed is that about half the land in any major development will be 'unbuilt'. This will provide significant open space to maintain our green character, as well as protecting our heritage assets and creating buffers for existing communities.**

In the remaining area, space will be needed for uses other than residential development as we want new homes to have all the facilities that are important to a community within easy reach - usually within a 15-minute walk.

And in all cases, we will fully involve local communities in shaping the future of their neighbourhoods and our great city.



## Building in Flexibility

Our recommended approach provides more than enough space to grow by 2050 to meet the needs of the **410,000** people that will live here. It provides for a variety of types, sizes and locations of development, including smaller sites that are likely to be more suitable for small- to medium-sized housebuilders. And we want to see self-build plots included as part of housing sites so that homeowners can build their own.

**A variety of homes phased over time in this way will allow flexibility to respond to changing circumstances and homeowner requirements, and a range of development sites and locations will help to ensure a steady future supply of homes.**

Of course, our recommended spatial framework is not intended to be definitive and is being tested further through the MK City Plan 2050 process.



# Chapter Ten

## Making it Happen

In 1967, government established the Milton Keynes Development Corporation to plan, finance and build the new city. They laid the foundations for the successful place that we have today. They did this by taking most of the increase in land value and profit arising from new development and re-investing it in the city's infrastructure and amenities.

In 1992, (what is now) Milton Keynes City Council started to take over responsibility and now, outside of CMK, virtually all of the land suitable for new development is controlled by private builders. We are not confident that new communities being built under the current approach will match the aspirations set out in this Strategy or the standards that our residents expect. To address this challenge, we are exploring new forms of delivery and governance which will provide

much stronger democratic control over future developments. One option being considered is to establish a new locally led development corporation financed by government.

In any event, we wish to ensure that much more of the value and profit from housing growth is invested in education, community and health facilities, open space, sports and leisure, and transport infrastructure.

This will be key to the city's future. In recent years, we have successfully secured significant investments from government to help the city's growth and we are in no doubt that that future investments will be required. We hope to work more closely with neighbouring councils, government and other partners to deliver our Strategy for 2050. These partnerships will be key to realising the full potential of Greater Milton Keynes.

Under the current approach, even where a council provides a strong vision for its area through a Local Plan it is still delivered by developers.

**If the development is not of a high quality or does not provide the infrastructure and services needed to support the larger population, it is understandable that our wider community is not supportive.**

In the lead up to approving the Strategy for 2050 in January 2021, we modified our initial thinking because of the impact of the COVID-19 recession. The great uncertainties brought about meant it was challenging to define some of the details of our approach.

But we remain clear that an ambitious vision and policies that can guide our progress through long-term uncertainties is needed now more than ever.

We are realistic about what we can deliver within current arrangements and resources but have set out an approach that is flexible and can support greater ambition if we can secure the right investment and delivery arrangements.

As in 1970 we need a powerful partnership with government.

The 1970 Plan for Milton Keynes set the framework for the first decades of our city's life and this was accompanied by a New Town Development Corporation established to provide leadership and secure investment for the growth of the city. These arrangements ensured that the essential infrastructure and facilities for our communities were in place when people moved into their new homes. That 1970 Plan and the Development Corporation, supported by major investment from the government, created much of what defines MK today.

We share the concerns of many of our residents that what has become the 'normal' development process today is not up to the standard enjoyed in our early years. We are not confident that the new communities being built now will match the aspirations set out in this Strategy.

Milton Keynes has not succeeded by waiting and reacting but has prospered through its distinctive approach to creating and delivering its own future.



## A new delivery model

We are exploring new governance and delivery models that give us greater democratic control over the quality and pace of development. The conclusion may be that different approaches to fit the variety of opportunities across the borough might serve us best. One of the options is to create a localised version of a New Town Development Corporation that works to our vision and plans.

Any future arrangements should enable us to meet three principles:

1

**Strong vision and leadership, driven by high quality community engagement**

2

**Mechanisms that enable us to secure more of the value of development and land value to create investment that can benefit the community**

3

**Provide the ability to look after and maintain the assets in our city well into the future as part of long-term stewardship.**



## Vision and leadership

Our Strategy sets our ambitious vision for the long-term future, looking ahead to 2050. This is beyond the usual Local Plan timescales which typically have a 15-year horizon. By setting out our agenda for a longer period we can take opportunities that might not otherwise be available and ensure the benefits are shared across all our communities.

**Our Strategy provides the basis for discussions with central government, utility providers and other agencies about the investment and support we need to deliver our ambitions.**

A good example is the support we gave to Milton Keynes University Hospital's bid to government for investment in a new Women and Children's Hospital. Our long-term strategy will help make the case for similar investments that will serve us for the long-term rather than piecemeal reaction to pressures as they arise.

Through a framework for CMK, we will guide investment to address some of the challenges we face in CMK, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and recession, and create a more integrated, better connected and vibrant city centre, with public spaces that are far more people-friendly. And we are working on a Town Deal programme for Bletchley with the Town Councils, residents and stakeholders.

**Involving communities will be integral to our process, helping to shape the detail of proposals as they are developed.**

Some of our communities have already recognised the benefits that can result from well-planned growth, as demonstrated in the result of the Fullers Slade ballot in 2018, where the local community voted in favour of refurbishment and improvements to existing homes enabled by building new homes in their estate.

Through their close engagement in development frameworks and design codes, local communities can influence the way their local area changes and grows.

Our Strategy for 2050 has been subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment that found the strategy advances equality of opportunity in numerous ways and mentions, and has regard to, the need for inclusivity, diversity and meeting the challenge of child poverty.

The Impact Assessment notes that as the Strategy is delivered, we will need to give attention to the factors that have led to persistent child poverty and focus on designing in access to all and developing a 'welcoming spirit'. These themes are integral to our Strategy but there is a risk they could be disregarded as we deliver our ambitions if they aren't given the right attention.



## Value capture and infrastructure provision

We understand the concern that many residents have about the right infrastructure needing to be delivered alongside growth. We know that health facilities – the hospital and doctors' surgeries – and schools are particularly important to our citizens.

With any level of growth there is a need for a wide range of infrastructure and as part of the development of the MK City Plan 2050, we are undertaking a comprehensive assessment of infrastructure, services and other essential requirements.

This understanding is vital to secure funding and to manage and phase the development process. Developers and landowners involved in new development are required to contribute to the cost of affordable housing and essential infrastructure.

This includes the physical, social and green infrastructure that is important in creating high quality development and reducing any negative impacts on the wider area.

**The level of investment we require for affordable housing, public services and infrastructure in all its forms cannot be gained through existing developer contribution approaches alone.**

In the past, we used the Milton Keynes Tariff mechanism in our major expansion areas to fund essential infrastructure. This provided certainty upfront for developers about costs and communities were assured that infrastructure and facilities would be provided as part of a new estate. It helped us to meet the principle of "I before E" – Infrastructure before Expansion. This ability to provide infrastructure in advance of people moving into their new home is integral to delivering good growth

that benefits everyone, including those in established communities that fear pressure on existing services and infrastructure. Current national planning policy restricts our ability to introduce a similar borough-wide arrangement today, so through our work to consider alternative delivery models we are exploring opportunities to replicate the features that made our Tariff so successful, including upfront funding for infrastructure.

**We will also consider mechanisms that allow us to capture the uplift in land value from new development and pursue strategic relationships with central government to secure long-term grant funding.**

An important part of our future infrastructure requirement is the provision of Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) as part of a much-improved mobility network. Through the development of an Outline Business Case for the MRT

project, our estimate for the overall capital cost of building our core MRT network is around £200m and we are now doing further work on route modelling, phasing and engineering to refine plans for how this could be delivered. New development will be designed in a way that supports the operational viability of mobility services in line with our placemaking approach in **Chapter Eight**, but the initial delivery of the network will be funded through developer contributions (including 'works in kind' by the developer to put in routes and infrastructure within new communities) and further public and private investment.

We are planning to phase our MRT network with an initial rollout of some core routes that can be expanded and supplemented over time.

**We are also considering the most appropriate governance arrangements for our future mobility network which will also influence decisions about funding and viability.**



## Future stewardship

The long-term maintenance and stewardship of assets is an important element of delivering our growth agenda. The Parks Trust model for managing our strategic green space network works well because a property portfolio was also transferred to the Trust to generate income to fund ongoing maintenance. The Milton Keynes Community Foundation model has also enabled the provision of land and income for local charities and other community facilities.

**As we grow we will continue to create arrangements for future stewardship, including support for the Parks Trust and Community Foundation models.**



## Achieving our Big Ambitions

The detailed actions and policies that will deliver this Strategy for 2050 will be set through future Local Plans and other council strategies including our emerging MK City Plan 2050.

The impacts of various factors including the cost of living crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic and other major disruptors may change some of the context in which we work but they don't change our long-term vision for sustainable, net zero carbon growth that provides an excellent quality of life for all who live here today, and for those who will want to in future.

Working across Greater Milton Keynes with our partners, stakeholders, investors and local communities, we can deliver the promise of our Seven Big Ambitions and make our Great City Greater.



## Partnership working

Milton Keynes was created with major national investment to meet national strategic priorities. We now need a new and powerful partnership with government. Working closely with government departments and agencies, such as Homes England, on our shared ambitions for long-term, high-quality growth will help secure investment by aligning priorities and resources. It will give confidence to communities that growth is being done properly. We will also aim to work on delivery in partnership with the housebuilding industry and landowners.

When developing proposals for new delivery mechanisms we will consider how they could be extended to cover our neighbouring councils (or parts of their areas) if those partners wish to work with us on cross-boundary growth and investment opportunities in that way. We will not pursue local government boundary reviews as part of our growth agenda; we believe there are ways that neighbouring councils can work together in a positive way through existing and new arrangements without the need to change local authority boundaries.

We will continue to work with local and national partners across the region. Working together helps with effective spatial planning across the wider area to respond to and, in turn, help frame our local vision and ambitions. We will also work closely with Town and Parish Councils across Milton Keynes in delivering our Strategy for 2050.





# A note on the Strategy for 2050

**W**e prepared this Strategy for 2050 following the recommendation of our MK Futures 2050 Commission and their report “Making a Great City Greater”, published in 2016. It provides a vision for the future of Milton Keynes borough over the coming decades, which local plans and other Council and partner plans, policies and strategies will help to deliver. The Strategy isn’t itself a statutory planning document.

We initially prepared the Strategy for 2050 during 2019 and 2020 using a range of studies and research which are available on request (to [MKFutures@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:MKFutures@milton-keynes.gov.uk)). During the preparation of the Strategy, we also talked to many members of the public, stakeholder groups, young people through our ‘Forging the Future’ work in local schools, and other organisations. We are grateful to them for the views and feedback we have heard throughout which have helped us to develop this Strategy.

We ran an 18-week engagement programme on a draft of the Strategy for 2050 between January and May 2020 which included a period when the country was in lockdown as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We also ran a further round of engagement to gather views on the potential long-term impacts of the pandemic. The comments we received helped refine the Strategy for 2050 before it was finalised.

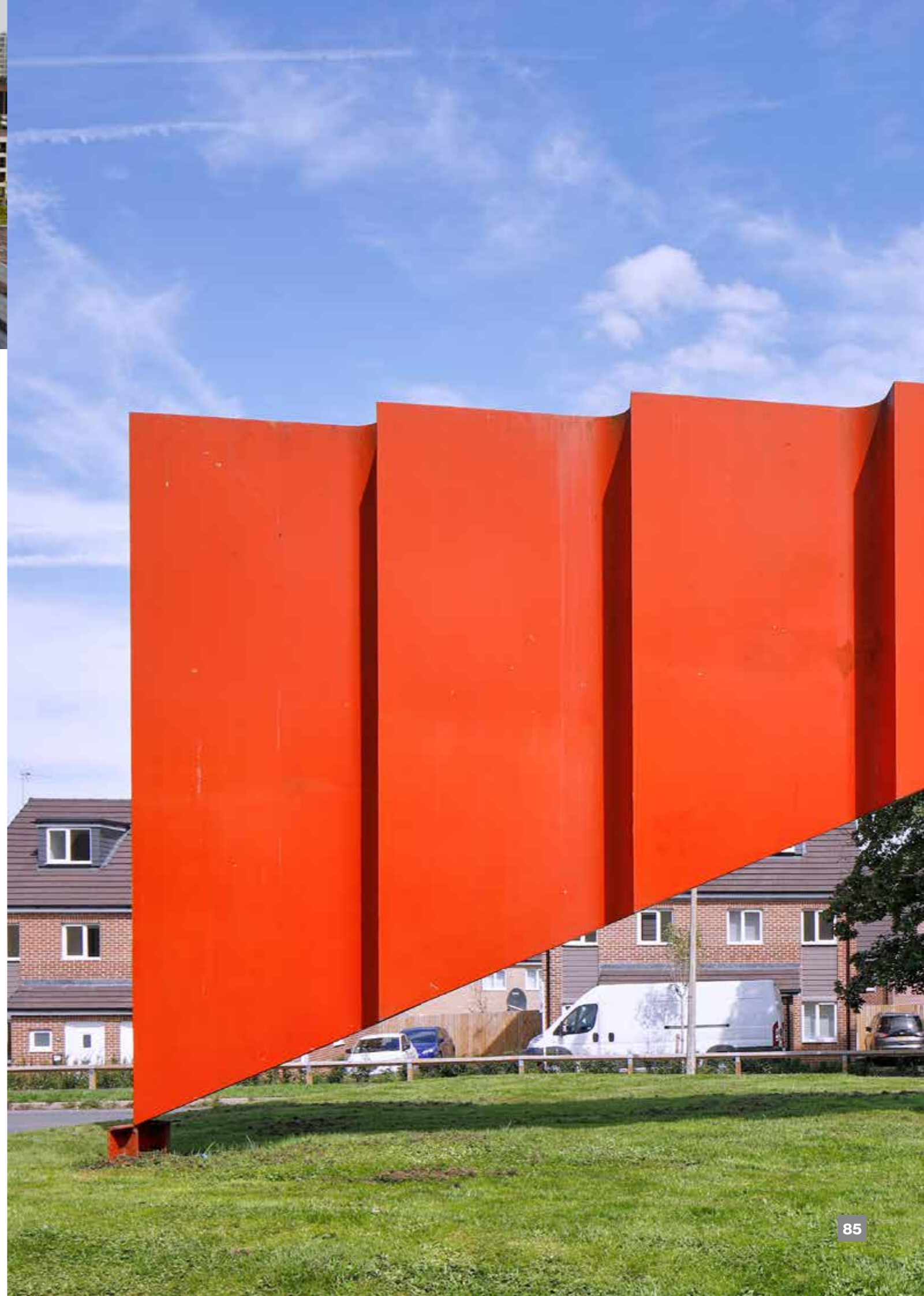
**The Strategy for 2050 was adopted by the Council in January 2021 as an annex to the Council Plan. It is also now forming the overarching vision for the emerging MK City Plan 2050.**

The Strategy has been updated in late 2024, three years after it was originally adopted, to refresh references and data within the document to ensure it remains current. The refresh has not changed the approaches proposed within the 2021 vision.

We prepared the Strategy during a time of uncertainty in various projects and events which we knew could have an impact on its contents and delivery, including the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic recession, Brexit and a new relationship with the European Union, the government’s intentions for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, the ‘pausing’ of the proposed A421 expressway, likely changes to the planning system, and the creation of unitary councils in neighbouring areas.

We used the best available knowledge at the time in preparing the Strategy, which is intended to be flexible to adapt to changing circumstances.

At a time of great uncertainty and volatility it is even more important for us to have a vision of what we are trying to achieve for Milton Keynes.



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