

Milton Keynes Strategy for 2050

Summary



Milton Keynes is a special place.

That's why in January 2021, we adopted our Milton Keynes **Strategy for 2050** to set out how we will keep and strengthen those things that make us special and 'better by design'.

Since then, Milton Keynes has been awarded city status, recognising how we've grown from our New Town roots into a vibrant business location, an increasingly popular place to call home, and a beautiful environment in which to spend time, with an even stronger future ahead for our growing and diverse communities.

We know, however, that we still need to tackle the 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.

Strategy for 2050 continues to guide our future ambitions and is now being taken forward through our New City Plan. Milton Keynes is a city that likes to look ahead, think differently and create our own future, and our **Strategy for 2050** is the way we will do that.

We hope you'll join us on that journey.

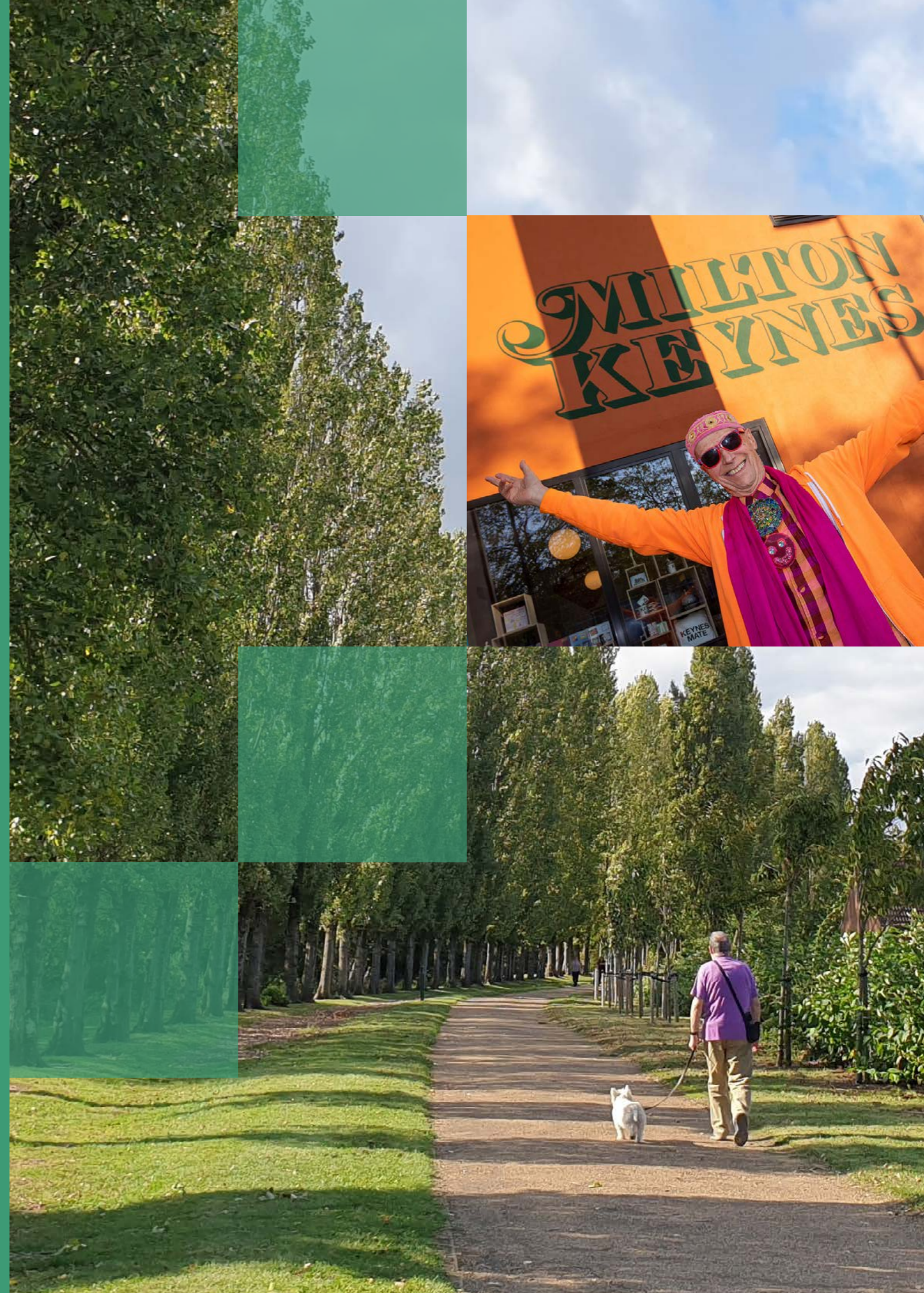
Cllr Pete Marland
Leader, Milton Keynes City Council



Milton Keynes City Council
www.milton-keynes.gov.uk



This is a summary of the Milton Keynes Strategy for 2040, adopted by the Council in January 2021. You can read the full version of the Strategy for 2050 at www.milton-keynes.gov.uk, where you can also read about the MK Futures 2050 Commission and their report 'Making a Great City Greater' (July 2016).



Introduction

Our **Strategy for 2050** is for everyone living in Milton Keynes today, as well as our future residents.

Our city is a place different to any other. These differences have helped to make MK a successful, attractive and popular place to live, work and spend time.

Seven Big Ambitions for Milton Keynes in 2050

The **Strategy for 2050** sets out an agenda for the ongoing growth of Milton Keynes.

As part of this, we must plan to strengthen what works well and make sure every resident in every part of Milton Keynes can benefit from our prosperity.

By planning ahead, we can make the case for investments for the future and ensure that local people are involved in decisions about their communities.

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



This Strategy for 2050 offers **Seven Big Ambitions** 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.

With development already committed through our existing Local Plan, **Plan:MK**, the population of Milton Keynes is expected to grow to around

340,000
people during the 2030s.

With more people being born here, and with people moving to the city, we expect Milton Keynes will continue to grow beyond 2031 at around the same rate to reach a population of around

410,000
people in 2050.

And as Milton Keynes grows, so will neighbouring areas within the growth area stretching from Oxford to Cambridge, bringing more economic activity and new investment over the coming decades.

Milton Keynes

Our successes, challenges and opportunities



Doing well...

- Home to more than **287,000 people**, with a 15.4% increase between 2011 and 2021.
- An **increasingly diverse** population, with **28.2%** of residents having been born outside of England (in the 2021 Census).
- High levels of **volunteering**.
- A **network of open spaces**, woodlands, lakes and rivers, linked by our Linear Parks, paths and Redways.
- A mixture of **urban and rural** across the borough, with market towns and villages set within attractive countryside.
- A highly productive, **innovative economy** – we are a **top 10** city for business start-ups, and **1 in 3** jobs are in digital and tech – helped by our great location and space to grow.
- Home to **12,000+ businesses** including the UK Headquarters of Red Bull Racing and Technologies, Santander UK and Marshall Amplification.
- A **well-connected place** by road and rail, to be enhanced by East West Rail and additional capacity on the West Coast Mainline once HS2 is operational.
- A spirit of innovation and being **‘better by design’**, trialling new technologies and being willing to do things differently.

But facing some challenges...

- An **ageing population** – although still young compared to the rest of the South East.
- Some of our neighbourhoods are among the most deprived in England and **child poverty** in the city is high.
- 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.
- Our **skills levels** and schools should be much better for a place with such high ambitions for its residents.
- Stretching **carbon neutrality** targets to help us address the climate emergency
- **Central Milton Keynes** needs to deal with the impacts of increased hybrid working and the move to online shopping, and breathe new life and activity into our city centre.

A Sustainable and Green City

Climate change and sustainability

When Milton Keynes was first planned there was little concern about climate change. Today, we know that we must change how we live, work and travel to preserve the planet's scarce natural resources. Our citizens and businesses – and the Council – passionately recognise the need for the city to become **carbon negative by 2050**.

The **Strategy for 2050** highlights the need to make a major change in how our city works over the coming decades. Transport is the largest source of carbon emissions in Milton Keynes, so we must minimise the need to travel by car with 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. New buildings and developments must reduce their environmental impact.

Since the early 1980s, we have been pioneers in promoting energy conservation, recycling and sustainable design and will continue to push further.

We will invest in waste recovery and recycling, energy generation from renewable sources, reducing emissions and energy conservation. We will support local heat and power schemes and explore the opportunities for energy storage systems.



Our blue and green city

We will continue to invest in and expand our **'green and blue' infrastructure** – including our parks, lakes, and woodlands. These areas are loved by our residents and provide major health benefits, as well as providing important habitats for wildlife, supporting water and flood management and helping to reduce air pollution, as well as contributing to the green character of the city.

To ensure that Milton Keynes is still a green, world-leading city, we need to continue to plan our blue and green infrastructure up front and at a strategic scale.

It's also important we have a strategy for the **long-term maintenance** and stewardship of these spaces, so they will continue to meet the high standard our residents deserve.

Affordable and High-Quality Homes

Milton Keynes is good at growing, but 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 is being impacted.

Affordable homes for all

We know that some of our existing homes and neighbourhoods need investment. 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.

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. We will aim to achieve a very significant increase in the supply of **'truly affordable homes'** particularly council housing and improve the quality of existing council homes and homes in the private sector.



Regeneration and renewal

Many of the city's original estates are now in need of substantial investment. We have been working with communities on the Lakes Estate and Fullers Slade and 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.

Widening our range of options

We will encourage a wider variety of types and tenures of homes which will reflect the changing needs and preferences of our population.

This will include student accommodation and homes for older residents, wheelchair accessible and adaptable homes and dwellings suitable for multi-generational households. We will also continue to pioneer green housing and new technologies that help to create **healthy, affordable homes** for our residents.

We also need our places to be designed to help Milton Keynes become a more **Dementia-Friendly City**. And because of the impact that living in poor quality places can have on health, we will challenge unsuitable conversions of office buildings into homes.



Our Diverse and Inclusive Economy

For over 50 years, we have attracted investment from companies around the world to create a diverse and resilient economy. Milton Keynes is one of the most productive cities in the UK; our economy is as big as that of Oxford and Cambridge combined.

We are confident about our prospects but know that the benefits of living in one of the UK's most successful cities are not felt by all our residents. To tackle the deep-seated issues of deprivation and child poverty, we need better access to **good quality jobs** for all, and a strong focus on education and skills development.

Jobs growth

By 2050, there will be a further **50,000-90,000 jobs** across Milton Keynes. As our population grows, so will our 'foundational economy' – jobs to meet everyday needs. Construction and logistics will remain strong, yet it will be our 'knowledge-intensive' industries, such as tech and high performance engineering, which will drive our growing economy. We will also continue to be attractive for companies in the green economy.

Skills and education

The city's economic success depends on whether our workforce has the skills to match the needs of our employers. We want to achieve high standards in all our secondary schools and provide

more STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) opportunities. We will continue to work with Milton Keynes College and the Institute of Technology in Bletchley, developing skills and knowledge in our local students, and with the higher education sector to develop plans for a **city centre undergraduate university**. Having our own undergraduate university will help to bring talented young people to the city and further build our local skills base.

Employment locations

Many 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. The logistics industry will continue to need large, flat sites that have good links to the transport network.

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.



Mobility for All

In the 1960s, most people felt that the motor car was the answer to how we would all travel. Today, it is easy to move around our city by car and this is one of the keys to our city's success. But now our world is very different.

We know we must mitigate the impact of climate change and promote more active travel to live longer, healthier lives. Congestion is increasing and we need to make sure that everyone can move around the city easily, not just those with use of a car.

Smart, shared, sustainable mobility

We need to make walking, cycling and scooting our first choice for shorter trips. We are developing plans for a world class **Mass Rapid Transit (MRT)** system to be the 'go-to' option for longer trips. 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 **Strategy for 2050** is about providing everyone with more options in how they move around. Cars – powered by electricity and some self-driving – will still be a choice for some for a while. But because the alternatives will be so attractive many will choose not to own a car. Today, more than a fifth of the valuable space in our city centre is car parking, so efficient and cost-effective **alternatives to the car** will create the possibility to use some of that space differently.

As envisaged in the original plan, our grid road corridors will be adapted so that they can be used by our MRT vehicles, other forms of public transport, cars and bikes alike.

Our city-wide bike, e-bike and e-scooter hire schemes will be enhanced by **improved cycling infrastructure**.

We will also support car clubs, flexible car hire services, and self-driving taxis. Our range of mobility options will be part of a seamless service with common ticketing and booking systems and linked-up schedules.

Our grid corridors

We will maintain our existing grid road network and ensure it is well-connected with new development areas. The design of new roads will be future-proofed to accommodate our planned MRT infrastructure. We will use the **grid road principles** of safe crossings and paths for pedestrians and cyclists, green planting and wildlife corridors along routes, and built-in adaptability. We will ensure road layouts respect the character of existing places, and manage the traffic impact of new development; there is no 'one size fits all' approach.

Central Milton Keynes and Our Centres

Central Milton Keynes

Central Milton Keynes (CMK) is the heart of our city.

We are the most popular shopping destination in the region, the best office location between London and Birmingham and we attract visitors from far and wide to our leisure offer. But there is no room for complacency.

To help deliver our ambition, that by 2050 CMK will be more successful than ever, we are working on a **framework to guide investment** in the city centre.

This will help us to best use the space and opportunities we have in CMK,

whilst retaining the **iconic character** that contributes to our distinctive heritage.

Our CMK Framework will help us create a stronger city centre where different activities are in the right locations and fit together well.

We will attract new companies and grow existing business to create a further **18,000 jobs** in CMK, supported by our plans for a city centre undergraduate university.

Some **25,000** or more people will call CMK and Campbell Park home. CMK will be the exemplar people friendly neighbourhood,

Central Bletchley

With Bletchley Park and the Institute of Technology and new links to Cambridge and Oxford as part of East West Rail, we expect many technology companies will choose to locate in Bletchley.

The Council is working with MKDP and other partners through the **Town Deal programme**. This will see new employment space, retail and leisure facilities and homes in the town centre, creating a more vibrant mix of uses and supporting a range of local services for existing and new residents.

Local centres and our rural communities

The original Plan for Milton Keynes recognised the importance of every community having **easy access to day-to-day services**, with local centres designed to serve one or more grid squares, larger centres at Kingston and Westcroft, and our older town centres and market towns including Wolverton, Bletchley and Fenny Stratford, Stony Stratford, Olney, Newport Pagnell and Woburn Sands.

Local centres will continue to be part of the design of new neighbourhoods. They provide a focal point where our residents can come together and provide the perfect location for stops on our mobility network. Local centres will be places to explore higher density development as part of mixed-use schemes.

We will continue to support Parish Councils in developing Neighbourhood Plans to guide much needed housing and investment in their areas, providing homes for people who grew up locally and bringing in new residents to help support the life of their village.



Healthy and Creative Places

Healthy placemaking

Our aim is to design places that improve our health and quality of life, and that inspire people to play an active part in their city. This is 'placemaking' and it applies to places at all scales, from small, infill developments to new neighbourhoods and our city centre.

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.

Our **Strategy for 2050** highlights the importance of creating walkable neighbourhoods – providing the services that people need day-to-day

within a short walk or bike ride for most of us. Our new neighbourhoods will be designed using this principle and we will attract more activity and investment in our existing local centres and open spaces, and make everyone feel safer moving around by foot or bike.

We will design places that work with the character of their local area and take opportunities that fit with our 'better by design' heritage. We will continue the approach taken in the early years of the city's growth, of sensitively incorporating existing settlements within development areas. We will also recognise how our modern heritage creates a **sense of place** for new communities and encourage developments with a variety of designs, layouts and densities that contribute to our patchwork character.



Our creative and cultured city

We also believe that creativity and culture is vital to the quality of our lives and the city's economic prosperity. We have a rich **cultural heritage** with our world-renowned public art and city design and our gallery, theatre, museums and other venues.

Our festivals and events often feature international performers, and Bletchley Park and The Stables attract visitors from around the world. We have a range of city and regional scale sports and leisure attractions, and we will continue invest in further facilities.

The 2050 Spatial Strategy



Five decades ago, the original Plan for Milton Keynes set a flexible framework for the city's growth, delivered through a series of local plans.

Through Plan:MK we have allocated or given planning permission for around 29,000 homes. 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 **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.

Our spatial strategy

First, we suggest that we should **complete and possibly extend** the existing development areas in Plan:MK.

Second, we should identify sites for **sensitive and selective development** within or adjacent to existing communities.

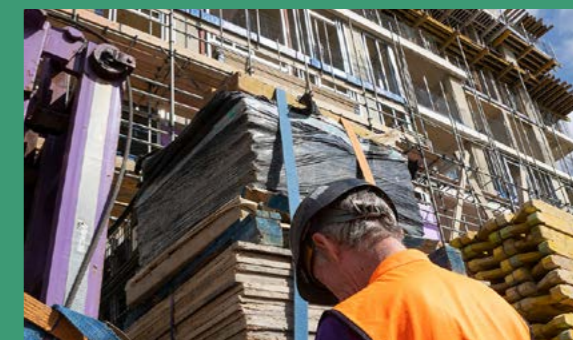
And third, we should develop **new communities** beyond the existing urban area, in the right locations and with the right infrastructure and links with today's city. We will discuss with neighbouring councils how to link up with development that might happen close by in their areas.

A flexible framework

This approach is about the inclusive future we are trying to achieve for our residents, and not about housing numbers. However, having a vision for our city's future scale helps us understand the sorts of facilities our communities need to thrive. We will therefore design new neighbourhoods at a scale that can support important **infrastructure** – schools, local centres, open spaces and green buffers to protect existing communities. We will involve local communities in shaping the future of their neighbourhoods and our great city.

Our **Strategy for 2050** offers a flexible framework. It does not allocate land or specify number of homes and other uses. These details will be developed with the involvement of local communities through our emerging Milton Keynes City Plan 2050..

Making it Happen

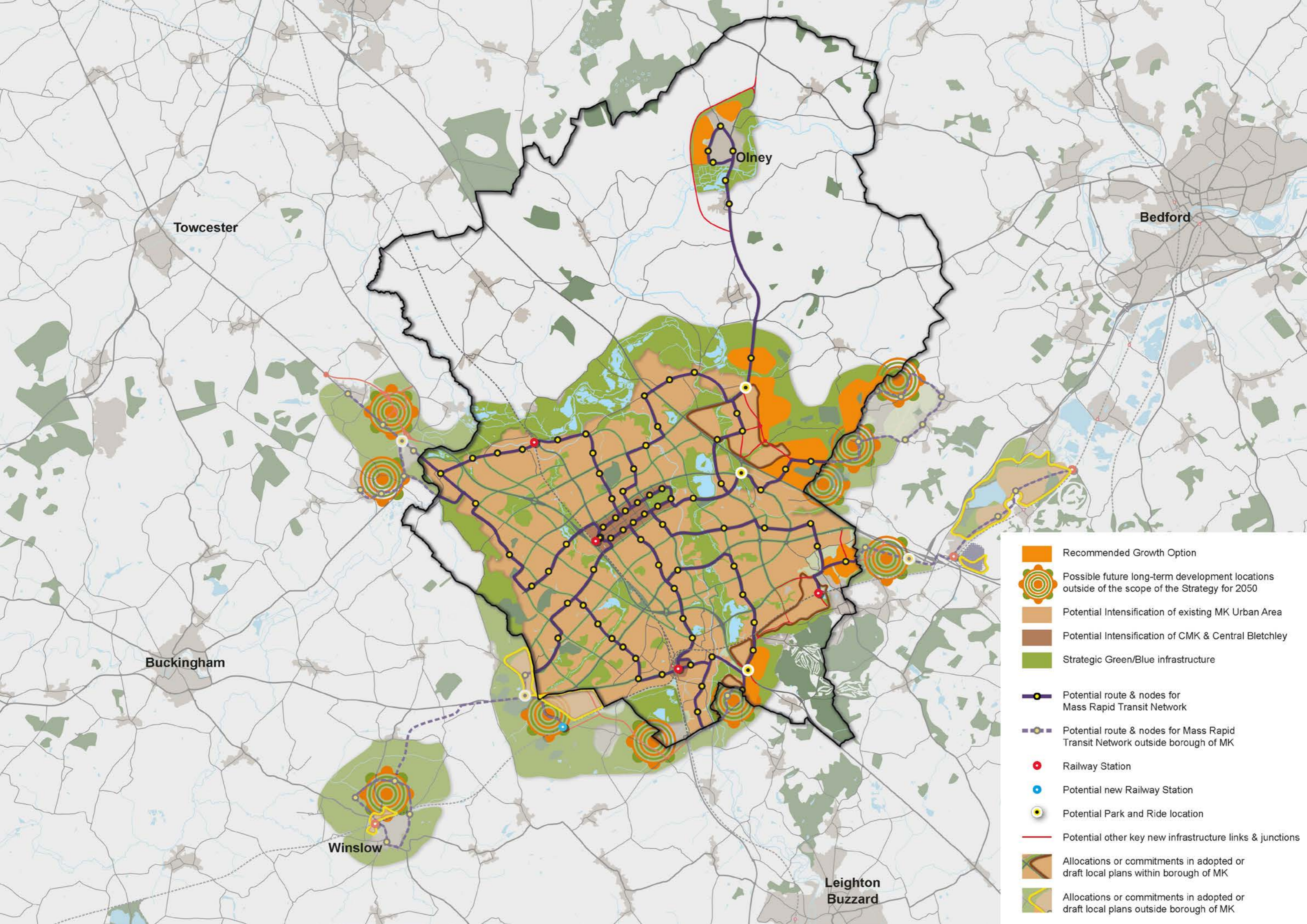


In 1967, the Government established a Development Corporation to plan, finance and build the new city. They used the increase in land value and profit from development to re-invest in the city's infrastructure and amenities. In 1992, **Milton Keynes Council** – now Milton Keynes City Council following award of city status in 2022 – started to take over responsibility and now, outside of CMK, virtually all development land is controlled by private landowners. We are not confident that new communities built under the current approach will match our aspirations or the standards that our residents expect.



New delivery approaches

We are exploring new forms of delivery and governance which will provide much stronger democratic control over future development and to ensure that much more of the value from growth is invested in infrastructure to support our communities.



Towcester

Olney

Bedford

Buckingham

Winslow

Leighton Buzzard

- Recommended Growth Option
- Possible future long-term development locations outside of the scope of the Strategy for 2050
- Potential Intensification of existing MK Urban Area
- Potential Intensification of CMK & Central Bletchley
- Strategic Green/Blue infrastructure
- Potential route & nodes for Mass Rapid Transit Network
- Potential route & nodes for Mass Rapid Transit Network outside borough of MK
- Railway Station
- Potential new Railway Station
- Potential Park and Ride location
- Potential other key new infrastructure links & junctions
- Allocations or commitments in adopted or draft local plans within borough of MK
- Allocations or commitments in adopted or draft local plans outside borough of MK

