

MILTON KEYNES:

MAKING A GREAT CITY GREATER



SUMMARY

Milton Keynes Futures 2050 Commission

The full report is available online at
www.mkfutures2050.com



We are grateful to receive this report from the MK Futures 2050 Commission. It provides a strong starting point for a constructive debate throughout Milton Keynes about the future of the city. We hope this debate will build a consensus about an ambitious new vision for how our beautiful city might change and grow, while maintaining its essential character and the features that have enabled its current success. It provides a basis for further dialogue with our neighbouring areas and with Milton Keynes people about shared opportunities and with Government about how Milton Keynes can continue to contribute to the nation's prosperity.

We established the Commission as an independent body to explore potential long-term futures as Milton Keynes emerges as a UK city and economy of increasing significance. While the Commission has drawn on independent research and expertise we are very pleased with how it has addressed our requirement to engage the Milton Keynes community in all its variety

and vibrancy. We would like to thank all those people who have contributed to the Commission's work.

The future of our city will be shaped by many people already living here, particularly our young people, and others who will choose to move here. Businesses already located in Milton Keynes, and those who choose to invest here, will drive the city's future prosperity. Our community groups and parish councils also have important roles to play in the city's future. We see the Council's role as enabling all those with a stake in the future success of Milton Keynes to work together to make our great city greater.

Finally, we would like to thank Sir Peter Gregson and the Commissioners. We are grateful for your hard work, your insights and objective analyses but most importantly we thank you for the passion you have shown for helping to make Milton Keynes an even greater place.



Cllr Pete Marland
Council and Labour
Group Leader



Cllr Edith Bald
Conservative
Group Leader



Cllr Douglas McCall
Liberal Democrat
Group Leader

Milton Keynes is the fastest growing city in the UK. This is driven by the people who feel the city is a great place to live and entrepreneurs and companies who decide it is a great place to invest. Milton Keynes is also a truly beautiful city with its trees, lakes, parks and canals, and Central Milton Keynes (CMK), Campbell Park, the grid roads as parkways and the network of Redways. There is no other city in the world like it.



No city stands still – it either grows or declines. We urge that Milton Keynes commits to continuing to grow its population to 2050 and seizes the opportunity to create an even stronger, high-performing economy, a true regional economic centre. Equally, we urge that future plans respect the city's distinctive heritage – Milton Keynes' landscape is a gift that keeps on giving – and ensure that future generations will enjoy the city's beauty. And we urge Government to sign up to a 'New Deal' for Milton Keynes that enables these things to happen.

In this report, we set out a vision for Milton Keynes in 2050 and our views on how to make a great city greater. We see two central drivers defining this vision for 2050. First, Milton Keynes' citizens must have access to the best education and training opportunities in Europe. Second, Milton Keynes must offer sustainable mobility for all. We are in no doubt that the city must rediscover the 'think big' approach that has served it well. We propose that the delivery of 'Six Big Projects' should start now. We also propose that the city needs a 'Strategy for 2050'. Together, these comprise a huge new commitment to its future.

In considering these proposals, and our vision as a whole, we believe it is important to recognise that there are serious challenges facing the city and risks associated with a business as usual strategy for the future. Milton Keynes is successful today, but this is no reason for complacency.

Milton Keynes Council established our independent Commission to take an objective, long-term view of the city's future. We were asked to consider its role and significance in the regional and national economy, its distinctive character, and the opportunities and challenges ahead of it.

Commissioners have drawn on their wide range of experience, and knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of cities, and the challenges that they are likely to face. Our work has been shaped by an extensive programme of research and engagement with the citizens of Milton Keynes. This has helped us understand the rapidly growing and distinctive 'we love Milton Keynes' culture of innovation. This culture fuels every debate about the city and, more importantly, is providing the energy now 'making a great city greater'.

Milton Keynes is, and is known to be, a great place to raise a family. As Commissioners we will know that we've made a difference if, in the future, young people also want to stay in the city and it is a great place for growing old.



The report is underpinned by a suite of research papers that are accessible to all. This final report is a vision inspired by what we, the Commissioners, have learnt through this intensive programme of work.

At the time of going to press the UK has voted to leave the European Union. In the context of the immediate economic uncertainty that has resulted we feel it even more necessary for the city to adopt a clear vision and set out a positive long-term strategy for growth

We would like to thank the Council for the opportunity to contribute to discussions about the future of this extraordinary place and its people. We invite all those with an interest in the city to share our vision for Milton Keynes in 2050, contribute to the delivery of the 'Six Big Projects', and engage in preparing the 'Strategy for 2050'.



Sir Peter Gregson
Chairman

THE ART OF THE CITY – A VISION FOR MILTON KEYNES IN 2050



Better by design, Milton Keynes is loved by the 400,000 people who live here, and in the nearby surrounding communities, and admired by urban leaders around the world.

Known as an international centre of learning and innovation with outstanding green spaces and a cutting edge cultural scene. Milton Keynes is where 'they just get it right' and is the location of choice for growing families, young entrepreneurs and innovative thinkers alike...

THE ART OF THE CITY – A VISION FOR MILTON KEYNES IN 2050

Building on its long-held reputation as an economic powerhouse – thanks to a perfect combination of accessibility, land options, and skilled workers – Milton Keynes' economy is a honeypot for advanced technology, knowledge-driven firms. Following a shared focus on education by the Council and its partners, business growth is driven by a highly skilled workforce, many of which were 'made in Milton Keynes' and educated at one of the city's outstanding schools.

Established in 2017, MK:IT is Britain's 21st century university - offering a mix of academic and vocational opportunities underpinned by a research programme shaped by 20+ global technology companies. It's at the heart of the cluster of high-performing universities in the Cambridge–Milton Keynes–Oxford arc that's leading the UK's successful effort to compete in the advanced industries driving global economic growth. MK: IT graduates are among the most employable in Europe.

Happily, it's 'brain-gain' rather than 'brain-drain' in Milton Keynes. By 2050, the city has established a virtuous circle where leading advanced technology companies locate in Milton Keynes to take advantage of MK:IT's graduates, who then drive the growth of these companies, which invest in MK:IT's research, development and teaching programmes.

Students are just one group who make the most of Central Milton Keynes. By 2050, the city centre offers a unique mix of independent boutiques, leading international fashion and technology flagship stores, and a diverse mix of restaurants, clubs, and galleries, with new experiences for everyone.

Many residents are inspired creators in the city's arts scene, leading to new generations of internationally active artists, directors, writers and musicians shining the spotlight on their home city. Milton Keynes is known

as an exceptionally diverse, cohesive, international city with a commitment to creativity and innovation in every aspect of its life.

Green is a state of mind as well as defining the essence of Milton Keynes. The landscape helps to ensure that local air quality is one of the cleanest in the world. Over the past thirty years, the taller buildings in CMK, and the four storey housing in the transit oriented development corridors elsewhere, have not detracted from the city's spacious, open atmosphere.

Having long been a leading low-carbon city, in 2050 Milton Keynes shows how every city can contribute to global carbon reduction targets. Many eco-companies have relocated to be near like-minded others, as well as firms seeking the prestige of being based in the most environmentally sustainable city in Europe.



Vision for a city design that could inspire a future Milton Keynes



Milton Keynes Council's own energy company buys locally-generated green energy to help balance the city's needs. Energy pricing policies contribute to achieving the city's social and economic goals. All recently built homes, and most of the older housing, is extremely energy efficient. Residents appreciate the low running costs.

By 2050 Milton Keynes Council is one of the strongest local authorities in the UK. This has enabled substantial investments in learning, the replacement of older infrastructure, and high-quality public spaces. Milton Keynes has long been admired for the way developers contribute to infrastructure. The funding mechanism built in to Milton Keynes' Local Delivery Vehicle gives certainty to landowners and developers about their obligations, and has ensured that facilities that are provided to support the arrival of new residents.

Similarly, the city's established communities have gained massively from ongoing investment into their neighbourhoods from the cash and additional rate income generated by the city's growth and regeneration. In 2050, all the city's schools, health facilities, parks, sports and leisure facilities, roads, and utilities are better than they've ever been.



The fear of gridlock from growing travel demand stimulated the city to invest earlier than most others in the provision of smart, sustainable, shared transport. Many citizens now pay a monthly fee to the Milton Keynes Mobility (MKM) service that provides a flexible range of travel options. Personal use of pre-booked electric cars and readily available shared bicycles remain popular choices. However, MKM's driverless cars and shared electric taxi service are often the first thought for journeys within the city. They are cheaper, provide door-to-door transport, and dispense with the hassle of car parking. MKM's Bullet and other rapid electric shuttle buses operate on priority express routes; they offer even lower cost journeys to and from main destinations.

The widespread use of MKM's services has reduced the number of vehicle movements. Milton Keynes' relatively uncongested grid roads continue to be one of the city's strengths. Homes close to priority routes and transport interchanges are especially sought after. The city was the first to establish a new-style local transport authority that used new technologies to provide through ticketing, booking and journey choices enabling MKM's on-demand integrated transport offer.

Across Europe and beyond, the UK Government promotes Milton Keynes Council's strategies as examples for others to follow, especially those that build on the city's long pedigree of partnership working.

A good example is how public, private and community and voluntary sectors work together. People recognise Milton Keynes as a place that offers choices on how they can live their lives and where health and wellbeing is valued and supported. Residents in all neighbourhoods live longer and healthier lives.

In 2050, people who have grown up in Milton Keynes are applying their skills to jobs in the city. MKM makes travel easy for work and play. Homes of all different sizes, types and tenures are readily available at reasonable prices and rents.

Milton Keynes is a regular feature in lists of the most desirable places to live in the UK, helped by a beautiful landscape, the success of MK:IT and the local lifelong learning ethos, by Milton Keynes Mobility, by its vibrant city centre, and its commitments to creativity, innovation, and low carbon living. As the old tourism commercial said: 'Wouldn't you like to live in Milton Keynes?' The answer for many people is a resounding yes.



CHAPTER ONE: MILTON KEYNES TODAY: DOING WELL, FACING CHALLENGES

Setting out a picture of Milton Keynes' strengths and challenges.

Milton Keynes has many strengths. Its **economy grows faster than any other in the UK**, is one of the most productive, and makes significant contributions to national output. It's a **great place to do business**. The rate of population growth is higher than most places in the UK, is still **relatively young and is exceptionally diverse**. Milton Keynes offers one of the widest choices of homes for sale at more affordable prices than most other communities in the South East, and it's easy to move around by car. It has a solid culture, leisure and sporting offer and high quality, green urban and rural environments.



We are particularly concerned about three challenges. First, the city's resident workforce is less qualified than in many other communities and educational attainments are below national averages at GCSE and A levels. There is a **need for improved secondary school education** which would better position those entering the workforce or higher education to fulfil their potential. Second, we believe the **tertiary sector needs strengthening** if young people are to stay in Milton Keynes for their higher education. A new university would serve local, national and international markets, attract talent to Milton Keynes, and retain some of that talent. Together these two initiatives would considerably strengthen the skills base of the city.

It also faces many challenges. Many residents face **multiple deprivations**. Life expectancy of those living in the most deprived areas is significantly shorter than in the most prosperous communities and the city has some health challenges. While Milton Keynes is meeting its targets to reduce carbon emissions, they are still high compared to other cities, and for the 20% of the population who do not have access to a car, **transport can be difficult**. There is an ongoing severe **shortage of affordable housing**. Even though there is enough land allocated for housing to achieve planned growth, annual housing completions are well below target. The city faces **financial challenges** in funding its legacy infrastructure, maintaining its services and identifying how best to replace the Tariff funding model for future funding growth.

Thirdly, we see the prospect of congestion on the grid road system increasing rapidly and moving around the city by public transport becoming even more difficult. A **new vision of an extremely accessible city**, underpinned by shared smart mobility for all and a transition plan to facilitate the changes is required.

CHAPTER TWO: GLOBAL DRIVERS: SHAPING THE FUTURE

Identifying key global drivers of change and how they will impact on Milton Keynes.

In 1968, the Plan for Milton Keynes was based on the then best assessments of the factors that would drive growth. Some were accurate; some were not. The authors of the Plan knew that forecasts should not be treated as certainties and thus they prepared a broad, flexible strategy, not a detailed blueprint. In many ways these flexibilities have served Milton Keynes very well.

The Office for National Statistics' (ONS) latest projections show **ongoing significant population growth** for the UK, London and the South East up to 2035 and then through 2050. As part of the **London mega-city region** – the most prosperous in the UK – Milton Keynes is well placed to continue to harness the benefits from a share of this growth. Indeed, Government will expect the city to do so.

We expect that the **UK economy will continue to expand** and generally **UK economic growth** will be driven by productivity improvements, accelerating innovation in advanced technologies, shifts to a low carbon economy with far more investment in recycling previously used materials to move towards a circular economy, and the growth of the sharing economy, with a number of people or companies engaged in the production of commodities.

The Government Office for Science's recent Foresight report, Future of Cities: An Overview of the Evidence provided extremely useful insights for us. Their report takes a "longer term view of the future of cities... For example, we are still living with the health impacts of the decision to promote car-oriented design in cities almost 50 years ago..."



Foresight highlights the importance of a city's **competitiveness** and particularly highlights the importance of a city's **human capital** in driving economic performance. "Universities play an intrinsic role in the UK economy, supporting economic growth and contributing to regional growth by increasing skills, supporting innovation, and attracting investment and talent. In the UK, 60% or more of growth is generated by those with tertiary education."



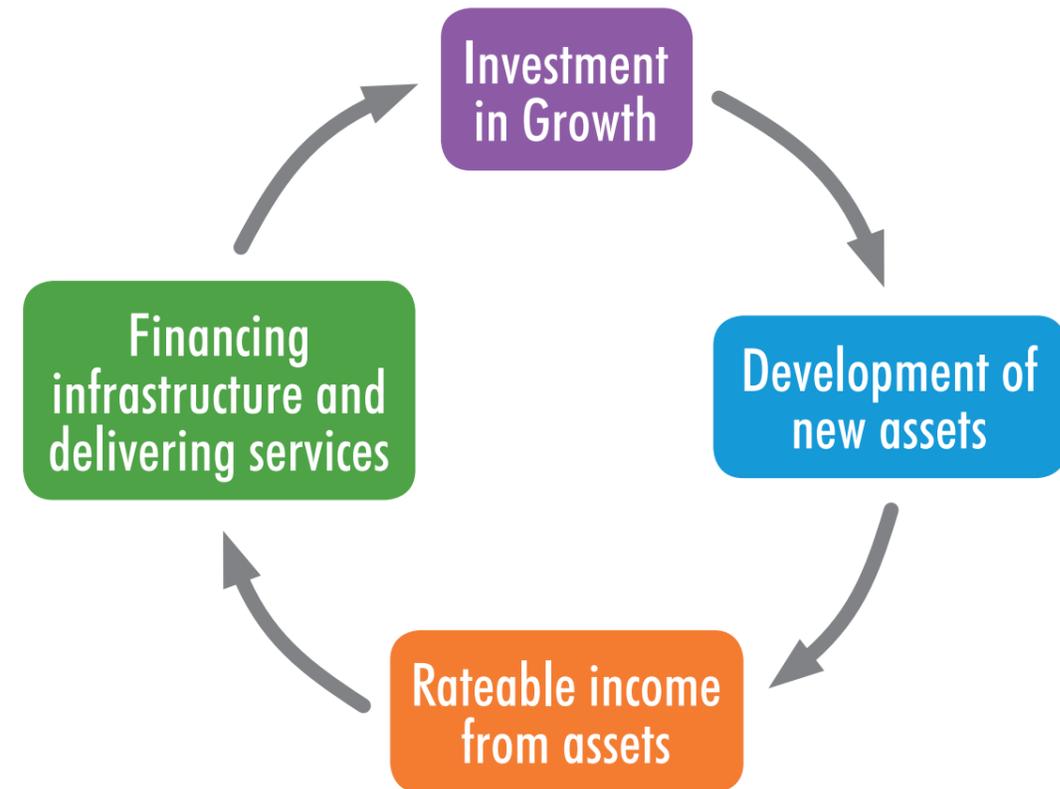
Foresight emphasise the need to understand a city's **urban metabolism** as a basis for understanding the 'city-scale action' that can contribute to **reducing carbon emissions** and help the UK achieve the legally binding global targets agreed at the 2015 Paris climate conference (COP21). Foresight provides very clear guidance: "... developing new places in a dispersed way was likely to result in increased costs per capita in terms of public service delivery and provision of energy, water and transport infrastructure." Milton Keynes is struggling with the challenge of modifying the basic structure and density of the city to reduce carbon emissions.

However, Milton Keynes does see that a wide range of **innovative transport technologies** such as driverless vehicles are coming down the road. Foresight advises "Evidence suggests that cities will need to develop long term evidence based investment plans to be able to identify infrastructure schemes with high economic, social, and environmental value and impact..."

To 2050, **older people will represent a significantly higher proportion** of the total UK population as more people live longer. Foresight reminds cities that the key challenges presented by an ageing population are "a greater prevalence of chronic illness and long term frailty/disability, both of which affect individual mobility. There is also likely to be a requirement for living spaces which are adaptable to the needs of older populations, including serving as sites of long term health care."

Finally, it is prudent to assume that for central Government expenditure "**austerity and devolution**" will be the "**new normal.**" This has important consequences for local government. Those local authorities that decide to promote growth and build their asset base will be far better placed to create a **virtuous circle**. They will invest in growth to enable the creation of new assets, which produce rateable income to meet service needs and finance infrastructure, which then enable the creation of further new assets.

These drivers will affect all cities. In shaping this report the Commission has considered how Milton Keynes should position itself to maximise the opportunities and minimise the challenges these drivers present. This includes harnessing opportunities for growth, but shaping those opportunities into inclusive growth, so that everyone benefits and current inequalities reduce, and focusing on those factors that help drive future prosperity. Thus in the 21st Century the most competitive cities will offer **education and training – for young people, for everyone – that matches the best** in Europe and the rest of the world. In the future, the aspirations, qualifications and skills of the citizens – **human capital** – will determine a city's wealth. Similarly, the most competitive cities **will enable everyone to travel** to work, learn, shop, and play easily at a reasonable cost. It is not clear **whether Milton Keynes will rise to these challenges.**



CHAPTER THREE: INCLUSIVE GROWTH TO 2050

Setting out why inclusive growth is the key to the city's future prosperity.

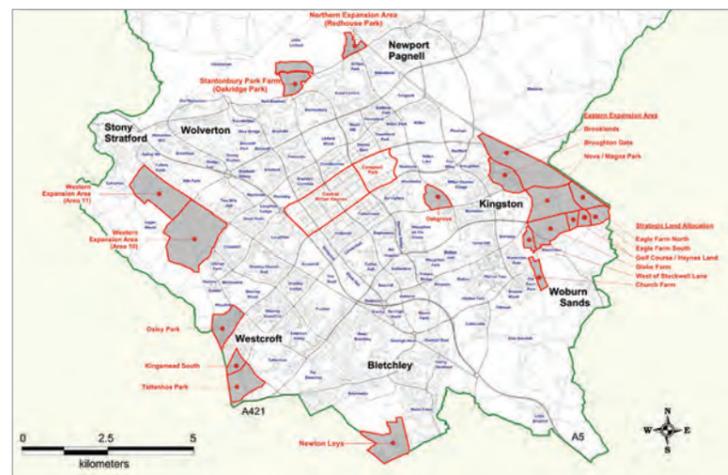
Today, Milton Keynes is a prosperous city. We will only be able to realise our vision for 2050 if Milton Keynes renews its commitment to continuing to grow – and this must be **inclusive growth**. According to the OECD, “Inclusive Growth is economic growth that creates opportunity for all segments of the population and distributes the dividends of increased prosperity, both in monetary and non-monetary terms, fairly across society.” It is particularly important that inclusive growth enables people to live healthier longer lives.

We see six reasons why Milton Keynes should promote growth through to 2050 and why it should be inclusive growth:

- It will be necessary to meet the **future housing needs of those who already live in Milton Keynes**.



Locations of new housing development to 2026.



- Milton Keynes has the opportunity to benefit from a fair share of UK population growth through to 2050. More specifically, the ongoing **demand for new housing in London and the South East will continue** for the foreseeable future; some of this will not be met in areas where the demand arises.
- Milton Keynes is ideally placed to **attract the investment driving the growth of the UK economy** – particularly in knowledge intensive sectors. Some of this will arise from the further application of digital technologies, some from the expansion of the circular and sharing economies. When combined with better education and training, job growth provides opportunities for those now excluded from the labour market.
- **Milton Keynes needs investment** to replace and improve ageing infrastructure, to build a new university, to improve school performance, leverage its cultural assets, continue high quality public services and for other purposes key to continually improving the city. Growth will create a stronger tax base, particularly the non-domestic tax base and additional land value which can be re-invested.
- Promoting the growth of Milton Keynes will lead to **Central Milton Keynes continuing to become a stronger, regional centre** for shopping, employment, culture, leisure and education.
- Ongoing growth will **honour the original commitment** to those who have moved here so far. In other words, ongoing inclusive growth will enable the city to realise the ambitions of the people and businesses who are already here.

Conversely, there are significant potential consequences if the city turns away from growth. The ongoing demand for housing will continue but when demand exceeds supply, housing will become relatively more expensive. It will be more difficult for retailers, other businesses, and investors to make commitments, leading to lower job growth. The expansion of the city's non-domestic tax base will start to slow, reducing resources available for investment in new public services; this burden of reduced services will fall particularly on disadvantaged people.

In broad terms, **the rate and location of Milton Keynes' growth to 2026 is set by the approved Core Strategy**. The Council projects that the population of Milton Keynes will increase from 267,000 people in 2016 to **309,000 people in 2026**. This now entails building 2000 homes each year to 2026; a significantly higher rate than over the past fifteen years.

The implications of different rates of growth post 2026 need further detailed examination. Based on the information available so far, we strongly believe that it is in the city's best interest **to promote a high rate of growth through to 2050, probably somewhere between 1,750-2,000 homes per annum**. This will provide the strongest possible foundation for the provision of better quality services to the existing population.

From this, we draw three conclusions. First, there are many opportunities to accommodate a significant share of the city's future growth through **developing/redeveloping selected sites at higher densities** in the existing built up areas where this would improve the overall offer to residents. It would be easier to make daily journeys on foot, cycle or public transport and also responds to the needs of some single person and couple households. However, it will not be possible to accommodate most, or even a large minority of the city's growth in this way and sustain **Milton Keynes' unique, distinctive, spacious qualities**. Therefore, it would be desirable to accommodate much of the growth to 2050 in new developments adjacent to the city and/or elsewhere in its functional economic area.

We have a clear view, in broad terms, on where this growth should be accommodated. Government's commitment to investing in significant improvements to the **rail and road linkages between Oxford, Milton Keynes, and Cambridge** is an exceptional opportunity for Milton Keynes. The most sustainable and financially prudent approach would be to use these two major infrastructure projects to link new expansion locations with the existing city. Each of these views needs to be tested before they are embedded in statutory policies. For our proposals compatible with existing policies, we suggest that these should be pursued as “Six Big Projects.” For recommendations that would constitute a change of policy, we suggest that a new long-term strategy for Milton Keynes is required.



CHAPTER FOUR: SIX BIG PROJECTS

The Six Big Projects that, taken together, we believe are essential to delivering the vision for 2050.

In our first working session in Milton Keynes with stakeholders, they asked us to ensure that our work reignited bold ambitions for the future of the city. We hope that this report will do that. So far, Milton Keynes is being built with a very strong “can do” attitude – *carpe diem*.

To start the process of realising our vision, we identified projects that would meet the challenges facing the city, have the biggest impact in securing a strong future, continue developing its distinctive identity and could be pursued today. These projects will provide direct benefits for residents and businesses, contribute to driving economic growth and accommodating population growth, ensure that this is inclusive growth, and strengthen the city’s asset base.

Our proposed Six Big Projects are:

Project One: Hub of the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc

This would realise the Arc’s full potential as a single knowledge intensive cluster as envisaged by HM Treasury and the National Infrastructure Commission. It would harness the proposed investments in East-West Rail and the A421 Expressway. It would look at the potential of Cranfield airport. This is a major opportunity for Milton Keynes to work more closely with Oxford and Cambridge, and particularly with adjacent councils to attract investment to promote inclusive growth.

Project Two: MK:IT

Lifelong learning opportunities at a new style university for Milton Keynes, demonstrating how cities, businesses, and higher education can develop together. MK:IT’s mission will be to promote research, teaching and practice which provide realistic solutions to the problems facing fast-growing cities everywhere. It will offer portfolio learning, Living Lab research in Milton Keynes, and learning partnerships with a wide range of global educational institutions and employers. MK:IT will provide top class education for local students, attract students from elsewhere, stimulate the local economy and help drive Renaissance CMK.

Project Three: Learning 2050

A step change in collaboration between schools and colleges, enabling families (particularly deprived families) to better engage with their schools, and ensuring that businesses are a strong source of support for school. It would ensure that Milton Keynes provides, and is known for providing, world class education for all local young people.

This includes linking up to and benefiting from MK:IT when established. Learning 2050 features the Milton Keynes Promise – a community commitment that every young person leaving school who wishes to study at university or a vocational equivalent will be guaranteed an opportunity to do so.

Project Four: Smart, Shared, Sustainable Mobility

Ensuring that everyone who lives, works, studies, or does business in the city is able to move freely and on demand. It will provide mobility for all by harnessing the flexibility of grid roads and Redways to enable travel by car, cycle, on foot, and by shared public transport to provide mobility for all. This will include: new city wide information and travel integration systems using the new Motion Map from the MK: SMART programme; low emission vehicles for fixed-route buses, on-demand buses, shared taxis, car clubs, short-loan bikes and electric bikes; and new transport technologies including driverless cars and driverless pods.

Project Five: Renaissance: CMK

Already the commercial and cultural heart of Milton Keynes, providing much of its employment, this will (re)create an even stronger city centre fit for 21st century. It will provide a home for MK:IT, a focus for the Smart, Shared, Sustainable Mobility investments, and strengthen CMK’s role as a regional commercial centre. Building on the [CMK Alliance Plan](#), this Renaissance CMK Investment Programme will attract substantial private investment. International competitions for developments at key strategic sites will ensure that the architectural character of the city centre remains distinctive and strong.

Project Six: Milton Keynes - The Creative and Cultured City

Itself a uniquely created cultural artefact, with a priceless cultural, sport and leisure asset base, this will harness the creative energy and motivation of the city’s biggest assets, its people. Using the 50th anniversary as a platform and building from the Capital of Culture bid, this would start with an International Festival of Creative Urban Living linking to innovation as well as culture, with a festival of urban green space and architecture, designating a grid square of sport, and arts, music and dance programme and animating the city’s rich heritage.

CHAPTER FIVE: DELIVERY

How the Council can start the process of realising the Commission’s vision.

Our full report sets out next steps for each of the Six Big Projects. Realising our vision, ‘the Art of the City’ must start with these next steps. We urge that Milton Keynes Council sets out its commitment to the Six Big Projects in a **detailed delivery programme** covering the 24 months from 1 October 2016.

When faced with significant opportunities, Milton Keynes’ leadership has often taken bold decisions quickly. This started with the Milton Keynes Development Corporation in the 1960s. Building on this foundation, Milton Keynes Council has taken some exceptionally bold actions including enabling the development of stadium:mk and purchasing £32m of property assets from the Homes & Communities Agency.



We hope that Milton Keynes Council – in partnership with citizens – will set out even bolder ambitions and make a strong commitment to realise them. It is for the Council to build a city-wide consensus around a vision and harness all the city’s resources to deliver.

To make the most of the opportunities offered by the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc it will need to build upon the relationships created in the Fast Growth Cities group and ensure that existing partnerships (particularly SEMLEP) are fully engaged. We urge that the Council establishes new **devolved formal partnerships** with adjacent authorities. Of course, the future governance arrangements for Milton Keynes are for the Council and its partners to determine in light of evolving local needs.

A major challenge is to ensure that the city funds the investments in essential infrastructure with a share of the increase in land value arising from growth. The innovative Milton Keynes Tariff is the most recent response to this challenge. In the March 2016 Budget the Government announced its intention to update the New Towns Act. This is likely to include proposals to **establish a locally controlled development organisation**, particularly when asked to do so by one or more local authorities. These would borrow funds from private institutions and Government. Milton Keynes could use this updated legislation to work with partners and Government to establish a new development organisation, tailored to local needs, to attract investment in the growth of the city. This would be a new modern body that would be ultimately accountable to local authorities but would work independently day to day to realise the aspirations of those living in the city.

A parallel challenge is to secure the necessary revenue needed to provide the services needed by an expanding population. For many years, local authorities received substantial undue burden payments from Government to reflect this need and Milton Keynes now receives New Homes Bonus payments.

It is important to look at the **organisational capacity to drive growth**. Essentially, this means reviewing the roles, remits and resources available – within the Council, in the Milton Keynes Development Partnership, and in any other organisation playing a primary role in driving growth. Realising our vision – making our great city greater – will require strengthening these teams and devoting more resources to do so.

Preparation

We strongly urge that the Council focuses on delivering the Six Big Projects. In order to knit these projects together, and to address the longer term policy changes that will be required, we also urge that the Council leads the process of preparing a non-statutory [Strategy for 2050](#).

The strategy should follow on from our work and thoroughly test many of our views. It needs to be built with, and owned by, residents – particularly younger people – as well as councillors, businesses, voluntary groups, adjacent local authorities, principal educational institutions and Government. It must build a city wide consensus about a bold future.

Milton Keynes needs a supported community-wide agreement about its future for four reasons:

- The city benefits from a strong “grass roots” interest in **neighbourhood planning**. Any future strategy should take those neighbourhood plans into account when they are aligned with the interests of the city as a whole.
- Ongoing prosperity will depend on building a strong **taxable asset base**, particularly the commercial/business asset base, to enable to further investment.
- Some preferred locations for growth will be **beyond the boundaries** in adjacent local authorities, a position that will be in tension with the need to build the city’s taxable asset base.
- The goals, policies and actions which would flow from the strategy are **much broader than the relatively narrow focus of the statutory planning process**. The strategy will therefore help to create a far more holistic, joined-up approach to delivering a great future for Milton Keynes and the wider area.

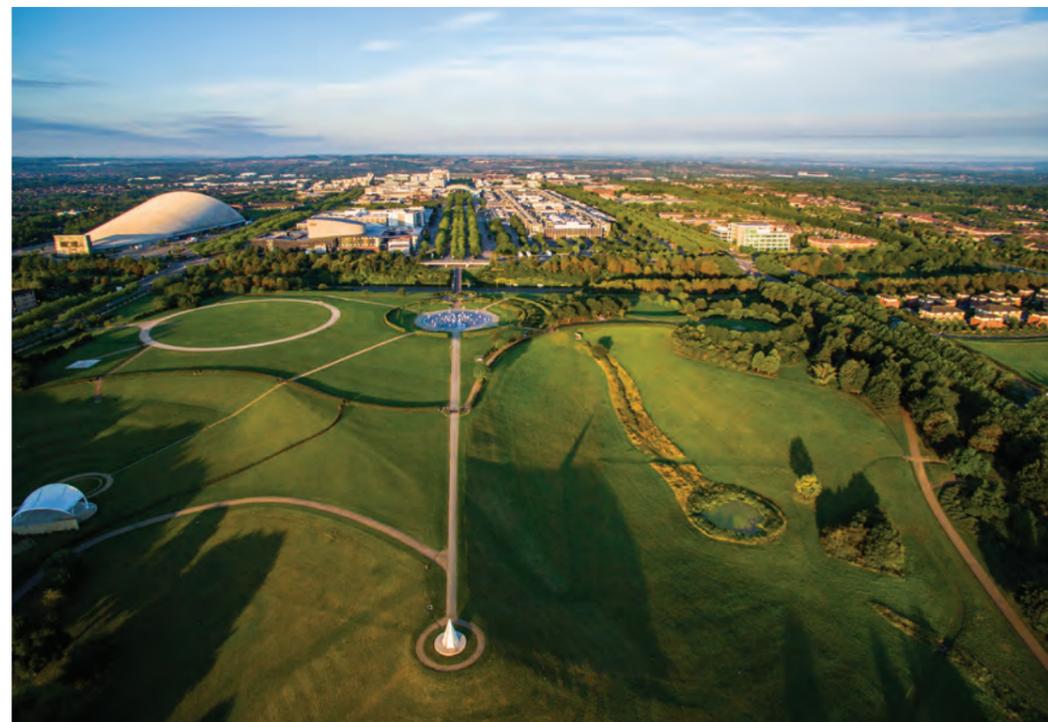
Strategy for 2050

Some of the most important (but not the only) matters that should be addressed in the *Strategy for 2050*, are:

- Defining the **scale and pace of population and economic growth**.
- Establishing the **capacity** of the existing city to accommodate additional growth, using good urban design principles, and the balance between accommodating growth in existing built up and allocated areas and new expansion locations.

- Meeting the housing **requirements of the existing** and new population.
- Strengthening the long term role of Milton Keynes as the **strongest regional centre** between London and Birmingham.
- Using the flexibilities of the **existing grid road and Redway** networks to enable improved mobility for all.
- Establishing Milton Keynes as Britain’s first **learning city**.
- Developing and redeveloping the city to enable people to live **healthier, longer** lives.
- Further enhancing Milton Keynes as a **beautiful bio-diverse** place.
- Increasing **contributions towards global carbon** reduction targets and promoting local renewable energy generation.
- Harnessing **new technologies** to drive growth and improvement.
- Defining the complementary roles of the city centre and the urban and rural **communities in the rest of the borough**.

Today, there is no clear consensus on these issues. It is for Milton Keynes Council to decide whether to building such a consensus and to devote the necessary resources. We understand that the Council intends to submit the statutory *Plan:MK* to Government for examination in Spring 2018. This would align well with the process of preparing this long term strategy.



CHAPTER SIX: TOWARDS A NEW DEAL WITH GOVERNMENT

Our advice on the elements Milton Keynes Council needs to include in a new deal with Government.

Milton Keynes was originally developed as result of a “deal” between Government and five small district councils. This provided the means to create a successful new town to enable regional economic growth, accommodate some of the region’s housing needs, and generated significant financial surpluses for the nation. For Milton Keynes to continue to prosper, it needs to be able to maintain its heritage, provide good quality services to citizens and businesses, and to play an ongoing strong role in the nation’s economy.

To do this, Milton Keynes needs a new deal with Government. This must focus on how the city can play a stronger pivotal role in the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc to unlock economic growth and continue to contribute to meeting the wider housing needs of London and the South East. Government has, again, recognised the potential role of the Arc. HM Treasury and the National Infrastructure Commission have recently commissioned a major study of the economic benefits which would arise from the planned improvements in East-West road and rail routes.

It is for Milton Keynes Council, (with neighbouring authorities and SEMLEP) to prepare the long term strategy for the city and *Plan:MK*. In our view, to secure a new deal, these processes should embrace contributions from Government. These would focus on the scale, rate and location of the city’s growth to 2050, the size of the contributions to housing need in the South East, how Milton Keynes can best contribute to the nation’s economic growth and how best to increase the supply of affordable housing for rent and for sale.

After coming to a view, Milton Keynes Council and local partners would seek to agree the most appropriate delivery mechanisms to realise this growth with Government. This might include establishing a new locally controlled delivery organisation using the updated New Towns Act or another statutory body.

The deal would also include a commitment from Government to support the creation of MK:IT; to work with Milton Keynes Council and partners to identify how to fund improvement in education and health; to assess the ongoing costs of maintaining and replacing the infrastructure, social housing, public realm and other legacy assets; to agree what proportion of business rate income should be ring-fenced; and to support the Council’s application to regulate bus services.

These are the key elements which should feature in Milton Keynes’ new deal with Government. This would strengthen Milton Keynes Council’s effort, with local partners, to lead the process of making our great city greater.



Milton Keynes Futures 2050 Commission

JULY 2016

The full report is available online at
www.mkfutures2050.com

