

Strategy for MK2050:

***Evidence Paper:  
Directions and Scale of Growth***

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# Executive Summary

The Milton Keynes Futures 2050 Commission report *Making a Great City Greater* (July 2016) recommended that in order to realise the Vision for 2050, MK needs to promote and commit to 'inclusive growth'.

The MK Futures 2050 report advocates that the Milton Keynes area will grow from its current population of 267,000 to at least 400,000 people by 2050. Between 48,000 and 60,000 new homes will be needed to support this population growth, underpinned and supported by infrastructure, jobs, services and facilities.

This Evidence Paper responds to the recommendations of the 2016 report by examining the opportunities and options for accommodating this level of growth, both in scale and direction. We have taken into account the capacity of the existing city to accommodate additional growth; looked at how growth can be balanced between the existing urban area and new growth locations; what scale of growth could be realised under each spatial option; and examined how the relationship between growth, travel and mobility in its widest sense can shape future planned growth for MK.

We have explored how some of the choices around technology, social policy and lifestyle changes could combine with spatial land use considerations to drive forward a long-term framework for sustainable growth. In particular, close working with those undertaking *Big Project Four: 'Smart, Shared, Sustainable Mobility'* has identified synergies between sustainable growth and mobility, and how if planned properly, new growth can support innovative mobility and better services for the existing population as well as for new growth locations.

The Evidence Paper draws the following observations to help shape MK activity in drawing up its Strategy for 2050:

- Having a 'spatial' or 'drawn' element within a growth strategy inevitably stimulates conversations about the implications of growth for any given locations. These conversations should not excuse the need to move towards an agreed long term spatial framework for growth but instead should help stimulate and inform it.
- Effective solutions to mobility and movement—in its widest interpretation—are key to the continued success and growth of MK. Each spatial option assessed in this Paper has the ability to help deliver well-planned growth, but growth options which reflect joint thinking around land use and transportation will perform better in delivering the stated *Vision for 2050* objectives.
- The preferred directions and scale of growth identified in this Paper are those which reflect strategic transport investment already happening and can build on this to secure transformational changes in the way people move around and adopt non-car based transport modes for everyday travel. Bespoke solutions, reflecting the particular characteristics of MK, will be required.
- Delivering the scale and directions of growth resulting from the Futures 2050 Commission recommendations will demand cross-boundary working with MK and its neighbouring authorities as well as infrastructure providers in the O2C Corridor.

- Some of the future technologies around how we may live in 50 years' time are uncertain. However, MK's track record of planned long-term growth fixed through spatial plans over the last 50 years has demonstrated that having a spatial framework in place which is universally understood, endorsed and adhered to will help build a robust framework for growth which does not have to be unpicked or re-designed but can accommodate change well.
- Spatial decisions made now and in the near future may 'enable' or 'disable' MK's ability to secure and drive forward 'good growth'. Whilst the shape of the spatial framework will evolve further, it is essential that a spatial framework forms part of the Council's Strategy for 2050. This will provide certainty for investment decisions made by MKC and other stakeholders (including at a national level), and can fix those 'enablers' which are prerequisites for well-planned growth.
- This will in turn help shape short and medium-term plans and policies so that short term decision making does not—deliberately or inadvertently—run counter to the Council's long-term infrastructure investment and role as deliverer of growth.
- Adopting a long term spatial framework will also demonstrate that Milton Keynes is acting proactively and innovatively to deliver the level of transformational growth being sought by government and will support the case for strategic infrastructure investment which MK needs to maintain its economic role at the centre of the O2C Corridor.

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# Introduction and Context

This paper is prepared at an interesting time. The scale of new growth now being advocated by government to ensure the UK meets its own economic and housing needs—and to remain competitive at an international level—will need a step change in the way those responsible for growth act to make it happen.

2 As a consequence, there is a re-emergence of strategic planning activity, whether through economic regions and LEAs, combined authorities or informal joint working between local authorities, as a way of investigating, shaping, planning and stimulating more and better growth at this scale.

Within the Cambridge-Oxford corridor—in the middle of which Milton Keynes sits—the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) is recommending the preparation of an integrated strategic plan (or series of linked plans) across the area, and that these plans should set out a “*clear and ambitious spatial vision for the corridor to 2050*”.



## Purpose of the Evidence Paper

MK is already ahead of the game. The work completed on the **Vision for 2050** by the MK Futures 2050 Commission in 2016 provides a compelling case advocating good, well planned and sustainable growth at greater levels than sought and achieved in recent years.

The purpose of this Evidence Paper is to take forward the key recommendations of the Futures Report ‘Making a Great City Greater’ and to provide analysis and recommendations about the spatial implications of this growth as it applies to MK and its environs.

It forms background evidence to inform the Council’s **Strategy for 2050**, which was identified as one of the actions in the MK Futures 2050 work. The results of this Paper should be able to assist MKC in its long-term planning and policy making for MK, and will input to the preparation of Strategy to 2050.

Importantly, in order to be effective as a long-term policy document, the Strategy for 2050 should have a much wider purpose and use than merely ‘planning’—it should be adopted as the framework for long term policy by other council departments such as health, education and skills, against which other policy decisions (especially those with a spatial aspect) are tested.

## Wider considerations

We hope that our work is also instrumental in helping MKC to lead the way on the scope and content of an integrated strategic plan for the central part of the Corridor and perhaps use the Paper to drive forward open and inclusive discussion with neighbouring authorities on MKC’s patterns of growth and development across administrative boundaries.

A series of Evidence Studies have been commissioned as part of the preparation of the Strategy for 2050. Other evidence studies are:

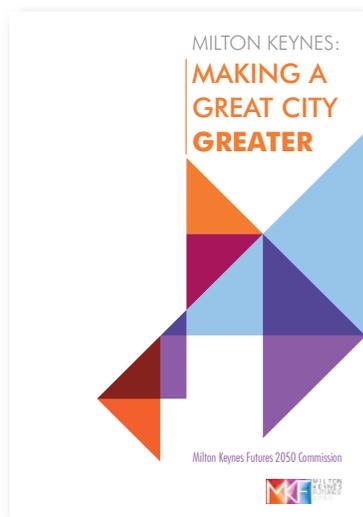
- Future Communities and Housing Need (IBI Group)
- Future Employment and Workforce Structure (Shared Intelligence)
- Innovative Mobility Roadmap (ITP)
- Building in a Culture of Innovation (Useful Projects)

The Evidence Study as a whole—of which this Paper forms part—will also be valuable in enabling MKC leaders to be ahead of the game in demonstrating to central government that:

- (i) MK is fully cognisant of the current and planned infrastructure investment in the wider area; and
- (ii) MKC is proactive in its consideration of how this investment is to be harnessed at the local level to realise spin-off and indirect benefits to the local economy as well as unlocking much needed housing growth and investment locally, as per government’s stated intentions.

Any recommendations in this Evidence Paper are cognisant of the four criteria outlined in the NIC's discussion paper for successful integrated strategic planning<sup>1</sup>. Our recommendations are capable of providing the basis of a 'spatial framework' for the Council, to form an integral part of the **Strategy for 2050**, which in turn could support investment strategies, delivery plans and appraisal frameworks.

And locally, MKC has a chance to be ahead of the game; to re-establish itself as the lead authority in shaping growth and infrastructure in the central part of the Corridor by adopting a long term ambitious, cross-sectoral and holistic growth strategy and policy framework.



<sup>1</sup> [https://www.nic.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/170308-Strategic-Planning-and-Governance-Discussion-paper\\_prepublication-draftv2.pdf](https://www.nic.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/170308-Strategic-Planning-and-Governance-Discussion-paper_prepublication-draftv2.pdf)

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## Criteria for an Integrated Spatial Plan

**Criteria 1:** *it should set out a clear and ambitious spatial vision for the corridor to 2050.*

**Criteria 2:** *it should be underpinned by a clear investment strategy.*

**Criteria 3:** *it should be supported by a phased delivery plan*

**Criteria 4:** *it should be shaped by the requirements of a robust and integrated appraisal framework.*

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# The Strategy for 2050 and its Spatial Framework

Conventional planning growth studies to inform local plans tend to focus on ‘how much growth is needed’ by ‘when’? Preparing a **Strategy for 2050** provides an opportunity to ‘unhook’ spatial planning from the constraints of these fixed local plan periods which are restricted to meeting relatively short term housing infrastructure and employment needs, and are often prepared on a ‘do minimum’ or ‘per plan period’ basis.

In this context, our work adopts a different approach—effectively looking ‘from the other end of the telescope’—by asking:

- What is the optimum ‘end state’ growth for MK to 2050 to provide the best growth for the area (in terms of scale and distribution)?
- Within this context, can we test the implications of alternative economic/technological ‘futures’ identified by the other reports—the “what ifs...”—to test spatial options and refine our thinking and priorities?

The series of ‘sister’ reports to this Paper have analysed future trends and changes in the way we live over the period to 2050, and how these changes might influence the Council’s policy and growth decisions.

This Paper specifically explores the implications of these identified long term trends and changes for the pattern and scale of growth, and gives some thought to how best MK might respond to these challenges through high level spatial planning to evolve an ‘optimum scale and form of growth and investment’ to 2050 and beyond—reflecting and supporting the future needs of its population, geography, innovation, technology and environmental capacity.

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*The objective of this Paper is to provide MKC with the evidence, information and expertise to “create a spatial framework within which good things can happen”.*

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Once drawn up and tested, a Spatial Framework as part of the Strategy will:

- (i) Provide a spatial dimension to non-spatial policy objectives, so that decision making can be done in a way which does not inadvertently cut across other objectives. It can help to shape a ‘road map’ against which to assess and review the Council’s strategic priorities, policies and direction of travel, so that future decisions or shifts in policy are made in the full knowledge of what the implications might be for its spatial growth or planned investments;
- (ii) Identify what spatial principles should be ‘fixed’ or cemented over time so that short term politics, responses or ‘fads’ don’t derail, water down or prejudice the long-term objectives and vision;
- (iii) Help to shape the spatial aspects of successive development plans and planning policy without the need to reinvent the wheel or revisit old arguments every local plan review period.

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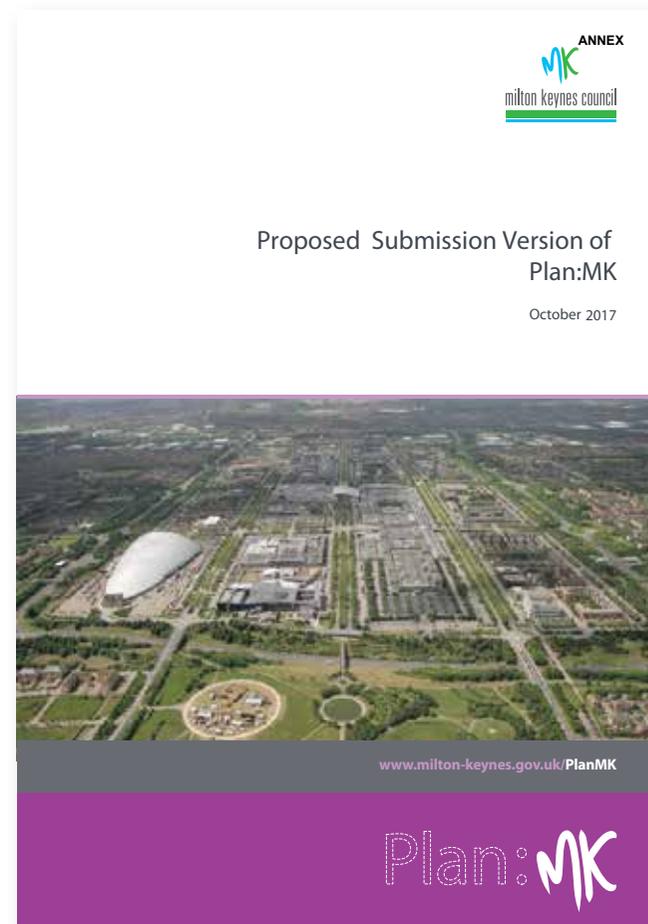
*MK was not conceived or built on short term thinking. Much of its success is down in no small part to the clear and universally-endorsed master plan and city structure, and to the cross-departmental buy-in to investment and delivery which survived 40 years of changing politics, delivery agencies and economic cycles.*

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### Relationship to Plan:MK

In order not to confuse statutory planning policy processes with the Strategy for 2050 and supporting evidence work, the spatial options proposed and analysed in this Paper focus on post-2031 growth.

But, importantly, our recommendations have also looked at what might be needed in the intervening period to secure the 'foundations' for this growth, whether these foundations be based around upfront investment; safeguarding of land or infrastructure routes; or pooling of resources with adjoining authorities or other public sector organisations.



# Assumptions and focus of our analysis

This Paper focuses on two aspects of spatial growth: '**scale**' and '**direction**'. There are a number of influences which will affect both scale and directions of growth.

Firstly, certain global trends and issues will undoubtedly influence our lifestyle and behaviours over the next 30+ years.

These include:

- Advances in technology affecting everyday activities;
- Health and wellbeing; obesity, mental health and lifestyle-related illness; an increasing population over 80 years of age;
- The city vs the country: the percentage of the world's population living in cities (congestion, pollution, space standards, concentration of services and jobs), with the 'shires' or hinterlands increasingly existing to serve the cities (green belts, food production, urban expansion, travel)

In addition to the above, there are MK-specific issues which will also have a bearing on growth:

- MK's role in the sub-region (and the corridor as a national/ international growth hub);
- Its relationship with its neighbours (and the impact that has on growth & delivery);
- The relationship between MK's 'past' and its future';
- Addressing sectoral weaknesses which have already been identified as priorities for social and economic policy (such as MK's secondary education offer and the increased gap between the upper and lower 'tiers' of MK's population/communities)

So how can a spatial policy framework help address the above issues? We already have a broad policy framework for growth set out in the MK Futures 2050 Commission Papers. Many of these papers make reference to issues which have a spatial element.

Spatial elements can be categorised as:

- (i) Those which have a spatial requirement and whose location may drive change (eg. new University/ hospital/ major employer);
- (ii) Those related to protecting and celebrating existing spatial elements of value to/by MK (eg. 'green'/'grey'/'blue' grid);
- (iii) Those which have an impact on the success of other things (eg. public transport, density, green infrastructure).

The **Spatial Framework** should focus on getting the latter two elements correct, to provide an effective and robust context within which the former aspects can happen quicker and better.

## Some parameters for a spatial framework?

The MK Futures 2050 Commission work found that there is broad agreement locally about:

- Not 'whether' MK grows but 'how' it grows;
- The role that MK already plays as a 'hub' in the sub-region and the need to support this;
- The need to reflect the best of the past into the future;

But Commissioners found there is no local consensus about:

- The scale/type of future growth – how much and where?
- Who is driving decisions on growth?
- Who is responsible for making growth 'good'?

Our Paper attempts to provide some recommendations on all three of the above points, but our remit is focused on the first point: the **scale and direction of growth**.

The Vision for 2050 document has two propositions in this regard, and we have taken this as a starting point.

## Scale of growth

The Vision for 2050 was unconstrained by local plan periods. The MK Futures 2050 document advocates that the Milton Keynes area will grow from its current population of 267,000 to at least 400,000 people by 2050. Between 48,000 and 60,000 new homes will be needed to support this population growth, underpinned and supported by infrastructure, jobs, services and facilities.

These numbers may feel uncomfortable for some. However, if we were to only look at housing or job numbers over a 'period', then the discussion inevitably becomes about 'how little' rather than 'how much', and begs the question "why should we do any more?"

Conversely, if we can 'uncouple' the numbers to focus on what 'good growth' looks like, then long term growth futures can be examined, together with working 'back' to identify what can or needs to happen in the interim. This approach allows the identification of long term objectives/principles and then examine how to get there through the short and medium terms plans.

Adopting such a long term 'framework' for growth also adds confidence: people can understand the 'long game' and have confidence that this will not be undermined by short term changes and that investment now is not done in isolation; or if something else is decided in the future, then it is done in the full knowledge of the consequences).

## Directions/shape of growth

The Futures document notes that opportunities exist for "a significant share" of future growth through "*developing/redeveloping selected sites in the built up areas at higher densities where this would improve the overall offer to residents*"<sup>2</sup>, but that it is not possible to accommodate most growth in this way.

Therefore, it recommends that in order to "*sustain MK's unique distinctive, spacious qualities*", "*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*".

Again, we have adopted this conclusion as the starting point for our analysis. This being the case, our analysis explored the following considerations:

- Can MK expand in line with its existing design principles? If so, where and by how much? Is there an 'optimum size' for a 'grid' to function effectively?
- What should MK protect/enhance?
- What 'typology' of growth could MK accommodate:
- expanded/redeveloped grid squares?
- new grid squares beyond the DA boundary?
- rail/transit-oriented corridor growth?
- linked settlements?
- garden villages/towns/self-contained communities?
- a combination, or all, of the above?
- Is one option more resilient against future change or 'unknowns' than another?

## Type of future growth

It is recognised that the New City of Milton Keynes has a well-established pattern of growth. This growth has been structured around the following overarching principles<sup>2</sup>:

- green and blue infrastructure shaping growth (existing features were incorporated into linear parks, canals and balancing lakes);
- a grid network, where grid squares of c 1 sq.km were created by the building of a network of grid roads within 80m wide landscaped corridors with roundabouts at their intersections and segregated 'redway' routes for pedestrian and cycle movements;
- centres of activity at or around the mid-points of grid roads to link residential areas;
- sensitive assimilation of the existing towns and villages (plus hamlets and groups of individual buildings) into the new city, through providing a landscaped setting or buffer between new and existing development and the downgrading of historic routes through villages to provide local access only.

Elsewhere in the Borough, growth of existing settlements has been incremental but has been on a much smaller scale than that of the New City.

<sup>2</sup> Page 11, Making a Great City Greater Summary Report (MK Futures 2050 Commission)

<sup>3</sup> More detail can be found in the Milton Keynes Planning Manual (1992) and summary document 'The Planning of Milton Keynes' (1992), and the MK City Structures Report (1979, reproduced in 2017)

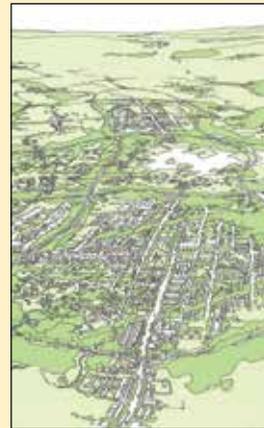
In recent years, urban expansion around the edge (or just beyond) the designated Development Area has moved away from the original principles of the MK Plan to what some refer to as a 'deformed grid' or 'edge blobbing'.

When this Paper refers to 'growing/completing the grid' as a future spatial pattern of growth in this Paper, it is with reference to growth following the original design principles as set out in the original master plan and MK Planning Manual. These are summarised below.

## The Milton Keynes Planning Manual



City Structure

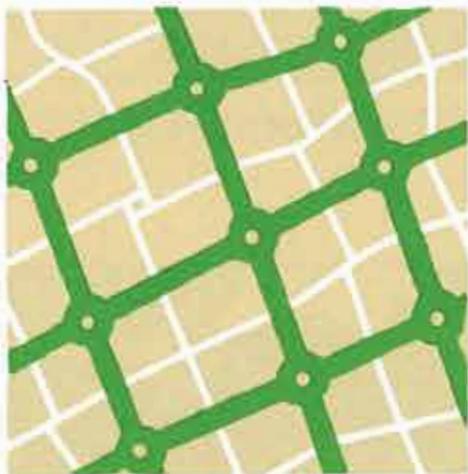


### Excerpt from *City Structure* document (Milton Keynes Development Corporation)

*“The examination of the physical form of the city as proposed in the Plan for Milton Keynes and as built to date has highlighted the need for a consistent fine grain structure within the Plan's broad structure of a grid of main roads.*

*Such a city structure is necessary to ensure a connected local environment continuous across grid roads and grid squares, that simultaneously provides a common basis for establishing priorities and monitoring both present and future development.*

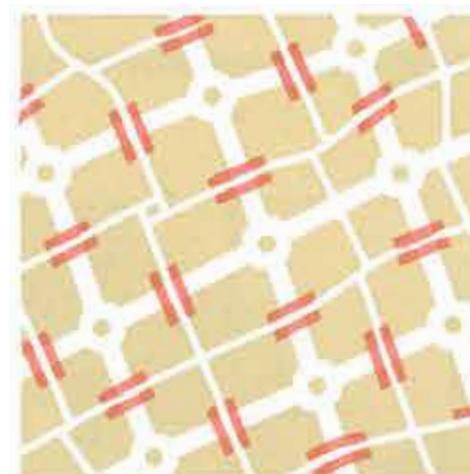
*It is proposed that the following set of mutually supporting principles should be used to guide the future planning and implementation of Milton Keynes.”*



The grid road structure – retain and complete to speed city-wide movement and protect local areas from through traffic.



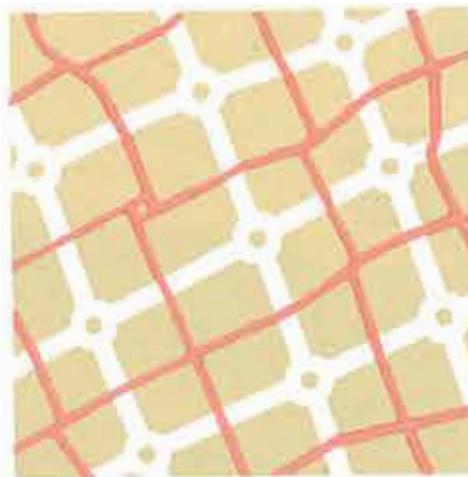
Residential development – concentrate along local routes to build up a familiar, protected and lively street system.



Activity centres – reinforce connections across grid roads by locating facilities at the mid point crossing and bus stop, to provide shelter, surveillance and an identifiable place, as well as information for the grid road traveller.



Open space and reserve land – aggregate towards corner roundabouts to provide a buffer between housing and grid roads, and to offer flexibility of future use.



Local routes – plan for continuous integrated movement across and between grid squares, for pedestrians, cyclists and local vehicular traffic.



Employment – locate according to type; small units at activity centres, medium units in some grid square corners, and large units in separate employment areas.

## Extent of study area

We have been cognisant of the extent of the Borough boundary in our analysis, as well as the existing characteristics and constraints of both the MK urban area, its hinterland, and places functionally linked to the operation of the existing New City.

10 Features such as landscape designations and environmental constraints have informed our analysis and helped shaped the pattern of the growth options identified. However, strategic scale growth has the advantage that some environmental features conventionally seen as a 'constraint'—for example, floodplains or woodland—can form part of a wider growth location which builds these features in as a 'structuring element' shaping built growth, and so we have not ruled out growth options purely on these grounds.

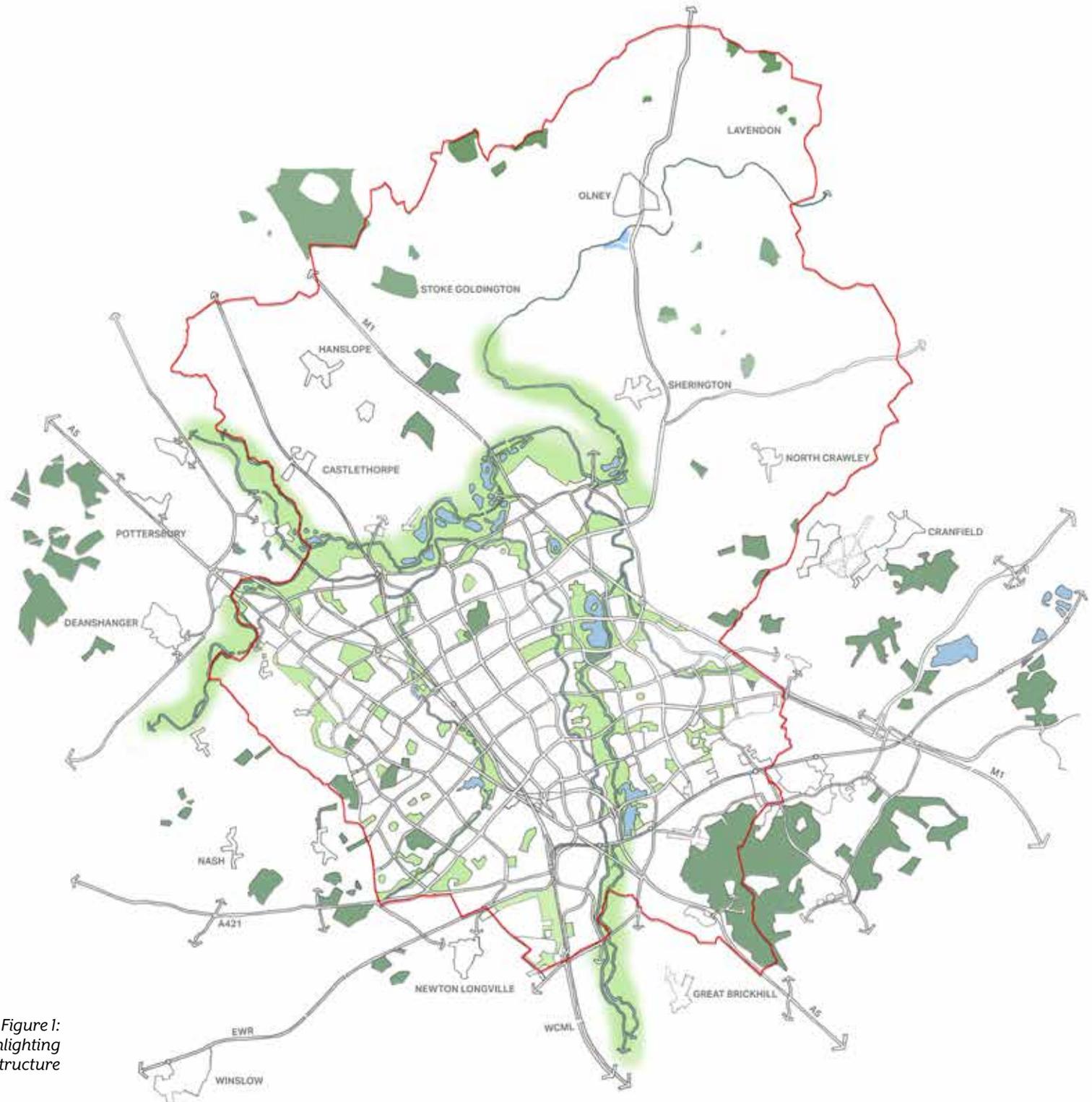


Figure 1:  
Current extent of MK Borough Boundary, highlighting strategic green, blue and grey infrastructure



# Spatial options

We have identified four growth ‘options’ which could reasonably be considered as propositions for MK. The characteristics of each option are set out below.

Our commentary on the ability of each option to meet the objectives of the MK Futures 2050 Commission’s recommendations is set out on pages 20–22.

## Conceptual Growth Option 1: “Growing the Grid”

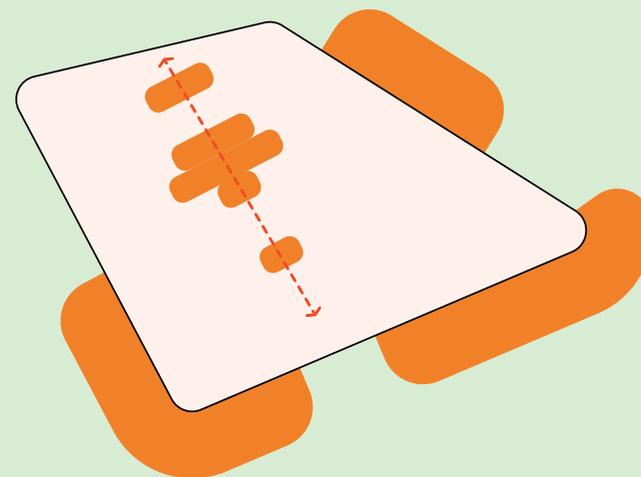
**We have considered the extent to which MK’s grid could be ‘grown’ or ‘completed’. Benefits of this option include:**

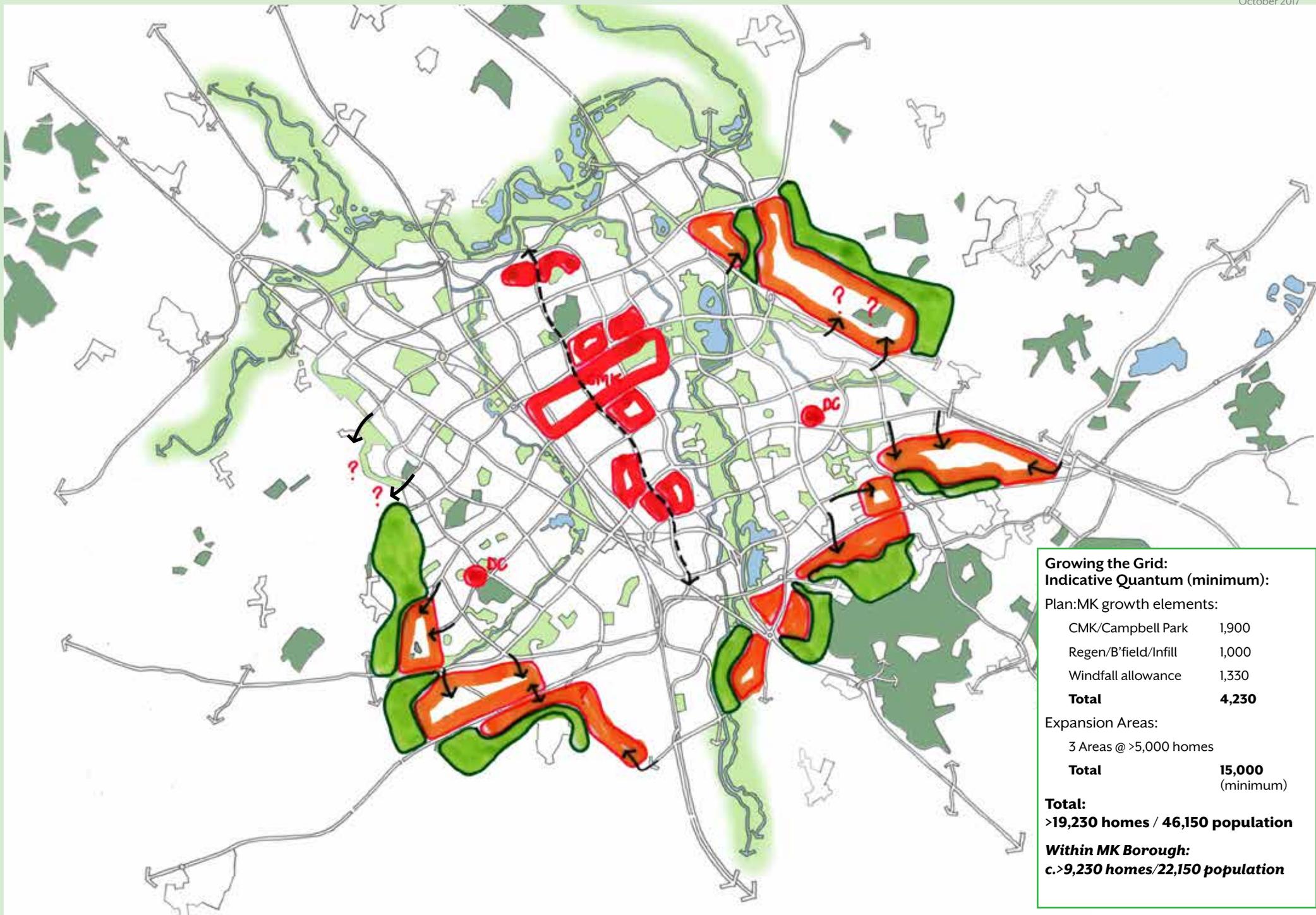
- The design principles for grid infrastructure/grid squares are embedded in the city
- Both the design and the operation of the MK ‘green’, ‘blue’ and ‘grey’ grid is understood and valued locally
- A ‘grid’ system has huge built-in flexibility and through its retained space is resilient and adaptable to change

Spatial implications we considered focused around the pros and cons of ‘growing’ versus ‘completing’ the grid, specifically:

- The ‘scale’ of grid expansion: at what point does distance become prohibitive to the effective functioning of the MK grid? How far are people prepared to travel and by what means?
- Expansion of the grid in certain directions may involve crossing strategic infrastructure or ‘protected’ environments – is this desirable or possible?
- A larger grid risks reinforcing current patterns of mobility (car-focused), generates increasing levels of congestion and does not facilitate active movement or public transport usage – this is contrary to other MK policy priorities.
- Expansion of the grid to the west and east will mean crossing administrative boundaries (with other unitary/planning authorities then responsible for designing and delivering the grid elements) but is a more geographically-functional, viable and sustainable option than strategic expansion to the north or south.

Our analysis explored issues around density, ‘edges’ and futureproofing future expansion of infrastructure networks. How or where should the grid ‘stop’? How can future grid connections be protected? Should we continue to build grid squares at current densities?





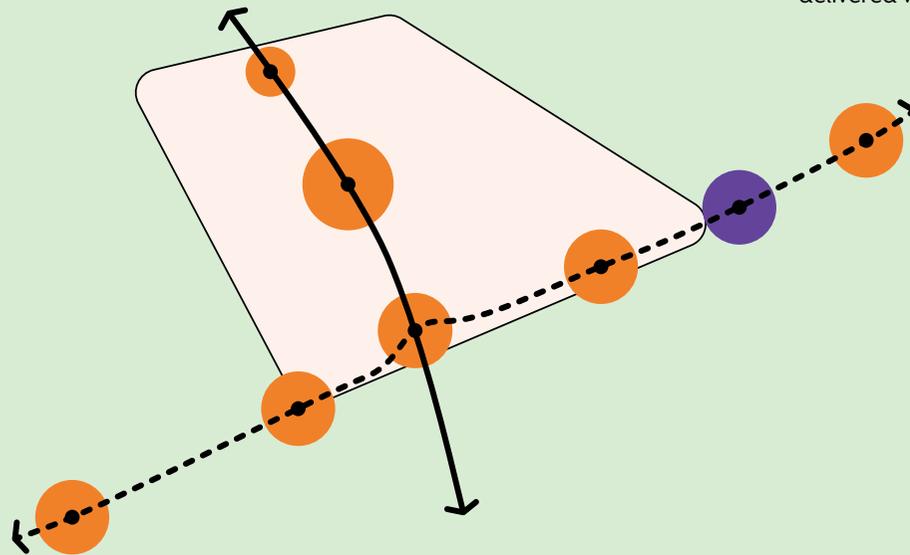
## Conceptual Growth Option 2: “Public Transit Growth”

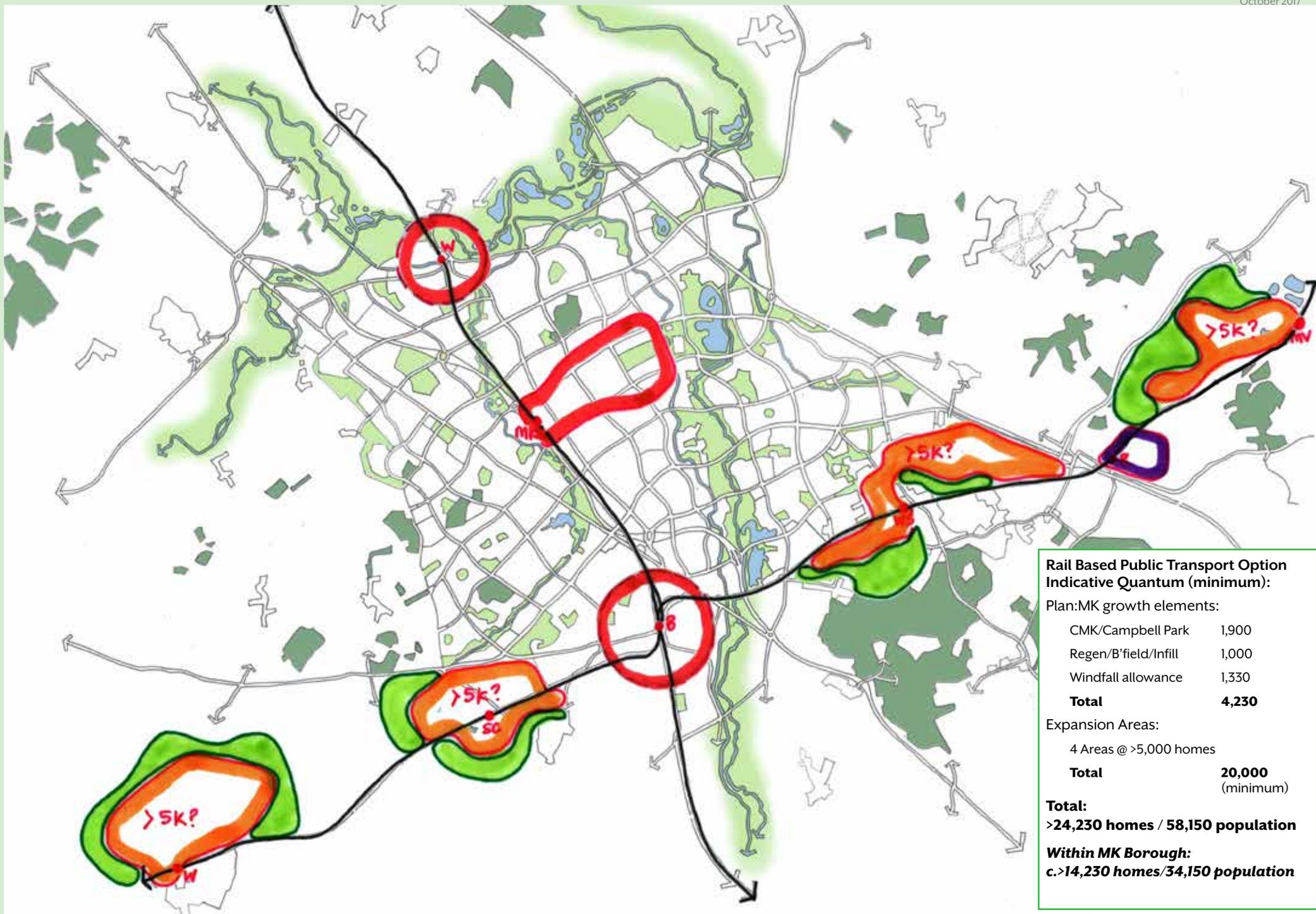
**We have considered the feasibility of aligning new growth much more closely with the existing and planned rail infrastructure in and around MK. Benefits of this option include:**

- A step change in the provision of more sustainable, joined up ways of getting around which are available to everyone (train, rapid transit, bus)
- Harnessing opportunities arising from current and planned infrastructure investment (including WCML improvements and the increased capacity post-HS2, East West Rail and also MK’s SMART transit investment)
- Capturing health benefits of active non-car travel (especially for short journeys and ‘first/last mile’ walking/cycling from stations)

Spatial implications we considered include:

- The need to define, secure and safeguard land for new and enhanced transit corridors, routes, destinations and interchanges
- The desirability of higher density new development at nodes (or redeveloping at higher densities at new nodes in the existing urban area), and the sensitivities that this may bring in relation to changes to the established character of MK
- Funding and building new ‘hard’ transport infrastructure along key routes and at key destinations (new stations/Park&Ride/road crossings etc)
- The need to engage on cross-border infrastructure and growth: east-west rail lines cross administrative boundaries and therefore new nodes, stations and routes will need to be co-ordinated and jointly delivered with other unitary/planning authorities.

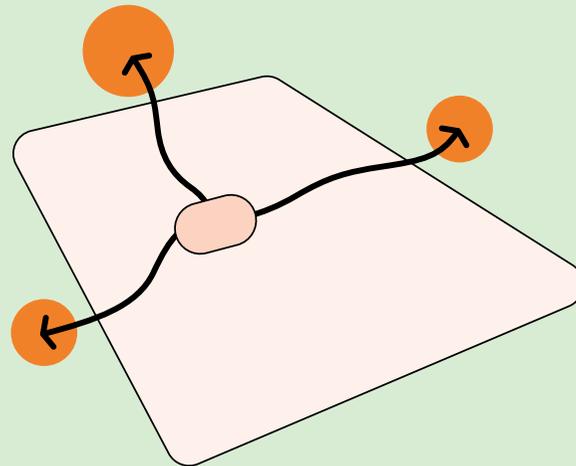




# Conceptual Growth Option 3: “New Transit Communities”

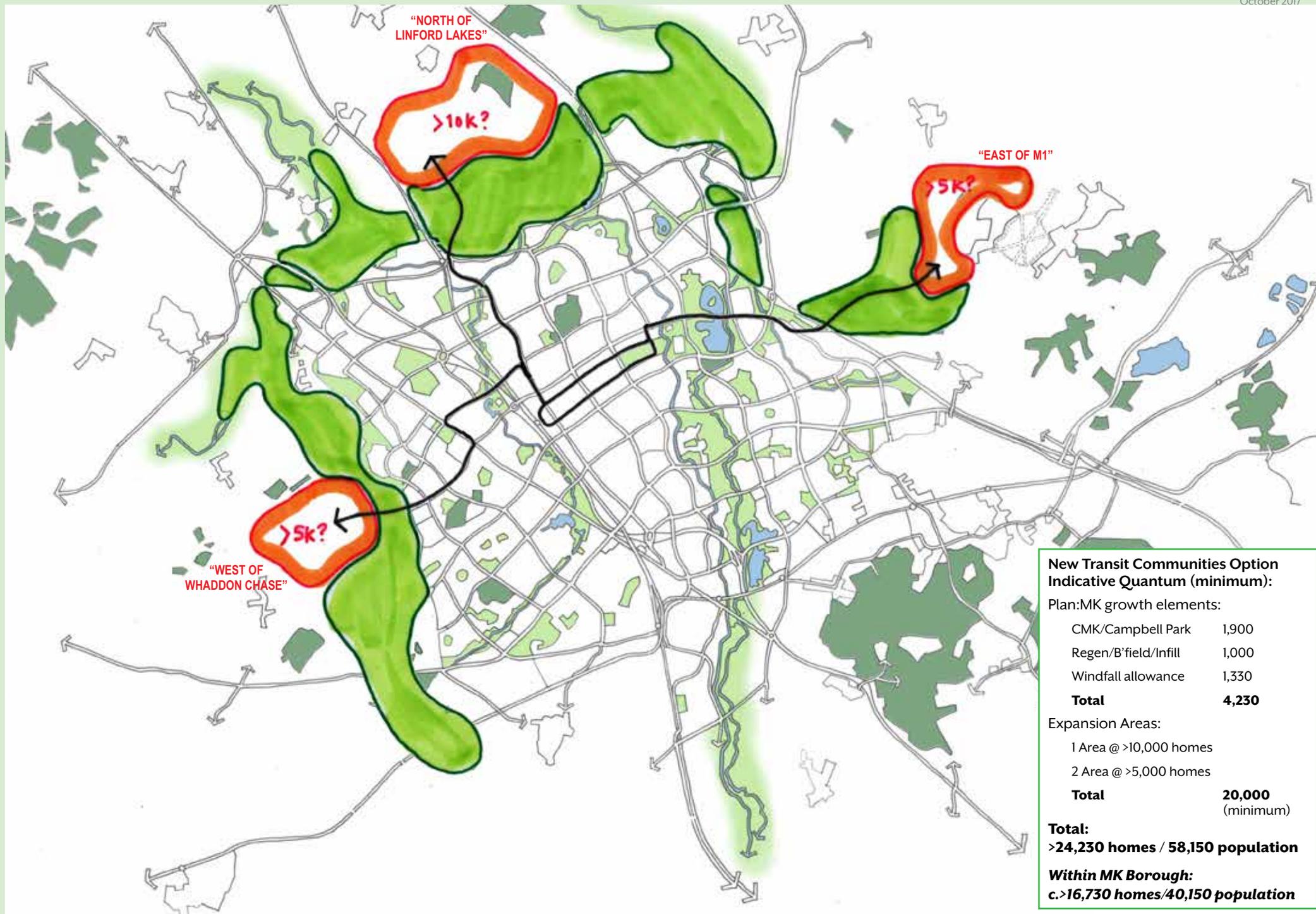
**We have analysed the potential for a new strategic growth pattern based around the enabling and delivery of new mass transit infrastructure for the MK area as a whole. Benefits of this option include:**

- An unparalleled opportunity to link national investment in sub-regional transport infrastructure with local transport investment to deliver significant new growth
- It would support and underpin a transformational change in mobility
- It is a different typology, but one which can complement the existing character and ‘grid’ of MK



Spatial implications we considered include:

- The location of new growth areas and their scale/extent - coupled with key routes into the city and CMK - would need to be identified and reserved at an early stage/in any early allocations
- The extent of opportunities for densification at certain nodes and intersections (new and existing) to further support transit routes
- The benefits of a more dispersed pattern of growth along rail lines which allows the creation and protection of the ‘spaces and places in between’
- The need for co-ordinated cross-border growth along and around key transit routes, which the surrounding area would also benefit from.



# Conceptual Growth Option 4: “Densification”

**One of the questions raised through the MK Futures 2050 Commission work and posed by other evidence studies is the extent to which redevelopment (selective or wholesale) of grid squares, reserve sites and/or building on undeveloped space within the urban area could support higher density development which in turn would enhance support for mass transit services within the urban area.**

Benefits of an option which focuses on densification as a way of accommodating growth include:

- It would underpin transformational changes in people’s mobility and their accessibility to local services and enhanced facilities (both for existing and new communities)
- It will support existing and planned regeneration programmes and improve the vitality of existing grid squares/neighbourhoods into the future
- It would focus efforts on infilling and redeveloping land within the urban area
- Wider social and economic benefits to local communities through increased vitality, diversity and walkability of urban areas (referenced more fully in the Future Communities and Housing Need Evidence Paper produced by the IBI Group)

Spatial implications we considered include:

- Any selection of redevelopment opportunities/densification areas will need to be aligned closely with transport and regeneration plans to be effective
- Parallel opportunities to review the space, cost and extent of car parking in the borough needed to facilitate and drive forward a successful transition to new mobility modes

- Potential need for measures to simplify or incentivise redevelopment at the same time as expansion
- Consideration of higher density development (related to centres of activity/transport interchanges) in cross-border locations

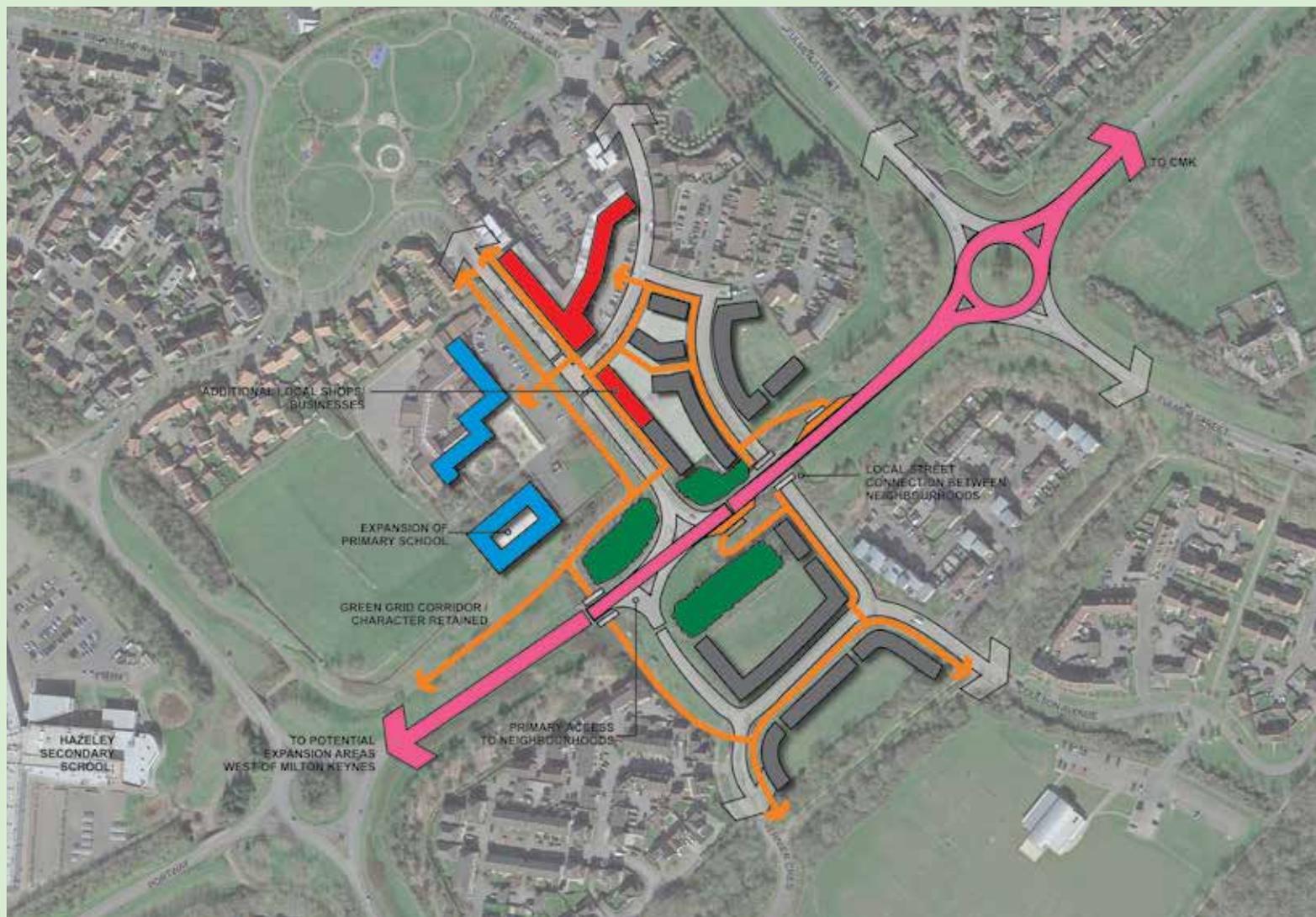
Wholesale densification within the existing MK urban area—or ‘universal’ higher density development as a way of accommodating new growth—is not considered a feasible or desirable option.

However, there are densification opportunities within the existing urban area related to estate renewal, town centre regeneration and district/local centre redevelopment to support mass transit.

These range from small scale intensification (see overleaf) to opportunities for significant densification of locations within CMK and district centres. Wholesale estate renewal could also deliver significant changes to the current density of some of the existing grid squares.

There are also opportunities for building at higher densities at new growth locations (designed into new centres of activity or to support public transport interchanges).

The feasibility of each of these densification propositions as part of an overall growth strategy—plus the scale of growth which might be realised under each proposition—merits further exploration.



This example shows how an existing local centre—Grange Farm—could be expanded at higher density without detriment to surrounding existing development, creating an enhanced centre to enable mass transit infrastructure as well as accommodating well-designed higher density development with expansion of local facilities.

This diagram includes:

- A new public transport/mass transit stop on the grid route
- Additional local retail opportunities at ground floor
- Between c.90–180 new dwellings (@ densities from 50–100 dph)
- Scope for extension to existing primary school to fulfil additional local need from new homes
- Enhanced quality pedestrian/cycle links
- Distance from public transport stop to existing retail c 150m walk

# Reflections on the options

Our interrogation of spatial options considered each option against the following questions:

## **Q1: What is the overriding priority or influence driving choices around spatial options for growth to 2050?**

The MK Futures 2050 report was clear that effective solutions to mobility and movement—in its widest interpretation—are key to the continued success of MK. Securing transformational changes in the way we move around and use non-car based transport for our day to day activities (including active travel for health and wellbeing reasons) will bring cross-sector benefits.

These benefits include improving the vitality of existing places within MK; improving accessibility for all of the population around the city; improving health outcomes for MK residents; and enabling growth of communities to be sustainable (meeting other MK Futures 2050 Commission objectives).

Future spatial decisions relating to both land use and transportation will underpin the success of any change. Furthermore, spatial decisions made now and in the near future by MKC (through Plan:MK or the Council's development management activity) may enable or 'disable' the ability to secure and drive forward this success.

The second priority for MKC has to be the deliverability of any spatial framework. Having an agreed long term spatial framework for growth that reflects current infrastructure investment plans will demonstrate to government the level of transformational growth being sought.

Harnessing the benefits of economic investment in this way will also make growth more palatable to local people by enabling the "I before E" principle of 'infrastructure before expansion' to be put in place.

Importantly, a key aspect of deliverability for a long term spatial strategy is that it allows short and medium term decisions and activities to be made in a known context. Whilst some of the future technologies around how we may live in 50 years' time are uncertain, MK has already demonstrated<sup>4</sup> that having a spatial framework in place which is universally understood, endorsed and adhered to will help build a robust framework for growth which does not have to be unpicked or re-designed but can accommodate change well.

**Thus, any spatial framework must fix those 'enablers' and 'disablers' which are pre-requisites for planned growth.** These fixes will need to be carried forward into short and medium-term plans and policies to ensure that short term decision making does not—deliberately or inadvertently—run counter to the Council's committed and planned longer term investment.

Having a long term framework in place will also provide certainty and confidence, which in turn will speed up decision making on growth proposals, transport/health and social care investment, and will establish a pro-growth platform to encourage other economic investment locally.

## **Q2: What options would work best in the MK context?**

All the spatial options can work in an MK context. Some—such as growing the grid—are a continuation or variation of the current spatial growth pattern, whereas others can be drawn up in a way which recognises and respects the current spatial framework and function of MK's structure to provide complementary growth.

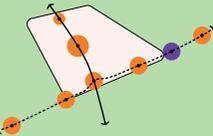
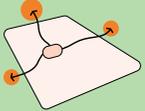
**It is important to note that a combination of all the growth options is likely to be needed to meet the scale of growth set out in the MK Futures 2050 Vision.**

## **Q3: Is there an optimum scale of growth for each 'typology' to deliver other priorities or benefits (transport/infrastructure/community/accessibility?)**

The scale and extent of any one option—and the sequencing of these options—will need to be worked up in more detail taking account of specific site circumstances.

However, as an indication of what may be possible for each option, some suggested guidelines are set out below:

<sup>4</sup> The original master plan and city structure for MK as set out in the MK Planning Manual.

<p><b>Growing the Grid</b></p> 	<p>The current MK grid is effective as a spatial framework for the city it encompasses. There is scope for further 'grid' development to happen at the edges, but when distances to be travelled between residential areas into CMK and other destinations within the city start to significantly exceed much beyond the current 10–15 minute drive, then the effectiveness of the current grid for sustainable movement and land use starts to dissipate.</p> <p>There are a number of locations where the growth of the grid is a sensible proposition, 'finishing off' missing parts of the grid or using the grid structure as a sensible structuring element for 'edge' growth.</p> <p>However, spatial options which significantly extend the size of the grid over a large area are unlikely to meet the MK Futures 2050 Commission objectives of transformational change. Thus, 'completing' rather than 'growing' the MK grid is the recommended spatial response for this option.</p>
<p><b>Rail Based PT Growth</b></p> 	<p>In MK, each location around planned or new rail stations has natural limits containing growth (physical/environmental) which constrains their physical capacity. Elsewhere (in cross-border locations), they may be less constrained.</p> <p>However, as a minimum scale of growth, each location is capable of having a sufficient 'critical mass' to support local facilities and services around a rail-based node of activity, with higher density development closest to the station and PT hub.</p>
<p><b>New Transit Communities</b></p> 	<p>New transit communities should be scaled to reflect key self-containment elements (for example: a minimum of c.5,000 homes would support 1 secondary school and small district centre; or be scaled in multiples thereof).</p> <p>Long term growth opportunities for new transit communities further beyond MK could be larger (anything up to a self-contained new settlement) but only likely to be acceptable locally once transformational infrastructure investment has happened (or has at least been committed and commenced).</p>
<p><b>Densification</b></p>	<p>This is very much a site-specific approach depending on local context. As a rule, any densities above 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) will support public transport use (with levels of usage dependent on detailed design and layout considerations), but higher densities (up to 100 dph?) well-designed around local centres/centres of mixed use or employment activity would optimise the viability of public transport nodes.</p>

**Q4: Should different growth options be brought forward in combination, or in sequence?**

There are different drivers and pre-requisites for effective delivery:

- expansion of parts of the grid could come forward in the short-medium term<sup>5</sup>. At present, there is some recognition in emerging local plan allocations for strategic infrastructure requirements but no 'fixes' in terms of infrastructure/'grid' network requirements, thus early cross-border joint working would be required in some areas so as to avoid prejudicing long term growth and infrastructure opportunities through advancement of current allocations;
- early commitment to an agreed MK mobility strategy through 'pilot' or first phase' schemes would allow testing of transit options to confirm the suitability and scale of long term growth locations, and could also allow some early redevelopment and densification in/around key activity nodes on key public transit routes;

<sup>5</sup> Two extensions to the grid are already in the planning system. Sites on the SE edge of MK are allocated in the emerging MK Local Plan and in the Central Beds Local Plan for growth (c. 5–6,000 new homes) and land on the SW edge of MK is the subject of an outline planning consent (Salden Chase) and draft local plan allocation (north of the A421) in the Aylesbury Vale Local Plan.

- rail-based public transport growth requires joint working with neighbouring authorities but also with DfT and Network Rail to deliver. Discussions relating to East West Rail are well advanced but only in the context of short term upgrades to the rail infrastructure itself. MKC is ably placed to lead discussions around future investment in growth and infrastructure, recognising that the time taken for third parties to decide on and deliver infrastructure proposals may mean that in the short term, the reserving of land, routes and sites for key transport infrastructure becomes the priority to avoid 'disabling' future spatial options;
- densification of grid squares could happen over the medium-term in conjunction with planned mass transit proposals as well as planned regeneration of estates<sup>6</sup>, but there will inevitably be some complex and controversial elements around land ownership and local community support/engagement which may slow or 'disable' delivery of individual projects;
- new transit communities can be planned at an early stage as part of a long-term framework, but should only be brought forward once transit infrastructure is in place (or at least routes and funding confirmed).

***Q5: Is there a priority for the sequencing of options?***

As part of moving towards an agreed spatial framework for MK which can be adopted for policy decision making purposes across departments, MKC may wish to review and consider the sequencing of options against other policy objectives.

However, having an agreed end-state spatial framework within the Strategy to 2050 document would provide a robust overarching framework and criteria against which to then assess the timing and content of any number of plans or proposals, retaining flexibility over sequencing and phasing of individual sites or transport schemes in subsequent local plans and other policy documents.



*Campbell Park and  
Central Milton Keynes*

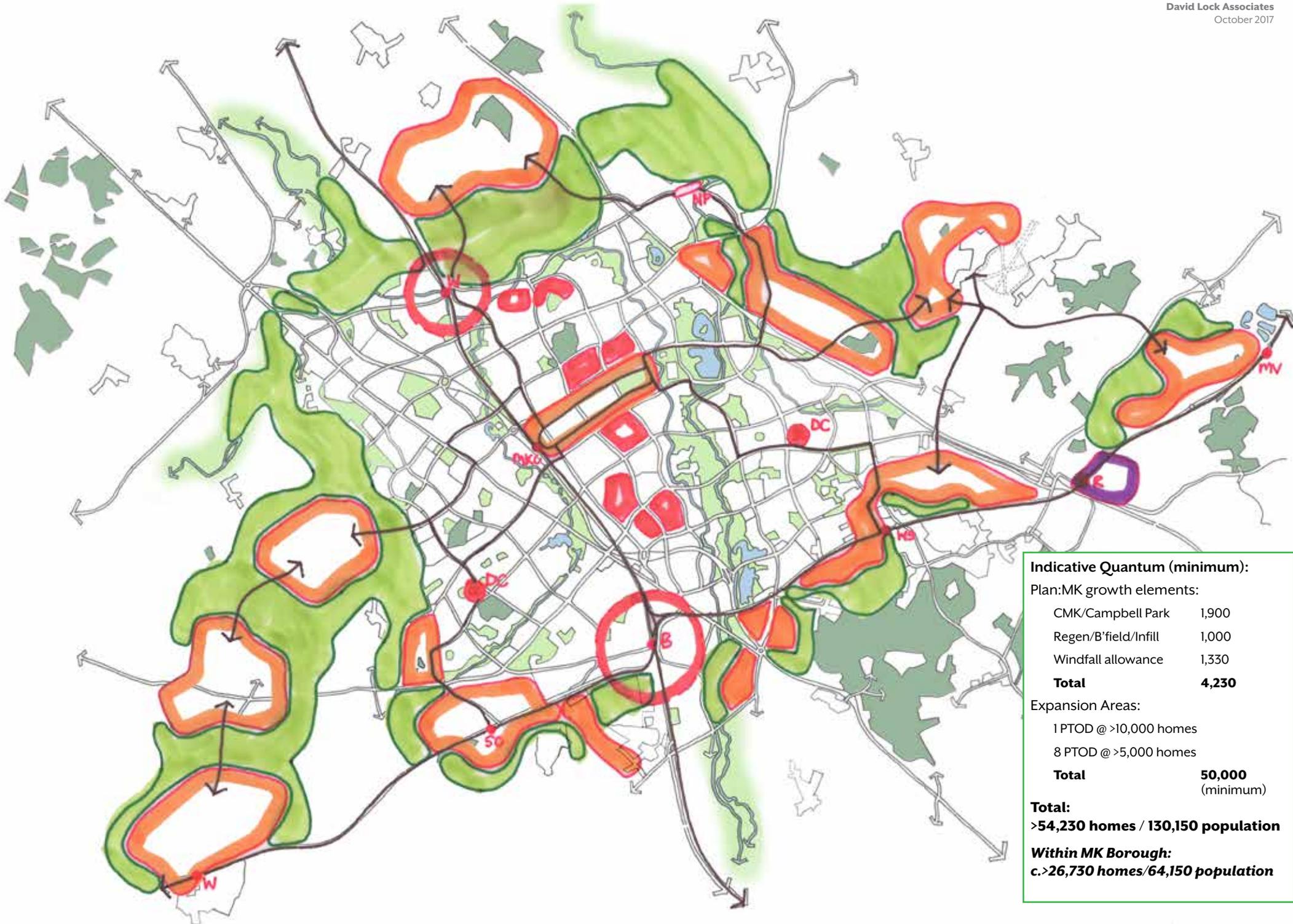
# Towards a 2050 Spatial Framework for MK

The conceptual plan overleaf shows how a combination of the four spatial options could deliver the quantum of growth advocated in the MK Futures 2050 Commission report by the year 2050.

A spatial framework based on this conceptual plan would achieve the following objectives:

- a ‘finishing’ of the urban area of MK by selected ‘edge growth’ complemented by robust and permanent green infrastructure to shape and frame its edges and boundaries, allowing the separation of settlements to be maintained outside the new urban area;
- growth around existing and expanded rail stations to maximise the spin-offs of government investment in East West Rail to benefit the existing and new local communities of MK;
- complementary growth typologies outside the urban area intrinsically linked to mass transit routes and nodes to support a transformational transition to more sustainable patterns of travel and movement.

This Spatial Framework could accommodate the 400,000 population growth advocated in the MK Futures 2050 Vision. Around 55% of this growth can be delivered within MK’s current administrative boundaries. Engaging with neighbouring authorities will allow MKC and others to establish a common framework for growth in the area which captures the benefit of existing and planned infrastructure investment and allows a single coordinated mass transit system to be realised.



**Indicative Quantum (minimum):**

Plan:MK growth elements:

CMK/Campbell Park	1,900
Regen/B'field/Infill	1,000
Windfall allowance	1,330
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,230</b>

Expansion Areas:

1 PTOD @ >10,000 homes	
8 PTOD @ >5,000 homes	
<b>Total</b>	<b>50,000</b> (minimum)

**Total:**  
**>54,230 homes / 130,150 population**

**Within MK Borough:**  
**c.>26,730 homes/64,150 population**

# Enabling the Spatial Framework

We have articulated below some of the considerations for MKC aligned with each spatial option. These are not exhaustive, but indicate the sort of decision making and policy approach which may be required to pursue effective progress on each spatial option.

Growth Typology	MKC 'Owns'	MKC 'Shares'	MKC 'Influences'	MKC 'Risks' to Delivery
<b>Redevelopment and intensification within the MK Development Area</b>	<p>MKC-owned land could drive forward redevelopment/change</p> <p>Potential early wins for existing communities</p> <p>Health and wellbeing advantages at early stage</p>	<p>Land value capture to reinvest in infrastructure?</p> <p>Retention of new social housing by MKC?</p> <p>More efficient use of land can support existing communities through new investment?</p>	<p>Improvements to existing built fabric</p> <p>Improving accessibility to services for those communities who need it most</p>	<p>CPO, funding and delivery</p> <p>Timescale for regeneration projects</p> <p>Immediate impact for local communities could be +ve or -ve</p> <p>Controversial if building over valued space/sites</p> <p>Less 'value' for s106/CIL infrastructure funding</p>
<b>Growing the Grid</b>	<p>Recognisable/known policy framework and spatial 'ground rules'</p> <p>Enforcing design to ensure 'grid scale' infrastructure (green and grey) provided by landowners/developers</p>	<p>Medium term delivery 'wins' for both growth and infrastructure</p> <p>Built-in 'space' for future growth/facilities (reserve sites)</p> <p>Cross border working to 'finish' the grid</p>	<p>Funding of infrastructure through s106/Tariff/CIL</p>	<p>Reliant on limited number of grid extensions in short-medium term</p> <p>Reinforcing lower density MK growth patterns may not force transformational change in PT take up</p> <p>Neighbours may not agree to applying MK design ethos in their area</p>
<b>Rail-focused Public Transit Growth</b>	<p>Allocation of land near/for rail stations</p> <p>Safeguarding of land/corridors for interchanges</p> <p>Decision to 'finish the grid' and apply new spatial 'ground rules'</p> <p>Definition of TOD corridors/nodes</p>	<p>Cross border working for wider rail/infrastructure benefit</p> <p>Capture wider funding initiatives for PT/station investment</p>	<p>Funding of infrastructure through s106/Tariff/CIL</p> <p>Ability to safeguard future 'links' or connections beyond the grid through adopted long term spatial framework?</p>	<p>Reliant on delivery of rail related infrastructure/investment outside MK borough</p> <p>Neighbouring authorities may not agree to applying same design/ infrastructure ethos in their area</p>
<b>New Transit Communities</b>	<p>Priority transit corridors to new communities fixed from day one</p> <p>Mobility/transit infrastructure prioritised/ designed in 'from scratch'</p>	<p>Land value capture around nodes to fund infrastructure?</p> <p>Re-investment in PT from re-use of under-utilised MKC parking resources</p> <p>MKC-owned/run PT to retain receipts?</p> <p>Indirect benefits of mode shift realised early</p>	<p>Investment in technological and SMART transit measures</p> <p>Wider influences on other MK growth along/around routes</p>	<p>Upfront investment in demand-responsive transit /transit infrastructure needed</p> <p>Commitment to long term return on investment needed (the 'patient capital' approach)</p> <p>Optimum locations for new transit communities for MK may not be supported cross-border</p>



*Central Milton Keynes Boulevards*

# Prerequisites for ‘good’ growth

## Mobility and Movement

Building on the evidence from previous studies and the emerging MK mobility strategy, it is clear that early decisions and actions around **future movement and transit infrastructure** will have a significant impact on the elements of the preferred Spatial Framework.

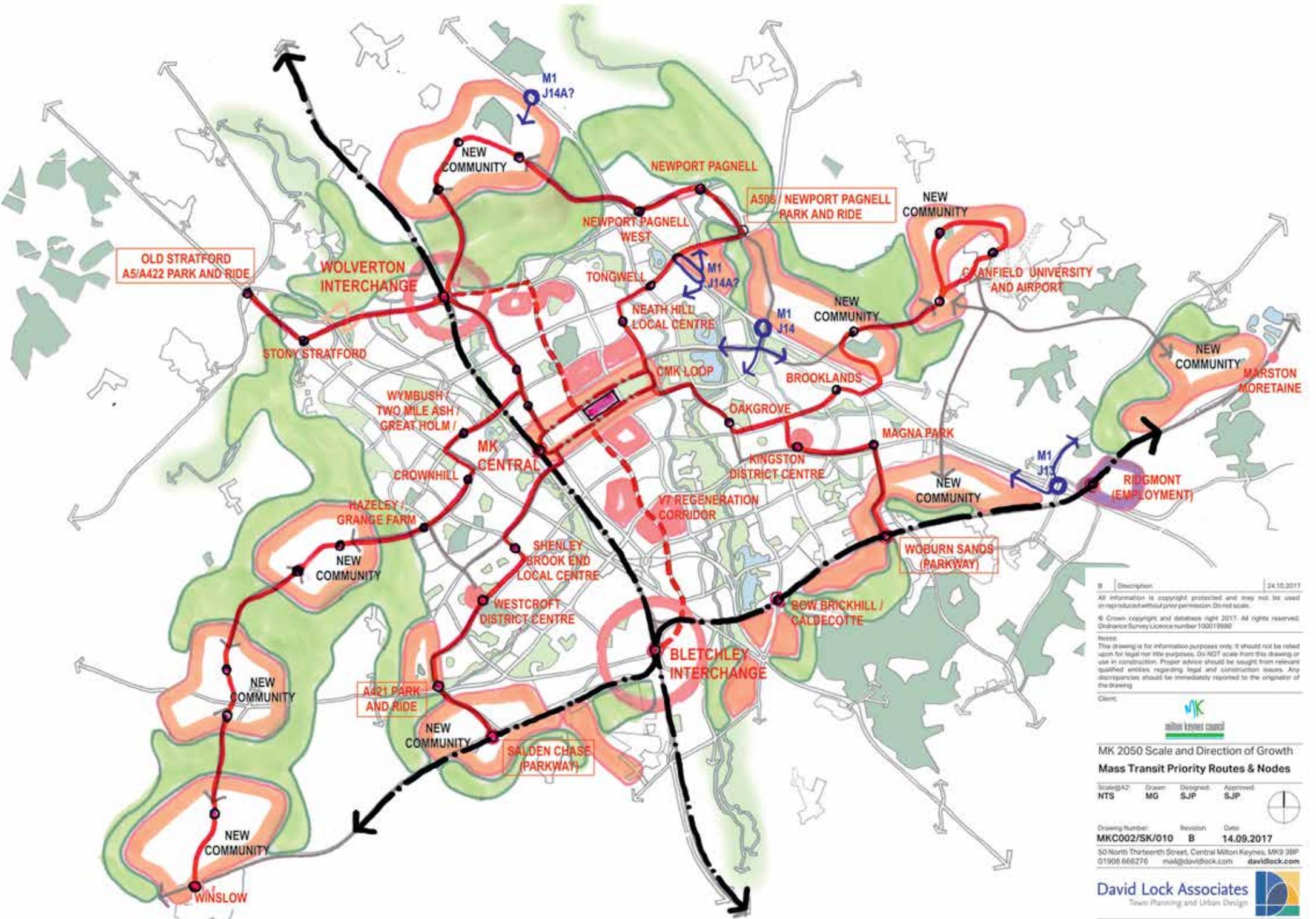
The diagram opposite illustrates one way in which an enhanced mobility and movement network—based around selected mass transit routes which complement key car-borne routes—could influence both the shape and infrastructure requirements of growth areas (some of which are already part of the emerging local plan, and others which would be delivered over the medium-long term).

Elements of this plan include:

- Integration with East-West Rail and the West Coast Main Line stations;
- Priority along key public transport corridors to offer a real alternative to car travel;
- Routes and nodes which serve and complement the planned regeneration of selected existing grid squares;
- Routes which complement rather than replicate key existing ‘bottlenecks’ into MK so that real advantages in journey times can be achieved early;
- Interception of commuters into Milton Keynes through ‘Edge Park & Ride’ interchanges and first/last mile facilities (cycles, good walking routes);
- Connecting new and existing ‘destinations’ around MK (to secure early viability of mass transit)
- Allowing a reduction of CMK car parking and/or increased charges to happen in tandem with a viable and publicly-understandable mass transit alternative
- Building mass transit infrastructure into new growth areas from the outset (‘hard infrastructure’ such as road space/priority junctions/ interchange facilities, but also requiring the design of new local centres/nodes/ development densities and green space to complement and support these identified transit routes)

This is not a blueprint for the Spatial Framework but simply one way in which growth and infrastructure could be co-ordinated from the start. Further feasibility work on spatial options running alongside the mobility strategy will be needed to test and select a preferred movement strategy.

Work to evaluate, select and trial one or more mass transit routes should be a priority action for the Council.



24.10.2017

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Client:



**MK 2050 Scale and Direction of Growth  
 Mass Transit Priority Routes & Nodes**

Scale/NTS	Drawn/MG	Designed/SJP	Approved/SJP
NTS	MG	SJP	SJP



Drawing Number: **MKC002/SK/010** Revision: **B** Date: **14.09.2017**

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## Green and Blue Infrastructure

One of the most successful legacies of the original masterplan for MK was the use of green and blue infrastructure to shape planned growth.

A continuation of this 'strategic' approach to the provision of land for large scale green and blue infrastructure should be part of any long-term growth plans for MK.

30 Green and blue infrastructure must not be seen by landowners or the Council as 'dead' or 'wasted' land which has a greater cost than a benefit. As well as providing long term and robust boundaries or buffers between distinct areas, building in productive uses for this land at a strategic scale has the following benefits:

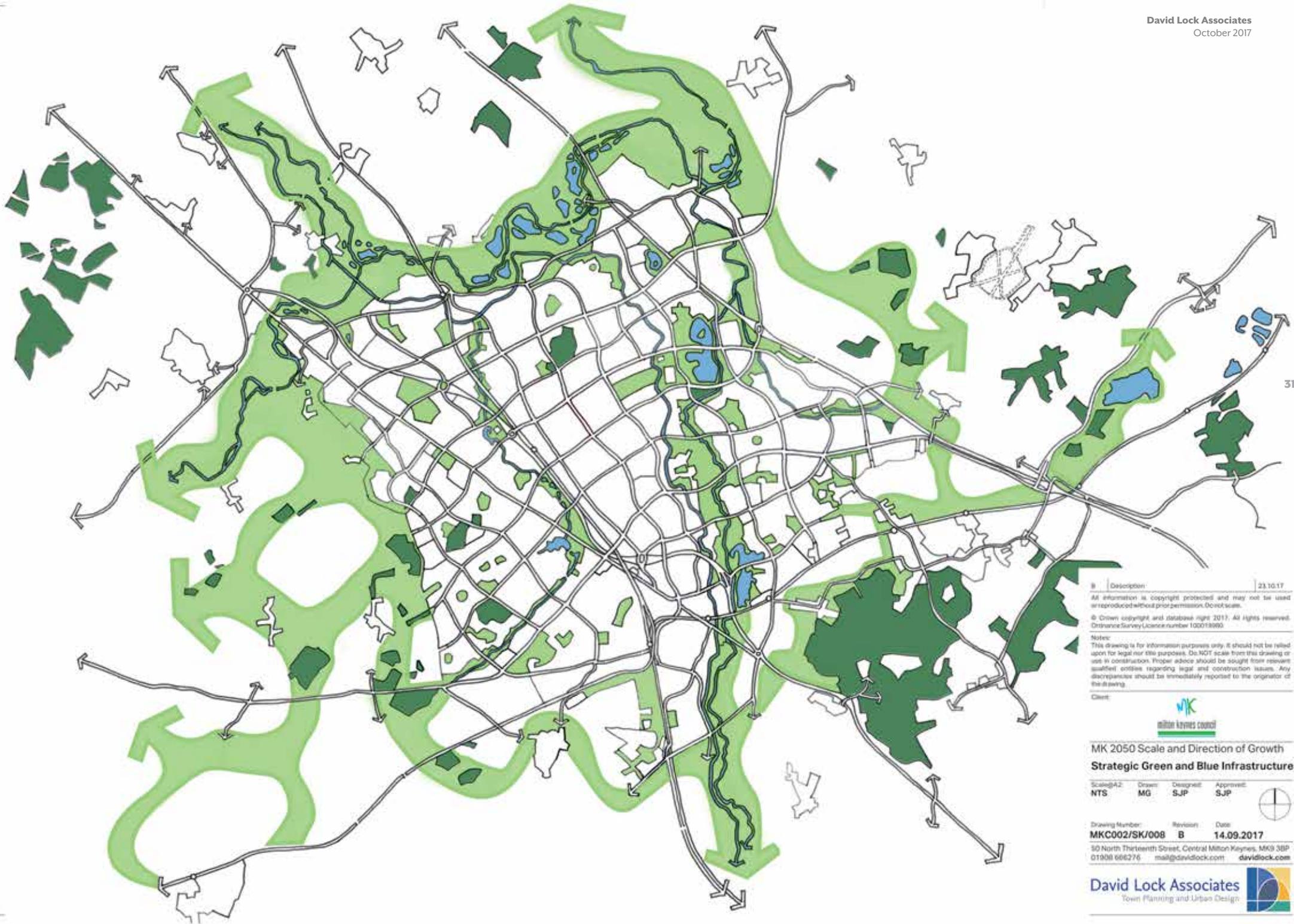
- enables city-wide flood attenuation and drainage (Ouzel Valley Park and the Loughton/Knowlhill 'teardrop lakes' are a case in point) protecting both new and existing communities from the risk of flooding;
- creates areas for cultivation (the community orchards, allotments and hedgerows provided in MK provide a wealth of produce and opportunities for outdoor activity as well as providing visual screening and biodiversity benefits);
- larger scale outdoor recreational activities best separated from built up areas but still accessible (eg Woughton playing field/training ground complex; Willen and Caldecotte Lakes watersports facilities; Furzton and Little Linford fishing lakes; the Bowl outdoor event arena);
- income generating uses—such as 'horsiculture' and other grazing land (including Campbell Park in the heart of MK) which helps towards the cost of maintaining greenspace.

As such, any spatial framework plan for the growth of MK should fix land for green and blue infrastructure and provide the same level of long term policy support and protection for this land so that the use, scale and character of these areas is designated in perpetuity.

The diagram opposite illustrates one way in which a network of **strategic scale** green and blue infrastructure—accommodating the type of environmental mitigation and uses as outlined above—could influence both the shape and setting of new growth areas (some of which are already part of the emerging local plan, and others which would be delivered over the medium-long term). Again, this is not a blueprint for the Spatial Framework but indicates the importance of designing in 'city scale' green and blue infrastructure at the outset.

At a smaller scale, the use of green buffers around existing villages and towns to preserve their character and identity—a key tenet of the original plans for MK—should also be carried forward to avoid unnecessary encroachment and coalescence of settlements (a common reason for local objection to strategic growth).





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Description: 23.10.17

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Client:



**MK 2050 Scale and Direction of Growth  
Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure**

Scale: A2: Drawn: MG Designed: SJP Approved: SJP  
NTS



Drawing Number: Revision: Date:  
**MKC002/SK/008 B 14.09.2017**

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## Reserving land and allowing space for ‘other good things to happen’

One of the more controversial elements when considering strategic options for growth is the extent to which the ‘urban area’ should be further developed or redeveloped to accommodate more development.

This debate is already happening in MK, with some advocating building on reserve sites and urban space as a way of delaying planned expansion of the city outside the urban area whilst others advocate their retention as an inherent aspect of the planned city and one which has proved adept at accommodating new facilities and uses to support existing communities and requirements over time.

As detailed earlier in this paper, there are some opportunities within MK where selective densification and redevelopment could happen successfully over the short to medium term; related firstly to the Council’s regeneration priorities and secondly, at local centres/local destinations linked to mass transit nodes along routes once these are confirmed.

However, short term piecemeal and un-coordinated releasing of undeveloped land simply because it sits in the urban area runs counter to a well-planned long term Spatial Framework. In MK not only are many of these sites valued locally (for green space or amenity purposes), but they may be much-needed sites for the continued expansion of existing schools, local health facilities and other related uses to support and revitalise existing communities which will themselves grow and mature locally.

The amount of development realised from building on these sites at current densities will not make a material difference to the need for planned expansion, and the loss of reserve sites will greatly reduce the ability of existing communities to diversify, build and expand the facilities and services they will need on their doorstep over the next 30+ years.

In contrast, there may be larger scale redevelopment opportunities associated with transit nodes—such as at district centres or larger sites where cessation of current uses might come forward within the next 10–15 years—which would generate a significantly more intensive scale of development.

Also at a larger scale, there are uses that MK may not yet know it wants or needs. There has been pressure exerted on the Council in recent years to facilitate the release of some strategic sites within CMK for housing in the absence of an identified commercial land use or business occupier. But some uses only manifest over time—the MK:U proposal for a new university being a case in point—and the Council’s ability to respond to future market demand through maintaining a portfolio of sites at appropriate locations is a great economic advantage which MK has over other towns and cities within the Oxford-Cambridge Corridor. This principle should be carried forward into any spatial framework.

On this basis, rather than assume a strategy for MK where ‘transit-corridor densification typology’ applies to the entire urban area/grid system, we recommend that further examination is undertaken as to where the most appropriate parts of the urban area might be over the short, medium and longer term to accommodate such densification and facilitate a transit-corridor approach to growth.



*World Picnic in Campbell Park  
Part of the International Festival 2010*

# Enabling the Spatial Framework: Some Recommendations

Summarised below are some high-level recommendations and principles which we suggest are carried forward into any Spatial Framework as part of the Council's **Strategy for 2050**.

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## Recommendations on the purpose and content of the Spatial Framework

1. We recommend that the Spatial Framework forms an integral part of the **Strategy for 2050**. This Strategy—within which the Spatial Framework sits—should not be a planning document but instead should be a Council 'Corporate Policy' document to be shared and adopted across other Council departments, especially where policy-making has implications for spatial growth.
2. The Spatial Framework should:
  - (a) Avoid being over-detailed or over-complicated—it should be kept to first/key principles (in the same way that the MK Planning Manual was drawn up). It should be simple, well-evidenced, and easily understood by the public as well as those in the relevant professions—with the potential to become a “people’s plan”;
  - (b) Be focused on:
    - key ‘fixes’ framing and structuring growth (eg. green, blue and grey ‘grids’, corridors, or networks);
    - key ‘design’ or ‘development’ principles – things all growth proposals must do or include

The benefits of this approach are that MKC would not need to revisit or reinvent the Spatial Framework over the short-medium term or over local plan periods. This would enable faster and more consistent MKC decision-making against an approved Framework which remains valid over the long term. Decisions on the pace and type of growth can be flexible and responsive within the Framework, whether this be changes over time or changes to reflect other influences/technologies.

3. The Spatial Framework should be:
  - part of the evidence base underpinning other policy documents, plans and decisions;
  - used to lead and shape MKC conversations with local communities and stakeholders, neighbouring authorities and strategic infrastructure providers/funders.
4. It could also be used to:
  - underpin MKC delivery commitments;
  - speed up plan making and delivery;
  - set out ‘common rules of engagement’ for other sectors;
  - lever in additional funding through MKC signing up to higher growth targets through the Framework.

## Recommendations on future infrastructure considerations

We understand that some feasibility work on options for long term and transformation mobility is already underway. We recommend that, based around the broad growth areas identified in the spatial options, some additional feasibility work is needed to identify and firm up preferred locations for specific routes, corridors, links, nodes and interchanges. This work should focus on:

- what should be fixed and where? For example:
  - » feasibility studies into new parkway stations at South West and South East MK to complement a mass transit network, engaging with Network Rail and neighbouring authorities as appropriate;
  - » identification of potential routes for mass transit and consequential redevelopment options/opportunities at local centres/centres of activity;
  
- what can be 'flexed'? For example:
  - » shaping of strategic scale green and blue infrastructure, including a review of the route for the connecting of the Bedford to MK Waterway through east MK

Importantly, the Framework should also include what MKC should not do in order to maintain a flexible and robust framework for future growth. Based on the work undertaken so far, we anticipate that this will be focused around the need to retain some land and corridor reserves over time (which may otherwise come under pressure to be relinquished or changed).

If undertaken at an early stage, this work can feed into emerging Plan:MK and Mobility Strategy/Local Transport Plan (LTP) policy wording around land use and transport; help articulate discussions with neighbouring authorities about cross-border infrastructure schemes; and further inform the current discussions with wider stakeholders and government about planned East West Rail (and Expressway) investment.

## Recommendations on future land use considerations

### **Moving towards 'allocation' of growth areas**

It is recommended that the starting point for the Spatial Framework should be the establishment of 'first spatial principles'.

This approach would enable the fixing of a **spatial structure** for new growth, the **strategic design principles** (or **'ground rules'**) governing built development, and fix **reserve land/nodes and corridors** where built development will not take place unless certain criteria are met, infrastructure delivered or milestones reached.

MKC policy makers will then be able to bring forward plans for individual areas for growth in the context of an agreed and adopted Spatial Framework which has a 'shelf life' of 30+ years, rather than constantly having to revisit the 'first principles' of local plan making at each plan period review.

This approach would allow successive local plans to include sufficient identified places for growth (or 'reserve' growth locations) to justify refusing inappropriate or speculative proposals which do not meet the terms of the Spatial Framework. Full or partial reviews of local plans would be able to quickly and simply manage the bringing forward of additional sites in response to changes in housing land requirements or in response to challenges on the grounds of 5-year land supply issues.

If long term growth areas can be fixed in the Spatial Framework, it leaves MKC free to concentrate efforts on (a) harnessing advance investment to support its plans, and (b) using its professional officers' expertise to demand and secure 'good growth' from developers (by applying the 'strategic design principles' (the 'ground rules') for development set out in the Spatial Framework to individual development plan allocations or planning application proposals).

### **Components of growth areas**

Although some high-level capacity calculations are included in our analysis, this Paper does not offer any fixed views on the land use components of any suggested growth areas.

There are a number of long term land use planning issues which merit further consideration as part of follow-on activity in advance of making any decisions on future land uses for the growth areas:

### **Flexibility and Mix of Land Uses**

The original plan for Milton Keynes had what would now be viewed as a rather rigid land use definition—both in type and distribution. Land uses are much more fluid than 50 years ago (both in time and make up), and we have moved away from a 'zoned' to a more 'mixed use' approach to the split of various employment, retail, community and residential land uses.

More critical to the drawing up of a successful Spatial Framework is the extent to which any land use generates **activity and travel**. For example, the location of existing town, district and local centres—where people already go to shop, use facilities and meet—will have a strong influence on the routing and interchange for mass transit

services. Secondary schools and colleges, large employers and health services have a city-wide ‘catchment’ and draw large movements of people and traffic often at ‘peak’ hours of the working day.

Overlain on this pattern, evidence from the Paper on *Future Employment and Workforce Structure* suggests the blurring of work and home—an increasing amount of business start-ups and employment in MK is already undertaken in and around the home. Together with technology leading to increased flexibility over office hours/shop trading hours, this may mean that the distinction between ‘employment’ and ‘residential’ uses becomes more blurred in the next 30+ years.

Additionally, land use is part of the ‘social infrastructure’ of a place. **Accessibility to goods and services** is critical to whether people within a community feel part of—and see their community as—a successful place.

Therefore, as well as improving connectivity and transit options between places, increasing the self-containment of both new and existing places is equally as important an objective for the spatial framework.

As a consequence, we recommend maintaining a flexible approach to land use within the Spatial Framework; instead, defining ‘centres of activity’ at intersections, stations, and nodes, where a mix of land use which generates higher levels of activity will be encouraged to support and maximise the use and frequency of sustainable travel modes.

#### **Finding new roles for city, district and local centres**

A second consequence of shaping growth around how people will move around is the extent to which the ‘hierarchy of Milton Keynes’ centres’ should be reviewed and expanded.

At present, there is a fixed hierarchy of city, town, district and local centres—primarily for retail purposes—which is adhered to in planning policy. It may be that additional centres are needed to support new communities and reduce the need to travel. With the scale of development advocated, these centres could be of a district or even town scale. Conversely, existing local centres along a key mass transit route which could support a significant catchment population could be grown into new district centres.

Over time, there may be also opportunities as part of the selective densification of MK for the comprehensive redevelopment of Westcroft and Kingston District Centres (currently dominated by ‘out of town’ building formats and prioritising car borne patronage) to form a new mass transit interchange or other more land-efficient activity-generating use.

We recommend that further work is undertaken on this element of growth as part of—or alongside—the work on the emerging Mobility Strategy, so that the synergy between land use and transport can be much more closely aligned.

## Recommendations on design and placemaking principles

### ***'Fixes' for New City structures***

Many of the key placemaking principles which could govern future growth are embedded in the original plans for MK. Whilst we recommend a flexible approach to the 'designations' or 'fixes' for specific land uses in the Spatial Framework, there are a number of key design principles which we strongly suggest should be embedded as requirements of any new growth areas. These spatial principles should be based around the on the MK City Structures document; albeit with some minor adaptations to reflect mass transit requirements identified through further feasibility work.

- Identify, fix and reserve corridors for future mass transit routes within the urban area;
- Identify, fix and reserve land for rail/transit interchanges;
- Identify specific opportunities for densification and redevelopment within the urban area/around new transit nodes;
- Define the specification of these corridors and nodes;
- Identify principles for densification within an agreed set of parameters;
- Set out the scale and characteristics of strategic green and blue infrastructure (and location of smaller scale green infrastructure when it is required to buffer or preserve the character of existing communities)

### ***Quality, innovation and diversity of design***

If a Spatial Framework can be fixed and approved which takes the heat out of continuous local debates about where growth goes, then the focus for MKC policy making could return to ensuring innovation, quality and diversity of design and good governance is put in place, with clear policy requirements fixed from the outset for all new growth so as to create a 'level playing field' for all landowners, developers and infrastructure providers.

This approach in turn would enable the rates of planning permissions to be speeded up.



*Apartment living in Campbell Park*

# Enabling the Spatial Framework: Suggested Actions

As a result of the thinking and analysis completed as part of this Evidence Paper, the following table sets out some suggested actions for MKC and its partners to firm up the spatial framework, and deliver the spatial aspects of growth set out within the Strategy for 2050 once agreed.

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We have split these actions into short, medium and long term activities. These actions will require consideration and refinement as part of further feasibility work, but the table gives an indication of the actions likely to be required to move projects forward once the strategy is approved as a policy framework.

Near Term (up to 2024)
<p><b>Adopt Spatial Framework</b> as a material consideration for policy (including planning policy) as an integral part of the approved Strategy for 2050. Publish widely within and outside MKC as a corporate policy document.</p>
<p>Spatial planning activity to:</p> <p>(a) focus growth to <b>grow/'complete' the grid</b> (ensuring delivery of green and grey infrastructure is a requirement of built development) to maintain/improve on current delivery rates;</p> <p>(b) identify <b>mass rapid transit (MRT) corridors/routes</b> (and intensification of selected nodes) through LTP/planning policy as a prerequisite for considering new planned growth beyond the 'grid' (local plan review?)</p>
<p>MKC <b>'promotion' of modal shift</b> (PR/communications)—using 'corporate policy' to embed benefits of a viable alternative (MRT) to both existing MK as well as future growth (influencing health, mobility, economic policy objectives).</p>
<p>Explore the ability to combine current estate renewal plans and programmes with the selection of a <b>MRT 'regeneration route'</b> (V7 Bletchley – Hospital – CMK – Wolverton?)</p>
<p>Continued <b>trailing of mass transit/transitional PT initiatives</b> across the city (including pilot or first phase MRT services on key grid roads)</p>
<p>MKC lead <b>feasibility studies</b> to identify key locations for infrastructure connections/nodes and interchanges/stations, based around rail and MRT routes. Safeguard this land/routes through LP/LTP policy as appropriate</p>
<p>Use Spatial Framework (as evidenced MKC commitment to growth) to:</p> <p>(a) <b>lobby for ringfenced/committed investment/funding</b> for strategic rail, road and digital infrastructure improvements (EWR/OCE/5G)</p> <p>(b) shape this infrastructure investment to <b>lever additional benefits</b> for MK growth</p> <p>(c) agree and deliver <b>spatial elements of any MKC 'first/last mile' proposals</b></p>
<p>Drive forward <b>cross-border engagement and common activity</b>—this is an imperative to realising growth levels in MK2050 Vision for the wider MK economic area (but benefits of growth are cross border too) This approach has recently been reinforced by governmentl.</p>
<p>Post-2017 Autumn Statement, engage with neighbours through a <b>'Summit'</b> (with DCLG presence/facilitator?) to drive effective joint working.</p>
<p>Define extent, purpose and reservation of <b>green and blue infrastructure</b> around MK to provide appropriate setting and functions required by the scale of growth planned to 2050 (this could include facilitating early land acquisition or advance works?)</p>

Medium Term (2025 – 31)	Long Term (2031 – 50)
Embed Spatial Framework as a key element of cross-departmental policy making and <b>to lever in national/growth area infrastructure investment.</b>	Establish <b>formal public-private sector partnerships (or JVs, or new style Development Corporation?)</b> to lead co-ordinated growth plans, increase delivery rates, innovate housing design/construction techniques and enable release/sale of land to more diverse delivery bodies
Prioritise growth locations/directions along defined <b>transit-oriented/active travel corridors</b> linked to EWR stations DW and SE of MK, where investment is being focused	Deliver <b>new transit communities</b> north and east of MK, co-ordinated with extension of transit corridors and interchanges
Secure redevelopment and <b>densification of local centres/district centres</b> to support more effective use of land and use of sustainable mass transit	Secure <b>comprehensive transit-orientated regeneration</b> at Bletchley and Wolverton interchanges, linked to potential increases in rail capacity on WCML post-HS2 completion
Secure <b>regeneration and densification</b> through selected estate renewal aligned with continued investment in mass transit infrastructure and services	Completion of <b>regeneration and densification</b> of selected estates
Explore and identify a more <b>detailed policy position on provision for use/parking of private vehicles in MK</b> as MRT/PT behaviour changes. Consequent redevelopment of car parking land (CMK and elsewhere?)	Embedding of <b>technologies into smart travel</b> to fully integrate mass transit with first-last mile and driverless car options
Lead delivery of <b>new interchanges</b> at existing/enhanced/new stations on EWR to complement established mass transit routes/nodes.	Potential for extend MK mass transit routes beyond new communities to serve surrounding communities especially to the north and south?
Explore <b>other land use policy positions</b> to embed change: (a) review retail and other ‘centre-hierarchy’ land use policy if change in policy position needed to secure self-sustaining transit corridor/ transit community growth; (b) maintain MK approach to safeguarding/reserving of land for future use/activities as part of new growth options/typologies	Carry forward <b>infrastructure and land use policy changes</b> into subsequent LP/LTP reviews to ensure medium term funding is made best use of. Ensure that other policy-making with a spatial element follows this approach.
Explore potential for <b>boundary change(s)</b> ?	Confirm <b>boundary changes</b> ?
<b>Formalise cross-border or joint working arrangements</b> for infrastructure policy and funding initiatives	
Ensure <b>design of green and blue infrastructure</b> is embedded in policy and mechanisms for its delivery and <b>long term management</b> put in place.	

# Concluding Remarks

This Evidence Paper has started to explore how some of the choices around technology, social policy and lifestyle changes could combine with spatial land use considerations to drive forward a long-term framework for sustainable growth.

We are certain that technology will have a marked influence on spatial patterns of growth for MK over the next 30+ year period, and that now is the right time to consider the best way forward.

However, the way in which technological advances will manifest themselves in behaviour or social policy cannot be fully predicted. As such, setting a 'framework' rather than a 'blueprint' for growth is critical. "Future proofing" of land and infrastructure has proved very effective in MK since the inception of the New Town to the present day.

We strongly recommend that a continuation of the MK approach to built-in future proofing when planning long term will be even more critical in the short to medium term climate of fast paced technological change, continuing decline of public sector funding streams and consequent reliance on third party (private sector) delivery.

Against this background, MK simply can't afford to switch to a short term ethos of "dig it up and try again". Long-term frameworks have been created, embedded in policy and have worked well for MK in the past—and we are confident it can be done once again.



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