



The Civic Society for Milton Keynes

CAMPBELL PARK NORTHSIDE

**A Response to
Milton Keynes Council's
Draft Development Brief**

October 2018

We support the preparation of the Brief for this important, strategic site and accept many of the points that have been made.

We are however concerned that the Brief looks at Campbell Park Northside at an apparently superficial level in that it appears to consider what might be appropriate for the site itself in isolation of its context within the rest of MK in general and CMK in particular.

We are particularly concerned about the way that Policy SS1 of the CMK Alliance Plan has been cast aside without explanation. If MK wishes to attract high quality employers and compete with other locations then we have to be able to offer high quality sites. Policy SS1 recognises this and identifies two within CMK - Block B4 and Blocklets F1.2-1.4. The former has now been allocated for MKU, leaving only the latter.

We believe that it would be extreme folly to abandon this important policy and reallocate the uses for F1.2-1.4, particularly when there are indications that MK will double in size. The continuing growth of MK will place an even greater emphasis upon the primacy of CMK and the sustainable need to have major employers within the city centre rather than dispersed through the urban area. Even though such occupiers will only appear intermittently it is important to look back through the development of CMK to recall the large occupiers who have come here since the opening of the Shopping Building - Argos, Stone and Webster, Abbey National (now Santander), Mobil and, latterly, Network Rail. Some companies change and move on but others remain and the recent announcement of the major expansion of Santander is an example of this.

It is not well known but the original intention of Abbey National was to build their HQ at Willen Lake but a change of management led to the site in CMK. Now, nearly forty years later, their further expansion (which could not have been predicted) has arisen because of the existence of a vacant site in CMK, albeit one that they own. Handled properly, this will bring incalculable benefits to CMK.

We strongly feel that successful city building necessitates planners and others taking a long view and having the confidence to reject "quick wins" in the knowledge that experience will bear out their decision-making.

The CMKAP was put together using a lot of professional expertise by a steering group that included representatives of the Council. No concern has previously been expressed about SS1 and, if the Council genuinely believes it to be a bad policy, then it should say so and justify its argument so that it can be discussed in public forum.

Our similar concern for successful city building means that we cannot support the general shift away from office use within Northside. Again, this was a clear inclusion within the CMKAP for the very real reason of building a proper mixed-use city centre area and not one dominated by a single use that closes down at certain times of the day. As drawn, one could envisage that the Brief will result in a residential area with, at best, some commercial uses on the Silbury Boulevard frontage: this is neither good enough nor appropriate for land within a short distance of one of the biggest and most popular shopping centres in the country.

Whilst it is not part of the Brief it is our view, in passing, that the potential order of development in Campbell Park seems haphazard and not making the best use of the development that has occurred and is in progress. We would have thought that it would have made more sense to

develop Southside first rather than Northside to capitalise upon the Crest Nicholson scheme, especially the commercial and community facilities, and make them more sustainable (and also make the new supermarket on Avebury Boulevard, more sustainable). This would leave either H1 or G1 to be developed next, followed by the other and leaving F1.2-1.4 in abeyance for a major occupier. We suggest that this particular point is worthy of wider debate.

We have the following specific comments upon the draft brief:

1.1	<p>a. The clear intention of the CMK Alliance Plan (hereafter CMKAP) is that this area should be mixed use see eg CMKAP Fig 16. We are concerned that there is no mention of this in the "Vision Statement", which makes no reference to office use.</p> <p>b. The exiting lane is not Common Lane (which runs from CMK to Bradwell). As far as we are aware, it did not have a name. The CMKNP would seem to be mistaken in this matter. If you are seeking a new name, Willen lane may be more appropriate given that this was the destination of the route.</p>
2.1.6	There is no mention of office use, which is an integral part of the CMKAP.
2.4.2	See 1.1b above.
Fig 4	The drawing does not show the substantial areas of open space in the central courts of some of the surrounding housing areas eg Downs Barn and Springfield. The drawing should also show the Campbell Park Marina development, given that it has now received planning consent and construction work has started.
3.3.3	See 1.1b above
3.5	<p>a. There is no mention of the opportunities provided by mixed-use development.</p> <p>b. See 1.1b above.</p> <p>c. There is no mention of the opportunity for reserving F block for a major employer (CMKAP SS1).</p> <p>d. There is no excuse for not knowing the location of services as we presume that full records will exist.</p>
4.1	We are concerned that there is no reference to office use.
5.2	The image of single storey housing is inappropriate for this site. The same comment applies to other images as well and we would ask that they all be reconsidered.
5.2.2	We do not support the incorporation of the boulevard parking within the site unless the G11 test is fully satisfied. It should not be offered as part of the Brief. The parking areas form a key part of public parking for uses in the Park and should be retained.
5.2.4	See 1.1b above.
5.3.5	See 1.1b above.
5.3.6	Whilst "corners" are important in any scheme it should be clear that we are looking for coherent and humane design across the whole site and not just in particular locations.
5.6.1	This section is very weak. The Council, as (effective) landholder is in a position to set whatever energy standards it wishes in excess of local policies. We believe that it should be ambitious in requiring that Northside is a zero carbon development.
5.7.5	<p>a. See 1.1b above.</p> <p>b. At grade crossings of Skeldon Gate and Overgate are not acceptable due to the width of the roads and the existence of convenient underpasses. We support the provision of grade separated crossings on the line of (Common Lane) and would ask that their design follows that used for the other bridges in the area eg over H5, V9 and Darley Gate (Downs Barn). There is a strong design aesthetic in this local area that should be respected.</p>
5.9.2	See 1.1b above.
5.9.3	Any SUDS scheme should be properly integrated into the design of the area and not

	treated as small, independent sites akin to “bomb craters”. We suggest that it would make sense, as a first step, to see if it is feasible to exploit the existing watercourse (the Leat) that runs along the north side of Campbell Park to the pond alongside the canal.
5.10.1	It should be made clear that the public art contribution is 1% of the total construction cost.
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. There is no particular reference to the range of housing to be provided. It is important to cater for all ages and a site for a retirement community should be a requirement, along with the opportunity for self-build. The latter should be modelled upon the Dutch experience eg Almere where self-builders build terraced houses and could, perhaps, be located between H5 and the old lane. b. The overall design should avoid a monolithic appearance and a wide variety of architects should be used (with the potential exception of Blocks F1.2-1.4 if developed for a single occupier). There should therefore be a clear master plan with a restriction (to be determined) upon the maximum length of street frontage to be designed by one architect. c. We think it important that the layout of the buildings fronting the Boulevard should respect the alignment of the CMK grid rather than the Boulevard, as with the existing developments in Campbell Park.

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