

# A Festival of Creative Urban Living 2019

# the BUILT the UNBUILT the UNBUILDABLE

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Milton Keynes' Festival for Creative Urban Living will unite the worlds of visual art, architecture, design, high-tech and urbanism with the urban context of Milton Keynes (MK) – in a unique biennial event.

## CONTEXT

Milton Keynes is one of UK's most prominent examples of the "New Towns Movement" of the 60's. It is the largest of the UK New Towns and arguably the most successful. In contrast to many other New Towns, MK has inherited many aspects of Ebenezer Howard's "Garden City" movement; it is very green, combining extensive tree-lined boulevards and vistas with modernist architecture, urban spaces and a radically segregated traffic system. MK also has a unique composite identity, through the integration of existing towns and villages into the overall New Town design.

Building in MK started in 1968 and continues into the present day. MK is one of the UK's fastest growing cities (population is expected to exceed 300,000 by 2027). Milton Keynes is - as predicted - still affordable, within easy reach of London, Oxford, Cambridge and Birmingham. It has a strong business sector and economy, with many large-scale international companies relocating their UK

headquarters here. People like to live in MK. It's quiet, green, accessible with great transport links and has a developing cultural scene. As an ever evolving city with a keen eye on the future, Milton Keynes Council and Cranfield University have just launched an international architectural design competition for MK:U – a new model university to be built in the centre of the city. Scheduled to open in 2023 with 15,000 students, MK:U will focus on vocational and STEM subjects relating to digital, cyber, autonomy, robotics and artificial intelligence. In Autumn 2019, Milton Keynes will experience the inaugural 'A Festival of Creative Urban Living' – a new biennial art, design and architecture festival for the city. The inaugural Festival of Creative Urban Living will launch on 26 September and run till 13 October 2019. Commissioned by Milton Keynes Council, the first edition will be developed, shaped and co-curated by raumlaborberlin.

The 2019 edition will be titled "the built, the unbuilt and the unbuildable". Through a free, public programme of new commissions, exhibitions, conferences and associated programmes, the Festival will ask and explore the question 'how do we live well in cities – now and in the future?' Within this macro exploration, the Festival will attempt to address the micro – with a critical





revision of MK's urban planning ideals, opening up debate and discussion concerning the founding design principles of the city, and their relevance or irrelevance to the 21st Century.

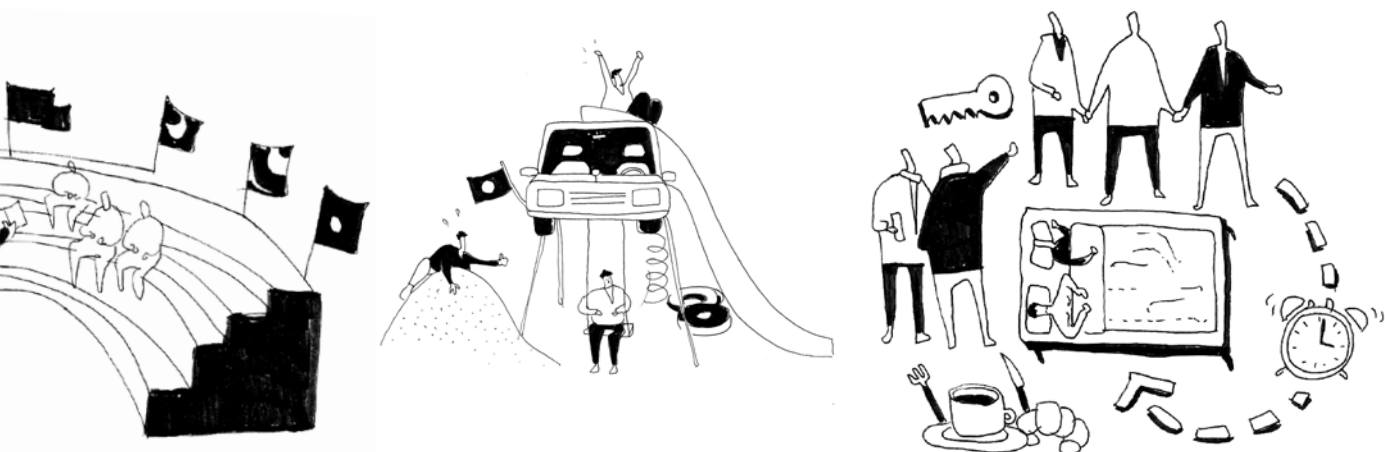
raumlaborberlin want to probe and question the ideas of MK's founders and how the city's future design must reflect a new epoch; one that is shaped by climate change, Brexit, globalisation, peak oil and social segregation. Through a multidisciplinary programme, raumlaborberlin will work in collaboration with MK associations, organisations, community groups, cultural institutions and the active civil society in order to explore MK's current urban reality and the city's future prospects. The Festival will include many art forms – with contributions from a range of cultural organisations, projects, artists, creatives, architects, designers, planners and urban theorists.

The Festival will be housed in a series of temporary structures, located on Midsummer Boulevard East – the central spine of MK's infamous grid road system. These new 'spaces' will provide a hub and a visual focal point for the Festival. Due to this location and the planned regeneration of Midsummer Boulevard East, the Festival will also provide an opportunity to engage Milton Keynes' citizens and the wider audiences in

creating prospective plans for the future of the city-centre and re-designing the public realm.

One particular area of interest to raumlaborberlin is that MK is the perfect bike city; with the unique Redway network – a complete off-road cycling and walking infrastructure that facilitates rapid bike traffic (and walking and running) through extensive green urban and suburban landscapes, without ever having to see, smell or hear any cars! At present, the Redways are under used by both citizens and visitors, as the city has become reliant on the direct and efficient grid roads.

raumlaborberlin want to change this! Through the Festival, they will experiment with new forms of propaganda marketing and initiatives for climate neutral traffic and for a city without cars. A 'Bike School' will attempt to make the bike the preferred mode of transport in MK. A 'Utopia Station' will research the fantastic new potentials of a city with hundreds of square miles of unused asphalt urban surface and the Crossroads Open Call will be launched for three artworks/structures which can temporarily make use of empty roads.



# crossroads: the open call



The curatorial team invites proposals for three temporary structures or platforms that can house the Festival programme. For example; talks, performances, social gatherings, a place to sleep, food, installation and workshops. The structures will form part of the Festival campus along Midsummer Boulevard East and will be built in the two-week 'build' period, prior to the Festival's launch. The section of Midsummer Boulevard East is outlined in the enclosed plan and will be closed for cars and buses during the Festival period. Road closure will facilitate a live test of a future vision for the city-centre, where part of Midsummer Boulevard East becomes a pedestrianized zone. raumlaborberlin are looking for artistic contributions that explore either 'the built, the unbuilt or the unbuildable' urban reality of Milton Keynes and/or MK's Midsummer Boulevard. The title Crossroads refers to MK's radical traffic scheme that consists of hundreds of roundabouts, flyovers, underpasses and very few traffic lights! The concepts that underline the development of the Festival of Creative Urban Living are as follows:

## CROSSROADS 1. THE BUILT

In Milton Keynes, infrastructure has always been a major subject in the public discourse. Visionary infrastructure and trees is what makes MK unique amongst the UK New Towns. Within this category we would like to receive proposals that offer a critique of MK's current condition - as a city whose public space is dominated by car-friendly infrastructure. We have included some aerial photographs to illustrate how car-dominant the city-centre is. What is needed to transform a car-friendly city into a climate-friendly city? MK centre is famous for the "porte cocheres" - elegant black roofs sheltering and announcing pedestrians, who would like to cross the roads. Transforming Midsummer Boulevard into a pedestrian zone will make these structures and many other roads, parking lots and the flyovers that cover MK's Open Market obsolete from their initial function.

What could be an alternative use?

## CROSSROADS 2. THE UNBUILT

Many aspects of the original masterplan of central MK where not realised. This is a very common situation, where social infrastructure received less investment than commercial elements, which are seen as essential to economic success. The problem is that it's mostly the non-commercial social infrastructure which remains unbuilt. So today, central MK consists of retail and parking space with public areas in-between that lack any quality spaces and opportunities for social encounters or sojourns. In respect of "the unbuilt" we are looking for proposals of a temporary space that invites people to stay, meet and interact.

## CROSSROADS 3. THE UNBUILDABLE

Our last category refers to the "what if..." aspect of Milton Keynes. The city was a great utopian vision before it was built (see the enclosed images created by Helmut Jacoby showing an attractive, clean and idealised vision of MK). The illustration of the future helps our imagination see the unbuilt, the unmatched reality and potential atmosphere and in this instance, it helps us endure the imperfection of the present. For "the unbuildable" we are looking for a new utopian vision, where a temporary structure or intervention hints at the past, refers to the present and imagines the future.

'A Festival of Creative Urban Living' is for the city and of the city. We would be delighted to see ideas and proposals that facilitate the inclusion of people – MK citizens, shoppers, bikers, public transport users, market customers, future tourists, ghosts, etc..



## GENERAL INFORMATION AND FACTS

raumlaborberlin and MK team invite professional and amateur artists, designers, architects, makers and performers to propose a temporary structure/ platform or programme, which can be realised as part of the Festival.

The total available budget for each commission is £12,000 – (there are 3 commission opportunities) The budget includes £3,000 for artists/creatives fee and £9,000 for production costs

Support from a technical and production team will be available, as well as administrative and practical assistance. MK and raumlaborberlin construction teams will also be available to assist with construction. A building workshop will be available on site.

We have gathered together a jury of interested parties who will judge the Open Call entries within each of the three categories (1.the built, 2.the unbuilt and 3.the unbuildable). Applicants should decide and include the category within which their proposal should be seen.

Deadline for proposals is Wednesday 24 April 2019 at midnight.

Proposals should include:

- no more than 2 A3 pages with text, images and project description
- no more than 2 A4 pages of own references
- CV



The Jury will review the ideas and meet end of April to decide which projects will be taken forward.

The Jury will consist of

- Jan Liesegang and Benjamin Foerster Baldenius, raumlaborberlin
- Nick Green – ON/OFF Architects, London
- Barbara Kaucky, Erect Architects, London
- Will Cousins, Design Director, David Lock Associates
- Simon Wright, Public Programmes Curator, MK Gallery
- Fiona Boundy, Curator and Creative and Cultural Manager, Milton Keynes Council
- Ursula White, Creative Producer, Milton Keynes
- Caroline Devine, Artist, Milton Keynes

A downloadable PDF is provided with all relevant plans, articles, images, sources of inspiration and raumlaborberlin thinking.

Applications should be submitted via Dropbox to [culture@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:culture@milton-keynes.gov.uk)



# midsummer boulevard

The Festival site



Parking outside the Centre MK



Centre MK



Shopping Centre Connection Building



The Point



Parking Lot





Market



Port Coshere

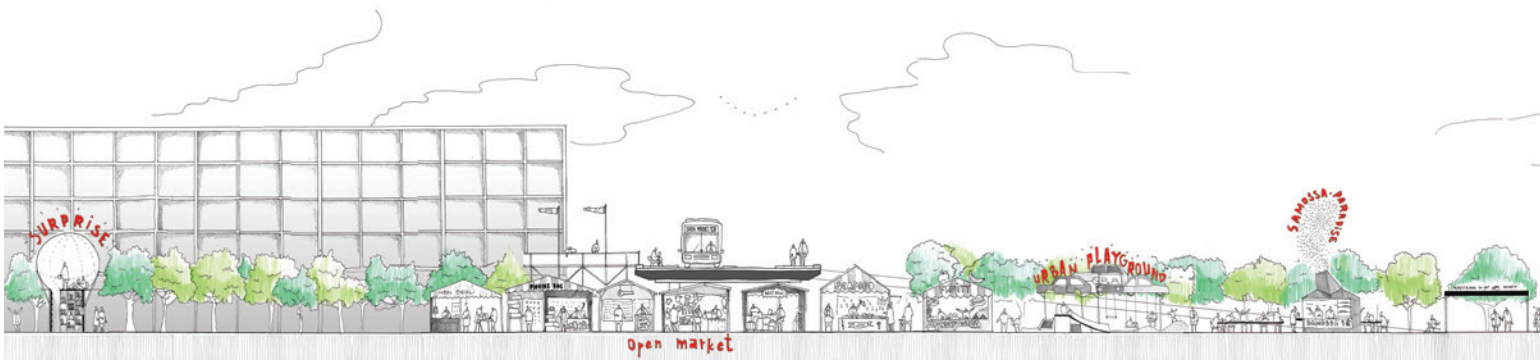
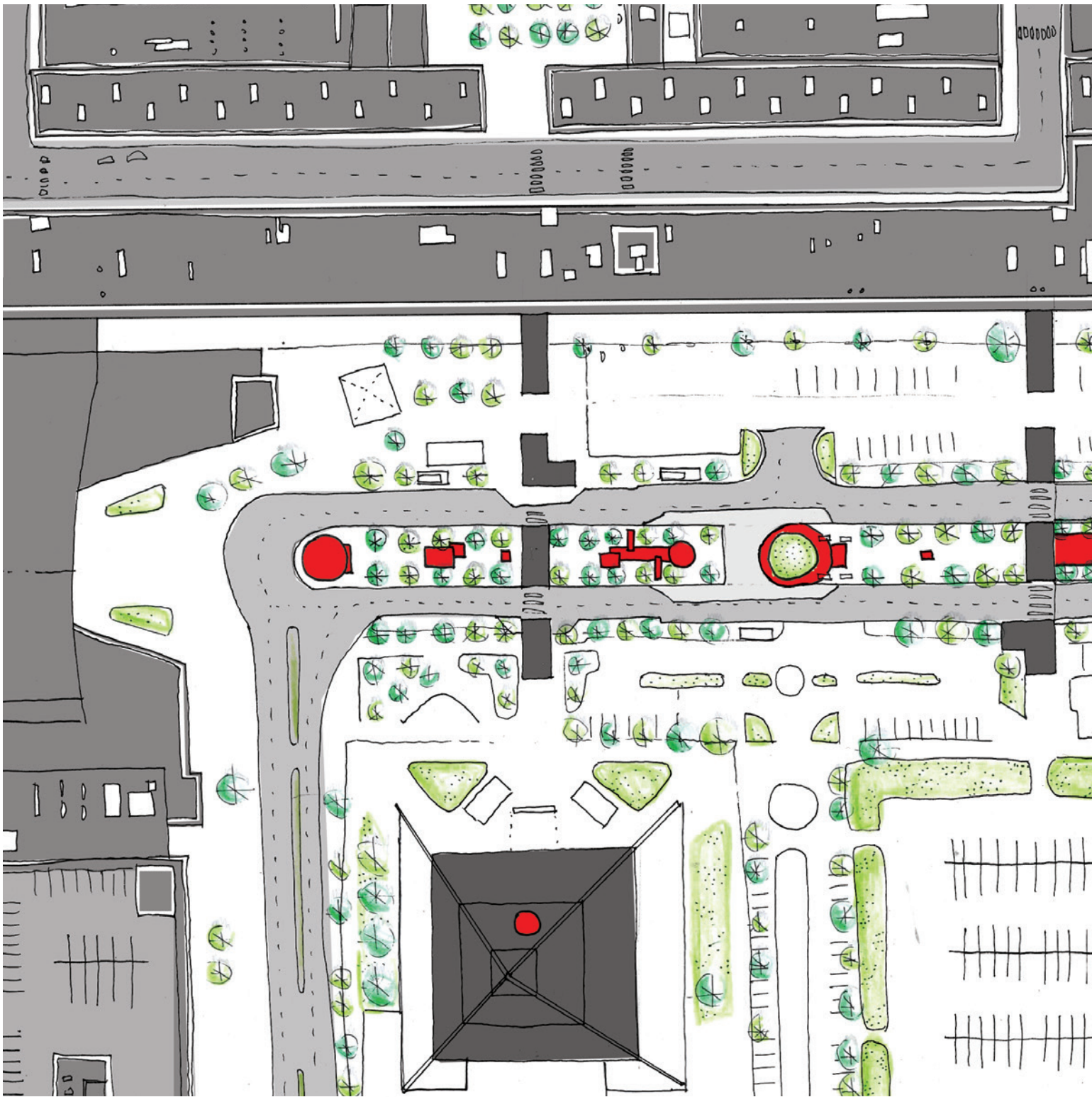


Empty Garage Building

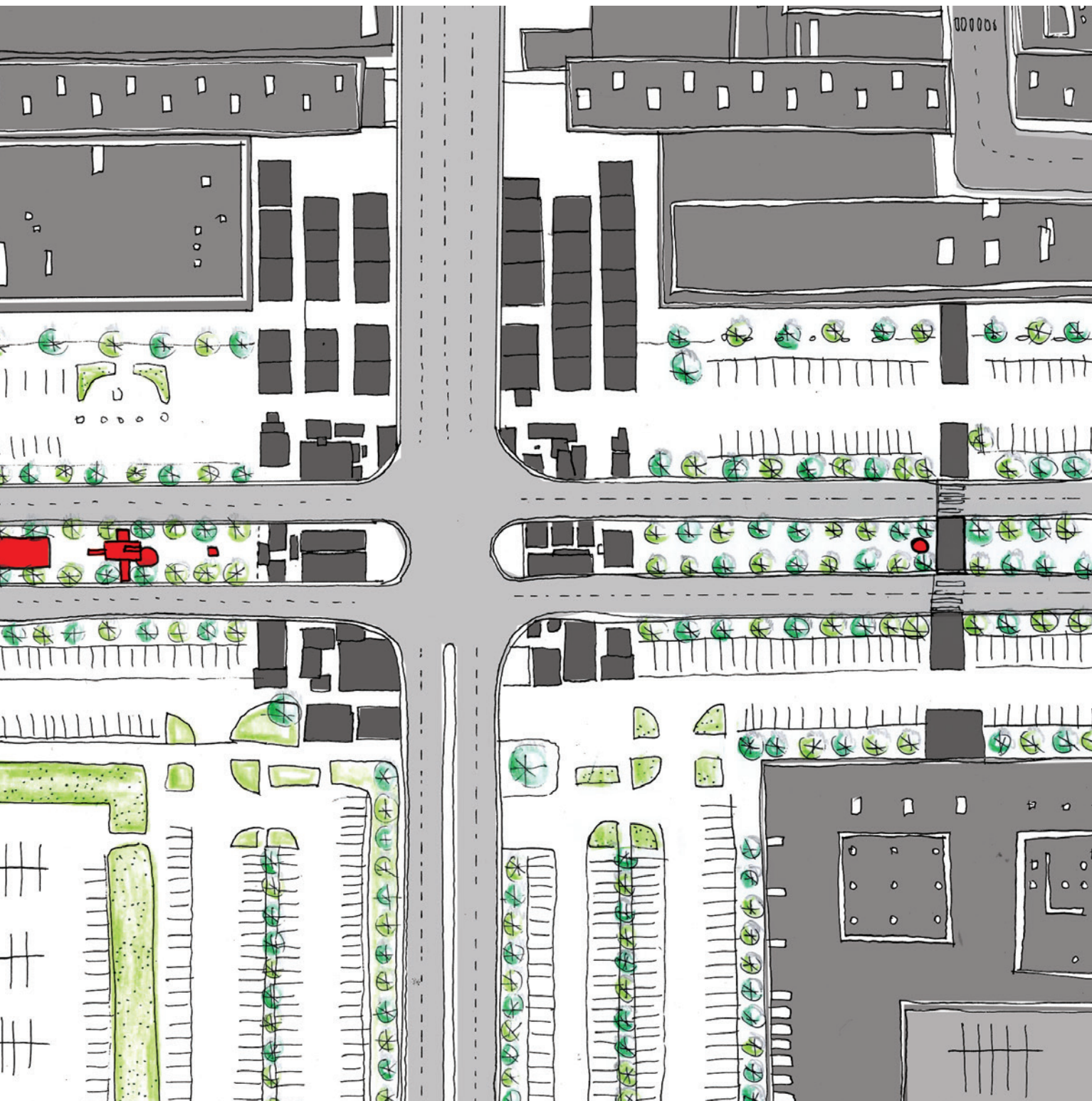


New MK Gallery











## History and overview



MK Map by Llewlyn Davies, Weeks Forstier-Walker & Bor, (Source: Architecture and Planning of Milton Keynes, 1982)

Milton Keynes is located in the South East Midlands region of the UK, equidistant from London, Birmingham, Leicester, Oxford and Cambridge. It was designed by Llewlyn Davies, Weeks Forstier-Walker & Bor. An exemplary of the 1960s New Town Movement, Milton Keynes is a cybernetic town, designed on the principle of systems analysis. It was envisioned to be a city that provides freedom of choice, flexibility and easy movement, afforded by its meticulously laid out grid-road network.

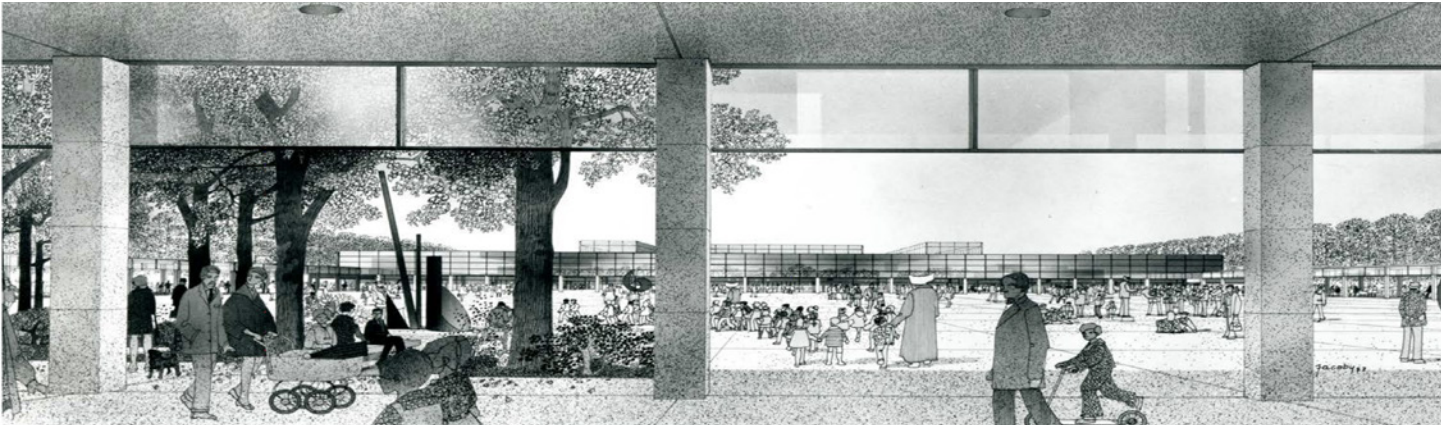
MK was also designed to satisfy the growing consumer needs of the time through what was then the biggest shopping centre in the UK. The shopping centre is surrounded by MK's several estates, housing its diverse population. Unlike the historical pattern of development, MK was designed to grow towards its central core and not away from it.

The city was designed on the assumption that people would spend 5 percent of their time on roads. While there were clearly segregated grids for easy vehicular, pedestrian and bike movement, the predominant choice of transport was always automobiles. This car-dominant lifestyle is becoming a cause of pressing concern in today's world where climate change is becoming increasingly apparent.



Ad Poster for MK by Cogent Elliot (Source: MKDC Archive, 1985)

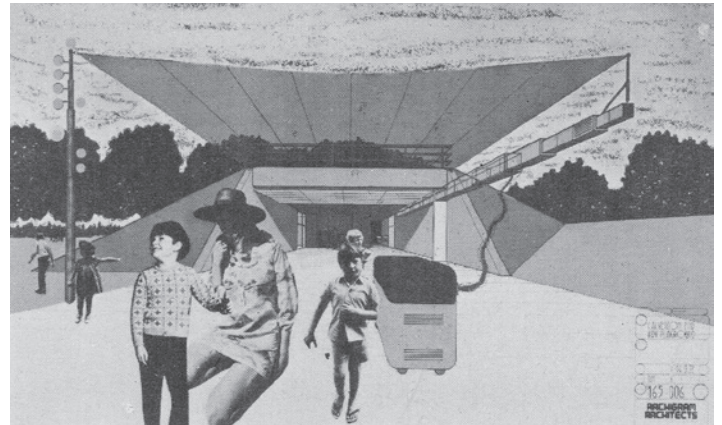




Central Milton Keynes, Drawing by Helmut Jacoby



Central MK (Source: Architecture & Urban Design of 6 British NewTowns)



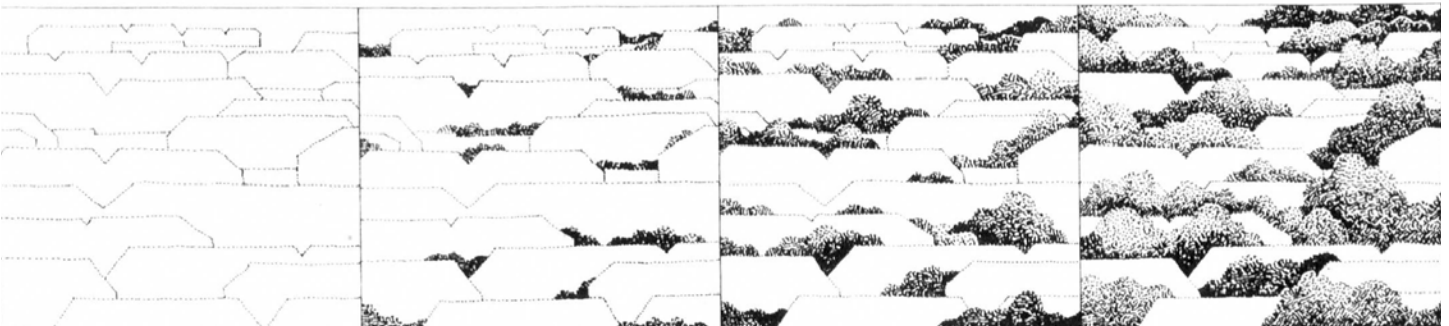
Claverton End Adventure Playground, Archigram (Source: A&D 6/1973)



City Club, Drawing by Helmut Jacoby

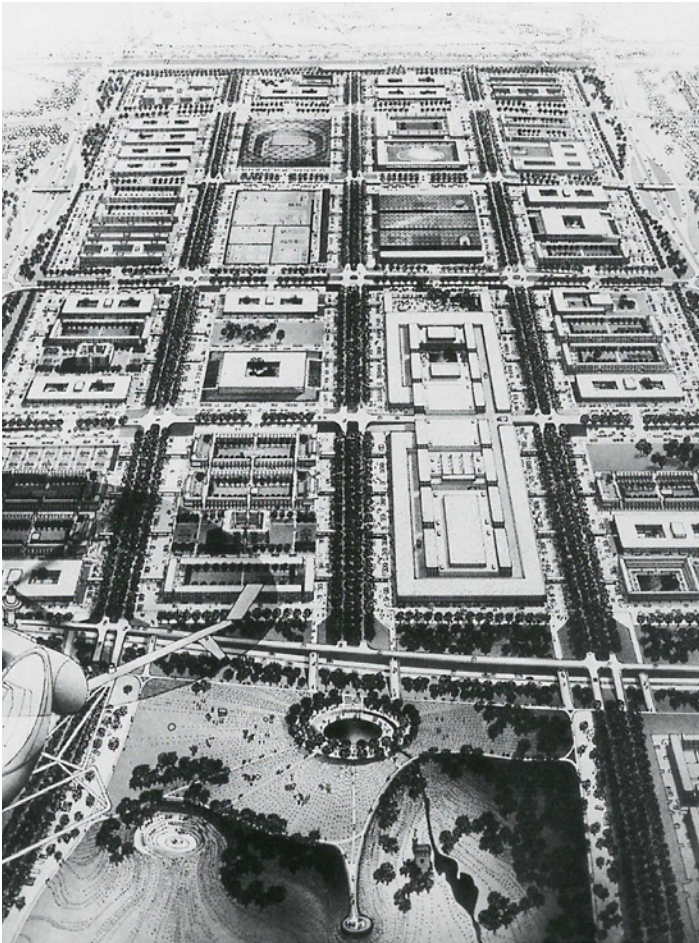


Typical local activity centre (Source: The Plan for Milton Keynes V2, 1970)

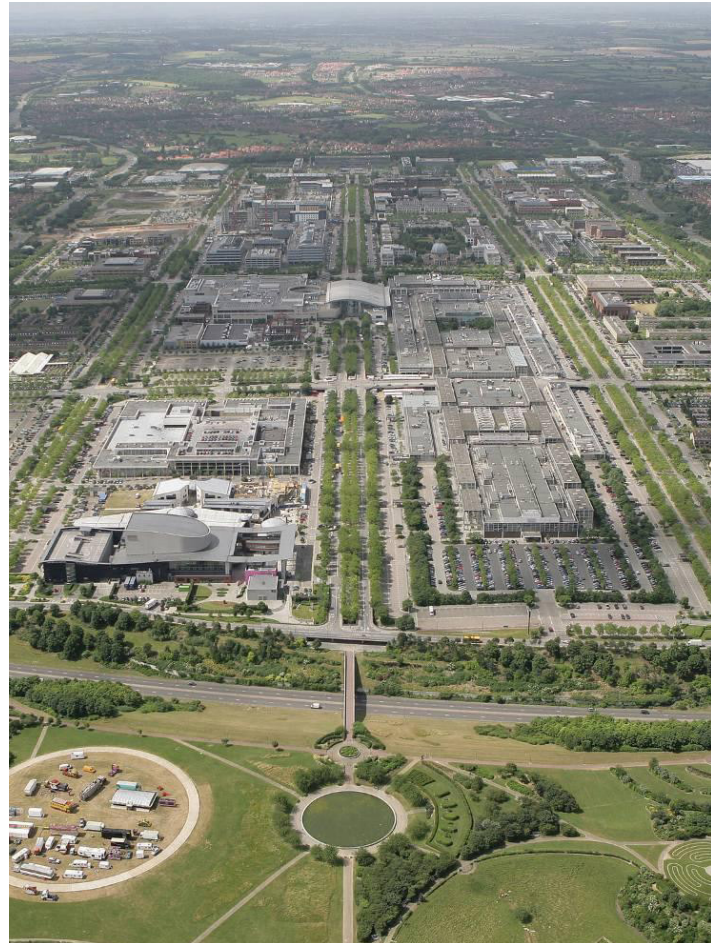


Shallow Oblique Perspective of MK's buildings (Source: Architecture and Planning of Milton Keynes, 1982)

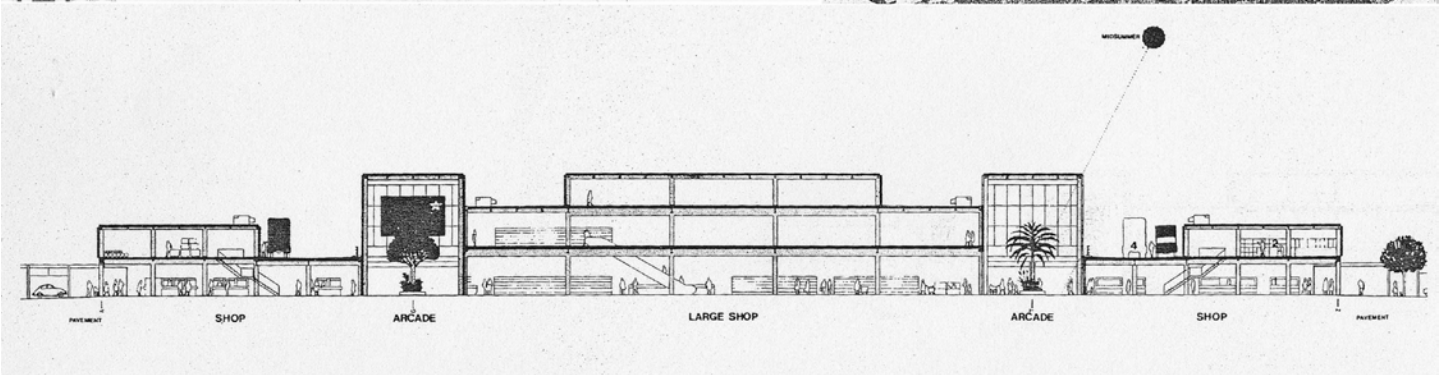
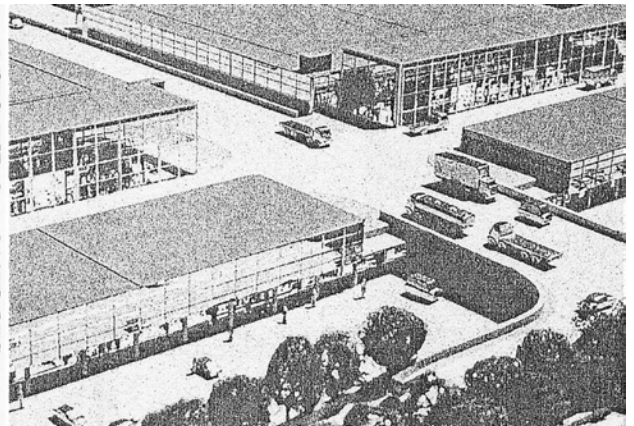
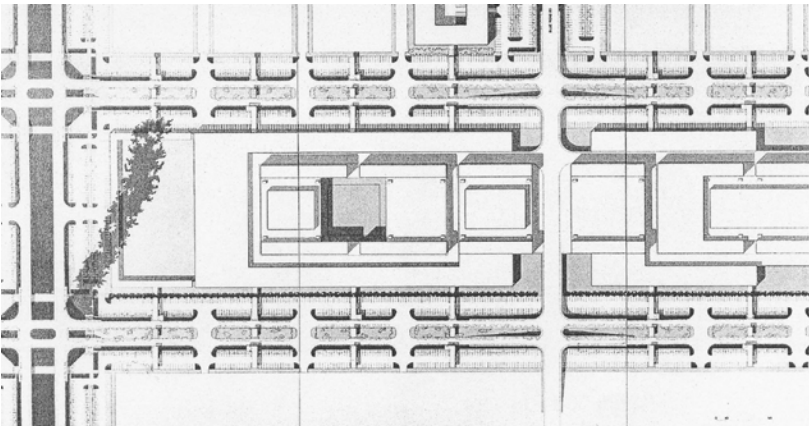




Helmut Jacoby's Utopic Drawing



Aerial View of Central Milton Keynes (Source: MK Pulse Magazine)



Schematic cross-section of Milton Keynes' Shopping Centre (Source: MKDC Collection, Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies)



# references

- Opher, P. and Bird, C. (1981). Architecture and urban design in six British new towns. Headington: Urban Design Oxford Polytechnic.
- The Plan for Milton Keynes (Volume 1): Report of evidence presented by the consultants to the Milton Keynes Development Corporation. (1970)
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- Wakeman, R. (2016). Practicing utopia. Chicago (Ill.): The University of Chicago Press
- Walker, D. (1982). The architecture and planning of Milton Keynes. London: Architectural Press
- Milton Keynes: A New City comes to Life (1972) – exhibition at London's Design Centre
- Milton Keynes: A New City comes to Life- magazine by Minale Tattersfield (corporate identity, graphic design, promotional material and navigational systems for MK)

