

MILTON KEYNES – THE OBVIOUS CHOICE

1. Milton Keynes – location and context

Milton Keynes (MK) is the obvious choice for the GBR Headquarters location.

The borough of Milton Keynes is an area with significant railway heritage, history and rail industry presence that Great British Railways would benefit greatly from. MK's location was chosen to give the town a clear geographical advantage, equidistant between London and Birmingham, and Oxford and Cambridge. MK already hosts over 6,000 jobs within the Rail sector¹, making it an excellent location for any organisation in the sector.

This application has cross-party support from Milton Keynes Council, the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership and the MK Business Council. The borough's two MPs, Ben Everitt and Iain Stewart, have also been campaigning to bring the Great British Railways HQ to Milton Keynes. We also have the support from other organisations including Costain who recognise the value that GBR being based in MK could have on the area, and Socius who are leading a major mixed-use development scheme in Central Milton Keynes.

We understand that Great British Railways is still developing its operational model, and that as a result, flexibility will be key to GBR when it comes to the number of staff that will be based at the HQ, the floorspace required and the opening date.

¹ IDBR, 2021 (2020)

With the requirements of GBR not yet extensively defined therefore, we would work closely with the GBR Transition Team to narrow down the site requirements. GBR is a model that is predicated on doing things differently, something that Milton Keynes is well known for.

MK Council is well practiced in helping new arrivals to the city find potential sites and in defining the requirements that most closely fit business needs. Two sites immediately present themselves as excellent candidates for the location of the Great British Rail headquarters, and MK Council are committed to working jointly with the Transition Team to confirm the best site.

Pictured: Milton Keynes Council's Leader and Deputy Leader showing their support to bringing Great British Railways to Milton Keynes



Potential location:

The Quadrant – Central Milton Keynes

Central MK (CMK) is home to Network Rail's Quadrant building, built in MK in 2012 at a cost of over £100m and described as Network Rail's national centre. The Quadrant complex is over 37,000 sq.m. across four linked buildings. There is a clear opportunity for the GBR HQ to be co-located in the Quadrant building.

The Quadrant would provide GBR with statement offices, one that already houses Network Rail's operational centre and has capacity to co-locate the GBR team. This would provide good value for money for tax and fare payers of the railway.

In addition to Network Rail, CMK is home to East West Rail Company, EFKB (Eiffage, Kier, Ferrovial Construction and BAM Nuttall), and the Connected Places Catapult, providing the new HQ with excellent locational advantages in the railway sector.

Pictured: The Quadrant, Central Milton Keynes



Potential location: Central Bletchley

Bletchley presents another prime opportunity for the Great British Railway HQ. Bletchley Rail Station became important in the Second World War; walking distance from Bletchley Park, at the midpoint between Oxford and Cambridge and connecting the brilliant minds of the codebreakers. Network Rail Infrastructure already have roles based in Bletchley, ahead of its reconnection to Oxford and Cambridge through East West Rail (EWR). With the town undergoing a transformation through the Bletchley Town Deal, GBR would gain excellent opportunities from being located in Central Bletchley.

Pictured: Bletchley Railway Station



MKC is working with a number of key stakeholders in managing a programme to regenerate Central Bletchley. Around Bletchley railway station, MKC and its development body Milton Keynes Development Partnership (MKDP) are orchestrating the delivery of a development masterplan. A supporting Memorandum of Understanding has been signed by Network Rail, London and Continental Railways, EWR and West Midlands Trains, who all have interests in the site.

MKDP owns large development sites to the west and east of the station and funding from the Towns Deal Programme will contribute to their regeneration. Concept work has already been undertaken on a large mixed-use development located on the old Fire and Police station sites, with space for 2,500 sq.m. of Cat A office accommodation (flexible in nature and fully serviced), which is planned to include an Innovation Centre for technology SMEs. Investigations are currently taking place on an ambitious plan for a new station development linking this office accommodation, with mixed residential development on sites to the west and east of the railway. This would prove an excellent location for a rail industry tenant who would have easy access to other Network Rail/East West Rail sites. In the near future, there are also new plans to develop the Brunel Shopping Centre recently acquired by MKDP close to Bletchley station into a business innovation centre.

2. Levelling Up

Milton Keynes is located in the South East Midlands. We work closely with colleagues across Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire with the MK functional economic area reaching well beyond the city boundaries.

Pictured: Milton Keynes Station Square



We have a developed vision for Milton Keynes as a borough of 410,000 people by 2050 which has cross-party support from MK Council, providing certainty to businesses and investors over the long term over the future growth and vision of our city.

Our levelling up agenda for Milton Keynes has seen early delivery through the Bletchley Town Deal. Although historically pivotal to the UK as the home of modern computing and codebreaking, Bletchley was an

area experiencing worse outcomes for its residents, with lower start-up rates and lower skills attainment than in the rest of Milton Keynes. To unlock the potential of everyone in Bletchley, a dedicated Towns Deal programme has been established, including projects related directly to the rail station and its pivotal role in the future of the area, as discussed in the section above.

We are working hard to create pride in place of in MK, bidding for city status this year to transform the perceptions of our new town to reflect its status as a nationally significant economic and population centre, attracting the national HQ of GBR would be a significant step to reflect this.

Pictured: Bletchley Town Centre



3. Connected and easy to get to

MK Central has excellent access to the Midlands (Birmingham, Coventry, Wolverhampton), the North West of England including Manchester, Liverpool, Crewe and Preston, and London Euston via the West Coast Mainline. Services to London and Birmingham provide a direct connection to MK in under 45 minutes. MK Central is also directly connected to Clapham Junction via a Southern service. By train, we are directly connected to Birmingham International Station and Airport, which in future will be part of the interchange with HS2.

Bletchley Station is directly connected to the West Coast Main Line and the Marston Vale line. East West Rail will be arriving soon, connecting Bletchley directly to Oxford in (2024) and Cambridge (in 2030s).

In terms of connectivity to the other nations of Great Britain, there are direct trains from Milton Keynes Central to Scotland (Edinburgh Waverly and Glasgow Central) and Wales (Holyhead and Bangor). There are five international airports within a 90-minute drive of Milton Keynes, connecting the city well by air.

The UK's largest single rail freight terminal, Daventry International Rail Freight terminal is accessible in less than one hour drive time of Milton Keynes.

Milton Keynes has in recent years hosted many trials looking at the future of transport in Great Britain, working in true partnership with industry on social, economic and transport objectives. From the first operational autonomous vehicle/pod trials, to the UK's first publicly owned 5G network, and the UK's first brand neutral electric vehicle showroom in Centre:MK, to the world's largest autonomous robot fleet of Starship Robots making deliveries, Milton Keynes Council has consistently adopted a true 'city as a test bed' approach, enabling the private sector to test 'future of transport' solutions, live in our city. We collaborate with other Local Authorities on enabling tests to place within their areas and share our learning to help the future become reality. Our

smart city expertise and enabling approach to trialling new concepts, enabling industry to collect real world data on their operations is recognised as world leading, showcasing innovation in Great Britain to a global audience. Being part of MK would allow GBR, as Network Rail already does, to participate in this leading innovation work on the future of transport.

MK is leading the way on the electrification of transport. Milton Keynes is well recognised as a lead in the adoption of electric vehicles and related infrastructure, in line with the UK Government's aims of all new sales being electric vehicles by 2030. We were recently named the best place to own an electric vehicle in the UK, the result of piloting an early roll-out of charging infrastructure.

MKC was successful in its bid through the Zero Emission Bus Regional Access scheme to bring a fleet of fully electric buses to MK and is currently working to deliver this as part of its strategy for a future transport system for the city ready to meet future challenges. The sites proposed are easily accessible by active/public travel.

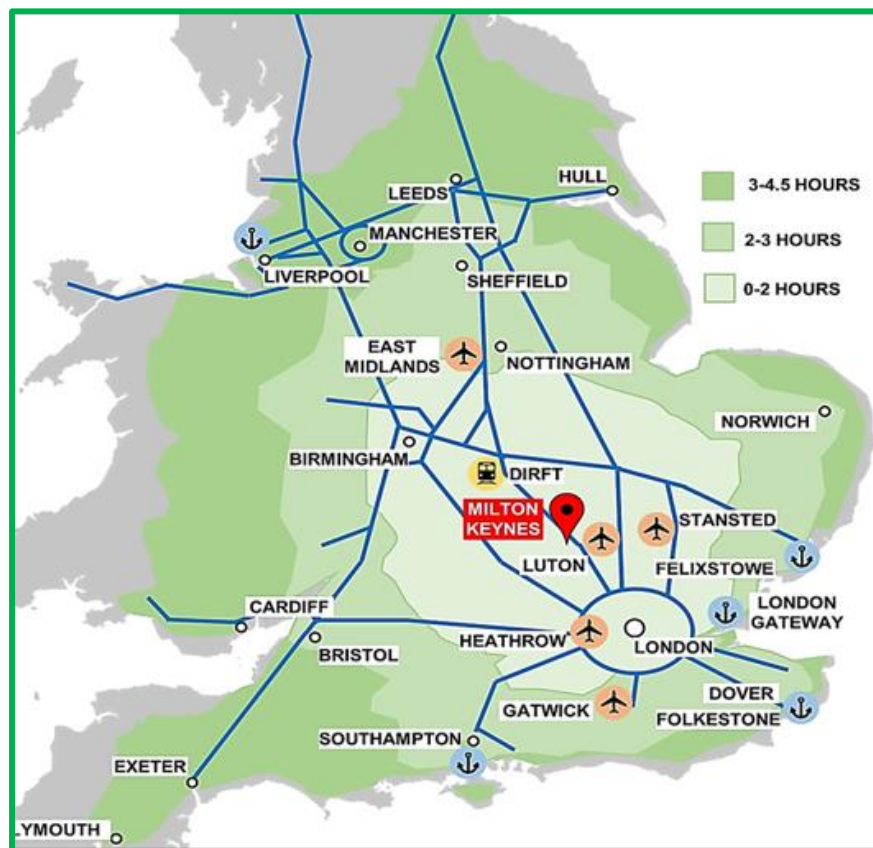
Pictured: trains at Bletchley station



4. Opportunities for Great British Railways

More than 1.4 million people live within a 45-minute drive of Milton Keynes, making it an excellent location for any national body to reach customers and Businesses. Over 12,000 businesses call the borough home, recognising the strength of its location.

Pictured: Travel time from Milton Keynes



Based on 2021 data, over 6,000 jobs in MK are within the Rail sector². The Council's Economy team have most recently supported Rail stakeholders with queries on settling in the city and on supporting the industry's skills agenda. The Council understands the importance and needs of the rail sector and its supply chains.

The strengths of the Milton Keynes logistic sector are clear evidence of our optimal location, with over 15,000 people locally employed in logistics and transportation. The Logistics sector is an area of significant strength for Milton Keynes, with excellent access to the M1 through Junctions 13 and 14. The UK's largest single rail freight terminal, Daventry International Rail Freight terminal is accessible in less than 1 hour drive time of Milton Keynes.

Pictured: cyclist at Milton Keynes Central station



² IDBR, 2021 (2020)

In retail, one of the UK's top 10 shopping centres is within easy walking distance of offices in Central Milton Keynes. We collaborate closely with Centre:MK on the future of our city and we work together on the innovation programmes we run, including hosting Europe's first Robotics competition in the shopping centre and partnering with the Council on its upcoming sustainability and resilience accelerator programme run by the Connected Places Catapult.

There are substantial opportunities for collaboration on projects on the future of transport within MK.

Pictured: future Mass Rapid Transit in Milton Keynes



The long-term plans for the future of our city will also afford GBR opportunities for working with the wider transport industry. Milton Keynes Council is currently developing plans for a Mass Rapid Transit system for the city, exploring new models of delivery and making considerations such as first/last mile journey links. Linking Central Milton Keynes and Central Bletchley is being considered as an early pilot route for the MRT network.

Milton Keynes is well-loved by its residents as an attractive, green place to live and spend time. Through our Strategy for 2050, we are working to maintain this green character, to provide a range of homes that are affordable for our residents, to ensure our local workforce has skills for the future. We recognise that being an attractive place to live is very important to our employers, ensuring that their staff have a good quality of life.

Pictured: Station Square in Central Milton Keynes



5. Railway heritage and links to the network

Despite the new town of Milton Keynes being only 55 years old, the railway heritage of the area goes much further back in history. Wolverton, a historic town which now forms part of the borough of MK was the first Railway town. Wolverton is home to Wolverton Works, the world's longest continually operating railway works, in operation since 1838. Royal Saloons have been built in Wolverton for over 150 years, producing trains all the way back to Queen Victoria's reign.

Today, Wolverton Works is still home to Gemini Rail Group who employ over 200 members of staff at their Milton Keynes operation.

Pictured: the Royal Train at Wolverton Works



As covered above, Bletchley Park, which played a pivotal role in the Second World War, was strategically chosen as equidistant between Cambridge and Oxford, connecting the country's brightest minds through rail. The Varsity line between Oxford and Cambridge was closed in 1967, the same year that MK was formally designated as a new town. It is due to reopen as East West Rail soon, with direct services from Bletchley to Oxford by 2024, and on to Cambridge in the early 2030s. East West Rail company have chosen Milton Keynes for its headquarters.

It is not just MK's original towns that have significant rail links. Since the New Town's designation in 1967, Central Milton Keynes (known as CMK to locals) has become home to Network Rail's Quadrant building, East West Railway Company Headquarters and EFKB (Eiffage, Kier, Ferrovial Construction and BAM Nuttall). Opened in 2012, Milton Keynes was chosen as the perfect location for Network Rail's Quadrant building following a national process to. At the time, Network Rail stated that

*"We chose Milton Keynes because it fitted all the criteria we had set – the site is a five minute walk from MK Central station, the town is on the West Coast mainline with a journey time of 35-minutes into London Euston and there was land ready to develop. Also, because the area is fairly new and rapidly expanding, it has very good amenities for people of all ages and their families."*³

MKC worked closely with Network Rail to relocate their significant presence into the city, and would use this experience to ensure a smooth welcome for GBR's Headquarters.

The rail sector is already a significant local employer, based on 2021 data, employing over 6,000 people within the city. Choosing Milton Keynes at GBR's HQ not only safeguards the existing roles in the rail sector within MK, and shows confidence in its railway heritage, but allows us to build on this for the next stage of MK's history.

³ Network Rail case study - InvestMK

6. Value for money

The principal Value for Money drivers behind locating in Milton Keynes are in the benefits of our strategic location. This is well-evidenced from the number of rail organisations located in the city. MK's strategic location on the rail network affords opportunities to travel sustainably to the rest of GB by train, minimising GBR's environmental impact of work on improving the railways.

As stated in the original press release by Network Rail, the opening of the Quadrant was an excellent business decision for the railway. They said:

"Moving so many people to a single location will save Network Rail tens of millions of pounds a year in office rental costs, helping cut the cost of the railway and delivering better value for money for taxpayers and fare payers."⁴

Locating Great British Railways HQ in the MK area will continue to achieve this value for public money.

In addition to our enviable location, MK also ranks as the second top fibre city in Great Britain, offering 87% FTTP coverage.⁵

⁴ <https://www.networkrailmediacentre.co.uk/news/network-rails-new-national-centre-opens-for-business-in-milton-keynes>

Pictured: Milton Keynes Central station



⁵ <https://www.computerweekly.com/news/252513170/UK-superfast-ultrafast-broadband-deployments-track-upwards-rapidly-in-Q4-2021>

7. Public support

Milton Keynes Council demonstrated unanimous, cross-party support with the motion supporting its bid to bring GBR to Milton Keynes. The political leadership of MK, including the city's MPs, have been making the case that our city is the obvious choice since the announcement of the GBR HQ competition. GBR will enjoy political support from all levels by choosing MK as the location for its HQ. It is clear the rail sector has been an incredibly important part of MK's history even before the new town was designated, and GBR's HQ being in MK will continue to celebrate this heritage. The public reaction to the announcement of the GBR competition reflects the passion the general public and the importance locally of the large role that Network Rail has played.

Since the new town's inception, there has always been a long-term plan and vision for Milton Keynes, providing residents with a clear idea of the ambitions the place they live in has. Most recently, in the Milton Keynes Strategy for 2050 was adopted by MKC with cross-party support, outlining amongst other issues the importance of providing quality jobs for everyone in Milton Keynes. The GBR HQ location being in MK would directly deliver on our ambition to support existing businesses (strengthening the opportunities for the existing rail sector in MK) as well as attracting new businesses to our area.

The can-do culture that has been outlined as an aspiration for Great British Railways is perfectly reflected in the culture of Milton Keynes, a city with a proven track record as a living lab for the future of transport and innovation. Milton Keynes is a place like no other in GB, that is unashamedly different by design. We are at the cutting edge of modern thinking, proud of being a can do place, where we learn alongside business what the future will be like.

In Milton Keynes, Great British Railways would find itself a home with unparalleled connectivity, a city that makes the future possible today, celebrates its rich railway heritage, and provides a collaborative environment for like-minded businesses.

Pictured: Old Wolverton

