

Alliance targets a 'blueprint for growth'



CENTRAL Milton Keynes is one of eight 'frontrunner' areas in the UK to pilot the government's new Business Neighbourhood schemes.

The CMK Alliance is a steering group of business leaders and representatives of Milton Keynes Council and Central Milton Keynes Town Council.

Set up under the Localism Act, its brief is to create a "blueprint for prosperity" based on the views of businesses and residents on how the city centre should evolve. The CMK Alliance Plan is the only scheme to cover a city centre and aims to promote further economic growth in the city centre and the wider Milton Keynes area.

Alliance chair Rebecca Kurth has called on businesses - owners, employees and management who want to help write the plan - to visit the alliance's 'wiki' website and input their views and ideas. She said: "We need to build a plan for the future of CMK that meets our community's needs and aspirations. Our future prosperity is not guaranteed - we must actively work together to achieve it."

A dedicated CMK Alliance Business Forum has also been set up, from which the eight



● **Kay Greenhalgh**

business representatives to the 16 strong steering group were elected. It is open to all businesses based in Central Milton Keynes and aims to create a strong and united business voice.

The wiki plan is a 'living' document available on line 24 hours a day until the end of May.

Milton Keynes City centre manager Kay Greenhalgh (pictured) said: "It is hoped the plan will therefore be written 'by the people, for the people, in their place' - a new and different way of planning made possible through the Localism Act but one that requires your involvement to succeed."

The CMK Alliance plans to have its plan finalised by October. Ms Greenhalgh said: "It is crucial that as many businesses engage in this process as possible."

The Alliance has already sent its first newsletter to around 1,000 city centre businesses and is holding a series of workshops until May 23.

Now we have a sporting chance to really make a difference

WE HAVE seen public consultations come and go in this city that we all generally appear to love. And after they have run their carefully crafted consultations, the people who commissioned them tell us that they have listened to us really carefully and they are going to be going ahead with their appalling new development just as they intended all along, anyway...

In Central Milton Keynes we have seen how the building line in Midsummer Boulevard was narrowed from 75 metres to 40 metres to facilitate the building of TheHub; how underpasses were infilled to facilitate the building of er... TheHub and how roundabouts were replaced by the world's slowest traffic lights to facilitate the building of - you guessed it - TheHub.

And now the prospect of Hub 2 stands before us in the piece of land called B4.4 opposite Vizion... itself no great success design-wise. I suppose it is just that, situated next to TheHub, a fermenting, fly-blown rubbish tip would look somewhat attractive.

But that is all in the past. The damage is done and we must lick our wounds and move on to other, newer threats. We have recently seen how the owners of

our high street, which also happens to be a regional shopping centre - namely thecentre:mk - are determined to destroy Secklow Gate.

I have written extensively about this so will not go into too much detail here. Suffice it to say that I do not believe that the majority of people, presented fairly with the cold hard facts, would countenance this urban vandalism for a Milton Keynes minute. However there is hope - and it involves you.

'This is an important initiative and if we do not want the agenda for development of our city centre hijacked once again by those with vested interests, we must act now.'

A new kind of consultation has arrived: one that has at least a sporting chance of not only being different but of actually making a vital difference. It is where you can really play a part.

A loose collective of vested interests trading as Milton Keynes City Centre Management is now in partnership with the former parish council, now renamed Central

Milton Keynes Town Council, and Milton Keynes Council as the unitary authority.

They have set up the CMK Alliance and have launched the CMK Alliance Plan, a Business Neighbourhood Plan designed to create and manage a public debate about the future of Central Milton Keynes. Importantly, the wiki website www.cmkalliance.co.uk is now open for writers and contributors to access freely until the end of May.

So the question for you, as once asked by Clint Eastwood (and please forgive the informality), might be: "Do you feel lucky, punk? Well, do you?"

If you do, and you would like to make a difference to Central Milton Keynes - I strongly suggest you do - visit the website and start adding your thoughts.

If the prospect of that seems a little daunting, there are also several workshops you can attend as well as drop-in sessions. All details are on the same website. Please look at it today.

This is an important initiative and if we do not want the agenda for development of our city centre hijacked once again by those with vested interests, we must act now. We know how clever

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they can be at squeezing your round opinions into their square boxes - strangely, when I mention square boxes my mind instantly returns to TheHub - so now is our chance to stop them in their tracks and really have our voices heard.

I commend the CMK Alliance to you. Do your bit... please. Your opinion really should have currency and count as much as anyone else's who lives or works here.

If you have any queries, contact Milton Keynes City Centre Management on 01908 398135 or e-mail info@mkccm.org.

Milton Keynes is counting on you. Cheerio.

● For more information, visit www.cmkalliance.co.uk

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