

Project: Station Square Revitalisation Proposal from Milton Keynes Development Corporation

The change to street trading control is part of a project to transform Station Square in Milton Keynes, ahead of the 40th anniversary of the Station which opened in 1982.

Station Square was laid out as the original gateway to the new town and still provides people their first impressions of the city once they leave the doors of the station. The station is a public transport hub connecting rail passengers with bus services, bicycle hire opportunities and taxis as well as walking routes to the city centre.

The project's purpose is to transform Station Square into a lively, bustling space by introducing community activity, making it feel more welcoming, pleasant and sociable. Additionally it seeks to improve bus travel, cycling and digital infrastructure.

Physical changes to the Square will include:

- A small, diverse and healthy, independent 'pop up' food and drink offer.
- A space for live performances, public art, lighting and water features.
- New landscaping and access to grassed areas.
- 'Smart' bins and benches with mobile charging points and free WiFi.
- Clear wayfinding for pedestrians.
- A deep clean of the Square and decluttering of unnecessary signage.

Transport improvements will include:

- 'Smart ticketing' vending machine.
- Improvements to infrastructure, including facilities for accessible transport.
- Electronic screens displaying interactive travel information including routes, timetables, real time info, visitor locations, and event/disruption information.

The introduction of a cycling hub that includes:

- A secure, enclosed weatherproof cycle parking facility with CCTV and electronic access via Smart Ticketing 'MK Move' cards.
- Centralised bike hire (Santander and Lime).
- Cycle maintenance and support through a local social enterprise.

The project's objectives are for:

- Improve arrival / departure experience.
- Increased activity and social interaction fostering well-being and health.
- A welcoming, inviting and inclusive environment.
- Public realm that promotes active travel.
- An effective, convenient and reliable multimodal interchange.

Currently despite rail passenger numbers and proximity to offices and homes, Station Square has been described as unattractive, unsafe, bleak and boring in recent public consultations.

The proposed food offering, landscaping and improved public realm are a direct response to the public's suggestions for improving the Square. The enhancements will introduce activity and bustle to the Square and invite people to spend greater time in it - encourage employees to get outside at lunchtime; entertain and occupy waiting passengers; support flexible working; and provide a social focus for residents, future students and visitors. In turn this will reduce the Square's perceived lack of safety and sense of isolation.

Quality wayfinding, including walking / cycling times and public transport distances, event information and interesting destinations encourage active travel and connectivity to wider MK. They help residents and visitors make better use of Milton Keynes' attractions, many of those journeys beginning and returning to Station Square. The transport screens can also promote community events, particularly those due to take place in the Square.

The Cycling Hub will provide secure cycle parking and improved facilities particularly for rail commuters and visitors to MK. It will increase accessibility to the rail station, employment

Consultation Responses

A public consultation has been undertaken by Milton Keynes Development Partnership (MKDP) and identified the following regarding Station Square:

'Unattractive, neglected appearance of the area - stakeholders considered Station Square to be too vast, too open and windy and felt the space was grey and 'stale'. The Square is considered to be soulless and is missing vibrancy, colour and greenery. It is considered to be an unimpressive gateway into the city. There is support for food/drink, retail and cultural uses and stakeholders feel more seating is required along with more trees'.

'The Square is unwelcoming, lighting needs improving in order to reduce safety concerns. Signage / wayfinding is considered to be poor and improvements are required to improve the commuter experience'.

By relocating the cycle parking and making public realm improvements it is hoped to introduce activity and interest to Station Square, making the space feel more welcoming, pleasant and sociable. The proposed food offer, pop - ups and enhanced public realm are a direct response to the public's suggestions for improving the Square and will transform the user experience by creating an attractive gateway to the city which will increase dwell time, social cohesion and economic activity. Overall these enhancements will reflect Milton Keynes' commitment to positive climate action and health and well-being, through a joined up delivery approach that will encourage employees to get outside at lunchtime; entertain and occupy waiting passengers; support flexible working; and provide a social focus for residents, future students and visitors. In turn this will reduce the Square's perceived lack of safety and sense of isolation.