

Workshop Proceedings

University of Hertfordshire *Connected communities* **'Mini charrette' for arts, culture and heritage in** **Milton Keynes**

6pm – 9pm, on Friday, 25th October at
Alston Drive, Bradwell Abbey, Milton Keynes

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(With notes from Dr Christine Garwood, Emma Cranidge,
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Index

1.	About the New Towns and Garden Cities Heritage Project	3
2.	About the mini charrette event	4
3.	Initial plenary presentations and discussion	5
3.1.	Why a mini charrette?	5
3.2.	Overview of arts and heritage in Milton Keynes	5
3.3.	'Connected Communities' context	6
3.4.	Initial discussion - what matters for arts, culture & heritage in Milton Keynes?	7
4.	Small group work write-ups	9
4.1.	Workshop Group One Discussion	9
4.2.	Workshop Group Two Discussion	12
4.3.	Workshop Group Three Discussion	15
4.4.	Workshop Group Four Discussion	19
4.5.	Feedback from Groups	23
5.	Final plenary	24
5.1.	Final discussion	24
5.2.	Next steps	25

1. About the New Towns and Garden Cities Heritage Project

The New Towns and Garden Cities Heritage project is a partnership project between the University of Hertfordshire, community researchers and heritage organisations. Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council through its 'Connected Communities' funding stream, the University won the funding through a competitive research bidding process. The co-principal investigators are Dr Christine Garwood and Dr Susan Parham.

The main objective of the New Towns and Garden Cities Heritage project is to bring together community researchers and academics to develop and share their research on new town heritage. This is a subject of particular local and regional relevance that UH researchers think may have been under-valued and under-researched in the past.

The researchers are focusing on tracing the growth and development of New Towns from the garden city movement to the 'model' new town of Milton Keynes, through a programme of research activities and events 'co-designed' with partners and involving a wider set of participants.

The researchers are particularly pleased that the research funds are offering the chance to work on a diverse range of project activities and with a wide range of project partners - from local authorities, museums and historic houses.

The project is also giving the opportunity to employ some community-based research and engagement methods which are viewed as very suitable to the field of community heritage: these include undertaking this 'mini charrette' workshop at Milton Keynes.

The researchers hope that the topical nature of the subject matter and its inherent connection to ways of life for communities in New Towns including Milton Keynes will form the basis for a series of policy recommendations on topics from urban design and the role of community arts, to public policy on museum provision and garden suburbs.

From E.M Forster's home in Stevenage to the uncatalogued papers of Milton Keynes Development Corporation, the project is seeking to uncover hidden stories and sources with community researchers and then publicise the research findings through a range of channels for the benefit of a broad audience.

The project is encompassing a series of events and publications - including a New Town Heritage Festival in early 2014, conference papers, research workshops and a co-produced New Town Heritage book.

2. About the mini charrette event

Participants were invited to take part in the 'mini' charrette workshop from 6pm – 9pm, on Friday, 25th October at Bradwell Abbey in Milton Keynes. The first session within the 'mini' charrette format was an opportunity for the researchers and Milton Keynes heritage staff to set the context for their research and policy projects and explain the process they hoped to go through with participants. After a welcome by Henk van Aswegen, Susan Parham addressed the question: why a mini-charrette process? and Shane Downer gave an overview of arts and heritage in Milton Keynes. Christine Garwood then discussed the 'Connected Communities' context and there was an initial Q and A session facilitated by Susan.

After a light supper participants broke up into facilitated groups to consider what matters for arts, culture and heritage in Milton Keynes. Working in small groups, participants spent around an hour exploring the following questions in relation to arts and heritage in Milton Keynes:

- How do arts, culture, sport and heritage contribute to Milton Keynes's identity?
- What are the most important elements in Milton Keynes's arts, sport and heritage?
- What are the most critical buildings, spaces and places for arts and heritage?
- Are there particular arts and heritage issues for minority ethnic communities in Milton Keynes?
- What are the opportunities for regenerating and celebrating Milton Keynes's arts and heritage in future?

Small group facilitators documented the points made for use in the feed back session and these mini charrette proceedings.

Following a quick break for tea the final session offered a chance to reconvene in plenary and feedback from the group discussions. It was also an opportunity to look at next steps in relation to both the Connected Communities research project and policy to support arts, culture, sport and heritage in Milton Keynes in future.

3. Initial plenary presentations and discussion

3.1. Why a mini charrette?

Dr Susan Parham, from the University of Hertfordshire, explained why this kind of workshop format had been chosen and its origins. The term charrette comes from the Beaux Art school in 19th century Paris where the charrette was a little yellow cart on which students placed their drawings for marking – often working up until the last minute. The idea of the charrette was to capture that speed and intensity in developing an idea or design quickly and cleverly.

Having been involved in designing and running a considerable number of charrette processes, which are intensive, often design focused, engagement processes. Dr Parham adapted the charrette techniques for even quicker workshop formats such as this one. The key idea drawn from charrette practice is to together consider a place, policy area and explore it in a holistic, facilitated way. There is a feedback loop from thinking about ideas and possibilities to reporting back on those, which is being done through the workshop proceedings.

3.2. Overview of arts and heritage in Milton Keynes

Shane Downer, Heritage Development Officer at Milton Keynes Council, provided participants with an overview of the Council's Arts and Public Arts Strategy and Heritage, Museums and Archives Strategy.

Introduction to Council Strategies

The 2014 – 23 Arts and Public Art and Milton Keynes Heritage, Museums and Archives strategies sets out the vision, plan, major programmes and projects that have been identified by stakeholder engagement as strategically vital for the future of Milton Keynes, the needs of a growing population and its reputation amongst ever increasing visitors.

2008 – 13 saw over £25 Million of funding secured to develop arts and heritage infrastructure and activity, with implementation to continue during the new strategy. Together with the Sports and Active Communities Strategy, more work is needed to develop Milton Keynes still relatively unknown distinctive and international offer, supporting both individuals and organisations to deliver the best choices possible for residents of and visitors to Milton Keynes.

For more information on the current strategies out to public consultation, to see what workshops might be available to attend and to complete the online joint arts and heritage survey, go to any Milton Keynes library or go online to www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/consultations

Cultural Vision

'Culture in Milton Keynes is a term that means different things to different people. We believe that cultural participation is where people of all backgrounds come together with shared interests and passions. Together with the environment in which cultural activities take place, culture includes all the things that define our lives, connect our communities and represent the values we pass on to other generations'.

Jointly the strategies will aim to deliver the cultural vision:
“By 2023 we will be recognised as being world class.”

This will also deliver the Heritage Vision; “Heritage at the heart of Milton Keynes and a force for social, economic and cultural vitality.”

This Arts & Public Art Strategy will continue to deliver the Arts Vision:
“Milton Keynes will flourish with Artistic Energy”.

With public art created that: “Invites the vision, creativity and skills of artists, to engage people freely with place, in a well-considered way.”

Cultural Promise

The new strategies provide a rationale for prioritised programmes and projects over the next ten years and will meet the aspirations of its current residents, visitors and growing communities. To do this, key promises will be embedded into the delivery plan and strategic decisions across the cultural sector, so the strategy will:

- Offer diverse opportunities and activities representative of Milton Keynes’ demography;
- Work across the borough with established and new communities supporting growth and regeneration;
- Capitalise on opportunities to expand inward investment within cultural sectors; and
- Use culture to support healthy communities and social wellbeing.

3.3. ‘Connected Communities’ context

The next speaker was Dr Christine Garwood, from the University of Hertfordshire, and Christine’s presentation is provided below.

Welcome to the event – being run by the University of Hertfordshire in partnership with Milton Keynes Council and the City Discovery Centre, our venue tonight. Thanks for coming along – it’s very good to see such a good group of people here, ready to pass on opinions.

My name is Dr. Christine Garwood. I am Senior Lecturer in History at the University, overseeing the project that is funding this event. I wanted to start by providing some brief background for a couple of minutes about the event and its context.

The event is being funded by a recent Arts and Humanities Research Council project ‘New Town Heritage’ – looking at the heritage of garden cities and new towns and the issue of change over time, through the twentieth century and more. On the slide you can see details of a one-day workshop on ‘Placemaking’ that we ran in June this year – looking at the development of garden cities and new towns in the region. Obviously Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire are of vital relevance to the topic as so many garden cities and new towns are based here. This area has the highest concentration of new towns, is the site of the first new town, Stevenage, as well as the first garden cities. Meanwhile the region also plays home to places like Luton in Bedfordshire, an interesting comparison as a ‘new and

renewed' town, and – where we are tonight - Buckinghamshire's 'model' new town Milton Keynes.

Consultation has also highlighted the broad definition of 'heritage' and the enthusiasm of local communities in the region for exploring the history of the places where they live – traditional villages and 1960s new towns alike. This also fits in with the AHRC's 'Connected Communities' programme - building communication and knowledge transfer between academia and community groups.

The KEY point really is our interest in both a HISTORICAL and CONTEMPORARY perspective. This is reflected in our backgrounds – I am a historian, Dr. Susan Parham – who is running tonight's event specialises in planning and sustainable communities.

The project also aims to uncover several issues across place and time:

Identity - including local character, perceptions, 'insiders-outsiders,' peripheries
Community - including social history, reminiscences, lifestyles, new communities
Infrastructure - including planning, transport, industry, funding, environment
Culture - including utopianism, new town planning, arts and literature

The project is therefore innovative and important in terms of theme *and* approach. The history of new towns, from early twentieth century Garden Cities to the 'model' new town, Milton Keynes, has been comparatively overlooked by historians despite its importance and relevance to contemporary debates and studies in related fields such as town planning. Their focus on built environment and other infrastructure issues, albeit useful, has resulted in community voices being lost and historical perspectives being obscured. In turn, this has led to widespread popular misconceptions about new towns - even the suggestion – as we know in Milton Keynes - that they have no heritage at all.

Obviously tonight's event is going to remedy this in part by giving you a chance to provide important feedback that will feed into both academic work and into policy – including the direction of Arts and Heritage strategy in Milton Keynes, and the development of a New Town museum and new archive.

3.4. Initial discussion - What matters for arts, culture and heritage in Milton Keynes?

The next part of the workshop was an initial discussion in plenary and key points are provided here.

- 1. Milton Keynes 'City of Design' – is this modern design, mediaeval design or what?**
Shane - all of it. We think Milton Keynes has USP in design (e.g. grids, redways,... and is the 10th largest place in the country for new patents, which is less visible). We want to bring in patents/artists/software creation, plus historic aspects (e.g. Wolverton first railway station in 1837). Does Milton Keynes need to develop its USP: glass and metal or about new materials?
- 2. Would it include/cover protecting some designs (20th Century, not mediaeval)?**
Shane – Yes, but see separate strategies re characterisation. Milton Keynes design from 30-40 years ago is becoming historic. We may need to let some of it go, to remain economically viable. But if we let go some of it, we need to document the design process and the social history/use of the buildings that are lost. Henk –

Milton Keynes regards itself as a city of innovation. How do new people influence how Milton Keynes changes? Big changes from Wolverton onwards (e.g. Netherfield is one of the most diverse and transitory areas). Need to record/feedback what's happening now.

3. **We've heard about opportunities for the ageing population. What about facilities for disabled people, building on the Paralympics?** Shane – the Sports and Active Communities strategy would cover this. But the Council tries to make sure that all sports and cultural facilities are DDA compliant. Also Henk is thinking about developing virtual tours...
4. **Can you explain the term 'Garden City'?** Susan - Ebenezer Howard developed the first Garden City in Letchworth. He was a shorthand typist from London, who was well aware of the poor living conditions for working people in London. He felt that building towns in rural areas could provide better conditions that would marry the best of town and country. He was influenced by Wakefield and Fourier among a number of others re ideal cities. Howard wrote a book which became very popular and spawned a movement. The Garden Cities Association developed (now the TCPA). Howard managed to buy land from a landowner for Letchworth. In his 70s he took a large financial risk to develop Welwyn Garden City. So the Garden City concept is about less dense housing, agricultural land around the edge supplying local food etc. In Letchworth, the town owned the land around it: a good financial as well as spatial model. There has been 'selective borrowing' of Garden City ideas and principles for other new towns and suburbs. Post war, with housing shortages, new ideas emerged about setting up new cities and towns. This led to a series of different new towns to be developed. Milton Keynes is possibly the best example of a car-centred new town. Henk – Milton Keynes is not a Garden City. But it has pulled the countryside into the town. Christine – interested in the theme of continuity. Milton Keynes designed as a city of trees, so was influenced by the GC movement.

4. Small group work write-ups

4.1. Workshop Group One Discussion

The workshop then moved to a detailed small group discussion stage, which is documented here. The discussion as framed around a number of questions which are mirrored in this write-up.

What matters for arts, culture and heritage in Milton Keynes?

How do arts, culture, sport and heritage contribute to Milton Keynes's identity?

Overall the group felt that one of the reasons they loved living in Milton Keynes is because of the opportunities that were presented for arts, culture and Heritage at citywide and community level. However there were some key concerns and issues raised including transport, lack of, or poor, communication and not taking advantage of local talent within minority ethnic communities.

What are the most critical buildings, spaces and places for arts and heritage?

- Milton Keynes is made up of a set of villages and is not one cohesive city. The group identified that one might know more about what is happening where one lives or in one's own community but that these differentiated areas could also form the basis of a patchwork of focal points for arts and heritage activity.
- The group also felt it was important not to just see heritage as a set of important buildings but rather to celebrate the social and cultural heritage of Milton Keynes, including the heritage of the multiplicity of communities that live within the city.
- Other key buildings and spaces the group thought were particularly useful were the Peace Pagoda, the Sikh Temple, the Museum, the City Church, the Barn Inn, the Parks Trust, Bletchley Park and Camborne Park.
- Group members also identified that there were some critical events and activities that were the especially important for arts and heritage. The most quoted event was the International Festival. Group members saw that this provided an opportunity to celebrate all the communities in the city. They saw it as being very popular, with lots of people engaged and attending and providing a very special atmosphere. However, the group felt it should be an annual rather than biannual event as it is now.
- Faith and food and the sharing of faith and food were also seen as critical conduits for sharing of arts and heritage. In particular expanding the celebration all community events such as Chinese New Year, Eid, Diwali and other were all seen as exciting opportunities for sharing the arts and cultural heritage of all communities of Milton Keynes.
- The theatre was seen as an excellent, modern resource and one that should be celebrated as coming from activism in the community as well as for its arts contribution to the city.
- The group felt that the Forests of Milton Keynes were a particularly underused resource, again providing a large range of opportunities to celebrate natural heritage. As a

starting point having access information, maps and user-friendly information on what to look for and where to go were thought to be useful. The group suggested that perhaps a next stage would be development of wood sculpture and more community activity within the forests.

- The Point was also seen as a unique part of local heritage that should not be demolished, but rather converted into a multi centre at the heart of the city. This was seen as especially important as there were no other facilities so accessibly and visible right in the city centre.
- The Ski Dome was also identified as a good resource available in Milton Keynes. However, the group felt that due to the prohibitive costs it was not a very accessible resource to many people.
- It was noted that there were some issues of accessibility and inclusivity in the existing arts and heritage venues. In particular the group felt this was an issue the theatre could address better and that deaf and visually impaired people were not catered for very well currently in local museums and exhibitions.

Are there particular arts, sport and heritage issues for minority ethnic communities in Milton Keynes?

On the whole the group felt that there were no particular issues but rather that the minority ethnic communities in Milton Keynes provided a vast number of opportunities for the expansion of arts and heritage. These opportunities formed the bulk of the group's discussion and debate:

- Celebrating diversity - the group members especially felt that the multi ethnic nature of the population of Milton Keynes provided immense opportunities to share and create new arts and heritage. The group very strongly articulated that there should be opportunities to share the art and architecture of all cultures.
- Alongside the idea of sharing, the group felt that if new communities such as the Somali community were encouraged to share their heritage and arts in permanent facilities opportunities to feel a sense of belonging to Milton Keynes today - whilst being proud of one's heritage - could be created.
- One particular suggestion that emerged from group discussion was that all arts and cultural heritage facilities could collaborate to have monthly celebrations of particular cultures present within Milton Keynes. This could include, for example, the existing free films in the park programme having an extended range to include films from a broader range of cultures and communities.
- The group felt that there were very limited opportunities for teenagers in Milton Keynes but felt that there have been occasions where innovative ideas had been very successful, for example, the silent disco at the International Festival. Involving young people and finding more opportunity for them would open another rich stream of arts and cultural innovation.

- The group felt that within minority ethnic communities there were very many talented people, who were not currently given opportunities and outlets to share their creativity within Milton Keynes.

What are the opportunities for regenerating and celebrating Milton Keynes's arts and heritage in future?

Beyond the issue of celebrating diversity and creating increased opportunities to showcase local talents from minority ethnic communities described above, other key opportunities raised by the participants for regenerating and celebrating arts and heritage were:

- Communications - participants strongly felt that Milton Keynes had many interesting opportunities to enjoy and explore arts and heritage but currently you have to make an effort to 'go and look for it'.
- The group felt that overall information on what was going on for both tourists and local people was very poor. Key suggestions for improvements included a city centre information centre, the local paper becoming more on-board with promoting activities rather than reporting on them after the event and a Milton Keynes calendar that would show as many events and activities as possible.
- Another active suggestion for increasing the availability and efficacy of information was the development of a Milton Keynes What's On Website - but ensuring that it was easy for groups to add in their own activities to keep the site live, up-to-date and useful. Although the group felt that not everybody would have access to the Internet so thought this could only work if information was also made available in other ways.
- Members of the group felt that schools had a key role to play in promoting arts and drawing in expertise from within the existing Artisan and minority ethnic communities in Milton Keynes.
- The group members felt that, in terms of regenerating arts and heritage, the key issue of transport would need to be addressed. Issues of using public transport generally but also on cross-Milton Keynes routes were identified as problems. However, the group felt that there were opportunities to be more inventive with the transport that existed by linking it to arts and heritage sites. The group suggested that here could be bus routes that linked heritage sites and that providing hop on-hop off, family / group tickets and / or multiple tickets would also promote use of existing and new facilities.
- Parks were also noted as open-air spaces that were identified as places to provide a wider range of opportunities including Zumba and Tai Chi.

What would make Milton Keynes more internationally recognized in terms of arts, heritage and sport? (See 'Milestones' document)

- The group identified that there are some internationally recognised local gems that could be promoted as cornerstones of Milton Keynes. From these cornerstones, people could be directed to smaller less well-known linked venues, festivals and activities. For example, the concerts at the National Bowl, the National Badminton Centre, the basketball and ice hockey teams, railway heritage and Bletchley Park could all also direct people to similar or nearby opportunities.

- The group suggested that there should be a proactive process to invite influential people from around the globe to experience Milton Keynes and all it has to offer, focusing on key influencers who would be able to represent the Milton Keynes offer back in their own communities.
- Because Milton Keynes has such a large number of diverse communities living within it the group felt that an annual festival of theatre, film, arts, music and food would be a way of both celebrating Milton Keynes and attracting an international focus. The group felt this could build on the existing success of the current biannual International Festival

4.2. Workshop Group Two Discussion

How do arts, culture, sport and heritage contribute to Milton Keynes's identity?

- The Milton Keynes Dons Stadium promotes Milton Keynes.
- Bletchley Park and the Open University (OU) also promote the new city well.
- The multicultural make up of Milton Keynes is unique and ethnic minorities reside in above average numbers.
- Some schools claim to have as many as 300 countries represented by their pupils.
- Is Milton Keynes really multi-cultural, yes - compared to places like Birmingham for example – very Asian population but not as diverse and united a community as Milton Keynes.
- Arts – the Milton Keynes theatre and Stables contribute to the arts in Milton Keynes – contribute to the knowledge building and audience development.
- There's a question mark over identity and perceptions of Milton Keynes – external = concrete cows and roundabouts. Internal = proud and defensive, see it and live it for real and love it.
- The Milton Keynes Dons football team and stadium are great, they're new like the city and show 'it can be done' - they celebrate the possibility of the new.
- Question over whether the concrete cows and roundabouts is actually negative and whether we need or want to shake it off?
- People across the UK know Milton Keynes for these things and so much more – the OU, the Theatre, Red Bull and Formula One...
- Anything north of the Watford junction is labelled/perceived as 'North' .
- The International Festival (IF) raised the quality and recognition of Milton Keynes through the Arts.
- The Bowl used to do the same.
- 'People' (not Milton Keynes residents) find Milton Keynes to be open, green and beautiful when they actually experience it for themselves.
- Culture – an example of the varied cultures in Milton Keynes is demonstrated by the wide variety of foods available in the shops and supermarkets: Polish shops, Indian supermarkets and the restaurant choices are vast now compared to 20 years ago.
- Arts from different cultures need to be better represented - local people share and exhibit the arts and science of Muslim culture - this builds bridges - there should be more of it.
- Milton Keynes is like the poor man's Australia – like colonial people – Milton Keynes residents in general made the choice to come here and satisfaction levels because of that are higher than elsewhere.

What are the most critical buildings, spaces and places for arts and heritage?

- Theatres, public squares and piazzas - the market town model is good, and certainly lacking in Central Milton Keynes. A performing arts theatre/facility, larger gallery that can exhibit local and more grass roots arts. Some independent cinemas.
- Need to keep the identities of the older towns that make up Milton Keynes, ie Stony Stratford, Olney, Wolverton, Newport Pagnell – the important spaces and places for heritage.
- Should be more protection through conservation and listings to retain and enhance these places.

Are there particular arts, sport and heritage issues for minority ethnic communities in Milton Keynes?

- There are no issues as there is very little in the way of arts, sports and heritage for minority ethnic communities in Milton Keynes.
- Church of Christ the Cornerstone celebrates many religions and cultures but few seem to know about it.
- No one is providing/promoting ethnic communities arts.
- What's stopping people from promoting them – money, need funds, knowing how to.
- There were more places and opportunities for celebrating them but they've gone now.
- Lack of communication and information – how do people know about what is out there/what's happening?
- Transport issues – Milton Keynes is so spread out, public transport offer isn't great. Journeys are lengthy and costly which doesn't help to bring people together.
- Cultural boundaries, beliefs and confidence (needed?) to integrate or take part in sport, arts and heritage.
- Not enough information and promotion about 'what's on', how to get involved.
- All the good things about Milton Keynes – open space, green, well designed – are also the issues in many ways - they hinder information sharing, signage, and transport.

What are the opportunities for regenerating and celebrating Milton Keynes's arts and heritage in future?

- There are lots of places to have events – it's more about advertising and communicating that they're taking place.
- Milton Keynes didn't have a theatre for 20+ years so Milton Keynes Council encouraged and supported local amateur groups, which seems to have ceased since the Theatre has been built. All the other support has gone including the funding.
- The Theatre is for the elite, the wealthy – not all people as it's too expensive – should give local people discounts for local attractions to encourage/enable visits.
- No money was originally invested in the museums in Milton Keynes by Bucks County Council; as a result they have had to rely on volunteers and sponsors, which they have done very successfully. Fearful that with the building of a single larger, modern and commercial museum for Milton Keynes the volunteers and talented experts and all the good works they have done will be lost/dropped.

- Libraries are very important. Central Milton Keynes library is one of the best/most successful in the country. Libraries are crucial for providing information and communications channels.
- Important to preserve the pioneering culture of Milton Keynes - the volunteers, supporters and ambassadors – Milton Keynes in danger of losing this. Should celebrate and build on it in the future.
- Bletchley Park expansion/modernisation including headset/recorded tours replacing the current volunteers and guides – concerned this is a negative move.
- Need more festivals to celebrate Milton Keynes arts and heritage. Museums tend to be static, they should collect stories from people and celebrate/share stories in the building (museum) – would encourage ownership and pride. Use museum(s) to celebrate the multicultural uniqueness of Milton Keynes.
- Very little for young people to do in Milton Keynes apart from shopping - they tend to go elsewhere for entertainment.
- Need to explore the opportunities for getting young people interested and involved in arts and heritage.
- Every year Milton Keynes should hold a one day (heritage and arts) event.

What would make Milton Keynes more internationally recognised in terms of arts, heritage and sport?

- Developing and building on the International Festival (IF).
- More music and food celebrations/festivals.
- If Milton Keynes to be City of Culture in 2023 what do we need to do/what do we need to look like?
- Must have grass roots 'stuff', home grown – not just hosted/imported in.
- Good musicians and artists tend to go to other cities, not stay in Milton Keynes as opportunities too limited.
- Kick start the thinking and process now and work towards City of Culture now. Don't leave it till too late!
- Milton Keynes offers a lot on the fringes or in Central Milton Keynes, so transport links and good communication is crucial.
- The city centre is all about retail and shouldn't be: we need to think about how to change it.
- Turn the food hall into an arts and performance centre/cultural heritage centre.
- Privately owned shopping centres kill the chance for buskers, street art etc.
- Owners of the Central Milton Keynes properties need to buy into the City of Culture and enable arts and performance to take place in their very public spaces.
- Build on/make more of Hub type piazza spaces in Central Milton Keynes – include the requirement in planning briefs and permissions.
- Bring back the use of empty buildings for arts and culture uses, encourage businesses to support this.
- Need to champion sports in Milton Keynes more, improve the facilities and our champions like Greg Rutherford.
- More international artists should be invited and showcased at the Theatre and make them accessible to all. The Stables do this already.
- Need some unique places of international standing.
- Need to find our niche, build on being the best new city/town in the UK.

Summary and feedback of key points by group representative:

- Build on and celebrate the pioneering, colonial, multicultural uniqueness of Milton Keynes – our 'can do' attitude. Making our own entertainment, our own museums.
- Must have the right places to 'do it in' (improve infrastructure to enable visits and use of places easier, parking too expensive, need a shuttle service between station and park/retail).
- Continue to develop the International Festival.
- If we are to be the City of Culture in 2023, need to start building now, and include the 'home grown'/local talent.
- Need more places to congregate – piazzas, squares and similar, to hold events in as well.
- Improve communication of information and promotion of events.

4.3. Workshop Group Three Discussion

The group consisted of local interpreters with knowledge of the Tamil, Polish and French communities in Milton Keynes.

How do arts, culture, sport and heritage contribute to Milton Keynes's identity?

Members of the group had lived in Milton Keynes for between 5 and 23 years. They were very positive about living in the area, finding it a comfortable and convenient place to live, with easy access to facilities and green space.

- *I came here by choice with my husband – we looked at several other areas.*
- *Quality of life here is good – it feels spacious and green, with cycle paths along the canal, and Willen Lake.*
- *I'm proud to be here. I'm still discovering lots about Milton Keynes (e.g. all the parks).*
- *I've joined walking groups – there's lots more to discover in the countryside.*
- *Talking to friends with kids, you have to defend why you're here. But Milton Keynes has everything – skiing, theatre, restaurants. I still find myself apologizing, but it's so comfortable to live here.*
- *But the fondness is growing. It gets into your genes.*

While it had few cultural facilities at first, this has improved. The Point was the first multi-screen cinema in the UK.

But participants recognized that newcomers could find the city confusing:

- *Milton Keynes is great but confusing at first – so many roundabouts and cycle ways.*
- *Signage is poor [for pedestrians in the town centre].*

The group discussed what 'heritage' meant in the context of a new town. They agreed that the new town had been overlain on centuries of history, which people did not always see.

- *People see the concrete cows and grid roads. But the older parts of Milton Keynes have history and culture.*
- *The city goes back 10,000 years – it has Stone Age and Roman archaeology.*
- *I liked the old and new mixed in a harmonious way. Milton Keynes is both old world and futuristic. Good modern and traditional architecture.*

Participants felt that contemporary heritage in Milton Keynes has not been fully recognized, and that the cultural heritage of the city is continually evolving. But they also agreed that heritage was about the cultural heritage of people living in Milton Keynes now.

- *Heritage is what people bring/make. It's about cultural heritage.*
- *Cultural heritage is constantly evolving – e.g. there are now 5-6 Indian shops where previously none. There are also Polish shops.*

Participants felt that Milton Keynes is diverse but harmonious.

- *Everyone is different, but in Milton Keynes everyone is new.*
- *We're a model. It's just English to be negative (and a Polish trait too)!*

What are the most critical buildings, spaces and places for arts and heritage?

Participants pointed out that Milton Keynes covers such a large area that it is difficult to grasp the whole. One participant commented that older residents of outlying villages such as Woburn don't feel part of Milton Keynes. They go to Bletchley or Leighton Buzzard to avoid the centre of Milton Keynes, but younger people like the centre.

Participants named some of the spaces and places which mean most to them. Some of these are historic or cultural but others are green spaces which give people access to the countryside:

- Willen Lake
- The Grand Union Canal, with cycle paths alongside
- Woburn
- The historic Linford Woods
- Blue Lagoon (a public lake)
- The Roman Villa (near this centre)
- The Milton Keynes museum (but difficult to find!)
- Stony Stratford (a historical coaching town)
- Railway stations (e.g. Wolverton, before the old station building was scrapped)
- Wolverton Works (they have built modern houses inside the workshop. You can still see the outer shell from the canal)
- New Bradwell and Caldecotte windmills
- The National Bowl (a stone quarry turned into an open-air amphitheatre. Big rock concerts are held there. The 2nd largest open-air venue in UK?).

Participants felt strongly that the 'Point' cinema was a meaningful landmark and should, if possible, be retained. There was suggestion that it could be listed, as the Shopping Centre is:

- *I didn't like it at first, but it has some historical value. There is talk of dismantling it.*
- *The Point used to be a beacon for Milton Keynes – you could see it from Junction 14 of the M1!*

The group, with the aid of Henk, identified a number of 'Milton Keynes firsts':

- First drive through Kentucky Fried Chicken in the UK
- First Peace Pagoda in UK, by Willen Lake
- The Point – first multiplex cinema
- Milton Keynes Shopping Centre (thecentre:mk) – longest covered shopping centre in the world, for many years.
- Milton Keynes Dons – first football team to move grounds

They also identified some existing cultural events:

- The Newport Pagnell Carnival, with a pancake race in 'Olney' (possibly the original one - another first for Milton Keynes?).
- There was reported to be Milton Keynes festival in June?

Are there particular arts, sport and heritage issues for minority ethnic communities in Milton Keynes?

Generally, participants agreed that Milton Keynes is quite well integrated. There is less tension than in Luton – everyone is a newcomer, so they treat each other equally.

- *My best friend is Indian. She hosts a Diwali party each year and most of the people who come are not Indian themselves.*

There was some discussion of whether the term 'Black and Minority Ethnic' groups applied to the people in the group. Some participants hadn't seen themselves as being included within this label.

They identified a number of existing events in the area that celebrate different cultures:

- Campbell Park Festival has a 'World Picnic' involving people from different cultures, dressing up, bringing food etc.
- There is also a Fireworks festival, Filipino Festival, Eid Festival.
- In Kingston, there used to be a Russian Market on one of the squares, with dancing, animation etc.

The group then discussed particular issues for the Polish community. They reported that there is an initiative called the 'Milton Keynes' project. This is not really a club but more of an email/Facebook group for younger people. They organise some events (e.g. at St Andrews; Easter Egg Hunt etc). Some are serious (e.g. gatherings for religious celebrations) and some are fun.

Participants mentioned the many members of the Polish communities (and to some extent other Catholic communities, such as French) have big problems with Hallowe'en. It is the eve of All Saints Day, which is a sombre day for remembering people who have died. Although the Hallowe'en/All Saints Day traditions are linked, they have gone in separate directions. Some of the participants felt that people cannot celebrate All Saints Day properly here – they even know of people who go back to Poland to celebrate it. In Poland, cemeteries are like cities, full of shrines, candles and so on. Here cemeteries are forgotten places. Another participant said that she was Polish but doesn't have a problem with Hallowe'en. She finds all the fires and candles on graves in Poland a bit overwhelming.

The group then discussed issues for the French community, but did not identify any particular concerns. There used to be a French market in Stony Stratford – possibly yearly or termly. And in the city centre, there is a regular French Market (near Middleton Hall?).

Finally, the group discussed issues for the Tamil community. There are really three Tamil groups: Indian Tamils, and (from Sri Lanka) Muslim Tamils and Hindu Tamils. The Sri Lankan Hindus have a small temple in Bletchley which is run by one man on a voluntary basis, while the Sri Lankan Tamils have land in Fishermead where they are about to build a mosque.

The group agreed that their children experienced fewer barriers in mixing with other cultures, as they meet each other naturally at school. But as parents, they were aware that their children have to live in two worlds. For example, Sri Lankan and Indian children have to act in a certain way at home (e.g. respectful to their parents).

The group felt that it would be useful to have a facility where different communities come together and celebrate their different cultures.

What are the opportunities for regenerating and celebrating Milton Keynes's arts and heritage in future?

Participants felt that Milton Keynes needed another theatre, as one was not enough for a city of its size. They also felt that some form of cultural centre was needed.

- *There is no cultural centre, no heart to Milton Keynes – just a shopping centre.*

The group discussed the need for more celebration of different cultures. While group members were aware of the existence of a Racial Equality Council, they felt remote from it and knew little about it. They wanted something like a Forum or Centre which was more casual and friendly. They felt that this could possibly be facilitated by Milton Keynes Council. They suggested that there could be cultural evenings with shows and food from a particular culture, providing opportunities for people from different cultures to meet and learn about each other.

The group also felt that there should be more celebration of festivals from different cultures, as done in places like Malaysia and Leicester. Suggestions for multi-cultural celebrations included:

- Diwali
- Eid
- Chinese New Year
- The Polish Oyster Festival

- Mardi Gras/Carnival

All members of the group felt strongly that better information and communication was needed about arts, heritage and cultural life. They felt that there should be more coordinated publicity for cultural places and events. For example, the Milton Keynes Citizen newspaper is widely distributed but rarely contains information on culture or Open University events.

- *Every Friday, over recent weeks, there have been art and culture nights in the Gallery. I had no idea about this.*

There was discussion about the lack of publicity for film nights which are currently run at the Open University, showing films from different cultures. Participants felt that not many people know about these – the audience is elderly and young people are not going. There was reported to be a risk that the film nights might stop.

- *I have just discovered these film nights and thinks this is a fantastic project that needs to be more widely publicised.*

Participants also felt that better information was needed for visitors and tourists. For example, they felt that Milton Keynes needed a Tourist Information centre. They reported that there used to be a shop branded 'Discover Milton Keynes' but now there are just leaflet stands at information desks in the shopping centre.

The group felt that it would be good to have plaques to mark 'unique things' in Milton Keynes. While some of these are already shown on the 'Heritage Map', it would be good to have plaques on buildings.

One participant reported that, in Dresden, hotels have a local TV channel playing a 1-hour video film on a continuous loop, showing how the city has changed. Could this be done to explain the history and development of Milton Keynes?

What would make Milton Keynes more internationally recognized in terms of arts, heritage and sport? (See 'Milestones' document)

The group highlighted two organisations in Milton Keynes which could play a role in developing the city's international profile:

- The Commonwealth Office is located in Milton Keynes, in Hanslope Park. Participants felt that this is important for many countries.
- The Open University also has a high profile role.

Participants also mentioned that there were plans for another university to start in Milton Keynes.

4.4. Workshop Group Four Discussion

How do arts, culture, sport and heritage contribute to Milton Keynes's identity?

- *I like the greenness and cheaper houses.*

- *It's an open environment compared with London.*
- *Bletchley – my grandfather has a job as a train guard in 1962. I live in Wolverton - Milton Keynes is pleasant, different, peaceful, easy to move around – I'm a keen cyclist and its brilliant for cyclists.*
- *I remember Milton Keynes city centre being built 30 years ago. It's good to see how it's grown – now tall buildings – amazing to see how it's changed.*
- *I was born here – it's grown from small villages, three towns – Milton Keynes is brilliant.*
- *I came here when I was 18 months old – have been here pretty much my whole life – my family farms locally – I feel able to live in Milton Keynes because of its rural nature. I could also live in Letchworth.*
- *I have lived in Milton Keynes for just over 10 years – really like Milton Keynes where I work as interpreter – it's easy to look after children here, as there is a sense of belonging.*

What are the most important elements in Milton Keynes's arts, sport and heritage?

What are the most critical buildings, spaces and places for arts and heritage?

- *Arts, culture and heritage do contribute but for each community (geographic or ethnically based) things happen but the rest of Milton Keynes doesn't know about them. People are not aware of these opportunities – Milton Keynes is quite parochial.*
- *I totally agree with that – living in a box.*
- *Arts and heritage – when I came here I didn't know about this but fresh air here is good*
- *Small estates keep to themselves – ie for celebration or prayers we have a small centre – we had a party and asked people but only linked through kids being at school together.*
- *There is a heritage house built about 1400 next door to me that's important, ancient – people want to take photos of it.*
- *Yes we have particular issues here in Milton Keynes – traditional buildings are listed like anywhere else ie city centre but there's a worry about listing modern buildings. As well if its listed people worry that they can't change buildings – so a 'middle ground' of listing such as a local Milton Keynes list so not preserving in aspic but nearly.*
- *The Point – was the first multiplex cinema – opened in Milton Keynes – was going to be a pyramid – it's a very important meeting point for people.*
- *Driving back from Luton you could see The Point.*

- *Dinosaur(?) – Manor House in Great Linford.*
- *20th century heritage will be important by the 23rd century.*
- *Recording the fact that The Point is part of our lives – have to decide whether art is something we really value.*
- *Smaller local centres just as important? Small community centres are good cultural meeting points – it's like a network of small centres within a big network.*
- *If you think of Netherfield that won architectural awards – now people think it's awful – but at the time it was good – shortage of bricks so used innovative methods and techniques...part of the social heritage naturally.*
- *Kit houses - early timber framed Leadenhall little bungalows (marketed as starter homes).*
- *Netherfield developed in a non-conventional way with buildings expected to have a short lifetime.*

Are there particular arts and heritage issues for minority ethnic communities in Milton Keynes?

- *In Muslim communities making mosques as community, learning centres (new ones being developed) the built form brings people together – same in the Sikh gurdwara and in temples, churches too.*
- *In Stoney Stratford the church hall has been taken over by the Greek Orthodox Church.*
- *Despite Milton Keynes being low density it is not easier to develop such cultural spaces.*
- *Church of Christ the Corner Stone example in the city centre.*
- *Commute to London but that attracts me most is the parks – I walk on weekends in the parks – Campbell Park, Willen Lake Park. It's amazing how much diversity you see.*
- *Milton Keynes's landscape planners were the 20th century Capability Browns – grid roads in the autumn are fantastic aspect of Milton Keynes's heritage – Willen Lake Peace Pagoda – it's just awesome – I feel a sense of peace.*
- *I walked from Caldecotte to Willen Lake and hardly saw a building – very lucky.*
- *A lot more work needs to be done to capture the cosmopolitan heritage of communities within Milton Keynes.*
- *In my community (Somali) need more awareness. For different age groups the issues may be different.*

- *Schools could be an entrance point to connect people to the heritage and cultures of places and people.*

What are the opportunities for regenerating and celebrating Milton Keynes's arts and heritage in future?

- *Development of mosques, gurdwaras etc helping to generate a change.*
- *Every year is a national event – heritage open day – it would be good if more events from the Muslim, Somali community or a weekend when all the different communities could offer cultural input.*
- *A big picnic? or at lots of places allows people to go and experience...*
- *We do take students to mosques, temples...*
- *A barrier is cost – we need to reduce prices for cultural places to make them accessible.*
- *That does happen on heritage days.*
- *There are families who cannot afford these facilities.*
- *There needs to be a mix of opportunities.*
- *International opportunities – field hockey has been internationally known about Milton Keynes but the hockey centre completed in 1996 was knocked down. For people who loved hockey this was bad. (Shane was asked about this and noted that the hockey authorities wanted to leave and go to London for 2012.)*
- *The National Badminton Centre is here.*
- *The Bowl is here – international pop culture music venue.*
- *Unfortunately Milton Keynes people think of concrete cows and roundabouts.*
- *We need to make international links.*
- *A Formula 1 race would be good.*
- *Cultural things – not one thing...*
- *Public art – quite a lot of attractive public art but little interpretive material – Wendy Taylor's Octo sculpture for example.*
- *There are quite a few sculptures in the city centre. So public art could attract people to go on an art walk – using QR codes.*
- *You could encourage different schools and groups to produce art for the community.*

- *I've stayed in very old house in Belgium turned into a B and B but we could also do that here.*
- *It might help as well to have something with youth in mind – projects, schemes (like near Argos) and for children to encapsulate different cultures and integrate those cultures.*
- *They did a couple of things at Milton Keynes Dons stadium.*

4.5. Feedback from Groups

Group 1:

In what we do, we should celebrate the colonial, pioneering uniqueness of Milton Keynes: a 'can do' attitude. For example making our own entertainment [before the cinema].

We have lost 1 library in Woburn Sands (or possibly not lost it yet?).

To get international recognition, Milton Keynes should develop an international festival. This could be linked to Bletchley Park. To be an international city of culture, we need lots of theatre, an international festival and need the people of Milton Keynes to be actively involved.

Do we have the right places? Our group discussed the importance of piazzas and squares where people can congregate. The city centre consists mainly of privately owned buildings!

We identified that public transport is a problem.

We also emphasized the importance of information and communication – knowing where to do things.

Group 2

We agree with most of what Group 1 has said.

We also mentioned the need to improve transport and accessibility.

We also highlighted the need to advertise events more (both general events and culturally specific ones).

And we think that the 'gems' of Milton Keynes should be better promoted, for example the world-renowned [shopping] centre.

Group 3

We feel there is a need for a cultural information centre, where people can find out what's going on.

Also we need better publicity of events, including festivals and cultural evenings.

We suggest that there should be plaques on the 'gems', explaining why they are important. People are often not aware of Milton Keynes 'firsts'.

We would like to keep The Point! (general agreement around the room from all tables).

We would like to see celebrations of culture, such as Polish or Tamil evenings.

Group 4

People who live in Milton Keynes think it's brilliant. Our group has an unusual and incredible sense of positiveness!

We feel that built form is important, but that Milton Keynes is also a landscape which is highly valued.

We feel that arts and cultural heritage will come from small things as well as large ones.

We also feel that some assets are under known and under-interpreted, and that the 20th century heritage of Milton Keynes is important.

And we need to find other ways of getting around, not just the car.

We are getting there!

5. Final plenary

5.1. Final discussion

1. We are missing the media of the Internet (e.g. YouTube). We could do short episodes for YouTube on Olney and Newport Pagnell. This is not very expensive. It's not just about Bletchley, and not just about Milton Keynes. We can't do tour buses here, as in Oxford and Cambridge, but we could make short YouTube videos.
2. As a longstanding resident, I find that parking in central Milton Keynes is expensive. People do come in from outside, but it is not friendly for residents. We need to change this to encourage people to come in to the centre. It is difficult to get from one point to another – you sometimes need to change buses 2-3 times. We need to attract Milton Keynes residents into the centre.
3. In response to this, why don't the shopping centre owners provide a shuttle service between Milton Keynes Central station and the shopping centre? Expensive parking charges kill the initial idea of Milton Keynes – it shouldn't be like that.
4. One World holds a multicultural even here every couple of months. Henk will circulate details to participants by email and put them on a mailing list (with their permission??!!). There are brochures on each table about an event called 'For Angels at the Abbey'. Henk is looking for singing groups to participate in this, from all cultures. Addresses are on the back of the brochure.
5. There is a Milton Keynes Heritage website, and a Milton Keynes Heritage Association.
6. People pointed out that the cultural information 2013 leaflet (on the tables at the workshop) needs to be improved. There is no map. You need a small magazine, not just a flyer. One participant pointed out that they had been unaware that you could visit heritage sites and parks free if you were a resident.
7. The Arts Officer explained that the Council has been consulting separately with people about arts events. A similar message has been emerging from this consultation too: people want a magazine that has it all.

5.2. Next steps

Susan explained that the workshop discussions would be written up into a Proceedings document that would be used as an important data source for the research she and Christine were carrying out.

Shane explained that the views expressed at the workshop would feed into the cultural, arts and heritage policy work underway for Milton Keynes currently.

Finally, Susan thanked all the participants, speakers, facilitators and support staff for taking part and helping prepare and run the workshop.

The workshop closed at 9pm.

6. Next steps

Susan Parham explained that she and her co-facilitators will write up the notes of this workshop which Susan will organise into 'mini' charrette proceedings, which Shane will send round as a Pdf file.

This will feed into Christine and Susan's research and into the Council's consultation on its Art and Heritage strategies.

Shane explained that people could still use the consultation websites to feed further thoughts into the consultation on the Arts and Heritage strategies. The Council will make relevant changes to the strategies, in response to comments from the workshop and other parts of the consultation. He and Lucy will hold some form of feedback session to explain the changes that have been made to the strategy. Some of the ideas from tonight's workshop are already in the strategy, but they will go back and check whether they are right.

Finally, the New Towns Festival was mentioned, coming up on the second weekend of January.

And Henk apologized that there was not time for a tour of the chapel this evening, but explained that three tours would be available on 2nd December at 12 noon, 1pm and 2pm. These would include a tour of the mediaeval wall paintings.