



Media Release

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Open University considers face to face offer alongside transformative move to city centre

The Open University is to prepare a business case for a world class university based in a sustainable green campus in Milton Keynes city centre. The plans support the city's wider vision to develop one of the UK's most vibrant city centres.

The University's governing Council has agreed to initiate work on the strategic and financial case for a multi-million-pound relocation of the OU's existing campus in suburban Milton Keynes to a new site adjacent to the central railway station.

This includes developing a proposal for a new 'sister university' serving students who want to study the OU's famous online courses in person, supported by teaching on site and an exciting range of accommodation, entertainment and sport offers at the heart of the city.

The OU is the UK's largest university, with over 200,000 students studying from home or work across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Its headquarters have been in Milton Keynes since it began in 1969.

Work on the business case will engage with the ideas of internal and external stakeholders, including the city council and Milton Keynes' growing businesses and communities, about how the campus could better meet the OU's future needs and the needs of students for future skills.

The OU will work closely with Milton Keynes Development Partnership (MKDP) as the landowners on a proposition to create a smart, accessible and energy-efficient campus to include science laboratories, interactive working and learning spaces, studios, a library and a student centre. It would integrate technology and place-making, optimising working and living experiences for staff, students and other city centre users.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Tim Blackman commented: “While Walton Hall remains an option for the future, we are focusing our planning on what additional benefits a new city centre site could bring.

“A purpose-built campus at the heart of a thriving business community, within half an hour by train from London, Cambridge, Oxford and the midlands, is an opportunity to reshape our facilities and provision for the decades ahead. Students would be able to choose online study with the OU from wherever in the UK or the world they live, or study all or some of the time on campus.”

MKDP’s Chairman Nicola Sawford said: “We are very excited about the opportunity to work with the OU on this once in a generation opportunity to re-imagine higher education in the city centre and for this to be a cornerstone of the new masterplan for the Lower Westside development site.”

Milton Keynes City Council Leader Pete Marland commented: “Milton Keynes is one of the UK’s fastest growing and most innovative cities, but also one of the greenest and most liveable.

“A move by the OU into the city centre is potentially transformational. It could create another world-class higher education opportunity where creativity meets technology, meaning our young people do not have to move away to study and we can attract students from across the world to study and live in Milton Keynes.”

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The Open University

The Open University (OU) is the largest academic institution in the UK and a world leader in flexible distance learning. Since it began in 1969, the OU has taught more than 2.3 million students worldwide and currently has over 208,000 students.

Seventy-one per cent of directly registered students are studying while in full-time or part-time employment, and 76 FTSE 100 companies have sponsored their employees to take OU courses. Many higher and further education institutions in the UK and overseas provide OU licensed or validated courses, often taught locally on-campus.

The University also provides an extensive range of free courses on its [OpenLearn](#) website and has a long-standing [partnership with the BBC](#).

In the latest national assessment exercise for university research, over three-quarters of the OU’s research was assessed as world-leading or internationally

excellent, and over 80% was assessed as having a world-leading or internationally excellent impact.

For further information please visit [The Open University](#).

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MKDP

Milton Keynes Development Partnership LLP (MKDP) was established in 2013 as a separate commercial legal entity and purchased a significant portfolio of land and assets from Milton Keynes City Council (MKCC) and the Homes & Communities Agency.

Having promoted and developed that land, MKDP has now evolved into the city's local delivery vehicle, with a particular focus on placemaking through urban regeneration and the delivery of affordable housing.

With in-house expertise and an independent board, MKDP is uniquely placed to act commercially to deliver projects and investments that achieve the city's social, environmental, and economic goals. It has the ability to take decisions that ensure the assets are used to maximise the benefits to the company, the LLP's majority Member, MKCC and the city of Milton Keynes.

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