

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE CAMBRIDGE TO OXFORD CONNECTION: IDEAS COMPETITION LAUNCHES

Open call for ideas to creatively link new infrastructure with sustainable placemaking in the UK's leading growth corridor – deadline 14:00 BST 3 August 2017



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The National Infrastructure Commission and Malcolm Reading Consultants today [30 June 2017] launched an ideas competition that calls for forward-thinking, imaginative proposals to integrate sustainable placemaking with development and new infrastructure. The focus for the competition is the arc encompassing four of the UK's fastest-growing and most productive centres: Cambridge, Milton Keynes, Northampton and Oxford.

The free-to-enter, two-stage contest is aimed at broad multidisciplinary teams of urban designers; architects; planning, policy, and community specialists; landscape designers; development economists; and others with local knowledge and general insight. Submissions from international teams and students are welcome.

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Set up in 2015, the National Infrastructure Commission is the United Kingdom's leading independent voice on infrastructure policy and strategy, a key adviser to government, and benefits from strong cross-party support. The Commission has recommended that government implements the next phase of the highly anticipated East West Rail project and the planned Oxford to Cambridge Expressway, both of which are set to transform connectivity within this part of England.

Through the competition, the Commission will be seeking visionary ideas for development typologies across the Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford corridor, which includes other important centres such as Northampton. Submissions should consider how to provide the homes the area needs: high quality places that integrate the proposed infrastructure and enhance the identity of the corridor as a single knowledge-intensive cluster, while working with its distinctive environmental and cultural character.

Full details of the competition, which is run by Malcolm Reading Consultants, including team and submission requirements and the detailed brief, are available on the competition website: <https://competitions.malcolmreading.co.uk/cambridgeoxfordconnection/>

Teams are asked to submit an emerging concept focused on a chosen form of development – ranging from the intensification of existing urban areas to new autonomous settlements – as well as details on the composition of their collaborative teams, if relevant. The emerging concepts will be judged anonymously by a panel drawn from a range of specialisms and including Lord Andrew Adonis, Chair of the National Infrastructure Commission; and two National Infrastructure Commissioners, Bridget Rosewell OBE, former Chief Economic Adviser to the Greater London Authority; and Professor Sadie Morgan, Founding Director of dRMM Architects, with further members to be announced later in the process. The top four teams will be given an honorarium of £10,000 to develop their initial submission.

Lord Adonis, Chair of the National Infrastructure Commission, said:

“ *The economic potential of the four cities of Oxford, Cambridge, Northampton and Milton Keynes is huge, offering real benefits to the success and prosperity of the country as a whole.*

But the area needs to adapt and change if it has any chance of achieving this, of attracting the brightest and best and of competing on the world stage.

Today, I'm calling on leaders in architecture, economics, policy-making and planning, as well as local residents, to help shape that future, and put forward ideas that will make this growth corridor an attractive place to live and work for generations to come. ”

Professor Sadie Morgan, National Infrastructure Commissioner and Founding Director of dRMM Architects, said:

“ From the dreaming spires of Oxford to punts along the River Cam, the growth corridor has so much to offer those looking to live and work there. We need to ensure that continues.

This is more than just good design – this is about creating a vibrant and attractive community that will stand the test of time and support the future development and prosperity of a unique part of the country. I look forward to seeing the ideas that are put forward. ”

Malcolm Reading, Competition Organiser, said:

“ Transport brings prosperity and activity and creates the conditions for growth, which are all welcome outcomes. The competition offers a rare opportunity to imagine new and enlarged communities, to shape their character. This is all about creating inspirational places that encourage social and creative exchange within a high quality environment. ”

The Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford corridor stretches over approximately 130 miles around the north and west of London’s green belt, encompassing Daventry and Wellingborough to the north and bounded to the south by Luton, Stevenage and the Aylesbury Vale. The area has a population of 3.3 million people and is approximately 3,900 square miles in area.

Towns and cities across the corridor are amongst the most successful and fastest growing in the UK. The corridor has a concentration of businesses in the scientific research and development, life sciences, pharmaceuticals, high-tech manufacturing, performance technology and motorsport sectors. An estimated 419,000 people across the corridor are employed in the knowledge economy. Presently, the corridor does not function as a single joined-up economic zone. Rather Cambridge, Milton Keynes, Northampton and Oxford operate as distinct city economies, each positioned on different radial routes around 50-70 miles from London.

The area is suffering with significant housing and transport pressures: the scarcity of suitable and affordable homes and difficulties in travelling within and between cities. These constraints are becoming obstacles to retaining talent and inevitably putting a break on economic growth.

Interested teams will need to read the Search Statement on the competition website before submitting their emerging concept, team details and registration information via email (using templates provided on the website). **The deadline for entries is 14:00 BST 3 August 2017.** At the second stage of the competition, four shortlisted teams will receive additional briefing and progress their concepts into creative visions, developed on a specific location within the corridor.

The final designs produced by the shortlist will be used in the Commission’s Report to government in late 2017 and will be fully credited to the authors. The teams may also be given a continuing role as the wider project develops.

The stage two deadline for shortlisted teams is expected to be in late September, and the winner announced in early November.

Ends

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NOTES TO EDITORS

• **National Infrastructure Commission**

The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC)'s remit is to become the UK's most forward-thinking and influential voice on infrastructure policy and strategy.

It is an independent body that enables long term strategic decision making to build effective and efficient infrastructure for the UK. The NIC was set up on 5 October 2015 and will look at the UK's future needs for nationally significant infrastructure, help to maintain the UK's competitiveness amongst the G20 nations and provide greater certainty for investors by taking a long term approach to the major investment decisions facing the country.

• **Cambridge - Milton Keynes - Oxford Growth Corridor Project**

In March 2016, the Chancellor of the Exchequer asked the Commission to:

“ *Make recommendations to maximize the potential of the Cambridge - Milton Keynes - Oxford corridor as a single, knowledge-intensive cluster that competes on the global stage, whilst protecting the area's high quality environment and securing the homes and jobs the area needs. The commission will look at the priority infrastructure improvements needed and assess the economic case for which investments would generate the most growth.* ”

In November 2016, the NIC published its interim report on the Cambridge - Milton Keynes - Oxford Corridor. This report concluded that:

“ *The corridor connecting Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford could be a world renowned centre for science, technology and innovation. But its future success is not guaranteed...* ”

The corridor faces a chronic undersupply of homes made worse by poor east-west transport connectivity. Two of the least affordable cities in the UK lie within the corridor, and the area as a whole has consistently failed to build the number of homes it needs. That shortage puts sustained growth at risk. It is already increasing costs for businesses and diminishing their ability to attract employees at all levels.

Investment in infrastructure, including enhanced east-west transport links, can help to address these challenges, but it must be properly aligned with a strategy for new jobs, homes and communities, not developed in isolation. This means local authorities working in partnership, and with government, to plan places, homes and transport together. Current governance mechanisms are not sufficient to deliver the step-change in strategic leadership and collaboration needed.

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For further information please see: <https://www.nic.org.uk>

• **Malcolm Reading Consultants**

Malcolm Reading Consultants (MRC) is a strategic consultancy that helps clients to imagine and define contemporary environments, both built and natural. MRC is the leading specialist in devising and managing design competitions internationally. MRC believes in the power of design to create new perceptions and act as an inspiration.

Recent work includes competitions for the Illuminated River Foundation, Science Island (Lithuania), Tintagel Castle Bridge, the Mumbai City Museum and new buildings for New College, Oxford and Homerton College, Cambridge.

MRC is currently advising the British Council for Offices Ideas Competition for the future of workspace, and is working with the British Library to establish the Design Brief for the major northern development of its St. Pancras site.

<https://malcolmreading.co.uk>