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NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE COMMISSION REVEALS GALLERY OF FINAL DESIGN CONCEPTS FOR THE CAMBRIDGE TO OXFORD CONNECTION: IDEAS COMPETITION



Images © Malcolm Reading Consultants and individual teams (clockwise from top left): Mae; Tibbalds Planning & Urban Design; Barton Willmore; Fletcher Priest Architects

Public invited to comment on the teams' visions

The National Infrastructure Commission and Malcolm Reading Consultants have today [12 October 2017] revealed the four final design concepts for *The Cambridge to Oxford Connection: Ideas Competition* in an [online gallery](#).

Launched in June, the competition sought inspirational yet achievable visions for future development of this key economic area, covering Cambridge, Milton Keynes, Northampton and Oxford. Finalists focused on integrating infrastructure and development to create sustainable and liveable places appropriate to the corridor.

Finalists' ideas for enhancing the corridor include a new National Park; an archipelago of linked, distinctive and compact places; a series of ecologically-rich urban campuses; and a reimagining of the 21st-century village.

From today, the four finalists' strategic design concepts for development growth will be showcased in a digital gallery at <https://competitions.malcolmreading.co.uk/cambridgeoxfordconnection/shortlist>. There is also an opportunity to submit comments on each scheme proposed, at cambridgeoxfordconnection@malcolmreading.co.uk

The four shortlisted teams – led by Barton Willmore, Fletcher Priest Architects, Mae, and Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design – were selected by a jury of thought-leaders in infrastructure, economics, design and placemaking, and announced in August.

The winner of the competition is expected to be announced next month.

For the teams' full concept summaries, please see the Notes to Editors. In brief, their key themes (in alphabetical order by team lead name) are:

- **Barton Willmore** developed *The CaMKoX Innovation Hive Delivery Guide* – not a fixed masterplan but an approach that envisages organic growth within communities, delivering not just homes but vibrant places to support innovation and business creation. A carefully guided approach to encourage communities to acquire a rich urban form and varied sense of place. Situated within a new National Park, the proposals set a new benchmark for development that enhances the natural environment.
- **Fletcher Priest Architects** developed the *Mid-Vale Archipelago*, a constellation of linked, distinctive and compact places set within a continuous landscape. They propose 'middle sites' between the corridor's major urban centres that combine the best of village life with the critical mass of larger towns while preserving and enhancing landscape character. The desire for beneficial relationships between existing and new communities is central – along with a patient approach to delivery that prioritises long-term capital benefits over short-term windfall returns.
- **Mae** developed *Urcadia* – an ecologically rich urban settlement for the Just About Managing, the Yes-in-my-back-yards, the Millennials, and Generation Rent in the form of a 'New Living Campus'. Their proposal combines the intensity and density of a city with the pastoral richness of the English countryside enhanced for leisure use, health and well-being and food production. New construction technologies facilitate economic housing for a generation suffering from no realistic prospect of owning a home.
- **Tibbalds Planning & Urban Design** developed *VeloCity*, a unique region in the UK that is no longer reliant on the car, supported by an integrated road-and-rail transport strategy linked to a network of local, medium and longer distance cycle routes. Focusing on six villages situated to the south-east of one of the new stations on the Oxford to Cambridge rail link, *VeloCity* reimagines the 21st-century village.

**Commissioner for the National Infrastructure Commission and competition jury chair
Bridget Rosewell, said:**

“ *The corridor encompassing Cambridge, Milton Keynes, Northampton and Oxford contributes considerably to our national economy – if we’re to continue this success we must foster places people want, and can afford, to live and work in.*

The four shortlisted entries to our ideas competition are creative, innovative and exciting. This online gallery gives people the chance to see these entries, and to have a say on how their area could be developed in future.

I’m delighted that we’ve attracted so much attention from leading lights across design, architecture, economics and town planning, and that residents and the industry at large will now get to see what their collective talents have proposed. ”

Competition organiser Malcolm Reading, said:

“ *These are four very diverse proposals that propel us deep into the 21st century. They show that it is possible to be imaginative in responding to a raft of competing challenges and are an urgent reminder that we do need a plan and a strategy or we will be overtaken by the times – losing out economically, in terms of quality of life, or both.*

We’re delighted that this ideas competition has generated a new set of possibilities that contribute to the wider debate of how we, as a nation, want to ‘design’ our future. ”

About *The Cambridge to Oxford Connection: Ideas Competition*

A total of 58 teams from the UK and further afield entered the competition’s first stage, anonymously submitting ideas based on a chosen form of development – ranging from the intensification of existing urban areas to new autonomous settlements – along with separate details on their teams.

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.

While the corridor includes some of the country’s most successful cities, as well as world-leading universities, high tech firms and highly skilled workers, it does not function as a single joined-up economic zone.

The National Infrastructure Commission has recommended that the 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.

The ideas competition is a key part of that work, and encouraged urban designers, architects, planners, policy and community specialists, landscape designers and development economists to come forward and submit their designs for how the corridor could be developed in the future.



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In November, the National Infrastructure Commission will announce the overall winning entry for the competition, and publish its final report and recommendations for further supporting the growth corridor.

The four finalists' proposals from *The Cambridge to Oxford Connection: Ideas Competition* – fully credited to the competitors – will be published alongside the Commission's Final Report.

Ends

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FOR IMAGES

Images from the four finalist teams can be downloaded from:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/t7585i6d71rtahb/AACf5TJlyQeXsPLNlp-dhH1xa?dl=0>

Images © Malcolm Reading Consultants & individual teams

NOTES TO EDITORS

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.

For further information please visit the NIC website: <https://www.nic.org.uk>

Anyone wanting to view the new online gallery can do so at:

<https://competitions.malcolmreading.co.uk/cambridgeoxfordconnection/shortlist>

Comments will be welcome at cambridgeoxfordconnection@malcolmreading.co.uk

Team concept summaries (in alphabetical order by team lead name) in full:

- **Barton Willmore - *The CaMKoX Innovation Hive Delivery Guide***

The Innovation Hive provides the foundations to build capacity for an increased number of new homes without compromising the existing sense of community and relationship with the landscape which make this place great in the first place.

Our approach avoids a fixed masterplan, proposing instead a process of organic growth intelligently steered by a delivery guide.

The proposals deliver not just homes but vibrant places to support innovation and business creation, supporting one of Britain's most productive regions.

More than a corridor, The Hive is a region defined by interconnectivity between communities, organisations and individuals, a place where mobility works in tandem with urban form.

The pattern of organic growth within communities will be carefully guided to encourage them to acquire a rich urban form and varied sense of place.

Set within a new National Park, the proposals set a new benchmark for development working to enhance the natural environment.

- **Fletcher Priest Architects - *Mid-Vale Archipelago***

The 'Mid-Vale Archipelago' is a constellation of linked, distinctive and compact places set within continuous landscapes. Existing and future connections and new approaches to sharing allow them to operate in a reciprocal manner to host civic and economic functions alongside significantly increased populations. It responds to the challenge of growth in a region characterised by towns and villages, combining the best of village life with the critical mass of larger towns while preserving and enhancing landscape character.

Our strategy identifies ‘middle’ sites between the poles of global success. We select locations where new linked places can be created that exploit existing infrastructures and which have the potential to be enhanced and accelerated by the overlay of new networks.

Central to our vision is the desire for beneficial relationships between existing and new communities, combined with a patient approach to delivery, prioritising long term capital benefits over short term windfall returns.

- **Mae - Urcadia**

For the JAMs. For the YIMBYs. For the Millennials. For Generation Rent. For the Entrepreneurs and the Dreamers. For the scientists, the industrialists, the engineers, the academics and the 1.9 million people expected to move to the Cambridge to Oxford region over the next 34 years we propose a new type of place - Urcadia - an ecologically rich urban settlement that takes the form of a ‘New Living Campus’.

Our proposal combines the intensity and density of a city with the pastoral richness of our English countryside enhanced for leisure use, health and wellbeing and food production. New construction technologies facilitate economic housing for a generation currently left out of the prospect of owning a home.

We propose integrating placemaking and infrastructure to create the UK’s leading growth network. Our submission sets out a vision to grow a series of places founded on sound and resilient placemaking principles, and underpinned by a form of governance to ensure these qualities continue for future generations.

- **Tibbalds Planning & Urban Design - VeloCity**

VeloCity is a unique region in the UK no longer reliant on the car, supported by an integrated system of fast rail and road links connecting major towns and cities and an associated finer grain network of local, medium and longer distance cycle routes.

The successful implementation of this transport strategy allows for traditional planning policy to be turned on its head and locations that were previously seen as unsuitable for growth have been transformed into well-connected and sustainable places.

Focusing on six villages situated to the south east of one of the new stations on the Oxford to Cambridge rail link, VeloCity advances a place-based vision for reimagining the 21st-century village.

It also considers how the vision might be delivered over time and the key actions and interventions that would need to be taken to make it happen.

For full details of each team and the competition jury please visit the competition website at:

<https://competitions.malcolmreading.co.uk/cambridgeoxfordconnection/>