Santander’s new Digital Hub in Milton Keynes

Project background

Santander is proposing to build a new Digital Hub in Central Milton Keynes. As Milton Keynes' largest employer, Santander is seeking to significantly invest and commit to their long-term future in Milton Keynes by embracing their digital future.

The Digital Hub will be located on land bound by Elder Gate, Midsummer Boulevard, Grafton Gate and Silbury Boulevard adjacent to Station Square. The site is currently in use as a car park.

It is a landmark site within the business district of Milton Keynes and provides an exciting opportunity to consolidate Santander’s existing buildings into one campus. This will strengthen the significant employment and economic benefits that Santander brings to the local area and will be enhanced by the additional offer that Santander is seeking to incorporate through additional uses on the ground floor that will be accessible to all.

Santander has created a design brief for the project architects, LOM, which seeks to respond to the Milton Keynes context while creating a new office typology. Osborne + Co has been appointed as the Development Partner to deliver this world class Digital Hub.

Integration
Create a building which will foster a stronger sense of community for Santander staff and the wider Milton Keynes community

Sustainability
Consolidating to a single campus will provide a new sustainable future for the bank environmentally and economically

Innovation & Collaboration
The new digital hub will support and foster collaboration and growth for the bank while maintaining Milton Keynes at the forefront of tech innovation.

Project delivery and design team:

The world class Digital Hub will consolidate Santander’s offices within Milton Keynes to create a new campus for 6,000 employees. The key principles for the project vision:
Planning context & consultation

Planning context

Planning policy sets out Milton Keynes Council’s vision for the site. These policies will be used to assess a planning application. The Site is subject to the following site allocations:

- Central Milton Keynes Neighbourhood Plan: Classic CMK Infrastructure (Policies G1/G11), Indicative Land Use (Hotel, Office, Retail / Professional and Financial services / Restaurants / Housing / Hotel (Figure 16) and Hotel / Conference space (Figure 6)
- Emerging Plan MK: Central Business District (DS3, SD2 & SD3).
- Saved Local Plan & Core Strategy: City Spine Quarter (Policy CC7b) & Station Square Quarter

Classic Infrastructure

The footprint of the proposed development infringes on classic CMK infrastructure to the north east and south east of the site. The key points from Policies G1/G11 are summarised below:

- An exceptional development will demonstrably raise the profile of Milton Keynes nationally or internationally;
- Makes a substantial contribution – economic, employment, social and cultural and other key objectives of the Plan and city prosperity;
- Enhance Milton Keynes’ distinctive identity;
- Look at alternative options, if put forward by the local community;
- Pre-application engagement with stakeholders to evaluate options and undertake a survey on options.

The development will offer a wide range of benefits to Santander staff and the wider MK community by providing a landmark office building in a key strategic site with a range of publicly accessible facilities

Economic benefits

- Commitment to long term future in MK;
- Investment in MK;
- Show confidence in MK as an office destination;
- Catalyst for businesses;
- Business rates;
- Local spending from increased staff presence and new businesses;

Social & cultural benefits

- Open ground floor;
- Additional services within the business district;
- Day and evening activity;
- Increased working environment;
- Increased footfall and passive surveillance.

Location benefits

- Enhance MK’s reputation;
- Links with the MK-U;
- Oxford-MK-Cambridge Corridor;
- Landmark development upon arrival to MK;
- Architectural form and sustainability credentials.

Consultation & feedback

Workshops were held on 29 October and 12 November 2018 with local stakeholders. The workshops were attended by 25-30 participants comprising of local interest groups, statutory consultees and members of the public. The feedback from workshop 1 can be summarised in the following key themes:

- Use of the building as an evening and social location;
- Servicing arrangements;
- Pedestrian and cycle movements;
- Relationship with Station Square;
- Impact on trees;
- Façade detail;
- Sustainability credentials;
- Travel planning; and
- What makes the development distinctive.

During the second workshop a revised servicing arrangement was shown and the above themes were discussed further. These conversations remain ongoing as the Project Team continue to develop the detail of the scheme and liaise with stakeholders.

Next steps

We will review the feedback from our public engagement and gather all of the various inputs to feed into the planning process. Following a review and any amendments to the scheme, a planning application is due to be submitted in Spring 2019.

Project updates will be available on our website: santanderdevelopmentmk.co.uk
The brief is to provide an open and collaborative working environment with a range of communal uses at ground floor. The proposal provides a compact campus for 6,000 staff, connected both horizontally and vertically within the building. Provision includes:

- **Office space**: 6 floors of workspace for Santander
- **Co-working space**: Incubator space for business enterprise and start-ups
- **Auditorium / meeting**: A flexible auditorium to facilitate staff and public use
- **Community space**: A flexible hall space which can be let for community use
- **Food hall and restaurant**: Food hall be also permit public access
- **Rooftop bar / terrace**: A facility to be made available to the public
- **Commercial / retail**: A range of retail / restaurant units at ground level
- **Bank branch**: A branch & work cafe with ATMs
- **Health & fitness facilities**: Health suite / gymnasium for both Santander and public use
- **Car parking**: 1,000+ parking spaces across the scheme

**Concepts & provision**

- **Basic massing across ground + 7 floors**
- **Linear blocks create 3 atria**
- **An open and accessible ground floor**

- **Articulated entrance and colonnade**
- **Landscaping brought into the building**
- **Environmental wrap**

- **Roof**: North facing rooflights introduce natural light to the atria spaces. Louvred screens enclose roof level plant.
- **Screen**: An environmental screen wraps the south, east and west elevations where solar control is required to facilitate a high level of natural light, transparency and views while reducing cooling loads.
- **Winter gardens**: Winter gardens link the atria spaces with landscaped bridges for meeting, break out and relaxation.
- **Linear blocks**: The building facades are fully glazed to form a series of linear glass blocks providing natural daylight and views to the internal workspace while conveying the transparent and open ethos of the bank.
Scale, massing & amount

Provision

The building is arranged across 6 floors of office space above a double height ground, with an additional floor of plant at level 7.

Two levels of basement car parking in addition to surface level parking will provide in excess of 1,000 spaces on the site. All surface parking will be retained for public use. The ground floor will host a range of communal and publicly accessible spaces and is arranged across a split level which responds to the topography of the site allowing for level access from either side of the building.

- Total net area: 44,000 sqm
- Total office space: 37,000 sqm
- Total staff: 6,000 (5,000 desks)
- Total Communal / ancillary space: 7,000 sqm
- Total parking provision: 1,000+ spaces
Landscape, public realm & parking

The development will provide public parking spaces at ground level in addition to basement car parking for Santander staff. There will be over 400 secure cycle spaces in the basement for staff and a further 130 spaces at ground level for visitors.

- Vehicle entry and egress points from existing Grafton Gate entry and off a new entry point from Silbury Boulevard
- Access to basement via ramp at ground level
- Public car parking provided at surface level
- Drop off / short stay parking provided to the north east adjacent to ATMs
- Building entrances from the north east and from the south west

Materials and planting for the proposed landscape will be selected to match the existing Classic Infrastructure. The landscape design will provide spaces for people to pass through and dwell, enhancing the existing permeability of the site. A new City Garden will be provided off Eldergate with seating, planting and space to relax.

Planting strategy

Although the development will involve the removal of a number of trees within the site, an extensive range of planting is proposed as part of landscape strategy to preserve and enhance the classic infrastructure principles.

A number of trees along Grafton Gate show evidence of disease. These will be removed and replaced like for like as part of the development, while other semi-mature trees will be planted as part of the landscape proposals.
Active ground floor

The ground floor will have an open, accessible and permeable public link though the building hosting a range of pop-up outlets, while an active colonnade along Midsummer Boulevard will be fronted by a range of retail and food & beverage units.

A flexible auditorium space will be provided at ground level which will host a range of events for both staff and the wider community including screenings, talks, presentations and functions. There will be scope to link the auditorium with the flexible function space which will offer additional community use.

The Midsummer Boulevard colonnade will be activated with a range of retail and commercial units creating a vibrant pedestrian link from Station Square.

Auditorium space will be available for public hire.

View looking north from entrance plaza. Open and permeable facades will permit movement through the site and create vitality to the streetscape.
Workspace & amenity

Three large atria spaces will bring natural light, views and greenery into the open plan workspace to provide Santander with a world class working environment focussed on staff well being.

The building is designed around the individual and will include shared collaborative spaces to support agile and flexible working to provide staff with control and choice over their workplace. Desk space is provided to the perimeter of the floors to benefit from natural light and views.

Landscape will provide a key role internally and externally to define spaces for staff to meet, work and relax by connecting people with nature. Winter garden break-out spaces are provided within the atria, along with 3 roof terraces on floor 6. The terrace on the north east corner will be associated with a bar / function space which will be accessible to the public.
Sustainability

Sustainability and staff wellbeing are two core objectives for the building design which reflects the sustainable ethos of the bank while creating an attractive and healthy workplace for staff.

The new building will promote excellence in sustainable design achieving 20 percent reduction of CO₂ emissions against Building Regulations through a range of passive measures.

Heating and cooling
The building will utilise a low energy and efficient central heating and cooling system with on floor fan coil units supplying fresh air to the office space while allowing for flexibility and user temperature control.

Renewable
PV panels will provide approx. 93,500kWh of electricity to the building offsetting 40 tonnes of CO₂ per year. Air Source Heat Pumps or District Heating and Cooling are also being considered to reduce carbon emissions.

Low energy lighting
Low energy LED lighting incorporating daylight and motion controls will be specified throughout the building.

Atrium
The atrium will bring natural light into the office space while assisting with the displacement ventilation of the lower ground floor spaces.

Building mass
The building is designed as an exposed concrete frame which is beneficial for heating and cooling the building through convection from the thermal mass of the structure.

Building envelope
The building will have a high performance thermal envelope which will minimise heat loss and gain while providing a high level of natural light. External solar shading will reduce heat gain further while minimising glare.

Biophilic design
Planting within the building will improve air quality and reduce toxin levels while providing staff with views onto nature.

Biodiversity
External roof terraces with planting and landscape will introduce biodiversity with the inclusion of wildflower gardens and bat and bird boxes.

Atria
Introduces natural light and views to the workspace.

Massing
Low rise building form is efficient and encourages movement.

Envelope
Control solar gain and reduce heating loads.

Landscape
Internal and external planting includes winter gardens.

Cross section through atrium

Long section through building