Market engagement event for the forthcoming tender for a study into the development of the Mass Rapid Transit concept for Milton Keynes:

The Milton Keynes Strategy for 2050 (adopted by Council January 2021 as an annex to the Council Plan) presents a long-term growth strategy for the growth of Milton Keynes borough to a population of around 410,000 people (from around 270,000 people today), set within a context of growth across the wider Oxford-Cambridge Arc. Among its seven big ambitions the strategy aims to "make it easier for everyone to travel on foot, by bike and with better public transport". A major part of the strategy is to introduce a Mass Rapid Transit network for the city, helping people move about in a more energy efficient way. It will also support reduced dependence on private car travel, higher density development, improved accessibility and social inclusion, and decarbonisation. The strategy aims for a phased delivery of MRT so that a complete network is operational by 2050.

The Strategy Evidence Base includes work on how the concept has been developed to date (see 2050 Growth Study by David Lock Associates with the MRT work by ITP Consultants). The MRT is expected to take the form of a Rubber Tyred Vehicle (RTV) based system. To be adaptable to future transport scenarios it is also expected to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate smaller (most likely connected and autonomous) vehicles as well as mass transit options. In their high-level assessment of the MRT viability, ITP have identified routes which could be delivered in either a phase 1 (by 2031) or phase 2 (2031-2050), with an eventual network being 90% segregated from other traffic. The precise routing of MRT lines and where they may terminate has not been finalised, and in some cases, these will need to adapt to future decisions on new development and regeneration schemes.

Ahead of commissioning further work and support on the MRT concept we are seeking views on the following questions:

- We may consider appointing a managing consultant to support the council team. Do you think this is the right approach and have you experience to share on how this works well/not so well?
- What should be the study approach?
- What do you think the sequencing of activities/work should be?
- What technical expertise is required to deliver the next round of studies? Would this be best brought together as a consortium of experts or via a multi-disciplinary team?
- What are the key inputs you would expect from the council team ?
- What do you think the role of operators should be in the study, when should they be engaged?
- Thinking of tasks ahead do you think these study objectives outlined below appropriate for the next phase of technical work and is anything missing?

The following are suggested objectives for the next round of technical work to develop the MRT concept, and comments are provided to explain these:

Appraise the MRT Route Options presented in the Milton Keynes Strategy for 2050 and recommend an updated network which moves it forward from	Long-term network plan needs to be agreed to inform long-term decisions on land use planning and transport infrastructure investment. Routes in the final strategy differ from those modelled in the

being aspirational to a 'preferred' network.	evidence base and the overall network requires further consideration. Appraisal must be informed by the wider Strategy for 2050 aspirations. Should other data and criteria such as existing bus routes influence the routes? Are there alternative route options for certain corridors and what should determine preferred options? Does recent decision by MK Council to withdraw bus subsidies and invest in demand responsive transport change the route network? How does DRT operation support or influence future MRT planning?
Refresh the outline business case.	The business case for the long-term preferred network needs to be viable, in terms of investment value for money and operational viability. The Strategic case must be very strong. Advice on suitable appraisal methods are welcome to ensure non quantifiable benefits are fully reflected.
Considering current and future transport demand and opportunities/variables to increase demand (such as with new development and park and ride), identify the phasing of new infrastructure delivery to support bus/MRT delivery and operation.	The updated network will in all likelihood need to be delivered in phases. Factors including current travel demand and future changes to this arising from new development, parking policy/strategy and societal/behavioural shifts is likely to affect the timing of route provision. The current Local Plan extends to 2031 and the Strategy for 2050 provides direction and scale of growth options that will be assessed and confirmed through the next Local Plan. There is currently no agreed new strategy for parking supply and management in central Milton Keynes. How important could other demand management tools such as Workplace Parking Levy scheme, road pricing etc be for the project? Clarity on MRT dependencies on these measures, and a steer on work required to progress those that are considered essential/desirable.
Refresh work undertaken to date on funding opportunities and delivery mechanisms for MRT.	Key to delivery and whether network develops incrementally or with comprehensive routes coming forward sequentially.
Recommend the infrastructure that should be delivered in the next 10 years to support both current public transport services and the delivery of the network.	Need to identify routes/network sections on which to focus further development. Clarity on solutions for central Milton Keynes particularly important given development opportunities here and interdependence with other projects.
Bus legislation implications for the design and operation of the MRT system.	How the range of partnership models between the council and operators impact the design and operation of the phased delivery of the MRT system, and the recommended approach for the relationship with operators.