

Planners are determined to keep this city on the move

PEOPLE keep claiming that Milton Keynes was built for the car. It simply is not true. Milton Keynes planners designed a city for people. Key planning goals included opportunity and freedom of choice, easy movement and access.

Those aspirations are as true today as they were 40 years ago. The world has moved on since 1967 so current city planners have to design things differently in order to achieve the same ends.

The original Milton Keynes masterplan was for a city with fewer people and therefore less traffic than we are planning for now. There is much more concern about climate change. Margaret Thatcher had not deregulated the buses either, since when it has been difficult to run a good bus service. These and other new challenges mean that some things have to change to enable everyone to enjoy "easy movement and access".

I RECENTLY realised what it is that makes me so passionate about defending Milton Keynes from those acting under government diktat to destroy it (in order to increase revenue from land sales) or those complicit in its destruction because of ill-thought out or muddled ideologies (such as 'forcing people out of their cars'). It's because I hate lied to. And lied to, we most certainly are.

You will recall from previous articles the survey carried out by pollsters ICM for the Citizen's Advisory Group on Transport that revealed those things that most residents love and cherish. Those who go about destroying those things are in descending order of infamy:

- English Partnerships, an unelected, unrepresentative government quango;
- Milton Keynes Partnership, an unelected sub-committee of that unrepresentative government quango, which variously claims it is nothing to do with EP, or that it represents the community, or that it has 'independent' members;
- Milton Keynes Council which seems to opt for the 'simple life' by nodding through every appalling decision made by the afore-mentioned organisations.

Even those you would expect to defend Milton Keynes are, on closer examination, found to be seriously lacking. Independent charity The Parks Trust owns (on a 999-year lease from the council) 1,800 hectares of green space in Milton Keynes - that equates to 20 per cent of the new city, including the majority of parkland, road corridors, lakes, woodland and about 300 hectares of farmland. Yet, despite its stout and noteworthy defence of the V10, the Parks Trust seems prepared to see the grid die.

In an act of betrayal, it has sold the green reservations of the western end of

Isobel McCall, leader of Milton Keynes Council, argues that an efficient transport system is essential if the city's expansion is to be a success.

"How dare you rip up the masterplan for Milton Keynes and turn us into Luton or Croydon?" is the rallying cry of those who oppose all change because Milton Keynes is perfect the way it is. Try telling the 30 per cent of households without a car in some parts of Milton Keynes that life is perfect when they cannot take up job offers or visit relatives in hospital because there is no decent bus service.

Businesses are losing a sizeable potential workforce when residents cannot get to work because the grid system makes it difficult for a bus operator to run a viable service.

"We don't want traffic lights" is the

other battle cry. "We are a city of roundabouts". Putting aside the fact that the original masterplan had traffic lights rather than roundabouts at grid road junctions, the debate addresses the wrong question. The right question is: 'Do you want to sit in a half-hour traffic jam just to preserve your right to drive round a roundabout?' Anyone with any sense will say no.

Roundabouts do not work at some junctions. Lengthy queuing will be avoided by traffic lights controlling traffic movement.

The council is determined to keep Milton Keynes moving. Grid roads will gridlock unless the capacity of the existing grid system is increased *and* a high-quality,

reliable bus service provided so that some people choose to use it rather than a car.

If you want to drive round the grid system in ten years time, it is in your interests that the council does what is necessary to get a decent bus service, particularly in the new areas. If it does not, you will not be going anywhere. You will sit in a long traffic queue.

The great transport debate in Milton Keynes has degenerated into hysteria about traffic lights, attacks on the original masterplan and on the motorist instead of focusing on what is important. As this successful city grows, we need to build on the best of the existing system but adapt to changes around us. The aim is to keep Milton Keynes moving and to ensure that everyone - not just those with cars - can get around, can take up jobs and enjoy all the wonderful things that Milton Keynes has to offer.



● Isobel McCall

We will live to regret short-term thinking

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ear park running along the southern boundary and a swathe of new parkland connecting the linear park to Kingsmead Spinney. When the development has taken place, the Trust will be handed some 14 hectares of extra green space.

"As always in these circumstances the Trust's Board of Trustees carefully considered the case for giving up the lease of the H7 stub end and felt that the case was compelling and was in line with agreed adopted planning guidance and was supported by the local authority."

David Foster was fully aware that, according to page 48 of the Tattenhoe Park Master Plan document of 2006, the H7 will be "downgraded" from a strategic grid road to a local distributor road. Page 12 of that document asserted that discussions were taking place with Milton Keynes Council and the Parks Trust for the release to Milton Keynes Partnership of the 2.7 hectares of land abutting H7. MKP chief executive John Lewis told me that "The grid roads are safe with me".

Really, David?

Prior to this grid road being officially downgraded, a few accesses have been taken from it of sub-grid quality and the landscape buffers removed. However, is it really too late to avoid this disaster?

With the current house-building and banking crisis, could we not reach a com-

promise, knocking the housing boundary back a distance to increase the speed limit to 40mph so that if that link ever happens, we don't have a grid road with 500 yards of 20mph or 30mph limit halfway down it? Surely that would be sub-sane?

Meanwhile the infrastructure with the main road - designated as the 'High Street' in the Tattenhoe Park plans - is pretty well complete, along with the district school. It is also evident that this street acts as the south-north bus route through Tattenhoe Park as defined in the plan. The main bus route will traverse multiple raised sections on a designated 20mph route. Does this equate to a future quality public transport system meeting the needs of Milton Keynes citizens?

This route is intended, according to the plans, to travel north into Kingsmead South into another 20mph designated area. This is clearly going to provide slow, uncomfortable bus travel as the multiple raised platforms regularly disrupt the entire width of the 'High Street'.

John Napleton, former head of Milton Keynes Development Corporation, said in response: "I am appalled that the Parks Trust has disposed of this land on the H7 corridor. Members of the local authority seem to have no awareness of decisions they have made on grid roads and the Parks Trust was established to ensure that this kind of planning vandalism could not happen.

"H7 can never now be properly extended as was intended and it could become a hybrid; starting as a grid road, then a city street and then back to a grid road. I firmly believe that the short-term thinking that is going into so much of Milton Keynes planning will be regretted in the future."

Isn't that the truth. Cheerio.

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