

Milton Keynes - A City For The Future?

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Sample of Content:

First of all,for people who are reading this from outside of the UK,a little background is required.Milton Keynes is a "New Town".That is,one that was designed and built from scratch in recent times rather than having developed from a small settlement over hundreds of years.Interestingly though it has incorporated a number of towns and villages that have a very ancient and interesting past.The majority of the town is, however, modern and has been planned - unlike traditional British towns that have simply had extra bits tacked on over the course of time.

Content:

The two main features of Milton Keynes which distinguish it from older towns are:

1)The town was built with motor vehicles in mind and so has a structured road network.

2)A significant amount of land was set aside for green space, from the extensive network of park land to the sizeable margins planted with trees and shrubs by the side of the road system.

So why this article?

Milton Keynes is my home, not a place I am forced to live, but where I live from choice. It is not a vast metropolis like London with all the things that such a city has to offer, or a quaint old English town. It is simply a provincial town of 200,000 people in the corner of Buckinghamshire with the most astonishing expanse of parks, lakes, and modern facilities.

This article is born from the frustration of the town being the butt end of every joke that is supposed to symbolise a place not to live. This is a self sustaining myth that is passed around between people that haven't even been here.

The public opinion of this town is developed from ignorance and an onslaught of misinformation.

This is an attempt to educate.The names of the regions of Milton Keynes come from three main sources:

- 1)Original village.The name of the village incorporated into the area.
- 2)Field name upon which the area is built.
- 3)Name of the farm now lying within the region.

The principle road network in Milton Keynes is simply that...a net like grid. The reason is to distribute traffic so that no one route is necessarily more preferable than the other (to get from one corner of the city to the other there are many permutations on the number of possible routes). This is a common enough concept in cities in the US, but in Britain most of the road layouts within towns were established before cars were invented.

The roads divide the city up into approximately 1 kilometre squares, most of the names of which are taken from an historical element from within the square. These roads are only for moving around the city,and have no frontage development. Instead they are heavily landscaped. To gain access to anything in Milton Keynes the grid roads have turnings onto "Local" roads.

The roads of the grid are named and numbered so that the "vertical" (roughly north - south) roads are named as "Streets", the Roman road of Watling Street is one of these, and have numbers beginning with V.Watling street is V4. The "Horizontal", roughly west - east, are numbered H and are named "Ways". Ridgeway [H1] and Portway [H5] roughly follow the routes of ancient tracks of the same names.

Landscaping

All the Grid Roads are lined with large grass verges, hedgerows, shrubs, and trees. Where the roads are only single carriageway, space is allowed to upgrade to dual should it ever be necessary and in the meantime planted with yet more shrubs. The heavy landscaping, while providing a "woodland" feel to the whole town also has a more practical purpose in helping to screen out the noise and sight of the roads from the quieter areas behind.

Roundabouts

The intersection of major routes is always a problem and traffic lights are usually the result. Because of the fairly even flow of traffic along the grid roads of the city, one route is not very much more dominant than another, roundabouts [traffic circles] were the ideal solution. Traffic flows in an even manner, meshing together at the junctions by means of the roundabouts without the inevitable "bunching" caused by traffic lights. In fact the only main occurrence of traffic lights in the city are those next to the main shopping center itself.

This of course means that there are a LOT of roundabouts. Since, however, these roundabouts are LARGE (not little painted white dots that are put in towns as an afterthought) the movements of other road users are easy to anticipate, making the negotiation of each junction a smooth, relatively unhindered operation.

Speed

These main thoroughfares allow for the easy movement of cars around the city (speed limits are the national limit of 60 mile per hour on the single carriageway and 70 on the dual). As soon as a driver turns off the "grid" the local areas have a speed limit of 30 miles per hour as is usual for areas of housing and pedestrians. Traffic "calming" devices such as ramps are also used, especially where a path or redway crosses such a local road.

Local Roads

Away from the grid roads, each area of Milton Keynes has a local road system which is often more "meandering". Pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, and local traffic are protected when crossing the grid roads by underpasses or bridges. Each length of grid road (between roundabouts) usually has two or more such crossings.

Redways

A pedestrian and cycle way network crossing the city for 250 kilometres. They are called "Redways" because of their red asphalt surface, however where they travel through the parks they have a more rural brown gravel surface.

Bridle ways

There are a large number of bridle paths running through the city,mostly following the linear parks,which also connect to rural bridle ways outside of the city. These are either sand or wood chipping surfaces. In places where there is a livestock boundary within the parks, and so a gate is necessary (the cyclists have a small cattle grid), mounting/dismounting steps are often nearby.

Canal

The Grand Union Canal a 12 mile section of the canal runs though the middle of the city from the Iron Trunk Aqueduct in the north (before bridge number 68) to bridge number 99 in the south. Now used by pleasure boats.

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