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**Address:** Aspley Guise  
**Date of Birth:** 1944  
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I'm John Hilton and I was born in 1944.

*(1st interviewer) And when and why did you first move to Milton Keynes?*

I got a job as a transportation planner with the Development Corporation in 1974.

*(1st interviewer) And what was your role in those days?*

Well initially it was to do the transport planning so running the transport model and sorting out the way people were going to move around the city. That was my first role, after that I became more of a town planner than a transportation planner.

*(1st interviewer) So who came up with the idea of redways?*

When I arrived there were one or two people who were talking about the need to get cycling to be a part of city life and safe. And there were one or two places in the country that had cycle ways but they were huge. They were five, six metres wide, took a lot of land and we were looking at a way to make things easier, to be able to cross the grid roads without going on the grid roads. And after a lot of negotiation with Government in particular um we were allowed to combine the surface for pedestrians and cyclists and that became the redway.

*(1st interviewer) So is there any sort of thing you are particularly proud of, you know, as part of the planning?*

Particularly proud of redways because we created what...the largest cycleway network in the country, um...

*(1st interviewer) How large is that?*

Well last time I heard anything and this is quite a long time ago now, it was a 180 kilometres.

*(1st interviewer) And, so what particularly in Milton Keynes do you consider to be a success or a failure?*

(laughs) I, I think that the really clever bit of the Plan for Milton Keynes was the built-in flexibility of the thing, so you...things could change and be changed as the environment around changed. So there was a tremendous willingness amongst the Development Corporation staff to put things in place that would allow for future development, unknown future developments. Um so for instance, the grid roads had ducting alongside them to put in something. We didn't know what that something might be at that stage but just...it's there and it can be used. And so we had cable television early on and of course now we've got fibre optics and it's all there.

*(1st interviewer) So can you sort of expand a bit more on your role, you know, what that entailed in those days?*

It really entailed, along with many, many other people, it was a big staff, making a better workable, liveable city with its own community and communities. It was, you know, there's the overall community in the way that everything knits together, and that tied in with the need for the flexibility and all that sort of thing that...and one of the things that I did in my early days was to actually cut out one of the grid roads because it ran through the linear park and it wasn't really needed in a traffic sense. And so I have a road that ran through the middle of a park, so we took it out. And that was the V9.

*(1st interviewer) So yeah, you mentioned it was adaptable, can you elaborate on that a bit more?*

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Yeah, I mean it's...throughout the city there are a lot of reserve sites so there's still parts of central Milton Keynes which haven't been developed because they're held back in order to be able to put things in that you couldn't envisage forty/fifty years ago. and a good example of what we were thinking was that the roundabouts that the city has, lots and lots as everybody knows, those roundabouts are the size they are so that should it be necessary to put traffic lights in, you can actually put the traffic lights into the middle of the roundabout with the cross roads without disrupting the flow of traffic around the roundabout. So that you can, you can switch systems very easily. Similarly, the grid roads are wide enough with their reserve either side if it's needed you can put a tram-way system in without disrupting the way the city works. So there's a lot of that sort of thing.

*(1st interviewer) So as a planner if you could go back and say 'we could have done that better' or...what would, what would you have changed?*

Oh right gosh. Not a lot actually. I think the city works remarkably well. I think that the biggest problem I guess is the fact that it's so dispersed. So it's difficult to have a public transport system that works really efficiently because you need a high density of population to make that happen. But then that has its disadvantages as well so... but the car is...most people would say a car is necessary in Milton Keynes.

*(1st interviewer) So what would you do now to improve Milton Keynes do you think?*

Not a lot.

*(1st interviewer) Not a lot?*

Not a lot, no. I mean I'm not....we had....the big battles in the early days where for instance it took quite a lot to persuade British Rail to build a station. They, they thought that you know...we'd got two, we'd got Bletchley and Wolverton, why do you want another station? But they were persuaded to eventually put it in. That was quite a hard battle.

*(1st interviewer) Yeah. Ok.*

*(2nd interviewer) Can I just ask a question?*

*(1st interviewer) Sure.*

*(2nd interviewer) Why were they called the redways? Why are they red?*

OK. The redways are red to make them distinctive from all the other road surfaces so that they would be obvious. So you have a red surface with the yellow bollards to make them distinctive so that people would know that that's a surface that you could cycle on as well as walk on. Because we had to have special bylaws to enable people to do that. Because nationally it's illegal to ride a bike on a footpath by a road.

*(2nd interviewer) Oh. Have you ridden your bike on a redway?*

Many, many times (laughs).

*(2nd interviewer) The first time you rode your bike how did you feel?*

Oh it was fantastic, yeah. And I now take my grandchildren to ride on the redways because they're easy and safe. It's the greatest I think.

*(3rd interviewer) Can I just ask a question? When you first started designing the redways how did you start off? How did it come about? What, what made you decide where the routes were going to go?*

00:10:00

Right. I did a design map across the city, so I said 'where are people living?' and 'where do they want to go?' and then drew lines through every bit of the planned city. And that produced a network of bunches of lines if you like, where you can say 'that is a, a route, that should be a route'. And so before any of the grid squares were being designed they had a pattern of lines across them, so that when the, the layout of the grid square was being designed they could build in from what I produced as straight lines, they could build into the...into the design to meet the design lines. So that people could go from their homes to their work, their homes to shops, their homes to doctors, whatever...by bike or on foot. And that's how it worked.

*(1st interviewer) So do you still live in Milton Keynes?*

I live just outside. I live in Aspley Guise. But it's been a great pleasure to be associated with.

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(tape ends)