

Name: Richard Minns

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Interviewed by: Sarah Watson

Duration: 00:24:32

00:00:00

Can you just introduce yourself again but can you also tell me where we are this time?

Yes, I am Richard, Richard Minns, Milton Keynes Citizen what for what thirty four years, currently in Oxley Park which is a relatively new estate, it's one of the last estates of Milton Keynes to be developed, as you can see it is pretty different to what you might see elsewhere with sort of bricked houses and normal roofing and it's a lovely place.

How long have you lived here Richard?

So I have been here for just nearly ten years now, in fact, just over ten years and we were the first to move into this estate as well so I have got a little bit of, you know, kudos points.

So tell me what attracted, so tell me what attracted you to here, why Oxley Park?

Well it was the houses, they were just so different and my wife and I we didn't really want to live in a standard brick house, you know, where your neighbours are all sort of overlooking your back garden and just very normal. We wanted something different and this it just came up at the right time so we jumped on it and we were the first to move in like I said.

And if you could if people can't see what we are seeing now and you were to describe how Oxley Park looks like. How would you describe Oxley Park, in like in granular detail?

Legoland [laughs] and that is a nickname and I don't know where it came from, I think my wife takes credit for making it up, it has been used in the National Press. And it is and I would say Legoland, and sort of I think the word used earlier, very modular but very aesthetically pleasing, again you have got the parallel lines which is a theme in Milton Keynes and it's definitely here with the cladding and the (I have lost my train of thought).....

Do you know what that's cool because actually it will be really good as when we go back you can say I think I used to describe Oxley Park is, but that's really good like the Legoland and the parallel lines and the kind of symmetry, between [unclear].

Yeah.

.....that is absolutely perfect that is really, that is really good and I am really glad that you kind of stopped there [unclear]. If I was to describe Oxley Park or Oxley Park has been described as Legoland, the lines again that would be brilliant.....

Yeah.

Okay, so if you were somebody who had never been to Oxley Park, how would you describe Oxley Park?

It's, this part of Oxley Park in these houses are they have been called Legoland, it's a good phase because it kind of sums up the angular and the parallel lines of the buildings and it's got a nice symmetry to the rest of Milton Keynes. Certainly if you go up to the City Centre with all of the glass of square buildings and angles there, it's to me it is typical Milton Keynes.

So that leads us on really nicely to the next question, thank you?

You are welcome [laughs].

Okay, so you describe typical Milton Keynes and I think there's something about the town's idiosyncrasies that comes down to its architecture and design...

Uh huh.

And you have talked about it when we were at [Oakbank? Unclear] It's strange, it weird, its different, its individual, can you just give me a little bit more on that about Milton Keynes its idiosyncrasies, its uniqueness, but, particularly in line with its architecture?

Yeah, now that's fine. So I mean for me I think certainly the original planners, you know the guys who came here in the late sixties and early seventies have had this sort of free range to do what they wanted to, I would say dreamers and they came up with some really radical ideas about what a built environment should look like and the architecture that they sort of came up with was, was it is typical Milton Keynes and you don't see it anywhere else you know and if you look around here it is continuing today. They have made some mistakes over the years, years definitely and some tragic, tragic buildings have been put up and knocked down. I think Milton Keynes is a strange place because you have got the old and the new really sitting side by side and if you just drive around Milton Keynes you will come to a really old village nestled in a brand new estate and they've they've kept those villages and the old roads and everything so there is this uniqueness about it that you really don't get anywhere else.

Are you sure that you haven't been practising?

No

That is actually spot on.....I should have recorded it?

I am running on nerves right now.

Oh no, it is really good, so I have put in here and we have touched on this briefly about the young Architects and the fact that they were visionary, I am kinda happy with what you said just then, it was quite nice. Is there anything else that you feel that you want to say about these young Architects those original ones then or the one that designed Oxley Park now, do you want have a like [unclear]?

Yes I guess so,

Can we get a bit on that?

Yeah can do.

00:05:00

Okay so tell me a little bit more about either Oakbank and the original Milton Keynes Architects or the guy that did Oakley Park?

So the he guy that did these houses was a guy called Lord Richard Rogers famous for designing the Pompidou Centre, Lloyds of London and a lot of other really kind of radical buildings. So yeah these were the first houses that he actually designed as an Architect in nearly forty years and this was his first foray back into residential housing so it was nice that Milton Keynes, was you know, was prepared to allow something like that to happen which kind of goes back to the roots of the city as it was in the late sixties and I think, you know, I was saying just now, that you know there has been some tragic errors made in the development of Milton Keynes and I think the planners today need to go back to that sort of radical thinking and you know really embrace these sort of abstracts and the obscure when it comes to architecture. I think Milton Keynes is really the best place to do that and it has got such potential to be different and as I say there are some really nice areas and some areas where they have just not got it rights. So if this message can get to anyone hopefully they will listen to it [laughs].

So good seriously, thank you. So again this is a summing up and you have already said this and I am just we have got two questions left so we are going to come at a different angle and you have said this but let's see if anything else comes out. Why and when did you move to Oxley Park and what makes this special?

So, when, why did we move here? Okay, so at the time we were actually, I was living with my wife in a suburb of Milton Keynes called Bletchley famous for the Bletchley Code Breakers and there was a very traditional area sort of, I say, sort of turn of the it was actually after the war it was kind of built so it is that sort of mid-century twentieth century which we loved. You know, it was a lovely little maisonette but we wanted something different and I just actually happened to be cycling past Oxley Park and I saw this odd house thing. I didn't even know what it was it looked like a space ship actually I just saw it over you know in amongst all of the bushes because obviously they had kept all of the hedgerows here and then funnily a couple of days later it was actually on the news on the local news that, you know, there was this competition being run by the Government to sort of challenge house builders to think outside of the box and come up with all this new designs and ways of construction which was sort of different to what they were doing so really challenging the status quo. For me and my wife we kind of like different, you know, we kinda liked different and this came up at the right time, you know it was. We were in the right place at the right time and ten years later we are still very happy here and I still walk into my house now and I just I still think it is a new house, you know, it doesn't feel like I have been here ten years but we have had our thirties in the house and my little dog she's ten and she has grown up there as well so we are a happy little family (laughs).

Thank you okay so this is a really kind of abstract bit now and what I am trying to do is kind of look at you. We have the kind of bit where we need you we need the view [unclear] we have already got a lot of you the stuff that we can use already [unclear]. But, what I am kind of interested in spending time here I don't think there is anywhere like Milton Keynes in the world [unclear] it is so unique

Yeah.

Whereas like you know you can go to like Slough or kind of Staines or whatever and you go you know they are anywhere. So why, so the question is that I would like just sort of and a couple of sentences to reply to is:

Is there anywhere else like Milton Keynes in the world and if not why not? What is your like what is it that how can you possibly even if you say I can't sum it up, but you know what is it that makes Milton Keynes so unique and special?

I mean I have only been to one place in the world that reminded me of Milton Keynes and it is the one place you would never think of, it is actually Palm Springs in the US. It had the same kind of radical architecture, sort of very low low rise buildings sort of very angular, very rectangular and it just reminded of Milton Keynes and it had the

boulevards, you know the sort of the grid system and that is the only place I can think of that I have even seen or sort of read about that actually matches Milton Keynes and you know that is what makes Milton Keynes a very unique place, you have the grid system and the H's and the V's which I think are the most simple place to navigate around but people do get lost here apparently – which is odd (laughs) sorry. What was the question?

00:10:00

So is there anywhere else like about, is there anywhere else similar to Milton Keynes in the world that's cool?

Yeah.

But also like sum it up for me – so I have come over from I am a visitor from the US, say I am American.....

Yeah.

I have come over to the UK and I go “Oh you know we are going to go to Burford and go to Oxford and all those bits” and you have to come to Milton Keynes because?

So you have gotta come to Milton Keynes because there are a lot of roundabouts [laughs] and it is a good way to see the city, but, it is, it is a strange place so if you do come to Milton Keynes and you really don't know it and if you are just driving through you might actually not know there is a city because, you know, all of the grid roads are sort of tree lined boulevards and they have got mounds which, you know, really hide the sort of residential areas even in some of more commercial areas. But, once you do sort of come off the grid system and you sort of navigate around some of the estates, you know, there is just a lot to see and we have got history, believe it or not, we have got some really ancient history and we have got some more near modern history and we are making history as well. So, for me, I think Milton Keynes is just a place to kind of come and just go “Wow this is different” you know and then leave with a smile.

V2. I have just got one quick question if you can answer Sarah on it not me. So basically what influence has this kind of architecture have on the people that choose to live here and the psychology of living?

Milton Keynes generally?

Um. Yeah.

It's eh

V2. Or does it?

Well I don't, well for me it definitely did. I think like I said coming here as a seven year olds and seeing all these new buildings going up, most of them glass clad, square or rectangular in shape and I used to remember looking out of my bedroom window in Oldbrook at the sort of city centre sky line and it was very sparse, you know, there weren't a lot of buildings. The time that I was growing up there was always a crane on the horizon and there was always a building popping up and you know and for me it was vivid and I think I look at things very aesthetically and I do get a little bit angry about lines which is really weird and you know for me I am pretty sure that is because of Milton Keynes and just how it has been designed, the kind of styles of the buildings and the buildings here and it's for me it had influenced me definitely, you know, I like photography and I like taking photographs of buildings and certainly ones that have really good angles and so for me it has been very influential in how I look at the world, I think.

That was really, really good and is there anything else that you would like us to add in or to redo I mean at all because we have been through your previous message and we are starting to look at the edit this all works really, really nicely..

Cool.

It is almost like a dream to be honest with you but is there anything that you think "Oh God I wish I could say that or I wanted to say that"?

There probably is but can I think of it now – NO. But you did say you mentioned dream, I mean I even today but I so remember when I was younger I used to have very vivid sort of dreams about these kind of alternate places or realities I couldn't you know it's a very abstract thing dreaming anyway, but, I always remember sort of going off in my dreams to these very strange sort of near future cities or landscapes and again that goes back to growing up in Milton Keynes in sort of seeing this abstract world develop around you, and it was you know, I don't think I will ever lose that so for me that is what Milton Keynes is.

(Laughs) Thanks.

00:13:37

Tape Ends.

00:13:55

Tape Starts

Are you ready, hello....?

Hello.

Do you mind introducing yourself and just saying what your relationship is to Milton Keynes?

Yes, hello my name is Richard Minns, I have been living in Milton Keynes since 1984.

Sorry, I am just going to stop, sorry, because you [unclear], that's my fault can you stick to the eye line again (laughs)

Sorry, so I need to make eye contact I don't do that very well either.

Yes (laughs) perfect, lovely, perfect, yeah great.

Okay.

Yeah great do you want to start again Richard saying who you are and what your connection is with Milton Keynes?

Okay I am Richard Minns I have been a resident here since 1984, so I moved here when I was seven years old I would call myself a Milton Keynesian if such a word exists, I don't know and I absolutely love Milton Keynes so that is me.

And can you just tell me why, where we are now and why we are here?

00:15:00

So this is Oldbrook, the centre of Milton Keynes that I grew up here, we moved just down the road to Barns Place in 1984 and lived in two houses there and here I used to play cricket quite a lot in my teens so the late eighties and also my school was up in Fishermead so we used to walk through here on this path literally every day as young kids do and causing mischief and whatever else on the way to school, loving life and yeah it is just a lovely place.

So is this, how long ago is it been since you have been here in this park?

In this park, probably twenty five years. My Mum and Dad moved out of Oldbrook three years ago and you know so I was obviously going home quite a lot but I haven't been here for twenty five years, so actually coming back it's quite nostalgic it has brought back a lot of memories. A lot has changed I mean these parks weren't here when I was a kid it was just the field and the trees and obviously Milton Keynes city centre in the background and the Cricketers pub there, looking glorious, not pink anymore [laughs]. Yes, it has got a lot of memories.

So tell me if you were a seven year old Richard back here, thirty three years ago?

[Someone singing in the background].

Yes.

And you were to describe to me that first day, can you remember the very first day you (wait for this car to go by) when you first drove into Milton Keynes?

No [laughs]...

Fair enough...

my memory is not that good, but, I can remember I do remember coming to Milton Keynes from Winslow where we were living at the time with my Mum and Dad and Brother to look at the new house in Oldbrook and I just remember it was a new development, there was a lot of green fields, weirdly and everything was kind of undeveloped. You know you had the grid roads but the trees were very much you know saplings and everything was new and everything was clean and there was crisp lines everywhere. I just remember coming to visit Oldbrook and seeing this street where we were going to be living in and you know coming from where we were which was a bit of sort of alternative living environment to this it was, I just don't know how I felt at the time, obviously I was only seven years old I just remember it was beautiful.

(Laughs)Someone still singing in the background.

Sorry, oh dear, it put me off it probably wasn't beautiful at all [laughs].

You know what I am kind of loving that gentleman though lady, I know you are unsure....

It's a dude surely?

So so happy though I know that is the happiness of Milton Keynes right there?

And do you know what I think he has a kebab.....

[Laughs] he is living the life?

He is living the life that's Oldbrook you see for you.

V2. What is it that you really love about this place, this place in particular?

I wouldn't say it was a particular love of this place it's just where I grew up, like I was saying to Sarah I have not been back here for twenty five years so this particular part of Oldbrook. But, just looking at it you have got the beautiful green fields lined by trees, you have got the little buildings sort of sticking out and the city centre in the background, you know, there's something you just don't get that in any other place in the UK potentially in the world, I don't know, but there is something magical about it you can't describe and its if you grew up here and you have a connection to it, it's just different. So it's a very strange place but a nice place.

So, Richard if you could describe for me, I am going to take you back to seven year old you.....

Uh hah.

You're here and maybe not the precise day you can remember and thank you for that, but you are seven year old Richard and you are coming from this alternative community and you arrive in Milton Keynes what do you see describe that to me?

So I definitely remember I remember the Boulevards so the dual carriageways and even here the Oldbrook Boulevard which runs all the way through, I just remember these straight lines and I think that when I submitted my little piece I talked about parallel lines and I do remember that there was this sort of symmetry to Milton Keynes that you just didn't get anywhere else, you know. It's most of England was old and sort of had matured over time and it's developed over time and here you came somewhere where it was thought about, it was planned and it was just very meaningful and very purposeful and I certainly remember that being quite a factor in how I felt about Milton Keynes when I was a kid.

Yeah.

00:20:00

It was just very clean and very straight and very green as well, you know, the trees, you know every street had a tree lined boulevard and as you can see there is quite a lot now and much more developed, it was just a very nice place to come to, it was like I said earlier it was very optimistic, it is the best word I can use to describe Milton Keynes as a seven year old, it was optimistic and it was a little playground, basically.

Lovely shall we, yeah okay great,

00:20:29

Tape finishes.

00:20:37

Watchful and babble and I get very whimsical.

Can we just do it outside the pub there because it is lit?

Umm.

But would you rather have a bit more time to think about it and we do it next week?

Yeah probably it wouldn't be a bad thing.

Yeah fine, right we can do that then. This bit has actually turned out to be really nice.

It is actually quite a nice evening for it, isn't it?

It is really a nice evening to see you here and children heckling you and we can talk more about, you know yeah.

(Laughs) Of course. Cut that, but that's you know what when I used to play cricket here twenty thirty years ago actually people used to drive bikes across the cricket pitch as we were playing and motor bikes and cars sometimes, they just didn't care and that's Oldbrook, it's just weird.

Has it got has it got a reputation, like a reputation in Milton Keynes, Oh, Oldbrook?

I think it is actually quite nice, that is what I was thinking looking out there again it is actually really nice, it reminds me of Capability Brown.

Oh, look at you.....

It does doesn't it?

Oldbrook favoured like Capability Brown.

(People shouting in the background).

And it is quite nice but it is quite expensive.

Yeah...

V1. It's quiet, quiet?

[Unclear] yeah it is alright, its good.

I always wondered about those, I have never done those 'cause you know a country girl, we would just go to the farm.

We would normally go to the pub to be fair, we, we are country people at heart, I mean where we live is literally on the absolute outskirts of Milton Keynes.

Okay.

Two walk from our house is Aylesbury Vale.....

Yeah.

And then a twenty minute walk there's Whaddon Village.....

Okay.

A really nice pub there, so that's

So that's quite nice...

[Unclear] our walk to the Drs. So we just galavant through the fields, you know.

And so is you wife from Milton Keynes as well?

She's from South Africa.

Oh.

And if you want to have a [adjusted? Unclear] position view on Milton Keynes speak to my wife....

You know she's is here because of me.

Oh that's nice.

Obviously my career is here as well.

Whereabouts in South Africa is she from?

She was born in Zimbabwe...

Okay.

And then her Dad worked in the mines as an Electrician, so she lived north of Jo'burg and then went down to [Dobermine unclear].

Yeah.

[Unclear]

How are you feeling about that?

I can't wait.....

Really??

Heat, sun,

Look at you?

Beautiful bars.....

It's not Milton Keynes though is it?

It's not, no.

It's not even slightly Milton Keynes?

I think I am ready to leave I think I am ready to fly the nest.

I feel a bit sad for Milton Keynes. I have never been I have only like been really briefly to South Africa. I have spent quite a lot of time in Namibia. It is really nice.

Okay, so if we do move to Capetown we will go to Namibia a lot.

You have to it's like a legal requirement'

Yes absolutely I want to see the meerkats.

It's like the last, I didn't see meerkats there,

[Unclear] only badgers, you should google honey badgers they don't give a shit. Its like stamped on it - I was joking. But no, Namibia is amazing they have got the last animals in the wilderness not like not in conservation.

Yeah absolutely.

Oh wow, it is like a badger almost.

(Laughs) that is why they call it the honey badger.

Oh shit. Sorry the nerves get the better.

Brilliant.

Wow they are actually like a weasel.

They are really angry, honey badgers, they do not realise they are small rodents they will literally take on.....

00:24:32

Tape ends.