

## THE PUBLIC INQUIRY JUNE 16 – 26<sup>th</sup> 1970

A week before the Public Inquiry started someone telephoned from the MKDC to ask me if I was using a legal representative to put my case and would I be calling witnesses? Not having attended a public inquiry before I was unaware of the formality of its setting, barristers with wigs and cross examinations. My objection to the proposed site of the sewage works at Willen was number 67 on the list.

The Inquiry, at the Territorial Army Centre in Bletchley, was conducted by the Inspector, A R Chown, and an Assessor of drainage, sewerage and water questions, R J E Braybrookes. Their report was sent to Peter Walker, Minister of Housing and Local Government in October, four months after the Inquiry finished.

There were 127 objections to the Master Plan, 69 by personal appearances at the Inquiry, 51 written representations and 7 objections were withdrawn. The Inspector wrote 'it is obvious that the function of the master plan has not been understood by many' and divided the relevance of the objections into:

- a. those which were germane to the Master Plan; size of the city centre, location of the sewage works, particular lines of grid roads, and the planning designation of the Old Wolverton deserted village site,
- b. those which were about detailed development which the MKDC should consider in the future,
- c. those which were irrelevant and obscured the provisions of the Master Plan.

In his summary the Inspector wrote that the majority of objections 'fall outside the scope of this inquiry'; objections to the site, to the MKDC and its perceived attitudes, one objector called it 'a troublemaker'. The inquiry was about the Master Plan, but the Inspector's report recorded objections which he considered to 'fall outside the scope of this inquiry'; the decision by central government to appoint a development corporation to build a new town in North Bucks which to some seemed to go against local democracy and obscure the need to re-vitalise Britain's cities. These objections continued throughout the process of building Milton Keynes and can still be read in comments on the new town programme. Some of the objections in 1970 were the same as those expressed at the Public Inquiry in 1966 into the designation of the area for development.

### **1966 Public Inquiry**

The first Public Inquiry at which objections to the designation of Milton Keynes were heard began on July 4<sup>th</sup> 1966. The following details are taken from Ministry of Housing and Local Government letter NT/256/53/23 dated 11<sup>th</sup> January 1967. A longer and 'chatty' account of the Inquiry is found in chapter 1 of MK Image and Reality by Bendixson and Platt. It is strange to read that the Inspector, G.C. Godber expressed personal doubts about the size of the new town but stated that as the project was Government policy there was no over-riding argument against applying the principle to this particular site. He also stated that the objectors recognized the need for speedy action to relieve London's housing problems.

### **Objections to designation**

The main objections were that the proposed site was too near London, the target population should be reduced, the quality of the agricultural land was too high for this site to be chosen, and the engineering problems of drainage and sewage disposal were unmanageable. The Minister of Local Government and Housing, Anthony Greenwood, considered the situation and characteristics of the site attractive to industry and commerce, favourable for a large and rapid development to meet London's need, homes for one million Londoners, and not so close to London as to preclude the development of a prosperous independent community. The land in general was not of such high agricultural quality, and the engineering problems 'not of a magnitude to make it unreasonable or uneconomical'. The effect on neighbouring large towns would be planned for within policies for the sub-region.

### **The Inspector's Views**

The Inspector advised the Minister to reduce the size of the designated area by 6738 acres, and to increase the planned density to avoid too much disruption to farming. The new town should have a structure for rapid growth and capacity to adapt. It should avoid dependence on a single centre which was the problem of large urban areas. The existing towns of Bletchley, Stony Stratford and Wolverton should be incorporated into the structure.

### **The Minister's Decisions**

In the end the Minister reduced the size of designation by 3300 acres; 2900 acres removed from designation in the west as compared to 1636 acres advised by the Inspector. The Inspector had advised the omission of a stretch of 5102 acres of the designated area next to the M1, but the Minister decided to remove only 400 acres of this area because of the importance of road connections to the M1 and the ease of developing such flat land. Other issues raised but not solved were compensation for tenant farmers and the need for housing for south Buckinghamshire. The water supply was now assured by an agreement between the Buckinghamshire Water Board and the Great Ouse Water Authority. The scarcity of water supplies had been a main reason for non-development in the area after the Second World War. The Inspector's emphasis on not using good agricultural land for storing storm water would be dealt with in the master plan. The details on discharge into the river would be agreed by the corporation and the river authority and compensation would be covered by the 1965 New Towns Act.

### **Objections to the Milton Keynes Master Plan published March 1970**

The Inspector of the 1970 Public Inquiry divided the objections to the Master Plan into 6 subject sections.

#### ***1. The Objections to The Link Road Through Wavendon To the M1 at Junction 13***

Nearly a third of all the objections were about the line of this road, which the objectors claimed was too close to the village and divided it. The Inspector recommended 'as a result of these objections **further consideration** should be given to the routing of the whole of this through road between the A5 and the M1 because of the effect it would have on the village of Wavendon through noise and severance'. The Inspector used the words '**further consideration**' in his report to the Minister when he thought the objection had made a good case; there were eleven of them altogether. The Inspector also wrote that H10 Bletcham Way would be 'one of the

more heavily trafficked roads' and 'should not run through residential areas in the new city'. The Corporation's landscape planting in depth of the grid roads has meant that the most heavily used roads often have housing next to them, a solution which in my opinion enhances the appearance of Milton Keynes at a cost to visitors and those travelling through who lose their way, but the residents are well protected from some of the worst effects of heavy traffic.

Wavendon had formed an action group to make their case, made up of the parish council, residents associations, the school managers, the sports club, the church council, individual residents and the Woburn Sands and District Society. The objection was a well constructed one from a united local community and made a convincing case. In particular the action group used statements from the Master Plan about the value of existing villages and claimed Wavendon's location 200 yds from the designated boundary made it 'vulnerable and especially worth protecting' and should be treated as the villages in the designated area. Paragraph 33 of the Inspector's report described in detail the physical and social impact of the road on the village; 53 of the 84 pupils of the primary school would have to cross the road to reach it, 103 households would be separated from the village centre. The action group had researched noise levels and current standards recommended by the Wilson Committee. Instead of merely opposing the line they had detailed suggestions to make on alternatives which might be considered. Their preferred line parallel to the railway was not agreed to by Woburn Sands parish council who otherwise supported Wavendon. The suggestions by Woburn Sands for the line to be north of Wavendon, and by Aspley Guise that the link from junction 13 should run north alongside the M1 were both eventually adopted. The action group's case was strengthened by proposing their own solutions rather than merely opposing the road. This is an approach to be recommended rather than 'nimbyism'.

## ***2. Other Road Objections***

The Master Plan showed a link road to the A5D outside the designated area. The individual objectors made their case on the division of two farms which the link would cause and the effect on the site of the Roman town of Magiovinium. At this time the line of the A5D had not been established but the Inspector recommended 'further consideration' of the link road which he said should be within the designated area. The link road was eventually built in the position the Master Plan recommended but by that time the designated boundary was a thing of the past. The owner of the Magiovinium site suggested that the line of the A5D should run to the east of her land which was the line the road took in the 1980s.

## ***3. Objections to The Surface Water And Foul Drainage Proposals***

The Great Ouse River Authority, the Bedfordshire Water Board made statements and provided expert witnesses for cross examination. The National Farmers' Union, Newport Pagnell Urban and Rural District Councils were objectors and I and a farmer, Mr A J Coney, who submitted his case in writing, objected as individuals. The Councils employed a solicitor to make their case.

The subjects of the objections were:

- a. The possibility of the greater frequency of less severe floods below Newport Pagnell.
- b. The doubts about using storage ponds (the balancing lakes) for recreational purposes.

- c. The lack of full information on rainfall and run-off.
- d. The danger of increased pollution in the River Ouse.
- e. The choice of the Willen site for the sewage disposal works.

### **Flooding**

The subject of flooding was a major concern in the area. It is a problem which still raises its head whenever urban development is proposed in many parts of the UK. It is however a problem which has not occurred in any of the newly-built parts of Milton Keynes and is a tribute to the standards adopted by the MKDC and described below.

Only two years before the Public Inquiry between July 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> 1968, 3.11 inches of rain fell at Haversham, including 2 inches in two hours. A reading at Calverton was even higher. I can remember seeing a boat being rowed along Silver Street in Newport Pagnell; living at Willen at the time we could only leave the hamlet along the road to Great Linford, the other roads to Newport Pagnell, the Woolstones and Milton Keynes village were all impassable. This event was not unique because in 1947 2.75 inches had fallen in 24 hours. The Newport Pagnell Councils claimed that since 1933 the town had been flooded five or six times. They questioned whether an independent study carried out by the Institute of Hydrology at Grendon Underwood, and used by the MKDC, was valid since the study had only started in 1962 and was of a much smaller area. The debate was whether the Corporation's plans would be effective in preventing flooding caused by the additional water run-off created by the building of Milton Keynes.

The farmers east of Newport Pagnell were accustomed to floods of short duration and their main concern was that their farming would be interrupted and crops and animals disturbed by much more frequent floods as Milton Keynes grew. The solution of improvements to the river channel had already been agreed but the Great Ouse River Authority had not done the detailed work and therefore could not produce evidence that the solution would be effective. This omission made it impossible for the Corporation to prove that the control by balancing lakes would take up the increased run-off caused by building and be able to cope with heavy rainfall such as the floods of 1947. The concern of the National Farmers Union about the efficiency of the balancing lakes dual role for storage and recreation was not considered by the Inspector or the corporation as needing any rebuttal..

The Corporation took considerable pains to demonstrate that their plans would not cause more flooding and would in fact help to lessen the existing problem in the area, which was only 7% of the River Ouse catchment area above Newport Pagnell. Only 30% of the designated area would be roofed or paved and therefore impermeable. The nature of the sub-soil, basically clay, with its variation of permeability in winter and summer was adjudged not to cause a problem which could not be accommodated by the lakes and the automatic working of the sluices. The Loughton-Bradwell Brook did not offer as capacious a flood plain as the Ousel for balancing lakes, but the area at Grendon Underwood investigated by the Institute of Hydrology was very similar, and the Corporation would plan on the basis of 2 ½ inches falling in 24 hours with half of this amount falling within two hours. The Inspector in his report said that 2 ¾ should be the target figure and the lowest balancing reservoir before the confluence of the Loughton-Bradwell Brook with the Ouse should be used to meet that occurrence, which became the wet/dry balancing lake east of Blue Bridge. The Corporation

responded to the views expressed by the Newport Pagnell Councils that the figure of 3.11 inches as recorded in 1968 at Haversham was relevant, with the figure at Bletchley of 2.20 inches and that the fall had been variable in the area. The Inspector commented on the debate that 'The records of the nearby recording station at Woburn Experimental Farm go back to 1899 and since that date only one storm with a rainfall exceeding 2 inches in 24 hours had been recorded, that of 2 August 1948 when it was 2.39 inches.' The run-off of 2 ¾ of the storm of 1947 was stated to be the bench mark with a return frequency of between once in 50 and once in 100 years. The Inspector stated, 'it appears to me that the corporation and the river authority have agreed on the highest standard of design which could be reasonably expected'.

In a discussion on the radio around the time of the floods on the Severn and elsewhere in 2007 a Government Minister stated that she was trying to convince local authorities to plan new development on the run-off from a magnitude of storm occurring every 10 years. The expansion of Milton Keynes now proposed should take note of the safeguards adopted by the Corporation and approved by the Inspector. Density of roofing and paving, the quantity of open space, and the effect of drainage from the west expansion on the Calverton Brook need careful consideration as the climate changes and heavier storms and dryer summers are likely.

### **Quality of effluent**

The next issue considered in the Inquiry was the quality and quantity of effluent from the sewage works. In 1970 the water from the Ouse was re-used in Bedfordshire between 1 ¼ and 2 times. The Great Ouse River Authority was statutorily responsible for deciding the standard of the effluent. It was noted that during the construction of the sewage works the standard would need to be reviewed. In particular a more stringent standard in the summer, when the flow in the river might be low, might be necessary. This raised the issue of whether maturation tanks or lagoons would be required to hold the effluent before release into the river. This issue was left for future resolution.

### **Site of the Sewage Works**

The last issue under this section was my own objection to the sewage works being located at Willen. The experience of attending the Inquiry as an objector was quite new to me. I was not prepared for the court atmosphere. The method used by the corporation's barristers when they questioned me was quite aggressive; as a friend, Michael Gow put it in a letter to corporation's Board Secretary later, 'so much time was devoted in a frankly partisan manner to demolish Mr. Waterman's case'. I was accused of not representing the people of Willen, who the Counsel for the Corporation said would not object if there was 'compensatory development'.

Two reasons for the choice of Willen as the site for the sewage works had been given by the corporation; the M1 site would not be attractive to those passing or entering the city, and would cost £1/4 million more. I said that the appearance of the city was more important to those living in it than to those passing by it and that the corporation might be thinking of the smell on the M4 near Slough. I also claimed that the corporation could not yet assess accurately the exact increase the alternative site would cost and £1/4 million in a total of approximately £8 million was small enough to be considered as falling within the margin of error for a project of this size. The

possible increased cost would also work out at no more than £1 per head of the future population of Milton Keynes.

One of my main points was that the Corporation had not considered in detail the land uses in the immediate vicinity of the works. For example, the linear park was on the east side of the works which meant residents would not have good access to the park. Mr Mann, one of the Counsels, asked me if I knew of sewage works at X. As I did not Mr Mann retorted that he was sure I would be interested to know that people there walked through the works on 'open' days. Later when I was able to question the Corporation's witnesses, Mr Oakley, the consultant engineer, agreed with me that the nature of the works precluded the possibility of people walking through them even if they wanted to. The fact that the works would be in place ten years before development reached Willen appeared to me to put in question the nearness of housing and accessibility to the lake and park on the east side of the works. All this went on in quite an abrasive but humorous atmosphere.

My main piece of evidence was a survey I had made in other new towns, with the help of colleagues in the New Town Ministers' Association, an informal ecumenical group. I had discovered that sewage works in nine new towns, including Harlow, Stevenage, Hemel Hempstead, Telford and Bracknell were placed outside the designated area, and at Crawley, Corby and Basildon placed within an industrial zone on the edge of the designated area.

My next point was made in a site visit with the Inspector. I showed him a view from the Woolstone to Great Linford road which revealed just how dominant the sewage works would be in any view from what is now Campbell Park and the east side of the central ridge of Milton Keynes, from Willen itself and also from the Woolstone direction. On a positive note, using the special quality of Hooke's church and its position on the higher ground, I said that 'the alternative site by the motorway ought to be chosen for the works. This north-east part of the designated area with a lake instead of the sewage works south of Willen could be one of the most attractive parts of the city'. The corporation replied that the alternative site was now reduced in size because of the decision to have two routes linking to junction 14. Broughton Brook would need a diversion and the main outfall would have to be constructed as an inverted siphon. The corporation took the view 'that the planning advantage of using the alternative site are outweighed by the increased costs'. Landscaping would be the answer to any visual disadvantage except for structures which would appear from several directions.

### **Visit to Rickmansworth Sewage Works**

While the Inspector's report was awaited I took up an earlier offer by the corporation to visit a modern sewage works as I had little confidence that my objection would be successful. Nearly twenty local people and corporation staff visited the Rickmansworth works in August. The humorous side of the issue showed itself again. We were told that the works were due to close. Noticing the absence of landscaping we were told that trees and the works could not be in too close proximity as the leaves and needles would interfere with the maturation of the effluent. When we asked the manager showing us round how he put up with the smell, he said 'What smell'! Walter Ismay, the Corporation's managing director replied to my letter in which I had said how disappointed we were with the visit, 'they do not appear to have even tried

to do the things which we know can be done and which we intend to do' and 'I hope we shall get an early decision'.

### **Corporation asked to think again**

Rumours that the cause was not lost began to circulate in October and I received a letter dated 21<sup>st</sup> from A.F.W. Swift of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government stating 'the Minister has noted that his Inspector considers the objections to the proposal to the site of the sewage disposal works at Willen to be sufficiently cogent to justify at least further consideration of the alternative site near the M1'. On December 2<sup>nd</sup> the corporation submitted a formal application on the M1 site, but it was not until April 29<sup>th</sup> that I was told by Mr. Swift that the corporation had decided to withdraw its application for the Willen site. The letter to me from Mr. Shaw, Secretary to the Board, said, 'although the corporation originally proposed the Willen site, this was not without reservation; if it had not been for the additional expense, I think our choice would have been for the motorway site, and we are glad ourselves that the consultative process had produced the right answer'. What consultative process? Michael Gow, who had supported my objection at the inquiry and received a copy of Mr. Shaw's letter replied, 'I would have thought that in this case it was manifestly the statutory objection procedure which produced the result not the pre-decision consultation (such as there was).'

### **Corporation delays**

It took five months from the submission of the application for the M1 site in early December to the corporation deciding to withdraw its application for the Willen site. Later I was able to learn more about what happened. As early as July 14<sup>th</sup>, less than 3 weeks after the Inquiry, the corporation's chief officers had discussed the alternative site and on July 28<sup>th</sup> that the 'Minister was being pressed for a decision'. On October 13<sup>th</sup> the chief officers considered the implications of moving the recommended site nearer to the corner of V10 and H5. On October 27<sup>th</sup> when the Inspector's report was published, the corporation minute read 'the Inspector advised against the site proposed by MKDC'. On November 11<sup>th</sup> it was agreed to drop the Willen study, presumably the detailed study of the works and its effect on Willen, if the site is going to be next to the M1. On January 19<sup>th</sup> 1971 the idea was discussed of seeking advance approval on the site because of the Minister's delay. Following a meeting with the Department of Housing and Local Government on March 25<sup>th</sup> it was reported 'that the Ministry thought the alternative site identical on engineering grounds. There was a direct conflict between amenity and spending £1/4 million. The Ministry would welcome a withdrawal of Willen'. Lee Shostak, Planning Director 1978 – 1980, told me that Fred considered he had made the decision to move the site as the Ministry left it to him. The words of the Ministry, in my view, did not allow him to do anything else.

Later Fred Roche, who succeeded Walter Ismay as General Manager in 1971, told me that my objection had cost the housing programme six months. The delay I think was caused by the corporation. It was a case of the corporation finding it hard to acknowledge that its proposal for Willen was a mistake. The Minister obviously did not want to order the corporation to change the site, and the corporation found it difficult to do so of its own volition. It illustrated one of the weaknesses of the corporation, among its many strengths; an over sensitivity to criticism or apparent criticism. It is interesting that later in the year in November, the chief officers'

meeting minute 2144 Willen Lake reads there was to be 'no consultation before the plan was approved by Executive Management Committee and the Board'. The idea of a participating relationship with the public (Master Plan paragraphs 70-74) was never practicable with an organisation that was over-sensitive.

On May 21<sup>st</sup> 1971 I received a copy of the Inspector's report on the Public Inquiry and learnt for the first time of his advice to the minister on my objection and the extent of his agreement with me.

'177. In my view the need to isolate the works from residential areas and the effect that the works would have on the views of Willen from the linear park and the ridge to the west have to be balanced against the increased cost when considering the merits of the 2 sites since technically, they are both suitable sites. Looking at the £1/4 extra cost in the light of the sums being spent on the new town; in the light of the goals the corporation have set and against the length of time the works will remain, I am convinced by what I heard and saw that because of planning reasons further consideration should be given to the master plan with a view to moving the sewage works to the M1 alternative site.' The end of his statement leaves no doubt as to the Inspector's conclusion.

#### ***4. Objections by Local Authority Areas***

##### **Objection 114 by Buckinghamshire County Council**

The county used the Inquiry to make points on shared costs of grid roads and roads immediately outside the designated area, the financing of county services, the possibility of more sophisticated methods of public transport than buses, and the housing needs of south Buckinghamshire; all these points the Inspector said were outside his remit. Under pressure from the Wavendon objection the county had withdrawn its agreement with the corporation on the route to Junction 13. The objection to the route of the southern by-pass of Newport Pagnell included the view of the county that there should not be a dual carriageway bridge over the M1 but that the M1's existing flyover of road and unused railway line near Newport Pagnell should be used instead. The Inspector said that the line of the by-pass should receive further study. The route eventually built was the one shown in the master plan.

The final objections were that the landscaping to the sewage works was minimal, and that the villages immediately outside the designated area should be protected from sprawl; which seems an odd comment to make since the fate of these villages was entirely in the county's hands. The inspector ignored the comment.

Only four months later BCC produced for consultation *The River Ouse Green Belt* which contained its proposals of locations for growth in North Bucks outside the designated area. A population increase of 38250, of which nearly 28000 would be in the towns of Buckingham, Newport Pagnell, Olney and Winslow, and over 10000 in the villages. Although it was recognized that the area had not grown for various reasons, the corporation did not wholly welcome such growth at the same time as its own programme was starting, and the Board minute of January 28<sup>th</sup> 1971 reads 'proposals for sale housing could seriously upset the goal of a balanced population'. The country towns and villages would be more attractive to the more affluent arrivals to the area than the grid squares which in the early days would not include most of the villages within the designated area. There was a hint in the timing of the county's plan

that the corporation had a rival not wholly committed to the success of the corporation.

### **Objections 96, 94 and 92 by Newport Pagnell Urban and Rural District Councils and the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE).**

The concern about the adequacy of roads both within and outside the designated area to be used by construction traffic was based on the experience of the nuisance caused by the construction of the M1. It was also thought that the through route east-west, the A422, should not be located within Milton Keynes itself.

The worry about pollution from the important industrial area to the west of the M1 as shown in the Master Plan was expressed because of its possible threat to the housing planned as part of the long awaited expansion of Newport Pagnell on the east of the M1.

The expansion of Northampton and other towns in the region and the issue of the Third London airport raised the possibility of a mis-match between jobs and where homes would be built leading to commuting and therefore further pressure on the road system. The success of Milton Keynes did in fact lead to a much greater level of commuting from the late-seventies in both directions, and the corporation made large financial contributions to the major roads leading into the city.

New housing in villages located in the drainage system of the Ouse had not been allowed for many years. These villages and the LAA had expressed the need for modest expansion which should take place without creating sprawl between Milton Keynes and Northampton.

The plans for recreational amenity were welcomed but the adequacy of the major amenity fund of £4 per head of newcomer for such provision was not adequate (£840 thousand) and local authorities should not have to foot the bill until an increase in rate income was available from the growth in population. At the inquiry the corporation said that it would use the major amenity fund for loans to local authorities for recreation centres. This was done for both Stantonbury and Bletchley Leisure Centres but when Milton Keynes Council became the one authority in 1974 the arrangement for repayment was delayed and eventually written off.

The CPRE wanted the gravel deposits worked out in the designated area as a priority. It also questioned the strategy of linking the north and south of the designated area in the crescent, and recommended their separate expansion. Behind this view was the belief or hope that such a large urban development would not actually happen.

The only amendment the Inspector recommended in these objections was that the paragraph in the Master Plan on the north-east employment area should include a reference to the choice of industries being compatible with housing in Newport Pagnell.

### **Objection 103 by Wolverton District Council**

This included objections to proposed land uses for two sites near Wolverton which the Inspector accepted, and recommended their designation as open space. These were the site of the deserted village of Old Wolverton which was to be reserved and a site north-east of Wolverton, near the road to Haversham and the Drill Hall, which had been designated for housing in the MP. The Council also wanted the historic site of Bradwell Abbey to be screened by the golf-course rather than by industry.

Objections were made to the size of the city centre; the line of the A5D, which the Council wanted to be the existing A5 with by-passes for Stony Stratford and Fenny Stratford; and the density of 8 houses to the acre which was considered to be too low. Behind this objection was opposition to higher density public housing immediately next to the existing towns. The Council thought that the lower density sale houses would be provided in completely new areas, as indeed it was, and an opportunity lost for better social balance in the existing urban areas.

The Council also thought the allotment standard of ½ acre to 1000 people was too low and that the provision of Health Centres for a population of 30,000 would not be near enough for people who were used to surgeries more on the door step. In fact, the allotment provision proved too high; and the concept of a Health Centre for such a large catchment was abandoned as some GPs broke away from the group approach, the centres were not provided with the range of services planned and the public funding of the centres was abandoned in the 1980s.

The objection to the size of the city centre based its arguments on the assurances given by the Minister in 1966 that the new city would be multi-centred. The Council was proved right in its fears of the decline of their own centres at Wolverton and Stony Stratford. The same fear was behind Objection 106 by Stony Stratford Chamber of Commerce, which was also against the loss of the town's surgery. Objection 109 by Buckingham Borough Council was also concerned about the affect of the city centre on small market towns in the hinterland of MK. During the years of population growth before the development of the city centre the existing centres experienced increased use and trading; and they all were provided by the corporation with additional amenities with a varying amount of success. Objection 107 by Mr. Fleming and Mr Haseldine, and Objection 72 by Lampitt's (Wolverton) Ltd, who operated commercial businesses in Stony Stratford's High Street, were worried about their position when detailed proposals took the place of generalised areas on the Master Plan. The Inspector defended the master plan proposals for the regional character that a centre for 250,000 residents would need.

There were two other objections in this section; 123 by Mrs Singleton about Stratford House and its grounds, and 78 by Miss Meadows about Higlin's Piece on the Calverton Road. Both were shown on the Master Plan for housing in Stony Stratford to which both objected. Miss Meadow's objection was supported by scores of local residents and although her objection was not successful it was not built on and subsequently was shown as open space in the local plan after the corporation's demise. The owner has fenced it in and although there is public access across it, it remains as a meadow for horses next to the park. Stratford House also remains a local problem with listed buildings deteriorating. The land has now been given planning permission for limited housing on the condition that there is public access into the park and buildings are repaired. Both spaces were probably too small for the corporation to get caught up in a complicated and time consuming compulsory purchase order.

## **The Bletchley Urban District Group**

It is both curious and interesting that Bletchley Urban District Council was the only major local authority not to make an objection at the Public inquiry. One cannot imagine that the Master Plan provided a correct answer to the Council's expansion ambitions. The Council may have felt that it had no need to cause a discussion on issues like funding unlike all the other major authorities. It is however strange that it did not ally itself with commercial interests in the town which were concerned about their future.

The presence of the major railway station in the designated area at Bletchley caused hopes for office development, but the corporation were keen to curtail the spread of the mixed use of office, shops and housing along Queensway to the east and adding to its long and narrow character. Objection 88 was by owners and lessee, like Barclays Bank, of property at the eastern end of Queensway who objected to the plan to make it a residential area and concentrate commercial development at the west end nearer the station. The Inspector made clear the rights of the property owners and did not support the objection.

Objection 89 by Milton Keynes Co-operative Society to the proposal to break and re-route Whaddon Way, which would affect their garage and petrol station, was upheld by the Inspector.

Objections 58, 59, 60, 126 and 127 were by the Bilton Industrial Estate and manufacturers on the north side of Watling Street about the effect of the lines of the grid road on their businesses. The Inspector did not recommend a change to the master Plan.

Objections 110, 111 and 124 to the proposed housing behind their property by residents of Stoke Road were based on the recreational use which existed on this site. The Inspector agreed with the corporation that the linear park should run along the other side of the canal which would provide a more attractive edge to the designated area.

### ***5. Objections from Parishes and Country Areas***

#### **Objection 101 by the Great Linford Parish council**

The need for roads to be provided ahead of development, the danger from extra traffic on the A422 near the village, the possibility of pollution from the north-east employment area, and the need for early consultation, were considered by the Inspector to be issues already being discussed. The possible pollution from the employment area was recognised by the recommendation to change the wording in the Master Plan in response to the objection by Newport Pagnell Urban District Council.

#### **Objection 102 by Woolstone cum Willen Parish Meeting**

The Parish Meeting objected to the line of the grid road which divided the village and the line of H6 which was too close to the village and the Inspector recommended amendments to the Master Plan. The objection to the site of the sewage works the Inspector had already dealt with earlier in his report and he stated that the

corporation's drainage proposals for the area were adequate to remove the fear of flooding which the parish meeting had expressed.

**Objection 99 by Stoke Hammond Parish Council**

The objection expressed concern about traffic on the B488, flooding, and litter being dumped in the parish. Although the Inspector stated that the traffic predictions did not justify by-passing the village, a by-pass was found to be necessary later because of the high level of commuting into Milton Keynes from all directions.

**Objection 125 by Calverton Residents Association**

The association's objections reflected their fears of being just outside the designated area and were about roads, trespass on farm land and the threat to the village if the Roskill Commission, whose recommendations to the Government on the site of the third London airport were awaited, found in favour of the Cublington site immediately south of the designated area. . The Inspector did not recommend changes to the Master Plan.

**Objection 86 by Mr M Gow**

Mr Gow, a resident of Woughton wanted a delay to all development until the Roskill Commission's recommendations were made, and detailed plans for development and traffic links outside the designated area were settled. Woughton village should not have an early housing programme and should receive special attention because of its character. Mr Gow claimed that the Master Plan was premature and needed more work. The decision to bring forward the building of H9 Grove Way, which was not in the Ten-year Plan, was taking flexibility too far and threatened the process of making objections. He also supported the case against the site of the sewage works at Willen. The Inspector stated that the Corporation was working to the brief from the Minister and that the first five-year programme was not incompatible with the Cublington site if it was approved by Roskill. The routes into the designated area were already being planned by a working party. H9 had been brought forward because of the objections to the proposed link to junction 13. Woughton village could not be isolated within the linear park and would provide an attractive site for 'better class housing' which the corporation needed to provide and had the necessary experience to do well.

***6. Objections Dealing with Wider Issues***

**Objection 64 by the NFU**

The objection included three issues already dealt with by the Inspector; the link road with the M1 through Wavendon, the grid road at Water Eaton outside the designated area, and flooding.

The NFU made it clear that having opposed Milton Keynes at the Inquiry into the designation and lost the case, their position was to retain the dialogue established with the corporation and their agricultural advisor Professor Wibberley and seek an early decision by the Minister, in advance of the Roskill Commission's Report, so that any doubts about farming in the area could be removed. In particular, that the doubts raised by Roskill about the decline of interest by the Greater London Council in Milton Keynes taking the city's overspill should be ignored as the last thing farmers wanted was a 'shadow city'. It is interesting that the NFU wanted densities of housing to be raised so that more space could be found for recreation within Milton Keynes. Their argument was based on a fear that recreational space would be sought outside the designated area and would lead to further loss of agricultural land. The NFU also wished for more areas on the boundary of the designated area to be non-residential and therefore protected from possible depredation by urban dwellers. To the NFU the

two uses of the reservoirs, for storage and recreation, were incompatible, but it did not give reasons for thinking so. .

The NFU used this opportunity of objecting to raise the issue of farmers' compensation and to ask that the Minister would require a 'thorough' investigation of the amount of land required in the first ten years, a critical period for farmers' investment, and for obtaining grants from the Ministry of Agriculture. On compensation they asked the Minister to allow the corporation to use the discretion available under the terms of the Agricultural Act of 1963 so that disturbance and severance could be calculated more generously. This was entirely against the provisions of the New Town Act which allowed only for purchase of land at agricultural prices, but in Milton Keynes the discretion was made.

The final point made by the NFU was how far the corporation would dictate to farmers on farm size and crops during the change of ownership as land was purchased ahead of work on infrastructure and building and could continue being farmed. The NFU said a successful policy carried out co-operatively by the corporation and farmers would make a useful example for 'similar development in other parts of the country'. In fact the corporation acquired land without making any compulsory purchases and it was noticeable how farmers turned to crops, more profitable short term than animal husbandry, on land before it was developed.

The Inspector said that the dual purpose of the reservoirs was a good idea for early recreational activities and merely recorded the NFU's views on matters outside the Master Plan

### **Objection 109 by the Buckingham Borough Council**

Buckingham was concerned that its stated need to accommodate over 15000 residents would not be threatened by the growth of MK. It also wanted to ensure that the road network between the town and Milton Keynes was not overloaded and that a by-pass would be built to prevent the narrow streets of its centre being swamped. The Council thought the corporation's traffic consultants were 'mesmerised' by the north/south national routes through Milton Keynes and had stated that 'no additional traffic will be generated from Buckingham to Milton Keynes along the B4034 by 1981'. In fact in-commuting on all roads entering the designated area proved to be a big issue and required major road improvements the cost of which was largely met through corporation contributions in the 1980s. These views raised an important issue on the balance between building outside and inside the designated area. The corporation feared that its need to provide a range of public and private housing would be threatened by too many opportunities for high earners to move to villages and country towns within easy commuting distance. Buckingham also questioned the need for the MK population target of 250,000 as the migration of people into the south-east 'may well have been halted'. The council suggested that the removal from agriculture of such a large area was unnecessary, that the planning option of enlarging Bletchley, Wolverton, Bedford and Buckingham was preferable, and that the size of the designated area should be halved. The council did not think the corporation could achieve 50% home ownership and the likelihood was that Milton Keynes would be just 'another new town' with a very high proportion of rented housing. The Master Plan was full of aspirations, like lists of every type of amenity, but there was no new thinking. The Council also raised the water, drainage and sewage disposal issues and questioned the dispersed employment zones and the pressure they would exert on transport.

The corporation hardly bothered to counter these points as it said they were utterly irrelevant and added that the council had not appeared to object to designation at the 1966 Inquiry. Many of the issues raised remained the concern of other bodies. The Inspector said that the council's views on size of area and target population should have been raised at the designation inquiry. The grid pattern of roads was a plan that set Milton Keynes apart from other new towns. It is interesting that he made no comment in paragraph 233 of his report to the unique social intentions of the Master Plan which were also a new departure. Paragraph 233 reads 'The corporation.....considers this (a programme of social development) just as important as its programme of physical development and essentially concurrent with it'. He recommended that no consideration should be given to amending the Master Plan as a result of Buckingham's objection.

It is surprising that a Borough Council such as Buckingham should have been so out of touch with events leading up to Milton Keynes. It reflects the lack of expertise in the council but also its isolation. Communication between local authorities in North Bucks at this time hardly existed. The issues raised by the council were of course not 'utterly irrelevant' but as the corporation and Inspector pointed out two years too late. Traffic west of Milton Keynes did prove heavy, the corporation found it difficult to provide housing for sale in the early days and the size of Milton Keynes was threatened in the late seventies. Buckingham got its by-pass in 1986 and its population is now 12000, in 1969 it was 5000.

#### **Objection 122 by Slough Borough Council**

Slough's problem was its lack of room to expand. The 'green belt' round London was on its doorstep and it needed its overspill problems to be recognized. The council had supported the proposal by the County Council to build a new city in North Bucks as a solution to population growth in South Bucks. Although Slough had not been notified of the Inquiry they wanted to remind the Minister that he had promised to keep Slough's needs in mind when he approved the designation of Milton Keynes. The Corporation had no objection if the Minister made a specific reference to South Bucks 'or even Slough'. The Inspector included the issue in his report.

#### **Objection 121 by Mr J M Cornwall**

Mr Cornwall, a local resident, made 14 points; five were about designation of the area, five objected to the setting up of the corporation and deplored its attitudes, one criticised the process of master plan and inquiry but ignored the plan itself, two were about water resources, one was about costs to the local authorities. The corporation did not make any case against Mr Cornwall's objections and the Inspector recommended no reconsideration of the master plan based on them.

Mr Cornwall's views on the corporation and the scheme, 'vanity', 'brain washing', 'dictators', 'absolute power', 'vested interests', 'too powerful minority', 'amused condescension', 'troublemaker', reflected the views of many residents in North Bucks. Wavendon Tower, the corporation's headquarters known locally as the 'ivory tower', and its occupants did not sit easily in the run down and culturally isolated separated communities of North Bucks. It took the Board and its staff a long time to become accepted and did not happen until newcomers arrived and the corporation's offices moved into the city centre. Twenty years later when the conservative

government decided to end the new town programme, a large proportion of interests in MK wanted the corporation to complete its programme, and forty years later many fear the expansion of Milton Keynes will mean a reduction of standards and a less sensitive hand at the tiller. Central Government thinks that expansion can be achieved without additional expenditure for the extras of quality in physical and social amenity that the corporation and local authorities achieved.

Mr Cornwall said that the arrival of the corporation removed 'our democratic rights'. Many opponents of the new towns thought the same. The machinery now set up by central government to oversee the expansion of MK consists of a not very democratic alliance between English Partnership, the successor to the New Town Commission whose aspirations are largely commercial and whose allegiance is far from local, and a new unitary authority left to correct many of the inadequate provision of services by Buckinghamshire and without the special grant systems, available to the corporation, to pay for the increase in provision in time with the growth in population.

Many people in Milton Keynes in 2010 have no more confidence that the machinery set up by central Government to oversee future growth is anymore democratic.

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