

INTERVIEW: OWEN

Q1a. Have you always lived in Milton Keynes? (Do you recall the area either before, or in the early stages of, construction? Have you ever wanted to live elsewhere and for what reasons?)

OWEN: Absolutely! yes

INTERVIEWER: Do you recall area before it was constructed?

OWEN:

Oh Yeah, I'm 68, and I've lived here all my life. I was born here in Stony Stratford. So, pre-Milton Keynes is a big thing with me memory-wise, all my childhood, my formative teenage years were all before Milton Keynes turned up. It was very rural; you tend to forget because Milton Keynes is all roads and roundabouts, grid-squares and all that. You tend to forget. I mean we used to go for walks across up to Bradwell Common, and I knew people who had lived in caravans on Bradwell Common. A guy, Ted, who actually ended up living next door here, York House. And so, your whole perception of the area was one of Stony Stratford - a small market town, Wolverton - a big town with a railway, Bradwell - ok, Newport [Pagnell]. These places all existed as individual places. Only through schooling did you meet people from Newport Pagnell, up until that point why would you go there? There is no need to go to Newport Pagnell, it's only 6 miles away, but you didn't go there, and Deanshanger for example, was the same, you know there was just things you didn't do. That's how it was, very colloquial I suppose. Stony Stratford people were very local, I went to school here, my parents lived here, my grandparents lived here, I had uncles and aunts live here, I mean that was your life when you were very, very small. Not very well-travelled in that respect.

INTERVIEWER: Have you ever wanted to live anywhere else?

OWEN:

Yeah when I was about 19/20, I had left school at 15, so I was in the process of becoming a professional person, although I didn't really understand what being a professional person was. I worked in Bedford from about 1967. So, I was travelling to Bedford and back every day on a bus, joy! The way forward was to go and work in London. So between the age of 19 and 22, I was constantly looking for somewhere else. London was the place to go to because you could commute by train or you could move down there, and you certainly have access to bigger salaries and more workplaces to move around. Whereas here, you had a job in a particular field, and you were stuck there really, stuck in one place. The world changed considerably in the mid-70s, or it did for me, but I think it did for all our generation. Consultants became popular things so you could move around a little easier, but up to that point I would suggest it was quite difficult. So, moving to London was on the agenda, and I actually took a job where I worked three days a week in Rathbone Place, just off Tottenham Court Road. And they had a pilot office out in Bedford, so I did two days in one and three and the other and just worked between the two places with a view to heading south.

INTERVIEWER: So, what changed?

OWEN:

I was offered a job at the Milton Keynes Development Corporation. Bingo. I got asked if I would like to go and work in a particular office at the MKDC. I didn't apply for a job, didn't answer an advert, I just got swept along really. The thing with the MKDC at the time it was because they were sucking people in, desperate to get people to come for a whole multitude of reasons, the salaries were fantastic. I earned more money than I would have in London, no commute, no commuting costs and

more importantly they gave me a flat up at Fullers Slade. "Bye-bye no more living at home with parents". I didn't go to university; I never had that sort of going away from home experience as a late teenager. So, it was heaven sent really, if you believe in heaven. MK just turned up on the doorstep, and as I work in the construction industry, which was the biggest building site in Europe. Plus, people coming in, creative people, because I've always had this music thing going, and all of a sudden, all these creative music type people started to move into Milton Keynes. And of course, you know what it is like, you seek out your own people.

Q2. What do you feel has changed the most in Milton Keynes?

INTERVIEWER:

I am also interested in this idea of all these creative people coming in, what change did that have for you?

OWEN:

We'll talk about the music. You live in Stony Stratford, you grow up in a youth club, you play a guitar at the youth club, and I wouldn't say you're top dog, but everybody is at a particular standard, and I was up to that standard if you like. Suddenly there are people coming from other places, specially my French friend, Jean Pierre, who came in 1972. These guys were all significantly more accomplished musicians than me by a country mile. So, you got two choices here either you just give up and retreat, or you put it down as a challenge and have a go at getting on with it. I like to think I did ok in the 'getting on with it' scene really. But there was just so many people. I mean it, you could write a book on it. There were just so many places, you could go to a folk club, and everybody came from somewhere else give or take one or two people. So, you had this new social life turning up on the doorstep; if you wished to take advantage of it.

INTERVIEWER:

In the early days, did that just happen organically or was it something the MKDC developed?

OWEN:

I would like to think it was organic, but I think the reality is the MKDC were sponsoring quite a lot of activities. So, there was things like Interaction at Peartree Bridge. The OU was sponsoring gigs. There were gigs happening all over the place, venues popping up here, there, and everywhere. Even the Folk on the Green was motivated by somebody who moved in from outside; not by Stony Stratford people per se. So, I think the Development Corporation have a lot to do with this because they were having to do it to sell it as a viable option for people moving out of London.

I mean a lot of people up North, a lot of people came down like architects and people like that, design professionals moving from other new city developments, like Telford. They would have come from the north coming down to MK and they were trying to get people to move out of London, and it wasn't just getting them to come and live here, they had to provide work for them. This was the development corporation *raison d'être* if you like. Of course, they had to provide them with everything, sort of manufacturer a social life so that people had something to do.

Initially, if anyone asked where I came from, I would say Stony Stratford and I'm sure if you spoke to people who were born and bred in Wolverton or grew up in Bletchley they would say the same. There came a point, and I am not sure when it was, some point in the 1980s possibly when all of a sudden it was totally cool to tell people you came from Milton Keynes. I live in Stony Stratford, which is the north end of it, but nowadays you actually introduce yourself as a person coming from Milton Keynes.

That may have something to do with having children. I started having a family from 1981 onwards. That might have had some influence on that. You don't do these things by design, do you? They just sort of happen, by a form of osmosis, it just sort of works. But there was a lot of resentment about

Milton Keynes coming in with the generation no longer here. So, my Grandparents were very iffy about all these outsiders coming in and they didn't like the idea of that at all. But of course, they were of a certain age, the age I am now. So, they're not interested in opportunities, are they? They are just interested in not having their way of life disrupted. We were in our late teens, early 20s and it was one huge opportunity, a great big door of opportunity opening, whichever way you looked, it was socially a win-win-win as far as I was concerned, and that's why I never moved away, I had no need to. It makes you a bit lazy because you don't have to try quite so hard.

When we were young, we would go to Northampton, from the age of 16 onwards. Now why would you want to go to Northampton? That's where there was a music scene, that's where, if you were interested in professional sport, they had a rugby club at Northampton, they've got a football club, and a cricket club, all playing professional sport at a high level. So, if you want to go and participate and watch it, that's where you went. There was a lot going on in Northampton it was a bit of a big place, and nobody knows you. So, you have this degree of privacy. If you are brought up in a village, you can't go anywhere without everybody knowing exactly what you are doing, where you were doing it, and dare I say who you were doing it with. Well Stony Stratford might be a town, but it was just like that. Which is why I took a job in Bedford when I was 16 because nobody knew me. There's a sort of a sense of claustrophobia with all your uncles and everybody knowing you, they are all wrapped around you, and you can't do anything. Go to Bedford, which sounds a bit ridiculous now, but when I went there I felt at 16 that I was in a place under my own terms, and I can make my own mistakes and do everything without big brother staring down at me all the time.

Q3. What, if any, qualities make Milton Keynes unique?

OWEN:

It's not just because I worked for the Development Corporation, and I feel I've contributed to the place, so I'm slightly biased. But the qualities are endless. The original design concept where everything was maximum two-storey, everything was on big open planned tree-lined streets

everywhere, and it succeeded. They had a tough time the guys who were trying to promote this and actually get through the government of the day to keep funding it. The late 70s was a tricky time and funding was often withdrawn. There were all sorts of issues that they were dealing with whoever they were. Us other people who were just sort of living and working, you don't understand that too much, but slowly, Milton Keynes, it developed the way it was intended to, give or take, I'm sure there are plenty of people who'd say this failed and that failed. There will be plenty of people who will talk about the failures. My overview is it's been a great place to be, I brought my kids up here and never had one intention of taking them anywhere else, and they all live in and around the Milton Keynes area. They have gone off to University and done stuff and come back. If you like the Urban City Life you have got it in Milton Keynes. I mean, I don't, but you have got it. Its only 10 minutes away on a bus or however you want to get there, it doesn't take you very long to get in there. But equally 10 minutes that way [signals in the opposite direction] and I could be anywhere in middle England really, on the river talking to nobody at 6 o'clock in the morning and frequently that's what I do. It very pleasant.

Q4. What would make you proud to live in a place? (Do you experience some of these elements in living in Milton Keynes? What could improve your pride in living in Milton Keynes?)

OWEN: I think the word proud is a difficult concept, really.

INTERVIEWER: Happy?

OWEN:

This is a difficult question to answer, having never experienced living anywhere else. I've never pushed myself to live anywhere else, to make a new friendship base. The friendship base sort of came

to me. So, I'm not too sure I can answer that question very easily because what we have here in Milton Keynes is Fantastic, and what we have here in Stony Stratford. There are faults with Stony Stratford. I mean, there is no community centre. There has been very little investment from Milton Keynes into Stony Stratford. There's always been this assumption that Stony Stratford is a very affluent part of Milton Keynes and therefore can look after itself, it's not actually true. The financial demographic of Stony Stratford is a lot different to the perception that people living away have. I think there are people inside the town centre block which are in a poor position. So, Milton Keynes to a certain extent has sort of ignored Stony Stratford in many respects, and yet it celebrates the place. It is used continually as an advertising plus point if you like. And yet the Investment has been inevitably from the people that actually live here. It appears to me that's how it seems to be. I've always played cricket from eight [years old], so the sports facility down at the Ancell Trust sports ground has the same issues, how do you activate coaching sessions and drive the cost in a way it's accessible to anybody. Now you do that, but there is still this image thing, we know there are people that don't come, 'oh it's that Stony Stratford thing'. So it doesn't quite work for everybody. The sports facility down at Stony Stratford on a Friday night you can't move for children. It's just ram-packed. But if you do a census on where these people come from, they're not all from Stony Stratford. If you go back to the good ole 60s when Milton Keynes wasn't here. If you wanted to play cricket down at Stony Stratford you had to live in Stony Stratford Parish, so that would include Calverton, and Passenham, and the surrounding villages. But you had to come from here, you had to have a home address that came from here, and if you weren't from here, then you went to Wolverton or Bradwell to play cricket/football.

That's a personal view. I feel the loss of the community centre. As someone who is community-minded, I find it ridiculous we don't have a community centre. I know we have York House here. It tries, but there are certain things it can't cope with that a community centre could. If you drive everywhere around the country, which I do with my band work, has a village hall or a community centre or something, but this wonderful place hasn't. We had one, and it was sort of politically removed from us. It was the where the Greek orthodox church is now that was, for all intents and purposes a community centre. You and me can't phone up the secretary of the community to book

something, it ain't there to be booked. For instance I play in a barn-dance band or Ceilidh band, so if you wanted to put one on, a ceilidh or a barn-dance for a fundraiser, we can't anymore because it's not there.

INTERVIEWER: Do you find any of these elements in your experience of Milton Keynes?

OWEN:

Absolutely, that's definitely a yes to all of that. But you make of it as you will, don't you? I mean I've got friends of mine who say there is nothing to do, they say 'I can go to certain places I go too, and there's nothing to do' - Sorry? There's so much to do. If I could of have afforded it, I would have retired at 50 and had a pretty full diary, a full life and a full week. I've come to the conclusion that pretty much the way forward is you just have to be social media savvy. If you're not the world of social-life is about to pass you by. You're just gonna spend your whole life sitting in your front room, going for a walk around the river smiling and saying hello to people but actually never going anywhere because you don't know anything is on. I don't like it. I'm from a generation where I would like a 'what's-on' newspaper coming through my door and having a read through, but the reality is it doesn't work like that anymore. I mean we're putting a gig on at the MK Gallery in November as a part of our 40th anniversary with the Cock and Bull band. Well we have got to advertise this, we've got to drive this, and there is only one way this can be done, and that's via Facebook, via online. You just have to encompass it. But we people who lived here in the quiet of Stony Stratford and places like it had to encompass all that Milton Keynes brought in. It's just the way life is. You just learn to use everything to suit your own agenda. It's not being selfish or arrogant or anything like that, it's just there is all that stuff out there to do, so if you want to go to Costa Rica then you check out the Costa Rican Tourist board, you use the facilities that are available to you before you go. You don't know anybody in Costa Rica; I use that as an example because it's far away, but that's what you do. Well if you want to go to a gig in Milton Keynes, then I suggest you have to adopt the same mentality you

have to sort of find gig opportunities in Milton Keynes and feed into Facebook and see what comes up. Overused Google I'm afraid, but you have to do it.

Q5. In your opinion, what element of Milton Keynes is: The best. The most exciting. The hardest. Lacking. The most culturally significant. The richest in heritage?

INTERVIEWER: The best?

OWEN:

based on the last 25 years, say, or actually Milton Keynes is 40 years, 50 years, I would say the music scene for me because that has been an ongoing process.

INTERVIEWER: The most exciting element?

OWEN:

I think it's the sense of Milton Keynes Community together-ness. So, if you're interested in football, for example, you've now got that massive Stadium. If you're interested in music, you've got gigs all over the place. If you're interested in art there is any amount of activities available to you. The Community Choir group. You don't have to be an elite person in any of this to get yourself involved and express yourself that way, so I think that's what I like.

INTERVIEWER: The hardest?

OWEN:

I would think the hardest thing is transport. It's easy for someone like myself, who has got the car and is reasonably well-off. I can afford to do things, I don't need taxis to get around, and fortunately I am fit enough that I can cycle and get around to places in Milton Keynes if I need to. But if you're not in that position, Milton Keynes I would imagine isn't quite as easy to get around as perhaps we all think. I don't know because I've never been in that position, but I can imagine it's more complicated than it appears on the surface.

INTERVIEWER: Lacking?

OWEN:

Well, it's not an old town, it's not an old place, and it's not a university town, so it hasn't got that Central hub vibe has it. You go to any historic place like Norwich or Nottingham, I can think of loads of places. There is that core centre. It is there if you want it whereas Milton Keynes hasn't really got that, it's why Stony Stratford thrives, it sort of does have a core, it has a high street, I don't think it's as popular as it was talking to the various businesses. It's not as busy a place as it used to be. Geographically it's got a little town centre. Whereas, for example, Wolverton has its little market square at the back, you've got to know where it is to find it, whereas you fall into Stony Stratford high street, you think this is obviously the town centre, easy job.

INTERVIEWER: The most culturally significant?

OWEN:

I think the music because of the diversity, whether it is classical or modern you've got the Dankworths, and the Stables theatre, The Milton Keynes Orchestra, the alternative music scene is very big, so if your musical bag is the Crauford [Arms, Wolverton] on any night of the week, then they are putting on stuff there. For me it's the music, but then I'm biased because it's what I do.

INTERVIEWER: The richest in heritage?

OWEN:

I think the fact they kept all the small towns and the little villages intact. So, if you want to go and experience that, be it you live there or want to go for a walk around visiting, they do exist. So, like for instance if we went on the canal walk, and you decided to drop in and around Lindford, if you are a visitor from the outside coming in you still can experience what elements of Milton Keynes were like pre-Milton Keynes. Of course, it's changed. Everything Changes but it hasn't changed necessarily that much, you go across to Newport Pagnell or wherever these places are still intact in their own right really. I mean even Milton Keynes Village, or call it Middleton depending on what you want to call it, but you can go to the little green the little pub on the corner. It's pretty much as it always has been sort of being left alone so you can experience all these things now. If you are fortunate to be able to afford to live in them, you can have it every day of your life. We have people come and stay with us, and we can take them around Milton Keynes, and we can ask 'what do you want to do? Do you want to see the new Milton Keynes, go up the boulevards and sample the Hub or would you like to go and see a little medieval village experience? Would you like to come for a walk with us and go and see Passenham Manor? I mean it's all there for you.

Q6. Has Milton Keynes played a part in helping you gain any achievements which you might not have been successful in if you lived elsewhere? Has it aided any failures?

OWEN:

100% both in my, dare I call it my day job and my music career. If there had been no Milton Keynes, I struggle to see how the two of them would have worked. Especially as they have worked in tandem with one another. I mean this might sound a bit ridiculous, I'm sure there are people who moved away and lived in other places who've had not dissimilar experiences, but everything that Milton Keynes has brought into the area has just helped that process for me.

INTERVIEWER: Has it played a part in any failures?

OWEN:

No, I don't think so. Anything I haven't done, my own headspace, and my own concept of what I'm doing and where I am. You can't blame Milton Keynes for perceived failures in life. I mean there are other things that one would have done had Milton Keynes not been here, had Milton Keynes been somewhere else, or had I moved away to somewhere else. Of course of my life would have turned out differently, but I think that's all of your own doing isn't it. You can't say Milton Keynes has prevented me from this and that, and then list out a load of negative stuff.

Q7. If you were in charge of advertising Milton Keynes what view/image and/or tag line would you give it?

OWEN:

I'd home in on the success story. That opens up a whole pandora's box. But that's how I see it; it's just provided me with so much positive over that time, it's a long, long time. It's always been an upward curve as far as I'm concerned. A tag line that advertises Milton Keynes? Does it need one? Does it not just advertise itself now? It's a completely established place. You've got people living here now that

are second or third generation from the people who came here originally. Who I'm sure had some serious difficulties, not only with settling in a new place but coming across prejudice, it's like a form of racism, isn't it? 'where do you come from?' 'Well I come from somewhere else' 'Well we don't like you then!' I am sure people came across that issue, but their children may not have done, and certainly, their grandchildren wouldn't.

Q8. If Milton Keynes was a person could you describe them and the type of 50th party they might have?

OWEN:

I would think Milton Keynes is a very happy person. I would see Milton Keynes, if it was a person, that person would be over 30. my children are 30 +. I can't understand what Milton Keynes feels like to a five-year-old no way of doing that, I've got grandchildren, but they just live here, their Mum and Dad live here, and their Grandad lives here. We don't all live in Stony Stratford incidentally; we are all scattered about. A happy person, forward-thinking... I don't know anymore. I'm not involved with anything anymore that has anything to do with long-term planning. I'm not looking at a place that is growing like that anymore, I'm the wrong age, I feel I need to be 32 to be answering this question.

INTERVIEWER: Party?

OWEN:

It would probably be a themed disco type or a live cover band type. There would be something that would relate back to when you were, say, 20, or if you were an ex-university student, then you might home in on the bands you used to go and watch at uni.

I would be completely ambivalent; I might go, I might not. I wouldn't be busting, I think of a lot of the invites I've had over the years to go to reunions, I've never been to any of them. There's something about looking back. I feel too young to be looking back. I might want to look back if I get to say 80-85, I might want to do a bit of looking back then, but at the moment there's another life out there, I hope.

It's got to change hasn't it, nothing is static, and I think it was you still need the mental and physical energy to cope with all the changes that are coming because every generation has had them. I mean, my grandparents didn't have a telephone, and they were confronted by it. I remember my Grandad complaining about the cost of it, worrying about being able to pay for his telephone bill. The next thing I find he is on the phone to Canada ringing his daughter up once a fortnight. To hell with the cost it's a fantastic thing this, 'it's the best thing we ever did, the best thing your grandma ever made me do was get this telephone in'. That's what happens isn't it, so every generation has its change issue to come to terms with, its change issues to be resentful about, and change issues to hopefully enjoy.

INTERVIEWER: Gift?

OWEN:

I would give them a tree to put in their garden because we are the city of trees, and I think that was a concept promoted, I might be wrong, but was promoted by an architect called Derek Walker. I had the pleasure of working with Derek Walker on various schemes, design building schemes, and he was a lovely bloke. I'm sure not everybody thought he was a lovely bloke because that's the way of life, but I found him a very engaging personality. So, it would be a tree, like a magnolia, it would be a proper ornament type tree, that only grows to 'yay-high' something pleasant to look at. It wouldn't be a Eucalyptus or a Leylandii!!

Q9. Please watch this clip from the BFI archives, 8 mins

(<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-milton-keynes-a-village-city-1973-online>). It shows the early days of Milton Keynes. Does this evoke any memories or thoughts you are comfortable sharing?

OWEN:

Those Space-age factories. My job was to design those.

There's a trip down memory lane. Amazing.

It just re-enforces pretty much everything I've answered about Milton Keynes. Not too much about Stony Stratford, because Stony Stratford is a part of Milton Keynes now, it's not just a little bolt-on place, tucked away with all the rest. I think everything in that video pretty much tells you why I think the way I do about it as a place. It's all farmland, but the reality was it was poor quality farmland. And one of the reasons they picked Milton Keynes to be where it is, is not only its geographical location, i.e. halfway between Birmingham and London (or as close as you can get) but the quality of the farmland was quite poor so they could buy it at a very, very cheap price at the time. And farmers were quite glad to part company I get the impression. You hear different stories from different people, but that was my impression. But I mean Fred Roche is amazing, listening to his commentary circa 73, not understanding how we would want to be living in 2003. The fact they were thinking like that, the fact they understood there were going to be huge shifts, but they didn't know what those shifts were going to be. So, they tried to design a place that had inbuilt flexibility and of course a lot of that is coming to the end of its designable life, and there is pressure. In Fullers Slade and Galley Hill, there is pressure, which I don't agree with - but that is by the by, to knock down and build and interfere with the original design concept. But are they? Because whoever is doing this now has to be the new Fred [Roche] they have got to think 40-50 years away. And it's all very well thinking 'things are perfect as they are thank you very much' type attitude, but in 50-40 years' time there will be a lot more people about presumably, and it's increasingly difficult for these people to find places to live and have their own independence and identity. I think the comment about 'the quicker we get out, the better it will be

for everybody' has backfired slightly; because unfortunately the people like Fred Roche and Derek Walker; (I don't really want to mention names because it's like when you say thanks at the end of a party you always forget somebody, so I'm going to miss names out) but there was a whole group of people who had design standards and concepts, and they were strictly adhered to. Everything from the quality of the pavings, even the curbs on the roads ways were high-quality granite, done in a particular way. Well Unfortunately when the MKDC English partnerships were devolved, and it all became the Milton Keynes Unitary Authority, I suppose you could argue its market forces - which is not nice, but the standards are not longer here. And the design concepts, I don't think the Milton Keynes planning authority has covered themselves in any glory over the last 15 - 20 years. They have made some horrendous mistakes, in my view. I will give you an example. I noticed in the press, which I happened to read on my telephone and not a paper, there has been a massive planning hoo-ha over where the Stables theatre is, with the housing wrapping around and the concerns that everybody has about people moving in and then complaining about the noise levels when that theatre is there. You are moving, potentially moving, close to a theatre. Well I understand that whatever the planning issue is that Milton Keynes Council has supported the Stables Theatre version of what should take place, rather than the developer. You have to say well done Milton Keynes Council, but you have to question why it ever turned in to the debate in the first place. Why aren't they professional enough to say 'we are not going to allow this to happen, you've got to come up with a different plan or scheme. Yes, we've got to build houses, but we've also got to protect the existing environment. And over here we have a worldwide renowned theatre and music school facility, and that is a piece of the environment that needs to be protected. Like Stony Stratford high street, it's no more or less important, it's part of the infrastructure and of course it [Stables] has now become very historic because of its age, when was it built? 1997 I think it's been there for quite some time. But it is there, and it's a very well used facility. Not everybody's cup of tea, but that's by the by, you could say the same about the football stadium. Thirty-two thousand people could go there on a Saturday, they don't, and its people who don't like football can say 'what's this doing here' feel like it's a huge chunk of southern Milton Keynes, and do we really need one of these? For some people they are quite happy with it. But there is the case and point with Milton Keynes, the fact that this debate was brought to the table in the first place. Its eaten

up people's professional time to argue the case in favour of the stables. I know too much about this, so I will skirt around the conversation, analyse the amount of time spent by various groups of people to actually create the 'we don't want the planning to be agreed' argument. I think it caused quite a lot of problems, and it didn't need to be. I think if you had a strong council with a strong sense of planning culture the conversation wouldn't have taken place, or it would have taken place, but behind a closed door in an office 'sorry guys this is just not acceptable. So go back to the drawing board'. Well we've also had issues in Stony with the proposal to knock down, part demolish, or completely re-work Cofferidge Close. Ok that's a different thing, it affects people - its affects me because I live around there, but it was confined within a sensible amount of time spent, this is what could be done, this is why we as a community don't like it, but some people in the community that thought it was a good idea. Ok, that's a consultation system that took place, but it's gone now (or I think it has). The Stables example is completely out of proportion and its needs a ... (a bit autocratic sounding), but it does need a strong hand from time to time.

Q 10. Do you think Milton Keynes has a good reputation a. Internally with its residents, b. Externally with the rest of the country? (Why do you think it has this reputation? How does that make you feel? What could improve it?)

OWEN:

I would like to think it has a good reputation with its residents, but I can't really answer that, to be honest. I've lived here all my life, and I live in a particular part of it. I think it would be safe to say we live in a little bit of a bubble. Therefore, I don't think it's a question that is easily answered. As far as the outside world concerned, I think there's been a huge shift it was much the butt of jokes at one point, to the point of getting fed up of hearing it, given that we live here. But I think that's changed. I think Milton Keynes has a positive vibe and reputation that now surrounds it. The thing is, if it didn't it wouldn't have the industry and the business, and it wouldn't have the 250 - 300,000 people who live here or transport themselves into Milton Keynes every day to work. It answers its own question really.

If Fred Roche was still alive watching this all take place, I think he'd backtrack on his comment about the quality of the construction and planning arrangements. The fact that now people come here to work, or they live here. It's not a dormitory town; people living in Milton Keynes don't just all disappear at half-past seven in the morning to go somewhere else. We work here. I suspect it's a very vibrant place. I don't know what the statistic is; I don't know what the unemployment is in Milton Keynes compared to the rest of the country for instance, I should imagine its quite healthy. You try driving around Milton Keynes at 8 am in the morning and people pouring down the A5 and the A508 and seemingly everywhere, and the same if you go across to the road coming in from Olney and Bedford, Where are all these people coming from, where are they all going I wonder? But you can get on a train down to London still relatively easy at that time of day. I know its full up, and there are always complaints about everything, but you can get on one and get there. So, if you ask me, that is what I would think. The world of work is a completely changed thing now from when I was a young man setting out, I wouldn't say you had a job for life, but it was all pretty consistent and fairly mapped out, relatively straight forward. I don't think it is now for young people, from what I hear.

Well, I got bored and fed up with it quite frankly. It's like people say Americans aren't very well educated, it's like the French never go anywhere because they are only interested in stuff that is French, it's a ridiculous comment. It is embedded in ignorance. 'Where do you come from?' 'Oh, I come from Milton Keynes', and then you would just get this type of rhetoric, so you think 'well ok fine!' Then you just switch off 'I'm not going to argue with you' I actually live there, my kids live there and go to school there and we quite like it, end of conversation. And actually, a lot of people who make these kinds of comments have never actually been, and it's the usual 'it's all concrete cows and roundabouts' hohoho! Fine, if you want to think like that, Fine! Just don't come and live next door to me, please.

Q 11. Do you know any stories, jokes, or urban myths about Milton Keynes? Can you share them?

OWEN:

The jokes are boring, and I'm not interested in sharing them, urban myths... there must be something ... I always think one of the urban myths is that all the people that came to live in Milton Keynes came from London. I imagine that's a myth. There was a huge sell in London. Bletchley was already being used as a bit of a London post-war overspill. So, everybody comes from London, well they don't do they, and never has it been thus. They have come from places as wide as Japan, as an example, that would be an urban myth. Not going to do jokes. The only pre-Milton Keynes stories come from the older generation who were really anti-it [Milton Keynes] I remember an anti-Milton Keynes walk, I don't know who they were, the good burghers of Stony Stratford, but there was a walk. I was about 17-18, but there was a walk that was actually mapped out, so it was about 26 miles long around the perimeter of what was going to become Milton Keynes, the designated area, in protest about the coming of Milton Keynes. And that was probably about 'all theses Londoners are going to be coming here and ruin our... whatever we've got. The one thing Fred Roche said there was that they designed Milton Keynes never to be a one-industry city, so we weren't relying on a 'whatever' but pre-Milton Keynes that's exactly what was going here. If you lived around here, you pretty much worked in Wolverton Works and your mum would work in McCorqudales or Wolverton Works.

Pretty much, a huge percentage of the population worked in one of those places, and if you went down to Bletchley, you had the brickworks. So if that all started to collapse, even now places like Swindon are reliant of the car manufacturers, they are going to pull, and it's absolutely catastrophic because it's not just the guys who work in the actual place that is closing down, it's all the peripheral stuff that all gets supported by it. The knock-on effect is huge. The list is enormous by the people who get affected by this. That is why there was so much trouble in the 80s when it was all going to get closed down, people fighting for a way of life, and fighting for hanging on to something. You might argue that is not a very positive way of thinking, but actually they weren't necessarily fighting for that, there is a much bigger picture every time. Everybody gets affected by it.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you very much for your time.

Date: 6/8/2019

Location: Office Space, York House Centre, Stony Stratford

Observation: Owen seemed a bit nervous and worried about what was expected, but as the interview progressed, he relaxed and concluded afterwards that it had been enjoyable and a helpful process for him to consider his life in connection to the area.

As an original inhabitant Owen was in a rare position to give details of pre-designation and I took the opportunity to ask further impromptu questions to gain greater insight. At times Owen seem hesitate or unsure if his answers were good enough or if he had authority to answer which I met with reassurance and encouragement.

Owen's body language was minimalist, but his facial expressions were numerous from frowned brow while concentrating to wide eyes and a broad grin when talking about things he relished.

The transcription was verbatim and Owen member check alterations focused on giving more clarity to his answers which had on occasion tailed off mid-sentence.