

Our home inspires our emotions

AMAZINGLY, this is my 75th column penned for this publication. In that time, I have looked extensively at Milton Keynes. So, by way of celebration, I asked Urban Eden members what they love about MK, why they came here and why they stay. I hope you find these brief excerpts from their many responses as inspiring as I do.

Ian Michie, chairman of the Public Arts Trust and a director of Urban Eden: "If you lived here you would be home by now. MK means freedom to dream; MK broke the rules and is at home with itself."

Lawyer **Karen Mason** says: "My move here has really changed my life. I enjoyed living and working in London for many years but when I started a family I found that I simply could not fit my career, child and commuting into days with only 24 hours. It wasn't difficult to work out which needed to go.

"I still wanted to work in a thriving commercial centre and, having looked everywhere in the UK, it seemed to me that Milton Keynes was the only such centre where commuting time was reasonable.

"I have not regretted the decision for a second since moving here nearly ten years ago. MK is, as all its inhabitants know, a fabulous place for work and family life. The business community is open, friendly, positive and hardworking and the facilities for leisure are second to none."

Former head of the Commission for New Towns **John Napleton** reflects: "I first read the Master Plan for Milton Keynes in 1974 having applied for a job with MKDC. The plan was unique and inspirational. I was determined to get the job and have been here ever since, dedicated to building this wonderful city.

"The young professional team of architects, planners, landscape architects

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'The designers' vision was utopian...'

'The people are pleasant, active and positive in spirit...'

'Most of our families have followed us...'

and engineers led with aplomb by Fred Lloyd Roche was the finest post-graduate education a person could receive and I am immensely proud of their achievement and my own role in its success."

Promise

Cllr **John Hawthorn** adds: "I came for a job one step up the ladder as principal lecturer, at Milton Keynes College. When we first saw the city in February 1984, it looked so bleak - deciduous trees dominated, as part of the 'forest city' strategy - that I had to promise my wife that we would only stay for two years.

"We stayed longer because of the people; the easy, fast, safe transport on grid roads and redways; good reasonably priced golf courses; our good relations with local schools; the green environment - those trees eventually grew masses of leaves - and the central location for travel to my various jobs since leaving the college."

Human resources professional **Nonie Westbourne** opines: "I came to Milton Keynes from stunning Durham City very reluctantly, only because my new husband worked here. I knew and loathed

Peterlee and Washington New Town - two new towns in the North East. They are ugly, dull, grubby and soul-less. I dreaded having to live in such a place.

"I knew, too, Milton Keynes' reputation as a cultural desert. It took five years before the epiphany when Milton Keynes' beauty revealed itself: wide boulevards, greensward, trees and landscaped roundabouts.

"A town built for cars, free parking, a light and airy shopping centre, fabulous modern buildings, a high water table managed well so the town was blessed with several lakes... what more could any modern town want?

"There was no graffiti - it was cleaned off as soon as painted and became an example of best practice in sociology degrees - and rubbish collection was so efficient and frequent that the cleanliness of the town compared favourably with Holland.

"With people kept apart from traffic, travelling instead by foot and bike on winding redways and housed in pretty little villages incorporating the new and the old, I realised that the designers' vision was utopian.

"Do I still love Milton Keynes? Do I want to stay? Yes to both."

Management consultant **Graham Benjamin**: "We came to Milton Keynes 25 years ago because of its layout and design and the sheer excitement of the vision of a growing city. We came because of its egalitarian ethos, mixed communities and provision of services across the spectrum of education, health, welfare and employment; education and the philosophy for our young children, the choice and price of housing; proximity to London and to major airports for my work.

"We stayed because of the ease of living here; the planned environment works very well and people are pleasant, active and positive in spirit with often a common commitment to make it all work for us."

Freelance video artist **Brian Salter**: "What keeps me here is one of our old slogans from MKDC days: the qualities of the countryside with the amenities of a city."

Modern

Linda Wolfe moved to Milton Keynes in 1979. "The 'thing' that brought us to Milton Keynes was finding somewhere decent to live when we started a family. Our three boys have had modern schools, plenty of parks to play in, a lovely place to grow up. We have bought our own home, always had jobs, as have our boys.

"It is so easy to get around: our grid roads are fabulous. I love the city centre but we still have places like Stony Stratford to shop in or just visit.

"I love Milton Keynes Theatre where we can see West End shows at better prices and don't have all that travelling to London. We also have lots of smaller theatres, such as the Chrysalis at Willen, where you can get a good night's entertainment for £10 or less.

Theo Chalmers



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"There is so much to do. You can have city, countryside, small towns, eat, drink and be merry all at short distances. Like many people here, most of our families have followed us. We all love it and wouldn't want to live anywhere else.

"We recently visited Australia and as we came back into MK everywhere looked so green and lush and we both said (at the same time): 'Ah, we are home' I think that says it all!"

And so do I. Cheerio.



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