

Ensuring the British brand thrives globally

PAUL GRIFFITHS

Chief Executive
Milton Keynes Chamber of Commerce

WITH the uncertainty of Brexit, it is difficult to know what lies ahead for Britain in terms of international trade. No doubt the current climate is a challenge for many businesses but I hope that the monumental changes that are afoot will ultimately bring new opportunities for British firms - as long as they are properly managed in the corridors of power.

And while we cannot claim to know what the future holds - and nor would we guess - here at Milton Keynes Chamber of Commerce we are abreast of all the latest happenings and can support local business in tackling any obstacles they may face.

Our upcoming International Trade Forum, run in conjunction with our sister Chamber in Northamptonshire, takes place on July 12 and will give our members chance to talk to export experts from the Department for International Trade and Enterprise Europe Network, as well as a Moneycorp representative.

The Chamber Foreign Exchange service provided by Moneycorp, which is exclusive to Chamber members, can help exporters to plan for risk - enabling firms to protect themselves from adverse exchange rate fluctuations - access payments on the go, ensure exporters get the best rates in the market and more.



Paul Griffiths

Our International Trade Forums are designed for Chamber members, enabling them to discuss international trade issues affecting them and, through discussion and by direct representation, bring any issues before UK government through our lobbying process. All our work is to ensure the British brand continues to thrive globally.

As well as our local event, nationally our partners at The British Chambers of Commerce will be holding their International Trade Summit in October. The event gives delegates practical advice, invaluable resources and the contacts needed to grow their business and begin the next step of their export journey.

The summit is designed to give businesses, at whatever stage they are in their export journey, help to take their business to the next level. There is a choice of informative workshops, lively panel discussions, stimulating speeches from policy makers, successful exporters and household names as well as plenty of time for networking.

I would encourage businesses of all sizes and sectors to attend these informative events and take advantage of the expertise available to them, whatever stage they are on their export journey. They may discover a great opportunity in front of them.

For more information call Milton Keynes Chamber of Commerce on 01908 547820 or visit www.chambermk.co.uk/international-trade

Theo Chalmers

Theo Chalmers is managing director of Verve Public Relations and chair of Urban Eden.



www.urbaneden.org www.vervepr.co.uk
e: t.chalmers@vervepr.co.uk
Tel: 01908 275271

Scrap 'city streets' and go back to the drawing board

CAN SOMEONE please have a serious word with our planners and councillors? I truly wish I could stop writing about how utterly incompetent and hopeless Milton Keynes Council is but they keep handing me new ammunition.

This time it seems the concept of so-called 'City Streets' - despite being roundly condemned by even the most town-planning-illiterate councillor or planning executive - is being rolled out yet again in draft expansion plans to form a new Eastern extension of Milton Keynes just over the M1.

Council officers are going against the very plan, Plan:MK, that they, themselves have prepared.

Our magnificent grid roads were and are a distinctive feature of the original masterplan for Milton Keynes. Indeed, the council's policy is still that they should be 80 metres wide as advised in The Milton Keynes Planning Manual and extensively agreed upon in their own now finalised Plan:MK. I quote here from several parts of it which basically repeat the same things as though they really believe them:

■ *"Plan:MK sets out important conditions for new development which include: Development should be based on the original principles of Milton Keynes, to keep what makes MK distinct and special."*

■ *"To manage increased travel demands through: Extending the grid road pattern into any major new development areas."*

■ *"The structure and layout of development within or adjoining the urban area of Milton Keynes is based on the principles that have shaped the original city, especially the grid road system."*

■ *"The unique grid road network will be expanded and fully integrated into the design and layout of new developments and regeneration areas."*

■ *"Where the grid road system is to be extended, proposals should include management and maintenance plans for the grid road reserves and/or landscape corridors which include proposals for this to be funded over the long term."*

Again and again this is mentioned in Plan:MK. Seems clear enough.

And let's not forget the broken promises of the past where, for instance, what was promised to be a grid road corridor reservation for H2 Millers Way into the Western Expansion Area ended up as a City Street only 27 metres wide from house front to house front.

And that included front gardens.

City Streets as seen, for instance, in both the western and eastern expansions of H7 Chaffron Way have been roundly condemned not least by some of the councillors actually responsible. In the east where Chaffron Way becomes Countess Way, the road is split into two sections, one at 30mph, one at just 20mph. There are double yellow lines and bus lanes in one large section but the bus lanes are totally blocked by impassable raised barriers every few yards - and it's not even as though anyone can park in these apparently impromptu laybys as they sport those double yellow lines.

So just what are they for? I'm damned if I can work out why blocking bus lanes and preventing parking helps anyone.

Countess Way has been such a disaster that all lorries are now banned and at one time it featured the most uncomfortable rubber speed hump pancakes ever experienced, now thankfully removed. Milton Keynes Council has even been consulting on a proposal to install a zebra crossing on Countess Way. What a total farce.

Bovis, which is developing part of Area 10 of the Western Expansion Area, has a 'City Street' which eventually curls round from the V4 to join the V2 and H4. So although we see claims of 'linkage to the grid system', there are in fact no grid roads in an area that effectively permanently blocks the western approaches of our city.

Of course terminology is important here. Having realised how utterly mocked and ridiculed our 'City Streets' are, developer Barratts/David Wilson Homes, which is developing 180 new homes in part of Area 11 of the WEA, talks about a 'Link Street' to the western continuation of H2 Millers Way. Elsewhere, including in the new eastern extension of Milton Keynes we are seeing the term 'High Streets' disguising what are actually 'City

Streets'. Do they think we won't notice?

Our grid roads were not only admired and copied worldwide; our citizens clearly loved them too. In 2008, the council set up the Citizens' Advice Group on Transport to review the city's future transport needs. The group commissioned a survey of 1,000 people by research body ICM which reported that "the grid is beloved of this parish. There is likely to be strong opposition if the format is radically changed."

Specifically:

- 88 per cent said it gives Milton Keynes a unique identity not seen in other towns;
- 87pc said the grid road system is fast and efficient;
- 84pc said the grid road system should not be tampered with.

Wikipedia says: "Following a change of policy back to grid roads in 2011 only a few of these [City] streets will now exist. The Milton Keynes grid road system is a network of national speed limit, fully landscaped routes that form the top layer of the street hierarchy for both for private and public transport. The system is unique in the UK: the grid roads run in between districts rather than through them. These facilitate higher speed limits due to the absence of buildings close to the roads. High-speed motor traffic is segregated from pedestrian and leisure cycling traffic, which uses the alternative Redway system."

What should concern us now is the draft Milton Keynes East Development Framework Supplementary Planning Document, prepared by the council's planning department with no extensive public consultation and which, almost unbelievably given their authorship of Plan:MK, features what are essentially 'City Streets'. A Delegated Decision for a six-week public consultation on the document was approved on June 18 subject to not being called in.

In my opinion it should be scrapped and those responsible forced back to the drawing board to include proper 80 metre-wide corridors with grid roads. This is no more than they insist we should have in Plan:MK.

Anything else is a betrayal of trust and a derogation of duty.
Cheerio.



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