

Paul Griffiths on behalf of Age UK Milton Keynes and Milton Keynes Motorcycle Association

Comments on Draft CMK Transport and Parking Strategy Consultation Paper

Wearing Two Hats:

Founding member of Milton Keynes Motorcycle Association a Facebook group with 160 members. I am also a member and contributor to four other Facebook groups with a combined MK membership of close to 1,000.

I also work at Age UK Milton Keynes – a local independent charity working with and for older people in our community.

Annex B refers to 33 separate comments on the draft strategy from both these perspectives and also as a long-term resident and supporter of Milton Keynes.

As a motorcycle rider my first comment – is why were Powered Two Wheelers specifically excluded from this exercise? The Council published its Powered Two Wheeler Strategy in February 2003 – a strategy that I have been told on at least two occasions is going to be updated – and this is what it says in the two opening paragraphs:

INTRODUCTION

Powered two wheelers can play an important role in the development of a fully sustainable integrated transport system. PTWs offer an affordable and flexible form of personal transport for journeys which are difficult to undertake by other sustainable modes such as walking, cycling and public transport. Although powered two wheelers are not totally 'green' they offer significant environmental advantages over the private car.

THE IMPORTANCE OF POWERED TWO WHEELERS

We recognise that PTWs are a separate class of road user with their own particular perspectives and needs. PTWs are an alternative to the private car for trips where the availability of public transport is limited and walking or cycling impractical. PTWs offer similar flexibility to the car but are generally cheaper to buy, tax and insure and have lower operating costs. Within urban areas they can move freely and are able to park in small spaces. They are an affordable way to increase mobility and widen access to employment and local services.

The Strategy makes a total of 24 Action points – but few if any of these seem to have been acted on – to the point where it would seem that this document has been tucked away in a drawer and forgotten about.

Yet it is clear that PTWs could be part of the solution. The Government has recognised this by continuing to support the Wheels 2 Work initiative to make PTWs available in a cost effective manner to employees who need to get to work when public transport and other means are not available.

Earlier this year there was an announcement that the subsidies currently available for electric cars would be extended to the new generation of electric motorcycles that are beginning to come to market.

I would ask that the decision to exclude the contribution PTWs could make to addressing transport and parking issues in CMK be reconsidered. And, if this is done then the PTW Strategy should be reviewed as a matter of urgency so that proper consideration can be given to the support infrastructure needed to bring about the greater use of PTWs for journeys to and within CMK.

Wearing my Age UK Milton Keynes hat my main concerns revolve around keeping and improving accessibility for older people and people with mobility impairments.

One challenge, not addressed by the report, is the changing population profile of Milton Keynes where growth in the 65 -79 years age group and the over 80s is forecast to grown by 78.3% and 96.3% respectively by 2026. Indeed Milton Keynes will see one of the highest growth rates of over 65's in the country over this time.

Not all older people will drive and not all older drivers will want to come into CMK but there are a number of issues that need to be considered - that don't just affect older people - and these include:

The complexity of the offer – already we see people putting money into meters for car parking in one ownership while their car is parked in another ownership. Different rules for different on-street parking e.g. blue badge holders pay in thecentre:mk NCP car parks – but not elsewhere in CMK. Different rates being charged by different owners e.g. the parking around Xscape has always has a different charging rate to Council owned parking. Some proposals such as dynamic pricing appear sensible but far from reducing the complexity of the current parking regime have the potential to make things worse: be aware of the law of unintended consequences.

The point is made several times in the document that people will need to get used to not being able to park close to their final destination and may need to use another mode of transport for the final part of their journey. It is important to consider the route of the potential shuttle bus. Why not cross at Saxon Gate and extend to Marlborough Gate - rather than cross at Witan and end at Secklow Gate. This would make the eastern end of the shopping building, theatre, gallery, Theatre District and Xscape more accessible potentially attracting more passengers and making such a service more viable.

The driverless pods sound great but who will they serve? They are small - you will need to be agile to get into them. You won't be able to use them if you have mobility restrictions or use a walking aid. They are going to be difficult to access if the only way of booking and navigating them is through a phone app - again excluding a significant part of the population. Consideration should be given to the larger vehicles being tested in Greenwich offer greater accessibility for people with restricted mobility and small children etc but as these wouldn't be able to share pedestrian space [apart perhaps from around Station Square] so this needs to be factored in to any proposed modifications to CMK highways structure. Also consideration needs to be given to alternative ways of booking these vehicles. Perhaps on demand minibuses will also be useful for older people. However, none of these options can replace the friendly, professional, personal service offered to people with high levels of restricted mobility.

Finally, the public transport interchange is sorely needed. In the discussions about the future development of Midsummer Boulevard East there was strong support for the provision of a 'community hub' within this building too - somewhere where older people, disabled people could sit in comfort , hold small meetings and access Information & Advice and other services. In looking at the design options for the Interchange I would strongly support clear formal crossings as opposed to having informal crossings to reach different stops. Clear signage, use of strong colours [perhaps colour code different bus routes] and audio messages for people with impaired vision. And, look to the access points from the Interchange to the retail area - it shouldn't have too steep a gradient and should, as far as possible be weather protected. The recent move of the central post office from thecentre:mk to the edge of the Theatre District highlights how a relatively short move for most people can affect those with impaired mobility.