

S26-/08 Resources for a City

Transmission date: 1974

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Ian Gass:

In this programme we're going to be concerned with the different types of constructional materials [that] are combined to build a new city. In the course unit we've discussed the theory but what happens in practice? Here at The Open University we're in a good position to see what is going on because a new city, Milton Keynes, is being built around us. Milton Keynes is planned to be a city of modest size which when completed will house about quarter of a million people, and we in Britain have to build the equivalent of such a city every two years to keep pace with increasing population. How do the construction industries cope? The biggest problem is land, thirty five square miles are needed for Milton Keynes, and most of this will be agricultural land, but four towns will also be included.

This is how the planners say the city will be built in the next ten to twenty years. First the land will be drained using the existing rivers to carry away the main volume of ground water, and balancing lakes will control the flow. That's a heavy demand on gravel and concrete. Then the roads will be put in, and the city, to start with, built as a broad crescent development to link existing communities. That will need wood, concrete and bricks. Then the city centre, and the rest of the roads, an access grid they call it, and that means a hundred miles of main road, most of it dual carriageway, and that's bitumen and aggregates. Within the grid the city will be built block by block until it's complete, sometime in the late 1990s.

That's the plan. But where are the building materials going to come from? To answer that question we have to relate the position of the city to the geological picture. Here the new city is plotted on a geological map of the southern part of the British Isles. And the city's going to lie right across a belt of clay which extends more or less northeast southwest across the country. This is the lower Oxford clay and it's probably the finest brick clay in this country, and also probably in the world, and there are lots of brick pits around here producing millions of bricks. And what's more, a bit further to the south, we've got a chalk escarpment where chalk and clay occur together and these two substances are the raw materials for cement. Also Milton Keynes lies on the River Ouse and there are plenty of river gravels, when mixed with cement, produce concrete.

So there seem to be plenty of constructional materials near to Milton Keynes and did that influence the location of the new city in this area? I asked David Jamieson, of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation if that was why the new city was being built here.

David Jamieson:

Two reasons: one was to provide a new city to provide London's overspill and the second was to relieve development pressure in the southern part of the county. There is no land available for development in the south of the county other than green belt land and, quite rightly, it was felt that the green belt should not be built on. There had been some expansion in the northern part of the county at Bletchley with a GLC overspill arrangement, for some

time, and it is a good site, it's adjacent to the M1, it's adjacent to the London Liverpool Manchester railway line. Strategically it's a good location to build a new city.