

# City leaders are listening to the lobbyists

ONE of the ways in which Urban Eden lobbies is by requesting regular meetings with those who have real power.

One such meeting occurred in January where seven Urban Eden members - all with credible expertise and commitment to this city - sat down with 12 members of the Milton Keynes Council executive including Nick Fenwick, assistant director, planning, economy and development, Neil Sainsbury, manager of urban design, landscape archi-

ecture and regeneration, and assistant director transport and highways Alex Constantinides. Also at the meeting were council leader Cllr Andrew Geary and Cabinet members Andrew Morris, who holds the growth and development brief, and John Bint, who is in charge of transport and highways.

The purpose was to discuss major issues facing Milton Keynes which, if tackled without proper consideration of all long-term implications, could negatively impact our quality of life. One is the plan by thecentre:mk to demolish the south side of Secklow Gate, which would mean closing a vital grid road; moving the market to a new 'dead zone' where no passer-by could trouble the retail hegemony of the centre; the building of two monstrous new stores on the market's current site and lowering the height of the Midsummer Boulevard carriageway, thus removing the safe road crossing under the road junction.

We have already had some joy with our lobbying. It was confirmed at the meeting that thecentre:mk's attempt to avoid an Environmental Impact Assessment for the demolition has failed.

We alerted the council that, as far as we are concerned, thecentre:mk's recent public exhibition/consultation exercise was little more than a charade. We were invited to meet their development team, to preview their plans and to comment on them. However, as no notes were taken, what exactly was the point?

We also discussed with the council the rapidly emptying food centre and the ridiculous intention of thecentre:mk to build thousands of square metres of new retail space on one side of Midsummer Boulevard while presiding over thousands more, empty just a few yards away.

I felt obliged to offer my own solution; a covered, raised two-way travelator (like the ones at Gatwick Airport) flying over the road. It might even be visually attractive.

Another hot topic was the council leadership's further efforts to get Gallaghers to commit to a proper grid road system in the

## Theo Chalmers



Theo Chalmers is managing director of Verve Public Relations and chair of Urban Eden  
[www.urbaneden.org](http://www.urbaneden.org)  
[www.vervepr.co.uk](http://www.vervepr.co.uk)  
 e: [t.chalmers@vervepr.co.uk](mailto:t.chalmers@vervepr.co.uk)  
 Tel: 01908 275271

Western Expansion Area. While real progress has been made here, there is still much to do.

Yes, Gallaghers has agreed to set aside reservations to continue the H2, H3 and V2 into and past the WEA, as well as further roundabouts on the V4. Yet they are, it seems, not yet fully committed to underpasses or overpasses on the V4 nor on their H2 and H3 extensions and plans still show traffic-lit pedestrian crossings. For Urban Eden this is not desirable, and we appear to have the support of the Cabinet, particularly John Bint and his executive counterpart Alex Constantinides, which is heartening.

A further important topic is the Milton Keynes land bank and planning rights currently controlled by the Homes and Communities Agency. Apart from tranches of land in the centre and elsewhere, the HCA is still clinging to both the land and

the rights to grant planning in the B4.4 area (opposite Sainsbury's) which was until recently controlled by developer Places for People and destined to be West End One.

Our lobbying helped to see off this disastrous 'dormitory town' which offered nothing to the city and served only commuters. Now it seems housebuilder Barratt Homes has acquired the site and may be 'eased' into a similar high-density scheme by an HCA apparently concerned only to fatten the Exchequer.

It really is time for the HCA to leave Milton Keynes without further delay, save only to apologise for the planning and environmental disasters that its short-sighted greed has foisted on us. For proof, see no further than The Hub.

The good news is that the council is in serious negotiation, also involving the government housing minister Grant Shapps, to acquire the assets and obligations. The bad news is that negotiations are apparently very demanding and no resolution is yet in sight. My impression is that the Treasury is breathing down everyone's necks like the seagulls in the film Finding Nemo, shrieking 'Mine! Mine! Mine!'.

The Cabinet is clearly very constrained by what it could reveal, however both it and the HCA may need to be prepared to make concessions. After all, a deal in which neither party feels entirely content is probably a fair deal. Let us hope and pray for a resolution we can live with.

Other subjects debated included plans to develop (or, in the opinion of Urban Eden, over-develop) Coffridge Close in Stony Stratford and the provision and cost of parking in CMK. There is no space to go into detail here. However I would like to take this opportunity to thank the council for listening to us and their apparent commitment to do the best for the city and its citizens.

Join Urban Eden to discover more... and be one of the hundreds who are already making a difference. Cheerio.

## Help research get ahead... wear a hat

BRAIN Tumour Research and its member charities is encouraging businesses to make a donation and nominate their boss to wear a hat for the day in aid of the charity's annual Wear a Hat Day on March 30.

The event aims to raise awareness of the prevalence of brain tumours and the need for vital research. Wear a Hat Day is an awareness initiative and, from sponsored silences to charity runs and office bake-offs, businesses are being encouraged to raise money to sponsor their boss to wear a hat.

Brain Tumour Research receives less than one per cent of national cancer research spending in the UK. "Yet," says Brain Tumour Research director Sue Farrington-Smith, "the deadly disease kills more children and people under the age of 40 than any other cancer. Wear a Hat Day is a fun way of increasing awareness and getting people raising money for an often-overlooked form of cancer."

Brain Tumour Research has recruited the help of Kate Langrish-Smith, crowned Hat Maker of the Year 2010, to develop the official range of campaign hats.

You can make your own bespoke hat, or one simply out of paper, by downloading instructions from the charity's website [www.braintumourresearch.org](http://www.braintumourresearch.org). Do this at your desk in your lunch break or even for a team-building activity.

• Brain Tumour Research represents the united campaign voice of the Brain Tumour Research group of 18 charities. Launched in 2009, the charity was established specifically to raise funds for brain tumour research. To request a fundraising pack or for further information, visit [www.braintumourresearch.org](http://www.braintumourresearch.org)

## Hats off as the countdown begins to a brand new season

ALTHOUGH we are only in February, hats are a 'hot topic' for 2012 writes Alexandra Cole, of Face Facts Studio. Invitations to apply for Royal Ascot tickets have dropped on my doormat and Michelle McCartney, owner of On Your Head Be It hat studio in Northampton, is all set for the spring and summer collections.

I have known Michelle for some years and we have frequently worked together. We have a good synergy in our offer - the perfect hat with the face looking its best, complimenting the latest make-up.

Michelle says: "I am very excited about 2012, after the upsurge in hat-wearing that the Royal Wedding brought last year. A hat can and should be a great confidence-booster."

• There has been immense

publicity in the media recently on the subject of breast implants, which in turn triggered adverse publicity about facial cosmetic injectables: derma fillers. We now live in a world in which the anti-ageing industry is huge. My opinion of facial injectables is that it is a matter of individual choice but make sure that you go to a professional clinic.

My work as a facialist is also my passion. Face Facts Studio has always offered and promoted the best non-invasive facial treatments available.

I have always stood firm in my belief in non-surgical treatments. My principle in addressing anti-ageing is to use the most up-to-date, result-oriented, non-invasive 'natural' technology on the market today.

• Rumour has it that the

trend on the catwalk will be that pastels are back, in soft chalky colours, and rainbow-coloured shoes in patent.

In my studio I am using Illuminators to draw warmth out of the skin, which give it a

natural radiance for perfect complexions. Brows are bold (always a good defining look - the perfect eye-lift) and soft lips, with a natural defining pencil finish. Spring is on its way...