

# Theo Chalmers

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## Homes: we are not a dumping ground

AS MANY will know, Milton Keynes Council is desperate to fulfil some sort of lemming-like requirement to never stop expanding Milton Keynes. But it is not only infill and expansion by our own council of which we should be scared. Soon, it seems, Milton Keynes is to be afflicted with several swellings on its flanks, afflicted by others.

Central government sees Milton Keynes as a place where more residents can be dumped from crowded and rapidly-becoming-unaffordable nearby cities. Government ambitions to build more than 40,000 new homes here before 2031 - that equates to 1,750 dwellings a year - have provided the stimulus for the council to create the somewhat stuttering Plan:MK.

The desperation to hit targets is already showing, resulting in aggressive house building firms busily buying up and optioning every available potential site in order to capitalise on this mindless expansion and in-filling. Bizarrely, of course, this will inevitably result in Milton Keynes becoming a crowded and unaffordable city itself.

Cheers, central government. Cheers, aggressive house builders.

But Milton Keynes is not alone. The

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boroughs that surround us are under pressure to expand too. And Milton Keynes is sitting there with its already developed land oh so close to their borders, like a great fat, sacrificial goat.

Aylesbury Vale, for instance is required to expand by 33,000 new homes. And where better to dump them than right on Milton Keynes' doorstep? After all, they will collect all the council tax and government house-target brownie points; we will collect all the grief, supplying transport links, doctors' surgeries, hospital, fire, police, ambulance, schools and colleges, railway stations et-bloody-cetera. What could better suit the burghers of Aylesbury Vale?

The existing plan for 1,885 homes in the so-called South West Milton Keynes - or 'Son of Salden Chase' - scheme, about which I have written previously, is still not decided.

Meanwhile 268 homes are already being built south of Newton Leys, outside our boundaries.

But why stop there?

There is yet another newly announced plan for a further 2,000 homes in Shenley Road, Whaddon, tucked up against Milton Keynes yet just outside the borough boundary. And, apparently, Milton Keynes is to enjoy the benefits of Aylesbury Vale's two 'traveller' sites nearby too. Nice one, Aylesbury Vale.

Bait

The threats are not just from the west. In the east is the just announced plan from specialist planning company Berrys to build two new 'garden communities' east of the M1 with 10,000 homes between Cranfield and Bedford. The bait for this expansion of Milton Keynes into Central Bedfordshire is an offer to construct a new hospital to serve both Milton Keynes and Bedford as well as a major university campus, such as should properly be built in central Milton Keynes on the large empty site between the:hub and the rail station.

There is, of course, also the recent

proposal of Gallagher Estates to build a 'daughter Milton Keynes' of up to 20,000 new homes in the north, between Castlethorpe and Little Linford, admittedly on Milton Keynes Council-controlled land.

Surely a city the size of Milton Keynes, with plans to expand its population from the current 260,000 to well over 350,000, should control its own borders and what adjoins them. Surely Milton Keynes' boundaries must be urgently expanded if we are to have all these developments tacked on to them.

I asked local MPs Mark Lancaster and Iain Stewart for their views on this. There are, I argued, precedents for this: many London boroughs, for instance, were formerly parts of Middlesex County Council or Surrey boroughs.

Mr Stewart, MP for Milton Keynes South, was on holiday. Mr Lancaster his counterpart in Milton Keynes North, could not be contacted over several days, despite appearing on BBC Look East in between being asked for a quote and the deadline for this article.

Hmm, a hot potato, gentlemen? You bet. This issue will not disappear soon and may yet burn a few fingers. Cheerio.

## Control the controllables

The psychology behind Team GB's Olympic success applies equally to personal development in business, says executive coach and Olympic medallist Gail Emms.



AFTER Team GB's success in Rio Olympics 2016, the stories of the incredible athletes start to emerge. How the sporting journey began and how they reached their goal of becoming a Team GB Olympian, wearing that tracksuit around the Olympic village and reaching the pinnacle of their sport. For many athletes, just being there is the dream.

But for those who want a medal, the key to making the step from Olympian to Olympic medallist, is confidence; confidence in your ability, your training and finally, your team.

There is a great saying in sport 'Control the Controllables', which sums it up perfectly. You cannot control the opponent or the conditions but you can control YOU.

We go about every day and have many thoughts, some positive and some negative, but you can control your actions on these thoughts. Do you act on the negativity rather than the positive? How do you change the thought pattern to make sure you rise to the challenge?

The athletes who succeeded in Rio are the ones who turned the bad days into learning days, who saw setbacks and adversity as just another hurdle to jump over and if they needed help, were never too embarrassed to ask, knowing that to achieve is almost impossible on your own.

To release the Olympian in you, it starts from within. Control the controllables and relax about what you cannot control. There is nothing you can do about it. Control your thoughts and your actions on your thoughts and watch the confidence grow.

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