

## 2

# 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

## Growth corridor will lead to a crowded commuter land

SO HERE we all are; the people of Milton Keynes, Milton Keynes Council, MK Development Partnership, lobby group Urban Eden and civic society MK Forum, all agreed, all in favour, all gung ho about the reintroduction of the fully-funded East West Rail link - the formerly dismantled Varsity Line - and the proposed new Oxford to Cambridge Expressway properly integrating Milton Keynes into the very centre of the Oxford to Cambridge Arc.

Indeed, we have all said how great the idea of the CMKO [Cambridge - Milton Keynes - Oxford] Growth Corridor is.

But I admit it, I was wrong. Badly wrong.

We have all been wrong. Because we have all been conned. It is a trap.

I recently attended a public debate in Middleton Hall in centre:mk organised by MK Forum. It was part of the extensive MK City Fest programme which I wrote about in these pages in May and which was designed to deliver a multi-purpose Festival of Creative Urban Living, conceived as part of the MK Futures 2050 Commission process.

At this debate were big-hitter speakers including David Rudlin, chair of the Academy of Urbanism, one of the sponsors; Martin Tugwell, director of England's Economic Heartland Strategic Alliance; Dr Ian Hirst of the Environment Agency; Phil Verster, managing director of East West Rail.

Unsurprisingly, they and others were buoyant about the future potential for and ultimate success of the CMKO Growth Corridor initiative.

One thing has always been clear to me,

however, and it has often puzzled me. How would, or could, cities so fundamentally different from Milton Keynes as Oxford and Cambridge form any kind of mutual alliance with such a brash, philosophically separate newcomer as Milton Keynes?

### Blessed

Oxford University was founded before the year 1167, 850 years ago, and Cambridge University between 1209 and 1226. Milton Keynes has not even got a proper university yet.

OK, it has the brilliant Open University, the distance learning initiative copied worldwide, it claims arguably to host the Masters' degree factory Cranfield and has links with the University of Bedfordshire.

But they do not really count. 'Milton Keynes University' is still merely a hoped-for dream, sadly.

There are other big differences, too.

Oxford and Cambridge city councils both stridently hate cars. And car owners. They appear to do everything possible to dissuade

“

*Both Oxford and Cambridge have a protected designated Green Belt. Milton Keynes does not.”*

them from entering their cities of dreaming spires and plucky punters.

Not so Milton Keynes, a forest city but one blessed with fast, efficient and brilliantly designed roads.

It is clear to me that the burghers of both Oxford and Cambridge look down on Milton Keynes as though it was that embarrassing cousin you have to invite to your wedding but wish did not come.

The thing that suddenly dawned on me at that meeting, and that I had not realised before, is far more important than either of those two things, however. It is this: both Oxford and Cambridge have a protected, designated Green Belt.

Milton Keynes does not.

In Cambridge, it is a planning zone, not a

statutory protected area. Yet it works, is some six to ten miles wide and protects neighbouring villages from urban sprawl.

In 1955, Oxford was one of the first cities to define a Green Belt. Its inner boundary is tight around the city and it extends outwards for some five to six miles in every direction.

By the late 1950s the Green Belt was being employed as a policy tool in planning decisions. Once again it works. And once again I must mention that Milton Keynes does not have one.

So how have we been conned? Oxford and Cambridge are protected by Green Belts; Milton Keynes is not. The new East West Rail link and East West Expressway will make commuting fast and efficient between Oxford and Cambridge via Milton Keynes. So where will all the people who work in Oxford and Cambridge live and commute from?

Here of course. In houses crammed into the still green fields around an ever-expanding, not-worth-preserving, not-worth-protecting, disposable, embarrassing-cousin Milton Keynes.

So either Milton Keynes Council and the city's two MPs start fighting now for the urgent instigation of a MK Green Belt or we must accept that we are to become a commuter town for our illustrious neighbours, a convenient halfway-house dumping ground for those prestigious cities with their protected green spaces.

Welcome to a crowded commuter land where nowadays no one cares where we build. Cheerio.

### INSIGHT

●Whistleblowing: when is it in the public interest?

●Control your estate with a Lasting Power of Attorney

●Beware the potential perils of rental concession letters.

Pages 8-9

### GROWTH

**MATTERS** Read the views of the experts on the issues and challenges around business growth. Pages 10-11

### THE CLOUD

How it is playing an increasingly important role in modern business. Pages 12



**clubConnect**  
Your Business Network at MK Dons



**ClubConnect is your chance to align your brand to the power of MK Dons and be part of a unique Business Network.**

- Two **ClubRed** season tickets
- Ten **ClubRed** tickets to choose in 2017/18
- Four **ClubPlatinum** packages to choose in 2017/18
- Framed shirt signed by the First Team
- 2 x complimentary networking events for members and one guest
- Logo on the **ClubConnect** page in match programme\*

- **ClubConnect** roll call on the big screens at each game and on the **ClubConnect** web page within the business section of the website
- Reduced rate on function room hire in the DoubleTree by Hilton Milton Keynes which is part of Stadium MK

\*League games only

**PACKAGE PRICE**  
**£1,795**  
**+VAT**

**For further details please contact Tim Lee in the Commercial Department on 01908 622891 or tim.lee@mkdons.com**