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Dark wraiths cast a pall upon this sunny land

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considerations.”

Apart from the above-mentioned and risible “detailed analysis”, Malthouse also promises “a significant programme of investment in infrastructure, housing and business”.

With regards to infrastructure, yes, we have seen funding to restore the original Varsity Line, the direct rail link between Oxford and Cambridge via Bletchley. And yet already this has run into major problems over the replacement and upgrading of existing level crossings. Will these be properly funded and replaced with bridges or tunnels, for instance at Woburn Sands and Bow Brickhill, or will it be a series of horrible compromises with flashing gates stopping traffic every five minutes as passenger trains and endless freight trains trundle through? We’ll see.

And as bad as the prospects for East West Rail appear, the prospects for the promised East West Expressway appear worse. The government has announced, having considered three options A, B and C, that the route of the Expressway will be through the south of Milton Keynes, roughly following the line of the East West Rail line. “Corridor B was judged to offer greater benefits to the region - outperforming the other options by providing better links to jobs, education, leisure and health services”, says Highways England.

But clearly they too have not thought this through. What many regard as the only available spaces to bring the Expressway through the south of Milton Keynes are already occupied, or very nearly so. Firstly by two meadows south of Bletchley alongside Watling Street which (as mentioned in the approved Eaton Leys planning application) are to be parkland because the ancient Roman town of Magiovinium and its fort lies beneath them.

Possibly the oldest known gold coin found in Britain was dug up here in 1849, a gold stater of the mid-second century BC. Perhaps more importantly, Magiovinium is a scheduled monument of national importance under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act, 1979.

The second blockage is at Levante Gate, at Galley Lane, Little Brickhill. Levante Gate was an outline proposal with all matters reserved for development of land to

HAPPY is he, or she, who moves home to an area with generally good housing, leafy open spaces with millions of trees, speedy and efficient roads laid out to avoid hold-ups, separation of cars from pedestrians, good schools, great jobs at innovative and successful companies including many start-ups and the wherewithal for a high quality of life.

And happy have been the vast majority of that happy band, that lucky many, who have moved here to Milton Keynes. And yet dark wraiths of destruction have cast a pall upon this sunny land, with ever-increasing attempts to destroy those things we love.

I have written previously about those with too many fingers in the pie. One such is the National Infrastructure Commission, a division of HM Treasury whose objectives clearly do not include protecting the things you love. Its plans include doubling the size of the Milton Keynes population to over 500,000, without any consultation, and increasing total travel times in the morning peak by 54 per cent. And that is just for starters.

It seems that the NIC has now merged its plans with those of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government whose Minister of State for Housing, Kit Malthouse, wrote in July to every local authority on the planned Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge Arc giving them just six weeks to tell him where to build one million new homes here by 2050. What’s that, another four or five million people?

The delivery date for this was September 14. Surely ‘new towns’ on this scale require years of careful planning. Instead local authorities were given just six weeks - during the summer holidays when many stakeholders are absent - to pull lists of empty fields out of a hat.

I quote from Malthouse’s extraordinary letter: “The Government believes that the corridor between Cambridge and Oxford has the potential to be a globally significant economy. A combination of innovation, entrepreneurship and highly-skilled workers has established it as one of the most productive and fastest growing areas in the UK. It also includes some of the least affordable housing markets in the country.

“The National Infrastructure Commission has stated that realising its full potential as a world class economic hub would require delivery of up to one million new homes here by 2050. The Government welcomes this ambition.

“Last year, we set out a significant programme of investment in infrastructure, housing and business to support it. Realising the ambition of one million homes here will require additional action from central and local partners. This action includes Government’s planning reforms, our national programmes such as the Housing Infrastructure Fund, the forthcoming national prospectus inviting proposals for locally-led new garden communities, and further work to understand the potential for housing growth across the corridor.

“Government will also soon begin detailed analysis to explore potential locations for new settlements across the corridor, their alignment with transport infrastructure, and any environmental

it, removed any objection. So clearly they are not thinking things through at all, are they?

And although the application was refused - and I congratulate Milton Keynes Council on that - it is almost certain that the developer will win on appeal given that the council’s five-year housing plan is incomplete. Just how, to these jaded eyes, developers like it and a situation they appear to strive to maintain.

In other words, it seems Highways England does not want to use that last available space and, despite the route announcement, cannot now put the Expressway immediately south of Milton Keynes without unbelievably costly and disruptive tunnelling.

Meanwhile the dark wraiths of destruction continue to gather over Milton Keynes... Cheerio.

the south of the A5 and east of the A4146 for up to 500 homes, a one form entry primary school; a local centre and open space. This application came up at Milton Keynes Council’s development control committee in September which refused it, amazingly.

Highways England, which had previously asked for an extension of time to consider



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