

How we need a guardian angel...

LAST month in this column I wrote about the assaults on our public spaces by, among others, Milton Keynes Council and the Homes & Communities Agency. A recent meeting of the council's development control committee under chairman Cllr Douglas McCall provides yet another example.

Cllr McCall twice used his chairman's casting vote to pass approval for what is in effect The Hub 2 - more proof, if any were needed, of how Milton Keynes is being permanently converted into a poor copy of other failed communities.

It is like a re-run of the 1946 film *It's A Wonderful Life* where, in a vision, the hero George Bailey (played by James Stewart) is shown how without his benign influence his perfect town would be turned into a dystopia before his guardian angel brings him to his senses. In this case, however, it seems Cllr McCall is beyond saintly salvation.

The development control committee meeting, attended by a full house of protestors from Urban Eden and single-issue lobby group Xplain, met to decide whether the owners of Xscape could proceed with plans to develop a 41-metre tall casino hotel, shops and multi-storey parking on land they own and land owned by HCA. The plans would involve removing three out of five access routes and hundreds of parking bays, scandalously cutting down numerous trees and narrowing Avebury Boulevard, and creating a dangerous new right hand turn off a dual carriageway (Secklow Gate) - against Milton Keynes Council's stated policy.

The main prize, which voluble X-Leisure boss PY Gerbeau has in his sights - subject to gaining the operating licence - will be the lucrative 6,000-sq metre (three times the size of Middleton Hall) money-pit of gambling which will suck money like a sponge out of struggling estates such as Springfield, Conniburrow and Fishermead.

Many councillors on the development control committee were unaware of the plans' implications and Cllr McCall's attempts to speed up proceedings did not help to make things any clearer.

Independent advice from the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment - the government's

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own urban design panel - to reject it was ignored. A motion to defer a decision did not get sufficient support. A vote to reject approval was denied by Cllr McCall's casting vote and a further vote to approve with a plethora of reserved matters - in other words, no one knew exactly what they were voting for - was also passed by the casting vote.

There were cries of protest from the public gallery. In my opinion, if the plans do not show what is to be approved or not approved surely the correct response is to reject them? Have our councillors no moral compass? It is important now for the deferred matters to go before the committee again and to not allow the unelected planners to wave them through. I also sincerely hope X-Leisure comes to his senses and looks at alternate plans.

Urban Edenite and noted town planner Ken Baker has again come to the rescue of the city he loves and, as he did for Station Square, has drawn up his own set of plans which do much to allay concerns while still allowing development.

This is a compromise I heartily recommend. It's not perfect but he is the closest we are likely to get to a guardian angel any time soon. Cheerio.



● Vision: An artist's impression of the proposed new complex.

Back our World Cup bid



I AM really pleased to be part of the team that wants to bring world-class football to Milton Keynes in 2018 writes Milton Keynes Partnership chief executive John Lewis. The consortium driving the bid pulls together people from Milton Keynes Council, Milton Keynes Partnership, Milton Keynes Dons FC, the city's Economic and Learning Partnership and Destination Milton Keynes and it has been a terrific experience to work together.

Milton Keynes is one of 16 cities competing to be a World Cup Host venue if England is successful in winning the right to stage the 2018 tournament and the bidding process has fired people up to work together and achieve the best for Milton Keynes.

The England 2018 inspection team first visited the city in July and returned during the first week in September for a more detailed look at some aspects of the bid. Feedback was positive and it now seems hopeful that Milton Keynes is in with a real chance of success.

This would be fantastic for our local economy and, with a massive amount of money likely to be spent by fans, it is easy to see why local companies should support the city's bid to be part of this global sporting event.

When Germany hosted the 2006 FIFA World Cup, its tourist industry enjoyed a \$400 million uplift. Hundreds of businesses benefited

● *To be successful, we also need the support from businesses and individuals within the local community. I know that many businesses of Milton Keynes are proud of our city and would like to be involved in this amazing global event.*

To show your support, vote for Milton Keynes on the official England Bid website at

www.england2018bid.co.uk/hostcity/miltonkeynes. You can also support Milton Keynes' bid by text. Text MK to 62018. There may be a charge for this. For news and information about the bid visit www.mkworldcup2018.com

from two million international visitors and a total of 3.3 million spectators, many of them watching on big screens in city centres. The tournament also created 85,000 jobs.

If the World Cup comes to Milton Keynes, there would undoubtedly be massive benefits to local businesses in terms of inward investment, job creation and tourism. They would also benefit from the huge prestige and profile-raising that the event inevitably brings with it.

After World Cup fixtures, people around the world would know a lot more about Milton Keynes. This massive sporting event would place us even more firmly on the global map.

There would be many other benefits. We would see world-class football right on our doorstep, would

enjoy much-improved local facilities and infrastructure and it would be likely that people would reap personal health rewards from the anticipated increase in sports activities. We would also welcome to our city new friends from all over the world.

During their recent visit to Milton Keynes, the inspection team saw spectacular new plans to develop stadiummk to a capacity of 43,000.

They were also impressed by the city's open spaces, particularly the National Bowl and Campbell Park which were praised as suggested locations for 'fan fest' events at which supporters could watch matches on giant screens.

The inspectors praised our bidding team's flexibility, our infrastructure and our enthusiasm. They also approved of our local 'partnership' approach. Working in partnership is always a great aspiration but the World Cup experience has allowed organisations to put this into practice and work closely together on something that will bring great benefits to Milton Keynes.

I know that we have the enthusiasm, energy and commitment to deliver everything needed to be a superb 2018 host city. This opportunity will drive us forward beyond our 50th anniversary and create a fabulous lasting legacy for the people of Milton Keynes and the whole region.

Tenon recovery

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Carrying out regular reviews of the main aspects of your business is fundamental to both success and profit. Ensure you have a short and long term business plan and that it is progress-checked at least every 6 months. Involve your key decision makers when developing and reviewing your business plans. Always have clear goals about what you want the business to achieve and where you want it to go. Have regular meetings with your accountant, finance staff and external business advisers to ensure you are on the right track to success.

Tim Dolder, Director of Business Recovery and Insolvency