

## LATEST NEWS

### THE GREEN BELT AND THE LOCAL PLAN

The **Local Plan** is in an advanced stage of gestation. The Council's Housing and Planning Panel is to meet on 16 March to consider if and how the draft Plan should be modified in the light of comments and representations received by the Council in the recent public consultation. Once agreed by the Panel, the Plan will go before the full Council for approval and submission to the Planning Inspectorate for public examination.

The numerous representations from NMDGBS feature amongst the 2,190 comments in the consultation that were submitted by members of the public, developers, land owners, neighbouring local authorities and statutory consultees. We believe there are strong arguments based on Green Belt principles against each of the sites within North Mymms parish that have been included in the draft, although, we have to accept that similarly strong arguments have been made against the inclusion of other Green Belt sites elsewhere in the Borough. The Council have already determined (in our view mistakenly) that the "exceptional circumstances" required to approve the release of Green Belt do exist.

Essentially it comes down to the Council's housing target.

In our view, and that of many other respondents, the Council's target for new dwellings – around 13000 houses by 2032 - is too high. It reflects "aspiration" rather than local "need". We don't understand why it should be so much higher than the targets adopted by our neighbouring boroughs. We think it involves double counting and projections which take insufficient account of special factors of recent years, namely the redevelopment of the British Aerospace site and the rapid expansion of the University of Hertfordshire.

Into this mix come the potential reductions in immigration following Brexit and the very recent Housing White Paper which promises consultation on further government guidance to local authorities about how to calculate local housing need.

Commenting on that promise, Shaun Spiers, Chief Executive of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), said: *"For those concerned about our countryside, the outcome of this consultation is the acid test. Until local authorities are able to set realistic and deliverable housing targets, with an emphasis on meeting genuine need rather than aspirational demand, the countryside and Green Belt will continue to be threatened by poor quality and speculative development."*

By the time of our AGM we will know how the Council has reacted to the public's representations – approaching 90% of which assert that the draft Plan is "unsound"!

The Council's latest report and all the consultation responses, including our own representations can be seen on the Council's web site <http://consult.welhat.gov.uk/portal>

**Please come to our AGM for the latest update, to express your views and listen to Kevin FitzGerald one of the County's foremost advocates of the Green Belt.**

### We need your help.

We had an excellent response from members at the two public meetings in the autumn but we need to be able to draw on our membership in a more regular way. In the first place we would like two or three new members for our committee. Please think about this and get in touch if you are interested. You don't have to be a planning expert, just a willingness to get involved, especially if you have experience or a flair for communications. We'd love to hear from you.

### New Website

We're excited to announce that our new and refreshed website is live. The updated site includes changes to navigation, with dropdown menus and a quick and easy link to pay your subscriptions and donations. We've also improved the structure of our content, so you'll get more from a quick read. There's a whole host of smaller but impactful changes, all to make your experience of the new website that much better for you.

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