

SEG letter re. Green Belt to “The Week In” published in 24th January 2013 edition

Dear Stephen

Green Belt development and Salford

The 17th January edition of “The Week In” featured an article about concerns being raised over possible housing developments on the Green Belt as B&NES Council struggles to get its Core Strategy for 2026 back on track. Salford was mentioned as one of the potential target areas for such development. Salford Environment Group is well aware of the background to this and its Committee agreed the following policy statement incorporating six core principles on 15th January that is published on our website www.saltfordenvironmentgroup.org.uk :

“We are of the opinion that the Green Belt land around Salford should not be developed because:

- It is important to retain and sustain a sense of community for villages like Salford. The creation of additional housing on Green Belt land around Salford would set an unwelcome precedent leading to an urban sprawl merging Bristol with Bath leading to the destruction of the setting and special character of the area and loss of community cohesion. This would seriously diminish the quality of life for the wider community, as well as the residents of Salford.
- Traffic congestion requires sustainable solutions, not simply creating more roads that increase overall road traffic with higher carbon and other polluting emissions whilst creating traffic problems elsewhere.
- The protection of our 'natural capital', the natural environment and the biodiversity of wildlife that it supports, is essential for the health and well-being of present and future generations. It is important to retain and enhance attractive landscapes near where people live.
- Green Belt and agricultural land should be retained and protected for potential future food production purposes should that become necessary against a background of extreme weather due to climate change creating food shortages in the future.
- The existing services and infrastructure struggle to cope with heavy rainfall; further development would make matters worse.
- Central and Local Government have a duty of care to take a more long term and strategic approach by first identifying the future 'carrying capacity' of the UK and local regions. This must be done against a background of world population growth that is creating an ever growing demand for food whilst the increasing episodes of extreme weather in the UK and worldwide due to climate change will reduce the UK's ability to feed itself or rely on imported food.

For these reasons we cannot accept further development on our Green Belt as a matter of principle.”

It cannot be sustainable development to maintain such a top-down “predict and provide” approach to house building regardless of the consequences for the communities, wildlife habitat and agricultural land lost in the process. Let’s hope B&NES Council can make a convincing case to central Government that local decision making means just that.

Yours sincerely

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