

Green Belts Threats – Summary Of Points

Introduction

This issue affects the whole of the Wirral MBC area.

The overstated *Theoretical* Housing Need figures are driving this and must be corrected.

All of the local organizations within WMBC area need to work to have this theoretical “housing need” reduced to a number that is appropriate to the WMBC area.

We must not fall into the trap of having one area fighting another or one area repulsing their threat to the Green Belt only to see it appear in another area.

The Labour Wirral Council has shown with the continuing Hoylake Golf Resort and the Fire Station at Saughall Massie that it will drive through anything it likes.. (or Phil Davies likes and can “whip” his Councillors into line.)

The Wirral is effectively an island, there are no adjacent lands West, North or East on that can be swapped to offset loss of the Green Belt. Apparently, CW&C have refused any transfer of housing need.

NIMBY-ISM

It is not NIMBY-ism to object to the destruction of Greenbelt Land.

Much of the land is farmland and produces food and we must remember the UK can only produce 50 to 60 per cent of our food needs. (That is before Brexit!)

Green spaces reduce carbon dioxide, housing estates create a carbon dioxide. With the issue of climate change highlighted by this summer’s temperatures we must preserve all are green spaces.

Green spaces play a vital role in the cleaning the atmosphere reducing pollution and it’s a threat to health.

Wirral Council

Four years ago, the Council met the housing need with some 50% excess AND had a draft Local Plan. What happened?

We cannot hope for an Andy Burnham to intervene and save the Green Belt.

Is this all to support the Council’s economic scheme that more houses means more Council tax, being the only proposal this Council seems to have to address the reduction in central government support.

What figures did Wirral Council send to the government that has caused the calculation of a theoretical need that is over three times higher for the assessment made in the regional spatial strategy from only a few years ago.

Why has the Council selected such a huge area of Greenbelt Land that would with average housing density provide for some 60,000 new homes.

Is the Council's need to project highly optimistic figures for economic growth and hence housing need in any way connected with Cllr Phil Davies' role as the leader for economic regeneration within the Liverpool City Region.

We understand these figures would likely have originated with the SHMA report of 2016. Surely up to date figures should be provided that can be used to test whether the optimistic projections are in any way valid.

What progress has the Council made in replacing the housing that it cleared under the "pathfinder" scheme over 10 years ago? That the Council could reduce the number of houses without causing a massive, real, housing problem must indicate the wide gap that can exist between the theoretical need from that period and the actual need.

The Council's very hurried consultation on its Local Plan, including re-drawing the Green Belt must be a concern for us all.

How did the Council review and assess the plots of land as being suitable to take out of the Green Belt?

How can the Council assess the feedback from the consultations where there is no structure to the response form. The Council will only be able to claim that xxx have been returned.

Planning matters

The Raynsford review is considering how to manage / tax the massive paper profit resulting from a plot of land gaining planning permission.

The NPPF, the national planning policy framework stresses that new development must be **sustainable**.

How can the loss of greenbelt/green field land be sustainable given its role in providing food and cleansing the atmosphere?

Greenbelt Land exists to support the five purposes: -

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

(NPPF JULY 2018)

Surely the fifth point, “e”, is the most pertinent to the planned urban regeneration of Birkenhead and Wirral waters.

The Appeal Court has ruled that to be considered, a development **need only be possible, not definitely deliverable**. Hence some if not all of Wirral Waters 13,000 units must be considered.

Need to support Jobs

We believe that the Council have used optimistic figures for the growth in jobs. This should be proven against actual figures.

Some 40% of workers living in WMBC work outside the borough. Any creation of good jobs in the borough would surely attract some of them, without any need for new housing.

Housing Need

Wirral has historically had an ageing and declining population. Any new housing must be to meet their needs AND housing needs of the young. BUT Current house prices mean only well off pensioners can move to the area, increasing **the massive load on Social Services and the NHS** destroying the Council's hoped for increase in net income from more Council Taxes.. if WMBC collects them.

Peel at Wirral Waters

Peel are the only developers active.

We are very surprised that the Council is talking about peel delivering only just over 1,000 houses during the planning period. We understand Peel has written to all Councillors clarifying that with certain support they could produce 6,000 houses within the planning period. This would be half the theoretical housing need.

One has to ask why the Council is keeping to this very low figure.

The Appeal Court (Lord Justice Lindblom) has ruled that to be considered, a development **need only be possible, not definitely deliverable**. Hence some if not all of Wirral Waters 13,000 units must be considered.

Existing housing

Whilst we can appreciate us that the rules by the government are for new builds only, there must surely a be a process to consider: -

- Existing empty houses (6,000)

- The availability of second-hand homes

- The plans to demolish houses by St. James's

Again, to ignore or demolish viable units just to meet a theoretical need for brand new units must be UNSUSTAINABLE.

Does this demonstrate that the methodology has been designed to produce new builds as may be appropriate in the South East, but is not appropriate in areas such as Wirral with a significant stock of existing houses available.

Brown Field

Some 2,500, possible units excluding Wirral Waters?

What about existing planning permissions, not used?