

Dear Sir,

Like everyone else, I want to see a local plan produced quickly - BUT not just ANY Local Plan, regardless of the housing numbers on which it is based. The latest City Consultation, ending on 30 November talked about reviewing the green belt to meet the land requirements for Turley's housing numbers.

Housing is important, but the allocation of land for housing is just one element in a complex balancing act. The quantity of houses is easy to expand but difficult to contract. Once given over to housing, the use of land is fixed - often for many generations. The loss of agricultural and amenity land to house building is a destruction of a finite, and valuable social resource.

The purposes of a Green Belt are defined as:

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

The ongoing review is an integral part of the planning process, designed to determine whether these purposes continue to be relevant. I have been reading Councillor Hanson's letters in the local press. I hope events prove Councillor Hanson right when she says that if green belt land is allocated for development, "this will be a consequence of green belt land no longer serving the purposes for which it was created: not to enable more houses to be built".

I raise the rhetorical question "What is the point of having a Green Belt to preserve undeveloped land if at the first sign of "trouble", the Green Belt designation is disregarded, and the land is treated as available for development, in just the same way as any other land ?"

I believe that it is unacceptable to encroach on the North Lancashire Green Belt protected areas which have been so designated to ensure that our successors live in an environment that enables them to appreciate the countryside rather than seeing open land disappear under unrestricted urban sprawl.

None of the five purposes of a Green Belt in the context of North Lancashire have changed compared to the purposes set out. The first four purposes are still valid and the final one is particularly significant as a means of stimulating the regeneration of derelict or brown field land in preference to "cherry picking" by developers of potentially more profitable sites.

2015 is the 150th anniversary of the publication of Alice in Wonderland - so let me refer to a well known scene in that book. Failure to retain the North Lancashire Green Belt substantially intact runs the risk that developers proceed along the same lines as the characters satirised by Lewis Carroll in the scene of "The Mad Hatter's Tea Party". They proceeded by messing up one set of place settings and then moved on to the next

and did exactly the same thing again. We need to learn from the mistakes of the past and show we are not condemned to repeat them.

I have authoritative advice that the Green Belt is protected by law and doesn't need a new local plan to keep it safe from development. The current Green Belt [including areas GB1 GB2 GB3 and GB4 in the consultation] are NOT potentially subject to predatory planning applications at the present time. Indeed, a new local plan is likely to reduce the amount of land currently protected by the Green Belt. Therefore an action delaying the local plan is actually to the advantage of those who want to preserve the Slyne component of the Green Belt - [GB4 north of Manor Lane] or other parts of the current Green Belt and NOT to their disadvantage, in that thereby any possible development is delayed.

It is green field sites that are potentially subject to predatory planning applications at the present time.

The crucial thing to protect our green field sites is to ensure that land has to be found for the lowest number of houses that a Government Inspector can be prevailed upon to accept - and that if possible, land is released for development in a phased (or rolling) five year allocation, instead of all the land calculated to be released for housing between now and 2031 all being released with immediate effect as soon as the plan is published.

I conclude that a full and proper investigation of the house building numbers proposed by Turley is fully justified in the interests of the present and future residents of the District. To require anything less would be a neglect of council members' responsibilities to their electorates - and would be to sacrifice the heritage of the district to developers with no adequate compensating gain. It should not be forgotten that tourists do not arrive in our District to visit housing estates !

Cllr. J. R. Mace
Kellet Ward