



The London Green Belt Council

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING Held on 11th March 2015 in the Thatcher Room, Portcullis House, Westminster.

Present:

Mr P York, Chairman (Kent Federation of Amenity Societies)
Mr R Liffen, Vice-chairman (Carshalton-on-the-Hill Residents Association)
Mrs J Habib, Treasurer (Chiltern Society)
Mr C Hoptroff, Secretary (Leighton Buzzard Society)

Mr R Bishop, Barnet Society
Mrs J Gammons, Bexley Civic Society
Mr R Knox-Johnston, CPRE Protect Kent
Mr T Harrold, CPRE Surrey, Guildford District
Mr E Glynn, Croham Valley Residents Association
Dr G Lomas, East Coulsdon Residents Association
Mr I Murray, Eastcote Village Conservation Area
Advisory Panel and Eastcote Residents Association
Mr D Cockle, Enfield Society
Mr A Smith, Epping Society
Mr R Newton, Friern Barnet and Whetstone RA

Dr M Worms, Mill Hill Preservation Society
Mr M Doughty, North Cray Residents Association
Mr M Farrugia, North Cray Residents Association
Mr C Beney, Open Spaces Society & Bushey Footpaths
Mr A Siddiqi, Stanmore Society
Dr J Warren, Theydon Bois Action Group
Mrs S Warren, Theydon Bois Action Group
Mr K Page, Wanstead & Woodford Friends of the Earth
Mr J Archer, YHA South England and CPRE London
Ms A Scoville, MSc student, LSE

Apologies Mr R Smith, Vice-president, Hatch End Association, Headstone Residents Association, Ickenham Residents Association, Ottershaw Society, Potters Bar Society, Ramblers Association (Surrey), Society for the Protection of Ascot and Environs.

Matters arising from previous minutes

200(4) Cane Hill Hospital Dr Lomas reported that the Judicial Review relating to Cane Hill will be heard on the 18th March. [Later:- It is understood that the Court decided against the claimant, but the full judgement is not yet available.]

466(c) Green Belt Map The Chairman said the that the map was selling, but only slowly. He asked member organisations to publicise the map to their members and beyond. The Treasurer added that receipts from map sales so far amounted to about £900. The Vice-chairman said that he is holding the main stocks of the map and if any members need a supply, they may email him at rayliffen@compuserve.com

486 All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Green Belt The treasurer welcomed the idea of putting a premium on development in the Green Belt, as suggested by the APPG. Mr Smith warned that the premium should not find its way into local or central government funds or it would incentivise granting permission for Green Belt sites. This risk is recognised in the APPG report.

Item 488 Treasurer's report

The Treasurer reported that the bank balance stands at £1369 of which £400 is from subscriptions. There have been fewer renewals than usual at this point in the year and the Treasurer will issue reminders.

Item 489 Government statements on housing need and Green Belt

The Secretary said that for some time Ministers have been saying that Green Belt boundaries should not be altered in response to a planning application, except in very special circumstances, and the lack of a five year housing supply will not normally, on its own, amount to very special circumstances. More recently they have also said that, while planning authorities should seek in their local plans to meet the objectively assessed housing need of the district, they must consider the National Planning Policy Framework as a whole. If the need cannot be met without unacceptably compromising other policies, including Green Belt, a local plan may be sound even though it does not meet the housing need in full. In such circumstances the planning authority should seek to make good the shortfall by cooperation with neighbouring authorities. [A list of Government statements about housing and the Green Belt is in an annex to these minutes.]

Mr Knox-Johnston said he had been to see the Minister with a group of Gravesham residents because the Council is undertaking a Green Belt review. The Minister stressed that the Government is not forcing them to review the Green Belt, but they do have a duty to cooperate with neighbouring councils. He suggested that parish councils could make local plans to direct development and provide local affordable housing.

Mr Doughty said that several Gravesham parish councils were collaborating to produce a single neighbourhood plan. By pooling the funds available to each of them, they could do a good job. The Vice-chairman pointed out that although the Greater London area is not parished, it is still possible for any group to apply to the borough council to be recognised as a neighbourhood forum to make a neighbourhood plan.

On the duty to cooperate, Mr Page said that Redbridge are seeking to meet some of their need at the Olympic Village in Newham and Barking Riverside in Barking and Dagenham.

The Secretary added that Central Bedfordshire have refused to accept an inspector's conclusion that they should withdraw the planning document governing how much housing and employment land should be provided because they had not sufficiently cooperated with Luton. Central Beds' plan would already give up a substantial amount of Green Belt to provide 5400 houses towards Luton's need but the inspector appears to be saying that the duty to cooperate amounts to a duty to agree to whatever Luton want. Central Beds are challenging this by judicial review.

Item 490 General and local elections 2015

There was a general discussion about tactics for the run up to the May elections. It was felt that, while it may still be possible to influence party manifestos, the main focus now turns to individual candidates.

Mr Doughty referred to a report by the Natural Capital Committee, set up by the Government to advise on how to give due weight to environmental issues ('Natural Capital') The report recommends not building on Green Belt, but developing forest and wetland round towns and cities with improved access.

Mr Harrold said that Guildford Council are going to look again at the Green Belt review after the local elections. Some new candidates are intending to stand in the elections on a 'protect the Green Belt' platform. Their presence ensures that Green Belt is a prominent issue in the hustings. There is a feeling that the party which has

been in power for a long time, and has traditionally supported the Green Belt, can no longer be trusted to do so. He saw part of the problem lying with the Local Enterprise Partnerships, which, unlike the former Regional Assemblies, have no environmental input to their decisions. He added that recent projections by the Office of National Statistics indicate that the need for housing in Surrey is not as great as previously thought.

Dr Warren said one problem was paragraph 159 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which requires Strategic Housing Market Assessments to take account of migration. Epping Forest District had historically received migration from London, particularly from Redbridge and Waltham Forest. He felt that this left brownfield sites in London which could be utilised.

Item 491 BBC Radio 4 'Costing the Earth' 10th March 2015

Dr Warren said he had been interviewed for this programme, although only a small amount of the interview found its way into the programme transmitted. He had stressed the importance of the Green Belt around Theydon Bois to Londoners who could reach it easily on the Central Line. The programme also included Tom Papworth of the Adam Smith Institute, which recently produced a report 'The Green Noose: An analysis of Green Belts and proposals for reform' Mr Knox-Johnston said that the programme did not deal with the effect Green Belts had in encouraging redevelopment within towns and cities. He suggested that LGBC should challenge the Adam Smith Institute to a debate and thought that, perhaps, the Evening Standard might sponsor the debate.

A Podcast of the programme is at: http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/radio4/costearth/costearth_20150310-1530a.mp3

Item 492 Press, publicity and promotion

It was agreed to set up a small sub-committee comprising Mr Knox-Johnston, Dr Lomas and the Secretary to be able to respond quickly to threats and opportunities. Dr Lomas is preparing an article which it is hoped the Evening Standard will run. It will be necessary to warn members to be ready to write in support of the article when published.

The Chairman said that a revamp of the LGBC website was being considered. The Vice-Chairman added that he could make video clips to incorporate in the site. Mr Knox-Johnston said LGBC needed to have a presence on social media but that may have to wait awhile.

Item 493 Other matters raised by members

- (a) Dr Warren reported that Transport for London are planning to use land on the east of the Central Line at Theydon Bois as a car park. They have argued that they do not need planning permission because they have permitted development rights as a statutory undertaker. The Theydon Bois Action Group are going to challenge this by judicial review. Currently, the railway line marks a clear division between the developed village to the west and Green Belt to the east. He added that the existing car park, on the developed west side, has been put forward by Transport for London in response to Epping Forest DC's call for sites.
- (b) Mr Beney said that Open Spaces Society has been dealing with a case in which a landowner wished to dedicate a piece of land as a village green to prevent it being developed in perpetuity. Unlike commons, which are for the benefit of everyone, village greens have to be dedicated for the benefit of a specified community.

THE DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING The next meeting was arranged for Wednesday 1st July 2015 and 11th November 2015 was earmarked provisionally for the following meeting.

ANNEX – List of Government statements about Housing and the Green Belt

SoS (Eric Pickles) Statement to Parliament 6th September 2012

Stated Government's commitment to the Green Belt but encouraged councils, within the policies of the NPPF, to tailor the Green Belt to local circumstances. Encouraged the best use of previously developed land in the Green Belt. In the debate on the statement, the SoS condemned rollback of the Green Belt, but wrongly identified quarries as previously developed sites. The Glossary at the end of the NPPF excludes them. [Hansard 6 September 2012 Col 400]

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm120906/debtext/120906-0001.htm#12090626000005>

Nick Boles' appearance before the Communities Select Committee 15th October 2012

Replies to questions 30 - 32 and 37 - 39 by Nick Boles said that no changes to Green Belt policy had been made since the NPPF. Brownfield sites in Green Belt could be developed and suggested that local authorities might set a lower Community Infrastructure Levy on brownfield sites generally. In response to Q114 he also referred to quarries as brownfield sites.

Ministerial Statement (Brandon Lewis) 1st July 2013

The Secretary of State wishes to make clear that, in considering planning applications, although each case will depend on its facts, he considers that the single issue of unmet demand, whether for traveller sites or for conventional housing, is unlikely to outweigh harm to the green belt and other harm so as to constitute the 'very special circumstances' justifying inappropriate development in the green belt. [Hansard 1 July 2013 Col 24WS]

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm130701/wmstext/130701m0001.htm#13070130000004>

Ministerial Statement (Brandon Lewis) 17th January 2014

Re-emphasised substance of the statement on 1 July 2013 [Hansard 17 January 2014 Cols 34WS-35WS]

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm140117/wmstext/140117m0001.htm>

Revision of Planning Guidance 6th October 2014

The Guidance on 'Housing and economic land availability assessment' was changes to read:

Local authorities should prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to assess their full housing needs. However, assessing need is just the first stage in developing a Local Plan. Once need has been assessed, the local planning authority should prepare a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment to establish realistic assumptions about the availability, suitability and the likely economic viability of land to meet the identified need for housing over the plan period, and in so doing take account of any constraints such as Green Belt, which indicate that development should be restricted and which may restrain the ability of an authority to meet its need.

<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment/stage-5-final-evidence-base/>

Letter from Brandon Lewis to Chief Executive of the Planning Inspectorate 19 December 2014

Referred to the Revision of Planning Guidance. Said that Government would expect councils to take account of new Strategic Housing Market Assessments over time but, being untested, new SHMAs do not immediately invalidate an existing local plan. Councils must consider also environmental issues and Green Belt policy, and cooperate with neighbouring councils before arriving at a housing figure.

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/390029/141219_Simon_Ridley_-_FINAL_SIGNED.pdf