

Whither our Green Belt?

Hertsmere Council's draft **Local Plan** is currently out for public consultation, *writes Robin Bishop.*

Why should the Barnet Society be interested? Because if it's approved, over 10% of Hertsmere's Green Belt will be built over and lost forever. That's an area about twelve times the size of Hadley Common and Hadley Wood combined.

That should most certainly be a Society concern. Establishment of a Green Belt was the trigger for our foundation in 1945. Although legally part of Hertsmere, not Barnet, in effect we share Hertsmere's Green Belt. Most of us drive through it to the M25, Potters Bar, Borehamwood or St Albans, and its varied and mainly green openness is a welcome break between our and their built-up areas.

Also, most of the walks in our Rambles Round Barnet guidebooks are through Hertsmere. The footpaths themselves may be

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safeguarded, but if their green surroundings go, they will offer a sadly diminished experience.

The Green Belt is an indispensable reservoir of natural biodiversity, absorbing greenhouse gas emissions and cleaning the air we breathe, as well as great resource for physical and mental wellbeing.

There's much else in the Plan to cause us concern:

- Little information is provided about two showpieces of the Plan, Bowmans Cross – a major new settlement north of South Mimms – or a massive Media Quarter east of Borehamwood, (See Page 7) both of be sited on Green Belt land.
- Other proposals include 2,770 houses in and around Borehamwood, 900 on the fields south of Potters Bar and 225 at South Mimms village (to list only those close to Barnet), mostly in the Green Belt.
- Very little is said about transport, which will be vital to the Plan's

success, especially in semi-rural areas. There's a tantalising mention of a Mass Rapid Transport system, but no details.

- There's a serious conflict with Enfield's Local Plan over land use around M25 Junction 24. Hertsmere is planning a wildlife area; Enfield envisages a joint industrial development.
- Barnet already suffers from road and parking congestion caused at least partly by the rising number of commuters from Hertfordshire into London. Building new homes and workplaces near our border seems certain to exacerbate that.

For Barnet residents, 900 homes on the fields separating Potters Bar from the M25 will be a particular loss.

Not only do they provide an attractive working agricultural landscape between Potters Bar and Barnet, they link visually with Bentley Heath, Dancers Hill, Wrotham Park, Dyrham Park and

other greenery to create a panorama much greater than the sum of its parts. The Baker Street and Barnet Road motorway bridges will make dismal southern gateways to the new housing, and it's hard to imagine a pleasant life in the shadow of the M25.

Good news for Barnet is that no new building is planned for the countryside south of the M25 and east of the A1. The media work opportunities will be welcome. And new homes near Barnet are likely to be cheaper and more spacious, internally and externally, than in Barnet itself. They're bound to attract young couples and families struggling to afford property in our area. It would be ironic if Hertsmere's new housing ended up benefiting us at the expense of its own residents.

We sympathise with Hertsmere's predicament. It has to meet an ambitious government housing target, yet 79% of its area is

designated as Metropolitan Green Belt, where development is only justifiable under very exceptional circumstances. But the Plan contains little analysis of either its housing need or re-use of its brownfield land.

The Society will be submitting a detailed response to Hertsmere, but we encourage you to submit your own. The deadline for comments is 5pm on Monday 6 December.

The draft Local Plan can be found at: www.hertsmerelocalplan.com/site/homePage. To comment, you can:

- **complete an online survey under the Have Your Say tab on www.hertsmerelocalplan.com**
- **submit comments via the consultation portal also available on the website**
- **email local.plan@hertsmerere.gov.uk**
- **write to Local Plan Consultation, Hertsmere Borough Council, Elstree Way, Borehamwood WD6 9SR.**

BARNET SOCIETY

CAMPAIGNING FOR A BETTER BARNET SINCE 1945 SPRING 2019



Developers have Green Belt in their sights

Hertsmere Council recently considered the possibility of building up to 2,620 new homes plus new places of work between the M25 and Potters Bar, westwards as far as South Mimms and eastwards beyond junction 26. This would have a huge impact on our Green Belt, writes Robin Bishop. To meet the housing crisis, particularly in London and the South-East, the government is requiring every local authority to meet new house-building targets. Hertsmere have responded by considering 26 large sites and many more smaller ones. Barnet Council may do something similar when it launches its own draft Local Plan this February. Although the Green Belt on our side of the M25 is not seriously threatened – we have to be constantly on our guard. Any new building on it sets a precedent that developers are happy to exploit. The identity of Chipping Barnet, which is surrounded on three sides by Green Belt, is potentially at risk. That is why the Barnet Society recently opened – successfully – a new warehouse on Green Belt land at 127 Barnet Road (the former Cottage Garden Nursery). That is also why we have reservations about a new community and sports hub in the middle of Barnet Playing Fields. So we responded to Hertsmere's consultation. Our main concerns were as follows.

The Green Belt principle

The Barnet Society opposes development of the Green Belt on principle. Not only has it prevented ribbon development between Barnet, Potters Bar and other Hertfordshire settlements, thereby

preserving their character and identity, but it has saved lovely countryside north and south of the M25 for the benefit of residents, commuters and wildlife. Its presence has been enhanced by the lack of roadside development along the M25. Having said that, we recognise that some development may be justifiable under exceptional circumstances. Unarguably today's housing needs across London and the South-East are exceptional, and we broadly accept that a substantial amount of new building is necessary. But much of this could and should be accommodated on brownfield sites. Only as a last resort should building on the Green Belt be considered – and then only in the least alternative places, properly planned, and designed to high design and environmental standards.

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Page 6: Work on Youth Arts Children's Centre is progressing according to schedule after successful £1m fundraising

Page 7: Children have reminded their adult counterparts about the importance of keeping the streets and public free of litter

▲ How we warned about the threats back in 2019.

▼ Illustration of the proposed media quarter



BOWMANS CROSS & BOREHAMWOOD MEDIA QUARTER

Bowmans Cross is planned to be a settlement of 6,000 homes for around 15,000 people – nearly as many as live in High Barnet ward, half the size of Borehamwood and seven-tenths that of Potters Bar, located on Green Belt, **writes Robin Bishop.**

It will be a net-zero carbon, self-sustaining community, and the only

sketch in the plan [above] shows lots of trees. But little detail is provided.

The Media Quarter will be on a site of 63 hectares, and it's hoped will provide thousands of jobs. That would be welcome – but is it credible or sustainable? The economic case for such a vast development, or its long-term viability in a distributed digital age, needs

critical scrutiny. The Quarter will have 34 sound stages, many times more than currently exist in Elstree & Borehamwood. But access to Borehamwood will depend largely on two motorways, one of them notorious for traffic jams. And sound stages are being built in large numbers elsewhere in the country, which the government will probably support.