

Cheshire East Ignores 10 000 residents' objections and schemes to destroy Macclesfield's Greenbelt

Flying in the face of public opinion Cheshire East Council plans to encourage property developers to build on the Greenbelt of Macclesfield. Councillor Jones has not listened to the people of Macclesfield who ardently objected to the destruction of their Greenbelt and plans to destroy the very nature of our town.

The council strategy involves immediate destruction of valuable Greenbelt at Fence Avenue and in the fields from Pennington Lane to the Rising Sun pub. This land will be the first to fall to the property developer as the profit margins are greatest on these pristine sites rather than the brownfield sites that lie like empty eyesores across Macclesfield. The plan not only ignores current Brownfield sites such as the Territorial Army site on Chester Road but fails to take into account the future potential for Brownfield sites to appear in Macclesfield in the plan period. You would think that the reality check of Astra Zeneca moving its research out of Alderley Park would have awakened them to this idea which is used by neighbouring councils such as Stockport to fulfil **all** their housing needs. It is not a Brownfield First Policy as promised by Councillor Jones but rather a vision of Greenbelt grab.

In what can only be regarded as a cunning marketing plan they call land which is promised for annihilation by developers as Safeguarded land. This land which covers 400 acres to the South West of Macclesfield between Chelford Road and Congleton Road **is currently safe from destruction** as it is designated as Greenbelt. The gift of our countryside (some of this land is owned by us as council farms) will allow the building of 5454 houses at the council's density of 30 houses per hectare. How can they justify this? It is even more shocking when you consider that this land is only perceived to be needed by the council after the current plan period ends. Designating it as Safeguarded will stop it being protected, make it easy for developers to try and build on it before 2030 and create an area of planning blight for all those people who live in or near it.

The loss of this Greenbelt will drastically reduce the biodiversity of our countryside with the infilling of ponds and the destruction of ancient hedgerows. For birds alone their plans will destroy the habitats of thirteen Red list species (globally threatened and declined by more than 50%), twenty three Amber list species, seven schedule 1 species, fifteen species listed in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and seven identified in RSPB Conservation Targeting Projects. Additionally the numerous bats, small mammals, badgers, foxes, and amphibians including Great Crested Newts, all protected under British and European legislation due to their rarity, will lost for ever by enacting this plan.

The plan flies in the face of the National Planning Policy Framework which requires the removal of Greenbelt only in '**exceptional circumstances**'. What are these exceptional circumstances that the council has that can justify these actions? They never seem to tell us.

This plan will cause a:

- A fall in house prices (this is stated as one of the aims of this strategy)
- An increase in road traffic and congestion
- A loss of over 400 acres of high quality farmland
- Destruction of prime Cheshire Countryside, lost to us and future generations

This vision is not a vision of the people as purported by Councillor Jones in last week's Macclesfield Express. It makes a mockery of the idea that we were consulted. How can elected officials ignore the will of the people who objected on mass to the building on Greenbelt? They must believe that what they do in our name will make no difference to their re-election.