

21st May 2017

Dear Sir,

Many thanks for your email. I entirely share your frustration with the seeming refusal of Cheshire East Council to listen to the many voices of local residents speaking out in favour of protecting the green belt, instead listening to the lobbying of developers.

Cheshire East Council appear to treat the Local Plan as a pointless tick box exercise, which simply has to be seen out, they hoping that local residents will lose heart and give up after yet another round of consultations (twelve to date). They are conducting a war of attrition.

As an example, the online portal “designed” for comments on the Local Plan by Cheshire East Council is both unwieldy and extremely non-user-friendly, almost to the point of intention.

When I have spoken to people in Macclesfield, the protection of the green belt comes up again and again. This is an issue where people really feel that they are not being listened to.

Two examples spring to mind. I spoke to a resident of Macclesfield recently regarding the King’s School relocation, which she and many others had vigorously opposed as this entails use of two pieces of green belt land – one to the east of Fence Avenue and the other for the new school on Prestbury Road.

The proposed development near Fence Avenue is on the green belt agricultural land directly behind her and her family’s house. Some time before this, she had purchased a very small parcel of the land behind her house from The King’s School, using this as a vegetable plot / small orchard in line with its agricultural status. She erected a shed for the maintenance of the plot. Cheshire East Council ordered this to be demolished, which it was. Then, some time later, Cheshire East Council afforded permission for the building of an entire housing estate on the remainder of the green belt agricultural land immediately behind it! Such decision-making is utterly irrational and perverse.

I also think of one of the current battlegrounds, the green belt between Macclesfield and Henbury, and, in particular, Cock Wood, an ancient wood and Local Wildlife Site, which is proposed to be destroyed. So not only will the size of the green belt be drastically reduced, meaning that there is no longer a firm and defensible long-term boundary between Macclesfield and Henbury, but also an ancient wood and the habitat it supports seemingly must be sacrificed for the sake of developers’ profits. Cheshire East Council has submitted to the Inspector maps just of the wood, and not the whole Local Wildlife Site. Development causing damage to the Local Wildlife Site is contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework and Cheshire East Council’s own plan.

There is a need for social and genuinely affordable housing, but I firmly believe that brownfield sites can be found. For example, the old King’s sites were screened out previously by Cheshire East Council’s methodology. However, they now have planning applications in (apart from one), and so should be included and therefore deducted from the amount of housing planned for the green belt. The reality is that developers are building unaffordable, luxury housing on green belt land, rather than meeting their social and moral obligations to both produce affordable housing and also re-use disused sites (of which there are many in Macclesfield) rather than churning up the green belt, which has already been heavily exploited in recent years with the proliferation of new roads.

It is a question of fairness between the different areas of Cheshire East. It does seem that Cheshire East Council are intent on allocating most of the 'safeguarded' land in Macclesfield. Macclesfield even has Handforth's safeguarding allocation.

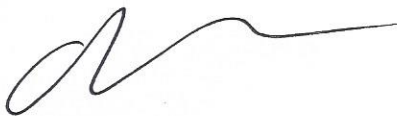
I am passionate about the protection of the green belt and the habitats it sustains.

If I am elected MP for Macclesfield, I pledge to pay up to one half of my first year's salary of £74,000.00 to support any judicial review proceedings following on from the decision of the planning inspectorate. I anticipate that this would be done by means of an escrow account.

The Green Party in Macclesfield also will continue to campaign for the protection of the green belt, seeking that Green councillors are elected to safeguard our beautiful, green town.

It is a question of doing what is right.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Andrew Booth', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

James Andrew Booth

(Green Party Candidate for Macclesfield)