



The Barnet Society

Campaigning for a better Barnet

All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Green Belt
Room 20
Norman Shaw North
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

26 January 2014

Dear sirs/madams,

**All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Green Belt:
How Green Belt land is protected and preserved for the future**

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Green Belt's review of Green Belt protection and preservation for the future.

I am responding on behalf of the Barnet Society, a non-political organisation that campaigns for the preservation and improvement of the environment of Chipping Barnet and surrounding areas. It was founded in 1945 specifically to give a voice to local people who believed that the Green Belt needed defending, and has a membership of over 400.

Below are our replies to those of the All-Party Parliamentary Group's questions that we are in a position to answer. For a fuller view of Green Belt issues, please refer to the London Green Belt Council, of which the Barnet Society is a subscribing supporter.

- ***Which local councils are taking their obligations on Green Belt preservation seriously and which local councils are placing Green Belt land under threat?***

The Barnet Society can only comment on our own council, the London Borough of Barnet. Its current policy, reiterated only last week by senior planners at a meeting of the Chipping Barnet Town Team, is to protect the Green Belt. In practice, however, the last few years have seen permission granted for a range of developments, such as conversion of historic meadow to school all-weather playing field, and of a stables to a horseball centre. Although these spaces have remained open, their natural green character has been eroded or lost altogether.

- ***Should brownfield land in Green Belt areas have the same protection as greenfield land in Green Belt areas?***

Our view is that brownfield land should continue to have the same protection.

Having said that, we know numerous local examples of buildings or land use on brownfield land that impair their adjoining green spaces. If we could be convinced that national and local

Founded in 1945, The Barnet Society campaigns for improvements to the environment of Chipping Barnet and surrounding areas and for protection of the Green Belt

President: Aubrey Rose CBE **Vice Presidents:** Jenny Remfry Robin Marson David Lee
Chair: Nick Jones **Vice Chair:** Gail Laser **Hon Treasurer:** Penny Dye

Post: 28 The Drive, Barnet, Herts EN5 4JQ **E:** info@barnetsociety.org.uk **W:** www.barnetsociety.org.uk

government were genuinely committed to enforcing the highest standards of design and sustainability and not allowing any significant new encroachment onto Green Belt, we might be willing to reconsider this stance.

- ***How can we increase local community engagement in protecting the Green Belt.***

We, too, would like to know the answer to this! Although we enjoy a healthy and active membership, it has been fairly stable over recent years, despite our varied programme of activities, publicity efforts and vigorous lobbying over particular planning cases.

We recently revamped our website, which has attracted compliments, generates numerous on-line comments on topical planning and environmental issues, and is evidently noticed by our local councillors and MP. It is hoped that, as this becomes more widely known, it may attract more members and campaigners.

It would be helpful if central and local governments themselves placed more value on environmental issues – and if an up-to-date map of the Green Belt was easily available, not just to groups like ours but to the general public.

- ***How do we balance the need to sustain the Green Belt with the need for sustainable communities?***

In principle, we support the need for more sustainable communities. However we also believe the Green Belt to be critical to health and well-being, a defining part of the character of both Chipping Barnet and London, and likely to be even more appreciated as London grows.

- ***What should the Green Belt look like for the 21st century?***

Ideally, the 21st century Green Belt should remain very much the same as when it was first created. In practice, we accept that changes have inevitably occurred, most notably in our area the disappearance of working farms and their replacement by garden centres, leisure facilities and the like. We also acknowledge that this process is likely to continue.

Our wish would therefore be for the continuing and rigorous protection of indigenous and historic natural environments, but – if development cannot be avoided – the enforcement of the highest design and sustainability standards.

Yours faithfully,

ROBIN BISHOP

Chair, Planning & Environment Committee