

FRIENDS OF BURY FOLK – PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday 23rd January 2019, 7:30pm
The Elizabethan Suite, Town Hall, Bury, BL9 0SW

Panel

Cllr. Eamonn O'Brien	EOB	Cabinet Member for Finance and Housing
Crispian Logue	CL	Strategic Planning, Bury Council
Cllr. Rishi Shori	RS	Leader of the Council
Geoff Little	GL	Chief Executive, Bury Council
Chris Russell	CR	Friends of Bury Folk Chair
Cllr. James Daly	JD	Conservative Group Leader
Cllr. Tim Pickstone	TP	Lib Dem Group Leader
Ivan Lewis	IL	MP for Bury South

Public Attendees

Around 500 members of the public were in attendance.

Item	Description
1.0	WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR
1.1	The meeting began with CR welcoming everyone to the Public Meeting and thanking everyone for coming on an unpleasant night, weather-wise. CR explained what literature had been left on their seats, being a key information sheet, a membership form and a 'can you help?' form from Friends of Bury Folk (FOBF).
1.2	CR outlined FOBF's objectives for the meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To openly and honestly discuss the implications of the new GMSF proposal and how it will affect the Borough of Bury. • To raise awareness of the implications if the GMSF proposal is implemented. • To answer to the best of our ability any questions surrounding the proposal. • To facilitate access to key decision makers in order to provide answers to questions raised by residents who are likely to be directly and indirectly affected by the proposals.
1.3	CR explained, our group was officially formed to fight the GMSF allocations around the Bury area that would decimate our greenbelt. The second draft of the supposedly revamped GMSF has been issued but the destruction of our greenbelt remains unchanged. We are still set to lose at least 12% of our green belt when the average net loss across greater Manchester is 3.2%. On top of this, Bury has reclassified some green and not so green spaces as greenbelt, such as a land fill site, a cemetery, a primary school and bodies of water, so our actual loss of accessible greenbelt will be much higher. Well used areas of greenbelt will be lost forever at Elton, Walshaw and Simister with thousands of homes built without the guarantee of local infrastructure and facilities to support them. In the meantime thousands of homes stand empty and brown field sites undeveloped. I must emphasize this group still recognize the need for some level of new homes built with greater consideration for our local area. We must ask why we, the tax payers of

Item	Description
	Bury, are being forced to sacrifice our environment, our health and our futures for the sake of developer's & others profits.
1.4	CR stated we are fighting decisions that will wreck our town, and emotions are running high. However, whilst we all have strong feelings and concerns about this situation, I must ask you all too please respect the guest speakers and allow them to respond to our questions. I will have to ask anybody who persists in aggressive behavior to leave the meeting.
2.0	OPENING STATEMENTS
2.1	<p>Tim Pickstone opened by stating it is great to see so many people here, who are passionate about such an issue. Tim has represented Holyrood Ward for the last 19 years, which includes Simister and Bowlee, which is proposed for 2,800 extra houses and TP argued that this would destroy these villages.</p> <p>TP added that the Lib Dems are opposed to <i>any</i> loss of greenbelt land for housing in this area and the statistics that indicate that GM needs an extra 202,000 houses in the next 20 years is ridiculous, stating that the government's figures point more to 130,000 houses and that we need affordable housing - for first time buyers, older people and so on.</p> <p>The greenbelt was invented as a planning tool in the 50s to stop urban sprawl. Bury is a great place to live because we have green – if we didn't want green we'd move to a city. Greenbelt gives us a place for recreation and to breathe.</p> <p>Building should be on brownfield first and Andy Burnham's figures would fit this. We should reinvent town centres as places to live and work. TP would argue that we need more houses and jobs, but we should not build on greenbelt but on brownfield, regenerating our town centres.</p>
2.2	<p>Geoff Little: Two weeks ago we wrote to all homes in Bury to ask them to submit their views on the draft GMSF and advised them to read the online documents to see the wider objectives.</p> <p>GL stated that the plan is to bring more economic prosperity to the northern areas of GM, including Bury. The average wages for those in working in Bury are low; the money is brought in from those working in the city.</p> <p>GL added that the council would work with colleges to get training in order to get jobs into the town. Part of the plan would include affordable housing for young people and also the need to accommodate older people. The council is prioritising brownfield sites for development – as we have seen with The Rock and have seen in Prestwich. The plan is to be carbon neutral by 2028.</p> <p>Regarding the housing numbers in the draft framework, the council has followed government advice and, if that changes, we can change our plans.</p> <p>GL ended by explaining the process that the GMSF proposals will go through and that all residents' views from this consultation will be considered.</p>

Item	Description
2.3	<p>Rishi Shori: I know people aren't going to be happy where we are with this draft but there have been reductions in the amount of greenbelt loss. As a local authority we don't decide the housing numbers based in our borough – this is the government's decision. We previously submitted proposals on brownfield sites, but the government rejected this.</p> <p>RS is meeting with the government housing minister on 12th February to talk about the figures imposed to see if we can get some new figures. The government's 2016 figures suggest all our quota could be built on brownfield, but the 2014 figure is what the government has said to work off, which means the greenbelt has to be put forward to accommodate these numbers.</p> <p>RS added that Bury's housing allocation has been reduced from 11,000 to 9,500 since the first draft. 12% of that will be on greenbelt.</p> <p>This second draft proposal starts with an 8-week consultation, then another consultation in the autumn.</p> <p>RS ended by stating that with Prestwich and Radcliffe we are looking at regenerating the town centres and added that in the borough, 7% of proposed greenbelt land will be homes, with the remainder being businesses.</p>
2.4	<p>Ivan Lewis: IL began by thanking those who are at the forefront of this campaign; the turnout on the night says it all. People have every right to be angry – with the impact of loss of greenbelt on property prices and air quality. We also accept that whether it's for us, our kids, or our grandparents, none of us here dispute that we need more housing. This needs to be affordable housing and not luxury apartments out of the price range of regular working folk.</p> <p>There is no question that the figures in the GMSF have been determined by the government – these figures are not based on the most up-to-date population growth figures (2016), which is entirely illogical. If the figures were the most up-to-date, we probably wouldn't need to build on greenbelt at all. We should be using the most up-to-date figures; they currently are out-of-date.</p> <p>IL asked whether RS and JD would be prepared to challenge the government's figures.</p> <p>There is a disproportionate amount of proposed greenbelt distribution loss across the borough. There is a greater scope for town centres that is currently not in the framework. Why is there a whole swathe of Bury where there are no proposals for development? Noticeably that no green belt at all is lost in Ramsbottom.</p> <p>If we don't build the houses, the government will make us build them, but there is a disproportionate impact on Simister, Elton Reservoir and parts of Whitefield and Unsworth.</p> <p>We stand together to protect Bury – if I was leading this council, this proposition would be vetoed – it would not happen.</p>
2.5	<p>James Daly: James began by quoting the Technical Consultation on Updates to National Planning Guidance and added that we do not need to impose the GMSF plans.</p> <p>Stockport have redistributed 30% of their housing need. 30% of Bury's housing need would be 4,500 homes. James argued that we should expect our council to represent us as well as Stockport has done their residents.</p> <p>James pointed out that this is not is a regeneration strategy – building in town centres would be regeneration, not building on greenbelt.</p>

Item	Description
	This government's target is not mandatory, the council can make that choice – the Conservatives would take this back to Manchester Council and question the numbers. Don't accept politicians who say we can't do anything; this is the government's fault and we can do this. JL added that we need to stand up and say this is unacceptable and rewrite the plan based on 2016's figures, not the outdated 2014 figures.
2.6	CR thanked all the speakers.
3.0	Questions from FOBF Members
3.1	A good number of questions had been received. John Edgington (JE) asked the questions, mainly directed at RS.
3.2	<p>Question 1: <i>The demographics of Bury are and will continue to change and the GMSF, using data provided by the ONS, have stated the following</i></p> <p>7.22 Quote</p> <p>A diverse range of housing will be required to meet population and household growth in Greater Manchester.</p> <p>Around three-quarters of the population increase is projected to be aged 65 and over, with less than one-tenth aged under 18(67).</p> <p>Indeed, those aged 65 and over are projected to account for all population growth in five of the individual districts in Greater Manchester, Bolton, Bury, Rochdale, Tameside and Wigan, based on the ONS 2016-based sub national population projections, with each seeing a decline across other age groups.</p> <p>7.25 Quote</p> <p>The ageing population will necessitate a renewed emphasis on ensuring that a diverse range of housing is available to meet the needs of older people and households.</p> <p>This will require new dwellings to be more adaptable, and designed with potential care needs in mind, so that older people can remain in their homes if they wish as their circumstances change.</p> <p>There also need to be much better options for those who would like to move, perhaps to a dwelling of a more appropriate size in a location that enables them to easily access local services and facilities, and this could help to release some existing houses for families with dependent children.</p> <p><i>If this is the case then as far as Bury is concerned shouldn't the emphasis be on creating accommodation of appropriate sizes that are closer to amenities including healthcare and built on town centre brown belt land instead of building 4 and 5 bedroom homes on greenbelt land and why if the population growth is going to be in the 65+ range is there such a need for 4 additional schools between the Walshaw and Elton reservoir sites.</i></p> <p><i>Please would you expand on your understanding of the percentage growth quoted and how you expect this to affect the borough and how does it fit within the proposed developments?</i></p>

Item	Description
	<p>GL: That paragraph is misleading, and the paragraph should say that Bury residents are living longer, which is one of the reasons for population growth. GL stated that he will take this point back and change that paragraph.</p>
3.3	<p>Question 2: <i>Given that the Local Authority have no powers to force developers to build on brown field land before any green spaces are developed, please can you tell us who is responsible for cleaning up the brown field sites to make them ready for development and what is the council is actively doing to ensure that this happens?</i></p> <p>RS: 90% of homes built over the last 6/7 years have been built on brownfield sites. There is a pot of money available at GM level to clear sites (such as contaminated land). All brownfield sites have been calculated into Bury's plans and we are actively working with housing associations and developers to identify and to build on brownfield sites.</p>
3.4	<p>Question 3: <i>While the other 9 boroughs in the Greater Manchester Framework have an average of 3.2% green belt loss it is proposed that Bury will lose 12%. The Council are stating that they have reduced the amount of green belt loss from 20% to 12% but it appears that while other councils were looking at ways of reducing green belt usage Bury Council were looking for ways to make their figure look more attractive.</i></p> <p><i>Can you explain why Bury Council have offset green belt losses by creating new green belt which in the main is unattractive to developers because of its location and or environmental issues such as contamination or prohibited land which is close to watercourses?</i></p> <p>RS: Other places, such as Bolton, have more brownfield land than Bury and therefore they can meet their housing demand using brownfield sites.</p> <p>CL: The sites we are putting forward for greenbelt have already in fact been targeted by developers. *** The greenbelt that has been proposed in the GMSF is largely well-integrated into existing urban areas – it has an existing transport infrastructure etc. The sites not chosen would require a new infrastructure to be built.</p> <p>*** Additional explanation at this point unfortunately was unclear and barely audible.</p>
3.5	<p>Question 4: <i>Andy Burnham complimented various boroughs for their “out of the box and imaginative” thinking in terms of homes in town centre developments and town centre regeneration.</i></p> <p><i>Why has Bury council not put any thought into additional town centre regeneration including the use of brown field sites given that the old police station and the old fire station sites are vacant and the fact that there are car parks throughout the borough which could be developed for homes whilst still retaining their car parking capabilities and further relieving pressure on our greenbelt?</i></p> <p>RS added that Andy Burnham did say that Bury is the exemplar of town centres where at the Rock we have 1,000 apartments over retail units. There are similar plans proposed for Prestwich and Radcliffe and the old police and fire stations are factored into brownfield figures. Bury will learn from what Stockport is doing in their town centre regeneration.</p>
3.6	<p>Question 5: <i>Will you please tell us what modelling and investigations have been carried out and by whom to ensure that all flood risks that are likely to be precipitated by all or</i></p>

Item	Description
	<p><i>any of the new developments have been taken into consideration and the increased risks mitigated?</i></p> <hr/> <p>CL: Flood risks have happened on each site and have been shared with the Environmental Agency, who will have the final say.</p> <p>EOB: Any development will have to pass planning, which will have to pass a specific flood risk test to bring that development forward – this will all happen after this consultation process and at its development stage.</p>
3.7	<p>Question 6: <i>Given that all of the main roads, and many of the minor roads, around the borough are now congested to the point of creating hugely extended journey times during busy periods of the day what is it within your new road plan that you believe will relieve existing congestion in areas such as Lowercroft Road/ Ainsworth Road, Bury Bolton Road and Bury Bridge.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">And</p> <p><i>Will this new infrastructure reduce the increasing levels of toxic exhaust fumes that blight the boroughs road system when there is expected to be an increase of at least 9000 and probably many more cars using these roads if all of the developments are completed. We could also add to this the additional vehicles which will cross the borough in order to get to the Trafford Park of North Manchester once it is completed?</i></p> <p>JE: RS has stood here on more than one occasion to state how important air quality in Bury is. Bury is currently congested and one of those issues is that all roads lead to the centre. There is a need to alleviate the congestion around the centre.</p> <p>CL: We have been working with TFGM over the years to look at congestion. Our aspiration is to take people out of their cars and one of the ways to do this is to introduce a new transport infrastructure – Metrolink stops, new Interchange in Bury, cycle lanes etc.</p>
4.0	<p>Questions from the Floor</p>
4.1	<p>Question 7: <i>Scobell Street in Tottington has flooded numerous times over the past few years. There are proposals to put another 500 homes on the site at Scobell Street. What are you going to do to alleviate flooding?</i></p> <p>CL: As we have said, we are working with the Environmental Agency. Utility providers have also indicated that this new development could see new investment in terms of flooding infrastructure.</p>
4.2	<p>Question 8: <i>Regarding Scobell Street, United Utilities last year told a resident that the sewer system isn't fit for purpose. They have been told that United Utilities has no money. How are they going to put this new infrastructure into place?</i></p> <p>CL responded that this development will see new investment, adding that this funding will come from service providers and developers.</p> <p>CR questioned the response by stating does that mean we would only get sewers that are fit for purpose if we build more houses.</p>
4.3	<p>Question 9: <i>The leader of the council has a right to veto these proposals. Will you support the strategy to derail the strategy and veto to save our greenbelt?</i></p>

Item	Description
	<p>RS: I have been leader for 10 years and was part of the strategy that didn't release greenbelt. If a developer puts in a proposition to build on greenbelt and it gets rejected by us, the government can overrule this.</p> <p>CR: I was in a meeting where you veto'd your own local plan.</p> <p>RS: Having our own local plan would not put us in a better position.</p> <p>Someone from the audience said "Why don't we challenge the figures?".</p> <p>IL: Are RS and JD prepared to challenge the government's figures? Why are we not using the 2016 figures so that we don't have to use greenbelt land to accommodate the figures?</p> <p>JD: Let's challenge the figures and say we're not accepting this; this is not acceptable for the people in Bury. Let's pull together a plan to tell the government we're putting together a plan based on 2016 figures so that we don't have to build on greenbelt.</p> <p>RS: I'm meeting with the Housing Minister on 12th February to discuss these figures. Quote: "We would prefer to use the 2016 figures because that would mean no loss of greenbelt in GM". "Absolutely we will challenge these figures".</p> <p>CR recalled a previous meeting where it was said that the figures would be challenged. "But I believe that you're telling us now that you're going to pull together collectively, this is your chance."</p> <p>EOB: "It is right we challenge the figures, as has been said". EOB added that developers have challenged greenbelt land in East Cheshire, Rushcliffe (Notts), amongst other areas, where the government have overturned the local authority decision of not to build on greenbelt in favour of developers.</p>
4.4	<p>Question 10: <i>The household projection figures were questioned.</i></p> <p>CL: The latest household projection is 145,000. For the purposes of the GMSF the 2014 figures should be used, which is where 201,000 came from. The next stage of the plan will take into account the government's figures at that time.</p>
4.5	<p>Question 11: <i>What measures are in place to ensure that brownfield is built on before greenbelt? Tell Andy Burnham that we are not building on greenbelt until these figures are sorted.</i></p> <p>GL explained the decision process for the GMSF.</p>
4.6	<p>Question 12: <i>Housing White Paper: extending greenbelt land – can the council demonstrate that all reasonable options have been looked into?</i></p> <p>RS: Brownfield locations are online now. Density reduced greenbelt, as looked as higher density. We also spoke to other authorities who could take their brownfield into consideration and managed to move some of our allocation there. We will take on board any other brown field sites we have missed.</p>
4.7	<p>Question 13: <i>Pole Lane, Unsworth – lady runs a horse rescue sanctuary and for the last 15 years has been dealing with the council with regards to planning permission. The sanctuary has been unable to put even a brick near the on-site pond for 15 years due to</i></p>

Item	Description
	<p><i>the existence of the Great Crested Newt and all of a sudden the council wants to put 600 houses on this site. The sanctuary doesn't have money to rehome the rescued horses and so the lady asked if the council would pay to put them to sleep and dispose of the carcasses.</i></p> <p>CL responded that the GM Ecological Unit will carry out investigations if the proposals go through.</p>
4.8	<p>Question 14: <i>Lady has lived on Warth Fold Road since June. With the proposed new Metrolink stop and nearby school, getting off drives is going to be a nightmare for Warth Fold residents. Are any of you yourselves affected by the greenbelt proposals?</i></p> <p>RS: Everything would still need to go through planning etc. and could be rejected even if these proposals go forward.</p> <p>CL: This is still in early stages of planning – still looking into all the planning.</p>
4.9	<p>Question 15: <i>A copy of the Brownfield Land Register had been pulled off the website. The first section lists potential land available for development and the second list is sites the council has agreed are suitable for brownfield building. The second section is empty – why is this?</i></p> <p>CL: This (Brownfield Land Register) is a new concept and it lists planning permission and not sites proposed for brownfield development.</p>
4.10	<p>Question 16: <i>Of the proposed greenbelt sites, what sites are owned by the council and how much are you proposing to make from the sale?</i></p> <p>CL: Seedfield – it's a small fraction of the land that's proposed to be released. CL confirmed that he will put the list on the council's website.</p>
4.11	<p>Question 17: <i>The sewage works at Blackford Bridge is already at overcapacity and the smell is dreadful for local residents. What do you propose to do with regards this?</i></p> <p>CL: I will get a council Environmental Officer to take a look.</p>
4.12	<p>Question 18: <i>How many of these houses will be affordable for people that are on £10 an hour?</i></p> <p>RS: 25% will be affordable housing – at the moment that would be a minimum of 1,500 houses. The Paper Mill will be shared ownership.</p> <p>CR asked RS to confirm what is meant by “affordable housing” and RS responded with £170,000 and that this is why these shared schemes come in. With social housing on council land mostly.</p>
4.13	<p>Question 19: <i>Has the council already been approached by developers with regards the sites that could be released? Are you already having discussions with landowners and developers?</i></p> <p>CL wouldn't answer the question directly but it appeared that landowners and developers are being talked to.</p>

Item	Description
5.0	Final Comments
5.1	CR thanked the guest speakers for coming and responding to questions. He thanked the meeting attendees for coming and added that hopefully we have a bit of unity on this panel about the figures and we can take that away and work on that.
5.2	CR explained that attendees could join the FOBF at the back of room and continued, "If we all stand together, maybe we can make a difference. And, more importantly, maybe our governing parties can come together and make a stand for this area."
5.3	The meeting concluded with CR stating that objections to the proposed GMSF need to be submitted by 18 th March and to please get your objections in. The details are on the handouts left on seats and the details will also be posted to the FOBF group on Facebook. Finally, he would ask each of you to actively help us to preserve our greenbelt for the future: Once it's gone it's lost. Good night from the Friends of Bury Folk.

