

Public Questions – Overview and Scrutiny 04/10/23

<i>Question</i>	<i>Answer</i>
<p>As an asthma sufferer I am concerned about air quality and global warming, what is the council proposing to ensure that we protect the air quality in the development areas? Bury Road, Radcliffe already has high congestion from cars. How is the council proposing to ensure that such congestion is not added to by the proposed development.</p> <p>Annette Corrigan Radcliffe</p>	<p>Air quality is a complex issue with many challenges. However, it is clear that a wide range of actions will be required to improve air quality to appropriate levels, and support objectives relating to health and quality places.</p> <p>Many of these actions are beyond the scope of PfE, but by developing the Plan, we are able to set out specific policy requirements for our strategic sites. These include requirements for the developments to deliver significant improvements to public transport and active travel, such as walking and cycling, as part of their developments. We would not be in a position to require these improvements on smaller sites.</p> <p>PfE also seeks to locate new developments in the most sustainable locations and to maximise residential densities around transport hubs. As an example, the PfE proposed to create a new transport hub around a new tram stop as part of the Elton proposals.</p> <p>The aims and objectives of PfE are aligned to our emerging Transport Strategy and wider Greater Manchester-wide ambitions to improve the public transport network and promote cleaner ways to travel (such as the Bee Network and cleaning up taxi fleets) in order to help to encourage more people to use more sustainable and cleaner modes of transport.</p>
<p>The controlling party of this council championed a campaign to remove the Walshaw site from the Places for Everyone plan. They submitted a main</p>	<p>Whilst the Inspectors conclusion regarding the Walshaw site and the Green Belt additions are disappointing, it is considered that, on balance,</p>

<p>modification to the plan after formal submission to government which was dismissed by the inspectors at the beginning of the examination in public. Also, the council requested 14 new greenbelt additions in Bury to reduce the net loss but only 3 of these now remain after the examination. So, the question is, why would this council now seek to approve a list of modifications that doesn't include some of the key elements you originally asked for?</p> <p>Stephen Cluer Tottington</p>	<p>this is outweighed by the wider advantages that come with continued participation in the Plan.</p> <p>Not participating in the PfE process is likely to have a number of negative consequences, particularly in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Having no up-to-date plan in the short-term - leaving the Borough open to speculative and unplanned development with inadequate supporting infrastructure. ▪ The PfE sites (including Walshaw) being targeted as these have the evidence in place for planning applications and the Inspectors have found the sites sound. ▪ Additional Green Belt sites would be under threat if they were not afforded the up to date protection that PfE would give them. ▪ The potential loss of job and investment and investment opportunities, as the Northern Gateway site could be compromised. ▪ And, our Local Plan would need to default to the Governments Local Housing Needs without the ability to redistribute in a joint plan. Therefore, we could potentially require more Green Belt land than identified in the PfE.
<p>I oppose building on Green Belt and would like to know why, when the council advocate a 'brownfield first' policy, they want to allow the destruction of Green Belt areas. PfE is not 'brownfield first' and is inappropriate, without any exceptional circumstances:</p>	<p>The Council remains committed to prioritising the development of brownfield land but does not have the large swathes of brownfield land that exists in other districts across Greater Manchester.</p> <p>As a Borough, we simply do not have enough land within the urban area or on brownfield sites to meet either our full Local Housing Need target or even the reduced PfE target over the plan period.</p>

<p>Making effective use of land</p> <p>Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land.</p> <p>Proposals affecting the Green Belt</p> <p>Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.</p> <p>Richard Lucas Tottington</p>	<p>In identifying Bury's housing land supply, we have sought to maximise brownfield land sites but, like other districts, it has also been necessary to identify some land within the Green Belt to meet our targets. It should be noted that without the PfE allowing us to offset some of our Local Housing Need target, the impact on Green Belt would have been greater.</p> <p>In terms of exceptional circumstances, the Inspectors have considered the arguments around these and have effectively concluded that exceptional circumstances exist to justify all of the sites proposed within Bury.</p>
<p>"If the places for everyone plan is approved, how will the Council ensure that the biodiversity habitats which will be lost on the sites allocated for the Places for Everyone plan be replaced 'like for like' within the borough of Bury."</p>	<p>Once adopted, Places for Everyone would become a key part of Bury's statutory development plan and its policies will be used for planning applications that will need to be submitted on the proposed allocated sites.</p>

<p>Phil Smith-Lawrence Prestwich</p>	<p>PfE Policy JP-G9 relates to a net enhancement of biodiversity and geodiversity and sets out several measures by which a net enhancement will be sought.</p> <p>The purpose of the Policy seeks to initial avoid significant harm to biodiversity in the first instance and to mitigate/compensate where necessary.</p> <p>And instead of a 'like for like' approach the policy actually seeks to achieve a measurable net gain in biodiversity of no less than 10%.</p>
<p>Two of my Councillors in the Elton Ward namely Charlotte Morris and Martin Hayes campaigned to have the Walshaw Site taken out of Places for Everyone in the run up to local elections in 2022 and 2023. Why did they choose Walshaw and not the Elton site? Also the two Councillors actually voted for PfE to be approved which also included Walshaw. Is this not a blatant case of electioneering?</p> <p>Supplementary question (if applicable):: I will ask on the evening</p> <p>Alan Bayfield Bury</p>	<p>The decision to submit Places for Everyone was made by Full Council in July 2021.</p> <p>On 7 September 2022, Cabinet authorised officers to request a main modification to PfE involving the removal of the proposed housing allocation at Walshaw due to the identification of additional housing supply in Bury and Radcliffe town centres that was not confirmed when the Plan was submitted in February 2022.</p> <p>The Cabinet report set out a site options appraisal by Officers which took a balanced approach to considering the planning merits of each of Bury's proposed PfE housing allocations.</p> <p>This appraisal concluded that whilst the site at Walshaw would deliver some local benefits, unlike the other comparable sites (including Elton), these are not considered to be of a scale and nature that would offer strategic benefits to the wider Borough.</p>

	<p>It was for these Planning reasons that Officers recommended the Walshaw site.</p>
<p>I have been following the PFE inspection process via the web link and it was apparent to me that it was conducted in a completely biased way showing favour towards the Council Officials and the developers. From what I witnessed the ultimate aim of the inspection was entirely to assist its final approval. The Council even employed an independent top barrister to 'defend' the plan and the inspectors have also had to recommended numerous modifications to make it 'sound'</p> <p>This is certainly not what I would define as an 'independent' review (as it is sold to the public) but a completely corrupt and coercive way to review the important issue of preserving Bury's precious greenbelt .</p> <p>A massive amount. of public money has been wasted on this farcical tick box exercise.all which will be to the detriment of our wildlife and greenbelt if it is allowed to go ahead.</p> <p>National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) specifies that plans are 'sound' if they are:</p>	<p>Any assertions that the PFE examination process has been corrupt, coercive or biased in any way is strongly refuted.</p> <p>Following the submission of the Plan in February last year, the Planning Inspectorate appointed three Inspectors to hold an independent examination of the Plan.</p> <p>All three are very experienced planning inspectors and have conducted the examination in a very thorough and professional way throughout.</p> <p>It is normal practice at examinations for Inspectors to recommend main modifications to a plan where these are considered necessary to make the plan sound and/or legally compliant.</p> <p>As a joint plan of the nine districts, Places for Everyone is a substantial and complex document that has required the Inspectors to undertake an extensive examination that has already taken 20 months to get to the current stage. It is inevitable, therefore, that an examination of this scale and nature has given rise to a significant number of modifications.</p> <p>Nevertheless, these modifications do not change the overall Vision, Objectives and Spatial Strategy of the Plan.</p>

Justified – that means ‘an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence’

There are good alternatives to destroying greenbelt which have been highlighted and brushed aside!

So - I believe that the inspection process did not uphold this and that representatives who were present at the inspection to speak out on behalf of a massive group of supporters against the destruction of greenbelt were not listened to.

So it begs the question:

If this plan requires so many modifications (479 pages to be exact) which was following a blatantly biased inspection process and which dismisses massive opposition for building on ‘protected greenbelt’ from the people of Bury in order to make it legally sound - Is this plan really fit for approval or should it be scrapped even at this late stage?

Supplementary Question:

Response to supplementary:

Do you really want to waste even more money on a legal battle against your own electorate? And do you really want to destroy greenbelt areas with natural beauty and ecological importance when it is totally 'unjustified'?

Marie Holder Bury

It is unclear what legal battle is being referred to but our position has always been that we do not want to build on Green Belt.

However, we have to work within the confines of national planning policy and this requires us to plan for the longer term employment and housing needs of the Borough. Unfortunately, this requires the release of some Green Belt land.

The role of the Planning Inspectorate is to test whether the plan is legally compliant, and they have indicated that they feel it would be with the proposed modifications.