

To: Woking Borough Council. Planning Dept.

RE: Development/loss of green belt in Hook Heath.

From : Clare Brierley, Allen House Park, Hook Heath, Woking.

July 28th 2015

Dear Sir or Madam,

What is Green Belt for?

It is to prevent urban sprawl and to maintain the open spaces between individual towns and villages. The current proposals to build on so much of the open land that separates Hook Heath from Mayford, and Mayford from Woking, do just the opposite.

The Hook Heath area is unique because of the Green Belt.

Woking went through disastrous planning in the 1970s onwards, giving us a town that no-one could be proud of.

In more recent years we have seen Woking Council improving all areas of Woking, working towards a better, more attractive, more functional town for everyone. Maintaining the Hook Heath Area Green Belt is part of this. The Green Belt is not just for Hook Heath, it is for all of Woking. It lifts and improves the Woking area for all Woking residents, and gives those who live in the less green areas somewhere very local and convenient to go to. I have plenty of friends who do not live in Hook Heath but come daily to walk their dogs or jog the leafy streets.

**National planning policy allows the release of land from the Green Belt only in exceptional circumstances.** The Woking Core Strategy requires WBC to find sites in the Green Belt for 550 homes in the period 2022-2027, but WBC have gone further than required by identifying sites for an additional 1200 homes in the period 2027-2040. I strongly object to this.

**WBC has not demonstrated any exceptional need for 1200 houses in the Green Belt around Woking post 2027.** These 1200 should be deleted from the proposal.

Hook Heath plot ratio is the key to retaining the nature of the area. Currently we average 5.5 dwellings per hectare in Hook Heath. Council is proposing areas of 30 dph. Surely such density can only be achieved by building apartments, not houses? And what about infrastructure?? How many new cars will this put on the already very congested local roads? Woking is already full in peak hour. It takes me 3 weeks to get a doctors appointment. Egley Road is already jammed with traffic in peak hour/school hours.

Who is the council working for? The people of Woking or the developers?

Council finds itself between a rock and a hard place. On one hand the central government is mandating new housing, on the other hand Green Belt is what defines our country and allows us all a bit of sanity in a country with the highest population density in the western world .

The easy course for council to take is to just convert green belt into housing. The harder course is finding ways to meet Councils new housing requirements and keep the greenbelt. By meeting this latter challenge, we can have a thriving city community with the necessary green spaces to keep us all sane. Failing to meet this challenge leaves us all an awful lot poorer.

If WBC is forced to increase the population so much then we need to take a different approach and not create urban sprawl but create a vibrant urban community. I know this is possible because I have lived many years in Hong Kong.

If you can walk to the station you don't need a car. Vibrant hubs develop around the station with shops, restaurants, gardens and community. Council gets the most cost effective result. And the community retains open space, its identity and its sanity.

To be honest, the main reason for Wokings growth is the train. Council should focus on this and develop attractive apartment blocks (all flats with balconies) near the station and keep other open green spaces for recreation.

Instead of looking to 2027 or 2040 we should be looking to the next hundred years and designing Woking for the future, with density

radiating from the station outwards in the form of  
mediumrise/highrise -with great train links and great parks.

WBC, please don't take the easy way out and just sprawl onto our  
beautiful green belt.

Regards, Clare Brierley  
Allen House Park, Hook Heath, Woking.