



**Billericay
District
Residents'
Association**



John Baron, MP

House of Commons

Dear Mr Baron

You may, or may not, be aware that the Billericay and District Residents Association (BDRA), Billericay Action Group (BAG) and the Billericay Society (BS) recently came together to better represent the views of a significant proportion of the Town's residents with regard to the Basildon Local Plan. It is therefore on behalf of these 3 Groups that we write to you today.

You have previously indicated to BAG that you do not see it as part of your brief to become involved in the Basildon Local Plan process.

"...when it comes to Council decisions about local development, an MP has extremely limited powers. This is after all, one of their key functions – the Council has the difficult task of catering for a growing local population. However, where I get particularly involved is when decisions are forced on local residents by outside bodies such as the Planning Inspectorate in Bristol and the Government in Whitehall." 12 March 2014

It is however apparent that more and more MPs are now, in fact, taking a keen interest in the Local Plans impacting their constituents. The extent of this involvement is highlighted in an article in The Mail on 20th January, which can be found here: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4142144/Ministers-shelve-plans-bulldoze-Green-Belt.html>

We would also refer you to the active involvement of Rebecca Harris in Castle Point who has been in the forefront of the fight against building on the Green Belt there.

We strongly disagree with the proposals made in the Basildon Local Plan with regard to Billericay. Our main concerns are the proposed changes to the Green Belt boundaries (without exceptional circumstances) to facilitate excessive building on what is now Green Belt land and a total lack of supporting infrastructure for the new construction. In fact, the number of houses proposed has been inflated further since the original Consultation as an incentive to Developers.

In the past you set out your view on both the Green Belt and Infrastructure in correspondence with BAG:

“Green Belt – I again reiterate that it is up to local people to decide whether they consent to any development – whether or not it is on the Green Belt. In addition, infrastructure improvements – appropriate to the scale of the development – must be funded in advance. I will continue to oppose “outside interference” by the Planning Inspectorate once local decisions are made.

Infrastructure – As above, I will not support any development if the increased infrastructure demand is not properly met and fully funded in advance.” 21 April 2015

Bearing in mind that protection of the Green Belt against development is part of the Conservative Party 2015 Manifesto, restated in the recent White Paper, and we are told that the Conservatives support greater Local Democracy, we are once again asking whether you will engage with us to challenge the Local Plan.

We have undertaken detailed research and organized significant responses to both Consultations on the Local Plan. Having been roundly ignored in the first Consultation, we do not have high hopes for the last one. We would welcome the opportunity to present our findings and discuss areas where we might work together to protect our Town and the surrounding Green Belt. We believe that MPs have significant input into these matters and note the active involvement of other MPs in the Local Plan process. We would also note that we are currently preparing comments on the recent White Paper and will share these with you once available.

It is our intention to publish this letter to the residents of Billericay and would like to publish your response in due course. For the purposes of your reply we would be happy for you to use the postal address of BAG Chairman, Mike Andrews, at .

Yours,

Robert Reeves

John Buchanan

Mike Andrews

Billericay Society

Billericay District Residents Association

Billericay Action Group

7 March 2017