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Subject: Campaign to Protect Rural Wokingham

Good Evening

I would like to invite you for an inaugural meeting of the Northern Parishes Management Group for the Campaign to Protect Rural Wokingham. The purposes of this body is guide the campaign to ensure that we achieve our object:

- To protect Wokingham's Green Belt
- To Protect the Prime Agricultural Land
- To protect Green Spaces between settlements
- To provide the right homes in the right places

The members of this body are Parish Council Chairmen (or their deputies) and Northern parishes Borough Councillors.

There is no party political bias towards the campaign.

If your Parish council contributes the £10 per head which we agreed, it is reasonable that you play a part in the management of the Campaign.

We may find other issues that we could fruitfully discuss as a Northern Parishes Block.

The dates I have in mind are

**Monday 12th February or
Thursday 15th February**

Please could you indicate what would be your preference.

If you cannot make it please send your deputy.

Venue will probably be Loddon Hall and time 7.30pm

As you know, I started this campaign in early September to combat the threat of obliterating Ruscombe, which became serious when Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) decided to masterplan Ruscombe together with Grazeley and Barkham.

It became evident that the scale of the development planned for the Northern Parishes potentially would impact on the Green Wedges between settlements, the Countryside and any massive development would clearly affect all the Northern parishes.

The call for sites in Wokingham gave rise to some 276 sites, which conservatively could accommodate 50,000 houses prior to considering brown field sites or the Council's own land (the Council is believed to be the biggest landowner in Wokingham Borough).

The Green Belt is a very small proportion of the Borough existing only in Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe.

Planning legislation says “Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan. At that time, authorities should consider the Green Belt boundaries having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they should be capable of enduring beyond the plan period.”

Given the abundance of other opportunities, it will be hard to argue that exceptional circumstances arise and the CPRW will do their best to refute those arguments.

Wokingham Borough must build some 20,000 homes in the period 2016 – 2036, some of which have been built, close to 10,000 have been approved but not yet built and Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) has to make provision for a further approx. 10,000 homes.

If we knew what we know now about how housing prices have increased, then we would have made provision for say a third of houses for rental to those on median incomes and below, say 1/3 starter homes at a cost which someone on a median income can afford say £150k -£250k and say a third family homes.

Why? Because developers are providing houses for the affluent but not for those on median incomes and below. (the current definition of Affordable Homes is a discount on the retail price normally 20% which is still out of reach of those on median incomes).

Therefore, in my view, the remainder to be built to 2036 should be in the category of rental for those on median income and below and starter homes; most of those homes approved but not built are family homes for sale.

So, I agree with you, most of the remaining homes to be built should be either social housing for rent or starter homes. They are likely to be urban, high density and with

good connections so that a car is unnecessary. Ruscombe or the countryside is very unlikely to be a suitable and sustainable location for that type of tenure,

It is not a binary choice.

What is clear is that it is going to be a very long campaign going probably until the end of 2020.

I believe with the team around us we shall be successful.

The timeline that I see is:

December 2017	Set up team and foundation for campaign
March 2018	Petition WBC and MP
August 2018	Local plan Preferred Options Consultation
April 2019	Local Plan Regulation 19 Consultation
September 2019	Plan submitted to the Secretary of State
February 2020	Inspection in Public
July 2020	Inspector's Report

It has been a busy three months.

Ruscombe parish council has agreed to start preparing a Neighbourhood Plan and has registered its intention with WBC.

A campaign team has been formed.

Some 1,000 – 1,200 people came to the meetings and I gave a three-quarter hour discourse to the attendees.

I have subsequently addressed the Twyford Village partnership, Parish councils in Remenham, Wargrave, Ruscome, Shinfield, Charvil, and Waltham St Lawrence.

We have leafleted Ruscombe, Twyford, Wargrave, Remenham, Charvil and Hurst twice.

Several articles have been written in Wargrave News, Remenham Newsletter.

We have a Facebook page which is followed by more than a thousand and reaches two and a half thousand with every post.

A company limited by guarantee has been formed and finally after two months of arduous follow up and many meetings, I have an HSBC bank account.

Six local people have agreed to serve as directors.

We still have to sort out the company secretarial and banking signatories.

We have appointed Pegasus as planning agent and Llandmark Chambers as Counsel.

Pegasus have written to Wokingham Borough Council.

We will have a conference with Counsel early February.

Lawrence & Beavan Design Consultants have agreed to do our marketing, website preparation, publicity and leaflets.

The website should be up by Christmas generating an ability to communicate with our supporters mail lists and social media.

If we must go the distance to the inspection in public, the cost is estimated to be some £120,000 including VAT.

I hope we can confirm all the Parish Councils support for the campaign at the £10 per household agreed over the period of the campaign.

Please include this in your budgets.
Thank you for your support

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Kind regards

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