

STOP HARLOW NORTH CAMPAIGN GROUP

Welcome to our Spring Newsletter in which we give a quick update on the current status of the District Plan submission, the Garden Town initiative and the recent Government White Paper on Housing.

Local Politics

But first, a word on local politics. **STOP HARLOW NORTH** is not, and never has been, a party political organisation and we have no affiliation to any Party. However, this newsletter, is necessarily very critical of the Conservative District Council and we would ask that when considering how to vote in the coming County Council election, you take our comments into account and vote on local matters rather than follow your normal national allegiance. If you take nothing else away from the Newsletter, we would like to make it known that Councillor Roger Beeching, a good loyal supporter of ours is retiring and the replacement Conservative candidate is District and Sawbridgeworth Town Councillor, Eric Buckmaster. Eric is one of the architects of the District Plan, sits on the Planning Executive Committee and is fully in favour of Harlow North. Furthermore, when he asked for your votes at the last District election only 2 years ago, he forcefully stated his strong opposition to Harlow North only to change his mind a few months later.

Eric is not the only Conservative District Councillor to perform this about turn and we can add his fellow local councillors, Ian Devonshire and Bob Brunton to the crime sheet. They did not even have the decency to wait a few months before changing their minds. The District Conservative Party is no better, claiming at the 2010 election that Harlow North would “never” come to pass on their watch. “Never” it seems, is no more than a few years. We believe the way the local Conservative Party has behaved is arrogant and deceitful and while we will not recommend how you should vote in the County Council election on 4th May, we would like you to take these factors into consideration. **Please pass on this newsletter or this message to everyone you know and please do vote. Turnout is likely to be very low and so every vote will count much more than in a National election.**

Housing White Paper

Moving onto more national matters, we can be more forgiving of the national Conservative Party who commissioned a Housing White Paper and who, at the last election anyway, made manifesto commitments to protect the Green Belt. This commitment was attacked from every quarter and cited as a reason for the housing crisis. There was, therefore, a significant danger that the White Paper would bend to the developers and lobby groups and soften the Green Belt protection. We are happy to report that this did not happen and that it recommended the current protection for the Green Belt remains. We await to see if the new Conservative Party manifesto for June’s election reiterates the strong protection promised last time (and which the local party chose to ignore).

District Plan Submission

As they said they would before the “consultation”, East Herts District Council have ignored all the comments collected and the Plan has now been submitted with almost no changes. Although, to be fair, they did submit all the responses with the unchanged Plan. Over 90% of these were against the Plan and about 2,300 were from **STOP HARLOW NORTH** supporters. A big thank you to all.

Announcing the submission in the local Link magazine, the Council Leader, Councillor Linda Haysey, justified their betrayal by claiming the plan would provide local homes for local people. We thought it worth highlighting this laudable claim and exposing it for the nonsense it is. At the last count, the housing shortage in East Herts was estimated at about 3,000 dwellings. The District Plan solves this 3,000 shortfall by building 16,000 dwellings. To justify the plan on this metric is, to say the least, economical with the truth and deliberately misleading. However, as mentioned above, the local Conservative Party is no stranger to misleading the electorate.

STOP HARLOW NORTH's long held objections to the proposal remain valid. There is no excuse for building on the green belt to accommodate new commuters for London. To claim this is local homes for local people is quite simply a lie. There is a national need to build more houses but the only reason Harlow North is in the frame is that it offers a single land owner who is willing to develop the land. It is the easy way out if you do not feel the need to first plan the infrastructure, if you do not feel responsible for the inevitable chaos as the infrastructure breaks down and if you do not care about the countryside.

Garden Town Grant

Much was made of the Council's recent success in obtaining a Government Grant under the Garden Town initiative. Please note that this in no way prejudices the Examination in Public.

Invoking the concept of a Garden Town is further nonsense dreamt up by the planners. The principle of a Garden Town does not work on the scale of Harlow North and, as one architect involved in the creation of Milton Keynes pointed out, it would be a disaster. There are no plans for the infrastructure changes it would require, from sewage to water to roads and rail. There are no plans to provide work for the new inhabitants (a direct contravention of the Garden Town principle). They would therefore, be forced to commute on roads and rail already full at peak times. There are no plans and no funding for the necessary healthcare provision. Indeed, the relocation of Princess Alexandra Hospital remains unfunded. Struggling under special measures, both the hospital and the local GP infrastructure cannot cope with demand now and yet the District Plan recklessly recommends increasing the population by about 25% with nothing that can be called a plan to explain how this health crisis will be resolved.

On the infrastructure deficit, the Rye Meads Sewage Works is worthy of special mention. The Council planning department admit they do not know why this is no longer an issue (why not?) despite it being one of the key reasons Harlow North was rejected about 10 years ago. However, in common with most local infrastructure, it is already dangerously close to being at 100% capacity with excess sewage occasionally being pumped into fields and the river. It is a difficult site to expand and not only is there no plan to resolve this problem, there is no money to fund it. Thames Water say that they only have sufficient capacity until 2024 and this is BEFORE building starts on Harlow North.

In summary, EHDC are quite content to betray their electorate and submit a plan that will ruin the countryside, our way of life and the the District but, all is not lost. The plan is seriously deficient, goes against decades of Green Belt Policy, is unsustainable, undemocratic and still needs to be presented and agreed at an examination in public – probably in September. We remain committed to fighting the plan and with your support, will do all we can to defeat it.

**Thank you for your support and remember,
make sure you vote in the County Council election on Thursday 4th May.**



We will continue to post any newsworthy events on our Facebook page - STOP Harlow North Campaign. Please pay the page a visit and 'Like' us and follow us on Twitter - @stopharlownorth - Don't worry if you don't use Facebook as we will continue to send e-newsletters. Please forward this newsletter to your friends and ask them to "Join Us" on our website or via Facebook or Twitter.

STOP HARLOW NORTH CAMPAIGN

Unnecessary, Unsustainable and Undemocratic

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