

Chairman's Report for AGM

This report covers matters since the AGM on 26th February 2020

Like everywhere else, this has been a difficult year for the Society because of Covid 19 and the restrictions it has imposed on our meetings. However, also like many, we have learned to Zoom.

Members

Although we have not been able to circulate our annual "green" letter throughout the district we sent out several newsletters by email through our website. Our ambition for a monthly edition proved beyond us but the seven we have sent out have allowed us to keep the membership up to date with events surrounding the Local Plan. We have just over one thousand members from some five hundred households. With over four hundred registered e-mail addresses we believe that our newsletters are reaching the vast majority of our members.

We have greatly benefited from the generosity of the Brookmans Park Residents Association, which on its winding-up donated the closing balance of its funds, £934, to NMDGBS. We are most grateful for this contribution.

The Committee

We have held regular "virtual" committee meetings throughout the year using Zoom.

The committee is currently constituted as follows: Nigel Matthews (chairman), Claire Taylor (vice president), Carol McCarthy (secretary), Martin Connolly, Az Khan, Alex Brown, Simon Polledri, Roger Dean.

I should like to thank all the members of the committee for their work for the Society during the year and for their support to me as chairman.

During the year, two committee members, Philip Elgar and Noreen O'Sullivan have stood down. I'd like to thank them both for their work for the Society over a number of years, and Noreen, particularly, for her work as treasurer.

On behalf of all the membership, I should like to thank Gary Mabbutt, our President, for his continued support for the Society and commitment to the Green Belt.

Jed Griffiths, our planning adviser is a tower of strength without whom our effectiveness would be much reduced.

I should also like to thank John Salmon who has again reviewed our Financial Accounts and is a source of wise advice.

The Local Plan

The Local Plan has been the main focus of our representational work. We have followed the Council's deliberations through the year, writing to all councillors and submitting questions to formal council meetings.

We have submitted comments to all the consultations and, represented by Jed Griffiths, taken part in all the relevant Examination Hearings. Our comments and representations are available on our website and through the council's website.

We commissioned a paper from Professor Alan Wenban-Smith on the report from the council's advisers, Turley, on the impact of the most recent population projections from the Office of National Statistics and circulated this to members of the council. Subsequently, with CPRE Herts we co-commissioned a follow-up paper as evidence for the Examination Hearing on the OAN.

We now await the Inspector's report to the council after the local elections and the "Main Modifications" to be proposed as needed to make the plan "sound".

Other Green Belt Matters

We continue to review the weekly planning list published by WHBC and to respond as necessary. Our responses are published on the council's website.

Notable applications have included the RVC, which we supported. We opposed significant proposed developments at Fir Park, Bell Bar, and Bullens Green. Both were refused but the latter is now subject to appeal.

The Society tries to play a part in defending the Green Belt beyond our district through our memberships of CPRE Herts and the London Green Belt Council.

The Future.

The Green Belt under threat as never before: not just in North Mymms and Welwyn Hatfield Borough. We are not optimistic about the outcome of the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan. Our Green Belt is going to suffer. Just how badly remains to be seen.