

Save Jealott's Hill Newsletter

3rd December 2020



Introduction

Welcome back from the latest Lockdown in a year that has been like nothing we have ever seen. It is hard to describe our feelings right now as Christmas approaches and, while the relaxation of social restrictions over the holiday period will be welcomed it is hard to erase from our minds the level of tragedy which has swept through the land since the last Christmas/New Year celebrations. It puts a lot of things into a new perspective for us but, while COVID has certainly constrained a lot of what we have been trying to do it has not dampened our enthusiasm for the cause of saving Jealott's Hill from the bulldozers.

We want to take this opportunity to thank you all for your encouragement and support during 2020, we wish you all as happy and joyful and fulfilled a Christmas/New Year holiday season as is possible and we invite you all to join us in 2021 when the real battle over the Green Belt will begin.

Where are we now

Media coverage: We have been very active through the year in the media channels with TV and Radio interviews and great coverage from Bracknell News and the Maidenhead Advertiser during the year since the Warfield Parish Council meeting which sowed the seeds of the campaign on the 4th of December last year and the Meadow Vale school meeting on December 16th. So much has happened since then; it feels like a long time ago. At the end of this Newsletter you will find links to some of our recent press coverage about the campaign and a couple of other related, recent, planning matters affecting the area. All of our coverage can be found in the Press section of our website at www.savejealottshill.com.

The Petition: Just before this latest lockdown Richard Stok, Charlie Griffiths and Patrick Kennedy delivered the Save Jealott's Hill Green Belt, Change.Org Petition and Comments to both the Bracknell Forest Council offices and to Syngenta at Jealott's Hill. Since then a copy of both the Petition and the written comments left by signatories has been mailed to ALL the Bracknell Forest councillors, the MP's for Windsor, Bracknell and Maidenhead, the Syngenta HQ in Switzerland and the Chinese Ambassador to UK. We had almost 5,000 signatures and over 200 comments sending a clear message about how people feel about the inclusion of LP7 in the BFC Draft Local Plan.

You can see pictures of our appearances at both Time Square and Syngenta on page 1 and these, plus a report, appeared in the Bracknell News.

Responding to Bracknell Forest Council (BFC): On 6th March BFC published their "Summary of Responses" to the initial consultation on the Draft Strategic Growth Review which took place late last year. This summary had to be withdrawn, amended, and released anew because a significant number of objections had been missed out in the March edition. We were very happy with the level and quality of objections and the over 2,000 objections listed in the May version of the Response report was a tribute to all your efforts in preparing and submitting your responses.

Next Steps in the Planning Process: The work on the draft plan has been much delayed partly by the volume of objections you generated and partly by the COVID disruption. We are fast approaching the start of the 6-week phase which will be the consultation on the Submission Draft of the plan sometime, we think, in the first quarter of 2021. More details on next steps later in this Newsletter.

Fundraising

Now that the next stages of the Planning process are getting closer, we are about to launch our fundraising.

The Planning Inspectorate Inquiry is a formal legal process and must be approached as such. To present our case effectively we will need to be able to assemble and fund a team of legal and professional advisors. We envisage needing at least a Barrister and maybe 2 or 3 planning consultants plus support work. This will need something like £80,000 and that assumes we do a lot of the pre-preparation research and briefing paper preparation ourselves (by doing that we will not need to hire solicitors and so avoid that cost).

We have opened a bank account and are launching an online GoFundMe campaign. We will be able to accept donations direct to our bank account (at no cost) or via the GoFundMe campaign which will allow card payments but incur an admin charge of around 3%.

Opening a bank account for the campaign has been a long, drawn out process due to the business banking sector being swamped with new account openings, in order for businesses to access the Government

COVID business and bounce back loan schemes, at exactly the same time as the banks had to reorganise to meet social distancing requirements.

Today we have no money at all in the accounts. We will need to raise all the money we need over quite a short period of time. The campaign cannot engage the professional support we need at the inquiry without having the funding in place in advance. We have already received some very generous offers of financial help but are nowhere near what will be needed. We need the online fundraising to be a success.

We will issue a specific Newsletter devoted to Fundraising when we have all the pieces in place to kick the effort off.

Next steps in the planning process

Recently we have seen two comments from within BFC at a very senior level, one on the Executive and one in the planning department suggesting that the Submission Draft will appear in the first quarter of 2021.

We have a close watch on the published Agendas of upcoming meetings of the BFC executive and the full council. The Submission Draft will have to be adopted by the full council prior to it going out for Consultation so we will have some idea about 3 weeks in advance when it is coming up for council sign off. It is not listed for the December meeting and we now await January's draft agenda.

If it is adopted unchanged, the Draft Plan will come back out for public Consultation and we will all need to respond to Policy LP7. We are currently preparing briefing papers which we will make available to you to help with framing your objections. Given the certainty that COVID will still be with us, it could be that this will be a purely "on line" consultation so we will also be available to help those who need support with the wonders of the internet. If it is an "online only" consultation we will challenge this. We believe denying people the opportunity to object by post will deny many the opportunity to register their objection and as such would be undemocratic.

After the draft is signed off then a few weeks will be needed for BFC to make all the necessary arrangements before the Consultation begins. The consultation is scheduled to last for 6 weeks.

Approximately 6 weeks after the consultation closes the Submission Draft PLUS the objections and comments on the whole plan, including Policy LP7, will be sent to the Planning Inspectorate. The number of responses to the Consultation usually dictates how much time is needed for the council to index and collate the responses into digestible groupings. We had more than 2,200 responses to the first consultation so, as we expect more this time, 6 weeks would be a reasonable working assumption. The RBWM plan took longer than this but they had over 7,000(!) responses to the submission plan consultation.

It will then take at around 10 weeks (per the Planning Practice Guidance) before the schedule of meetings etc becomes public and the process begins to move ahead to public sessions. During this period the

planning inspectors will issue their “matters, issues and questions” (MIQs) which tend to define the big issues as they see it within the Draft Plan.

If, for example, the Draft was to be adopted by the council in mid-January 2021, you could expect to see an initial meeting around August/September 2021 if nothing dramatic happens to derail or delay the entire process.

More to follow is all we can say at this point but, obviously, we will keep everyone informed. In the meantime, we will continue our preparations for the Inquiry and will be in touch with everyone on the fundraising front.

And finally

You will find the recent media coverage links listed below together with details of our website and social media pages. We ask that you share these, and indeed the entire Newsletter, with anyone you think might be interested and supportive as we want to continue to grow our readership.

This is CRUCIAL; your “spreading the word” is our best route to more sympathetic ears around the area.

Links to recent press coverage

1. <https://www.bracknellnews.co.uk/news/18879840.bracknell-4-000-homes-update-local-plan-coming-soon/>
2. <https://www.bracknellnews.co.uk/news/18870544.warfield-305-homes-plan-approved-council-chiefs/>
3. <https://www.bracknellnews.co.uk/news/18850924.jealotts-hill-petition-4-000-homes-plan-submitted>
4. <https://www.bracknellnews.co.uk/news/18698946.jealotts-hill-campaigners-urge-council-drop-4-000-homes-plan/>
5. <https://www.bracknellnews.co.uk/news/18659738.jealotts-hill-4-000-homes-plan-sees-campaigners-clash-company>
6. <https://www.bracknellnews.co.uk/news/18428485.bracknell-4-000-homes-syngenta-jealotts-hill-opposed-rbwm>

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- Twitter: <https://www.twitter.com/@SaveOurHill>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/276748633252141>
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