Councillor Andrew Baggott  
Leader  
Basildon Council

28th June 2021

Dear Councillor Baggott

**Basildon Local Plan**

For over seven years together with the Billericay Action Group we have fought the emerging Basildon Local Plan.

We continue to believe that the proposed 2,700 houses and the resulting 25% increase in population is excessive and will put huge pressure on Billericay’s already creaking infrastructure; whether schools, health facilities, roads, parking, and public transport.

There is no clearly defined need for this scale of development in Billericay and the resultant and irreplaceable loss of over 150 hectares of the Green Belt around our historic town.

The Planning Inspector has recently asked Basildon Council to reassess many of the core elements of the Local Plan. We believe this gives you, our elected Councillors, a last opportunity to atone for mistakes of the past and put in place a more appropriate and more sustainable Local Plan.

This new plan should be based on a more credible housing number that addresses the real local need, allocating this housing around the whole borough based on individual settlement needs and sustainability, and recognises the Green Belt as a valid constraint that should be retained. We believe this is fully achievable, deliverable and a sound approach.

This week Robert Jenrick, the Cabinet minister responsible for housing and planning, wrote in the press:

“We will protect the green belt and the environment, prioritising building on brownfield, backed by more than £10bn of regeneration funds in this Parliament. We’ll keep all green-belt protections, with councils still responsible for local decisions.”

This follows numerous similar ministerial and Prime Ministerial statements over a number of years, whereby housing need alone is not deemed to represent the special and exceptional circumstances required to declassify Green Belt land. Yet Basildon Council did not see fit to nominate the Green Belt as a constraint in the Local Plan. Instead it tells us that the government insisted on the level of new housing that is proposed, under threat of taking over the council’s planning responsibilities and imposing it. Such an argument to justify the proposed over development of Billericay and other parts of the borough has no credibility.
We are therefore calling upon you, as our elected representatives, to take personal charge of the Local Plan process, with a bold and creative stance and work to these aims, acknowledging the wishes of residents who have elected you on a manifesto promise to protect the Green Belt.

As we have seen with the recent Parliamentary by-election in Chesham & Amersham, local people want action on local matters and are prepared to voice their concerns at the ballot box. The same applies here. We will no longer tolerate being taken for granted as a safe seat. The close contest in Billericay West Ward in last month’s borough council election did not surprise us. A proactive Liberal Democrat campaign, involving extensive door to door canvassing and the promise to listen and act on electors’ needs and wants, was nearly successful. If things continue as they are, a similar LibDem campaign next year in any part/s of Billericay may well carry the day.

The bottom line is ‘help us and we will help you’. Anything less is unacceptable.

We believe that an early meeting to address all the concerns of Billericay residents is essential.

Yours sincerely

A Maddocks
Chairman

Copy to John Baron MP