

Adam Ralton

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To: Adam Ralton
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My name is Cheryl Stungo

I am a Three Rivers District Councillor, a Parish Councillor and a Croxley resident.

Thank you for allowing me to speak at this meeting today.

I am here to be the voice of all the residents of Croxley Green who cannot be here, especially the women, children, elderly and disabled. It is vital that their needs and perspectives are not overlooked. I have a few points to raise that I hope will add to your considerations.

1/ The Green Belt I am not going to debate whether this site is Green Belt or not as my colleagues will be eloquent on this. Green Belt has been called the lungs of our land, offering vital clean air in an increasingly polluted world. Air pollution is a growing health crisis, linked to thousands of deaths annually especially in cities like London. Destroying these vital green areas will worsen air quality, harming us all. Why would we willingly lose this critical natural ally?

2/ Mental health.

Humans are not designed to thrive in concrete jungles. The happiest and healthiest people are those who have regular access to nature and green spaces. Studies link regular contact with nature to lower rates of anxiety, depression and suicide. In Croxley Green we even have a 'suicide bench' that offers counselling and support at dark times. Green spaces provide solace and healing - why sacrifice this for short-term profit? Our community uses these areas daily, as families have for generations.

Immersing oneself in nature is universally promoted as being beneficial for mental health. Why then is this principle instantly disregarded as soon as a developer intends to profit from Green Belt Land? Should we not be preserving this land for those who come after us? 100 years ago all of London was farmland. The parks that were protected are even more important today than they were then.. Space is ever scarcer and as urban living becomes denser, preserving green spaces becomes even more crucial.

3/ Broken promises by developers

We have experienced firsthand the broken promises of developers at a site nearby - Killingdown Farm has already been mentioned this morning - promises that are designed to be appealing, very like the

ones we are currently being offered - a doctors' surgery, primary school classes, childrens' playground, allotments...when it came down to it, none of these (apart from a very small playground with a couple of swings) was ever built. They are a fiction. When complaints were made we were told that these were not affordable if sufficient profit was to be made by the developers. The attractive watercolours shown to us by Richborough, that were so enticing, will be assigned to the recycling bin. My question is how can we trust assurances this time? What enforcement mechanisms will protect our community? By this stage it will no longer be in the hands of Richborough, it will have been sold on to another developer for a huge profit and all bets are off! Why do we have to sacrifice our Green Belt land for developers' profits?

4/ Access to Amenities for non-drivers

I am concerned that little thought appears to have been given as to how people who may not have access to a car will avail themselves of urgent medical care, shops to pick up a pint of milk, or a pharmacy, without a very long walk, in all weathers. This overlooks the real needs of vulnerable people, especially children and the elderly or disabled. Public transport needs to be re-examined, likewise parking, already under pressure and with the massive influx of an estimated extra 900 cars. The impact on our current way of life for people living in Croxley already will be devastating.

5/ Strengthening the Existing Community Spirit

We have a new community centre planned in the heart of Croxley on the Barton Way Red Cross site, with the intention of uniting and strengthening our community spirit by reviving the activities enjoyed in Croxley before the Red Cross returned the lease to TRDC. This project is very close to the hearts of our residents, as it was to their parents and grandparents. When it was first built, in the 1960s, when money was very tight, these families donated 2 shillings and sixpence per brick until there were enough bricks to build it. When asked what made new residents choose Croxley when looking to buy a house, the majority of newcomers cite - the incredible community spirit here. The Parish Council will move their office here to be more accessible to the public. Why build another Croxley community hall when the focus should be on enhancing and protecting what already exists? What will be left of our community spirit?

Alternatives to Green Belt Development

We do need more houses, this is not in dispute. However, there are many more suitable brownfield sites in Croxley where these will be built. 90 affordable homes are nearing completion in Grove Crescent. These sites should be prioritised before any Green Belt is considered. I would also like to see the many empty houses utilised which would be a more sustainable and community-friendly solution. The Green Belt is incredibly precious and this site is pristine and very beautiful. It should be safe-guarded with all the effort we can muster. I applaud your initiative Mr Baird to request photographs for display to all involved in making the final decision. Green Belt is being encroached upon everywhere. Calling it Grey Belt is in my opinion a pitiful excuse to abandon the principles on which the Green Belt was originally established. Once it is gone, it's gone forever. Who will bear the responsibility for the irreversible loss of this vital heritage?

Finally I call for transparency. TRDC and the Parish Council have both recently withdrawn their support for this appeal due to the anticipated exorbitant costs, in spite of a unanimous vote by TRDC's planning committee to refuse permission. Some people in the hall found out about this decision only today. To say that we feel very let down by this approach is a huge understatement. So it all comes down to money in the end.

Please. Let us protect our Green Belt for this generation and those to come.