

BNES/29 Green Belt issues

Re Changes to the core strategy:

1. BNES/24, CD6/E2.2: Policy DW1

Where the core strategy will be reviewed around every five years, to ensure the strategy is b. *planning for most appropriate growth targets, particularly housing and employment space/jobs*, we regard it as equally important that future **food security** and the **food production potential of green areas is taken** into consideration as part of a 'sound' planning process.

UK food security is threatened by a number of factors, the impacts of climate change, peak oil (with subsequent food price inflation), population growth and **loss of agricultural land to building development** among them. There is a strong argument that protection of farmlands both inside as well as outside the green belt, should be prioritised to ensure future food production requirements for the city and its environs.

The city council's 'Who feeds Bristol' study (March 2011) shows that Bath falls well within the food footprint of Bristol, and states on P111 para 14.3.1 *'A strong presumption against the development of any of the best and most versatile agricultural land(grades 1,2 and 3a) and general protection of all other agricultural land (grades 3b and 4) except the very poorest (grade 5). Increasing building densities in urban areas will reduce the pressure to develop agricultural land.'*

2. Statement of Common Ground

from Woolf Bond Planning, on behalf of the Duchy of Cornwall, (summary of agreed matters 3.1 page 15) suggests agreement that agricultural fields to the SW of Bath, within the green belt, are a monoculture. This is fundamentally incorrect where more than 220 acres is farmed for maize, rapeseed, barley and wheat and has a food production potential to deliver approximately 2.5 - 3 million loaves of bread per annum (ref: Newton Farm & Claysend Farm, 2010, Newton St Loe).

In this respect farmland within the green belt represents a significant food security area which should be taken into consideration in any Placemaking Plans, or in future reviews of the green belt and its role.

We attempted to highlight this issue at the hearings – i.e. that the review of the green belt lacked a study on food security and food growing requirements for the region, especially in the light of climate change and peak oil.

3. Core strategy page 93 para 5.12

highlights the potential opportunities of the rural areas to diversify the rural economy for food production and renewable energy, there is no such consideration for farmland falling within the green belt or of the green belt itself to fulfill these functions.

4. Paragraph 6.64 the Core Strategy

clarifies that *Green Belt Inset boundaries will be reviewed through the Placemaking Plan and Neighbourhood Planning and, in accordance with PPG2, they will only be altered if **exceptional circumstances** can be demonstrated.*

We believe that these 'exceptional circumstances' should include an evaluation against future food production requirements and food growing potential of the green belt.

Once lost, agricultural land and green space cannot be reclaimed.

Newton St Loe Conservation group
17th February, 2012