



20 August 2024

On Monday 19 August, we attended an emergency council meeting, called in response to the Government's proposed new housing targets.

We called the meeting, of all 66 councillors in Wirral, because of the impact the new targets will have on our Green Belt, not least around Saughall Massie.

We've also set up a dedicated Facebook group to keep residents informed: www.facebook.com/groups/saughallmassie

Prior to the new targets, we had been working to have a legally-required Local Plan. This would have delivered 14,000 homes over the next 15 years. Crucially, none would have to be built on Green Belt and all on so-called 'brownfield sites' instead. Sites such as those parts of Birkenhead and Seacombe which badly need investment.

That Local Plan was about to be signed off and would have meant Green Belt around Wirral would have been protected for years to come.

WIRRAL'S NEW HOUSING TARGET: 35,000

Instead, and following the new Government's change in housing targets announced on 31 July, Wirral will be legally required to build a staggering 35,000 homes. The current housing waiting list is 6,000 families.

This means that sites around the Borough could have to be released from 'Green Belt' protections and offered to developers.

THREAT TO SAUGHALL MASSIE

As we have reported previously, three developers have already lodged proposals to build 1,000 houses around Saughall Massie:

- Bloor Homes wants to build 276 houses on land next to Saughall Massie Road, between the fire station to Pump Lane
- Taylor Wimpey want 180 houses on the land between Saughall Road and the Arrowe Brook, including Diamond Farm
- Russell Homes want 555 houses on the land behind Bloor Homes' proposals, resulting in almost no green space between here and Greasby

BEFORE the election...

'We are now very close to seeing a Local Plan which protects Wirral's precious Green Belt'

Labour Council Leader, Paul Stuart, 4 March 2024

'Sir Keir Starmer said his party was committed to a "brownfield-first" approach'

BBC, April 2024

AFTER the election...

'We'll make sure the green belt doesn't block our housebuilding plans'

Deputy Prime Minister, Angela Rayner, 31 July

'Wirral Labour 'fully supports' government housebuilding plans'

Wirral Globe. 16 August

Please turn over

WE DO NOT SUPPORT THIS

As your three local councillors, we are OPPOSED to these proposals because of:

- Extra pressure on the flood plain and the Arrowe Brook and Birket
- Extra pressure on roads and public transport
- Extra pressure on local services including schools and GP surgeries
- Loss of local wildlife sites and biodiversity

At the emergency Council meeting, we spoke about this and urged the Council to reject the Government's target. We also asked Wirral's four Members of Parliament to back this.

While our proposal passed, with the support of the other Conservative Councillors, as well as the Liberal Democrats and Greens, we regret that Labour Councillors voted against it. We had hoped to secure all-party support for a clear message rejecting the housing target.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The Council will now ask the Government to think again. We hope the MPs will too. Other councils, Green Belt campaigners and nature conservancy groups will also be responding. But so will developers.

This is where we need your help.

1. Read more about the changes being proposed by the Government on our website – www.wallaseyconservatives.com/greenbelt (and sign up to receive our email bulletins)
2. Email your views direct to the 'consultation' on the new housing targets (and other changes proposed) PlanningPolicyConsultation@communities.gov.uk
3. Join our new local Facebook Group: www.facebook.com/groups/saughallmassie

We know this will come as a shock to residents in our community. Many of whom chose to live here because of the close proximity to open fields and countryside.

We also know we were elected in May 2023 partly because we pledged to fight to protect our Green Belt. It's a great shame that others, who made similar promises more recently, have so quickly broken theirs.

Please be assured we, your three councillors, will do all we can to protect and preserve our local environment in the face of this new challenge.

We will report back in our local newsletters, and online, as soon as we have a the Government's response.

Yours sincerely



Cllr. Colin Baldwin



Cllr. Gary Bennett



Cllr. Vida Wilson

P.S. We'll report back in our next newsletter and via our new Facebook group: www.facebook.com/groups/saughallmassie