

Parish Council Matters for July/August 2014

Additional Housing Required in Shorne over the next 15 years

Gravesham Borough Council, in line with other Boroughs and equivalent authorities, is required this year to produce plans - called a Local Plan - showing how they will meet future housing requirements within the Borough over the next 15 years.

GBC's original estimate of 4,600 new homes required to March 2028 was rejected by an independent Government Inspector last year as inadequate. GBC has announced a revised target of 6,170 additional homes. The Inspector is due to give his verdict on this estimate next month [August 2014].

GBC, under the Local Plan, has invited landowners and developers to identify possible sites within the Borough which might be considered suitable for housing. A total of 78 sites have been identified. Of these locations, 32 are in protected Green Belt areas. The potential construction of almost 7,500 dwellings would be involved. Four of these sites are located in Shorne - Pear Tree Lane [two sites], Thong Lane and Swillers Lane [Warren Farm].

GBC advises that no consent has been given for any of these sites to be developed, and being on the list does not mean that the owners will get planning consent. The Council stresses that it has yet to undertake any site surveys or analysis of the sites promoted, and the information provided so far takes no account of environmental impacts or physical limitations such as access and infrastructure. We understand from the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England [CPRE Protect Kent] that each application will be screened against a series of tests for sustainability, including the impact on local roads and transport links and the environment, at each stage in the development process.

Shorne Parish Council believes that we cannot afford to be complacent in the face of these plans which, at all stages, we ourselves will subject to close scrutiny and stiff challenge. We understand the need for further development to take place to meet increasing needs for housing, but believe this should be in places where it can be sustainable and environmentally friendly. We are in particular determined to defend our precious green spaces against further attacks on the Green Belt when we know there are other better options available, for example by making more use of brownfield sites. To this end, we will work closely with CPRE Protect Kent, fellow Parish Councils, Gravesham Rural Residents Group and our local MP to protect our environment.

Roy Dinnis
Shorne Parish Council