



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Date: 28 March 2006**

### **TOWN COUNCIL OBJECTS TO THOUSANDS OF NEW HOMES FOR NEWBURY**

On 27 March 2006, the Planning and Highways Committee of Newbury Town Council discussed the proposals in the West Berkshire Planning Strategy for 2007-2017, which includes a massive house building programme forced upon Newbury. Of the 5,180 new homes allocated to West Berkshire by the new South East Plan, the vast majority will have to be built in urban areas, principally in Newbury.

Town Councillors were shocked to hear that the proposal was for as many as 3,500 – 4,000 new homes in Newbury over the next ten years, 70% on brownfield sites, the rest beyond the current settlement boundaries. However, the requirement for 2006-2011 will probably be met by application / sites already known about.

To get some idea of what would still be required after 2011, 18 new high density estates like that at The Oaks (115 homes), off the Newton Road, would need to be built to provide an additional 2,070 new homes.

In considering the Council's response, the well known issues of overdevelopment, increased traffic and parking nuisance, together with loss of character and gardens in Newbury's prized 'garden suburbs' were discussed. In addition, such a rapid rise in population will inflict enormous strains on the infrastructure – schools and doctors surgeries in particular.

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Cllr Gina Houghton proposed addressing some of these concerns by creating a new Conservation Area around St Bartholomew's School, to include the garden suburbs of Buckingham Road and Andover Road up as far as Bartlemy Road junction, and character properties in Enborne Road. Both Wormstall (a handsome gothic style building in Enborne Road, built in 1885) and Luker (a decorative red brick building built in 1909) had been identified by the Council's working party on the Conservation of Historic Buildings as meriting conservation, probably for Local Listing. This new Conservation Area would also include the Grade II Listed 18<sup>th</sup> century Terrace 61-67 Andover Road. The 20<sup>th</sup> century houses in the Area's 'garden suburbs' are of individual design and their well maintained gardens made a big contribution to the attractiveness of the locality. Mostly built in the 1930s, they are the heritage buildings of the future. Thus the Conservation Area encapsulates over 200 years of Newbury's history, demonstrating the historic expansion of the town.

Concern was expressed that without the added protection of a Conservation Area (which counts as Supplementary Planning Guidance), the Key Principles of the Town Design Statement (published last year) would not be effective in protecting the character of the 'garden suburbs'. The TDS only counts as 'material consideration'. The area around the school had been singled out because it was a highly visible one, being the pedestrian approach to the school, as well as a 'gateway' road to the town centre.

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Cllr Gina Houghton said: “The Conservation Area is not a new idea, it has been suggested in the past by some of the residents of the Andover Road. However historic buildings, of importance to the local community or nationally, are needed in a Conservation Area. Now that we’re able to produce our own ‘Local Listed historic buildings’, the St Bartholomew’s Conservation Area is possible.”

END

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