



## Chiltern District Council's housing targets 'not credible'

Chiltern District Council's Delivery Development Plan Document (DDPD) is the follow up to the 2011 Core Strategy. One of its principle functions is to demonstrate how the new housing target set out in the Core Strategy will be achieved.

The DDPD has to be approved by central government and this process is achieved by a Government Planning Inspector holding an Examination in Public. This commenced on Tuesday, November 11.

Chiltern firstly established that the Duty to Cooperate process had been properly conducted and attention then turned to housing development and examination of numerous schedules in which Chiltern had detailed where new housing was to be built.

The Inspector conceded that in a recent similar Inquiry the authority had been able to demonstrate that it could substantially achieve its housing target in four large development sites. Chiltern is by comparison far more constrained, with large areas of green belt and Areas of

Outstanding Natural Beauty. However on examination of Chiltern's proposals the Inspector believed he had found instances of double counting and had doubts about the validity of some of the predictions for infill and windfall sites.

### Inquiry Suspended

The Inspector opened the second day of the Inquiry by saying that on reflection overnight he had 'severe doubts' that the council's DDPD could be found to be sound. Numerous questions had not been satisfactorily answered and a lot more coherent evidence was required. He considered that it was therefore not wise to continue. Informal discussions had been held with council officers and he was proposing to suspend the Inquiry for a

maximum of six months, ending on May 12, to allow the council time for the necessary additional work.

The Inspector's letter confirming the suspension of the Inquiry highlights further the problems with deliverability of proposed housing sites, for example multi-ownership, current employment uses, and that few appear to be at an

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advanced stage of the development process. There are also questions over the estimated capacity of sites with an example where the council has refused permission for a smaller number of units than in the DDPD based on contradictory grounds advanced by the council's Design Advisor.

It is then suggested that an up-to-date Strategic Housing Market Assessment is required and although affordable housing was not discussed at the Inquiry it was difficult to see how the Plan could deliver the required numbers.

The inspector then suggests that because of the 'significant amount of work' required to make the DDPD sound, the council may choose to withdraw it and proceed with the new Local Plan on which work has already started. He acknowledges that there is more than a five year supply of deliverable housing land to meet immediate need. We are fortunate that the Core Strategy is approved with agreed housing numbers, at least for more than five years, because this should prevent uncontrollable development over the period whilst a new Local Plan is agreed.

Suspension of a Public Inquiry is an unusual step but it has to be acknowledged that our council is facing a challenging task in providing new housing within all the beautiful countryside that we enjoy. It has expended much time and money on preparing the DDPD and we await with interest the formal response to the Inspector's letter, which is expected in February.

One thing is very certain, a new Housing Assessment will identify a requirement for a significantly higher number of dwellings than the

Core Strategy and renew pressure on the green belt. We need to continue to remind those preparing plans and assessments that they must also look at other potential ways of achieving their numbers, particularly brownfield sites.

### Our Concerns

The Chesham Society was timetabled to participate at the DDPD on a later day and voice concerns about what we consider an equally important issue, the infrastructure required to support the additional housing. It is unquestionable that the infrastructure of Chesham cannot even cope with the current population. We are all too familiar with sewage discharge into the River Chess, the over abstraction of water from our aquifers and pollution and congestion in Berkhamstead Road. There are very detailed but still seemingly inadequate plans for housing but no such work being undertaken on infrastructure. An Infrastructure Delivery Schedule in the DDPD is a hopelessly inadequate document and we are hoping to persuade the council to undertake more detailed work on our infrastructure before housing development escalates.

Over the next few months, alongside the council developing more details on housing allocation, it is also intending to start a review of the green belt, a further cross county Housing Need Survey and then a new Local Plan. Your Society wants to be fully involved in all of these activities but we urgently need your help with studying the inevitable numerous pages of documentation that will be circulated and providing objective responses. If you can spare some time to help with these projects, or indeed join our planning team, we will be pleased to hear from you.

**By Roger Smith & Tony Molesworth**

## Editor's letter



**HELLO and welcome to the Winter 2014 edition of Focus.**

I cannot believe we are already in December, where on earth has the past year gone? The Society has once again achieved some fantastic things this year, some of which you will read in this edition, including holding another successful Civic Day at BURYFields in June, organising and funding our biennial Chesham Heritage Open Day in September, which attracted more than 1,000 visitors to nine historic sites in the town, and very closely monitoring and responding to many planning applications and Chiltern District Council's Delivery Development Plan Document. While 2014 has been busy for the Society, 2015 is expected to be even

busier as we will be heavily involved in the consultation of the New Local Plan, as well as organising another Civic Day Event, responding to planning applications all while trying to drive up our membership numbers. This would be quite a task for a full committee but we have several vacant positions that need filling, including Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Secretary and up to three more committee positions. Having these additional officers will allow us to achieve so much more and enable us to continue Putting Chesham First. So if your New Year's resolution is to do more voluntary work, please think of us.

Lastly I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.

**Camilla Goodman**



## WINTER 2014 Chairman's report



Throughout much of this year the Chesham Society has been involved with Chiltern District Council's Delivery Development Plan Document. Roger Smith covers this topic in detail in this issue. This will now lead to a public consultation covering a much higher allocation of new housing in Chiltern and a review of the green belt to meet this imposed "need." If agreed it will result in housing on green fields around Chesham and further impact on our already over-stretched infrastructure.

The Chesham Society must take a leading position in this consultation as our key activity for 2015. This must be fitted alongside our normal activities, working with many other local organisations, monitoring new planning applications, organising keynote speakers for our monthly members meetings and planning Civic Day in late June.

In order to achieve these aims, and meet the objects of our constitution, your committee must have adequate resource. The immediate need is to fill the key vacant positions of Secretary and Treasurer, neither of which are very time consuming or onerous. There are vacancies on the committee for normal positions and specific help is needed with planning, which could be in a non-committee co-opted capacity.

If you can undertake any of these roles, or know somebody who can, please contact me urgently to discuss. If these are not filled at the AGM, we will need to seriously consider if the Chesham Society can continue to operate and whether it should be dissolved.

On a more happy note thank you for your support during 2014. I hope you can join us for the Society's Christmas Reception for drinks and nibbles on Thursday, December 11 when we also invite those who have helped us during the year.

My very best wishes for a happy Christmas and prosperous 2015.

**Tony Molesworth**  
Chairman

## Gratitude paid to volunteers who deliver Focus

This is a short note, written at a particular gloomy time of the year, to thank all the members who hand deliver Focus. Just so you know how appreciated your efforts are, the printers provide me with about 175 copies, of which I post 40 to members and local organisations. This costs the Society £21.20 at the current second class price of 53p. The remaining 135 are hand delivered by some of the members. If I had to post all the copies of Focus to members and organisations, postage for each edition would cost the Society about £91 each time. So thank you Helen Clews, Jim Conboy, Ruth Duffy, Phil Folly, Tom Gorsuch, Bill Martin, Merrin

Molesworth, Lesley Parrot and Brian Pratt for getting out and delivering in your area. You save the Society about £70 each edition in postage. Thanks also to Judith Aldridge for buying me the stamps and envelopes and Brian Pratt for promptly providing me with the labels each time for the posted ones. If there is any member who would like to help with this task, and lives in Chesham, give me a ring on 01494 786 749.

Seasons Greetings to you all.

**By Angela Bishop**

*Merry Christmas &  
Happy New Year*





## OBITUARY - Rev Derek Upcott C.Eng., FIMechE

One time secretary, then chairman of the Chesham Society.

**Most members will know that Derek died in October, and many of you also shared with the family his celebratory service at St Mary's. That told you many things, but primarily his community involvement, his faith, and love of music.**

Derek (and Cic) joined the Chesham Society in the late '60s, following some interesting chats with the occasional members walking past our Eskdale Avenue home on sunny Sunday afternoons, as we worked on the front garden. However, what brought Derek in was, first, the idea by the then Bucks Examiner music critic, one Basil Ashmore, to stage Peer Gynt in Lowndes Park. However, this was not a good idea, and Derek joined the newly formed Chesham Millenary Festival Committee for the great event of 1970. On that committee he met Chesham Society members, and so it all began.

Val Biro was the first chairman of that committee, and Derek became treasurer. Early in 1970, there was a change of society officers, and Derek took over the chairmanship of the Festival Committee, and became secretary of the Chesham Society in one move. Later he took over the chairmanship of the Society, where he remained for a number of years.

At the same time, approaches were made to us to join the Chiltern Society, and we were able to help bring both

organisations more closely together, at that time of great benefit to all. Several years later he was instrumental in bringing the plan to create a Conservation Board to fruition, by meeting the newly appointed planning officer for Bedfordshire at a pre-match lunch at Luton Town and introducing him to both Bucks planning officers and the leading members of both Societies. The result was, at long last, the creation of the Chilterns Conservation Board. Derek was later a member of that board for a three-year stint.



Those early years in the Chesham Society were pretty exciting, with the battle to prevent the construction of a major road through Chesham, and all its side effects on the town. Battle lines were well and truly drawn up, both to oppose these plans and to draw greater attention to Chesham's needs. From all that stemmed the present much-modified St Mary's Way and the pedestrianisation of the town centre. The Society grew in both size and relevance under Derek's chairmanship, befitting Chesham's value as a town worth working for and living in. Being a networker bar none, Derek continued to be at the forefront of any useful conversation at civic events, even when he moved to Ballinger 'to get a bit of peace!'

By Cic Upcott

## HS2 - an update

The next milestone in the campaign against HS2 will be a site visit by the select committee, which is considering petitions to amend details of the bill).

The latest rumour is that a visit is unlikely before the election next May, but campaigners are busy preparing evidence to support their proposals. Chesham and South Heath action groups undertook some aerial photography of the course of the route through the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The photograph above shows Mantles Wood, an area of ancient woodland, and the proposed site for the Chilterns Tunnel portal. The line emerges at the edge of the woodland on the right, and passes through the centre of the picture, in a deep cutting.



See <https://www.flickr.com/photos/25055169@N02/sets/72157648314767766/> for more images from the flight.

Meanwhile, there are reports that work on the alterations to Euston Station has been halted, since the proposals are not economically viable. Since that goes for the entire project, this may be a good omen.

By Jim Conboy



# PLANNING WATCH

By Tony Molesworth and Roger Smith

## Highlights of the last quarter's planning applications and the action taken by the Chesham Society

**Application details:** **Tesco** - Three freestanding signs and five lamppost banner signs in and around Chesham Station car park (all non-illuminated) advertising Tesco Click and Collect

**Chesham Society position:** Objected - Excessive signage interrupting views of White Hill Centre and skyline, creates precedent for other businesses

**Council planning decision:** Chesham Town Council (CTC) objected, Tesco withdrew application

**Application details:** **The Wild Rover** – change of use to used car sales centre in car park area

**Chesham Society position:** Objected - loss of public asset, residential sites close by, drainage risk.

**Council planning decision:** CTC did not oppose. CDC Planning Refused. Enforcement action taken

**Application details:** **Floodsmart sign in Market Square**

**Chesham Society position:** Objected - Inappropriate way to communicate with property owners, detrimental effect on the layout of Market Square.

**Council planning decision:** CTC supported. CDC Planning Approved (for five years)

**Application details:** **Specsavers** – external illuminated sign in High Street

**Chesham Society position:** Objected – contrary to planning guidelines in conservation area

**Council planning decision:** CTC supported. CDC Planning Refused

**Application details:** **Berkhampstead Road** – derelict public toilet. Redevelopment to provide detached two storey dwelling

**Chesham Society position:** Supported - innovated sympathetic contemporary design can be in keeping with older buildings

**Council planning decision:** CTC rejected - not in fitting with street scape. CDC Planning Rejected as above plus no on-street parking.

**Application details:** **Chessmount Rise** – 10 dwellings (Similar site zoned for 20 in Local Plan)

**Chesham Society position:** No comment, (CDC refusal grounds appear incompatible with Core Strategy policy)

**Council planning decision:** CTC no objection (but raised highway concerns). CDC Planning Refused

**Application details:** **Brae House, Cameron Road** – Cultural, Education and Community Use, Rawdhah Academy

**Chesham Society position:** No comment

**Council planning decision:** CTC objected (highway safety). CDC Planning Refused Enforcement action taken

## Cheryl's Corner

The short winter days and long nights might not be the most welcoming of seasons, but people make a big effort to drive away the gloom.



At the time of writing I have been looking through the calendar of events in Chesham, many around the Christmas period, such as the Christmas in Chesham festivities, which bring warmth and colour to the winter streets. They are always fun to visit.

I don't think any of these events could take place without the involvement of volunteers, giving their time throughout the year. There are groups who help junior and senior schools with their fairs. Charities, whether locally or nationally based, will be raising funds to help good causes here in the UK and across the globe.

In December I'm always thrilled to be asked to help the Amersham and Chesham Lions with its pack-a-parcel scheme. This is only part of the fundraising which local organisations do to help people in our community who need a helping hand.

Winter festivities centre around family meals. There are many people who think about those who may need a little help. During the year I visited Chiltern Foodbank at its new premises in The Broadway, Chesham, where again the volunteers meet throughout the year to pack donations of food to distribute to those who need it. Many businesses – whether they be the large national chains or the small independent traders - which we are enormously lucky to have based in our towns and villages - contribute to the welfare of people in our community, by donating goods or allowing staff time to help with organising collections.

If there is one thing that sums up Chesham it is the strength of community, so that residents really connect with the town.

The festive season, around Christmas and New Year, is also a time to connect with friends and people with whom we may not be able to get in touch during the course of the busy year. Even if it is only once a year, it is good to rediscover those links and renew them.

**Wishing you all a very merry Christmas and a happy and peaceful New Year.**

**By Cheryl Gillan, MP for Chesham and Amersham**



# Notes from our friends

## No.6 Chesham Environmental Group

In this month's regular column we feature Chesham Environmental Group and find out what they have been getting up to.

**Chesham Environmental Group has been working around Chesham for a number of years for the good of the town. We arrange two working parties a month throughout the year, on the first Wednesday and the third Sunday, usually in the mornings from 10am to 12pm. We also have four indoor meetings per year including an AGM. Our volunteers, who number from 10 to 15, are called upon to meet at the place we are working on or the nearest car park. Our work consists of litter picking, cutting back overgrown vegetation, especially along the River Chess and generally tidying up.**



The winter of 2013/2014 was very wet and as a consequence the cuttings on Berkhamstead Field, off Vale road, weren't baled up, and if not collected would not help the wildflowers grow during the coming summer months. Chesham Environmental Group, along with Chesham and District Natural History Society, leafleted the local residents with the idea of an action day. It turned out to be two action days on the first Sunday of the new year and again on the third Sunday in February. This was probably the wettest winter on record, yet on those two Sundays the sun shone on us, and the field was cleared. We had about 30 volunteers on both days, which was most gratifying. We have worked with other groups during the year including Chesham in Bloom, took part in litter picks arranged by councillors and churches also planted 2,000 daffodil bulbs.

Our programme for next year includes leafleting along Waterside and advertising an all day event to clear the river from Moor Road roundabout to Kitty Bridge. Some might remember a very similar event

along the same stretch of the river in October of 2006, which attracted a good number of volunteers and was very successful. If we have agreement from the Town Council this will take place on Sunday, March 15.

**By Phil Folly**

**Chesham Environment Group volunteers Phil Folly, Jenny Pearson and Jean Staverley litter picking in Moor Road**





# Panellists quizzed at annual members' meeting

The Chesham Society held its annual members' meeting on September 18, which is set-up as forum for members to discuss their concerns about Chesham with a local guest panel. The panel comprised Chesham's mayor Mo Fayyaz, Councillor Noel Brown, Joanna Hill from The Bagnall Centre, The Drawingroom's Richard Elkington, Trevor Pilling from The Elgiva and Chesham Theatre Company and Rev Colin Cartwright from Trinity Baptist Church and Chesham4Fairtrade.



Questions asked included whether a bypass would solve Chesham's traffic problems, how Chesham town centre can be revived and how to deal with the problem of geese in Lowndes Park.

The discussions that ensued were interesting and thought provoking. The consensus over Chesham's traffic problems was that a bypass would not solve the traffic problems, since surveys have shown that the vast majority is local traffic. Bypasses can also result in less people being inclined to go into a town centre, which can lead to towns declining or dying.

It was felt that Chesham town centre needs more encouragement for people to visit to help revive it. It was agreed that Chesham has some very interesting and unique independent shops and that having more to keep the town

centre attractive was a good way of encouraging people into the high street. It was also suggested that if more flats above shops were lived in this would encourage a night time economy. There was a discussion about a possible rates holiday for businesses, which Chiltern District Council is considering introducing from next April to encourage start-up businesses.

The geese was not a problem that was easy to solve as public opinion was sharply divided between those who liked them and those who felt they should be culled. It was explained that culling is not a viable option, and not just because many people oppose it, but because the gaps would quickly be filled by other geese. Preventative measures are being tried out to discourage geese from leaving the pond and walking around the park. This led to a discussion about the state of the pond itself, which was regarded as 'pretty foul'. As this would cost about £250,000 to dredge clear, this is not something that is going to happen in the near future.

The meeting closed by congratulating chairman of Chesham in Bloom Vince Crompton for winning Gold for the first time in the Thames and Chiltern in Bloom awards. Chesham was invited to enter the national competition, but Vince said unfortunately Chesham in Bloom did not have sufficient funds and volunteers to, so he would be pleased to welcome support from Chesham Society members.

By Judith Aldridge





# Dates for your diary!

We are currently finally agreeing dates with a fine line-up of speakers for 2015 and will give you the full details early in the New Year and confirm at the AGM.

Speakers for the first quarter will include Hugo Hardy whose architecture firm based in Berkhamsted submitted an innovative modern house design for the old public loo site in Berkhamstead Road, Colin Oakes a London guide and local historian who will speak about Latimer House, Graham Winwright the Planning Policy Manager from Chiltern District Council and to add local interest a director of Red Squirrel Brewery, a local business creating a presence in Market Square despite the culvert building work hoardings hiding their shop for many months.

If there is a speaker you can really recommend or would like to hear then please drop Emily Culverhouse a line and we'll try and accommodate your suggestions

Emily Culverhouse

Date	Room	Day	Purpose	Time	
11 December 2014	Council Chamber	Thursday	Christmas Reception	19.15 to 21.15	Free
29 January 2015	Council Chamber	Thursday	AGM	19.30 to 21.30	Free
18 February 2015	Lowndes Room	Wednesday	Members' Meeting	19.30 for 20.00	
18 March 2015	Lowndes Room	Wednesday	Members' Meeting	19.30 for 20.00	
15 April 2015	Lowndes Room	Wednesday	Members' Meeting	19.30 for 20.00	

All meetings are in the Town Hall at 7.30 for 8pm unless stated otherwise

Admission charges: members £1, guests £2; which includes tea/coffee and biscuits.



## The Chesham Society

# Putting Chesham first

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