

Theydon Bois Action Group

PROTECTING THE VILLAGE OF THEYDON BOIS

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2012

TBAG has seen a great deal of success in 2012, leading the fight against unlawful and improper development within and surrounding the village of Theydon Bois. We

saw central and local Government, Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) declare war on the Metropolitan Green Belt with their Issues and Options paper and 'call for sites'. Consultants acting on behalf of EFDC identified three possible sites in our village on Green Belt land with potential plans for anything up to 1,274 new houses. This includes land owned by the Sear family in Coppice Row bordering Epping Forest, land owned by Robin Llewellyn Jones at Thrifts Hall Farm and land owned by John Padfield at Great Gregories Farm. Interestingly two are former Parish Councillors. The damage to our village would be catastrophic and change it forever. TBAG forwarded a detailed and robust response and with other village interest groups prepared a generic objection letter for villagers' use. TBAG organized the leafleting of the entire village to make residents aware of the threat. With other action groups around the country we hope to challenge this damaging policy and thereby stop the Metropolitan Green Belt being 'concreted' over.

Our dedicated and committed team has continued to proactively lobby Essex County Council, EFDC and our Parish Council. This culminated in a series of successes against various developers. TBAG in collaboration with the Parish Council held a meeting with representatives of Essex Highways to remove the remaining obstructions in Station Hill and another example was lobbying EFDC to take 'direct action' in October 2012, over The Old Foresters unlawful portacabin issue. This was a victory in an ongoing battle with unscrupulous developers who bent the rules again during the summer months by operating an unlawful campsite and car park during the Olympics. Continued pressure on EFDC saw the campsite being dismantled shortly after the games were completed.

TBAG continue to work with the National Organisation of Residents Associations (NORA) and attended a Licensing seminar organized by them during the summer. We also joined the London Green Belt Council (LGBC) and TBAG representatives attended their AGM at The Palace of Westminster. TBAG were also invited to and attended the EFDC Heritage Asset Review – presentation meeting, which forms part of the evidence base for the new local plan.

TBAG has reviewed and made representations for a number of planning applications. Some of the more important objections, in pursuance of our remit to protect the Green Belt, included the appeal for a Foster Care Training Facility on the Old Foresters site, which appeal was dismissed; the application for four new houses at Blunts Farm which is ongoing and strong representations were made against a proposed telecommunications mast in a highly visible location within the village.

TBAG were not so successful in preventing EFDC Planning Committee East recommending granting planning permission on the land in Coppice Row bordering the forest where an eco friendly house is proposed on Green Belt land. Interestingly this is the same land put forward for housing in the Issues and Options process. This application then went to District Development Council Committee where TBAG and other village interest groups made representations of objection to the scheme where after it was categorically refused.

It is clear that 2013 will see an increase in work for our Committee particularly in light of the Government reforms of the Planning system.

The TBAG website; www.theydonbois-actiongroup.co.uk, saw an increase in hits during 2012 and remains an independent, helpful source of information about important issues happening in our village. The number of our supporters also increased in 2012. TBAG now has a presence on Twitter at @TBActionGroup.

I would again like to thank not only the entire Executive Committee but also those who regularly attend our meetings and contribute. Our supporters voluntarily give up their time and efforts to keep our village safe. The team is proactive, focused and as active as ever. We are an open book and always welcome new supporters.

Thank you all.

David McKelvey

Chairman

For further information about current issues please visit the TBAG website www.theydonbois-actiongroup.co.uk or attend our monthly meetings.