

The logo for Theydon Bois Action Group features the text 'Theydon Bois' in a green, sans-serif font above 'Action Group' in a larger, bold, orange, sans-serif font. The text is centered within a light green triangular shape that points downwards.

Theydon Bois Action Group

PROTECTING THE VILLAGE OF THEYDON BOIS

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2014

At the end of my first year as Chairman, I would firstly like to thank all of our Executive Committee for their continued efforts in helping to protect our village and its Green Belt surroundings. This has at times involved huge amounts of work at short notice in order to achieve our goals. I would also like to thank all of our supporters, many of whom have submitted objections to undesirable planning applications which would have harmed the character of our village.

We regret that, nationally, the new permitted development legislation which came into effect in April 2014 did not exempt the Green Belt in spite of strong views which were expressed in responses to the Government's Consultation Document. We were however delighted to see a press release and Ministerial Statement in October 2014 from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles MP urging Councils to protect our precious Green Belt land. It is hoped that this policy guidance will be fully taken on board by Epping Forest District Council in the determination of planning matters in our district, including the development of the "Local Plan" which will determine where and how many dwellings are required for the next 20 years. This Ministerial Statement is of particular importance as our District comprises of some 92.4% Green Belt land. The Council's Consultation on the "Preferred Options", where development could potentially take place, is now scheduled for May to July 2015.

We have continued to actively work with the London Green Belt Council (LGBC), the National Organisation of Residents' Associations (NORA) and CPREssex, who all provide valuable support and information which can assist us in achieving our objectives as stated in our Constitution. As a committee member of the LGBC, I took part in the launch at the House of Commons of the first comprehensive map of the Metropolitan Green Belt. This event was also attended by Eleanor Laing MP who participated in the discussion session.

Theydon Bois Action Group has continued to raise objections against inappropriate development which would affect our village, including making representations at the District Council's planning committee meetings. We have a good track record of successes and have made major contributions towards resisting a number of applications which would have compromised the Green Belt. Details of individual

planning applications covered by TBAG are reported in our Quarterly Updates which can be found on our Website. These are also published in Theydon Bois Village News.

The most serious threat to our Green Belt, and which also has far reaching implications for the future protection of the Green Belt to the east of the village, has been gaining momentum throughout 2014. The first indications of this threat took place back in March 2014 when contractors for Transport for London (TfL) cleared the former allotment site to the east of the tube line of all vegetation. The whole site was effectively razed to the ground, including the destruction of old apple trees which remained from the allotment days. This action on behalf of TfL took place with no warning and no consultation with the Parish Council or villagers. Various spurious explanations were given by TfL before TBAG finally learned that the construction of an 80 space car park was proposed for the site, which TfL claimed they could carry out without planning permission. TfL claim that they can exercise permitted development rights, based on old Victorian railway acts going back to 1845, which they have supported with Advice from their Counsel. TBAG are not convinced of this and have engaged our own barrister who has advised that the proposed development of a car park does not constitute permitted development and that a full planning application should be requested by Epping Forest District Council as a matter of law. Only with a normal planning application can a full and proper consultation with all interested third parties take place. Under permitted development, only limited comments can be made. Matters such as important Local and Government Green Belt Policies and traffic safety/Highways issues cannot be taken into account. Theydon Bois Action Group, our Parish Council and Rural Preservation Society are committed to doing all they can to ensure that TfL should submit a proper planning application and have entered into financial pledges to take the further legal action of a Judicial Review should this be necessary. The Chairpersons of TBAG, Theydon Bois & District Rural Preservation Society and CPREssex have met with Eleanor Laing MP to discuss the situation and seek her support. What villagers may not be aware of is that TfL put forward the existing car park land back in 2009 as a potential site for development in response to Epping Forest District Council's 'Call for Sites' exercise in relation to the production of the new Local Plan. The existing car park site is brownfield land and we do not know what plans TfL may have for this site in the future!

Finally, I would like to express my personal thanks to our two Webmasters who have put in many hours of work to get our new, enhanced Website up and running.

John Warren
Chairman

Theydon Bois Action Group www.theydonbois-actiongroup.co.uk
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