

THE FUTURE FOR LANGTON GREEN – bright or...?

DID YOU KNOW?

Much of the land in our village enjoys some form of protection – green belt, area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB), conservation, landscape importance, ancient woodland, local wildlife, nature reserve, open space... we are fortunate to have it all! And that is one of the reasons why we were recently voted as ‘*One of the best places to live in Kent.*’ (*Country Life* magazine)

This was supported in the recent Parish Plan Survey where over 96% of the 552 respondents from Langton Green (an extraordinarily high figure) said that conservation of the landscape, looking after the countryside and maintaining protected green areas are the most important aspects in making somewhere a good place to live. Those high figures demonstrate just how important it is to do what we can *to protect what we have, and enhance where we can.* That is where you as a resident can help.

WHERE ARE THE THREATS?

The Government’s Manifesto pledge to protect our green belt appears to be going out of the window. The Borough of Tunbridge Wells has to find space for 6000 dwellings in the period between 2016 - 2026. Some almost certainly will be built on green belt or even conservation land. Their draft Site Allocations Development Plan Document sets out where some/all of the possible sites for these dwellings lie. *Some are in your village or very close by.*

There is one on the A264 near Heathgate Corner; one close to the border with Rusthall; another on the Speldhurst Road and one close to The Hare crossroads. These may not go ahead - detailed investigations will take place first, but the fact that they are listed is a concern. And it is entirely feasible that others may be added to the list as the Borough Council have put out a second call for more sites. Some may be perfectly acceptable, others may not.

So why should *you* be concerned?

In the Parish Plan, you, the Langton Green residents stated that you were not totally averse to development as long as it is on brown field sites, small in size and preserving the character of the village, with a preference for more homes for the young. But those sites mentioned are potentially a threat to what you say you want to see.

There are other concerns. The preservation of the common land (the buffer zone!) between Langton Green and Tunbridge Wells is crucial for the protection of our village and its discrete identity. But watch what could happen on the Spa Golf Course – the property company Targetfollow, who own the Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Commons recently purchased an option to acquire the golf course from its members.

So we as a village must be vigilant. Our environment and way of life is under threat from different quarters, whether from development on protected land, the potential of removal of trees and woodland or the destruction of our tranquillity through aircraft or traffic noise. We as a village should vigorously oppose developments that we do not want.

Speldhurst Parish Council reviews all planning applications submitted to them by the Borough Council but their comments are advisory only. It is therefore crucial that you, the residents, comment on applications you disagree with. To do this you need to know when an application has been submitted, in time to have your say. You could look regularly on the Parish Council web site but the reality is that in the main, people don't. Attendance from members of the public at Council Planning meetings is low and only when the application has a direct impact on where they live do most people bother to attend. In future, members of the Langton Green Village Society will be advised by e-mail of any application that could impact on the nature or character of our village, in time to do something about it.

Another threat is the proposed Gatwick Airport expansion. Our Village Society Committee has been working with Speldhurst Parish Council and between us has been very vociferous and, with others, successful in redressing some of the recent adverse developments on air traffic over us, but there is still a long way to go. This involvement by volunteers of our village is for the benefit of everyone who lives here.

The work must go on. In the coming issues of this magazine, we will be looking at individual aspects of 'life in our village'. If you have something to say, please get in touch. Whether it is to do with planning, Gatwick, trees and woodland, village architecture, the environment.... please feel free to write to me at lgrs.secretary@gmail.com

If you care about your village and are not a signed up member of the Village Society (£5 pa) please see our adjoining ad in the magazine. We want your views and your support in keeping Langton Green 'one of the best places to live in Kent.' Thank you.

Ed Langridge

Chairman, Langton Green Village Society on behalf of the LGVS Committee

www.langtongreen.org.uk