

**SUBMISSION TO CIVIC VOICE FOR ITS RESPONSE TO THE
ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP ON THE GREEN BELT**

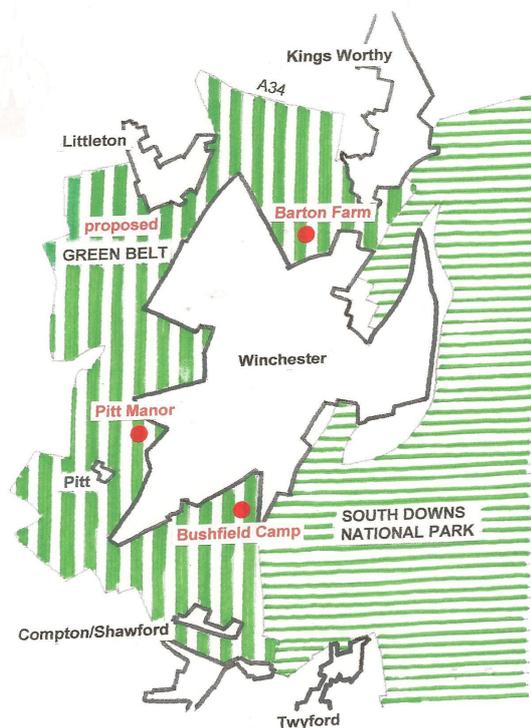
from

**THE CITY OF WINCHESTER TRUST (CWT)
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For some years CWT has wished to protect the compact character and setting of Winchester. To this end the Trust has attempted to promote the concept of heritage or historic town protection. This paper sets out the experience of the Trust to promote and use green belt legislation as a means to recognise, identify and protect the setting of of an historic city..

At the end of 2011, the CWT in conjunction with the Hampshire Gardens Trust, published '[Winchester and its Setting](#)' It did so to explain why the landscape setting was a very important component of the character of the historic City.



**Green Belt Proposal for
Winchester**

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This document was submitted in a representation on the Winchester District Plan Part 1 in March 2011. The representation contended that the Plan was unsound, in that whilst acknowledging the importance of the Setting, it did not define the Setting or propose adequate policies to protect the setting.

The National Planning Policy Framework was published at the end of March. It confirmed the importance Government attaches to Green Belts. Paragraph 80 stated that they had five purposes -

- a. to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
- b. to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another
- c. to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
- d. to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns and
- e. to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict land and other urban land.

It was contended that all five purposes of the Green Belt were entirely applicable to the setting and character of the historic city of Winchester, and that the Local Plan should contain a policy to designate a Green Belt around the north, west and south sides of Winchester to complement the South Downs National Park on the east side of the City – see attached plan showing these areas.

The written response of the City Council to this representation was that if the idea of a Green Belt around Winchester had any merit it would have been subject to debate through previous structure and local plans. No work had been undertaken on this issue in the preparation of the Plan. It expressed the view that those promoting a Green Belt for Winchester would find the prospect more damaging than the Local Plan is promoting.

At the **Local Plan Hearing** CWT responded by saying that the idea of a Green Belt had been dismissed because of the constraint it would impose on growth. CWT also drew the attention of the Inspector to the impact on the setting that two appeal decisions had made. The first at Pitt Manor Farm, for 200 houses, on the west side of the City, and Barton Farm, for 2000 houses, to the north. The Inspector was reminded of the SoS statement in the appeal decision for Barton Farm, where he considered that the 'proposal would be detrimental to the historic integrity of Winchester' and that 'He considers the appeal scheme does not comply with LP Policy W1 which seeks to protect and enhance the special and historic character of Winchester and its landscape setting.'

The Inspector in his Report, February 2013 stated –

139. The possibility of a Green Belt being defined around Winchester would have to involve the identification of an inner boundary which leaves space for sufficient new land for development to come forward, at the appropriate time, to meet the long term needs well beyond the timescale of this plan. Given the SDNP to the east, this would presumably affect land on the periphery of the

existing built up area to the north, west and south of the town. It would therefore partly prejudice complex decisions about the long term future of Winchester, that the Council is not in a position to realistically make at the present time. Nor should they in the absence of full consultation on and consideration of all the possible options that are practically deliverable.

140. In conjunction with the NPPF, the current suite of policies in this plan and elsewhere available to the Council is more than sufficient to ensure that inappropriate and/or unsustainable development proposals in and around Winchester are unlikely to progress during this plan period at least. The heritage assets and landscape of the town and the district as a whole should receive appropriate protection accordingly. Therefore there is no current necessity for a Green Belt around the town.

Planning is about protection and development. The landscapes at Pitt Manor Farm and Barton Farm were not protected by the current suite of policies. The proposal by the Inspector in the form of a modification to the Local Plan, to designate Bushfield Camp, to the south of the City, adjoining the National Park for 20 hectares of employment use, despite local gap and nature conservation values. So this land was also unprotected, despite all these important characteristics and strong local objection to development of this site.

In all three recent major decisions on the development for Winchester have been determined by central Government, rather than as a result of localism

While it may be reasonable for the Inspector to state that the landscape of Winchester should be protected from inappropriate development by the policies of the Local Plan part 1, for the plan period of 20 years to 2031, the proposal for a Green Belt is a long term policy, like that of a National Park, to influence and guide plan making for generations to come, not just the next 20 years.

CWT is reserving its position to formally request the City Council to undertake a consultation for designating a Green Belt around Winchester to protect the landscape setting of Winchester and to inform complex decisions about the long term future of the City.

The alternative approach is the possible creation of a Brown Belt and the birth of Greater Winchester.

This is a case not of a Green Belt designation being eroded, but of resistance by a local planning authority and a government inspector, to consider examining and using a legitimate piece of planning legislation and policy, whose criteria seems so applicable to the protection of the character and setting of the historic city of Winchester, in its' chalk downland landscape.

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