

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2021

BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT

We have spent the last year pursuing the strategic issues below, along with individual matters raised by constituents. Alan A was the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services for most of the year and then switched to the Planning & Regeneration portfolio in a recent cabinet reshuffle. Alan J has been an active member of the Housing & Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee, and of the Licensing Committee.

At the risk of stating the obvious, the Covid 19 pandemic has dominated the last twelve months, reducing the number of strategic issues to just the following.

Covid 19 - The council has done everything in its power to deal with the crisis as much as possible, both generally, and in four specific areas:

- passing on government grants to help businesses;
- keeping key services going as close to normal as possible, e.g. refuse collection;
- assisting with & enforcing the safety measures implemented by the Government; and
- supporting community initiatives to help those who have needed more assistance.

We pay tribute to the council staff who have pulled together and put in the extra effort to achieve these goals in the most difficult of circumstances.

Green Belt/Housebuilding/Planning - Local planning authorities like Dacorum are required to create Local Plans to guide the long term development of their areas.

These are typically controversial, and especially so in Dacorum's case, as the Government, with the support of Opposition Parties, is setting housebuilding targets which would force the development of some of the Green Belt.

Pretty much the whole of the Green Belt around Kings Langley has been proposed for development by the four landowners involved, but when the first draft of Dacorum's new Local Plan was published in the Autumn, we were successful in getting three sites omitted, leaving just one site in the plan, at Rectory Farm.

The Council is collating the roughly 3,500 comments received from the whole Borough during the first round of consultation, and considering our next options.

We are strongly opposed to the amount of housing being talked about, but we cannot get our Local Plan in place without Government approval, and without a Local Plan, developers will be allowed, on appeal, to build what they like where they like.

Undaunted, we will carry on doing what we can to retain what control we can over the Planning system in Dacorum, and to minimise the development of the Green Belt.

MSA Wars (Motorway Service Areas) - Three operators are seeking to build MSAs around our part of the M25 - Moto next to our nearest junction (junction 20), Extra between junctions 16 & 17, and Welcome Break next to the M40 interchange.

We are strongly opposed to the Moto scheme, because it would exacerbate the existing traffic congestion problem at junction 20, and be an unnecessary release of high visibility Green Belt, when Extra's scheme offers a much more ideal "online" MSA.

Whatever Three Rivers District Council decides with the Moto project, it will be down to the Government Secretary of State to determine all three proposals, as they involve the previously unplanned development of the Green Belt. We will do everything we can to support the junction 16/17 proposal and to oppose the junction 20 proposal.

In closing, it has been an honour and a privilege to represent and serve the parish on Dacorum Borough Council over the last year. As "dual councillors", we would also like to thank Parish colleagues and staff for their help and professionalism.

Alan Anderson & Alan Johnson,
Dacorum Borough Councillors.