You will know from the previous newsletter about the proposal to develop land around what is known as the Beehive fields off Trowbridge Road.

We recommend that your primary objection should be that this is, and has always been, designated in every Town Council Neighbourhood and Wiltshire Council Local Plan as GREEN BELT, and for the developers to describe it as Grey Belt is disingenuous to say the least.

The National Planning Policy Framework says (Section143) that the Green Belt serves 5 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 and other urban land.

At the Full Council meeting on Tuesday 7th July, Councillor Andy Gordon made some exceptionally important points. He has graciously given a summary for us to use:

“The following is a summary of the points I made last night about the concerns and potential impacts of the Beehive Field on the SAC (Special Area of Conservation) features and some but not all wider protected species. The claim by the developer that the site is not in proximity to Bath and Bradford on Avon SAC is not true for the following reasons:

1. Recorded bat foraging zones are used to assess the impacts of development on an SAC. The great horseshoe bats hibernation site at Gripwood is within 4km of development site and is within 4km of Iford Manor breeding GHS site. The development site is within 2km of lesser horseshoe maternity sites at Belcombe court and Kingston Mills. (Note LHS bats forage at a shorter distance to GHS bats). Note bats dont forage every bit of habitat for instance where a habitat has poor floristic they may not feed in this area.

2. GHS bats forage /feed in sheep grazed species rich pasture adjacent and along river.

3. Artificial light from the development can affect movement and navigation of bats especially barbastelle bats

4. The edges of Widcombe wood are important to LHS bats because of the edge effect from grassland to scrub to woodland supporting a larger number of insect species. The sport pitches will require flood lighting for autumn and winter month. Wiltshire Council (WC) will likely be looking to attach a lighting condition to mitigate impacts

5. Breeding bird survey only covers the period from May until June. It should have included March and April. April is a key month especially for skylarks and therefore the survey may not reflect the numbers and range of breeding pairs. The developers survey did pick up 2 pairs of breeding skylarks located in areas for housing and proposed to mitigate the loss by recreating habitat on the so called Country Park. But there are concerns about how they would prevent disturbance from dogs in a likely intensively used green space.

6. The site supports a beaver lodge and water voles both protected species.

7. In terms of SAC impact assessment process for the SAC the WC Biodiversity Team will firstly undertake an appropriate assessment as required by law where there is a likely significant affect on an SAC. This is the assessed by the Natural England and their advice forms an integral part of the material considerations in the LPA deciding whether or not to grant permission.’

He also suggested looking at the submission of Christopher (Kit) Pleydell-Pearce, which contains this visual evidence of flooding: https://sites.google.com/view/planning-application-boa/home

Other points can be made about the prospective increase in traffic and the congestion and damage to buildings and health that can be caused, and also the elimination of an important stretch of flood-plain,