

# SYNGENTA'S PLAN TO RAID THE GREEN BELT – BACKGROUND PAPER

## Main points:

- \*The Chinese State-owned agrochemical company Syngenta could be in line for a half a billion pound windfall if Bracknell Forest Council gain approval for a new Local Plan which surrenders 640 acres of irreplaceable Green Belt at Jealott's Hill, Warfield for 4,000 unnecessary homes and a science park.**
- \*Most of that windfall cash can be expected to go abroad and there is no commitment to any of it coming back to the community.**
- \*Another 10,000 cars will clog up what are already gridlocked local single-carriageway roads.**
- \*It will have a severe impact on biodiversity, with the destruction of hedgerows, woodlands, ponds and lowland which currently support barn owls, bats, breeding birds, badgers, great crested newts and stag beetles.**
- \*There is already enough brownfield built land on the present Jealott's Hill site to create a new science park, protect 800 existing jobs and create 1,200 more without raiding any of the Green Belt.**
- \*Bracknell Forest Council have specifically stated that they have already met the housing need from 2019-2036 without 4,000 houses at Jealott's Hill.**
- \*There is already 1,000,000 square feet of empty office space plus unlet industrial space in the borough to provide alternative sites for a science park.**
- \*Warfield is an ancient settlement mentioned in the Domesday Book.**

Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) is consulting on a revised New Local Plan which extends out to the year 2036. Part of this plan (Policy LP7) proposes changing the status of Syngenta's 640 acre site and land at Jealott's Hill into a "Garden Village" with 4,000 houses and a Science and Innovation Park. This is to support the continuation of agricultural research in state of the art facilities rather than the large scale field trials of the past.

Residents and parish organisations are strongly opposed to the sacrifice of irreplaceable Green Belt which will create a dangerous precedent for future housing development.

## ARGUMENTS AGAINST:

**There is already enough land built on at Jealott's Hill** to create the planned science and innovation park, protect the 800 jobs at Syngenta and encourage an additional 1,200 jobs. The Local Plan envisages 200,000 square metres (20 hectares) of floor space for the science park, yet the existing defined built area at Jealott's Hill already occupies 25 hectares!

Why does the science park need more space in precious Green Belt? If Syngenta believe that a science park makes good business sense for continuing research and development at Jealott's Hill, they should submit a planning application which RESPECTS the Green Belt and limits the land use to the existing built site of 25 hectares.

Why should a foreign-owned company benefit from a land value windfall - typically £1 million per acre, 500 acres of it for new housing – at the expense of contravening Green Belt policy and destroying the environment for the residents of Warfield and Bracknell's other northern parishes? What threat is envisaged to jobs at Syngenta if the council does not agree to its demands?

With in excess of 1,000,000 square feet of empty office space and strong reservations about the amount of industrial space unlet, there are plenty of alternative sites available for a science and innovation park in the current defined employment areas, if Jealott's Hill does not meet the future needs of Syngenta.

**It contravenes the BFC's own Local Plan Green Belt Strategy which claims to “protect the Green Belt.”** The quoted exceptional circumstances to protect a nationally important centre for scientific research can easily be met without sacrificing irreplaceable Green Belt.

**It fails to meet the criteria set out in BFC's Policies Local Plans 1 and 2 (LP1 and LP2) for sustainable use and defined settlements.**

**There is no requirement for 4,000 additional houses.** BFC's local plan explicitly states that the requirement for housing land is catered for up to 2036 without Jealott's Hill. Para 6.25 states that the allocation is NOT required to meet the local housing need (LHN).

**The local transport infrastructure does not support an additional 4,000 homes and the associated 10,000 vehicles.** Despite vague indications of road improvements between the site and the junction at the Three Legged Cross, the two North-South routes are already gridlocked at peak times because they are single-carriageway and feed onto traffic-flooded junctions as shown in the Transport Study referred to in the appendices of the Local Plan. The site has already been rejected on transport grounds by BFC in the previous version of the Local Plan!

BFC policy for Bracknell town centres focusses on attracting residents from all the surrounding areas for leisure, retail and social activities, particularly to Bracknell's huge new Lexicon shopping/leisure “destination”, making worse the congested North-South routes if 10,000 extra people take advantage of what BFC has been promoting for 30 years.

There is no mention of the impact that the Syngenta plans would have on neighbouring boroughs such as Windsor and Maidenhead, Ascot and Wokingham, yet they would need to take account of such a major development, and make funds available for transport and infrastructure improvements such as access to major trunk roads like the M3 and M4.

**BFC are riding roughshod over the painstakingly prepared Warfield Neighbourhood Plan** in contravention of the stated strategy for close cooperation with such local Neighbourhood Plans (paragraph 1.8 to 1.11). This plan follows the Bracknell policies of respecting Green Belt and focussing developments inside settlement boundaries.

**It contravenes the stated BFC Local Plan policies for Employment Areas** (paragraph 4.16 to 4.18) which focus new employment in defined employment areas and recognise the views stated by local employers to be close to the amenities provided in the town centre. It also contravenes the stated policy of keeping industries with potential to generate noxious odours (such as agrochemical research) away from residential areas.

With more than one million square feet of empty office space and strong reservations about the amount of industrial space unlet, there are plenty of alternative sites available for a science and innovation park in the current defined employment areas.

**Find out more:** Visit [www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/draftlocalplanconsultation](http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/draftlocalplanconsultation) and specifically look at pages 50-51 and Policy LP 7.