

March 26 2017

'Save green belt for our children' is loud and clear message as protestors prepare for city centre rally

Organisers are urging thousands of residents to support a rally in central Manchester to protest against controversial plans to build on green belt.

The Albert Square rally - organised by Save Greater Manchester's Green Belt - follows a host of successful local group rallies, and tens of thousands of objections to plans for new housing and industrial development across the region.

"This might be an April first rally," said SGMGB chairman Steven Longden, "But our opposition to these plans is far from a joke.

"We're maintaining the terrific impetus created by the local protest groups, and hope that the powers that be can see just how serious we are about scrapping these plans in the current format.

"Our peaceful protest, in front of the TV cameras, will highlight how passionately opposed the ordinary folk of Greater Manchester are about this blueprint to destroy our green belt and damage communities.

"Of course we understand, and have empathy with the need for affordable housing; and of course we understand the need to create new jobs for the future. We have children and grandchildren.

" But these same children, and their parents, need places to walk and run and relax and play. We must protect this natural environment and secure it for future generations.

"We would urge the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to go back to the drawing board to ensure a much greater amount of brownfield is proposed than the current 70% target stated in the plan. Previously much higher targets were being achieved by authorities across Greater Manchester."

Longden said he was confident that hundreds, if not thousands would support the rally outside the city's town hall.

More follows

Save Greater Manchester's Green Belt

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The draft spatial framework - the combined authority's development blueprint for the next 20 years - has faced widespread negative feedback since being published towards the end of 2016.

The proposals, embraced by each borough, show the building of 225,000 new homes, and millions of square metres given to office and industrial space.

And the decimation of vast areas of protected green belt.

But many local MPs have criticised the plans, and mayoral candidate and Leigh MP Andy Burnham described them as unfair and disproportionate, adding they needed to be radically rewritten.

Lib Dem mayoral candidate Jane Brophy went one step further and said the 20 year framework should be scrapped altogether.

The rally, to be staged outside Manchester town hall has support from the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) who also submitted a withering response to the spatial framework - highlighting potential flaws in the authority's estimations and calculations on housing and jobs.

Longden said that he wanted parents to bring their children to the event which involves several speakers, and a range of competitions for best posters and children's fancy dress.

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PHOTO CAPTION: Saving greenbelt for our children...SGMGB chairman Steve Longden with kiddies from Save Shaw's Greenbelt.

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