

Council meeting 10th July 2014

This is a Statement on behalf of the South of Bath Alliance (SOBA) by Colin Webb

40 years have passed since an unenlightened Bath Council wrought havoc on our city in what became known as the Sack of Bath.

With the unnecessary removal of acres of valuable artisan housing – ironically artisan housing sorely needed today - their action is still identified by the ugly replacement buildings which remain as scars on the city.

Of course it is impossible to forecast how we might look back on today in another 40 years. But we believe that the inclusion in the Core Strategy of crucial green belt at the Southstoke plateau as land designated for new housing will coalesce the city with the countryside and will have comparable negative implications.

Eric Pickles, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local government, has stated that only in **exceptional** circumstances should such release of green belt land be considered.

We regard the circumstances that have led to Southstoke green belt being in the Core Strategy as **not** being exceptional and more a matter of political expediency. As such it is a compromise of staggering proportions.

As Adam Fergusson the distinguished author of The Sack of Bath has written

*“If I were the Minister, or the Secretary of State, or his Inspector, reviewing new proposals for in-and-around Bath, I would say this: “Plan as you please, but don’t come back to me to approve any development in the countryside **until every brown-field acre in this world-heritage site has been used up**; and every existing building properly occupied” And, even after that, **I would add that the green belt round Bath is not negotiable.**”*

Councillor Crossley has posted on his Facebook page

"Whilst I fully accept *some* people will be disappointed overall, it is good news for us *all,*' He has thus chosen to ignore and dismiss the 1,400 signatories to a petition presented to this Council from Bath residents and from people around the world – those who regard the green belt at Bath as being sacrosanct and a key aspect of our UNESCO status. It is not good news for **all of us**.

And to quote once more Adam Fergusson:

“No matter that the country is said to need more houses on more virgin land: what remains of the beauty and uniqueness of Bath, its ethos and its context, is simply not to be trifled with, not to be compromised any more.”

Fortunately for them the names of the Councilors responsible for the travesty of 40 years ago have been lost in the mists of time.

But in July 2014 this is the moment to recognize that a vote against the proposition or a deferment is the result needed to secure, protect and maintain the all essential green belt as designated.

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