Voting in forthcoming local and national elections for Queen Edith's residents concerned about Green Belt development

by Chris Rand, October 2014

1. Queen Edith's By-Election, November 2014

The City Council by-election for Queen Edith's, in November 2014, will be to replace Councillor Sue Birtles, who has resigned from her position. Sue was the first (and so far, only) Labour councillor ever elected in this area. As somebody concerned about Green Belt development, which of the four candidates should get our vote?

1.1 Who can win?
On past form, the election would seem to be between the **LibDem** and **Labour** candidates, but both the **Conservative** and **Green** candidates have a sufficient enough bedrock of votes to make a breakthrough and challenge the favourites, should they have a very strong campaign. So anything is possible.

1.2 Who is most likely to fight Green Belt development?
The most important guide we have is a city council debate on the Local Plan in June 2013. In this, the council's only independent member proposed an amendment to the plan which would delete the two Wort's Causeway sites. He was supported in this by the council's only Conservative party member, Shapour Meftah. Queen Edith's LibDem councillors who had spoken out against the GB1/GB2 development refused to support the amendment. Our Labour councillor was not present to vote. However, the Labour party, in particular George Owers, its Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources, has been forthright to the point of rudeness in dismissing arguments from the Save The Green Belt campaign.

1.3 Who should we vote for?
The Conservative party would appear to have shown its commitment to actively opposing Green Belt development. The Green party says it would do likewise, but with no councillors in Cambridge recently, has not had a chance to demonstrate this in practice. Early signs in terms of campaign commitment would indicate that the Conservative party will have the edge as the party (of the two) most likely to make the breakthrough and challenge the LibDems or Labour, neither of which can be endorsed for those wanting to cast a vote opposing Green Belt development.

2. General Election, May 2015: South Cambridgeshire

2.1 Who can win?
It is important to note that as Queen Edith's residents, we are not in the Cambridge city constituency, but in the largely rural South Cambridgeshire constituency which encircles the city to the north, west and south. This is a straight, two-way fight

between the **Conservatives** and **LibDems**. No other party stands anything but the remotest chance of winning.

2.2 Who is most likely to fight Green Belt development?
As we're now talking about national parties, there may not be much between the two. Conservative Local Government secretary Eric Pickles has been making encouraging noises about protecting Green Belts from developments.

2.3 Who should we vote for?
Either the Conservatives or LibDems – but concerned voters may wish to choose on factors other than Green Belt development.

3. General Election, May 2015: Cambridge

3.1 Who can win?
Although Queen Edith's is not in Cambridge, with little to play for in our own constituency (above), some residents may wish to get involved in the Cambridge campaign, where there is a stark contrast in policies. Here the fight is between the sitting **LibDem** MP, and **Labour**.

3.2 Who is most likely to fight Green Belt development?
Accoriding to the Daily Telegraph, "Labour will allow more homes to be built on parts of the protected Green Belt if the land has little 'environmental or amenity value'. The small print of the report which is expected to form the basis of housing policy, published Sir Michael Lyons, discloses that Green Belt with little 'environmental or amenity value' is at risk. The report singles out the Green Belt around cities like Oxford, Cambridge, York and Bristol as ripe for development."

3.3 Who should we support?
It is quite clear that the LibDems are far more likely to oppose Green Belt development, and that the sitting LibDem MP should receive our support.