

Current state of play

As you are all able to see, Forster Country remains untouched. The storm clouds that are approaching have not yet deluged us. While there is life there is hope.

From our perspective it is unfortunate that the Stevenage Local Plan was formally adopted by Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) at a meeting on the 22nd of May.

Immediately prior to this meeting we had sent a hand delivered letter to all Stevenage Councillors asking them to oppose the adoption of the Plan. Our reason was that the Plan

intends building on Green Belt land in the face of recent evidence. This evidence from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) 2016 data shows that Stevenage will need **1,954 FEWER** houses than shown by the 2014 data on which the Plan was based. This building also contradicts the approach taken by the Greater London Council which agrees with our understanding of the NPPF, and which quite rightly refuses to build a single house on Green Belt land. We said in our letter that the promise of strong protection of the Green Belt is enshrined in the manifestos of all the major political parties and for good reason.

We also said in our letter that the Stevenage Green Belt both can and should be saved. To stick to a plan that takes away the precious Green Belt when it can be avoided seems pernicious. The destruction of the Green Belt is not only unprincipled, it is

unnecessary.

During the discussions at the SBC meeting adopting the Local Plan we understand that a suggestion to leave Green Belt until last was made. We hope that this will have made an impression. It is also true that any builder will have to be confident that projected housing will sell and it is

possible that current market conditions may not be favourable for developers. At the time of preparing this article no planning application for building on Forster Country has been made.

We have also sent a letter to all prospective Conservative Party Leadership Contenders saying that the promise of strong protection of the Green Belt is stated in earlier

Conservative Party manifestos. It asks will you, if elected leader, stick to the promises regarding Green Belt made at the time of the election of the Conservatives to Government along with any promises you may make during the hustings? Whether or not this could possibly have any effect on Forster Country is difficult to tell.

On a more positive note we have held, without prejudice, a meeting with

SBC relating to the approximately 48-hectare area being designated as a country park within Forster Country. FoFC said that it would be well received if the country park could be named in honour of E M Forster to which the answer was “yes” with the additional desire to apply the names of Forster’s books where applicable including to streets within the housing development. We said that planning and creating a country park requires a design input, with descriptive documentation, specification of access paths, planting and furniture along with suitable drawings.

It was agreed that it would be good if FoFC could meet the potential developers (Bellway Miller (BM) for some discussion of the way forward for the country park. SBC agreed to organise this. FoFC said also that a volunteer force might be able to be established to work perhaps in conjunction with Countryside Management Services to help maintain

the country park. SBC agreed with this and said that it is already happening in other parts of Hertfordshire.

So, we are still attempting a rear-guard action against the housing whilst simultaneously looking to retain a link with E M

Forster should we eventually be left with the relatively small green area planned by SBC.

John Spiers

A 'lost' work of Elizabeth Poston

Among the works missing from Elizabeth Poston's archive of music that was left at Rooks Nest House, after she died in 1987, was her Concertino da Camera on a Theme of Martin Peerson, written for early instruments in 1957 and based on a transcription by her friend, Marylin Wailes; all that could be found among her papers was a single MS title-page.

The work, described by a critic as new wine poured successfully into old bottles, had been dedicated to Marylin and her London Consort of ancient instruments.

Elizabeth thought that Marylin's copy of her music was the only one in existence when, in August 1985, she asked for its return in order to add it to her 'National Archive', explaining, 'I am trying very hard to put together writing I count of any value & leave it tidily while I am still alive & not forgetting or gaga!'

There is no evidence that the music was actually returned before Elizabeth



Elizabeth Poston as a young woman

died but a copy (perhaps Marylin's) did, at some time, get into the possession of Faber Music and, in January 1968, was passed on to David Munrow, the well-known enthusiast for

early music and ancient musical instruments.

After Munrow's untimely death in 1976 that copy was given by his widow to the virtuoso recorder player, John Turner. He, finally, with the kind permission of the copyright-holder, Simon Campion, has now had it published by Peacock Press, (PJT 201) and a copy has been safely deposited at the British Library with the rest of Elizabeth's extant manuscripts.

He has also recorded the work on the Prima Facie label (PFCO 005) with Richard Simpson (oboe d'amore), Richard Tunnicliffe (viola d'amore) and Ian Thompson (harpsichord).

The piece has the unique position of being the particular one Elizabeth chose when asked to lecture on the subject of composition; now that the music has been found and printed we can follow more clearly what she described with such enthusiasm.

John Alabaster

AGM

The 2019 Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Forster Country will be held at Springfield House, High Street, Stevenage on Saturday, August 17th at 2.30 pm.

The business meeting will be followed by refreshments.

Please make every effort to attend.

Apologies should be sent to the Secretary, Marion Ohlendorf.

Telephone 01438 361470 or e-mail rmohlendorf@gmail.com

Birthday Walk

A record number of 39 people attended the Birthday Walk on 1st January, 2019, many of whom enjoyed refreshments in the Parish Room of St. Nicholas' Church afterwards. As the church is now closed for refurbishment until February, 2020, this will not be an option next year.

Patrons of the Friends of the Forster Country

John Alabaster. Margaret Ashby. Nicola Beauman. Barbara Follett. Sir Andrew Motion. John Pilgrim. Richard Whitmore

Officers

Chairman - John Spiers, 25 Whitney Drive, Stevenage SG1 4BE. 01438 350217
Secretary - Marion Ohlendorf, 4 Chestnut Walk, Stevenage, SG1 4DD. 01438 361470

Newsletter

Editor - Angela Hepworth 01438 351462. Design - Peter Kingsnorth 01438 869557
web - www.forstercountry.org.uk