

For Witham Central

Spring 2017



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Witham Deserves Better Green Councillor renews calls for big improvements to local health services and transport

Major development is now underway around Witham with several thousand houses expected to be built over the next 15 years. But many residents are asking *'when is Witham going to get the better services that the town needs ?'*

In total, Braintree District Council is being required by the Government to allocate land for 14,600 houses in the district up to the year 2033.

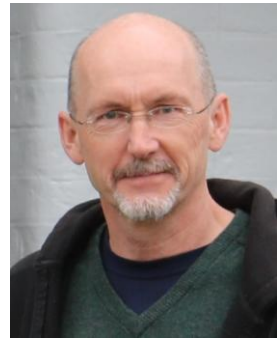
In the 3 years to 2016, an average of 370 homes a year were built in the district. **But the new target in BDC's Draft Local Plan is 860 a year – well over double the previous rate of building.** Most of that development will be in the countryside around Witham and Braintree and the larger villages.

County Councillor James Abbott, who represents Witham Central ward residents at County Hall, has been the only local councillor to consistently challenge the development targets and to press the ruling Conservatives to deliver on their long-promised improvements to local services.

He said: **"Clearly Witham does need new housing, particularly for local people that is affordable to buy or rent, as well as more local jobs. But development has to be at a level that the town can cope with and it must be matched by big improvements in services.** If re-elected in May I will take every opportunity to press the case that **Witham needs its own Community Hospital or Walk-in-Clinic.** We also need a **comprehensive plan to ease congestion on the roads,** with upgrades to access at the railway station, a review of parking in the town, better bus services and completion of the cycleway and footway networks."

Cllr. James Abbott will continue to fight for a better deal for Witham.

He has lived in the Witham Northern county division since the 1960s and talks to local residents and groups regularly about the local improvements needed.



Delivering on our Pledges

In May 2013, voters in Witham Northern elected the first ever Green Party County Councillor for Witham. In 2013 the Greens promised to work for reform at County Hall and to represent local residents as a first priority. 4 years on, **the Greens have delivered.** Working with colleagues at County Hall, Cllr. James Abbott has:

- ✓ **Ended "free meals"** for Labour, Tory and Lib Dem councillors – this was costing Essex taxpayers tens of thousands of pounds a year
- ✓ **Opened up council meetings** so that residents can now ask questions at all main meetings
- ✓ **Worked consistently** to get potholes and failed streetlights fixed, improved footways and ensured that crossings are safer

He has also worked with residents to help deliver:

- ✓ New lining along **Guithavon Valley and Mill Lane** to ease parking problems along those roads
- ✓ Solutions to flooding problems in **Newland Street, Avenue Road and near the railway station**
- ✓ **Protection for local green spaces**
- ✓ **Funding for new pedestrian safety projects** to be completed in the next year

On 4th May there will be elections to Essex County Council.

If re-elected, Cllr. James Abbott will continue to press strongly for improved health services for Witham.

He will be an independent voice representing Witham residents at County Hall.

Community Policing

Many residents have reported their concerns about low levels of policing and longer waits for calls to 101 to be answered.

In October 2016 the new Essex Police & Crime Commissioner Roger Hirst held a public meeting in Witham. Almost all the questions put to him and senior police officers were about lack of policing and poor communications. The main cause is cuts in funding from the Government.

Witham Police station has been closed, most PCSOs have gone and the police are responding to fewer calls. Waits on 101 have been reported as being as long as 50 minutes.

James Abbott, County Councillor for Witham Northern division, which includes Witham Central ward said

"I support the local police. Community policing is an essential public service. Being able to contact the police to report crime, getting a good response to calls and having local police about to give reassurance to residents should be high on the agenda of decision makers.

But local policing is being undermined by budget cuts. This area has been particularly hard-hit but residents are being asked to pay more in council tax for a reduced service.

Mr Hirst says he is aware of the problems and is trying to get better funding for the police in Essex – let us hope he succeeds."

The Green's offer to voters at the 4th May county council elections is clear:

"supporting local communities and protecting our shared environment"

Recycling services

Braintree District Council suspended collections of garden waste in the green bins between 5th December and 27th February.

This service reduction was on top of Essex County Council's decision to reduce services at **Witham Recycling Centre on the industrial estate**. Residents can no longer take DIY type waste there and all vans are banned except for blue badge holders.

Conservative Essex County Council says it has changed the rules to stop commercial waste being taken to recycling sites. **But it is not applying the rules evenly** – the Braintree site still takes DIY waste and allows vans in so long as it is household materials being taken.

Green Party Councillors tabled a motion to the December Full Council meeting at County Hall calling for a rethink. This followed concerns that the new rules could result in increased fly-tipping. Residents **have also reported been turned away from the Witham Recycling Centre** and told to go to Chelmsford even though they were bringing in their own materials.

Greens have always supported recycling as the best way of treating waste – meaning that resources are re-used and avoiding landfill or incineration. **Greens support making recycling as easy as possible for residents and local businesses.** By encouraging more recycling businesses to locate on existing industrial areas, local jobs are generated and the distances waste has to be trucked will be reduced.

For 24 years, Greens have worked with local communities to oppose plans for first landfill, and then a waste incinerator at Rivenhall Airfield, and will continue to do so to protect air quality for Witham and to avoid more HGVs coming through the town.

Caring for vulnerable people

Social Care funding for the most vulnerable people in Essex is in "crisis".

Those are the words of the Conservative Leader of Essex County Council who has warned the Government that ECC will not be able to fully protect services for those who need care if funding cuts continue.

The Government has allowed councils to apply a "levy" to help support Social Care Services and for 2017/18 this means ECC will increase council tax by 3% – but even so, reductions in funding from the Conservative Government means there will still be cuts to Social Care.



If there is a local issue you need help with, please get in touch:
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