

Havering's Green Belt Under Threat!



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Havering Data Centre - an artist's impression!



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Havering Data Centre - Introduction

- ▶ We may need data centres, **but why so large?**
 - ▶ **600mw** data centre. Enough to power **375,000 homes** or **2.4million electric cars annually***! Yes, it is monstrous! Reportedly the largest in Europe.
 - ▶ **Imagine 214 football pitches'** worth of farmland destroyed! That's around **1x1.5 miles**. Or **200 hectares**
 - ▶ **12 - 15 buildings**, up to **21 metres high**, enclosed by **16 metre fencing**.
 - ▶ Large data centres can consume up to **5million gallons of drinking quality water per day** (source: Environmental and Energy Study Institute)
 - ▶ As energy and water usages increases, so do the **carbon emissions**. **Carbon Net Zero?** We don't think so.
- ▶ And why on Green Belt?
 - ▶ Because it's the **cheapest and most vulnerable land that developers can buy** in London?
 - ▶ Reef (the developer) says there are no suitable brownfield sites with easy access to 600mw of power? But is this correct?
 - ▶ Big question mark - can Warley Sub-Station actually produce 600mw? It will not be all green energy or renewables for years (source: National Power)
 - ▶ BESS?
- ▶ Is it appropriate to destroy **200 hectares** of virgin Metropolitan Greenbelt and G1-G3 farmland?

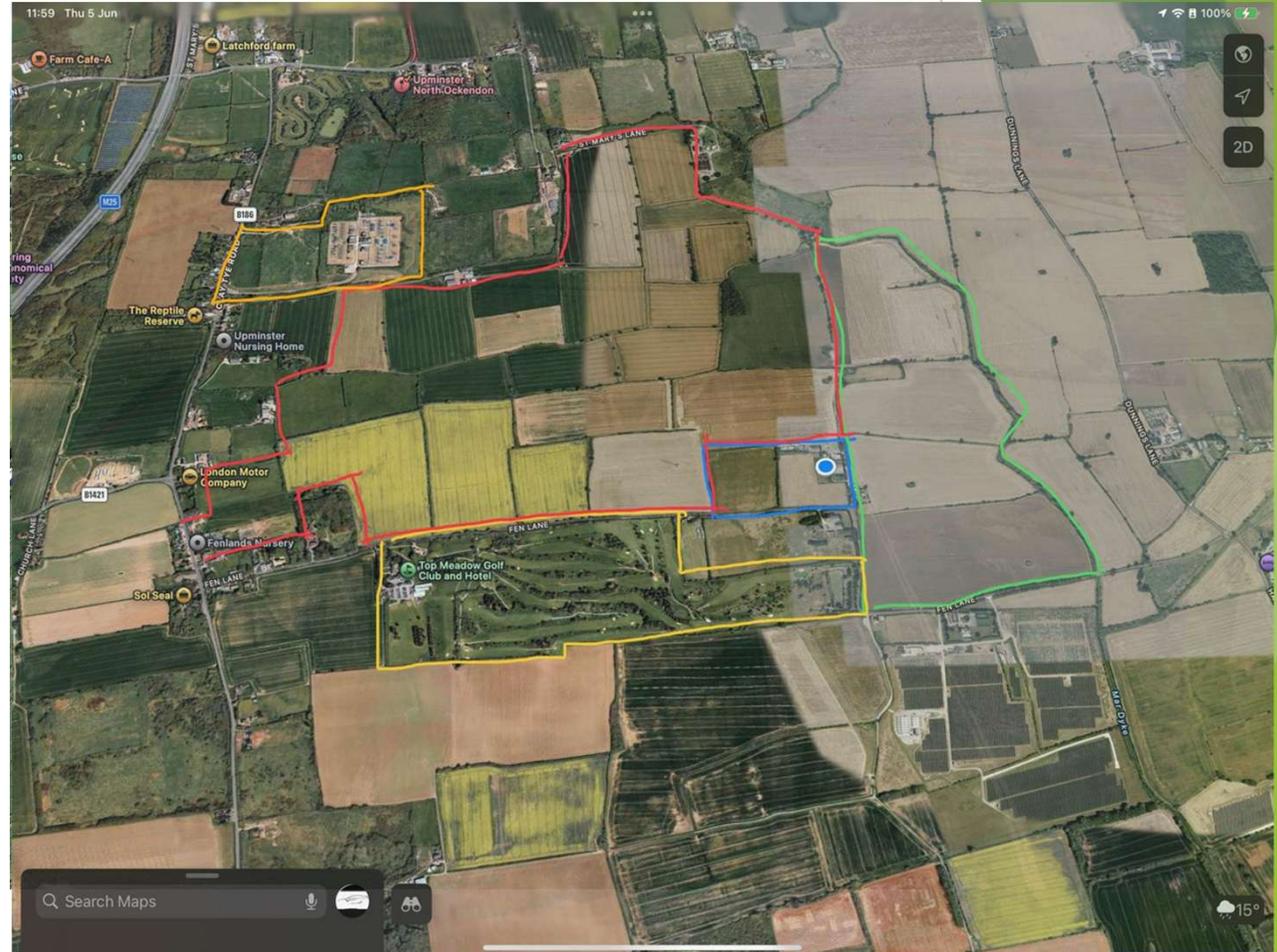
* source: International Energy Agency

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Havering Data Centre - How Big?

- ▶ This shows what just under 200 hectares (1.25 square miles) looks like.
- ▶ G1-G3 crop producing farmland in the Green Belt.
- ▶ M25 to the west (left), Top Meadow Golf Club is to the south, Bulphan to the east (right).
- ▶ The red boundary line shows land to be taken by the data centre.



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Havering Data Centre - Green Belt

- ▶ Isn't Green Belt protected?
 - ▶ Yes, under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Green Belt is, indeed protected, except in **Very Special Circumstances (VSCs)**.
 - ▶ There are restrictive 'golden rules' under which some developments may be possible, but this doesn't meet that criteria, - Planning are **struggling to find** those VSCs.
 - ▶ VSCs should not be financially driven.
 - ▶ Remember, even the Government and Local Planning Authorities are not above planning laws.

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Havering Data Centre - Green Belt

- ▶ 5 purposes of the Green Belt:
 - ▶ to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - ▶ to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - ▶ to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - ▶ to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
 - ▶ to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

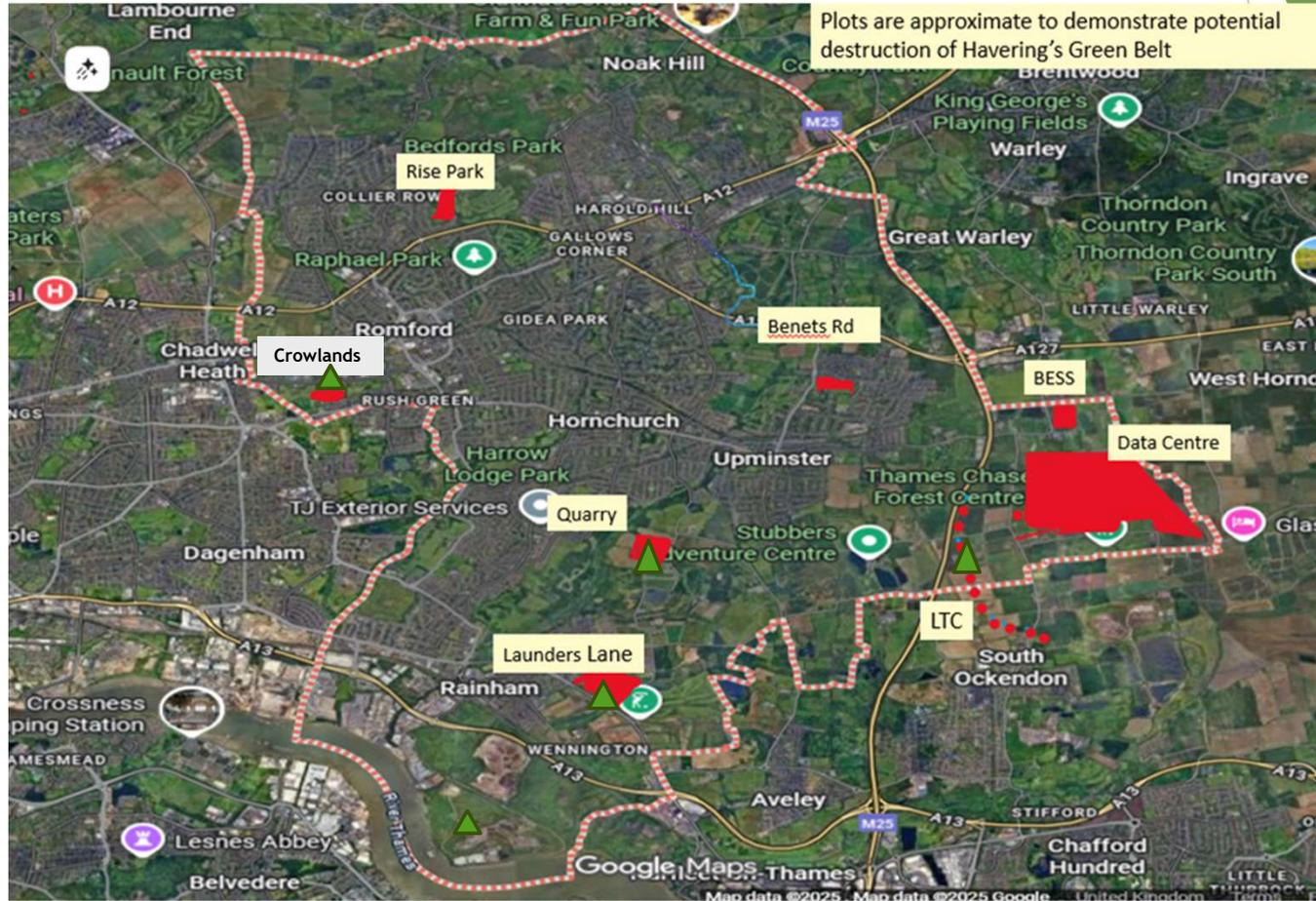
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Havering Data Centre - a Race to the Bottom

Key

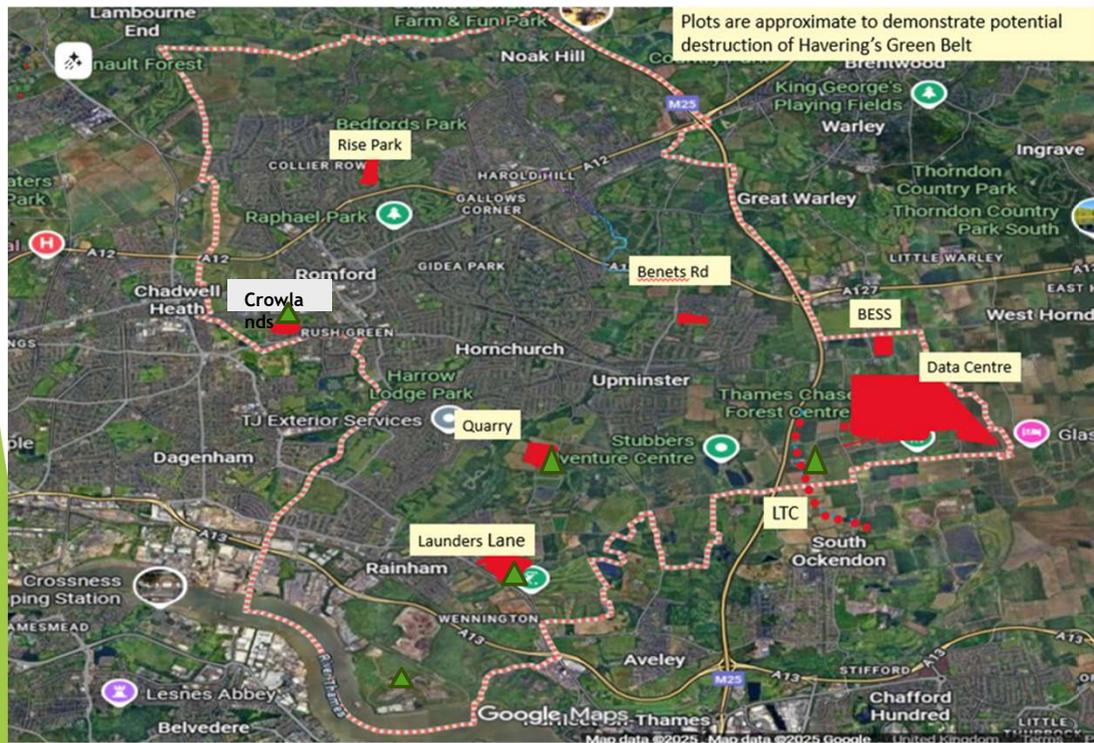
-  Approximate location of Green Belt threats
-  Particularly hazardous air pollutants



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Havering Data Centre - Meet the Neighbours

Threats in Havering



Threats next door



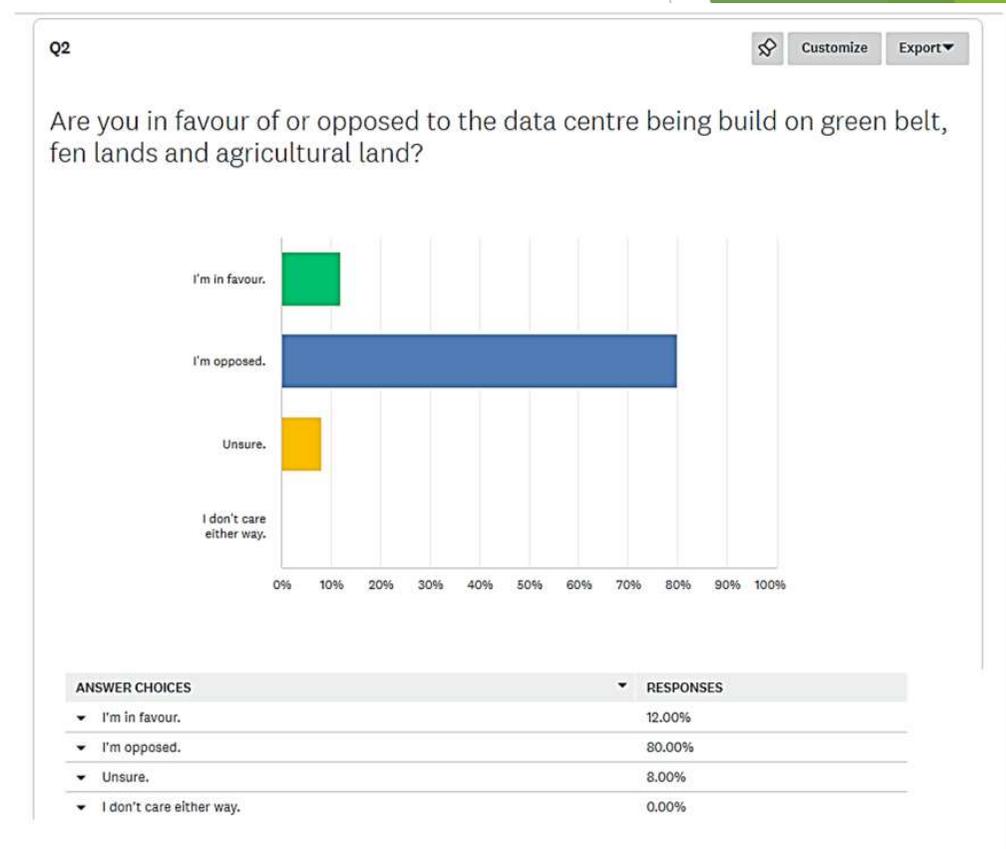
London Freeport
Doubling of berth
size

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Havering Data Centre - Goodbye to Green Belt

- ▶ What do residents say?
 - ▶ **80% of Havering residents and others polled do not want it ruining the precious Green Belt.** (Survey in Summer 2025)
- ▶ What could it mean for the future?
 - ▶ **Sets a precedent for future encroachment**
 - ▶ **Further industrialisation of the Green Belt in Havering.** (ie, expansion of London Freeport industries)
 - ▶ **Even more Green Belt eradicated forever.**
 - ▶ **Where will be the next Green Belt target?**
 - ▶ **Losing the 'lungs of London'!**



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Havering Data Centre - How will it affect you?

- ▶ Impacts will stretch way beyond North Ockendon
 - ▶ 10-12 years of construction, they say
 - ▶ Flooding - it's fenland
 - ▶ Roads and transport disruption and congestion for years
 - ▶ Unsuitable narrow country lanes
 - ▶ Increased noise, dust and air pollution
 - ▶ Property prices (10% already lost east of St Mary's Lane to BESS)
 - ▶ Mental health impacts
- ▶ And after?
 - ▶ Water supply access and increased utility bills?
 - ▶ Electricity supply access and increased bills?
 - ▶ Flooding - it's still fenland
 - ▶ Constant hum 24/7
 - ▶ Further developments on further Green Belt?
 - ▶ Quality of life? (But we'll have an Eco Park!)
 - ▶ Do the public want or need an Eco Park?



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Havering Data Centre - Nature

- ▶ What about the wildlife and ecology?
 - ▶ Who lives on this land?
 - ▶ Badgers
 - ▶ Great-crested newts
 - ▶ Muntjac
 - ▶ c.60 species of birds across the seasons
 - ▶ Nesting bats
 - ▶ Grass snakes, adders
 - ▶ And adjacent, their human neighbours
 - ▶ And the land itself?
 - ▶ Fens - and hence, a flood plain.
 - ▶ Partially a SINC designation
 - ▶ Crops, lots of crops. Barely a failed harvest!
 - ▶ Rare grasses
 - ▶ Until 2022 site of a G2 listed building - Bullens and Herds!



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Havering Data Centre - the Developer

- ▶ What's known about Digital Reef/Digital Origin?
 - ▶ Proposing to build both East Havering and Didcot Data Centres.
 - ▶ **Self proclaimed** 'experts in building data centres' **BUT** they have **NEVER** built a data centre! A risk to the Council and residents in itself?
 - ▶ Most likely will be financially backed by a hyperscaler (ie AWS, Microsoft, etc).
 - ▶ LPA advise that no background checks/due diligence undertaken on developers, even for this scale!
 - ▶ Only two disastrous drop-ins for residents in Spring 2024 :
 - ▶ No realisation that
 - ▶ the site is on **fenland**,
 - ▶ North Ockendon is a **Conservation Area** and
 - ▶ the site is encircled by **narrow country lanes**.
 - ▶ No engagement since.

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Havering Data Centre - The Spin

- ▶ Ward Councillors will not **speak to residents** about the data centre until the LDO is submitted. That's too late.
 - ▶ They wanted and needed early support and that has been severely lacking.
 - ▶ There's been a steep learning curve.
 - ▶ Two are cabinet members, therefore obliged to support the project.
 - ▶ Others have stepped up and supported where they can.
- ▶ Open meeting with residents and Council Leadership at Top Meadow in Summer 2024
 - ▶ very little meaningful information relayed and passed the baton to Local Planning Committee
 - ▶ Council said they do not get involved in planning matters
- ▶ Dialogue with LPA:
 - ▶ Unlawful work by Reef's contractors
 - ▶ Unlawful disturbance of badgers
 - ▶ Destruction of public footpath
- ▶ Council press articles and communications - one-sided promotional greenwash of purported but unproven benefits of the data centre.
- ▶ Never a mention of the **risks, dangers, impacts and environmental costs.**



Reef's contractors unlawful work on FP 233



****NO HRA SUPPORT FOR RESIDENTS - A WALL OF SILENCE****

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Havering Data Centre - What Happens Next?

- ▶ Local Development Order due to be submitted any day now (Autumn 2025). **No input from local residents**
- ▶ Strategic Planning Committee will meet to decide on the way forward - approve or decline.
- ▶ Council have openly communicated they '**expect**' approval by the SPC in January 2026 (is that Pre-determination?)
 - ▶ A consultation period with a **minimum of 28 days** will allow public and relevant bodies to scrutinise and respond.
 - ▶ There will be **lots and lots of documentation!**
 - ▶ **Environmental Impact Assessment is crucial** and will be subject to intense scrutiny and challenge (Middlewick Ranges case springs to mind).

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A diversion - BESS - Application P1498.24 For BESS St.Mary's Lane Upminster - an obvious enabler?

- This demonstrated how easy an application can be approved, if the council so wish:
 - Application for Battery Storage on 11 Hectares on virgin Agricultural Green Belt
 - **97.5% of Havering Residents** who responded **objected** to the application
 - The 3 Upminster Ward Councillors opposed and **'Called In'** the application
 - Application approved at the Special Planning Committee Meeting on 10th July -
 - 3 Votes (HRA) to 1 (Lab,) 1 absention (Con)
 - If there were a 50/50 split, decision the Chairman gets the deciding vote, he is one of the 3 HRA councillors
 - The HRA Pledge is to protect valued Green Spaces and the Green Belt.
 - They are not honouring their pledges on which they were voted in.
 - They are not listening to Havering Residents - what is their true agenda?



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Havering Data Centre - How you Can Help

- ▶ **Object** to developments on the Green Belt.
- ▶ **Collaboration** - anyone can support the campaigns against the data centre and other groups. Together we can be stronger
- ▶ Help, advise on, share and scrutinise the LDO.
 - ▶ We will always welcome **more technical and planning experts** and support.
- ▶ Familiarise yourself with available data and do your own research - and **question everything!**
- ▶ **Contact us:**
 - ▶ Facebook - **No to Havering Data Centre group** for information or grab the QR code below now.
 - ▶ Email: NORAagainstEHDC@hotmail.com
ian_michael_pirie@btinternet.com



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Havering Data Centre - Save the Green Belt!



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