

When New Homes Make Sense

Sir Peter Bottomley MP

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With the help of a diary or a journal, it is easy to check my unreliable memory that six months ago I received a very short-notice invitation to view proposals to cement over the green land to the Lansdown Nursery, between the A259 and the southern boundary of the South Downs National Park at Highdown.

The nursery site proposal was for over 100 new homes with nearly 200 car spaces. An exhibition at Ferring Village Hall did not win local support. Under the subtitle Benefits and Opportunities, the accurate words were 'A Distinctive Place'.

That 'distinctive place' is not expected to be a contrast to the approach to the National Park. Is it not an insult to our common sense to 'maximise the opportunities to provide green energy solar panels or electric vehicle charging points' there? The 'wide mix of unit sizes will deliver a housing development for all generations. . . ' All can agree more housing is desirable but this is not the answer. What it would do is remove the buffer of horticulture that blends in the northern Goring Gap between the Sussex coast and the South Downs.

I have written to Arun District Planners with my objection to the most recent planning application. The nursery, like the vineyard and the golf course, can be judged the appropriate use of the green lung, the green gap adjacent to the South Downs National Park. The separation of the built-on areas at the west of Worthing, the north of Goring-by-Sea, and the present northern limits of Ferring with the farmland provides the distinction to the Kingston hamlets and the rural east and north of East Preston.

Alternatively, this land could be vital prime agricultural land if available for alternative use. Any proposals for housing in this green lung should be declined for local, regional and national reasons. This is a special part of what makes unique the Goring Gap.

As someone who knows the area very well and as the local elected parliamentary representative, I wrote to Arun objecting to the proposals. With others, especially with the groups supported by Ed Miller and The Worthing Society, I have been campaigning fiercely for many years to protect and to enhance this rare green area.

No one should see me as a NIMBY. I see myself as a YIMBY when proposals are appropriate and sympathetic. For example, I did not object to the major development of over 1,000 new homes in West Durrington. OMIT My objections to a high development at the south end of Grand Avenue were satisfied when the developer accepted a reduced height more in keeping with its setting near Dolphin Lodge and the adjacent blocks.

The original proposal for what is now Bayside was too tall. Again, further conversations with the Council brought a revised plan which was approved. I have consistently said that the only sensible very high development, if economic, would be by Worthing Station.

We anticipate an autumn planning application for the former HMRC site south of Durrington Station.

I have asked that the opportunity be taken to provide ways to cross from either side of the station to the other without the current 15-minute awkward walk for those with pushchairs, wheelchairs and other mobility issues. The rail regulator should require it and ministers should enforce it. In April I submitted an initial recommendation that Durrington Station receive massive investment under the Access For All Funding process for 2023 to support accessibility for current and future nearby residents.

The new homes will be uncontroversial if the plans are acceptable to existing residents. That applies too to the Union Place site and the gas holder redevelopment. The initial voicing of genuine concerns led to good changes.

This past week I remember the war service of my father-in-law and my father who crossed the Channel before and after the Normandy invasion. Their anniversaries are commemorated in war records and family books written by their colleagues.

For those who understand the international nature of the World Wars and our local connections, I commend attending the Canadian War Memorial Service on West Parade, Worthing, this coming Sunday at 11:00am.