

Hearts and Heads in Politics Today

Sir Peter Bottomley MP

Worthing Herald Article

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On Friday I will join the Romero school community in Goring, across the rail tracks from Chatsmore Farm, near Goring-by-Sea station. Their students made reasoned and impassioned appeals for the Goring Gap to be kept as open green space, separating Arun District Council and Ferring from the Castle ward of Worthing.

My plea to Michael Gove is to withdraw the opposition by his Department of Levelling Up to the successful application by Worthing Borough Council for judicial review of the premature and perverse conclusion by one of his planning inspectors that over 400 new homes should be constructed on prime agricultural land.

The students were followed by Worthing Council leaders. Kevin Jenkins announced the application for judicial review, followed by Becky Cooper who leads the new administration. The following day, she and the local Labour party held an additional meeting. We can trust they will maintain the commitment to fight for the valued green space that is part of the distinctive character of Goring.

As local member of parliament, I can make representations to the Ministers in whose name another inspector is considering the Worthing Borough plan, including the serious determined efforts to allow appropriate development of homes, preferably in and around the town centre or on reusable land, not the few remaining green fields to the west and east.

The major exception, under borough leaderships of two political parties was West Durrington. Home building there could have been seen as a marginal decision. It has proceeded, though developers are still being held to their unfulfilled commitments by the admirable and persistent Terry Woodjetts and county councillor Sean McDonald.

The opportunist application by Persimmon to exploit a temporary time gap of protection of Chatsmore Farm was rejected by the council for good reasons. Their application to set aside the inspector's unjustified conclusion should be agreed or if necessary upheld by the court. Persimmon should not proceed to a second inquiry hearing their appeal against their plan to build in an inappropriate place.

If they do, those proceedings should follow the expected endorsement by the other inspector of protection for the Goring Gap.

I could use emotional argument; the advice I offer to government on this at national and local level has to be practical and based on what is likely to be effective. Graham Forshaw, former leader of West Sussex County Council, hoped to achieve enduring protection for the green link between the South Downs, now with National Park status, and the coast.

For most of the past decades, the gap was safe. On behalf of local people in Worthing and in Arun, I am dedicated to fighting for it and for the few other green lungs around our town and villages.

Bad news on the costs of living: the challenge is to help the vulnerable, working to avoid a possible prices/wages inflationary spiral that helps no one while bashing every pensioner's fixed pension and each person living on value-losing savings.

Park home residents urgently need their pitch fees increases changed from RPI to CPI. They should not suffer loss of 10% of the value of their home to the site operator. A letter this week includes: 'I cannot afford more costly housing and there is a long waiting list for social housing. We shall probably be forced to sell soon as my husband needs more care than I can manage.'

I serve because my heart's response requires my head to find the practical ways to achieve results.