

Goring and Ilex Conservation Group

Final Notes for Gap appeal zoom inquiry January 27th 2022

I have been viewing and catching up with much of the proceedings via You Tube but apologies if I am repeating things that have been previously covered or that I have misconstrued.

I just have a few comments from the sessions that have taken place over the last two weeks and further thoughts from members.

Local Green Space

It was said in yesterday's sessions that in the emerging local plan the Local Plan Inspector noted that the designation did not meet the appropriate tests for Local Green Space. As far as I understand, the Inspector is satisfied that the requirements (a) and (b) of paragraph 102 of the NPPF were met. In other words for this plot of land it is **demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance.**

Highdown gardens – I appreciate that this area may now be covered by the Statements of Common Ground (Heritage and Landscape) but I feel it is worth mentioning.

It has been implied in these sessions that only the chalk pit area of the garden is special and this is of course where the garden started but Sir Frederick Stern and his wife worked for 50 years to show that plants would grow on chalk which as we know underlies most if not all of the gardens.

There are notable plants elsewhere in the gardens for example a rare *Carpinus* which the Sterns described as the finest at Highdown. Planted by Queen Mary on her visit to Highdown in 1937 and still growing in the middle garden.

Visitors now value the whole gardens – If we look at Kew for example the first thing that comes to mind is the glass palm house yet this is only a small portion of the Kew attractions. Highdown is on a far far smaller scale but again has much more to offer than just the chalk pit.

Travel and highways

The appellant's highways consultant noted that some traffic congestion would be alleviated by people taking short journeys taking the train or bus instead of their cars. There was no explanation as to what a short journey consisted of – it could mean trips along the A259 to Asda, to Sainsbury's the Garden Centres or to Tesco in Durrington **but** assuming a trip to Worthing town centre: -

The journey to Worthing town centre by bus or train is around 40 to 45 minutes each way with a cost around £5 per adult.

The timing of a car journey may be similar at worst traffic peak but is usually shorter assuming not too much difficulty in finding a parking spot. Free parking spots are available in Worthing town centre for 1 to 3 hours.

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For one person, time and cost may be similar but far more convenient to go by car. If more than one person, the car always wins.

Benefits of the proposals

One benefit noted by the appellant is the provision of construction jobs. In my experience, developers will have their own supply chain of core contractors and sub-contractors with opportunities for local, rather than regional or nationwide construction operatives being more limited.

Housing provision

Last week I mentioned factors that I believe are helping towards the housing provision. One thing I did not mention is my perception of the effect of permitted development. Touring Worthing, it is surprising to see the number of properties that have taken advantage of this by forming rooms in the roof. Although this does not add to the **number** of properties, it does add to the **capacity** of those properties and must go some way towards alleviating any shortages.

I also note that a recent report indicated that there are more than 98,500 vacant homes in the South East. Would it not be a most important consideration to free up these homes before destroying greenfield sites? (Source - Barrows & Forrester Property Research 10th January 2022)

Worthing including Goring is a pleasant place to live, a seaside town with reasonable rail links to Brighton, London and Southampton and, with the correct timing, reasonable road links. Almost every day on local social media people say they are moving or have recently moved to Worthing from Brighton and Hove, from all parts of London and from other areas of high housing prices. Housing **need** has been discussed. I believe that there is a difference between a **need** for lower cost housing locally and the **desire** of people from these areas with higher housing costs wishing to move to Worthing to reduce their mortgage costs or increase their accommodation standards.

There is currently in these proposals an **affordable** housing provision - (which may still remain unaffordable for many). How certain are we that if the appeal is granted this provision will remain? May it possibly reduce or perhaps disappear in return for a cash sum for housing elsewhere (e.g. on a recent development, the high maintenance costs meant that around half of the affordable housing provision in that development was not taken up) or should the development become unviable in terms of percentage return – also will these provisions cater only for those on the local housing list?

I believe the meat of these proposals, by the type of housing proposed, caters for the previously noted **desire** rather than **need** and by feeding this desire, it increases demand, increases house prices and thus exacerbates the housing problems for those on lower incomes.