

DEPUTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting of the Council for the hearing of depositions from members of the public. Each deposition may be heard for a maximum of five minutes.

Deputations received:

(i) Deputation: Swift Boxes

- In just a few months' time, swifts will be making their epic 6,000 mile journey here from Mozambique. They're only here for a short time between May and August and that's when you'll see them soaring through the skies swooping down either catching insects or looking for potential breeding site's. They have a very distinctive call, which a lot of people associate with summer. Everyone enjoys the return of the warm weather and the sounds that come with it. What would it be like if the spring or summer progressively got quieter?
- Their scientific name *Apus apus* means 'no foot no foot', which also means swifts can't perch or land on the ground. Swifts are however superb flyers, who spend almost their entire life on the wing apart from when breeding.
- Unfortunately, as for many other birds, swifts have experienced dramatic declines. Surveys carried out by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) show that there has been a decline of over 53% in the past 21 years in the population of swifts in the UK between 1995 and 2016 (Breeding Bird Survey Report for 2017).

Threats to the species

- Common swifts once nested in the trees but are now almost entirely reliant on buildings to nest. Modern properties are now constructed in ways that exclude potential future opportunities for birds like swift to nest. There is also the risk that because they are so unobtrusive people don't realise that they have a swift in their home and if maintenance works or loft conversions get carried out the holes can get blocked.
- Swifts are site faithful and will come back year after year to the same exact same nest awaiting arrival of their life-long partner. Swifts are also colonial birds and like to nest where other swifts do.
- There are simply not enough new nesting opportunities in new developments across Brighton and Hove. Without a clear policy that compensates the loss of the nests and provides new opportunities in new developments, there is no guarantee swifts will thrive in Brighton and Hove in the future.

Solutions

- The RSPB have already made headway on understanding where swifts are nesting in Brighton and Hove and the key hotspots by undertaking surveys of the city. These have been carried out by volunteers over the last 3 years, a total 105 nest sites have been revealed since 2016. These nests exist thanks to some of the nooks and crannies that come with older properties.

- Swifts nests are easily incorporated into the fabric of new developments, being relatively low in cost, and with the various designs available they offer easy to achieve enhancements for biodiversity gain. City Plan 2 is the opportunity to include a clear/in this case species specific policy.
- Currently Brighton & Hove biodiversity checklist will highlight the possibility of swifts nesting but only if -see Appendix attached. (Figure 1).
- Brighton & Hove are a leading City for conservation and have national reputation for being environmentally friendly. Here is yet another way that we can lead the way.
- This is very timely when the current Brighton General Hospital Site which holds the largest and believed to be the oldest of Brighton and Hove Swift colonies now endangered by the plans of the new development. We will be looking to the council to support us on this.

Vision

- Our vision is by working with the Brighton & Hove Council, the RSPB hope that swift bricks will be installed in every suitable new development in accordance with a strengthened policy, which ensures developers are adhering to new legislation.

Signed by:

Chloe Rose (Lead Spokesperson)

Jack Thompson

Ellie Taylor

Katie Nethercoat

Hugo Bloomfield

Darren Hunwicks

Supplementary Information:

1: Biodiversity Indicators – do any of the following features apply to the application site?	2: Please answer yes/no	3: Notes (indicators of :)
1. Development involves clearance of shrubs/scrub or woodland of more than 100m ² (about the size of half a tennis court)		Nesting birds
2. Modification, conversion, demolition or removal of barns or farm buildings of brick or stone construction, or with exposed wooden beams, whether derelict or in use		Barn Owl, Bats, Swallow
3. Change to coastal shingle east of the Palace Pier or west of Hove Lagoon		Coastal vegetated shingle
4. Removal or modification of hanging tiles or weather boarding on buildings of any age within 50m (about the width of a football pitch) of woodland or mature trees		Bats
5. Change to pre-1914 roof structures with opportunities for access into the eaves (missing tiles, cracks in brickwork, missing bricks or missing soffit boards) but not to roofs made with metal or prefabricated sheeting.		Sparrow, Starling, Swift, Bats
6. Proposals involving external floodlighting of churches and listed buildings within 50m (about the width of a football pitch) of a green space or woodland		Bats
7. Change to derelict areas with exposed soil, brambles, piles of rubble, etc. of more than 100m ² (about the size of half a tennis court)		Reptiles (Adder, Viviparous Lizard, Slow-worm), invertebrates, plants of value
8. Application site is inside or within 10m (about the width of a tennis court) of a Site of Special Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserve or Site of Nature Conservation Importance.		Sites designated for nature conservation. The boundaries of these sites are shown on the development plan proposals map or see www.CityWildlife.org.uk 'special sites'

- Figure 1. Screen shot of Brighton and Hove Biodiversity Checklist, available at: <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/planning/checklist-full-planning-applications>
- Although Biodiversity Action Plan talks about swifts and sets ambitious/valid/relevant conservation objectives for swifts (page 48 out of 102) there is a gap/lack of clarity in policy/not strong enough? See below:
- SPD11 Nature Conservation and Development uses a vague language such as “Developments should deliver adequate provision for biodiversity -what is adequate?”
- SPD11 Annexes is a separate document available at : https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/downloads/ldf/Annexes_-_SPD11_Nature_Conservation_and_Development.pdf in which swifts are only mentioned in Annexe 1 as species of importance, and again Annexe 3 in Biodiversity Checklist but not in Annexe 6. Actually Annexe 6 only mentions bird boxes in general and although species of importance are listed in Annexe 1, the wording in both documents (SPD11 and SPD11 Annexes) are not effective in delivering provision for swifts/or provision of nesting sites for swifts (they simply don't inform developers well enough/or leave it to open).

References:

Harris, S.J., Massimino, D., Gillings, S., Eaton, M.A., Noble, D.G., Balmer, D.E., Procter, D., Pearce-Higgins, J.W. & Woodcock, P. (2018). *The Breeding Bird Survey 2017*. BTO Research Report 706 British Trust for Ornithology, Thetford.

(ii) Deputation: A deputation from Amex Area Neighbourhood Forum

The somewhat in-vogue catastrophising phrase 'going over a cliff edge' surely applies to the direction this council takes us all with its pied-piper housing policy? Dominated by, obligated to – in essence under the cosh of a 'deliver the numbers or else' Whitehall command - it feels like (to our neighbourhood certainly) the city's housing policy is and will continue to deliver miniscule amounts of homes that citizens in-need can afford while inflicting adverse impacts on the day-to-day human life of the city (adverse effects that will become all too obvious in years to come). The net adverse impact of bloated, ill-conceived, City Plan-crunching housing juggernauts landing in this city one-by-one and which fail miserably to tackle genuine housing need will demonstrably and significantly **not** outweigh their benefits (perhaps not even in terms of economic growth [footnote 1]). You must surely agree that the evidence of this has already loomed into view? Our citizen group recognises and sympathises with the council's enforced pied-piper role. But from the standpoint of local democracy it urges this committee to reflect (and respond) to the following. (We apologise of course if this something reflected upon and discussed ad infinitum)

1. The '5 year HLS' issue relating to NPPF para 11, f/n 7 (as relayed by the latest SHLAA update) means that purveyors of bad planning proposals for large scale housing development have never had it so good. Naturally the council feels it must defend the planning process insofar as it answers *some* housing need. Indeed, we applaud those within the council who encourage every creative opportunity it sees be it self-build housing co-ops and the efforts of community land trusts, build-to-rent initiatives and so on. But can the council really say that large scale luxury apartment proposals (even if 40 percent were homes ordinary citizens could afford) are, under present circumstances, approved without compromising scrutiny?
2. We ask BHCC this: If large scale planning will be ushered through the planning process with only 'token' scrutiny (and with attempts to oppose or amend from citizen/ward councillor/local 'Society' and other organisations met with nebulous procedural explanations of factors that somehow 'outweigh' harm) then why insult citizens with a planning process at all?
3. Lastly, we'd like to urge that if you do think there is a case to answer contained in any of the above, your response avoids any of those pitfalls of Orwellian newspeak if not straightforward town hall fudge. If that sounds ill-tempered or unfair then we'd be pleased if you would reflect on the context of our campaign group's diligent and exhaustive efforts to ask planners (including committee members) not to reject so much as simply spend a minute talking to us, looking at our drawings, considering – before statutory time limits run out thus risking developer-led court action – that 21 century neighbourhoods

are not all 'nimbys' and will increasingly and pro-actively point out the extraordinary missed opportunities (for the built environment alone) big house builder proposals frequently entail. In other words, we were ignored and the opportunity to return the Amex site proposals back to the drawing board was lost. If something can be gained for us today it will be a response from this committee that ends the delusion that the government defined 'housing crisis' it purports to be steadfastly addressing has anything to do with the crisis effecting middle, low income – increasingly homeless - long term citizens of this city in a state of *real* crisis. Stop colluding with the disingenuous use of the phrase 'affordable housing'. And be honest with us about the illusion of planning 'scrutiny' and the absurd theatre of planning hearings for proposals already decided.

Signed by:

Adrian Hart (Lead Spokesperson)

Rick Hurst

Chloe Hillier

David Sassons

Jan Norris

Julia Basnett

Queenie Saunders

Heather Camille

