

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

A period of not more than fifteen minutes shall be allowed at each ordinary meeting for questions submitted by a member of the public.

The question will be answered without discussion. The person who asked the question may ask one relevant supplementary question, which shall be put and answered without discussion. The person to whom a question, or supplementary question, has been put may decline to answer it.

The following written questions have been received from members of the public. Questions 1 and 2 are within the main agenda (page 25)

(3) King Alfred – Ms V Paynter

Should either BHCC or the Crest Nicholson/Starr Trust developers be finally defeated by viability issues, forcing an end to the current redevelopment attempt of the King Alfred/RNR site, can the Council agree that a very serious rethink of the 15 years old (basically) Planning Brief has to inform the way forward?

(4) St James' Street – Mr David Spafford

The retail shopping in St James' Street is identified in the Draft City Plan (Stage 2) as prime retail space, but there is nothing in the plan for developing or improvements for this district.

During the consultation for the development of the Edward Street Quarter a commitment was made to the development of the roads, George Street and Dorset Gardens, to make an attractive 'funnel' for footfall into St James Street from the new developments.

What plans do the City Council have in train to regenerate and promote growth in the St James' Street district.

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.

1. Save Whitehawk Hill Local Nature Reserve –

“Joint Venture Project” for a high rise estate in the middle of the Whitehawk Hill Local Nature Reserve and the Race Ground recreational common

Whitehawk Hill is Brighton's senior and most important public Downland site. It is a statutory Local Nature Reserve, and was voted for inclusion in the new South Downs National Park by full council in 2002. Its status as a common, now known as 'The Race Ground', is perhaps a thousand years old. It is mostly statutory Access Land. It has the earliest statutory Scheduled Ancient Monument in Sussex protecting one of the ten best Neolithic Causewayed Camps in Britain. Its wildlife includes many rare or scarce animals and plants and rare ecosystems such as species-rich chalk grassland and furze field.

The Joint Venture proposal for a new high-rise estate of 217 properties in five blocks with 110 parking spaces on the Hill will smash our Local Nature Reserve and this treasured landscape in two. It comes in addition to 103 recent new homes in the Valley and a planned 38 more on Swanborough Drive playground, and will hugely cram the already crowded north end of the Whitehawk Valley.

The site is a sacrosanct public space, the local infrastructure and amenities are already at breaking point, and the needs of local residents have not been properly considered.

The Council is not even attempting to use the resources that are available to build houses for Social Rent.

We call upon Brighton and Hove City Council to put an end to this development and find other sites for much needed social housing, preferably council housing at social rents.

The signatories to this deputation represent communities from throughout the City and in particular Whitehawk and East Brighton. We include community groups working for a better quality of life for the people of our City, for the conservation of the

natural environment, for benefit to the health and wellbeing of all and for housing that is truly affordable and secure.

Sokesperson (Eileen McNamara)

Members of the deputation (Brighton & Hove Housing Coalition):

Amanda Bishop
Anne Glow
Maria Garrett-Gotch
Dave Bangs
Sharon Scaife
Charmaine Evans
Richard Bickers
Kim Turner
Judith Watson
Nichole Brennan
Steve Parry
Mr J Deans

'Save Whitehawk Hill' & 'Brighton and Hove Housing Coalition'

Notes to accompany our Delegation to PR&G Committee 06/12/18

The atrocious proposals to build a city-centre-type high rise housing estate on Whitehawk Hill are breathtaking in their audacity and ignorance.

Though Whitehawk Hill is the most visible landscape feature of Brighton along the entire sweeping Bay of Sussex from Worthing to Seaford, and Chanctonbury to Ditchling Beacon, the housing site which smashes its unity in two is merely described in the BHCC City Plan Part Two as "**Land at and adjoining Brighton Race Course**", as though it exists only as a valueless adjunct to that commercial enterprise.

At one stroke the multiple statutory designations which load the Hill like the medals on a veteran's dress uniform are dismissed.

Though the Hill and the housing site have been protected by their status as common land for a thousand years and probably more (mostly as Brighton's 'Eastern Tenantry Down' and in the last two centuries as 'The Race Ground' recreational common) and though many of its species have official recognition as being of conservation importance, and though it is largely statutory Access Land, and largely within the statutory Local Nature Reserve, it is just seen as being fit for a totally arbitrary excision (like a dog's bite from a carcass) for a major urban development.

Though the full Council voted support for the inclusion of the whole of the Hill in the South Downs National Park only 16 years ago, their aesthetic and cultural assessment of the Hill now flips to a valuation that sees it as a mere disposable adjunct to an existing housing estate.

Though the Council (admirably) thrice turned down developers' applications for housing development at Meadow Vale, Ovingdean (which they had similarly voted to include in the National Park) in a middle class area with very low housing densities and very privileged access to private garden space, they think it appropriate to build an estate of 8 story towers right next to a crowded working class community with high levels of deprivation, and right in the middle of Brighton's premier and senior public Downland site, thinking that this would not be contested.

Hyde Housing's Joint Venture eco-expert tells us that "there are no badgers there", though local residents have loved and watched over them for 50 years. Their expert has not seen the pleasure that watching the Dartford warblers and foxes, the stonechats and whitethroats, the lizards and slow worms, the minibeasts - and even, remarkably, perhaps still adders - the bats, the skylarks, the meadow pipits and house martins has given us.

They draw up a programme which anticipates their bulldozers being on site by next spring (2019) as though they expect no possible delays - nothing except meek gratitude and acceptance from us, and urging on to do their good work - as though we must share the same dismissive evaluation of this neglected nature reserve as they do.

Though they would readily accept (or perhaps not, in some cases) that a high rise housing estate at Cuckmere Haven or Ovingdean, Rottingdean or Alfriston would be an outrage they think that Whitehawk is another case.

They judge our 'fish and chip Downland' as being altogether without worth, though they readily accept the worth of Alfriston's 'cream tea Downland'.

In a City in which street after street, estate after estate of the finest family council housing - of garden city standard - and whole areas of erstwhile private rented modest housing is lost to gentrification and HMOs for ripped-off students; and in which whole suburbs of luxurious private housing at low densities, low levels of occupation and very privileged access to private garden space make no contribution to the housing needs of those on our waiting list and those dismissed from our waiting list - in this City we are asked to accept that there is no alternative to further pillage of our urban fringe Downland to meet our housing needs, though many of our urban fringe Downland sites are of greater public value than those more remotely sited within the National Park.

We watch the architecture of the rich at the Marina rise up match the height of the ancient causewayed enclosure made by our first farming ancestors on Whitehawk Hill. We watch the architecture of our competing University corporations rise up in the Lewes Road valley to home 700 temporary student residents, when it could have provided an unbeatable opportunity for homing those most in need of secure and affordable housing in our City.

We urge councillors to use your audacity and your bravery to reach new solutions for our homeless and poorly housed, which really take on the vested interests which leave so many people without homes or in homes subject to insecurity and super-exploitation.

We urge councillors to remember that their responsibility for the protection of nature is a categorical imperative that sits alongside and co-equally with the categorical imperative to provide each and every one of us with a decent, affordable and secure home.

We must find our solutions in ways that equally recognise the epochal crisis of the extinction of nature, and the crisis of human misery caused by a failing housing supply, and seek solutions at the expense of those who can most afford to contribute.

In a world in which some 60% of the global biomass of wild animals has been lost in just 47 years, we must recognise our local, domestic, particular responsibility to stop and reverse that process, and the concomitant need to protect all those places which still retain reservoirs of wild nature.

The slogan of the National Trust - "forever, for everyone" - is one which is applicable to the responsibilities of our Council too. Our specially recognised and protected places for nature are a resource to be preserved in perpetuity, not to be used as a contingency fund for future trading for other purposes. We all need homes, but Nature is our home, too. We need both homes.

'Save Whitehawk Hill' & 'Brighton and Hove Housing Coalition'

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