

NEW HOUSING ESTATE IN GROOMBRIDGE? RESIDENT APPEALS TO MP

Dear Nus Ghani

I am sorry to be writing to you again but I am part of a unincorporated group opposing a potential development outside the village development boundary on green fields in the High Weald AONB. You can find outline details of the development on a website set up by the developers, Earlswood Limited: <https://www.ardenvalegreen.co.uk/>.

Our group has its own website: <https://stopardenvaledevelopment.co.uk/> which you might like to view. It is work in progress and only went live yesterday evening.

We have been told that planning application will be applied for in July 2021 so I thought I should give you early warning of the development in your constituency particularly in light of the Chesham and Amersham by election result. You may be aware that the conservative lost the county council seat in this area to the Greens which is probably an indication of the strength of feeling about the Government proposed planning policy. As you know under the CROW Act an AONB has the same status as National Parks and in Wealden comprises less than 50% of the whole area. I am strongly of the view that the best thing that politicians in this area can do is to persuade this government that land in AONB is conserved and untouched and that the High Weald Management Plan takes precedent over the NPPF in this context. That sets out clear parameters which this proposed development falls outside.

The other fact that is particularly relevant is the village development boundary was set shortly after High Weald became an AONB in 1983 and has been unchanged since 1987 with a nil development potential in all subsequent Wealden Plans, including the most recent one that was not accepted. It is also within 7 km of the SSI which comprises the Ashdown Forest. The land was put forward in the "SHELAA" in 2019 and was dismissed as totally unsuitable as follows: 'Development of this site would have an unacceptable impact on an area of attractive landscape at the fringe of the village. The creation of a satisfactory vehicular access to the site would not appear to be possible due to inadequate visibility at the junction with Station Road, and the sub-standard width available in Station Road itself. Site is within the High Weald AONB. Development would have an unjustified impact on the character and appearance of the landscape'.

Despite nothing changing in relation to the road or the status of the land, it has been put forward to be included in the present SHELAA consultation.

We have conducted a traffic survey through East Sussex County Council which shows that traffic on Station Road, single track at the point of proposed access, is well above the national average as found in the RAC 2020 report.

Further the proposed access not only demolishes a substantial family home but also cross Back Lane, an ancient Byway and possible Drovers Road, classified as a 'BOAT' and the only access by foot to the village for those of us who live above the development field.

The proposed houses will be built on a field that is at either first floor or roof level of the houses in Lealands Close which is unacceptable.

The development will be adjacent to the school and will no doubt impact considerably during construction with noise and dust level that will impede teaching of children in this school which is the leading primary school in East Sussex.

The developers talk about Affordable Homes but there is no evidence that they are either talking to or considering working with an appropriate social housing provider. Furthermore, there is a proposed development of 72 smaller units in Burrswood which, although situated in Kent, is still part of our village.

I could go on, (and there are lots of other issues), but please will you support us and our cause and help us to persuade Wealden District Council that this proposal should be rejected.

Yours sincerely

M Symes
Groombridge resident for over 30 years