



Urgent: Barnham Eastergate and Westergate Southern Consortium Planning Application.



Please read this before responding to the recent Lichfields consultation. If you've already responded, you can respond again.

As residents you will have recently received a Community Consultation by developers for the above planning application for 1,250 houses and the A29 realignment. The consultation leaflet provides very general information. It does not address the issues and concerns raised by your Parish Councils, of which you as residents should be aware.

Your parish councils continue to press for a more sustainable level of new housing development in our villages but if this is unachievable then:

- We must demand that key road and community infrastructure is built before more housing.
- The Lichfield Consultation talks about the development of the new A29 but you need to be aware that they are proposing to build 1,250 houses long before it is complete. We must resist this plan with all our efforts.
- A moratorium on further housing is needed until a new, sustainable housing figure is agreed which truly represents housing need in Arun and the infrastructure is in place.

Housing numbers

The scale of housing for Arun approved at the Examination in Public (EiP) of the Local Plan was based on calculations, which our MP Andrew Griffith called a rogue algorithm in Parliament in August 2020. That rogue algorithm has not yet been corrected by Government.

At the EiP your Parish Councils pointed out the housing figure was unattainable and that this figure would undermine the Arun planning system. This is because if the rate of house building (which is not in control of the Planning authority) does not deliver a 5-year supply target then there is a "presumption in favour of additional housing development" to bridge the gap. Developers and landowners exploit this for their own commercial purposes.

The Local Plan was nonetheless approved. Inevitably the 5-year supply has never been met and developers have won permissions for further ad hoc developments on appeal. As we predicted, the number of houses required has expanded considerably since the Local Plan set out a Strategic Allocation at BEW of 3,000 houses and the target is now 4,000 houses.

The Lichfield's consultation represents 1,250 homes and is one of a series of applications we can expect this year. There is a further 850+ to come this year with many more in future years. These applications come on top of 1,170+ unbuilt planning permissions of which almost 800 were won on appeal. Just these developments alone will nearly double the size of Aldingbourne, Barnham and Eastergate.

Infrastructure shortfalls

There is a MasterPlan for the whole BEW housing site, but it is proving ineffective in providing an agreed approach to a range of issues. Developers are not working together, and the District Council unable to compel them to do so.

Your Parish Councils have highlighted existing infrastructure cannot accommodate this level of housing development. Our argument is that key infrastructure should be provided ahead of development, not once development is completed. If this is not achieved, then the lives of local people will be made substantially worse.



Roads

Our position has consistently been that the new A29 must be constructed before houses are delivered. The original plan (pre-2016) was that WSCC would fund the road and take contributions from developers as they built the houses but WSCC has walked away from this commitment.

The Southern Consortium state it is commercially impossible for them to fund it up front, and that their traffic consultants can demonstrate that 1,250 houses can be built without connecting the new A29 to the South. To be clear this actually means our local road network (principally the B2233 Barnham Road and the A29 through Aldingbourne) will have approximately 10,000 more car journeys per day, substantially worsening air pollution. WSCC already confirms that significant delays and congestion occur at peak times at the War Memorial junction and the Woodgate Level Crossing. Without the new A29 there will be chaos on Westergate Street and the B2233 Barnham Road.

The BEW Strategic Allocation was initially predicated on improving Bognor's economic performance by improving the A29 Bognor to A27 at Fontwell. This seems to have been forgotten.

We must press ADC/WSCC/Developers to deliver the whole of the proposed A29 realignment end-to-end before the housing is developed and they must seek innovative solutions to achieve necessary funding. This is Arun history repeating itself: In 1980 North Bersted Parish unsuccessfully fought thousands of houses being proposed, and mostly now built. The developer had to deliver the Bognor relief road, which was not fully opened until 2016 – 36 years later.

Other Facilities

The Parish Councils have submitted a detail analysis of existing deficits and what is required as our villages grow. We have repeatedly asked for coherent delivery plans and commitments, but none have been forthcoming. Our priority demands include:

- Medical facilities and access to GP surgeries needs to be improved before houses are built
- School places need to be provided, especially at Primary level, before housing
- Sewerage systems need upgrading to deal with existing problems, let alone new housing
- New community facilities need to be developed by upgrading and extending existing facilities before building new ones.
- There needs to be proven net biodiversity gain

Responding to the Lichfields consultation

This consultation by developers Lichfields closes on 16th May. You can provide your feedback at www.bewconsultation.co.uk and you can also email your comments to bew@lichfields.uk or use the Freepost card attached to their leaflet. Lichfields pose six questions, but your response can go beyond their scope.

The developers employ professionals to argue these points, whereas Arun DC's planning department is under-equipped to address them adequately, **so your responses are important**, copied to Arun Councillors and your MP.