

Success and Disappointment in Horam (part 1), Cornelie Usborne, candidate, ESCC elections, May 2021



Horam on the Parish Council's website

This website reads: "The southern slopes of the High Weald AONB touch Horam on its northern fringe. Old established rights of way allow you to walk in the fields and woods. It is possible to find peace and solitude in Horam's countryside even though you are never far from habitation. The landscape is cut by streams which have carved valleys, by trees and hedgerows, and by narrow winding lanes. One of these valleys is on the line of a fracture or "fault" in the rocks beneath, but nobody has any worries about an earthquake occurring here (perhaps we should be concerned!)."

When I arrived here in 1987, Horam was indeed embedded in green fields and woods. The High Street was bustling with shops, from bakery to butcher and greengrocer, ironmonger to pharmacy.

Merrydown, the cider factory (founded in 1946) produced c 35,000 bottles a day and dominated local employment; the Station Inn was a popular pub. 35 years later much has changed: The pub is now a Co-op and Merrydown has become a large housing estate:



Now many shops have gone and so have many of the green fields. New mass housing, especially in Horebeech Lane (eg. Rosemead Place, built on the former Rosemead farm) saw to that.



photo of Rosemead Place

Many more housing estates have been built since, south of the recreation ground, or are planned like one next to the May Garland Pub and along Chiddingly Road, amounting to something like 150 new dwellings; on top of this there are new applications in the pipeline on Little London Road.

The roads are busier, the High Street noisier and the air more polluted.

Horam Parish Council is right: no earthquake has occurred, but we have suffered plenty of flooding and raw sewage spills. Many long-term residents have now lost their green surroundings, their peace and their country walks. Instead, they are engulfed by concrete and brick, having to put up with the noise and dirt of builders' cranes and lorries. Not surprisingly quite a few want to move away. (I was told this by several people who wrote to me when they heard about this workshop).

As a candidate in this year's County Council elections, I received more complaints about overdevelopment than any other issue: Why so much building in a single village? Why outside the building boundary, so that cars are needed for shopping? Why are there no plans for buses, more doctors' surgeries and local schools? Why so many executive homes when locals cannot afford them? We need small houses and rented accommodation for our youngsters. Why are developers not forced to build 35% of (truly) affordable homes as they promised? We cannot see solar panels on the new houses, should we not build sustainably? Where will all this end?

So, I decided to focus on overdevelopment in my campaign

**Green Party
NEWSLETTER
WEALDEN EAST**

REPAIR CAFÉ

Kent Green Party have now launched repair cafés in Brightling, Ettington, Forest Row and Lamberhurst. This year we hope to help to establish the 8th in Rye to help us all reduce waste and save money!

(Do you have a lamp which no longer works? A hammer with a hole? Or a broken bicycle? Don't throw it away! Green Party activists are working hard to open a repair café in the Wealden and East areas. Twelve local repair cafés have re-opened to fix and repair your goods. You will get to know and value local experts and you can never employ a model while you work.)

Repair cafés are friendly meeting places. Everyone is welcome; all services are free but contributions are welcome. Fingers crossed for funding applications and we will open as soon as social distancing can be lifted.

WEALDEN PLANNING SHAMBLES

Wealden Green Party shares local concerns over proposed large-scale housing development and Green Councillors argue for sustainability to protect our green spaces that have been at risk during the pandemic:

Last year Wealden District Council declared a climate emergency resolution. Despite this, Wealden planning committee continue to approve developments that will exacerbate the climate crisis. Wealden Green Party has written to the planning committee, requesting to review evidence of sustainability as part of the planning process but this is currently being overlooked.

Wealden Green Party recognises the need for new smaller houses but questions the increase of large-scale housing recently approved, especially in Wealden East. The scale, mass, bulk and design of many of these threaten the safety of neighbouring properties and surrounding ecosystems and the safety of residents, local businesses and other services.

This demand for local voices to be heard, the preservation of sensitive natural habitats and the creation of suitable homes, especially for young people.

CAN YOU HELP DEFEND OUR GREEN SPACES? www.greencouncillors.org/wealden

WINFIELD AND HORAM PLANNING ISSUES

An update on the latest news from Winfield Councillor David and what's been happening if they don't like the news.

The government's latest planning rules would reward developers and erode our democratic right for efficient and transparent planning. We could easily become developers over local residents. These have current seven year leases from Wealden District Council on our website.

WINFIELD

Winfield, the size of village north of Rye, has a population of 1,667 (2011). This rural estate administration is unique. All houses are privately owned and another 70 are being constructed by Blue Cliffs Hill, return to over 200 units comprising 40 and more.

Wealden Planning Committee approves the hillside development despite the lack of infrastructure, including roads and ensuring that planning is a place-shaping demonstration.

This village community centre is next to St. Cuthbert's Church. Winfield is under threat from the developer, having built upon it, an proposed vast residential site. In November 2019, the developer put out to the public a notice board, a "No-go" notice board, to stop people from using the space.

The application has been submitted to the planning committee and it would have "transformed the local character and appearance of the rural setting of Winfield, creating significant ecological consequences".

Qualify the hill and any resultant major infill developments will result in "transforming the local character and appearance of the rural setting of Winfield, creating significant ecological consequences".

REVIEW OF PLANNING POLICIES & LOCAL PLAN
In an emergency, ring 0144-88 00 100 to the Council and let them know an urgent appeal.

www.greencouncillors.org/wealden

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My first newsletter is just one example

BUT, all is not doom and gloom.

Let's celebrate the way local residents have acted so passionately and patiently with the problem, determined to stop the concrete spreading. Every new application for yet another housing estate resulted in a huge number of local submissions. The voices in our community are loud and clear and have reached those who can do something about it. But if you want to check the number of objectors, you won't find them anymore. Sadly, as soon as the go-ahead is given to an application, these protest letters are taken off the website.

Some important success stories: just 2 examples



Field opposite Rosemead estate, belonging to Old Orchard House

First: In 2019, the application by a developer for 60 houses (again with 3-5 bedroom houses) next to Old Orchard House in Horebeech Lane went to appeal.

The independent inspector ruled against the developer as well as the Council. The Council had shamefully supported the developer despite fierce local opposition. It showed that the councillors involved did not understand their own policies; they should represent the electorate and not the government's imposition on local building numbers. The inspector rejected the development a.o. as it would be "harming the character and appearance of the rural setting" echoing local concerns. Needless to say, in January 2021 the developer applied again, reduced by just 7 dwellings! But in early September this year, the application was withdrawn.

Second: In 2020 a developer applied to build 60 houses on the green fields east of Rosemead Place, and behind the private dwelling called Cauldavon.



Cauldavon

In Sept 2021 the inspector recommended refusal on several grounds. If it reads a bit like the comments made about the Old Orchard development opposite, this is no coincidence. They had inspired them.

"The site lies outside any development boundary and within open countryside. The principle of residential development would therefore not be acceptable. ..

The proposed developmentfails to satisfactorily demonstrate
that the site would be capable of accommodating the quantum of development
proposed without resulting in an unacceptable and inappropriate form of
development, that would significantly impact up on the visual amenity of the rural
landscape character of this edge of settlement location. ..

The Planning Statement speaks positively about delivering a policy compliant
scheme to secure affordable housing, custom and self-build. No mechanism exists
to secure an appropriate package that would ensure delivery of these matters and as

a result the proposed development is contrary to ...the Affordable Housing Delivery Local Plan 2016, Spatial Planning Objective...and ...the Wealden Core Strategy".

The inspector also expressed his doubts about an adequate provision for sustainable drainage and that the development would not lead to increased risk of surface water flooding.

Since then, however, the developer has contacted all the neighbours of Cauldavon, offering a price for their houses and gardens well above the current market value. So, sadly this saga has not finished.