

## **Agenda Item 17 – Ward Issues**

### **Lewes Bridge Ward Matter – Raised by Councillor Ross**

In my ward, Lewes Bridge, a developer has applied for pre-application advice on a proposal to demolish the bus station and to replace it with a block of flats. Bus companies, businesses, the Lewes Chamber of Commerce, the Town Council and many residents have expressed significant concerns about the impact the loss of the bus station would have on the Town: fewer bus services as a result of the operational issues that would arise; harder for older and less able people to get into town; reduced custom for shops; more cars; and greatly increased congestion as a result of buses having to stop and wait on narrow and busy roads in the town.

And all of this at a time when we should be increasing public transport to reduce transport emissions as required by the climate emergency and COP26. Indeed, the Government's own "Bus Back Better" initiative and East Sussex County Council's "Bus Service improvement Plan" both explicitly call for a very significant increase in bus service provision.

Fortunately, although the South Downs Local plan does allow development on this site, Strategic Site Policy SD57 (North Street Quarter and Adjacent Eastgate Area) requires that "Alternative uses on the bus station site are subject to the facility being replaced by an operationally satisfactory and accessible site elsewhere". The Lewes Neighbourhood Plan also states that the bus station should "be retained until a suitable alternative town centre site can be found offering the same or better undercover waiting facilities".

However, despite me and nearly 300 residents writing to the National Park Authority seeking assurance that they will not grant planning for this site until an alternative site has been found, we have not received any such assurance from the Park. Indeed, the developer has told people visiting their exhibition that the Park "approved of" their plans.

**Will the Leader of the Council please speak to the Chief Executive of the South Downs National Park Authority as soon as possible and seek assurance that any application received will be assessed in accordance with the policies consulted on and approved in Local Plans?. Will she also seek their commitment to meaningful engagement with interested parties and the public if and when a full application is received?**

Failure to ensure that Lewes retains a bus station would do huge harm to sustainable transport both in Lewes and in the surrounding District.