



## HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

### Chanctonbury Allotments Update

I am aware there has been a lot of discussion on social media and in the town around the Chanctonbury Road Allotments in Burgess Hill. I am sharing what I believe is helpful to constituents.

I understand Burgess Hill Town Council's current lease with Network Rail for the allotment site was signed in 2010 and has been allocated in the Local Plan since 2004 but the Town Council has had access to the site since the 1950s.

I recognise the allotments are not 'statutory allotments' and do not have the protections provided by the Allotments Act. They technically have the status of 'temporary allotments'. As a result, Network Rail could terminate Burgess Hill Town Council's lease and clear the site. They would **not** be required to re-provide them.

It is the duty of Burgess Hill Town Council to provide allotments, where there is a demand for them, plus match the demand for new sites. Managing these sites is both a need and a duty of the Town Council. I know this is challenging as a previous Town and District Councillor.

Although the individual allotment is not a 'statutory allotment', Section 23 of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908, which lays a duty on certain councils to provide wider allotments, still applies.

*23(1) If the council of any borough, urban district, or parish are of opinion that there is a demand for allotments...in the borough, urban district, or parish...the council shall provide a sufficient number of allotments, and shall let such allotments to persons...resident in the borough, district, or parish...*  
Network Rail submitted a larger development site (including the allotment land) to Mid Sussex District Council to consideration in the District Plan Review process. Nothing has been agreed and as the landowner its in their gift.

Mid Sussex District Council intends to consult on the inclusion of this site in the District Plan Review in November and December. Therefore, this is still not decided, and it is clear this site and its allotments are a real concern for us all.

Any brownfield regeneration at the centre of Burgess Hill must not be at the expense of allotments and by consulting to include the site in the District Plan review Mid Sussex District Council are able to introduce a policy requirement on Network Rail that development can only go ahead **if** the allotments are re-provided. This is an improvement on the current policy position.

As the land is under the control of Network Rail, it is the responsibility of Burgess Hill Town Council's to find more allotment sites elsewhere if this site was found suitable. I think we can **all** agree it certainly would not be suitable if these can't be protected or re-provided very nearby that would have to be an essential planning permission.

I have been informed that the site is protected within the Burgess Hill Neighbourhood Plan but that there is a waiting list of 246 people and, given this, the Town Council should have always been planning for more allotments.

It is welcome Mid Sussex District Council has stepped in and commissioned consultants to review the current allotments provision in Burgess Hill, consider current and future need and investigate alternative sites. I am aware that a number of potential sites are already being assessed. Brownfield homes in the centre of Burgess Hill are extremely welcome, but this should not be at the expense of much needed allotments. It is therefore welcome that Mid Sussex District Council are looking to introduce a policy requirement on Network Rail that development can only go

ahead if the allotments are re-provided.

Allotments are really important for the town and given Network Rail owns the land it is crucial that provision is made by Burgess Hill Town Council and other partners to look for other allotment sites.

Having been a Town and Parish Councillor myself, at Haywards Heath and Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common, I do of course appreciate it is difficult to find the right sites and manage existing sites as well as look for future ones however this is key as it is the duty of the Town Council (whether they own the site or not).

It is my understanding that Burgess Hill Town Council have agreed with Mid Sussex Town Council to try and resolve the deficit in provision and find sites, which I welcome.

I will be continuing to monitor this issue and hope this update is useful.