



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr Greg Fitzgerald  
Chief Executive  
Bovis Homes Group Plc  
11 Tower View  
Kings Hill  
West Malling  
Kent  
ME19 4UY

Our Ref: HM/FM/362

30 July 2018

Dear Mr Fitzgerald,

Some three years ago, a senior representative from Bovis gave a presentation to the Bexhill Town Forum showing the design and plans of the 1000+ homes which you were about to build on the newly opened Link Road between Bexhill and Hastings. I was in the audience that night, and also on the list of speakers. I spoke positively about your plans and how the community would benefit.

I am writing to you in exasperation because a shovel has not been placed in the ground. I spoke about this in the House of Commons when questioning the new Housing Minister, for whom I used to work. I also raised the same point with the Business Minister when new plans to help the construction industry to expand were unveiled. To both, I asked the Government to bring in new powers to charge council tax twelve months from planning consent being given. Additionally, I asked for local authorities to be given new compulsory purchase powers, at a discount, if developers have not commenced build-out after two years from planning consent being given.

The Link Road was delivered by local and national taxpayer returns. It was driven as much as an economic road, to deliver new homes and jobs, as it was to make it easier to travel between the two towns. This North East Bexhill site was designed to provide the economic regeneration which East Sussex needs in order to cover the costs of social care and other acute needs which coastal communities have. It is difficult to attract businesses to the area when labour is short. This is why the new housing proposed by Bovis is so essential.

As you can envisage, the lack of build-out is driving other housing sites to be brought forward. Some would be needed regardless. However, some sponsors are bringing forward land, in smaller parcels, some within the AONB, due to a lack of supply from the Link Road.

The lack of build-out can be demonstrated by the pressures being brought upon residents in nearby Little Common. These residents have, via their council taxes, helped fund the Link Road. They were told that this new road would increase traffic movements on the A259, through their village, by 14%. A study from the highways authority, which I requested on the residents' behalf, has confirmed that their

increase has gone beyond 20%. To compensate for the increase in traffic, and as a return to their council taxes contributing towards the delivery of new Link Road, these residents had expected to see the new housing on the Link Road. This has not occurred. To make it worse for them, they are aggrieved that planning applications are being made within their area. These applications are harder to resist due to the lack of housing which the Link Road should have provided. This scenario is replicated in other parts of my constituency.

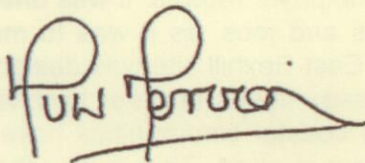
Not every constituent is supportive of new development but I believe the majority, be they first time buyers or parents or grandparents of first time buyers or keen for their family to move nearer to them, recognise the need for more housing. The Link Road was an example of a well-designed plan to deliver homes following the delivery of transport infrastructure. It is the reason why your plans were well received. Other plans, without the transport infrastructure, are less well received.

I am urgently seeking your assurance that your proposed homes will shortly commence their build-out. I am keen to meet with you to discuss the reasons for the delays and the timetable for completion of the entire site (and not just a phase). A failure to deliver these houses will only stiffen my resolve to speak out for more powers aimed at driving supply. The current Government line is to refer to the recommendations which are to be made following a study by my colleague, Oliver Letwin MP. I am sending him a copy of this letter. If the end result of his work is for the Government to continue with softer incentives then it is unlikely to get my support.

I should add that I am sympathetic towards the issues and concerns which developers may have, and am happy to assist in overcoming these. I often speak up for developers, and against central dictat, in order for developers to be free to get on and build. Where developers have completed the planning stage, but do not build, my focus is on driving completion.

After three years of promised delivery, you can understand why I am now keen, on behalf of my constituents, to see signs of delivery. I look forward to hearing from you, with a view to meeting in Parliament or on site. I am happy to invite other organisations if this would help you.

Yours sincerely,



Huw Merriman  
Member of Parliament for Bexhill and Battle

Copies to:

Kit Malthouse MP, Minister for Housing  
Cllr Keith Glazier, Leader of East Sussex County Council  
Ms Becky Shaw, Chief Executive, East Sussex County Council  
Cllr Carl Maynard, Leader of Rother District Council  
Dr Anthony Leonard, Executive Director, Rother District Council  
Mr Graham Peters, Vice Chairman, South East LEP  
Amber Rudd, MP for Hastings and Rye  
Oliver Letwin, MP for West Dorset