

We have written to all the candidates for the General Election asking them for a statement about our issues. We will post each one on here as we receive them. The Save Ecclesbourne Glen Campaign Group has no political agenda or bias, we are united only by our cause and look forward to hearing from the other candidates.

Following are their responses:

From Andrew Michael (UKIP)

Statement of Support

I am very pleased indeed that the enormous efforts and tenacity of the Save Ecclesbourne Glen campaign group have led to the decision that this monstrosity of a building that is blighting the scenic beauty of our Country Park must be pulled down.

I remain fully behind the campaign group and share their aim to get this structure removed with the utmost care, so protecting the Scheduled Ancient Monument and the ecology.

I am keenly aware from many members of the community as well as the campaign group that we still have a fight on our hands to ensure that our voices are heard with regard to the outstanding planning permission.

I fully support the Save Ecclesbourne Glen Group's position that the extant permission is no longer achievable and I urge the council to recognise the legal opinion and numerous material changes that make it unachievable.

It is most disturbing that permission for a building in such a sensitive position can be given under devolved responsibility despite the National Planning Policy Framework's clarity on the subject. This should never, ever be permitted; such decisions must always go to committee. I fully support all efforts in establishing a public enquiry into whether abuses of process occurred.

The recent changes in planning law have created a presumption in favour of developers that is totally undemocratic. It is my party's stated policy that we will protect communities by giving a right to

referenda and removing developers' right to appeal against local planning decisions.

It is also our policy to introduce local referenda on major planning decisions, such as out of town or large scale supermarket developments, wind turbines, incinerators, solar farms, major housing developments and transport schemes like HS2.

We also propose that local communities have the final say over housing, energy, waste, retail, commercial, mixed-use and all other planning applications on the proviso that 5% of the electorate "call-in" the particular planning application. The community voice must be heard, as we are the party of direct democracy !

I hope it is some comfort that we will do all we can to establish these policies in law and I will continue to give my full support to the Save Ecclesbourne Glen Group and the community's efforts in achieving their aims - maintaining the scenic beauty of the glen, achieving a full restoration of the habitat that was destroyed, and the repair and re-opening of the 1066 Country Walk down into the glen.

Andrew Michael
UKIP Parliamentary Candidate for Hastings & Rye.

From **Nick Perry (Liberal Democrats):**

Statement of Support

The Save Ecclesbourne Glen campaign group are completely dedicated to protecting our environment and heritage on the East Hill. They have my unequivocal support. If they say the Council needs to prevent further work on the 952 application, then that is just what the Council must do!

Nick Perry (Liberal Democrats

From **Sarah Owen (Labour)**

Statement of Support

It has been my personal opinion from the start that the building must be pulled down, and that planning permission for the original building should never have been given, and ways should be found to have it revoked.

I have and will continue to work with Save Ecclesbourne Glen campaigners. I've attended meetings and the picnic protest last year and would continue to do so if I am elected as your MP. I very much welcomed the news that retrospective planning permission was refused - but we are still left with a building which has no right to be there. The time has come for steps to be taken to see that the building is removed and I will continue to support SEG campaigners in that shared aim.

I have always enjoyed our beautiful green spaces in Hastings, and the Country Park in particular has special memories for me and my family. We have amazing parks and open spaces for a town of our size and we should do all we can to preserve them for us and future generations to enjoy.

Many failings have caused the current situation, but the original application for this current building – sited as it is on the footprint of a former bungalow - received no objections from anyone (including English Heritage) when it was submitted, which sadly gave it free passage through the process.

This meant that planning officers at the council took the decision to grant permission alone; without any input from councillors. In my opinion the planning officers made a serious error in granting permission, but due to the lack of objections from the public and relevant organisations, it was their decision to make.

In future, we need to ensure more people are informed of such sensitive planning applications and therefore given the chance to object. This situation has highlighted some serious flaws in national planning regulation and how councils communicate

planning applications with the general public.

Planning too often talks in a language of regimented process which is at odds to the emotion and heart-felt passion in campaigns like this. There will always be difficult decisions to be made, but we need to ensure that a situation like this never happens again.

If I am elected I will fight to keep people better informed of development, especially near sensitive areas. The council undertook the statutory advertising, but it is clear that not enough people knew about it or saw the planning notices. I think that more could and should be done to engage the wider the community in planning decisions, especially when it is near an AONB or public land.

I will also fight in parliament for tougher sanctions for breaches of planning permission. Red tape and rules are not usually something people like, but in this instance the breach of planning regulations has shown that they are often there for good reason.

In this case, I also think there should be tougher sanctions for the illegal felling of trees. TPOs are there for a good reason and there should be much tougher consequences when they are breached. I will also fight for wider reform of planning legislation to increase public involvement, community influence and accountability here in Hastings and nationally.

I will seek to reverse recent changes by government to planning law. There is now an imbalance between developers and local communities. The recent changes in planning legislation mean that developments like this can be taken from the hands of local communities and councils entirely.

These changes give Eric Pickles the Secretary of State, the power to decide if a council is too slow or delaying passing planning applications - allowing developers to bypass local councils altogether and be fast tracked to the National Planning Inspectorate.

The loosening of planning legislation is wrong and I would fight to reverse these changes and also argue the need for section 106

agreements to be reinstated.

As well as building developments, this government have also pushed through legislation to allow for fracking to start in the South Downs, AONBs and parks - I would vote to stop this.

Sarah Owen (Labour)

From **Amber Rudd (Conservative)**:

Statement of Support

As your Member of Parliament, a member of the Save Ecclesbourne Glen Group and as a resident of Hastings, I have made my views clear; this illegal building must be removed. It is my personal view that it should never have been given planning permission and the fact that it did receive planning permission does not reflect well on the council's planning department.

Although MPs cannot interfere in matters of planning or intervene in the decisions of the council, this building offends me every time I walk on the East Hill and I have joined calls for its demolition. As a resident, and someone who loves our Country Park, I find this building an eyesore.

I am pleased that the council have now issued an Enforcement Notice to demolish the partially built 'holiday let' and I once again praise the work of the Save Ecclesbourne Glen Group and everyone involved for their persistence in the face of a council who are very reluctant to admit its mistakes.

I support the Save Ecclesbourne Glen Group in their request for Hastings Borough Council to recognise that the previous planning application is no longer achievable and that the building must not be allowed to be rebuilt.

I am conscious that whilst we have secured a victory, the battle may not be over. Many constituents have written to me raising concerns as to the actions of Hastings Borough Council's planning department, and many have called for a public inquiry. Indeed, I wrote to the Secretary of State, Eric Pickles of the Department for Communities and Local Government last October whom advised that it is their 'general approach for them not to interfere' except in exceptional circumstances.

I have since written again enclosing a dossier of comments and concerns from constituents regarding the council's handling of Ecclesbourne Glen and other applications. I will continue to highlight my lack of confidence in Hastings' planning department

and call on the Secretary of State to intervene.

Amber Rudd MP

From **Jake Bowers, Green Party PPC for Hastings and Rye.**

“Like many Hastings residents I was outraged when I first saw the development in Ecclesbourne Glen. The country park is an essential part of our natural environment and should be cherished and preserved. I am one of many objectors who have written to Hastings to demand that the eyesore is torn down. I unequivocally support the Save Ecclesbourne Glen Campaign in all that it does.’
Jake Bowers, Green Party PPC for Hastings and Rye.

Jake Bowers, Green Party PPC for Hastings and Rye