

Feeding the Nation, After World War two, and the following years.

The decline of Village life.

There were two men in a prisoner of war camp in Germany, that came from the same village in East Sussex. This camp one would expect was not so bad as some. They went into the kitchens and found some fruit and made some cider. After the war they were sitting in a house, and said, what shall we do now? They decided to make some cider, going out into the local orchards collecting apples, and made cider in their garage. After some time they were selling a lot of bottles, and when a building near by came up for sale, they bought the property. The house they were in was called Merrydown, so they called their new premises Merrydown cider, hence the name became a National name.

If one went to the local Agricultural shows in the sixties, one would have seen a large number of small businesses, similar to Merrydown cider, corn merchants, agricultural distribution and repair firms, all family enterprises.

I remember there was a small coach company, a garage and petrol pumps, and snob (shoe repair person), men`s hair dressers, two grocers, a butcher, a pub, football team, stoolball team (a Sussex game) & most villages had a cricket team. That village today has just the pub and the one grocers shop, which opens mornings. All the businesses have been sold for houses that locals can`t afford. One kind person in the village offered some land to build some affordable houses for young people. The parish council said “there are no young people in the village”. Well, we know why, so it never happened. Villages are becoming a place for old people and retirement places, yet that in itself is creating issues, as isolation and loneliness in villages is a huge problem.

I have seen the second generation make money from the forefathers business. The third generation sell it on for developments, or in some cases sell to a competitor, and we end up with a few large businesses.

I recall 20 milk producers in each village ,now we find two or three in a District, milk tankers travelling several 100 miles to a depot. We need local distribution centres saving environmental issues.

So, what should be done.

One solution is to create small farms that one can enjoy and create employment. Instead of paying set-aside or for countryside stewardship. That money could be

used to help create new local produce i.e. cheese, a smokery, cutting room for meat, bakery, local pies etc. Local milk dairy and egg suppliers, free range poultry for egg and meats, fruit storage, freezers for storage, and energy crops should be grown. It would be better for 10 farmers to have 40 cows each, rather than to have one farmer with a few hundred; animals would have better care and attention.



Farmers who have no charge on their land are paying high rents for short term lettings so the price is spread over the whole. The young farmer can't bid on equal terms for the land.

In order to encourage more family farms we should introduce a land tax for those who farm a large acreage. The following table suggests a guideline as to rental value; English rates:- Grade One - £50 per acre Grade Two - £40 per acre Grade Three - £30 per acre Grade Four - £20 per acre

Therefore if one inherited a farm one would only pay tax equivalent of rental value and this could be paid annually into the National Fund.

For example, if one inherited Grade Three land the following table would apply:-1-100 acres - no tax 101-200 acres - 50% of rental value i.e. 200 acres = £3,000 p.a. 201-300 acres - 50% of rental value i.e. 300 acres = £4,500 p.a. over 300 acres - 100% of rental value Where land is let, no tax should be payable. This would prevent multi-nationals from purchasing and controlling large estates.

People like Sir James Dyson should not be buying up land to keep his money safe, while keeping young people out of using farmland he owns, but create tenancies for new entrants into food production.

They could own the land but only allowed to farm a percentage of the land and create tenancies for new entrances to farming. Rents would have to be within income from produce, anyone buying new land would have all subsidies stopped. The land would come under any new scheme.

Nicola Sturgeon in Scotland is making farm tenancies of 35 years or retirement. That's not a bad thing. One can still lose one's tenancy for bad farming practice or debt, but growing food to feed the nation is a long term plan.

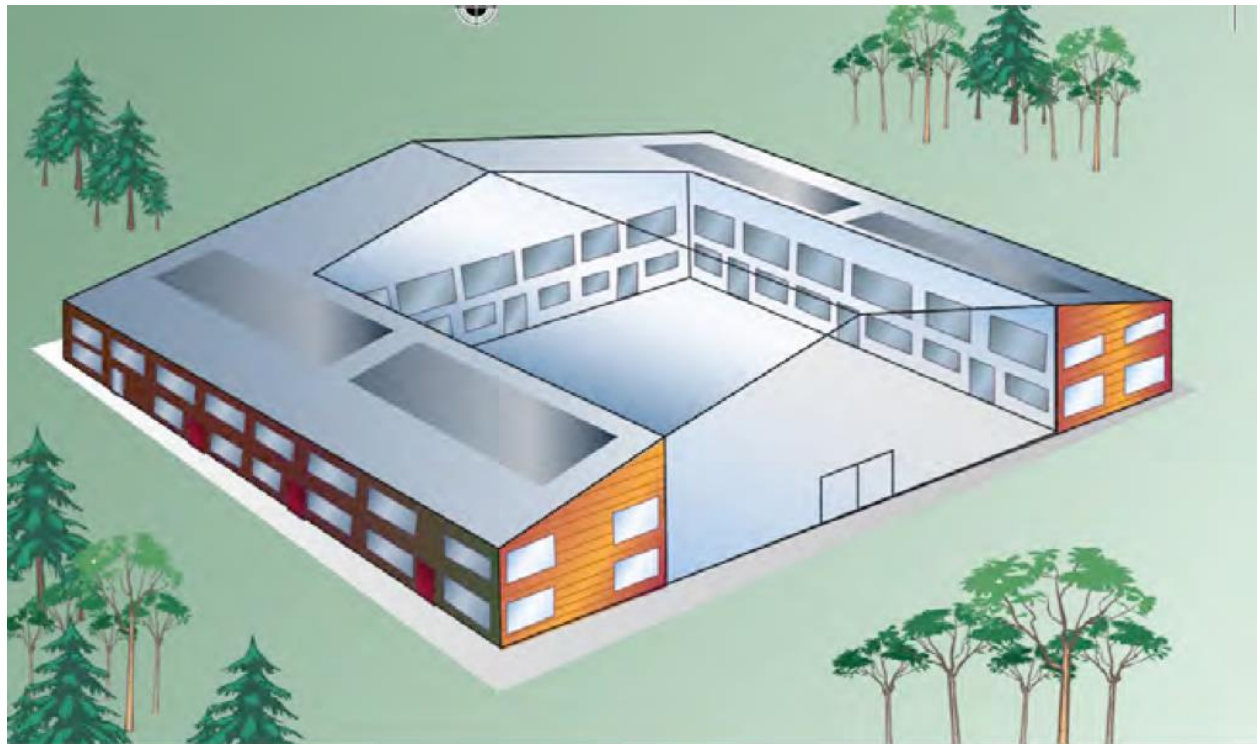
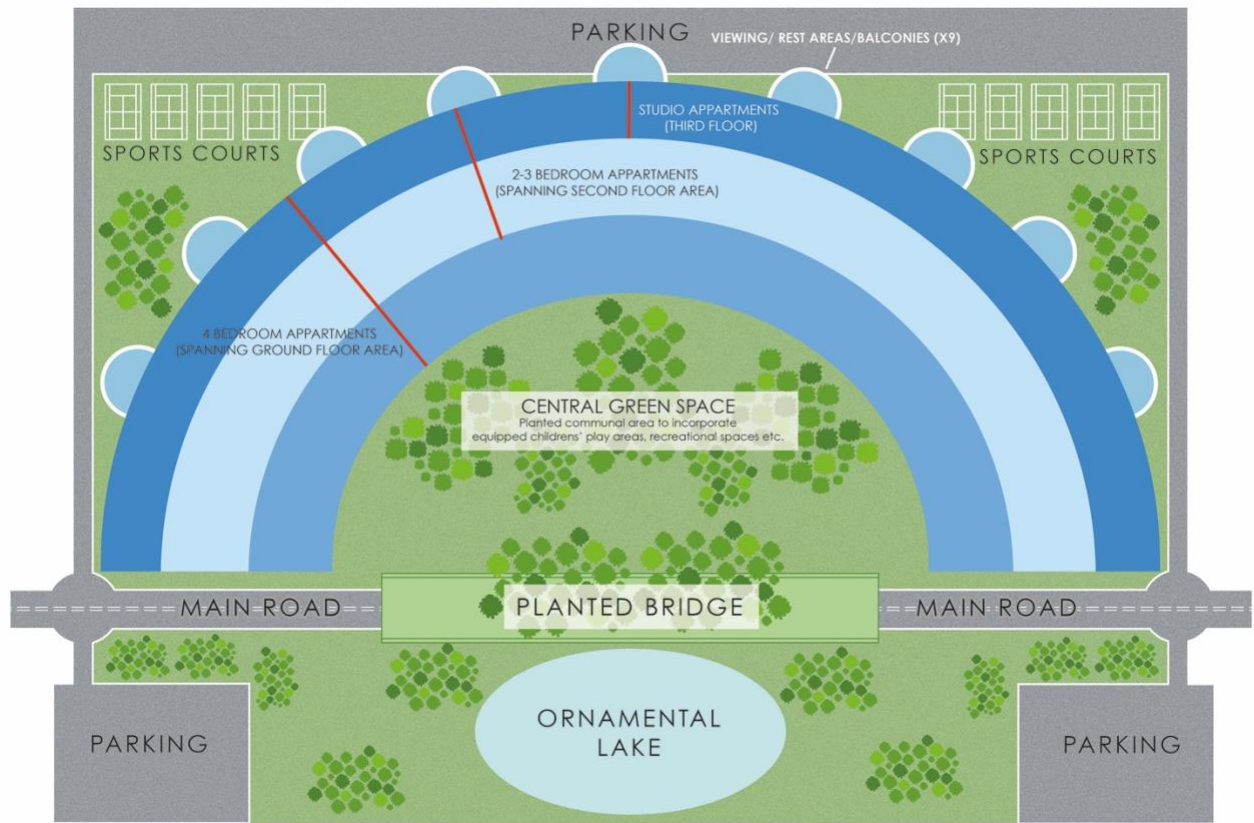
Maybe when we leave the European Union, the money we give to the EU can be used instead to create small farming enterprises, with the Government underwriting any loan given to those starting out.

It would be better to look at land ownership, Speculators buying land as a safe place to put their capital, often don't farm the land, but rent it out on short term arrangements. The farmers who rent the land don't live on site, hence live stock are not looked at each day

Create a Community Land Trust in every District by:

1. • Abolishing development boundaries.
 - Capping development land at £100,000 per acre.
 - Every village to have some affordable homes to revitalise village life.
 - Trust houses cannot be sold on the open market, they can only be sold back to the Trust at the current cost of production (materials and labour).
2. Invite every Town and Parish Council to select places where homes could be built. Take away the Right to Appeal from developers...No means NO.
3. Build care complexes for older people, to enable them to stay in their community area.

4. Local Councils say they are not able to suggest alternatives to planning applications - this must change.
5. Invite developers to tender for the building work (Developers to gain up to 11% per house. They can turn that capital over three times on one year.)
6. Add a proportionate sum to each home to give to the Town or Parish Council.
(This capital to be used to revitalize villages and towns - build a new community hall, enlarge a shop to cater for all local needs which would save people having to travel to larger towns, or possibly where pubs have closed, create a pub, shop and community hall in one development, and create work units.)
7. For example; building 20/30 homes in every village, on land that is not first class food growing land, add £20,000 to each one for the Parish Council. They then could enlarge or build a local shop so they could cater for all the local needs, thus saving families travelling to the towns, and creating traffic gridlock and pollution. This could also be a larger complex in a town setting, with a self-sufficient garden to feed the residents.
8. The bottom design could become an older peoples complex with a carer living on site.



We have a Housing, Care & Pension crisis.

I would like to start with giving you some facts.

In the year 1900, the average person spent just 10% of their wages on housing, at that time mostly it would be a rent.

Today one can be paying 60% of one's income on housing, be it rent or a mortgage.

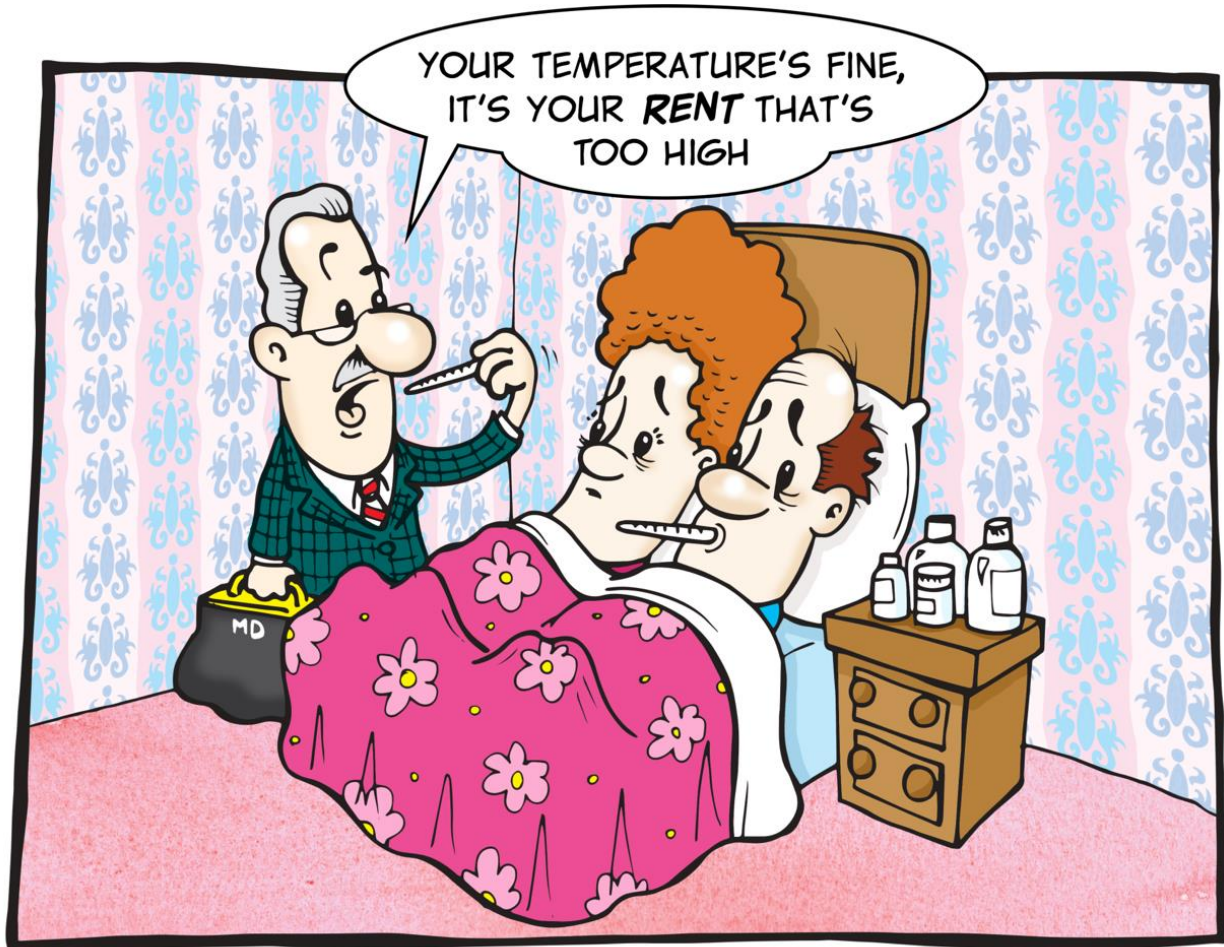
If a person today was working 8 hours a day and paying 60% on their income on housing that would equate to 24 hours a week or 3 days.

So, if we were to build houses for £150,000, one would use one day a week for one's housing costs, so we could then work a three day week, to stay as we are.

And that in turn would take two in five cars off the road in commuter / traveling to work time.

As a nation we have never been so well off, so why have we so much anxiety, depression & mental health issues?

We need to look at Housing, Care, Pensions, Food security & Wellbeing.





Laurence Keeley