Councillor Daniel Manvell
Uckfield North – Wealden District Council
Vice-Chair – Overview and Scrutiny Committee

13 July 2023

Ward member representation from Councillor Daniel Manvell, Wealden District Councillor for Uckfield North, in relation to the appeal "Land at Downlands Farm"

I want to start with a quote from Jasper, an 11-year-old neighbour of Downlands Farm and Uckfield North resident:

"*I would be extremely sad if they build 424 houses on this pretty setting packed with wildlife and rare species of plants. There are ancient woodlands filled with creatures like snakes, dormice, newts and deer, where would these animals go? [...] I am only 11 years old and now worried about the future ahead of us if we carry on this way."*

Jasper went to the trouble of completing an objection to the original application along with 364 other concerned neighbours and residents. They speak for a cross-section of Uckfield and the surrounding area, who recognise the great need for more housing locally, but also see the significant environmental, arboricultural, conservation, heritage, and highways planning problems of this application on this site.

I respectfully request that this appeal be dismissed by reference to the detailed, local objections of 365 residents and neighbours of the site. I rely on the objections and expert comments of statutory consultees and local planning officers. The application was refused on 21 April 2023 by way of delegated decision prior to my election, so I was not involved in this application as the local ward member before now.

Wealden District Council's planning officers have provided powerful planning reasons for their objections. Wealden's Drainage Officer has submitted three separate holding objections on surface water grounds. These were subject to the Arboricultural Officer's report, which was also an objection based on the impact of the development on ancient woodland and veteran trees. The impact on ancient woodland - an irreplaceable habitat that now covers just 2.5% of the UK's landmass - is a material planning consideration and is referred to frequently in the objections of residents, statutory consultees, and planning officers.

Wealden's Biodiversity Officer raised objections based on the impact that the SUDS and planned access would have on the ancient woodland, as well as a lack of biodiversity net gain. Wealden's Conservation and Design Officer objected on the basis that the application has no heritage benefits and that there were no conditions which could mitigate this harm. The development fails to preserve the significance of a nearby Grade II* building and two other Grade II buildings.

East Sussex County Council's Flood Risk Management Officer has provided three separate holding objections on the grounds that the applicant has, following further representations, repeatedly failed to meet the requirements to assess its acceptability in flood risk terms. Following further information provided by the applicant, the Flood Risk Management Officer's second holding objection cited the construction of water flow outfalls across the ancient woodland needing to be considered acceptable by Wealden officers. The third holding objection considered the drainage strategy to be "at concept stage".

East Sussex County Council's Highway Authority has objected twice, maintaining their objection after representations from the applicant. This was on the grounds of incomplete access details being provided, highway safety issues at Snatts Road, inconsistent active travel standards, town centre highways impacts, and that it is a detached standalone development. East Sussex County Council's Archaeology Officer did not object, but did disagree with the conclusions of the applicant's archaeology report "that the site

generally has a low potential, or may only contain features of low importance, for all archaeological periods."

The Woodland Trust strongly objects due to the impact of the application on ancient woodland, veteran trees and Lake Wood, a site that supports many protected species, among others. The Sussex Wildlife Trust also objects due to the threat to ancient woodland, the lack of biodiversity net gain, and the impact on protected species. Natural England has said it has serious concerns about the application which require careful consideration on the grounds of ancient woodland and nature conservation.

This application has been objected to by 365 local residents and neighbours of the site. It has received strong objections from Uckfield Town Council and the neighbouring Isfield, Fletching, Maresfield, and Buxted Parish Councils. My Wealden District Council predecessor, the current East Sussex County Councillor, as well as my two Uckfield Town Council North ward colleagues have also objected. These objections rely on material planning considerations that have been spoken to above.

Based on the recognised planning considerations outlined above and in consideration of the objections of local residents and their elected representatives, I respectfully ask that the Inspector dismiss this appeal.

Yours faithfully,

Daniel Manvell

Councillor Daniel Manvell
Wealden District Councillor – Uckfield North
Uckfield Town Councillor – Uckfield North

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The Planning Inspectorate

COMMENTS ON CASE (Online Version)

Please note that comments about this case need to be made within the timetable. This can be found in the notification letter sent by the local planning authority or the start date letter. Comments submitted after the deadline may be considered invalid and returned to sender.

Appeal Reference: APP/C1435/W/23/3321978

DETAILS OF THE CASE

Appeal Reference	APP/C1435/W/23/3321978
Appeal By	GLEESON LAND AND JOHN ALISON LAND AND RESEARCH LTD
Site Address	Land at Downlands Farm Uckfield TN22 3PU Grid Ref Easting: 546619 Grid Ref Northing: 122026

SENDER DETAILS

Name	COUNCILLOR DANIEL MANVELL
Address	[redacted]
Company/Group/Organisation Name	As a Wealden District Councillor and the local ward member, representing the community

ABOUT YOUR COMMENTS

In what capacity do you wish to make representations on this case?

- ☐ Appellant
- ☐ Agent
- ☑ Interested Party / Person
- ☐ Land Owner
- ☐ Rule 6 (6)

What kind of representation are you making?

- ☐ Final Comments
- ☐ Proof of Evidence
- ☐ Statement
- ☐ Statement of Common Ground

- [x] Interested Party/Person Correspondence
- [ ] Other

COMMENT DOCUMENTS

The documents listed below were uploaded with this form:

Relates to Section: REPRESENTATION
Document Description: Your comments on the appeal.
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