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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	[redacted]
Address	[redacted]

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
- ☑ Interested Party/Person Correspondence
- ☐ Other

YOUR COMMENTS ON THE CASE

I draw your attention to my letter of 21st August 2022 to Wealden District Council relating to Application No. WD/2022/1637/MEA and confirm that I stand by all points raised therein on Ecology and Environment; Suitability and Visual Impact; Compliance with Planning Policy; Traffic, Transport and Sustainability Issues. I would further draw your attention to the previous application to build on this site (WD/2006/2855/MEA) and the rejection of an appeal (APP/C1435/A/07/2046982) against WDC's refusal, following a public inquiry, inspector's report and decision by the then Minister of State. I would refer you to the Minister's decision letter dated 24 February 2009. Whilst the 2006 scheme was for some 750 dwellings, the reasons for its dismissal still apply to the current proposal for 424 dwellings.

The ecological reasons contributing to the dismissal still hold good and indeed the area has been subject to considerably more scrutiny and scientific evaluation in recent years and the contributions to this by experts such as Dr Martyn Stenning should carry significant weight.

From a sustainability point of view, the original scheme at least offered some on-site opportunities for employment and a new primary school thereby potentially mitigating excessive road vehicle use to access other areas. The present scheme offers no such benefits and the original proposed "country park" of 2006 has been replaced by a much less ambitious SANGS that nonetheless encourages access from elsewhere in the area potentially raising traffic levels on the inadequate Snatts Road. Despite fine words about provision of a new local bus service post-completion, it seems inevitable that most residents will still use road vehicles both for longer distance commuting and to access the facilities of Uckfield town centre. A potential Uckfield town centre scheme to relieve traffic congestion was acknowledged in 2009 to be some considerable way into the future and the Secretary of State considered that Downlands would therefore be unacceptable in terms of town centre traffic impact. Uckfield town centre remains essentially unchanged in 2023 with little prospect of a new traffic management scheme any time soon. It should also be pointed out that Uckfield and its infrastructure now suffers the impact of many hundreds of new homes on the southern edge of the town so to permit another development the size of Downlands with its inevitable car dependency would be seriously detrimental to the quality of life in the town.

As a resident of the northern fringes of Uckfield in Coopers Green, I have seen over the last four years, developers enjoying an NPPF free for all submitting applications to build "sustainable" dwellings on virtually all of the available small green field sites that surround Five Ash Down and Maresfield and define the "feel" of the area. Several of these have been (rightly) refused by WDC but have then inevitably gone to appeal with a possible expensive outcome for the Council. The Downlands scheme is, sadly, more of the same but much worse in scale.

I urge the Inspectorate to dismiss this appeal.