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4th July 2023

FAO Planning Inspectorate

Dear Sirs,

Re: Appeal Reference C1435/W/23/3321978

I write to urge you to refuse the above appeal and uphold the correct planning decision made by Wealden District Council for the reasons outlined below.

Before outlining my personal reasons for objecting to this proposed development, I would bring to the attention of the inspectorate that developments have been proposed on this particular piece of land (that separates the conurbations of Uckfield and Maresfield) over the last twenty years and have all been refused for the same reasons as they have been this time. The last time it was refused approximately a decade ago, it was referred to the Secretary of State who concluded that "***this land should never be built on***". None of the reasons for the Secretary of State's decision previously have changed and in fact the diversity of wildlife and the protected ancient woodland present has expanded and thrived in the interim. For this reason alone, the appeal is inappropriate and should fail.

Notwithstanding the above, I would like to offer some local knowledge as a resident of the area concerned in order to assist the inspectorate to obtain a clear picture of what the developers are proposing. I am not against development in general, but this particular proposal is wholly inappropriate, as I shall now attempt to explain.

Nature: The proposed access to the site from the already overcrowded Uckfield bypass would involve destroying some protected ancient ghyll woodland which is irreplaceable and would be lost forever. The site is the home of numerous protected species whose habitat would be destroyed. These include (but not exclusively) Barbastelle bats, hazel dormice, adders, grass snakes and rare frogs, toads and newts. The site abuts the Woodland Trust owned Lake Wood, an area of outstanding beauty and the secret gem of Uckfield. The effect of 424 houses adjacent to the conservation area would be devastating in addition to the wildlife corridor that has been present for hundreds of years that would be destroyed by the site access road. I'm sure you will receive numerous detailed reports from other concerned residents in relation to these points, so I will not labour them here. It should also be noted that this area is notorious for flooding and there is no natural draining or sewerage system available or adequately planned.

Families, residents and nature lovers have enjoyed unfettered access to this land for 30 years. Despite the developers having proposed to leave some of the areas of woodland to form a path for walkers, it has been admitted that this was more due to the exorbitant cost to remove the hundreds of tree stumps than it was to maintain some access to locals.

Services: I have lived in the area since March 2018. I am still unable to get a doctor or dentist in the area. My children have to go to school in another town as there are no places here. A mass development on the northern side of the town (1,500 houses) has put a further enormous strain on the services of this town, which are already at breaking point. The paucity of services should be addressed before any development should go ahead to the north of Uckfield. The town side (northern side) of the proposed development has a narrow road which is unsuitable for additional vehicles and therefore the only access would be from the bypass, a road already renown for gridlocking at peak times and effectively cuts the development off from the town anyway.

Other considerations: It is the policy of Wealden District Council that the town should not 'merge' with the surrounding villages and careful consideration is always given to the areas in which the town expands. Downlands farm is the natural parcel of land that separates Uckfield from Maresfield and to build on this land would indeed see Maresfield 'connected' to its larger town neighbour. Additionally, when the landowner of Downlands Farm died, it is my understanding that he wanted it to be used for housing due to the lack of available housing in the town at that time. However, that situation has been widely addressed with numerous more suitable developments appearing over the last twenty years. His concerns are therefore no longer applicable as also observed by the Secretary of State in the appeal of a decade ago.

In the interests of balance, I genuinely tried to think of positives and things in favour of the development, but I can't come up with a single one. Regardless of the above reasons for objection, the proposal is ill conceived, poorly thought out, and doesn't meet the criteria percentage for incorporating affordable housing anyway. Is it any wonder that when Wealden District Council considered the proposal, they received a record number of objections to a single proposal.

With all this in mind I urge the planning inspectorate to dismiss the appeal out of hand and in accordance with the Secretary of State's findings a decade ago refuse the appeal and protect this wildlife haven in perpetuity.

Yours faithfully,

[redacted]

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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

Dear Sirs,
Please find attached a letter from myself explaining why I believe this appeal should fail and would urge you to review the Secretary of State's conclusions of a decade ago when he stated that "this land should never be built on" as all of the reasons for his conclusion still apply today.
Thank you for taking the time to consider my representation.
[redacted]

COMMENT DOCUMENTS

The documents listed below were uploaded with this form:

Relates to Section: REPRESENTATION
Document Description: Your comments on the appeal.
File name: PlanningInspectorate.docx

PLEASE ENSURE THAT A COPY OF THIS SHEET IS ENCLOSED WHEN POSTING THE ABOVE DOCUMENTS TO US