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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 am writing to object to the planning permission to build 424 homes on Downlands Farm, Uckfield. In 2009 the then Secretary of State ruled that planning permission should be denied and that this land should never be built upon. This was a great relief for all those who had worked hard to fight against the proposed plans only to see the developers take it to appeal when permission was refused. After the appeal decision it was thought that this precious site would now be safe and 'protected' from building. Sadly, due to the lack of an agreed upon 5 year plan, Wealden became a target for a developers free for all. The district has now suffered from massive over development resulting in a severe lack of services such as doctors, NHS dentists, school places and child care. We have a sewage and water system which is struggling, water supply has become a major problem recently with some areas of Wealden going without a water supply for several days. Uckfield is on a hose pipe ban. The increased housing has already caused traffic congestion on the roads in Uckfield High Street and Bypass at important times of the day, causing noise and petrol pollution. The Bypass was originally built to relieve the congestion in the High Street and only route through Uckfield from massive traffic jams and can no longer do this.

Uckfield, during this overdevelopment period, has seen several farms sold to developers and housing estates built which will eventually encircle the town and change it's very nature far too rapidly for services and infra structure to cope. These fields were once an important part of the water cycle natural drainage system allowing the River Uck to flow normally. Since the various housing estates this has added to flooding problems, we need Downlands farm to remain fields to prevent further flooding. Any drainage dug on the site would be a potential threat to the ghylls and archaeology on site and could have the potential of polluting the stream at Shortbridge.

When planning permission was again sort for Downlands Farm and Wealden District Council quite rightly refused it, we have had to fight all over again which caused trauma for people before and now even more so. I stand by all my objections made in my original letter but would like to stress the vital importance of the history and ecology of the site. I previously described the abundant wild life and the endangered species such as the Hazel dormouse and the Great Crested newt (found in one of the ancient dew ponds)and the importance of maintaining the green tree canopy connecting Downlands Farm to Budletts Common and up to Buxted. This is a necessary route for wildlife to travel for mating, and finding food and water. The site itself is made up of fields made from old grass meadows, with irreplaceable ancient ghyll woodland, wet woodland and Mesolithic rock outcrops. There are over 100 species of birds, 14 species of dragonfly, and over 150 species of moth and butterfly. It is home to bats, especially the Barbestelle bat that is rare in Sussex. There are also rare invertebrates such as adders, grass snakes, slow worms lizards, frogs , toads and the newts. Deer cross this land and rest here on the way to Lake Wood where they drink. This is their home and we already have many killed on the road as drivers go too fast and don't consider the deer.

Lake Wood is next door to Downlands Farm and is owned by the Woodland Trust, it is a very valuable site for flora and fauna and has been a major study of Dr Martyn Stenning who is an authority on Lake Wood, visiting it since child hood. A development on Downlands Farm would inevitably have a detrimental affect on Lake Wood due to housing backing up right next to it. There would be increased footfall, littering and damage and predation of the wildlife by pet cats. The developers have put forward suggestions on how they would protect the wood and wildlife and ancient trees on both Downlands Farm and Lake Wood but they are not reasonable suggestions which only prove to show that they do not understand. For instance, their solution to protecting the Lake Wood from the housing estate is to put up a very high fence. This would then stop the free movement for deer and other wildlife to and from the Lake for their water source, it would not stop cats, noise and pollution and would undoubtedly become damaged over the years when the developers are long gone.

I object to the poor level of surveys made on behalf of the developers on flora, fauna ,ancient trees, archaeology, historical buildings, water drainage and vehicle access to the site especially on Snatts Road which years ago was called a lane and is not wide enough or straight enough to cope with the increased traffic entering and leaving the site. These surveys are not accurate representations of this site.

I also strongly object to the process of destroying a natural, diverse, irreplaceable heritage landscape that is worthy of SSSI status and mitigating this loss by 'creating a 'SANG'. This makes no sense, nothing can mitigate the destruction of Sussex farmland and ancient woodland in an area or outstanding natural beauty so close to Ashdown Forest.

Downlands Farm was once part of the Streatfeild family estate(that is the correct spelling of the family name). They owned Buckswood Grange, Lake Wood and Downlands Farm and they have shared history, for example the old carriage route and Chicory Cottage (Heather Hall the Heritage Officer says that Chicory Cottage "has a close relationship with Lake Wood and Fir Tree Grove and has a clear historic relationship to Buckswood Grange. I therefore conclude that it has a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions because of it's heritage interest.")
To conclude, in these times of importance for bio-diversity and the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs wanting England's 48 local authorities to make their own strategy for their area to plant more trees and hedges and create wetlands etc it is already here on Downlands Farm. The people of Uckfield have enjoyed walking on the land over the last 30 years, it is a valuable resource to the town and the our country. It must never be built upon.