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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 Sir/Madam,

I am writing to express my strong objection to the planning application appeal lodged by the developers for the proposed development of up to 424 homes on the Downlands Farm site, located between Uckfield and Maresfield. I firmly believe that this exceptional piece of land, with its invaluable heritage landscape, ancient woodlands, priority habitats, and endangered species, should be protected for future generations.

The Downlands Farm site is not just a mere plot of land; it embodies a unique and irreplaceable natural heritage. The landscape comprises fields formed from old grass meadows, encircled by ancient ghyll woodlands, including rare wet woodland, and Mesolithic rock outcrops. It serves as a habitat for over 100 species of birds, such as skylarks, hawfinches, lesser spotted woodpeckers, and curlews. Furthermore, it hosts 14 species of dragonflies, over 150 varieties of moths and butterflies, endangered hazel dormice, bats (including the scarce Barbastelle), rare invertebrates, reptiles such as adders, grass snakes, lizards, and slow-worms, as well as amphibians like frogs, toads, and newts.

The interconnected network of ghylls, along with the Shortbridge Stream, plays a vital role in the migration of critically endangered European Eels. Additionally, the historical significance of the site, dating back to the Streatfeild Estate carriage drive from Lake Wood to Malling Budletts in the 1790s, further emphasizes its value and uniqueness.

Having cherished this beautiful countryside for nine years, I hold a personal connection to the Downlands Farm and Lake Wood area. It serves as a precious open green space that provides solace, tranquility, and natural beauty for me and my family. The rural character of the landscape, the views to and from the Maresfield Conservation Area, and the Ashdown Forest Friends Clump are all integral elements that contribute to the charm and allure of this region. As a home educating family we find Lake Wood and the surrounding area to be an invaluable resource for the study of nature; the ability to access it regularly and without impedance has a profoundly positive effect on the mental wellbeing of both my family and I.

One of my major concerns regarding this proposed development is the significant increase in traffic through Uckfield and Maresfield. The current state of over-development has already started to impact these areas adversely. I have personally experienced the challenges of crossing the town and the subsequent delays caused by the congested roads. Furthermore, the hilly topography, evidence of traffic accidents, and the difficulties faced by individuals with disabilities all amplify the existing barriers to local travel. The introduction of a new roundabout, access roads, and hundreds of additional houses would only exacerbate these issues.

Another critical aspect at stake is the functional connectivity of the ancient woodland landscape and wildlife corridors. The proposed development poses a severe risk of fracturing these vital connections through the construction of access roads, a new roundabout, and the extensive housing development. Such fragmentation would have detrimental effects on the local ecosystem, disrupting the natural movement of wildlife and inhibiting their ability to thrive.

Moreover, the Downlands Farm site plays a crucial role in protecting the internationally important High Weald Geodiversity. Preserving this unique geological heritage is not only a responsibility but also an opportunity to safeguard an invaluable asset for scientific research, education, and public appreciation.

The site's location between Woodland Trust sites, from Lake Wood to Views Wood, and its position within the Buxted Park SSSI form a vital natural wildlife corridor. North Uckfield should be recognized as a Local Nature Recovery Strategy area, housing internationally important habitats that protect an astonishing array of wildlife, including endangered species. The development, if approved, would pose a direct and indirect threat to our heritage, ancient woodlands, and rare peat-fed lake. The loss of irreplaceable habitats, contrary to standing advice, is a risk that should not be taken lightly. I implore you to refuse the proposed development and ensure the long-term protection of this invaluable site.

In conclusion, I strongly urge the Planning Inspectorate to consider the objections raised by concerned citizens, as well as the evidence provided by various organizations, including the objections from Uckfield Town Council, other parish councils, the Woodland Trust, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Downlands Action Group, and experts such as Dr. Martyn Stenning and Vivienne Blandford. It is crucial to recognize the significance of the Downlands Farm site and safeguard its ecological, historical, and cultural value for generations to come.

Thank you for considering my objection. I trust that you will make the right decision to protect this unique piece of Sussex.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]