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From: [redacted]
Sent: 15 November 2023 22:08
To: [redacted]
Cc: planning
Subject: Appeal Inquiry - Land at Downlands Farm, Uckfield

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Dear Madam and Sir

Having listened to much of the inquiry, I have become increasingly distraught by the possible destruction of the unique, fragile and very special area that is Lake Wood. It is absolutely the wrong place for a housing development.

My particular concern is for the survival of the Hazel Dormouse (Muscardinus Avellanarius) which cannot speak for themselves. I shall be as brief as possible.

THE HAZEL DORMOUSE

The delicate Hazel Dormouse is equally as important to protect as the Great Crested Newt and various Bats and the Whales. It is in fact protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The Hazel Dormouse is a priority species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. It has become extinct in 12 counties in the last 100 years. It is rare and vulnerable to extinction. We should be doing all we can to preserve its habitat, not push its survival to the edge, even if we make bridges for it there are no guarantees that it will be brave enough to use them. In fact the disruption, light and noise involved in building such a large development in the middle of its habitat could well drive it out or stress it into an early grave. The Dormouse prefers to travel from tree to tree in search of food and any breaks in the canopy (bridges or no bridges) for access roads could spell disaster. It likes to keep off the ground. The Hazel Dormouse hibernates (roughly October to May) in a nest at the base of old coppiced trees or Hazel stools, under piles of leaves or log piles. There is talk of moving Hazel trees, presumably in winter, when the Dormice may be asleep at the bottom. It doesn't take a great imagination to see that such action will doubtless spell disaster. The tree species, Brambles and Honeysuckle in Lake Wood and the nearby Woodland, which joins up with Budletts, are ideal for the Hazel Dormouse. It particularly needs Hazel trees. This is its home.

PEOPLE, CATS AND DOGS

As if all this wasn't bad enough, the proximity of a large housing development next to Lake Wood will mean hundreds more people trampling through the Wood, many with dogs and there will doubtless be many cats as well. Cats are a special and lethal danger to the Dormouse. (I know of a certain cat, now no longer at large at night or in the evening, which took great delight in sitting under a bat flight path and picking the bats off one by one).
I once came across a man in Lake Wood with two children and a 'Bully-type' dog. He was strengthening the dogs jaws by hanging it by the jaws from a branch suspended over the Lake. Presumably the dog didn't like water.
I don't believe a 'dog-proof' fence will be effective, especially if it is damaged by human endeavour. Who will repair any damage? Badgers and foxes still need to be able to travel freely.
I am also concerned about the rise in light levels and noise from so many houses plus people's security lights and car headlights shining into the woodland.

SANG AND CAR PARK

The provision of a SANG and car park onto Snatts Road is a disastrous idea because it will simply attract more cars, walkers and dog-walkers in particular who are lazy about picking up after their dogs. I know of one local authority where the groundskeepers refused to mow the grass because of the volume of dog mess which constituted a health hazard. Snatts Road is more of a lane than a road and not wide enough for 2 lorries to easily pass each other. If the car park is full, people will park on the road and footpath. It has dangerous bends round the rocks at the southern end and a hazardous junction.

A22

The A22 is a busy road and regularly grinds to a halt on a daily basis. There have been several accidents recently. We have 1000 more houses being built a little further along the Uckfield bypass, the other side of Uckfield. That will also stop the traffic without yet another roundabout to yet another housing development. And yet more destructive lighting.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Having spoken to a lot of people, several hundred, about the proposed development at Downlands Farm, the things that worried them most was the fact that there is NO infrastructure to support hundreds more households. All the schools are full. It's impossible to get a dental appointment anywhere locally, the doctors' lists are closed, there is no new hospital or the personnel to support any of these facilities. These things matter to people. It's no good just filling every apparently empty field with houses when there is no infrastructure to support them. It's a scandal. There is a 'smash and grab' mentality with no thought of the consequences.

The proximity of Downlands Farm to Lake Wood means one of two things should happen to the land. Either it should be used for growing crops or it should be re-wilded with appropriate trees and flora. It should be dark and quiet. The fauna will probably look after themselves and the beleaguered Hazel Dormouse will have a sporting chance of survival and it will be a lot better for the planet.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Yours sincerely

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