

Sarah Valentine

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 11 January 2024 11:57
To: planninginfo
Subject: Fw: Application DM/23/2867

[REDACTED]
Dear Sir,

Following your email of this morning, I enclose my full postal address, as requested, along with my comments for the above application.

Walstead Forge
Snowflake Lane
Walstead
Haywards Heath
RH16 2QJ

With best wishes

[REDACTED]

Sent: 10 January 2024 19:02
To: planninginfo@midsussex.gov.uk <planninginfo@midsussex.gov.uk>
Subject: Application DM/23/2867

Dear Sir,

I have been directly associated with this ground since the year 2000, and until recently, I have run a small pheasant shoot on the area concerned. My family can be traced back to the 1500's living and working in Ansty, Cuckfield and Burgess Hill as Farmers Agricultural Contractors and Game Keepers, so thus, have a lot of knowledge of the land and history of the area.

The land concerned hasn't been intensively farmed since the shoot has been involved, the grass land has seen very low key grazing, some years hay was taken and others not at all, hence the bio diversity in the grass land is extensive, with many rare grasses and perennials establishing over the past 24 years. The woodlands had been neglected for many years, before we took over the woodland management.

I am a keen conservationist and have run my own private nature reserve of approximately 30 acres for many years, so our activities on the above ground since we have run the shoot, have been to enhance the natural history, with the added bonus of ten pairs of willing hands. i.e. the shoot members to do the work needed.

Over the past 23 years we have created woodland rides, and hot spots, also removed many areas of "Rhododendron". Dark neglected woodland has been revitalised, providing ideal conditions for a

huge diversity of woodland flora, which had laid dormant for many years. This in turn, provided perfect habitat for woodland flora loving species, for example, since the year 2000 the butterfly species count has increased many fold. There is a large population of "Silver-washed Fritillary" now found in all woods, "White Admiral" is doing well in Walks wood, "Purple Emperor" another rare butterfly can also be found in areas where Oaks and Willow can be found together. "Marbled White" and "Clouded Yellow" can be found on the grassland at certain times of the year. These are just a few examples of the huge variety of butterflies that can be seen all year round in abundance.

The woodland management program has also increased the small rodent population many percent with the extra seed source. Indeed there is a small population of "Dormice" to be found in some areas. With this increase has come the arrival of many species of birds of prey. We have had a resident Barn Owl breeding for many years in a provided nest box, also a breeding pair of Kestrels have done very well in recent years. You can often see Tawny Owl, Buzzard, who also breed on the land, Red Kite, Peregrine, Hobby, are regular visitors and once a Goshawk was on the ground for a few days, a rare bird indeed.

Water Rail can be found in the wet areas in the winter, as well as many Snipe, there is a healthy population of Woodcock that visit in the winter months and a couple of pairs are breeding year round residents. Although the last two species are game birds, they weren't shot by the shoot, as is the policy with most local shoots.

With regard to birds, well over 100 species have been seen on the above land since we have been involved and a lot have thrived with the addition of cover crops in the winter months .

There is a large Badger Sett in one of the woods, and in the evening in the summer you can see 15- 20 plus in the grass land worming and digging for beetle larvae. Stoat and Weasel are often encountered as are Foxes, sadly the occasional Mink use the stream to invade the ground, but we do try and control them when we can, they can be devastating to our native wildlife as is the Grey Squirrel who was also controlled. Some fine Roe deer live on the land, and in recent years they have been joined by Fallow and Muntjac.

Great Crested Newts can be found in some of the small ponds in the late spring but at other times under rotting logs etc there are always Frogs and Toads in areas where you would expect to see them.

There are rare plant species, Jig-Jag clover has been recorded and there is a colony of Violet Helleborine to be found in Walks Wood. The Common Spotted Orchid has done exceptionally well with the woodland rides created, with many hundreds of plants now found in places they weren't seen before. Within the Ancient Woodland, rare ferns are thriving, as is the other key ancient woodland flora you would expect to find in quiet, pristine habitat. There are many fine Oak trees in the woodland and a number of dead trees providing perfect conditions for rare beetles, fungi, etc, Hornets have nested in many of these trees over the years, as well as social bees. Bats are numerous, there are at least two species that use the building we called "The Deer Hut" at various times of the year they can be seen in the rafters, their dropping making a mess on our dinning table, along with the Owl Pellets !

With all this said, I find it hard to believe that the party concerned with the proposed development think they would increase the Bio-Diversity of the ground by 20 % by turning the site into a Re-Wilding / Country Park with increased footfall, made up cycle tracks etc, they are deluded! Re Wilding has a place, but it isn't for everywhere, indeed my 30 acres has much more interest than Knepp Castle, (who I visit regularly), for example, fences protect rarities from being eaten/rooted out/trampled on etc by pigs, deer, cattle. who don't discriminate between a rare helleborine and a tuft of grass! Knepp is an interesting project, don't get me wrong, but this ground at Ansty has a lot to lose if the use changes that dramatically.

I spoke with one of the environmentalists employed by the developers in the summer on the said ground, who had been up there on a couple of occasions with a Moth Trap to record moth species. When I asked him what he had found, his reply was "there is nothing here, very disappointing" I replied "I don't believe you" when questioned further, it turned out he had trouble with the generator, it had failed after an hour on both occasions. Hence, no recording had taken place, it was no little wonder that there was nothing there for his records! I can't tell you how saddened I was, and wondered about the accuracy of all the other environmental reports being done, especially knowing the ground and it's natural history well, very sadly their findings just don't add up!

This area is a very special little oasis, in a very built up area of Mid Sussex and should be treated with respect, once gone, it will be gone for ever, those of you who are in a privileged position to make planning decisions, please think carefully or on your conscience be it.



Sent from [Outlook](#)