

Steve Ashdown

From: planninginfo@midsussex.gov.uk
Sent: 14 December 2024 15:36
To: Steve Ashdown
Subject: Mid Sussex DC - Online Register - Comments for Planning Application DM/23/2867

Comments summary

Dear Sir/Madam,

Planning Application comments have been made. A summary of the comments is provided below.

Comments were submitted at 14/12/2024 3:35 PM.

Application Summary

Address:	Land East Of Ansty Way Cuckfield Bypass Cuckfield West Sussex
Proposal:	Change of use of farmland and woodland to parkland reserve to include public access and instigation of long-term management and rewilding regime, including establishment of pedestrian and cycle tracks, with new pedestrian and cycle access points off Cuckfield Road to the south and Staplefield Road to the north. Proposals to include the addition of two wooden viewing platforms and two hides. Sports pitches at Beech Farm Field to remain in sports use. (Additional information received on 8th November 2024).
Case Officer:	Stephen Ashdown

[Click for further information](#)

Customer Details

Address:	Wealdacre Courtmead Road Cuckfield
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Comments Details

Commenter Type:	Neighbour or general public
Stance:	Customer objects to the Planning Application
Reasons for comment:	
Comments:	It is clear that this application is for the sole purpose of Fairfax trying to deliver a biodiversity net gain to offset the destruction of biodiversity at the Ansty Farm site and not to deliver recreational facilities. Fairfax's own documentation makes it clear that public access to the site will be limited to less than a third of the overall site and the new footpath would be closed during February to August each year for "ground nesting birds". In the current district plan (2014-2031) which was adopted in 2018, policy DP16 states that "Development will only be permitted where it conserves or enhances natural beauty". This application serves neither purpose.

The ancient woodland on the site (Walks Wood etc) will have a cycle path running through it linking up with other public rights of way which will be destructive to the tree roots and smaller plants. The activity of cycling will also adversely affect the wildlife. The cycle path will consist of a rolled hoggin surface that will compact the soil.

The High Weald National Landscape has a high sensitivity to change where even modest changes to visitor numbers, footpath construction or car parking can have a significant effect on the landscape fabric. The latest documentation suggests that there will be no parking facilities in one document yet in another document is the suggestion that endowment fees to maintain the site could be reduced by car parking income for 100 visitors per week, a cafe or a concession of say a van selling food and drinks. There also seems to be nothing in place to prevent the use of parking at the football ground. The concept seems confused and contradictory with the potential for a destructive impact on the environment.

The erection of fencing (post and wire) will form barriers to existing wildlife such as deer and small rodents. Fencing is also disapproved of by the National Landscape (AONB) authorities as it disrupts historic field boundaries. It is also visually unattractive.

The "rewilding" "light touch management regime" will not enrich the existing habitat but merely replace an already bio-diverse natural environment with another more alien one. There are several references in the documentation to learning from the re-wilding at Knepp Estate, this is completely at odds with the objection submitted already by Sir Charles Burrell, owner of the Knepp Castle Estate. He makes it clear that the documentation is full of errors and the site is too small to be viable.

The purpose of the "Parkland Reserve" or "Country Park" is confused and contradictory. On the one hand it claims to provide a recreational resource to local people whilst at the same time limiting access to enhance biodiversity. It cannot achieve both aims in such a small area because they are mutually incompatible.

The special landscape qualities of the High Weald are the result of interaction between rural people and the natural landscape over centuries. It cannot be improved upon by the revolutionary imposition of a new land management regime imposed from above.

National Planning guidelines state that Biodiversity net gain should be achieved ideally at the development site itself rather than on an alternative one. Common ownership aside the two sites are quite separate and the activity in one cannot compensate logically for destructive activity in the other.

Evidence of Biodiversity Net Gain aggregated across both sites has been estimated at 18.2%. However this figure has not been provided using the objectively assessed statutory biodiversity metric but instead by desk based assessments undertaken by advisers who have no practical experience of re-wilding schemes. Sir Charles Burrell (the leading expert in re-wilding in this country) has already dismissed these plans as not serious.

The introduction of the cycle path runs close to and damages the setting of listed buildings in the area such as Old Mill cottage and Pondtail cottage.

Cyclists could also come into conflict with users of existing bridleways such as horse riders.

Once land ceases to be used for agricultural purposes, it becomes much easier to subsequently develop at a later stage. This has frequently happened elsewhere.

The Fairfax proposal in terms of access to the countryside gives local people nothing they don't already have in terms of access to the countryside and its enjoyment. It is also hard to see how the current measure of biodiversity in this special area could be improved upon.

Kind regards

