

Pondtail Cottage

Deaks Lane

Cuckfield

West Sussex

RH17 5JB

(Ref: DM/23/2867)

09.01.2024

As the location of this application has been identified on the Notification of Planning Application letter as being related to '*Lands East of Ansty Way Bypass, Cuckfield, West Sussex*' and as per Fairfax's own statements, all other objections received by MSDC in relation to DM/23/2866 should therefore be applied to DM/23/2867 too as these applications should be one and the same. However, we have responded to DM/23/2866 and DM/23/2867 separately as this is how they have been presented.

Firstly, we strongly object to the location of the cycle route that runs past Pondtail Cottage, which is a listed **building** situated within an **historical setting**. The significant **increase of noise and disturbance**, to us in particular, that will be generated by the public using it will destroy the **tranquillity** of the site that has existed there for hundreds of years.

The proposal argues that it is respectful of listed buildings, but we believe that this is not the case and not enough distance has been left between these ancient buildings and the proposed development sites. In this application the proposed cycle route is shown to run from the A272, alongside the southern end of Beechy Bottom Park, straddling the river after which it's located, to be within approximately 30 metres of Pondtail Cottage, a grade 2 listed building. Its proximity will alter and extinguish the historic setting of the Cottage which comprises of the close and nearby remnants of the 16th century iron industry and its related former pond structure, identified by the Weald Iron Research Group¹ as having an '*important purpose*' and shown on the attached map (circa1800) which also shows the medieval field structure of the privately owned Cuckfield Place. The map shows two nearby ponds as both depicted in blue, recognised as carrying water and recorded as '*Upper Mill Pond (84) & Lower Mill Pond*' (85) in the accompanying Book of Reference to the map. Both are located

close to Pondtail Cottage and are shown to supply water to the nearby 'Old Mill Cottage' before continuing downstream to support the historic Cuckfield Furnace site identified in the application DM/23/2866.

Therefore, this section of the cycle route will significantly impact on the surrounding area of Pondtail Cottage, which as a listed building is considered to be a heritage asset. We understand that the impact the new development will have on the surrounding area of the listed building is considered as important as the preservation of the building itself according to the National Planning Policy (NPPF).

Secondly, in the Supporting Statement (Environmental Statement 1. Non Technical summary, Paragraph 5.3.3) it says that *'Routes were positioned away from the Ancient Woodland and concentrated on the ecologically low value areas such as low value grassland and arable land'*. This is contrary to the **Design & Access Statement** on page 15 where it clearly defines areas of Ancient Woodland and on page 16 names these ancient woods as 'Walkes Wood' and 'Boonsford Wood'.

In addition, on page 58 of The Environmental Statement (Volume 4: Appendix G: Ecology & Biodiversity Part 8) it shows semi-natural ancient woodland clearly depicted in dark green.

However, the Detailed Masterplan (_21_Rev:PO4) indicates the following:

- the proposed cycleway cutting through ancient woodland but does not label the ancient woodland called 'Walkes Wood' and 'Boonsford Wood';
- parts of the cycleway to be fenced on either side running through the middle of 'Walkes Wood', which is not labelled, but never-the-less, effectively cutting off the flow of natural wildlife movement, such as deer, fox and badgers;
- that there is no clear distinction made between the existing bridleways and footpaths which have been presented as coloured differently on the map to the key. This camouflages the fact that the north/south cycle route traverses the east/west footpath numbered footpath 58 CR, running between Walkes Wood and Boonsford Wood which cyclists are not allowed to ride on.

- that the cycle track is to run alongside the far southern end of the park and just south of Old Mill Cottage but not fenced. However, another map shown on page 58 of the Environmental Statement (Volume 4: Appendix G: Ecology & Biodiversity Part 8), shows this area to be ancient woodland depicted in dark green and shows the boundary of the ancient woodland to be fenced between that and the deer fenced boundary of the site. This will create another narrow corridor for cyclists to ride through, but again this map does not clearly demarcate the proposed route of the cycle track and both maps conceal the full details.

Finally, the Supporting Environmental statement 1. Non Technical summary (Figure 3.7: Overview of the Proposed Beechy Bottom Parkland Reserve Site), shows the cycle routes on this map and again does not identify the ancient woodland that the proposed cycle route is to run through.

These statements are **confusing, contradictory and deceptive** which brings into question the integrity of the applicants and the validity of the **quality of the design** of the **project**.

Thirdly, the Environmental Statement (Volume 4: Appendix G: Ecology & Biodiversity Part 8) Paragraph 5.6 says: *'Fallow deer are recommended to be removed due to their non-native (but naturalised) status, impact on woodlands, high numbers and to simplify ease of future population management'*. No evidence has been provided to support the theory that the fallow deer have damaged the ancient park that is so abundant with wildlife and so well documented in this application. Displacement of deer must be accompanied by monitoring and responsive management action, and these details have not been provided in this application. As the applicants have suggested by omission that cereal and root crop will not be grown in the park that they could damage, we fail to see why this idea should be supported. Fallow deer were first introduced to Britain by the Normans 1,000 years ago and have lived in our woodland for centuries. Records of the Park date back as far as 1294 which depict deer habitation when it was much larger than the present day, (Ref: Rot.CL.,22 Edw.I.)². Further records show the Park's use for hunting deer circa early 1700 (Ref: Mr.

lower- Vol.xxv od S.A.C)³. A proposed cull of deer suggests the planners foresee them as a potential obstacles and risks to cyclists, which is ironic given that this is their natural habitat. Therefore, building a cycle route in their natural habitat only serves to harm the deer population rather than add any ecological enhancement or benefit.

The public cycling through the woodland, **clearly intrudes on the countryside**, which is part of the fallow deer's habitation. Fallow deer are generally extremely wary and are suspicious of strange objects or changes within their surroundings and this will frighten them away also disturbing other wildlife. Furthermore, fencing almost the whole area around its boundary edge and fencing the cycle route either side creating enclosed corridors, introduces potentially unnecessary barriers to wildlife as all the woodland within this area and the adjoining Highweald AONB area are connected and work collectively to provide wider ecological functions.

Fencing off almost the entire park will ensure there is no possibility that any remaining deer could ever return. Supplying other species of farmed deer contained in relatively small enclosures **will not enhance the area**, which from an ecological, historical and landscape perspective, is shown to be of exceptionally high quality.

Fourthly, the applicants have applied for a change of use to the farmed area which constitutes new development. **This new development does not comply** with the National Planning Policy Framework, West Sussex Rights of Way Improvement Plan, Ansty, Staplefield & Brook Street Neighbourhood Plan and the latest Government initiative that 'all new developments should be accessible to all'. This is because the proposed routes are not multi-functional routes for NMUs (Non-Motorised Users) and exclude horses. The proposed car park at the northern end of the park has not allowed allocated space for horse boxes and trailers which alienates horse riders and this also demonstrates noncompliance as well as a **flawed quality of design**.

There is also no indication that the cycle route and paths will be dedicated as public rights of way and recorded as such on the definitive map. This leaves them vulnerable to becoming easily extinguished since they will be privately owned.

Furthermore, In the Planning statement (paragraph 1.12) a Toucan Crossing is proposed on the A272 Cuckfield Road, *'providing access and connectivity between the Parkland Reserve and the new Garden Community for both pedestrians and cyclists'*. We suggest that the crossing should be a Pegasus crossing not a Toucan crossing which only accommodates pedestrians and cyclists. A Pegasus crossing would ensure that horses riders are able to cross safely. Connectivity between the two sites has been shown to link to bridleway 59CR and should multi- functional routes be implemented, as they should, then linkage to other various bridleways surrounding the two applications would allowing safer off-road usage for horse riders. The **design** of this application has not taken this into consideration and its **quality** is **flawed**, which we believe constitutes a **highway safety issue**.

This also extends to the cycle route that is proposed to exit from the car park at the north end of the Park onto the B2115 which has a 50mph limit and the south exit that adjoins the A272 which is a national speed limit Trunk Road (60mph) and thus both these roads support busy, fast-moving traffic. Neither of these roads have special designated cycle lanes to protect the public using them, and yet they are portrayed in their use to connect up to Cuckfield making a *'round trip'* but the lack of designated cycle lanes is what we believe to be hazardous especially as the applicants are giving the impression that the public can use these roads **safely**.

Lastly, to reiterate the inclusion of the cycle route we believe constitutes **intrusion on the countryside** and will **significantly increase noise and disturbance**; we fail to see how **any** of the proposed routes can generate any **ecological benefit to the surrounding countryside and landscape**.

In sum, our main objection points to the application are:

Proximity to listed buildings.

The effect of this proposed development on the appearance of the area.

Intrusion on the countryside to both animals and local people

The flawed quality and design.

Significantly increased noise and disturbance.

The non-existent ecological benefits to the proposal.

Highway safety issues.

The application's lack of compliance to and consideration of inclusivity.

Degradation of the countryside.

¹ Written evidence from Weald Iron Research Group dated 16th June 2023 can be supplied to testify the '*nearby remnants of the 16th century iron industry*'.

² 1885, William Smith Ellis, The Parks and Forests of Sussex , Page 73.

³ 1885, William Smith Ellis, The Parks and Forests of Sussex, Page 73.

Attachment: photo of map of Cuckfield Park, Chichester archives, Sergison Estate Survey, (ref: BMW 43/1, MS 1/524, Budgen 1800).

CC Emily Wade

Your sincerely,

