



KNEPP CASTLE ESTATE

Knepp Castle
West Grinstead, Nr. Horsham
West Sussex RH13 8LJ

11 JAN 2024

Steve Ashdown,
Planning Department,
Mid Sussex District Council,
Oaklands Road,
Haywards Heath,
West Sussex
RH16 1SS

Tuesday 9th January 2024

Dear Mr Ashdown,

Your Reference DM/23/2867

It has come to my notice that a property developer, Fairfax, has submitted a planning application for change of use of farmland and woodland to parkland reserve on land to the west of Cuckfield. This application is solely to support the building of a new town to the east of Ansty (DM/23/2866).

In the 'Beechy Bottom Reserve Design and Access Statement' of November 2023 it states that the naturalistic grazing project has been inspired in part by the work that I have done here at Knepp. I would like to make it clear that neither Fairfax nor any of their advisers have consulted me at all in the preparation of this document and, as a result, it is full of errors.

They state that here at Knepp we have seen increases in numbers of birds such as corn bunting, grey partridge, starling and tree sparrow. This is absolutely untrue. These are farmland birds that do poorly under our rewilding regime as they are birds that thrive under old-fashioned arable systems of farming.

I also see that they are intending to use ordinary stock fencing to enclose introduced cattle and pigs. This type of fencing is wholly inadequate for pigs, especially Tamworths, which will escape at every opportunity. They also claim that wild red deer would graze across the whole of the park. To my knowledge there are no wild red deer around Cuckfield and, if they introduced them to their proposed park, the stock fencing would be useless.

Here at Knepp to be good neighbours to farmers, we maintain a mown strip around our boundary fences of 100 metres. This is to prevent the spread of creeping thistle and ragwort, both of which appear from time to time in a rewilding system. I see no mention of this, but it is important to maintain good relations with neighbours. However, this proposed rewilding project is so small that with a mown border strip there would be little left.

I see that the proposed 'Parkland Reserve' forms part of the old deer park that once surrounded Cuckfield Park. I can't see that this half-baked proposal is going to improve the surroundings of this beautiful, listed