

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

Wednesday 4th December 2024

Dear Mr Ashdown,

Your Reference DM/23/2867

I must refer to my letter to you dated Tuesday 9th January 2024.

I now see that the property developer, Fairfax, has submitted some updated documents for this proposed development to the west of Cuckfield. In them they state that the naturalistic grazing project has been inspired in part by the work that I have done here at Knepp.

As before I would like to make it absolutely clear that neither Fairfax nor any of their advisors have consulted me or my staff in the preparation of their various documents.

Again, they state (Beechy Bottom Parkland Reserve vision document June2024 p.14 5.0) that here at Knepp we have seen increases in numbers of birds such as corn bunting, grey partridge, starling and tree sparrow. This is totally 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 find the repeated use of stock photographs of grey partridges to be particularly deceitful.

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. In the Tadorna Consulting Ltd document dated September 2024 I see no mention of this. In Appendix 3 p.35 (Management Schedule – Ecology and Habitats) in the Grasslands section it merely states that the intention is to introduce cattle, deer and pigs. This is not going to control injurious weeds as prescribed in the Weeds Act 1959. 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 building at all. Proposing to site a new footpath (even if it is closed during the nesting season) and erect a tall deer fence along the edge of the lower lake of Cuckfield Park will be particularly annoying to the current owners and likely to lower the value of their estate. I also note that they intend to cull all the fallow deer and hope to 'introduce 10 red deer in order to form the basis of a herd within the park if possible'. This is a mistake. Fallow deer (which would have populated the original deer park) are a much-loved deer species that are relatively easily fenced and would be much missed by local people. Red deer grow to a large size in Sussex and I have found it almost impossible to fence them, even in very large enclosures.

As a matter of principle, I object to the siting of a new town in the magnificent countryside of the High Weald at Ansty (DM/23/2866) and, although I support rewilding experiments throughout Britain, I feel sure that this proposed one is merely a smokescreen to attempt to tick some boxes and enable the building of a new town so must object to it too.

Yours sincerely

Sir Charles Burrell, Bt.