



The countryside charity
Sussex

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Mr Stuart Malcolm

Planning Department, Mid Sussex District Council

Oaklands Road

Haywards Heath

West Sussex, RH16 1SS

Sent by post and email to: planninginfo@midsussex.gov.uk

22 August 2024

Dear Mr Malcolm,

Application No: DM/24/0446: Land off Scamps Hill, Scaynes Hill Road, Lindfield

I am writing on behalf of CPRE Sussex (CPRESx), the Sussex countryside charity further to our original letter dated 22 March 2024 which set out our views on the countryside and sustainability implications of this planning application, and the reasons why we would support a decision by your Council to refuse this application as being unsustainable, contrary to your Council's District plan policies, to the Lindfield and Lindfield Rural Neighbourhood Plan ("LLRNP") and to national planning policy.

I limit this correspondence in the main to new points arising out of documents submitted by the Applicant Developer after the initial consultation period ended. That should not be taken as an acceptance that other points previously made (and repeated in the conclusion to this letter) do not still hold good.

Ecological Impact Report received 23 July 2024

This 181 page report was commissioned by the Applicant Developer, and is a snapshot of what was seen on site in terms of wildlife, habitat and ecology.

Flooding

Despite the length of this report it is largely silent on points regarding flood risk. The proposed development is in a flood zone. Building on this land will merely increase the flood risk to the adjoining business park and properties. The river bank is already eroding and causing issues with flooding onto the business park carpark.

The report accepts ¹ that the Scrase stream which is adjacent to the north boundary of the site is in poor condition, and that an outflow may be created from the SuDS which will drain into the stream. No enhancements have been recommended for this stream as it is outside of the Applicants' ownership. This is all very well, it but does nothing to address the fundamental underlying point. This is a flood zone. Run-off water already goes into the Scrase stream which already floods. No mitigation is being proposed. The problem will simply worsen and in time the Lindfield business park and neighbouring properties will pay the price.

Your Council has had photographs submitted from a member of the public living close to the proposed site illustrating the extent of flooding on the proposed site and the Scrase Bridge Stream bursting its banks in May of this year, when a serious flood warning was issued by the Environment Agency warning of "Immediate Action Required" to the Scrase Bridge Stream area. It has also received objections to this development from business owners in the business park which adjoins the proposed site.

Designer's Response Report dated February 2004, received 17 June 2024

In the Designer's Response Report prepared for the Applicant Developer it is accepted that hedgerow will need to be removed or relocated near to the site access². It is hard to see how this cannot but sever ecological corridors, as stipulated by MDSC Policy DP37.

Listed Buildings and Other Heritage Assets

Even the Conservation Officer for MSDC, Emily Wade considers that, in terms of the Non Designated Heritage Asset at Walstead Grange³ then by virtue of proximity, intervisibility, impact on the character of the approach to the asset, loss of the current separation from Lindfield village and loss of the agricultural character of the farmstead's historical farmlands, then the proposal will result in a high level of harm to an asset of a high level of significance within the local context.

Sustainability

The proposals do nothing to encourage use of public transport and discourage car usage. WSCC themselves acknowledge there is limited cycling infrastructure, but fall back on pointing out that the NPPF paragraph 115 sets a very high bar in terms of when development should be refused on highway grounds. Moreover, there has been no attempt to address the 'elephant in the room', namely the inability of Lindfield to accommodate further development in terms of education, medical facilities and the road network. It is already operating waiting lists for basic facilities and lack of capacity will of necessity force new residents out to the surrounding areas in order to fulfill their basic needs. This is the very opposite of sustainable living.

¹ P.169 of the Ecological Impact Report

² P. 29 of the Designer's Response Report

³ Paragraph 209 of the NPPF will be relevant

Conclusion

This remains a speculative, unsustainable development proposal on a greenfield site to which there is huge local opposition. None of the new material submitted by the Applicant Developer can or does address the incompatibility of the Application with the Mid Sussex District Plan and the LRNP. This is not a site which has been allocated for development or proposed for allocation in the draft Plan Review. It does not address how a category two settlement which is already absorbing hundreds of new houses can accommodate yet more housing, with no corresponding improvement to the local infrastructure. The proposed development remains wholly incompatible with DP6, DP12, DP21, DP37, DP34 and DP41 and no exceptional considerations justify overriding these policies.

We would once again urge your Council to reject this application.

Yours sincerely

CPRE Sussex, the Sussex Countryside Charity

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