



The countryside charity  
Sussex

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Planning Department, Rother District Council

FAO: Mrs S Shepherd

28 March 2023

**Re: RR/2023/217/P (Catsfield)**

On behalf of CPRE Sussex, the countryside charity, I object to the above proposal, on the grounds of landscape preservation, protection of ancient woodland, traffic and light pollution.

**Impact on the AONB landscape, including visual impact**

The proposed development sits within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB): one of England's finest protected landscapes. Protecting the distinctive characteristics of the AONB, and conserving its natural beauty, are priorities of the previously adopted Local Plan, and are reinforced by the current NPPF.

The developer's own Environmental Statement concedes that: "The setting of the lakes and established woodland will be negatively affected by the introduction of lakeside lodges, increasing activity and reducing tranquillity... The established pasture will be impacted by the introduction of the new access and a limited number of lodges within the central sloping valley, resulting in a loss of openness which cannot be fully mitigated."

The Environmental Statement further admits that, despite new planting, "some visual harm will remain which cannot be fully mitigated."

This significant development – with large numbers of additional visitors, and the necessary additional infrastructure to accommodate them - will also place unacceptable strain on this historic landscape. Furthermore, given the site's location on the edge of the AONB, development here would place the integrity of the AONB boundary at risk.

**Ancient Woodland and wider biodiversity impact**

This development site includes areas of Ancient Woodland. As per the advice given by the Forestry Commission on this application:

"Ancient woodlands, ancient trees and veteran trees are irreplaceable habitats. Paragraph 180(c) of the NPPF sets out that development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists. In considering the impacts of the development on Ancient Woodland, Ancient and Veteran trees, the planning authority should consider direct and indirect impacts resulting from both construction and operational phases."

To promote, enhance and protect a thriving countryside for everyone's benefit

President: Lord Egremont

Campaign to Protect Rural England Sussex Branch CIO | Registered charity number: 1156568

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It stretches credibility that this development will not have deleterious effects on existing Ancient Woodland and other priority woodland habitats, or on the connectivity between such habitats, critical for supporting biodiversity, during both the construction and use phases. We have further concerns relating to the impact of the proposed development on newts, birds and bats.

**Impacts on traffic and tranquility**

Creating a new 350-vehicle car park at this location, which is poorly-served by alternative sustainable transport modes, and, as such, is likely to increase private vehicle movements within the area, appears contrary to net-zero carbon and air quality aspirations, and to place further pressure on the area's roads.

On top of the additional noise pollution from this traffic and the site's operation, we would express our further concerns about likely light pollution within the High Weald's dark skies area.

Overall, we believe that the AONB is not an appropriate location for this type of development, and the protection of the historic landscape and its natural beauty should take precedence. We urge you to refuse the application.

Yours sincerely,



**Prof Dan Osborn**  
Chair  
CPRE Sussex