

Simon Stokes and Andy Burton  
c/o Cuckfield Parish Council,  
Parish Council Offices,  
The Queen's Hall  
High Street,  
Cuckfield  
West Sussex,  
RH17 5EL

and c/o Ansty and Staplefield Parish Council  
Ansty Village Centre  
Deakes Lane, Ansty, Haywards Heath,  
West Sussex  
RH17 5AS  
20<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Dear Simon and Andy

**DM/23/2866 Land East of Ansty Way, Cuckfield Bypass, Cuckfield, West Sussex: Outline planning application for 1,450 homes**  
**DM/23/2867 Land East of Ansty Way, Cuckfield Bypass, Cuckfield, West Sussex: Change of use of farmland and woodland to parkland reserve**

Thank you for contacting LHLA in connection with the above planning applications made to Mid Sussex District Council.

LHLA was appointed by Cuckfield Parish Council (CPC) and Ansty and Staplefield Parish Council (ASPC) in 2022 to prepare a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for each of the two sites during the consultation process for the Mid Sussex District Plan. CPC and ASPC submitted these two LVIA's as part of their consultation response to Mid Sussex. The draft District Plan (Regulation 18) was amended in 2023 to exclude an allocation for 1600 houses at Ansty. The Mid Sussex District Plan was submitted for examination on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2024.

In November 2023 Fairfax Acquisitions Ltd submitted a planning application for a new Garden Community with up to 1,450 homes, 90 residential care units, primary school, SEND school, health hub, sports and community facilities together with a parkland reserve on an adjacent site. LHLA was instructed by CPC and ASPC to prepare a summary of landscape and visual impacts of the proposed developments, based on the LVIA's undertaken in 2022 which was then submitted to Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC) in January 2024.

Responses to the two planning applications on landscape matters were received from Place Services, a landscape advice consultancy used by MSDC, in January 2024. In May 2024 fabrik responded to the Place Services and LHLA reports and re-issued their Environmental Statement Volume 3: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment; in October 2024 Savills issued a response on behalf of Fairfax Acquisitions Ltd to all consultee representations. On 12<sup>th</sup> December Place Services responded to the latest fabrik response.

CPC and ASPC have instructed LHLA to review all comments and responses made on landscape and visual matters in connection with these two planning applications and advise them if further

Louise Hooper CMLI BA (Hons) L Arch

Latterhams Penshurst Tonbridge Kent TN118DL

t: 01892 870211 m: 07711820575 e: lhla@btinternet.com w: <http://www.louisehooper.co.uk>



work could usefully support CPC and ASPC in the light of a possible future public inquiry.

The advice received by MSDC from Place Services is summarized as follows:

A The application DM/23/2866 is not supported on landscape & visual grounds as it would

- Contribute to coalescence between Ansty and Cuckfield, and conflict with policy AS2 of the Ansty, Cuckfield and Brook Street Neighbourhood Plan
- Based on the Mid Sussex Landscape Capacity Study (2014) the proposals would breach the landscape capacity recommendations over most of the applications site
- Elements of the approach and judgements of the LVIA give erroneous judgements
- The number of verified images is not enough to demonstrate the full effects of the proposals on the landscape and on visual receptors
- An assessment of the impacts of the proposed development should be carried out on the special qualities and setting of the High Weald

The proposed development is also contrary to the adopted Mid Sussex District Plan (2018) and to the Submission draft District Plan – Regulation 19.

In conclusion, Place Services advise that the proposed development would result in irreversible change to part of a landscape considered important at both a National and European level; this landscape adjoins and sits within the setting of a National Landscape. There would be significant adverse effects on the immediate site and its setting, including the perception of coalescence between Ansty and Cuckfield. The effects on the National Landscape are not yet fully assessed. Errors and omissions in the approach to the assessment underplay the effect on the landscape and its function.

B The application DM/23/2867 is not supported as the premise of the parkland reserve is reliant on the approval of the neighbouring residential application of 1450 dwellings under DM/23/2866 and in that context the proposals are not acceptable.

- Place Services agree with the judgement that the proposals in themselves are likely to have a minor adverse or negligible impact on the site in terms of landscape character or visual effects
- The proposals could contribute to the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan but a detailed management plan and details of proposed governance and funding models are required to demonstrate this
- It is understood that the premise of the parkland reserve is reliant on the approval of DM/23/2866 for 1450 dwellings on the neighbouring site. In that context, the proposals are not acceptable.

In the updated Environmental Statement Volume 3: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (fabrik May 2024) four new visually verified montages of the proposed development are included, but some Viewpoints (for example Views S28, S30 and S33 from the November assessment) have been removed. Table 4.2, Summary of Visual Assessment has been modified to include additional Viewpoints, and the column showing the value attached to the view of the visual receptor has been amended. The tables in Appendix V3.2, Assessment of Landscape & Visual Effects have been amended. Comments have been added to the description of changes to night-time character within the site, and changes made to the magnitude of effect, description of change and significance of effect to users of PRow 65CR within the site.

**Louise Hooper** CMLI BA (Hons) L Arch

Latterhams Penshurst Tonbridge Kent TN118DL

**t:** 01892 870211 **m:** 07711820575 **e:** lhla@btinternet.com **w:** <http://www.louisehooper.co.uk>



In response to comments on the LHLA LVIA (ref fabric response of 16 May 2024 section 4):  
Ref 4.17 LHLA was appointed by Cuckfield Parish Council and Ansty and Staplefield Parish Council to undertake two LVIAs in May 2022, and they were issued in November and December 2022 respectively (for the housing site and the parkland site). This was a year before Fairfax made their planning application and issued their Environmental Statement 3 LVIA in November 2023 and ES3 Addendum in December 2023; LHLA LVIA did not include a critique of the findings or methodology of a report issued a year later.

LHLA disagrees with the comments made and judges that valued and sensitive landscapes would still be damaged and degraded, if not destroyed by the proposed development. Effects on the South Downs National Park and on the High Weald National Landscape remain significant and have not been fully assessed.

The findings and advice given by Place Services is supported and welcomed.

Several matters of landscape and visual impact of the proposed development have still not been adequately resolved including the following:

1. Based on the responses from fabric (May 2024) and Savills (October 2024) we consider that the proposals would still contribute to coalescence between Ansty and Cuckfield.
2. The proposed development is not proportional to the existing size of Ansty village.
3. Impact on landscape character and visual receptors of new main access point on the A272 for the proposed development
4. A VVM for Viewpoint 8 on the western boundary could help to explain the likely effects on the High Weald National Landscape
5. The landscape and visual effects on the South Downs National Park have not been addressed.
6. The landscape and visual effects on the High Weald National Landscape have not been fully assessed.
7. The proposals for Beechy Bottom Parkland Reserve do not include sufficient information on proposed management, governance or funding; the proposed 'rewilding scheme' makes references to the work done on the Knepp Estate. However, no consultation was undertaken by Fairfax or their team with Sir Charles Burrell or Knepp staff, who have criticized the proposals as 'full of errors'.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Louise Hooper BA (Hons) CMLI  
Chartered Landscape Architect  
Louise Hooper Landscape Architect

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