

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 – SECTION 78

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING APPEALS (DETERMINATION BY INSPECTORS)
(INQUIRIES PROCEDURE) (ENGLAND) RULES 2000**

APPEAL by Gladman Developments Ltd. against the non-determination by Rother District Council of an outline planning application for up to 210 residential dwellings (including up to 30% affordable housing), introduction of structural planting and landscaping, informal public open space and children’s play area, surface water mitigation, vehicular access point and associated ancillary works at Land off Fryatts Way, Bexhill. All matters to be reserved with the exception of the main site access.

Planning Inspectorate Reference : APP/U1430/W/22/3304805

Rother District Council Reference : RR/2021/1656/P

**SUMMARY
PROOF OF EVIDENCE OF PETER DIJKHUIS ON BEHALF OF ROTHER
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

1.0 SUMMARY (Central points to my evidence)

- 1.1 The site is deemed ‘Countryside’ within the Local Plan with all policies related afforded weight (Policy RA2 and RA3). This is not disputed by the Appellant.
- 1.2 By the process of preparing the Local Plan, various studies did assess the site and corridor’s landscape value (singular and cumulative value), and was rejected for development (SHLAA).
- 1.3 We note that Mr Jackson makes refers to NPPF 174(a) in stating that the Appeal Site is not a ‘*valued landscape*’ but then does not go on to read NPPF 174(b) which gives weight to ‘*recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside*’.

- 1.4 The site, and landscape corridor, fall with the ESCC Landscape Assessment Character Area: Bexhill Urban Area. Both parties agree. The site, as 'Countryside' set **within** (emphasis) the Bexhill Urban Area character area, is part of that character area. These two elements are not incongruous with each other.
- 1.5 The High Weald landscape character as described, which underlies the Appeal Site and remains visible and evident today, is explicitly used in the Appellant's motivation when referencing the mature landscape screening to the proposed development and the 'loss of green fields' (Appellant Planning Statement. Para 5.8.2).
- 1.6 In reviewing the Appellant's Landscape Visual Assessment, the study addresses the Appeal Site's landscape as two separate components, namely a) treed hedgerows, and b) open fields; and, views the Appeal Site in isolation, rather than as part of a landscape corridor. This is a mis-reading of this landscape character and setting.
- 1.7 This inter-relationship is further critical in understanding habitat dynamics which is part of the landscape setting. In terms of habitat, the landscape is domesticated.
- 1.8 We suggest that their LVA methodology is based on this incorrect reading. Their assessment may be internally consistent but the principle underlying the study that addresses the landscape as two separate components, that is the basis to their assessment, is inherently an incorrect understanding in reading this landscape in terms of character, setting , and as defined in policy.
- 1.9 I would strongly contest that the landscape setting cannot be read as a singular landscape, rather it should be read as a landscape network of small-scaled fields framed by mature treed hedgerow and, south of Broad Oak Park, small rather dense woodlands to form this complex landscape corridor. The corridor is evident of High Weald Countryside, framed by settlements of Little Common and Sidley/ Bexhill. The Appellant's statement that development is screened by

this mature landscape framework by developing within the open fields is beside the point as the two landscape elements form part of the same landscape setting, character and understanding.

- 1.10 The application therefore represents irreversible harm to the landscape character and appearance of the site and the broader landscape corridor.