**Southern Water planning application WSCC/007/24**

We write in respect of the above application and live at the Old Kennels, Cuckfield Road, Staplefield adjacent to the proposed site.

Whilst we are supportive of Southern Water’s intention to improve waste water at their facility we have a number of concerns and therefore write to object & comment on this application to create a new site.

1. Suitability of use for the area

There is an existing treatment plant which could be upgraded to achieve the new Government phosphate targets from December 2024.   This will avoid a visual change to the landscape of the designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and avoid killing and destroying existing wildlife

1. Loss of light / outlook / privacy

We are shown as V3 & V8 of visual impact from the end of our drive.  This is not representative of the impact with 6 house windows with a clear diagonal view of the site.

1. Effect on historic feature

Our house is not listed, but our neighbour and neighbour to the site, Little Ashfold, is.  The proposal will cause harm to the setting of a listed building through the introduction of a heavily engineered landscape not characteristic of its historic setting.   We hope that the LPA will consider the balance of any changes to this setting.   Also the WW2 Pill Box sight line will be changed, affecting its importance in the setting’s history.  It is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with historically, great difficulty getting planning permission for changes in the village.  Does this set up a precedent for more changes in the village?   How can the LPA defend future decisions if this is allowed?

1. Dust / odour / fumes

Regardless of the upheaval of construction, this is an experiment as this will be the first development of this kind that Southern Water have undertaken.

What assurances are there that the stagnant water in the manmade cells will not smell which will then drift over the village due to the prevailing south westerly winds at the site?

1. Impact of trees / hedges / hedgerows

Hedges will be removed at nesting time and the screening to replace is not detailed in the plans and would need to fully hide the site.

1. Layout / appearance

The heavily engineered cells will be 1.8m to 2.0m higher than ground level and will look out of character with the gently sloping topography that currently exists.   This will be out of character for the setting and there are also parking and hard landscaped paths planned which are not needed.   There is already parking at the existing treatment works next door.

1. Impact on the natural environment

The 8 tonne excavators that will be used to create this site will ensure that all existing wildlife at the site is destroyed.   It is noted that the plans were submitted 4 days before the Government’s new rules for sites such as these to show a “Diversity gain” of 10% over the current levels.  This is a deliberate attempt to avoid compliance to the latest standards.  On our neighbouring field, which is 10m away from the site, there are great crested newts, bats, dormice, 3 species of owl, skylarks and grass snakes amongst a huge diversity of wildlife.   We are “scoped out” in the application as if a 10m distance creates and entirely different eco-system.   This cannot be true.

1. Noise disturbance

900 + planned vehicle movements and associated noise during construction is only temporary, but the plans say Monday to Friday and Saturdays yet the leaflets from Southern Water state Monday to Friday.   Which statement is true?    The 2 new pumps do not have any noise rating specified.   Noise comes up the hill from the water treatment works as experienced  when new generators were installed in 2012.   Southern Water ignored these complaints at that time.   What assurances are there, that we will not have additional noise that affects our quality of living at the Old Kennels and at other neighbouring houses?

1. Effect on the landscape

Why can the current water treatment plant not be upgraded with no change to the rural setting, no destruction of habitats and no destruction of wildlife especially during the breeding season?   It is unbelievable that this scheme is even being considered.

We fully endorse the planning policy concerns made on behalf of Dr Ireland at Little Ashfold and share his Family’s concerns that this experimental scheme could give potential sewage spills into a wetland area and in view of the close proximity of our property would request that the LPA seek safeguards on the health & safety aspects of this scheme.

Please take the above into consideration in determining the outcome of this application.