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**From:** Ann Stewart [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 28 February 2021 01:37  
**To:** Richard Burrett <richard.burrett@westsussex.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** Fw: Planning meeting. Balcombe oil

Dear Cllr Burrett,

We are writing to you about the planning application  
**Lower Stumble Exploration Site, London Road, Balcombe RH17 6JH Application No: WSCC/045/20** due to come before the Planning Committee on 2nd March 2021.

The Planning Officers (PO) recommended refusal of a previous application last year, and consequently Angus Energy withdrew that application and have now submitted a revised one. We disagree with the reasons given by the Planning Officer for recommending approval for the following reasons.

**The recent PO report states that the key differences between the two applications are**

1. The duration of the proposed operations from three years to, we believe, one year.
2. The instillation of a new impermeable membrane.
3. The submission of additional documents including a Socio-Economic report.

The 2020 application the PO's report recommended refusal on the grounds that the application did not meet the exceptional need requirement because

*"National energy policy indicates that there is sufficient oil, from a diversity of*

*sources, to meet demand. The development would also result in minimal benefit to the local economy from the development. On balance, it is concluded that although there may be a need for onshore oil and gas development to contribute to national energy security, the need is not such that it represents exceptional circumstances, or that it is in the public interest for the proposed major development to be located in the High Weald AONB, because there are alternative sources of supply to meet the national need. “*

We cannot see that the changes indicated in the revised application make any material difference in this conclusion. Indeed, the opposite is true. Since the original application the Government has produced its Net Zero emissions targets and the recently published Energy White paper. The demand for oil is set to reduce and the commitment is to electric vehicles and to the hydrogen economy. Onshore oil is no longer considered important. The white paper only makes one mention of onshore oil in the whole report and the chapter on **off**shore oil is largely about helping the workforce transition fairly away from the oil industry into green energy jobs.

The current NPPF no longer includes a presumption in favour of oil development. It does still give “great weight” to mineral extraction, and it is true that fossil fuel exploration is a part of this. However, the revised NPPF now gives frequent use of the term “energy” which does, of course, include renewable energy. It also and makes frequent references to sustainability and climate change. We assume this must have been part of the Planning Officer’s conclusion in his previous recommendation for refusal.

We cannot see why the reduced time period in the current planning application should be considered significantly different. If the company were to find oil within a year, they would apply for 25 years production. Because of the time it takes for these developments this would take us to the Net Zero target date of 2050 or beyond.

The Socio – Economic report now submitted also seems an unlikely reason for changing the recommendation. The previous application estimated a benefit to the County of £1,709,000 per annum if oil production were eventually permitted. The current application has revised this down to £815,000. This is less than half the original estimate. It would seem the original estimate was a blatant exaggeration. The company was asked to provide a breakdown of these benefits and we would still question the reliability of these estimates and whether they are worth the disruption and harm the development would cause locally. We note that the report states that only four permanent jobs and 33 part time jobs would be created and that not all would be local jobs. WSCC do have a producing oil well at Lidsey. It would be interesting to know exactly how much financial benefit this actually is to the County, and how much employment it provides.

We also note that public comments on the website are all objections. Six are registered as “comments” rather than objections, but should you read them you will see that they are in fact objections.

Therefore, we urge you to reconsider the application and to reject it as it would not conform with the national impetus towards Net Zero emissions as announced by the Government supported by the independent Climate Change Committee.

Kind regards,

Ann Stewart. Stansted park  
Emily Mott. Stansted Park

**Dr Anna Curado**

Rhiannon Parry Thompson

**Philip Maber. Singleton**

**Theresiu Janicki-Hardy. Forestside**

Thomas Jonathan Hardy. Forestside  
Dr Jill Sutcliffe. Wisborough Green

Sarah Sharp. Chichester  
Heather Barrie. Chichester

**Diana Morgan. Chichester**

Liz MacCullum. Chichester

**Diana Bollam. Chichester**

**Patrick Bradfield. Chichester**

Valerie Briginshaw. Chichester  
Chris Gilbert. Stansted Park