

LOXWOOD CLAY PITS LTD OBJECTION

I wish to object strongly to the proposed development by Loxwood Clay Pits Ltd for the following reasons.

First, the developers appear to be disguising the real reason for the development, which is to put in a construction and demolition waste processing site, by claiming the primary reason is for the supply of clay. This is patently not the case as there are clay reserves of 25 years in sites around the county, and even the ones that are close do not use Weald clay, which is the type that would be dug here. Plus bricks are normally made on the site of clay pits because of the high cost of transport of raw clay. The final point on this is also that according to the developers own application, they will be refilling partly with clay from building foundations, most of which will be from areas geographically far from the development itself, just as the construction and demolition waste will be produced far from the proposed development. This goes contrary to Government guidelines.

Second, this is a greenfield site, and National Policy states that waste sites should be situated in built-up areas or brownfield sites. This development would include a 15,000 sq ft building in pristine woodland, not to mention the other building and quarrying operations, which would visually impact this entire area, including light pollution due to floodlight operation, as well as spread noise, dust and other pollutants around the site, impacting footpaths, bridleways and even the nearby Rikkyo School.

Third, the proposed development would severely impact the access road to the site - 1.6km long - which would need to be widened, resurfaced in places and a hard standing wheel washing facility built, all within this site of ancient woodland. Not only that, the impact on bridleways and footpaths that the access road crosses, would make any kind of leisure activity in that area - walking, running, cycling etc - much more dangerous, not to mention the proposed closing of footpath 792-1. The Sussex Border Path – a shining example of a council created amenity – will also be impacted due to its proximity to the proposed development. My wife, my 16 year old daughter and I regularly walk our dog on the footpaths and use the bridleway for mountain biking. All these activities would become much more dangerous, and we would be nervous to use our regular routes due to the impact of up to 42 HGV vehicle movements a day on the access road.

Fourth, the road network access is severely restricted from this site, the total distance from the local Lorry Route Network at Bucks Green being 4 miles. This exceeds the recommended distance. Plus the local B roads are much narrower than recommended for two HGV's to pass each other, being as narrow as 5.1m in places, and of course there is no guarantee that the HGV drivers will stick to the designated routes and will inevitably end up taking short cuts. Living on Lynwick Street, we have already seen the impact that these make from the Brick Works here, with all lorries supposed to be turning right out of the brickworks and using the A281, but many turning left and using Lynwick Street up to Church

Street and then via Cranleigh, Ockley etc. Living in a Grade 2 listed house, I can assure you that every time a large lorry passes our property, the building shakes, and with many such houses in the area surrounding the proposed development, who knows what damage may be caused to these historically important buildings? Although fortunately the filling of the clay pits here are drawing to a close later this year we believe, I'd hate to see another 30+ years of similar - but heavier - traffic in such a close location, particularly as I can guarantee they will, for example, use Lynwick Street as a cut-through to gain access to the A29 at Okewood Hill. This would also apply to the Loxwood Road, with HGV's turning right instead of left, Alfold, The Haven etc. If this development is approved, no-one will be monitoring the HGV movement, and the HGV drivers will just follow satnavs and drive wherever they want, another blight on local B roads.

Fifth, the impact on wildlife will be immense. The bio-diversity impact reports clearly show that if the proposed development goes ahead we will lose 5 Category A pedunculate oaks, four further groups of Category A oaks, 12+ Cat A oaks along the perimeter of the access road, not to mention locally rare sessile oaks (presence confirmed by Sussex Wildlife Trust but not mentioned in the tree survey).

Slow worms, grass snakes, common lizards, 268 invertebrates, including 28 of 'national importance', numerous butterflies, including 3 of 'principle importance' (small heath, wood white and white admiral) will all suffer, if not be lost completely.

There are 28 species of wintering birds (8 on either the amber or red list, 2 on Schedule A of the Wildlife & Countryside Act), and of 28 species of nesting birds, some of which are of more than local significance (6 on either the amber or red list, 4 of 'principal importance') including nightingales. The developers say that they will restore the land in 30 years time, but you can never regain species like these, which may be lost to the area forever. It is also a flight path for many species of bats, some of which are endangered. Not to mention the impact on water, both on the surface and in the water table.

As a keen amateur ornithologist and nature lover, I would be devastated to lose such a wonderful area for no good reason other than greed. To walk those footpaths at night and listen to the nightingales is a magical experience, one that should not be lost to future generations.

Sixth, the developers have glossed over the historical features, such as the ancient green lanes, the set of banks in the NE corner of the site, the old clay pits and brick works, a midden and the late medieval glass industry. As the Time Team dig at the end of Stane Street showed a few years ago (it was the Alfold Dean episode), there is still much to be discovered about our local history, and if the proposed development goes ahead, who knows what might be lost?

In summary, for all the reasons listed above, I strongly believe this application should be refused with no recourse to appeal. It will be both a blight on the land where the proposed development is suggested, a blight on local amenities like footpaths and bridleways, cause a huge percentage increase in HGV's in the area, and will negatively impact all the surrounding area and roads.

If all the impact reports are thoroughly studied, I believe that the sensible decision will be to do just that; reject the proposal.