

# Comment for planning application WSCC/046/23

Application number

Name

Address

Type of Comment

Comments

Objection to Planning Application WSCC/046/23 at Broadford Bridge

As an individual deeply interested in science and environmental conservation, I am writing to express my profound concerns regarding the planning application WSCC/046/23 by UK Oil & Gas (UKOG) for a fifth extension at the Broadford Bridge site. This request, in my view, raises several critical issues that are contrary to the principles of environmental sustainability and responsible land use.

One of the most troubling aspects of this situation is UKOG's apparent disregard for the conditions of their exploration license. Their failure to restore the Broadford Bridge site within the six-year period set by the West Sussex County Council (WSCC) represents a clear breach of these conditions. This non-compliance is not only a procedural issue but also a significant environmental and ethical concern.

From a scientific perspective, the exploration activities at Broadford Bridge have been fraught with complications. These include unsuccessful extraction efforts, notable damage to geological formations, and issues with cement bonding. The use of methods such as matrix acidising, which extend beyond the scope of the original permit, further exacerbates these concerns, highlighting a potentially irresponsible approach to resource extraction.

Furthermore, the prospect of fully exploiting The Weald's fracked oil reserves, as suggested by UKOG, would provide only a minimal benefit in terms of energy supply - enough for merely 96 days for the UK. This short-term gain stands in stark contrast to the potential for long-lasting environmental harm. Such an approach seems out of step with the UK's evolving energy strategy, which is increasingly focusing on renewable resources.

In line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), any development, particularly in sensitive areas like The Weald, must emphasize "restoration and aftercare at the earliest opportunity" and uphold the principles of sustainable development. The proposed extension for hydrocarbon development at Broadford Bridge appears to be fundamentally at odds with these guidelines.

Seismic research, including studies by experts like Dr. Robert Westaway, has pointed to significant earthquake risks in The Weald, a region already known for its geological complexity. The link between drilling activities and seismic events, as observed in the Newdigate swarm of earthquakes, cannot be overlooked. These geological risks, combined with potential environmental impacts such as methane emissions, directly challenge the objectives outlined in WSCC's climate change strategy, which targets net-zero emissions by 2030.

The local community has also felt the impact of UKOG's operations. Increased noise, light pollution, and traffic, particularly the rise in HGV traffic, have adversely affected the quality of life and caused significant wear on local infrastructure.

Additionally, UKOG's proposal to pivot towards geothermal energy exploration at the site, while innovative, seems misaligned with their current license and raises questions about feasibility and geological suitability. The costs and risks associated with geothermal energy in a region as geologically complex as The Weald require careful consideration.

Moreover, the broader ecological implications of prolonging operations at Broadford Bridge are significant. The Weald, renowned for its biodiversity and natural beauty, is at risk of further ecological decline, a concern echoed by environmental organizations like WWF UK. The potential for habitat destruction, pollution, and disturbance to local wildlife is high, and such outcomes would be contrary to the principles of environmental stewardship and preservation.

In conclusion, I strongly urge the Planning Committee to consider the long-term ecological, geological, and social ramifications of this decision. The choice you make regarding the Broadford Bridge extension will set a precedent for future developments in The Weald and reflect our collective commitment to sustainable development and environmental protection.

Thank you for your attention to these concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Ben Dawson

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Attachments