

Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee of Wadhurst Parish Council held at The Pavilion, Sparrows Green Recreation Ground, South View Road, Wadhurst, TN5 6TW at 09:30 hours on **24th August 2024** for the transaction of business as set out below.

Attendees: Cllr Shairp (Chair), Cllr Smith, Cllr Gadd, Cllr C Moore, Cllr P Moore, Cllr Crawford and Cllr Ramsden.

Members of the public present: 2

Minutes

It was proposed by Cllr C. Moore, seconded by Cllr Gadd and unanimously agreed that Cllr Shairp take the minutes

1. To receive apologies for absence.

Cllr Anderson

2. To receive declarations of interest and updates to members' register of interests.

Cllr C Moore and Cllr P Moore disclosed an interest in 10.8 and advised that, as before, they would be leaving the room.

3. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 27th July 2024 and 10th August 2024

It was proposed by Cllr C. Moore, seconded by Cllr Gadd and unanimously agreed that the amended minutes for 27th July be agreed, and the minutes for 10th August be agreed.

4. To discuss matters arising from the minutes of the meeting of 10th August 2024

None

5. Public forum – time limit 15 minute.

Four members of the public were present (including two councillors speaking in a personal capacity).

One resident brought up the Marling House appeal and advised the following:

- **He asked whether the Inspectorate only wished to receive new comments, rather than a reiteration of previous objections.**
- **He advised that the developers own land to the north of the Marling House site**
- **He reported that the developers apparently intend to remove 8 trees that have not been mentioned in the appeal documents**
- **The trees on the western side of the site boundary have had TPOs placed on them.**

Two residents spoke against the appeal for Coombe Lane (item 10.8):

- **The application is for a permanent structure. This means that if the development proved to be unviable, then this would be classed as a habitable structure and could be approved as a permanent residence (as there is no material change of use of a holiday letting to permanent residential dwelling).**
- **The appellant's support for the Scouts is not relevant to this proposal. Scouts are an exempted organisation, licenced by Natural England. Such exempted organisations are allowed, under permitted development, to camp on this land for up to five days anyway. The scouts don't need this permanent development, which provides accommodation for only 8 people, when a whole troop of scouts can camp here anyway.**
- **The planning framework has been bolstered since the application stage by the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan and Design Code, which have been made. In particular, policies WAD1 and WAD10 are relevant.**
- **The new High Weald AONB Management Plan has also been published, which raises concerns about camping and glamping in terms of their impact on the perceptual and aesthetic qualities and the impact on dark skies.**
- **The site is very tranquil and dark.**
- **The statement of case makes allegations against two residents, who are also parish councillors. The appellant's formal complaints have been investigated by WDC and dismissed.**
- **The site is not sustainable in terms of location and access to local facilities (station, shops, pubs and restaurants). The appellants own video shows it takes over five minutes by car to go just from the top of the private lane to the site.**
- **The residents state that there is no residential dwelling on the site, from which to manage tourists (particularly for night time disturbance to neighbours) contrary to the appeal statement which says the appellant is 'on-site'.**
- **Comparison with the development at Doozes Farm is not helpful. It is not in Wadhurst and therefore not subject to the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan and Design Code, but also because it is a tree house in the garden of the farmhouse, which is classed as a temporary structure in contrast to this application. It is also conditioned that the occupiers of Doozes Farmhouse, which is 50m from the treehouse, manage the treehouse and guests. The nearest neighbours are over 1km distant.**

It was therefore decided to change the order of the agenda to address item 10.8 first, followed by item 10.6. Cllrs C Moore and P Moore left the room for the discussion of item 10.8, leaving Cllrs Crawford and Ramsden to attend that discussion. Once item 10.8 was agreed, Cllrs Crawford and Ramsden then left the meeting and Cllrs C Moore and P Moore returned.

6. Pre- application briefings.

7. WDC Decisions:

7.1 Application: WD/2023/2259/LBA

Location: SKINNERS FARM, BEST BEECH HILL, WADHURST, TN5 6JT

Description: removal of condition 10 of WD/2020/0201/LBR (proposed conversion of former granary to provide a three-bedroom dwelling, Sussex Barn (Colyers Barn) to provide a four-bedroom dwelling and dairy to provide a four-bedroom dwelling; conversion of former Oast as ancillary accommodation to skimmers farmhouse to provide two-bedroom first floor apartment with games room and home office below; separation of former annexe from skimmers farmhouse to provide separate two-bedroom dwelling with associated landscaping and external works. Retrospective listed building consent for works to Skinners Farmhouse, Granary, Sussex Barn (Colyers Barn) and Oast. Replacement septic tank for Skinners Farmhouse and Oast and the construction of a new shared sewerage treatment tank) as the dairy is not within the curtilage of the listed buildings.

Decision: Approved

WDC Officer comment: *The objection is noted but lies outside of the scheme of delegation as it does not raise any material reason for the variation of condition 10 which would amend the approved drawings, which is assessed below. The application is also a discrete listed building consent application, seeking to amend that previously approved. Therefore, whilst the objection is noted, it remains to be determined under delegated powers. In response to the prevention of further development, this lies outside of the scope of the listed building consent and would be a consideration for any planning application seeking planning permission and need to be justified against the central government guidance for imposing of conditions.*

7.2 Application: WD/2024/1258/LDE

Location: HILL FARM, COOMBE LANE, WADHURST, TN5 6NU

Description: continued use of land as residential garden lodge

Decision: Not issued

7.3 Application: WD/2024/0967/FR

Location: 3 BALLIOL COTTAGES, LOWER HIGH STREET, WADHURST, TN5 6BB

Description: retrospective application to convert an existing shed in the rear garden to create hygienic cheese-making room for hobby/small home based business use. The proposed changes would be connecting the shed to utilities (electricity, cold water supply and waste water removal) and internal refurbishment (installing hygienic floor and wall coverings, lighting, sinks and food-safe furniture).

Decision: Approved

7.4 Application No. WD/2024/0677/F

Description: demolition of existing dwelling and construction of a replacement dwelling (revised scheme of planning permission WD/2019/2319/F).

Location: MERRYFIELDS, BEST BEECH HILL, WADHURST, TN5 6JT

Decision: Approved

Comments from WDC to WPC: *The paler brickwork is not considered to be an issue to the extent it would necessitate seeking an alteration. While a glazing condition requiring non-reflective glazing is not considered to be enforceable, and the previous permission involved a dwelling with large glazing approved at first floor, it is noted that since the previous permission, the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan has been made. To this end, the agent has acquiesced to amend the plans so the glazing at first floor is*

reduced, with two windows made smaller and a timber screen utilised so one half of the glazing on the front and rear elevations would always be covered, to reduce light spillage.

8. To consider new planning applications.

8.1 Application No: [WD/2024/1794/F](#) (please also note agenda item 8.2)

Expiry date for comments: 28th August 2024

Location: SOMMERVILLE, DURGATES, WADHURST, TN5 6DF

Description: demolition of conservatory, proposed ground floor rear extension, internal alterations and all associated works.

(see item 8.2)

8.2 Application No: [WD/2024/1793/F](#) (please also note agenda item 8.1)

Expiry date for comments: 28th August 2024

Location: SOMMERVILLE, DURGATES, WADHURST, TN5 6DF

Description: proposed ground and loft floor rear extension, internal alterations and all associated works.

Object

It was agreed that items 8.1 and 8.2 should be considered together.

These applications would have benefitted from a Design and Access Statement, to explain the applicant's intentions and provide some basic information.

Specifically:

- **What is the increase in the gross floor area from this proposal? WPC notes that Google enquiries suggest that the existing GFA is about 1475 sqft. Could WDC establish this and calculate the increase in GFA, noting the first two bullet points of para 2.3 in section 10 of the Wealden Design Guide. In particular, WDC needs to be satisfied that there is no major change to the character of the building itself or its impact on its setting.**
- **WPC notes that the property is very close to the next door building. WDC should therefore consider whether the change in the left-side elevation will represent excessive massing and encroachment.**
- **There are 4 new roof lights (from 3 to 7) and significant additional glazing. If WDC is minded to approve this application, we request that glazing is non-reflective and is 'Dark Skies' compliant, as Wadhurst is working towards being a 'Dark Skies' Community.**
- **The application proposes a flat roof using fibreglass. The Wealden Design Guide states (section 10, para 5.1, 5th bullet point) that, "*Unless they are relevant to the design of the existing property, the use of flat roofs will not normally be supported*". Moreover, the flat roof does not correspond to the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan Design Guide: WPC would have preferred a pitch roof.**

8.3 Application No: [WD/2024/1797/F](#)

Expiry date for comments: 29th August 202

Location: GLEN VILLA, LOWER HIGH STREET, WADHURST, TN5 6BE

Description: single storey extension to the kitchen to create a small downstairs shower room and extended kitchen. The WC in the outhouse would be removed and it would be returned to a store.

No objection

8.4 Application No: [WD/2024/1805/F](#)

Expiry date for comments: 30th August 2024

Location: LAUREL HOUSE, BEST BEECH HILL, WADHURST, TN5 6JR

Description: construction of open porch. Take down balustrade and rebuild in brickwork to match existing. replace flat roof structure.

No objection

8.5 Application No: [WD/2024/1693/F](#)

Expiry date for comments: 4th September 2024

Location: RIDGECOTE, MAYFIELD LANE, WADHURST, TN5 6HX

Description: single storey rear extension with internal alterations to the existing dwelling. This including a part conversion of the garage to an annexe with a new first floor extension above.

No objection, but WPC would like to make the following comments to WDC:

The additional glazing should be Dark Skies compliant, because it looks out over this intrinsically dark part of the HWNL. WPC also respectfully requests that the applicants use non-reflective glazing.

The application proposes a flat roof. The Wealden Design Guide states (section 10, para 5.1, 5th bullet point) that, “*Unless they are relevant to the design of the existing property, the use of flat roofs will not normally be supported*”. Moreover, the flat roof does not correspond to the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan Design Guide: WPC would have preferred a pitch roof.

9. Live planning applications

9.1 PLANNING & COMPENSATION ACT 1991, as amended-Certificate of Lawfulness for a PROPOSED USE.

Ref No: WD/887/CMCL Description of site: Certificate of Lawfulness for the proposed use as a Household Waste Recycling Centre in accordance with extant planning permissions WD/1377/CC and WD/136/CM and their attached conditions involving the deposit of household waste at the site by members of the public and the importation of household waste by the operator. Faircrouch Depot, Household Waste Recycling, Faircrouch Lane, Wadhurst, East Sussex, TN5 6PT

10. To monitor planning appeals received and make recommendations:

10.1 The Boat House Bistrol, Bewl

Ref: APP/C1435/W/24/3336886

WDC Planning application: WD/2021/2924/F

Proposal: extensions and alterations to the Boat House Bistro, replacement of the adjacent fishing facility building and change of use to form 6 x 1 bed and 5 x 2 bed tourist units, creation of a cafe with terrace, with some sailing club facilities retained.

Status: Deadline for comments to the Inspectorate passed on 16th May 2024

Method of appeal: Written Reps, though the parish council's solicitor has requested an upgrade to an Inquiry on three occasions.

Update: PINS have responded to a further email requesting that the three appeals be heard together and via Inquiry. The Inspectorate states that an inspector has been appointed and that a report is being written for the Bistro appeal.

(Action: Cllr Shairp to request that counsel write to PINS to issue a pre-action letter. Budget of up to £900 + VAT agreed for advice)

10.2 Bewl Water Application for an 80-pitch campsite and portacabin.

Planning ref: WD/2023/1895/MAJ

Appeal ref: APP/C1435/W/24/3343258

Update 2nd July 2024: this is now subject of appeal proceedings with the Planning Inspectorate.

Status: Live, with deadline for comments by 5th August 2024.

Method of appeal: Written Reps via <https://acp.planninginspectorate.gov.uk>

Update: WPC has learnt from WDC that the district council did not manage to send an objection to PINS before the deadline for submissions.

(Action: Cllr Shairp to respond to WDC to acknowledge the email and to clarify whether an objection has been sent regarding the linked Yurts appeal, which had a deadline three days after that of the Campsite)

10.3 Bewl Water Application for the retention of the yurts and toilet block

WDC planning ref: WD/2023/2424/FR

Appeal ref: APP/C1435/W/24/3343260 (linked lead appeal for campsite: APP/C1435/W/24/3343258)

Update: this is now subject of appeal proceedings with the Planning Inspectorate.

Status: Live

Method of appeal: written reps via <https://acp.planninginspectorate.gov.uk>

Deadline: 9th August 2024.

See item 10.2

10.4 Bewl Water NE licences (*enquiry submitted to NE and awaiting response*).

10.5 WDC Planning Committee North (25th July 2024)

Bewl Water unauthorised campsite.

[BEWL WATER BEWLBRIDGE LANE COUSLEY WOOD WADHURST TN3 8JH.pdf](#)
(wealden.gov.uk)

Decision from WDC PCN: no enforcement action be pursued at this stage, pending the outcome of the appeal in WD/2023/1895/MAJ. This will mean the camping use will continue – unauthorised – through the rest of the camping season, up to September 2024.

10.6 Land To The North Of Marling House, Station Road, Wadhurst, TN5 6RT

Outline planning application for residential development of 29 dwellings.

WDC planning ref: WD/2022/0535/MAO

Appeal ref: APP/C1435/W/24/3346513

Status: Live

Method of appeal: Written representations

Deadline: 13th September 2024

Given the greater level of detail in the appeal, it was agreed to seek advice up to a value of £2000.

(Action: Cllr Shaip to obtain quote from Simon Bell)

Application states that this design has been designed purely for Wadhurst and yet is a ‘carbon copy’ of the site in Isfield. The design does not comply with the design codes relevant to Wadhurst

(Action: Cllr C Moore to obtain quote from Create Streets, for their opinion)

10.7 Chittinghurst Farm, Tidebrook, TN5 6PQ.

Planning applications [WD/2023/2561/F](#) and [WD/2023/2562/LB](#)

Partial demolition and conversion of remainder of existing barn to a residential dwelling with associated landscaping to form parking areas and domestic curtilage (amended plans)

10.8 Coombe Farm, Coombe Lane, Wadhurst, TN5 6NU

Planning application: [WD/2024/0313/F](#)

Description: erection of two a frame glamping cabins.

Appeal reference: APP/C1435/W/24/3346077

Status: appeal lodged

Deadline: 27th August 2024

Cllrs C Moore and P Moore left the room for the discussion of item 10.8, leaving Cllrs Crawford and Ramsden to attend that discussion. Once item 10.8 was agreed, Cllrs Crawford and Ramsden then left the meeting and Cllrs C Moore and P Moore returned.

Please see Appendix A for comments made.

11. To consider any footpaths modification orders and make recommendations

12. Planning Control (& High Street Planning Enforcement)

12.1 Correspondence sent to WDC Enforcement team with regards to the yurts and camping being advertised at Bewl, despite the fact that they do not have planning permission for such (sent 16.4.24). WDC have responded advising they will not be taking any action whilst appeals are in underway. WDC reference: C/2024/0187 & C/2024/0188

12.2 Magpies, High Street, Wadhurst: possible issues with border hedging. Reported to Enforcement at WDC 12.8.24. WDC reference: C/2024/0363.

12.3 Old Station Road, Wadhurst – issues with the planting scheme has been reported to WDC enforcement (5th June 2024). WDC reference: C/2024/0113.

12.4 WD/2022/0867/FA Dene Farm

Variation of condition 1 and removal of condition 2 of planning permission WD/2013/0273/FA (variation of condition 2 of WD00/1987/F - change of use of former agricultural buildings for sales, office and workshop in connection with farm and garden machinery business including sale of Calor gas, quad bikes, trail bikes, associated clothing and accessories. Variation of condition 4 of WD/2008/2960/F - erection of replacement sales, office and workshop building in connection with existing farm, garden machinery, leisure and trail bikes businesses) to remove the restriction on the type of refreshments sold and to allow for the sale of motorbikes and bicycles.

(WDC enforcement case reference: C/2024/0311)

(Action: Clerk to add enforcement action at Coombe Lane, Ref C/2021/0597, to future agendas)

13. To discuss Tree Preservation Orders

13.1 TM/2024/0028/TCA

Location: UPLANDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE, LOWER HIGH STREET, WADHURST TN5 6AZ

Description: Work as per schedule subject to regulations designated Wadhurst conservation area October 1971/MAY 1988/MARCH 2017.

13.2 C/2024/0163: Alleged unauthorised tree works on land North of Jonas Drive/Durgates Meadow.

13.3 Correspondence received from Tree Warden (Mr Noel).

He advised us that he has contacted the Tree Officer (Mr Massheder) at Wealden District council as he had become aware of some intended tree works on behalf of a telephone company and wished to request urgent TPO's. The works are due to take place on Cockmount Lane, Jonas Lane, Sparrows Green. *'The trees in question are crucial to maintaining the area's tree-lined character and include: four Oak trees, one of which I consider to be a Landmark Tree in the village due to its mature age and large girth. One Field Maple, One Willow, One Ash. Additionally, there is a notable large Oak tree situated at the corner of Jonas Lane and Gloucester Road that I believe is also worth protecting under a TPO.'*

Update: the Clerk reported these concerns to the telephone company 16.7.24 (Open Reach) as requested. Ref: 38a1b881-f0be-453b-bec3-e33a72597057.
(Action: Clerk to remove this item from future agendas)

13.4 [TM/2024/0158/TPO](#)

Location: Maple Lodge, Mayfield Lane, Wadhurst, TN5 6HX.

Description: Work as per schedule within tree preservation order (Wadhurst) No 12, 1986.

Noted

14. Conservation areas

15. CIL & S106 summary:

16. Policy/Correspondence/Consultations/Budget

16.1 Dark Skies meeting - update and agree any necessary actions

Engagement with planning and architectural practices /new resident packs/poster & leaflet requests/Dark Skies technical note.

(Action from previous meeting: Cllr C Moore and Cllr Smith to set up meeting)

16.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) consultation (deadline 24th September).

To access the consultation document, please click here: [NPPF-July-2024-Consultation-document.pdf \(wadhurst-pc.gov.uk\)](#).

To see all of the documentation, please click on this link to access the government website: [Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

(Action: Committee to construct response after consulting replies from ESALC, CPRE and other relevant bodies)

16.3 Road works/pipeline: 'Not suitable for diverted traffic' signs to be placed at road entrance not further down road and required at further sites. Fairglen, Faircrouch Derbys, Brinkers, Snape and others.

17. Freedom of Information requests

17.1 Waters Reach FOI

Response received 16th July 2024 saying no results found. (This correspondence was forwarded to Planning Committee 16.7.24)

18. Wealden Local Plan Update.

19. Matters for noting or inclusion on future agenda.

20. Date of next meeting: 7th September 2024

Meeting closed at: 11.20am

Appendix A

27th August 2024

Ref: APP/C1435/W/24/3346077¹

Coombe Farm, Coombe Lane, Wadhurst, TN5 6NU Erection of 2x A
frame glamping cabins.

**WADHURST PARISH COUNCIL'S
RESPONSE TO THE APPEAL AGAINST
THE LPA'S REFUSAL TO GRANT
PERMISSION**

TO WD/2024/0313/F

Wadhurst Parish Council (WPC) notes the response of the appellants to Wealden District Council's Committee Resolution, dated 24th May 2024. WPC reiterates and summarises its strong opposition to this development, as laid out in its Consultee response of 23rd April 2024 and respectfully requests that the

In summary, the WPC objects due to the very sensitive remote rural ecology of the special part of the National Landscape², this proposal is located in, including its exceptional dark skies and tranquillity and unsustainable location. There is no established requirement for tourist accommodation in this location and there are already under-occupied sites in more sustainable parts of the Parish. Refusal would be consistent with recent planning decisions in this location in order to prevent encroachment on this 'A1' National Landscape countryside. These are permanent structures on green fields well outside the Development Boundary, which are resisted by planning policy (NPPF, Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan, Wealden Local Plan policies and the High Weald AONB Management Plan).

¹ LPA application reference: WD/2024/0313/F. Note all references to consultee responses are based on date they appear on the Wealden District Council website.

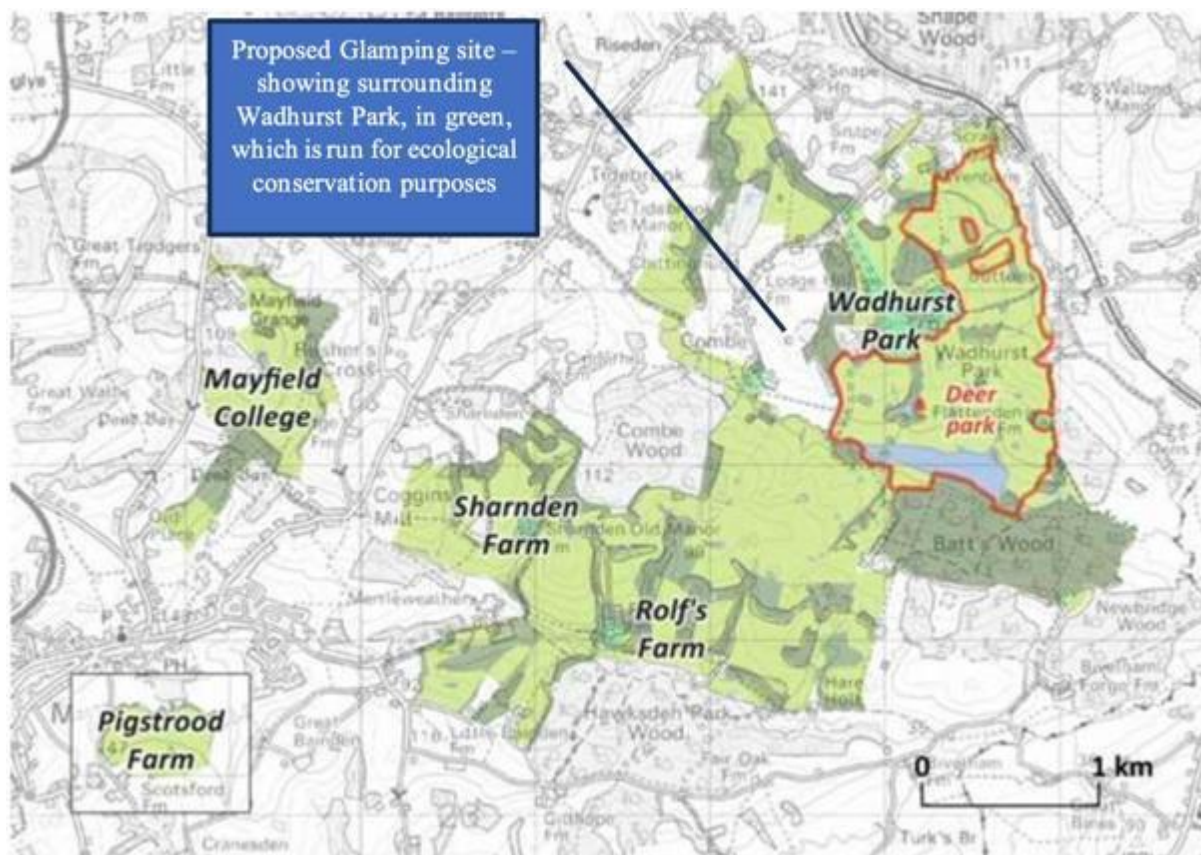
² Formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). These terms are used interchangeably in this objection.

DETAILS OF OBJECTION

(1) Special Ecological Area of the High Weald National Landscape

The proposal is located on agricultural land (approx. 40 acres) encircled by almost 2000 acres of land run for conservation purposes (Wadhurst Park)³ shown in green on the map below.

Exhibit 1: The proposed glamping site in context



Source: Wadhurst Park

A) NOISE WOULD CARRY ALONG THE VALLEY

The site lies on one side of an exceptionally tranquil open valley where any noise carries very far.

B) DARK SKIES – LIGHT SPILL IN AN EXCEPTIONALLY DARK AREA

There are exceptionally dark skies at this location as there are very few buildings or activities here. This is a very rural area and the residential lighting in the proposal is inappropriate. As the applicant acknowledges in the original application document:

*“The proposal includes a small amount of ground mounted, solar powered safety lights located along the length of the access track **akin to those found in a residential setting.**”*

³ Environmental purpose (wadhurstpark.co.uk)

The glass frontages of the proposed glamping cabins, particularly the glass gable ends, would create light spill in this exceptionally dark rural area. [WPC emphasis].

“Wildlife surveys since 2011 have recorded 23 threatened and rare bird species, and 20 near- threatened species.

“Ten species of bat hunt over fields and water, and in woods at Wadhurst Park”.

The proposal will disturb the tranquillity and dark skies that enable these species to survive and thrive here.

Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan has a policy (WAD16) that does not support development proposals which detract from the unlit environments of the Parish. Wadhurst Parish and the High Weald National Landscape have some of the darkest skies in the Southeast. (Sky Quality Meter readings taken around Wadhurst indicate skies as dark as 21.09 mags/arcsec² – a figure that corresponds to a Silver Tier International Dark Sky Reserve. This can be confirmed from the interactive dark skies map on CPRE’s website. Wadhurst Parish Council has registered their intention to become recognised as a ‘Dark Skies Community’⁴, alongside other local councils and there is a high level of local support for this⁵.

(2) Visual Amenity and Visibility from Public Footpaths – The Site is Highly Visible

The applicant’s Design and Access statement⁶ is incorrect when it states that the *“The site is not visible from any footpath.”* There is not only a public footpath running across the southern end of the agricultural land itself, but also a network of public footpaths from which the site is visible. (See Exhibit 2: Public Access Footpath map below).

The high elevation and open countryside mean the proposal will be visible across long distances. The applicant acknowledges this when they say that *“Customers and their families enjoy the opportunity to visit, choose and take away their tree directly from the plantation **whilst enjoying the fantastic views of the countryside.**”* [emphasis added by WPC].

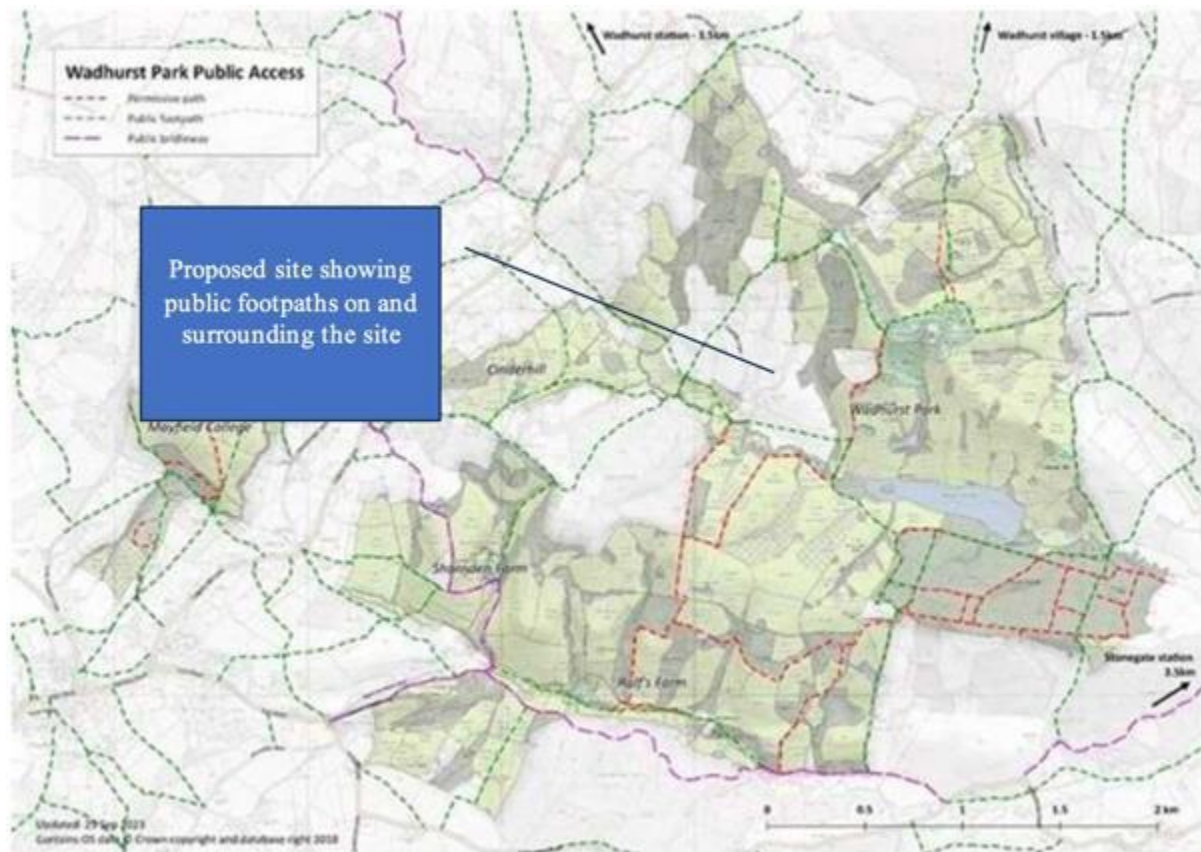
See Appendix A below for some example photographs towards the site taken from the public footpaths. The proposal would be visible and have a detrimental impact on the views from the footpaths.

⁴ 2024-05-09 Full Council Meeting Agenda (May 2024) – Wadhurst Parish Council (wadhurst-pc.gov.uk) (item 11.8)

⁵ Wild About Dark Skies Festival celebrates wonders of the stars - High Weald

⁶ Planning, Design, and Access Statement - Coombe Farm Glamping Coombe Farm, Coombe Lane, Wadhurst, TN5 6NU October 2023 WD/2023/2480/F

Exhibit 2: Public Access Footpaths



Source: Wadhurst Park⁷

The WPC notes that, by their nature, Christmas trees are not tall trees – they take some years to mature (an average 10-12 years according to the British Christmas Tree Growers Association) to a height (6- 8ft) where they are ready to be sold to be placed indoors. So, while growing, the majority are below an adult’s height; thereby having no screening purpose versus the glamping pods, which have a ridge height of 4.2m (13ft 9inches). See Appendix B for an example photo of the agricultural holding’s Christmas Tree plantations.

(3) Additional Accommodation is not needed in this unsustainable location

A) There is no established functional need for Accommodation in this Location

There is no shortage of accommodation in Wadhurst when Airbnb and camping facilities are included (there are almost unlimited camping facilities within the area and occupancy data is low, even during COVID and the current cost of living crisis).

The applicant acknowledges that within Wealden “only 8% of all visits include an overnight stay”. However, the applicant’s assumption that the reason that “only 29-34% of overnight visitors stay in paid accommodation” is “potentially due to the existing accommodation options performing at very high or maximum occupancy rates during peak times of the year” is flawed – detailed analysis shows that there is a surplus, particularly of camping facilities.

⁷ Walks (wadhurstpark.co.uk)

Recent objections to the proposed expansion of Bewl Camping facilities by local family-run campsites, who are suffering from their business being ‘cannibalised’ by that operator, are indicative of this (see Appendix C below, which shows extracts from responses to application WD/2023/1895/MAJ).

b) This is an Unsustainable Location

Both of the applicant’s examples (Best Beech Inn – which has now been converted to residential use and the Greyhound Inn, which is now open after a change of ownership) were/are located within walking distance of facilities and were/are permanent structures with onsite facilities.

In this case, by contrast, there are no facilities within walking distance; the nearest facilities being a 10-minute drive away (Wadhurst High Street) making this proposal wholly unsustainable. The site is not sustainable in terms of location and access to local facilities (station, village and pubs and restaurants). Indeed, the appellants’ own video shows it takes five minutes to go from the top of the lane to the site.

WPC has estimated travel times from the site to important locations (Wadhurst station, Wadhurst village, Mark Cross and Mayfield), using the main modes of transport (walking, cycling and by car). It can be seen that the times make it effectively prohibitive to get around by walking or bicycle (Exhibits 3 and 4).

Exhibit 3: The remote location of the site



Source: Google maps

TNS 6NU to:	Distance	Walking	Cycling	Driving
Wadhurst – Jemsons Supermarket	2.8 miles	1hr 01min	16 min	10 min
Wadhurst Train Station	3.6 miles	1hr 20min	23 min	13 min
Mark Cross – Lazy Fox pub	4.4 miles	1hr 35min	23 min	14 min
Mayfield – Londis convenience store	4.6 miles	1hr 48min	36 min	12 min
Mayfield Rose and Crown pub	4.3 miles	1hr 40min	33 min	11 min

Exhibit 4: Distances from the Site

Source: Google maps distances and timings

It should be noted that Google maps is effectively a two-dimensional medium. When the third dimension is considered, as with an Ordnance Survey map, timings will be longer when account is taken of the many hills in the area. The reality is that these timings could well be longer than stated in the table.

Paragraph 4.4.1 of Manual for Streets states that walkable neighbourhoods typically have a range of facilities within 10 minutes (around 800m or 0.5 miles). On this criterion, the village and the station are not walkable, even for vacationers. The Institute of Highways and Transport guidance document ‘Providing for Journeys on Foot’ (published 2000) suggests an acceptable walking distance of 1km (5/8ths of a mile).

It is important to add, as per the Manual for Streets framework, that the **quality** of the walking experience from this site is very poor (along narrow lanes, which are not lit at night). This means that visitors would, in reality, have to take to their cars. In short, this site is car dependent and thus is not sustainable.

c) It will bring little or no employment / commercial benefit

Two glamping pods are unlikely to have any impact on the local community either in terms of tourism (due to existing spare capacity this would just cannibalise existing businesses) or employment.

Saved policy TM1 of the Adopted Wealden Local Plan requires proposed developments for tourist attractions and facilities to “*respect, and where possible, enhance the character, heritage and environmental quality of the area*”. Bringing even only two glamping pods to such a pristine and remote area with consequent noise and light pollution does not respect or enhance the landscape character.

TM1 goes on to say that “*within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, particular care is given to siting, design and appearance in accordance with Policy EN6*”.

EN6 itself only permits development “*if it conserves or enhances the natural beauty and character of the landscape.*” Consideration of proposals should have particular regard to “**undeveloped ridge positions and other visually exposed locations**”, “*areas of unspoilt or remote character*” and “*the High Weald Management Plan*” amongst other considerations. This proposal does not conserve or enhance the natural beauty and character of the High Weald National Landscape. [WPC emphasis]

With regard to the new High Weald Management Plan (2024-2029), a top five light pollution issue is stated as “*Increased light pollution in rural areas from a variety of*

*buildings and structures including **camping and glamping sites...***. The plan also lists “*camping / glamping accommodation and activity*” as a top-five issue affecting the “*Aesthetic and*

Perceptual Qualities” of the HWNL as this is seen as “*urbanising development*”, causing “*erosion of rurality and tranquillity*”. The management plan says “**public bodies should**

....ensure that proposals for camping /glamping sites, conserve and enhance the

natural beauty of the High Weald....” [WPC emphasis]

(5) Traffic will increase in a very narrow lane

The site is located at the end of Coombe Lane; a very long, narrow single-track road, with no footway or formal passing places, which is shared by all users, including horse-riders, pedestrians and farm vehicles. Car users have to reverse long distances when encountering farm vehicles or HGV’s. The increase in visitors would increase traffic and be dangerous. The situation is similar to that of Great Shoemith’s Farm, where WDC councillors (who were assessing the application) had a car accident on their way to a site visit for a proposed holiday let⁸ (which was subsequently refused).

The applicant’s assertion that this will have “minimal” impact vs the current Christmas Tree plantation use is incorrect. The season for ‘Pick Your Own Christmas Tree’ customers is short (only for a few weeks in November / December) and importantly is outside the busy, Spring to Autumn, agricultural seasons.

In contrast, glamping is almost year-round and peak seasons are at the same time as the busiest agricultural periods. With no facilities nearby, all journeys by visitors will likely be by car, increasing traffic in this unsuitable location.

(6) This development is the thin end of the wedge

Two pods are unlikely to be commercially attractive on their own. So, it seems likely that expanded numbers of cabins will prove necessary to be financially viable. As there are no facilities here, or within walking distance, the proposal is likely to require future amenities to be built on site. It may also be likely that the glamping business will require extras that do not require planning permission, but would exacerbate noise and light pollution (glamping sites often have extras such as hot tubs, fire pits, torches, music players, BBQ’s etc). In addition, there are several other agricultural holdings, without residential components, in the vicinity with similar features for which approval of this application could set a precedent.

(7) Few neighbour objections would not imply acceptance of this scheme

The WPC notes that the proposal is largely surrounded by Wadhurst Park, which is in the ownership of a single family who like to keep a low public-profile. This should flag to the Inspector that there are unlikely to be many neighbour objections.

(8) Relevant local planning precedents are not supportive of this development

⁸ WD/2018/2742/F - FORMER COW SHED, GREAT SHOESMITHS FARM, WHITEGATES LANE, WADHURST, TN5
6QG -PROPOSED CONVERSION AND CHANGE OF USE OF EXISTING RURAL BUILDING TO A HOLIDAY LET –
Refused 23/9/2020

A) WD/2020/2556/FR: at neighbouring COOMBE MANOR FARM for RETROSPECTIVE APPLICATION FOR THE SITING OF A MOBILE HOME AND ITS ANCILLARY USE AS STAFF ACCOMMODATION IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE HOLDING AT COMBE MANOR FARM was

refused by WDC on 15/11/2021

Reasons for refusal included:

- The application site occupies a remote location outside the development boundary where new housing is resisted unless it conforms with other, exceptional policies of the Local Plan. The application fails to demonstrate that there is a clearly established functional need for a rural worker's dwelling on this landholding. It would therefore result in an **unjustified addition to and consolidation of scattered and sporadic development in this remote location to the detriment of the character and appearance of this nationally designated area**. Furthermore, the location is such that future **occupants would be reliant on the private car for access to day-to-day services**. The site does not constitute a sustainable location for housing and is contrary to Saved Policies GD2, EN1, DC2, DC17 of Wealden Local Plan 1998; SPO7, SPO13, WCS6 and WCS14 of Wealden Core Strategy 2013; and paragraphs 79, 104 and 105 of the NPPF 2021. (emphasis added by WPC)
- The proposal would **fail to conserve or enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the High Weald AONB, including its dark night sky, and would be out of keeping with the intrinsic rural character of the area** contrary to policies EN1, EN6 and EN27 of Wealden Local Plan 1998; SPO1, SPO13 and WCS14 of Wealden Core Strategy 2013; and paras 126, 130, 174, 176 and 185 of the NPPF 2021. [emphasis added by WPC]

A replacement dwelling at this location (Coombe Manor Farm) was only approved in 2006 because a number of ancillary dwellings were being demolished and the replacement was largely subterranean – thereby improving visual amenity.

B) WD/2022/2128/F: ONE NEW ACCOMMODATION TREEHOUSE AND EXTERNAL DECKING AREAS. CHITTINGHURST FARMHOUSE, TIDEBROOK ROAD, WADHURST, TN5 6PQ – described as “self-catering holiday let accommodation” was withdrawn in December 2022 following concerns by the Parish Council and environment agency.

C) WD/2022/0401/F⁹: GLAMPING CABINS WADHURST CASTLE

In contrast to the proposal in question – five new glamping cabins (temporary, moveable structures) in the grounds of Wadhurst Castle are within the village centre with all its amenities sited within walking distance. However, even so, the approval was subject to stringent conditions re visitor management, lighting and non-car transport provision:

“No floodlighting, security lighting or other external means of illumination of the site shall be provided, installed or operated in the development, except in accordance with a detailed scheme which shall provide for lighting that is low level, hooded and directional, and has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority” and

*“In order that the development site is accessible by non-car modes” the
“**development hereby approved shall not be occupied until details of secure
bicycle parking have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local
Planning Authority**”. [WPC emphasis]*

⁹ [Planning and Building Control - Wealden District Council](#)

For all the reasons detailed above, the application neither conserves nor enhances the National Landscape so, the WPC respectfully requests that the Inspector REFUSE this proposal.

(9) Questions and observations arising from the Appeal statement

The appellants have made several points in their appeal statement:

- They mention that no mention or comparison was made with the approved application (WD/2022/1276/F, Doozes Farm) in Mayfield Parish. WPC understands that this is a tree house offered for let, which is classed as a *temporary structure* though it is not 'moveable' and is in the curtilage of the residential farmhouse. This is contrast to this proposal which is a *permanent structure* and is not in residential curtilage.
- They cite one of the LPA's reasons for refusal, namely that the proposed development does not include a management plan, or on-site management, stating that:
*"This is not correct. The applicant and owner (applicant's husband) of the land live on site. This was evidenced by the three planning committee members who visited the site meeting the owner during their visits.
"Visitors will be advised of the need to minimise light pollution, not have internal lighting on all night and minimise noise and disturbance. There will be no outside lighting as the existing farm buildings have external high intensity flood lights for security. Onsite management 24 hours a day due to location of applicant and owners".*

WPC understands that the site is agricultural land and the agricultural buildings on it (including the barn next to the proposed site) do not have residential use. WPC also notes that the appellant in the s78 Questionnaire for the Planning Inspectorate used a different address that is sited approximately 300 metres away from the site. If this is the appellants' residential address, then they would not be living 'on-site'. WPC thus invites the Inspector to clarify this point.

There has been a previous application at this site for glamping cabins, (WD/2023/2480/F)¹⁰, which was withdrawn. The WPC Planning Committee noted changes from the withdrawn application to the current proposal, made in the wake of pre-application advice. The changes noted were:

- The frame of the glamping pods are slightly smaller in size, while the glazing area is reduced
- The site is sited closer to the agricultural buildings

but were unable to note any changes that mitigate the previous concerns raised about the withdrawn application (WD/ 2023/2480/F)¹⁰.

Therefore, the Committee's previous issues and objections (as per the WPC objection of 29th November 2023¹¹) still stand. In addition, new concerns were raised with regard to the

¹⁰ [Planning and Building Control - Wealden District Council](#)

¹¹ All comments and objections are referenced when they are logged onto the Wealden District Council (WDC) website.

safety of children, bearing in mind the very close proximity to open-sided old farm buildings containing machinery.

Please note that, in line with the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan, which was made on 15th May 2024 (after our original objection) and as detailed in our previous objection to the withdrawn application, the Planning Committee supports camping/glamping applications, such as WD/2002/0401/F (at Wadhurst Castle), where they are located in the right location (i.e. close to existing amenities, not car dependent), of the right type (moveable, temporary structures), with strong visitor management plans and conditions to safeguard residential amenity and not be detrimental to the tranquillity and dark skies of Wadhurst (WAD1 and WAD 10)¹².

The WPC Planning Committee therefore reiterates its objection, made to the original proposal (WD/2023/2480/F⁹), despite the applicant's alterations to the development, for the reasons originally stated.

¹² [Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan \(wealden.gov.uk\)](https://www.wealden.gov.uk/wadhurst-neighbourhood-plan)

Conclusions

As a starting point, WPC is, in principle, very supportive of local businesses and, through the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan, seeks to encourage them in the right location.

However, this application, now at appeal stage, is not a proposal that the parish council can support. The commercial and economic benefits to the parish are vastly outweighed by the potential damage to the National Landscape.

The NPPF, para 182, states that; *“Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues”*.

Since the application was refused, the Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan and the High Weald AONB Management Plan have come into force.

The new (27/3/24) High Weald Management Plan (2024-2029)¹³, raises key issues of concern over the proliferation of glamping in the HWNL due to suburbanization and impact on dark skies and tranquillity on this protected landscape (pages 42 and 46).

The Wadhurst Neighbourhood Plan¹² policies WAD1 and WAD10 are especially relevant:

- WAD1: *“Development in the countryside, beyond the adopted development boundaries, will be strictly controlled in the interest of conserving the nationally important landscape, tranquillity and distinctive character of the High Weal National Landscape”*.
- WAD10: *...“Proposals for tourism development will be supported where the following criteria are met:*
 - *The proposal addresses the concept of sustainable rural tourism...”*
 - *The proposal would not generate any unacceptable impact on the amenity of residential properties and on the capacity and safety of the local highways network...”*

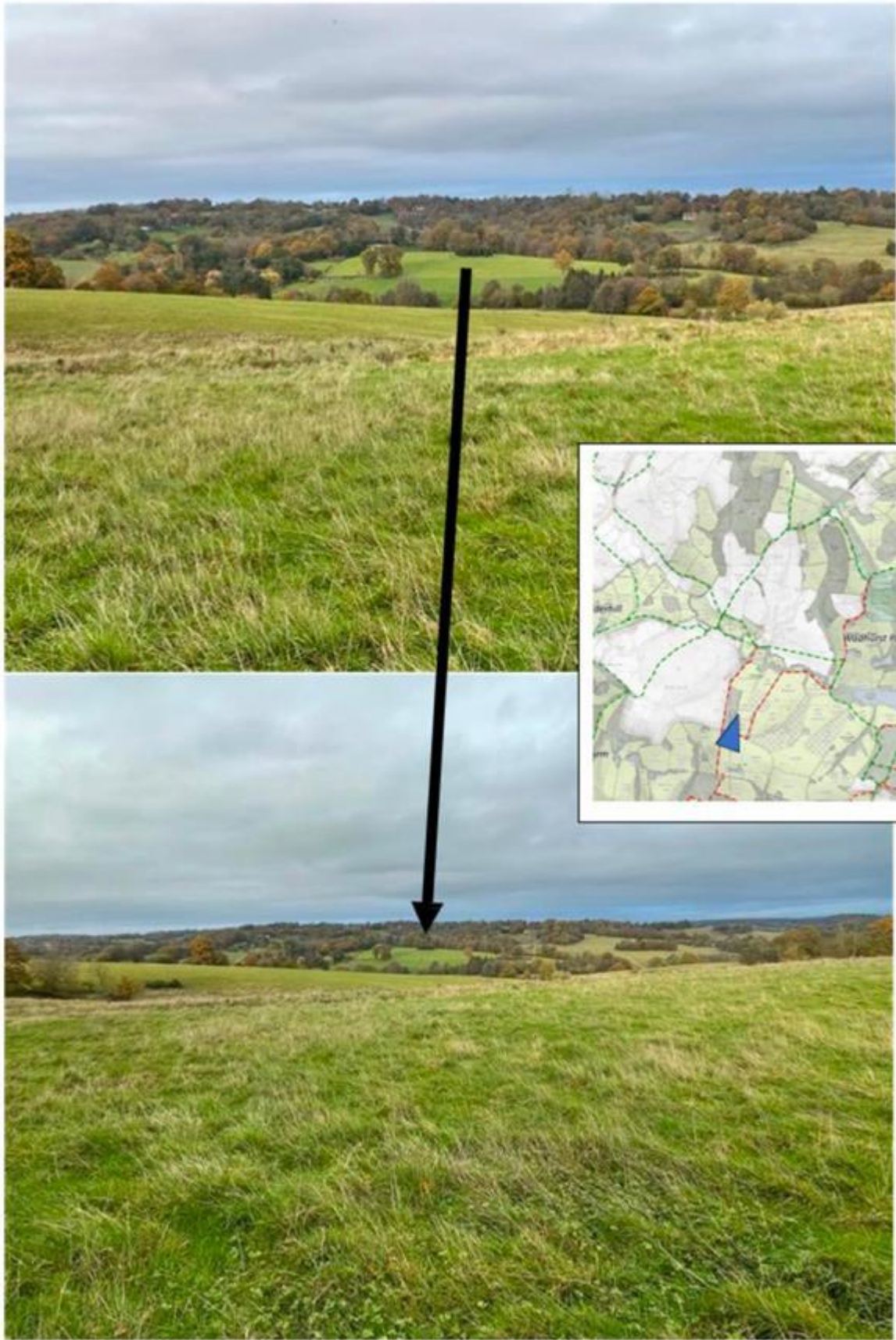
For all the reasons detailed above, WPC concludes that this proposal neither conserves nor enhances the National Landscape and so, respectfully requests that the Inspector REFUSE this appeal.

¹³ [AONB Management Plan - High Weald](#)

Appendix A – Photographs taken from public footpaths showing “*the fantastic views of the countryside*” into the 40-acre site



Note: Photos taken in November 2023



Note: Photos taken in November 2023

Appendix B – Christmas Tree plantation

The plantation is adjacent to the footpath on the land showing how the small size of growing trees (these are approx. 4 years old) would not screen the A-frame buildings (most trees when cut down are 6-8ft to fit indoors). (According to the British Christmas Tree Growers Association, they can take up to four years to reach a height of just 25 cm. or 10 inches)



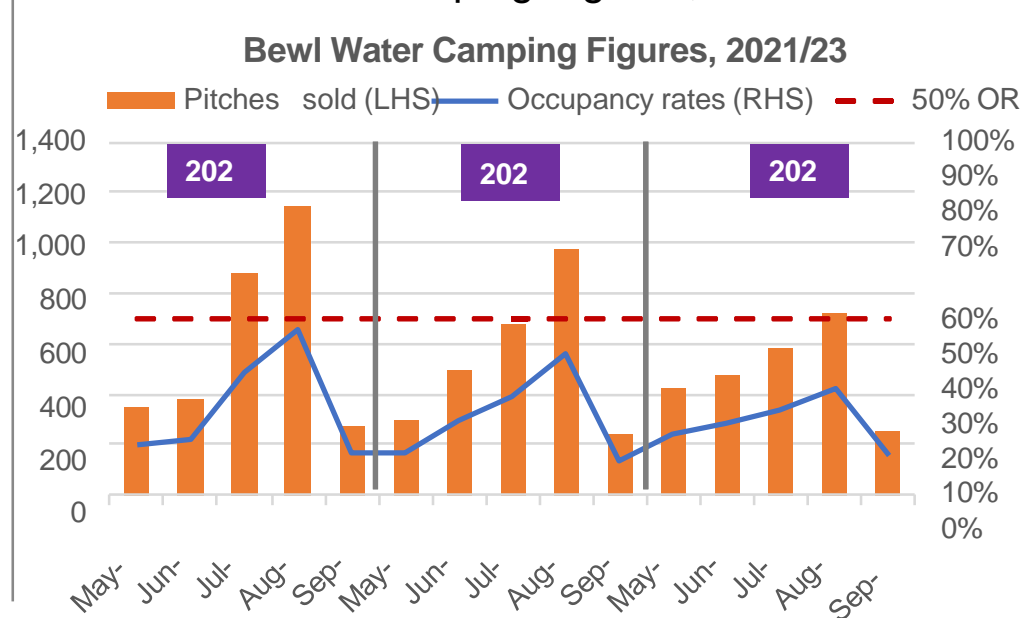
Note: Photo taken in November 2023

Appendix C

Extracts from Wadhurst Parish Council’s Response to Application WD/2023/1895/MAJ¹⁴

Bewl Water Campsite occupancy data showing spare capacity -with occupancy never reaching even 50%

Exhibit 5: Bewl Water Camping Figures, 2021-23



Source: Applicants (for application WD/2023/1895/F), data supplied by WDC

“WPC’s detailed spreadsheet demonstrates there is no shortage of overnight accommodation in the Wadhurst area. Indeed, looking at available B&B and Airbnb accommodation, our analysis showed there were 259 rooms available within the area, offering beds for 525 people. Given that the Bewl campsite has never been full – to our knowledge – 525 beds available elsewhere in the area, suggests that a permanent campsite is not needed (see Appendix A for details¹⁵).

“In addition to B&B or Airbnb premises, offering overnight accommodation, there are several long standing campsites within the area, whose businesses have been adversely impacted by the temporary campsite at Bewl. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Cedar Gables Campsite, A21 (family-run, 4.5 stars on Trip Advisor)
- Pelverers Farm Camping, The Slade, Lamberhurst (family run 4.5 stars)
- Blue Caps Farm, Sleepers Stile Lane, Cousley Wood, Wadhurst (family-run 5, stars on Trip Advisor)
- Hoptarden Glamping & Camping, Sleepers Stile Lane, Cousley Wood, Wadhurst (family- run, 4.5 stars on TA)
- Rainbow’s End Campsite, Newbury Lane, Cousley Wood, Wadhurst (family run, not on TA)
- Meadow Breeze Glamping, Ticehurst (family run, not on TA)
- T & J Motel (family run 4.5 stars on Trip Advisor)
- Bedgebury Camping (part of family run farm 4 stars on Trip Advisor)

¹⁴ Logged on Wealden District Council's website on 29th August 2023

¹⁵ Please see pages 20-23 of WPC's objection of 29th August 2023

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“All of these campsites are close to Bewl’s entrance. A rough estimate suggest that the first 7 sites have capacity to offer bed space for approx. 285 people, while Bedgebury Camping has space for their weekend campers covering 30- 40 acres.”

“The damaging impact to these businesses due to the temporary campsite at Bewl has had the effect of ‘cannibalising’ the tourist business in Wealden. The temporary approval has had the effect of ‘robbing Peter to pay Paul’. By supposedly boosting tourism with Bewl, planners have undermined viable camping business elsewhere in the nearby vicinity. Indeed, one site owner estimated that over the three years that Bewl has been running its campsite, its revenue has halved (though some of that will reflect the cost of living crisis).”