Objections to APP/21/01376 (Land adjacent to 54 Long Copse Lane, Emsworth)

. At the Tory Party Conference last September, the Prime Minister said that no more homes would be built on green field sites, and that brownfield sites would be developed instead. This is a green field site. What is more, it is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation.

. The site also currently lies in the countryside. Previous planning applications on this site have been refused because of its countryside location. The applicants argue that the need for housing outweighs the fact that this is rural land. It is interesting that the HBC planning policy response to the recent planning application on site H8 (Land North of Long Copse Lane) said that, if H8 remained in the rural area, the application should be rejected, as the need for housing did NOT outweigh the fact that it was rural land. This should also be the case with this application.

. The site is a SINC site that contains unimproved grassland. The NPPF says that the presumption in favour of sustainable development only applies to a habitats site if an assessment has concluded that it will not be adversely affected. Under the applicants' plan, the SINC turves would be moved to the field to the east owned by HBC. However, the applicants admit that the experience of translocating grasses is varied. This translocation might end up with the turves dying. Therefore HBC cannot be certain that the SINC site would not be ruined.

. The applicants are proposing a mini-estate of 9 houses. However, the site would be accessed from Long Copse Lane, and there would be no connection between it and the adjacent Redlands Grange estate. There are 9 properties along the south side of the Lane next to it that have about half acre plots. Therefore the housing density proposed does not reflect that adjacent to it in the Lane. The applicant says that this density has been chosen to make more efficient use of the available land. This is presumably because of the recent ruling by the Planning Inspectorate regarding the Fowley Cottage site. However, Fowley Cottage is in an urban area. Why should the same criterion be applied in a rural area?

. Long Copse Lane would become more dangerous. At the site entrance, the Lane is only a single-track road, with no footpath. About 40% of the car journeys from the site would be made towards Westbourne, as this has the closest amenities. The T-junction of the Lane with North Street Westbourne is dangerous, with a single-track blind exit due to parked cars.

. There is an inadequate bat corridor along the eastern boundary of the site. The SINC site is only 280 m from the large roost of Bechstein's bats within site H8. Bechstein's bat is very rare and HBC have a duty to protect them. They are known from bat surveys to forage along the eastern line of trees, and will not use foraging routes if these become lit. However, there are houses on the proposed site that are only 10 m from these trees. These will produce enough light to stop the bats and reduce their foraging capability.

. The site would drain to Thornham WwTW. Thornham is close to capacity, and as a result probably has a reduced ability to strip nitrogen. It may be a decade before Southern Water can make the improvements required. This means that, for year upon year, more nitrogen would be pouring into Chichester Harbour than if Thornham was working properly. This would be detrimental to the Harbour, whose intertidal zone is already covered in algae. The SINC field houses would contribute to this algae.

. The site would not be nitrogen neutral. HBC plan to mitigate the nitrogen generated from development draining to Thornham by re-wilding Warblington Farm. Thornham drains to the Thorney Channel to the east side of Thorney island, while Warblington Farm drains to the Emsworth Channel on its west side. In order for the water with lower nitrogen content from Warblington to affect Thornham, it needs to travel 9 km around Thorney Island. Because of the way the tides work, it is unlikely to get there before being swept out into the Solent. As a result, the nitrogen budget in the Thorney Channel would be positive.

. These objections have the support of the Save Long Copse Lane Action Group.

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