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Save the environment - think before you print.

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 24 June 2018 21:08

To: Planning

Subject: Objections to Planning Applications P/140/16/OUT & P/25/17/OUT

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Owen Mitchell and I reside in the Arun DC area.

I wish to object to these two applications in the strongest terms. In doing so I would like to draw information to your attention which I think should have a bearing on your decision(s).

Before I make my more detailed comments, I would add to the numerous objections that have already been raised, concerning the massive problems permitting such developments will have on increased traffic, infrastructure and potential flooding risks. However, I am also well aware that despite me knowing the realities of what would actually happen, potential developers are well practised at apparently minimising and playing down the effect of these issues at any enquiry stage and will employ well-trained barristers to do so.... was ever thus and so be it. I trust these points will be considered anyway.

My main concern though is the effect these schemes would have on the environs of Pagham Harbour Nature reserve, with the potential to seriously affect this SPA, Ramsar and SSSI site. Any development as close to the Reserve as proposed cannot fail to cause harm, through direct habitat loss, increased disturbance and Human pressure right on the doorstep.

I have been a local bird-watcher for 45 years and have much experience of the birdlife of the Selsey peninsula including Pagham harbour. I have produced several publications on this subject. I have been a long-standing member of the Sussex Ornithological Society and have held several offices of that organisation over the years. I was also a part-time Bylaw enforcement officer with West Sussex County Council (and latterly the RSPB) for around eight years from 2006 to early 2013, and so had occasion to visit all parts of the Reserve and surrounds. I also, on some occasions, assisted with surveys and WeBS counts (i.e. Wetland Birds surveys) for the parts of the Reserve adjacent to the area subject of the application and indeed on it.

Furthermore, since becoming aware of the applications above, I have visited the area a number of times and viewed the current state of the environment, around Summer Lane – the area behind Pagham village hall and Church Barton area. I shall hereafter refer to this as the 'relevant area.'

I am deeply concerned as to the effects such a development would have on the area of refuge formerly used by Brent Geese and some wader species. Looking at the proposed sites for development, it is within my knowledge and experience to say that flocks of Dark-bellied Brent Geese (*Branta bernicla bernicla*), Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*), Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) and Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) in particular have habitually used these areas for resting and feeding in the winter months over the years, whilst roosting Mute Swans (*Cygnus olor*)

were also occasional visitors. However, the last two years have seen a marked change; bird-scarers, much more human disturbance, bonfires, changes in farming policy, ploughing and otherwise have seen to it that the area has apparently become much less suitable for wildlife – and indeed I do not recall seeing a single goose of any species there during this time. No co-incidence I would suggest.

I am led to believe that the developers have indicated that no Brent Geese have been seen using the relevant area....if so, this is a complete untruth and completely misleading by them. Furthermore, the European Court has surely given indications as to what must be considered in cases like this where Ramsar sites and SPAs are involved....any indication by developers that this is not an important area for geese, waders and wildfowl is also misleading. Surely Arun DC must take account of this?

I am prepared if necessary to give evidence to any tribunal to this effect, on oath, as it is the truth. As an indication of the previous use of the aforementioned relevant area by birds, I give below some examples of sightings made by me in more recent years whilst wardening (WSCC), drawn both from memory and notes gathered.....though with research there will doubtless be others, both from me and other experienced birders.

14/1/2009: 4 Tundra Bean Geese (*Anser serrorostris*) (a scarce species in Sussex) were seen over-flying the areas in question, and I had spent a lot of time searching for them previously. However, I also saw c.200 Golden Plover settled in the fields in the relevant area at this time, although they later flew off west.

11/12/2009: During a large count of c.2500 Lapwings in the general area of the fields north of Pagham North Wall, this count included several hundred birds actually in fields around the Summer Lane area and part of the relevant area.

21/1/2010: Whilst searching for a Brent Goose flock, I found them (several hundred birds) in the fields of the relevant area and fairly close to the Village Hall. The flock seemed quite restless and some were feeding, and on scrutinising the flock I discovered an individual of the rare 'Black Brant' form (*Branta bernicla nigricans*) amongst them, so I remember it well. The rarity sighting was documented. About half an hour later the whole flock took flight and headed off.

20/2/2011: During a survey count, there were 100+ Curlew in the relevant area (of a total count of 380 on the 'North Fields' area that day). There were also 70 Black-tailed Godwits (*Limosa limosa*) on the wet grassland nearer to Summer Lane/Village Hall and in the relevant area (there were also 300 more of this species elsewhere on the North fields, some which doubtless commuted to and fro).

30/1/2012: There were 2 Whooper Swans (*Cygnus cygnus*) (scarce here) with a small flock of Mute Swans – initially at OS map reference SZ877987. This is a short way outside the relevant area...however I later saw the Mute Swans only in the general area of the relevant area...and although not precisely recorded on this occasion I have certainly seen them there on other occasions.

12/2/2012: There was a female Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*) hunting over the entire relevant area (and a male bird nearby on the North fields). This was a particularly cold and frosty day – most of the waders had moved on from the frozen fields – but there were c.2500 Dark-bellied Brent Geese in the fields behind the Village hall at the time, plus several hundred Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) the total for the whole North wall this day being c.3000.

I recognise the pressure that Councils are under from the Government to churn out more and more housing – depressingly I've seen plenty of it in Sussex – but I urge you at Arun DC to give nature the priority it deserves here. We owe it to future generations to get this right and if we cannot protect our most treasured and valuable Nature reserves now, what hope is there for the environment in the future?

Finally, I would ask that you please acknowledge this objection and advise if any further details are required from me.

Yours faithfully,
Owen Mitchell

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