

## **Statements from those who attended.**

### *Jim Glover's Statement*

We represent the Coldwaltham Meadow Conservation Group, we have over 300 supporters on our database and we all assumed that the formation of the South Downs National Park Authority would protect our countryside from inappropriate Development.

This Development Brief for Coldwaltham Meadow must surely be one of the most controversial issues that you as a Planning Committee will be asked to consider, but today, you are being asked to simply delegate the whole process of consultation, minor amendments and implementation to the Planning Department without the need for you to look at it again. This brief is premature, not proactive; If you approve it now, before the Local Plan has even been submitted to the Inspector, you will be derogating your responsibility as a planning committee.

Your duty is to examine this brief and policy SD64 in the light of everything you stand for which is set out in your Partnership Management Plan.

Look at your Vision, your Two Main Purposes, your Seven Special Qualities and the Ten General Policies. Your Draft Local Plan refers to all these documents and goes on to provide Nine Local Plan Objectives and Ten Core policies. These are all fine words that define what you should stand for and what you should do. Every one of these documents gives you a clear indication why you should reject this development brief and protect this site. You should be considering the alternative sites we have identified in the village which are far less damaging to wildlife and the landscape.

Your first main purpose is to "Conserve and enhance natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage". What better example could you find than a flower rich hay meadow?

You may not initially have been aware of the special quality of Coldwaltham's flower-rich hay meadow, because the Planning Department failed to consider that sites that have received government funding to enhance wild flowers might be of conservation importance, but there is no excuse for ignorance now. The Sussex Wildlife Trust, The RSPB, our Group and English Nature have all informed the Planning Department that this Meadow is important for wildlife. You should also know that the adjacent Wildbrooks are the most important and sensitive wildlife site in the National Park, for no other area within the National Park has a comparable combination of national and international designations. And yet there are statements in this development brief that building houses and landscaping must enhance biodiversity. There is only one way to enhance a flower rich hay meadow and that is to continue the management which has created it. Building houses, planting trees and encouraging public access will simply destroy it.

Last week Environment Secretary Michael Gove announced that it will be a Government Priority to reward farmers who create flower meadows; why are you rewarding one who wishes to destroys one?

### *Chris Yeardsley's Statement*

The Planning Inspector has yet to see the draft Local Plan; to submit this Development Brief for limited consultation so far in advance of the Local Plan's ratification means that your

planning decisions are being made outside of the Local Plan process. This is not consistent with national policy guidelines on plan-making and community consultation, specifically paragraphs 17, 150, 155, 196 & 216.

Why, when there is every possibility that Policy SD64 could be withdrawn, or substantially modified, is this Brief being produced so far in advance of the Inspector's examination? Even if the Local Plan is unchanged, your own experts have advised that proposals for the meadow should not come forward until the second or third editions of the Local Plan, so what is the rush? The only guidance to be conveyed by the untimely presentation of this seriously flawed document is that you are absolutely determined to develop the meadow, and will make up any nonsense to justify your plans.

The jargon in this Brief is incomprehensible to most local residents. The Plain English Campaign has awarded their Crystal Mark to the Planning Inspectorate and we recommend that their "DriveDefence" methodology should be used if you truly wish us to understand this Development Brief.

References to environmental and social benefits in this Brief are superficial, unquantified and misleading. Their delivery cannot possibly be guaranteed, either in the short or the long term, and you do not have the intention or the capacity to objectively assess their delivery, on any time scale. Glib and facile references to enhanced biodiversity and social engineering are merely used in the Brief to justify the unjustifiable; they are deeply patronising and offensive to local residents, who will have to suffer the consequence.

Despite three drafts, the Vision and Design Principles lack coherence and the evidence base remains flawed, indicating that the Brief was produced as a desk study. If local residents had been involved in the so-called "Landscape Led Design Approach Process" then at least the Brief would be based on reality.

It is hugely ironic that the Brief states there must be a "clearly defined edge" to Coldwaltham and that there must be a "full stop" to further development, for that is the purpose of our current village boundary. Your failure to respect this indicates that future boundaries are also likely to be ignored.

#### *Chris Skinner's Statement*

One of the key principles of sustainable development is "ensuring a strong, healthy and **just** society". Yet from the outset, your plans for the meadow have been characterised by a lack of transparency and the avoidance of engagement with the local community.

Despite your Statement of Community Involvement and assertions in the Local Plan, we have been denied a Regulation 18 Consultation about developing the meadow.

You compounded this by presenting the first draft of this brief, with just eight days allowed for comment, to the Parish Council, before the Local Plan consultation had ended. We now have to comment on another draft before the Planning inspector has seen our objections to the Local Plan, let alone examined them.

Your brief requires developers to work closely with those directly affected by their proposals, yet you do not respect the rights or wishes of local residents.

We discover (for we were not informed about this document by you) that we are to accept forced integration of boundary treatments to our own gardens and to allow access by strangers to and through our quiet cul de sac, via our children's play area. This has obvious and unwelcome implications for child welfare and is a threat to our security and safety.

We must give up our views of the countryside, and accept the loss of a beautiful meadow, with increased disturbance to the Wildbrooks, for a shop that probably won't be built and almost certainly won't last, and for houses that could be built elsewhere in the village. This is neither just or fair.

The Brief is for an unsustainable location and no amount of design will compensate for this. There can be no adequate mitigation for the loss of the meadow and the brief cannot therefore claim to be "supporting biodiversity and the natural environment".

References to ecosystem services is meaningless greenwash. There is no indication of who will be providing and delivering the meadow management plan, who is to assess the results, or who is to ensure that the children's Play Area and Public Open Space are kept free from contamination by dogs.

We cannot live within environmental limits if a major development is built in a village with few work opportunities, very limited facilities and no public transport worth the name, for the part-time bus service is unsuitable for commuting and the railway station is over 2.5 miles away.

The proposal will generate increased car use on the busy A29 and around the village, particularly if the proposed shop is commercially viable enough to be built.

This Brief is stated in terms that are impossible to achieve and should therefore be rejected.