



South Downs Society

formerly Society of Sussex Downsmen

Protecting the Beauty of the Downs

11 August 2015

For immediate publication

Save Our Green Fields

Two local environmental campaigning groups, Friends of Lewes and the South Downs Society, are joining forces to fight a proposal to build 200 new homes on a greenfield site in the heart of the Ouse Valley between Landport and Malling.

The independent planning inspector, who conducted a public inquiry in January into the latest stage of the local plan covering the whole of Lewes district including that part in the National Park, concluded that the plan would yield insufficient new dwellings to meet local need. He suggested that land at Old Malling Farm in Lewes could be developed to provide more houses. But this is a site already considered – and previously rejected – by the South Downs National Park Authority.

Said Chairman of the Friends of Lewes, Robert Cheesman, “This must be resisted. The designation of the National Park, and the decision to include the town of Lewes within it, was to ensure the protection of our precious landscape, the downland setting of Lewes and its cultural heritage. All of these are seriously threatened by the proposal to build 200 houses on quality farmland at Old Malling Farm which is highly visible as well as having historic associations and archaeological significance.”

Says Steve Ankers, Policy Officer for the South Downs Society, “Both societies want to see more affordable housing available in and around Lewes on brownfield sites but, as the official Friends group for the National Park, we very much share this opposition to any new housing estate at Old Malling Farm. Development there would be a worrying precedent for building on other greenfield sites on the edge of town or elsewhere in the National Park.”

A further round of consultation is taking place between 7 August and 2 October, with a possible reopening of the public inquiry in the autumn to consider comments on this site. While the Societies will be putting forward a strong objection to the 200 houses proposed for Old Malling Farm, it is vital that members of the public make their views known. Details of the proposals are available on Lewes District Council website:

<http://www.lewes.gov.uk/planning/22277.asp>

Send in your comments by emailing ldf@lewes.gov.uk or by post to Lewes Planning Department at Southover House, Lewes.

Ends

For further information, please contact Steve Ankers, Policy Officer, South Downs Society, or Robert Cheesman, Chair of Friends of Lewes via tel: 01798 875073

Notes for editors:

- The South Downs Society is a registered charity set up to conserve and enhance the beauty and amenities of the South Downs for the benefit of the public. It was established in 1923 and successfully defeated proposals for unsuitable coastal development overlooking the famous Seven Sisters area. The Society organises, both for the public and its members, a varied programme of strolls and walks as well as events and talks, all aimed at increasing both the enjoyment and awareness of the South Downs.
- The Friends of Lewes, also a registered charity, is the civic society for this historic town. Founded in 1952, its aims are to stimulate public interest in the beauty, history and character of the town of Lewes and its surrounding area; and to organise concerted action for protecting and enhancing the townscape and for preserving free access to the surrounding area.
- The South Downs National Park, created in 2010, stretches for 100 miles between Eastbourne in East Sussex and Winchester in Hampshire. The town of Lewes is the biggest town in any of our national parks.