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WOOLHOPE NATURALISTS' FIELD CLUB

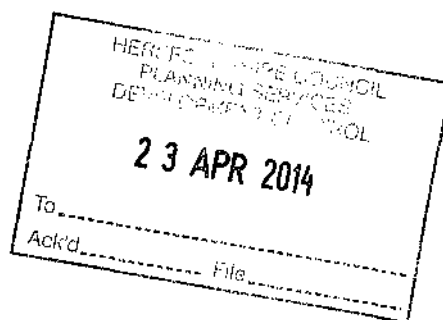
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Principal Planning Officer, Herefordshire Council, PO Box 230 Blueschool House, Blueschool Street, Hereford HR1 2ZB

From:

David Whitehead,
Hon. Secretary,
60 Hafod Road,
Hereford HR1 1SQ

21st April 2014



Dear Mr Ashcroft

P140963/0: Site for 135 Homes at Aylestone Hill, Hereford

On behalf of the President and Central Committee of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club I would like to express our opposition to this development.

Apart from the obvious issues of flooding, disposal of sewerage, water supply and traffic, which provide a host of intractable problems, glossed over by the applicant in their submission, the Club would like to reiterate some of the landscape, environmental and cultural issues more pertinent to our interests.

The land under consideration belonged to the cathedral at Hereford and was probably acquired in the 8th century. It appears in Domesday book as part of the manor of Tupsley and by the mid-12th century had become a discrete holding called *Waleneya* – from the Old English *waellan-eg* – ‘island of the spring’ indicating that most of the land lay on an island between the River Lugg and the stream called Lugg Rhea. It contained a mixture of pasture – the development site – and shared the commonage of the meadows – the Lammas lands - between the rivers, with the king’s tenants at Lugwardine.

Acknowledging the scarcity of unimproved water meadows the area was recently declared an SSSI.¹

A large part of the meadows and the adjoining slopes of the Aylestone ridge now belong the Herefordshire Nature Trust with public access virtually unrestricted between the road to Ledbury (A438) and the road to Worcester (A465). Indeed, the meadows are criss-crossed by public footpaths, fed into the landscape from the Aylestone ridge. The area is locally recognised as an Open Green Space. A satellite nature reserve has been created on the site of the ancient woodlands at Baynton Wood – the Broadlands Nature Reserve – which has a specific educational role, being adjacent to two schools and a Sixth Form College.

The land under consideration for development forms an integral part of this package of environmentally sensitive lands and acts as a buffer between the straggling Aylestone suburb and the SSSI. Since 1969 Aylestone Hill has been designated a Conservation Area to strengthen the defences of the Lugg Meadows and to protect the northern approaches to the city of Hereford, which is much enhanced by the mature planting found in the large gardens of the Victorian and Edwardian villas on the ridge. On the western slopes of the hill a new public park – Victoria Park - is in the process of being established, which already acts as a counterpoise to the more natural landscape on the eastern side of the road. Parents and children satiated by swings and seesaws are seen crossing the road for a walk across the development site for a visit to the meadows. A walk through a housing estate will destroy this connection.

The SSSI, the Conservation Area, the Nature Reserve and the Victoria Park combine to create one of the most important heritage assets in Hereford, which is underpinned by both central and local government legislation. In particular, the National Planning Policy Framework taken in conjunction with the English Heritage *Revision Note on the Setting of Heritage Assets* (2012) has much to say on incongruous development proposals. Equally pertinent is *Understanding Place: Conservation Area designations, Appraisal and Management* (English Heritage, 2011).

Locally, there are several saved policies from the old Hereford Local Plan which affect the context of the development, together with the ‘emerging’ UDP policies relating to heritage assets and the setting of conservation areas. Similarly, the *Herefordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy* (2010) defends the green corridor linking the northern edge of the city with the Lugg Meadows and deals with other matters relating to the general setting of Hereford. More specifically, the Council has a *Design and Access Statement relating to the Aylestone Conservation Area* (February, 2013) plus an earlier planning guide for this site, drawn up by Hereford City Council (1998) following an earlier proposal to develop this land.

Herefordshire Council is thus, well-armed to squash this application but the issues need to be tested in public before a planning inspector. We urge the Council to reject this application and prepare its case for a planning inquiry. The case for an eastern by-pass, crossing the Lugg Meadows, was dismissed at

a public inquiry in 1992 on much weaker grounds and we are confident that this development will suffer a similar fate.

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of David Whitehead.

David Whitehead,
Hon. Secretary

PS: The developer ignores the cultural significance of the Lugg Meadows reflected in the work of the painters David Cox (1783-1859) and Brian Hatton (1887-1916). The former 'one of the greatest British landscape painters' developed his skills living in close proximity to the Meadows (for a short time at Baynton Wood) between 1814-27. He constantly drew upon this experience for many of his images and in *The Lugg Mead* (1816) created a masterpiece, which was permanently on display at the V & A until the mid-20thc.² Later Brian Hatton, an indigenous artist, whose promising career was cut short by the 1st World War, was frequently drawn to the Meadows for several of his most memorable images.³ Remarkably, the scenery depicted by these artists is still recognisable today because of the vigilance of Herefordshire Council and its predecessors. The present application calls for similar action to preserve 'Cox Country' or 'Hatton Country' from the barbarian strain in modern life.

¹ Anthea Brian & Beryl Harding, *The History of Lower House Farm and its Surroundings* (2010); Bruce Coplestone-Crow, *Herefordshire Place-names* (2009), p. 115.

² Scott Wilcox (ed.), *Sun, Wind, and Rain: The Art of David Cox* (2009).

³ Celia Davies, *Brian Hatton: A Biography of the Artist* (1978).



David Cox – The Lugg Mead (1816) – V & A



Brian Hatton- Man on horseback hunting on the Lugg