

Mr Robert E Wilkins
Director of Transport and Environment
East Sussex County Council
County Hall
St Anne's Crescent
LEWES BN7 1EU

21 October 1999

Dear Mr Wilkins

EAST SUSSEX AND BRIGHTON & HOVE WASTE LOCAL PLAN
MARLEY FARM, BATTLE

I am instructed by my Council to write to you to object to the consideration of the Marley Farm site as a preferred site for waste disposal by land-raising. This objection is in two parts.

1) The letter informing Marley Lane residents that the County Council was planning to undertake further assessment of Marley Farm as a possible site for waste management was extremely curt.

Although the consultation process undertaken by the County Council last December was non-statutory, it did nonetheless list 52 sites for waste disposal. To propose a new large "last resort" landraise site without even giving the opportunity for consultation appears insensitive.

2) My Council believes that the Marley Lane site is not suitable for a landraise waste disposal site for the following reasons:

- Your Policy WLP33 states "*Proposals for landraising will be supported only where: a) the sites are located outside designated areas of outstanding natural beauty....*". This site is within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This development is not compatible with the primary objective of an AONB to conserve and enhance landscape quality and character. The character of Marley Lane is essentially rural and a waste tip would not do anything to enhance it. The development would not be limited to that derived from the character and qualities of the countryside. Change and damage to the character of the AONB would occur by significant increases in noise and intrusion from traffic. These are contrary to your Structure Plan policies.

- The unnatural alteration of the landscape in the Brede Valley area of the AONB by building up a hill in place of a valley cannot be supported. The Countryside Commission, in its 1995 report on The High Weald, warned that each new development, however small, in the AONB changes the appearance and hence people's perception of the AONB. This report was produced in collaboration with all the relevant county councils including East Sussex County Council and concluded that:

"The beauty of the High Weald results from its combination of intricate topography, its varied agricultural tapestry and its rich legacy of historic buildings. This assessment has identified what makes the High Weald special. It has defined the identity of local areas and some of the characteristics which make up this nationally important landscape. It has also examined the main forces for change and identified the gradual decline in landscape structure, the decline in woodland management and the gradual suburbanisation of the countryside as three of the major pressures affecting the landscape of the AONB."

- Access to the site is poor. The A21 is already congested and slow-moving. The additional lorries, estimated at up to 250 a day, driving to and from the site would impose an unacceptable burden on rural people who have to use the road to access the towns for employment, shopping, banking etc. The A21/Marley Lane route is used by Sedlescombe residents to get to their nearest town, Battle.

The junction of the A21 and Marley Lane would need substantial improvement before extra traffic could be accommodated. There are already delays for traffic at peak times. Sedlescombe residents would be caused additional delay and inconvenience and other routes to Sedlescombe along small country lanes are bound to suffer from increased traffic.

There is currently an outstanding planning application for a substantial development on the Blackman, Pavie & Ladden site in Marley Lane expected to generate an additional 1440 movements a day from this site. There are two other industrial sites in the Lane and the addition of a waste disposal site creating yet more traffic should not be considered.

- The site is relatively remote from Hastings and Bexhill where the waste is mostly produced.
- A public footpath crosses the site.
- The prevailing wind is from the west and Sedlescombe therefore lies downwind of the site. When the now closed charcoal burning business was in operation in Marley Lane, Sedlescombe frequently suffered from an extensive pall of smoke across the whole village.
- There is a risk of pollution of water courses.
- This is an inappropriate development close to the ancient town of Battle.
- The site is within 1066 country where tourism is important. A recent Rother report in the Rye & Battle Observer states that tourists spent £120 m in Rother in 1997 which was 4.6% of the whole regional spend and more than 3500 jobs depend on these tourists. A waste disposal site would not encourage tourists to visit the area.
- There are several precedents for refusing to approve inappropriate development in the area. Two recent examples are: 1) the County Council itself has objected to the proposed Blackman, Pavie and Ladden development that is close to the site and would probably be used for accessing the waste site; 2) the Inspector has just turned down an application for a very modest conversion of a farm building at Lower Marley Farm into bed and breakfast accommodation being concerned that the building would be visible from the road and public footpath, would increase the level of activity in the countryside, would bring additional traffic etc.

My Council believes that these are overwhelming reasons not to include the Marley Farm site in the Waste Local Plan.

Yours sincerely



Clerk

Copies to:

County Councillor Mrs K Field
District Councillor M Wilson
Rother District Council Planning Officer
Council for the Protection of Rural England
Battle Conservation Group

