

Ecological Land Co-operative

COVER LETTER

Field to the south of Copyhold Cottages,
formerly part of Wilbees Farm,
Arlington, Hailsham, BN26 6RU

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For a Living, Working Countryside

This letter has been written by the Ecological Land Co-operative. It is written to be read in conjunction with the planning application, plans and other documents accompanying the application.

The Ecological Land Co-operative (**ELC**) is proposing with this application the creation of three new affordable residential smallholdings for new entrants to ecological agriculture.

It is widely accepted both that there is a pressing need to create pathways into farming for new entrants, and that the lack of available, affordable farms is the most significant barrier for prospective new entrants. It is also becoming increasingly accepted that we need to transition to resilience and sustainability with organic, agro-ecological, and conservation agriculture such as the type being proposed here. With this proposal the ELC is uniquely combining these two imperatives, providing for the growth of sustainable land use and small-scale farm businesses.

We are seeking a consent for a period of five years for: three temporary agricultural workers' dwellings; one shared barn with roof-mounted photovoltaic array and two adjacent 10,000 litre rainwater storage tanks; change to the road access; and an area of porous hardstanding. The details of the change of use, and development proposed is within the accompanying Design and Access Statement.

The ELC is a community benefit society, not-for-profit and social enterprise which exists to support sustainable land-based livelihoods, and to support its tenants in developing both their businesses and their land stewardship skills. As a condition of planning permission, the ELC monitors our sites to ensure that they remain in agricultural use, affordable and under careful ecological management, in perpetuity. We also require that our tenants host Open Days and school visits so that others beyond our primary beneficiaries benefit from our work.

To date the ELC has established one similar project, in Mid Devon, Greenham Reach. Progress at Greenham Reach is set out in the Planning Statement, and an example of our annual monitoring reports for Greenham Reach is provided in Appendix 2.

Our scheme has attracted a great deal of support detailed in paragraph 1.5 of the Planning Statement. In Appendix 6 we have included letters of support from nine of our supporter organisations.

We understand and support the role of the planning authority in protecting the countryside. We know that planners have to be vigilant against bogus and over ambitious applications. In support of this, we have gone to great lengths to put in place the structures and policies that will safeguard these holdings on behalf of ecological agriculture and affordable use. These measures are set out in Section 2 of the Planning Statement.

Finally, we believe that our application is in line with the direction of English planning policy which in recent years has sought to enable greater environmental sustainability, particularly development which contributes to delivering a transition to a low carbon economy. As organic smallholdings, using reduced levels of fossil-fuelled farm machinery and no agrochemicals, the smallholders will be modelling an agricultural method low in carbon emissions and high in both carbon sequestration and the delivery of other 'ecological services'.

We consider our applications adhere to the development plan policies on dwellings in the open countryside. We also consider that our proposal achieves the underlying objectives of these policies *and* that the benefits amount to a 'special circumstance' or could validly be considered to be a material consideration. These arguments are set out in full in the accompanying Planning Statement.

The ELC seeks to contribute to a strong and healthy rural economy by facilitating sustainable land use by small-scale producers. It is our hope that the proposed agricultural smallholdings will be a credit to the community of Arlington and to Wealden District Council, and that you will be able to support the endeavour.

Yours sincerely,



Zoe Wangler

Director, Ecological Land Co-operative

Documents submitted with this application

1. Cover letter
2. Application form
3. Planning Statement
4. Site location plan (LP-01)
5. Block plan (L_001)
6. Drawing: Barn (L_002)
7. Drawing: Visibility Splay (L_003)
8. Design & Access Statement
9. Ecological Appraisal
10. Community Infrastructure Levy form
11. Effect of the Proposed Scheme on the Ashdown Forest SAC
12. Appendix 1: Ecological Land Co-operative Decision Notice Greenham Reach
13. Appendix 2: Example Monitoring Report, Greenham Reach
14. Appendix 3: Draft Section 106 Unilateral Undertaking
15. Appendix 4: Management Plan for the New Smallholdings at Arlington
16. Appendix 5: Proposed Schedule of Conditions
17. Appendix 6: Example letters of support
18. Appendix 7: Tree and Hedge Planting Proposals
19. Appendix 8: ELC Publication *Small is Successful*
20. Appendix 9: ELC Business Plan 2015-2020
21. Appendix 10: Table of Planning Decisions for Farm/Horticultural Businesses on less than 10 acres
22. Appendix 11: Illustrative Smallholder Functional Need
23. Appendix 12: Manufacturer's Details of Proposed Solar Panels