Ecological Land Co-operative

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

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

FEBRUARY 2017

Ecological Land Co-operative
Unit B04, The Brighton Eco-centre,
Brighton, BN1 3PB

Tel: 01273 766 672
Web: www.ecologicalland.coop

For a Living, Working Countryside

What follows is a selection of the letters of support we have received for the work of the Ecological Land Co-operative. It has been submitted in conjunction with the planning application, plans and other documents accompanying the application.

Action in rural Sussex

Sussex House
212 High Street
Lewes
East Sussex BN7 2NH

Tel: 01273 473422
Fax: 01273 483109
Email: info@ruralsussex.org.uk

www.ruralsussex.org.uk

RuralSussex

09th August 2016

REF: Ecological Land Co-operative planning application – East Sussex

To Whom it may concern

I am writing to support this application as an organisation we fully support initiatives which promote affordable access to land and the use of land for sustainable activities such as those delivered by the Ecological Land Co-operative.

As with our own Community Land Trust Project we also support this kind of community ownership and management of land and other community assets including shared community facilities and housing which can - in such ways - be protected for the benefit of the community in perpetuity.

I am aware of the successes achieved through the Greenham Reach site in Devon and would welcome this kind of initiative in Sussex as a means of supporting local people to live more sustainably and to support the local economy and vibrancy of rural communities.

Regards

Tom Warder

Housing and Community Engagement Team Leader (AirS)

Sussex Rural Community Council (SRCC) is a charity and company limited by guarantee.
Charity Reg No. 1035401
VAT Reg No. 587494379
Company registered in England No. 2907172

Presidents:
Mrs Susan Pyper, Lord Lieutenant of West Sussex
Peter J Field, Lord Lieutenant of East Sussex

Chief Executive:
J J Leggett

Action in rural Sussex is a member of the Rural Community Action Network

COMMON CAUSE
CO-OPERATIVE

Common Cause
66 High Street
Lewes
BN7 1XG
28/8/16

Lauren Simpson
Ecological Land Co-operative
Unit F7
The Waterside Centre
North Street
Lewes
BN7 2PE

Dear Lauren,

Common Cause is very excited to hear about your plans for a land trust site in East Sussex. Making organically managed land available for sustainable food production is something that Common Cause has worked towards for many years and as such we fully support your plans.

Over the last 20 years we have worked at a local, regional, national and European level with voluntary and statutory organisations which shared our aims and delivered a wide range of projects. This has given us a broad knowledge of different ventures developed to support the local economy and sustainable food production.

We previously carried out research into the benefits of land trusts and how they might be established to best provide access to affordable land managed to high environmental standards in the long term. Our work and other research showed the key role of working productive farms and businesses in a local rural economy. They help to support other small rural businesses and services which in turn provide jobs and keeps vital services available for people living in rural areas.

We support the Ecological Land Co-operative in their vision to secure affordable plots of land with accommodation for farming families where land is managed to high ecological standards. This is vital work in the face of an ageing population of farmers and high cost of land and housing in the South East making it ever harder for new entrants. The Ecological Land Co-operative have proved that they have the skills to make a success of this venture and the vision and determination to ensure that it is something truly remarkable.

We wish you every success,

Katharine Finnigan,
Common Cause Director

Tenant Farmers Association

5 BREWERY COURT,
THEALE, READING,
BERKSHIRE, RG7 5AJ
TEL: 0118 930 6130
FAX: 0118 930 3424
E-MAIL: tfa@tfa.org.uk
www.tfa.org.uk

GWD/0808
05 August 2016

Lauren Simpson
Ecological Land Cooperative
Unit F7
The Waterside Centre
North Street
Lewes
BN7 2PE

Dear Lauren

Ecological Land Cooperative

I write in support of your plans to expand the number of residential smallholdings for ecological land users for which, I understand, you are at the stage of applying for planning permission. Please feel free to submit this letter in support of any application for planning.

As you are aware, the Tenant Farmers Association (TFA) is the only organisation dedicated to representing the interests of tenant farmers and others who do not own the land that they farm. With astronomical land values, new entrants to the agricultural industry need a steady supply of openings such as those provided by your co-operative. However, there is significant unfulfilled new entrant demand for agricultural tenancies. It is always the case that there are many more individuals seeking opportunities to farm than there are opportunities available in the marketplace and the TFA seeks to support those offering sustainable opportunities for new entrants, such as the Ecological Land Cooperative (ELC).

The recent report from the Princes Countryside Fund on family farming highlighted the importance of small, family farms to the economy, communities and environment of rural areas and expressed concerns about their long-term decline. The opportunities ELC would be able to provide through this new initiative would make an important contribution to assisting the process of stemming that decline.

Yours sincerely

George Dunn BA MSc FRAgS
Chief Executive

CHIEF EXECUTIVE:
GEORGE DUNN

Company Limited by Guarantee
No. 1587270 England

Centre for Agroecology, Water & Resilience
Coventry University, Priory Street, Coventry, CV1 5FB

Centre for Agroecology, Water & Resilience

November 11th, 2016

To whom it may concern

I am writing in support of the Ecological Land Co-operative's application to develop three agricultural residential small holdings for new entrants to small-scale ecological food production in Arlington, East Sussex.

I work at the Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience, which specialises in research on resilient agriculture, food and water systems. For almost twenty years, as part of my research on sustainable food systems, I have followed the development of local and regional food chains in the UK and Europe. Since the first farmers' market was established in Bath in 1997, the demand for local food has been growing, even during periods of economic volatility. Consumers like to buy local because they trust the foods' origins, they want to support local producers producing high quality food, and many hope their choice will be more environmentally friendly.

There are many good reasons to support the local food sector. The Campaign to Protect Rural England's (2012) report estimated that it sustained about 61,000 jobs. The sector can also deliver valuable social impacts, such as improved community relationships, and better access to fresh healthy food. Yet the sector faces barriers to growth, which include the limited supply of locally grown food, especially that produced to high environmental standards, by small-scale farmers who can sell direct to consumers. The number of small-scale farmers has fallen dramatically over the years, and yet it is increasingly recognised that they are a vital part of the diverse agriculture sector that we need, a point which has been reinforced recently, again by the CPRE (2016). One reason for the decline of small farmers is the difficulties faced by new entrants to farming who are often excluded by the high cost of agricultural land, but would benefit from access to small units from which to develop their businesses.

The ambition of the ELC to support farmers using agroecological methods to produce food is of central importance for environmental reasons. Sustainable and regenerative farming practices are urgently needed to restore soil quality and biodiversity. The UK has sustained some of the worst biodiversity losses in the developed world. The recent (2016) 'State of Nature' report showed that of 3,148 species in the UK, 60% have declined in the last 50 years and industrial agriculture is one of the key contributors to this loss. The same report argued that it is possible to reverse this trend if all parts of society act together to save nature.

Throughout the world, agroecological methods have been proven to have a regenerative effect on soil and biodiversity. From an environmental point of view, therefore, it is vitally important to support agroecological approaches that can help us to regenerate our natural resources. The soil strategy for England (2009, p.5) confirmed that "*Farmers and other land managers, developers, planners and construction companies must all play their part in managing soils sustainably and protecting soil functions*".

Centre for Agroecology, Water & Resilience
Coventry University, Priory Street, Coventry, CV1 5FB

Centre for Agroecology, Water & Resilience

From a research point of view, the activities of the ELC are of high importance, due to the rigorous and regular monitoring that they are committed to undertaking and making public. Examples of such careful monitoring are rare and extremely valuable because they enable us to establish baseline indicators from the start of the interventions, and then to monitor change over time. The ELC monitoring report from their site at Greenham Reach is an extremely useful resource, and the fact that it is publicly available means it can be shared widely and used to improve knowledge and understanding of how agroecological food and farming systems can contribute to the UK's future food resilience.

In summary, therefore, I hope this application will be supported and wish ELC every success.

Yours sincerely

M Kneafsey

Moya Kneafsey
Professor of Food and Local Development / Human Geography

EXCELLENCE WITH IMPACT

Coventry University

South Plaza
Marlborough Street
Bristol BS1 3NX
t +44 (0)117 314 5000
www.soilassociation.org
@SoilAssociation
facebook.com/soilassociation

31 August 2016

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir / Madam

Letter of support for the Ecological Land Cooperative

I write in support of the Ecological Land Cooperative's planning application. I have worked for over five years with the Ecological Land Cooperative, supporting their initial project and collaborating with them on various working groups, initiatives and events to encourage low impact, agro-ecological farming, opportunities for new entrants to farming and access to land and rural housing issues. They are an innovative and proactive organisation that is pioneering new ways of addressing some of the most challenging issues facing the development of better food and farming in the UK.

The Soil Association is pleased to be able to support the Ecological Land Cooperative's proposal for the development of small holdings on the site at Arlington.

The Soil Association is the UK's leading membership charity campaigning for healthy, humane and sustainable food, farming and land use. Our certification body certifies 1800 farms as organic, however we work with farmers across the board to help them reduce their impacts on the environment and to farm in ways that support wildlife, soils, human health and local economies.

Organic and agroecological farming offers a direct connection between our our health and how the food we eat is produced placing a strong emphasis on the protection of wildlife and the environment. It is widely recognised that local and organic farming systems, such as those advocated by the Ecological Land Cooperative provide positive benefits on a wide range of issues, as outlined below.

Benefits to biodiversity

Organic and low input farming depends on encouraging a diverse ecosystem to maintain soil fertility and to keep pests under control naturally. It does this by encouraging nature's own predators by maintaining hedgerows and creating open, 'wild' spaces at the side of fields, and changing the crops planted each season, to keep soil fertile and avoid the need for chemicals. Organic farming uses mainly natural methods, developing good soil and healthy crops which have a strong natural resistance to pests and diseases.

A *2005 review of studies* found that organic systems have a third more species than non-organic, as well as around 50% more abundant wildlife[1].

[1] Bengtsson, J., Ahnstrom, J. and Weibull A-C. (2005) 'The effects of organic agriculture on biodiversity and abundance: a meta-analysis' Journal of Applied Ecology, 42(2), 461-269

Royal Patron HRH The Prince of Wales **Chair** Dennis Overton OBE **Chief Executive** Helen Browning OBE
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A more recent, 2014 *peer-reviewed meta-analysis*[2] published in the Journal of Applied Ecology reviewed nearly 100 international studies and confirmed that organic farms have on average a third more species, including nearly 50% more species of pollinators, 75% more species of plants and over 20% more species of birds.

Benefits to soil health and soil carbon sequestration

IPCC advisors say soil carbon sequestration represents 89% of agriculture's greenhouse gas mitigation potential. The Soil Association's 2009 report '*Soil Carbon and Organic Farming*' shows that organic farming increases soil carbon levels, by producing additional sources of organic matter, integrating crop and livestock systems, and by increasing the proportion of vegetation cover which supports helpful soil micro-organisms. All significant factors that increase soil carbon sequestration and help to mitigate agriculture's greenhouse gas emissions.

The Organic Research Centre produced a report in 2011 that shows that organic cropping systems have considerable potential for increasing soil carbon and combating climate change '*Soil Carbon Sequestration and Organic Farming: An overview of current evidence*'.

A 2012 *peer-reviewed meta-analysis*[3] of international studies published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) backed up the findings of both these reports. It found that organic farming systems on average sequestered up to 450 kg more atmospheric carbon per hectare than non-organic farms.

The impact of maize on soils

The Ecological Land Cooperative's proposal to develop land that has previously been used to produce maize crops will have a significant positive impact on the land management of that area, particularly in reducing impacts on public goods such as soils and fresh water.

The Soil Association's 2015 report Runaway Maize[4] detailed how maize crops cause water run-off from compacted and damaged fields, polluting waterways with pesticides and nutrients, and causing floods. Estimates suggest that during the storms and heavy rainfall in the winter of 2013/14, every 10 hectare block of damaged land under maize stubble produced the equivalent of 15 Olympic swimming pools (more than 375 million litres) of additional runoff. Research published in 2014 found that 75% of late harvested maize sites showed high or severe levels of soil degradation.

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[2] Tuck et al, (2014) Land-use intensity and the effects of organic farming on biodiversity: a hierarchical meta-analysis', is published in the Journal of Applied Ecology http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1365-2664.12219/abstract

[3] http://www.fibl.org/en/media/media-archive/media-archive12/media-release12/article/organic-farming-enhances-soil-carbon.html

[4] Farnworth, G., Melchett, P. (2015) 'Runaway maize', Soil Association

The overall financial cost of annual flooding in the United Kingdom is estimated to be somewhere in the region of £1.1 billion; a cost to the public to which maize will be making an increasing contribution.

Overcoming barriers to access to land

The Soil Association and in particular the Soil Association Land Trust is active in promoting access to land for agroecological farmers and raising the issues around loss of farmland, increasing prices and land consolidation as the key obstacles to the development of local, sustainable agriculture. Our Future Growers scheme trains new organic growers, many of whom face significant difficulties in finding affordable and available land to set up their own enterprises after they have completed their training.

Eurostat data shows that between 2003 and 2010, the number of farms in the EU dropped from 15 to 12.2 million, i.e. a loss of about 19%[5]. Today, out of EU 12 million farms, 3% are large farms (over 100 hectares), which control 50 % of farmland[6]. This increasing concentration of land in large farms causes loss of jobs, reduced opportunities for new farmers to take on small farmers and the decline of vibrant rural communities, as well as impacting negatively on biodiversity.

Huge increases in land values over the past decade have also pushed land ownership out of reach of many farmers. Between 1992 and 2006, sales price indices rose by 100% in the UK.[7] This high price makes farmland inaccessible for many new entrants.

By providing alternative land ownership models for small farms with accommodation and infrastructure, the Ecological Land Cooperative is able to create new opportunities for new and young farmers that are otherwise not available, as it has done so at its Greenham Reach site.

For the reasons outlined above the Soil Association believes that the Ecological Land Cooperative's proposal to develop smallholdings at Arlington would make an important contribution to the social, economic and environmental fabric of the local area.

Please do contact me if you would like further information.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Harries
Producer Skills Manager
Soil Association
rharries@soilassociation.org

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[5] Eurostat, 2010 http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database
[6] Ibid.
[7] Center for European Policy Studies (CEPS), Study on the functioning of land markets in the EU member states under the influence of measures applied under the Common Agricultural Policy, 2008, p61, 100-2 and 197 (figure 3), available on : http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/analysis/external/landmarkets

Sustainable Food Trust
A global voice for sustainable food and health

10 February 2017

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing in support of the Ecological Land Co-operative's application to develop three agricultural residential small holdings for new entrants to small-scale ecological farming in Arlington, East Sussex.

The Sustainable Food Trust is a national organisation committed to building food systems that support and sustain human and environmental health. We strongly believe that projects such as the Ecological Land Co-operative are working in a constructive way to build agricultural alternatives that work to provide safe, nutritious food in ways that cause the least harm to the environment.

Working to transform our food systems the Sustainable Food Trust believe in sound science, solid research and communicating with the public in an open way to inform policy and engage citizens.

The motivation behind the Ecological Land co-operative's vision echo our pursuit of working to create food systems that are beneficial to people and the natural world. The Ecological Land Co-operative have worked tirelessly to address these issues by engaging with policy and proposing real, concrete solutions. Their first project, Greenham Reach, in Devon, goes from strength to strength as smallholders continue to prove the viability of their businesses and positive engagement with the local community.

The Ecological Land Co-operative's research into the viability of smallholdings (see their report, 'Small is Successful') illustrates that the creation of affordable and sustainable land-based livelihoods is not only possible, but desirable.

What the Ecological Land Co-operative propose is a working country and a healthy rural economy. As evidenced in their report - and the number of innovative agricultural projects appearing across the country - the demand for small-scale mixed farming based on ecological practice is plain to see.

The Ecological Land Co-operative are a professional organisation, with a clear policy, a stringent management plan and a willingness to work with local authorities and local people to help steer land use in ways that address the

+44 (0) 117 987 1467
38 Richmond St, Totterdown, Bristol, BS3 4TQ, UK
info@sustainablefoodtrust.org
www.sustainablefoodtrust.org

Registered Charity Number: 1148645

Sustainable Food Trust
A global voice for sustainable food and health

key challenges of sustainability, energy issues and climate change.

It is for these reasons that we give our full support to the Ecological Land Co-operative's application to develop three agricultural residential small holdings.

Yours sincerely,

Patrick Holden

Patrick Holden CBE
Chief Executive

+44 (0) 117 987 1467
38 Richmond St, Totterdown, Bristol, BS3 4TQ, UK
info@sustainablefoodtrust.org
www.sustainablefoodtrust.org

Registered Charity Number: 1148645

sustain
the alliance for better food and farming

Sustain, Development House
56 - 64 Leonard Street
London EC2A 4LT
sustain@sustainweb.org
www.sustainweb.org
020 7065 0902

In support of the Ecological Land Cooperative

I am writing from Sustain in support of the Ecological Land Cooperative's work. As the alliance for better food and farming, Sustain advocates food and agriculture policies and practices that enhance the health and welfare of people and animals, improve the working and living environment, enrich society and culture and promote equity. The Ecological Land Cooperative embody these principles and have put them into practice at the Greenham Reach site. We support the expansion of organisations like this, for the following reasons:

- They use ecological agricultural techniques which are better for the environment: By having no chemical inputs it is beneficial to biodiversity – important in itself but key for pollination and balance within the food chain; reduced water usage and water management helps control shortage, flooding and surface water run-off; minimising greenhouse gases through cultivation techniques that are lower impact. This in turn is healthier for people, whether through reducing the risk of direct contact with chemicals being sprayed, or through the risks through consumption.
- Smaller scale farming is the glue of rural communities, as it provides higher employment per acre, supporting livelihoods and rural populations. Small scale farming also promotes local consumption and with it keeps money in local economies.
- Across the UK we are facing a shortage of opportunities for people to move into farming. The Ecological Land Cooperative address this by supporting new entrants to organic horticulture and small-scale mixed farming.

The presence of the kind of farming that the ELC supports would be an asset to any community. It would reflect well on the area, as one that shows leadership and vision, which in turn will attract interest and plaudits from far and wide.

Yours,



Ben Reynolds
Deputy Chief Executive
Sustain

Sustain is a registered charity (1018643) and a company limited by guarantee, registered in England & Wales (02673194).
Registered office: Development House, 56-64 Leonard Street, London EC2A 4LT



SMALL FARM TRAINING GROUP

Marlene Holter, Cobb Cottage North, Selsfield Road, Ardingly, West Sussex RH17 6TH
01444 892519 marleneholter7@waitrose.com

26th August 2016

To whom it may concern;

Re: Ecological Land Co-operative (ELC) planning application for residential smallholdings on agricultural land at Wilbees Farm, Arlington, East Sussex.

The Small Farm Training Group is an active group of small farmers and smallholders with 250 members in the East Sussex, West Sussex and Kent area.

We support our members by providing training courses, meetings, social events, displays at agricultural shows, tool hire, a library, a newsletter and a web forum. Our group provides the opportunity for our members to share information and skills, buy and sell goods and services and to socialise.

Our members play a very active part in the rural economy, providing a wide variety of food and agricultural products for home consumption and for sale at farm gate or through local markets.

We know that smallholdings can be highly productive and have many social, environmental and economic benefits.
We are concerned by the current trend of increasing agricultural property prices and a lack of new entrants to smallholding, particularly by younger people, which we believe is the main cause of a decline in new membership applications to our group.

We are not politically active, nor involved in planning applications concerning individuals. However, we support and welcome the proposed smallholdings at Wilbees Farm, Arlington.

Signed, on behalf of the SFTG.

Marlene Holter

SFTG Chairman

Improving rural lives together

Plunkett Foundation

2nd August 2016

Dear Wealden Council

Ref: Ecological Land Co-operative

We are writing in support of Ecological Land Co-operative's planning application to the Wealden Council.

The Plunkett Foundation is a UK charity which aims to tackle rural poverty and social exclusion through the promotion of community co-operatives. Community co-operatives are an increasingly important model used to protect vital rural community services whether that is a shop, a local pub, woodland or horticultural smallholding venture, such as Ecological Land Co-operative. Plunkett Foundation is the only national organisation to support community co-operatives in rural areas and has been working with Ecological Land Cooperative since 2014.

Our experience of working with Ecological Land Co-operative has been positive, with good communication, feedback and milestones being met. Through working with Ecological Land Co-operative, we are also aware that the impact of their work, like community co-ops across the world, is significant in improving the welfare of their beneficiaries, members and supporters.

We are proud to have supported Ecological Land Cooperative as the impact that their work makes aligns to the impacts Plunkett is keen to see happening. We are especially drawn to their work as:

- The sites Ecological Land Co-operative develop, such as their site at Greenham Reach in Devon, boosts the local economy and creates environmental benefits.
- Spaces that they develop have been proved to promote local consumption and reduce global, social and environmental impact of resource consumption
- Ecological Land Co-operative supports the invigoration of local rural economies and can produce local jobs, learning opportunities and the vitality of rural villages. We believe that a site such as this new site in Sussex provides investment in the local community and education and skill learning opportunities.
- ELC's work can act as a hub for re-ruralisation with visitors and interest from business as has been the case at Greenham Reach in Devon

If you have any questions about this letter of support or would like to ask for details Plunkett's work with Ecological Land Co-operative, please contact Plunkett directly on 01993 810730 or info@plunkett.co.uk.

Yours faithfully,

Tom Carman
Plunkett Foundation

The Quadrangle
Banbury Road
Woodstock
Oxfordshire OX20 1LH

T: 01993 810730
E: info@plunkett.co.uk
www.plunkett.co.uk
@PlunkettFoundat

Company Limited by Guarantee
Registered in England and Wales
No 213235
Registered Charity No 313743

People are stronger together