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Mr N Parry
Planning Inspectorate
South Downs National Park Inquiry
Chatsworth Hotel
Steyne
WORTHING
BN11 3DU

5th February 2008

Dear Mr Parry

South Downs National Park

At the Pre-Inquiry meeting held in Hove on 11 December, you stated that you would give a decision at the opening of the resumed inquiry, as to whether you would hold a session on the Western Weald.

Petersfield Town Council welcomes the prospect of a full public examination of the basis on which it was proposed to exclude the Western Weald from the South Downs National Park. We believe there are important reasons why it should be conducted.

Subsequent to the completion of the work on which your report was based, the report of the East Hampshire District Local Plan Inspector has been published. His findings are at variance with those of your Landscape Assessor. He found, correctly in our view, that the impact of Petersfield on the landscape was not detrimental and that, on the contrary, the landscape in the environs of the town were of a very high quality. The report of the South Downs Joint Committee's Integrated Landscape Assessment, also not available to the original inquiry, bears this out. Since the Landscape Assessor did not take part in the original Inquiry, we believe that his findings should be examined fully and in public. Particular concern has been expressed by Councillors on his comments appertaining to *'recent unremarkable development which overwhelms the historic core and lack of integration with surrounding landscape'* in his description of the town of Petersfield. It should be noted that there has been no major development in the town since the original recommendation to include it within the National Park boundary.

The NERC act, which clarifies the question of whether a National Park should consist of a single landscape character, did not become law until after your report was

submitted. It has a bearing on the contention that the South Downs National Park should be confined to the chalk downland.

There is mounting public concern in the area at the prospect that the Western Weald, including Petersfield, may be excluded from the National Park. This council considers that this concern is best addressed by devoting a full session of the inquiry to this vital matter for the people of Petersfield.

If, after considering the evidence you are minded to exclude the town of Petersfield from the National Park, Councillors believe it is imperative that a new 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' Order be created at the same time that the National Park comes into being in order to protect this historic and characteristic town from being deluged in inappropriate development that would destroy its current character and appearance.

I am unclear whether a copy of the Town Council's response to the public consultation undertaken in 2007 has been passed to you. I have, therefore attached a copy for your information in which our other concerns on this subject are fully set out.

Yours sincerely

Neil R Hitch
Town Clerk