HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSULTATION

TO:	Horsham District Council – Planning Dept
LOCATION:	Barn Southeast of Normans East Street Rusper Horsham
DESCRIPTION:	Prior Notification for Change of Use of an Agricultural Building to a single dwellinghouse
REFERENCE:	DC/24/0237
RECOMMENDATION:	Objection / Refusal

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATION:

A key consideration as to the suitability of this proposal regarding trees is the proximity of the existing building to the adjacent area of designated Ancient woodland (AW) and additional trees in the area that fall outside of the designation, and what foreseeable impacts the change of use Agricultural Building to a habitable dwellinghouse would have on the trees and area of AW in the area.

MAIN COMMENTS:

Future resident pressure

Due to the location of the existing building, surrounded by mature trees to the south, north and west, if it were to be converted to a habitable dwelling it is likely that future residents of the dwelling would experience issues with and have concerns with the level of natural light entering the property and any areas of open spaces such as a garden/parking areas or other such area generally associated with a residential property. This is due to the position, size, and form of the mature trees in the area.

Para 5.3.4 of the current industry standard **BS5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations**. States –

A realistic assessment of the probable impact of any proposed development on the trees and vice versa should take into account the characteristics and condition of the trees, with due allowance and space for their future growth and maintenance requirements. To maximize the probability of successful tree retention, the following factors should be taken into account during the design process.

1) Shading of buildings. Shading of buildings by trees can be a problem, particularly where there are rooms which require natural light. Proposed buildings should be designed to take account of existing trees, their ultimate size and density of foliage, and the effect that these will have on the availability of light.

2) Shading of open spaces. Open spaces such as gardens and sitting areas should be designed to meet the normal requirement for direct sunlight for at least a part of the day."

Additionally, the new residents may have concerns with perceived threat and nuisance caused by falling tree detritus, such as dead wood leaves, acorns and bird excrement. It is also worth noting that issues with falling with acorns would be greater during a Mast year when the oak trees in the area would produce a higher-than-average number of acorns, which will fall onto the building and garden in high numbers. The proximity of the trees to the building will likely place pressure upon the trees to be heavily reduced or possibly removed to help address issues with general tree detritus. In this respect, Para 5.3.4 of the current industry also refers to the issues mentioned above, and states –

d) Future pressure for removal. The relationship of buildings to large trees can cause apprehension to occupiers or users of nearby buildings or spaces, resulting in pressure for the removal of the trees. Buildings and other structures should be sited allowing adequate space for a tree's natural development, with due consideration given to its predicted height and canopy spread.

e) Seasonal nuisance. Trees are naturally growing and shedding organisms. Leaves of some species can cause problems, particularly in the autumn, by blocking gullies and gutters. Fruit can cause slippery patches, and accumulation of honeydew can be damaging to surfaces and vehicles. Buildings, footpaths, and hard-standing areas should be designed with due consideration to the proximity of retained trees, especially in terms of their foliage, flowering and fruiting habits.

Ancient woodland impacts

Around 4m to the southwest of the existing building is an area of designated Ancient Woodland (AW). The importance of AW centres on protecting the undisturbed soils, which are typically exceptionally rich in wildlife and support a seed bank of many rare and threatened species now seldom seen outside such sites. It is, therefore, essential that such areas are not harmed by development or through the domestication of such sites post-development.

AW is classified as an irreplaceable habitat, and since AW now covers less than 3% of England's landmass, policies have arisen in recent years attempting both to stem the loss of such sites and, indeed, to protect them for future generations. Central to this consideration is the current standing advice given by Natural England for new development adjacent to AW, which states that "the proposal should have a buffer zone of at least 15 metres from the boundary of the woodland to avoid root damage (known as the root protection area). Where assessment shows other impacts are likely to extend beyond this distance, the proposal is likely to need a larger buffer zone". Residential development within the 15m buffer zone of AW is generally not considered to be acceptable without a very high level of justification and an appropriate mitigation/compensation strategy in place.

It is acknowledged that the building is already in situ, and any root disturbance may have already occurred when the building was erected (sometime between 2001 and 2007 from looking at aerial images of the site). However, consideration would need to be given to how any underground services such as fresh and foul water inlets and drainage systems would be connected to the new dwelling, and how any hard or soft landscaping activity generally associated with residential use would be integrated into the development proposal; all of which would have to be located within and require development activity to take place within the AW buffer zone. As such, due to the proximity of the new dwelling to the AW, it would suggest that it is not possible to achieve no new development activity within the 15m buffer zone, which brings the proposal into conflict with the standing advice given by Natural England.

ANY RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS:N/A

NAME:	Andy Bush Arboricultural Officer (Planning)
DEPARTMENT:	Strategic Planning – Specialist Team
DATE:	03/04/2024