We respond to the application under DC/24/1087

General:

We note that the application is for a “prior notification of a change of use of agricultural buildings to 5 residential houses” under Permitted Development at Lower Perryland Farm, by Church Barn following their purchase of the property in or around July 2023.

The application (by Church Barn Group) is for the development of 5 barns on the basis of a farming entitlement.

Summary:

Whilst we accept that an increase in residential development is necessary throughout the country, this site has numerous shortcomings that should be resolved before any such development should be considered.

We trust that Horsham District Council will not allow the application under a “change of use” and thus engage a fuller consideration of the issues relating.

If the shortcomings are fully resolved or resolutions guaranteed beforehand then we would support the development.

Use of the Permitted Development process:

Firstly as we understand it the property ceased to be a farm following the BSE pandemic in 1992/93, when the farm suffered a cull of its cattle. We understand that the farmer ceased such active operations at that time. Church Barn suggest it is a grass farm but if so then there will be commercial records of harvesting (hay or silage) and sale. Historical views show no indication of farming, unlike the surrounding fields. We therefore question if a Farm based Permitted Development route is appropriate.

2024 Church Barn website aerial



2009 Google Image



2001 Google image



Additionally we understand that the longer term intent of the developer is to submit for the Permitted Development / change of use, and once approved then broaden this to a wider planning permission for full development. Whilst this may be allowed, it does seem to be against the spirit of the planning process and may result in certain issues being circumnavigated. It may be more appropriate to submit for the full application at the outset if this is the intention.

Considerations:

1. Access: The track/roadway is not adequate to service more traffic:

    - The council refuse service has previously declined to collect rubbish due to the state of the track/road. More recently it has refused to collect from the Lower Perryland Farm house due to the collapse of a culvert. This residents at Lower Perryland Farm have to convey their bins to the extent point of the refuse vehicle travel. Not ideal for them nor for any visitors on the day though this does not directly affect us. Should the Refuse Truck drivers refused to reverse as far as they do, then other residents including us would be affected.

    - The section of track/roadway (hereinafter "track") from its highpoint to Lower Perryland Farm is single track and requires one party to reverse should a meeting of vehicles take place. Indeed the curvature of the track actually prevents visibility so head-head meetings are guaranteed. There are currently 3 houses along this single track section, Lower Perryland Farm (the site), Honeybridge Cottage and Perrylands Place, the later two of which are owned by retired pensioners who have 1 car and 2 cars respectively and few traffic movements. With the lower quantity of traffic it is only a small issue, but an additional 5 properties likely with 2-3 cars each and the associated deliveries will increase the traffic movements considerably and substantially increase problems. The single track is unsuitable.

      There is a clause in the Lower Perryland Farm deeds that allows for the track to be widened up to 15 feet (4.572m) but this clause is not reflected in the deeds for our property. Nevertheless, if the roadway were widened then in order to avoid further overspill and encroachment this 15 feet would have to include kerbs otherwise vehicles will forever exceed the road edging (note that they do currently ride up side edgings and damage plantings).

      It is noted that the current standard width of vehicles on UK roads is 2.55m and even now many lorries and delivery wagons are of or near that size. As such even 15 feet (4.57m) would not allow 2 full width vehicles (nor even 1 lorry and 1 car) to pass and one will have to reverse around blind sections. The highway authority (HAUC uk) suggests 2 way working on restricted roads for cars and light vehicles only would require 5.5m.

There are notional passing places where driveway entrances exist but by their inherent nature these are private property so are not “passing places”. Unfortunately they are currently used as such but this practice should be avoided.

The section from the ponds to the track high point is wider but does not afford 2-way traffic without driving off the designated track.

The section through the wood from the A24 to the ponds (which we are told is separately owned by a 3rd party) has one passing place at the pond end, but is otherwise single track.

The track does not have the appropriate design for 5 additional properties which may each have 2-3 cars.

Any increase in traffic levels will affect the central reservation entrance crossing off the southbound A24. This approach to the track requires cars to wait for northbound traffic and necessarily occupies the same crossing section that anyone leaving the track heading south would wish to occupy in order to wait for southbound traffic. Any vehicle leaving the track is a potential blockage to the vehicle crossing from the central reservation. The issue can only be worsened by an increase in traffic movements. Meanwhile, vehicles approaching from the south have only a short section in which to decelerate and turn into the track and if a vehicle is in any way blocking or arriving at the track exit at the same time then it is likely to create a risk situation for all parties. Again this issue can only be worsened by an increase in traffic movements.

However, we do note that the Highways Authority has responded and stated:

> *As part of the prior approval, the LHA can consider only whether the proposal is likely to result in a material increase or a material change in the character of traffic in the vicinity of the site. No traffic flow information has been provided with the current application. However from experience of other similar proposals, the LHA recognise that an agricultural use would have generated related vehicle movements by vehicles including HGV’s and tractors/trailers. A residential use for 5 units is likely to generate a minimum amount of movements by smaller vehicles. The LHA would raise no highway safety or capacity concerns in relation to the application.*

It appears from the report that the responder on behalf of the Highways Authority has not visited the site entrance onto the A24 and nor have they considered that Lower Perryland Farm was not an active Farm. We suggest a site review is appropriate.

For comparison, When DC/16/2680 was assessed, the Highways Authority recommended the following conditions be secured:

> *Vehicle parking and turning: No part of the development shall be first occupied until the vehicle parking and turning spaces have been constructed in accordance with the approved plan. These spaces shall thereafter be retained for their designated use. Reason: To provide adequate on-site car parking and turning space for the development.*
>
> *Cycle parking turning: No part of the development shall be first occupied until covered and secure cycle parking spaces have been provided in accordance with plans and details submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Reason: To provide alternative travel options to the use of the car in accordance with current sustainable transport policies.*

- The applicant states that there are 5 additional residential properties (other than Lower Perryland Farm) to the East that are serviced by the track.

  This is incorrect. There are only 3,being Perrylands Place, Honeybridge Cottage and Perryland Farm. In the wood section between the ponds and the A24 there is a gateway leading to some fields owned by third parties, but these are not residential accesses. As such the positioning that there are 5 additional residences on the track is wrong.

2. Water and flooding

- The track passes over several culverts, one taking the A24 side rain water (intact and working), another taking the water from the south to north ponds owned by Perryland Farm (blocked) and a third servicing a catchment stream leading to the Adur river from the Honeybridge Cottage side through Lower Perryland Farm (this culvert has collapsed and was inadequately repaired – which is why the Refuse Lorry will not travel over it). We understand that there are at least 2 further culverts within Lower Perryland Farm.

  The flood report shows that culverts within Lower Perryland Farm have not been maintained. Clearly culverts have and are likely to be further affected by the development and this should be considered and any preventative measures taken.

- The Flood report shows that there is a 1 in 100 year risk that the access track will be flooded from the entrance to Lower Perryland Farm. This means there is a 1% chance that it will be flooded this year and a similar 1% chance it will be flooded next year and any year thereafter. Changes to land topology such as hard standing for cars may increase the chance and severity of flooding. It is accepted that climate change causes higher intensity storms. In 4.1/4.19 of the

Flood report it highlights that Defra cannot be certain that flooding will or will not arise. Therefore at best it remains a concern.

- The collapsed culvert at the site entrance demonstrates that the track is not suitable for the traffic it has to take.

- These is also an intermittent water run-off down the track which is either a water leak or an active spring. The water authority has investigated but not ascertained the cause. It is intermittent. The Church Barn team has offered to investigate the cause but this was at a time when the water authority was investigating so it was left to the authority. The leak continues (intermittently) and both deteriorates the track and contaminates the stream as its run off drains into the culvert at the site entrance.

3. The Ecosystem:

Since the purchase of the property in or around July 2023 the developer has carried out substantial clearing of the land and barns and removal of materials stored in the barns.

- There were bats in the barns and we would see them regularly through the summer of 2023 (and previous years) if we were out at dusk. We have seen none this year.

- We used to regularly see several owls, 2 larger barn owls and around 4 smaller tawny owls. Now we see the barn owls only occasionally and no tawny owls.

- The tributary of the river Arun that flows through Lower Perryland Farm is a haven for frogs, toads, lizards, newts (only ever seen common newts and not crested), plants etcetera and even kingfishers have been seen (photos available). Site development carries a high risk for damaging such fauna and flora.

4. The Application states that there are no hazardous materials on site. However:

    - There is Asbestos Cement Sheeting on the roofs of the units to be developed. The structural Engineering report references this material and the addition of (not replacement by) a more modern insulated roofing (possibly suggesting that the intention is to leave the asbestos in place).

      Such Asbestos sheeting is often deemed safe unless accidentally damaged (likely during development) or remodelled (cleaned, added to, repaired, strengthened, etc). Fire (as is more likely in residential premises rather that open barns) would create an asbestos plume that can affect a substantial area for many years.

      We feel that it may be better to professionally remove all such asbestos sheeting complete with council certification for same.

    - Oil spillage. The property had a number of historic machines and a diesel store. Considering that the local stream runs through the site then a review of the oil contamination/security may be appropriate.

    - Similarly, as many years ago it operated as a farm, residual chemicals may be present.

    - The site has a cesspit/septic tank (unless recently replaced as part of the sale process). Cesspits/septic tanks inherently contain hazardous waste and if not correctly contained can affect surrounding land.

5. Health and Safety:

    - Whilst the collapsed culvert demonstrates that the track is not suitable for the traffic it has to take and is not deemed safe for the Refuse wagon, we understand that it will similarly be deemed unsafe for Fire Engines. As such the track creates a distinct risk for any residents on the Lower Perryland Farm site including those already living there.

    - The open stream in a residential setting would be a direct danger to residents, particularly children, and especially in flood conditions with open culverts.

    - The issues referenced under Hazardous materials are clearly a concern

    - There is a presumption to cycling in respect of new properties such as these. The track is not suitable for bicycles and vehicles at the same time. Such situations on blind single lane tracks would be dangerous for cyclists.

6. Electrical Supplies do not have the capacity for the proposed development:

   It is probable that the properties will be powered fully by Electricity. Solar panels, as long as they are positioned/angled so as not to cause a reflection nuisance, would be a positive inclusion. Likewise heat pumps would be a positive inclusion as long as they are quiet. However peak power still needs to be accounted for.

   The Electricity supplied to the "Perrylands" region are fraught with problems. The cables are (with the exception of one that was replaced due to height problems) bare copper that can clash and spark in the wind, and they are of generally of inadequate rating. The supply regularly suffers from outages (e.g. 2 on 5 August 2024) where the transformer/switching systems switch out and reconnect, but are "off" for long enough to reset appliances. Longer outages of several hours (or occasionally days) are not uncommon and have occurred every year for the last decade. The local transformers often lock out and will not auto reset requiring one or more site visits to resolve. In essence the local electricity network is old and not really fit for purpose.

   UK Power Networks are aware of the network problems.

   We would not wish to be further inconvenienced by a supply that overloaded more frequently due to the addition of 5 new properties reliant on electricity. As such the upgrade of the electricity network should be completed prior to any occupation of property.

10 July 2024