Objection to Planning Applications DC/25/0276 and DC/25/0277 at Southlands Farm, West Chiltington

In 2019 Horsham DC set a limit of 1 wedding per month for a 7 month season.

Last year there was an estimated 35 to 45 wedding party events (excluding open evenings).

Now the applicant is seeking a possible maximum of 131 events over 10 months of the year, which constitutes an 'all year round' use of the site.

Please refuse the proposed variation to Condition 6 of DC/19/0121 (season length) in order to safeguard the local amenity and preserve the existing rural character. A further explanation and analysis is provided below.

In its current form, the proposed variation to Condition 5 of DC/19/0121 (wedding venue use restriction) should also be refused. The newly proposed wording is not enforceable and there will be no way of controlling the extent to which further intensification of use takes place on the site.

Allowing a small number of occasional beef luncheons and suppers during the summer 'wedding season' seems a reasonable request (in isolation) but the applicant has made the mistake of trying to use the variation of Condition 5 as an opportunity for the floodgates to open for a whole range of other types of event to take place such as 'Milestone celebrations' (and on a frequent basis).

How can the variation of these very important conditions be justified?

When these Regulatory Conditions were first written, they were justified with a stated reason. Nothing has changed with regards to these reasons or their importance, and so there is nothing that can justify the variation or removal of the conditions.

Reason for Condition 5 (DC/19/0121)

> In the interests of amenity of the countryside and neighbouring properties, and in accordance with Policies 10, 26, and 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

Reason for Condition 6 (DC/19/0121)

> In the interests of amenity, to enable the Local Planning Authority to regulate and control the development and in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

The effect of allowing the proposed variations would have the same effect as allowing their complete removal. Varying these particular conditions will result in less control which means an intensification of use and more harmful impacts on the local amenity: you will be eroding away the existing level of protection that was intended when the planning conditions were imposed.

In 2020 the Planning Inspector for APP/Z3825/W/19/3236648 chose to keep Condition 5 which states Southlands Barn should only be used as a wedding venue and keep Condition 6 which restricts the months of operation (31 March to 1 November).

An 'all year round venue' versus a **'seasonal rural wedding barn venue'**

The proposed change would result in significant change in the level of activity throughout the year -with an increased presence of customers and supplier deliveries at the site.

March 31st to November 1st is the current 7 month season -going beyond this to 9 or 10 months means a tipping point is reached, whereby the use of the site and activity on site is taking place for majority of the year. 9 or 10 months of the year clearly constitutes 'all year round' use if the site.

'Removal' or 'variation' of the planning conditions

It would have been more transparent to apply for the complete removal of the planning conditions in question (5 & 6 and 3 & 4). **It's quite apparent that the intention is to use the venue for events all year round.** But because January and February is a quiet period in terms of demand for for events (and it is also probably very cold in a 17th century barn) they say that the 'Regulatory Planning Condition' should be varied and re-worded in a way that creates the illusion that the planning condition is somehow continuing to impose a restrictive control on the use of the site (and this supposedly safeguards amenity).

Page 16 of the planning statement implies that the conditions would continue to protect amenity because the proposed new Condition 5 wording 'imposes a restriction on the number of events'. It's a farce to imply that a limit of 131 events per season will somehow continue to 'protect' the amenity of the local area.

Also, does anyone truly believe that an Enforcement Officer will monitor the number of events (via Condition 12 of DC/19/0121) and then take enforcement action if 150 or 160 events take place? The condition would not be enforceable and therefore doesn't meet the requirements of the '6 tests'.

Current use of site: 40-50 wedding events per year? New proposed maximum of 131 events

The proposed limit of 131 events must be considered against what is currently taking place at the site. The 7 month season equates to 30-31 weekends. As the main demand for larger weddings is at weekends this creates a natural element of control. The venue tends to have 1 wedding each weekend so that would mean a minimum baseline figure of 31 events. Sometimes they may have 2 weddings a week.

Even if the wedding venue does currently hold as many as 50 events a year, then the proposed limit of 131 events is a massive increase.

Other concerns and reasons for this objection

Sustainable Travel and Carbon

The rural location of the venue means it is completely car dependent. From a sustainable travel and carbon reduction perspective it would be harmful to allow the use of this site all year round.

Noise Assessment

The need for a new Noise Assessment which covers all year round events use of the venue (re. Condition 6 variation). The planning application appears to be missing a new Noise Assessment. The local acoustic environment (background noise levels) is very different during the winter months of November and December and therefore the potential impact of events and music is different. Also, having more events and at all times of the year will have a greater impact on the local area.

Policy Summary

In summary the policy basis for my objection to the application is in the interest of protecting and safeguarding:

-The amenity of the countryside

-The amenity of neighbouring properties

-The amenities of the locality

The stated Policies from the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) all point towards the need to refuse the two planning applications:

-**Policy 26 Strategic Policy: Countryside Protection** Outside built-up area boundaries, the rural character and undeveloped nature of the countryside will be protected against inappropriate development.

-Policy 33 Development Principles (to conserve and enhance natural & built environment, developments should avoid unacceptable harm to the amenity of occupiers/users of nearby property and land).

-**Policy 10 Rural Economic Development ‘**development should maintain the quality and character of the area’

<u>If Horsham District Council are minded to approve part of the planning application</u>

Notwithstanding everything set out in the above objection, if the Council is minded to approve any form of variation to the conditions in this application:

-Please ensure that a new Noise Assessment is provided in order to inform the planning decision. Also ensure that a satisfactory acoustic mitigation details and a revised noise management plan is submitted and approved prior to the implementation of the new consent.

-It seems quite reasonable for Southlands Farm to be permitted to host a limited number of beef themed luncheons and suppers. But how do you ensure that this doesn’t become a regular weekly ‘pop up’ restaurant? Allowing such events should not be seen as an opportunity for the floodgates to open for a whole range of other types of event to take place i.e. ‘Milestone celebrations’.

-A clear distinction should be made between non-wedding events that involve music (live bands or playing music through a sound system) and non-wedding events that do not involve music. The only type of non-wedding event that could be considered acceptable is an event that doesn’t involve music.

-Do not allow ticketed live music events to take place.