HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSULTATION

TO:	Horsham District Council – Planning Dept
LOCATION:	Normans East Street Rusper
DESCRIPTION:	Prior Notification for the Change of Use of an agricultural barn to form a 2 bed dwellinghouse
REFERENCE:	DC/26/1515
RECOMMENDATION:	Objection / refusal on the grounds that the submitted information has not demonstrated that the proposed development and subsequent residential occupation would avoid the direct or indirect deterioration of the adjacent Ancient Woodland, an irreplaceable habitat, contrary to Policy N6(2) and the aims of the NPPF.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATION:

The application is supported by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA), Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) and Tree Protection Plan. Whilst these documents provide a methodology for the protection of retained trees during the construction phase, they give only limited consideration to the implications of introducing a permanent residential use in close proximity to Ancient Woodland.

Whereby, Ancient Woodland is referenced only briefly at Paragraph 3.13 of the Arboricultural Report, wherein the author, in their opinion, advises that no concerns arise due to the implementation of tree protection measures during the conversion works and the presence of a boundary fence separating the woodland from the proposed hardstanding, services and access arrangements.

Whilst the AIA and AMS may address potential construction-phase impacts, the submitted information provides insufficient assessment of the likely long-term effects associated with residential occupation. In particular, it does not demonstrate that the development and subsequent occupation would avoid the direct or indirect deterioration of the adjacent Ancient Woodland, an irreplaceable habitat.

Consequently, the submission does not demonstrate compliance with Policy N6(2) of the National Planning Policy Framework 2026. The policy test under the NPPF and Policy N6(2) is whether A proposal would result in the loss or deterioration of Ancient Woodland during and after development. Whilst the submitted information seeks to address construction-phase impacts, insufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the proposed residential use would not give rise to longer-term deterioration through woodland edge management pressures, domestic encroachment, service installation and other indirect impacts associated with residential occupation.

MAIN COMMENTS:

Future Resident Pressure observations

The relationship between the proposed dwelling and surrounding mature trees and Ancient Woodland is largely unchanged from the previous proposal. Given the proximity and scale of the retained trees, issues relating to shading, enclosure, restricted natural light and seasonal tree debris are entirely foreseeable.

Paragraph 5.3.4 of BS5837:2012 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."

Given the proximity, scale and canopy spread of the retained trees, particularly those associated with the adjoining Ancient Woodland, the proposed dwelling would occupy a heavily enclosed treed environment. The resulting relationship would foreseeably give rise to shading, restricted natural light, seasonal tree debris and perceived tree risk. These factors are well recognised as common drivers for post-development requests for pruning, crown reduction and tree removal.

Ancient Woodland observations

The Ancient Woodland lies approximately 4 metres from the existing barn, which would become the proposed dwelling. Whilst the presence of the existing building is acknowledged, the principal concern relates to the introduction of a permanent residential use immediately adjacent to this irreplaceable habitat and the foreseeable indirect effects associated with residential occupation.

In addition, the proposal would be situated well within the minimum 15-metre buffer advocated by Natural England and Forestry Commission Standing Advice for development adjacent to Ancient Woodland. Whilst the existing building is already located within this distance, the proposed change of use would introduce a permanent residential receptor and associated domestic activities in close proximity to the woodland.

Such activities may give rise to increased disturbance, trampling, storage of domestic materials, garden encroachment, vegetation management pressures, lighting, and other urbanising influences which have the potential to contribute to the deterioration of the Ancient Woodland over time.

Given the irreplaceable nature of the habitat, and in the absence of sufficient evidence demonstrating that direct or indirect deterioration would not occur during or following development, it has not been demonstrated that the proposal would accord with the precautionary approach set out within national planning policy and standing advice relating to Ancient Woodland.
ANY RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS: N/A

NAME:	Andy Bush Arboricultural officer (Planning)
DEPARTMENT:	STRATEGIC PLANNING - SPECIALISTS
DATE:	27/10/26