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6<sup>th</sup> May 2021

Planning Department  
Horsham District Council  
Parkside, Chart Way  
Horsham  
West Sussex  
RH12 1RL

Dear Sir

**DC/20/0603 Retention of the barn currently under construction, to provide a dual-purpose facility for vineyard staff welfare/vineyard storage, and vineyard tours. Associated hard and soft landscaping works.**

Mannings Heath Golf Club, Hammerpond Road, Mannings Heath

### **Background**

Planning permission was granted (DC/18/0958) for a replacement barn with a condition that it was to be used for agricultural storage only.

Construction started and residents walking the adjacent public footpath were told by the contractors that they were building a wedding venue. Furthermore, the construction was not in accordance with planning permission as the barn had been turned through 90 degrees.

Following an enforcement investigation, a retrospective planning application was made (DC/20/0756). Planning permission was granted again for agricultural storage only with a small staff area and toilet. The officers report specifically stated *"A condition to secure this specific use (agricultural storage only) has been recommended, and will protect the building from being used for any other purpose."*

Construction continued and it was observed that the agricultural store had a nice wooden roof, a shiny floor and external lighting. A further enforcement investigation resulted in second retrospective planning application (DC/20/2531) *“Retention existing barn currently under construction, to provide a dual-purpose facility for vineyard staff welfare/vineyard storage, and vineyard tours. Associated hard and soft landscaping works”*. Clearly this application was for much more than agricultural storage, particularly vineyard tours – that is a commercial enterprise. The Parish Council considered that the applicant’s intention from the beginning was to use the barn as a commercial enterprise rather than for agricultural storage. The Parish Council strongly objected to that application on the following grounds and urged HDC to refuse permission:

- 1) The barn is sited within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) where such commercial activity is not appropriate or acceptable;
- 2) It contravenes policy 1 of the Nuthurst Neighbourhood Plan (NNP) which requires that *“Development proposals will be expected to conform to the development plan policies [in HDC’s Planning Framework] in respect of the control of development in the countryside”* since it does not comply with HDC’s Planning Framework (HDPF);
- 3) It contravenes paragraph 4.13 of policy 1 of the NNP which states that *“Its spatial strategy [of the NNP] ...for avoiding development in the High Weald AONB all together”* because this development is in the AONB;
- 4) It contravenes policy 26 of the HDPF on “Countryside Protection” because this commercial enterprise is inappropriate development in the High Weald AONB, it is not essential to its countryside location and it does not support the needs of agriculture; and
- 5) It contravenes policy 30 of the HDPF on “Protected Landscapes” because of the harm it will cause to the High Weald AONB and because this commercial enterprise is not in the public interest.

The Parish Council notes that there were also strong objections to the application from the High Weald AONB, HDC’s own Agricultural Consultants and several nearby local residents. The Parish Council understood that Planning Officers in HDC were minded to refuse planning permission. However, the application was withdrawn by the applicant but no reason is given on HDC’s Planning Portal.

## **The Current Application DC/21/0603**

The title and description of this third retrospective application is the same as the previous withdrawn application. The only difference is minor changes to the design of the façade of the barn. This confirms the applicant's intention from the beginning to use the barn as a commercial enterprise rather than for agricultural storage and completely contrary to the reason for HDC attaching a condition to the approval of DC/20/0756. The Parish Council considers that this deceptive and unethical practice by the applicant is unacceptable.

Furthermore, the Parish Council is extremely concerned that should permission be granted for use for vineyard tours, the principle of use as a commercial activity would be established and the applicant will subsequently:

- seek to expand the commercial activity to include a wine shop, a restaurant, a wedding venue etc. This would be totally unacceptable in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Seek to have vehicular access to the site along the existing public footpath or by a new access off Hammerpond Road
- Seek to build another barn for the "lost" agricultural storage.

The Parish Council notes that the applicant already conducts, and has done so since the vineyard was planted a few years ago, vineyard tours starting from the Club House with participants being transported by buggies across the Golf Course to the vineyard. In this retrospective application, the applicant proposes exactly the same tour starting at the Club House. **So, the barn is not needed to support the vineyard tours.**

## **Conclusion**

As there is no change in the title and description, the Parish Council strongly objects to this retrospective planning application for the same reasons as the previous application. These reasons are set out in items 1) to 5) above.

**The Parish Council strongly urges HDC to refuse planning permission on these grounds.**

Yours sincerely



Clerk, Nuthurst Parish Council