HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSULTATION

TO:	Horsham District Council – Planning Dept
LOCATION:	Wellens Farm Steyning Road Ashurst West Sussex
DESCRIPTION:	Demolition of existing redundant farm buildings and erection of two new detached residential dwellings with associated landscaping including boundary wall, two garage barns, cycle stores and a refuse store.
REFERENCE:	DC/24/1513
RECOMMENDATION:	Holding objection / Modification Holding Objection/Modification

2nd set of comments provided in green

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATION:

Given the immediate context of the site, including similar permitted development under DC/14/1030, the erection of 2No. dwellings is unlikely to give rise to adverse landscape and visual effects in principle. In addition, the proposals are considered appropriate to the countryside location and reflective of the existing and local agricultural vernacular.

However, there is key concern with the proposed access onto Ashurst Road, on approach and sense of arrival into Ashurst village. The level of vegetation clearance, and more importantly the earthworks required to facilitate the access, would result in an adverse effect on the landscape character and visual amenity of the sunken road and its rural setting. The use of the existing access would mitigate these findings and is recommended.

Clarification is requested in order to safeguard the retention of key landscape features, including the treelines on the eastern and western boundaries.

The additional information and visualations of the proposed access from Ashurst Road have been reviewed. We remain of the view that the works required to facilitate the access will result in localised adverse effects on the landscape character and amenity of the sunken road and its rural setting. The applicant has presented examples of other access points off Ashurst Road but fails to recognise that the sunken nature of the road in this location is the key difference.
Furthermore, we remain unclear of the level of vegetation that would need to be removed to facilitate the access and what measures are proposed to mitigate the loss as per points a) and b) in the detailed comments below.
As previously recommended, we remain of the view that the identified effects can be eliminated if the existing access remains in use.

MAIN COMMENTS:

The proposed site is situated outside of the Built Up Area Boundary (BUAB), in a countryside location, south of the village of Ashurst. It is generally rectangular in shape, bounded by mature treelines and vegetation to the east and west. The northern boundary is undefined and open to a cluster of dwellings, including a barn conversion. The southern boundary is defined by a fence and visually open to agricultural land. The site currently comprises a cluster of agricultural buildings and associated hardstanding.

Both the immediate and wider landscape context can be described as pastoral in nature, being predominately remote and undeveloped with few residential and urbanising detractors. Save for Ashurst Road on the western boundary and the aforementioned dwellings immediately north of the site, agricultural land surrounds the site on all sides. It forms part of the intricate strong and well-defined field pattern by hedgerow and hedgerow trees and water courses, interspersed by shaws and historic farmsteads; key characteristics of the landscape character that can be found in the area.

Multiple public rights of way (PRoWs) are located in the surrounds, however views into the site from the wider landscape and footpath network are limited on account of topography and intervening vegetation.

Proposed access to the site is from Ashurst Road, in this section, a sunken, verdant road running in a north-south direction on the western boundary, generally bounded by dense vegetation and steep banks. Glimpse views of undeveloped countryside are experienced by visual receptors traveling through the area during the winter season on account of the deciduous trees, reinforcing its rural qualities.

The site is located within Wellens Farm and the proposals include demolition of existing agricultural buildings and erection of two new detached residential dwellings. While it is recognised the proposal would introduce domestic and urbanising features, which are considered large built form outside the BUAB, the dwellings are replacing existing farm buildings which are a familiar feature within the site and immediate landscape character.

In addition, the dwellings adjacent to the northern boundary benefit from a similar development as converted agricultural buildings under permitted DC/14/1030, therefore it is not considered that proposals would appear out of place or dominant within the context of the surrounding landscape.

Key concern however lies with the location of the proposed access due to the effect on the character and visual amenity of the rural edge. It is currently not clear what level of clearance is required for existing trees and vegetation to facilitate the access and associated visibility splays. However, given the level difference between site and road being over 2m, this is expected to be significant. This therefore creates uncertainty that the landscape proposals are sufficient to retain the rural character and rural approach to the settlement. In addition, there is no detailed indication of topography and earthworks proposed, however the level of engineering works to facilitate access to the sunken road are anticipated to be large in nature, giving rise to adverse effects on the receiving landscape.

It is our judgement that the removal of trees and vegetation as well as level of earthworks in this location will expose the development to view from Ashurst Road, considerably changing the gateway from rural to a much more suburban setting.

<u>Design considerations</u>

1. In order to minimise adverse landscape and visual effects, we request that alternative access routes are considered. Existing access for Wellens Farm would be a suitable option if a shared route is possible, given that the existing opening is a recognised feature and situated on arrival into Ashurst, in keeping with the nature of the village.
2. If proposed access is to remain, justification is required as to the necessity of the proposed location. In addition, the following information is needed to assess the effects on landscape character and visual amenity in regard to site access:
    a. At present, the tree survey submitted does not accurately portray the vegetation on the western boundary, describing it as dense hedging ranging up to 10m in height. Satellite imagery and Google Maps indicates mature, coppiced Hazels in particular, positively contributing to the historic, sunken, leafy lane character. We request that the vegetation is surveyed in more detail, and the level of clearance more clearly indicated in plan.
    b. In addition to the above, the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) under 6.2 states that the line of trees on the eastern and western borders, '*should be retained and protected in line with Root Protection Areas (RPAs) of all trees'*, therefore if removal is proposed, appropriate mitigation must be demonstrated.
    c. A levels plan is requested in order to understand proposed cut and fill and where the excess soil is to be located.
    d. Information on earth bank retention is requested for the exposed banks as a result of earthworks. Please note that the black sandbags as seen on approach into Ashurst are seen as an urbanising detractor and proposals must be sensitive to the rural surrounds.
    e. It is recommended that a viewpoint is submitted to demonstrate the effects of the proposal within the sense of arrival to the village. This is to be carried out in accordance with the Landscape Institute Technical guidance note 06/19.
3. Clarification is requested in regard to boundary treatments, as the boundaries currently appear undefined, with the exception of a run of hedgerow partly between Houses 1 and 2.
    a. We recommend post and rail fence, which is in keeping with the rural surrounds.
    b. We request that the trees on the eastern boundary are protected by a retention condition for the longevity of the development, or if this does not meet the test, for a minimum period of 10 years. This is to secure their retention as per para 2b above and to remove the risk of future lopping or felling pressure. The eastern boundary vegetation is a prominent feature in the receiving landscape and its loss or deterioration would have a significant adverse effect on the character of the area and retained field pattern.
    c. A vegetated buffer as per guidance under 4.26 in the PEA is also required.
4. Introduction of orchard planting is welcomed, however we advise that trees are planted outside of the RPA of the T8 Oak in order to reduce competition and therefore potential deterioration. This information is not needed to be submitted, however.
5. Introduction of native hedgerow is additionally welcomed, however we note discrepancy between species within the planting specifications, PEA and planting palette. We note for example Portuguese laurel which is not native or found within the local landscape, therefore we advise species and ratios as listed under the planting specifications.

RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS:

If you're minded to recommend the application for approval without the concerns addressed above the following details must be secured by condition:

Hard and Soft Landscaping

Pre-Occupation Condition: No part of the development hereby permitted shall be first occupied until full details of all hard and soft landscaping works shall have been submitted to and approved, in writing, by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall include plans and measures addressing the following:

- Details of all existing trees and planting to be removed and retained, including trees and vegetation along the western and eastern and boundaries
- Details of all proposed trees, planting and seeding, including schedules specifying species (inc latin names), planting size, densities and plant numbers and tree pit details
- Hard and soft written specifications including ground preparation, cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment
- Tree pit and staking/underground guying details
- Details of all hard surfacing materials and finishes, including layout, colour, size, texture, coursing and levels
- Details of all boundary treatments
- Details of existing and proposed levels for all external earthworks associated with the landscape proposals – including cross sections where necessary
- Details of all external lighting
- Ecological enhancement measures set out in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal or subsequent Phase 1 Ecological Survey

The approved landscaping scheme shall be fully implemented in accordance with the approved details within the first planting season following the first occupation of any part of the development. Unless otherwise agreed as part of the approved landscaping, no trees or hedges on the site shall be wilfully damaged or uprooted, felled/removed, topped or lopped without the previous written consent of the Local Planning Authority until 5 years after completion of the development, and in case of the western and eastern boundaries, this will apply for the perpetuity of the development/minimum 10 years after completion of the development. Any proposed or retained planting, which within a minimum period of 5 years, or in the case of the western and eastern boundaries, in perpetuity/ minimum 10 years after completion of development, dies, is removed, or becomes seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent to any variation.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory development that is sympathetic to the landscape and townscape character and built form of the surroundings, and in the interests of visual amenity in accordance with Policy 33 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015).

NAME:	Elly Hazael Trainee Landscape Architect (Planning)
DEPARTMENT:	Specialists Team - Strategic Planning
DATE:	13/12/2024
SIGNED OFF BY:	Inês Watson CMLI Specialists Team Leader (Landscape Architect)
DATE:	17/12/2024 27/03/2025