CPRH Objections to DC/23/2076: Erection of a single storey detached workshop / woodland management / forestry building. Installation of 6No. rooflights, new access and track. Land North of Stonepit Lane, Stonepit Lane, Henfield, West Sussex, BN5 9QT

The Campaign to Protect Rural Henfield (CPRH) represents the views of local residents who are striving to protect and enhance the rural environment of our village. We support development that meets local needs and aligns with the local and district planning strategies. We wish to object to the current proposal.

The proposed development appears to be essentially identical to the one in DC/22/1874: Erection of a single storey detached workshop including the provision of 6no rooflights, new access and track at the same location. CPRH submitted comprehensive objections to that earlier application. **The earlier application should be cited as a Related Case on the HDC Planning website.**

Planning permission for DC/22/1874 was refused by HDC on 25 July 2023. The first reason for rejection was stated as:

> *The development is sited within a countryside location, outside of the built-up area boundary of any settlement on a site which has not been allocated for development within the Horsham District Planning Framework or an adopted Neighbourhood Plan. The development would be contrary to the overarching strategy and hierarchical approach of concentrating development within the main settlements and is not essential to its countryside location. The proposal represents unsustainable development contrary to Policies 1, 2, 10 and 26 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015), Henfield Neighbourhood Plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework.*

As before, this new application will result in significant harm to a generally rural landscape on a site that is highly visible and adjacent to a footpath used by many members of the public. The development does not need to be in the countryside insofar as it is not for agriculture or forestry, does not enable extraction of minerals, is not for quiet informal use nor does it enable the sustainable development of this rural area.

All comments made regarding the previous application are still valid and should be considered by the local planning authority as sufficient to refuse this application again.

Not a rural business

This revised application differs mainly in the addition of a Woodland Management Plan for a proposed small coppice to provide wood for the allegedly rural business. The Woodland Management Plan, however, explains that any trees to be harvested or coppiced will not be ready to be used in the business for many years. In addition, this small coppice is insufficient to enable harvesting on the scale needed for a viable business unless considerable additional material is imported.

The Woodland Management Plan further states that a " considerable amount of timber created as a result of business activities" is going to be brought onto the site. Along with the finished products being exported for sale to other businesses, this will entail excessive movement of lorries and machinery along the unmade track which is already potholed, rutted and in a continuous state of disrepair.

With further traffic created by the proposed number of employees, this will cause disturbance and safety issues regarding members of the public and domestic residents in the lane, which is also a popular local footpath.

The proposal shows no justification for using agricultural land when industrial units are available in the vicinity and near main roads. With the site surrounded by footpaths and the noise produced by woodworking tools/equipment, the tranquillity and ambience for all who enjoy such a beautiful rural area would be destroyed.

The processing of wood from off-site, as is suggested would be the main activity here, would be more appropriate in an identified employment area within the district.

Requirements that the applicant acknowledges as necessary to support the active management of the woodland over the 25-year plan period are listed as:

> *"Provision of welfare facilities for workers; Shelter for workers, especially if winter harvesting; Chainsaws; Brushcutters; Knapsack sprayer; Herbicide store; Safety PPE for workers; Small 4WD tractor; 3-point linkage mower; Diesel store; Miscellaneous small hand tools such as planting spades and bill hooks and; Workshop/storage space for the maintenance and safe keeping of the above machinery."*

It also appears the site will be fenced in with high deer fencing which will not be in keeping with the surrounding fields.

The rural character of the lane would be adversely affected, not enhanced by this development. It directly opposes the goal of HDPF policy 26: Strategic Policy: Countryside Development which states that 'quiet, informal, recreational use' of the countryside should be an important consideration.

Under the changes made to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2023 (Footnote 62) increased weight should also be given to the loss of agricultural land, which until recently has produced crops, when deciding what sites are most appropriate for development.

Infrastructure Requirements

Water, drainage and waste services are not available on the land at present. The Health and Safety Executive requires that employers provide facilities for employees:

- toilets and hand basins, with soap and towels or a hand-dryer
- drinking water
- a place to store clothing (and somewhere to change if special clothing is worn for work) somewhere to rest and eat meals.

Also, the Fire Service has raised concerns that the nearest fire hydrant for the supply of water for firefighting is 650 metres away, 560 metres further than the 90-metre distance required for a commercial premises. Evidence of an alternative source of water is not provided, nor is evidence that the access is suitable for firefighting vehicles.

Planning Precedents

The applicant argues that various mixtures of commercial, storage and forestry buildings within the countryside have been given planning permission by HDC in the past. Closer inspection reveals that the cases cited are not comparable to the current application:

- Reference DC/22/2351 refers to a heritage barn-style stable to be used for storage only.
- Reference DC/22/0086 refers to commercial car storage adjacent to existing large working farm buildings.
- Reference DC/22/2252 refers to replacement of an existing barn for storage.
- Reference DC/20/0145 relates to modification of an existing wood building in the centre of a wood.

None of these are comparable to the existing application which proposes a storage and workshop building in which employees will be working, in the middle of a field which had only a small derelict shack at one end.