RAMBLERS Sussex

[redacted]
45 Cissbury Gardens
Worthing
BN14 0DZ

December 6, 2024

Hannah Darley

Planning Department

Horsham District Council

Planning ref: Planning Application No. DC/43/1801

Dear Hannah,

Location of application: Barn To East of Coolham Road, Coolham, RH13 8QD

Details of application: Prior Notification for Change of Use of an Agricultural Building with associated operational development to 2no dwellinghouses (C3 Use Class).

I am submitting this objection to planning application DC/24/1801 for and on behalf of the Ramblers in my role as West Sussex Area Footpath Officer. The objection relates specifically to the impact on Public Rights of Way that border the application site.

The Ramblers works to help everyone enjoy the pleasures and benefits of walking, and to enhance and protect the places where people love to walk. We are committed to encouraging and supporting walking, protecting and expanding public rights of way and access land, and protecting the beauty of the countryside and other areas. As Ramblers we value our countryside for its natural beauty, sense of peace and tranquillity and wildlife, as well as its vital role in promoting wellbeing and sustainable economic growth.

Ramblers
1 Clink Street, 3rd Floor, London SE1 9DG
020 3961 3300 | ramblers@ramblers.org.uk | **ramblers.org.uk**

The Ramblers' Association is a registered charity (England & Wales no 1093577, Scotland no SC039799) and a company limited by guarantee, registered in England & Wales (no 4458492). Registered office: 1 Clink Street, 3rd Floor, London, SE1 9DG.

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A Public Right of Way (PRoW) in the form of bridleway 1966 passes along the northern boundary of the application site, starting at Coolham Road and heading broadly west along an agricultural track. The Planning Statement submitted by the applicant states the intention to employ the western end of the track that carries the bridleway as the access route from Coolham Road (B2139) to the development site, a distance of approximately 200m, requiring Non-Motorised Users (NMUs) to share the track carrying the bridleway with vehicular traffic accessing the application site.

It is assumed that the landowners of the existing barn must have at least agricultural access rights over the track to gain access to the barn. However there is no public vehicular right of access along the private track that carries the bridleway and no indication of how vehicular right of access will be dealt with as part of this change of use in order to provide access along the PRoW for contractors' vehicles, deliveries and plant or by future occupiers of the dwellings once the development is complete. Such access would be unlawful if no such right exists and we urge the planning authority to investigate how this is to be addressed before determining the application.

Bridleway 1966 forms the north and east sections of a perimeter walk around the important historic site of the Coolham Advanced Landing Ground airfield (RAF Coolham) built to support the D-Day landings in 1944. Footpath 1965 follows the southern and western boundary of the original airfield and forms the other leg of the perimeter walk, emerging back out onto bridleway 1966 approximately 75m east of Coolham Road, within the section that the application proposes would have shared use with vehicles. While the airfield was returned to agricultural use post war, it is understood to be the only Advanced Landing Ground that remains visible on the ground, and critically is an important memorial to the service personnel who lost their lives at the time, many of whom were Polish. The perimeter walk is well-known and widely publicised, and as a result it attracts a lot of visitors, a significant proportion of whom access it using the PRoW from Coolham Road.

We object to the proposed change of use for the following reasons:

- the adoption of the bridleway as the access route into the development site introduces a significant hazard to all NMUs using the bridleway due to shared use not only with

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vehicles belonging to future occupants but also service and delivery vehicles attending the proposed dwellings;

- no evidence has been provided to confirm that appropriate access rights are or would be in place to allow vehicular access to the site during and after the development;
- there is no footway alongside Coolham Road and NMUs accessing the bridleway do so by using the road itself, raising further safety concerns with vehicles entering or leaving the application site via the track that carries the bridleway;

In view of the above, we urge Horsham District Council to refuse the change of use application despite the existing Prior Approval.

In the event that the authority are minded to allow the development to proceed, we urge them to advise the applicant of the protection that must be offered to the PRoW itself and its users, and their attention is drawn to the guidance notes provided previously by the WSCC PRoW team in response to the earlier planning application for this site, DC/23/1151, that still apply.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted]

[redacted]

West Sussex Area Footpath Officer, Ramblers

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