HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSULTATION

TO:	Horsham District Council – Planning Dept
LOCATION:	Land to the West Side of Burnthouse Lane, Cowfold
DESCRIPTION:	Construction of agricultural / equestrian building and associated track, hardstanding and manure skip
REFERENCE:	DC-26-1502
RECOMMENDATION:	Advice / Objection / Modification / Withdrawal / Refusal

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATION:

The proposed development is within the minimum recommended root protection area buffer to a veteran oak tree situated on the laneside. The tree is of exceptional biodiversity and cultural value.

I am therefore unable to support the development as it conflicts with the NPPF ethos of conserving habitat features of this rarity/significance within the landscape.

I recommend that the application be withdrawn. If acceptable in other planning terms a revised siting and access for the facility within the field should be guided by the constraint posed by the tree and the High Hurst Copse Ancient Woodland to the South to which the tree is linked by the remaining roadside shaw.

Any revised application should be accompanied by both an arboricultural impact assessment and requisite ecological impact considerations for veteran trees.

MAIN COMMENTS:

The proposed development utilises an existing agricultural access gate to a field that borders the Burnthouse Lane at the bottom of Peacock's Hill where the Ward/Parish boundary is situated. The current gated access appears to have been re-used for circa the past 15 years since earlier disuse. There is little recognisable former upgrading for vehicle use, the access seemingly consisting principally of permeable soft ground only.

Circa 6m South of the gate is a relatively large oak tree. The tree by virtue of its species, size (circa: 1.5m stem diameter) and condition (crown retrenchment (downsizing) with substantial decay, large deadwood and habitat features) confers veteran status upon it within the current definition applied by the NPPF guidance in this respect.

It is therefore regarded as an irreplaceable habitat that is afforded the highest possible respect within the ethos of assessing new planned development and safeguarding landscape features of recognised merit.

The tree may have been a former recognised Parish boundary marker and could have additional heritage value. From historic mapping evidence the former West lodge of Woldringfold House/Estate on the opposite side of the lane has only been known as Oak Tree Cottage since some time in the latter half of the 20th Century.

The tree is at the tip of the laneside shaw which connects to the South with the High Hurst Copse Ancient Woodland. In my view, whilst the installation of below ground services and upgrading of the metalled Lane up Peacock's Hill may have historically had some impact on the trees root spread, the tree would have been sufficiently well established when these works were undertaken for the Lane not to be considered a significant constraint on rooting. Therefore, utilising a recommended radial root protection area buffer, no new development including any form of hardstanding should be considered minimally within circa 23m of the tree. Ideally IME when considering horse husbandry and use of stockpiled animal manure (even when effectively contained) a larger buffer is recommended where space exists to afford this.

The potential use of the existing access for some form of upgraded vehicle access is not desirable in terms of affording the tree greater protection from detriment to its key rooting area or the pressures associated with more frequent human passage and potential use of larger vehicles requiring increased height clearance beneath its branch spread.

ANY RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS:

N/A

NAME:	ANDY CLOUT – ASST. ARBORICULTURAL OFFICER
DEPARTMENT:	STRATEGIC PLANNING - SPECIALISTS
DATE:	18/10/26