

Ferring Parish Council

Re FG/138/21/PL

Ferring Parish Council objects to this proposed change of use which would necessitate an unwarranted incursion into grade 1 agricultural land in an area designated as a Gap Between Settlements. The only reasoning being offered is that the owners have allowed the plot to fall into disuse. This cannot be regarded as a legitimate rationale to erode the Gap Between Settlements and over-ride both the Ferring N.P. and the Arun Local Plans, which have specific policies for the protection of this area of countryside which is located on the slopes of HighDown Hill and adjacent to the SDNP. This proposal is a Departure from the Development Plan and notice of which should be contained in the proposal description on the ADC portal but has been omitted by ADC.

In consideration of this application, it is particularly pertinent to reference the FG/123/20/PL Appeal Decision (case ref. APP/C3810/W/21/3269319) on a nearby site. In this appeal, the Inspector determined that it should be allowed on the following grounds *having regard to existing commercial use of the site, the existing structures which are to be replaced, and the contained nature of the land surrounded as it is on three sides by other commercial uses, I consider that the proposed storage use would not intrude into the countryside, nor would it physically or visually erode the sense of separation between neighbouring settlements.*

It is crucial to note that none of the above factors apply to this application.

Policy C SP1 of the Arun Local Plan recognises the countryside for its intrinsic character and beauty, and Policy SD SP3 protects the generally open and undeveloped gap between settlements and to prevent coalescence and retain the separate identity of neighbouring settlements. The case referred to above was contained within the boundary of a site with some existing commercial usage and adjacent to other sites where the change of use from agricultural to commercial had been established through lack of appropriate enforcement. Those enterprises are physically aligned north/south in the gap between the access / bridlepath to Highdown Hill on the eastern side and the private, unregistered, unmade, unlit narrow farm track from the A259 on the western side. That does not apply to this site which would extend westwards into the countryside.

Commercialisation/Industrialisation of this plot would potentially give rise to applications to extend the change of use on both the northern and southern sides.

The farm track would not sustain industrial use. The applicant has confirmed that no new or altered vehicular or pedestrian access is proposed to or from the public highway. The farm track is used for agricultural access only and there are no provisions for an upgraded road/driveway which would be a further infringement of the countryside. The proposal can only be considered with access as it is currently. The impact on the condition of the track when subjected to increased industrial/commercial activity needs to be taken into consideration. The farm track also passes a dwelling known as The Chalet and would potentially create noise and overlooking issues for the residents. As the farm track is on private land it is difficult to ascertain the extent of impact on the

residential property. The access statement offers no professional assessment of the anticipated vehicle movements or highway safety implications for a commercial/industrial application. The applicant claims that target customers are businesses and one full time member of staff is 'envisaged' which indicates that regular access throughout the operating hours by commercial/industrial or private vehicles must also be envisaged. However, it does not actually state whether the envisaged staffing position is to be based on-site or not. The staff position is not given as a firm requirement and no provisions for a staff member on-site have been included (shelter/toilet etc) raising questions as to that position. We would seek clarification on these points. We also note the applicants statement confirms that NO COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES will be carried out on-site.

The proposed screening would be inadequate and reference to the established trees on the northern side or other planting are outside the red line boundary as indicated on the applicant's own site plan. The trees would therefore not be subject to any conditions that could be made on this application. The applicant considers and has confirmed on the application, that the trees shown as adjacent to but outside the site boundary do not influence the development and are not considered by the applicant to be important as part of the local landscape character. They are not currently protected by TPO's, could be removed at any time and are deciduous. This contradicts the claim made in item 5.2 of the applicant's design statement as providing the appropriate screening from Highdown Hill from which the site would be visible.

The site would be subject to the SDNP Dark Skies provisions which do not appear to have been referred to.

For all the reasons stated, we urge Planning Officers to refuse this inappropriate, inaccurate, contradictory and incomplete application.