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Dear Sirs

MO/2021/0290 - Logmore Farm, Logmore Lane, Westcott, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 3JN
Change of use and extension of an existing storage building to a holiday let and
artists studio.

I write in my capacity as planning lead for Westcott Village Association (WVA). WVA occasionally makes representations on behalf of the Westcott community.

WVA has been made aware that this application is of concern to members of our community and, having reviewed, we write to share some of their concerns.

We have read the comprehensive planning statement prepared by Batcheller Monkhouse which details the extensive planning history for Logmore Farm over the last 16 years, part of which is pictured below.



MO/2004/0923 consented the stables on the left (with no upper storey accommodation) and MO/2016/1633 was a variation enabling the same building to be used as an art studio with workshop/ storage and accommodation used for holiday lets ancillary to the main house.

MO/2015/1338 then consented the open sided 66 sq m machine store to the right.

The new application MO/2021/0290 is for the “change of use and extension of an existing storage building to a holiday let and artists studio” but, according to the statutory declaration from the applicant, is the relocation of a building which replaced a shed in 2006 and had already been moved prior to this. The re-build in the new location has left a concrete base in the old location and meant the replacement of the corrugated iron roof with a clay tile roof.

This is all in addition to the conversion of the late C19 barn next to the Logmore Farmhouse which was converted to ancillary residential use incorporating games room, studio and two guest bedrooms under MO/2004/0746.



The aerial photo of Logmore Farm shows, shaded in yellow, the significant parking areas which the above developments have generated a requirement for and have been provided.

Logmore Farm is at the western end of a shared surface track (also BW 572 and BW 254) c. 600 metres from its intersection with Logmore Lane.

Batcheller Monkhouse reference the following MVDC policies in the context of this application and we would suggest that reference to these policies is somewhat tenuous given for the following concerns:-

POLICY ENV4 - LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The Council will seek to ensure that development proposals and forestry schemes in the countryside and rural settlements conserve and will not detract from the character of the local landscape. In determining planning applications account will be taken of the visual impact of the proposed development on the landscape, the extent to which the impact of new buildings has been softened and integrated into the landscape by careful consideration of siting, design, colour and associated planting and whether any existing landscape features such as trees and hedgerows should be retained.

Concern – we believe that, despite the quality of buildings erected, the quantum of development, together with the parking provision, has now started to detract from the character of the local landscape.

**Policy CS 13
Landscape Character**

1. All new development must respect and, where appropriate, enhance the character and distinctiveness of the landscape character area in which it is proposed. Landscape enhancement works may be required to avoid adverse impacts associated with new developments.
2. The Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is of national significance, and as such, the conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape will be a priority in this area. The AONB will be protected in accordance with the objectives in Planning Policy Statement 7 (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas) and the Surrey Hills Management Plan, with particular focus on the impact of development on ridgelines, significant views, peace, tranquillity and levels of artificial light.
3. The AGLV (Area of Great Landscape Value) will be retained until such time as there has been a review of the AONB boundary. Development in the AGLV area will be required to be supported by evidence to demonstrate that it would not result in harm to the AONB, particularly views from and into the AONB and the key features identified in point 2 above.
4. Small scale development for the reasonable needs of the rural economy, outdoor recreation as well as that for the local community in the AONB or AGLV, will be supported subject to meeting other relevant criteria within the LDF.

Concern – same comments as for ENV4 but we highlight that Logmore Farm is in the Green belt, AONB and AGLV.

POLICY ENV23 - RESPECT FOR SETTING

Development will normally be permitted where it respects its setting taking account of the following:

1. the scale, character, bulk, proportions and materials of the surrounding built environment. Developments will not be permitted where it is considered they would constitute over-development of the site by reason of scale, height or bulk or in relation to the boundaries of the site and/or surrounding developments;
2. public views warranting protection. Opportunities will be sought to create attractive new views or vistas;
3. townscape features such as street patterns, familiar landmark buildings, and the space about buildings;
4. the roofscape. Pitched roofs will normally be expected and any plant, machinery or lifts being incorporated within the roof structure;
5. the impact of the development within or conspicuous from the Green Belt on the rural amenities of the Green Belt by reason of its siting, materials or design;
6. the impact on the landscape of the proposed siting and appearance of new agricultural buildings or works or any other appropriate/exceptional development in the countryside.

Concern – Logmore Farm is a small holding and not a working farm. We would suggest that the quantum of development may be near (or even have exceeded) the over-development threshold.

POLICY RUD17 - FARM DIVERSIFICATION

The diversification of activities on agricultural units will be permitted provided that:

1. the scale and nature of the activity is commensurate with maintaining, and where possible improving, the character and appearance of the countryside;
2. new replacement activities should re-use existing buildings wherever possible but new building will be considered in exceptional circumstances;
3. the activities would not prejudice the protection of sites of ecological, historical or recreational value;
4. the character and setting of historic farm buildings is protected;
5. the amount of traffic likely to be generated by the proposal would not prejudice highway safety or cause significant harm to the environmental character of country roads.

Development for housing or industrial and commercial development will not normally be permitted unless acceptable under Policy RUD19.

Consent will be granted only for minimal advertising appropriate to a rural area.

Concern – same comments as for ENV23. Logmore Farm is a private dwelling with land, not a working farm. The existing and proposed development is not diversification but commercialisation.

POLICY RUD19 - RE-USE AND ADAPTATION OF RURAL BUILDINGS

The re-use and adaptation of buildings in the countryside will be permitted provided:

1. the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction and are capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction;
2. on land within the Green Belt, the proposal does not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it;
3. the associated uses of land surrounding the building(s) would not materially harm the character and amenities of the area and, in the case of sites within the Green Belt, conflict with the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it;
4. the proposed use and the form, bulk and general design of the building(s) are in keeping with their surroundings;
5. the conversion does not lead to dispersal of activity on such a scale as to prejudice town and village vitality;
6. the use can be contained within the building(s) without extension, or external storage, other than such provisions which can be made without any adverse effect on the building, its surroundings or, in the case of sites in the Green Belt, the openness of the Green Belt;
7. any conversion works will be carried out in a manner appropriate to the character of the building(s) and have no adverse impact on its surroundings;
8. the amount of traffic likely to be generated by the proposal would not prejudice highway safety or cause significant harm to the environmental character of country roads.

Where the Council has reasonable cause to believe that an applicant has attempted to abuse the system by constructing a new farm building with the benefit of permitted development rights, with the intention of early conversion to another use, it will investigate the history of the building to establish whether it was ever used for the purpose for which it was claimed to have been built.

Subsequent rebuilding of re-used buildings will not be permitted, and permitted development rights for extensions will be removed by condition.

Concern – the only rural building which we believe has been re-used under the current ownership is the late C19 barn next to the Logmore Farmhouse which was converted to ancillary residential use incorporating games room, studio and two guest bedrooms under MO/2004/0746. All other buildings are contemporary.

POLICY REC22 - CONFERENCE FACILITIES, HOTELS, GUEST HOUSES AND SIMILAR ACCOMMODATION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

The development of conference facilities and hotels in the countryside will not be permitted other than in accordance with Policies RUD17 and RUD19. Limited extensions to existing hotels, guest houses and similar forms of accommodation will only be permitted provided:

1. the size of the extension is not disproportionate relative to the size of the original building;
2. the scale and form of the extension is in keeping with the existing building and would not harm the openness of the Green Belt and rural character of the countryside;
3. the amount of traffic likely to be generated by the proposal would not prejudice highway safety or cause harm to the environmental character of country roads;
4. the development would not either individually or cumulatively be likely to give rise to further demands for accommodation which cannot be met within the building;
5. car parking is limited to that required for the reasonable operation of the proposed use and does not include off-airport parking for Gatwick Airport.

Proposals for new recreation facilities at existing hotels and similar establishments in the countryside will be permitted where the development would not harm the open character, appearance and tranquillity of the countryside.

Concern – same comments as for ENV 23 and RUD 17.

WVA urge MVDC to consider this application and planning history carefully. Our position is neutral in respect of this application but we feel that now is the time to ensure that conditions and protections are put in place to regularise and put a stop to further development in this sensitive location.

Yours sincerely,

James Leaver

Planning Lead, Westcott Village Association