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Planning Department

Mole Valley District Council

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Dear Sirs

MO/2021/0318

Old Bury Hill Fisheries, Old Bury Hill, Westcott, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 3JU Conversion of 2 No. existing barns to 2 No. residential dwellings with associated landscaping

I write in my capacity as planning lead for Westcott Village Association (WVA). WVA occasionally makes representations, as consultee, on behalf of the Westcott community, particularly where Westcott Neighbourhood Development Plan policy might be relevant.

A significant number of members of our community have aired significant concern in relation to this application which has been submitted in the middle of the summer holiday season. WVA has not therefore had the opportunity to meet to discuss the application.

Our initial concerns relate to the complex past planning history and the assertions being made by the applicant with respect to the viability of the fishing business. We cannot imagine

that further fragmentation of the estate would do anything to improve this position and we intend to look into this further.

The application site falls within:-

- Green Belt
- An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- An Area of Great Landscape Value

We understand that the most relevant Mole Valley policy context is therefore Policy CS13 – Landscape Character

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.

We believe the acceptability (or otherwise) of this application is probably marginal at best based on Policy CS13. We have not seen the evidence to suggest that it meets the “very special circumstances” required to make the case for development on the Green Belt as set out within the NPPF.

Based on this brief initial assessment we ask MVDC to refuse permission. If an extension of time can be provided until 1 September 2021 we will provide further justification.

Yours sincerely,

James Leaver
Planning Lead, Westcott Village Association