



WESTCOTT VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

Mr James Leaver



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Piers Mason, Head of Planning

Planning Department

Mole Valley District Council

Pippbrook

Dorking

Surrey, RH4 1SJ

3 July 2023

Dear Piers

**MO/2023/0188/OUT MAJOR – Sondes Place Farm, Westcott Road, Dorking**

Westcott Village Association has picked up that the applicant has lodged an appeal. The timing was fortuitous as we had the WVA AGM last Thursday evening and we were able to report this news and to gauge the feelings of our residents.

You will no doubt be aware that the applicant has also submitted a request to PINS for an appeal by the Inquiry procedure.

WVA hope that you would share the view that PINS should receive an immediate counter-request from MVDC for an appeal by written submissions instead.

WVA's thinking is:-

1. The applicant is pushing for a permission which needs to be determined through the current Local Plan. As such, no hearing is needed and an Inquiry would be a waste of public resources;
2. The applicant has not demonstrated that the scheme is necessary as the new Local Plan is not yet in place;
3. Whilst it is unfortunate that the pause in the Local Plan process might have brought on this application, it is still premature. The site should still be considered properly through the current draft Local Plan process. MVDC took this green belt site (and all other green belt sites) out of the draft Local Plan earlier this year in light of possible changes to the NPPF, particularly in relation to green belt, as a result of the current Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities consultation which is ongoing;
4. We still need to know what the Department's consultation will mean for Mole Valley;
5. In this context we believe the very special circumstances case presented by the applicant - striking the balance - is weak and it presents a series of proposed mitigations at best;
6. We cannot find a sustainability appraisal in the application or the appellant's statement of case. This means that a sequential approach which considers the relative merits of other green belt sites coming forward before this one has not been provided and very special circumstances could not therefore be demonstrated;
7. We think it would be positive if MVDC is able to confirm to PINS that it is taking a proactive approach and is in the process of reviewing all green belt sites in the draft Local Plan itself and that there is a programme for progressing the Local Plan.

Please confirm that MVDC shares WVA's recommendations and that, on behalf of MVDC, you will counter request for an appeal by written submissions only.

Yours sincerely,



James Leaver

Planning Lead, Westcott Village Association

CC Cllrs Budleigh, Magesh, Mursaleen-Plank for Mickleham, Westcott and Okewood. Cllrs Stephen Cooksey (Leader) and Margaret Cooksey (Planning)