

COMMITTEE DATE:	11 March 2021
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APPLICATION NO: RR/2019/1659/P: PGL (former Pestalozzi), Sedlescombe: Change of use of site from a use comprising conference, dining, administration & education facilities with associated accommodation, to a use comprising a residential training and educational activity centre; together with operational development including kitchen extension to existing building, extension to existing accommodation block, new accommodation blocks, tenting area, car and coach park, site access improvements and new coach passing places, outdoor activities structures, new activity pond, living acoustic fencing and parkland tree planting.

A further letter of objection has been received from the occupier of South Lodge, Cottage Lane. This also contains 38 pages of appendices. The letter can be viewed in full on the application website.

In Summary:

- Weight should be given to the volume of objections given that development plan policies on villages focus development that meets local needs.
- The development would result in an increased footprint some 42% over what has already been approved.
- Noise of hundreds of adults and children will travel across the open valley with the noise map showing it to have greatest impact on ancient woodlands.
- Volume of forecast jobs is relatively small and roles are primarily seasonal.
- Given the size of the village and the proximity of residential properties, the development will have an overbearing presence.
- Felling of numerous trees, increase in traffic, and poor public transport will not support a low carbon future.
- No cumulative noise assessment involving all guests has been provided and it has not been demonstrated that noise will not cause significant adverse effects.
- Proposal is not C2 class use but has strong emphasis on outside recreational activity
- Local tourism and community benefits arising from the development will be limited.
- Development contrary to Local Plan policies relating to countryside (RA2 RA3).
- Conflict with Planning policies designed to safeguard and enhance the AONB (EN1).
- Previous permission sought to achieve a higher design quality (EN3)
- Site location is not well-located in terms in terms of sustainable transport options.
- Use of proposed car park (noise, traffic fumes etc.) will impact on ancient woodland.
- DEC2 says that new holiday sites are unlikely to be satisfactorily accommodated locally due to constraints of AONB.
- Also, contrary to AONB policy DEC1 and DEC7, the latter of which relates to safeguarding 'dark skies'.
- Matters relating to pollution (noise, light and air) and harm to ancient woodland have been given insufficient weight.
- New built development would also be located close to ancient woodland and would impact.

- the application is 'major development' in the AONB and passes all of the Maurici principles.

- The *potential* for the development to cause significant adverse impact has already been acknowledged by the Secretary of State.

- There is no planning condition varying the capacity of guests/visitors throughout the year and approval would permit maximum occupancy 365 days through the year.

- An air quality assessment has not been undertaken. The nation and local list of planning application requirements suggests that a lighting assessment is required.

- A Green Infrastructure Masterplan has not been submitted with the application (DEN4(iv)).

- The fallback position (*implementing the remainder of the 2008 permission*) has been recognised as a material consideration but with no real discussion on how much weight can be attributed to it, including whether the implementation of the fallback position would be more or less harmful to the AONB.

- fallback position :

was not an increased footprint of buildings; included a car park for fewer vehicles and further from the ancient woodland; involved the planting of more trees; involved less traffic; had significantly less capacity; involved indoor education/activities; did not position large accommodation blocks 16.5m from ancient woodland; did not break-up the AONB with acoustic willow fencing that die-back in winter to reveal an underlying alien structure; did not involve the felling of over 20 grade A trees (*Clarification – the applicant has confirmed that none of these trees are required for removal to implement the current planning application – trees required for removal to implement the planning application are as set out in 7.6.43 and 7.6.44 of the report to Committee*); was centred around a village green and pond; did not result in levels of noise pollution and risks relating to ancient woodland; did not reduce the amount of semi-natural habitat; had an extensive ecological plan; previous owners worked alongside conservation groups.

- Standing advice from Natural England on ancient woodland says that proposed compensation measures should not be considered as part of the assessment of the merits of the proposal.

- The site is protected by two priority habitats and this development neither protect nor restores them.

- Wood pasture is protected as priority habitat and may also be ancient.

- There is no mention in the report of Sedlescombe village being a historic conservation area; the NPPF (189) requires a development proposal to take account of heritage assets and their setting.

- There are concerns there would be potentially further development if this is approved.

- Environmental Health previously identified noise disturbance as an issue on a site (*elsewhere*) used as a wedding venue for up to 150 guests.

- In conclusion the letter says: There are a significant number of weaknesses on how the planning recommendation has been determined and errors/oversights which even individually could justify reasons for refusal. On balance the application has not been determined in accordance with the development plan. There are more policies contravened than supported and material considerations have not been given appropriate weight.

The Appendices with the letter include: appeal decisions relating to a proposed car wash at a car sales site in Sedlescombe in which the Inspector identified potential noise issues; an appeal in relation to the use of domestic swimming pool at a

residential property for commercial purposes - identified as falling within class D2, as a leisure and recreation use; a planning refusal in relation to the use of agriculture land for the parking of two cars; an appeal decision relating to development in the green belt in which the Inspector found the development would impact on ancient woodland; and temporary planning permissions for activity bases (climbing tower /zip wire) that were previously granted at the Pestalozzi.

Comment: While the additional objection letter has been noted, the recommendation to members remains as set out in the planning report.