Jubilee House

Rushden Road

Sandon

Herts.

SG9 0QS

Ms. Melissa Tyler

Case Officer for Planning Application No. 18/00584/FP

Planning Department

North Herts District Council

4 May 2018

Dear Ms Tyler,

Planning Application Case Reference numbers Ref. No: 18/00584/FP and 18/00585/LBC

Diversification of Sandon Bury Farm to provide a wedding venue and internal alterations to Sandon Bury Farmhouse and Refurbishment of Black Barn

We write to oppose the above application and would like to make the following comments:

1. We do appreciate that over the years the Faure-Walkers have made a great contribution to the village and have every sympathy with them if the farm is struggling.
2. We accept that the farm may need to diversify and have no objection to that in principle.
3. However we feel that any changes made to the use of the buildings and farmyard must be appropriate for a small village setting and sympathetic to the surroundings because the site is located in the centre of the village in a heritage conservation area and borders on the landscape conservation area which provides a wildlife corridor important to sustaining the flora and fauna of the village and the surrounding area. Regretfully we do not feel that this proposal provides that.
4. We don't have any objections to the conversion of the house into a small country hotel and feel that could be a positive contribution to the village and surrounding area as over the years we have met a number of travellers from all over the world completing the Icknield Way Walk and looking for suitable comfortable accommodation in the area.

5. Our concern is with the use of the Black Barn as an events venue and the proposed scale of the venture. Suggestions as to possible alternative uses for the barn that would be a better fit for the village as a whole were made to the applicants when the previous (withdrawn) application was made However, the applicants confirmed that their preferred option was still that the barn's use should be as an events venue.
6. Like many other residents in the village, our concerns centre on noise, traffic and damage to the environment. We have read all the supporting documents at length and like others we feel that they are incomplete and inaccurate. So they cannot be relied upon. Rather than go into the details here we refer you to the detailed analysis provided by the Sandon Conservation Group that we fully concur with.
7. We moved to the village nearly 18 years ago and chose to live here because it was a small, peaceful and quiet village surrounded by open countryside. We wanted our daughter to learn more about the natural environment take an interest in it and value it. We chose our property specifically because it bordered a landscape conservation area and that would enable us to experience the wildlife first-hand, something neither of us had the opportunity to do as children. We do feel that it is very important to protect the landscape conservation area and prevent any development in it as that is the only protection that villages and countryside beyond the green belt have.
8. We are dismayed at the potential damage to the environment in the surrounding area that this venture could cause and struggle to understand why there appears to be far greater weight given to the conservation of the house and barn buildings than to the environment and the landscape character, especially in a Heritage Conservation Area. The two should surely go hand in hand. To damage areas that contain protected species, with no certainty that the proposed mitigations will ensure that the species is not harmed, simply in order to preserve those buildings by making use of them in this particular way, makes no sense at all. Nor does it make sense to put other areas in the vicinity that also contain protected habitat at risk or effectively reduce public access to Icknield Way, the oldest road in Britain, far older than either the house or barn, and prevent the public and the local residents from enjoying the peace and tranquility of the area. The proposed car park and removal of trees to the south of the site will have a major adverse impact on the visual landscape.
9. In terms of noise, we do feel that it will be impossible to prevent guests from wandering around outside 'after hours' and it is inevitable some noise will escape from the buildings themselves whatever the soundproofing. Nor can the noise from traffic be eliminated. This means the surrounding area will be subjected to increased noise, both from the venue and from the comparatively large increase in the volume of traffic on the roads, including over the weekend. At times this noise will continue throughout the night into the early hours of the morning. We feel that widening the scope of the proposed development to now be an all encompassing events venue increases the likelihood of villagers being disturbed by noise as does moving the entrance of the venue to the centre of the village. Given that at our property we could hear the noise from the annual fete, when it was held at Sandon Bury and the family weddings that took place in the Black Barn, we fully expect to hear noise from the venue and the increased road traffic. Whilst we would not complain about occasional events we do feel that regular events would be particularly intrusive to us, personally, and to the village and wildlife as a whole and it will have an observable adverse effect on everyone's quality of life. Living next door to the village school we very much value the peace and quiet of evenings and weekends.
10. As well as being necessary for wildlife, the darkness of the night sky is valued by those of us who are amateur astronomers and like to search the night sky. The light pollution caused by the venue will be damaging for all. Given that areas unpolluted by light are few and far between in the UK every attempt should be made to preserve those that do exist.
11. The amount of traffic going to and from the venue will greatly increase the risk of serious road accidents in and around the village. The roads in the area are narrow,

winding rural roads, often containing potholes, with no footpaths or lighting and surrounded by open countryside. Statistics show that mile for mile the risk of death in road accident is far greater on rural roads than on any other type of road. Common sense dictates that the more traffic on a road the more accidents that will occur. As it is more than likely that there will be surges in traffic just before an event begins and when the event ends late at night, common sense again suggests that it will be particularly dangerous at these times especially when it is dark or road conditions are poor. A recognised factor contributing to fatal accidents on rural roads is drivers driving too fast for the road conditions. Locals tend to know the roads they use quite well. Strangers travelling to and from the venue are not likely to know the roads at all so are at much greater risk of causing an accident, especially if their judgment is impaired by tiredness or alcohol/drugs.

12. It is not clear to us that there will be any overall economic benefit to the village or North Hertfordshire. Whilst there might be a few villagers benefitting from jobs at the venue it is equally likely that other jobs in the village will disappear. Also there are plenty of similar jobs to those likely to be offered at the venue already available in the area whilst there are few available that are similar to those that could be lost. In order to encourage young people to stay in the area we feel that it is far more important to be offering them opportunities to learn a skilled trade so that they can eventually earn sufficient to be able to afford to live in the village unsupported.
13. Similarly whilst it is no longer clear whether this is the case or not, if there is any intention to offer the venue up for village use when it is not being used, there will be very limited opportunities for the villagers to make use of the venue if the venue is successful and any such opportunities are likely to be on days of the week which are not likely to be popular.

We trust that you will fully consider our points and look forward to receiving details of your decision on this planning application in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Derek & Lydia Pollard