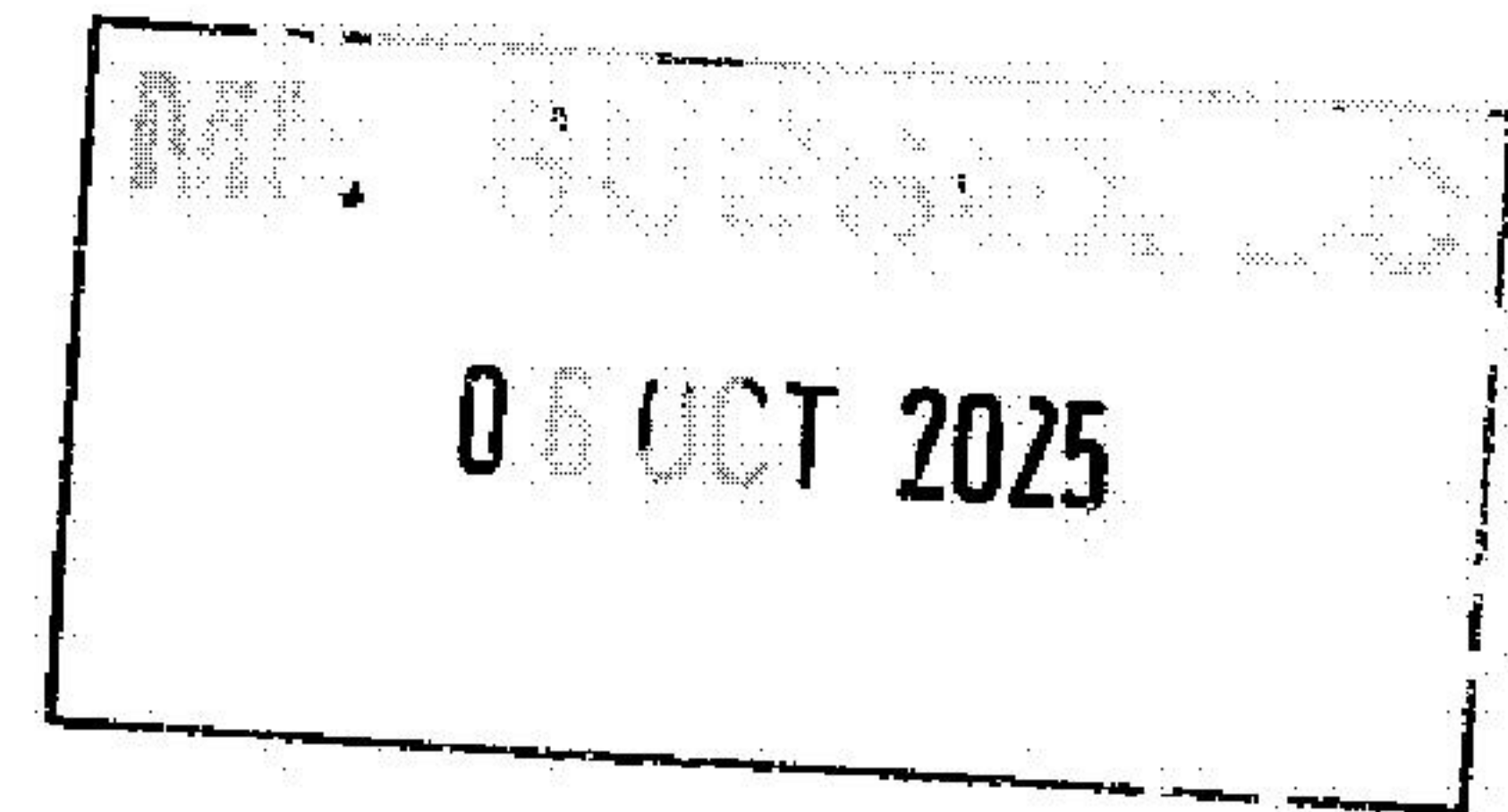


Mid Sussex District Council
Planning – FAO Stefan Galyas
Oaklands
Oaklands Road
Haywards Heath
RH16 1SS



1st October 2025

Dear Mr. Galyas,

Reinstatement of observatory tower, proposed construction of orangery and associated works, including removal of hanging tiles.

Stonehurst, Selsfield Road, Ardingly, Haywards Heath, West Sussex. RH17 6TN

Planning ref: DM/25/2231

I refer to the above planning application, which is made on behalf of Mr. Laurence Tonna (the applicant), by Whaleback Ltd (the agent).

My name is [REDACTED] and I own and occupy the neighbouring property 'Many Waters', Selsfield Road, Ardingly RH17 6TN. I wish to **OBJECT** in the strongest possible terms with relation to the above proposal.

In summary, I object for the following reasons: -

- The proposed tower would form a tall and obtrusive development, significantly detracting from the visual amenity of the surrounding Grade II Listed Registered Park and the High Weald National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).
- This proposal follows a previous Planning Application on the site for a smaller tower. There have been no material changes in planning circumstances since the time of this application being considered, that would warrant a different view being taken. Further, due to the proposed tower now being taller, the impacts of the proposal will be greater than those previously considered. I wish to highlight the Council's previous comment that *"regardless of the architectural accuracy of the replacement tower, modern planning policy and the protection of the visual amenity and character of the AONB will receive greater priority and weight in this determination than a historic and long-absent precedent"*.
- The proposed tower, by reason of its scale, form, height and position would have a detrimental effect on the residential amenities of my neighbouring property and gardens through the creation of increased overlooking and loss of privacy.

(i) Planning Policy

It is a requirement that all planning applications must comply with relevant planning policies of the Development Plan. At the local level, the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 provides the most up-to-date local planning policy context. Mid Sussex District Council also have relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance in the form of **Design Guide SPD, November 2020**.

(ii) The proposal

This planning application seeks planning permission to reinstate the former observatory tower to Stonehurst – which is a residential dwelling, located within a Grade II Listed Registered Park and the High Weald National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or AONB). It is noteworthy that Stonehurst is not a Listed building.



Fig 2. Proposed West Elevation – Current Proposal

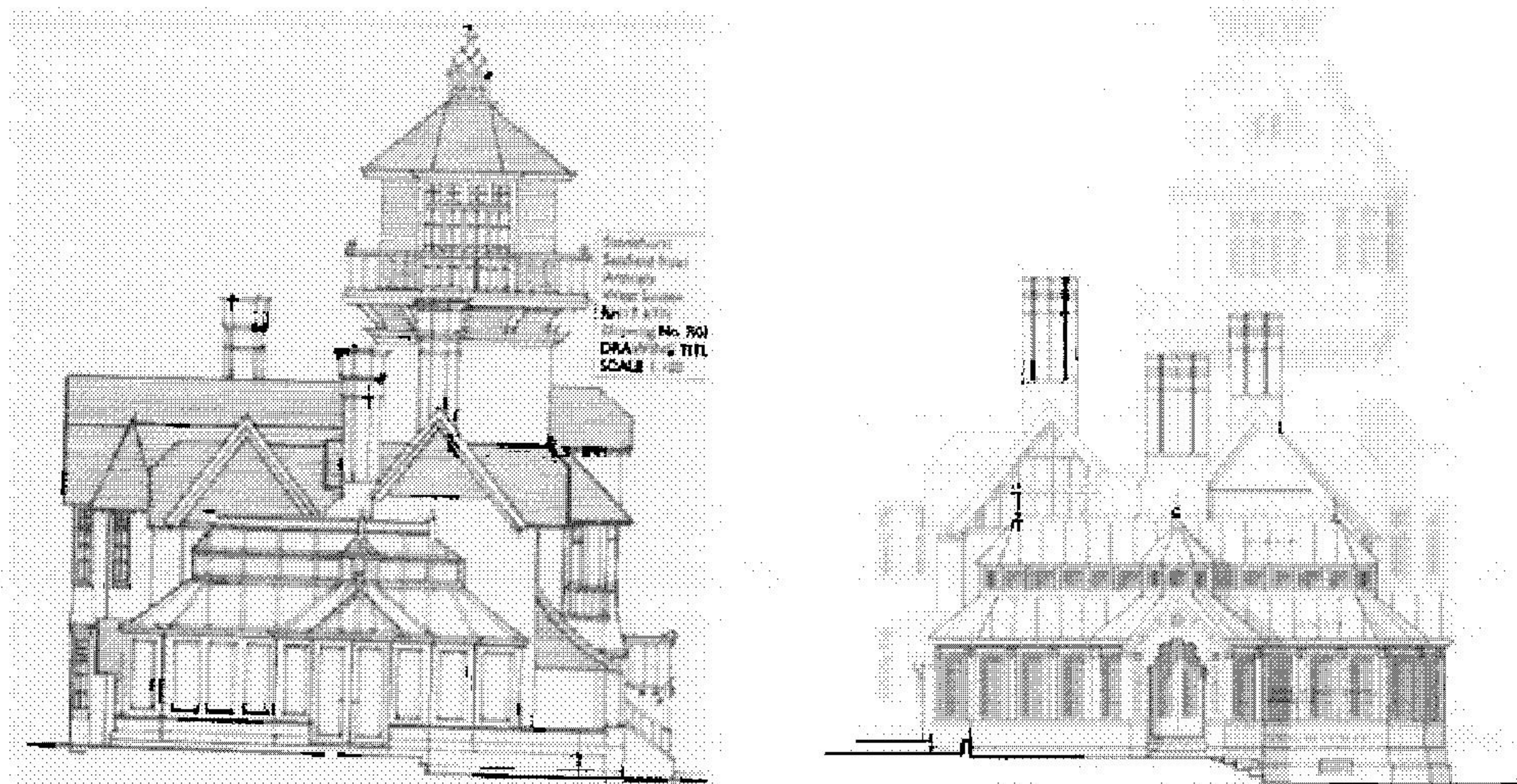


Fig 3. Proposed South Side Elevation – Refused and Current Proposal

The Applicant's Planning Agent argues within their Planning and Heritage Statement that "reinstating of the tower and the orangery will return the visual and external appearance of the house as it was originally intended. The house was built on an elevated plateau offering extensive views to the north, east and south. The design of the house intended to maximise this exceptional location through the extensive fenestration on the east elevation, the wide terrace but also importantly the tower offering different levels of views. The orangery also provided views to the south from an enclosed situation which was likely welcome in winter". They also contest that "the heritage value of the building and registered parkland is currently harmed by the absence of the original tower and the incongruous, exposed base of the tower currently in its place. Former historic views of the grounds and beyond, as intended by the original designers, cannot be appreciated. The tower is described within the Stonehurst RPG listing as "a large, multi-staged tower with a balcony, that would have provided extensive views over the surrounding landscape"."

I strongly contest the above arguments. The proposed tower dates back to the early 20th, before being reduced in size (see photograph dated 1926) and later entirely removed. There have been significant differences to the site and its surroundings during this period, as well as many material changes in planning circumstances, which restrict the reinstatement of this tower, and lend weight to my view that the tower feature is no longer an appropriate feature that should be reinstated to Stonehurst.

Stonehurst House is not a Listed Building and as such, neither was the original tower. It is considered that reinstating the watch tower would not restore any architectural integrity. The tower would merely serve to increase the size and dominance of this property.

The property already has an observatory, which provides views of the sky.

It is accepted that the previously refused tower was perhaps not entirely historically accurate, whereas the Applicant's Planning Agent argues that the current proposal is. Notwithstanding this point, the Council stated at the time of the previous refusal (ref: 07/03885/FUL) that "regardless of the architectural accuracy of the replacement tower, modern planning policy and the protection of the visual amenity and character of the AONB will receive greater priority and weight in this determination than a historic and long-absent precedent".

The Planning Officer went on to note that *"Local Plan policies C4 and H13 seek to ensure developments conserve and enhance the AONB and do not detract from its visual quality and essential characteristics. Policy H13 explicitly states that 'proposals should be appropriate in their setting and not obtrusive in the landscape' and the Council considers that every effort should be made to protect the AONBs from potentially obtrusive development, particularly on exposed sites which are visible from long distances (C4, para 3.38)".* Although the policies referred to are now withdrawn, the current Mid Sussex District Plan includes policies that replicate the thrust and intentions of these broad policy requirements, which quite simply this revised submission also fails to comply with.

In addition, the previously refused tower measured 7m in height above the existing protruding base, giving a gross height of 10m above the roof apex. The current proposal is significantly taller, measuring 23.3m above the terrace level, and circa 11m above the existing tower base. It is my opinion that the proposed tower would appear out of context within the building and surrounding rural landscape, within is located within a Grade II Listed Registered Park and the High Weald National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or AONB). The tower would be highly visible from surrounding areas.

The proposed height of the tower would appear completely out of context with the present landscape of the surrounding area, significantly detracting from the visual amenity of the surrounding Grade II Listed Registered Park and the High Weald National Landscape. There is no residential built form within the immediately surrounding area that is of comparable height, with the only buildings consisting of churches, Gatwick Airport or Haywards Heath Commercial Office Blocks by the railway station.

Although the property has views of its own grounds and the surrounding area already, this would significantly exacerbate the situation. The erection of an unsightly tower for the benefit of long-range views seems wholly unnecessary and will certainly have a detrimental impact upon the privacy of neighbouring properties. In particular we raise concerns that the height and position of the tower would allow direct view into Many Waters' gardens and neighbouring habitable windows, including children's bedrooms. This would result in an unacceptable relationship with neighbouring properties, with the proposal causing demonstrable harm to the residential amenities of neighbouring properties by way of overlooking effect and loss of privacy.

The Council reiterated this view at the time of the previously refused application, noting that *"the height of the proposed tower at 20m above ground would be unparalleled in the local area and would visually dominate a large area of the AONB landscape. Stonehurst is positioned on an exposed ridge and the full scale of the proposed tower would be highly visible from across the Cob Brook valley to settlements in the distance, as well as the nearby rural bridleway (2Ar) 115m east of Stonehurst and the listed garden in which it sits. The proposed use of the tower would be as an observation platform including an external wrap-around balcony. The occurrence of electric lights and activity in this prominent position, particularly at night, would create a very conspicuous and additional obstruction in the landscape, significantly detracting from the visual quality of the AONB as viewed from much of the surrounding countryside"*. It should be further acknowledged that the current proposal is even taller and as such, all of the above issues will be exacerbated as a result of the development.

At the time of the previous refusal, the Planning Officer concluded that *"because of this highly visible and dominating position in the landscape, any additional development, particularly above the existing height of this property would need to be of exceptional design and quality to a degree that would enhance both the architectural character of the building and the natural beauty and visual quality of the AONB"*.

I am of the opinion that there have been no material changes in circumstances since the time of this application being considered that would warrant a different view being taken. Further, it cannot be denied that the tower currently proposed is taller than that previously refused and as such, the impacts of the proposal will be greater than those previously considered. The proposed tower would not be of an exceptional design and quality and would neither preserve or enhance the architectural character of the building or the natural beauty and visual quality of the High Weald National Landscape. Finally, I would agree with the Council's previous comment that *"regardless of the architectural accuracy of the replacement tower, modern planning policy and the protection of the visual amenity and character of the AONB will receive greater priority and weight in this determination than a historic and long-absent precedent"*.

Other Matters

I am of the opinion that some of the information contained within the supporting statements is misleading. The Planning and Heritage statement states that the pleasure grounds are split between the applicant and Many Waters; in fact the applicant owns only the gardens around the house amounting to c 7-10 acres - whereas Many Waters owns a 300-acre holding that operates as a conservation project curating the pleasure grounds, the SSSI and part of the scheduled monument. We would also raise concerns that pictures of our property, Many Waters, have been included within the Planning Application submission without permission.

To confirm, the original Stonehurst estate was separated in 2002 - the main house sold with a couple of cottages. The cottages along the Selsfield road sold separately as did the Holt, as well as Fulling Mill Farm. I (Mr. McCaig) bought the land and cottage at Many Waters and have since carried out considerable conservation projects and believe have taken the property on considerably working with Natural England and other interested stakeholders.

The author of the Planning and Heritage Statement had no access to any of the land outside of the Stonehurst gardens and presumably neither did the owner who also has no access rights.

(v) Summary

I conclude that the proposed addition to Stonehurst is ill conceived. The proposed tower would form a tall and obtrusive development, significantly detracting from the visual amenity of the

surrounding Grade II Listed Registered Park and the High Weald National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or AONB).

The proposed tower would not be of an exceptional design and quality and would neither preserve or enhance the architectural character of the building or the natural beauty and visual quality of the High Weald National Landscape.

I wish to again reiterate the previous Planning Officer's views, that *"regardless of the architectural accuracy of the replacement tower, modern planning policy and the protection of the visual amenity and character of the AONB will receive greater priority and weight in this determination than a historic and long-absent precedent"*.

The proposed tower, by reason of its scale, form, height and position would have a detrimental effect on the residential amenities of neighbouring gardens and properties by way of overlooking effect and loss of privacy.

In my opinion, the proposal will conflict with established local and national planning policies and guidance. It is therefore respectfully requested that the application be refused.

I trust the above comments will be taken into consideration in the determination of the application. If the Councils Planning Department requires any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Many Waters,
Selsfield Road,
Ardingly
RH17 6TN