**St. Francis Fields, Northiam**

**Report from SFF CIC to the SFF Committee 29th July 2022**

**Planning applications for change of use for the Stables and Hub and for the proposed Natural Burial Ground (NBG)**

The SFF Committee is requested to note and agree the following:-

**1. Current situation**

A change of use is required from the overall current use class, sui-generis, to new use class F for the Stables and the NBG and use class E for the Hub.

These should be treated as separate projects and the subject of separate applications so any difficulties with one do not compromise approval of the others and so as not to complicate any future changes of use on the estate.

**2. Highways**  
The initial response to the pre-application advice requested by SFF CIC from ESCC Highways indicates that access issues in respect of the NBG are unlikely to be a problem. Further information has been requested and provided and a response is awaited.

With respect to the Stables and the Hub, we believe that with further information to be provided, success from a Highways point of view may be regarded as possible but with no guarantee at this stage.

**3. Planning**  
The RDC Planning Officer has written to the SFF CIC about the proposed change of use of the stables: -  
*“I do not think we would object to the proposal, subject to hours and levels of activity and ensuring that there is adequate parking for all users of the site including the equestrian business. Any application, as well as clear site and block plans detailing the buildings/land and uses of should also include details of how the business is operated, how many people at any one time, hours of use and any other activities undertaken/proposed.”*

The fee for change of use application for the stables will be £231 which takes account of the 50% reduction because the applicant will be NPC. This is likely to be the level of the planning application fees for each of the other two applications.

**4. Recommendation**  
The CIC recommends that, given the overall responses, it is worth proceeding with the current Highways pre-application consultations for all three projects. If there is no significant change from the Department’s initial responses following delivery of the further information requested, we are likely to recommend three separate planning applications being progressed with the appointment of technical consultants needed to provide supporting information for each one. We will provide a further paper about the next stage of the process in due course.

**5, Authorisation**

As a first step, the SFF Committee is requested to authorize a budget of up to £1,000 plus VAT for a Tier 1 Geo-environmental Survey to be undertaken now. This will be required to support the planning application for the proposed Natural Burial Ground and should be paid for from the Donsmead Section 106 Agreement fund.