

I have submitted comments on all the Tournerbury Woods (TW) planning applications and CLEUDS for change of use since 2018, and before that applications in 2012, 2017, 2020 and 2021 to construct an alternative access track to avoid Tournerbury Farm. These were generally responses to inconsistencies, contradictions and mistakes rather than objecting to the wedding venue as a whole. I stand by everything I have said before, but was surprised to find that the current application appears to be identical to the first version of APP/23/00076 in August 2023, with no updates for the different circumstances that exist now two years later. There is no new covering letter, nor a Havant Borough Council (HBC) planning officer's report, although there are at least new public comments submitted in November and December 2025. At the risk of repeating myself interminably, there are five aspects I wish to address now.

1) Legal agreement to change right of way to & from Tournerbury Woods to alternative access track

When APP/23/00076 was first granted planning permission in August 2023, there seemed to be a reasonable expectation that a like-for-like swap of the old right of way through Tournerbury Farm (TFarm) for a new right of way bypassing it was not only an achievable goal in terms of an agreement between the Applicant and TFarm's owners, but something required as a condition of granting the permission at all. The Decision Report of August 2023 Condition 2 states that no wedding and events can take place until the new access route via Tournerbury Lane had been completed and made available.

Many writers in favour of the TW wedding business seem to be convinced that the failure to get the right of way (RoW) swap finalised has been the sole fault of the people who donated their own land, time and money to build 90% of the new track to a much better, wider, more attractive and safer standard than the old, single lane, agricultural farm track over which a RoW was granted when the Farm was sold to them in 1987. At that time there was almost no traffic of any sort into or out of the Woods. The new track provides good visibility and ample passing places for large vehicles and coaches, unlike the original track. Whilst the TFarm owners have been repeatedly accused of stubbornness, making ransom demands and bribery to finalise the deal, all based on cruel and unproven hearsay, there are also many additional background factors not in the public domain causing the impasse between the two parties. Historical deeds drawn up decades ago have played a big part in the reluctance of the Applicant, not the TFarm owners, to go ahead with switching over from one RoW to the other. Streams of excuses and demands have been put forward to delay or refuse the swap, some of them marginally convincing but the majority without any merit. For example, would "control" of the new 3.75 m wide grass verges along the new track that the Applicant has repeatedly demanded actually make any difference to his access to the Woods? The verges are not required for overtaking or passing as the width for that has been provided along the main track, they will be mowed regularly with machinery used at the adjacent golf course, and new trees are to be planted for landscaping on one side; the other is currently occupied by brambles. There is, very reasonably, to be no right to park on the verges, or to picnic or barbecue or camp. There was no "control over grass verges" on the original track as there was insufficient width for any realistic verges to exist. Nevertheless, the Applicant continues to demand control over the new track's grass verges, again and again.

Finally, in 2024, after years and years of attempts and negotiations the TFarm owners gave up in despair and notified the Applicant that the offer to use their new track had been withdrawn. The final 10% of the new track, which could have been completed within weeks once a deal had been legally agreed, remains unfinished to avoid wasting any more resources on a valuable and cost free (to the Applicant) opportunity that could even now still materialise with his full and express commitment to use it. None of this current status quo has been referenced anywhere in the new application, giving the misleading impression that the potential to switch to the new track is the same as it was in 2023. Was this a deliberate omission?

2) The NPA and Planning Permission Condition 2, APP/23/00076, August 2023

The other major obstacle to transferring wedding traffic to the new track has been a Non Prosecution Agreement (NPA) issued by HBC to the Applicant on 9 May 2022 at a time of numerous unresolved appeals against planning permission refusals and deferments. It allows the recipient to ignore any planning conditions or, indeed, the need for planning permission at all by guaranteeing immunity against enforcement and stop notices. No one at HBC seems to be willing to explain why this highly controversial NPA was offered, how common they are in this or other local authorities, nor how biased, unfair and possibly unlawful they might be. NPAs make a complete mockery of any kind of planning law, and show a worrying lack of impartiality that one should surely be able to expect from a local planning authority.

Thus, the Applicant has been able to continue booking and undertaking weddings in the same uncontrolled manner as before the planning permission meeting without any fear of sanction, using the original track through TFarm regardless of Condition 2 (see Para 1 above) which expressly prevented him from doing exactly that. The NPA will continue to remain in force until the previous planning application, APP/21/01301, deferred in December 2022, is finally resurrected and determined one way or another. This in turn cannot happen until both the current round of APP/23/00076 and the CLEUD application APP/19/01626 have been determined too, so, effectively, there is no end date to this hugely convenient advantage conferred on the Applicant. In addition to getting the green light to run a lucrative but illegal business in a fictitious, self declared "Business Enterprise Area" within an SSSI for the last 12 years (such areas do not exist in SSSIs), the Applicant has also been allowed to avoid paying any business rates, unlike other proper businesses.

3) Linking the new TFarm alternative access track to existing Northern Track inside Tournerbury Woods

Apart from finishing off the final 10% of the new TFarm track referred to above, various roadworks need to be undertaken on the Woods side of the boundary before heavy volumes and weights of wedding traffic could pass seamlessly between the two. This stretch of 300 m or so between the boundary ditch to the west, and the old track at the eastern end, is known as the Northern Track.

The Applicant has provided many different stories as to the status of the Northern Track over the years. In 1999/2000 during a dispute over a separate RoW to Woods Cottage, it was alleged that it, amongst others, was a soft dirt track which could not be upgraded under SSSI regulations. [REDACTED]

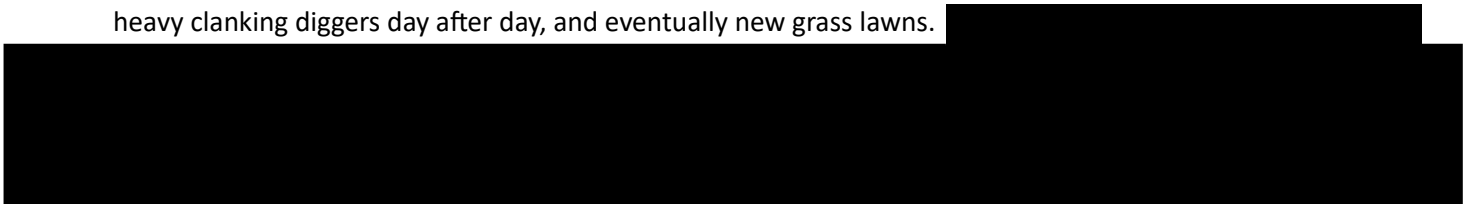
[REDACTED] Although I cannot be sure when the North Track was upgraded, it could well have been during the major re-landscaping years 2012 to 2013, when huge quantities of road building material was driven into the Woods through Tournerbury Farm in massive haulage lorries. Mini mountains of material were stacked along the eastern edge of Wood Field, a.k.a Christopher's scrap yard; other loads were dropped directly in spots throughout the "business enterprise area", ie. the wedding venue area, and for which there are several dated photographs as evidence. In May 2020 an enormous pile of rubble appeared at the southern entrance to the Woods making access impossible, then vanished a few weeks later, suggesting possible roadworks. In March 2023 the Applicant's ecological consultant Holbury's reported the track had been in use since 1938 and was in regular use at the current time for agriculture and forestry management. [REDACTED]

Holbury's report claimed the track comprised a solid foundation of brick and hardcore over which vehicular traffic could safely pass; thus there was no need for an upgrade so no new materials would need to be

imported; and that the same length of track had been inspected by HBC tree officers in 2017 who had reached the same conclusion. The Holbury opinion is not shared by Professor Raper who believes the survey criteria and the two shallow trial holes inadequate for proving the true condition of the track down to an essential sub-base layer. I understand there are industry test standards that have to be met before high tonnage vehicles, such as fire engines, can safely drive over a given surface, standards that were referenced by the Applicant whilst TFarm were building their track on the other side of the boundary. If Professor Raper is right, it will be necessary to once again start re-importing into TW the roadbuilding materials required. I do know for sure that the old ditch between the two properties was casually infilled with clay and loose hardcore in late 2024, but with no supervision or authority to do so, as usual.

4) Environmental damage in Tournerbury Woods

There can only be a handful of people alive who witnessed first hand the extraordinary transformation from 2011/2012 of a large, wild, and untouched part of Tournerbury Woods to the northwest of Woods Cottage into a substantial and well manicured wedding venue, and I was one of them. My memories of different stages of the landscaping are still sharp and vivid – tree clearance and earthworks, noisy haulage lorries, heavy clanking diggers day after day, and eventually new grass lawns.



Twelve years later I am much more aware of the significance of the SSSI, SPA, Ramsar and National Landscape designations and the serious damage that has been done to this precious and protected environment as a result of the Applicant's ambitions to create a mud-free wedding venue on a muddy bit of land, without permission, or admission (until recently). There is now much guilt on my part at not having done more to intervene in these activities while they could still have been modified or stopped, but there it is. It is a relief however that there is such a good collection of other definitive evidence available now, from the deep indents around the few remaining mature trees, some dead but still standing, on the marquee and West lawns (ring fencing), the visible difference in ground height between the original Cottage pottery workshop/garage (at pre-works ground level) and the Love Deck (at post-works ground level), about 6 metres apart, and not least, the comprehensive body of research work undertaken by Professor Raper, with a brilliant pictorial timeline of tree and vegetation cover before, during and after the landscaping works. Additional detail as to what was there before, such as the original size and position of the Woods Cottage curtilage boundary, before the Business Enterprise Area had been artificially invented, can be found in the 1961/2 Ecological Survey and Report by John Savidge. This curtilage remained unchanged until at least 1999 when the south western corner of the so called Business Enterprise Area, which had been used as an illegal waste dumping site since 1995, was formally, and successfully, stopped by DEFRA. The waste that had been deposited was allowed to be used as the base for West Lawn as it was completely unsuitable for sea wall defence work. I commented on these issues at length in my statement for APP/19/01262; there are maps and plans. It may well be the case that the creation of West Lawn at higher than original ground level provided the inspiration for the creation of the main wedding venue later, but there is no evidence for this.

Whilst I am more doubtful than the Saving Tournerbury Woods group that the vegetation and original ecosystems buried and lost under hundreds of tons of crushed concrete can ever be resuscitated successfully, I do feel it is important that some sort of punitive action should be taken against the Applicant so as to discourage any other developer relying on the Tournerbury Woods model as a precedent for similar attempts at development in another SSSI elsewhere in the UK. There is also the question of how much extra damage would be done in the course of digging up and removing the huge quantities of material that should never have been imported into the Woods in the first place.

5) Camping

I submitted an objection to overnight wedding camping in Tournerbury Woods for APP/23/00076 in August 2023, and have even greater concerns about this now in 2026. Climate change has arrived all over the world at a terrifying rate since 2023, with the UK affected by extremely hot dry weather for months on end in 2025, and the same forecast for 2026. Wildfires broke out in numerous parts of southern Britain's countryside last summer and spread with terrifying speed and intensity over large areas of open and forested land. The potential for this to happen in Tournerbury Woods, possibly resulting in the complete obliteration of the woodland, must be extremely high too, yet there has never been an official environmental impact or fire risk assessment to date. Indeed it is quite possible the Fire Safety Officer has no idea that camping operations at the wedding venue are under consideration at all, and that fire risk was limited to the marquee and flammable buildings, which have been assessed. Not only is the proposed camping site in a heavily wooded area with potentially tinder dry leaf litter, but the campers involved will be happy, carefree wedding guests who may have been drinking heavily all day long and who intend to continue partying well into the night. They will have been given a leaflet on arrival in the morning, still sober, asking them to be careful to not start fires, but late on in the day it is debatable how much notice anyone would take of these. There is meant to be a limit of 88 camping pitches a year, but no explanation of how many pitches would be allowed per night. As before, this limit can be conveniently ignored by virtue of the NPA, therefore another pointless addition to the planning Conditions if permission is granted next time around.

6) Summary

Like other interested parties I have spent a great deal of time on research, correspondence, documentation and meetings for the interminable series of disputes, planning applications and appeals on Tournerbury Woods since 2012, with nothing worthwhile to show for it, and still no clarity as to whether or not an authorised wedding and events venue will ever be allowed. By now I have all but given up hope of an outcome for Tournerbury Woods based on fair play and honesty which everyone in the local community can trust, believe in and support unconditionally. I have therefore now decided to support PLANNING REFUSAL for APP/23/00076, for APP/21/01301, for APP/19/01262 and any other outstanding planning matters. Firstly, to both publicise and to terminate the shameful NPA that has ruined everything, and contributed so significantly to the delays, dithering and uncertainty. Secondly, to bring about the permanent closure of the Tournerbury Woods wedding and events venue as a failed venture. In another location it might have worked, but not this one. The owner of Tournerbury Woods should be obliged to repair the massive amount of damage he has caused and should be made to work relentlessly to re-create as quickly as possible a new and beautiful natural environment to replace the one that once thrived there.

It is also important that, whatever the actual outcome of the remaining and deferred planning, CLEUD and appeal applications, that a new, workable, co-ordinated and consistent management plan for the Tournerbury Woods SSSI is produced soon and actively supervised at regular intervals by all of the authorities involved - Natural England, the Environment Agency, Chichester Harbour Conservancy and whatever Havant Borough Council becomes when amalgamated with Hampshire County Council. It should not be too difficult these days to ensure that any one individual making a site visit records and dates his findings accurately, then copies this information by e-mail to everyone else involved so that there is no scope for failing to know whether the plan is being adhered to, or not. The information should be available to the public as well to enable lobbying when things are going wrong. The days of relying on self-reporting by a self interested owner should be brought to an end; there was too much scope for misinformation and misunderstanding leading to troubling loopholes and avoidable errors in the past.