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16 November 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

Ashburnham Estate – Ninfield Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan

I write as the Land Agent for, and on behalf of, the Ashburnham Estate. The Estate was surprised that, according to your website, when preparing the neighbourhood plan for Ninfield 'the Working Group notified landowners of the possibility of using the neighbourhood plan to designate their sites of local green spaces', which for Ashburnham Estate directly effects Coombe Wood. For the avoidance of doubt we did not receive such notification from the Working Group, nor were any consultations undertaken with the Estate about designation or use of Coombe Wood by members of the community.

Coombe Wood is not an 'open' green space, nor has it any designated public rights of way through or around the woodland. There has been an inference that access appears to be 'tolerated' in Coombe Wood and we would like to remind you that this is not, nor has it ever been, correct. Anyone accessing the woodland without permission from the estate is trespassing. The woodland is under our Forestry Commission approved Woodland Management Plan: we regularly carry out forestry operations to remove trees affected by ash die back and generate wood products that are sold. The Ashburnham Estate also has a shoot let to a local farmer with rights over Coombe Wood. Therefore, public access is disadvantageous for the Estate, potentially dangerous for residents, and we have not sought to encourage this in any way (as the many signs, sadly regularly defaced by residents, will demonstrate). We do acknowledge that various people have trespassed over Coombe Wood but this is not something willingly tolerated by the Estate.

We would like to put on record that we do not believe the Ashburnham Estate has been consulted about the possibility of designating Coombe Wood as a local green space, and we do not acknowledge your position that access is 'tolerated' through the woodland. We would like the local community to be reminded that the wood is privately owned and that residents should not be trespassing on private land.

Yours faithfully

[REDACTED]

Senior Associate Director
Strutt and Parker
For and on behalf of the Ashburnham Estate

