

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE OF URCHFONTS PARISH COUNCIL held on Wednesday 10 June 2015 at 7:00pm in the Conference Room of Urchfont Village Hall **Being item A on the agenda of the Full Council Meeting.

Present: Acting Planning Chair Cllr: Dave Mottram. Cllrs: Day, Donald, Gibb, Mitchell, Stephens, Thomas & Planning Administrator S Johnston.

Also present: Parish Clerk B Lunn, Wiltshire Cllr. Philip Whitehead & 9 members of the public (including the Applicant and his Agent) as detailed in the Full Council Minutes.

Cllr Mottram welcomed all present and opened the meeting by reminding Committee Members that they should look at planning applications within the context of the 6 criteria laid down in the new Policy Planning Document. **Namely:** Scale of development; Visual impact upon the surrounding area; Relationship to adjoining properties; Design - bulk, height and general appearance; Environmental /Highway impact; Car parking.

1. Apologies for absence received: Cllr. Clifton-Page

2. Declarations of Interest: 5a) Pecuniary Interest declared by Simon Holt; acting as Agent for Detailed Surveys. 5a) Pecuniary Interest declared by Cllr. Andy Stephens.

3. Minutes of a meeting held on 13 May 2015 were signed as a true record. Proposed by Cllr Mitchell, Seconded by Cllr Day; agreed unanimously.

4. Matters arising from those Minutes: None

5. Plans for discussion

a) **15/04348/FUL** - Full Planning Application for the erection of a Building for Grain Drying and Storage at Rookery Farm, Crooks Lane, Urchfont, Devizes, Wilts., SN10 4RY; for J. Snook & Sons Ltd.

To date, 2 letters of representation ref. this application, had been received by WC Planning Office/UPC.

** Item 5.a) Pecuniary interest (DPI) declared by Cllr. Stephens in land close to the application to be considered:- In his role as Planning Chair, Cllr. Mottram informed those present that the Parish Clerk had reviewed the criteria for granting a dispensation to Cllr Stephens to allow him to participate in the business of the Parish Council regarding this application. Under the delegated authority granted within the Council Standing Orders (12 February 2014 version) Para: 53, the Parish Clerk granted a dispensation for Cllr Stephens to participate in the Parish Council debate and vote on Planning Application 15/0348/FUL - Erection of building for grain drying. This dispensation given specifically that Cllr Stephens might generally represent the interests of people living in the Parish; not to represent any personal interest or views that he himself may have as a result of land detailed in his DPI declaration.

** Cllr. Mottram adjourned the planning meeting for public participation:

Statement given by Louise Dandy, resident of Urchfont:-

Ms Dandy supports all necessary agricultural development in the countryside but has concerns regarding the plans for the proposed grain drying building, as well as the ethics regarding the agent for this application being an Urchfont Parish Councillor and also Chairman of its Planning Committee. She thought it crucial that all members on the Planning Committee (or any other) be seen to make informed decisions with complete transparency, as any lack of trust from members of the public could undermine all the hard work of Urchfont Planning Committee. She had assumed a Parish Council's Code of Conduct (and the Local authorities) would preclude a serving Councillor from accepting such a contract.

** Cllr Mottram suspended public participation to inform those present that Simon Holt had declared his pecuniary interest to the Parish Clerk and no legal reason had been found to disallow him, as a Chartered Surveyor, from accepting work contracts within the Parish.

** Wiltshire Cllr Philip Whitehead pointed out that this procedure was no different from any local councillor or MP having/declaring a conflict of interest with an issue being debated. It was accepted that councillors generally would have other interests, both personal and pecuniary and that the procedure was to declare it and take no further part in the decision making.

** Cllr. Mottram resumed public participation:

Ms Dandy resumed her statement, saying that although there was an established need by the farmer for a grain drying facility, she thought this application lacked the necessary technical information and photo

montage needed for both UPC and the public to make an informed judgement on its position, size, interior/exterior lighting, effect on wildlife and the degree of noise/vibration close neighbours and visitors to the Cemetery would experience when the dryer was working at full capacity. She felt it also did not make clear why the original, smaller building applied for was not now considered adequate.

Statement given by Mr Simon Holt, Agent for the application:-

Mr Holt showed slides of the proposed Grain Dryer and a Dryer for which planning consent already exists. The building for the proposed dryer has a smaller footprint, achieved by increasing the height by 5.4m. This building will measure 32.794m x 34.700m, rising to 8.7m to the eaves. Had height remained at existing consent, it is estimated the building would have to be increased to approx twice the size of that proposed in this application. If built on this site; it is estimated the building would be in excess of 130m from the nearest residential building. If built in Crooks Lane; an estimated 80m from the nearest residence in Foxley Fields and, if built at Newsyde; 40 & 65m from the nearest 2 houses. Put in scale, Mr Holt estimates it will be 5.1m lower than the top of Urchfont Church.

At 160m from the proposed dryer, Mr Holt opined the noise level would be 48 decibels, equating to the sound of a modern day library, or the lowest limit of urban ambient sound: essentially background noise. Prevailing wind during July/August is usually S/Westerly, which he believed would take away any noise from residences in the direction of Lydeaway. Earlier readings had been taken at an Alvan Blanch Grain Drier in Berwick Basset, with the wind blowing towards the db measuring device. Readings were as follows: At 20 metres (m) 70 decibels (db); / At 50 m 64 db; / At 80 m 55 db; / At 100 m 51 db; / At 160 m 45 db; / At 180 m 43 db

Vehicular access to the site is set within the 30mph limit and beyond the last residential building South of the B3098. The majority of lorries carrying grain away from the Dryer will leave in an Easterly direction, therefore minimising nuisance to Urchfont village.

The existing consent for a still current application is supported by the following Planning documents and, in Mr Holt's opinion, sets a precedent for this new application to be supported, subject to any suitable safeguarding conditions:-

National Planning Policy Framework: Para 9 – Replacing poor design with better & improving work conditions. NPPF: Para 28 - Support expansion and promote development of all types of business & enterprise...through...well designed new buildings...in rural areas. Wiltshire Core Strategy: Policy 34 – a) Agriculture & land-based industries included in target sectors identified in Wiltshire to promote move towards higher-value economy b) Support rural way of life through promotion of modern agricultural practices. UW&LNP: Pol LB2 - Establishment or expansion of small scale employment enterprises in existing premises or on new sites supported if they are for rural-based businesses and proposals are compatible with use of surrounding buildings. UW&LNP: Pol LB3 – Farm diversification will be supported if...primary use remains agricultural and...they support...land based rural business.

Mr Holt refuted a statement made by John Knight, in his letter of representation to WC, that 'The Layout and Scale of the proposed Grain Store and Drier fails to conform to Wiltshire Core Policy 51: Landscape – 6.79'. Core Policy does not apply as the proposed Dryer is outside the village boundary.

**** Statement given by Mr Phil Snook, acting for applicant FJ Snook & Sons:-**

NB -When deemed necessary, Mr Snook was questioned by Councillors throughout the meeting and all his answers and explanations are included in a single statement, as found below:.....

The family farm had previously used 3 sites for grain storage; Newsyde Farm (now housing a temporary mobile drying unit), Rookery Farm store and the most contentious, being a high density dryer with 2 stores, behind the village pond on Manor Farm Yard: historically, with the fans running continuously each day, this dryer could take up to 3 months to dry the grain in ambient air and it had not been possible to sell any before Christmas. The dryer and its site are now gone, providing funding for FJ Snook & Sons to purchase and build a new Grain Store & Dryer (in all probability supplied by Alvan Blanch) on the site approved in previous planning applications, this being at their farm buildings in Cemetery Lane. They believe this to be the best possible site to place a building capable of drying the 5 types of grain grown on the 800 local acres they farm. The site is not in view from the village and, being centrally situated in their own fields, vehicular movement (fairly intensive during harvest period) will lessen greatly through Urchfont village, as farm vehicles going to and from Rookery Farm yard can use Snook fields to cross the B3098 and the majority of lorries collecting grain will arrive/leave Cemetery Lane, on the B3098, in an Easterly direction, towards the A342.

The applicant & agent have endeavoured to continue working in the approximate footprint of the previous applications and it is not an option to re-site the store further along the lane, across the fields, as the cost of running power that far could be in excess of £50K and the building would be more visible from the B3098.

Once the proposed Dryer is operating, Newsyde & Rookery Farm dryer/stores are to be de-commissioned. The proposed building is oriented to the East to endeavour to mitigate sound to the N & W. The dryer and intake will be on the East side and the building itself should help to deaden noise, especially when full of grain. Due to an increase in crop production this building needs to be larger than that previously applied for, with 2 internal high level conveyors needed to take the grain to its natural angle of repose when gravity filling the shed. The type of grain dictates the angle of repose and pile height. This building is 5m higher than that previously proposed, it being less expensive to go upwards than outwards. A lower store would be approximately 25m longer; with a reinforced floor adding to the cost. A lower building may also create more noise. To minimise noise and visual impact, a soil Bund will be created around the S & W sides and partway along the Nth, with top planting of trees/bushes to be considered. Lighting outside will be minimal and inner lighting will not be seen, as the tipping area faces East towards Redhorn Hill. Modern continuous flow dryers are computer operated; much faster and more efficient than the ambient type. The dryer was expected to run at full capacity at harvest time and, as Snook & Sons try to limit their harvesting to dry weather days, the grain would not be too damp and the drying time therefore reduced. Mr Snook estimated harvesting/drying time would take place within a 3 – 4 week period, at the outside. After the drying period, the building will be used to store grain through the rest of the year until it is sold.

Statement given by Mr John Knight – resident of Urchfont:

NB Mr Knight's letter of representation can be read in full on Wiltshire Council's Planning website - Mr Knight thought that, for a proposed project of this size and the disturbing implications for residents of The Croft, the manner, or lack, of communication by Wiltshire Planning Office had been extremely shoddy. He agreed with Ms Dandy that it felt 'uncomfortable' for Mr Holt to be the agent for this application when also Planning Chairman of UPC.

Mr Knight wished to object to this planning application. He believed a building of this magnitude failed to comply with the WC statement that "Development should protect, conserve and where possible enhance landscape character and must not have an unacceptable impact upon landscape character, while any negative impacts must be mitigated as far as possible through sensitive design and landscape measures. Proposals should be informed by and sympathetic to the distinctive character areas identified in the relevant Landscape Character Assessment(s) and any other assessments and studies".

He questioned the prospective noise levels detailed on the Design & Access Statement as being unsupported by any assessment (usually in these cases BS.4142:1997) and the accepted level of 10dBA above background before complaints are made would, in this environment, be easily achieved. The levels recommended by the BSI noise levels for residential noise are exceeded by the predicted levels of 52-68dB by almost 50% for a night time assessment. In his opinion, an assertion (sect C of the D&A statement) that noise levels will 'fall off quite rapidly' offers a most unscientific appraisal of a non-existent demonstration. It was suggested that the prevailing wind would assist in noise dissipation for residents of the Croft but, wind direction & speed being sadly unpredictable, if the wind were in the opposite direction, an equal increase in noise levels would result. A reference to a 50m row of Cupressus trees that hide the existing farmyard from the nearest residential properties is factually incorrect, as many have now been removed. Mr Knight was of the opinion that this application fails to provide information on the many issues relating to grain transportation: Frequency of and type of vehicles? Their contribution to the level of industrial noise? The impact on wildlife at night? Will the access track be wide/robust enough to cope with this traffic? Will unloading on the Nth side cause further disruption to residents of The Croft? Will the large trailers at present parked on this site be located elsewhere? He ascertained that although agricultural, this application was no different from proposing a factory be built in the same location.

Mr Knight concluded with a detailed appraisal of his findings on the effect that noise has on health - yet another concern amongst the many he has, should this application be approved, for the most vulnerable residents of our community; the elderly and those in poor health that live in The Croft.

Statement from Mr Richard Hawkins – resident of Urchfont:

Mr Hawkins opined that the proposed Barn was very big and almost as high as the village Church: would

there be any advantage to sinking it down? He was also surprised that residents of the Croft had not been informed by Wiltshire Council of a planning proposal so close to them.

** Cllr Mottram replied that, in all probability, houses in the Croft and others nearby may be outside the 'distance from development' perimeter that WC would automatically contact to make residents aware of a proposed planning application.

**Councillor Mottram closed public participation and re-opened the planning meeting:

He requested that, after careful consideration, members of the Planning Committee make their decision on this application on valid planning grounds; these being called 'Material Considerations'.

The following considerations are relevant in most planning applications:-

- National planning policy and advice.
- Local planning policies.
- Draft policy.
- The environmental, social and economic impacts of the proposal.
- Access and provision of infrastructure for the site.
- The design of the proposal.
- The planning history of the site.
- The views of organizations and individuals.

15/04348/FUL – The Planning Committee found as follows:

- The increased scale & height of this building is an overriding concern. Compared to that proposed in the previously approved application E/2012/0763/FUL, it could have a seriously detrimental impact on the local landscape and the open views of the Pewsey Vale and adjacent AONB.
- It would appear that no landscape/visual impact assessment has been undertaken, which was believed by Cllr Thomas to be necessary and although the previous application included substantial new tree, hedge & shrub plantings to screen the installation from E, S & W sides, no such screening is proposed on this application. The existing line of trees between the closest residential properties and the proposed development is patchy and may not provide a satisfactory visual/audio buffer.
- Mr Snook has stated that the drying process will not generate a huge noise and for not too many weeks but a more detailed study into noise levels could have been carried out. Assurances are needed that it will meet British Standard, Environmental: Industrial noise assessment (BS.4142)
- Living in a farming community, it is appreciated that the whole process of grain growing, harvesting and drying will generate noise and have some sort of impact of on the locality. Unfortunately, the distance between the proposed building and the nearest bungalows being approx 130m, the elderly and often housebound residents of The Croft will be the recipients of 24 hour long noise generated at harvest time by farm vehicles and the grain dryer.
- Being an area of quiet contemplation, the adjacent Cemetery should be taken into consideration.
- Crop growing is a constant process for FJ Snook & Sons and it may therefore be an advantage to consolidate the existing and widespread movement of farm traffic to one location. This may also reduce noise pollution in the area as a whole.
- No lighting details appear on the D & A statement, though reference is made to 24/7 drying (Sec B)
- The D & A statement refers to an Alvan Blanch grain dryer but the drawings show a dryer by Perry Engineering. It is hoped that the Alvan Blanch is of the same size & configuration, otherwise any differences should be accurately shown in revised drawings.
- No details of roof drainage have been included, although the D & A statement mentions future rainwater harvesting, when funds permit, as the farm relies heavily on a mains water supply. The land where this development is proposed is all agricultural and the addition of 1138sq.m of roof & approx 800sq.m of hardstanding will have a significant effect on local surface water runoff. At times of heavy rain, Cemetery Lane has streams of water discharging onto the B3098. Therefore it is hoped, when funds permit, a proper drainage and rainwater system will be installed.

*****15/04348/FUL** – Councillor Donald proposed that UPC Planning Committee **Support** this application but with the following **Conditions**:

If this application proceeds, Urchfont Parish Council **would request that**;

1) On completion of building, a noise impact study is carried out to ensure that BSI levels are met.

- 2) A full drainage and flood impact assessment is carried out.
- 3) Statements are provided for any landscaping/tree planting schemes and the exact parameters of the proposed bund.
- 4) An environmental impact assessment is carried out.

***UPC also need assurances that**, if the application proceeds;

- 1) All other FJ Snook & Sons Dryers, situated within the Parish, will be permanently de-commissioned.
- 2) Only locally grown grain will be dried and stored in the proposed building.

Urchfont Parish Council are supporting this particular site for a proposed grain dryer, in the belief that it will minimize existing noise pollution and farm vehicle movement in and around the village as a whole.

*The Proposal was seconded by Councillor Day and passed:- 4 supporting votes and 2 against.

6. Applications studied by UPC Planning Group since 08 May 2015 & their response to Wiltshire Council

- a) **15/04461/FUL** – Proposed Replacement timber framed Garage with storage over and creation of Access Track, all at Manor Farm House, Lydeaway, Nr Devizes, Wilts., SN10 3PU for Mr Nick Plank. *Urchfont Parish Council Planning Group Support this application, particularly as the creation of a new access track to the South of the property will improve the privacy of the owners from tradespeople and customers visiting the adjoining Farm Shop complex.*

7. Decisions received from Wiltshire Council since 08 May 2015

- a) **15/03174/FUL** - Full Planning Application for the demolition of existing pre-fabricated Garage and erection of a new open fronted Car Port with Log Store: Replacement of existing open fronted porch and erection of new single storey Lean-to extension to the rear, with associated internal alterations, all at Fussells Cottage, Green Gate Road, Wedhampton, Wilts., SN10 3QB, for Mr & Mrs P Riddle.

Approve with Conditions

- b) **15/03271/LBC** – Listed Building Consent for the replacement of existing open fronted porch and erection of new single storey Lean-to extension to the rear, with associated internal alterations, all at Fussells Cottage, Green Gate Road, Wedhampton, Wilts., SN10 3QB, for Mr & Mrs P Riddle.

Approve with Conditions

8. Matters for Report

Manor Farm Yard could not be discussed as Cllr: Holt did not attend the meeting as a member of the planning committee.

There being no other business, the Planning Meeting closed at 8:40 pm.

The proposed date of the next Planning Meeting is **Wednesday 08 July 2015 at 7:00 pm** in Urchfont Village Hall.

Planning Administrator Sandra Johnston – 01380 848774 – 07808 124721 – sandra-j@virgin.net

NB Hard copies of all Planning Applications & Plans are with the Planning Administrator and may be inspected, by arrangement, at any time. Planning Applications and their documents should also be visible on www.urchfont-pc.gov.uk or on www.wiltshire.gov.uk Go to:- 1) search planning applications 2) East Wiltshire 3) search by planning app number.

Signed

Date

