

EAST WOODHAY PARISH COUNCIL PLANNING COMMITTEE

5.30 p.m. MONDAY, 28th SEPTEMBER 2020

Virtual Meeting held on: Monday, 28th September, 17:30 via Zoom.

MINUTES

1. **Attendance:** Cllr. Susan Cooper, Cllr. Martin Hainge, Cllr. Philip Jarvis, Cllr. Karen Titcomb (Chair), Cllr. Andrew Watson, Mr. Peter Brunsdon, Ms. Alexandra Munday of Munday Planning.

2. **Apologies:** None.

3. **Minutes of last meeting:** Agreed.

4. **Matters arising from Minutes of last meeting:** None.

5. **20/02535/OOBC - Land West Of Pumping Station, Enborne Row, Wash Water, Newbury, Berkshire.** Construction of stabling and hard standing. Change of use of agricultural to a mixed agricultural/equestrian use. Soft landscaping scheme.

No comments or objections.

6. **20/00869/FUL - Broadmead Barn, North End Road, North End.** Erection of 6 no. bedroom dwellinghouse following demolition of existing barn, to include landscaping and installation of a cesspit, including raising of ridge height to 9.69m from that approved under application 18/03648/FUL.

Object: particularly to the increase in ridge height to 9.69m. There should be no derogation from the approval of application 18/03648/FUL as to do so would result in a property that would be obtrusive in the immediate locality.

7. **19/02956/FUL - Land at Sungrove Farm, Abbey Wells Road, East End, RG20 0AF.** Demolition of existing farmhouse and erection of mixed use building comprising of Farm Shop, Bakery, Gift Shop and Plant Nursery (A1), Cafe/Restaurant (A3) and lecture/educational space (D1). Demolition of existing barn and erection of 1 no. 2 bed dwelling for agricultural workers. Re cladding of 2 no. existing barns, and associated car parking and landscaping.

Comment on new documents recently added to the B&D planning portal by the applicant's agents.

Object. The Committee's detailed comments were submitted to B&D on 30th September and are attached as an Annex to the Minutes.

8. **20/02218/HSE - The Orchard, 1 Greenlands, Woolton Hill, RG20 9TB.** Proposed ground floor side extension, floor plan redesign and all associated works

No comments or objections.

9. **T/00406/20/TPO | 8 Douglas Ride, Woolton Hill, RG20 9UG.** T1 Cedar: prune

Decision left to the expertise of the Tree Officer.

10. **20/02282/HSE – Northways, Woodhay Downs, East Woodhay RG20 0AL.**

Construction of raised deck and steps, with balustrading to the west side of the existing dwelling.

No comments or objections.

11. **20/02313/HSE - Ashton Grove and Orchard House, Ball Hill Road, Ball Hill RG20 0NL.** Installation of new entrance gates to Ashton Grove and Orchard House.

No comments or objections.

12. **20/02308/HSE - 3 Rectory Cottages, East End, RG20 0AJ.** Erection of front porch to house and garden room extension to garden store.

No comments or objections.

13. **T/00452/20/TPO - 8 Falcon Coppice, Woolton Hill, RG20 9UE.** T1 and T2 Oak: fell.

No objection to the diseased tree being felled should the Tree Office consider this the appropriate course of action. However, if in the opinion of the Tree Officer it is possible to manage the un-diseased tree the Committee would prefer that course of action to felling.

14. **20/02363/HSE - Woodfen, Broadlayings, Woolton Hill, RG20 9TT.**

Construction of first floor living accommodation with front and rear dormer windows and front, side and rear extensions. Alterations to external wall and roof materials, alterations to fenestration and rear decking area. Demolition of conservatory and detached garage.

No comments or objections.

15. **20/02362/LDEU - Cottage Farm House, Annexe at North End Road, North End RG20 0AY.** Certificate of lawfulness for the existing continued use of The Barn Annexe as a single dwellinghouse and associated garden land.

No objections. However, the Committee noted that the Annexe should not be treated as a separate dwelling, either now or in the future.

16. **20/02338/HSE - South Oak, Tile Barn, Woolton Hill, RG20 9UZ.** Proposed first floor extension, new front porch and single storey side extension.

No comments or objections.

17. **Planning Committee Terms of Reference:** Carried forward.

18. **Items for next Agenda:** Planning Committee Terms of Reference.

19. **Date of next meeting:** 5.30 p.m., Monday, 19th October, via Zoom. If you would like to join or speak at this meeting 'virtually' or have any questions for the Planning Committee, please contact – in advance – clerk@eastwoodhay-pc.gov.uk.

ANNEX

The four additional reports submitted in support of this application (which the Committee has considered carefully) serve only to intensify opposition of the Committee to it. Firstly, there is no planning imperative to support it. Secondly, it is environmentally hostile and unsustainable. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, it does not have the support of the vast majority of the community for whose benefit it purports to serve. For these reasons (expanded upon below), the Committee continues to recommend refusal of this application.

General Observations

The Committee reiterate its support for the view of the AONB Officer (letter of 20th December 2019) and as stated in the Committee's letter of 4th March 2020. Indeed, the more information supplied by the applicant, the more apparent it becomes that this proposed development will have an enormous and irredeemable impact on the hamlet of East End and the surrounding area.

The overall adverse impact on the hamlet of this mixed purpose, commercial enterprise is unacceptable, and certainly outweighs any potential benefits which such a development might bring to the area. For example:

- (i) It seems likely that only a proportion of the produce on sale will have come from the applicant's smallholding. The majority of commercial activities will have no direct connection with that land, operating 7 days a week from early morning through to 7pm or 9pm;
- (ii) The development is specifically designed to attract people into East End who would otherwise not go there. This will have a very significant disruptive effect on the peace and tranquility of East End and the surrounding area.

Reference is made to the Policy Guidance posted on BDBC's website on 31st July 2020, (<https://pad.basingstoke.gov.uk/documents/4753/01/24/43/01244323.PDF>) and the response on behalf of local residents by Mr Crerar, (<https://pad.basingstoke.gov.uk/documents/4753/01/24/74/01247400.PDF>).

The Committee is in agreement with the reasoning given in support of the proposition that this proposal does not represent proper 'farm diversification' and should not be assessed as such. The issue of 5-year land supply cannot be relevant here as this is about the construction of a building for a business, not housing (apart from the farm worker's housing which is not under discussion).

The Committee agree with the points raised and continue to support the view of the AONB: significant impact on the area deems this a 'major' development and therefore unacceptable; the adverse impacts would "significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits" (NPPF Para 11d); so the application must be refused.

The Committee is also concerned about the basis on which some of the reports have been founded. There appear to be some fundamental misrepresentations in the reports, as highlighted below:

- The letter from Planning Potential dated 19th August 2020, contains maps of the surrounding area and highlights in red certain buildings which are alleged to be commercial (i.e. non-residential). It is true that the highlighted buildings are not residential, but nor are they 'commercial' - they are agricultural, recreational or educational establishments. Accordingly, there are no 'commercial' enterprises of the type proposed in the area.
- Lighting Report – Baseline Conditions (11.2.1) states 'the application site is within a suburban environment.' Clearly there is nothing 'suburban' about this tiny, rural hamlet and it is wrong to present as such.
- Lighting Report – Baseline Conditions (11.2.1.) states 'there is roadway and sports pitch lighting within close proximity to the application site which also presents the characteristics of an E1 Environmental Zone'. There is no roadway lighting in East End and no sports pitch lighting there.
- Lighting Report – the photos of the site with every light on create an entirely false representation of daily use and habit. This issue will be addressed further in comments on the Light Report below.
- The covering letter from Planning Potential harks back to the days when the hamlet supported 2 pubs and a shop: in the days when sheep were driven through East End to market in Newbury and farm workers occupied the houses. This is no longer the case and not a valid justification for new development of this type, where the surrounding residents will not provide enough business to make the venture viable and they will still have to drive to the supermarket for the majority of their practical but mundane shopping; thereby defeating the sustainability argument.

In seeking to deal satisfactorily with the key issues raised by the AONB, the Parish Council, and the many local objectors, the reports produced by the applicant paradoxically serve only to highlight the extensive and detrimental impact of the proposed development on the tranquility of East End. Furthermore, it should be emphasised that East End is located in a Conservation Area and which, contrary to the impression the applicant seeks to create, is a hamlet entirely devoid of any urban or suburban characteristics.

The Committee wish to make the following comments on each report:

Noise Report

The Noise Report concedes that the development will create noise; but it ignores the additional noise which would be generated by the attendant increase in traffic (visitors, deliveries, staff, services) into and out of the hamlet. The view of the Committee is that *any* additional noise in the hamlet is unacceptable and will have too great an impact on this tranquil location.

Further, the Committee would comment that many of the noise mitigation proposals sound good on paper but are not enforceable or practicable. For example

6.41 'assumed potential clientele' seems to be suggesting that the development will attract only well behaved and quiet visitors, which is clearly beyond the applicant's control.

6.15 - signage and staff trained to discourage excessive engine revving and raised voices. The signage would contribute to the 'urbanisation' of the site, and whilst staff may be trained, it does not follow that visitors will take any notice.

Noise emanating from the cafe and from the terrace or 'beer garden' (page 4, 3.5) will have an impact. Music played outside will have an impact. Voices laughing or talking loudly will have an impact. Noisy machinery – located closest to Dormer Cottage - must be unacceptable for the residents there and mitigation will not detract from the fact that there is a low (6.20) 'hum' in the background. Indeed the exact specifications of the requisite machinery have not yet been provided, though the oven (7.8) apparently can be improved upon from a noise perspective – again, a tacit agreement that there will be noise production.

The issue with noise seems to be that the applicant has put forward a good case for noise mitigation measures – different materials on the driveway, car parking areas etc., plus acoustic fencing etc. These are an improvement on the original proposal but are, in themselves an acknowledgement that noise objections are valid. It cannot be denied that there will be additional noise in the hamlet from visitors, deliveries, machinery, music, vehicles – none of which imposes itself on the hamlet at present and makes the applicant's proposition untenable. The mitigation measures will add to the 'suburbanisation' of what is currently a rural hamlet.

Light Report

The Lighting Report contains mitigating measures but the impact of any professional lighting scheme for a development of this size, with some 90 external lights as well as internal lighting continuously 'on' during opening hours, will have an unacceptable impact on the dark skies, in a hamlet where the dark sky is highly prized.

The Committee cannot agree with the Baseline Survey photographs (page 16 and Appendix Six). The Committee is aware that local residents have supplied photographs of how the existing premises are lit at night for most of the year – with very few lights and we agree that generally there is very little lighting in East End (letter on website: <https://pad.basingstoke.gov.uk/documents/4753/01/24/90/01249034.PDF>). It would be unusual in a domestic home for all lights to be on throughout the house, no curtains closed and all lights also on in the barn and driveway. Furthermore the farmer would generally keep lighting at night to a minimum to avoid disruption of the animals' natural rhythms.

The lighting report states (item 7.1.2) that 'measures are specifically focussed at minimising light that contributes to sky glow, leading to an impact on the Dark Sky.' Yet the installation of some 90 new external light fittings along with the internal lighting arrangements which will be constantly on for a large part of the evening, will have a massive impact on the dark skies through 'glow' in an area which is generally pitch black.

Air Quality Report & Additional Traffic

This mostly focuses on the air quality during the build. The bigger issue here must be about pollution in its wider sense namely, smoke, fumes, gases, dust, steam odour, noise and light, all of which will increase significantly if this development goes ahead. In this context, the Committee would respectfully remind BDBC of its declared commitment to the environment, air quality and sustainability.

The report dismisses the impact of additional vehicle activity on the environment should the venture be up and running (5.26) on the basis that the number of vehicles is below the threshold of 500 vehicles daily, thus triggering the need for an air quality assessment. This is the first time that any figures have been applied to the considerations, in terms of number of vehicles visiting on a daily basis.

It is also noted that (5.25) mentions 30 arrivals and 30 departures per day on a week-end. For a development which is designed to attract visitors to the hamlet, this is probably a considerable under-estimate. But even as they stand, these figures would mean that on a Sunday there will be an additional vehicle passing into or out of East End every 6 minutes, which is far in excess of the existing situation, where there is probably one vehicle passing through East End on a Sunday at a rate of more like one every 30 minutes.

If the applicant is not expecting more visitors, then it is hard to see how this project is viable – 30 visitors per day will not sustain the business from a financial perspective. In reality, the project introduces a range of commercial activities, open 7 days a week, designed to attract to East End, visitors who would otherwise have no reason for going there. This is both unwelcome and unnecessary.

Highways Report

The applicant's report addresses Policy CN9 – focusing on the need for locals to use the amenity without needing to drive – but there are only approximately 100 locals in the hamlet, and they will not sustain a business on their own. Similarly school mums will not sustain the business in isolation. It also talks about pass-bys but nobody / few people 'pass by' East End. There are 'bus services to the hamlet - but limited service means that a visitor to the farm shop would have to wait some 4 hours to go home again – which is not realistic.

The key issue is that whilst Highways might say that the roads can accommodate/cope with the additional vehicular movement from a technical perspective, the adverse environmental impact from a noise and air pollution viewpoint has been ignored. Nor is this issue addressed by the Noise Report.

The main Policy Requirement (CN9) confirms that 'development proposals should seek to minimise the need to travel'. From the perspective of local residents, the Sungrove development will not minimise their need to travel as these luxury items might represent occasional purchases, but they will still need supermarkets for their general items. In addition, the local residents are not numerous enough to support a business venture of this size – visitors will be attracted to the site causing further travel with adverse environmental impact.

Old data and data which is not relevant to this application continues to be used in support of the applicant's submissions. This data has little, if any, relevance to a commercial and busy business in a hamlet in the south of England and should therefore be ignored.

Major Development

In the context of AONB, the definition of 'major' is provided in footnote 55 in para 172 of the NPPF which states: *"For the purposes of paragraphs 172 and 173, whether a proposal is 'major development' is a matter for the decision maker, taking into account its nature, scale and setting, and whether it could have a significant adverse impact on the purposes for which the area has been designated or defined."*

The applicant cites various appeal cases where the matter of 'major' development has been considered, but these appear to be mostly residential developments, so are not relevant in this case. If BDBC accepts that what is proposed is, **in this context**, 'major', then it must be rejected.

The Committee would also draw attention to para 172 of NPPF: *'Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in ... Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of ... cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areasThe scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited.'* The scale and extent of this proposed development would clearly fail to meet these criteria.

It is the view of the Committee that this proposed development would constitute **major** development because of:

- Its combined and overall impact on the AONB and conservation area, which will be significant and is unacceptably high.
- The considerable amount of change it would impose on a very small community, where the benefit of the development is far outweighed by the detrimental impact it would have from all perspectives – as highlighted above.
- The increased intensity of use on the site as a mixed use, commercial development. The mitigating measures suggested will have the effect of 'urbanising' the site, as we have highlighted above.

For all these reasons, this application should be refused.