



4th WORLD ECOLOGICAL DESIGN

Project Design Management & Appraisal

Alison Fish,
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 Mid Devon District Council,
 Phoenix House,
 Phoenix Lane,
 Tiverton,
 Devon,
 EX16 6PP

REF: applications **11/02007/MFUL** and **12/00045/MFUL**

I write in support of the applications submitted by the Ecological Land Cooperative.

I combine viable small holder farming with a consultancy business to generate an income on a Farm site of lower quality than one in question and from a smaller amount of land. I have lived and worked on my site for 15 years. Through my work as a consultant I am aware of numbers of other ecological agricultural projects and am familiar with both successful and less successful enterprises.

Having read the reports submitted with the application and viewed the area around the site it is my view based on my experience that the tenant's proposed small scale intensive production systems could produce a viable income from the site. It will take time to establish successful production systems and to develop markets for the produce. There is a considerable amount of land under arable cultivation in the vicinity and I see no reason why improvement techniques cannot be applied successfully to the soils on the sites to increase yields in the mixed horticultural fruit and forestry systems proposed.

There are a number of local people who have noted the difficulties and harsh realities of generating an agricultural income and a genuine rural livelihood. They are certainly correct in that it requires dedication, perseverance and extremely hard work.

This is why there are so few examples of people attempting to achieve a low carbon rural livelihood and the country side continues to loose agriculturalists who are replaced by rural commuters. The effect of this is to increase prices such that it is almost impossible for new entrants to come forward in agriculture. A future of sustainable low carbon food production systems is far from a reality and anyone prepared to take on the challenge should be offered every support. The application of on site energy systems will reduce the costs of living as well as reducing the carbon impacts from the site. The proposals are in line with the aims of PPS1 and in keeping with the challenge set down by the Climate Change Act which requires the nation to make significant cuts to its overall carbon emissions which simply will not be achieved unless such projects are encouraged.

Food security and the development of production systems less reliant upon fossil fuels is of key importance and land should be made available for genuine people to explore the small scale production route further in line with policies supporting the diversification of agriculture and rural economic activities that maintain the essentially agricultural character of the local area.

The project will provide an affordable route into a land based livelihood along with the mutual support of a small number of families all addressing similar issues. The proposed sharing of infrastructure is progressive and helps to reduce the impacts of the proposals whilst increasing their efficiency and potential viability. The sharing of resources and mutual support in my experience can reduce the need for journeys to and from the site and make best use of any trips that are undertaken by combining journeys.

It is my experience that the overall ecological footprint of similar projects is reduced and their viability increased when intensive cultivation techniques are combined with residence on the land. This enables the multitude of tasks required to make such an enterprise work to be carried out flexibly throughout the day to suit weather conditions, the other commitments of the business family commitments and the amount of work input that is required to cultivate intensive crops successfully.

Our farm site has 10 resident families, some of whom work off the farm, with 8 vehicles and up to 20 other families as guests in our camping and barn facilities at any one time in the high season. We carried out a number of surveys of vehicle movements in and found that our normal residential and business travel needs resulted in averages of 22 and 25 vehicle movements per day respectively on our local lanes, including deliveries supporting 5 farm based businesses. From this experience the impact of vehicles using the local lanes due to the development should be of a minor nature and the projections of the transport consultants in their report would appear to be of the right order.

I can see no reasons why the proposals should have any long term negative impact on the local area. Ultimately should a business fail significantly the lease can be removed from the tenant as laid out in the management plan.

Yours sincerely

W Knight BEng