

Holcombe Rogus Parish Council

Head of Planning and Regeneration
Planning Services
Development Control
Mid Devon District Council
Phoenix House
Phoenix Lane
Tiverton
EX16 6PP

30th January 2012



Attention : Mrs Alison Fish, Area Planning Officer

References: Plot A - Planning Application 12/ 00045/MFUL
Plot B – Planning Application 12/00107/MFUL
Plot C Planning Application 11/02007/MFUL

Proposal: Siting of temporary agricultural workers dwellings
agricultural barn and associated works

Location: Land at Greenham Reach, Holcombe Rogus, Devon

Dear Sir/Madam

The Parish Council considered the applications for Plots A and C Greenham Reach at its meeting on 26th January. The papers relating to Plot B arrived too late for consideration at the meeting. Nevertheless the issues and comments raised in this letter will, it is anticipated, be applicable to Plot B also. The applicant and other members of the public attended the meeting and were able to express their views.

1. What is being sought is planning permission to site temporary agricultural workers dwellings on three plots and associated works including an agricultural barn. Your Council, it is understood, advised the applicants to submit three separate planning applications. Our Council considers this to be misconceived.
2. What is being proposed is a community of low impact sustainable smallholdings enjoying common facilities. The smallholdings have been deliberately clustered as part of the proposed project as is borne out by what the applicants say in the applications and underlined by comments of the expert Appraisers who indicate that this should assist in the success of the venture

3. The policies that your Council considers to be most relevant are, we understand the MDDC Core Strategy 2026 and PPS7 – Annex A .
4. These policies can be more clearly understood in the context of traditional agricultural activities where the agricultural dwelling is clearly subsidiary to agricultural enterprise. They do not fit happily with the proposed project at Greenham Reach. The emphasis of low impact living is the promotion of a way of life, the centre of which is the ability to live on the land and to use the land's resources wholly or partly for subsistence in a sustainable manner. For this reason, some caution is required in trying to apply standard policies that were not drafted with this kind of social enterprise in mind. Our Council does not consider that MDDC has any clear policy that contemplates what is being proposed at Greenham Reach. There is case for treating the development proposals as 'sui generis'. If this is correct, the applicants will, it is assumed, need to justify an exception to planning policy.
5. It is crucial in this type of enterprise that the nexus between the occupation of any dwelling and the activities on the actual plot of land is not severed. This is particularly relevant when considering what conditions should be imposed if MDDC decided to grant permission. It is not appropriate to seek to apply standard conditions that were drafted without the current type of project in mind.
6. It will, of course, be helpful to consider the tests that need to be applied in the case of a traditional agricultural worker's dwelling but this should not lose sight of the fact that this proposed social enterprise is qualitatively different.
7. Our Council are generally supportive of the type of social enterprise that the applicants are seeking to establish and were very impressed by the substantial work that the applicants have done in support of the applications.
8. Nevertheless our Council did have a number of concerns and these are mentioned below.
9. Bearing in mind the requirements of Annex A to PPS7, our Council has some concerns about viability given the small areas of land involved. The applicants have provided detailed Appraisals and business plans for 2 of the plots and provided evidence of viability of other small projects. Our Council did not feel that they had the necessary expertise to analyse the data to make a considered judgment. We assume that your Council will take appropriate advice on this issue.
10. Our Council have not seen any evidence of the financial resources of the intended lessees of the three plots or any financial appraisal relating to the provision of the common infrastructure.

11. There are concerns about the amount of traffic that might be generated by the proposed scheme, bearing in mind the narrow roads. The Council is aware of the proposed section 106 Undertaking but there are concerns about additional trips from visitors and produce deliveries. Our Council would ask your Council to consider whether the location of the proposed scheme is acceptable having regard to traffic impact and if so, whether additional controls are required.
12. Given the considerable work done by the applicants to establish the ecological and environmental credentials of the proposed scheme, our Council considers that the Section 106 Agreement or Obligation should be amended to ensure that the objectives of the scheme are achieved –ie that this is truly low impact living.
13. Our Council have raised a number of concerns with the applicants about the terms of the leases of the plots. It is considered that some changes will assist in achieving the objectives of the social enterprise.
14. Our Council is concerned that if this project obtained planning permission it should not create a precedent and lead to a proliferation of similar projects in the same locality. This kind of social enterprise is experimental and it will be appropriate to monitor its development and its impact on the neighbouring communities.
15. Our Council have also considered what conditions should be imposed if your Council is minded to approve the proposed scheme as follows:
 - a. In order to achieve the objective of the scheme the dwelling on each plot must be occupied only by a person working wholly or mainly in agriculture on the relevant plot (and his immediate family). Our Council does not agree that the standard agricultural workers condition in Circular 11/95 is appropriate to this type of scheme (and in any event to temporary permissions) and indeed it would completely undermine the scheme.
 - b. The first occupier/tenant must be the person whose business has been considered to justify the grant of planning permission.
 - c. The removal of Permitted Development rights to prevent proliferation of ancillary buildings.
 - d. Our Council would like to ensure that all temporary dwellings are timber clad and that there are no caravans or mobile homes .This is very important to reduce adverse visual impact.
 - e. A landscaping scheme will need to be approved so as to ensure adequate screening. Our Council envisages that this will be soft landscaping.

- f. Section 106 Agreement or Undertaking to impose an obligation to provide on demand evidence that the occupier of dwelling is wholly or mainly occupied in agriculture on the relevant Plot. Also additional provisions will be required to ensure that the objectives of the scheme are achieved.
- g. Conditions to regulate traffic generation.
- h. Condition for the removal of temporary dwelling and ancillary accommodation at end of three or five years as the case may be or such earlier date as the dwelling ceases to be occupied by someone wholly or mainly occupied in agriculture on the relevant Plot. Our Council does not object to a five year temporary permission given the nature of the scheme, assuming all other matters are satisfactorily addressed.

Our Council would welcome the opportunity to discuss the above issues and comments with your Council and applicants further.

Yours faithfully

John Butler
Chairman
Planning Committee
Holcombe Rogus Parish Council