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Sandra Hutchings

From: Zoe Wangler [zoe@ecologicalland.coop]
Sent: 20 March 2012 09:54
To: Alison Fish
Cc: Development Control
Subject: applications 11/02007/MFUL, 12/00045/MFUL and 12/00107/MFUL
Attachments: Response to Objections.pdf



Dear Alison,

Please find attached our formal response to the points raised by those objecting to applications 11/02007/MFUL, 12/00045/MFUL and 12/00107/MFUL.

If you feel it would be appropriate, I would be grateful if the Council could let the relevant objectors know that we have prepared a response. We have already been in direct correspondence with 3 of the 11 households and can, of course, make this correspondence available to the Council.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Zoe Wangler
Managing Director

"There is a need for a transition to resilience and sustainability with organic, agro-ecological, and conservation agriculture. Business as usual is not an option" Hans R. Herren, Co-Chair IAASTD, www.agassessment.org, President Millennium Institute

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Response to Objectors

Date: 19 March 2012

Ecological Land Co-operative Ltd. | The Hub, 5 Torrens Street, London EC1V 1NQ

For a Living, Working Countryside

This document has been written by the Ecological Land Co-operative Ltd. in response to the letters of objection received against planning applications 11/02007/MFUL, 12/00045/MFUL and 12/00107/MFUL as of 15 February 2012.

This document has been written in response to the points raised in the letters of objection relating to the proposals at Greenham Reach. At the time of writing, letters of objection for one, two or all of the three planning applications had been received from 11 households¹, raising the objections which we believe can be summarised as follows:

Objection	No. of objectors raising this objection
1. Traffic generation	10
2. Concerns over controls to protect the site	5
3. Marginal land makes the site unsuitable	4
4. No local market	4
5. Will not produce low carbon food / town location would have lower carbon footprint	3
6. Proposed bore hole will create problems for neighbours' water supplies	3
7. Road safety	2
8. Does not comply with PPS7 Annex A	2
9. Will negatively impact the landscape character	2
10. Ample affordable smallholdings already	1
11. Incongruity of planning long term crops such as tree-crops with application for 5-year permission	1
12. Will create a harmful precedent	1
13. Will diminish the environmental amenity	1
14. Failure to consult locals	1
15. Poor accessibility and transport links	1
16. Applicant's tree planting indicates disregard of process	1

Within this document we have addressed all of the objections listed above. If there are any other points that we have not covered here, we are happy to do so if either the District Council or our objectors ask this of us. Satisfactorily addressing objections is important for us both because it should allow us to strengthen any weak points in our plans and because we aim to be a respected

¹ (1) Mr Cameron-Rose, (2) Mr. and Mrs. Civil, (3) Mrs Freeman, (4) Mr Goad, (5) Dr Haro and Mrs Fussell, (6) Dr Harvey, (7) Mr. and Mrs. Robinson, (8) Mrs C White, (9) Ms Larson, (10) Miss Howarth, (11) Mr Dorpman and Ms White.

and welcomed member of the local community, and thus welcome the opportunity to discuss concerns that may exist.

Traffic generation

Objectors² are concerned that further traffic will present a danger to, and significantly inconvenience, existing users of the lane.

- We recognise and understand the widely felt concern about traffic generation but sincerely believe it to be without justification. We have projected that the site as a whole will create an average of just two return vehicle trips per day (including visitors, deliveries etc). Full information on our projected journeys can be found in the Transport Statement.
- Mr. and Mrs. Civil and Mr. and Mrs. Robinson have both written that they find the projected trips to be unrealistic. We have obtained data from existing low impact settlements and found the average daily return vehicle journeys range from 0.38 to 1.34 per household. These other settlements are more isolated than Greenham Reach, yet even if Greenham Reach were to generate the same amount of traffic as these isolated settlements, against all expectations, the entire site would still generate only between 1.14 and 4.2 average daily return trips. Full information on these data sets is in the document Appendix G - Additional Information Traffic and Safety and its appendices³.
- Mr. and Mrs. Civil have argued that the businesses could not operate in a commercial manner without vehicles travelling to and from the site. The prospective tenants on Plots B and C will be sharing the journeys they make to sell their produce and the other tenant will be making his vegetable deliveries by bicycle. There will be traffic generated when Plot C sells their point-of-lay pullets but all of these journeys are accounted for in the projected development trips (Transport Statement). It is intended that any part-time workers or volunteers will either primarily cycle to the site or be the permitted 'seasonal agricultural worker' and reside temporarily on the site and will be recruited on that basis.
- We are confident of the tenants' desire and ability to maintain low vehicle use and have offered to limit, by way of planning condition, the total number of vehicle trips to and from the site. A traffic counter would be installed at the gate in order to provide reliable

² All of the above objectors except Mr Goad

³ Appendix A Annual Monitoring Report; Appendix B Transport Survey 2006; Appendix C - Keveral Farm - One Community Limited 2008 Travel Plan; Appendix D Cycle Network; Appendix E Accident Map; Appendix F Accident Detail

data. The proposed conditions are set out in the Revised Management Plan. We have been advised that if we were to breach such a condition we would be served with either a breach of condition notice (against which there's no appeal) or an enforcement notice and that non-compliance with these notices constitutes an offence.

- Two objectors highlighted the proposed school visits and open day and asked how this could be practical. A school visit would, in all likelihood, consist of just one school class arriving in two mini-buses. For the open day we would organise a rented mini-bus to pick those people up who had expressed an interest in attending.
- Mr. and Mrs. Civil supported their argument that our proposal should be refused on traffic grounds by referring to an application for a commercial livery stable at Ramsey Farm which was refused. This application was also referred to in the letters of objection from Dr. L De Haro and Mrs. M Fussell and Miss. Howarth. The livery would have generated lorry and horse trailer traffic and up to 224 return trips per week. The largest vehicle intended to be operating from Greenham Reach will be a short wheel based van and the projected return journeys for the entire site are just 13 per week.
- If we were granted planning permission we would be improving the lane through the provision of two passing places, the locations and specifications of which would need to be approved by the Highways Authority and / or District Council.
- Finally, we would note that the Highways Authority has studied our application and raised no objection to it⁴. The independent charity Sustrans, who exist to provide and support creative, innovative and practical solutions to transport challenges while benefiting health and the environment, have also written in support. They state that our application “fully understands the need to minimise fossil-fuelled transport” and that it could set a useful precedent for low-impact development with minimal motor transportation.

⁴ The Highways Authority's comments 'CNH - CONSULTATION - HIGHWAY AUTHORITY' is dated 12/03/2012 and can be found under Associated Documents for applications 12/00107/MFUL and 12/00045/MFUL. It has not yet appeared against application reference 11/02007/MFUL.



Veg box deliveries by bike

Controls

Five objectors raised questions as to the protection of the site:

What happens if the tenant breaches the terms of the lease?

If any tenant breaches the terms of the lease, including failing to provide – or be working to provide – a livelihood from the site, they can be required to sell the plot back to the ELC.

If you need to evict the tenants, won't the tenants be protected by the Human Rights Act?

Our solicitors, [Reed Smith](#), provided us with the following reply “You may know that the illegal site attracting the recent press coverage over the difficult eviction was owned by the local authority. Public authorities are bound by the Human Rights Act 1998 so it is unlawful for them to act in a way that is incompatible with one of the Human Rights (as laid down in the Human Rights Convention). The ELC are not a public body so are outside this legislation and are caught by the ordinary laws affecting residential properties and farm business tenancies.

Although formalities have to be gone through to evict a tenant who occupies a property as his or her home we will not face the human rights arguments that the local authorities must deal with”.

What happens to the land if the ELC folds?

For many reasons it would be very difficult for members of the ELC to force the co-operative to either change legal structure or dissolve. Should the ELC go into liquidation, in all likelihood the

freehold would go either to the mortgage provider and/or would be sold on. The new freeholder would be bound by the same planning conditions: i.e., the dwellings would need to be occupied by persons solely or mainly employed in agriculture; the freeholder would have to report on and adhere to the objectives of the Management Plan, including limits on vehicle use; and so forth.

Who will bear the costs if the smallholdings have to be reverted to agricultural land?

Mr. Goad expressed concern that the tenants would face a “significant loss on the resale value basis provided for in the lease agreement”. From Mr. Dorpman / Ms. White’s letter, it would seem that they would also be concerned about this and the fairness to the tenants. The ELC would bear the costs if the smallholdings reverted to agricultural land. The tenants would not face significant loss as they would be refunded the investment they had made in purchasing the plot, into their temporary dwelling and into their smallholding business.

How will the site be monitored for adherence to restrictions and for environmental impact?

The ELC would be responsible for monitoring the site in accordance with the Management Plan and would be required to report annually to the District Council. The Management Plan requires tests and assessments by third parties. This means that the ELC could not avoid reporting honestly and comprehensively, and would be bound to providing the following third party assessments:

- annual ecological assessment by a qualified professional
- annual traffic count from installed traffic counter⁵
- ecological footprinting by a qualified professional (prior to moving on and in year 5).
- annual statement from Holcombe Rogus Parish Council⁶
- bi-annual water tests (ground water and water in swales)
- annual soil tests, and
- annual business accounts from each smallholding prepared by a Chartered Accountant or equivalent.

⁵ This has been added to the draft Management Plan and will appear in the revised version

⁶ This has been added to the draft Management Plan and will appear in the revised version

If planning permission were granted we would be required to identify in the annual report any objective that had not been met. If an objective had not been met we would be required to produce a supplementary report setting out corrective or mitigating measures. The District Council would have to approve any such measure and the ELC would then be required to implement them. We have been advised that if we were to breach such a condition we would be served with either a breach of condition notice (against which there's no appeal) or an enforcement notice and that non-compliance with these notices constitutes an offence.

Marginal land makes the site unsuitable

Four objectors write that they believe the site unsuitable for the businesses proposed because the holdings are too small and/or the land is too poor in quality. Since we purchased the land in 2009 we have been visited by four organic market gardeners, three permaculturists and our agricultural appraiser. They all concluded that the land could provide modest and sustained livelihoods for the three smallholders. One of the aforementioned market gardeners, Hugh Chapman, has written this in a letter of support he submitted for our applications. However, because viability continued to be questioned, we commissioned the following experts to provide us with written evaluations of the viability of the site for the proposed activities. This included a site visit by each expert:

- **Martin Crawford BSc**, a leading researcher in agroforestry and director of the Agroforestry Research Trust. Patrons: Herbert Giradet and James Lovelock.
- **Richard Harding HND, BASIS, FACTS**, an agronomist and crop consultant.
- **Mandy Goddard**, a local organic market gardener running Spring Grove Farm in Milverton. Winner of the Soil Association's Loraine Award. The award is given annually to a holding demonstrating the best practical combination of nature conservation with good organic husbandry.

The evaluations are included in the document Appendix A Site Evaluations⁷, and all conclude that the proposed business plans are viable on the land in question.

Mandy Goddard's report includes the following comment, based on her own experience over nine years running a similar 6.5 acre site within six miles of Greenham Reach:

⁷ forms part of our planning application and is available to download from the District Council's website

“It is perfectly possible to make a living on such a small scale, a fact which is not always well understood by those with a conventional farming background. In my own case, I began growing vegetables on just one acre, and kept a flock of 40 laying hens. I asked two agricultural consultants (one from Acorus, one from Greenslade Taylor Hunt) to provide a report for my planning application and both were of the opinion that it was not possible to make a living from farming on such a small scale. Luckily I was able to find a consultant who had a better understanding of small-scale horticulture to provide the necessary report for planning permission to live on site, without which the business would not have been possible. Within 5 years it was providing a modest, but full-time living for 4 people on a turnover of approximately £60,000 ... My understanding of the reason for granting temporary permission in the first instance, is for applicants to be able to show that their business model works at a particular location. I hope that these applicants are given this opportunity ... I visited the Greenham Reach site recently and have also been able to read the applicants’ business plans. I see no reason why they should not be successful on this site. The land is Grade 3 and in some areas poorly drained, and may therefore be considered marginal by conventional farmers. However, methods that can be employed by the type of small-scale, intensive agriculture proposed by the applicants is able to correct many of the problems presented by such land.”

Last year the ELC commissioned research into the viability of smallholding. Our short report *Small is Successful: Creating sustainable livelihoods on ten acres or less* was included in the Research Council UK's publication *Big Ideas for the Future* showcasing "UK research that will have a profound effect on our future". The research profiled eight case study smallholdings on less than 10 acres, most of which began with the purchase of marginal sites, with high elevations, north facing aspects and/or exposed, denuded and compacted soils and all of which are now viable businesses.

Finally, it is worth highlighting that Annex A of Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7) requires simply that the business be “planned on a sound financial basis”. Indeed, the reason for granting temporary permission in the first instance is for applicants to be able to show that their business model works at a particular location. The tenants have: had their business plans reviewed by an agricultural appraiser; had the site visited and business plans reviewed by the experts listed above; and researched their markets. The applicant for Plot C has also successfully applied for a mortgage on the basis of his business plan.

No local market

Four objectors doubted the presence of a local market. One of the reasons provided is that “people in the immediate location have enough land to grow their own fruit and vegetables”. The response to this objection comes down to how one defines local food. The Lottery funded partnership [Making Local Food Work](#) promotes local food production and consumption. On their website they write “there is no universal definition of local food, but it is generally considered to be food grown or produced, processed, traded and sold within a geographic radius of 30-50 miles”. Tiverton, Taunton and Wellington are within 11 miles and have a combined population of over 97,000. However, the ELC is absolutely concerned with sustainability and we would always be supporting the tenants to a) find market opportunities which lead to a reduction in the distance between the produce and the consumer and b) minimise emissions through the use of electric vehicles and efficient distribution. We already have within the organisation knowledge of the latter, with members of staff having experience in analysing emissions from food transport and in strategies to minimise emissions.

The tenants will not produce low carbon food / town location would have lower carbon footprint

The most significant contributors to greenhouse gas emissions from horticultural produce sold in the UK are: greenhouses heated with fossil fuels; air-freighted produce; refrigeration of produce over long periods; and the use of a vehicle by the consumer to purchase food, particularly if they are purchasing small quantities at a time. If the tenants at Greenham filled their car with tomatoes and drove them 5 miles back and forth to Wellington, they would be producing ~20 grammes of carbon per kilo of tomatoes. This compares with ~1,500 grammes of carbon per kilo of produce for tomatoes heated in a conventional greenhouse, and a massive ~8,000 grammes per kilo for air-freighted tomatoes. Field grown Spanish tomatoes sold here have been calculated to be accountable for ~700 grammes of carbon per kilo of tomatoes⁴.

It is also possible for a farm shop at the edge of a town to generate more carbon emissions than a farm which drops-off at a point which can either be reached on foot or where additional journeys are not generated. For example, if the tenants made an arrangement to sell to parents at a school in Tiverton or Wellington no additional journeys would be generated by the consumer.

⁴ Wangler, Zoe Lelah (2006) *Fresh Insights Number 2: Sub-Saharan African horticultural exports to the UK and climate change: a literature review* International Institute for Environment and Development. Available to download from <http://www.sustainweb.org/pdf/SSA-airfreight.pdf> last accessed 20/02/2012.

And as John Hemming MP highlighted in his letter of support for the applications, “by providing healthy food to people in the local area, it also reduces the need for driving to out-of-town supermarkets”, thus providing a further reduction in local carbon emissions.

Proposed bore hole will create problems for neighbours’ water supplies

Four objectors expressed concern that the proposed borehole will add to problems being experienced with existing boreholes.

The location and condition of the body of water / aquifer that the boreholes are drawing water from is not known at this stage. There is a possibility that the source that the proposed site would draw from is not in hydraulic connectivity with these boreholes, and therefore there would be no impact on surrounding boreholes from the proposed development. Nonetheless, the following measures have been incorporated to result in very low levels of water use:

- The development incorporates an initial 20,000 litres of rainwater storage facility, which will meet a significant amount of the water demand.
- The development incorporates compost toilets; there will be no water usage from flushing toilets.
- The demand for potable water will principally be from consumption and from dish and personal washing. The prospective tenants are only proposing to have showers.

Under the terms of the Management Plan we will be monitoring the amount of water drawn from the borehole, and we will be looking over time to further increase the storage, treatment and use of rainwater.

Minimising the use of local water resources is as much a part of the ethos of our project as avoiding pesticide use or reducing carbon emissions, and we expect usage to be greatly lower than the local average.

Road safety

Mr. and Mrs. Civil argue that the lane is not safe enough to walk or cycle children to school, stating that they have had a number of near misses. Mr Hugh Cameron Rose states that ‘accidents have occurred’. The Devon County Council records of accidents occurring within 1.5km of the site over the last 5 years show that no fatal or serious incidents have been recorded

and there has been only one ‘slight’ accident’ not on the lane serving the site but a little over a kilometre away. The proposals will not entail a substantive change to the design of the road network and the projected growth in road traffic is so low as to present no significant increase in the likelihood of accidents occurring.

We would also note that the Highways Authority has raised no objection to the applications on road safety or any other ground.

Doesn’t comply with planning policy

Does not meet the functional test

Mrs. Freeman does not agree with us or the Agricultural Appraisal that the applicants’ proposed businesses meet the functional test, writing that she knows of other farms with similar activities which manage without on-site presence. In Appendix 1 of the Design and Access Statement we provided a review of similar applications in terms of activities and scale. These other cases show that local planning authorities and inspectors have considered that elements of the proposed businesses do require the grower/farmer to be “readily available at most times”¹⁰. The Design and Access Statement also refers to cases when the Planning Inspectorate has considered that the grower/farmer needs to be on-site because of the multitude of tasks and complexity of the system (Five Penny Farm) and because where permaculture is practiced, “a farmer should live on his land to be in tune with it and this need should not be judged only on produce and livestock” Inspector on Brickhurst Farm (APP/M2270/A/94/241023/P2).

We would also refer to the judgement in the case of *Petter and Harris v Secretary of State for the Environment* from the High Court of Justice¹¹ which when considering a refused application for a temporary agricultural worker’s dwelling wrote “as is agreed on all sides, the policy is to stop bogus or over-optimistic applications and to ensure that the relevant agricultural activity is likely to continue [our emphasis] ...”. The Lord Justices go on to say that “so here an unexpected but undoubtedly genuine application, by somebody living by what amounts to subsistence farming, requires not a rigid application of criteria designed for commercial agriculture but a practical adaption of those criteria to secure the underlying purposes of the policy”. For our applications

⁹ See documents Appendix E Accident Map and Appendix F Accident Detail

¹⁰ This is the expression used in Annex A of PPS7

¹¹ *Petter and Harris v Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions and Chichester District Council* (15th March 1999). QBCOF 1998/0725/4

we have set out how the applicants meet the functional test and presented business plans and agricultural appraisals, and we have the additional protection of a lease which requires the tenant to be employed in ecological agriculture on the holding and which can lead to the eviction of the tenant if they are found to be in breach. The ELC would review the farm business accounts as part of the annual audit and would therefore become aware of a breach. The ELC is a social enterprise and co-operative and it would take a vote of more than 75% of its members to change our aims and objectives.

Not planned on a sound financial basis

Mrs. Freeman writes that the evidence that the businesses have been planned on a sound financial basis is 'open to debate'. She states that there is "no obvious market because the locals either grow their own, or in the case of the hatchery, there are several chicken producers in the area with their own hatcheries". Mr. Goad adds to this by stating that "the poultry project, seed hatchery and small flock of sheep are unlikely to generate the returns necessary to justify the capital investment in the project as well as provide a sustainable income for Mr & Mrs Guskov". As set out above in the response to the objection that the produce could not be low carbon, the site is within 11 miles of over 95,000 potential customers. Each of the prospective tenants has researched their markets and provided profit and loss forecasts (set out in the individual business plans). Their finding that there are markets for their planned produce is supported by local organic grower Mandy Goddard (Appendix A Site Evaluations) and local permaculturalist Beverley Draig (letter of support). That the Guskovs' financial planning is realistic is supported (aside from the statement from the agricultural appraiser) by the fact that Lloyds TSB Agricultural has offered a mortgage in principle on the basis of their business plan.

Part-time job maintained

Mrs. Freeman argues that it is contrary to policy for Mr. Stanton (Plot B applicant) to remain in part-time employment for the first two years. She misquoted the agricultural appraiser who does not write that Mr. Stanton would continue working even if the business is in profit. Rather, the appraiser writes "I understand that in the first two years of the business, Mr. Stanton will continue to work off-site as a builder for two or three days per week, to supplement the family's income. The sum retained in the business from the end of year 5 [our emphasis] will provide a significant buffer in case of unexpected expenses or drops in sales. If all goes according to plan, some of this profit is likely to be reinvested in the business, leaving a sum available for saving each year." Mr. Stanton is only proposing to remain in part-time employment until the business

provides his family with sufficient income to do without the part-time work. Ms. Long, Mr. Stanton's partner, will be working full-time on the holding from the beginning. We have not found anything in Annex A of PPS7 to support Mrs. Freeman's claim that this is contrary to policy.

Too much food processing

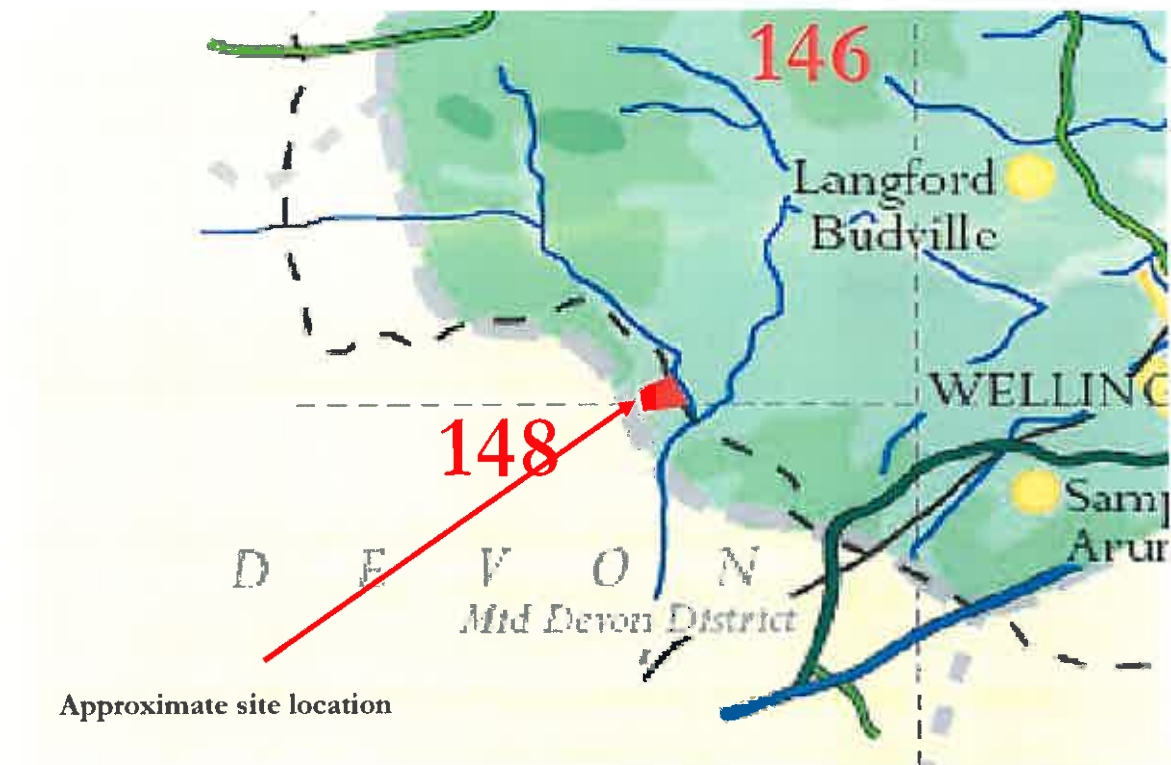
Referring to Plot B, Mrs. Freeman argues that "a large proportion of income from the site will be derived from food processing and Annex A states "requirements arising from food processing ... cannot be used to justify an agricultural dwelling".

- (1) The processed items: fruit juices, fruit condiments and cosmetics, make up 1%, 21% and 3% respectively of total gross profits in year 5 and less in years 1-4.
- (2) The vast majority of the ingredients in the processed items are derived from the site's produce. By way of example, the proposed fruit condiments are made up of 375g of produce from the site and 143g of bought-in ingredients.
- (3) The text to which Mrs. Freeman is referring relates to a) applications for permanent dwellings and not temporary dwellings and b) to the functional test. Neither the ELC nor the agricultural appraiser includes food processing in the functional need arguments.

Will alter the landscape character

Mrs. Freeman writes that the "the site is not actually within the ... Character area 146 ... the area around Greenham Reach is extensively agricultural with pasture land and cropped fields and no market gardening . The proposed type of intensive agriculture will alter the landscape of the area".

The site, although on the border of the Character area 146, is just within that Character area as the image below – taken from Natural England's publication *Vale of Taunton and Quantock Fringes* (area 146) shows:



As set out in the Design and Access Statement, the area's description includes "a patchwork of arable, pasture, market gardening and orchards" with "irregular, medium-sized fields [that are] generally bounded by thick hedgerows" and where "lines of alder are commonly conspicuous along streams".

Mr. Dorpman and Ms. White in their letter write that they believe that the project is a type of urbanisation of the countryside. Only agriculture and activities ancillary to agriculture are taking place on the site. The temporary agricultural workers' dwellings are limited by planning policy to a maximum of 120m² and must be single storey. The dwellings would be occupied not by commuters but by agricultural workers working the plot in question. Smallholdings tend to be High Nature Value Farming and ecological smallholdings even more so, so they will add and not subtract from the wildlife, as indeed is core to both our intentions and our Management Plan. As set out above, the traffic generated is to be limited by planning condition.

Ample affordable smallholdings already

Mrs. Freeman writes that "there are plenty [of smallholdings] on the market with buildings that have planning permission or some degree of planning potential". We followed the web link that she provided to support this claim in her letter of objection and found a smallholding at

Becklong. For £115,000 the purchaser would get ~7.5 acres of land, planning permission for a polytunnel and barn but no planning permission for a temporary or permanent dwelling. The temporary permission which allowed for the now dilapidated bungalow expired in 2002¹² and furthermore, an application for a mobile home was refused in 2005. By comparison, should we be granted planning permission, our tenants would, for £60,000 (Plot C) and £65,000 (Plots A&B), have ~7 to 9 acres of land, a 5-year permission for a temporary dwelling, a barn, renewable energy system, etc. plus the ongoing support of the ELC in developing their business

These two sites are clearly not comparable.

Within the letters of support there are letters from the co-ordinator of the Soil Association's apprentice scheme (Rachel Harries) and a senior lecturer at the Biodynamic College (Nir Halfron). They both state that lack of availability of affordable farms is one the greatest obstacle for new entrants. This has also been our experience and indeed is also the finding of the 'Tenant Farmers' Association¹³ and the Royal Agricultural Society of England¹⁴.

Incongruity of planning long term crops such as tree-crops with application for 5-year permission

Mr. Dorpman and Ms. White have in their letter that “projects such as these do not seem to take into account the limitations of the products themselves”, questioning the sense of planting fruit trees when applying for a five-year permission. The ELC and the prospective tenants are intending to make a success of the project and apply for another planning permission in 5 years. While we have prepared for a failure (by for example, insuring all structures are reversible and deciding on how to compensate the tenants), we are working towards making three successful small farm businesses. Arguably by proposing to plant trees in the first five years, despite not knowing whether a further permission will be granted, our tenants are showing their commitment to making a success of the project and to sticking to the rather stringent conditions set out in the Management Plan.

¹² The site's planning history can be found by searching for site “Becklong” in the District Council's Public Access for Planning.

¹³ Tenant Farmers' Association 2020 Report

¹⁴ Royal Agricultural Society of England: New Blood Report

The business plans prepared by the prospective tenants assume that fruit and nut trees will not begin any fruiting until Year 4, and the fruit assumed to be produced in that year is a fraction of the amount that the business plans assume to be produced when the trees reach maturity. The three business plans were reviewed by Martin Crawford, Director of the Agroforestry Research Trust with over 30 years experience in agroforestry. He found that the agroforestry aspects of the business plans “were sound”¹⁵. The plans include crops and animals that will generate income in different years, so for example, Plot C includes geese in the first year of their business plan as grassy areas will still be available but as these grassy areas are turned over to market garden and agroforestry, the geese are not maintained. Due to data protection regulations, the business plans were not made available on the Council’s website but anyone that would like to see a copy can request one from us. Our contact details are at the end of this document.

Creating precedent

Concern has been expressed that permitting our applications could lead to a proliferation of smallholdings. It seems unlikely that others would repeat our work. Firstly, it has taken nearly four years of work to get to the point we are now at. In this time we have established our co-operative and conducted a great deal of research into low impact development, ecological smallholding and the site itself (ecological survey, topographical survey, etc). Much of this has only been possible through people volunteering their time. Secondly, if granted planning permission we have signalled our willingness to be subject to strict planning conditions which few others would be prepared to be constrained by.

Diminish the environmental amenity

It is argued by Mr. Goad that the kind of small scale ecological smallholdings we are proposing would “diminish further the high quality of the environmental amenity of this traditional rural parish”. The independent ecologist who surveyed the land writes in her report “low impact developments such as that proposed here tend to benefit wildlife by introducing low input, more extensive agriculture, increasing habitat diversity and re-introducing traditional management techniques”. Mr. Patrick Krause, Chief Executive of the Scottish Crofting Federation wrote in his letter of support (12/000107/MFUL) “smallholdings tend to be more environmentally friendly than large farms. If smallholdings tend to be more environmentally friendly then **ecological** smallholdings will be even more so ... we are confident that the ecological smallholdings will do nothing but enhance the environmental protection of the locality”.

¹⁵ Martin Crawford’s statements are available in the Design and Access Statements submitted with each application

Failure to consult locals

In Mr. and Mrs. Robinson's letter dated 31 January they wrote that "the application claims local consultation but has failed to write to local people about the latest applications". We wrote to neighbours shortly after the second of our three applications was validated (12th and 16th January) and before public consultation began on any of the three applications (17th January). A list of addresses was generated for the TA21 0JY and TA21 0NG post codes on the Royal Mail's website.

Mr. and Mrs. Robinson also say that the ELC chose to send its application in on the 22nd (sic) December so that "people's attention might be focused elsewhere". At the time of submitting the application ref:11/02007/MFUL (20th December) we spoke with the Council's planning department as we too had similar concerns that the Christmas holidays would not allow for a period of public consultation. We were told that the period of public consultation would run until at least the end of January. It seems that this is indeed the situation as the public consultation only began on the 17th of January and at the time of writing this response (19th March) was still open.

Poor accessibility and transport links

Miss Howarth states that the site has poor accessibility and transport links. The question that we have asked ourselves is whether or not the tenants can meet their business and personal needs with the existing transport links while at the same time generating minimal traffic. We went through a lengthy exercise with the tenants to ascertain these needs and found that they will be able to meet their needs through the use of a combination of lift sharing, cycling and walking. As set out above, should they not be able to meet these needs in this way and end up making more vehicle journeys than permitted, we risk being served with either a breach of condition notice (against which there's no appeal) or an enforcement notice. Non-compliance with these notices constitutes an offence.

Applicant's tree planting indicates disregard of process

Miss Howarth in her letter of objection wrote that she was "extremely concerned to note that the proposers are already undertaking work on the land ... I hope this is not an indication of a future disregard for the conditions of any approval". The work to which Miss Howarth refers was a day and a half of tree planting and bramble clearing, and certainly indicates no such

disregard. The bramble clearing needs to continue to ensure that bramble doesn't encroach onto the pasture, particularly the species rich pasture. The trees were principally planted to create a visual screen between the site and the neighbours at Lowdwell. In discussions following the Parish Council meeting of 26th January, our direct neighbours expressed their concern for their loss of privacy and we wanted to respect their concern. Accordingly, we decided it was worth spending £500 and our time to begin growing a screen on our land as soon as possible.



Tree planting on 25th February 2012

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