

Transcript of Mid Devon's Planning Committee Meeting of June 06 2012

Created by the Ecological Land Co-operative

Only the conversation related to the Greenham Reach applications has been transcribed.

(text in red is unclear. "... " indicates an unintelligible passage)

Chair Colthorpe: There are speakers here, so if we could have your officer's report please Mrs Fish, and then we will take speakers.

Planning Officer Alison Fish: Thank you Chair. For members convenience you'll find on your tables a coloured plan that I've circulated just because the ones on the overhead don't come out terribly clear so it just gives you a bit more of an idea of what I'm setting out. There is also a summary page for each of the plots and what it is proposed in the business plans for each of them just again as an aide memoir for members.

As you will recall from the previous committee meeting the applications are for a site that lie approximately 1.5km from Holcombe Rogus. This is the site here edged red on all three applications. I'm going to take all 3 together. The river Tone is along the Eastern side, that is the District boundary there. The canal is to the south of the site here and the nearest neighbours are Ramsey Farm to the north, here and Lowdwells to the South and Tremlett Farm to the east, here.

The total area of the land within the red outline there is 21.87 acres.

The items 1,2 and 3 on the Plans List are all part and parcel of one larger proposal for the development of this site. My presentation today covers the communal aspects of the proposals and then leads onto each of the individual items.

So, the main communal facilities are set out in your reports on page 8.3, and they include improved access, two additional passing bays, a visitor parking area with space for refuse and recycling, a new trackway into the site, which leads to a barn which is to be used by all three plots, and the barn has a solar PV array on its roof and water storage proposals. There is also some strategic landscaping proposed, particularly towards the west of the site and a Wetland Ecosystem Treatment system for the waste water on site.

So, the overall layout of the site, and this is where members may want to refer to the colour drawing in front of them for more clarity. So in terms of the communal facilities, this is the County Highway road to the west of the site down here and within that they have proposed to provide two passing bays on the on approach to the site and improved access into the site at approximately this location. Members that came on the site visit will note that the current access is served by just a field gate so there are some proposals to slightly widen that. Also proposed is to provide a trackway into the site which runs through to the communal barn which is to be used for food processing, storage of materials and any machinery. And just to the entrance as well is the proposed visitor parking and also an area for storage of any waste and refuse. In terms of the other communal aspects, you have the WET which is the Wetland Ecosystem Treatment area just to the north of the site here and to the east of the barn.

So if we turn to the access now, the picture on the left shows the existing arrangement which is literally just a field gate within the hedge and there are proposals to widen the access to

provide greater visibility in each direction. And this is a view taken from the access looking northwards towards Ramsey Farm so the proposal is to cut back some of this hedge and provide visibility across the verge as you can see, and looking southwards again you can see the need to take back some of the hedge to improve visibility.

Also a communal aspect is the barn and as you can see from the detail here this is a relatively traditional construction of timber boarding with a solar panel array on the roof and provision inside for processing some of the jams and chutneys that you will have read about in your reports together with an open storage area. There is also the provision for collecting the roof water in storage tanks.

And this is a view of the proposed siting of the barn taken from the access and looking eastwards and roughly this location here **against the treed boundary treatment**.

So if we turn to each of the applications individually. Plans List number 1, this is Plot C and this is the furthest east of the plots. This one is 8.9 acres in total. And within this they are proposing a market garden with vegetables and herbs, and silvopastoral agroforestry which is trees, particularly fruit and nut trees, with mushrooms on logs, herbs and vegetable planting, 0.3ha of poultry, soft fruit and grazing sheep with the idea being that chutneys, jams and pickles are made from unsold and imperfect fruit from the enterprise.

So in the layout here. This is Plot C on the far right of the screen. The grey hatched area here is the proposed location of the dwellings. Also proposed with this is a brooder / chicken house in this location here which is also part of the application and then the scheme also proposes a polytunnel area in this location here and chicken houses. They are actually considered to be not buildings so they do not form a specific part of this proposal.

Turning now to the Block Plan, the dwelling again in this area here in grey hatching and the poultry brooding house in this location here and you can see that in relation to the communal barn which is at this location here and the waste treatment area in this location. On Plot C you do have details of a temporary agricultural dwelling that they are proposing. It is 11 metres by 4 metres and two and a half metres in height and timber clad of relatively simple construction again with storage for rainwater from the roof. Plot C also includes provision for a poultry hatchery and brooder building. This one 6.1m long by 3m wide and 2.3m high. So these are photos now of Plot C. Members will recall that when we did the site visit we walked right over to the far eastern side of the site and we stood at the top of this hill looking down towards the River Tone. This is a relatively steeply sloping parcel of land. This is looking eastwards. This is taken from the same spot. You can see the fall of the land and we are looking northwards towards the boundary of the site and we are stood in a similar spot looking southwards to the more denser land and the flatter areas towards the very south of the site and again looking south-eastwards you can see the slope of the land where the sheep are grazing.

Looking south this gives you an overall view of the site with the steeply sloping piece of land here and the much more flat area in this location here. So moving on to 2. This is an area of 5 and half acres and is the flattest part of the site and the most westerly part of the site which adjoins the county road. Again this is the overall layout of the site with the communal barn here so it is this area of land towards the left of the screen we are looking at that is Plot A. The grey hatched area here is the location of the proposed dwelling and you've also got within this a polytunnel at this location here and a greenhouse which forms

part of the application which is located there. So in terms of its relationship to the communal barn, that is the communal barn there and this grey hatched area is the area of the dwelling and this is the greenhouse here. This is the proposed greenhouse, 7 metres long by 3 and a half metres wide and two and a half metres in height. We will turn to some photographs now. This is looking from the gateway approximately due east across the site. You can see it is relatively flat. Again stood in the same location looking more southwards. Again you can see the gradient relatively flat and this is looking down due south with the hedge on the right hand side of the photograph being the boundary with the public highway. So we will move on to the final plot now and that is item 3, Plot B. This is 6.8 acres of more gently sloping land and again it is this central section here highlighted in red, and again you will be able to see that more clearly on your coloured drawing. The area in grey in this location here is the general location of the dwelling and there are no other buildings proposed as part of this application. They do propose a polytunnel and some chickenhouses but again these are temporary structures that are not forming part of this planning application. So in relation to the communal barn this grey hatched area here is the location of the third dwelling. So each of them are in roughly the same area congregated around the communal barn. And we have reached the final set of photographs now. This is taken from within the site within Plot B looking northwards toward gently sloping land. This is looking southwards across the site. Again you can see the gentle slope. And looking southwestwards across the site.

So one of the main issues that members need to consider is whether there is an essential need to live on site. Members will recall that in previous times we had to consider the functional financial test PPS7. As of the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework in March the test now is whether there is an essential need for the rural workers to live on site. And the other item I would draw your attention to in the update sheet is to say that as the applicants confirm there is no longer a need for a borehole, then, on your recommendations, item 4 VIII which is with reference to the Section 106 requirement for a borehole is to be removed from the officer recommendation in all three items. I'll also just run through the answers to some questions raised in public question time. The first question was that Holcombe Rogus Parish Council had noted their concerns that Mid Devon District Council did not have a clear policy on dealing with these types of proposals. We don't have our own policy on this. Officers **endeavour to** support the members to consider the National Planning Policy Framework which in paragraph 55 does state that there should be an essential need for rural workers to live in the open countryside so this has been balanced against the sustainability objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework as well. The other question asked was that the reason for approval did acknowledge that the proposals in themselves did not have essential need and yes it is quite clear that the officer's report does acknowledge that in the officers view that, taken on their own and based purely on the agricultural aspects we didn't consider there was an essential need to live on site but this, in coming to a balanced recommendation considered this and all other aspects including the merits of a pilot such as this in bringing the recommendation of approval to Members. The final question was about overturning the strict control of National Planning Policy in terms of dwellings in the countryside in terms of the aims and objectives and the ethos of the pilot and the answer to this is that when the members feel they should overturn strict controls over new dwellings in the countryside this is a decision for the members considering all the benefits and the other issues raised in the officer's report. Thank you Chair.

Chair Colthorpe: Thank your Mrs Fish. There are speakers on this. First we have Mr Maxey who speaks on behalf of the applicant. I should explain for those people who were not here last time that because all these applications are being taken together although **votes**

will be taken separately speakers are being given six minutes to speak rather than the three which is normally allocated to each application but because we have here three applications which are largely similar each speaker will have six minutes. Thank you.

Dr. Larch Maxey: Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today. I am Dr Larch Maxey, Director of the Ecological Land Cooperative and Research Fellow at the Centre for Sustainable Futures at Plymouth University. I have researched Low Impact, Developments for 18 years.

I would like to start by thanking the Committee for ensuring all councillors have been able to read these applications in full. Each Committee member has been in to the council offices to read the applications and supporting documentation. I appreciate that you are all busy people, so for taking the time to really understand this application, I thank you. In applications such as this, based on ecological agriculture and Low Impact Development, it has been common in the past for the Planning Inspector to be the first person to closely read and deeply understand the applications. I commend the way in which Mid Devon has conducted itself with regard to these applications:

Firstly, the planning officer and indeed, the entire planning team have been outstanding, taking the time to engage with us over several years. It is clear that all the officers involved really understand this application. They have probed it, questioned us and brought real meaning to the pre-application process. Similarly, the Parish Council have been exemplary in really getting to grips with the application, raising questions and making suggestions which have further strengthened it. Finally, the local community have responded thoughtfully and frankly to our numerous consultations as we have called door to door, speaking with people, sharing our ideas and taking on board all the concerns and ideas raised.

Each time we consulted, each time we met officers or councillors, we came back with **more** home work, another report, more analysis, tighter wording, all to ensure the project succeeds and is as beneficial as possible to the community, the local economy, biodiversity and our shared challenges such as climate change. The results are detailed and thorough applications totalling over 400 pages.

Let's consider just 2 examples of this productive consultation process. Firstly, our *Small is Successful* Report and then the borehole discussion at last month's Planning Committee meeting.

The *Small is Successful* report came out of our first meeting with the Parish Council who identified a lack of information demonstrating the ability of such small-holdings to produce financially viable businesses. Over the next 12 months I led a 4 person research project which investigated the viability of such holdings. We found a growing number of businesses with annual turnovers of 12 000-180 000 on acreages of ½ to 6½ acres. Crucially, they did this on land far more marginal than Greenham Reach! To date these businesses have remained little known due to their small size and local nature, but it is clear they have a significant role to play in future food provisioning. We published our findings in 2011 and our report *Small is Successful* was acclaimed by the Research Councils UK as one of the year's most influential pieces of research.

At the last Committee meeting concerns were raised about the possible negative impact a

proposed borehole at Greenham Reach could have on neighbouring farms. The Committee asked for more information. We therefore brought forward a hydrologist's inspection which concluded the project can meet its water needs without a borehole. The details of this, and our response to *all* the questions raised at the meeting have been sent to Councilors and your planning officer. If desired, we are also happy to participate, in due course, in a study of groundwater and boreholes in the locality and their extraction rates.

Today is the culmination of a four year consultation and development process. The results of this process are applications described as exemplary by an independent planning consultant, applications the Parish Council praised for their detail and rigor as they gave their support, applications which your planning officer, in collaboration with her outstanding team has recommended for approval.

The key for this Committee today, in determining these applications, is essential need. The NPPF defines this as an: "essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside".

These applications concern diverse and non-mechanised farm businesses. Most of their proposed activities require on-site presence and the applications' Design and Access Statements detail where each aspect of essential need in these applications has been supported by Appeal Inspectors. As our supporting documentation makes clear, Planning Inspectors now recognise the essential need of ecological small holders to live on their land. This on-site presence is vital to their viability and productivity. Inspectors have determined that whilst individual activities on such ecological mixed holdings may not justify on-site presence, taken together they do.

It is important to note that these Appeal decisions were determined on the old, narrower framework set out in PPS7. Essential need is a broader measure and more suited to a sensitive understanding of how ecological agriculture functions and the benefits it may bring. Your Planning Officer, having worked closely on this project for several years, has found that there is an essential need for the small holders to live and work on site.

It is essential for their business and livelihoods' viability, it is essential for their practical day to day functioning, it is essential for them to achieve such high levels of productivity and diversity and it is essential to ensure the project's sustainability objectives, generating absolutely minimal traffic flows whilst using solar electricity, harvesting rainwater, monitoring and providing data so Low Impact Rural Development can be fully evaluated. To address Councillor Bainbridge's question of how these applications are different from others that have been refused, this is again set out in detail in the documentation, but if we briefly consider the two most relevant:

- Muxbeare Orchard: farm activities were at a different scale, the farm business required approx 0.2FTE, ours average 2FTE per smallholding.
- Charwood Farm: the truffle business application failed to demonstrate functional need or a sound financial plan.

Ours applications detail both functional need and sound financial planning. Muxbeare, Charwood and *all* previous applications were judged on PPS7, ours on essential need.

Another crucial difference is that previous applications did not have in place the many measures and protections the three applications before you today benefit from. The ELC exists to safeguard and protect the land, to ensure it remains only used for affordable, sustainable agriculture and to support the tenants creating viable livelihoods and reporting on these annually.

Finally, I remind Councillors that this is an application for temporary permission. If, after approval, it should become clear that the businesses are not viable, then the residential component will be removed.

All we are asking today is that you recognise the beneficial potential this scheme presents. That you recognise the essential need for residence in order to achieve this potential and that you follow the Parish Council and your planning officer in giving these 3 smallholdings, these 3 households and the ELC a chance to prove themselves. Thank you.

Chair Colthorpe: Thank you Dr. Maxey. I have a Mrs. Frances Freeman who wishes to speak for the objectors.

Frances Freeman: Yes I am Mrs Frances Freeman (with an e if anyone is interested). I live between the village and the planned development. We object to all three applications related to the Greenham Reach development and the general principles of the objections apply to all three applications. As at the last meeting I urge you to concentrate on the requirements of the new National Planning Policy Framework and not be seduced by the ethics of the Ecological Land Cooperative development. The applications clearly fail the essential need and sustainable development tests as we demonstrated in our letter to you. Please just focus on the relevant planning issues and do not be persuaded by non-relevant support including the recent letter in the Tiverton Gazette. The person who wrote it is a Parish Councillor but does not have the backing of the Holcombe Rogus Parish Council which has strong concerns about the applications as clearly put in the Parish Council's letter to Mid Devon District Council.

This is the development of a green field site, not the required essential need but in every case for convenience. After all farmers do not live in their fields and for somewhere cheap to live. The following will show how the three planning applications fail to satisfy the planning criteria. The new National Planning Policy Framework wants to achieve sustainable development but not at the cost of our natural environment. The NPPF provides three dimensions to sustainable development as economic, essential and environmental. You will have seen from the business plans and other evidence provided by the ELC that it will in fact be low **income**, isolated, inward looking and covering a large part of the small site with houses, hardstanding and polythene so it fails the three dimensions. The ELC clearly had no idea of the impact of the borehole and therefore it has been removed from all applications. We have provided statements to demonstrate that the water supply from the boreholes will adversely impact on two other homes and two farms. Not only will they suffer from the development but the other homes and farms will have the legal right to seek significant damages from the Greenham Reach applicants. We note that the ELC have been forced to acknowledge the issue of neighbours protected water rights and the stress to the water table. However we would query the ability of the spring to provide water instead of a borehole. Should you choose to give planning permission it is essential that it specifically prevents the sinking of a borehole any time in the future to avoid farms and householders being deprived of water.

Paragraph 55 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances. These applications are in isolated areas and do not fulfil the criteria required for special circumstances. There is no essential need for the applicants to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside. The case officer stated in her report to the Planning Committee Agenda that in all three cases they would fail their functional need and essential need for the rural workers to live at or near their place of work. In her words it would fail the test of functional need and therefore we must consider that it will fail the essential needs test. In her report the case officer states that generally isolated residential development in the countryside is unsustainable unless there is essential need for the dwelling to be located there.

TR5 TSB seeks to encourage the use of walking, cycling and public transport to limit the use of the private car. This application is contrary to that policy as it will considerably increase the use of the private car. The photos you have just seen show that the area is totally rural and unsuitable for this development. The stated aims of the Ecological Land Co-operative are to create a pathway into farming. In fact each development is providing lifestyle accommodation on a green field site which has proved by the business plans will continue to require an alternative income and can never lead to an income that will allow the applicant to progress to a genuine sustainable farming enterprise. Two of the three applications are clearly reliant on outside earning to maintain their way of life. In other words this is not an independently sustainable development as required by the NPPF. The Small is Successful booklet which has just been mentioned does not tell you how many small businesses did not succeed. If these applications are approved you will without doubt be setting a precedent that will allow the ELC and other less reputable groups to replicate the application to you and other planning authorities which if approved under delegated authority will have no accountability to the elected councillors and the local community they serve. We do not see that the development will contribute to the local economy because Holcombe Rogus is very rural and not at all affluent and will not benefit from an agricultural site that instead of being sympathetic to the surroundings and managed traditionally will in fact be the site of intensive agriculture. Neither will it protect and enhance the biodiversity of the area as required by the NPPF. The economic role, the social role and the environmental role are the three dimensions described in the NPPF and none have been satisfied in the applications. In particular there is no absolutely no essential need for rural workers to live on site. We therefore urge you to refuse the applications.

Chair Colthorpe: Thank you Mrs Freeman. Is there anyone from the Parish Council who wishes to speak? OK, I have a statement from one of the Ward members which I propose to read to you now and then the other Ward member will speak. This is from Councillor Heather Bainbridge. Having read the business plans of the prospective tenants I do not doubt their sincerity and desire to farm in a sustainable and ecological manner. Nor do I doubt the messianic fervour of the ELC's beliefs. However that is beside the point. Residents in the immediate neighbourhood, few though they are, have grave misgivings about this application. They know this land which is poor and best suited to sheep, not horticulture. The plans indicate that at least two sets of tenants would derive income from activities unrelated to farming, for example journalism, websites, building. The myriad of activities proposed are very ambitious like most business plans and it is not realistic to expect them all to be fulfilled on a plot that is probably reduced to six acres each when the infrastructure is built. Neither is the micromanagement of the site suggested. The ELC will not be able to monitor indefinitely the tenant's movements. When you live in as remote a spot as this it would be an infringement of your rights to be so monitored. The uniqueness and special nature of this

venture has been stressed but it is not particularly unusual. There have been smallholdings, eco warriors and communes in the countryside for many years but not in this seriously farmed area. We have said no in committee regularly to others who wish to do likewise. The NPPF and our strict policies on development in the open countryside do not make this application an exception. The ELC says they will have to build log cabins in a semi permanent manner because no mobile home meets their strict criteria for installation etc. News no doubt to the manufacturers. These will require foundations, however small indicating permanence rather than a temporary experiment. Put simply it is three homes in a 21 acre field and permission would not be granted to a fellow farmer to house his workers. The access roads are and both flood regularly in winter. The area's **proper** facilities are in Wellington and the hospital and A and E are in Taunton. In conclusion I also challenge the commercial aspect of this venture as the tenants must raise £60,000 as new entrants to agriculture /horticulture. Thank you.

Chair Colthorpe: Would the other honourable member like to speak now please?

Cllr. M. Lucas (not member of planning committee): Thank you Madam Chairman, members. Firstly, on Code of Conduct, I am speaking as a Ward Member for Canonsleigh, which I represent. Therefore I have seen reports and communication and have attended Planning Council meetings.

Because I have come into the process at this particular juncture, I haven't been *au fait* with a lot of the things that have been going on, but I have spent a lot of time in the last few days reading and going through various reports. I have made a certain pros and cons list, which I will not bother you with, because you have already probably heard both sides of these arguments. What I would like to say, though, members, is relating to the location of these particular sites. As Ward Member I travel a lot round the ward on my bicycle. The road – as you have seen on your site visit relating to these particular sites – is extremely narrow. When I say narrow, you are aware of the smallness of Devon roads, but this is a particularly narrow road. I can go round this area, I have my ... and I would be very appreciative to know if you actually ride that site, because if you ride that site coming from Greenham, you would have gone down a very narrow, winding, twisting lane into the site. Ten days ago, I decided to test this, not on my bicycle but in my vehicle. I don't have a large vehicle, I have a small vehicle. From the actual site going past the ... Farm which is on the right (I was trying to get to Tracebridge), it took me something like 12 minutes because I met vehicles coming the other way and had to reverse back, and back. By the end of the 3rd time of reversing back I was quite competent at reversing in fact! That is a problem that people are going to have with these roads – they are extremely narrow.

I have noticed within the various submissions relating to this, they talk about lay-bys, but what concerns me is the fact that the two lay-bys have **got two months to be commenced**, according to the papers in front of me right now. I would like confirmation of this later on, Madam Chair. That's the first part.

The second part, which I think is probably of even more importance, and I note that the applicants have had a **site visit** related to boreholes, I would like – before I can proceed any further – a definition of “boxing the spring”, as I am unfamiliar with the term. If someone could be so kind as to tell me what that means I should be most grateful to you.

(The Chair invites Oliver Rodker, Director of the ELC, to explain the term, which he does. Planning Officer Alison Fish also explains that the Environment Agency will check on any proposals to alter watercourses)

The other thing, then, is relating to water boreholes... (the Chair explains that boreholes have been removed from the application)

Let's approach this from a different angle. In Holcombe Rogus they have had problems with water for some considerable time. There is a letter which I hope you all have in front of you, from a Mrs. Kim White, of Featheringcott Farm, which according to me is possibly half a mile away from the actual site. Therein she relates how much DEFRA advises in their rough guides to the needs for her animals. If you add all of that up, that's 148 litres per day for each one of those animals. She has two wells, the first one is below the house, approximately 50ft deep... the second well is only about 12ft deep. My point I'm trying to make councillors, is that the more you take out, and don't put anything back in, and the more people there are taking out, the less there is collectable to be there. My feeling is that this is a point that really should be taken very seriously – water. It affects us all. And finally Madam Chairman, I am concerned about the fact that we haven't in some of our conditions put down what we should have put down. The Parish Council mentioned the removal of Permitted Development Rights within the current conditions outlined in the Parish Council's report. [But] there is nothing in the conditions related to Permitted Development Rights if this application is approved. The other thing is on Condition 7, I'm concerned, Madam Chair, that we don't state with regard to provision of a temporary dwelling (and passing bays) on site that there's nothing in there stating how soon that should be done. And you have seen the site – if that is not done immediately, then how are you going to get tradesmen's vehicles down that narrow lane? I really do ask you, members, to think about the narrow lane, the lack of water potentially, and also the fact that it is not the right location; whilst I might accept that it is an excellent venture, the location of where it is – within the countryside – is in the wrong place.

Thank you Madam Chair.

Chair Colthorpe: Thank you Cllr. Lucas. Mrs. Fish, have you any answers for Councillor Lucas' questions?

Planning Officer Alison Fish: Yes Madam Chair. With regard to the position of the passing bays in Condition 7, you'll see my revised recommendation that the Section 106 Point 4 is to require the provision of a timetable to various works, and that includes the provision of the passing bays. So they'll need to submit the details of the passing bays and under Section 106 provide a timetable showing exactly when they'll be provided on site. In terms of the Parish Council's point about the inclusion of a condition removing Permitted Development Rights, preventing the proliferation of ancillary buildings; in terms of agricultural buildings, there are no Permitted Development Rights for new buildings on areas of individual holdings of less than 5 hectares, so any new buildings would need planning permission. If members felt that there was a need for a condition to prevent residential ancillary buildings then, yes, we could look at that. Thank you Madam Chair.

Chair Colthorpe: Thank you Mrs. Fish. I hope that is sufficient, Cllr. Lucas. Members you have heard the applicants the ELC, you have heard the objector, you have heard a statement from a ward member and the words of the other ward member. We have already discussed this at some length. I would like to point out to you that should you wish to discuss the

business plans in detail we will need to go to part two. If all you want to do is just mention the business plans in passing that will be fine but please if anyone wants to discuss them in detail please remember that we need to go to part two first.

I throw it open to the floor. Councillor Stanley.

Councillor Stanley: Thank you Madam Chair. **I am the proposer that this was deferred.....** Like a number of other members I have actually looked at the business plan and I will restrict my comments to generality rather than specifics at this stage. If I was to raise it I would go to part two. This business plan doesn't stand up full stop. There is a demonstrated loss at the end of five years which would make my hair stand on end if I had any left so financially I don't think this thing stacks up. Three units for accommodation is over development and as it is in the open countryside as far as I am concerned that should not be permitted. The question about water is an interesting one. Now the borehole has been removed and they are going to rely on the springs. Well I declare an interest that I farm 60 acres at the moment and the springs from this stream dried up and I had no water in three of my fields from springs that have been running for the last 17 years that actually dried up this winter. So there we have a major problem. My bill for water as I could not use the spring and it was £175 for 3 months just to feed some of my sheep. Overall there are so many errors and omissions within the business plan and I have discussed this with the Head of Planning and he has the same view as myself that there are large **chunks** of the proposals that are not costed. There is nothing about the **funding of the sheep** or how they are going to deal with animals that die as they do. Livestock is dead stock as you know**and they need to be taken away.** The outcome of their produce gets to a 100% and that just doesn't happen. There is no way that your produce will run at 100%. So overall I don't think this is the right proposal we should give planning permission on. There are letters in this report which does concern me. For instance the ELC is proposing to sell a 50 year lease to these three tenants. What happens at the end of the five years if we do give permission now but we decide not to let that continue. There is a comment that the land is marshy. It is marshy – we have seen it. Some of the land is extremely steep and is only fit for sheep that's for sure and then you look at their proposals for the quality of their accommodation. They are going to build these units to code level 4. We on the council are struggling to get to code 3. Now it is going to be forced on us in the next few years to go to code level 4 and the financial cost of getting our stock to that is phenomenal and how we are going to get there I don't know. Then they go on about a 4.5kw PV array to meet all their electricity but they are reliant on banks of batteries to give them power in the dark times. I mean it must be a super way to live but I don't think it is practicable as far as I am concerned and I am not prepared to support this. Thank you

Chair Colthorpe: Thank you, Cllr. Stanley. Cllr Holloway?

Cllr. L. J. Holloway: Thank you Chair. Well the first thing is that this seems a very innovative scheme, and it seems carefully thought through in quite a lot of detail. I do take Cllr. Stanley's point that you could consider there were gaps in it. On the other hand I was prepared to give it a chance because it seemed worthwhile testing the water on something like this, which is so close to people's hearts – just to see how it stacked up, over a proper planned period, being monitored, so that we could see if it actually worked.

The sticking point for a lot of people seems to be the dwellings, even though they're temporary, and this is [an application] for a temporary condition. So, if we're saying that

there is no essential need in agricultural terms – which is what the case officer has decided, from all the information – and we’re then saying that the only reason for approving the dwelling is in order for the project to go ahead, it strikes me that the pilot is not based on the true facts. It’s not a true pilot if it’s being allowed to go ahead on something that would not normally be permitted. Because if we permit it and it’s reasonably successful – or even if it isn’t – you have set a precedent then because others will come forward and say “I’ve got a similar scheme, you permitted a temporary dwelling before. I need a temporary dwelling because that’s the only way it can be viable”. The only way to have a true pilot is to do it *without* the dwelling, in accordance with planning guidance, because then you can see whether it’s actually achievable. So that is my real stumbling block because, on the face of it, a pilot would be valuable and it would be really interesting to see whether what was on paper – in the business plans – would come out in reality and what would be achieved. But if we’re doing it on the basis of the workers being able to live on site, and that wouldn’t normally be permitted, then it’s not a useful pilot, so I’m actually thinking now that I can’t support it, on that very basis.

Chair Colthorpe: Thank you Cllr. Holloway. Cllr. Wilson?

Councillor Wilson: Yes thank you chair. I disagree with Lynn slightly. I still consider this is a pilot because we are only allowing permission for this for a five year period and if it doesn’t work the fact that there is a fifty year lease ahead is immaterial if it is proven that it is not likely to be able to do it then I doubt if anyone else would want to come along and take over should planning permission be re-granted for a further period of time. With regard to people living on site I think it depends on which way you look at it. These people are going to be living, dare I say it, hand to mouth that is their choice. We may want to have a conventional way of living, some people may decide on an unconventional way of living. Why not? And the practicality which Ray mentioned earlier is not really an issue. For each of us because, if it’s not practical then they will find out and waste their money and see their savings disappear down the drain and in the end they may not have anything at all. They do have more to lose these people. Ray said **they may lose some** sheep. People who are going to be doing this are going to be very much more careful on what they do and looking after the few stock that they have because to them they are far more significant than to someone else which is why I assume partly they do want to be able to stay on the site. And with regards to what **Mel** said in his objection to traffic, that can happen any time. It is time at the moment. We are going to find lots of tractors and trailers going up and down country lanes. It happens this time of year and people don’t turn round and say this shouldn’t happen because it’s dangerous so why should it be that possibly one or two vehicles if anything are any less warranted?

...

Chair Colthorpe: Councillor Squires

Cllr. Squires: Thank you Chairman . I've looked at this, I come from traditional agriculture, I feel it, I find it very very difficult to square the same circle for here. I have read the business plans and what is intended to be done may be very good, but knowing what farming is about, I know that foxes come occasionally ... and I noticed that particularly on this side there is a river that I understand is prone to flooding, and I was looking at the picture here and the free range poultry going, I thought wouldn't it be awful if a flood came and you've got those... (unintelligible through coughing)

And I've been very sceptical, I also saw a young couple move into a farm with a few acres a few years ago next to us who said they were going to do a box scheme, and we scratched our heads and said that'll never happen, and I have to say it did happen. They found it very difficult the first few years, they borrowed machinery, we helped where we could, and they have a very good scheme going now, so it was on much higher acreage than this so I am very sceptical about the amount of acreage here to support it, and I felt I should say that.

Having said that, and I know its experimental, I still haven't made up my mind about which way I think it should go, and I would say that now, because I think it is going to be very very difficult, and a lot of hard work, and I am very sceptical.

Chair Colthorpe: Thank you Councillor Squires.