

PLANNING AND REGULATORY COMMITTEE

Date: 3 June 2020

Schedule of Committee Updates/Additional Representations

Note: The following schedule represents a summary of the additional representations received following the publication of the agenda and received up to midday on the day before the Committee meeting where they raise new and relevant material planning considerations.

SCHEDULE OF COMMITTEE UPDATES

TITLE OF REPORT:	<p>192711 - ERECTION OF A CATTLE SHED, 1 BAY EXTENSION TO AN EXISTING GENERAL PURPOSE AGRICULTURAL STORAGE BUILDING AND LANDSCAPING. AT FARMSTEAD SOUTH EAST OF BAGE COURT, DORSTONE, HEREFORD, HR3 5SU</p> <p>For: Mr Morgan per Mr Ian Pick, Station Farm Offices, Wansford Road, Nafferton, Drifffield, East Yorkshire YO25 8NJ</p>
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ADDITIONAL REPRESENTATIONS

Two additional letters of representation have been made since the publication of the agenda. These are set out in full as follows;

1. *I have had the opportunity to read your report to Committee. However, I would be grateful if you would confirm to me:-*
 - a. *The existing type and number of livestock?*
 - b. *The proposed increase in number of livestock (and type)?*
 - c. *The area of existing agricultural land (in hectares) owned by the applicant at Bage Court Farm?*
 - d. *The area (in hectares) of any agricultural land rented by the applicant in the vicinity?*
 - e. *How many agricultural buildings are currently on-site and what is their combined floorspace (gross external measurements sq m).*

The reason I ask these questions is I remain unsure as to why yet a further new building is required in this location when there does not appear to be any evident increase in the size of the holding and / or livestock numbers. Clearly in the open countryside one should restrict new buildings and I understand that agricultural buildings should be demonstrated to be "reasonably necessary" for the purposes of agriculture. You are aware of the complex and controversial Planning history relating to this site. It was for that reason that I had previously suggested that you engage the services of a suitably qualified agricultural expert (I understand that Herefordshire Council occasionally engage the services of Robert Fox) to address the issue as to whether this further building is actually needed. Nobody wishes a building to be permitted that becomes redundant with inevitable pressure for another use.

2. *On the surface this appears to be a simple, straight-forward planning application which, in isolation, it is and intended to be so. But, considered in the light of the previous planning history relating to this site and the accumulated levels of legal and illegal activity now carried out at the site, it should be rejected.*

The initial buildings on this site were permitted to replace the old and obsolete buildings at Bage Court itself, within the hamlet of The Bage. Permission was also granted to convert the obsolete buildings into residential property and that development was commenced with demolition of some small buildings and the improvements to Scar Lane junction.

Over the years, further individual applications have been made for additional buildings on the site which have been granted and implemented thus creating a major complex. During this period three applications were also made for industrial units for poultry adjacent to the site. These were all refused on appeal.

Last year the applicant illegally erected four food silos on the site without planning permission. The County Council officers decided, after consultation with Councillor Price, that no enforcement action should be taken about the food silos and thus allowed industrial farming into Dorstone Parish by default. The applicant then illegally adapted two of the buildings on the site into industrial piggeries and commenced using the buildings for industrial activity.

The planning permissions for these buildings were granted strictly for agricultural purposes associated with the land at Bage Court Farm. Currently illegal major structural work is being carried out on further buildings on this site and it appears these will be used as industrial piggeries also.

It is very concerning that despite a history of non-compliance with planning conditions these illegal activities are allowed to continue by Herefordshire County Council officers and no enforcement actions are taken. Namely:

- 1) The illegal erection and operation of four food silos on the site.*
- 2) The illegal conversion of buildings to allow intensive farming activities to be undertaken.*
- 3) The continued use of the development site at Bage Court Farm for farming activities after commencement of the development.*

Current government policy relating to agriculture is moving away from intensive animal farming to more sustainable farming methods. The adopted Dorstone Neighbourhood Plan is clear that 75% of residents polled are against intensive farm in the Parish.

The majority of the buildings at this site are in use for intensive animal husbandry throughout the year. As such, levels of activity have intensified which is out of proportion for the normal farming processes throughout the Golden Valley for which permissions were granted at this site. In particular, dumping of substantial quantities of the manure arising and constant loader activities over extended hours cause nuisance to residents of the Parish.

The headwater stream of the River Dore actually runs through the site which, with the ever increasing intensity of livestock on the site, puts the river at greater risk of pollution and contamination.

Approval of this current application would add to the intensity and issues. This site is already the largest complex in the Golden Valley.

Since the majority of the buildings on the site are used for intensive animal husbandry the obsolete buildings at Bage Court Farm are still in daily use for food storage and processing, lambing, and any treatment of the sheep flock of the holding.

Because of the history of planning associated with this site the Planning Committee should give full consideration to all these issues that are involved and reject this application. If the County Council was minded to grant permission for such an increase in this industrial complex then it should impose appropriate conditions to mitigate the effects. These conditions should be carefully worded and enforceable, by law if necessary. They should include:

a) A wide tree planting margin planted all round the site installed prior to commencement of the buildings to ensure that the condition is, this time, met.

b) No further buildings to be allowed on the site or the holding.

c) Cessation of all farming activities at the development site at Bage Court Farm.

In addition to the above, members will be aware of further correspondence sent to them directly on behalf of the Golden Valley Action Group. In summary, the correspondence raises concerns with regards to the how officers have addressed a number of points raised in subsequent representations. It also attaches these previous representations for reference and sets out details of the Group's speech which is to be read out during the Committee.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The enterprise is well-established and continues to grow and the applicant has identified a need for additional livestock accommodation/storage.

The following additional details have been provided by the applicant in relation to the justification of the proposal;

As pig numbers have increased and required housing in the existing buildings, the applicant has identified the requirement for additional buildings in order to grow cattle numbers. The traditional buildings at Bage Court Farm are no longer within the ownership of the applicant. They are owned by the applicants brother, and the applicant has 18 months left on a lease on these buildings, following which he has to vacate (the traditional buildings at Bage Court have an extant planning permission for residential conversion and this requires the removal of the modern farm buildings). The total land available to the applicant is 350 acres. The applicant has 1,000 fattening pigs, around 650 breeding ewes and 45 cattle which he intends to expand.

Notwithstanding the above submission, the question of 'need' is acknowledged and addressed accordingly at Paragraph 6.10 of the officer's report.

Comments relating to previous enforcement matters at the site or future concerns in this regard are noted but as set out at Paragraph 6.4 of the officer's report, this application has been assessed on its own merits.

Correction – Paragraph 6.12 of the Committee Report should read as follows;

The proposal would extend the length of the existing agricultural storage building by 6.09 metres and erect an additional cattle building for the resultant length of the above, with a ridge height 1.15 metres in excess of the existing building to be extended.

NO CHANGE TO RECOMMENDATION