

Whittlesey Town Council

Minutes of the Planning Meeting held on Monday 18th March 2019 at 7.30pm at Grosvenor House, Grosvenor Road, Whittlesey

Meeting was delayed due to technical difficulties and started at 7.40

Present: Cllr Mrs Jolley, Butcher, Whitwell, Mrs Laws, Miscandlon, Mrs Mayor, Windle, Bristow

Officer in Attendance: Mrs Sue Piergianni – Town Clerk

Recording: DS25. DS2

P28/19. To receive apologies for absence from members.

There were no apologies.

P29/19. To confirm and sign minutes from the last meeting of the Planning Committee held on Monday 18th February 2019

Approved: The minutes of the meeting were approved and signed as a true record.

P30/19. Declaration of member's interests.

Councillors Mrs Laws and Miscandlon as members of FDC Planning Committee advised that should Planning applications be discussed they may comment, but reserve the right to change their minds should more information become available later

P31/19. Public Forum. - To allow members of the public to address the Council. Time allowed 15 mins total.

6 members of the public present.

Mr Steve Robertson – referred to the Planning Meeting of 26th October 2016 and asked why planning for the Cattery at Partridge Farm has only just been submitted and is retrospective. He has queried if they therefore had a licence, why has it taken three years for them to apply for the licence. There does not seem to be any recourse as they have been trading, the system is wrong.

Mr Roy Gerstner – F/YR19/0158/F reserved matters, he has been asked by residents to advise members that the presentation given by Persimmon Homes was very poor and was inaccurate in content.

Carol Turner – (Mrs Turner provided the following information on the application for **Huntingdonshire District Council planning ref 18/01782/FUL – Collmart Growers LTD – Anaerobic Digester**

The existing site is officially classed as agricultural.

The proposed plant is a new Commercial Facility. Purely in the owner's interest, with no economic benefit to Pondersbridge and no legitimate reason for its location here, only convenience. There is land elsewhere.

This company farms 1,417 hectares (approx. 3,500 acres) of valuable rich farm land in and around the county of Cambridgeshire.

The above plan is to build a 3.5MW Anaerobic Digester on the border of Pondersbridge village only 275 meters away from residential properties.

The village is already blighted by their activities as a Vegetable Processing plant, as can be seen under the comments section from residents within the application files.

The applicant's agent advises and would have us believe that the plant is a **relatively small operation**. However, with the dimensions shown, (which are too small to draw attention to them)

rgaw

suggests otherwise. In Comparison to information I have found in various other Anaerobic Digester reports, i.e. dimensions of the digesters, lagoon, number/size of storage clamps, power provision etc. of plants between 1MW and 2.8MW, (Who have all been classed as large plants), Collmart's proposal is a **very large industrial facility**. With the 2.8MW systems using almost 2 X the amount of feedstock too, including Maize which is a high methane yield crop.

Details:-

- This plant will produce 3.5MW of biomethane and 0.6MW of heat
- It has twin digesters 80 metres X 24 metres X 2 metres deep, with a 7,680 cubic metre capacity
- The digesters are just over 7.5 metres high from ground level
- There is a lagoon 80mtrs X 35 metres X 4mtrs deep, capacity to hold 12,000 cubic metres of liquid. (an Olympic swimming pool is 50 metres)
- Storage clamps 100mtrs X 80mtrs divided into 8 sections
- Plus, a process building 10 metres X 8 metres X 4.25 metres

Feed stock chart/traffic flow see plans: -

- The digesters will need to be fed 24/7, 365 days a year to work properly
- Declared usage of 24,000 tonne of feedstock comprising (total on sheet shows 29,650 tons). Would this double once up and running?
- Maize - 7,000 ton "500 tractor movements annually from Collmarts existing farms to Pondersbridge but will only replace existing movement of crops already grown" *We believe this to be only onions and potatoes. They will still go to the processing unit.*
- Sugar beet - 5,500 tons (*then indicates tonnage as 10,500*)?
- Straw -6,650 tons – transported throughout the year
- Onion waste – 5,500 (*on site but the onions are again transported into Pondersbridge all year round*)

Gas transportation route? – could affect a lot of people!

- The **Biomethane** will be exported daily from site (no gas pipeline in village)
- **Not via Farcet village**, vehicles too large, so it won't affect them.
- **Horsey Toll, through Stanground, onto the Parkway to the power station?**
- **Whittlesey, Church Street, through to Thorney?**
- Lorries will be too large to go down and over **North Bank**
There are no other routes.

Sites to look at Material Change, Symonds Farm 1.4MW with further expansion
Decoy Farm Power Ltd Crowland 2.8MW. permission to extend business Sept. 2018. There are many others with more details and many having additional plans passed, allowing them to grow considerably.

Principle of Development - agent

"The proposal is near one of the main feedstock sources", (*this provides the lowest source of feedstock ie 5,500 ton of onion waste*) "together with the production of a purpose grown energy crop on applicant's surrounding farmland" (in the county).

Landscape Impact –

How can views of the site be "generally distant ones" – the photos they provide within the plans are of distant views and are conveniently taken with a property in front. Yes, in a blink of an eye.

Flood Zone 3 classed as "Highly probable, but proposed industrial use for the site, is classified as less vulnerable". *Not if an explosion caused the river bank to rupture! And our banks are getting weaker!*

Ecology

– "Site is in the corner of an open field.....The surrounding farmland is in monoculture"? which means our fields are planted with a single crop! There are potatoes, sugar beet, wheat, rapeseed and

sometimes even linseed. Unless of course, the applicant is now going to rent all these fields to grow his energy producing crop, then they will be monocultured.

The applicant's conclusions – “the proposal represents a sustainable form of development that is required to be located on the existing farm in order to take advantage of the proximity of the nearby storage and pack houses. Both importation of feedstock and export of digestate involves the use of the agricultural vehicles moving within the confines of the farm and on public roads. The small scale of the buildings and plant and the location away from dwellings and public vantage points will result in a form of development that will have a relatively light touch on the landscape”.

My Conclusions

This site incorporates the Vegetable processing plant is 2.84 hectares according to agent and is slightly over 7 acres. **It is not a farm**, there are no other roads leading on or off the site. Storage and pack houses are just in front of the proposed plant and will be built on the same size area or land. All the buildings are huge and attempts to cover them up and stop the sound penetrating, are by putting 6 high raised vegetable crates in front of them. The public road, namely The Drove/Farset Road leading onto the B1095, is used by the residents living opposite the plant. They have no alternative route. They already run the gauntlet of vehicles, vegetable debris, potholes and subsidence of the road, every day 24/7 365 days a year. Vehicles turn into the estate to turn around. We all pay our rates to Fenland, so I think Fenland should think seriously about allowing this application to go ahead. They know nothing first hand.

Finally, residents use the river bank track that runs parallel to the site, for walking activities and people have done so for at least the last 90 years. Once used by horse riders too.

P32/19. To consider Planning Applications received from FDC for comments including: - Questions for every planning application – Does it meet the criteria of the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service, building safe and designing out fire.

F/YR19/0147/F – Conversation of garage to living accommodation and formation of a flat roof with lantern to conservatory at 98B Eastrea Road, Whittlesey.

The Town Council have no objection and therefore recommend approval.

F/YR19/0142/F – Erection of a single storey extension and first floor extensions to front of existing dwelling and conversion of garage to living accommodation at 216A Coates Road, Coates.

The Town Council have no objection and therefore recommend approval.

F/YR19/0137/F - Erection of a single orangery extension to side of existing dwelling at 2 Collins Court, Whittlesey

The Town Council have no objection and therefore recommend approval.

F/YR19/0133/F – Erection of a single storey rear extension and bay to front elevation of existing dwelling at 26 Coates Road, Eastrea.

The Town Council have no objection and therefore recommend approval.

F/R19/0150/F – Erection of a wooden shed (retrospective) at 50A West End Whittlesey.

The Town Council have no objection and therefore recommend approval.

F/YR19/0158/RM – Reserved matters application relating to detailed matters of layout, scale, appearance and landscaping pursuant to outline permission F/YR15/0134/0 and F/YR17/1231/VOC for the erection of 220 dwellings and garages comprising of 4 x 1 bed; 34 x 2 storey 2 bed, 127 x 2 storey 3 bed, 47 x 2 storey 4 bed and 8 x 3 storey 4 bed with associated works, play area, substation and ponds and Land North of Whittlesey.

Whittlesey Town council wishes to make the following observations about the above application:

1. **Infrastructure:** Highways – concern about the South east “link” to Teal Road; this will develop into a rat run for vehicles from the B1040 (main entrance to the development) through



the Birds estate/Bassenhally Road and subsequently vice versa and worsen the traffic congestion that already exists in the area. Could this junction be looked at again? **Suggestion** could rising bollards as indicated at the Otago Road entrance to the development also be used at the Teal Road junction? This would enable cyclists and pedestrians to have access but not motor vehicles. This would also encourage parents to walk their children to school rather than relying on a car and hence making the current situation worse.

Registered B1040 Road Closures - The principle access for Showfield Development is off B1040 and is frequently underwater.

During the Easter Flood of April 1998, the B1040 and surrounding area was closed off for many weeks.

In the Autumn of 2012 and Winter of 2013 uncontrolled floodwater closed the B1040 for 65 days. In January 2014 the B1040 closed for 21 days. The B1040 was closed to all traffic for several days at a time during 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2011. Bassenhally Ward can no longer be classed as a "one in a hundred-year flood category". In 1947 flood waters are documented to have reached up to 4.75m AOD. We have experienced at Easter 1998, the Environment Agency recommended that development abutting the Whittlesey Washes should not be carried out on land below the 5.0m AOD

Fenland District & Cambridgeshire County Council Highways Department arranged for two sets of road closure flood gates to be installed between the south side of the Dog in a Doublet bridge and beyond the Showfield Development entrance in East Delph, this is to prevent drivers taking a risk and not knowing the depth of the flood water; it also proves more cost effective for Council's instead of delivering, installing and collecting large concrete blocks and other road signage, cones etc to install a one off road closure barrier.

The entrance to this development will be interesting as if both B1040 flood gates are closed to all traffic and if construction vehicles are prohibited from Swan Road/Teal Road any building or related deliveries will automatically stop.

Flood Warden Scheme - A flood warden group was set up in April 2013 following a meeting between Fenland District Council's Emergency Planning Manager and Whittlesey Town Council. It was much needed in the area to the north of Whittlesey that borders the Whittlesey Washes and includes the regularly flooded B1040.

The flood warden scheme is a vital link between residents, local government and the Environment Agency. A flood warden scheme is important in protecting life and reducing damage to property. The aim is to help and prepare those in the local community that are at risk of flooding. The Environment Agency has informed the Flood Warden Group/Whittlesey Town Council **that 220 households in the Bassenhally ward are at risk of flooding and over 1,000 properties are potentially at risk of flooding.**

An emergency evacuation plan has been in place since 2010 and the Environment Agency has published an emergency flooding map - Why have these measures been put in place if the North side of Whittlesey is not at risk of flooding?

2. **Management company:** As a Town Council we are fully aware that Business Management Companies can cease trading with very little notice.

If, as we are given to understand the developer has decided not to enter in to any formal arrangement for drainage or maintenance agreement with North Level Internal Drainage Board – what guarantees are in place as a fall back?

How many times have we heard water is being managed not controlled – therefore it is essential to know who will manage and the standard of management?

It is noted that the North Level IDB has serious concerns about this development and has preferences for the developer to provide a pumped system for when the washes are in flood.

3. **SUDS and ditches:** Whilst acknowledging the safety hazard of balancing ponds the developer does indicate that the RoSPA recommends that slopes should be sufficiently shallow that any person wading into water can proceed for at least twice their own height and remain standing with their head well above water. Young children do not see the danger of ponds and are "attracted" to water therefore to have a pond immediately next to the play area (north of Whiteacres) central to the development should be revisited. No amount of fencing around a pond will prevent an accident. It is noted that the North Level IDB has serious

concerns about this development and has preferences for the developer to provide a pumped system for when the washes are in flood.

At the recent presentation to Whittlesey Town council by Persimmon Homes extra water storage on the washes was referred to; we ask that FDC as the LPA elaborate on this proposal.

4. **We respectively request a Construction Management Plan as follows:**

Days and hours of opening – suggest the site and all work activities cease from 1.00pm Saturday, no Sunday's and no Bank Holidays allowing residents respite from warning beepers on heavy plant/machinery,

HGV movements to and from site, Contractors & Staff vehicles and the general building noise associate with any development site. Should the developer choose to install **site security lighting** – request down lights are used and directed away from existing residents' properties.

Request a **vehicle wheel wash facility** is installed on site – all HGV's must clean off mud and any other materials before leaving the site.

The developer must ensure the B1040 is kept clear of mud/soil. Will the developer have a wash/sweeper machine based on site and how frequently will this be used? The B1040 Highway must be cleaned before the site closes each day.

Whittlesey Town Council can only request – is the developer willing to sign up to the **Considerate Constructors Scheme** which promotes the highest standard of 'considerate construction'. This includes Care about the Appearance, Respect the Community, Protect the Environment, Secure everyone's Safety.

To conclude – the Peoples voice regarding quality of life and protection to homes and properties as outlined in the Localism Act 2011 must be listened to.

Whittlesey Town Council strongly recommends this proposal for refusal

F/YR19/0166/F – Erection of a conservatory to rear of dwelling at 20 Victory Avenue, Whittlesey

The Town Council have no objection and therefore recommend approval.

F/YR19/0167/F – Formation of a dormer roof extension to side of existing dwelling as 12 Ashline Grove, Whittlesey

The Town Council have no objection and therefore recommend approval.

F/YR19/0168/F – Erection of a single storey side extension to existing dwelling at 17 Marne Road, Whittlesey

The Town Council have no objection and therefore recommend approval.

F/YR19/0169/F – Extension of a dropped kerb at Ryburn, 66 Station Road, Whittlesey

The Town Council have no objection and therefore recommend approval.

F/YR19/0170/F – Erection of a 2-storey extension to front and rear and single storey extension to rear of existing dwelling at 8B Burnthouse Road, Turves

The Town Council have no objection and therefore recommend approval.

F/YR19/0176/F – Erection of 2 x 2 storey 3 bed dwelling involving demolition of single storey storeroom of public house at Land West of The Three Horseshoes Public House, 344 March Road, Turves

The Town Council have no objection and therefore recommend approval.

F/YR19/0183/F – Erection of a 2-storey side extension to existing dwelling at 15 Hawthorne Drive, Whittlesey.

The Town Council have no objection and therefore recommend approval.



F/YR19/0186/O – Erection of up to 19 dwellings (outline application with matters committed in respect of access) involving demolition of existing dwelling and outbuildings at 158 Stonald Road, Whittlesey

The Town Council have no objection and therefore recommend approval, however, would like to ensure the road does not link up with any existing roads and the roadway only services this development onto Stonald Road.

18/01782/FUL – Erection of proposed Anaerobic Digestion Plant, Collmart Growers Ltd, The Drove, Pondersbridge, PE26 2TP.

This application lies within Huntingdonshire District Council, in their District Ward for Yaxley and Farcet, but really does not affect any of their residents. The application site is right on the border with Fenland District Council, and it is their residents living in Pondersbridge who will be affected. The nearest residents in Pondersbridge are only 275 metres away from the proposed Anaerobic Digester. It is recommended by the Environment Agency that the site should be a minimum of 400 metres from the curtilage of residential properties.

The 2011 Localism Act places 'significantly more influence' in planning decisions in the hands of local people over issues that make a difference to their lives. This application is totally in the wrong location and would have a detrimental effect on the lives of people who live in the area. The residents have objected in force to this application.

Whittlesey Town Council believe that this application would have an adverse impact on residents: Roads, Smell, Noise, Insects, Appearance, Safety, Environmental.

Whittlesey Town Council object strongly to this planning application, on the following grounds:

- **Highway** – the roads around and leading to the site are in poor condition, and not fit to cater for the number and size of vehicles that will access the site daily. The addition of daily movements by Heavy Goods Vehicles will exacerbate this problem. Local roads do not have footpaths and the increase in number and size of vehicles will be dangerous to residents when walking through and around the village.
- **Smell/Odour** Residents are already suffering from the smell of rotting vegetables from this site. This proposal will only add to the situation. The Odour Assessment states that there will be smells, but that these are negligible and not significant. I suggest that if it prevents residents sitting outside in the summer months that it is very significant.
- **Noise** – The Cooler fans are running day and night and cause nuisance to the residents. This is worse in the summer months, when residents quite rightly, want to enjoy their outside amenities. The Noise Impact Assessment (which was carried out during December) does not rule out excessive noise, but states that it will be monitored, and if it proves to be excessive then mitigation measures would be implemented. Due to the open nature of the fens the extra noise will emanate from the site and will be intrusive to residents. This is not acceptable.
- **Insects** – The rotting vegetable waste attracts flies and other insects, which cause additional nuisance to the residents.
- **Appearance** – The site lies in a residential area that enjoys views of open countryside. The twin Digesters are 80 metres long and 24 metres wide. The proximity to residents will restrict their open views of the countryside and will be an eye sore to the surrounding countryside. The application states, "because of the relatively small scale of the plant there will be no visual harm" and "there will be no detrimental effect on resident's amenity". This is nonsense. The presence of an Aerobic Digester so close to densely populated residential areas is completely inappropriate. The proposal would be out of keeping with the traditional fenland landscape and would also be clearly visible over a long distance due to the flat nature of the terrain.
- **Previous Applications** – The applicant has not fulfilled conditions on previous applications for landscaping the site.

- **Safety of site** – There are several important safety issues and potential risks for humans and the environment that exist when constructing and operating a biogas plant: These are explosion, fire, asphyxiation, poisoning, surface water leakages, etc. This site is much too close to residential properties. There are several reports of explosions and escapes of noxious smells and materials at these types of plants to countenance such a development so close to so many people.
- **Environmental** – The plant can have an impact on the environment. The Bevills Leam river runs parallel to the site. The river bank is used daily by residents as the only safe place to walk their dogs and other recreational purposes. Wildlife could also be affected, and there are many different species in the locality. Fenland District Council Local Plan Policy LP16 is aimed to ensure that high quality environments will be delivered and protected throughout the district. This proposal does not adhere to this policy.

Finally, Huntingdonshire District Council refused an application for a Chicken Farm near to Farcet (18/00935/OUT) as being too close to residential property – and this was 700 metres. The proposal at Pondersbridge is only 275 metres and should be refused for the reasons above.

P33/19 – Additional Information

F/YR19/0112/0 – Erection of 2no, 4 bed single storey dwellings (outline application with matters committed in respect of access, layout and scale) at land South East of 182 Wype Road – This application has been withdrawn.

P34/19 Date of next meeting Wednesday 3rd April 2019

Meeting closed 8.45

RSM Jolley
 Cllr Mrs Rita Jolley
 Chairman
 Planning Committee

*JAWinda
 10/4/19*

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