

DC/20/01697 Email from Agent received 27.04.2021 at 18:18

Hello Daniel,

As per our discussion earlier, under the circumstances, please circulate this as a late paper to committee. This is not my 3 minute speech.

**What did committee task officers to do in November:**

*“to investigate and understand the intended energy use and what it would be applied to in terms of justification of the proposal in the countryside protected for essential use”.*

Unfortunately, no such approach has been made to us in the intervening months.

**What has the applicant been doing?**

- We have emailed officers a number of times asking for an update on this application, as recently as 7<sup>th</sup> April, but received no meaningful response.
- As you know from my correspondence today, it was a surprise to me this morning that our application was going to planning committee tomorrow.
- Whether a notification was sent to us by committee services is unknown (we have checked and double checked and can find nothing) and in a sense that is by the by now, not least as the applicant has not been approached on the matters committee raised in November.
- The applicant understands the pressures the planning dept. is under.
- Having re-watched November’s committee meeting I have centred my 3 minute speech on matters which Councillors were confused on.
- In pursuit of the committee’s request for officers to investigate matters, I wish to make the following comments...

**Update on County Matters:**

- Section 73 variation application on the feedstocks planning condition on the AD plant – approved in mid-December.
- Subsequent non-material amendment to the description of development on the AD plant – approved.
- Subsequent submission of a conditioned travel plan in pursuance of December’s approval – decision in coming weeks.

**Update on barn:**

- As discussed with officers previously in 2020, and as promised when I spoke in November, the application to regularise the extension to the approved drying barn is in.
- Ditto the landscaping conditions on both the 2019 and 2017 consents.

**Response to items in the committee report ‘addendum’:**

- The addendum says “no additional information has been received with regard to the use of the heat energy” – until yesterday the applicant was unaware this matter was coming to committee today and had been chasing officer’s for an update prior to that. We do not want Councillors taking the impression the applicant has been dodging the issue.
- The County application 0055/20/VOC has been approved and this was in December 2020. Subsequent to that we have submitted and had approved a non-material amendment to the description of development on the AD plant and have submitted the requisite travel plan and await a decision on that in the coming weeks.
- The barn will have a wider role than the assumed narrow harvest season as set out below.

### **Agricultural information in 'support' of this planning application:**

As you know, my basic position on the field array application is that it should be judged on its own merits. The parish council and a member of the public have issues of interest to them that they continue to raise. A lot of time was devoted to matters aligned with the AD plant and the barns in November's committee meeting that are not legitimately matters of concern for the field array. In fact, one Councillor appeared to suggest in a public forum that the applicant was "harvesting grant monies". I hope comments like that do not surface again tomorrow.

As we have not been approached by officers as committee requested, I have to assume committee will continue to raise their matters of concern, regardless of whether they are legitimately related to the field array or not.

I have spoken to the applicant who, whilst expressing concern that he is being required to explain himself in this manner and to this degree on an application coming up to its first birthday, makes the following comments:

*The farm will use the drying facility for:*

- 1. The drying of industrial hemp. 70 acres is being grown on the farm (producing about 1200 tonnes of wet material) being conserved as silage then dried to then attempt to split into biomass for bedding and fibre for industrial use.*
- 2. Wet straw drying to allow us to utilise all the wet (stack top bales) for pig bedding. We currently can lose up to 20% of product in a wet year. Shortages of pig bedding is a significant issue in the industry at present.*
- 3. Grain Maize harvested in Oct as a replacement for imported Soya in the pig rations. Grain harvested at about 60% dm then dried. This is important because we are trying to reduce soya imports for animal feed. Soya that is grown on former rainforest land.*

*Why the farm is looking at new crops:*

*Rattlerow's main farm crop is 'first Wheat', used as a pig feed for the farms own pigs. To achieve 'first Wheats' there needs to be rotational break crops. These have historically been Oilseed Rape, Sugar Beet and pulses. The break crops are used to break Wheat disease and weed cycles, take all / blackgrass etc. In East Anglia the viability of Oil seed Rape due to flea beetle attacks and Sugar beet due to extremely wet winters and historically low prices, has meant these crops are dropping out of rotations and therefore threatening the ability to produce good Wheat crops.*

*The extraction of Protein from Grass has the potential to replace imported soya in the future.*

*To combat this, alternative crops need to be grown (as below ).*

*Hemp drying will take place Dec – May.*

*Wet Straw - Jan – June.*

*Grain Maize - Oct – Dec.*

*Grass - all year.*

*Farming is entering a new set of challenges that requires new rotational practices, reduced inputs and better soil management. The introduction of new low input high carbon capture crops such as Hemp is going to be a requirement on the agricultural industry moving to the future.*

Clearly from the above information there WILL be a year-round need for a drying barn. A drying barn that should have its green credentials boosted by this field array being approved in a timely manner by the Council. As I said in November, we submitted a near-identical application to West Suffolk in 2020 which was approved within the statutory period without the delays and issues being dwelt on here.

I sincerely hope that the Council can see the challenges that the farming industry were facing last year when this planning application was submitted, let alone now as it comes up to its first birthday?

At the beginning of November's committee meeting the Chair described this proposal as "quite exciting proposals, very interesting". That is true now, was true in November and before that in April last year.

This applicant is innovating, and planning HAS to allow him to do so. The delays he is experiencing are fettering him in that pursuit.

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