

**Response of Dorstone Parish Council to Planning Application Number 172894/F – Erection of an agricultural building for free range egg production, with associated egg packing area and feed bin, (amended scheme, of 161909), on land South East of Bage Court Dorstone Hereford.**

Dorstone Parish Council considered the above application at their meeting on September 13<sup>th</sup>, Councillors present resolved, by a majority of 4 to 1, not to support the application. The meeting was well attended by Parishioners and others.

In considering the Application, the Council focussed primarily on landscape issues. In doing so it was aware that concerns continue to be expressed by Parishioners over other issues, such as the impact on highways, noise, dust, odour and water pollution. However as the Independent Inspector who examined the previous similar application in February 2017 based his rejection on the impact on the landscape, the Council decided to concentrate its assessment on this factor, in the context of both the Herefordshire Local Plan policies and the Dorstone Neighbourhood Plan policies adopted in February 2017.

The previous similar proposal submitted earlier this year was not supported by the Parish Council, was rejected by Herefordshire Planners under delegated powers, and rejected at Appeal. Therefore the key issue is how does this new application differ from the previous proposal?

The Application claims to have addressed the landscape issues raised by the Inspector. Namely:

- The application on page 4 contains the heading “Reduction in length”, which is correct. However the narrative of the Design and Access Statement fails to draw attention to an increase in the width of the proposed building which, together with the proposed side shed achieves a footprint reduction of just 0.33%.
- At the same time there have been increases in height, in both the roof ridge height and the finished height including the boxed in fans. The net effect, as calculated in a submission by the Golden Valley Action Group, to the Council was an increase of 22% in the overall volume of the building. The net effect of the increased height would be that the proposed unit would be significantly higher than existing farm buildings and would make the building look significantly higher than the previous application. All this increases the proposed shed’s visibility both at ground level from all directions and from the surrounding hills.
- The Application, therefore, claims that the protrusion issue, referred to by the Inspector, has now been overcome by the reduction in the length, and it claims that it no longer protrudes from the existing buildings at all. However this is only because a new barn has recently been constructed, under permitted development conditions, on the other side of the proposed building. Both this new barn and the proposed building protrude from the existing buildings.

- The new application also states that the design of the building has been altered to a more traditional appearance, primarily by the use of wooden cladding. This change has been made despite the comment from the Inspector in paragraph 16 of his report, namely: *“I accept that conditions could be imposed for example to control the colour of the external cladding on the building, landscaping and any security lighting. Some views towards the building from nearby highways and rights of way would be screened or filtered by existing hedging. The proposed landscaping would, in the long term, partially mitigate the effects of the proposal. However, these points would not either individually or collectively neutralise the landscape and visual effects of a building of this scale at this location”.*

The Council’s view of these changes is that they are minimal and superficial and do not remove the concerns contained in the Inspector’s decision earlier this year. The proposals, including the newly erected barn, expand the built area of the site. It remains a substantial building, in volume terms virtually the same and in height terms has been increased, compared with the previous application. The introduction of cladding does not remove the basic nature of the building as being enclosed and of utilitarian design, contrasting markedly with those of the open sided existing buildings.

The Council therefore continues to share the view of Herefordshire Council in its final Report of the previous proposal that it would *“ result in substantial harm to the character and appearance of the aforementioned landscape, contrary to paragraph 109 of the National Policy Planning Framework, together with the overarching aims of the Framework policies SS6, LD1, RA6 and SD1 of the Herefordshire Local Plan Core Strategy 2011-31 and DNP ENV Policy 1 Conservation, Heritage and Landscape of the emerging Dorstone Neighbourhood Plan”.* This conclusion was fully supported by the Inspector in paragraph 19 of his Report.

Since these Reports and the Appeal the Dorstone Neighbourhood Plan has been adopted in February 2017. It is worth noting that the new Application makes no reference, whatsoever, to the Dorstone Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Council expects that the presence of the adopted Plan which includes specific reference to Intensive Livestock Units must be fully taken into account in considering this Application.

The Dorstone Neighbourhood Plan, supported by all members of this Council, was prepared carefully and methodically over a five year period. It included thorough consultation by various means, including detailed questionnaires to all households in the Parish to find out their views on matters which were considered important to the Parish.

This consultation included a questionnaire carried out between May and July 2015 which included a question on the development of intensive livestock installations. The questionnaire explained in its covering note that whilst large scale intensive developments cannot be part of a neighbourhood plan, smaller

scale development, such as those proposed at Bage Court, can be influenced by the presence of an Approved Neighbourhood Plan.

The results of this survey which had a 70% response rate was that 75% of respondents took the view that that Dorstone was not a suitable location for intensive livestock installations. This information went on to inform the policies contained in the final Plan, which was subject to detailed scrutiny by an Independent Inspector.

The relevant policy is contained in Policy number DNP/ENV 1 - Conservation Heritage and Landscape. It states that *“Development proposals will be supported where they:”* (Number 6) *“propose intensive livestock units that demonstrate no significant adverse landscape, environmental or amenity impact, and with access arrangements that fully satisfy the Highway Authority”*.

The Plan was supported by 84.4% of residents who voted in the referendum of January this year. It is the Council’s view, in the context of the Neighbourhood Plan, that this proposal has a significant adverse impact on the landscape and should be rejected. To do otherwise would seriously undermine the value and integrity of Dorstone’s Neighbourhood Plan and bring into question Herefordshire Council’s commitment to the Neighbourhood Planning process.

To conclude, the Application makes a superficial attempt to overcome the issues raised by the last Appeal Inspector. At the same time it makes no reference to Herefordshire Local Core Strategy Policies or the Neighbourhood Plan. It states that *“the proposed design will appear to the casual observer as a traditional livestock shed”* yet it does not back up with any professional opinion providing a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment. In simple terms the majority opinion of the Council believes that this proposal would be a permanent *“blot on the landscape”* and should be rejected.