

Cllr Surinder M Soond,
20 Barrington Road,
Shepreth,
SG8 6QB.
Tel: 01763 268447
Email:s.soond@btinternet.com

**Retrospective Planning Application S/1728/10: Warehouse Extension and Toilet
Block at Fieldgate Nurseries, Meldreth**

Dear Saffron Garner,

Please find outlined below my representation and views to be considered in determination of the above planning application.

While development at Fieldgate Nurseries (FGN) has extensive planning history, most of which is very convoluted by aspects of planning enforcement coupled with concerns raised by local residents, without complicating things further, I would be grateful if this particular application could be presented to the Planning Committee for the next meeting with a view for members to remark on a possible course of action (based upon their experience and knowledge in such matters).

On the 30th November 2010, Mr and Mrs Lowe (residents of St John's Farm, SJF) contacted me expressing grave concerns regarding this application and the possible consequences should this application be approved. Subsequently, numerous local residents have also expressed similar concerns, all of which were collectively highlighted to the members of Meldreth Parish Council Planning Committee on the 2nd December 2010.

Based upon the complexity of events leading up to this juncture in time, I would like it to be known that most of the views expressed in this letter are founded on the above application only (for simplicity) and that previous events leading up to submission of this application will be kept to a minimum and used for reference purposes only.

With this in mind, I would like to highlight my views (taken with the views of local residents) and the possible options available for consideration with a view to highlighting what the consequences of such options would be based upon their impact on the surrounding residents of FGN. These recommendations should be viewed broadly as follows:

- 1) Rejection of this application**
- 2) Consideration of this application with conditions**

Rejection of this application

While we are all in favour of economical development of FGN in Meldreth for the direct benefit to the local community, we are also of the view that growth of such retail businesses (particularly as it is outside the village envelope) should be permitted with up most consideration to the impact of such growth on the surrounding residents and the surrounding countryside. Conversely, in this instance (and previously), it would appear that very little in the way of consideration has been given to the local residents immediately residing around the site and the adjacent natural surroundings. Taken with certain inaccuracies highlighted in the application form, we think recommending this

course of action to the Planning Committee should be a serious consideration in view of the following:

Firstly, local residents (particularly from SJF) have had to suffer the movement of heavy lorries into and from the site at unsociable hours (eg 3-4am) consistently for the last 3 years. Taken with unregulated and obstructing car parking-generally in front of SJF along Bury Lane (and over the 'Keep Clear' road markings adjacent to this) this has been a source of major disruption and inconvenience to the residents at SJF. Although this is an issue that has to be addressed by the owners of FGN, it would appear that no positive actions by FGN have been taken. We are collectively of the view that limiting the times during which heavy traffic moves in and out of the site would be of great benefit to the local residents and for the safety of other road users. Moreover, while customer parking does exist further into the site away from SJF, it is infrequently used. Having visited the site, it would appear that factors that may contribute to this may arise from the fact that the parking sites are very poorly lit and due to the general messy and littered state of the areas designated as parking lots, may contribute to this pat of FGN breeding safety concerns should one's car be parked in the designated parking areas.

The sighting of conveniences for the shoppers at FGN is of great importance and is a necessity at the site. Considering that the current conveniences are of a 'Portacabin' style, it would not be too much of an inconvenience for them to be sited further into the site (due to the presence of a septic tank into which they could feed) and therefore away from the retail outlet, which would have the benefit of freeing up more potential parking nearer the shop.

We fear that should this planning application be unconditionally approved, there would be an increase in traffic visiting the site during retail hours and during unsociable working hours (to collect recycling from the cardboard bailer for example), which would add to the distress of the local residents and road safety around the site.

Other factors that would contribute to this application being rejected or flawed (purely based on how the application form has been completed) are as follows:

Question 6: The answer to all these parts should be 'YES' (see traffic flow supplement). In this diagram the use of an exit road is planned onto Station Road (point marked B). This proposed road is to be developed on what appears to be property that belongs to the Cambridgeshire County Council Highways Division. No such documents highlighting ownership have been submitted with this application.

Question 11: 40 parking spaces are listed. This is incorrect, as two of these are occupied by a refrigeration unit (see application S/0684/08/F)

Question 12: Localised Flooding has become a consideration at this site as the filling in of a ditch near the entrance of the site (by the owner) has taken place. Consequently, water cannot soak away as readily as before and is the source of a private legal matter between the owners of FGN and SJF. This should be addressed for more transparency as it could have implications for SCDC planning in considering any future planning applications.

Question 16: While trees and hedges may not be directly impacted, there are trees and hedges on the site-therefore 'YES' should be the answer to this question. Moreover, this is described in the design and access statement as having mature trees and hedges being

present and is also described as a woodland setting. These are important features of the landscape and character.

Question 19: The increase in storage and distribution floor space would be an increase in 58 square metres (not 54 as stated) and would give a total increase from 330 to 388 square metres in floor space. Also, there would be an increase in floor space for the proposed toilets (9.1 square metres), which is not referred to here.

Question 21: The correct opening hours of the non-residential properties are: Mon-Fri 8am-6pm, Sat 8am-5.30pm,, Sun 9am-4pm (approximation) which are not in agreement with what is stated.

Question 23: The site area is 1.5 hectares and not the stated 3.45

Design and Access statement:

- 1) The site is approx 2.5 acres and not the stated 4.5 acres.
- 2) The 2 storey brick and single storey wooden barns are also listed buildings and are being used by businesses who occupy some of the parking spaces designated for the customers at FGN-adding to the problem of customers parking near the entrance for the whole site rather than in designated sites on the development.
- 3) The warehouse extension at this moment is used at anytime of the day and week, which is a source of disturbance to the residents of SJF. This is also cited as comprising less than 10% of the total floor space-in reality it is approximately 14.9% (58/388, based upon question 19 of the application)
- 4) In this statement other developments, such as the presence of a residential dwelling mobile home behind the shop (which could be a suitable location for the toilet block) is not mentioned-for which no planning consent appears to be present.
- 5) The greenhouse permitted in application SC/0136/70/D, is currently being used for industrial storage-a change in use (and is clad in tin) for which no planning permission has been obtained. Moreover, this building is directly opposite the 16th century pond, moat and public footpath and has the effect of physically altering the natural appearance of this part of the site.

Heritage Statement:

- 1) The warehouse extension and the toilet block would be visible from the listed building, although in this statement it states that it would not. Moreover, these are also visible from Station Road and from SJF.
- 2) The refrigeration unit is also visible from the listed building and is the basis of application S/0684/08/F (ongoing)

Index Map Plan

The boundary line in this map may be incorrect. We are led to believe that the actual boundary (on the East side of the site) is represented by the dashed line. Consequently, the area between the dashed and solid line should be identified by the submission of land registry ownership documents as part of this application (and are not) or should at least be addressed with respect to ownership. Moreover, the dotted line defining the area that has been developed does not appear to be consistent with planning

applications (approved or ongoing), highlighting another possible inaccuracy in this application.

The use of heavy vehicles exiting the site would pose a major hazard as 'exit B' is near a road bend-heavy traffic making a right turn here (towards Melbourn) would pose a hazard for traffic heading towards the A10 by-pass along Station Road.

Consideration of this Application with Conditions:

While, it is tempting to speculate that granting of this planning permission with conditions, may give scope for better developmental regulation of the site, it cannot be ignored that a general trend of submitting retrospective planning applications appears to have taken hold and therefore may not necessarily present a tangible solution to the overall problem of deregulated growth of the site.

However, should this be a point for further consideration, we are of the view that the following points be considered as conditions that should be attached to this application:

- 1) Parking facilities at the site should be better regulated to encourage shoppers to park in the designated areas and away from public highways (that are the subject of inconvenience to the residents at SJF).
- 2) The relocation of the toilets should be reconsidered to permit the formation of an area that allows for cars to have ample space in which to park and manoeuvre.
- 3) The hours during which the movement of heavy vehicles should be restricted so as to minimise disruption to the local residents with a view to also improving the flow of traffic through the site from a safety stand point.
- 4) The whole site would benefit from planning applications being submitted retrospectively for buildings that have been erected in the absence of planning controls (so that the whole development can be regulated) with a suitable planning enforcement policy in mind.
- 5) Submission of future applications be given no consideration until any outstanding applications have been addressed and resolved.
- 6) Views taken by the Local Council Ombudsman (dated 28th September 2010) be taken in to consideration in any immediate future decisions made in the development of this site which could have implications for the local residents.
- 7) Provisions should be made to discourage the use of travelling to the site by car and for more provisions to be made for pedestrians to access the site by foot. This aspect of sustainability of the site is not addressed in the above application, whereas ample consideration is given to addressing the flow and parking of cars.

In summary, we would be grateful if the Planning Committee would consider the above points in determining the fate of this application, being mindful of the residents immediately residing around this site with a view to unravelling what can only be described as a 'confusing situation', so that retail industry and residents can co-exist within boundaries defined by SCDC Planning Law. Moreover, we believe that the proper and regulated development of this site would be a real asset to the residents of Meldreth and the surrounding villages.

Best Wishes
Cllr Surinder M Soond