

Charlton Parish Council

MINUTES of The Planning Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 28th January 2025 in The Old School Room, Charlton.

Present Cllr Roger Davies

Cllr Richard Wallis

Cllr Helen Hill

Apologies for absence

Cllr Darren Salmons

Declaration of Interest

None

Two members of the public were present

W/24/02564/FUL associated ref: W/23/01036/FUL

Bredon View, Haselor Lane, Charlton, Evesham WR11 2QZ

The Parish Council decided to support this planning application.

W/24/02461/FUL Highfield, Haselor Lane, Charlton, WR11 2QZ

Charlton Parish Council **strongly objects to this planning application** for the following reasons:

- 1) The site of this proposed development is in open countryside where development is strictly controlled.
- 2) SWDP 8E states that *“the provision of employment land and the conversion of existing buildings to support job creation throughout south Worcestershire will be supported providing the development supports an existing business or new enterprise of a scale appropriate to the location”*. The region to the southwest of Evesham has a unique rural fabric. The area is bounded by a wooded ridge of Haselor Hill in the west, and Haselor Lane and Merry Brook to the east and is characterised by market gardening. In fact the land has a scale and linearity stretching much further back to the open-field systems of the feudal middle ages. Whilst some of the high density plots have given way to cereal farming in this area the landscape retains many of the human scale qualities. It is probably as a result of this that this area, which includes the application site, lies within the (LT) Village Farmlands and Orchards as defined in The Worcestershire Landscape Character Assessment 2012. As a result of this in our opinion the application does not meet the criteria of being appropriate to the area.

The applicants also state that they chose the site at Highfield *“as it is available, it is in their ownership and provides all the potential facilities for a regional depot”*. Their acquisition of Highfield has only recently taken place, should they have wanted planning permission to change the use of the site surely they should have sought this prior to purchase and not be using this as a reason for planning permission to be granted on this site which is not appropriate for the requested purpose.

- 3) The applicants state that the Company started as a family run business. However, this has clearly grown and under the present ownership current Companies House records reveal that two of the six Directors are American and reside in the USA. Records also reveal that two of the other Directors reside in Scotland. Companies House records also have a “Notice of Relevant legal entity having significant control” on file stating that Olympic Compactor Rentals (UK) Ltd own more than 75% of the shares of the Company. Companies house also reveal that Michael Brask who is an American and resident of the USA has a controlling interest in Olympic Compactor Rentals (UK) Ltd.

The person holds, directly or indirectly, more than 25% but not more than 50% of the shares in the company.

Further Companies house also reveal that Michael Cese who is an American and also resident of the USA also has a controlling interest in Olympic Compactor Rentals (UK) Ltd. Again owning more than 25% but not more than 50% of the shares in the company.

It would appear that the Systematic Servicing (Equipment) Limited are part of a larger International Group and we again question whether this is an appropriate site for a regional site for a business of this size.

- 4) SWDP 12 Clause C - The application is contrary to SWDP 12 Employment in Rural Areas. *“Expansion of employment sites in rural areas will be supported where it can be demonstrated that intensification of the existing site is not viable or practical.”* The applicant's agent has not demonstrated that the previous agricultural use was unviable. Rather she has assumed this, based on the fact that the previous owner who farmed the land requested an extension to the 3-year planning permission granted for the siting of the agricultural worker's mobile home on the grounds of exceptional circumstances. These were Covid 19 and the presence of TB. His own state of health may have also been a factor – unfortunately he passed away within 12 months.

- 5) SWDP 12 Clause D - on Farm Diversification the SWDP reads:
Proposals to diversify farm businesses for employment, tourism, leisure and recreation uses will be permitted providing:
- I. *the proposed new use does not detract from or prejudice the existing agricultural undertaking or its future operation.*
 - II.

The planning documents show that the changes proposed are permanent and irreversible, yet such development should not be permitted to jeopardise future agricultural production. The scale of the activities associated with the development should be appropriate to the rural character of the area. The industrialisation of the site and the proposed bund do not comply with the last requirement.

- 6) The building of a 2 metre bund would be a visible disaster on the landscape and also contrary to SWDP 25. It should also be noted that the building of such a huge item would involve the movement of many HGV's transporting tonnes of hard-core/soil along the farm tracks, and local roads either through Hinton, (where there is a narrow bridge and corners to navigate), Pershore or Hampton and Evesham.
- 7) In this application there is provision for the change of use for a mobile home to be used as an office reception, meeting room, etc. It should be noted that this mobile home was granted temporary planning permission for an agricultural worker use only due to the site being open countryside. Since being vacated by the agricultural worker the mobile home has become subject to enforcement proceedings, however action is currently deferred pending the outcome of this planning request.
- 8) The Parish Council are confused that given the applicants are stating that there will be four HGV's accessing the site each month, if each one would carry one compactor, (also the applicants have stated that they would be working on four compactors when they were not busy). Then why would they need eight full-time employees to attend to what would seem to be a small amount of work.
- 9) With regard to the actual works being carried out, it should be noted that:
 - A) there could be considerably more noise than has been estimated from the use of industrial sized power tools used to repair/modify compactors/hoppers and other equipment, and also from ventilation systems used when diesel is being used to generate power
 - B) The open access storage would seem to be in close proximity to the residents of Haselor Lane causing a lot of disruption and lack of amenity to their daily lives.
 - C) The surface water drainage from the whole site and especially from the wash-down area, will drain into The Merrybrook. The Merrybrook catchment is designated as a "Very High-Risk Rapid Response Catchment" by the Environment Agency - and is also subject to a natural flood management to reduce flood risk to properties downstream. If this planning application should be passed, then all water run-off from the site should be curtailed. A scheme to retain the water so that it naturally drains into the ground should be implemented.
- 10) The route the HGV's would take to access the site would have to either be through Hinton, (where there is a pinch point at the bridge as well as bends to navigate on the narrow road), Pershore or Hampton and Evesham. These roads are already congested and not ideally suitable for HGV traffic. Whilst Highways are happy with

vehicles accessing the site from Haselor Lane they do not appear to have considered the wider issues of access to Haselor Lane.

This site therefore does not seem to meet the criteria set out in SWDP11 A para 3 which suggests the road haulage industry use appropriate roads.

11) Location sustainability - the site is in open countryside and would have to be accessed by vehicle, this applies to all employees as well as those visiting the regional depot. It therefore fails to meet the requirements of SWDP4 A.

12) Mr Williams of Upper Haselor Farm submitted a planning application for similar activities on land immediately next to this application site application ref: W/24/00634/FUL. This was refused and is now the subject of an appeal: APP/H1840/W/24/3354735. Although the applications are similar this application is for a much bigger operation. The application site at Upper Haselor farm would only require two part-time members of staff whereas this new one is for eight full-time members of staff.

If that application is granted on appeal, and this one is also granted, the resultant combined permissions, on adjacent sites, would be for a much larger scale operation with significantly larger impact on the area than described in either of the individual applications. We question as to how can these enterprises be considered sustainable or community focused in such a traditional rural area.

In objecting to this application the Parish Council considers this sort of operation would be more suited to one of the Commercial sites, of which there are plenty in the area such as Vale Park, and not in open countryside. The fact that the previous application at Upper Haselor Farm explicitly stated that there are ambitions to expand the business reinforces the fact that the business should not be allowed to become established in a "Designated Rural Area" and also an area which is identified for "Protect and Enhance" under SWDP 5.