**Elm Farm Swalciffe House Partway House**

**Sibford Ferris Swalcliffe Swalcliffe**

**OX15 5AA OX15 5EY OX15 5HA**

 **15th March 2015**

**Dear Committee Member**

**Swalcliffe Park Equestrian (SPE) 14/01762/F**

**Use of land at Grange Farm for mixed use comprising** **part agricultural, part** equestrian **and competitions (Use Class D2), retention of 1no access and relocation of 1no access on to the road leading from the B4035 to Sibford Ferris; extension to existing parking area and retention of equestrian jumps and obstacles; as detailed in agent’s letter dated 22nd December 2014.**

We are the three neighbours who live on the perimeter of the SPE site.

**Timetable**

We received from the Head of Public Protection and Development Management a second class posted Neighbour Notification on 9th March (dated 5th March) informing us of Amended Plans. We were given 10 days to respond. If this means from the date of the Letter, 10 days expires on 15th March, six days after we received notification on 9th March. This seems unreasonably short. If this means from the receipt of the letter the 10 days expires on 19th March, simultaneous with the actual Planning Committee. Either way it is unclear how the Case Officer proposes to take our comments into account, given that the Minutes for the Planning Committee were circulated on 11th March.

This timetable seems rushed and insufficient.

**Documents**

A consequence of the rushed timetable is incomplete documentation

Nowhere is there laid out a set of the extant current documents. This is the second Amendment to the Application, following the original application in October ‘14. It is almost impossible to know which documents remain relevant and what the universe of documents is.

The revised Event Management Plan does not even refer in its title to the correct Planning Application.

The Amended Application title makes no reference to large events >50 horses. These are the events that cause the greater disturbance. Surely reference to these large events needs to be a headline issue?

An equally crucial consequence of the fluidity of documents is how we can be sure, on what premise, consultants to the planning team, have based their reports.

**Site Area**

A case in point is the Site Area for everyday training and schooling < 50 horses. We have 3 possibilities for the site area:

* Cross hatched area per Paul Walton’s report, para 11, accompanying the October 14 application.
* The Amended Plans in December 14 included a map with purple colouring showing the “Areas for Schooling”. The purple area is almost double the cross hatched area. Paul Walton in his report accompanying the Amended Plans in Dec 14, at para 11 says “..the submitted site plan illustrates within that an area of 14.26 ha with hatching in order to illustrate the land which will be used for every day use for training and schooling…”. This conforms to the map enclosed with the application in Oct 14.
* The Case Officer attaches a site map that encloses an even larger area than the purple shaded area- in particular fields 3, 6 and 5 are included in the Case Officer’s map.

Surely a cornerstone of any planning application is being crystal clear as to what piece of ground permission is being applied for which activity? It is precisely this opaqueness which will enable a tolerable level of activity to become intolerable, with no means of control.

**Noise Management Plan**

Para 3.4 says the Case Officer writes “..it is my view that in order to be effective a NMP would contain an assessment and plan for each of the potential configurations with scaled plans setting out the optimum location for each area of activity with the plan drilling down into the detail of each of the event configurations”. I believe that this may be repeating advice from the Anti Social Behavious Manager.

The Noise Management Plan submitted by Id!BRi in March 15 does not satisfy the above. The Case Officer appears to recognise this, because at the time of writing, the Application is still subject to receipt of an approved Noise Management Plan. Noise is a key issue, as evidenced in the past by letters from the community. Is it right that an application should be submitted for approval with such as key issue outstanding?

**Traffic**

Tadmarton Parish Council recommends the reversal of the traffic flow between Lower Tadmarton and Wigginton Heath, with all traffic accessing via Gated Road South. This eminently sensible proposal has not been considered and was not even mentioned by the Case Officer in his verbal briefing to the Planning Committee on 19th February. It is a highly practical proposal that helps address a range of issues.

The proposed Event Management Plan. funnels all event traffic, (except that approaching directly from Shipston on Stour), through two villages (Tadmarton and Swalcliffe), much of the traffic is required to travel an extra 5 miles or so, including on unclassified roads, encouraging the temptation to short circuit through a third village, Sibford Ferris.

This offers the following benefits:

* Keeps all equestrian event traffic out of Tadmarton and Swalcliffe;
* Reduces road miles travelled by equestrian vehicles, along unclassified roads;
* Avoids temptation for some equestrian traffic to short circuit through Sibford Ferris;
* Avoids need to upgrade Grange Lane North (Sibford Ferris Parish Council);
* Reduces the need to use dangerous junction off B4035 at Tyne Hill;
* Acknowledges recommendation from Swalcliffe Parish Council that “… Oxon Highways and Cherwell District Council should consider the effects of any increase in traffic on the main road through these two villages, in the light of current road management issues (eg lack of pavement and speeding)”

It has the following disadvantages:

* The “mouth” of Gated Road South is narrow and one residential property may be affected. Both may be mitigated by use of land owned by the applicant that fronts Welsh Lane, east of Turpins Lodge.
* Access form the South may be less convenient to the Applicant.

**Number of Events on Site**

There is huge difference between 28 days events and 28 days including set up / take down time.

Planning Recommendation 3 says that “events with greater than 50 competing horses shall be limited to take place on no more than 28 days (including days required for setting up and taking down of any associated equipment and structures) in any one calendar year”. At para 1.7 “it is the Officer’s opinion that the 28 days allowed under the GPDO would include days required to erect associated structures before the event and also days required to clear the site post event..”

At para 3.4 (“Further Comments following revised / additional information being received” which reflects the comments of the Anti Social Behaviour Manager) “in the Applicant’s response to a PCN they indicate that these large events currently operate for 13 days per year yet the total site that the land is in use, ie when an event is being put together and dismantled totals 39 days giving an overall use of 52 days per year”

Para 3.4 continues “I am assuming that the build up and dismantle times would be included within the permitted 28 days if approval were to be given and as a consequence the level of large use activity would fall.”

Courses are typically open for walking the course the previous the [www.brtisheventing.co.uk](http://www.brtisheventing.co.uk) suggests that the site will remain open for 3 days after the March 22nd event.

Does the Applicant understand and accept that the consequence of Planning Recommendation 3, is that the number of actual Event days would most likely halve to about six? A clear, unequivocal understanding of this point is paramount.

Recommendation 3 makes Recommendation 6 otiose. The Calendar of Events exceeds what is permitted under Recommendation 3.

Recommendation 15 restricts site use for equestrian training and schooling to 8am to 8pm. How does this impact overnight camping at competitions?

**Other points**

* At Para 1.9 “the Applicant has stated that they have used the site for equestrian activities since 1997”. This may be true for other parts of the planning unit but not for the principal part of the site in question. Aerial photos reproduced by Judith Norris in her report, dated October 2013, in connection with application 13/01295 show the larger northern of the site under crops in 2010 and the southern part under crops until 2006. The Applicant themselves show a Spring crop from March to July 2010.

Why does the Case Officer refuse (see para 1.9) to acknowledge photographic evidence of crops on the site and yet at para 5.58 appear to accept photographic evidence of the car park?

* The greater the area permitted for schooling the easier to spread equestrian activities across a greater area and the greater the scope to set up and dismantle events under cover of schooling, thereby eroding the impact of Planning Recommendation 3.
* The three access gates are all within close proximity of near neighbours and the 365 day overflow parking is within 10 metres of Swalcliffe House (Mrs Boycott). Swalcliffe Parish Council (para 3.1) “we suggest that, if possible, any entry and exit gates are sited away from immediate neighbours’ houses”
* The proposed Grange Farm car parking and the 365 day proposed equestrian sites are not contiguous. This would require horses either to cross an agricultural field each day in breach of planning or move up the public road. At a recent Swalcliffe Parish Meeting we were led to understand that Cherwell Council and the Applicant have made a private arrangement to cover this point.

We believe that Cherwell Council should disclose this and other private arrangements that they have made with the Applicant.

* The Case Officer’s report makes no mention of “Overflow Carparking” immediately opposite Mrs Boycott’s house. The possibility of horse boxes being permitted to park outside your windows each day of the year is a serious matter for consideration.

**Premise**

At para 5.74 the Case Officer says “.. due regard has to be had to the fall back position that the applicants have in terms of what can be carried out under permitted development”

Surely what can be carried out under permitted development in isolation should be distinguished from the permitted development level of activity coupled with 365 days of schooling? Surely the essence of the planning application is to consider the effects of the combined and as appropriate adjust scale of activity, above or below, that allowed under permitted development?

Is the Case Officer’s premise sound?

Yours Sincerely

Robin and Emily Grimston Michelle Boycott Brenda Vandamme