**Elm Farm**

**Sibford Ferris**

**OX15 5AA**

**10th January 2015**

**Dear Mr Neville**

**Swalcliffe Park Equestrian (SPE)**

USE OF LAND AT GRANGE FARM FOR MIXED USE COMPRISING EQUESTRIAN

**TRAINING/COMPETITIONS (USE CLASS D2) AND AGRICULTURE, TOGETHER WITH**

**EXTENSION OF EXISTING VEHICLE PARKING AREA**

**14/01762/F**

**Objection Letter**

We live on the perimeter of SPE and were forewarned by a letter dated 23 Dec, received after Christmas, of “Amended Plans”. On 30 Dec various documents appeared on CDC web site but it is unclear whether they are responding to questions, or attempting to present amended plans.

Quality of Documents

The documents filed on the CDC web site do not define the Amended Plans and are unreferenced and disjointed. It is virtually, if not impossible, to work out whether they are trying to set out Amended Plans or provide what answers, against what questions. It is impossible to understand whether these documents are trying to substantiate, or replace, the original submission.

The clearest document is an email from Bob Neville of 3rd Dec with unnumbered points. Where these points are addressed is unclear. An undisclosed party has produced a document called “Layout Information for 28 Day Event”. The first para refers to Question 9. No where can I find numbered questions. Let alone question 9. What points, for what reasons are all vast number of plans and diagrams supposed to be making?

These documents are wholly inadequate leaving the reader confused as to what he is supposed to be reading for what reason.

Points gleaned

Paul Walton’s report confusingly also, dated October 14, buried in the detail, in the “Applications Proposals” section confirms that the 28 Event Days of 250 riders (with more than one horse per rider could be considerably more horses) are to be included within the planning envelope.

Comparison of maps disclosed with the initial papers, pertaining to the 3rd Application for this site, showed cross hatched areas for the 365 day activity for unrestricted activity for 50 riders per day. The Amended Plan shows “areas for schooling” on a much larger purple coloured area. The purple area appears to double the schooling area. Which of these documents is the right one? Why is there no narrative disclosure of this change and what is the reason for the larger area for schooling?

“Overflow Parking” is now proposed immediately outside Mrs Boycott’s property. To dump overflow parking immediately outside a neighbour’s property is particularly unfriendly.

There is no mention made as to whether the 28 Days includes set up or take down time. Clarification of this makes a huge difference.

The Applicant, in their letter of 3rd December, graciously, does acknowledge, the disruption to neighbours who are objecting. The proposed scenario is to rotate the entrances used, parking and dressage areas, in effect rotating the inconvenience.

The Applicant may say that they currently run events over 11 days. If they are seeking authorisation for events of 250 riders over 28 days it is this higher level at which the application must be judged.

Amended Application

The presumption is that a major constituent of the Amended Plans is the formal inclusion of the 28 days of events within the planning envelope. This represents a 30% increase in the permitted scale of equestrian activity, almost all of which will be concentrated across summer weekends.

The formal inclusion of events within the planning envelope requires a fundamental change in reporting. The previous reliance on permitted development rights meant that you, in your Report to the Planning Committee dated 4 Sept 14, at para 9 advised “…it is not these events that permission is being sought for at this time…” As of the “Amended Application” this has fundamentally changed.

I assume, to ensure legitimacy, that you will be seeking formal advice from all of your technical colleagues based on this new amended application. Such issues would seem to include all of, traffic, noise and landscaping.

Traffic

The inconsistency and fluctuating advice of the Highways Officer at Oxon CC is to be noted.

On the 27th June 2014 the Highways officer recommended the application be refused. He reversed his decision on 27th August on the basis that the 50 horse ceiling (relating to the then planning envelope) applied only to schooling, not competitions. On 2nd December, with no meaningful explanation another “corner was turned” to allow the traffic.

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

This is a wholly unacceptable situation that benefits no one.

Some photos of traffic outside our house are enclosed.

Noise

It is easy to become blinded by science. The fact is if you are sitting in the garden in the summer, the wind is in the wrong direction, tannoys are too loud, arenas sited too close by, bells and whistles too frequent the noise levels become abusive. SPE is situated on top of a hill and noise travels.

Events take place almost exclusively at week ends and predominantly in the summer. When there is no traffic on the roads this is a pretty quiet, rural location. The local traffic tends to be school traffic and people going to and from work. SPE creates noise at the part of the week which would otherwise be quiet.

Noise is an issue, despite what academic statistics might try and prove / disprove.

Landscaping

The “purple shaded” areas and 28 Days Events in effect would permit equestrian jumps etc to be littered across the field throughout the year. The site is conspicuous and close to conservation areas.

The Applicant may say that this is not their intention but this application should be judged, not by their intention, but by the authority they are seeking.

There are landscaping implications of the Amended Plan which need to be considered.

Policing

Overarching this whole application needs to be the recognition that SPE is a business. The aspiration of most businesses is to be successful and grow. It has to be acknowledged that there will be little effective way of policing the activities of SPE. History has proved this, not least the unauthorised expansion of a farm gateway opposite our house which has gone unchallenged. Inspecting records is of limited value.

This means that the whole approach to reviewing SPE’s application needs to be on the basis that over time it will grow. CDC do not appear to inspire confidence that they recognise this. The Applicant’s proposed rotation of inconvenience around the neighbours suggests that this is the wrong site for this scale of activity.

Yours sincerely

Robin and Emily Grimston