

**PLANNING DEVELOPMENT CONTROL (VIEWING) SUB-COMMITTEE**

**10 May 2005**

Attendance:

Councillors:

Busher (Chairman) (P)

Baxter (P)

Davies (P)

Mitchell (P)

Tait (P)

Others in attendance:

Councillors Bennetts, Cook and Jeffs

Officers in attendance:

Mr D Dimon (Acting Planning Team Manager)

Mr N Culhane (Engineer)

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1. **NEW COLD STORE; REPOSITIONING OF VACUUM COOLER; REMOVAL OF TEMPORARY COLD STORE AND REPLACEMENT STORAGE UNIT COMPLETE WITH NEW LANDSCAPING – ALRESFORD SALADS (GEEST), THE NYTHE, BIGHTON ROAD, OLD ALRESFORD (REF W07763/13 05/00057/FUL)**

The Sub-Committee met close to the application site where the Chairman welcomed to the meeting approximately 11 local residents, Mr Orton representing New Alresford Town Council and Mr Byrne representing Old Alresford Parish Council together with Mr Doyle (Operations Director, Alresford Salads - GEEST) and Mr Turner (Site Operations Manager, Alresford Salads - GEEST).

In observing the site, the Sub-Committee noted the position of the existing loading bay. Members were also shown where additional tree screening would be planted and the existing open air storage for crates and pallets, part of which area the new building would cover. Mr Turner explained that the open storage area would not increase and that the new cold store would allow some of the present open storage to be accommodated within the building. Members also observed the footprint of the proposals and noted that the ridge line of the roof would be below the height of the existing goods storage which was situated adjacent to the application site.

Mr Dimon explained that the proposal involved the erection of a steel framed industrial building of approximately 336 square metres to provide a new cold store and storage on the southern side of the existing processing buildings. The building would have maximum eaves height of 3.5 metres and a ridge height of 5.5 metres and would be clad in metal sheeting to match the existing buildings. The proposals under consideration were phase 1 for the redevelopment and ongoing improvement of the site. Phase 1 was specifically linked in with the consolidation of operations to the one site at The Nythe and would follow with the closure of the leased site at Manor Farm which was close by. Mr Dimon explained that operating the two sites created commercial inefficiencies for the applicant and also contributed to additional lorry movements shuttling goods between the two sites. Therefore, consolidation of operations at The Nythe would address the localised traffic concerns, particularly along Bighton Lane.

Mr Dimon reported that various consultations had been undertaken which had not resulted in any objections being raised. However, the Council's landscape officers had negotiated additional planting to screen the proposed new building. Mr Dimon referred to relevant policies regarding the expansion of existing operations in the countryside and explained that the proposal was generally acceptable in policy terms.

Referring to the 26 letters of representation received from local residents, Mr Dimon explained that concerns raised mostly focused on the impact from articulated lorries through Alresford town centre (including noise and pollution) and upon the conservation area and the physical threat to the structure of buildings due to such traffic. The representations also referred to dangers to other road users and pedestrians. It was considered that the site was no longer an agricultural facility and was purely industrial and was therefore not appropriate to this countryside area.

Referring to highway issues, Mr Culhane reminded Members that the proposals would reduce traffic movements from articulated vehicles between The Nythe and the Manor Farm sites. However it was recognised that the overall number of vehicle movements through Alresford town centre would remain the same. Mr Culhane acknowledged that although the large articulated lorries utilised by the operative were not ideal, even more traffic movements would be generated if smaller lorries were utilised.

Following a Member's question, Mr Dimon confirmed that it would be by agreement rather than by a condition of any planning permission granted for the proposals at The Nythe, that the use by GEEST of the Manor Farm site would be ended. Furthermore, any new occupants of the Manor Farm site could move in and operate without planning permission, if their operations were to be similar. Additional conditions could not be applied to restrict traffic to and from The Nythe site due to the site's established use.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Turner addressed the Sub-Committee. Mr Turner explained that GEEST monitored the number of vehicle movements to ensure that all lorries were as far as possible at full capacity by consolidating loads. They were also keen to reduce traffic movements as much as possible so as to work towards alleviating concerns of local residents.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Jeffs (as a Ward Member for the Alresfords) addressed the Sub-Committee. Councillor Jeffs acknowledged that the watercress industry was important for Alresford. However, as the GEEST operation had increased so had its detrimental impact on local infrastructure and on road safety. It was suggested that the company should be more proactive in resolving these issues with local residents together with the parish, County and the City Councils. Finally, Councillor Jeffs reported with concern the condition of the grass verges along Bighton Lane and suggested that the company should undertake to repair them and make a financial contribution towards their upkeep.

Also at the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Orton (a representative of New Alresford Town Council) addressed the Sub-Committee. Councillor Orton suggested that improvements or maintenance to Bighton Lane should be carried out on condition of any agreement of the application.

Mr Culhane stated that the maintenance of the grass verges could only be carried out by an informal undertaking with the operative.

The Chairman suggested that as Hampshire County Council were responsible for highway matters, the relevant County Councillor investigate the matters raised regarding highway issues in consultation with the Parish Councils.

At the invitation of the Chairman a number of local residents addressed the Sub-Committee regarding traffic issues. Several members of the public expressed concerns regarding the road safety especially close to The Globe Public House. It was suggested that the Highway Authority address this issue with urgency with appropriate signage and restrictions.

Also at the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Byrne (representing Old Alresford Parish Council and owner of The Globe Public House) suggested that planning permission should be withheld until the traffic issues had been addressed sufficiently.

Members agreed that the County Council should be requested to comment on type and number of vehicle movements through Alresford town centre.

Following discussion, Mr Doyle advised that GEEST would be happy to accommodate a meeting with relevant Parish and County Councillors and members of the public regarding traffic issues. Furthermore, site meetings could be arranged for those interested members of the public to view the application site at The Nythe.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Members were sympathetic to the concerns raised by local residents and representatives of the Parish Councils regarding traffic issues especially if there was to be a continuation of operations from the Manor Farm site by another company following the consolidation of GEEST activities to The Nythe site.

Generally the Sub-Committee were satisfied that the consolidation to the one site was acceptable, as was the proposal for the new building, although there was some concern about the scale of the development in the countryside. However, Members considered that they were unable to support the application as it stood, as a number of matters should firstly be addressed in consultation with the applicant and the County Council regarding traffic issues. It was therefore agreed that the matter be deferred until the next meeting of the Planning Development Control Committee on 25 May 2005 where a representative of the Highways Authority at Hampshire County Council be invited to attend to answer questions regarding the issues raised at the Sub-Committee.

It was noted that due to an administrative error, the official notification of the meeting (including site notices) had given the incorrect date. Therefore the Chairman agreed to use her discretion in allowing additional public representation at the next meeting of the Planning Development Control Committee for those members of the public who had been unable to attend the Sub-Committee meeting to express their views concerning the application.

**RESOLVED:**

That the application be deferred for further consideration at the next Planning Development Control Committee meeting.

The meeting commenced at 9.30 am and concluded at 11.25 am

Chairman