



Bothenhampton & Walditch

Parish Council since 1886

29th July 2021

Via email

Mr M Garrity
Head of Planning
Dorset Council Planning Services

Dear Mr Garrity

RE: Homestead Farm, Main Street, Bothenhampton, Bridport DT6 4BJ

Now the dust has settled on the inquiry regarding Homestead Farm, we hope it's not too presumptuous to share with you some lessons on the case from our perspective, as the Parish Council in which this long, costly and controversial project has occurred and wanting to avoid in future a repeat of the considerable unhappiness it caused amongst many residents in the village.

First, we would like to thank our local councillors, in particular Dave Bolwell, for their close involvement and hard work on this case. They have reflected the views put to them very well. We have also appreciated the hard work and professionalism of the Planning Committee.

In terms of lessons for this Parish Council, we will pay particular attention in future to any applications that we believe might be controversial for any reason. We're also keen to strengthen our partnership with your Planning team, and to think about how we could help you further.

If it would be helpful, for potentially sensitive applications, we would be very happy to be consulted informally early in the process, perhaps at the pre-application phase. We could then quickly let you know how local residents might react to a particular application and how it might sit with its immediate surroundings, pointing out any potential difficulties and thereby perhaps saving time in the longer run.

Greater attention could then be attached to these costly/potentially controversial applications. An early visit to the relevant site by the planning officer would be beneficial, perhaps accompanied by one of our Councillors. Conservation Officers might similarly prioritise any such application likely to have major implications for the conservation area.

It might be helpful too if accurate plans are insisted upon at the outset for such developments, to reassure planners and residents of the applicants' intentions and to aid monitoring of compliance. The ambiguity inherent in 'hand-drawn' plans proved troublesome in the case of Homestead Farm. The planning team should be able to call on an in-house

team of surveyors to provide independent, accurate measurements in the case of any disputes.

If the application is approved, we would also be happy to help the planning officer monitor progress on site, to ensure the development sticks to the agreed plans. This would help reassure residents and obviate the need to spend time and money monitoring the build themselves.

Readiness to use enforcement powers would also help minimise the risk of any deliberate flouting of the planning laws and the relevant provisions of the Local Plans, help demonstrate the seriousness with which these laws are defended and save time in the long run.

The vast majority of applications, however, are routine. To free up the necessary time for sensitive ones, we would suggest fast-tracking as many of these others as possible. They sometimes seem to stick in the system for too long. For example, a routine application for very modest work at the rear of a small (listed) property directly opposite Homestead Farm has been under consideration for nearly a year. We appreciate the planning team is hard-pressed and under-resourced, and so would be happy to do some of the leg-work on these routine applications, if that could help.

We would be very interested in your reactions to these suggestions, and in your own responses to the case of Homestead Farm, so that we can help each other ensure that any future such applications proceed smoothly, in our interests and those of our residents.

We look forward to your response in due course.

Yours sincerely



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Chairman
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