

Tockholes Parish Council

These are the minutes of the extraordinary meeting of Tockholes Parish Council
held on

Tuesday 7th January 2020 held in the Village Hall to discuss the
Planning Application 10/19/1210 for Silk Hall Farm.

Members Present:

Councillors: G Woon (Chair), G Swanton, C Tobin, A Robins

Apologies: Dist Cllrs Stephanie Brookfield and Brian Taylor

Clerk: Judith Finney

Visitors: K Marsden, D Craig, E Burrow, D Burrow, B Crook, J Crook, K Riding,
P Whittam, J Whittam

The meeting was opened by the Chair who welcomed the visitors.

It was noted that the members of the public who attended, although many were very distressed at what they saw as a major threat to their quality of life, made their points calmly and logically. This was appreciated by members of the Parish Council.

There was then a long discussion about the planning application and the points made by the residents.

It was then resolved that the Parish Council should object to the application.

Proposed by Cllr Tobin and seconded by Cllr Robins and carried by 3 votes to nil with Cllr Swanton abstaining because he feared a conflict of interest as he is a Governor of the school which had already objected to the application.

A formal letter of objection was then drafted as follows:

1 – Industrial not Agricultural use.

The Parish Council fear that this is an application for a building for industrial, not agricultural use.

Although the site is named Silk Hall Farm, it is not a farm. It is a one acre site occupied by an engineering business. More than half the site is occupied by buildings and equipment associated with the engineering business.

There is no history of the site being used for keeping hens or pigs in anything approaching the numbers being proposed. Somewhere in the region of 30 – 40 hens have been kept for egg production, and a small number of pigs have recently been brought on to the site.

The design and access statement forming part of the application has been very carelessly produced. It contains several statements are simply not true, the numbers it contains do not add up, and it fails to address fundamental issues such as how the very considerable and potentially dangerous waste will be disposed of. There is no

risk assessment regarding the dangers posed by the slurry pit or the consequences of it flooding in an area where surface water run off is common during heavy rain.

All this indicates that there is there is no intention to use the building to house pigs.

The Parish Council fear that the applicants know that an application for a large industrial building in this Green Belt location would be very unlikely to succeed, and are therefore seeking to circumvent the planning process by applying for an agricultural building (for animal welfare purposes) which is much more likely to succeed. Once the building is there it can be used for industrial purposes.

Although BWD Council could impose conditions if any permission was granted, the applicants have a history of ignoring planning conditions, and monitoring use and enforcing conditions would be very difficult and potentially costly.

The Parish Council feel strongly that the planning process should not be allowed to manipulated in this way. If such circumvention were to succeed the Green Belt status which is important not only to Tockholes residents, but to the wider population of Blackburn and Darwen who use the area for mountain biking, horse riding, dog walking and other recreational activities, would be steadily eroded.

2 . Green Belt

The size and location of the building make it inappropriate development because of its adverse effect on the openness of the Green Belt. This is particularly true as it would form a large addition to an existing cluster of buildings giving the appearance of a small industrial estate.

It would be highly visible from many parts of the village and beyond.

3. Agricultural Justification

There is a fundamental question as to why a small piece of land substantially occupied by an engineering business would be the site of a proposed large agricultural building.

The application claims the pigs already exist – they do not in anything like the numbers proposed. A small number of pigs have recently been brought to the site. The application talks of 40 pigs, but then provides back up data showing that the number would be around 85. 40 would be too many for the site and 85 would raise serious animal welfare issues with there being less than a square metre per animal. There is no history of agricultural activity on anything remotely on this scale in the last 30 years and probably beyond that.

4. Amenity Impact

The loss of amenity to the local residents, the wider community and the village hall (a much used and valuable public amenity) is very significant and its seriousness cannot be overstated.

Apart from the overbearing large building there are serious health risks, the noxious gases (accepted as being a problem in the application) and the noise issues.

The complete failure of the application to address important matters such as the disposal of large quantities of waste, potential problems with a slurry pit, risks to the village school suggest that these cannot be mitigated and if the application were to succeed everyone would just have to suffer.

The application refers to the dangers to both humans and animals when the slurry pit is being emptied but offers no suggestion as to how these might be managed.

5. Impact on landscape character and design.

If this application is approved the site will take on the appearance of a small industrial estate in the middle of a village characterised by widespread small groups of stone built houses in Green Belt. It will therefore have a major adverse impact on the landscape character, made worse by its very prominent position.

6. Accessibility and transportation.

The site is accessed via a very narrow lane with housing on one side. The problem of vehicles carrying noxious and hazardous slurry in close proximity to residents homes is of serious concern – especially as this will occur frequently, possibly daily.

The removal of live animals for slaughter could also be a problem.

Tockholes Parish Council Urge Blackburn with Darwen Council to refuse this application on the many grounds outlined in this letter.

Signed as a true record of the meeting
Chairman

Date.....

Meeting closed at 8.10pm

