

Community Council

Minutes of Meeting held on 9th February 2022

At a meeting of Ilston Community Council held at 7pm, held at Penmaen and Nicholaston Village Hall on Wednesday, 9th February 2022.

Present: Councillors: Mr D Ponting, Mrs A Elliott, Mrs F Owen-John, Mr J Griffiths, Mr N Huffer and Mr V Jones.

Also present: Ms R Muuns, Mr and Mrs Davies, Mr T O’Kane, Mr S Hockin, Mr D Joseph and Mr G Joseph

In the Chair: Councillor: Mr D Ponting

1. Apologies for Absence.

Councillors: Mr R Church, Mr N Hollett, Dr J Kingham and Mr D Llewellyn

2. Personal Interests.

None

3. The Swansea Airport Stakeholder’s Alliance – this item was discussed after the planning applications as a number of interested parties had come to speak at the meeting.

After discussion, it was agreed by all members present that the clerk will contact Mr Oliver to ask him to stipulate the aims and objectives of the Airport Alliance so that the community council can give serious consideration to whether they can commit to supporting the Alliance.

4. Planning Applications 2021/3250/FUL and 2021/3251/FUL

The date for comments on 2021/3251/FUL has passed so this application will not be discussed at this meeting.

Application No. 2021/3250/FUL

Location: Land South of Furzehill Green, Parkmill SA2 7LQ/
Proposal: A One Planet Development consisting of one detached dwelling and associated ecological land-based creation of three ponds.
Applicant: Ms R Muuns

This item was moved up the agenda so that the interested parties attending could be heard before the consideration of the application.

First to speak was Trevor Davies, he and his wife are stewards of the land near Furzehill Green, to which the application pertains. Mr Davies started by saying that the application falls under the Welsh Government One Planet Development scheme. These developments are subject to alternative planning regulations to the standard ones. The emphasis is placed on tackling climate change,

biodiversity loss and mass extinctions, giving an opportunity to live a very low impact life in terms of carbon emissions. Approximately 50 of such applications have been passed in Wales so far. They are adhering to the strict planning rules under the scheme. Mr and Mrs Davies have been farming for the last 18 months and they have offered an open invitation to all to come and see what they have achieved so far.

Mr Hockin from Wiloxton Farm spoke next. He is concerned that this scheme may ruin Gower as it sets a precedent and will open the gates for everyone to start building on any empty land on Gower. He queried the need for a dwelling as there are three empty agricultural dwellings near the site and also queried the need for a barn as the stewards do not seem to be storing any animals or machinery.

Mr D Joseph from Furzehill Green spoke next. He lives in the bungalow and his property is next to the field on which the proposed dwelling will be built. He also worries that if this goes ahead a precedent is set. He is also concerned that the road is too narrow and can't cope with associated traffic. Vehicles are already damaging the bank and garden of the bungalow when they try and squeeze past oncoming traffic. He also stated that the value of the field will be raised tenfold once planning permission to build is gained and therefore maybe sold on for profit. He is also concerned about overpopulation and the damage this will do to the beauty of Gower as Britain's first Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and worries about the impact on climate change of more dwellings being erected on Gower and also about the shortage of building materials at this present time.

Mr O'Kane from Cae Tan spoke next in support of the application. He sees it as a great opportunity. He has been growing vegetables at the Furzehill site and is witness to the hard work done by the stewards. He stated that they are very skilled and hard working. He thinks that the One Planet Development is an exciting opportunity for AONB's and National Parks to help conserve wildlife and conserve and maintain habitats. It's very difficult to find land and a place to live, so this is an opportunity for young people to see that you can create a livelihood from the land with integrity and little impact. This creates a sustainable local income, local produce using sustainable buildings with minimal impact. He also stated that according to the stipulations of One Planet Developments, if the venture doesn't work then it can be taken down and moved offsite.

Next to speak was Mr G Joseph, who lives in the neighbouring house to the fields. He has farmed all his life and feels that the approach taken is a mess with hedges left to grow, no crops harvested and the land left to waste. He worries that a number of plots are for lease and this may mean that not just one dwelling and barn will be applied for. He also questioned who and where are the people who have invested in the Ecological Land Co-operative who own the land.

Lastly, Ms Munns, from the Ecological Land Cooperative, spoke and wanted to make three main points:

1. It is a One Planet Development application which by its very nature is an antidote to climate change.
2. The justification for the development was related to the intended inhabitants, the stewards, and the land and their commitment to living a low impact lifestyle, reducing their carbon footprint and that of the local community and meeting all their needs off the land. The application is very different from rural working residences. One Planet Development applications are very personal and the stewards have done a huge amount of work on the

land and are very dedicated to living a low impact lifestyle. Ms Muuns is very confident that they will exceed the required criteria.

3. The development amount is very small. The dwelling will be small, timber clad and moveable. A polytunnel and shed are already authorised and the barn has been submitted under a separate application. The barn is necessary to provide essential storage place and will be shared with others who use the site. Monitoring will take place annually by the council and the Ecological Land Cooperative to ensure that the criteria for One Planet Developments is being met.

After the presentations, Cllr Ponting thanked interested parties for coming and told them that they were welcome to stay to watch the discussion by the council members but that they could take no further part in the discussion. Mr Hockin and both Mr Joseph's left the meeting. The members then discussed the application.

Cllr Elliott was concerned that this may be a backdoor route to getting planning permission.

Cllr Jones said that he has seen the endeavours of the stewards and that it is a brilliant enterprise but he doesn't see the need to live on-site. He is worried that the strict criteria of the OPD scheme is to the detriment of good agricultural land. He went on to say that growing trees on the land for coppicing and then using the coppiced timber to heat the dwelling, and also allowing some of the land to revert to rewilding, was a waste of good productive agricultural land. He also said that their ecological plan for the field seemed to be incomplete and only consisted of a small sketch map showing where the three ponds were to be situated with no further details of where the tree planting or rewilding was to be.

He is also aware of other farmers and their families wanting to build on their own land for the next generation who are unable to do so. He thinks is that this is a backdoor way to get dwellings and is worried that this sets an undesirable precedent. He also is concerned that agricultural land is to be used just to sustain two people, however low impact that may be.

Cllr Griffiths worries that there are five plots, if one gets permission will the other plots be applied for. The hedges have not been cut along Furzehill Lane making it hard for residents to access. She feels that this is the wrong place for this type of development.

Cllr Owen-John raised the point of utilities and asked how the produce was moved offsite, questioning the type of vehicles used on the narrow busy roads. Cllr Jones stated that the electricity was to be provided by solar panels on the dwelling and the barn, water is to be harvested and a compostable toilet to be used.

Cllr Huffer questioned the need for a dwelling. It would be unfair to farmers and agricultural workers who are struggling and can't erect homes on their own land. He said it is very hard to get into agriculture by normal processes. He doesn't feel able to support the idea for a dwelling until the case is clear why its necessary. The tenants need to demonstrate over a short period of time that they are adhering to the criteria of a One Planet Development and can be removed but, once planning permission is granted and this remains on the land but questions what happens to the tenants. He fails to see how this meets the criteria. He also raised the point that the criteria of One Planet Developments were hard to meet. The Gower Society raised a number of objections and he wanted to know whether these have been addressed.

Cllr Ponting raised the point that there are many empty agricultural dwellings in the area and fails to see the need to live on a small holding of this scale. He also commented that developed land is very high and is suspicious of the motivation of the Ecological land Cooperative and their shareholders. Cllr Ponting pointed out that the site is a greenfield site and also that the road infrastructure is not fit for purpose at the moment and can't take anymore traffic. Lunnon Hill already struggles with volume of traffic.

Cllr Jones mentioned that the barn application had not been well advertised and that this happened with the previous applications. It was agreed by all present that the council should be contacted regarding the notices that haven't been put up in time as this is an issue that needs addressing.

A vote was taken on whether to support the application. All members present voted against supporting this application.

Ms Munns said that she would be happy to answer any questions that members had and that the Clerk has her email address.

Date of next meeting. The next meeting will be on Wednesday, 2nd March 2022 at Nicholaston and Penmaen Village Hall at 7.00 pm at Nicholaston and Penmaen Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 8.05pm

Chairman.