

Sibford Gower Parish Council

Minutes of an extraordinary meeting of the Parish Council held on **Tuesday 5th January 2021** at **7pm** via Zoom video conferencing

Present: Cllr Pidgeon, Cllr Mallows, Cllr Allen, Cllr Berks, Cllr Pougatch.

In attendance: 3 members of the public, Clerk.

Business

1. **Apologies for absence** – None.
2. **Members declarations of interest for items on the agenda** – Cllr Pougatch declared that she lives immediately behind the Sycamore Close property and therefore will not be voting on that item.

Planning

3. **Planning applications received**

20/03266/F – Parsons Barn Farm, Shutford Road, Sibford Ferris. Change of Use without alterations from agricultural to B8 storage in connection with the business operations of Gentlevan Removals. **Sibford Gower Comment only.** Whilst further clarification has been sought from the Applicant, it has not been possible to verify:

that all current storage associated with Gentlevan Removals occurs in the building space already approved under 10/00759/F. (Additional Information 3.5) the current use of the barn.

The identified barn would appear to be within 20 metres of an adjacent watercourse, raising concerns regarding the disposal of surface water via a soakaway facility, potentially contaminated by association with the continued operation of commercial vehicles. Further consideration may be appropriate to address the possible retrospective nature of this application.

20/03342/F – 2 Sycamore Close, Sibford Gower. Alterations to convert double garage to form home study and w/c. **Support.** Recognising that the property is identified as the new vicarage, it may be appropriate to consider the possible impact on available on-street parking provision.

20/03347/F - The Pheasant Pluckers Inn (aka The Blaze Inn Saddles), Street through Burdrop, Burdrop. The erection of an agricultural barn store. It was noted that the response deadline for this application has now been changed from 5th January to 4th February. **Object.** There is an extensive planning history associated with these premises, now known as The Blaze Inn Saddles, and currently listed by Cherwell District Council as an Asset of Community Value.

This application would appear to be a direct consequence of 20/00446/ENF. The proposed erection of an agricultural barn store also raises potential issues concerning the nature and character of the conservation area, together with such actions and activities as may be permitted within that area. There is no reference in the application to the conservation area location

The specific location, known as the Sib Valley, lies at the heart of the conservation area and separates the villages of Sibford Ferris and Sibford Gower and the hamlet of Burdrop. The Sibford Ferris, Sibford Gower and Burdrop Conservation Area Appraisal 2012 (SFSGBCAA) identifies “an attractive valley which runs east-west” (para 3.5). This prominent and sensitive location is further referenced as: “The valley is an integral part of the conservation area and is included within the boundary as it has significance in its own right and not just as a setting for settlements.” (para 8.1.6). Further, “The openness of the valley has not as yet been compromised and in the interest of maintaining the character and appearance of the valley” any further infill “should be resisted” (para 8.3).

The Blaze Inn Saddles public house is located centrally within the Sib Valley. The Sib Brook forms the southern boundary of the small parcel of land identified as the site for the proposed agricultural storage barn.

We acknowledge the visual change to this site, the Business Model/Viability outlined, the potential benefits which the application may bring to The Blaze Inn Saddles and local tourism in the area. However, it is our view that there are significant and material considerations which lead us to being unable to offer support, namely:

Conservation Area:

- The addition of the proposed agricultural storage barn materially compromises the openness, character and appearance of the Sib Valley conservation area location, and would create a significant precedent.
- No ecological survey has been undertaken prior to the earlier removal of trees and hedges on the site. It would appear that further activity has since taken place. A retrospective expert assessment, accompanied by a detailed landscaping plan, would be helpful to restore the site within its conservation area context.
- No evidence is provided to determine the location or dimensions of the proposed parking area. Therefore, it is not possible to determine the potential influence of size, scale and visual impact in this relatively small location.
- The provision of a new hardstanding for 30 motorcycles, together with the designated camping provision, is likely to have a negative impact on the nature and character of the conservation area.
- The creation of new terracing for the proposed vineyard imposes a conspicuous change in the prevailing landscape pattern and significantly damages the natural profile of this prominent and sensitive area within the Sib Valley.
- Noting the unorthodox East/West planting orientation, together with the heavy clay soil identified at the site, there is a concern that an appropriate viticulture appraisal for the site has not been provided to support the application.
- Given the very modest size of the proposed vineyard, the unconventional East/West planting orientation indicated could be seen to offer greater benefit to screening the proposed camping site and vehicle parking area than generating an optimum crop return for future wine making,

Change of Use:

- The curtilage of the public house is identified in an earlier planning application (17/01981/F) as significantly smaller than the current application when referencing: *“an area of paddock land which, whilst in the applicant’s ownership, was not considered to form part of the curtilage of the public house”* (Officer’s Report 2.3) The current application identifies a larger curtilage, which now includes this area of paddock land, as referenced to the business operation of the public house (Site Plan). No evidence is provided to support this significant redesignation.
- While the creation of a vineyard, albeit with an unusual planting orientation, could be identified as agricultural use, the addition of parking provision for 30 motorcycles and dedicated camping provision directly associated with the operation of the public house, as identified in the declared Business Model/Viability, would appear to constitute a significant change of use. This is reinforced through the specific referencing of information from the Facebook page and signs on the main gates (see Publicity : Sept – Nov 2020 attached). It is our contention that the parcel of land would now be primarily associated with the planned operation of the public house rather than dedicated agricultural use.
- Should any fee be required to access the proposed camping and associated facilities, this would appear to be a commercial activity, thereby identifying a change of use.
- The potential provision of additional parking spaces for 30 motorcycles and more permanent shower and toilet facilities, with associated septic tank, offers further support to indicate a change of use.

Building a new agricultural barn:

- No precedent has been identified for an earlier building in this field.
- While the identified location may be discreet from the public highway, there is a concern regarding the size and scale in relation to the anticipated maintenance requirements in relation to the modest size of the proposed vineyard.
- The erection of this building in such a prominent and sensitive location would adversely impact on the character and appearance of the valley. It is our understanding that previous planning applications in this very sensitive Sib Valley conservation area have been consistently refused for many years. The provision of

any new building would set a significant precedent, rendering the area potentially vulnerable to further development.

Impact on the Sib Brook:

- The site currently identified for the proposed agricultural barn is immediately adjacent to this watercourse, raising fears of potential contamination associated with both initial building activity and subsequent use.
- The declared intention to further develop the site for camping, including parking provision for 30 motor cycles, and conversion of the proposed agricultural barn to include “permanent shower and toilet facilities” with “septic tank” foul drainage provision further increases pollution risk to the adjacent watercourse.
- No assessment has been provided to evaluate how the current activity and proposed works will affect ground water and surface water run-off into the watercourse.
- Given that significant levels of additional fertiliser are likely to be required for the successful cultivation of the proposed vineyard on this sloping site, these added nutrients in the chemical run-off are likely to have a negative effect on the Sib Brook

Additional parking for 30 motorcycles:

- The proposed parking would appear to be directly connected to the proposed camping requirements rather than the proposed agricultural storage barn which is the identified subject of the application.
- Any run-off, including possible fuel spillage, from the proposed parking area would appear to flow directly into the Sib Brook. This may require a discharge consent from the relevant authority.

Site access:

- The current historical access provision presents as a significant safety hazard for motorised vehicle movements accessing the dangerous highway location ie a dangerous blind bend at the bottom of a steep sided valley on the road within a 60 mph speed restriction zone, which joins Sibford Ferris and Burdrop / Sibford Gower. The proposed use by motor vehicles, rather than farm animals on more than an occasional basis, represents a change in the nature and volume of use with regard to modern traffic conditions in this hazardous location.
- Clearly, this area would benefit from a full appraisal by OCC Highways.

Should the application be permitted, we would have further concerns with regard to:

Access and Highway safety:

- The existing access provision is very dangerous (see above). It is noted that the applicants are minded to make a further application in this regard.

Monitoring conditions for 28 days camping facility:

- Consideration should be given to identifying a comprehensive monitoring programme showing clearly defined roles, responsibilities and terms of reference, including such licencing arrangements and environmental health requirements as are deemed necessary for legal compliance. This would be essential for the continued reassurance of all parties.

Storage:

- Consideration should be given for the new agricultural building to be used solely for the storage of materials and equipment directly associated with the on-going care and maintenance of the proposed new vineyard.
- All reasonable precautions should be undertaken to ensure that any equipment and materials have regard to potential contamination risk to the Sib Brook.

Lighting:

- Although mains services (water, electricity) are not being installed, the solar lighting identified to the agricultural building will offer continuous illumination throughout the night time hours in this “dark” location, as identified pre-2005. The provision of motion activated security lighting should be considered.

Septic tank:

- While the applicant affirms this will be a future provision, there is a concern regarding the close proximity of the Sib Brook. No location is identified or means of avoiding potential overflow contamination into this watercourse. Should the septic tank be identified as a permanent amenity, the siting and appropriate discharge consents should be obtained from the relevant authority.

- While the applicant references the possible provision of more permanent shower and toilet facilities in the future, it will be helpful to locate the temporary portaloos to a location where it will not negatively impact on the landscape for an extended period of time.

Hours of opening:

- Any additional use of the site generated through camping and additional parking are likely to have a negative impact on this sensitive location.

Publicity: The Blaze Inn Saddles (Sept – Nov, 2020):

28th September *Note on main gate*

To our loyal Monday evening bikers, we regretfully call time until the Spring. Stay safe.

22nd October *Note on main gate*

The latest Government restrictions on pubs has had a devastating impact on our business. Our trading model relies on large groups of bikers visiting our venue and clearly the new rules cannot allow more than 6 persons in any one group. Therefore, with great regret, we are closing the pub until the COVID-19 pandemic situation improves dramatically. Hopefully next year we can hold biker rallies utilising our Friday and Saturday late licence serving until 1am. We hope to be ready for the very first of many Blaze-Saddles biker events from Easter 2021, all to be held in our wonderful gardens.

Watch our Facebook pages for updates or phone 01295 780494.

We look forward to seeing you all, with luck, next Easter. Stay safe.

Early November *Facebook*

Our new camping facilities are coming along nicely. Vines being planted soon.

14th November *Facebook*

Camping in our new vineyard. Aiming for Easter, who is interested?

20/03409/F – Heath Barn, Sibford Gower. Single storey connecting link between garage and the original barn conversion. **Support.** The high quality of the application provides clear evidence that the proposed link structure creates a proportionate link between the existing barn and garage, ensuring that they constitute one dwelling only.

20/03601/F - West farm Cottage, Main Street, Sibford Gower. Proposed single and two storey extensions and internal alterations. **Support.** This application has minimum visual impact on the street scene within the conservation area location, and seeks to address the specific needs associated with a long term medical condition.

Planning decisions received

20/03328/AGN – Land East of Epwell Road, Sibford Gower. Erection of a secure agricultural storage building to house tractors and machinery, harvested crops and equipment for processing crops. **Withdrawn.**

20/02564/F - Gautherns Barn, Colony Road, Sibford Gower. Convert 2 steel / wooden barns into 1 bedroom holiday lets. **Approved.**

Correspondence

4. Concerns raised about the condition of the footpaths near the Doctors’ Surgery – A parishioner has contacted the Parish Council (PC) to ask if the bollards that have been severely damaged near the doctors’ surgery could be reinstated along with some improvements to the footpaths due to them being very muddy and therefore are a slip hazard. A Cllr noted that the Parish Council minutes of 14/07/06 state that Oxfordshire Highways installed the bollards at the end of the footpath. It was agreed that the **clerk should report both issues on FixMyStreet** requesting that Oxfordshire Highways complete a detailed appraisal of the area to consider the most suitable fix.

Meeting closed @ 8:13pm

Signed..... Date.....