

# Birdlip Parish Council



Clerk@Birdlipcc.org.uk

## MINUTES

### **Minutes of Extraordinary Meeting of Birdlip Parish Council on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2024 at St Mary's Church Birdlip at 7pm.**

**Present:** Councillors: J Lavington, E McKay, P Ritchie, D Partridge, M Crossley, O Hale, J Twydell and 10 members of the public.

**The meeting was opened by the Chairman**

**24 EX.10/1. Apologies for Absence** Cllr Judd

**24 EX.10/2. Declarations of Interest** None

**24 EX.10/3. Public Participation regarding items on this Agenda (3 minutes per person allowed)**  
Four members of the public spoke regarding the planning application – all objected

**24 EX.10/4. Planning**

- i. **24/01548/FUL** Full Application for Change of use from agricultural land into secure dog field. Including the creation of a track for vehicle access, a small parking area, new fencing around the field and associated landscaping works at Land At Birdlip Old Cirencester Road Birdlip Gloucestershire GL4 8JL  
<https://publicaccess.cotswold.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=SE6O5IFIJJD00&activeTab=summary>

The Parish Council unanimously agreed to object to the planning application.

Birdlip Parish Council has carefully considered this application for a secure dog field on agricultural land in the Cotswold National Landscape High Wolds area to the east of the Parish.

The primary consideration has been 1) does the benefit that the parish may gain from this new commercial operation justify the potentially permanent loss of historic agricultural land? and 2) is there significant negative impact from the commercial operation on pollution, biodiversity, local wildlife and any excessive noise on the tranquillity enjoyed by adjacent residences and the wider community?

This Parish Council has also considered the demand for such a commercial operation from the residents of Birdlip, its viability as a business and the environmental impact of its customers travelling from outside the area where many alternative facilities exist closer to the area of demand.

The Parish Council is also concerned over the impact on the privacy of the residents of the adjacent properties. The planning application for these was approved by CDC in 2014 including design aspects specifically to blend into the local landscape. There are large areas of glazing that if this application is permitted would allow users of the dog field to have a direct view into residents bedrooms and bathrooms.

The conclusion of the above is that Birdlip Parish Council OBJECTS to this application.

To support the above decision Birdlip Parish Council has reviewed the relevant policies within the Cotswold District Council Local Plan noting that there are no specific policies relating to a secure dog field as a commercial enterprise. However, Birdlip Parish Council does consider that this application should constitute a Major Development as defined under the NPPF and policy EN5. Please note that taking a quantitative approach of the size of the operation results in some 3.5 hectares of agricultural land changing to a very significant large dog field.

Furthermore:

Planning Policy EC1 - Employment Development.

a) The application fails to create the high quality jobs in professional, technical or knowledge based sectors. The applicant states that just two part time jobs will be created to be involved in remote administration of a largely self-serving business managed with little or no contribution to the local rural economy.

b) The application fails in any ability to maintain or enhance the vitality of the rural economy. The rural economy within the Parish is mainly agricultural consisting of businesses that are rural in character. As well as livestock and arable farming other employment in the Parish includes game and clay shooting, game rearing and equine related businesses. It is likely that the close proximity of the dog field to the game rearing and clayshoot may significantly harm the existing viability of these businesses.

c) Other opportunities for employment through dog walking services are not considered sustainable as demand will mainly arise from the conurbations of Gloucester and Cheltenham where there are many other dog walking fields within a short, often walking distance. Consequently the siting of dog fields closer to areas of demand offers a greater sustainable and environmental solution.

Section 9.1.8 of the Local Plan has an aim to reduce car journeys. Cotswold District Council are adopting a policy of 'Green to the Core'. This application relies on a business model that requires customers to bring their dogs by car needlessly increasing carbon emissions by 120. - 150gm per Km for a typical car. This application is therefore in conflict with both the Local Plan and CDC environmental policy.

Planning Policy EC3 - Proposals for all Types of Employment (2. Outside Development Boundaries)

The Parish Council does not consider that the applicant has demonstrated a viable business case. In terms of the applicants anticipated turnover, Birdlip Parish Council has canvassed its residents and has found that there is no local demand for a dog field. Residents have stated that there are abundant facilities and open spaces for dog walking in the area. The applicant has built its business case around demand from dog owners living in population centres 10-15Km from Birdlip. This market is already demonstrably saturated with over 20 similar dog fields operating within the county, 8 fields within Gloucester and Cheltenham and 3 each in Stroud and Cirencester. A survey of the online booking websites of the closest dog fields which are on the key routes to Birdlip show that capacity already available on a daily basis.

The Applicant's projected annual costs are consistent with an online only operation with limited if any on-site supervision. The British Dog Fields trade association recommends that operations are supervised daily to deal with noise complaints, escaped dogs and clearing of dog faces which are frequently not removed by dog owners. The cost of such daily supervision would render this business unviable. Furthermore the operator should have a duty of care to ensure the site is properly managed and not pass all responsibility to potentially unverified dog owners. It is inevitable that reactive dogs and possibly dangerous dogs, will escape from time to time and threaten or cause serious harm to grazing sheep, local residents or even children at the nearby school. The operator should be required to be accountable and liable for all harm to third parties caused by its customers.

Policy EN4 The Wider Natural and Historic Landscape and EN5 Cotswolds AONB

Birdlip Parish Council consider that this application should not be permitted because of the significant detrimental impact on the natural landscape. The site of the dog field at over 900 feet at the top of the Hawcote Hill escarpment requires that there will be no detrimental impact on the tranquility of the countryside and the planning officer is asked to note that this tranquility will significantly be improved on completion of the A417 Missing Link scheme, which will mitigate all discernible road noise. The Planning Officer is requested to respect the objectives of the landscape led scheme which was approved by the Infrastructure Planning Inspector including objectives to improve tranquility in this area as a result of the A417 moving some 2 km to the North and to note that the red-line boundary to this scheme is only metres away from the proposed entrance to the dog field. Consequently the noise impacts of the dogs and owners are significantly greater than that suggested by the applicant and will impact adversely on the immediate residences and also the surrounding area due to this prominent high wold location.

Policy EN8 - Biodiversity

The Parish Council supports the request made by the Biodiversity Officer to refuse this application. However it considers that the applicant has failed to consider the impact on protected bat species identified in the area by National Highways and in the planning application for the adjoining residencies. The dog field will potentially impact the raptors nesting in the adjacent ancient woodland and who currently hunt in the proposed dog field. The dog field will also impact grazing by deer and their ability to transit across the escarpment.

EN15 - Pollution and Contaminated Land

Dog faeces and dog urine are likely to pollute the site by an excessive concentration of dissolved nitrogen which can leach into the water table that emerges through natural springs at the bottom of Hawcote Hill and Parsons Pitch. This could also impact grazing of cattle and horses in the adjoining field to the west. The applicant is unable to mitigate for dog urine which will increase in concentration and will also result in bleaching of grass and wild flowers during the dryer months. This pollution will be exacerbated by the lack of control over dog numbers and could render the land permanently contaminated with the result being the land could not be returned to any form of agricultural use should the business fail.

**Date of next meeting** Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2024 at St Mary's Church, Birdlip 7pm

The meeting closed at 7.30pm

Signed.....

Date.....