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Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership

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Your Ref: 16/03334/EIA
Our Ref: ph_111116_16_03334_EIA Hurst Barn

11th November 2016

Dear Grahame

16/03334/EIA Erection of 2 No poultry sheds, feed bins, solar voltaic panels, ancillary equipment and alterations to vehicular access Hurst Barn, Clunton, Craven Arms, SY7 0JA

The Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership wishes to make a further submission on this application.

We do not consider that our response of 6th September 2016 is countered by the agent's so-called rebuttal, and wish to re-state the Partnership's objection to the application.

The proposed sheds would be incongruous within the landscape setting. The valley between Clunton and Clun is one which is visited by large numbers of people seeking not only a beautiful landscape within the AONB but also peace and quiet. The proposed development will have an adverse impact on the immediate and wider area. The character of the area will be changed from one of rural agricultural to one of a more commercial nature by the introduction of a large-scale industrial process operating round the clock. The process by its very nature introduces dust, noise and odour, which are difficult to mitigate against, despite best intentions.

We have the following additional comments on the agent's response:

2.1 The British Poultry Council has a web page 'About the Poultry Industry', stating "The British poultry meat sector is a dynamic, fast-paced modern food industry, producing consistently safe, affordable and environmentally sustainable meat." The use of the term industrial in the context of this proposed development is not a matter which seems worthy of questioning, and to do so further illustrates the attempt to downplay the significance and impact of the proposed development. The word 'large' is relative, as it has to be taken in context. In this case introducing buildings approximately 100m long to process 100,000 birds, plus a 14m wide concrete apron and auxiliary buildings, more than doubling the built footprint of the farm, in the setting of three listed buildings, is considered by the AONB Partnership to be both 'large' and 'industrial'. The fact that the development is undergoing an EIA underlines its significant scale.

2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 are not relevant. The application described is not in the AONB and different policies and considerations are applicable here.

2.6 There are three listed buildings in close proximity to the proposed sheds. Setting is the surroundings in which an asset is experienced, and may therefore be more extensive than just its curtilage. All heritage assets have a setting, irrespective of the form in which they survive and whether they are designated or not. The extent and importance of setting is often expressed by reference to visual considerations. Views of or from an asset will play an important part, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust and odours from other land uses in the vicinity.

2.7 A general purpose shed is not the same as an industrial building generating noise, and odour connected to a large scale poultry production plant.

2.8 The AONB Partnership objected to both of the applications described, referencing unacceptable scale and impact in the AONB landscape in both cases.

2.9 This is not relevant, as Bletchley is not in an AONB and other local conditions are not comparable.

2.10 See 2.1 above.

2.11 The Clun area is the most deeply rural part of the AONB and is amongst the most sparsely populated parts of England. The landscape value in the area around Hurst Barn is high. Landscape impact assessment includes a combination of objective and subjective judgements. Visual impact assessment is also greatly influenced by value judgements. We disagree with the conclusions of the LVIA, and believe the development would have an impact on the visual amenity of the area for locals as well as visitors, as evidenced by other responses.

2.12 Paragraph 5.16 of the ES LVIA quoted does not convince us that the AONB and its landscape quality has been adequately addressed by the document. The LVIA has not taken proper account of the NPPF policy relating to AONBs, namely Para 115 'Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs' nor national Planning Practice Guidance which states the importance of the AONB Management Plan to planning decisions. No assessment of the impact of the development on the special qualities of the AONB is included in the LVIA. The LVIA has not taken proper account of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, Section 85, which places a duty on public bodies to have regard to the purposes of AONB designation in carrying out all of their functions in relation to land in an AONB. The LVIA suggests that planting trees would offset the damage to a key feature of the AONB. The irreversible loss of grassland (and soils) to hard standing and sheds is a material change to the fabric of the landscape that in no way is mitigated by planting trees on other grassland. Tree planting may in the long term reduce the visual impact of the buildings but will not fully mitigate this.

3.1 We disagree with the conclusion of no significant adverse effects and that NPPF Para 115 is satisfied in relation to "Great weight" being given to "conserving landscape and scenic beauty in ... Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty."

3.4 NPPF policies are open to some interpretation. The AONB Partnership's role is to advise the Council in relation to matters concerning the AONB, and the outcome of past decisions does not negate the positions taken by the AONB Partnership and the advice it has given.

4.1 to 4.3 It is recognised that animal manure is a primary source of nitrogen and phosphorus to surface and groundwater. The Clun Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) states:

"The Nutrient Management Plan provides the evidence in relation to Phosphate, Nitrogen and Sediment to inform Local Authority Habitat Regulations Assessments (Reg 61) for proposed developments and their strategic development plans within the Clun SAC catchment."

"Livestock are estimated to be the single largest source of phosphate and account for over half the catchment phosphate loads on an annual basis".

"The main catchment pressure associated with poultry farming relates to the production and spreading of poultry manure to arable land in the catchment. The use of poultry manure as organic fertiliser is part of certain arable agricultural systems. This may be associated with leaching of nitrogen and phosphate into watercourses"

The Clun NMP calculated that prior to the Shadwell poultry development, poultry accounted for 28% of the phosphate in the Catchment. Clunton and other proposed developments will see a more than a doubling of poultry derived P load in the catchment. This is at odds with the requirement to reduce by 43% and 71% to meet the short and long term phosphate Favourable Condition Targets (FCT') respectively.

Similarly, Nitrogen concentrations in the River Clun SAC are high for a freshwater pearl mussel river and are in the order of 4 mg/l. Reductions in the order of 68% will be required to meet the nitrogen FCT. Achieving the FCT's is extremely challenging, adding to the N and P load in the catchment is unsustainable and at odds with the objectives of the Clun NMP which provides a long term, whole-catchment strategic view of the types and combinations of measures that may be needed to achieve the FCT's

Mitigation: The proposal is to export 435 tonnes of manure per year from the proposed poultry sheds to Acton Farm (applicant's Environmental Statement July 2016). However, the applicant fails to state that this farm is also situated within the Clun Catchment. It is located near a tributary of the River Kemp. This is not mitigation but merely moving the problem from one part of the catchment to another. Storage of manure and its potential use away from the development still represents a threat to achieving the favourable condition targets (FCT) for the River Clun. This is an important omission since addressing HRA requirements is dependent on the positive outcomes of mitigation. It will also very difficult to police the movement of manure to alternative sites. Furthermore, the River Kemp is failing to achieve Good Status under WFD. It is currently "poor ecological status" See: <http://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/WaterBody/GB109054044060>. It is a statutory requirement that all waterbodies in the Clun Catchment achieve Good Status.

Yours sincerely

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