

Report by Michael Hanley.

1. Erection of Five Buildings at Culgaith.

The site is next to the primary school. Reason to come to the planning committee: Objection from Culgaith Parish Council.

The proposal is for the construction of five detached dwellings.

Recommendation: planning permission should be granted subject to completion of S106 agreement with regard to drainage and the meeting of council costs to do with monitoring the nutrient neutrality mitigation.

M Wilson (MW, planning officer): These will be quite large sandstone houses with detached garage. The construction materials are considered of high quality.

There has been objections from the local parish council and some locals. One of the main objections is the lack of affordable housing but the threshold for the developer to provide affordable housing is six dwellings. The drains are connected to a field drain on private land and permission is needed from the owner. Also monitoring of the nutrient neutrality mitigation (a small woodland near the site).

Speaker in favour:

Daniel Addis (DA, Planning Agent): The application went in in May 22. Nutrient neutrality was the biggest challenge. This is a high quality scheme with slate roofs and a landscape buffer on the northeast border. Culgaith Parish Council has triggered the referral to Eden Planning Committee.

Speaker against:

Cllr Sue Smith (SS, Culgaith PC): The parish council continues to object. This is a greenfield site. It was not identified as a potential site for housing. The visual aspect will be transformative. There is no provision for affordable housing. These are large executive houses. Each house has a fountain on the drive. The houses will not be in keeping with the local character. They will be well beyond the means of local young families. These are the wrong houses in the wrong place.

M Eyles (ME, LD): Asked about other plots in Culgaith for housing. I propose that this application is refused. Land (in Culgaith) that has been designated for housing has not been built on.

I Blinkho (IB, WAFC solicitor): Discussed the implications of the new NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework). The local policies may be out of date. This should be deferred.

M Lynch (ML, Head of Eden Planning Dept): The future growth sites are not solely for housing. They may be used for housing shortfalls. LS1 in the Local Plan (Eden) does allow for growth on the edge of settlements. Pointed out that what ME said is a future growth site is not one.

ME: In that case I apologise. I still object as this is open countryside.

C Atkinson (CA, C): With this government's rush to build loads more housing it will be guilty of building the wrong type of houses. How do we encourage builders to build the type of houses we need (smaller and more affordable).

ML: Developers will determine what is the most profitable and what can sell. On larger schemes it is more viable. On this type of scheme then we can either accept or refuse. Some local families may be upscaling to a larger house and their smaller house will be available to buy.

N McCall (NMcC, LD): This is an incentive to build luxury expensive houses.

ML: The government sets the cut-off point for affordable housing. We cannot request that (an affordable house in this scheme). If it went to appeal we would not be able to defend that.

L Baker (LB, LD): Asked about the woodland for mitigation of Nutrient Neutrality.

MW: The woodland would need to be monitored for 80 years. Under the Section 106 rules the cost would fall to the developer.

NMcC: I propose we accept.

Vote: 6 in favour, 1 against.

2. 25 metre chimney stack at Omega Products (Retrospective)

Reason: Item of a sensitive nature.

MW: The chimney comes from parts of the plant where animal parts are rendered. Very high temperatures are used to destroy the odours. There is a need to replace ageing and less effective equipment.

Omega has submitted evidence that this complies with new regulations from DEFRA (Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs).

There has been objections from local residents. The monitoring of odours rests with the EA (Environment Agency) .

Speaker in favour:

Mr Watts: The purpose of the chimney is to treat odours from the cooking plant at temperatures exceeding 800 degrees centigrade. This destroys the odour particles and they are broken down into nitrates. The emissions are well below those that would cause environmental concerns.

Speaker against:

Jeff Thomson (JT, Fresh Air for Penrith): This planning application was submitted to Eden District Council in 2022. It was a retrospective application. Fresh Air for Penrith raised signatures via a petition. Liberal Democrat councillors accused us of having forged signatures. Last September four councillor members of this committee visited the site. All this was kept secret and no minutes were kept. There was no declaration of interest when a shed at the site was approved (a few months ago).

This displays a disparity where the owner is given hours and today I am given five minutes. This bias can result in unlawful decisions being made. I am also disappointed that Penrith Town Council has not objected. It is a travesty and an affront to democracy if this is approved.

A Connell (AC, LD): I propose to go with the officers recommendation.

Vote: Unanimous in favour.

3. 25 Metre Chimney at Omega Proteins (Similar to the previous item).

MW: This is above the same building and is also retrospective. It is yet to be commissioned. It will serve the same purpose as the previous item. Penrith Town Council have talked about their concerns about two chemicals, putrescine and cadaverine and want a chemical engineer to be involved.

Speaker in favour:

Mr Watts: This is about replacing outmoded equipment. The new equipment is more efficient and more reliable. Penrith Town Council's objection was founded on the idea that those odours (putrescine and cadaverine) were not considered, this is not correct.

As for the site visit, I was there. The visit was to understand what goes on at the site and this is good practice.

Speaker Against:

JT: Am I wasting my time? You have just proven that I am. I couldn't make out a word that the planning officer (MW) said. You don't talk to the residents, you talk to the owner. In 2019 the owner pledged £30 million to upgrade the odour equipment. Last year the EA received 1092 complaints about odour. These plumes (from the chimneys) are evidence of high level industrial activity. We are worried about the air that we breath. You must guarantee to me and the residents that the emissions are safe. Thank you for your time but I am sure that I am wasting mine.

ME: Asked about the EA addressing residents' concerns.

ML: We can pass the concerns on to the EA. We do not deal with public health issues, we cannot get involved with that.

AC: In the report, the EA have no objection.

ML: It is not an offence to submit a retrospective application although it is a problem and not to be condoned.

Vote: Unanimous in favour.