

Objection by Maisemore Parish Council to application 18/01162/FUL for 2 poultry rearing buildings and ancillary development including new access at land east of the A417 Main Road at Overton, Maisemore GL2 8HR.

Maisemore Parish Council held a public meeting on 16th January 2019 to hear the views of residents on this application. It was attended by 49 local residents plus the 5 councillors. The attendees were asked for a show of hands at the end of the public participation, when 47 showed against the application and two supported it, both of whom were associated with the applicant. The Parish Council was unanimous in deciding to object to the application in view of the very serious impact it would have on the village and its residents. The Council feels that, if there is an officer recommendation to permit, this application should be considered by the Planning Committee and not be decided using delegated powers.

Many of the Council's concerns have already been detailed in individual representations from residents, but the Council's summary of these is below.

Inappropriate development

Maisemore is a rural village and the surrounding area supports mixed farming. An intensive poultry unit is alien to that. In effect it produces a chicken meat factory on the doorstep of the village, which is entirely unnecessary and out of character. It does not show any respect for place and, in the Council's view, would be an unsustainable development.

Loss of amenity

The proposal is adjacent to a Public Right of Way which forms part of the Maisemore Circular Walk. This was established some years ago by the co-operation of landowners in the area and is a valued amenity both to residents and visitors. The proposed poultry unit would blight that. The establishment of what is, essentially, a factory unit would be detrimental to the local amenity and environment.

The visual impact would be significant. With feed bins rising to 9.2m, the site would be clearly visible from the A417 and from most of the houses along Old Road. This issue is considered in more detail in submissions from residents, and the Parish Council agrees with the concerns set out.

The Council also agrees that the visual impact assessment included with the application does not fully represent the damage from the development, since the viewpoints are restricted. The types of building proposed are not typical of any in the area, and there are no farm buildings near the site at present.

Pollution

Four types of potential pollution are of concern to the Parish Council: Air, Water, Light and Noise.

Air pollution

Evidence from comparable units shows that air pollution would be significant, despite the use of the latest ventilation equipment. 100,000 chickens produce a great deal of dust, ammonia and bio-debris. This means that such units should be much further away from residential settlements. Carcasses stored on site will also add to the smell.

It is naive to suggest that hedges and trees in the area will absorb the dust. Maisemore is subject to quite strong winds, and there is no doubt that these will be more common as climate change progresses. The Parish Council believes that these pollutants will reach local homes, having a serious effect on residents' comfort and well-being. It will be particularly damaging for people with a tendency to asthma and other breathing problems.

The air pollution from such units at the end of each cycle, when the chickens are caught and the sheds are cleaned has been well established. There will be a stench from the unit at these times and the air will be heavy with ammonia. This is highly undesirable near a village and there is no reason why Maisemore residents should be subjected to it.

The suggestion that a member of staff will check smell emissions by sniffing the air each morning is no guarantee that smell will not be a significant burden on residents.

Water pollution

This is a major concern of the Parish Council and seems to have been largely ignored by the Environment Agency. The proposal site lies adjacent to a spring-fed stream that runs into Maisemore Lake - which is used for fishing - and then into the River Severn, which is an Environment Agency waterway.

Significant quantities of dust will be deposited on the roofs of these large buildings and this will contaminate the run off rainwater entering the stream. During rainfall, this water will also absorb the ammonia being extracted from the buildings. Together these pollutants pose a significant threat to the biodiversity of the stream and lake as they will greatly increase the biological oxygen demand in the short term and over-fertilise aquatic growth in the longer term.

It is not clear how dead carcasses will be stored on site, but it is estimated that there will be around 3,500 of these per cycle. Their residues pose a serious further risk of pollution from bacteria and from antibiotics entering the water - which is extracted further downstream for drinking water. There is also a probability that stored carcasses will attract rats and other vermin, also posing a risk of water pollution.

The end of each cycle and cleaning out the sheds poses an additional threat. The chances of this being done during rainfall are high and it is inevitable that some waste and pollutants will reach the stream. The proposal does not guarantee that this will not - or cannot - happen and the Parish Council has no doubt that water pollution will result from this development, if it is permitted.

Light pollution

Maisemore is essentially a 'dark' village, with no street lighting, so any lighting on an industrial unit such as this close to the village will be a significant change to the village's character and amenity. This will be worse at the end of each cycle, when there will be extra lights to aid the manoeuvring and loading of lorries, plus the lights from the vehicles themselves.

Noise pollution

While the noise from the normal operation may be muted by well designed and maintained ventilation, it will be audible from parts of the village. The noise will be greater when feed is delivered and even worse at the end of each cycle, with

reversing lorries and fork lift trucks all using reversing beepers. Noise from the unit will be channelled along the valley to the village, causing significant loss of amenity.

Bio-security

There is a significant bio-security risk posed by the large number of units such as the proposed one already operating within the County. Diseases such as bird flu and fowl pest have devastating consequences and can seriously affect food supplies if the outbreaks are in an area where there are many intensive poultry units, as there already are in Gloucestershire. These diseases result in the slaughter of birds in affected units and, in many cases, those in nearby units in order to provide a 'cordon sanitaire' to prevent further spread. The risk is increased as a result of the high pheasant population around Maisemore, which arises from established commercial shoots. The introduction of a further intensive poultry unit in the area is, therefore, a bio-security risk.

Highway safety

The Parish Council is concerned that the access road will join the A417 at the crest of a hill. This is not good for road safety and this section of the A417 is identified as an accident blackspot.

The traffic survey that accompanies the planning application was carried out over 1 week during major roadworks at Over roundabout.. It does not give a true picture of the traffic flow on the A417 under normal circumstances. Nor does it take account of the high flood risk between Maisemore and the Over roundabout, which causes the closure of the road and diversions through narrow country lanes.

Absence of continuous supervision

Because this proposal is for a new enterprise completely separate from an existing farm, there will not be anyone on site continuously and, therefore, no-one to deal with an emergency, such as a fire. The owners live at least 4 miles away - further if the A417 is flooded - and there is no indication of how they might be aware of such a problem arising when the unit is unmanned. The Council sees this as both an animal welfare and health & safety issue.

Economic impact

The application does not include a business plan to justify a completely new enterprise in the area. The Council believes that its establishment will conflict with and be a detriment to established rural businesses and activities. The proposal is essentially a low manpower chicken meat factory and offers no employment opportunities to local people.

Application flaws

A number of the independent submissions have already pointed out technical and factual flaws in the application. These should all be corrected before the application is considered.