

Comments on Applicant's response to Q1.16.8: Community food growing areas

The Examining Authority asked the Applicant how the scale of the initiative was decided upon and what consultation was undertaken with local stakeholders.

I would like the ExA aware that there has been no consultation with the local community about the scale or any other aspect of the proposed 'community' food growing initiative.

The Applicant's response states it consulted on the proposals at the Statutory Consultation; however the information provided at the statutory consultation was too minimal to enable adequate or meaningful consultation.

The Applicant's response indicates some food producers were consulted but it should be noted that none are from the local community.

The only reference to the views of stakeholders in the local community is the Applicant's claim that: 'the village of Bladon expressed interest in establishing an area for allotments, given current high demand and limited availability in the village'. It is unclear who the Applicant is referring to as 'the village of Bladon'. Existing groups that might represent the village on this subject are Bladon Parish Council, Bladon Gardens Society and Bladon Allotments Association. I have spoken to each of these groups and all confirm that they have not been approached or consulted by or on behalf of the Applicant for their opinion on the community food growing proposal.

The Chair of Bladon Allotments Association, which is responsible for managing the existing allotments site in Bladon, also explained that the provision of allotments in Bladon is roughly in balance with demand. Occasionally there may be a waiting list of one or two people but usually for less than a year. The facts do not support the Applicant's claim that there is high unmet demand for allotments in Bladon.

It should also be noted that while the Applicant claims the village of Bladon expressed interest in establishing more allotments, their proposal does not reflect this: the community food growing proposal does not include any allotments for the local community. The rationale for the proposal remains opaque.

Comments on Applicant's response to Q1.16.21: Education facility building

The ExA asked how the possible location for the education facility was selected and what level of consultation was undertaken with local stakeholders about the location.

The Applicant's response to the ExA's question states it has had discussions with OCC. However I would like the ExA aware that there has been no consultation with the local community about the location or any other aspect of the proposed education facility. As the Applicant's response states, they intend to permit community involvement only after consent is obtained and only for refinements to the design and location.

It would be reasonable to expect the Applicant to have consulted Bladon Parish Council as well as the County Council. However the Parish Council confirms it has not been approached or consulted by the Applicant for their opinion on the educational facility proposal.

The education facility proposal does not reflect a wish or need expressed by the local community and does not benefit from the knowledge of the local community. For instance, if the Applicant had consulted the local community about the potential location mentioned, they would know that the narrow access lane that serves the school does not offer suitable vehicular access to the land proposed for the education facility building as the Applicant claims. The history of planning discussions and applications linked to this lane confirms this.