

For Development Control Committee 2nd July 2018
Re: CM/0005/18 – Red Brick Farm, Dunton Road, Stewkley

Rachael Webb

1. Thank you for the opportunity to address this committee. I am the nominated speaker for local residents whose views are reflected below.
2. Dunton Road, Stewkley, is neither in or near to a large settlement. Neither is it a 'key settlement' or a general employment or waste management area. Red Brick Farm is legally rural agricultural land, surrounded by productive agricultural land and abuts an Area of Attractive Landscape. In other words, **this retrospective application contravenes every relevant part of the spatial strategies and waste management development principles** of the adopted Waste Core Strategy and draft Waste Local Plan (Policies SO6, CS6, CS10, and 11, 14, & 15 respectively).
3. Even if the site did conform with the strategies, the application should be dismissed because it **unacceptably impacts residents' lives** – frequently, over 120 thundering HGVs a day have been recorded using the site, and evidence submitted to officers. **This illegal operation, and the way it is being handled, actually violates the Human Rights Act 1998 (Article 8)**. Noise and dust and vibration pollution compromises health, quality of life and residents' enjoyment of their homes and gardens. This isn't imagined or forecast or anticipated. **It's real.**
4. Industrial recycling is, of course, supported by local and national policies, as the officer's report identifies but **not in Stewkley**. Cherry-picked national provisions might appear to allow it in Stewkley, but **a systemic and balanced examination** of all the provisions does not. The Local Plan was developed with regard to **all** these provisions, resulting in a sound, sustainable solution for our county's needs. If we have to refer back to individual national provisions for each and every planning application, then why have local plans?
5. One example of said 'cherry picking' is the omission in the officer's report of **cumulative impact**, which **is** included in the NPPF and incorporated in the draft Local Plan (Policy 17). The provisions recognise, for example, that the presence of some HGV traffic around Stewkley does not justify a free-for-all on our unsuitable roads, less than 5.5m wide in many places, village and country roads alike. This committee has the power, backed by the NPPF, Local Plan and the brand new Freight Strategy, to reject planning applications that increase existing impacts.
6. There is also cherry-picking when it comes to **great crested newts** and badgers. For example, the County Ecologist has considered one nearby pond but ignored a second more likely one. Even the first pond met Natural England's criteria for an immediate survey to be done. But officers did not demand one and allowed the recycling to continue throughout the **peak breeding season**. That's illegal.
7. There is a school of thought that it is more prudent to approve such a planning application **with conditions**, because a Planning Inspector might approve it on appeal **without conditions**. Please don't go down that route. Given the history of this site and the way it has been handled, the conditions would be breached and officers would not meaningfully enforce. But a Planning Inspector would refer first and foremost to the **very clear Local Plans**, so the likelihood of the application being granted on appeal would be very slim indeed.
8. We therefore urge you, our elected councillors, to consider this **retrospective application** (it is NOT continued **legal** use) strictly in line with our Local Plans. Please protect Stewkley's rural agricultural heritage and the amenity of residents who sadly no longer enjoy living in their own homes as a direct consequence of Red Brick Farm operations.