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STRATEGIC AND TECHNICAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2025

Present: Cllrs Duncan Sowry-House (Chair), Belinda Bawden, Matt Bell, Toni Coombs, Spencer Flower, Craig Monks, Belinda Ridout, Pete Roper, David Taylor and David Tooke

Apologies: Cllrs Dave Bolwell and Richard Crabb

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Philip Crowther (Legal Business Partner - Regulatory), Eleanor Godesar (Senior Planning Officer), Felicity Hart (Minerals and Waste Planning Manager), Megan Rochester (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Tom Uglow (Lead Project Officer (Minerals & Waste)) and Lindsey Watson (Senior Democratic and Governance Officer).

17. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 8th September were confirmed and signed.

18. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Belinda Bawden declared an interest to agenda item 5, stating that she was a carbon literacy trainer for town and parish councils, co-founder of the Dorset Climate Action Network, and worked with a national organisation which supported parish councils on climate related matters. It was agreed that she would take part in the debate and vote on the item.

19. Registration for public speaking and statements

Representations by the public to the Committee on individual planning applications are detailed below. There were no questions, petitions or deputations received on other items on this occasion.

20. P/VOC/2023/02762 - Waddock Cross, Wellsite Waddock Cross, Affpuddle, Dorchester, DT2 8QY

The Case Officer presented the proposal using site plans, aerial photographs, and current site images, confirming that the site was not producing oil at the time. Key constraints included the proximity of Oakers Wood SSSI, ancient woodland, and listed buildings. The application sought to vary previous conditions, with the temporary duration of the permission and restoration of the site extended for a further 10 years to 2033. The site layout and phasing would be unamended, except for new ecological mitigation and enhancements to be provided on-site.

Relevant policies were considered, including Dorset's Climate and Ecology Strategy and the Energising Dorset Growth Strategy, which supported the transition to green energy. While the development would have generated some greenhouse gas emissions, these were not considered significant at a county or national level. Updated ecological surveys informed mitigation and enhancement measures, including habitat features for invertebrates and reptiles.

The proposed extension until 2033 was deemed acceptable within the transitional period towards net zero by 2050. New ecological mitigation was explained, including a close boarded fence to mitigate against light spill towards the adjacent SSSI that is used by bats. The fencing was considered to preserve landscape character. Low traffic volumes, which would have been similar to the original permission, were not expected to impact highway safety. Existing conditions were reviewed and retained to mitigate impacts on amenity, ecology, landscape, and groundwater. A condition relating to early cessation of hydrocarbon production operations prior to 1 June 2033 was circulated to members. The condition aimed to safeguard long-term environmental and operational concerns. The recommendation was to grant planning permission, subject to conditions.

Public Participation

Mr Whipple read a statement which addressed the national policy imperative to maximise energy security and supply. He felt that the application breached planning policy. It was noted that the site in question was an oil site, not gas. Reference was made to the Climate Change Committee's projections that oil demand would decline significantly by 2050. The application was criticised for lacking evidence of future commercial viability and for being in breach of the local mineral strategy. Mr Whipple stated that the site should have been restored over a decade ago and urged councillors to reject the application.

Mr May read a statement on behalf of Ms Finch. It was noted that the applicant had acknowledged the potential for significant greenhouse gas emissions. He highlighted the cumulative impact of such projects on climate change and referenced recent Government guidance and academic studies from the University of London. The statement criticised stated that the applicant has ignored the most current climate policy positions and urged the committee to reject the application due to its unacceptable environmental impact.

Ms Elcoate delivered a strong statement regarding the dangers of continued fossil fuel extraction, citing climate change as a global emergency and calling for local action. She stated that councillors had a responsibility to contribute positively to climate commitments by rejecting the application. She questioned the applicant's conclusion that environmental impacts were not significant, noting that an estimated 350,000 tonnes of emissions represented a major impact. Ms Elcoate questioned whether such harm was justifiable for what she described as a marginal contribution to oil supply. She stated that Dorset's own climate strategy was incompatible with the application and urged its refusal. Additional concerns raised included traffic movements and biodiversity impacts, with reference to widespread local opposition.

Mr Foster addressed the committee in support of the application, noting that a

comprehensive set of ecological surveys had been undertaken. He reported that the applicant had engaged with Affpuddle and Turnerspuddle Parish Council, attending meetings and answering questions. While consensus had not been reached, the applicant had worked cooperatively. Mr Foster stated that the purpose of the application was to regularise existing development and that, as of January 2025, the site had provided an annual breakdown of oil reserves. The applicant had considered climate impacts, and Mr Foster concluded that the proposal complied with both national and local planning policies. He argued there were no provisions in the relevant development policies that restricted continued production. Members were asked to support the officer recommendation for approval, subject to conditions.

Members questions and comments

- A query was raised regarding the duration of the commission, with clarification sought on whether the condition imposed a fixed end date.
- Members sought clarity on who held responsibility for determining the significance of environmental impacts.
- One member questioned why significance was assessed in terms of global or national metrics rather than local targets.
- A discrepancy in figures noted in Column 4 of the spreadsheet was highlighted. Members expressed concern that inaccuracies could alter the interpretation of the data.
- Clarification was requested regarding the decommissioning provisions outlined in Section 16.1 of the report.
- Members queried details of the cessation condition, seeking further explanation of its scope and intent.
- A question was raised regarding the nature and intended use of the oil extracted from the site.
- Concerns were expressed about the water table and potential impacts
- Requested details regarding transport routes beyond Bovington.
- Asked why local emissions were not included in the assessment.
- Sought guidance on how the scale of significance (local, national, global) could or should be determined in such assessments

Having had the opportunity to discuss the merits of the application and an understanding of all this entailed; having considered the officer's report and presentation; the written; and what they had heard at the meeting, a motion to **DEFER** was proposed by Cllr David Taylor, and seconded by Cllr Belinda Bawden.

Decision: To defer the item to a later date to seek further detail on the scale of significance and whether it was possible to assess the proposal in relation to global carbon budgets, as well as national and local impacts.

21. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

22. **Exempt Business**

There was no exempt business.

Decision Sheet

Duration of meeting: 10.00 - 11.30 am

Chairman

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Strategic and Technical Planning Committee
Tuesday 23rd September 2025
Decision List

Application: P/VOC/2023/02762

Application Site: Waddock Cross Wellsite Waddock Cross Affpuddle Dorchester DT2 8QY

Proposal: Retention of an existing well site for 10 years for oil production from the existing boreholes, Waddock Cross - 2 and Waddock Cross - 3, drilling of a sidetrack well, Waddock Cross - 4, and drilling of two boreholes, Waddock Cross - 5 and Waddock Cross - 6 for the appraisal and production of oil (Variation of condition 2 (Temporary Time Limit) and 3 (Restoration) of 6/2013/0001 in order to retain the wellsite for a further ten years).

Recommendation: Grant planning permission subject to conditions set out in section 18.

Decision: To defer the application to facilitate further collaboration between the planning team and the applicant. This would enable the application to be presented to the Committee at a later date.

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