Fiona Dey

Subject: FW: Gompels Planning Application

From: Thomas, Nic <Nic.Thomas@wiltshire.gov.uk>
Sent: 05 August 2025 15:09
To: Alford, Phil <Phil.Alford@wiltshire.gov.uk>
Subject: Gompels Planning Application

Dear Phil,

My colleague, Pete Manley, has had a chat with me this morning about your enquiry below relating to the Gompels planning application.

You are probably aware that earlier this year, our economy and regeneration service merged with our planning service to become one Directorate. This was an important step in making sure our approach to supporting economic development and regeneration activity is aligned across our different functions. This also allows a more co-ordinated approach to making sure that we protect the historic and natural environment and the amenity of local residents, providing more joined up advice to stakeholders.

The planning application process for the Gompels planning application has involved assessing a range of issues and opinions to arrive at a recommendation that can be fully justified and defended if we end up in an appeal situation. It is important that individual services or officers are not put in a difficult position to express opinions that might not align with the officer's overall view and that might undermine the officer's case either at committee or in any subsequent appeal proceedings. This is not in the spirit of our One Council approach, can affect the council's reputation, and could expose the taxpayer financially in the event of a costs claim by an appellant. For this reason, we have a clear position that our economy and regeneration team does not express views on individual planning applications.

Our officer assessment of planning applications is a matter for the DM case officer, who balances a range of competing issues. They work closely with our economy and regeneration colleagues where they need to better understand the benefit of business retention and employment opportunities so this can be considered alongside the range of other matters.

You will be aware that our economy and regeneration colleagues have provided extensive client management support to Gompels over several years. It was disappointing at the Strategic Planning Committee when Mr Gompels denied that this had happened. This is the same type of support that Pete and his colleagues provide to other significant local businesses and employers – as the company searches for the right site to meet business needs. These efforts will of course continue, but they cannot extend to seeking to influence the assessment of proposed sites in planning terms.

Please let me know if you would like to discuss this further.

Kind regards,

Nic Thomas
Director – Planning, Economy and Regeneration

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From: Alford, Phil <Phil.Alford@wiltshire.gov.uk>
Sent: 05 August 2025 10:12
To: Manley, Peter <Peter.Manley@wiltshire.gov.uk>
Subject: Gompels planning app

Hi Peter,

I hope all is well and sorry to email if you are the wrong man on this but Rory is away so I thought you might e able to help.

I am trying to find out what involvement the economic team had in the Gompel's planning application? As you may know, the two parish councils in Melksham have been supportive of the Gompel's move and we wanted to know if the Ec Dev team have fed into the planning consultation and if we could help develop the thinking on it for the next meeting of teh planning committee when it is considered again?

Thanks

Phil

Cllr Phil Alford
Melksham Without North and Shurnold

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