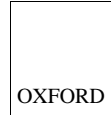




Sir Colin Blakemore



FMedSci HonFRCP HonFSB HonFRSM FRS

Professor of Neuroscience & Philosophy Emeritus Professor of Neuroscience Directory Centre for the Study of the Senses
Department of Physiology, Anatomy & Genetics
School of Advanced Study, University of London Sherrington Building, University of Oxford Senate House, Malet Street, London
WC1E 7HU Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PT
D +44 (0)20 7862 8689 F +44 (0)20 7862 8639 M +44 07802 291059
E colin.blakemore@sas.ac.uk

E colin.blakemore@ndcn.ox.ac.uk

PA: Patricia Morrissey E patricianorrissey@sas.ac.uk

Helen Skinner
The Planning Inspectorate
3/26 Hawk Wing
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol, BSI 6PN

Dear Ms Skinner,

Planning appeals 2219468 and 2219469 by Yorkshire Evergreen (planning application 13/03244/STPLF)

I hope that this letter is not too late to be taken into account in your consideration of the appeal by Yorkshire Evergreen against the refusal of planning permission for the erection of a new building at The Field Station in Grimston.

I have no financial interest in the parent company, B&K, but I have had many interactions with their staff over the past 20 years. They, like me, suffered harassment and intimidation from animal rights extremists in the 1990s, and I visited their facility to see their work and to share my own experience. I admired not only their forthright stance against those who attacked them but also their commitment to the highest standards of animal welfare and to openness in dealing with the media, the biomedical science community and the regulatory authorities.

I have not visited Grimston for a few years but, when I did so, I was impressed by the efforts of _____ to maintain world-class standards in all their work.

The planning application that was initially declined is for much improved housing for dogs. It is very difficult to see how such an application could not be welcomed on grounds of animal welfare, and I am led to believe that the new accommodation, which would be entirely within the existing footprint of the site, would also lead to a reduction in the current traffic to and from the site currently needed for the transport of dogs from distant suppliers in this country and overseas.

I understand that the official argument against approval was based on concern that an outdoor run for dogs might be added to the building and that there would be a _____ consequent environmental impact because of noise. However, I understand that no _____ outdoor run is included in the plans and that Yorkshire Evergreen has no intention of building such a run, I presume that the company will be willing to give a formal, legal undertaking to that effect.

It is difficult to avoid suspicion that there might be hidden motives in the refusal of planning permission, and that the Council has succumbed to the intense lobbying from animal 'rights' groups, whose intention has, for decades, been to put this important facility out of business, I urge the Council to resist pressure to base their decisions on arguments and pressures outside the statutory frameworks that regulate the use of animals in research and outside the normal rules that determine planning consent,

Research on laboratory animals is, quite rightly, an issue of public debate. The arguments for and against such research have been very widely exposed over the past 30 years, and - I am very pleased to say — the research community has increasingly accepted the importance of openly communicating with the media, the public and the government, to make the case for such research and to counter the exaggeration and misrepresentation of those who oppose any research on animals, whatever its importance to human and animal health.

The intense campaigning to eliminate animal breeding and holding facilities in this country has already had a severe impact on local supply of animals (as well as on the livelihood of those who have been put out of business and their employees). As a consequence, more animals for research are imported from overseas, at much higher cost and, even more important, more variability in the status of the animals, and more stress to them,

I have not held a Home Office Licence for research on animals for more than 10 years and I am no longer involved in such research. But the impact of the savage campaigning of the 1990s is still heavily impressed on my mind. You will know that the most extreme leaders of that activism were imprisoned for long sentences, for crimes including arson, trespass, property damage, harassment, conspiracy and extreme intimidation. In my own case, the tactics included the delivery of two potent letter and parcel bombs to my own home.

Despite the outrageous behaviour towards me, my students, the staff of my laboratory and my family, I always tried to engage with those who oppose animal research, and to try to discover, and take proper account of, their objections. I have every respect for those who recognize the undeniable fact that medical progress would be hugely impeded by the abolition of research on animals but who, nevertheless, have personal ethical objections to such research, despite the obvious benefits (to animal as well as human health), But what is surely unacceptable in a democracy, with a strong and visible regulatory framework, is that legitimate and important research, fully compliant with all regulations, is impeded or prevented by extreme action. As an academic, with a concern for truth and for evidence, I would count deliberate exaggeration and misrepresentation as 'extreme action'.

I ask you and the Council to give fair consideration to the facts in this case, and to consider the appeal from Yorkshire Evergreen within the law, uncontaminated by 3

extraneous arguments from those who are seeking to undermine an area of research that is not only entirely legal but which is of vital concern to the future of humanity and which is, according to opinion polls over the past 10 years, supported by the vast majority of the public.

If I can be of any assistance to the Planning Inspectorate I should be more than willing to help.

Yours sincerely

Colin Blakemore

Sir Colin Blakemore
Former Chief Executive of the Medical Research Council

cc:

The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP
Department for Communities and Local Government
