

PETITIONS REGARDING AGENDA ITEM 6 “THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH MINERALS AND WASTE PLAN – PREFERRED OPTIONS”

Four petitions were received as set out below in a) to c) objecting to the proposed re-siting of Cambridge Sewage Works from its present location in Milton, to the preferred site identified in the informal consultation paper at Honey Hill, Fen Ditton.

a) Petition from Horningsea Village (54 signatures) Speaker Mike Hellowell

Points made during this presentation in support of their objections included:

- Failure in Preplanning Public Consultation – in their view the County Council had carried out a totally inadequate investigation into the proposed move and that the process of consultation had been seriously flawed and was contrary to the County Council's own policies and its guide to planners (SCI).
- Lack of convincing evidence of the need to move and the perceived adverse cost of relocation – the petitioners contested whether it was essential for the sewage works to be re-located highlighting that section 9.30 of the current Cambridge City Plan stated that if it became apparent that the relocation of the sewage works was not practical, then the remaining areas within the Northern Fringe would be considered for other suitable forms of development.
- Anglian Water had emphasised many times in the past that they did not need to move from the site as the land they occupied had sufficient reserve to accommodate future expansion to cover growth of any predicted housing schemes in and around Cambridge.
- Waste planning authorities, when considering new sites were required to consider opportunities for on site waste management where they were already in existence and should also look at a broad range of locations, including industrial sites. This they believed had not happened.
- Use of Green Belt - The conservation villages where all located in full-time farmed areas of the Green Belt with any building/development being strictly governed by the Structure Plan regarding permitted encroachments and restrictions appropriate to a rural area, which did not include a sewage works. The Structure Plan did not permit any encroachment on the site of Honey Hill.
- That approval could lead to further unacceptable development once a precedent had been established.

b)) Petition from Teversham Parish Council (55 signatures) Speaker Simon Martin

Points made during this presentation in support of their objections included:

- That the proposal was unsustainable - that the proposed siting was contrary to national planning policy and sustainable development – and that decisions on development required to be based on social inclusion, recognising the needs of everyone, effective protection and enhancement of the environment and prudent use of natural resources. Attention was drawn to there being no mention of the by-way which bisected the whole site.

- It was not a prudent use of natural resources to site a sewage works on a major aquifer.
- The stated national policy for creating sustainable communities was that priority should be given to brownfield sites. The proposal took no consideration of this policy. Developing the site on Green Belt land as proposed would create a precedent for further development. As the proposals involved green belt land there was a reasonable expectation that mitigation plans would form part of the proposal, but none appeared to have been drawn up.
- Questioning how the countryside enhancement area approved in 2001 could be sustained with such a plant on one of the green wedges it was set to enhance.
- Wicken Fen Vision had been given highest priority in the Green Infrastructure Strategy. The green lung of Cambridge would be adversely affected by siting the sewage treatment works directly within this important green link.
- Wicken Fen as a unique long term project was supported by Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council East Cambridgeshire District Council and the National Trust.
- Siting a WWTP within the vision area would be detrimental to the whole future plan of Wicken Fen and the Bridge of Reeds Project.

c) Petition from Fen Ditton (127 signatures) Speaker John Drake

Points made during this presentation in support of their objections included:

- That there were a number of planning applications/proposals which currently circled the village and which the petitioners considered threatened the village identity. These included proposals for housing, a minerals waste site, widening of the A14 and additional recreational facilities. The proposals were considered to be of no benefit to the local community. (Details of the various planning applications were included on a coloured map tabled by the petitioners for Cabinet members reference purposes along with a map showing the proximity of the new proposed sewage treatment works site proposal to Fen Ditton and Horningsea)
- As Fen Ditton was a conservation area and as many of the proposed developments affected their village, the various applications should all be considered as a whole and not in isolation.
- The appraisals carried out in relation to the three sites looked into by officers were inconsistent, as in their view two of the sites had been dismissed as a result of faulty scoring analysis (Milton area of search and Milton/Landbeach area of search) as careful examination by the petitioners showed that Honey Hill had the worst score of all three. Factors that had been used as negative points against the other two sites and had been ignored for Honey Hill (e.g. a listed building within 200m). Reference was made to a footpath Right of Way seen as negative for one site while at the same time a byway through the middle of the revised Honey Hill Site had been ignored in the analysis.
- The criteria for relocation did not mention that there was a hotel and 12 houses within the 5 km radius from the proposed new site or that 2,000 new homes were being planned on the Marshall site while in other cases one or two houses had been highlighted as a negative reason for not moving to another site.
- The impact on water resources and the environment – the land east of the River Cam was a major aquifer governed by ground water laws with specific protections in place

e.g. Quy Fen. The risk to the resource and the environment could not be eliminated over the life of the sewage works and was therefore not sustainable.

d) Petition from Stow-cum-Quy (202 signatures)
Speaker Geoff Barker

Points made during this presentation in support of their objections included:

- The lack of information provided during the consultation exercise and that very little information was still being provided on the revised proposal.
- The latest preferred site had only recently been announced and had moved within the area of the search defined as Honey Hill and exceeded the bounds of the original area.
- Houses within Quy were now closer to the proposed site than those in other villages but no mention was made of Quy in the submission to the Development Control Committee or in the current report. They believed it would be more accurate to add a sentence at 3xxii to read" but is now only a matter of a few hundred yards from the nearest houses within Quy, a village about which no specific reference has yet been made"
- That the experience of such sewage plants was that the odours created were noticeable to the least sensitive of people. Assertions of new technology did not allay their fears. The 400 m buffer zones would not disperse gases with a wind behind them, and with winds predominately from the western half of the compass rose, Quy would be particularly affected.
- Impact on house sales - blight would occur for years on their properties while their contention was that no such blight would impinge on existing houses around the Milton Site should the works remain there.
- Increased heavy traffic with increased consequent hazards. In addition at the Honey Hill site there was no existing access for heavy vehicles and therefore would require development of an existing or new road with still further environmental impact. This would also involve increased traffic at the Quy roundabout, already a site of frequent accidents and this would result in a risk of further accidents.

In addition, James Paice, Member of Parliament for Cambridgeshire South east was invited to sum up the key issues raised in the previous four petitions in respect of:

- the contention that no proper assessment or consultation had been undertaken on the other options
- making reference to a letter from the National Trust also received by Cabinet Members which suggested that siting it at the proposed location would have a devastating impact on the Bridge of Reeds and the Green Lung to Wicken Fen
- Making reference to the officer's report stating that as Honey Hill was a rural site, a Waste Water Treatment Plant would not be in keeping with this landscape.
- Inadequate consideration being given to Anglian Water not moving from their present site and the contention therefore that the relocation was not essential.
- That as the basis of the move was the need to build 4000 houses on the Northern Fringe and with a net cost of £80 million plus for relocating the works, this approximated at £20,000 per house and he therefore questioned what would this add to the affordability of the proposed social housing to be built.

- The proposed site was now on and beyond the eastern fringe of Honey Hill, with no explanation provided of what consideration had been given to other possibilities within the same distance of the existing works.

He concluded that while it was necessary for the officers to take the overall Site Specific Plan forward, in respect of the waste water treatment plant officers should include the two sites not previously consulted on, together with a full examination of reasons for not relocating the works. The consultation should relate to all options, without listing Honey Hill as the preferred site.

In response to this last point, Officers had explained in the report that for procedural reasons the County Council was required to identify a preferred site.

Also tabled at the meeting and circulated for Cabinet members was a submission from the local member for Fulbourn who objected to the proposals on the grounds of:

- The inadequate consultation:
- The project was unsustainable in terms of cost, use of materials and, should it be built, the operation of the new works was against the County Council policy whereby developments required to be sustainable in terms of energy use, waste production, pollution and have a minimal impact on the environment.
- The proposal would result in increased CO₂ emissions, not least from the additional pumping which would be required to pump waste to and from the Honey Hill site.
- Brownfield sites should be considered; a Green Belt site should be the last on the list.
- Moving the works would result in increased running costs, estimated at today's prices of £1.2m per annum. A significant civil engineering project to build a connecting tunnel from the old site to Honey Hill and then back to the River Cam would be required. For operational reasons sites closer to the old works and the river would make more sense.
- Anglian Water were stating publicly that they could remain in their present location, operating with a modernised plant and using a smaller footprint than they now occupy, whilst being able to provide for future population growth. As this was the only sustainable option it should have been included in the consultation.
- Concerns that the plan of the proposed new site appeared to be significantly larger than the existing site at Milton.
- The works had been on the present site for 100 years and the land was contaminated. As it would require intensive decontamination and this, together with the noise and pollution from the A14 it was not a suitable site for housing.
- By staying on the present site, contamination of another greenbelt land area would be prevented
- The proposal would adversely affect the Wicken Fen Vision project, with its associated network of cycleways and footpaths and the Bridge of Reeds, which had substantial public support and backing from the East of England Development Agency. Should the be relocated fundraisers had stated they would be unable to raise the substantial capital required, as sponsors would withdraw from the project. This would be a great loss to all residents of Cambridgeshire, not just local people.
- Using this site would set a dangerous precedent for infill building, which could lead to destruction of the green separation area for the surrounding villages. Anglian Water had also stated that if they moved, they would require a site that would allow them to expand in the future.

- Should the present Milton site to be used for housing, it was doubtful that by providing 40% affordable housing enough finance would be generated in order to realise the enormous costs associated with this project. Therefore the assumption was that to make up the shortfall, the building of affordable housing would be forgone in favour of commercial or industrial uses. Building on a greenfield site in order to accommodate this type of usage would be totally wrong.
- From the proposals map it appeared that access to the site was to be gained via High Ditch Road. This was a very quiet, narrow country road and totally unsuitable for accommodating the vehicles which will be required to service the plant, which at the present site approximated 30-40 lorries per day.

5) Petition organised by Hauxton Parish Council (229 signatures) Speaker Councillor Janet Lockwood Hauxton Parish Councillor and South Cambridgeshire District Councillor for Harston and Hauxton

This petition was opposed to the proposed siting by Cambridgeshire County Council of a waste transfer/recycling facility on the former waster water treatment plant of Bayer Crop Science Limited now owned by Harrow Estates plc. Their contention was that it was premature to choose Hauxton as the preferred site and that greater investigation was required before a preferred site could be selected and that selection should be from any number of sites.

Points made during this presentation in support of their objections included:

- The Bayer factory site was heavily contaminated with agro chemicals which would require expensive remediation. The Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) would be used for the new proposed recycling plant and itself would need to be remediated which was very expensive but was vital to safeguard the ground water supply. To funds such works would require the owners to sell the factory for housing.
- It would be an unacceptable incursion into the Green Belt and contribute further to the reduction in separation between the Villages and the Town.
- Hauxton had no recreation facilities. The factory contained a large sports area on the west side of the A10 (2 football pitches, 1 cricket pitch, 2 tennis courts a bowling green, 2 squash courts) which could be made available to the village and was within cycling distance of the Southern Fringe Development.
- The necessary work to provide access to and from the A10 would encroach right across the middle of the recreational space and would make the area unappealing and very dangerous. It was understood that there were up to 1200 two-way movements of cars per day not taking into account skip and refuse lorries.
- The extra traffic generated by the plant onto an already heavily congested A10 would add a further safety hazard, particularly in view of the proposed housing developments on the Eastern side of the A10, at Trumpington and on Clay Farm. The petitioners were certain that this road could not accommodate traffic to the recycling centre as well.
- The WWTW site itself was next to a pristine section of Cam riverbank with important wildlife.
- The Cabinet was asked to consider whether in this area it was right that the proximity principle should have less weight.
- The preferred proposed site, were unanimously opposed by Hauxton Parish Council.