

Notes of a meeting of the residents of Longham
Held at Longham Village Hall
Tuesday 25th March 2008 at 7.00 p.m.

Chairman Mr. Chris Kennell
Attendees Approximately 100 Village residents

Mr. Kennell explained the meeting had been requested by residents concerned over the recently published proposals for waste and mineral sites around the village. He further explained that whilst he had agreed to chair the meeting this was not a Parish Council meeting and he was not chairing as the Chairman of the Parish Council.

Mrs. Bass introduced herself to those attending, noting she and her husband had recently moved to the village. It was noted that Mrs. Bass of Fox Burrow Barn had agreed to take notes of the discussions and produce a record for information.

Mr. Kennell read 3 letters/emails he had received as Chairman of the Parish Council, one of which explained the process of consultation that was currently being conducted by Norfolk County Council (NCC).¹

Mr. Kennell's suggestion that he should go round the room asking each individual to raise their questions or make any comments about the proposals was accepted.

During the resulting discussions the following questions and concerns were raised.

1. *At what point had the Parish Council known of the consultation and proposals and why had residents had no opportunity before the 25th March to raise their concerns?*

Mr. Kennell explained that the Parish Council had only been told of the proposals at the commencement of the last meeting (3rd March) and because the consultation period was due to end on 28th March it had not been felt there was enough time to call a meeting and respond to the consultation within the prescribed time.

It was reported by other residents who had attended the open day at Breckland Council offices on 16th March that the NCC had indicated the papers had been sent out by no later than the middle of February.

It was agreed there had been an unfortunate breakdown of process regarding circulating information to residents on such an important matter. This would be reviewed at the Parish Council meeting on 7th April² 2008 to agree a process and ensure such a problem did not happen again.

Mrs. Bass reported that following the meeting at Breckland Council's offices the village had had the period of consultation extended to 11th April 2008.³

¹ Copies are attached.

² Since rearranged for 21st April 2008

³ Note since the meeting NCC have extended the consultation period on the Waste and Mineral site proposals to 25th April for everyone.

2. *What had been the Parish Council's response to the 4 specific sites around the village?*

Mr. Kennell responded that the Parish Council had objected to all 4 proposed sites citing noise, dust pollution, road safety and visual intrusion as the main concerns about all four proposed sites. Concern was expressed that the response did not seem to be recorded on the NCC website.⁴

3. *Had a Breckland Councillor been invited to attend?*

Not specifically as a councillor because of the very short notice between receiving the request and sending out the notices. However Elizabeth Gould had been told of the meeting and had sent her apologies. It was thought it would be a good idea if the councillors (or even MP) could be invited to any future meetings of the residents on the subject.

4. *What could the residents and Parish Council do to prevent the proposals gaining approval?*

One resident highlighted that one of the issues of which the NCC had to take note was residents' perceived risk to their health.

Another focussed attention on the fact that mineral sites were, generally, required to be within 5-10 miles of the developments using the minerals. Since most of the sand and gravel was required for housing and Dereham and the surrounding villages were only scheduled to provide 4% of the new development this was a point which should be highlighted, as the proposed mineral sites in Longham and Beeston alone would provide much more than the required 4% and these sites were not the only ones proposed in the Breckland area and ignored the existing sites' reserves.

Mrs. Hubbard, in her letter to the Parish Council, had suggested trying to enlist the support of the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE). This would be considered by the committee proposed to be set up (see later).

It was noted that site specific responses to the 4 Longham, 1 Mileham and the 4 Beston-with-Bittering sites had been prepared and copies were available for residents to take away, alter as they felt appropriate and then submit by Freepost. It was highlighted that objections (or support) were required to be submitted for each proposed site and one response combining objections (or support) would only count as an objection to one site. Responses objecting to all nine sites had been prepared as it was felt that the increase in traffic, particularly heavy lorries, if any of these sites were approved would adversely impact Longham and its residents.

Mr. Kennell then asked Mr. Euan McLeod, son of the landowner proposing the three waste sites and the one additional mineral site in Longham, to try to explain to residents the rationale for the proposals.

Mr. McLeod indicated he felt the residents had a misunderstanding about the waste proposals in particular and that he did not believe the household waste site would

⁴ The NCC web site is now indicating it is taking 'some weeks' to process responses, suggesting it may be some time before the Longham response is published.

cause noise, smells or other pollution as it would consist of a few skips and recycling bins.

In response to this the residents asked if that was the case why the site needed to be 17 acres in size. During the conversation it was indicated that a facility similar to that at Ashill was what was envisaged plus inert waste storage and recycling. At this point strong concern was expressed over the level of traffic and extending the traffic to Saturdays and Sundays, which was not generally the case with the existing quarries.

Mr. McLeod also suggested that the blight of fly-tipping would be reduced if such a site was available. There was strong disagreement to this as it was felt by residents fly-tipping would increase if the site was opened for the following reasons:

- If the user had missed the closing time he would drive away from the CCTV cameras and tip on the side of the road;
- If the site had closed due to quarantine restrictions imposed at the adjacent turkey farm a lot of the users would fly-tip when they arrived to find the site closed; and
- Semi-commercial tippers who had been turned away from the site as non-household would also similarly fly-tip.

Whilst some support was expressed for the need for more household recycling facilities Mr. McLeod was unable to convince the residents that it was appropriate to locate in Longham a household waste and recycling facility together with, or separately from, inert waste storage and recycling. In particular it was pointed out that his environmental arguments were incomplete and failed to address the point that most users would have to travel for 5-10 mile round trip from Dereham (where most of the households generating the waste are located) and significant additional HGV's would be using inadequate roads. All of which had adverse environmental impacts as well as safety issues. Other concerns included concerns over the long-term impact to health and that, as waste sites were not temporary but permanent change of the use, the adverse consequences would be suffered by the residents for a very long time.

Mr. McLeod also answered questions regarding the inert waste storage and recycling proposals. Concerns expressed by residents covered the issue of noise and dust, with one resident in particular referring to her already difficulty in hearing and her asthma being made worse by the waste sites. Mr McLeod was unable to satisfy residents that the use of concrete crushers would not create significant noise and dust disturbance to residents.

Regarding the mineral extraction site residents expressed concern over the visual impact, increased traffic as well as noise and light pollution. Mr McLeod suggested that, because of the temporary nature of such sites and the restoration which was required afterwards, development of this site would ultimately be a benefit to the community. There was considerable disagreement to his position. Comments included references to the fact that the temporary quarries in the local area had existed for 25 years and more and that waiting a further 25 years for yet another inaccessible lake or woodland was not much of a benefit for the disruption, noise and traffic suffered. His view that the site was unlikely to be returned to agricultural use

was met with some hostility, with a view being expressed it was not appropriate for the UK continually to lose permanent agricultural land. Reference was also made to the fact that the landowner took a significant financial benefit for simply waiting for the land to be restored. On the other hand residents of the village generally had only the adverse impacts and if they did happen to be residents when the restoration was complete it was unlikely to be of any benefit to them, apart from the cessation of extraction activity.

There was general agreement with the view expressed by one resident that the proposals if progressed would, effectively put the village in the middle of an industrial waste-land, which was completely inappropriate given the rural and agricultural nature of the area.

Mr Kennell concluded that part of the discussion by thanking Mr. McLeod for venturing into the meeting to put their position but that clearly residents remained unconvinced.

Further questions/suggestions included:

5. *Could the Parish Council object to the site machinery currently being used by the McLeod business.*

Mr. Kennell believed it was not possible to do so as this needed to be done at the point at which the planning application was made.

6. *Further concerns were raised over the speed of and number of HGV lorries using Honeypot Lane/Reed Lane and what action residents could take.*

Mr. Walsh, a visitor from Wendling reported that Wendling Parish Council was obtaining portable speed readers and suggested Longham should consider doing the same, with volunteers checking HGV's (and other traffic) over a period of time.

7. *Should we consider a petition for all residents to sign?*

It was felt this was not something which should be organised yet, but might be useful/necessary at some point in the process.

8. *What else could residents do?*

It was proposed and agreed an action committee should be established, working alongside the Parish Council, to raise awareness, ensure residents were kept informed of progress and raise finance to pay for legal and professional advice should this become necessary. It was suggested the committee consist of those residents who had combined to produce the responses for the consultation plus any other volunteers. It was agreed that one Parish Councillor should be a member to ensure full and open communication between the action committee and the Parish Council.⁵

⁵ Names and contact numbers of the Action Committee are attached.