

BEDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

(Draft) Minutes of an Extra-ordinary Meeting held on Thursday 27th February 2020

The meeting was convened to discuss Planning Application SCC/007/19MS relating to a retrospective planning application for a concrete crushing plant at Poplar Farm, Worlingworth, Bedfield IP13 7LR

The meeting commenced at 2030 at the Bedfield sports pavilion

EX02/20 - 01 Present

- Keith Frost (KF), Suzie Carr (SC), Ed Nesling (EN), Richard Pickard (RP), Steve Harvey (SH) and John Dickson (JD).
- Geoff Robinson (GR), as Parish Clerk.
- 22 members of the public.

EX02/20 - 02 Apologies for Absence

- None.

EX02/20 - 03 Introduction by KF

Due to the exceptional interest being shown in the subject of this meeting and the feedback from the earlier Village Parish Meeting, KF reminded those present that:

- The public were welcome to stay but could not take part in any debate.
- The public were welcome to address the councillors during the public open session, but again debate would not be allowed. They do not need to be residents of Bedfield.
- The purpose of this meeting was to formulate a view to be notified to SCC Planning in respect of the application.
- Although Councillors had individual views, it was their duty to consider the views of the parishioners from the Village Parish Meeting.

EX02/20 - 04 Public Open Session

KF opened the session by welcoming members of the public and explaining that they were welcome to comment on the application. Accordingly, several members of the public spoke, the salient points of which are:

A resident of Worlingworth who is the closest to the site, stated that they had bought their house in 2001 and had initially not objected to the business and in fact had traded with the applicant on some occasions. However, since the concrete crushing had started the noise and dust had become intolerable to the point that his wife could no longer use her garden studio. This was entirely due to the applicants unlawful activities. He also had video proof that the applicant does not keep to the conditions that stipulate there should be no activity on bank holiday or Sunday operations. It was also claimed that he had been informed that asbestos had been crushed on at least one occasion. He considered that the access roads were totally inadequate for the reasons aired at the previous Village Parish Meeting and had commissioned his own traffic review, which has savaged that submitted by the applicant. He concluded by stating that taking everything into account it was simply the wrong location for that type of business.

An unknown gentleman stated that the applicant has had a license to crush concrete since 2016 and most of the allegations being made were simply not true. In particular, water was used to dampen down and there was no dust. He stated that combine harvesting created dust and it was no different. He reminded the councillors that there had been no complaints about the site in the last ten years of operation and that the plant will never be able to crush 25,000 tonnes of concrete in a year. This was

because it is simply not available in the area and even if it was, it would uneconomical in terms of transport costs. A maximum figure of about 10,000 tonnes would be more realistic and this would be officially checked on an ongoing basis. He concluded by stating that he thought the current situation had been deliberately stirred and “exaggerated up” by neighbours, using the internet to “wind-up” others.

A Bedfield resident concurred that the estimated throughput of concrete would not be possible due to shortages locally. He also wished to point out that not all the HGVs using Bedfield Road, Worlingworth/Tannington Road, Bedfield were associated with the crushing site.

Another Bedfield resident living very close to the site stated that they would not have bought their home had they had any indication that a crushing plant would ever operate from Poplar Farm.

General points made by others included the fact that 25,000 tonnes would equate to a maximum of an extra ten HGVs a day and not all of them would exit from the lane via Bedfield. This was based on the figure of 25,000 tones, using loads in and out at circa 20 tonne per HGV. Also, that dust from combine harvesting was not toxic like that from concrete.

KF closed the open session at 2055 and thanked everyone for their contributions

EX02/20 - 05 Councillors Discussions

The six parish councillors then discussed in depth the points raised from the Village Parish Meeting, the public open session and stated their own views. Salient points are as follows:

- RP had spent a lot of time studying all the papers and at the end of the day a large degree of objectivity would have to be applied to the application. Whilst the applicant had commissioned a series of experts on the environment, transport, and the like, the SCC portal also contained responses from SCC and other official experts. Only the SCC Highways aspect was against the application. However, he thought that it was difficult in many ways to obtain accurate information and as an example, the fact that the application included no reference as to if the applicant was currently acting illegally and what his status was in terms overall. RP stated that as always in these cases, the difference between fact and fiction was always difficult to determine. This made exercising sound judgement difficult, if not impossible. He added that he had spoken to the applicant who said has no plans to increase the current level of activity.
- EN stated that he thought the 25,000 tonne target was unrealistic but accepted that the current level could be “ramped up”. He thought it could be that the applicant had simply used 25,000 tonnes as “sensible” figure for the application. He added that wetting during the crushing operation was a legal requirement and that crushing machinery have system fitted. He also said that the entrance lane was not suitable for HGVs from anywhere, not just Poplar Farm.
- John Dixon stated that he supported the application as an individual and had recorded his views on the SCC Planning Portal. However, he fully accepted from a corporate point of view that he needed to represent the views he had heard from the villagers. He also condemned the lack of information available from SCC.
- KF endorsed concerns over the lack of information.
- SH asked for confirmation that if the application is granted, Mr Lansdowne would need to submit a new application to exceed this figure. RP said that he spoken to Andy Rutter, the SCC Case Officer who had confirmed this was correct.
- SC stated that is was puzzling how he had been allowed to operate illegally for so long and why he had not been stopped before now.
- All councillors agreed that whatever their own views and concerns they must put first the feelings of the villagers and respond to their concerns.

EX02/20 – 06 Recommendation to SCC

KF thanked the councillors for their input and views and after a discussion it was recommended that the response to SCC would be to **Object** to the application and include the view that:

- The amount of 25,000 tonnes is out of proportion to the capacity of the site.
- The Parish Councillor had not received enough accurate and informed information and this had made formulating a response very difficult. It had also allowed much misinformation and speculation to circulate throughout the Parish.
- Whilst concerns did exist about the environmental impact, dust and noise, the aspect of the application which was the Parish Council's greatest concern was in terms of transport. This centred on the total inadequacy of Bedfield Road, Worlingworth/Tannington Road, Bedfield to cope with present HGVs, let alone any increase. The Parish Council has very real concerns in terms of road safety to walkers, cyclists and in fact, all users. These seemed to be reflected in the SCC highways response to the application.
- The Parish Council will therefore inform the Suffolk County Council Planning case officer that it totally supports the vast majority of Bedfield villagers in opposing the application.

The meeting closed 2115.

Signed:.....
Chairman Bedfield Parish Council