

Shadingfield, Sotterley, Willingham and Ellough Joint Parish Council

Minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting
held at Shadingfield Village Hall on 3 January 2024 at 7.00 pm

Present:

Councillors C Ellis (Chair), Blunn, Chipperfield, Drane, R Ellis, London, Sheldrake and Thornton.

In attendance:

Mr S C Blackburn (Clerk) and three members of the public.

24.001 Apologies for Absence: County Cllr J Cloke and District Cllrs Specca and Hammond.

RESOLVED: that the apologies be noted.

24.002 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations: None.

24.003 Public Participation

The Chair outlined the rules of conduct and debate for the meeting.

Representatives of Mutford and Henstead with Hulver Street Parish Councils were present and confirmed that their Councils had voted against the proposals previously. Both had applied for an extension until 15 January in the time allowed for comments to be lodged.

24.004 Planning Applications

SCC/0124/22W: Proposed anaerobic digester at Copland Way, Ellough.

The Chair noted that serious safety concerns had been raised by experts, particularly in the aviation sphere, and referred to a fire at a similar plant in Oxford. Of particular concern was the possible effect on Beccles Aerodrome: the loss of an Engine Failure After Take off (EFATO) site, the possible loss of this site and 60 jobs in a business which makes a positive contribution to the economy, including leisure and tourist activity for a gain of only 6 new jobs, dependent on government subsidy. Most notably, there was concern at the apparent complete lack of consultation with the Aerodrome business. The site of the proposed digester is not within the 2019 Waveney Local Plan.

Cllr Thornton then commented on the nature and quality of the supporting documents:

- A number of the submitted documents included reference to the fact they have been written specifically 'in support' of their application and cannot therefore be objective. Unless properly reviewed and validated by the planning team they should not be acceptable.
- There are a lot of discrete assessments, odour, transport etc, but nowhere is there one holistic assessment of the overall impact of this application
- The traffic analysis is flawed in a couple of ways. Firstly the survey period used is just one week in September which is unlikely to be representative of a whole year. Also it does not identify types of vehicle movements and so the conclusion of a 0.6% traffic increase misses the point which is that it is the level of increase in HGV / heavy traffic that is relevant and it is not possible to calculate that from the data used.
- The whole application carries an assumption that the operation will be perfect. The assessments do not explore the likelihood and potential impact of operator negligence, process failures, or human error. There is no such thing as a perfectly operating system so the assessments are all fundamentally flawed in both scope and conclusions.
- There is no overall risk assessment for the whole application and, by extension, no risk management and mitigation plan.
- There are no documents from the applicant or whoever is aiming to operate the plant. All the assessments use external consultants and appear to have been written in support of the application. This raises questions of operator involvement and competence.
- There is no overall assessment of the ecological impact of this application. There should be clear analysis of the ecological cost of all the transport to and from the plant (especially if this will be food waste potentially carried hundreds of miles) as well as the impact of the food waste itself. This risks making the creation of food waste an

Chair _____ Clerk _____ Date _____

enticing profit opportunity and, as seen with the existing digester, 'waste' can, and will be, manufactured if there is profit to be made. We should not be building an infrastructure that requires food waste.

- Some of the reports are poorly written and move from past tense to present tense. When read without detailed study, it was felt that this could give a misleading impression that all was well in a system which has not yet been built.

Cllr R Ellis referred to a document from SRL dated 20 December 2023 which makes assumptions that the planned operation should be acceptable, the implication being that the plan is not currently acceptable and thus attempting to inspire false confidence in the reader.

Cllr Drane commentated that there was no reference to the possible cumulative effects of the potential odour, especially in relation to the existing adjacent site which has been the subject of a number of complaints from both residents and from many local businesses nearby.

It was commented that the response from the Environment Agency was too brief and could not be taken as a proper Environmental Impact Assessment. She asked if the recommendations in the November 2023 documentation had been incorporated into updated assessments received by the County Council.

Upon being put to a vote, the meeting RESOLVED by 8 votes to nil to continue to object to the proposals.

24.005 Requests for items to be placed on the next agenda: None.

24.006 Date of next meeting: Wednesday 17th January 2024 at 7.00 pm.

The meeting closed at 7.50 pm.

_____ Chair

_____ Date