

Bitteswell Parish Council

Clerk: Peter A. Jones, Dipl.P.A.,

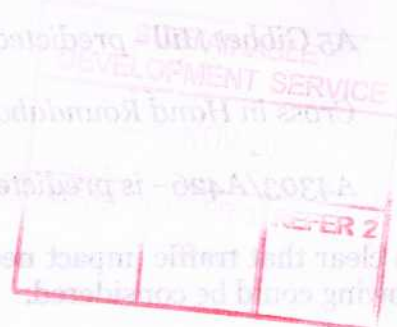
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John Wright
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Minerals & Waste Planning
Leicestershire County Council
County Hall, Glenfield, Leics LE3 8TE



Dear Mr Wright

CONSULTATION ON LEICESTERSHIRE MINERALS AND WASTE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The following comments are submitted by Bitteswell Parish Council in response to Leicestershire County Council's consultation on Preferred Options for the Development Framework to 2021, in relation to Core Strategy & development Control Policies and Site Allocations for both minerals and waste.

Whilst we understand the local, regional and national significance of available resources in our area of the County, our main concerns are to ensure for local residents:

- the best possible protection of the local environment, its landscape character and natural habitats
- the control of pollution of the local environment, in order to improve air quality, and also to limit noise, illumination at night and other disturbance
- reductions in the flow of traffic and increased road safety not only for Bitteswell, but also for Lutterworth and other surrounding villages, given their close geographical relationships.

It is important to note also, that whilst the carrot of employment opportunities is dangled again, unemployment in Harborough District is extremely low at about 0.8% or "churn" level. The addition of any further significant number of jobs will be positively detrimental to the local area, sucking in an additional volume of commuter traffic and putting further strain on the local infrastructure.

Minerals Core Strategy and Development Control Policies

Given the predominantly agricultural and residential nature of the "Lutterworth Lowlands", it is our bad luck to be based in a geographical environment that provides a major proportion of the aggregates transacted in England, especially sand and gravels.

Consequently, we understand the positive thrust of the objectives set out in Section 4 (page 11) and agree particularly with point 5, to seek alternatives to road transport. This is particularly the case in view of the already unacceptable burden of both HGV and small commuter vehicle traffic going through Lutterworth and local villages.

Pressure on the local road network is already at unacceptable levels. A transport assessment by U.R.S. for Gazeley Properties dated September 2006 includes the following comments:

M1 Junction 20/A4304 - beginning to show significant stress.

A5 Gibbet Hill - predicted that the junction would function above capacity.

Cross in Hand Roundabout - capacity is predicted to be exceeded.

A4303/A426 - is predicted to be operating above capacity.

It is clear that traffic impact needs to be controlled. If the Shawell development is to be allowed the following could be considered:

An additional motorway junction north of Lutterworth, South or North off, would resolve the pollution in Lutterworth.

A light railway or conveyor system following the old railway line with a transfer station north of Lutterworth would resolve the pressure on the road network south and east of Lutterworth.

The nearby canal network is also worthy of consideration for importing and exporting material from Shawell.

We suggest, however, that there should be an explicit policy objective in Section 4 to protect the open countryside and landscape character as much as possible by minimising the extent of development to meet actual needs, objectively quantified and monitored. This would amplify the Government's draft Minerals Planning Statement (MPS1) which quite rightly sets out the need to keep environmental impacts of extraction and transportation to a minimum, but at the same time refers only to protecting nationally and internationally designated areas of landscape and nature conservation. This does not cover adequately the closer focus on landscape character and rural environment important to the people who live and work in them.

Minerals Development Framework: Site Allocations

In principle, we recognise the sense of concentrating further development on existing sites, rather than adding installations at new locations. It is notable, however, that of the 6 preferred sites for sand and gravel extraction, 2 (Husbands Bosworth and Shawell) are in the vicinity of Lutterworth, together with a further 2 out of 4 alternative sites (North Kilworth, Slip Inn Quarry).

A high volume of traffic will inevitably be added to the local road transport network. This already carries a disproportionate burden of HGVs associated not only with these particular sites, but also accessing quarries at Croft and locations to the south west of Leicester City, where in preference to the notoriously traffic-jammed junction 21 a proportion of commercial traffic uses Junction 20 of the M1 at Lutterworth.

