

Urgent Update to Item 14 – Receipt Of ‘Call-In’ – Relevant Procedure (Kent Minerals And Waste Plan Review – MBC Response)

Excerpt from the Minutes of the Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Policy Advisory Committee Meeting held on 6 September 2023.

42. KENT MINERALS AND WASTE PLAN REVIEW - MBC RESPONSE

Kimmy Milham, Sandra Manser and Rachel Rodwell addressed the Committee as Local Residents.

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development introduced the report, stating that the response attached at appendix 1 had been submitted provisionally to Kent County Council’s (KCC) Kent Minerals and Waste Plan 2013-2030 Regulation 18 consultation, due to the 25 July 2023 deadline, and was subject to ratification by the Committee. The Council was a statutory consultee, and that the two main issues to address in the response were the extension of Hermitage quarry and the demand for soft sands in construction.

The Cabinet Member stated that as no other sites had been submitted during KCC’s call for sites process, which would leave a shortfall of materials that were required for construction purposes, KCC had little choice but to put the site forward as an allocation. It was stated that the proposal was not ideal but was the best solution and that it was possible for maximum mitigation to be achieved through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It was stated that there would be increased environmental and ecological harm caused by transporting materials from an alternative site, or from permission being given to build another quarry elsewhere.

During the debate, several Members of the Committee expressed that the draft response at appendix 1 to the report did not sufficiently outline the effects of the proposal. This included the loss of ancient woodland which could not be replaced, the harm and impact to biodiversity from the proposal, and that KCC had not provided the evidence to support that the proposal fell within the exceptional circumstances as outlined in the NPPF guidance. There were also concerns that the proposal could lead to increased housing developments on Hermitage Lane once the Ancient Woodland was removed.

In response to questions on the response attached at appendix 1 to the report, the Strategic Planning Manager confirmed that:

- Officers had provided the parameters of what could be included in the response according to the NPPF and it was the Committee’s decision to recommend to the Cabinet Member for Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development what could be included in the letter; and

- There was nothing to prevent KCC from accepting further representations whilst they were in the Regulation 18 stage; should KCC proceed to the Regulation 19 stage, further representations could also be received to the associated consultation at that stage.

The Committee gave consideration to recommending one of the following actions; that the response at appendix 1 to the report be amended, that an addendum be sent outlining the Committee's views, or whether an alternative letter should be produced and sent to KCC. It was noted that the response had been submitted on 9 August 2023, as opposed to the original 25 July 2023 deadline, following an agreed extension with KCC.

Some Members felt that an amended response would be the most suitable to strengthen the sentiment expressed in the draft response and highlight the matters raised by the Committee. Overall, it was felt that the response should be withdrawn and a second response sent in its place using the wording of the Woodland Trust, to outline that the proposal could not be supported.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND to the CABINET MEMBER:

1. That the letter be withdrawn, and a new letter sent in its place using the wording provided by the Woodland Trust of 'given an unacceptable loss of habitat, Maidstone Borough Council are unable to support the proposed quarry extension.'

Note: Councillor Hastie left the meeting after the item's conclusion, at 7.40 p.m.