

Rookery South ERF Community Liaison Panel Meeting 14 Final Notes
Monday 29th June 2020 – 6.30 pm
via Zoom

Present

CLP Members – Representatives from Marston Moretaine PC; Brogborough PC; Millbrook PM; Cranfield PC; Wootton PC; Marston Vale Trust; Lidlington Resident; Houghton Conquest PC

Observers/Presenters – Covanta: Tom Koltis, Judith Harper, Neil Grimstone, Andy Smith; Jack Stitt, David Spencer; Environment Agency: Emma D’Avilar; CBC : Roy Romans; Network Rail: John Emery, Oliver Watson-Pridmore; BBC: John Shortland

Facilitator: Bob Fisher (rmpfisher77@gmail.com)

Apologies for Absence: Lidlington PC; Cllr Tim Hill; Neil Goudie (EA), Anita Taylor (CBC)

Resignations and appointments: Andy Smith (Covanta) was introduced as a Presenter; Jon Shortland (Chief Officer for Planning & Infrastructure Development, BBC) was introduced as an Observer.

NOTES FROM THE MEETING

- Participants were reminded of the set of ground rules originally agreed by meeting participants:
 - Keep to time
 - Keep to the agenda
 - Respect each others’ views
 - Turn-taking - Do not speak over one another
 - Mobile phones turned off/turned to silent
- In addition, protocols for conducting meetings via Zoom were proposed:
 - Microphones muted & cameras turned off
 - Raise hand & use Chat mode
 - No recording, please

The meeting was recorded so as to facilitate an accurate set of notes.

- **Approval of notes from meeting 13**

The notes had been circulated in advance of the meeting and were approved.

- **Matters arising from previous meeting (20/01/2020)**

Wootton PLC wished to raise a number of points, but was unable to due to technical issues. These questions may be found in the Appendix to the Meeting Notes.

Covanta is currently working to obtain the information requested, but please note that as a number of key personnel are on annual leave, this may take a little time and answers will be received in due course.

- **Construction & Traffic Management Update - Andy Smith (AS)**

AS has only recently joined the Rookery project for Covanta – in March. He has a background in project management of new-build power plants and therefore this is quite a familiar type of project for him.

Construction update

The construction phase of the project is on schedule and includes the introduction of control measures in response to Covid-19. It has been a very active period on the site in terms of construction, which aerial photographs from January to June 2020 reflected (see slides).

The company introduced a raft of additional arrangements on site in response to Covid-19, in line with UK Government advice and site operating procedures, as articulated by the Construction Leadership Council. These procedures have been very effective and have allowed the work to continue on schedule. The project is now coming to the end of the civil construction phase and moving towards the mechanical and electrical installation phase (e.g. boiler pressure tests, energising the electrical connection).

Q: Marston Moretaine asked about work carried out in the evenings – a number of comments had been received from parishioners regarding the amount of light emanating from the site in the evening and work continuing late on.

AS explained what the company had been doing in respect of working hours (see slide on *Temporary Extension of Working Hours Application*). The Development Consent Order allows a window of opportunity in terms of working hours (7.00 – 19.00 weekdays & 7.00 – 13.00 weekends). In order for work to progress, Covanta have sought modifications to these working hours. CBC are addressing these requests on a discrete basis for particular activities over particular periods of time. Permission was sought to extend the working hours over the current period to mitigate against time lost due to Covid-19 and to allow the workforce to be split over shifts to facilitate social distancing. There were two areas where Covanta has asked for flexibility:

- 1) Welding works – request approved by Planning & Environmental Health to carry out welding works 24/7. This was considered to be “unobtrusive activity”.
- 2) July– Sept 2020 – Steelwork erection, Process equipment installation & Deliveries. The decision on this is pending.

AS was aware of one or two occasions where lights from the tower cranes have been obtrusive and the company has taken a couple of steps to address this:

- 1) Adjust the lights so that they are shining down on to the site rather than casting light any further afield
- 2) A timer has been installed on these lights so that they automatically go off at 22.00.

The company is conscious of light pollution and has taken steps to address it.

Q: Houghton PC was interested to know how many of the 600 people employed at the site are local people – there was an initial promise that the project would create jobs locally.

Covanta conducts a regular review of where the workforce comes from. The nature of this type of project is that some of the work is specialist and there are existing supply chains in place with European companies. Other aspects of the work are more readily undertaken by more local/UK-based companies. AS suggested following this up and reporting in the post meeting notes.

AS went on to summarise off-site works (see slide), e.g. Anglian Water & Network Rail. With regard to abnormal loads, the majority of these have now been delivered and should all have been received by late August. AS noted, however, that abnormal loads are legally required to stop prior to the Green Lane level crossing to await permission to cross from the Network Rail signaller. He also pointed out that the date and time of escorted deliveries is mandated by the police.

Traffic Management

Traffic management at the site is governed principally by the Section 106 Agreement and set out by the HGV Access & Routeing Strategy (see *Traffic Management* slide), which states that all HGVs must travel via Green Lane and the C94.

AS noted that there had been a couple of instances where there have been problems with the HGV Routeing Strategy. Unfortunately, it appears that someone – possibly maliciously – has generated a navigation pin to the Rookery ERF site on Google Maps. This is in the correct position for the site location, but the roads on Google Maps do not reach the site at present – so, if anyone does use this pin to navigate, they can access the site from several directions and clearly, the only direction that does work is via Green Lane. Covanta have put more steps in place so that, 24 hours prior to any deliveries, the driver must contact the site to obtain more explicit directions to access the site to avoid any issues through the use of sat nav. This has hopefully seen a reduction in the number of mis-routed vehicles, although the company is aware of one or two which overshot the site entrance and had to go to the Stewartby roundabout.

AS acknowledged that things haven't been perfect, but the company has taken steps to ensure that it is in the future. Covanta is here for the long term and there is an understanding that traffic issues need to be addressed for the project as a whole. To this end, a traffic management consultant has been engaged to look at an enhanced signage scheme, which will focus on deliveries to the site during the operational phase. Work is currently being done on this phase and will be presented to CBC, BBC, the Highway department and also, possibly, Highways England. Once the concept has been developed, it will be shared with the authorities, approved and put into operation.

Q: *Lidlington resident noted that lorries are not allowed on the old A421 from junction 13 – the route should be from junction 13, down the new A421 and then off at the junction at Marston Moretaine to join the old A421. This wasn't seen in the Traffic Management Plan. Local people have a number of concerns that the shortest route – which a lot of HGVs take – is down the old A421 because it is a more direct route from junction 13.*

AS appreciated this useful feedback and offered to work this into the signage strategy being developed. This may require signage at Brogborough, junction 13 of the M1 to enforce this. However, it is clear from the plan incorporated into the Section 106 Agreement that the green route (see slide *HGV Access & Routeing Plan*) – which is the preferred route for HGV traffic – should take the Marston junction of the A421 or the northern junction off the A421 and only use the section of Bedford Road that leads to Green Lane. The signage strategy is intended to enforce the whole of the routeing strategy and it is clear that the A421 should be used until the Marston junction.

JH added that when the routeing strategy was put together, it was before the new A421 had actually been built and opened, so the strategy focused on what was there at the time – it does refer to the Marston Moretaine roundabout, but not in any more detail than that.

AS: The signage strategy will include both directional signage to indicate where HGVs should be going, but also prohibition signage in areas where they shouldn't be. The latter is therefore something which can be addressed at the junction of the M1.

Q: *Lidlington resident noted that this issue has been debated for a long time and it is very much a local concern that HGVs would be forced to use the new A421.*

AS assured the meeting that the new consultant will look at this as part of the signage strategy to see how it might be reinforced. It's important to strike a balance between having every road with a sign at the end of it versus getting the traffic to use the correct route. Also, when the project moves to the operational phase – and once the delivery sites have been established – there will tend to be a regular set of hauliers, will develop into an understanding of what is/isn't allowed in terms of access to the site. It's probably more difficult to manage effectively during the construction phase than during the operational phase.

Q: *Marston Moretaine PP asked whether Covanta is engaged with either CBC or the Inspector regarding the Local Plan. There has been a lot of discussion about the inadequacy of junction 13 for the future. It is easy to imagine the volume of traffic accessing the site having a serious effect on local highways.*

AS noted that, as part of the consent for the project, the company is required to carry out various traffic assessments. It is uncertain, however, whether this extends to the junction by the M1.

JH confirmed that junction 13 access has been improved significantly since planning permission was granted and that was being treated as a separate item – the environmental assessment and planning dealt with the existing situation prior to 2013 and junction 13 improvements were being dealt with by Highways and was a separate matter.

Roy Romans added that the concern is in connection with the Local Plan going through the enquiry process at the moment and looking at future development and growth within the Marston Vale – and the impact of this on junction 13. This is part of the work CBC has done in terms of modelling growth in the area, which has taken on board all existing/built projects and projects with planning permission and has included traffic levels expected at the Rookery South site in terms of a worst case scenario. Therefore, traffic levels at the site have been taken into account as part of the modelling at junction 13.

Q: Lidlington resident asked whether, in terms of imposing fines for using the wrong route, the system of football-style cards discussed in the past would be introduced; i.e. 3 cards and you're banned from accessing the site.

AS stated that as he was fairly new to the project, he couldn't comment in detail at this stage. However, the strategy set out in the Section 106 Agreement does mention 'reprimands and disciplinary action'. There are various considerations set out in the Agreement which are intended to cover both the construction and commercial/operational phases. It will be easier for Covanta to take action during the operational phase and the company has been seeking to enforce it through their main contractor in the construction phase. The red/yellow card system applied to HGV access is one which has been used in other projects in the operational phase, when it involves a regular group of drivers. In the construction phase, you may get one driver delivering one set of boiler components one week and a completely different one the next – so it is not so easy to apply.

JH added that Covanta did raise this issue and Veolia suggested this is how they would manage it with their own vehicles. Clearly, though, they are able to control their own fleet, but this does not necessarily apply to construction.

- **Network Rail Update – John Emery (JE)**

JE is the project sponsor for Network Rail and looks after the Green Lane crossing upgrade. JE presented a recap on the reasons for the upgrade (see slides) and an update on current progress.

The timescale for the upgrade project – transition to a new manual/CCTV-operated system – commences on 22nd August 2020 and the crossing will be operational at the end of August (31st). Nine days are needed for this to maintain the safety of the public, vehicles and trains. Also, the deck is being replaced with a more heavy-duty deck. JE summarised how work has been carried out while adhering to COvid-19 Government guidelines.

Q: DS asked whether the upgraded level crossing still required exceptional loads or long vehicles to continue to stop before the crossing and to then obtain verbal permission from Network Rail before continuing on to traverse the crossing.

JE: The simple answer is no – The main reason for implementing the upgrade at the moment is because it is currently an automatic crossing activated by the train, so if a long or slow vehicle was crossing, the barriers would automatically close on to it, a train could approach it and the driver would have to apply the brakes to stop in time. The new manual/CCTV

system means that the signaller will be able to see if a slow or abnormal load is traversing and will be able to wait until that is complete before the barriers come down.

Q: *Houghton PC asked where the site workers will park and whether all other traffic would be stopped for the duration of the work.*

JE stated that the NR workers would have a compound at Millbrook and this will be set up in the coming days. This will be the main base for the works, storage, materials and site offices. There will be a minibus service from there, so workers have been asked to park at the compound.

However, there will be a NR Maintenance area very close to the crossing where critical workers can park - e.g. signalling testers. These critical services are there to ensure the project is completed on time.

Q: *Houghton PC acknowledged this was fine for NR workers, but asked where Covanta workers would park.*

JE assured the meeting that the road to the Rookery South site will remain open; there was no intention to prevent access to the site.

AS added that, from the project side, the work would continue alongside the NR works, so the diversion route will be in place and site workers will come in via this route.

This falls into the scenario mentioned in the HGV Access & Routeing Strategy, where it is possible for the strategy to be suspended in particular circumstances; e.g. when there's an obstruction or where Police require traffic to go by an alternate route. Therefore – very occasionally – in the early stages of construction, when there has been a problem at the level crossing, it has been necessary to suspend the routeing strategy under agreement with CBC, and this period will be one of these. So, all the traffic going to the site during the NR upgrade will use a diversionary route.

- **Council Reps – Q & A**

No questions

- **Environment Agency – Emma D'Avila Q & A**

No questions

- **Site Visits – Covanta & Veolia**

AS observed that, from the Covanta side, things are a little challenging at the moment because of Covid-19 and the company was trying to minimise unnecessary presence at the site. However, restrictions are starting to ease, so in the coming months, it should be possible to offer people the opportunity to see what's going on at the site. With regard to other main contractors, enquiries will be made.

In the meantime, the company was in the process of finalising a video showing progress made at the Rookery South site, such as has been viewed at previous CLP meetings. Once completed, this will be available on the usual channels.

Q: Marston Moretaine asked whether it might be possible to question Veolia about the use of sub-contractors (hauliers). There was a very good presentation at the previous meeting from Veolia regarding their processes for controlling sub-contractors, but this seemed to go against what several people had previously understood – that they were going to deliver most of the waste themselves. Is there any additional information available?

BF offered to pass this query on to Veolia and report back.

Q: Marston Moretaine was satisfied that Veolia itself had very good processes; it was the process for controlling sub-contractors (and selection of sub-contractors) which is of concern.

Finally, DS gave an update on the next quarterly video – normally there would have been a film out in April, but due to Covid-19, it was necessary to restrict the number of people on site. The next film is going through a final edit and will be on the Rookery South project webpage by the end of the week. A link will be sent to BF, who will disseminate to all CLP members.

- **Time/date/venue for next meeting**

The date of the next meeting will be confirmed by Doodle poll, but will take place in September 2020.

BF invited CLP members to send any questions or items to be added to the agenda.

Bob Fisher

CLP Facilitator

16th July 2020

Appendix

- **Questions submitted by Wootton PC in *Matters Arising*:**

'Matters Arising' for Covanta and/or the construction contractors: to establish the carbon footprint for the construction of the Rookery South waste incinerator (i.e., the entire facility, including the electricity generation plant), we would like to know how much of the following will be used to complete the plant:

- *Concrete (how many tonnes?)*
- *Steel (how many tonnes?)*
- *Tarmac (how many tonnes?)*
- *Fuel (for construction vehicles working on site — how many litres?)*
- *Electricity (for cranes, lighting etc. — how many kWh?)*
- *Manpower (person-days for everyone working on site).*

As noted above, as a number of key members of staff are on annual leave, these questions will be addressed in due course.