

East Winch Parish Council

c/o Mrs H. A. Steele

3, Southview Cottages,

West Bilney,

King's Lynn PE32 1JX

October 2016

Dear Sir,

Area of Search (modification) Consultation AOS 'D'e

At a parish Council meeting on 10th October attended by 27 residents of East Winch and West Bilney and a representative of Middleton Parish Council, much concern was expressed about NCC's area of search proposals for the West Bilney area, and dissatisfaction that the Parish Council had not responded to the earlier consultation. This letter attempts to put forward their views and is therefore general comment rather than a response to the modification proposals.

The proposed arrangements for transporting sand gave concern to all present. Lorries taking sand from a site to the processing plant make numerous trips there and back every day. Common Road is indeed used by heavy vehicles, but it is narrow and there is already an issue with tractors and lorries destroying the verges when they pass each other. There are two blind corners, no speed limit and no pavement. Walkers use the road every day, particularly the stretch in East Winch, which runs through the Common, an SSSI. A huge increase in the number of heavy vehicles will ruin the road and verges, increase risk for cyclists and pedestrians and make dog walking an impossibility'

Furthermore, it is inevitable that there will be delays at the junction with the A47 as lorries turn in and out, backing up traffic in all directions and making life more difficult and unsafe for people living along the A47. Accidents already occur with depressing frequency at both junctions. Pedestrian crossings on the A47, already highly desirable, will become a necessity' People trying to access the A47 from other side roads, particularly Station Rd, will experience longer waits and a greater degree of frustration. In West Bilney 19 households, and on the A47 at least 24, will be directly affected.

Similar problems will be created in Middleton'

Solutions to these problems need working out before the planning process for any extraction starts. Residents will need answers to questions, e.g. What is the daily tonnage likely to be extracted? What is the estimated axle count? For how long might excavation continue? Has NCC considered other routes and other methods of transport?

West Bilney residents, living close to or right in the middle of the area of search have other concerns as well.

a) The area is an attractive and varied landscape. What will happen to the excavated land? Is it proposed to reinstate it or to make lakes? People do not want to be surrounded by more lakes than there are already.

b) If the area of search becomes a similar area of extraction there will be serious consequences for wildlife. Bilney Forest has a wide range of interesting fauna, particularly birds and insects. As the area of search includes more than half the forest, excavation over this area would significantly reduce wildlife diversity.

c) Residents of Denton's Farm are concerned about the search process as well as possible future excavation. The bridleway/restricted byway - the only access to Denton's Farm - is covered by the area of search. Therefore they do not want drilling or other invasive search methods used on or near the track. Telephone cables and water pipes are laid under the track, and can easily be severed. Residents are responsible for the upkeep of the track as a byway and do not want it damaged by heavy vehicles.

d) There are health and safety concerns. It is accepted that silica sand particulates are too large to be a health hazard, but concerns have been raised that other matter in an area being excavated may well consist of much smaller, damaging particulates. Your comments on this would be welcome.

e) The area of search may cover items of heritage value. There is a tradition that Cromwell bombarded Pentney Abbey from the forest area, and stone cannonballs have been found by the river Nar. The arm running north from the forest has in it a Victorian pumping station, one of the last remnants of the old Bilney Hall where General Allenby of WW1 fame spent much of his happy childhood.

f) Property values will be blighted for the next ten years and during the period of excavation.

Apart from astonishment that different criteria appear to apply to West Bilney and to the Snettisham/Dersingham areas, there is no objection to the modification, as far as the reduction of the area of search is concerned.

Yours faithfully,
Mrs. H. Steele
Chairman