

East Quarry – Shevington Parish Council Meeting - 27 June 2019

Cllr Katie Jukes of Wrightington Parish Council, a resident of Appley Bridge and a member of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) was invited by the Chairman to take the lead. She opened by informing the Council that, although the principal subject matter of this item was the East Quarry, the matter of the Parbold landfill had to be included in the discussion, as the two were connected.

The Parbold Landfill Issue

Cllr Jukes explained that the Parbold landfill tip was directly opposite Miller & Carter on Parbold Hill. The cap, which consisted of clay and topsoil, of Parbold landfill had subsided and needed to be restored. Parbold and Appley Bridge East and West Quarries were owned by the same person, who had submitted a planning application to restore Parbold landfill. The pressure group were of the view that what he was really intending to do was to add to the landfill in the process and they were intending to challenge him and oppose his planning application. If his application were passed the nationally recognised vista from Parbold Hill, which was regularly visited by tourists, would be lost, because it was the owner's intention to raise the height of the landfill by 9m – higher than it had been originally.

The additional materials would be transported to Parbold landfill via lorries travelling along the A5209 from J27 on the M6. The volume of traffic involved would have a devastating effect on the environment and on villages along the route between Newborough and Standish. The site of Parbold landfill had been closed to the world for about 30 years and provided a habitat for a variety of flora and fauna. However, a full ecological survey had not been carried out on the area – only a desktop impact assessment had been submitted.

The original deadline for representations had been set as 7 July and was going to be determined by one planning officer, but the pressure group had succeeded in having it 'called in' so that it would now be determined by the Planning Committee and the deadline for representations had been extended to 24 July.

The pressure group had been working hard to garner support in the area. District councillors and parish councillors from areas likely to be affected were all on board. The greatest impact on the Shevington Parish area would be from the increase in traffic at J27 and the pollution it would cause. It had been reported that there was a possibility that other disciplines could be transferred to Wrightington Hospital. If this happened, there would be an even greater increase in the volume of traffic on the arterial routes in the area.

It was agreed that a letter should be sent to Lancashire and West Lancashire Borough Councils to ask whether traffic and environmental impact assessments had been carried out in relation to this application and whether the results had been shared with the public. A letter of support would also be sent to neighbouring parish councils to assure them of Shevington Parish Council's support in the matter.

It was observed that, if the application were refused, the owner of Parbold Quarry still had the right of appeal to the Planning Inspectorate and a refusal by the local Planning Committee could be overturned.

An email carrying a digitised version of the leaflet being produced by the pressure group would be sent to the Clerk for circulation in the Shevington area.

Appendix B

The East Quarry Issue

Cllr Juckes introduced the two residents of Appley Bridge who were members of the Calico Brook Flood Action Group who had joined her at the meeting. She added that, according to the two members of the Flood Action Group, some of the information in the paper about East Quarry prepared by two residents of Appley Bridge and sent to the Parish Council was incorrect. As she had been one of the residents, she apologised for this. The issue had recently been discussed at a meeting of Wroughtington Parish Council, which Cllr C Horridge had attended. The two members of the Flood Action Group led the discussion.

The intention of the owner of East Quarry was to drain the quarry of all of its water, fill it with inert material and build 370 houses on it. The West Lancashire Local Plan allocation for the whole of Appley Bridge had been 65. However, the Local Plan had been shelved completely.

Work at the quarry had ended in 1987. Before the flood in Millbank water was pumped out of East Quarry at night and was known to be contaminated with sulphur because it was possible to smell the Hydrogen Sulphide gas being given off. The water appeared to be clean at the top, but was not expected to be clean at the bottom. It was suspected that the crusher and crane that were in use at the quarry had been left and had been submerged under the water.

The owner was proposing to pump all of the water out over a period of 90 days. However, he had not taken account of rainfall. It would, in fact, take longer than 90 days to empty the quarry.

There was a belief held locally that East Quarry had been filled in by diverting water from Calico Brook. It was true that an arrangement had been set up under the footbridge at The Slacks to allow excess water to overflow into the quarry, but there was very little evidence of that ever happening on a scale of any note.

In 2011 permission to do this was withdrawn and the relevant public authorities had to do something to prevent flooding in Millbank. The Millbank Flood Alleviation Scheme was set up in 2012 and £1.4 million was spent on it. The scheme is on the whole a good one, but some tweaks are needed. For the past few years the Flood Action Group had been fighting for the tweaks to be introduced. Pumping water from East Quarry into Calico Brook would undermine the scheme and lead to a greater risk of flooding. The Flood Action Group had sent objections to the Environment Agency to the proposals for East Quarry.

The Parish Council had received a reply to the enquiry sent to West Lancashire Borough Council. It had been reported that Wigan Council was the owner of the property called The Slacks. Dist Cllr Brown was asked to seek Wigan Council's assessment of the situation.