

23/10/2010

Dear Mr. Rowland,

I have agonised over whether or not I should waste more of my time by responding to this planning application, 10/02487/S73WM for yet another extension of time to the proposed golf course off the A603 in Cople.

I have spent many hours gathering evidence, writing letters and e-mails, speaking to the Minerals and Waste Department on a regular basis, filling out forms about noise and dust pollution for the Environment Agency and I even spoke at the Council offices when the last time extension application was discussed. Why bother I ask myself, when whatever planning decisions are made, (which all seem to favour the applicant), are not regulated and actually seem to be a total waste of everyone's time if the conditions are not then enforced.

This is a complete and utter joke. I discussed this matter on the radio at the last application stage and a listener said " This is a wolf in sheep's clothing". In January 2000 the village of Cople was told that we would receive a recreational facility. We were to have a 9 hole golf course on our doorstep that could only benefit our community. No mention was ever made of the fact that what we would be putting up with is a waste management site or the length of time we would suffer from noise, dust pollution, mud on the A603 and heavy lorries that often pull out in front of cars causing sudden breaking.

May I refer you back to the original planning application dated September 1999, when the original Borough Council decided that they were able to deal with a planning application normally dealt with by the County Council. The planning conditions were totally inadequate considering what the site actually is and how close to houses it is. I think it is fair to say that they were totally negligent. I have been told, by Council members that it is normal to have a start time of 9.00 a.m. when close to houses. We have had to endure a 7.30 a.m. start (even on Saturdays) and all day Saturdays to begin with until it was shortened at the last planning decision stage. At this point I was told that the 3 years extension application would be shortened to 2 years but the 7.30 a.m. start time would remain. If the start time was put back to 9.00 a.m. the Council stated that they would have to allow the full 3 years. Here we are today, having endured the 2 extra years starting at 7.30 a.m. and another application for an extension of time is being considered. It seems a fait accompli. What was the point of campaigning before?

The deadline for importation was the 30th September 2010. Imagine my anger when two full lorries turned into the site in front of me on October 1st. Having discussed my anger and immense frustration with members of the Mineral and Waste team I asked for a breach of condition notice to be served on the applicant for breaking conditions yet again. I have been told that this is not going to be enforced.

What then is the point of having planning conditions? What are you doing at the Council and why are you wasting more of our money having planning meetings at all? Why do you ask for any objections, wasting our time, if you are going to ignore them?

The Applicant has breached conditions on a regular basis:

- When the work started in 2005, lorries would regularly wake us up when they were on site as early as 5.00 a.m. This was when my youngest son was taking his A level exams.
- Trees have been removed that should have remained to protect the habitat of the barn owls as stated in the conditions. None have been seen since.
- External lighting was erected without permission.
- There has been considerable dust pollution with little evidence of dusting down. Now I am told that if they damp down too much there are more problems with mud on the road, so it would seem that we have to opt for the lesser of two evils, whichever that may be.
- Vehicles constantly drive faster than the 10mph permitted on the site which causes a considerable nuisance as the empty lorries bounce over the rough ground creating a constant banging noise.
- Someone was living on the site, again without permission.
- Now there is importation of material after the stated 30th September deadline.

What fines or penalties does the applicant Mr. Moore get for breaching conditions? None.

Do I get any compensation for what I have to endure:

- Not being able to use my conservatory or enjoy my garden because the noise is a constant nuisance? NO!
- Looking out on an eyesore from my house and garden. A raised up pile of debris that I have been told is topsoil that will eventually be distributed over the site but is currently over the permitted height and levels for the site. It has been there since the beginning of March and now if the application is successful could be there for some considerable time, until the end of the project. NO!
- My car gets covered in the filth on the A 603 on a regular basis. NO!
- My conservatory and windows need to be cleaned more regularly because of the red dust that comes from the site. NO!

Are you going to pay for all the telephone calls and all of my time that I have spent trying to get you to do your job. NO!

Whenever I complain about the mud on the road, the Waste and Mineral Team often responds that the Highways Agency doesn't consider the A603 any worse than the other roads in Bedfordshire. We very occasionally see a cleaning vehicle.

The Minerals and Waste Team do go on site between normal visits usually after a concern that I have raised. They go to check the speed of the lorries on site in high visibility vests, so, surprise, surprise, all the lorries slow down for the hour or so they are being checked but as soon as the Council members leave, they return to their normal speeds and we continue to have the banging and rumbling noises that result.

I have researched into the time it takes to build a golf course. The construction of Lower Stondon Golf Course in Bedfordshire, a 9 hole golf course, commenced in August 1991 and opened for play in July 1992; a period of approximately 12 months. This was an unusually fast turnaround but it was achieved. If this site ever becomes a golf course, (I understand there is no obligation for Mr. Moore to do so and there is no current need for any more golf courses as present courses are desperately seeking members), it will have taken over 5 years to complete and probably several more if the application is successful. I think that the villagers of Cople would have had very serious concerns if the original application for a golf course had been an honest one and admitted it was actually a

waste management site. There would have been very strong objection to the application. The original permission granted by Bedford Borough Council states:

“This planning permission authorises the engineering works and landscape construction necessary for the creation of a golf course. IT DOES NOT PURPORT TO CONSTITUTE A WASTE IMPORTATION LICENCE”.

What is it then? It certainly appears to be a licence to import waste. There is no golf course after 5 years and now it would seem you are going to allow further importation of waste materials.

Condition 19 states:

“ the permission hereby granted shall authorise the landfill operation with inert fill and topsoil for a period of 3 years only. Reason: for the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the filling works are completed in a REASONABLE TIMESCALE and to retain control over the operation in view of its proximity to residential properties”.

From where I stand you have no control over the operation. Mr. Moore does exactly what he likes to suit himself. You don't appear to have the authority to stop him from breaking any of the conditions and you certainly don't have the means to punish him when he does. So he just keeps doing it.

Neither of the above statements have been met. Again, why do we pay councillors to make decisions supposedly on our behalf? We are certainly not benefitting from them. It seems the only person gaining is the applicant who is being granted a further licence to make money at our expense. I understand that he was exempt from paying a landfill tax because he was creating a recreational facility. If no golf course appears will he have to pay that back?

On a final note, when I spoke at the Council Planning Meeting on January 24th 2008, two members of that committee said that having visited the site the previous day they felt it was a complete disgrace. One stated that in the words of Laurel and Hardy “ that's another fine mess” and suggested the villagers of Cople should be compensated. The lawyer then waved his hand and said that wouldn't happen.

I cannot believe that you are going to allow this fiasco to continue. Even when the importation stops we will have further disruption and noise as the project is hopefully finished to some level of acceptability. As residents we have our concerns that the project will be abandoned and left as the eyesore it is now. You have an obligation to see this project result in something that is aesthetically pleasing. It is not my fault, nor the villagers of Cople, that the economic situation has prevented the applicant from finishing this project in the permitted time. He has other sites and should have completed one site with the available material. Why should I have my life disrupted and my quality of life ruined by one greedy applicant?

I feel strongly that you should force the applicant to finish off the site at its present height, and not allow him to disrupt our lives for a further significant period of time. After all, in my opinion, it would appear the Council has been negligent in its job so far.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Boardman (MRS)