

Reporting to Planning Committee Meeting to be held on: 4th June 2015	Electoral Ward Affected
Report submitted by: Director of Development	
Application Number: 06/2015/0382	

1 Summary

1.1 Land West, North and East of Roseacre Wood and between Roseacre Road, Roseacre and Inskip Road, Wharles Preston

Construction and operation of a site for drilling up to four exploratory wells, hydraulic fracturing of the wells, testing for hydrocarbons, abandonment of the wells and restoration, including provision of access roads and improvement of accesses onto the highway, security fencing, lighting and other uses ancillary to the exploration activities, including the construction of a pipeline and a connection to the gas grid network and associated infrastructure (Article 16 consultation)

Type CM
Applicant Lancashire County Council
Agent Lancashire County Council
Case Officer JST

Parish

2 Decision recommended

OBJECT

2.1 Reason for recommendation

Objections are raised on the basis that the proposed development includes alternative routing proposals for HGV construction traffic, one of which involves inbound traffic to the development site using a route from the A6 via Broughton Crossroads and the B5269 through the parish of Woodplumpton. This route is likely to have potentially severe adverse effects on the operation of the highway network in terms of traffic disruption and highway safety and would not improve the high levels of air pollution in the Broughton Air Quality Management Area.

3 Information

This application has been submitted to Lancashire County Council as it relates to minerals development. The City Council has been asked to provide comments on the application. This matter would normally be determined under delegated powers but the Director of Development considers that, due to the nature of the proposals, it should be referred to the

Committee for decision.

3.1 **Location**

The application site is in the middle of Fylde, approximately half way between Blackpool and Preston, approximately 400 metres southeast of the village of Roseacre and 800m north-west of the village of Wharles. The site is currently in agricultural use, primarily for dairy cattle and is classified as grade 3a (good) and grade 3b (moderate) quality agricultural land. The site is approximately 6.54ha, including approximately 1.9ha for the exploration site, 2.2ha for access works through the DHFCS site (The Ministry of Defence facility, Defence High Frequency Communication Service site, Inskip, located approximately 35m to the east of the surface works site entrance at Roseacre Road) and 2.44ha for an extended flow test pipeline and gas grid connection. There is an area of woodland (Roseacre Wood) adjacent to the access track between Roseacre Road and the exploration site.

The maximum extent of the below ground works (for vertical and horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing) would extend to a total area of 562ha in a quadrant shape. The majority of the surface area above the underground works is currently in agricultural use but also includes sections of roads, the village of Roseacre and residential/commercial properties including those at White Carr Farm, South Greenhills, North Greenhills and Elswick Leys.

3.2 **Proposal**

This application relates to drilling and exploration works. Proposals for related monitoring work are the subject of a separate application which is also being dealt with by the County Council (PCC ref: 06/2014/0466, LCC ref: 2014/0102). The City Council has also been consulted on that application and the report relating to the City Council's response appears elsewhere on this agenda.

The proposed development is for the exploration and analysis of shale gas reservoirs within the Bowland Shale formation in the Fylde district of Lancashire. The shale gas (also called methane gas or natural gas) is known to be distributed within the shale rock.

Planning permission is sought for a six year period. A well pad would be constructed and wells would be drilled into the shale rock. A process called hydraulic fracturing would then be used to help the gas flow out of the rock by pumping water and other materials into the shale to dislodge the gas. The gas then flows back to the surface within the flow back fluid. The proposed development would explore the potential flow rate of the gas in order to establish whether the gas can be extracted and if it would be economically viable to do so. Following exploratory activities the site would be abandoned and restored unless the site is found to be economically viable, in which case a planning application would be submitted for production works before the site is decommissioned.

An Environmental Statement (ES) has been prepared in respect of both this application and the associated application LCC/2014/0102 for monitoring stations. The ES presents an overview of the proposal in respect of the sources of natural gas, the exploration and appraisal of the Bowland Shale, provides details of the site locations, the context, geology, hydrogeology and hydrology, a development summary, sequencing of activities, surface and below ground works, monitoring arrays, construction of the well pad and access track, well design, fracturing, flow testing, extended flow testing, decommissioning and

restoration. The ES sets out the scheme alternatives and why the sites for drilling were selected which principally relate to interpretation of geological information gleaned from a 3D geological survey demonstrating the makeup of the geology and the most attractive areas of geology to undertake further investigations. This selection process along with the direction of drilling has determined the nature and location of the proposed monitoring array. The ES undertakes an assessment of the proposed drilling site and array in respect of a number of subject areas.

Access proposals as submitted initially and detailed in the ES involved the use of a two-way route northwards to the application site from the A583. However, following concerns about the initial proposals including concerns about access, further information was submitted under Regulation 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011. This additional information includes proposals for alternative HGV access via Broughton and along the B5269 through Woodplumpton to the site.

3.3 **Supporting information from applicants**

Full details including an Environmental Statement were submitted to Lancashire County Council. The Environmental Statement provides a full description and assessment of the following:

- The application site and surroundings
- A description of the proposed development
- Scheme alternatives
- Air quality
- Archaeology and cultural heritage
- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Community and socio economics
- Ecology
- Hydrogeology and ground gas
- Induced seismicity
- Land Use
- Landscape and visual amenity
- Lighting
- Noise
- Resources and waste
- Transport
- Water resources
- Public health

3.4 **Relevant planning history**

None relevant

3.5 **Planning Policy Framework**

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that if regard is to be had to the Development Plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Development plan comprises:

Central Lancashire Core Strategy

Policy 3 Travel

Policy 30 Air Quality

Adopted Preston Local Plan (APLP)

Policy T19 General Transport Considerations

Other Material Considerations

Preston Publication Local Plan (PPLP)

Policy ST2 General Transport Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

3.6 **Consultation responses**

As this is a 'county matter' consultations were carried out directly by Lancashire County Council.

The following comments to the County Council should be noted.

Woodplumpton Parish Council: following receipt of further information under Regulation 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 the Parish Council submitted representations to the County on this application and application 06/2014/0466 (LCC/2014/0102) which is reported separately on this agenda. The main thrust of their objection relates to the use of the B5269 through Woodplumpton from Broughton for HGV access to the application site. Their comments are summarised as follows:

- Potential clashes between the construction HGVs and buses, and agricultural vehicles such as tractors and milk tankers that use the route;
- Impacts on cyclists using the Guild Wheel;
- The lack of alternative diversion routes should any part of the route be damaged, as has happened for instance with damage to the canal bridge;
- Concerns about the urbanising effects of the suggested introduction of traffic lights.
- Added potential for damage to grass verges along stretches of the route where there are no pavements;
- Added air pollution at Broughton Crossroads which is part of an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA);
- The applications are premature owing to unanswered issues relating to fracking including concerns from the World Health Organisation;
- The location is within a rural area with very limited infrastructure in place to accommodate the transportation of materials; and
- The disposal and treatment of waste water, and that it [the Parish Council] has a duty to represent the views of residents and act as custodians to protect the rural area for future generations.

Broughton Parish Council: submitted an objection to the County following the Regulation 22 submission with concerns summarised as follows:

- 98% of Broughton residents are impacted upon if the route is allowed.

- Air Quality already in the Red Zone will deteriorate further.
- There are three educational establishments – adjacent to or immediately close by the route – within 0.10Km.
- There is sheltered accommodation with 46 units adjacent to the route.
- The A6 northbound is already up to capacity for most of the working day.
- Broughton Crossroads already recognised as a location of severe traffic congestion. The layout is not fit for purpose regarding increased HGV activity. Narrow footpaths in the area exacerbate the situation.
- B5269 a dangerous road with three identified challenges – Sandygate Lane Bend, Lack of Width, Railway Bridge.
- B5269 – Speeding Black Spot – Spids [Speed Indicator Devices] installed.

County Highways: There are concerns regarding all the potential routes considered in the initial Environmental Statement and in the Traffic Management Plan Addendum dated 13th January 2015, which includes the alternative routing strategy with inbound traffic via Broughton and the B5269/Woodplumpton Lane and outbound traffic southward from the site to the A583 (along roads outside the Preston City Council area). Specific concerns about the inbound Broughton/B5269/Woodplumpton Lane route include traffic flows, impacts on vulnerable road users, cyclists, pedestrians, equestrians, accidents and safety. Concerns are also raised about the layout around the site itself. County Highways concludes that the latest information does not overcome concerns previously raised. This information is limited and is not in line with that previously discussed with the applicant. The measures described do not provide any certainty that a comprehensive package can or will be delivered that also ensures that the network can be safely managed without detriment to existing users during the whole project. It is still considered that the increase in traffic, particularly HGV movements would be severe, there would be a material impact on existing road users, particularly vulnerable road users and overall highway safety of which the potential is considered severe and therefore it is not possible to support this application.

Environmental Health – Nitrogen Dioxide levels within Broughton are some of the highest in Preston. The ES does not mention the AQMA in Broughton and appears to dismiss any potential impacts on Air Quality saying that “Given the low background concentrations reported in the ES along with the small increase in movements, which is well below a level that would be expected to cause a significant air quality impact it is concluded the revised access routing will not have a significant impact upon air quality.” Any increases in HGV movement will not improve the Air Quality at Broughton and therefore it would appear unreasonable to permit extra HGV movements through this area. Environmental Health therefore objects to the proposed inbound route through the Broughton AQMA.

In addition to the above an email was received by Preston City Council from a member of the public regarding the ‘Fracking Planning Application’ and querying the need for the development given falling wholesale gas prices and the abandonment of some North Sea oil rigs.

3.7 **The Main Planning Issues**

The main issues are: impact on highway safety and air pollution (in so far as the proposals affect the interests of planning for Preston City Council)

3.8 **Analysis**

Impact on highway safety

APLP Policy T19 and PPLP Policy ST2 require development proposals to demonstrate that efficient and convenient movement of all highway users, and corridors which could be developed as future transport routes, are not prejudiced; existing pedestrian, cycle and equestrian routes are protected and extended; the needs of disabled people are fully provided for; appropriate provision is made for vehicular access, off-street servicing, vehicle parking and public transport services; and that measures are included for road safety and to facilitate access on foot and by bicycle.

Core Strategy Policy 2 states that the local planning authority will work with infrastructure providers to establish works that will arise from or be made worse by development proposals. It further states that the local planning authority will set broad priorities on the provision of infrastructure to ensure that it is delivered in line with future growth. Core Strategy Policy 3 outlines a number of measures which are considered to constitute the best approach to planning for travel. These include reducing the need to travel, improving pedestrian facilities, improving opportunities for cycling, improving public transport, enabling travellers to change their mode of travel on trips, encouraging car sharing, managing car use and improving the road network.

Paragraph 32 of the Framework states that development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.

The Traffic Management Plan Addendum submitted by the applicants in January 2015 includes a proposal for a one-way access route for construction traffic servicing the construction of the development. The inbound route involves access for traffic from the motorway along the A6 to Broughton and then via the B5269/Woodplumpton Lane to the site with up to 25 HGVs per day travelling one way along this inbound route. Outbound the HGV traffic would leave the site southwards joining the strategic road network at the A583 using roads outside the district boundary of Preston (but still of concern to County Highways in terms of the use of local rural roads). County Highways note the temporary nature of the works proposed and yet identify approximately 25 points of concerns along the inbound route, such as junctions with other roads (i.e. Sandygate Lane, Moorside Lane, Whittle Hill and Catforth Road), the rail bridge over the West Coast Main Line, Bell Fold Bridge over Lancaster Canal and the accesses to properties (i.e. Broughton Business and Enterprise College, Blackpool Farm and Rolling Pin Farm).

As well as concerns about specific locations along the route County Highways are concerned about the accuracy of the applicant's existing and proposed traffic figures. It is noted that the applicants would commit to a maximum of 25 HGVs per day which could be enforced through a planning condition but concerns remain in terms of both the daily total and the hourly flows that would still result in conflicts or compromises on the surrounding network. Further concerns are also expressed about impacts on vulnerable road users, cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians and on the potential for more accidents.

While the development proposals mainly affect an area well away from the City boundary the consequences of routeing HGV construction traffic from the A6 via Broughton and the B5269/Woodplumpton Lane would have unacceptable adverse impacts. The applicant has failed to demonstrate that the development proposals would not prejudice the safe, efficient and convenient movement of all highway users and corridors contrary to APLP Policy T19 and PPLP Policy ST2, Core Strategy Policies 2 and 3 and the Framework.

Air Quality

Core Strategy Policy 30 seeks overall improvements in air quality. Paragraph 124 of the Framework requires that planning decisions should ensure that any new development in Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) is consistent with the local air quality action plan. There is a declared AQMA at Broughton Crossroads which was designated in May 2012. An air quality report is included with the application details but this does not address issues relating to the proposed HGV route through Broughton and along the B5269. Environmental Health consider that any increases in HGV movement would not improve the Air Quality at Broughton and therefore object to this proposal. It would therefore conflict with the aims of Core Strategy Policy 30 and the Framework.

3.9 Value Added to the Development

This is a 'county matter' on which the City Council's views are requested.

3.10 Conclusions

While the development proposals mainly affect an area well away from the City boundary the consequences of routing HGV construction traffic from the A6 via Broughton and the B5269 would have unacceptable adverse traffic and air pollution impacts conflicting with the requirements of APLP Policy T19 and PPLP Policy ST2, Core Strategy Policies 2, 3 and 30 and the Framework. On that basis the application cannot be supported.

3.11 Recommendation

Object.