

May 2014 Lynchmere Parish Council response to Celtique – additional information

Lynchmere Parish Council has considered the further information offered by the Applicant. None of it in any way answers the issues we raised in our first response. The following should therefore be read in addition to our initial objections.

Traffic

The additional information offered by the applicant is inadequate, misleading and does not address all the issues raised in the SDNP request for further information. In particular;

1. The swept path analysis for access to the site shows clearly that HGV access from the east is only possible by moving onto the opposite carriageway before making the turn. This poses an unacceptable hazard to oncoming traffic, especially motor cycles. It will also be a hazard to vehicles moving west which will either have to wait on the westbound carriageway until lorries have made the turn from the opposite (wrong) carriageway back across the westbound carriageway way or remain moving on the westbound carriageway thereby 'overtaking' the lorries and forcing them to wait on the opposite carriageway before making the turn. This can only cause confusion and danger to all road users.
2. At approximately 4.5 M wide, most of the access track to the site is too narrow for two lorries to pass (a minimum of 5.5 M is required for this, and more for those lorries with an overhang). The site itself has little space for lorries to wait while others use the access track. Given that HGV movements are to be within working hours and that during the construction period alone there may be up to 40 **two way** (ie up to 80 trips) movements daily, and given the time lorries will need to pass along the access track in and out of the site, unloading in between, no amount of good management could avoid the inevitable queue of lorries which will be on the road outside the site waiting to get in.
3. There is no swept path analysis for the other narrow bends on Vann Road, such as the approach to the bridge.
4. The traffic counts provided by Axiom Traffic Limited in the ES Addendum, which give separate counts for LGVs and HGVs shows how misleading the original figures given in the ES are because all vehicles over 1.5 tons were included in the HGV tally. HGVs in fact make up a very small percentage of existing traffic on Vann Road and the % rise which this development would cause is significantly over the 30% mark. We consider that the traffic counts for the A286 should also have been revised in this way.
5. The applicant shows access visibility splays and a widened site access in the ES Addendum without any evidence to show that these are within the Applicant's power to deliver.
6. The Applicant has still not given any information about the location of any disposal or treatment sites for waste, including toxic waste, emanating from the proposed activity. This denies the settlements through which this waste will be transported the opportunity to consider and possibly object to this Application.
7. The information supplied by the Applicant on the capacity of the Vann Road bridge to carry the traffic associated with this proposal is inadequate because it considers only six 50 ton vehicle movements, and not the cumulative effect of weeks of 20 ton construction vehicles passing over it.

A Traffic Management Plan might reduce the hazards, but because of the volume of extra traffic this proposal would generate a Plan could not prevent significant build up of traffic and long delays.

We consider that, even as a temporary disruption, all the above constitute a serious reduction of amenity for the more than 500 households living on and adjacent to Vann Road, for all the residents of Fernhurst and for the wider community. Vann Road is a country lane unsuited to such intensive traffic which would damage its integrity and rural character.

Alternative site Assessment

The Applicant has largely refused to address the request for further information about potential sites outside the National Park. We consider this to be a fundamental failing. We have already pointed out in our first response that there is no legal basis for limiting the alternative site assessment in such a way. Furthermore, the Applicant's own submitted information indicates that similar geology exists outside the boundary of the National Park (eg para 7.7 of the Planning Statement 'The main sources for hydrocarbons in West Sussex ... extend under the whole County'). There should therefore have been assessments made of sites closer to A roads and away from villages, homes and watercourses. We consider the Applicant's discussion of drilling laterally from outside the Park to be pure obfuscation of the fact that the site assessment has been determined by landowner compliance and not by the environmental and social suitability of the site. In our view the Applicant did not initially satisfy the requirement for an Alternative Site Assessment, the Addendum offers no further useful information and does not properly answer the SDNP request for it.

How Temporary is the Application

The Applicant stresses that this is an application for exploration which is 'temporary', and that the withdrawal of the proposal for a horizontal borehole shortens the period of operations. Thus, the Applicant argues, any diminution of amenity or environmentally negative aspect of the exploration will only be temporary. If we are to consider this as a stand alone application ie an exploration and no more, then consideration of 'national need' or of contributing to the national energy supply, which forms so great a part of the Applicant's case for this proposal, **is irrelevant** because the activity for which permission is applied for will not in itself make any contribution to either. The potential for damage to the environment and human health, in particular from water, air and land pollution, which is inherent in any such exploration however temporary or carefully regulated is not temporary or short term. The effects of chemical waste, drill cuttings, or contaminated water spills as well as air pollution from diesel engines, gas flaring or escape would take significantly more time to correct, if indeed it were possible to do so fully ('it may not be possible fully to restore sites in sensitive areas following well completion or abandonment' - Report to the European Commission 2012) . In our view therefore the balance to be drawn here between extending our knowledge about the geology and hydrocarbons which may exist and the attendant risk in finding this out falls clearly on the side of caution and protecting the environment.

Withdrawal of the potential horizontal drill

The applicant has apparently removed the potential horizontal drill from this application, thereby reducing slightly the time required for the activity proposed, and avoiding the need

for landowner permissions. However, no explanation is offered by the Applicant for this. Has the understanding of the geology changed so that the Applicant knows that no horizontal drill will be required to explore the hydrocarbons present? There is no mention of this in the further information. Or does the Applicant in fact think that a horizontal drill will be required (see the recent comment by the Celtique CEO about the Fernhurst application 'should this data prove positive we may wish to explore these formations further which could include the use of hydraulic fracturing on this site' and even in para 9.57 of the Revised Planning Statement reference to 'the lateral contingent'), and that a separate application for it later will be easier to achieve once the industrial infrastructure for it is already in place? Or that no such permission will be applied for because that activity may be covered by permissions sought from DECC, the Environment Agency and the Health and Safety Executive without the need for further planning permission. The Applicant has wholly failed to answer the questions posed in the request for further information on p2 letter 12th march 2014. In our view the lack of clarity by the Applicant on this point goes to the bona fides of the application.

ES Addendum - further environmental information

We consider this to be wholly inadequate and misleading. For example, the calculations on air quality compares the likely increased CO2 emissions at the application site with existing emissions not at that site but over the whole of the Chichester area (ES Addendum 15.92). A great play is made of giving the SDNP 15 bat boxes on restoration. An average bat box costs £50 to buy and far less to produce - this is just flannelling on Celtique's part. The Applicant has limited consideration of a number of environmental hazards on the basis that these are not planning matters but fall within the purview of other statutory agencies from whom permissions will be sought in due course. We do not agree with this narrow interpretation. We note that the SDNP in the request for further information (letter 12 March 2014 p.2 'Pollution Prevention') also considered these matters should be determined in advance. The inherent risks associated with any oil or gas exploration directly affect the question of appropriate land use; the consequences of long term contamination must be considered initially, not merely as part of the process later. We find it astonishingly arrogant that the Applicant can say ' ...as such there will be [no] long term irreversible adverse effects' (Revised Planning Statement para 10.7a) or that '... there would be no ongoing risk to groundwater' (para10.7u). Well casings can and do fail after restoration and abandonment. In this regard it should be noted that in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland there is to be no unconventional oil or gas exploration or extraction until the release of a two year study by the Environmental Protection Agency. Furthermore the regulatory framework which was to have been put in place following the initial report by the BGS has yet to be developed and in the absence of a coherent combined strategy between all the statutory agencies involved no reliance should be put on them in determining appropriate land use. The determining factor should be the clear overarching policy developed by the planning authority. In this case that policy is the SDNP Vision and its focus on conservation and enhancement. Within this, growth, development and investment can of course be accommodated, but this application is neither appropriate in scale or in form (Revised Planning Statement para 12.7) nor is it capable of integration into the landscape. Nor has the Applicant fully answered the request for further information.

Geology and risk of water contamination

Celtique claims that the geology of the Weald is “well understood”. In their revised planning statement they claim that at Fernhurst “there are no proximal major faults or subsurface structures that could lead to complications during drilling, tremors or fluid leakage in the area”. However they fail to state whether there is any evidence for such a bold statement or indicate if 3D seismic surveys on or around the actual site have already been done. Further evidence is needed to indicate the significance of vertical fault lines in the shale rock around this location as was strongly recommended in Professor Smythe’s report which we sent as part of our original response. The British Geological Survey has recently admitted the geology of the Weald *is difficult* and state there is unlikely to be any shale gas. They believe there may be up to 4.4 billion barrels of shale oil but only a fraction of about 220 million barrels could be extracted. This would be a very small amount of oil for the number of wells which may be required, the damage that could be caused and the cost of clearing it up and they urge caution particularly in drilling in environmentally sensitive areas such as National Parks. It seems that the experts have difficulty in agreeing the underlying geology, and we are not persuaded that the risks posed by drilling into this geology are in the least 'well understood'. We anticipate a further report from Professor Smythe commenting on the further information which we will submit in due course. Celtique now state they will be using fresh water and bentonite, as the drilling mud, to a depth of approximately 4000ft, but it is not clear whether or not they will add any chemicals to the oil based mud used to drill below that (ES Addendum Appendix 11.4A). There is concern about what might happen if chemicals either added to the mud or naturally occurring deep within the shale resulted in toxic fluid being formed. It could be environmentally damaging should any contaminated fluids flow back to the surface or an accidental spillage occur. Although Celtique has outlined some mitigation measures to try and prevent this there is no indication of how they would actually deal with contamination on or outside the site and who would be legally responsible for clearing any pollution caused.

There is still uncertainty about whether the fresh water they will be using is going to come direct from the mains or be trucked in. The latter would make a significant difference to the overall traffic movements and the number of HGV vehicles going to and from the site. There is also no statement about how much waste water will be trucked out, where any treatment disposal plant will be and how it would cope in dealing with any toxic fluids from the drilling process. In their revised planning statement Celtique states some waste will be recycled and the rest could be composted at a commercial disposal site and then used in commercial landscaping projects. What safeguards would there be to make sure the contaminants are fully removed?

If Celtique are taking a substantial amount of water direct from the mains this could have a detrimental impact on its quality and flow which could affect local residents and businesses.

Landscape character

We strongly dispute Celtique’s assertion (ES Addendum para 8.80a) that this site is not a diverse and inspirational landscape and cannot be regarded as a tranquil and unspoilt place. In our view it successfully blends residential, farming, light industrial and recreational use in an historic setting, retaining its special landscape value. This is why it was included within the boundaries of the Park when other parts of our Parish were not. Celtique’s proposals will destroy this balance; how can this application sit with the English National Parks and the

Broads Vision and Circular 2010 - by 2030 the communities of the Parks 'are known for being pivotal in the transformation to a low carbon society' or the purposes of the SDNP to conserve and enhance, or Policy RE4 of the PMP.

We again urge members of the SDNP Planning Committee to take up our offer of a guided tour of the application site and its environs, to see its quality for themselves.

In conclusion, we remain opposed to this application for the reasons above and those in our first response.