

From: 
Subject: Whistleblowing - Central and Eastern Berkshire - Joint Minerals & Waste Plan
Date: 28 August 2018 at 06:19
To: confidential.whistleblowing@wokingham.gov.uk

Dear Sirs,

I am writing to you as I believe that Wokingham Borough Council and its officers are intentionally attempting to abuse their power, subvert current consultations and conceal information relevant to the Joint Waste & Minerals Plan, currently at consultation stage.

Background

As you may be aware, the Central and Eastern Berkshire - Joint Minerals & Waste Plan is currently meant to be within a consultation period.

This plan is being coordinated by Hampshire Council for Bracknell Forest Council, Reading Borough Council, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Council and Wokingham Borough Council.

Residents were recently advised, at a Public Meeting (Tuesday 24th July 2018), that consultation had been ongoing since 2017

The Hampshire Council website

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/landplanningandenvironment/berksconsult/berksconsult-io> states the first stage in plan-preparation was the 'Issues and Options' Consultation, conducted in Summer 2017.

However residents and owners of nearby potentially impacted properties had not been consulted until the rumours of the proposed meeting on 24th July 2018 started to circulate (mid July 2018)

Residents in attendance were advised, at the 24th July 2018 meeting, that the Draft Plan Consultation would run for ten weeks, beginning 6 August 2018 and ending 12 October 2018.

Timeline

16th July 2018 - I requested copies of extant, but aged, Planning Consents relating to Star Works; a site proposed by Wokingham Borough Council to be included as a new Waste Facility in the above Plan.

A Decision Notice was sent to me on the same day, however this was found to be only a Condition Discharge, not the original permission.

18th July 2018 - The Planning Inspectorate's Appeal document was issued to me, but this excluded the Plans and further details relating to the site.

27th July 2018 - I was contacted by Wokingham Borough Council's Statutory Services Administration (Planning) Team to inform me that they have found the requested original box files and that they were being put aside for me to access the pertinent documents. As such, I arranged to visit the Council offices, when I returned from a business trip abroad, to copy any relevant documents.

7th August 2018 - I contacted Wokingham Borough Council to confirm my forthcoming visit as 10th August 2018 and to request additional documents that were not available online.

9th August 2018 - I was contacted by Wokingham Borough Council to advise that

On 7 August 2018 - I was contacted by Wokingham Borough Council to advise that "despite the boxes having been clearly labelled ready for my (your) visit" they had been removed and possibly destroyed. Extremely suspicious behaviour that documents retained for 24 years, relating to a current Proposed Plan and an extant Permission be destroyed one day prior to my visit to view said files.

10th August 2018 - I contacted both Manjeet Gill and Josie Wragg of Wokingham Borough Council to alert them to this issue and urge them to investigate / address the suspicious disappearance of documents critical to the current consultation (see attached emails).

15th August 2018 - I received a response from Josie Wragg attempting to explain how such important documents could have been removed, destroyed, or made unavailable. In turn I responded, providing further information and requesting documents, in line with Wokingham Borough Council's legal obligations and duty of care. I also requested confirmation of receipt of two Planning Enforcement notifications logged online, to which there had been no acknowledgement.

16th August 2018 - Josie Wragg delegated tasks to Marcia Head - Service Manager, Wokingham Borough Council. A further copy of the The Planning Inspectorate's Appeal document was issued to me, but again this excluded the Plans and further details relating to the site.

17th August 2018 - I contacted Marcia Head to highlight that the document provided did not address my original request and confirming the exact details required for action. I received a response with dates and times of Marcia's response, but no further documentation to address my original enquiry. At this time I stated that I would progress further in 7 days had no response been forthcoming.

22nd August 2018- A response was received from Marcia Head stating turnaround times of 10 working days for enquiries, reporting that a response would be forthcoming Monday 3rd September 2018 (One day prior to the next Public Consultation Meeting, assuming documentation is indeed forthcoming). A response which I found and still find both incorrect and objectionable. Wilful attempts to subvert, delay and obstruct are not appreciated and I urged her to comply with my requests and those of Wokingham Borough Council's Management, the elected officers / public servants. I copied both Manjeet Gill and Josie Wragg on my response to Marcia Head, expecting a response by Friday 24th August 2018.

24th August 2018 - Having received no response from Wokingham Borough Council by midday, I contacted Josie Wragg on her direct line. I was informed Josie was not at her desk but either Josie Wragg, or Marcia Head would ring me back. No return call was received, nor was any documentation / plans forthcoming.

Issues

1. In spite of a duty of care and obligation to provide details relating to extant and current Planning Permissions, no such documentation / plans have been provided since the initial acknowledge request of 16th July 2018. Wokingham Borough Council's attempts to subvert, delay and obstruct are not appreciated and they should have complied with my requests. I consider their latest delaying tactics and lack of contact a further attempt to delay disclosure. As Josie Wragg stated "Wokingham Borough Council are required to keep a copy of planning application decision notices and the approved or refused plans", so this should not have been an issue.
2. Considering the lack of disclosure by Wokingham Borough Council, this has impacted both the first Public Consultation Meeting and will also impact the forthcoming Public Consultation Meeting to be held in Knowl Hill on 4th September 2018. As such, the

Public Consultation being coordinated by Hampshire Council for Bracknell Forest Council, Reading Borough Council, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Council and Wokingham Borough Council is flawed and any proposed further use of Star Works, Knowl Hill as a Waste Facility should be thrown out due to this deliberate block on disclosure of information.

3. As documentation relating to the currently approved restoration of the Star Works site is being deliberately withheld, delayed and destroyed any Consultation will not be fair and balanced, as the agreed restoration scheme; "restoration to forestry and grassland open for public recreation", as approved by the Planning Inspectorate and the Secretary of State, being nearly complete is being ignored by Wokingham Borough Council in favour of continued industrial use, unchecked and unmonitored by their officers.

Required Actions

1. Please can you address these issues, as it points to corruption at the heart of Wokingham Borough Council, it's officer and staff
2. It is clear that Hampshire Council has not been fully and openly briefed on the sites proposed by Wokingham Borough Council within the Central and Eastern Berkshire - Joint Minerals & Waste Plan, as the documentation relating to the ongoing Restoration and closure of one of the now proposed new sites, Star Works, has been removed and destroyed from the Council's documents archive.
3. Subsequently, it shows that the inclusion of Star Works as a Waste Facility in the Central and Eastern Berkshire - Joint Minerals & Waste Plan is flawed and it should be removed from the Plan to remove all issues relating to possible wrongdoing and corruption within Wokingham Borough Council.

Further Information

The closure of the Grundon site has been awaited for many years by many people, as can be seen by correspondence to Wokingham Borough Council from the now Prime Minister.

I would urge you to act now to prevent further escalation, as this will require rapid escalation considering the short consultation period of 10 weeks and the over 4 week delay incurred by Wokingham Borough Council to date.

Obviously Hampshire Council and all other Councils involved in the Plan need to be advised of Wokingham Borough Council's believed wrongdoings, to allow them to consider their further actions based upon this new information.

Thus, I look forward to your prompt acknowledgement, response and actions.

Yours Sincerely

P.S. - Currently there are a number of Planning Infringements relating to Star Works, reported to Wokingham Borough Council Planning Enforcement, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Planning Enforcement, VOSA Environmental and the Environment Agency, all with potential impact on future operations within close proximity to residential properties.



Documentation
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RE_ Star Works
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Theresa May
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