

## **ITEM 21 QUESTIONS TO MEMBER CHAMPIONS AND REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

**Councillor Karen Walton who represents the Council on the Springfields Fuels Limited - Site Stakeholder Group has received a questions from Councillor Keith Martin as follows:**

“Could you please update the Council on your last meeting at the Springfields Fuels Ltd Site Stakeholder Group meeting in October, particularly in relation to Operation Heron?”

**Councillor Karen Walton’s response is as follows:**

Thank you very much for your question regarding the Springfield Site Stakeholder Group Meeting which took place on the 4<sup>th</sup> October. As you are probably aware Springfields Fuels Limited is a UK Nuclear Licensed Site and COMAH (holds certain chemicals which requires registration by the Health and Safety Executive) establishment situated on the outskirts of Preston just north of the Ribble Estuary. The plant is directly adjacent to SRBC as the crow flies and as such the Council is part of the Multi Agency Response arrangements to address any major incident at the premises.

The principal activity on site is the production of fuel for civil nuclear reactors involving the processing of highly toxic Uranium Fluoride (UF<sub>6</sub>) to manufacture nuclear fuel products. Springfield’s is required to comply with the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2001 (REPPPIR) and the Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) 2015 Regulations and Lancashire County Council are responsible for producing and exercising an off-site plan for the site every 3 years. Testing of the Springfields REPPPIR/COMAH Off Site Plan called Exercise Heron 7 took place on the 03rd October and three officers from South Ribble

Borough Council were in attendance. The full debrief meeting of the exercise will take place on the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2018 and will be attended by our Emergency Planning Officer Andy Armstrong. A full report will then be produced and if this report is made available to the public we can forward a copy.

**Councillor David Bird who represents the Council on the Campaign to Protect Rural England - Lancashire Branch received the following questions from Councillor Keith Martin as follows:**

**Question 1:**

**“CPRE have raised concerns that the Government’s plan to Fast Track applications for Shale Gas Exploration. They say this removes the power from Planning Authorities to fully investigate any Shale Gas application, and could be seen that the Government is favouring some energy projects and not others by choosing different paths via localism, which should put residents at the heart of decisions.**

**Was this discussed at a Lancashire level, and if so, what were the comments and thoughts of the Lancashire Branch?”**

**Councillor David Bird’s response is as follows:**

I can confirm that the Lancashire branch of CPRE have discussed the issue of fracking a number of times over the past few years and were in fact heavily involved in the original planning application for fracking at Preston New Road and Roseacre sites

They made strong representations as they attempted to ensure that a strong regulatory and monitoring regime was adopted. Earlier this year, the Government announced two proposals against which a coalition of environmental groups, including the CPRE, spoke out.

The first was that non-hydraulic shale gas exploration would be treated as 'permitted development' – meaning that fracking companies would no longer be required to apply for planning permission to begin exploratory drilling.

The second was to classify fracking as part of the 'Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects' regime – this would take local councils out of the decision making process for fracking proposals and the decision for which would be handed over to national Government.

The following is a statement from Crispin Truman, Chief Executive Officer at the Campaign to Protect Rural England, and is fully supported by the Lancashire branch.

*“We have a Government policy full of contradictions. It makes ‘commitments’ to cut carbon emissions, to conserve and enhance the beauty of our natural environment and to champion localism. Yet they attempt to impose on us a new industry that extracts carbon-emitting fossil fuels, that will industrialise the countryside against the wishes of local communities and deny those same communities the opportunity to reject any subsequent fracking proposals. To fast-track fracking through the planning system, as these proposals aim to do, is a ruthless subversion of local democracy. It is imperative that the Government heeds the warnings from this coalition of environmental groups, as well as those MPs pushing back against the plans from all political parties. The proposals are quite simply unacceptable and must be dropped immediately.*”

*Fracking has been widely opposed since it was introduced in the UK and progress has been slow due to objections, protests and legal challenges from all quarters. These plans are the Government's attempt to speed the process up and bypass potential blockages. But in doing so, the plans would fail to scrutinise properly an industry that poses huge risks to both the countryside and environment."*

Lancashire branch were heavily involved in the CPRE response to the Government consultation on the inclusion of shale gas production projects in the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) regime. This would mean fracking proposals would go through a national planning process, rather than be decided by local authorities.

CPRE argued strongly that this would reduce local decision-making and communities' involvement in these decisions.

The consultation response outlines CPRE concerns with this proposal, which are, at a top level:

- It would deprive local authorities of direct decision-making on fracking development in their areas;
- It does not offer anything like 'full involvement' of communities in decision-making;
- Shale gas production does not fit within the NSIP planning process
- It is unlikely to hasten the decision making process

The full CPRE response to the government is detailed in the attached document entitled

NSIP\_CPRES\_Consultation Response\_(24.10.18).pdf

## **Question 2:**

**“CPRE agree there is a need to develop more homes, but these homes should be the right type and are in the right**

**place. Given that Penwortham is looking at thousands of properties being built as part of the City Deal.**

**Will the Lancashire Branch of CPRE be commenting on these consultations within Penwortham and continue to campaign locally for the right housing in the area?**

**If the Lancashire Branch have already discussed this, could you pass on the thoughts and recommendations of the branch to Council.”**

**Councillor David Bird’s response is as follows:**

I can confirm that the Lancashire branch has been heavily involved in the discussion regarding Local Housing need assessment.

The Chair of the Lancashire Planning sub-committee says: “CPRE believe that 2016-based household growth figures should be used rather than the proposed 2014.

Lancashire CPRE don’t agree that affordability will be addressed by simply building more.

The Government, in introducing the housing delivery test, is making it very onerous for councils to maintain a five year housing land supply.

Therefore CPRE Lancashire advocates identifying enough homes, but not being too optimistic about growth, because if the market doesn’t deliver, despite enough land being allocated, yet more land has to be allocated and this is usually in countryside locations which would not have been released for development...if the council had a say on the matter. ” CPRE Lancashire formally responded in detail to the recent Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

(MHCLG) consultation on the updates to national planning policy.

A summary of Lancs CPRE response is detailed at Appendix 2  
CPRE Lancs comments to 2018 December MHCLG  
Consultation.pdf

With regard to local development applications such as Pickering's farm. As this site is one adopted for housing on the local plan. CPRE could not argue against it and the democratic local plan should prevail.

CPRE would also advocate master planning for large sites so that all required infrastructure including green infrastructure, cycle lanes, public rights of way and design quality is assured. In general, CPRE policy is such that if a proposed development is on a site allocated for housing on a local plan, CPRE would not normally get involved.