

## **HILLS GROUP**

### **Barton Court Community Liaison Committee**

Minutes of a liaison committee meeting held at Barton Court on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2006.

#### **PRESENT**

##### **Kintbury Parish Council**

Councillor Stephen Cook

##### **West Berkshire Council**

Councillor Anthony Stansfeld

Councillor Andrew Rowles

##### **Benchmark Furniture**

Sean Sutcliffe

##### **Hills Group**

Mike Webster, General Manager, Hills Waste

Alex Marland, Waste Collection Manager, Hills Waste

Barrie Hedges, Communications Adviser

Rachel Hedges, Communications Adviser

#### **APOLOGIES**

Councillor Keith Plank, Kintbury Parish Council

## **INTRODUCTION**

Mike Webster thanked the community representatives for agreeing to participate in the committee. The company recognised the need to liaise more closely with the community, to achieve clarity over the site's future and to ensure high standards of operation.

## **BACKGROUND**

Mike Webster detailed the history of the site, which was originally worked for sand and gravel in the 1970s and was subsequently landfilled with waste. The landfill operation came to an end as new regulations evolved.

It was at that point that the company established a transfer station, receiving skip wastes from West Berkshire and sending them on in bulk for recycling at the company's landfill site north of Swindon. The introduction of landfill tax and the need to reduce landfill had made it imperative that such facilities were available.

The company had first sought a permanent planning permission for this activity in 1996 but had been advised by West Berkshire Council that it should await the development of a Waste Local Plan and had instead been given a temporary permission. That was subsequently overtaken by the intention to develop a Waste Local Development Framework which is still awaited. The site had, therefore, continued to seek further temporary permissions, the latest of which came earlier this year. It is understood that the WLDF may still not be in place when the current temporary permission expires.

In the absence of anything more than a temporary permission, the company did not have the security to justify significant investment in the facilities at Barton Court. It thus has two groups of cabins, one near the entrance and one allied to the skip sorting area. The road between the two remains a farm track which could, with the security of a permanent planning permission, be properly surfaced.

## **ROLE OF THE SITE**

The site is the only facility of its type in West Berkshire with planning permission and makes a valuable contribution to the area and to the cause of sustainability. It handles some 2,000 tonnes of skip waste each month, of which 1,500 tonnes (75%) is ultimately recycled. Much of that is in the form of construction and demolition materials which are re-used as a substitute for primary aggregates.

## **FUTURE OF THE SITE**

Given the security of a permanent permission, the company would like to make significant improvements to the site which would include:

- Landscaping improvements to the entrance which would obscure views beyond
- Removal of the cabins just inside the gateway
- Establishment of a surfaced road from the entrance to the skip sorting area
- Concentration of all buildings and activity within the existing skip sorting area
- Construction of a covered area for skip sorting
- Possible removal of the plant that grades aggregates and soil, which could be concentrated in future at the company's site north of Swindon
- Final restoration of all remaining landfilled areas to agriculture.

**Action:** Hills will review the future of the site over the next three months and prepare an outline plan for discussion at the next meeting.

## ISSUES

The community representatives were generally accepting of the need in the area for a facility of the type provided by Hills.

However, they raised a number of concerns over housekeeping at the site as follows:

- Wind-blown litter in the roadside hedgerows which is especially unsightly in the winter months
- Unsightly entrance, especially the use of breeze blocks to repair the wall
- Need for stone picking on restored fields
- Need for completion of part restored areas
- Lack of dust suppression equipment
- Effectiveness of drainage provisions in the skip sorting area.

Representatives were also concerned that a long-term permission could be counter-productive if the company ultimately decided to close its current operation and develop other industrial activities there.

Mr Sutcliffe said that while the operation caused no nuisance to his business, he was anxious about the potential for pollution of the fishing lake from run-off water. He was assured that checks were regularly made and there had been no such problems.

Questions were also asked about the monitoring of methane levels. Mr Webster said that they were regularly monitored in line with Environment Agency regulations and had not been a problem.

**Action:** Hills agreed to undertake an immediate review of housekeeping standards at the site and to make improvements wherever necessary. Such changes would be viewed by the community representatives at the next meeting

## NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the committee was provisionally arranged for Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2006 at the site at 4pm. Barrie Hedges will confirm nearer the time.

Please note: These minutes will be posted in the community zone of the Hills Group website at [www.hills-group.co.uk](http://www.hills-group.co.uk). You will, therefore, be able to make them available to others electronically.