



Alex Cunningham MP

Member of Parliament for Stockton North



Richard McGurkin
Director of Economic Growth and Development
Stockton on Tees Borough Council
Municipal Building
Church Road
Stockton-On-Tees
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Monday, 01 April 2019

19/0331
19/0328

Dear Richard,

Planning Application 18/2082/FUL - application for a variation of planning permission

I would like to add my voice to those of residents and other groups, particularly those living in Cowpen Village nearest to the proposed development, who have very real concerns over the proposed changes to the development and variations sought.

The fact that there has been such a considerable change, I would hope to see this variation referred back to the Planning Committee, who rightly imposed, on officer recommendation, stringent conditions on the development. It is the right thing to do for councillors to be consulted in committee and given the opportunity to ask questions and hear from the objectors before a decision is taken on allowing the proposed changes.

Stratera Energy Limited, who I understand are the company behind Saltholme Power Limited, already have a track record of applying for one thing, changing their minds, achieving planning permission and then changing their minds again. You will know I am referring to the one, off, on, off projects proposed for the area near to Thorpe Thewles Village.

Now it appears that having achieved permission for a power station in an industrial type area, much more suited to this kind of development than Thorpe Thewles, they now seek major revisions to the project but in particular the conditions relating to noise mitigation measures.

This has resulted in local people objecting in some numbers to the changes – naturally concerned that they could be subjected to relatively high noise levels which as I understand it had been mitigated in the previous approved application. If the company were prepared to invest in the mitigation measures approved by the Planning Committee, I can't quite understand why they require the change.

There appears to be a gap in information – according to the February version of the report at 5.1 there is no data available from the equipment manufacturer MAN and the report relies on another plant, built in quite different circumstances for the noise data.

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As far as residents are concerned at the fact that the company are now proposing a reduction in noise mitigation measures because there is one fewer engine. The company at 6.1 in their February report admit that noise levels will be considerably higher than they estimated in the September report.

I am no noise expert but in addition to the above admission by the company, at table 7.1 it shows daytime background noise levels higher than in the earlier report - with residual dBI exceeding 50 and in some areas 60 - which adds to residents' anxieties.

I can only think that this revised application is more to do with cost reduction than anything else and there is no doubt that residents will be subjected to considerably higher noise levels than in the originally approved application.

All the more reason I believe that these material changes ought to be considered by the full Planning Committee.

I also find that the report of 8 February totally disregards the important aspects contained in the 4 September report around the potential impact of the noise on the bird population. Given the proximity of the Saltholme and other Nature reserves, I am surprised that this no longer features.

In relation to this material change to the report associated with the application I'd welcome confirmation that the managers at Saltholme RSPB site and other wildlife and nature organisations have been made fully aware of the proposed changes by the company and given the opportunity to make representations.

When I saw the original application I was content with the proposals particularly given the location of the power station - which I understand is just one of two proposed for the area. In fact when I was supporting the residents of Thorpe Thewles, Carlton and others concerned about power stations being built on farm land, I was vocal both to the company and in the media saying they ought to seek sites in industrial areas.

Sadly they seem to think they can demand changes to their planning permission and ride roughshod over objections from the local community, who were until now, tolerant of the original proposal.

I do believe the Planning Authority have a duty of care to the ancient village of Cowpen Bewley, one of the few gap tooth developments left in the country and to its residents.

I would reiterate that the changes are considerable and I would hope to see the matter referred to the Planning Committee for full consideration so they can satisfy themselves that the changes sought are reasonable and won't have an adverse effect on both the people living closest to the development and the wildlife surrounding it.

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Thank you - I hope my comments will be taken into consideration. I am copying this letter to Councillor Norma Stephenson, Chair of the Planning Committee, directly so she can be aware of the concerns of residents, councillors and myself.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Cunningham'.

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