

Coggeshall Parish Council Hearing Statement

For hearing scheduled on 9th May 2018: Lightwood and Monks Wood

Coggeshall Parish Council (CPC) was first notified of the 9th May hearing day by CAUSE, who informed CPC that Lightwood's proposals in Coggeshall/Bradwell at this meeting. There had been no formal or informal notification by Braintree District Council. As a result, CPC had to submit a late request to be included as a participant, and subsequently was rushed in producing this hearing statement, despite being a statutory consultee. CPC wishes to endorse CAUSE's hearing statement presented at this hearing day.

The hearing day appears to be incredibly technical and with short notice, CPC is not able to provide a response that is as comprehensive as should be the case. The inclusion of CPC at this late point is appreciated, but the reality is that this consultation has excluded CPC.

The failure of the North Essex Authorities to send Lightwood's representations to the Inspector meant that we were unable to participate in the Examination in Public of Section 1 in January. Had we known about the submissions for Monks Wood, we would have participated in this process and responded.

We are concerned that our local authority did not see fit to communicate with us about the current situation and we believe that this should be noted under your question about natural justice. We would also like it to be noted that Lightwood has made no efforts to engage with Coggeshall Parish Council since we first became aware of the proposal in September 2016. At no point has the Parish Council been able to participate in a formal consultation process about Monks Wood. Furthermore, neither Braintree nor Lightwood make reference to Coggeshall's emerging Neighbourhood Plan.

It is clear that the lack of justification by the North Essex Authorities for the size or location of the three North Essex Garden Communities has opened up this opportunity for Lightwood to attempt to insert an otherwise obviously unsustainable proposal into the Plan. We object strenuously to any possible attempts by Lightwood to slot 'Monks Wood' into the Plan retrospectively, as a modification and based on technical aspects of the process. The spatial strategy, which was publicly consulted on, involved three very large communities in specific locations. The only solution to the Monks Wood situation is, we believe, to go back to square one and restart the sustainability appraisal, giving proper assessment of all strategic options including brownfield, use of Community Infrastructure Levy to fund infrastructure instead of debt, urban extensions and growth in accordance with Neighbourhood Plans.

7(b) Taking into account all the steps that have been taken to enable Lightwood Strategic to participate in the examination process, since the Inspector was alerted on 18 January 2018 to the NEAs' failure to register their duly-made representations, in what way(s) might Lightwood Strategic's interests, the interests of any other party or parties, and/or the interests of natural justice be prejudiced by those breaches?

As stated by CAUSE, much attention has been given to Lightwood's interests but less to those of the communities affected.

The failure of the NEAs to submit representations to the Planning Inspectorate means that local communities have been unable to participate fully in the Examination process. If many of these groups, CPC included, had been aware that Lightwood continued to promote Monks Wood through the Plan, then they would have been able to submit full hearing statements in response and to request attendance at the whole Examination in Public in January. Attendance on May 9th is not a substitute, because only Matter 1 will be examined at this day.

On a practical note, Lightwood has been able to submit several documents and appendices promoting its proposal and was able to insert itself into week 2 of the Examination. There was no such opportunity for the groups mentioned above to insert themselves similarly. Local communities have been unable to 'have their say' and participate fully and are prejudiced by this.

Any genuine consultation should be a two-way process and have the transparent objective inform plan-making in North Essex. Unfortunately, CPC feels this consultation is a one-way process and local people are being dismissed before even being given a chance to express an opinion, perhaps as a presumptive and pre-emptive action. This goes against the Localism Act, as an objective of this was to empower communities.

Any attempt to reach a compromise with Lightwood behind closed doors will be contrary to natural justice and open to legal challenge. The Lightwood situation can only be properly resolved by a full reappraisal followed by consultation.