

# Middleton-cum-Fordley Parish Council

## Issue Specific Hearing 4: Socio-economic and community issues

### Post-hearing submission

21st July 2021



#### 1. Introduction

Middleton cum Fordley Parish Council (MCFPC) was represented at Issue Specific Hearing 4 on July 9th 2021 by Julian Cusack, the Chair of the Council.

This post-hearing submission includes the points made at the Hearing and provides further detail and context.

Middleton lies three miles north-west of the site of Sizewell C and has the B1122 running through on its way from Yoxford to Leiston. The B1125 runs from Blythburgh through the east of the village to join the B1122 to the south.

The parish comprises three distinct areas. The first is the main village to the north-east of the Parish. The second is Middleton Moor on higher ground to the west.

There are 13 homes on or near Middleton Moor. Some of the smaller homes front directly on to the main road and will be subject to major hazards from noise, vibration and pollution if construction and supply traffic is routed along the B1122 as is proposed in the early years of the project. These photographs show the proximity of the road to the homes and the impact of traffic jams - in this case caused by agricultural vehicles<sup>1</sup>.



<sup>1</sup> Photographs taken on June 20, 2021

Middleton Moor itself is highly valued and an important habitat supported by grants from Natural England. It comprises seven and a half acres of common land and includes wildlife rich ponds. Experience during the pandemic has confirmed the importance of greenspaces such as the Moor. They are crucial contributing factors to well-being and good mental health.

The third area is Fordley which is a smaller settlement which will be severed from Middleton by the link road proposed by EDF.

## 2. Socio-economic issues

There are no material economic upturn prospects for this Parish as there are no businesses that could feasibly become part of any supply chain for the SZC development. There are however businesses that will experience a negative effect with the loss of customers and therefore income, should the development at Sizewell C (SZC) be given development consent.

In this area we have a farm shop, a garage, a pub, Suffolk Stoves, a market garden, a pony stud, farms, a care home for dementia sufferers and a caravan park. Staff changeover for shift patterns at the care home could become very challenging with additional travel time and potential delays due to Sizewell Relief Road (SLR) and congestion at the proposed junctions with the A12, B1125 and the B1122. The B1122 takes a large amount of farm traffic which often causes delays. Many of the local family and generational businesses rely on visitors and tourists coming from beyond the immediate area. Predicted traffic congestion and inevitable delays at proposed junctions will be harmful to these businesses.

Between 15% and 20% of the homes in this area are holiday lets. There is also a caravan park. Many of these homes are fully occupied between early spring and mid-autumn. Visitors come from all over the country for the peace, tranquillity, dark skies, heritage coast and areas of outstanding natural beauty, particularly RSPB Minsmere, historical sites, geographical sites, diverse wildlife and their varied habitats. The coast is 4 miles away and Minsmere is 3.5 miles. Many visitors come for the opportunities to cycle, walk, horse ride, dog walk, bird watch or drive through unspoilt countryside. The Parish Council consider there is no mitigation that can be put in place to protect these precious assets.

Visitors will not wish to come to this area due to traffic congestion throughout Suffolk along the main routes such as the A12, A1120, B1122, B1125. A resident from Hinkley has said, 'the hugely increased volume of traffic for the construction site in the area has caused so many long delays for local traffic, holiday makers have said they will never return to the area again.'

None of the local attractions in this area are accessed from main roads, all visitor attractions can only be reached by travelling along narrow country lanes. With the proposed closure of some of the lanes in this area, this can only force visitor traffic onto roads already congested with supply traffic, HGVs, LGVs and workers traffic for SZC. For every journey going into the construction site there is a return journey for vehicles coming out again.

Hardistry Jones Associates Economic Development Advisers wrote a report in 2018 stating, 'a 1% drop in visitor numbers would mean a loss of £6,000,000 of local economic impact per year.' The proposed development along with congestion issues, will make it difficult for a positive image to be promoted in order to continue to attract visitors to all areas in Suffolk.

### 3. Community issues

Many of the holiday lets in this area could potentially be used by workers for the construction site. This could have the negative effect of leading to issues with parking. In Somerset, rental prices around Hinkley increased considerably, making it too expensive for locals to be able to meet the increased rental charges. Accommodation became limited for visitors and for any other local business attendees.

Amenities in the peaceful, beautiful village of Middleton are minimal. There is no bus service, doctors or dentists or essential shops. Anyone living here has to travel to Saxmundham or Leiston for such amenities. With the proposed closure of the lanes from the village to these towns, journey times will increase considerably and pressure will be placed on facilities that are already challenged.

Many of the homes on Middleton Moor are within a few metres of the B1122. Apart from serious issues around noise and vibration from HGVs etc. recent health studies have shown that air pollution from diesel exhaust fumes is carcinogenic and can lead to premature deaths. (See <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg286.pdf> for details.) With the prevailing westerly wind, diesel fumes will be blown from the proposed SLR route towards Middleton Moor and the village of Middleton.

Middleton has one primary school that has just under 40 pupils on roll and a Montessori nursery. Parents have expressed concerns they will not be able to drop their children off due to congestion on all routes leading to Middleton. Leiston and Yoxford are the main catchment areas for the village school. This could lead to permanent closure of educational establishments that have both been rated good by Ofsted. The school brings youngsters into the village. Such a loss will change the socio-dynamics of the village, should parents decide to take their children to other schools.

The Covid pandemic has shown how isolated communities can become. There is a fear this could happen with the construction of SZC making it difficult for residents to exit the area and reach support networks. This village is renowned for its caring support of those vulnerable in the community, as was shown throughout the pandemic. There are many social groups that meet weekly and there are recreational activities throughout the village as well as a community supportive public house. With proposed country lane closures, it will be very difficult for residents to meet, give help and remain socially active.

Based on the experiences of locals who lived in this area during the construction of SZB, there are genuine concerns over a rise in anti-social behaviour and petty crime, as happened in the past.

The B1122 and the B1125 have issues with traffic speeding already, as evidenced by the traffic camera placed at Middleton Moor on the B1125. The police have stated the B1122 is in the amber category but would like to see it moved to red so the road can be monitored on a more regular basis. There are no pavements or cycle paths for any of these roads apart from a short stretch of pavement on the B1125. Many people walk along these roads to

collect newspapers, visit the farm shop, walk their dogs or take family walks to access footpaths, ride horses and cycle etc. With construction traffic predicted to increase especially if the SLR is not going to be built for the first 2 or 4 years, it will be much more difficult for anyone to walk along these roads. It is also highly dangerous for residents coming out of their driveways to try and join the main roads. As for elderly residents, who are in the majority, it will be extremely dangerous for them to try and cross the main roads to access the village and the moorland which leads to many footpaths which in turn lead to remote countryside or other villages.

#### 4. Conclusion

Middleton-cum-Fordley PC is opposed to the development of SZC. EDF have been poor neighbours, they have not listened to locals. There are alternative routes that will cause far less disruption than the SLR should development consent be misguidedly given.

The proposed SLR route will cut Middleton from Fordley and leave part of Middleton Moor in the middle of two roads, leaving residents with many issues such as being isolated, their mental well-being threatened and life as it is here in this stunning environment lost forever. Extended overnight hours for HGVs between 11pm and 7am are proposed. Given the proximity of many homes to the SLR this is entirely unacceptable and this will again threaten the well-being of residents.

This area of Suffolk, even with the construction of a relief road, is unable to cope with such a huge development without the beauty and tranquillity being irrevocably destroyed forever. For the sake of the flora, fauna and residents, this enormous development cannot be allowed to happen.