

An open letter to INEOS Shale

I was extremely disappointed to receive an email from INEOS Shale on Friday setting out its reasons for asking the Planning Inspectorate to intervene in two applications for test drilling – including one at Bramley Moor Lane in Marsh Lane, Derbyshire.

We have been in regular contact with INEOS throughout the planning process and reject the suggestion that there has been any unreasonable delay on our part.

As with any planning application, the decision must be based on objective analysis of evidence, taking into account local and national planning policies and the relevant comments of the public and official consultees such as parish councils.

This detailed analysis and consultation for major planning applications of this nature takes time – particularly when we had to go back to the applicant to request more information, as in this case, and give people the chance to comment on the additional detail.

Our planning process is a democratic process. It would be wrong of us to deny local people and statutory consultees the opportunity to comment on the additional information – which was not included in INEOS' original planning application. Allowing this opportunity does not involve an indefinite wait. Local people have until 7 December 2017 to read the detail on our website and have their say at www.derbyshire.gov.uk/BramleyMoorLane and planning officers are preparing to report to our planning committee as soon as can be after that.

By asking the Planning Inspectorate to intervene, INEOS is denying local people the opportunity to have the future of their community decided at a local level.

Our planning committee will still meet to consider the proposal, looking at the evidence from INEOS and local people, and will remain impartial. But if the Planning Inspectorate takes charge, the committee can only give its view for the Inspector to consider.

INEOS says it prioritises local consultation and is disappointed that the decision will not be taken at local level. And yet it is the very organisation pushing to have a local decision made by central Government.

We have a statutory duty to make informed decisions about what is and what is not appropriate development for our communities in Derbyshire in line with the relevant planning frameworks and laws and sound local planning decisions cannot be made without thorough consultation and examination of the facts.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Barry Lewis
Leader, Derbyshire County Council