

## WEST SUFFOLK OPERATIONAL HUB (WSOH)

*“A battle won but the war continues ...”*

At the St Edmundsbury Borough Council meeting dated 7 July, Councillors decided to reject a recommendation to progress further work on the Hollow Road Farm site without first evaluating other possible sites. Although decisive, the voting (14 for, 17 against and 10 abstentions) shows there is still much to play for.



This encouraging decision is due, in no small part, to the efforts of concerned local residents who turned out in force at the Council meeting to demonstrate the strength of local feeling against the proposal to site the new hub at Hollow Road Farm.

Having already received a joint letter from Great Barton, Fornham St Martin and Fornham All Saints Parish Councils, Borough Councillors were further influenced by the three community representatives, Philip Reeve, Simon Harding and Sarah Bartram, who argued persuasively that other sites were

available and should be evaluated before further Council Tax monies are committed to a process that seemed to have a pre-determined outcome.

Portfolio Holder, Peter Stevens, responded by saying that the new hub needed to be close to a major centre of population and to the A14 and that it would eventually save money for local residents. He encouraged the councillors to support the motion by saying that, if during the consultation process a more suitable site should appear, it would be considered and that parts of the feasibility studies could be transferred; i.e. the considerations will be similar.

While most of the Borough Councillors who responded to Councillor Stevens rose to oppose the recommendation, it was Councillors Paul and Rebecca Hopfensperger, who together with Councillor Sarah Broughton, caught the mood of the meeting pointing out that the recommendations before the Council had no popular support and seemed to reflect the views of planning officers rather than council members. Other councillors pointed out that the hub would generate very significant amounts of additional heavy lorry and support service traffic in the area and that it was folly to relocate the hub without first implementing a local traffic plan capable of accommodating it. In summary, a flawed process had, unsurprisingly, given rise to a flawed recommendation.

***Having been defeated on the motion, the Borough Council has now undertaken to visit other potential sites, evaluate them thoroughly and to keep local residents informed about current thinking. The decision not to advance the Hollow Farm Road site without evaluating fully other potential sites is a battle won in a war that continues.***

The campaign to date has taught us two important lessons. The first is that numbers matter when it comes to influencing our Borough Councillors. The second is that that the Parish Council needs to be able to contact you quickly and efficiently to keep you informed about the campaign and to call you to action when necessary.

**Please continue to support the campaign by:**

- (i) attending Borough Council meetings whenever the issue is on the agenda;
- (ii) displaying protest signs in gardens and windows;
- (iii) forwarding your email address to the Parish Council Clerk, Paul MacLachlan, at [fmsgpc@gmail.com](mailto:fmsgpc@gmail.com)

\* to assist with the collation of email responses please put **Keep me informed** in the title line. The Parish Council will not share your contact details with any other third party.