

Thornton Parish Council comments on Great Altcar fracking planning application

Thornton Parish Council object in the strongest terms to the proposed plans by Aurora Energy to frack two exploratory wells at the Altcar Moss site, Suttons Lane, Great Altcar. (Planning application LCC/2019/0037.) If approved, these exploratory wells could open the door to large scale fracking operations across Sefton as well as Lancashire, at huge cost to residents and the environment. Fracking at Altcar Moss will have a significantly detrimental effect on the locale, including Thornton and its residents, and far exceeding any suggested benefits, in relation to:

- Reduction in local air quality: Due to increased traffic, the methane gas released from fracking wells, and the burning of any gas produced in a ground flare. This would compound the already woeful failure both locally and nationally to meet EU air quality targets brought into UK law by the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2010, further threatening the health and wellbeing of local residents.
- Risk to the water supply and increased flood risks: The risks of groundwater contamination from fracking are already well documented from the USA and Australia, and this is compounded by the higher risk of induced earthquakes locally, due to fault lines, which could compromise well integrity. In addition the proposed site being on a zone 3 floodplain risks flooding of the well site itself and the spread of contaminants, and any development on green belt of course reduces the capacity for surface water to drain naturally.
- Risk of induced seismic events: As seen in recent weeks at the Preston New Road site near Blackpool, where on the 26th of August of this year a fracking induced earthquake measuring 2.9 in magnitude was recorded, far exceeding the 2.1 magnitude quake which in 2011 forced Cuadrilla to cease operations at their Preese Hall site. As mentioned above, Altcar Moss and the surrounding areas across Lancashire and Sefton are known to lie on top of multiple fault lines, along with disused oil and gas wells, further increasing the risk from induced earthquakes.
- Increased traffic and the impact to local roads: The submitted plan suggests that up to 55 vehicles including HGV's will be going to and from the site on a daily basis for one and a half years, many carrying hazardous wastewater and chemicals, and using the Formby Bypass and Sutton's Lane as an access route. Any wear to public roads caused by the heavy goods traffic will be borne by taxpayers, not Aurora, and there will also likely be disruption to residents using these roads, due to traffic buildup on the bypass caused by the access route to the site.
- Risks to biodiversity and the green belt: The proposed plan would necessitate destruction of green belt land at the Altcar Moss site. In addition the site is located 100 metres from the nearest designated Site of Special Scientific Interest, and just 60 metres from the Downholland Biodiversity Heritage Site, a breeding ground for shelduck, who

are classified amber status on the 2015 red list of British birds. The area is also home to other threatened species including water voles and grey partridge. For the duration of the proposed test frack a tranquil, rural area would be turned into a hive of industrial activity, causing huge disturbance to the daily lives of local residents.

- Failure to work towards climate change targets set out in both domestic and international law under the Climate Change Act 2008 and the Paris Agreement. Despite industry illusions of natural gas as the “green” fossil fuel, the methane produced by the fracking process, along with the greenhouse gas emissions associated with burning the gas itself, mean the process is as much of a pollutant as coal fired power stations.

The proposed plans would impact not only on the residents of Lancashire, but those of North Sefton and beyond, including the residents of Thornton which is situated about 5-6 miles from the proposed site. For any prospect of commercial viability Aurora would need to drill a huge number of wells across their PEDL 164 and 261 licence areas which encompass a large swathe of Sefton borough, including Thornton. Even the spectre of this eventuality is likely to have a deleterious effect on property values across Lancashire and Sefton. In addition the residents of our parish, while living far outside of the scope for community compensation payments, will still bear the risks of any negative outcomes from water contamination, air quality reduction and induced earthquakes. We hope you will act upon the strength of opposition from residents, and refuse to grant planning permission for fracking on Altcar Moss in the interests of all in the local area and beyond.

Thornton Parish Council.