

Bexhill gets ready to fight plans for landfill site

By Ben Higgins

ASHDOWN Brickworks is first choice for a vast new landfill site.

East Sussex County Council (ESCC) named the Turkey Road excavation as their preferred choice in a 133-page document released this week outlining its strategy for dealing with waste in Brighton and Hove and East Sussex until 2026.

At a meeting last Wednesday, ESCC's cabinet approved a planning timescale which sees applications discussed next year and work beginning in 2012.

MP Greg Barker has called a public meeting to launch a campaign against the proposals.

Nick Hollington, chair of the Bexhill Against Landfill Incineration (BALI) group, labelled plans: "a pernicious proposal with a devastating effect on the whole town of Bexhill."

Rother District Council also opposes the plans. In a meeting on Monday, Mr Hollington asked council leader Carl Maynard if he recognised the effect that a landfill site would have on Bexhill and the setbacks it could cause regeneration.

Cllr Maynard said: "Rother District Council has consistently and fundamentally opposed the inclusion of the land at Pebsham and Ashdown Brickworks in the Waste Local Plan."

The relevant section of the waste plan reads, under the Preferred Option Selection heading: "The Waste Local Plan currently allocates Ashdown Brickworks as potentially suitable for landfill."

"Ashdown Brickworks offers a substantial mineral void close to one of the major urban areas of waste in East Sus-



MP Greg Barker, and Cllrs Brian Gadd, Joanne Gadd, Patrick Douart and his wife, Jimmy Carroll and Paul Lendon

sex and Brighton and Hove." Having been cleared by ESCC, the strategy now looks set for approval by Brighton and Hove City Council on October 15. A six-week period of public consultation follows.

From October 21 to December 2, organisations such as BALI and Rother District Council, as well as members of the public, can submit their views.

Details of how to contribute to the consultation will appear from October 21 at an ESCC subsite: <http://consult.eastsussex.gov.uk>

It is estimated that between 34 and 37 million tonnes of waste will be produced by East Sussex and Brighton and Hove from 2011 to 2027. With recycling taken into account, and the work of an incinerator planned for Newhaven in 2012, the final figure for waste pumped into the new landfill site by 2026 is estimated at 4.5million tonnes.

be delivered within the short time-frame required by ESCC.

Mr Hollington said: "The news is extremely serious and a wake-up call to the people of Bexhill, some of whom have doubted that the threat of a landfill was real. It's staring us in the face now, but if we can all get together to fight this monstrous plan we can defeat it. But we must act now."

Hundreds of residents attended a similar public meeting in 2002 when the threat of a Bexhill landfill.

Greg said: "A landfill site of this size and in this location would be an absolute disaster for so many reasons. I want to head this off at the pass and ensure that such a proposal never comes to fruition in Bexhill, be it in five years time or 20 years' time.

"Thankfully for the town the BALI committee has been quietly working very hard indeed over this period but we cannot now leave this fight all to them. We need to back BALI with a strong and cross-party campaign, a broad alliance of groups."

John Heasman, Vice Chair of Bexhill Labour Party and a committee member of the preservation society for nearby Highwoods Nature Reserve, said: "I am appalled that this site should even be considered for landfill.

"The dumping of non-inert waste so close to Highwoods would also have a catastrophic effect on the ecology of a valuable recreational area which is enjoyed by many Bexhill residents."

A spokesman from ESCC said: "The document has to be considered by the Cabinets of both East Sussex County Council and Brighton and Hove City Council. For that reason, it would be inappropriate for us to comment further at this stage, except to say that following the Cabinet meetings it is proposed to seek the public's views during a consultation period starting from the end of October."

■ The public meeting will be chaired by Greg Barker at St Augustine's Church Hall off Cooden Drive on Friday, November 6 at 7pm. Mr Barker said: "It would be helpful if we had an idea of how many to expect so I would be very grateful if people could register their intention to come."

Visit www.gregorybarker.com or call 01424 736861 to register

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