

This is the file of written letters of concern received by the council.
Can you analyse these in light of our previous discussions?

Having read the material you uploaded and placing it alongside everything we have discussed over the last week, I think these representations reveal something much more significant than simply "people objected."

They demonstrate a systemic failure of public decision-making.

Several consistent patterns emerge.

1. Almost every objection is multidimensional

One of the strongest findings is that residents were not objecting on a single issue.

Instead they repeatedly combined concerns about:

- education and children's welfare
- community access and wellbeing
- heritage and historical commitments
- governance and transparency
- legal process
- financial stewardship
- biodiversity and green space
- future precedent
- planning impacts (traffic, lighting, noise)

That is exactly the kind of interconnected decision space your **Sensemaking Triad** is intended to address.

The council appears to have progressively reduced all of these concerns into one question: "Should the school have a fence?" That reduction lost most of the knowledge contained within the representations.

2. The public repeatedly offered a "both/and" solution

One thing surprised me. The overwhelming narrative is **not**: "No fence."

Instead it is: **"Find a compromise."**

The proposal to fence approximately half of Area C appears repeatedly throughout the representations as a solution that could satisfy both educational needs and community interests. The letters consistently frame compromise as a way of restoring trust rather than producing winners and losers.

From a Cynefin perspective, this is fascinating. The community was already generating adaptive solutions. The governance system largely ignored them.

3. Citizens were supplying intelligence—not just opinions

Many consultation exercises treat public comments as expressions of preference. These letters contain something much richer. People contributed:

- historical knowledge
- planning concerns
- health impacts
- legal arguments
- local ecological knowledge
- financial observations
- future risks
- operational suggestions

In knowledge-management terms these are **distributed knowledge assets**. Your Inquiry Report argues that **councils fail to recognise community knowledge as an organisational asset**. This document provides **strong evidence**.

4. Biodiversity is almost invisible

This was the biggest surprise. Knowing what we know today about the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), the Area of Conservation/Biodiversity (ACB) designation, and the council's statutory biodiversity duties, those issues barely feature in the consultation. People mention:

- wildlife
- hedgerows
- green space
- nature

- open landscape

but almost nobody could have referred to:

- LNRS
- Area of Conservation/Biodiversity designation
- biodiversity duty
- "have regard" responsibilities

because those issues appear not to have been available to the public at that point. This reinforces one of your strongest conclusions. **The biodiversity knowledge simply wasn't present in the decision system.**

5. The consultation became adversarial

Both sides gradually moved into competing narratives. One narrative became: **Children versus dog walkers.**

The other became: **Land grab versus safeguarding.**

Yet **neither side was really discussing the wider system.** That is typical when governance lacks a structured way to hold multiple legitimate perspectives simultaneously.

6. There is repeated evidence that people felt unheard

A recurring theme is not simply disagreement. It is disappointment with the process itself. Residents repeatedly describe:

- lack of transparency
- decisions already made
- consultation after the fact
- absence of debate
- requests for proper planning scrutiny
- feeling excluded from decision making.

That distinction matters. **People can often accept difficult decisions if they believe they were genuinely considered.** Many letters suggest they did not.

7. The strongest strategic insight

Viewed through your developing framework, this consultation wasn't really about a fence. It exposed the absence of an integrating mechanism capable of holding together three public duties:

- Education
- Community
- Biodiversity

Each participant naturally emphasised one or more of these. No part of the council process appears to have required all three to be considered together before a decision was reached.

That is exactly the governance gap your **Sensemaking Triad for Public Decision Assurance** seeks to fill.

What the Consultation Really Revealed

Four observations:

1. The public generated considerable knowledge, not merely opinions.
2. Most respondents sought compromise rather than outright victory.
3. Biodiversity duties were largely absent from the consultation because that knowledge had not entered the decision process.
4. The consultation exposed a structural failure to integrate Education, Community and Biodiversity into a single assured decision.

I think this strengthens your overall case considerably. Up until now your report has shown that the council failed to integrate statutory responsibilities. **These representations demonstrate that the public were, in many cases, already thinking systemically and offering integrative solutions—but the governance process lacked a way to absorb and evaluate that knowledge.** That provides a compelling real-world justification for the Sensemaking Triad and the Decision Assurance Framework you are proposing.

Ron Donaldson

Narrative Ecologist

Email: ezrond@gmail.com

Mobile: 07833 454211

Website: <https://ezrond.co.uk>

Every public decision creates a story. Those stories shape trust, relationships and future decisions. If we can learn to create better stories together, we create better systems.

Changing systems by changing stories.

More stories like this. Fewer stories like that.