

In the House of Lords

Session 1885

Longton Extension Bill

Brief for the Owners, Lessees and Occupiers of Weston Coyney Township - Petitioners against the Bill.

The material facts of the case are shortly these : The Town of Longton which in 1881 numbered 18,600 inhabitants, in 1871 contained 19,700 inhabitants and is principally a Manufacturing and Mining place was incorporated in 1865 and as the above figure shows has not made any very rapid progress since, but has incurred a very large debt for sewage works. Baths and wash-houses and Public Buildings and for the purchase of Gas Works.

The pressure of the debt has of late years begun to be felt and the Corporation have accordingly applied in the Sessions of 1883 and 1884 for sundry extensions of the North and South Area of the original Borough so as to get additions altogether of Areas for taxation of the ratable value of nearly £30,000 and thus proportionately to lighten the load of local taxation to the Borough proper and to encourage the Town Council to undertake other ambitious schemes of local improvement. In the session of 1883 the Corporation were vigorously opposed on all sides namely, by the Duke of Sutherland and his lessees and occupiers on the south side and by the Weston Coyney and East Vale and Caverswall people on the north and they were only successful in annexing East Vale in that session - a small urban district of eighteen acres adjoining Longton which contained some 1400 inhabitants and comprised about £2,700 in ratable value.

In the session of 1884 the Corporation were more successful, for the Weston Coyney and Caverswall people having just had one expensive fight failed to put up the funds for another and the Duke of Sutherland and his lessees of Florence and Dresden caved in before going into Committee and came to terms which were embodied in the following agreement :

This agreement made the eleventh day of March one thousand eight hundred and eighty four between the Mayor Aldermen and Burgesses of the Borough of Longton hereinafter called the Corporation of the first part. The Most Noble George Granville William Duke and Earl of Sutherland K.G. of the second part. Such of the leaseholders of Florence hereinafter mentioned as having signed the petition against the Bill hereinafter mentioned of the third part and such of the inhabitants and tax payers of Florence aforesaid who have signed a petition against the said Bill of the fourth part.

Whereas the Corporation are promoting a Bill in Parliament under the short title of `Longton Extension` for the purposes of extending the Borough of Longton so as to include the Local Board of Dresden and those parts of the Parishes of Trentham Stone and Caverswall together commonly known as Florence and the said Bill is now referred to and awaiting a Select Committee of the House of Commons. And whereas Petitions have been presented against the said Bill by the parties of the second, third and fourth parts respectively (all of whom are herein referred to as the Petitioners) praying to be heard before the said Committee against the preamble and clauses of the said Bill.

And whereas the petitioners have agreed to withdraw their respective Petitions in consideration of the Corporation amending the the said Bill in manner hereinafter referred to and after entering to the Agreement hereinafter contained. Now this Agreement Witnesseth that for the mutual considerations herein appearing the Corporation hereby agree with the Petitioners their heirs executors administrators assigns and the Petitioners for themselves their heirs executors administrators or assigns do hereby agree with the Corporation as follows :

1. The Corporation will if so permitted by Parliament amend the said Bill now pending in manner shown on the copy annexed to these presents.
2. The Corporation will in the next Session of Parliament promote and use their best endeavours to pass into an Act, a Bill to extend the Borough of Longton.
3. The Petitioners will forthwith withdraw their respective Petition against the said pending Bill and shall not directly or in-directly oppose the passing of the said Bill into an Act.
4. These presents are conditional on the said pending Bill passing into an Act in this session of Parliament.

In witness whereof the Corporation have herewith set their common seal and the said parties hereto of the second third and fourth parts have signed their names.

M. Wardaugh, Mayor.

George Hawley, Town Clerk.

S. Herbert Cooper, Solicitor to the Duke of Sutherland.

W.A. Adderley, B. Prowse, J.B. Shelley On behalf of the Leaseholders of Florence.

J. Leak, J.H. Garrett On behalf of the inhabitants and Ratepayers of Florence.

From this arrangement springs the present Bill and it is hoped that the Committee will clearly understand and as clearly and strongly disapprove of the way in which the Corporation and the people on the south side of the Borough represented by the Duke and his Lessees have proposed to barter away the rights liberties of the people of the north. It seems as if the Florence and Dresden people having (so to speak) lost their tails in a trap, became determined that the Weston Coyney people should in like manner lose their tails also.

We should here explain that since our Petition was presented the Corporation have been very anxious to get rid of our opposition and failing to make terms of compromise they on the 28th day of March last served us with formal notice that they meant to abandon the greater part (in acreage) of their original proposal. The following is a copy of the Town Clerks letter containing the above named notice :

Town Clerks Office, Longton, Staffordshire,

28th March 1885.

Dear Sirs,

Longton Extension 1885

I send herewith plan of the Borough shewing the District originally proposed to be annexed by the Bill. As you are aware the Bill proposed to extend the Borough so as to include the whole of the Township of Weston Coyney not now forming part of the Borough. The Council have now determined not to ask to have included in the Borough the whole Township as originally proposed, but only the limited area shewn on the plan sent herewith. I shall be glad if you will consider this as a formal notice of the intention of the Council to abandon their scheme to the extent that I have indicated. I may say that it was at the desire of some of the Ratepayers of Weston Coyney that the whole Township was included in the Bill.

I shall be pleased to give you any further information you may desire. If it should appear that the portion of the Township now proposed to be excluded from the scheme will be put to greater expence in respect of the cost of maintaining the Highway by reason of the rateable value of the part to be included in the Borough not being proportionate to the length of the Highway in the respective portions. I propose to insert in the Bill a clause in the terms of sub-section 36 of the Longton Extension act 1884 a copy of which I have already furnished you with. I venture to hope that you will under the altered circumstances see your way to withdraw your opposition to the Bill and with this view I shall be happy to negotiate terms with you.

Faithfully yours, George H. Hawley, Town Clerk.

It may be well to state that the Town of Longton is far from being a handsome one. It is badly arranged, badly planned, and badly supplied with public and private buildings and the streets are very narrow, and the roads in bad repair. It has been understood for some time that the Corporation intend at an early date to do something considerable in the way of street widening and improvements which will of course involve a larger expense.

There is no question that Longton is very inferior in style and size and importance to most of the Pottery Towns such as Stoke, Hanley or Burslem, and there can be no question that when the Corporation have got what they consider a sufficient area for taxation and any improvement in trade that they will be sure to go in for extensive improvements so as to enable them to hold their own with the neighbouring Towns. Then again the Committee must not lose sight of the fact that if the Bill passes the rest of the Township of Weston Coyney and parish of Caverswall will have the whole of the School Board expenses and debt on their hands and the whole of the cost of about 14 miles of road with a loss of taxable area of £7,120 out of £11,030 which is a most serious thing to the Ratepayers, even outside the annexation area - as it will spring the Highway and School Board Rates to nearly double their present amount.

It may perhaps be urged that our clients are selfish in trying to keep out of the Borough to escape the Rates but a forcible reply to this is to be found in the fact that almost without a single exception the Members of the Corporation and the Town Clerk have selected their residences and reside out of the Borough themselves. It is possible that something may be said about bad sanitary arrangements with reference to a portion of the area on Weston Coyney Road inasmuch as we find the Longton people have lately set someone to complain to the Cheadle Rural Sanitary Authority about alleged defective drainage belonging to some newly erected houses there, but we believe this is somewhat of an invented grievance for the occasion and Mr Blagg who happens to be the Chairman of the Cheadle Board of Guardians, who are the Rural Sanitary Authority for the District will be able to set that matter right. The following is a copy of the District Medical Officers Report upon the matter :-

" To the Board of Guardians of the Cheadle Union"

Gentlemen,

At the request of the Sanitary Authority I have visited the houses situated on the Weston Road, Meir, Longton and made a house to house inspection. I have inspected about 120 houses. The whole of the houses are supplied with water from the Waterworks at Meir. The drainage of these with the exception of 17 is connected with the sewers, of the latter, 5 are sufficiently near to the sewer to drain into it, one having already arranged to do so, the other 4 complaining that they cannot as the drain would have to be taken underneath the cellars which it is expected would be below the level of the sewer.

At present these five drain into brick cesspools covered with a stone flag. The cesspools being situated at the bottom end of the gardens, some 20 yards away from the houses. I could not detect any nuisance coming from them. The other twelve are so situated that they cannot drain into the sewers. These are also provided with two brick cesspools covered with a stone flag. The houses are separately provided with privy's having cesspools either underneath the seat or just outside.

In 5 or 6 instances the brickwork in front and below the seat was loose through which slight percolation might take place. On my first visit a few ash pits were full, some have been emptied and others will be attended to. Four or five of the houses were not provided with ash pits. The occupants of these been in the habit of putting the ashes on the garden. Some of the ashes I found had been thrown on some waste building land.

The back yards of the houses are paved with bricks and provided with gullies and grids. As some of the yards are laid on the slope the waste water is liable to run on the footpath at the back of the premises. It would be well to have a few gully's with grids to carry both this and the surface water away. I visited five houses in which Scarlet Fever either existed or had done so recently. Four of these are situated at Weston Road and one in the Meir Lane.

1st Leese's, 3 children had been suffering, 2 recovered and 1 died. 2nd Shenton's one ill and recovering. 3rd Bailey's four ill 2 dead and 2 recovering. 4th Johnson's two ill recovering. In the Meir Lane, Bettany's one child ill recovering. Most of these children attended the Meir Board Schools and according to most of the parents statements, the children first attacked had come home ill from school. I ascertained that Scarlet fever had been prevalent in Longton and the neighbourhood, the contagion most likely emanating from this source.

When the disease is in so thickly a populated a locality as this it is impossible to prevent the contagion from spreading with the careless habits of the people. The conclusion I have come to concerning the Sanitary condition of this District is that the houses are as a rule well built with a plentiful supply of water. The drainage so far as I could ascertain is good. The privy's and ash pits are also in a fairly good state. The streets might be improved by having either paved or gravelled footpaths, with stone edgings and brick channels for surface water, and as before suggested. The footpaths between back premises would be improved by gully's and grids.

I am your obedient servant,

H. Langley Webb

Medical Officer of Health, April 1st 1885.

The short answer to such a charge, if made, is that the Rural Sanitary Authority have all the ordinary powers under the Public Health Act 1875 and that this small cluster of houses is subject to the same laws and the same Government as every other place in England which does not happen to be a Borough or under any Local Government Act, and if there is anything wrong the Cheadle Board will put it right.

To sum up our Case briefly we say,

1. That there is no legitimate and justifiable case for the proposed annexation.
2. That Longton did not want us in 1883 or 1884 and that they only want us now as a sop to Florence and Dresden and as a result of the agreement with the Duke of Sutherland, who being a Colliery Proprietor at Florence is anxious that the rival Collieries should be taxed as high as himself.
3. That these annual nibbling attacks upon frontier Parishes are unreasonable and vexatious and ought to be discouraged.
4. That there is no natural affinity between the Area sought and the Borough of Longton.
5. That the inhabitants of the area in question are strongly opposed to the alliance.
6. That the Ratepayers of Longton themselves are very far from unanimous in approving it.
7. That the onus lies upon the Corporation to prove their case and they have failed to do so. The facts with regard to the schemes of 1883 and 1884 and with regard to the secret agreement with the Duke and the Florence people will be brought out in cross-examination of the Corporation witnesses.

Proofs

Charles John Blagg of Cheadle, Staffordshire, Solicitor, will prove as follows. I am acting in the matter of the Petition signed by the general body of Landowners and Occupiers including the Honourable Edward Swynfen Parker-Jarvis and the Guardians of Walter Weston Coyney Esquire. I am one of the guardians of Mr Coyney who is just 20 years of age and I also act in this matter for Mr Parker-Jervis and the other Petitioners. The principal Landowners within the reduced area now sought to be annexed are Mr Parker-Jervis and Mr Coyney. They strongly object to the proposed annexation and have subscribed to the fund to oppose the Bill.

My clients consider that there is no pretence for this new attack on their property seeing that the Corporation went for all that was thought necessary in 1883 and 1884 and the present proposal was not in either of these schemes.

They consider that it is inequitable and unjust that their rights and liberties should be bartered away behind their backs by the Florence and Dresden people. Speaking roughly I should say that Mr Parker-Jervis and Mr Coyney own about two thirds of the land within the area. The Bill, if passed will inflict a great hardship upon the owners and occupiers of property not only within the area but outside it within the Parish of Caverswall because the abstraction of the most valuable area will send up the Rates throughout the entire parish and in these times of agricultural depression this will be severely felt both by owners and occupiers of property.

The people within the area are all dead against it. The population are a good deal engaged in Mining pursuits, only a certain proportion of them are connected with the Potting Industry of Longton and with the exception of Adderley Green and the Meir there is but a scattered and small population and their wants in the Sanitary and Educational way are well provided by Cheadle Rural Sanitary Authority and by the Caverswall School Board. There are from 600 to 700 acres without a house upon them. I am clearly of the opinion that but for the secret agreement of 1884 we should not have heard anything of the present scheme of extension.

The debt of Longton is very large, I believe upwards of £150,000 and the money and been spent for purely Town purposes not for the benefit of Weston Coyney and without their having any voice in it so that they naturally object to being called upon to contribute to its repayment.

Herbert Marson of Hulme, Staffordshire. Farmer and Clerk to the Caverswall School Board will prove as follows. I am a resident owner and occupier at Hulme in the Parish of Caverswall. I have been a member of the Caverswall School Board since its foundation in 1875 and have been Clerk for nearly two years and I am one of the Petitioners. The Corporation have modified their scheme considerably since our petition was presented but the reduced Scheme proposes to take the most valuable part of our area and to leave us with nearly 14 miles of road (out of 17) to maintain with an impoverished area and we still most strongly object to it.

The Caverswall School Board was formed in 1875. It has borrowed altogether £7000 of which £6,630 is still owing. The annual repayment is £341 and the whole will be paid off in 1927. The School Board Rate averages four and a half pence in the pound. School accommodation is abundant and well placed for the population - namely 6 schools altogether with room for 1255 children, 3 of them being Board Schools and 2 National and 1 Roman Catholic.

The children of school age in the Parish are about 1050. If the Bill passes, even if the proportion of the debt is paid by the Corporation it would leave a School Board with only two Board Schools and a district of only £8,450 Rateable Value and we should require a School Rate of at least seven pence in the pound instead of the present four and a half pence.

It should be stated that the three voluntary schools have been erected principally by the voluntary subscriptions of the Caverswall People and this injury would be inflicted on in the Parish at large quite independently of the increased rates which would upon the annexed area.

Rating expences in Caverswall

School Rate	4 and a half pence
County Rate	7 and a half pence
Poor Law Union Charges	8 pence
Highway Rate	6 pence
Total	2 shillings and 2 pence

Rating expences in that part of Caverswall recently annexed to Longton.

Poor Rate	1 shilling and 8 pence
District Rate	1 shilling and 9 pence
Borough Rate	3 pence
Total	3 shillings and 8 pence

Showing an increase of 1 shilling and 6 pence in the pound annually to all Ratepayers within the area if the Bill passes. The roads in Caverswall Parish are in good repair whilst in Longton Boro` many of them are in a very bad state indeed. The Sanitary Condition of the area in question is good, sewers having been constructed were necessary by the Cheadle Rural Sanitary Authority. Sufficient Burial accommodation is provided by the Caverswall Cemetery.

The people of Caverswall are unanimous in opposing the scheme and have subscribed funds for the purpose and I know of my own knowledge that the Longton people and even the Town Council are a good deal divided in opinion upon it, many of them strongly objecting to the scheme.

(The Petitioners engaged Mr John Charles Ball of 16 Parliament Street, Westminster, London to act on their behalf.)