

PLANNING COMMITTEE



WEDNESDAY, 11 AUGUST 2021 - 1.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor D Connor (Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor M Cornwell, Councillor Mrs M Davis (Vice-Chairman), Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor Mrs K Mayor, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor R Skoulding and Councillor W Sutton, Councillor A Miscandlon (Substitute)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Mrs S Bligh, Councillor C Marks, Councillor M Purser and Councillor D Topgood,

Officers in attendance: Nick Harding (Head of Shared Planning) and Jo Goodrum (Member Services & Governance Officer)

P35/21 STATUTORY CONSULTATION F/YR21/4002/LACON ENERGY FROM WASTE (EFW) AND COMBINED HEAT & POWER (CHP) FACILITY, ALGORES WAY, WISBECH

Nick Harding presented the report to members.

Members asked officers the following questions:

- Councillor Mrs French asked officers to clarify whether a full report had been received by the Highways Authority regarding the highway infrastructure. Nick Harding stated that there was no report and added that it is a consultation to the District Council, and we do not have to consult other external organisations as part of the process. He added that the Highway Authority at Cambridgeshire County Council will be providing their own response to the applicant on the proposal and the Council's Internal Transportation Officer have made their own comments.
- Councillor Cornwell stated that he notes that a lot of the responses appear to be holding responses, whilst further information is obtained on some of the different factors. He added that he is aware of other incinerators across the country, and they are rarely in an urban environment and he asked whether officers are aware of any incinerators in existence which are of the same size and scale, in an urban environment and whether there are lessons to be learnt from the local authorities that house those incinerators within their area. Nick Harding stated that there is an Energy from Waste operated incinerator in Fengate in Peterborough which is owned by Peterborough City Council and it does have a smaller energy output than the proposed incinerator, but the principles of its operation is the same. He added that planning permission has also been granted by the Secretary of State for another Energy from Waste facility, 500 metres away from the one in Fengate, which has now received funding and development is due to commence imminently. Councillor Cornwell asked whether any conversation has taken place with any other authority apart from Peterborough to ascertain their experiences and views. Nick Harding stated that from an officer perspective, there is the requirement to comment on the technical aspects of the scheme and that varies from one development to another and that includes assessing the impacts on the development proposed in relation to the receptors, such as ecology, town scape, air quality and noise and that is what determines whether there is a strong case for objecting to the development proposal. Councillor Cornwell asked whether officers have covered everything to compile their response and are happy with the content of it. Nick Harding stated that the Council is only commenting on a relatively small impact that the

development will have and the reason for that is that County Council are the Lead Authority, as it is a waste authority. He added that they have the knowledge and experience of this form of development and as the lead authority they have commissioned expert advice in a number of fields such as particle pollution and, therefore, the Council has not sought to replicate and look at every possible impact that this development could have. Nick Harding stated that the Council has focussed on air quality, noise, ecology, transportation, townscape heritage and conservation and received comments from the Economic Development Team.

- Councillor Cornwell asked, as the Fenland area is a large area involved with the production of food, is there any evidence anywhere that the risk of pollution could have a negative effect on the quality on the food that is produced? He added that, in his opinion, when the crops and food are produced there could be major risks in the food chain, and he asked whether investigation has been carried out to ascertain the risks involved from an environmental perspective? Nick Harding stated that the emissions that come from the incinerators chimney stack will have to meet a quality which is set by the Environment Agency's permitting system and, therefore, the planning system would not duplicate that system. He added that the planning regime would look to see whether the design aspects of the scheme, the waste stream going in and the technology proposed is capable of achieving the required output standards from the top of the stack and primarily it is covered by the environmental permitting regime. Nick Harding explained that when the decision notices are issued by the Secretary of State on this type of facility, the decisions do not specify the quality of omissions that come from the top of the stack and that is dealt with by the permitting regime. Councillor Cornwell stated that it is not something that the Council can comment on then as the Environment Agency are the controlling body.
- Councillor Miscandlon questioned whether the pollution that will be created by the number of vehicles, including tyre wear, entering and exiting the site has been investigated. Nick Harding stated that air pollution has been dealt with by the air quality information which the applicant has worked on and continues to work on with air quality monitoring stations in place to record the as is situation. He added that members will be aware that air quality management zones were established in the Wisbech area a few years ago and it is his understanding that a point was reached a couple of years ago where they were potentially no longer required. Nick Harding stated that he could not confirm whether the increase in tyre crumb on the highway going into the drainage system had been accounted for. Councillor Miscandlon expressed the view that the vehicles will be going through domestic areas to access the industrial area and stated that, in his opinion, this should be investigated as pollution from vehicles is a major concern for people with respiratory conditions and should be taken very seriously.
- Councillor Connor stated that he was the Chairman of the County Council's Planning Committee when the waste plant facility at Waterbeach was refused against the officer recommendation and then subsequently refused by the Secretary of State and he stated that he can confirm that the County Council do engage with various experts and, in his opinion, they are very thorough when undertaking their research and investigation.
- Councillor Mrs Davis stated that in the report it mentions that the plant will power 74,000 homes and she asked for confirmation on whether the homes it refers to will be in the Fenland area. Nick Harding stated he did not know the answer to that but added that thinking logically if the electricity goes into the local grid it would not be exported away unless it was surplus to requirements locally.

Members asked questions, made comments, and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Mrs French expressed the view that it clearly states at 5d in the report that the County Council are not content with heavy goods vehicles using Elm Road and she has been involved with the Wisbech Access Study for a number of years, with Wisbech being unable to cope with the volume of traffic it currently handles. She stated that the study was at risk of not receiving funding from the Combined Authority to complete it, however, the Board have now agreed to contribute £1.9 million pounds for its completion. Councillor Mrs

French expressed the view that the Fenland roads cannot cope with an additional 362 vehicle movements per day and the rubbish will be transported from across the country and is likely to use the A141 and the Peas Hill roundabout, with the roundabout being at capacity and unable to cope with that volume of traffic coming from the March Bypass. She expressed the opinion that the proposed site will destroy any opportunity for the Wisbech to March rail link which, in her opinion, is unacceptable. Councillor Mrs French made reference to the presentation screen, which showed that there are going to be 70,000 new homes in Walsoken and the Walpole's and added that the proposed facility will be in Fenland and it is the people of Fenland who will suffer and not receive any benefit. She made the point that there is going to be a new school in Barton Road in Wisbech with a proposed opening date of 2024 and will include schooling for primary, secondary and children with special needs, with the special needs element of the school providing places for 60 children, who will come from all over the country. Councillor Mrs French added that there is the intention to improve the quality of life for people, but with that volume of additional traffic this will not be the case and questioned whether the waste will be transported in open topped heavy goods vehicles as, in her opinion, it will stink. She reiterated her view that the Fenland roads cannot cope with the additional traffic and added that she understands that the County Council will be having an input into the consultation and as she is a member of the Highway and Transport Committee at County Council, she will be interested to hear their views. Councillor Mrs French stated that there is no way she would ever support the proposal for an incinerator and, in her view, satellite navigation devices will direct traffic down Elm Road, she cannot see any benefit whatsoever to the residents of Fenland and expressed the view that it is not fair on the villages in Fenland especially Elm. She stated that the traffic on Cromwell Road is already horrendous and stated that, in her opinion, this type of facility should be sited in the middle of nowhere and not on the edge of a town.

- Councillor Skoulding stated that more roads and dual carriageways are required in the Fenland area. He added that the B roads are all built on silt and they move and if all the extra traffic is accommodated there will be dips appearing in the roads which will be likely to cause accidents.
- Councillor Cornwell stated that he would have preferred for the waste to be transported by rail and he cannot support the proposal where 360 extra vehicles will be travelling on the Fenland roads.
- Councillor Cornwell stated that it is well known that Cromwell Road in Wisbech is one of the most congested roads in the Fenland area and is very often gridlocked, especially in the evenings or at weekends. He expressed the view that it is one of the most poorly laid out areas in the Fens. Councillor Cornwell stated that it is obvious that the waste for the incinerator is going to travel some distance into Wisbech by using the major routes into Wisbech such as the A47 and A141. He added that the road network in this area does not have any foundations and heavy lorries ruin them, with it being a known fact that the road to Warboys from Chatteris has been rebuilt many times and it is a constant exercise. Councillor Cornwell expressed the view that if the incinerator is approved then there does need to be a major investment into the infrastructure in the area, before the incinerator commences operation, as the area is desperate for a stronger infrastructure. He fails to understand why the applicant wishes to build an incinerator in a small market town, with the others he has seen having been built out of the way or on an industrial area, but Wisbech does not have an industrial area, it only has a commercial area which is very close to the town, the facilities and the heritage that is in the town. Councillor Cornwell expressed the view that he thinks that a facility may have been turned down in the Kings Lynn area, so the applicant has moved to the next nearest point so that the facility can still cover the Norfolk area and parts of Suffolk. He stated that people's quality of life will be genuinely affected because the wider area will be affected.
- Councillor Miscandlon stated that the Kings Dyke Crossing is being built near to Whittlesey and he added that he has been made aware by lorry drivers that, once the bridge is completed, they will use the A605. He stated that, in his opinion, the traffic coming from the west will automatically use the A605 as they believe that they will not be held up. Councillor

Miscandlon added that lorry drivers have expressed the opinion that the Thorney bypass is not conducive to their type of vehicles. He added that it is well known, that if you put in your car sat nav systems from Kings Lynn anywhere south of Wansford, it automatically sends you down the A605, and that road is not suitable for heavy goods vehicles, and the road has been known to collapse on a regular basis and he reiterated the point made by other members that the roads in the Fens are not fit for purpose.

- Councillor Murphy stated that he is not against an incinerator, but he does not agree with the proposed location and the existing infrastructure is not suitable, when considering the amount of vehicle movements being proposed. He stated that he believes that incinerators will be a thing of the future and stated that when he visited Germany, each town had its own incinerator.
- Councillor Connor expressed the opinion that the proposal is of no benefit to Fenland and there have been no Section 106 contributions included. He added that the proposal is in the wrong location, 750 metres from the nearest school and the traffic problems and the 360 lorries a day will be horrific. Councillor Connor stated that the Fenland roads cannot cope with that volume of extra traffic and whilst he has no problem with companies wishing to make money, it should not be at the expense of Fenland and the people of Fenland. He added that the officer's report, in his opinion, is a good report to be sent to the Secretary of State and he is sure that the proposal will be discussed again by the committee.
- Councillor Miscandlon asked for clarity over the number of lorries per day and asked whether it would be double journeys or single journeys with load and an empty return journey? Councillor Connor clarified that it is 180 vehicles going into the plant and 180 vehicles coming out of the plant.
- Councillor Murphy asked when will the proposal be brought back to the Planning Committee? Nick Harding stated that a further consultation will take place in January 2022 and he added that there will only be four weeks in which to consider information submitted by the applicant. He added that he will endeavour to provide a summary at that time, of each of the subject areas where the Council is proposing to make comment and that will present what the impacts are and provide an indication from an officer's perspective on whether they feel they are acceptable or not.

Proposed by Councillor Mrs French and seconded by Councillor Skoulding and decided that the consultation response from officers be ADOPTED.

(Councillor Sutton declared that he does not have an open mind when considering the officer's consultation response and therefore he took no part in the discussion or voting thereon)

(Councillor Mrs Davis declared that she had been lobbied as she had received an email from the local group who are opposing the incinerator)

1.56 pm

Chairman