Addendum for Planning & Regulation Committee – Agenda Item 5

13th April 2026

Development Proposed:

Part retrospective application for the creation of a development platform, erection of a new building and installation and operation of a Combined Heat and Power Plant along with associated landscape works

Contact Officer:	Matthew Case
Location:	Land adjacent to Ferris Hill Farm, Sibford Road, Hook Norton, Banbury OX15 5JY
Applicant:	Mathews Environmental Services Ltd
Application No:	MW.0027/24
District ref Nos:	24/00689/CM

Further Representations Received

1. Since the committee report was published, four further representations in support have been received from local businesses and individuals. Plus, a further consultation response from Hook Norton Parish Council, which provides further details why they support the planning application.

Summary Third Party Comment:

2. Four further representations have been received in support of the planning application for a combined heat and power (CHP) plant and associated landscaping at Ferris Hill Farm, Hook Norton.

3. Overall, respondents consider the proposal to align strongly with local, county and national objectives for low-carbon, decentralised energy generation and climate change mitigation. Significant environmental benefits are identified, including on-site energy generation, improved energy efficiency, diversion of substantial quantities of waste from landfill, and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

4. A recurring theme across the responses is the anticipated reduction in Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) movements associated with waste export from the site. This is considered to result in benefits for highway safety, reduced

congestion, improved air quality, and reduced wear on rural roads within and around Hook Norton.

5. Respondents also highlight community and economic benefits, including improved local energy resilience, reduced reliance on external energy networks, and increased security of supply at a time of volatile energy markets. Several representations note the potential for job creation during both the construction and operational phases, increased local investment, and positive impacts on the local economy. Support is expressed by local residents and established local businesses, who consider the development to be beneficial for the long-term sustainability of the village.

6. The proposed landscaping and biodiversity enhancements are welcomed, with respondents noting that these measures would help integrate the development into its rural surroundings, protect visual amenity, and deliver biodiversity net gain in excess of legislative requirements.

7. Some representations place the proposal within a wider local and historic context, noting existing renewable energy schemes in the area, Hook Norton's track record in sustainability initiatives, and the role that local CHP infrastructure could play in supporting national net zero targets and addressing limitations of the national electricity grid.

8. In conclusion, all four representations express clear support for the application, citing environmental, economic and community benefits, and urge the Council to grant planning permission.

9. Full Response Received from Hook Norton Parish Council received on Friday 10th April 2026:

   Hook Norton Parish Council fully supports the Ferris Hill Farm application and I would be grateful if you will include this as an addendum to the committee meeting on Monday.

10. *Since the submission of this application in March 2024, there have been significant local and global developments which underscore the increasing importance of local energy generation that is not reliant on fossil fuels.*

11. *The report provides clear and useful information regarding the current operation of the business at Ferris Hill Farm, together with an overview of its future plans. Any identified gaps could reasonably be addressed through Section 106 contributions, as proposed, rather than forming grounds for refusal of a scheme that has strong community support.*

12. *It is noted that the proposed plant would utilise up to 24,000 tonnes of Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF), manufactured from low-grade wood and other non-hazardous waste generated at the existing waste transfer facility. This approach would reduce the environmental impact associated with transporting waste to more distant locations, particularly given that a proportion of this material would otherwise be converted to RDF elsewhere.*

13. *The report also highlights the potential to supply energy to local businesses and residences. Over the past two years, meaningful progress has been made in this regard through the Energy Local North Oxfordshire initiative, which incorporates both a local solar farm and an anaerobic digestion facility serving Hook Norton. Such schemes play an important role in enhancing community resilience and reducing exposure to wider geopolitical uncertainties. Demand for local energy is expected to increase significantly in the coming years, with approximately 220 additional homes either under construction or approved for development. While these homes should meet high efficiency standards, there remains a clear need for additional local, environmentally sustainable energy sources to support Hook Norton and surrounding villages in contributing to Oxfordshire's net-zero objectives.*

14. *The proposal would also create employment opportunities for approximately 10 individuals, which is a material consideration given the projected population growth. The provision of local employment should be afforded appropriate weight in the determination of applications for business expansion.*

15. *One of the stated reasons for refusal relates to the use of previously undeveloped agricultural land. However, the report identifies this land as Grade 3b (good to moderate), rather than among the best and most versatile categories. In this context and given that other developments have been permitted on agricultural land within Hook Norton and neighbouring villages, it would appear inconsistent to refuse this proposal on such grounds alone.*

16. *Hook Norton Parish Council therefore respectfully requests that this application be approved, subject to any conditions deemed necessary. In an increasingly uncertain global context, developments that strengthen local self-sufficiency and sustainability should be supported.*

Additional Information

17. Additional Information has been provided by the applicant's planning agent on Friday 10th April 2026. Please see a summary of the new information:

Electricity Grid Connection

18. The planning agent confirmed that the previous National Grid Electricity Distribution (formerly Western Power) connection offer for a 2MW export has expired. That offer identified a connection point approximately 8.25km from the site, with cabling to be installed by the Distribution Network Operator (DNO) under its permitted development powers as a statutory undertaker. Due to the cost of applying for a connection, the applicant has not sought a new offer pending clarity on the planning position, although confirmation has now been requested from National Grid. It is unlikely that updated information will be available before the committee meeting.

19. To obtain a new connection offer, the applicant would need to submit a G99 application and pay the relevant fee. The DNO is then required to assess the network and identify the most cost-effective means of connection, which may not be at the nearest point depending on available capacity. The agent advised that it typically takes up to 12 weeks for a DNO to issue a connection offer, followed by a 90-day period for the applicant to accept or decline it. Installation works would then be programmed around network outages and could take up to a year to complete.

20. The agent noted that it is common practice for planning permissions for energy-from-waste or similar plants to include conditions restricting operation until a grid connection is secured. An example permission granted by West Sussex County Council for the Goodwood Estate in 2023 includes conditions preventing operation as a standalone incinerator, and the applicant has confirmed willingness to accept similarly worded conditions should permission be granted.

Heat Network Connection

21. The agent explained that heat connections differ from connections as they would operate through private agreements between the heat supplier and end users, rather than via a statutory undertaker. Heat would be supplied through insulated underground pipework (approximately 300mm in diameter overall), containing flow and return pipes of around 80–100mm.

22. The delivery of heat connections would be dependent on commercial agreements with customers and the securing of necessary consents. Installation of pipework would require planning permission and, depending on routing, may also need approvals under the Highways Act or Street Works legislation. In Oxfordshire, such applications would likely be determined by the relevant district council.

23. The agent advised that heat transfer over distance would experience minimal degradation and could be used as base-load or process heat. Integration into existing customer heating systems would require additional equipment such as flow and return valves or buffer tanks.

24. By way of example, the agent referred to the Goodwood Estate, where a similar (biomass-fuelled) plant supplies heat via approximately 8 miles of pipework to a range of buildings with minimal heat loss. It was also noted that the centre of Hook Norton village lies approximately 1 mile from the application site, and that district heating networks of greater scale operate successfully elsewhere in the UK, including networks supplied by energy-from-waste facilities.

Officer Response

25. The additional information from the applicant with regard to electricity and heat connections is informative but does not alter the officer recommendation to refuse planning permission as set out in the committee report.