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PLANNING AND REGULATION COMMITTEE – 19 OCTOBER 2009

ENERGY FROM WASTE INCINERATOR (EfW) INFRASTRUCTURE PLUS THAT FOR COMBINED HEAT AND POWER (CHP), INCINERATOR BOTTOM ASH (IBA) PROCESSING PLANT WITH OUTSIDE STORAGE AREA AND AIR POLLUTION CONTROL RESIDUE (APCR) TREATMENT AND DISPOSAL FACILITIES, VISITOR AND OFFICE ACCOMMODATION AND LANDSCAPING WITHIN SUTTON COURTENAY RECOVERY PARK

Report by Head of Sustainable Development

Location	Sutton Courtenay landfill site
Applicant	Waste Recycling Group Ltd.
Application No	SUT/APF/616/60-CM
District Council Area	Vale of White Horse

Introduction

1. This application proposes an Energy from Waste (EfW) incinerator and facilities for processing the incinerator bottom ash (IBA) and for treating and disposing the air pollution control residue (APCR) that would be produced by the incinerator. The development proposed also includes weighbridges, landscaping, offices, infrastructure for combined heat and power (CHP) and a visitors' facility. The site proposed sits on the Sutton Courtenay landfill complex which measures 264 hectares.

Location (see Plan 1)

2. Sutton Courtenay landfill site is located approximately 8 miles (13 km) south of Oxford, between the villages of Sutton Courtenay to the west and Appleford to the east. These villages each lie about 300 ms from the closest approach to the site. Didcot lies approximately 2 miles (3.5 km) to the south and Abingdon is approximately 2.8 miles (4.5 km) to the north.
3. Little Wittenham Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located approximately 2.5 miles (4 km) to the east.

The second closest SAC is Cothill Fen, which is approximately 4 miles (7 km) to the north west.

The Site and its Setting (see Plan 2)

4. This is an application for development at Sutton Courtenay landfill site, an active non-hazardous landfill site which accepts predominantly household waste and also commercial and industrial wastes.
5. The landfill site is bordered by the B4016 to the north and by the Oxford to London railway line to the east. Didcot power station lies immediately to the south and to the west lies open agricultural land.
6. The proposals in this planning application would affect two areas within the Sutton Courtenay landfill complex and the access points. The two areas covered by the application are the Air Pollution Control Residue (APCR) disposal area which is proposed to be located in an area consented for non-hazardous landfill to the north of the site, and the area for the incinerator plant, IBA processing and stockpiling, offices/visitors centre, weighbridges and CHP infrastructure (resource recovery park area) to the south. The total area of the application site is 50.3 hectares.
7. The landfill site is crossed by two private roads: Portway which runs east-west and Corridor Road which runs north-south. These roads are both rights of way for all or part of their lengths. Bridleway 3 runs along the route of one of the two southern access roads. Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT) 9 forms the western boundary of the waste park area and BOAT 10 and Road Used as Public Path (RUPP) 4 running along Portway forms the northern boundary. Footpath 12 bisects the APCR residue landfill area. The area proposed for the EfW plant and IBA processing plant is to the south of Portway and east of Corridor Road. The proposed APCR disposal area is to the west of Corridor Road. It is immediately north of the processing plant for the sand and gravel extraction at Bridge Farm.
8. There are two vehicular access points to the site, one to the north and one to the south. The northern access is onto the Sutton Courtenay to Appleford Road (B4016) and over the Thames at Culham Bridge. The southern access is more heavily used and exits onto a roundabout on the Didcot perimeter road (A4130.) There are two routes from the southern access point to the application site and both have been included in the application area. One route goes to the west of Hill Farm and the other to the east and they join at the south-east corner of the planning application area. There is also access from Didcot Power Station. The site has a rail siding entering the site from the east off the main Oxford to London line. This is used for the import of limestone aggregate and waste from London. There is an area at the railhead with permission for permanent minerals and waste development. Developments associated with the railhead include a blacktop plant and offices.

9. The closest property to the site is Crossing Cottage which lies immediately to the east of the edge of the resource recovery park area and approximately 550 m from the EfW building. Hill Farm and Hartwright House lie adjacent to the southern access route, approximately 550 m and 600 m from the EfW building. The closest property on Main Road, Appleford is just over 100 metres from the edge of the application boundary and approximately 600 m from the proposed EfW plant itself. The closest properties to the APCR residue landfill are on the Appleford Road in Sutton Courtenay. These are approximately 500 m from the landfill boundary. There are office buildings 200 m from the boundary.
10. Millennium Common lies to the west of the proposed APCR disposal site, on the other side of the haul road. The proposed ACPR site is currently semi-restored lakes created by an old gravel working.
11. There is a landfill gas utilisation plant which produces electricity from gases from the landfill site. This is excluded from the application area and is located south of Portway and north west of the proposed EfW building, adjacent to the IBA area.
12. An overhead power line runs through the site crossing the western end of the resource recovery park area to the west of the IBA area.

Site History

13. Landfilling has occurred on the Sutton Courtenay site since the late 1970s, following its working for sand and gravel since the 1930s. A planning application was submitted in 1992 to consolidate all earlier permissions and extend mineral extraction and landfilling. This permission was issued in 1996 (SUT/APF/616/33-CM). Conditions on this permission limited import of waste to 600,000 tpa with a limit of 200,000 tpa to be imported by road. The majority of waste was to be imported by rail via the existing sidings. End dates for landfilling were limited by condition to the end of 2012 and for clay extraction to the end of 2009.
14. An application was made (SUT/APF/616/45 CM) to continue the development but to increase the limit on road imports to 350,000 tpa. Permission was granted in 2001 to allow the increase in road imports for a period of 6 years after which time it would revert to 200,000 tpa.
15. In 2006 an application (APF/616/56-CM) was submitted to extend the date for the end of landfilling from 2012 to 2021 and to maintain the increased levels of import by road until the site closes. Committee resolved to grant permission in May 2007 (minute 33/07) and permission was issued in January 2009 following the completion of a legal agreement. Sand and gravel working has now finished on the site and so this application refers only to clay extraction and landfilling operations.
16. An application (APF/616/57-CM) was made in 2007 to construct a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) and In-Vessel Composting Facility (IVC) in an area of

the landfill site other than that which had been previously approved under the SUT/APF/616/45-CM permission. Temporary permission for this development until 2020 was issued in December 2008, following the completion of a lorry routeing agreement.

17. An application was made in April 2008 to deposit waste to higher topographical levels within the landfill site. This included the temporary storage of pulverised fuel ash (pfa) from Didcot Power Station and an extension in the life of the landfilling activities until 2030. This was considered by committee in July 2008 (minute 43/08) when it was resolved that the permission will be issued once a legal agreement to cover issues including a hinterland, transport contributions and rights of way, is signed.
18. Planning permission was issued for sand and gravel extraction at Bridge Farm in 2008. Bridge Farm is to the north of the Sutton Courtenay site, on the other side of the B4016. However, material worked from this site is proposed to be processed at the existing processing plant at Sutton Courtenay site in an area to the south of the proposed APCR disposal site. This does not form part of this application site.

Details of the Development

19. The EfW plant would be capable of processing 220,000 tonnes of waste per year (tpa). This would include residual municipal waste and commercial and industrial waste. The amount of municipal waste is projected to range between 140,000 and 185,000 tpa over the life of the plant and the amount of commercial and industrial waste would be between 35,000 and 80,000 tpa.
20. Waste would be incinerated in the plant and a steam turbine would produce electricity fed to the national grid. There would also be the capability for Combined Heat and Power (CHP) which is the utilisation of the excess heat produced by the process for heating schemes for other uses such as industry or housing.
21. The incineration process would create three by-products: incinerator bottom ash (IBA), ferrous metals and air pollution control residues (APCR). This application also proposes a processing plant for the IBA and a landfill area for the APCR. Although an IBA processing plant is proposed as part of the development, the application states that the IBA would be landfilled in the adjacent landfill site until such a time that it becomes economically advantageous to recycle it.
22. It is also proposed to construct office accommodation and a visitor centre within the EfW building.

The EfW Plant

23. The EfW plant itself would be 197.9 m long with a maximum width of 51.4 m with a maximum height of 49 m. The chimney stack would be 96 m high and 4 m in diameter.

24. Within the building there would be a waste bunker, tipping floor and turbine hall.
25. Waste would be tipped from waste collection vehicles into a refuse bunker within the tipping hall, which would be kept under negative pressure to control odour, dust and litter. The waste would then be loaded from the bunker to the furnace by an overhead grab crane. Crane operators would mix and load the waste and remove any unauthorised or unsuitable wastes for disposal at the neighbouring landfill site.
26. Waste would be loaded onto a feeding chute and transferred into the furnace. The waste would flow slowly over a combustion grate and burn at a controlled temperature. All biodegradable components would be removed and at the end of the combustion grate only inert and non-combustible material would remain. A vibrating grid would remove bulky items, such as ferrous metals, and the remaining IBA would be transported by conveyor to the IBA yard.
27. Hot gases from the combustion process would pass into a boiler and raise steam. This would then be passed through a turbine to produce electricity. Approximately 19 Mega Watts (MW) would be produced and approximately 17 MW of that would be exported to the electricity grid. The remaining 2 MW would be used to power the facility. It is proposed to install the necessary infrastructure to connect the plant to the Milton sub-station. This infrastructure does not require planning permission and does not form part of these proposals. The steam system comprises the boiler, turbine, condensers and associated pipe work.
28. The EfW building is proposed to be steel clad and coloured blue, silver and orange. Light reflective colours are proposed on the higher parts of the building.

Combined Heat and Power Infrastructure

29. The steam produced for the generation of electricity can also be used to heat water for district heating schemes. This would reduce the amount of electricity generated, but increase the overall efficiency of the plant. The applicant has not secured a user for the hot water produced, but is in discussions with developers of new buildings at Milton Park and Southmead. CHP infrastructure would be located east of the EfW plant. There would be a CHP pump house measuring 20 m by 10 m with a height of 3 m and a thermal store would be 4 m by 3.8 m with a total height of 7.7 m.

Incinerator Bottom Ash recycling plant

30. The IBA yard is proposed to be located to the west of the EfW plant and would contain an IBA plant building and open air storage yard. The IBA stockpiling areas will be roofed to minimise rainwater runoff from the stockpiles.

31. The July 2009 revision to the planning application supporting statement proposed that the IBA be transferred by conveyor to the IBA yard and then transferred to the wider Sutton Courtenay landfill site without undergoing processing. This option is proposed until there is an economic advantage in processing the IBA.
32. The application includes proposals for an IBA building measuring 37.6 m by 28.2 m with a roof height varying between 10.4 and 12.6 m. If brought into operation IBA would be transported to the yard by conveyor and stored in the open air storage area for up to 12 weeks to dry the material and make it easier to process. Then it would be fed into a processing plant within the IBA building, located to the south of the yard area.
33. Within the building IBA would then be screened and graded to separate and recover a range of materials for recycling. These would include metals and secondary aggregates. Residual, unusable material would be landfilled at the neighbouring non hazardous landfill site.
34. This plant would have the capacity to deal with 50,000 tonnes of IBA per year.

Air Pollution Control Residue Disposal Facility

35. Gases produced by the incineration process would be cleaned before they are released to the atmosphere to ensure that emission levels achieve the required standard. The cleaning processes involve the addition of materials such as hydrated lime, activated carbon and ammonia and produce a powder at the bottom of the baghouse filter. This powder is referred to as Air Pollution Control Residue (APCR). It is very alkaline and classified as a hazardous waste.
36. It is proposed to landfill the APCR in an area in the north of the site in an area currently permitted for the landfilling of non-hazardous wastes. As APCR is classified as hazardous waste, permission is sought for its deposit in this location.
37. The APCR would need to be conditioned prior to landfilling. This would involve the addition of water to reduce dust. It is proposed to construct a plant for this purpose, comprising two vertical silos and a mixing tower. It would be 18 m high with a base of 18 sq m. This conditioning plant is proposed to be located adjacent to the hazardous landfill area. APCR would be transferred to the storage silos from the EfW plant in vacuum tankers. It would then be transferred from the silo by sealed pipework, mixed with water and be deposited onto a dump truck.
38. The APCR would then be transported from the conditioning plant to be landfilled. It would be landfilled progressively, in clay-lined cells. There would be four cells in total. Once filled each cell would be capped with clay and soils would be placed on top then grassed, seeded and planted.

39. The application anticipates that the plant would produce 12,000 cubic metres of APCR per year. Infilling at this rate would give the site a 30 year capacity. There is the potential for APCR to be used in industry and the application states that it would be recycled if a secure and viable user was found.

The Visitor and Office Accommodation, Weighbridges and Car Parking

40. It was originally proposed to construct a separate block containing the visitor facilities and office accommodation. Following the second amendments to the application it is now proposed to incorporate these within the EfW building. This would not lead to any significant change to the external elevations of the EfW building, although it would result in an enlargement of the surface of the western elevation of the waste bunker to allow for the enclosure of a stairwell.
41. It is proposed to construct six weighbridges, three for the EfW, two for the IBA plant and one on the landfill exit road. Car parking will be provided for 78 vehicles.

Landscaping

42. Landscaping is proposed around the development to soften its impact. The proposed landscaping includes native tree and shrub planting, a parkland area with pedestrian access routes, hedgerow and tree planting along the access road, an ornamental lake, and screening mounds planted with native trees and shrubs. Attenuation lakes are proposed to be incorporated into the landscaping.

Construction

43. The construction period would last 34 months and at its peak the site would generate 346 vehicles per day. This includes HGVs and traffic associated with the 160 construction staff anticipated to be working at that time. This total would be in addition to the 424 daily movements associated with existing consents on the site. The peak number of construction staff would be 220 but these would not coincide with the peak period for HGV movements.

Operating Hours

44. The plant would operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It is proposed to receive waste between the hours of 6 am and 8 pm 7 days a week including bank holidays. IBA processing operations are proposed between 7 am and 6 pm Mondays to Fridays and 7 am to 1 pm on Saturdays and Sundays, including bank holidays. ACPR landfilling is proposed between 7 am and 6 pm Mondays to Fridays and 7 am to 1 pm on Saturdays.

Traffic

45. Once operational it is proposed that there would be 240 daily HGV movements associated with the EfW and IBA plants. Taken with the resulting decrease in movements associated with the landfill site and clay extraction, there would be a total of 432 daily HGV movements from this site, which would be 8 vehicle movements per day more than the existing movements for consented activities. There would also be vehicle movements associated with the 50 staff who would be employed once the plant is operational.

Waste Imports

46. It is proposed to import waste from within Oxfordshire only.

Rights of Way

47. Improvements to the rights of way network are proposed as part of this application. This includes the upgrading and resurfacing of some of the existing rights of way within the site. It is not proposed to upgrade or enhance inappropriate rights of way such as those that are also haul roads or those that have water voles in perimeter ditches. Portway is a haul road and traffic on it would increase as a result of this development. Therefore a new permissive restricted byway is proposed to create a safer and more pleasant east-west route in the site, away from vehicular traffic. The application also proposes making a financial contribution to pathways beyond the boundaries of the site to enhance the general network of rights of way in the surrounding area.

Traffic Routeing

48. The applicant has confirmed that they are willing to enter into a routeing agreement that routes HGVs associated with the development on to the A4130 Didcot Northern Perimeter Road. HGVs can then go west onto the A34 or east to Wallingford and south east Oxfordshire. The only exception to these routes would be waste collection vehicles from the local area which could use the site's northern access onto the B4016. The existing routeing agreement for the site allows 100 vehicles a day to use the northern access onto the B4016 and this limit would remain as a total for all development on site, including local waste deliveries to the EfW plant.

Environmental Statement (See Annex 1)

49. The application is supported by an Environmental Statement (ES). The topics covered by the ES are described in Annex 1.

Legal Agreements

50. The applicants have indicated that should planning permission be granted for this development, they would be willing to enter into legal agreements to cover the following matters;
- a routing agreement to ensure HGVs are restricted from travelling through local villages and urban areas;
 - a contribution of £43,824 (index linked) towards the Didcot Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS);
 - a limitation on the amount of tonnage to the EfW; a limitation on the amount of total waste being carried to the site by road; a limitation on the total number of vehicles using the secondary northern access and the number of vehicles travelling eastbound to the A4130;
 - a contribution of £1,000 towards the monitoring of a travel plan;
 - the funding of a 25 year long term management plan for any approved restoration scheme;
 - a contribution towards mitigation measures for both on site and off site public rights of ways;
 - a restriction on the area from which waste can be imported (a hinterland).

Consultations (See Annex 2)

51. The planning application was originally submitted in August 2008. As a result of the comments and objections that were raised in the initial consultation period the applicant was asked to submit further information. In February 2009 an amended application was received including additional information. These revisions included changes to the design of the EfW building. The revised plans show a reduced footprint of the EfW building, changes in the elevation so that some points were higher and some lower, with the highest point of the building raised from 44.25 to 49 m. The size of the IBA yard was reduced. Further landscaping was proposed along the site boundaries and to the east of the EfW plant. At that stage it was proposed to take up to 25% of the total waste import from Berkshire. There was a further consultation period on the amended application in March 2009.
52. In August 2009 further amendments and revisions were submitted. The details of the development outlined above in the details of development section refer to the most recent revisions. The design of the EfW plant was not altered. The main changes were to reduce the throughput and size of the plant, although not the size of the EfW building. This allowed the visitor centre and offices to be incorporated into the main building. This resulted in changes to work in the ES including the transport and air quality assessment. It is now proposed to import waste from Oxfordshire only.
53. All consultation responses are outlined in Annex 2.

Representations (See Annex 3)

54. The points made in letters of representation are outlined and addressed in Annex 3. The main issues raised related to concerns about air quality and health, visual impact, traffic, risk of flooding and water contamination, and the benefits of alternative forms of waste management.

Relevant Planning Policies (see Annex 4)

55. The key policies are those related to waste management, pollution and amenity, ecology, landscape and countryside, rights of way, design, hydrology and transport. The relevant policies are set out in Annex 4.
56. The Development Plan comprises saved policies from Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan 1996 (OMWLP) and the South East Plan (SEP) and the Vale of White Horse Local Plan (VLP). Although policies in the SEP are worded to provide guidance on writing policies, they can also be used for development control purposes. Certain policies from OMWLP have been 'saved' by the Secretary of State and therefore remain part of the development plan. PPS10 (Planning for Sustainable Waste Management 2005) is also relevant in determining this application.
57. There is not currently a Waste Development Framework in place for Oxfordshire. When this is published it will identify suitable locations for waste management in Oxfordshire. The Core Strategy with strategic site allocations is currently expected to be adopted in late 2011 or early 2012. The timetable for a Site Allocations Development Plan Document is not yet clear.
58. At the time that the application was originally submitted, Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) and saved policies from Oxfordshire Structure Plan (OSP) also formed part of the development plan and so some consultation responses refer to these documents. However, they were replaced by the publication of the South East Plan in May 2009. Three OSP policies remain saved but these are not relevant to the consideration of this application.

Comments of the Head of Sustainable Development

59. The non site specific issues of waste management policy, including need and pollution are dealt with in the covering report. The other key site specific issues are dealt with below, together with a number of other topics that are pertinent to the consideration of the proposal.
60. The key issues that should be considered in determining this application are:
- Site specific waste policy and management issues,
 - Strategic location of EfW plant at Sutton Courtenay against planning/transport criteria for waste management facilities
 - Landscape and countryside impacts and context
 - Amenity/impacts on local people

Site specific waste policy/management

61. The application proposal would provide an EfW plant capable of treating up to 220,000tpa of residual waste (after recycling and composting). It would provide capacity to manage the waste arising in Oxfordshire. It is not proposed to import any waste from London or elsewhere in the South East to the EfW facility. Therefore it would contribute towards net self-sufficiency in waste management capacity at a sub-regional level, in accordance with SEP policy W4.
62. The proposal no longer involves the recycling of IBA, although the plant would be available should this become viable. If recycling of IBA took place on site, the quantities involved would be small and unlikely to make a significant impact on the targets for the recycling of construction and demolition waste.
63. This proposal includes the husbanding of the existing landfill void. The plant has been situated in a location that would not reduce the capacity of the void. The diversion of waste to the EfW would reduce the rate at which the void was filled. This is in accordance with the requirement to husband non-inert landfill capacity set out in SEP policy W13.
64. Energy from waste plants must be part of an integrated approach to waste management, to accord with SEP policy W12. In terms of municipal waste, this EfW is proposed to manage only the residual waste that remains after the separation of waste at the kerbside. The EfW plant would form part of the integrated approach to the management of Oxfordshire's waste consistent with the aims of SEP W12. The commercial and industrial waste that is proposed to be dealt with at this site would not have gone through this separation process. These wastes may arrive separated in any case but there would be no system to ensure that they were. The EfW plant itself does not include a facility for the separation of recyclable wastes. Therefore in terms of commercial and industrial waste the proposal does not support the aims of SEP policy W12.

Strategic location of EfW plant at Sutton Courtenay against planning/transport criteria for waste management facilities

65. This proposal would involve the transport of municipal waste from across Oxfordshire to one waste management site. At present waste in Oxfordshire is taken to 4 landfill sites in different areas of the county. The development of a single facility would therefore cause an increase in the length of journeys transporting waste across the county. The extent of increase in length may be reduced depending on the bulking facilities which are operated in conjunction with the EfW plant. However, it is likely that there would still be an increase in the number of journeys. This is because any journeys from the bulking facilities to the EfW plant would be additional compared to the current situation where waste travels to one of 4 landfills sites. This is not supported by SEP policy W16 or T1.

66. The proposed EfW site is well located in relation to the existing urban areas of Didcot, Abingdon and quite well located for Oxford. It is well connected to the A34 which provides good accessibility from wider Oxfordshire. Therefore the location of the site broadly accords with SEP W17 in this respect. SEP W17 also supports the use of rail where possible. The wider Sutton Courtenay site has a railhead. However, it is not proposed to make use of this railhead to import waste to the EfW plant.
67. PPG13 does not contain specific advice on transport in relation to waste development. However, I consider this development to be in accordance with the general aim of sustainable travel which it promotes. Rail transport is only practical for waste brought in from single major sources over long distances. As waste for this site would arise from Oxfordshire only, it is proposed to import it by road. PPG13 states that the imposition of operating hours on freight movement can cause problems of congestion at peak hours. In this case as the routeing agreement would ensure that HGVs would not pass through residential areas, operating hours could be longer and peak hour congestion problems avoided.

Landscape and Countryside

Landscape Context

68. The landscape around the Sutton Courtenay landfill complex is characterised by fairly flat agricultural land with small villages.
69. The proposed EfW plant, which would form part of the existing Sutton Courtenay landfill complex, would be a permanent industrial scale development in the countryside. The site is within the Lowland Vale as referred to in policy NE9 of the VLP. It would have an adverse impact on the landscape, specifically the long open views across the area. Therefore the proposal is contrary to VLP policy NE9.
70. This development is also within the Important Open Land between Didcot and Appleford as identified in VLP policy NE10. Significant parts of this open land currently form part of the Sutton Courtenay landfill complex. The proposed EfW plant would sit within the present landfill complex. The landfill permission is temporary and will in time be restored to agricultural land. Once landfill restoration is completed, the EfW plant would harm the essentially rural and open character of the area as it would introduce a large industrial building unrelated to any other significant built development. Therefore the development is contrary to VLP policy NE10.
71. Policy NE11 of VLP allocates this site within an Area for Landscape Enhancement. A landscaping scheme has been submitted within the application. It is a high quality scheme that would improve the visual appearance of the development. However, it would not hide the development and I consider that the development would damage the agricultural character of the area, contrary to VLP policy NE11.

72. Extensive screening and landscaping is proposed to reduce the visual impact of the EfW on the surrounding landscape. The visual and landscape assessment shows that these proposals would contribute towards the mitigation of these impacts. Due to the size of the building it would not be possible to screen it from view entirely. However, the design of the building is of a high standard and has received positive comments from CABE. I consider that the proposal is consistent with OMWLP policy W5, in that the waste treatment (EfW) plant would be properly screened from the surrounding landscape. Conditions could be used to ensure that the landscaping is completed before waste treatment begins, as required by this policy. However, the effectiveness of the screen would improve over time as the native trees and shrubs grow.
73. The area proposed for APCR landfill already has landfilling consent. The change in the type of waste landfilled from non-hazardous to hazardous would not alter the impact of the landfilling on the landscape. The contours would remain the same and the land would still be returned to countryside following the completion of landfilling. Following restoration this area of the site would be subject to the standard 20 year aftercare period.
74. OMWLP policy W5 also applies to the IBA processing plant and APCR conditioning plant. It is proposed to screen the IBA plant through landscaping and planting. It would also be screened by the EfW plant building itself and further by the landscaping proposed to screen the plant. The APCR treatment plant would be set down 2 m below ground level and would be screened by the woodland planting proposed across the wider Sutton Courtenay site. I therefore consider that the IBA and APCR plants could be properly screened as required by this policy. These requirements could be secured by condition.

Compatibility with surrounding land uses

75. The application site should be viewed within the context of the wider Sutton Courtenay site which includes mineral working and processes and industrial development. Both mineral workings and industrial uses are listed as compatible landuses in SEP policy W17. Although the application boundary for this development does not encompass it, the wider Sutton Courtenay site does contain an area of permanent minerals and waste/industrial development (the 'coffin' area.) Permanent consents in the 'coffin' area include the construction of rail sidings and associated developments (including the importation of waste ballast). Therefore further waste development would be expanding on a site with some existing waste management use.
76. The wider Sutton Courtenay landfill site has temporary permission until 2021 and there is a resolution to grant permission which would extend landfilling operations until 2030. There is also permission for a Materials Recovery Facility and In-Vessel Composting until 2021. A green waste composting facility operates on the site with temporary permission. It should be recognised that the landfilling, MRF and IVC have temporary consents and these sites will be restored. However, the inclusion of active mineral workings

in the compatible landuses listed in SEP W17 confirms that temporary uses can be relevant in considering the suitability of sites.

77. There has been a landfill site at Sutton Courtenay for over thirty years and therefore I consider the site has the ability to meet a range of environmental and amenity criteria, in accordance with the policy. Therefore I consider that the proposed location largely accords with SEP policy W17. Although it is located in the countryside, it is in close proximity to two compatible landuses; an active mineral working site and industrial uses.

Amenity/impacts on local people

Pollution

78. The pollution control issue is dealt with in the covering report. However there has been a significant level of concern from objectors about the cumulative impacts on air quality from the developments at Sutton Courtenay.
79. The applicant has provided details of their plans to handle air emissions and the Environment Agency has been consulted on these. The details of air quality will be carefully considered by the Environment Agency through the determination of the environmental permit. Unless the plant can operate to the necessary standards of air emissions it will not be granted a permit and would not be able to proceed. The Environment Agency has confirmed that it considers well managed, modern energy from waste facilities do not cause significant pollution. Therefore I am satisfied that air quality issues have been taken into account and will be dealt with in detail through the appropriate process, as required by SEP policy E7.
80. This development would provide an alternative to landfilling for Oxfordshire's waste. Landfilling has an impact on air quality due to the escape of gases such as methane, which happens even when there are facilities to capture gases. Landfill gases that are captured are burnt which also results in an impact on air quality. A development which reduces landfilling therefore has the potential to improve air quality. However, this development would also create emissions from the incineration process, which would have the potential to have an adverse impact on air quality. The ES sets out the incorporated mitigation measures and states that the plant would be operated in accordance with the requirements of the Waste Incineration Directive (WID). The plant could not operate if it did not meet these requirements. Therefore, I consider that this development would be in accordance with the aims of SEP policy NRM9.
81. The development would involve the use and storage of hazardous substances. This would be a matter for the permit to consider in detail but there is no reason to believe that this would be unacceptable in principle in this location, which is some distance from residential properties. Pollution issues are considered above and will also be considered by the Environment Agency as part of the permit application. I do not consider that there would be harm to amenity as a result of heat from this development, due to the

condenser and the distance between the plant and residential properties. Therefore, subject to the appropriate conditions, this development would not unacceptably harm the amenities of neighbouring properties and would therefore accord with VLP policy DC9.

Proximity to local population

82. There are a number of factors to take into account in determining whether this development would have an adverse impact on local amenity. The proposed EfW facility is approximately 550 m from the nearest properties. I consider that this distance will mean that the development would not cause a loss of privacy, daylight or sunlight. Although it would be a visible feature in the landscape it would not cause a significant impact on any particular property in terms of dominance or visual intrusion. External lighting would be controlled by condition to ensure it would not have a detrimental impact on local amenity.

Odour and Dust

83. Odour and dust would be managed as the operations would be carried out inside a building kept under slight negative pressure and the air drawn would be used in the combustion process. The Environmental Permit would control odour. There has been no objection from the Environmental Health Officer in terms of noise and this would be controlled by condition.

Noise

84. There is the potential for the noise impact of the site to be reduced if operations take place inside a building and the number of vehicles moving over the landfill site itself are reduced. The development design incorporates mitigation and the noise study in the ES shows that with this mitigation, noise levels from the development would not be significant in either the construction or operational stage at the identified sensitive receptors. Therefore noise has been considered in line with PPG24 and the development is not considered to increase noise pollution. The proposal does not conflict with the aims of SEP policy NRM9. There has been no objection from the Environment Agency or the Environmental Health Officer regarding contaminated land.

Impacts on Water Environment and Flooding

85. A flood risk assessment has been submitted with this application. The Environment Agency has been consulted and has provided advice regarding flooding in line with PPS25. The Environment Agency has confirmed that the flood risk assessment is acceptable. The development is not likely to increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. Therefore the proposal accords within VLP policy DC13 and OMWLP W7(c).
86. There have been particular concerns that this development would pose a threat to the water environment as there would be a risk of leaching from the APCR landfill site into local watercourses and the Thames. However, the

hazardous landfill area would be lined with clay in order to prevent leaching. The proposal will also be subject to the environmental permit application process which will ensure that the development would not lead to pollution. Therefore the development would be in accordance with SEP policy NRM1 and OMWLP W7(c).

Traffic and transport

87. SEP policy T2 provides guidance for the formulation of policies aimed at ensuring that the environmental impact of traffic movements related to any development is minimal. I consider that this development is consistent with the general aims of this policy, subject to a routeing agreement to ensure that HGVs do not use roads passing through sensitive villages.
88. The applicant has agreed to enter into a routeing agreement to ensure that the current arrangements for HGV routeing continues. This agreement would ensure that most vehicles use the Didcot Perimeter Road and not the villages of Sutton Courtenay, Appleford or Long Wittenham. In the current routeing agreement for the site there is the provision for some roadside collection vehicles which have been collecting waste in the local area to use the northern access. It is proposed to continue this, but not increase the use of the northern access. Therefore subject to this agreement the proposal is in accordance with OMWLP policy SC3.
89. Transport Development Control have confirmed that the access is safe and, subject to a legal agreement securing financial contributions to Didcot Integrated Transport Strategy the road network can accommodate additional traffic arising as a result of this development. Provision is made for parking and loading off the highway and the other requirements of VLP policy DC5 are also met. Therefore the proposal is in accordance with this policy.
90. As a result of the EfW plant, waste to landfill by road would be reduced from 350,000 tpa to 100,000 tpa. Waste to landfill would predominantly be commercial and industrial waste and would therefore be bulked before being delivered. It is estimated that once the EfW is operational, as much as 90% of waste to landfill would be bulked. As this would be different to the existing input to landfill the number of HGV movements would be reduced.
91. Transport Development Control's view is that the site is well located in respect of the surrounding strategic road network to receive imported waste from around the county and is an existing resource recovery park. The existing site access is suitable for the proposed traffic generation and there is capacity within the highway network to cater for vehicles associated with the EfW.
92. Transport Development Control has also requested a travel plan, a construction travel plan and funding for monitoring the travel plan. This would be in accordance with SEP policy T5.

Operating Hours

93. The application proposes that deliveries are made to the plant between 6 am and 8 pm 7 days per week. This is longer than the standard operating hours usually applied to minerals and waste permissions in Oxfordshire. The standard hours are 7 am to 6 pm Monday to Friday and 7 am to 1 pm Saturday with no working on a Sunday. This is proposed for the APCR landfilling and these standard hours could also be imposed by condition for the waste deliveries to the site. However, I do not consider that this restriction of hours is necessary in this location. The plant is located some distance from residential areas and HGVs delivering to the site will not pass through the residential areas. Therefore, I recommend that a condition is imposed reflecting the operating hours which have been applied for.

Other Issues

Design

94. The application includes a predictive Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) assessment. This assesses the performance of the proposed buildings in areas such as materials, energy consumption, transport and health. This suggests that the buildings would achieve a minimum rating of 'good' and conserve resources. I am satisfied with the conclusions reached in this assessment. Therefore consideration has been given to measures to conserve energy and other resources, in accordance with SEP policy CC4.
95. I consider that the design of this development is of a high quality. Although it is a large and tall building this is necessary for its function and the design has been carefully considered to ensure that it is more interesting than a simple box shaped industrial building. The mass of the building is broken up by a layered design. Consideration has been given to materials and detailing and the relationship to adjoining open space. Overall I consider that the layout, scale, mass, height, detailing, materials used and its relationship to adjoining buildings and open space do not adversely affect those attributes that make a positive contribution to the character of the locality, which is supported by VLP policy DC1.
96. The policy also requires design to take into account local distinctiveness and character. However, although it may take it into account it would be difficult for a building of this type to reflect local character due to its nature and the fact that there are not many surrounding buildings and few of this scale. It is possible that the building could positively enhance the character of the local area, as it would be a distinctive and unusual building. However, design is subjective and there are many local residents concerned that the building would be an eyesore.
97. The facility is designed to be secure and deter crime in accordance with VLP policy DC3. Additionally the landfill site is currently closed overnight and there have been problems with people trespassing over the site. This plant would

be easier to secure and the continuous operation of an EfW building and presence of employees on site has the potential to reduce this trespassing.

Ecology

98. SEP policy NRM5 states that local planning authorities should avoid a net loss of biodiversity, and actively pursue opportunities to achieve a net gain across the region.
99. Comments from the various interested bodies on biodiversity (including Natural England and the County Ecologist) conclude that they accept the mitigation measures put forward to address any impacts on biodiversity. Indeed the landscape and restoration proposals may well result in an increase in habitats of value to biodiversity and the net impacts of the development will be positive within the site and local area. This would be in accordance with SEP policy NRM5.
100. In addition, there are several SSSIs within 10 km of the application site boundary and concerns have been raised about the indirect impact of this development on these sites. Natural England have confirmed that they have no objection in terms of potential air pollution impacts on any designated sites.
101. There are also 2 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) within 10 km of the proposed site. These are Little Wittenham and Cothill Fen. In considering the possible impact of the proposed development on the SACs (and whether an Appropriate Assessment would be required), Natural England appointed an air quality consultant to review the proposal. As a result of the consultant's findings, Natural England have confirmed that this proposal is unlikely to have a significant effect, alone or in combination with other plans or projects on the SACs, and therefore an Appropriate Assessment is not required.

Historic Environment

102. English Heritage have confirmed that they do not object to this application. The development would not be visible from public walking routes within the conservation area. There might be some visibility of the chimney stack from the private spaces behind some residential properties. However, this would be limited and the stack would be in the distance. Therefore I do not consider that this development would cause any harm to Sutton Courtenay conservation area or its setting. Therefore it would preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area in line with VLP policy HE1.
103. Specialist heritage advice has been sought from English Heritage in line with PPG15. The proposed development would not have a significant impact on the conservation area or listed buildings in Sutton Courtenay.
104. The application site is on an area that has previously been worked for sand and gravel and is landfilled, except the hazardous waste landfill area which has been worked but not yet landfilled. Therefore there is no archeological interest and there is no need to consider policies in relation to the protection

of archeological remains. The County Archaeologist has not objected to this application.

Rights of Way

105. There have been no objections from the rights of way team. Although the proposal would lead to an increase in traffic on a designated right of way and potentially affect the attractiveness to users of routes within the site, the development also offers potential improvements to the rights of way system within the site and also off-site.
106. This development would retain the existing rights of way in-situ, in accordance with OMWLP policy PE11. Rights of way on the site would be improved and the applicant is willing to enter into a legal agreement to improve off-site improvements. This is also in accordance with OMWLP PE18.
107. The proposal to maintain and improve existing rights of way is in accordance with SEP policy C6. Although there would be additional traffic movements on an existing BOAT and a potential effect on the attractiveness of some routes, a satisfactory mitigation scheme has been submitted. I consider that these improvements would mitigate any adverse impact on the rights of way.
108. The consultation response from the British Horse Society also refers to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan. As the development proposes improvements to the rights of way network to mitigate any adverse impact, I do not consider that the aims of this plan would be compromised by this development.

Climate Change

109. Moving waste up the waste hierarchy assists in making a significant contribution to limiting the effects of climate change. In this case the electricity generated by the development saves on fossil fuel use. In addition, the EfW building has been designed with energy efficiency in mind as it is aimed at achieving a BREEAM rating of 'good' which measures the sustainability of the building.

Energy

110. The proposed development includes the potential for CHP but no detailed scheme for its utilisation. The applicant has provided details of a potential scheme for CHP (as supported by SEP policy W12) but has not provided a detailed plan for its utilisation. Therefore at this point the proposal is not consistent with the aims of NRM12 which encourages that CHP be included in all developments.

Employment

111. Although the main purpose of the development is not to provide employment, the development would create 50 full time jobs. Therefore the proposal must

be considered against SEP policy RE3. The site is close to urban areas such as Didcot and has good accessibility by car. The accessibility by public transport is less good and given the 24 hour operation of the plant it may be difficult for some employees to travel to work by public transport. 220 people would be employed during the 34 month construction phase. The highways authority has requested that a condition be placed on any permission granted requiring a travel plan for the construction phase. This would help ensure sustainable means of transport are used. In general I consider that this is consistent with SEP policy RE3.

Alternative Sites

112. The applicant has carried out an analysis of alternative sites for the EfW proposal as required by the EIA regulations. The alternative site appraisal was fairly extensive and considered 229 sites. These sites were subject to an initial desk based appraisal taking into account site size, availability, compatibility with development plan policy, suitability of access and proximity to incompatible land uses. As a result of this initial appraisal 218 sites were rejected and 11 were shortlisted (these included both Sutton Courtenay and Ardley).
113. The remaining 11 sites were subjected to a more detailed appraisal using a system of scoring which covered the planning vision, sensitive human receptors, landscape and visual consideration, potential impacts on the natural and historic environment, road access, rail and water transport, energy utilisation, flood risk and ground water vulnerability, aerodrome safeguarding areas, air quality management areas and the green belt.
114. I am satisfied that the applicant has undertaken an assessment of alternative sites that is sufficient to satisfy the EIA regulations. The applicant has put forward this site for the proposed development and this proposal now has to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Landfill Proposals

115. The development of an EfW plant creates a need for a facility to handle the APCR that would be produced. APCR is classified as a hazardous waste and, therefore, must be disposed of within a designated hazardous waste landfill site. The application seeks permission to incorporate a hazardous waste landfill area to dispose of this waste. This need could potentially be met by an alternative hazardous waste landfill site so arguably there is not a definite need for the facility which cannot be met elsewhere as required by OMWLP W7(a). However, in this case there are clear advantages to reducing waste transport by dealing with the waste on the site from which it arises.
116. The proposed hazardous waste landfill site is approximately 3 miles (5 km) from the nearest SSSI and SAC at Little Wittenham. The County Ecologist does not consider that the hazardous waste landfilling would cause any damage to these sites. This area already has consent for landfilling and

therefore the archaeological issues have been considered. Therefore the landfill proposal is in accordance with OMWLP W7(d) and (e).

117. Allowing the deposit of hazardous waste in this area of the permitted landfill site would not have any effect on any AONB and the site is not in the Green Belt. Therefore the development is in accordance with OMWLP W7(f) and (g).
118. The APCR would be produced and deposited within the Sutton Courtenay site and therefore would not need to travel on a public road. Therefore the proposal is in accordance with OMWLP W7(h.) The application does not include any proposal to import hazardous waste from elsewhere to landfill here.
119. The proposals would not be granted an Environmental Permit if it does not meet the hydrological and geological requirements for safe disposal. Therefore OMWLP policy W7(j) would be satisfied.
120. A restoration plan has been submitted for the hazardous waste landfill area and it is considered high quality, in line with SEP policy W14. A 5 year aftercare would be required by condition, as encouraged by this policy.
121. The timing of the restoration of the landfill cells can be required by condition, therefore ensuring that the site is restored within a reasonable timescale after the completion of landfilling, in line with OMWLP PE13. The agricultural restoration is considered appropriate to the agricultural surroundings. The proposed restoration is progressive, in accordance with OMWLP W7(i).

Conclusions

122. There is strong support in the South East Plan and elsewhere to permit appropriate waste treatment facilities to move waste up the hierarchy and help meet targets to divert waste away from landfill. These policies support provision of facilities such as EfW plants to deal with waste as part of a balanced/integrated strategy. Oxfordshire County Council is aiming to do this by achieving comparatively low waste arisings, high recycling rates, garden and food waste treatment and residual disposal through an appropriate facility.
123. The proposed facility would have a throughput of 220,000tpa and is intended to take commercial, industrial and municipal waste from Oxfordshire only. There is a need to provide for at least 425,000tpa of residual waste from these sources. Whilst Sutton Courtenay is not within or adjacent to a built up area, it is close to Didcot and Abingdon and well related to the strategic road network which serves Oxfordshire as a whole. It is therefore well placed to meet the need that exists.
124. There is conflict with policies which seek to prevent permanent built development in the countryside. There is however some support in the South East Plan for locating waste management facilities at mineral and waste sites

which is proposed here. The visual impact on the countryside would be reduced by extensive screening and landscaping.

125. There are potential impacts for the local population. However, there have been no objections from those statutory consultees with relevant responsibilities on matters such as flooding, health, pollution and transport grounds as long as appropriate measures are included by conditions and agreement. Local environmental impacts can be satisfactorily dealt with by conditions and agreement.
126. A routing agreement would ensure that HGVs (other than local collections vehicles) are routed along the A4130 which would largely avoid HGVs travelling through local villages.
127. The development is contrary to policies that seek to protect the countryside and local landscape character. Whilst it would not be possible to fully hide the development, mitigation measures through landscaping, screening and good quality design would reduce the overall impact on the landscape.
128. In this case, I think that the need for a waste treatment facility to serve Oxfordshire, and the appropriateness of this location in relation to the strategic road network, justify granting planning permission.

RECOMMENDATION

129. **It is RECOMMENDED that**

(a) subject to legal agreements to cover the following matters:

(1) legal agreements to cover the following matters:

- (i) the routing of HGVs along such routes as to avoid travelling through local villages and urban areas;**
- (ii) a contribution of £43,824 (index linked) towards the Didcot Integrated Transport Strategy (DIDITS);**
- (iii) a limitation on the amount of tonnage to the EfW; a limitation on the amount of total waste being carried to the site by road; a limitation on the total number of vehicles using the secondary northern access and the number of vehicles travelling eastbound to the A4130;**
- (iv) a contribution of £1,000 towards the monitoring of a travel plan;**
- (v) the funding of a 25 year long term management plan for any approved restoration scheme;**
- (vi) a contribution towards mitigation measures for both on site and off site public rights of ways;**
- (vii) a restriction on the area from which waste can be imported (a hinterland).**

that the planning application for the development described in planning application SUT/APF/616/60-CM be approved subject to conditions to be determined by the Head of Sustainable Development but to cover matters to include the following

1. Compliance with details of application submitted (as revised). This includes a restriction to incinerating waste arising from within Oxfordshire only.
2. Detailed duration – 3 years.
3. Schedule of external materials to be agreed.
4. Noise levels.
5. Contaminated land risk assessment to be carried out.
6. Details of groundwater drainage scheme.
7. Development shall halt if previously unidentified contamination is discovered.
8. Details of piling or other foundation designs using penetrative methods to be submitted.
9. Details of final surfacing and containment arrangements for all areas used for storage of liquid fuels etc.
10. Details of underground land drainage scheme.
11. Details of all surface water drainage arrangements.
12. Total amount of waste to be imported to the site by road to be restricted to a maximum of 320,000 tpa.
13. A travel plan to be drawn up.
14. A construction travel plan to be drawn up.
15. Details of proposed cycle storage provision.
16. Final details of proposed car parking layout.
17. The northern site access onto the B4016 to be limited to 100 vehicle movement per day.
18. Macrophyte surveys of water bodies to be carried out.
19. Works in the vicinity of badger setts.
20. Great crested newt (GCN) surveys to be carried out. Should GCN be found to be present, a mitigation strategy should be prepared and licence obtained from Natural England.
21. An updated water vole survey to be carried out.
22. Water bodies should only be drained down in winter months (November to February inclusive).
23. Exclusion fencing to be erection around little plover nests.
24. No disturbance to grassland areas during the bird breeding season (March to August inclusive) as skylark are likely to be nesting there.
25. The quarry face which is a sand martin colony should not be removed during the bird breeding season (March to August inclusive).
26. No vegetation clearance to take place during the bird breeding season (March to August inclusive).
27. Details of any external lighting should be submitted for approval before development commences.

28. **Bat surveys to be carried out prior to removal of trees to determine whether the trees are being used as bat roosts.**
29. **A water vole strategy should be submitted.**
30. **A detailed restoration and landscaping scheme to be submitted.**
31. **A 25 year management and monitoring plan to be submitted.**
32. **Local liaison group to be established.**
33. **Details and scheduling of any night time construction activities to be agreed.**
34. **Hours of working to be agreed.**
35. **Dust suppression measure to be agreed.**
36. **Details of scheme to prevent pollution of watercourses.**
37. **No increase in infiltration through contaminated ground**
38. **Hydrogeological risk assessment to be agreed.**
39. **Final routing of waste heat recovering infrastructure.**
40. **Phasing of waste disposal.**
41. **Area of waste disposal to be solely for APCR from Sutton Courtenay EfW plant.**
42. **No reversing beepers except those whose noise levels adjust automatically to surrounding noise levels.**
43. **All internal site haul roads to be maintained.**

Informatives to cover:

- **Waste heat recovery infrastructure**
- **Oil and chemical storage areas**
- **Environmental Permit**
- **Water extraction and dewatering**
- **Discharge consents**
- **Works within 8 m of designated main rivers**
- **Culverting of watercourses**

- (b) **the application being referred to the Secretary of State as a significant departure from the development plan and the Secretary of State not calling in the application for his own determination.**
- (c) **the Head of Sustainable Development be authorised to refuse the application if the legal agreements recommended in (a) above are not completed within 10 weeks of the date of approval of the application.**

CHRIS COUSINS
Head of Sustainable Development

Background Papers: File Ref: SUT/APF/616/60-CM held in Environment & Economy, Speedwell House, Speedwell Street, Oxford.

October 2009

Environmental Statement

1. This application is supported by an Environmental Statement (ES). This ES contains sections on traffic and transport, air quality, ecology, landscape, hydrology and flood risk, land and contamination, noise and vibration and archaeology. The policy context, need and alternatives are also considered. The sections within the ES also consider the potential effects of the technical discipline upon others. For example air quality has been considered in relation to ecology.
2. The need and alternatives section considers alternative technologies, alternative site layouts and design and alternative sites for the development. The alternative sites appraisal considers 229 sites in Oxfordshire and concludes that no other site is better placed to serve the county.
3. The section on traffic and transport assesses the environmental impact of the changes in traffic flow in terms of visual impact, severance, driver delay, pedestrian delay, pedestrian amenity and accidents and safety. The proposals would increase traffic flow on the adjacent network by less than 10% during periods of peak activity on the site and less than this at other times. It concludes that in terms of traffic there would be no perceptible environmental effect as a result of the proposed EfW plant.
4. The air quality and human health risk assessment considers the atmospheric emissions released from the stack and also from traffic. The impacts to community and ecological receptors are assessed using computer dispersion models. A long term human health assessment has been made to determine the effects of exposure to potential contaminants in the soil following 50 years of deposition. The assessment identifies a number of residual adverse impacts. However, the significance of these impacts is considered to be negligible, except for the air quality effects from stack emissions, which are considered to be negligible/moderate adverse. The assessment concludes that the effects on the vegetation and ecosystems are not predicted to be ecologically significant, the effects of emissions from operational traffic are not considered to be significant and the potential human health impact is not considered significant. The plant would incorporate an air pollution control system designed to minimise emissions to limits specified in the EU Waste Incineration Directive (WID). Overall, with control of emissions in accordance with the WID, effects are considered to be of neutral significance during both construction and operation.
5. The landscape and visual impact assessment finds that the proposed building would be visible from many viewpoints within the Didcot/Abingdon area and therefore the design of the building is very important. High quality design would reduce potential adverse visual effects. Distance would have a mitigating effect and the development would be screened from some viewpoints by trees and other buildings. The overall conclusion is that with

the mitigation that has been incorporated into the proposal, the development would not be likely to result in a significant effect.

6. The ecology and nature conservation section includes protected species surveys and a habitat survey. It considers the impact on species that may be affected by the development. The proposed development would cause the loss of the majority of the terrestrial habitat within the development site. However, this impact is assessed as minor. There would be a significant minor local level impact on breeding birds and in particular a significant, minor, district level impact on little ringed plover. Mitigation is proposed to address these impacts. This section concludes that the mitigation measures proposed have the potential to result in a positive long term effect on bird populations within the site boundary and wider area.
7. The hydrology and flood risk section concludes that the construction or operation of this development would not be expected to result in an adverse effect on hydrology. Monitoring and management strategies will be implemented to monitor the environmental impact of the project including water quality monitoring, drainage and emergency spillage.
8. The geology, hydrogeology and land contamination section details the mitigation measures that would be used to ensure that there would be no discharge of pollutants to groundwater during construction and that water quality is not compromised during the operational phase.
9. The noise and vibration chapter considers sensitive receptors in Appleford and Sutton Courtenay. It concludes that no significant effects from noise or vibration would be likely to arise at residential properties.
10. The community and social effects section considers the employment that the development would generate to be a slight positive benefit.
11. The archaeology and culture heritage section considers the nearby listed buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM), registered Park and Gardens and Conservation Areas. It finds that these cultural sites and their settings would not be affected by the development. It considers that no further action is required regarding below-ground archaeology because the area has previously been quarried and potential for remains is negligible.
12. The amenity section states that the potential for the development to cause litter, pests, vermin and dust, can be adequately mitigated through measures such as the handling of waste within the building and ensuring waste is dealt with promptly. It also suggests that the removal of the municipal waste from the waste stream to landfill would reduce the potential for litter, flies, rats and seagulls at landfill sites across the county, leading to a minor beneficial impact of district importance.

Environmental Statement Addendum

13. Following revisions to the application and requests for the submission of further information, the applicant provided an Environmental Statement Addendum. This provides supplementary information for the Environmental Statement (ES).
14. This includes the Human Health Risk Technical Appendix that was omitted when the ES was originally submitted. This provides the technical background work referred to in the Human Health Risk Assessment.
15. A revised air quality and human health risk assessment has been provided. The amended assessment includes some minor amendments to the technical work. However, the amendments to the application have not altered the nature of the development or the stack. There is no change to the significance of the likely effect on the environment.
16. An odonta (dragonflies and damselflies) and lepidoptera (butterflies) survey has been submitted which concludes that once the proposed mitigation and enhancement is in place, it is considered that the proposed scheme would have an overall positive impact on dragonfly and butterfly populations in the area. Mitigation includes the proposed balancing ponds with features to benefit dragonflies, and the landscaping scheme which would provide further breeding habitat for butterflies.
17. A Noise and Vibration Assessment of the proposed APCR landfill site has been supplied. This concludes that the activities proposed would not have any significant effects at any noise sensitive receptors.
18. The ES addendum provides a revised description of development section reflecting the proposed changes to the development. The details of the proposals are provided above.
19. A revised landscape and visual assessment has been provided to assess the impacts of the amended scheme including the changes to the building elevations and the revised landscaping scheme.
20. A section on cumulative impacts considering developments such as the Asda storage and distribution centre and the Great Western Park development has been submitted to supplement the chapter on ecology. This concludes that there would be no significant cumulative impact.
21. The ES addendum also responds to the issues raised by consultees in the first consultation period. A surface water management plan has been supplied to supplement the Flood Risk Assessment, as required by the Environment Agency in the first consultation. An ecological assessment using new critical levels for ammonia has been submitted as required by Natural England. Individual points raised by consultees are also addressed.
22. There is no change to the overall ES conclusion.

Further Environmental Statement Revisions

23. Further amendments and revisions to the ES were submitted in August 2009.
24. The traffic assessment considers the reduced number of vehicle movements associated with bringing 225,000 tpa of waste from Oxfordshire only, rather than 300,000 tpa from Oxfordshire and Berkshire. The conclusion remains that there would be no noticeable transport or highways effects.
25. The revised air quality ES chapter considers the changes to the building including increased building height and length and changes to the roof profile. These changes were first proposed as part of the February 2009 consultation. It also considers the changes to the development outlined in the July 2009 amendments including the reduction in capacity and changes in the emission parameters of the proposed facility due to revised data from the technology provider. There is no significant change to the conclusions and it shows that all relevant air quality standards and environmental assessment limits are achieved.
26. There is no change to the visual and landscape, socio-economic, amenity, archaeology, or hydrogeology and ground conditions chapters.
27. The ecology section includes increased planting as a result of the change to the masterplan. It concludes that this planting would have a significantly beneficial impact at the local level. A water body that was previously to be drained is now proposed to be retained which would be restored to provide an improved habitat for two pairs of little ringed plover. Under the previous proposal this habitat would have been lost. There is no change to the overall conclusion that there would be a neutral/positive impact in the long term.
28. The hydrology section includes changes to the surface water management strategy to address the Environment Agency's objection.
29. The noise assessment considers the reduced capacity plant. The overall conclusions remain unchanged.

Consultation Responses

1. Sutton Courtenay Parish Council

First Consultation

Objects. Site location – this area is designated as an area for landscape enhancement and an area of important open land. This would not comply with policy NE11 and N9. Would be a major blot on the landscape after the cooling towers are decommissioned. Not in accordance with Oxfordshire Structure Plan (OSP) EN1 regarding enhancement of landscape character and EN4 regarding historic parks and gardens.

Transport - should the life of the site be extended to 2030 the lorry movements would not decrease should the incinerator be granted consent. No evidence that opportunities to reduce the impact of HGVs have been considered. Cumulative effect of transport arising from different developments in the area needs to be considered. Additional traffic would affect already congested junctions. Effects of pollution from traffic must be considered. Although HGVs may be routed away from villages, there would be an increase in car traffic through the villages from staff. The vibration could damage listed buildings. No proposals to monitor compliance with conditions or section 106 agreement.

Noise – village already suffers noise pollution and this will add to it.

Emissions – Didcot Power Station microclimate has not been taken into account. The application to the Environment Agency for a licence should be made now so that the pollution implications of the application can be considered. WRG have a poor track record at their Eastcroft incinerator in Nottinghamshire. Application does not take into account risk when there is an accident, it assumes normal operation. It does not consider the different emissions at start up and shut down. Application does not consider the historic garden at the Manor House at Sutton Courtenay or the Scheduled Ancient Monument. Oxfordshire County Council's consultants stated that this site was not suitable for thermal treatment unless it could be established that it would not impact on the SAC at Little Wittenham. There is no evidence that this has been shown.

Health – PPS23 states that potential impacts on health from a development is capable of being a material planning consideration. Fourth report of the British Society for Ecological Medicine refers to new data. While it is recognised that there have been few studies of populations exposed to incinerator emissions, most show higher levels of disease and birth defects. The Human Health Risk Assessment is missing from the Environmental Statement. No reference is made to the proposal by Thames Water to construct a reservoir. Impact of pollution on this drinking has not been considered.

Fly Ash and APCR – APCR provides a threat to groundwater. The land, ground and surface water will be polluted for many years. The water table is high and a breach would cause risk to public health and the environment. It is important to retain remaining ground water flow paths with no impermeable barriers. Hanson were required to restore to a wetland at Bridge Farm in order to ensure this.

Loss of Amenity – safety of users of the rights of way are at risk, both during construction and operation. Loss of amenity and open character of the existing site.

Conditions – if permission is granted request the following conditions:

PN5(b)

- Restriction on volume of waste to ensure that predicted levels of traffic are not exceeded
- routeing agreement, with monitoring of northern access
- construction traffic routeing plan
- limit on number of vehicles by road
- section 106 for financial contribution to off site travel measures
- environmental monitoring scheme for construction and operation
- restriction on external lighting
- restrictions on open storage of waste
- restriction to ensure waste is from Oxfordshire only
- controls on movement of ash
- noise limits
- landscaping
- energy generation

More waste should be recycled. Regards proposal as an increased concentration of industrial facilities in an area of 'open land' close to residential population.

Encloses a critique of the Environmental Statement by a local environmental consultant.

2. Appleford Parish Council

First Consultation

Object. Visual impact, would not be possible to adequately screen it and so would not accord with OMWLP. Would have an adverse impact on long, open views and so would not accord with policy NE9 of VLP. Would have a significant impact on road network. The traffic assessment assumes the offset of traffic volumes in permissions that have not yet been issued but they envisage that these activities would in fact overlap, leading to HGV increase above the 5% stated. The site is not served by public transport and so there is a fear there would be a substantial increase in car movements. Impact of noise from traffic and 24 hour operation. Village already suffers noise from the landfill site. The microclimate created by Didcot Power Station has not been taken into account. Application has not been made for Pollution Prevention Control Permit, despite guidance that states the planning application and PPC application should be made in parallel. Consideration of planning application should be delayed to allow the two applications to be considered together. WRG has breached emission levels at its incinerator in Nottinghamshire. The application does not take into account the risk of accident, normal operation is assumed. Immediate setting of the Thames and the Special Area of Conservation should be protected in accordance with the development plan. Concerned about health risks, refers to the Fourth Report of the British Society for Ecological Medicine reports. Application does not propose continuous monitoring only a reaction when things go wrong. The impact of the incinerator on water resources has not been properly investigated. The potential impact associated with piling operation is not assessed. Might create a pathway for the migration of contamination to the underlying aquifer. Concerned about leaching of the hazardous waste landfill, which is located in a high water table area near the Thames. Should the County Council be minded to approve this application, conditions are suggested to cover noise, handling of hazardous waste, restrictions on open storage of waste, outside lighting. There should be restrictions to the volume of waste that the EfW can process, a routeing agreement, monitoring for the

limit on traffic using the northern access, a construction vehicle management plan, no waste should be brought in from outside Oxfordshire, there should be contributions towards off-site transport measures. The bag filters used should be suitable to trap PM2.5 particulates.

Second Consultation

Support the objections from the Vale of White Horse District Council. If this technology is to be permitted it should be located somewhere with less of an impact on the landscape. There is growing concern about the health risks of incineration, especially the small particles which are not trapped in the chimneys. There are better alternative non-combustion technologies available. It is impossible to prove that combustion is totally safe or totally dangerous, but we hope OCC will not take the incineration risk, especially when any damaging medical results are only finally discovered long term. We realise that OCC wish to avoid the increasing EU landfill fines, and we believe this is possible with alternative technology of a non-combustion type, which WRG operate on other sites.

Alternative technologies can operate economically on a smaller scale, and that could have considerable traffic benefits. More than one alternative technology plant could mean much more localised deliveries of waste, and cut down overloaded road usage. The recent subsidiary WRG application greatly enlarges the scale of their operation. Possibility that site would continue to grow and take waste from further away until there is a regional waste centre, with specialist waste operators in addition to WRG. Waste should be strictly confined to Oxon only, as originally proposed.

We believe that with escalating carbon taxes in the future, there could be important longer term economic arguments against the incineration process, whereas non-incineration methods could avoid or at least lessen this. If this economic case is correct, OCC could get themselves into a very expensive 25 year contract, when it could be avoided at the outset.

We wish to be constructive in the search to find alternatives to landfill. We believe that OCC should turn down the current planning application, especially the extension beyond Oxon, and encourage WRG to submit an application based on smaller scale and alternative non-combustion technology which might then acquire the actual support of the many local critics.

Additional Consultation response dated 1 June 2009

Object. Do not believe that Oxfordshire County Council and the Environment Agency can assure people in Appleford that there are no risks. The village has put up with odour, flies and vermin from the landfill site for 40 years. The original application has now been amended to make the infrastructure larger and bring in waste from outside the county. Oxfordshire County Council has failed to seek independent advice on waste disposal and has instead assumed that the EA and the operators will regularly monitor the site. Have had 40 years of broken promises and alteration of conditions from those who should monitor the site.

3. Dorchester on Thames Parish Council

First Consultation

Object. Impact on Chilterns and North Wessex Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and Wittenham Clumps Special Area for Conservation (SAC). Industrialisation of a rural area. Will result in an expansion of waste management facilities on this site, which will have a further impact on the landscape. No attempt to design the building to make it in harmony with surroundings. Would like evidence that illumination required for 24 hour working would not spill and pollute. There should be a condition covering light pollution. Not satisfied with the Flood Risk Assessment (FRA.) Concern about contaminated flood water. Perception of harm is a valid planning concern and are concerned that there is better technology available. EfW plants can also be smaller scale. Disappointed that OCC did not consult on what would be appropriate technology. Forecast increase in road traffic is based on assumptions about the source of waste. As recycling increases waste will have to come from further, unless there is an increase in local housing. Would like to know the assumptions about the future population of the county that underpin the traffic forecasts. PPS10 shows that EfW is only one position higher in the waste hierarchy than landfill. Reuse and recycling should be encouraged but this development may reduce them. If smaller, less expensive installations were adopted these consequences would be less likely. A proportion of waste should be brought in by rail.

4. Culham Parish Council

Second Consultation

Strongly object. Alternative waste disposal strategies should be considered. Contrary to local plan policies NE9, NE10, EN1, EN2, EN4, G2. Would destroy open rural land, not enhance Oxfordshire's landscape character, cause the loss of habitat for protected species (little ringed plovers and skylarks), have an adverse impact on listed building and conservation area and cause harm to the character of the area through the size of the facility. Plant is larger than necessary to deal with Oxfordshire's waste and this is confirmed by the proposal to bring in waste from Berkshire. Independent assessment of alternative sites should be carried out. This site is on aquifer in flood zone and in a high humidity climate. Will dominate flat landscape. Will cause noise impact. Concern about how these will be monitored. In terms of traffic, the application does not consider the impact in relation to other developments such as commercial developments at Milton Park, the land adjacent to the Asda warehouse, proposed new housing developments or the Bridge Farm quarry. Concern about emissions, especially in relation to the microclimate created by Didcot Power Station. Application only assesses risk during normal operation, not in the event of an accident. Does not take into account the increased emissions during start up and shut down. Refers to the Fourth report of the British Society for Ecological Medicine and concerns about health. Concern about impact of APCR disposal on aquifer. Not all toxic pollutants will be continuously monitored. Loss of amenity due to public perception of health risks, loss in air quality, visual impact and effect on public rights of way. Oxfordshire County Council has a duty of care and should not allow an incinerator without adequate research into safety.

5. Didcot Town Council

Second Consultation

No objection to incinerator, concerned about increase in traffic.

Third Consultation

Welcome the reduction in capacity and the associated reduction in traffic movements.

6. Sunningwell Parish Council

Second Consultation

Object to any further progress until an independent environmental impact assessment has been undertaken and published and until the legitimate concerns of objectors have been met. Concerned about risks to public health.

7. Long Wittenham Parish Council

Second consultation

Object. Have conducted a survey and found that the majority of residents oppose this proposal. Endorses the responses of SODC and the Vale. Supports the objections made by Sutton Courtenay Against Incineration (SCAI). Request that the St Dennis incinerator application in Cornwall is taken into account as a planning precedent. Request that no decision is made on the planning application until the EA have completed the permitting process. Development is contrary to the South Oxfordshire Local Plan. There would be an adverse impact on the local landscape including the AONB and Wittenham Clumps. The proposed plant is bigger than all existing units currently operating in the UK. The development presents a potential flood risk. It has not been demonstrated how energy will be fed into the national grid. If heat cannot be recovered with power than it is not fully in compliance with DEFRA's advice that heat recovery makes plants more efficient. Air quality modelling has not been the subject of robust, independent audit. Must consider microclimate and military helicopter down-draft effect. Government urges anaerobic digestion where there is separate food waste collection. Lack of transparency regarding how this technology was selected for this site.

8. Berinsfield Parish Council

Second Consultation

Objects on the following grounds:

- the proposal conflicts with the local development framework
- the visual impact of the development
- risk to health from air emissions and emissions entering the food chain.

9. Abingdon Town Council

Second Consultation

Concurs with the views of Sutton Courtenay Parish Council. There is insufficient evidence to allay public fears about health risks. Concerns for the safety of the water supply due to the proximity of the plant to the River Thames and proposed new reservoir. Notes that the applicant's claim that the stack height will mean there will not be local pollution, but also concerned about pollution elsewhere. Proposals are contrary to policies NE10 and NE11 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan.

10. Vale of White Horse District Council Local Councillor Gervase Duffield

First Consultation

The Vale is keen to restore the view from Wittenham Clumps south across the Downs. It is currently marred by Didcot A but this is due to be removed by 2015 and the view could be restored unless the massive incinerator building repeats the mistake. Traffic congestion in this area is horrific and getting worse. The roads around Ardley are better and it is close to the M40. The most serious issue is the medical one, particularly small particles. It is not good enough to say we can tick an Environment Agency box when there is the possibility of long term health damage. There are alternative technologies that avoid this medical problem.

11. Vale of White Horse District Council

First Consultation

Objects. Contrary to policies GS2, NE9 and NE11 of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011. Would have an adverse effect on an open rural landscape, particularly having regard to the likely demolition of Didcot A and its cooling towers in the next 5-7 years.

The proposal represents a potential flood risk as demonstrated by the objection received by the Environment Agency. The proposal does not conclusively demonstrate how the energy generated from the EfW incinerator will be fed into the national grid. No draft legal agreement or heads of terms have been submitted to show how the potential cumulative impact of the proposed use, along with existing permissions on the site, will be controlled to ensure that there is no significant impact on the local highway network. The cumulative impact assessment of other large scale developments in the area has omitted the redevelopment of the 40s, 50s and 60s site at Milton Park. The assessment of the impact on local air quality relies solely on a model which has not been the subject of a robust independent audit. The Human Health Risk Assessment has not been submitted to the District which has concerns that the proposed incinerator could have an adverse impact on human health. The Environmental Statement has not used the new lower critical levels of ammonia in the analysis of the impacts from potential air pollutants. No independent assessment of the Environmental Statement has taken place to ensure it provides sufficient detail for a proper assessment, to validate the EIA methodology and to ensure that all legal obligations have been fulfilled. It has not been demonstrated that alternative new technologies have been considered for the disposal of non-recyclable waste on this site.

It is a matter for the County Council to assess whether the proposal can be justified as an exception to these policies. It is acknowledged that the remaining objections may be overcome by the submission of further information, the consideration of the work by independent third parties and the use of planning conditions regarding noise and contaminated land.

Third Consultation

Environmental Health Officer - I have no further observations to make in respect of this other than that I would expect any emissions to be reduced in line with the reduced plant capacity. Having been through the earlier iterations of this application I have no intention of going through the whole library of documents again unless there are any significant changes in plant or predicted emissions or air quality modelling.

12. South Oxfordshire District Council

First Consultation

Planning - Object. The proposed development lies within the Vale of White Horse District, but lies close to the District of South Oxfordshire. Relevant policies from the South Oxfordshire Local Plan (SOLP) G2, G6, C1, C2, EP1, EP2, EP3, EP4, EP5, EP6, EP7, EP8, EP9, T1, T2, T3.

SODC is in agreement with the recommendations of the Vale of White Horse District Council. In particular SODC objects to the application on the grounds that the development is contrary to policies G2, C1, C2, EP1 and EP5 of SOLP. The development would have an adverse impact on the local landscape including the AONB and Wittenham Clumps. The proposal represents a potential flood risk. It has not been conclusively demonstrated how the energy generated from the incinerator will be fed into the national grid. The assessment of the impact on local air quality relies on a model which has not been the subject of robust independent audit.

Drainage – recommends general foul and surface water drainage conditions are imposed on any permission granted, requiring details to be submitted and approved.

Air Quality Officer – the developers will have to apply to the Environment Agency for a PPC permit. This will outline strict construction and operational control measures to be implemented with regards to stack emissions. In terms of the output concentrations predicted by the modelling work undertaken I am satisfied that the construction and operation of the proposed development will not have a significant impact on local air quality in South Oxfordshire. However, I do not feel I have the technical knowledge to fully appraise the approach taken and the specific methods used within the modelling. Therefore it may be appropriate for the body determining the application to satisfy itself through independent scrutiny that the methods used and assumptions made were appropriate.

13. Environment Agency

First Consultation

Object. Flood Risk Assessment is insufficient to ensure that the proposed outline surface water drainage scheme is feasible on the site. Requests further information in relation to this. Also concerned about biodiversity. The infilling of two lakes is permitted under an existing consent. However, there should still be full surveys of these lakes to assess their value and determine appropriate mitigation. Further details of improvement of watercourses on site should be provided.

Second Consultation

Object. The submitted Surface Water Management Plan lacks some essential detail.

Second Consultation – Second Response

No objection subject to conditions. The Environment Agency is now satisfied that it will be feasible for the developer to incorporate a suitable surface water drainage scheme to manage surface water drainage without increasing the risk of surface water flooding to the surrounding area. A detailed surface water drainage scheme will need to be produced at a later stage. Recommends conditions on flood risk, contaminated land and groundwater quality, advice to the applicant and informatives.

Additional Statement

The Environment Agency has not made detailed comments on air quality or health risks from emissions from the plants. This is because the operation of these facilities is not a land use planning consideration. Any potential impacts to the environment and human health from operation will be considered as part of the determination under Environmental Permitting Regulations 2007. A permit will not be granted if the Environment Agency consider that there is likely to be significant pollution to the environment or harm to people's health. The Environment Agency considers that well managed, modern, energy from waste facilities do not cause significant pollution. If a permit is issued the Environment Agency would continually monitor the facility and take appropriate enforcement action in the event of any breach of permit requirements.

Third Consultation

None of the proposed amendments to the development materially affect the EA's previous comments. Still satisfied that developer can incorporate a suitable surface water drainage scheme to manage surface water run-off without increasing surface water flooding to surrounding area. Developer has indicated they can incorporate features such as swales, ditches, balancing of attenuation lagoons and infiltration. Pleased that applicant has decided to move away from a pumped surface water drainage system to a gravity drained system. Support proposal to increase amount of planting in the landscape master plan and proposal to retain water body 19 purely for ecological enhancement and opportunities for enhancement within enlarged water body 7. Measures required to prevent migration or contamination through to surface water features and groundwater.

Consider the proposed development is only acceptable if following conditions are imposed to cover the following issues:

- Detailed surface water drainage scheme to be submitted.
- Maintenance of watercourses as part of the 25 year ecological management plan. No development to take place until scheme to prevent pollution of watercourses has been submitted.
- Detailed soft landscaping scheme to be submitted.
- Details of a method statement to deal with any contamination found during course of development to be submitted.
- Piling or any other foundation designs using penetrative methods will not be permitted unless with the express consent of the WPA.
- No increase in infiltration through contaminated ground.
- No development until a hydrogeological risk assessment has been submitted.
- No development until final surfacing and containment arrangements for all areas used for storage of fuels, oils, chemicals, effluents has been submitted.

Various informatives and advice to both the applicant and Planning Authority are also included covering issues of onsite heat recovery infrastructure, oil and chemical storage, the Environmental Permit, water extraction and de-watering, discharge consents, works within 8 metres of designated main rivers and culverting of watercourses.

14. English Heritage

First Consultation

The impact on the settings of conservation areas and listed buildings has not been examined rigorously. The landscape analysis should also consider viewpoints which have been selected to assess the impact of the building and chimney on the historic environment. Without this the conclusion that there is no impact on the local historic environment is an unsupported assertion.

Second Consultation

No objection. Do not wish to comment in detail, but offer general observations. Can confirm that English Heritage is now content with the analysis provided in the addendum to the Environmental Statement and the letter dated 1 December from RPS. It appears that the site is not visible from the public routes within the conservation area. There is potentially limited visibility from the private spaces to the rear of some residential properties which means that the proposed chimney might just be appreciable in the distance. English Heritage therefore raise no objection to this proposal.

15. Thames Water

First Consultation

No objection on terms of sewerage or water infrastructure.

16. National Grid

First , second and third consultations

No objection.

17. Health and Safety Executive

First Consultation

No objection on nuclear safety grounds, this decision is made without prejudice to the interests of other branches of the Health and Safety Executive.

Second Consultation

No further response.

Third Consultation

No objection on nuclear safety grounds, this decision is made without prejudice to the interests of other branches of the Health and Safety Executive.

18. MOD Safeguarding

First Consultation

No objection. Recommend that the chimney stack be lit, however it is at the developer's discretion.

19. SEERA

First Consultation

No objection. Observes that permission should only be granted if the proposed site's capacity to host a thermal facility has been adequately tested and that the proposal is capable of meeting environmental and amenity criteria in Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) and Draft South East Plan (DSEP) and that the highest pollution control standards are utilised and only residual waste is accepted. Short-term utilisation of waste heat should be fully considered. If permission is granted conditions or legal agreements should address mitigation measures for air quality, noise and traffic generation.

Second Consultation

Have previously commented and do not feel that the additional information raises any new regionally significant issues.

20. SEEDA

First Consultation

Recognise the importance of the provision of waste management facilities. Energy from Waste should only be used for pre-treated residual wastes. Applicant should actively seek to identify users of the excess heat generated. Welcomes the creation of 50 jobs and would welcome further information from the applicant on the types of full time employment opportunities created once the plant is operational.

Second and Third Consultations

No further comments in addition to those made in first consultation. Amended application does not alter the principal of the development, nor SEEDA's position to it.

21. CABE

First Consultation

This facility has the potential to become a good example of this building type. In principle, the building's design is sound, but have some reservations about the visitor's centre and the general detailing in terms of durability and low maintenance costs. Ultimately, the quality of the building will be dependant on the materials and detailing. Ensuring the façade is robust and solid, for example, will be crucial in ensuring low maintenance costs and the building's long life. Hope that the determining authority has assured themselves that nuisance for local residents is kept to a minimum.

Second Consultation

No objection. These views supersede all views expressed previously. Welcome changes to the design of the EfW plant. The more accentuated and slimmer form of the main hall gives the plant a more dynamic appearance. Disappointed that the design of the visitor centre has not been improved. Simplistic box design does not live up to its potential. Ultimately the quality of the building will depend on the materials and detailing.

22. Natural England

First Consultation

We have looked at the Environmental Statement that has been included with this application and are concerned that the new lower critical levels for ammonia ($3 \mu\text{g.m}^{-3}$ with uncertainty range of $2-4 \mu\text{g.m}^{-3}$ for higher plants, $1 \mu\text{g.m}^{-3}$ for sensitive lichens and bryophytes and habitats where they are considered key to ecosystem quality) have not been used in the analysis of the impacts from potential air pollutants. It is important that the new critical levels are applied in order to adequately assess potential significant effects on European and nationally designated sites. Natural England objects to this proposal, however if we receive further information using these revised levels we will re-visit our objection.

With regards to the ecological information supplied, we are satisfied with the ecological information given subject to the implementation of the recommended mitigation and protected species licences where required.

Second Consultation

Further specialist advice is being sought regarding the amendments to the ES chapter on air quality and human health.

The proposed development site lies outside the boundary of the North Wessex Downs AONB, but the site is within 3 kilometres of the nearest part of the AONB boundary. A notable public viewpoint within the AONB is Wittenham Clumps, within 5km of the site, from which there are panoramic views over the Vale of Oxford. Natural England considers that the degree of landscape change brought about by the proposed Energy from Waste plant would have a moderate adverse visual

impact on the AONB, which we would advise is a factor that the Planning Authority should take into consideration in evaluating and determining the application. From the information supplied, we do not consider that there is likely to be a major impact on the AONB's special qualities and distinctiveness which would clearly outweigh the potential public benefits of waste disposal and energy generation proposed in this case. Accordingly, Natural England does not object to the current proposal in relation to impacts on the North Wessex Downs AONB.

The proposed development will generate additional traffic. The Planning Authority should consider whether there is likely to be significant additional traffic on roads within the AONB area, which could impact on its local communities and public enjoyment of its special qualities, including tranquillity.

AONBs have been recognised by government to be of the very highest quality and as having the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of the natural beauty of the landscape and countryside should therefore be given great weight in planning policies and development control decisions in these areas. Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000 requires that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, all public bodies have a duty to have regard to the statutory purpose of AONBs, which is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of their areas.

The proposal would be a substantial development visible from a wide range of open viewpoints in local areas and the wider countryside. We would therefore advise that the County Council, in determining the application, should give careful consideration to the potential for minimising visual impact. This should include the use of colours, non-reflective surface textures, minimisation of angularity of roof outlines and the development placement within the site. As well as visual impacts, careful consideration should also be given to other potential perceptual impacts such as smell and noise.

Natural England raised initial concerns with regards to protected species at the pre-application stage in July 2008. These concerns were addressed by SLR Consulting in the form of a letter dated 15 July 2008 addressed to Ms Thompson at Oxfordshire County Council. Based upon the information provided Natural England does not wish to object to the proposal as providing suitable conditions are attached which secures the proposed mitigation it would seem unlikely that protected species would be adversely affected by the impacts of the development. The recommendations detailed in the letter dated 15 July 2008 by SLR Consulting should be attached as conditions.

Second Response to second consultation

Can now confirm that, as set out in letter of 9 February 2009, in Natural England's opinion this proposal is unlikely to have a significant effect, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, on the interest features of the above Special Areas of Conservation and therefore does not require appropriate assessment in accordance with Regulation 48 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994. In addition, the wider conservation interests of the above SSSIs are unlikely to be

adversely affected by the above proposal. Therefore Natural England does not object to the proposal in terms of air quality issues. Previous comments in relation to landscape and protected species issues still apply.

23. Network Rail

Response dated 12 June

No objection in principle to the proposal. Provides comments and requirements for the protection of the railway and Network Rail, including drainage, safety, ground levels, site layout, dust, noise, vibration, landscaping, plant scaffolding and cranes. These comments can be incorporated into planning conditions as appropriate.

24. BBOWT

First Consultation

No reason to believe that there would be significant negative impacts on biodiversity on-site. However concerned about potential impact off-site. OCC must consider whether an Appropriate Assessment is needed. Even if not emissions including atmospheric concentrations and depositions at SACs should be monitored. Welcome the proposed 25 year Ecological Management Plan. Suggests a species mix of higher conservation value be used in the creation of semi-improved grassland. Suggests the ornamental lake is designed to maximise biodiversity value. In combination with mitigation to increase habitat connectivity for bats, enhancements could be provided through the provision of bat hibernaculae and bat boxes.

Second Consultation

Understand that Natural England is satisfied that the proposals for the Sutton Courtenay site are unlikely to have a significant effect on SACs or SSSIs in the area. However, the assessment of air quality impacts on nature conservation sites has not looked at the impact of Local Wildlife Sites. Estimate that there are approximately 40 of these within the 10 km zone within which impacts on SACs and SSSIs have been considered. An assessment of air quality impacts on these sites is needed, particularly for those LWSs which support BAP habitats which are not found on the SSSIs. Suggest this information is requested to fully inform the decision on the application.

Third Consultation

Welcome the provision of an assessment of potential air quality impacts on Local Wildlife Sites and have no reason not to accept the assurances given with regard to the impacts. Understand that Natural England are also satisfied that SACs and SSSIs within the vicinity would not be adversely affected by emissions from the proposed incinerator.

25. Northmoor Trust

First Consultation

Not against the construction of the proposed facility in principle. Would like assurances on some matters. It is not clear whether the plant would include provision for extracting compostable or recyclable waste. It is crucial that these are included in the design of the building. Concerned about the potential impact of

emissions on the Wittenham Clumps. This site is internationally designated and the amphibian species found there are especially susceptible to pollution. Little evidence is provided to justify the claim that the development would not have significant ecological impacts. Would like reassurance that an Appropriate Assessment will be carried out and to know what procedures are in place to ensure that there is appropriate action of any emission limits are exceeded. Plans are not clear about whether water entering ponds will be treated before being discharged into the river system or about the capacity of these ponds to hold water in extreme rainfall events.

Second Response

Object. Share concern of Natural England that the new, lower, critical levels for ammonia have not been taken into account. It is not clear that the plant has been designed to include provision for the extraction of recyclable waste. Concerned about the potential effect of emissions on Wittenham Clumps as little substantive evidence is provided to justify the claim that the impacts of the development will not be ecologically significant. Would like assurance that an Appropriate Assessment will be carried out. Would like to know procedures for ensuring that there is immediate action of emission limits are breached. Plans do not make it clear if water in ponds would be treated before entering river system. It is not clear how well these ponds could hold water in extreme rainfall events.

26. Campaign to Protect Rural England

First Consultation:

Comments made to VOWH – find it difficult to see how this proposal will meet the criteria set out in VLP policies NE9, NE10 or NE11.

Letter dated 6 March 2009

Object. Contrary to VOWH Local Plan policies NE9, NE11 and NE10. Proposed buildings are ugly and bulky and chimney is tall.

27. Oxford Friends of the Earth

First Consultation

Object. The large scale of the building will cause visual intrusion. Will not fit with the historic character of Sutton Courtenay village. Will add to the visual harm from Didcot Power Station. Therefore would not accord with OSP W3 and G2. Building cannot be adequately screened and therefore it is not in accordance with W5. Concern about noise from construction at night. The application does not consider added nuisance as a result of traffic coming from parts of the county currently serviced elsewhere. Transportation of hazardous waste off-site should be considered. Cumulative effect of dust nuisance with traffic nuisance and nuisance from other developments in the same area, should not be ignored. The water table is high in this area and there is an aquifer close by therefore there is the possibility of contamination. Incineration is not the best environmental option and does not move waste up the hierarchy. Alternative methods such as MBT have fewer environmentally undesirable consequences. Oxfordshire may have to bring waste in from outside the County to make up a shortfall. Three protected species will be

affected and 63 species will lose habitat during construction. The Environmental Statement inadequately assesses and mitigates potential biodiversity loss.

28. British Horse Society, Oxfordshire

First Consultation

Not consulted.

Second Consultation

Object. Contrary to Oxfordshire Structure Plan policies R1 and R2, Local Transport Plan for Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse Local Plan policy L10 and Oxfordshire County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Concerned about impact on byways and bridleways, although welcome efforts to consider potential improvements to the rights of way network. Application makes no specific reference to the needs of equestrians. Horses have sensitive hearing and sense of smell and are subject to allergies. Noise of HGVs and emissions will affect horses being ridden or grazing nearby. Application refers incorrectly to 'footpaths' where the rights of way concerned are in fact bridleways. This reflects that the writers did not consider the needs of horses as users. Signage on the site currently refers incorrectly to 'footpaths.' If application goes ahead permissive paths should be of a similar status to the byway. They should be surfaced appropriately. Horses are flight animals and therefore landscaping of routes is necessary. The impact of the increase in traffic on horses and riders has not been considered. Object on basis of OSP policies R1 and R2.

29. Chilterns Conservation Board

First Consultation

No comment. The application is not one on which the Board would generally comment.

30. North Wessex Downs

First Consultation

Unable to comment due to work commitments. Does not mean that North Wessex Downs supports the application.

31. County Ecologist

The ES has adequately assessed any potential biodiversity loss of this proposal and I am happy with the mitigation proposed.

The proposed development will not have significant impacts on any designated wildlife sites (SAC, SSSI, LWS) within 10 km of the site.

Within the site, water bodies 5, 8, 15 and ditch D will be removed and small areas of other habitats of low ecological value will be lost as part of the development. However, the landscape and restoration scheme will result in an overall increase in habitats of some value for biodiversity.

Protected species are present on the site but surveys have been carried out and provided that mitigation is followed, there should not be significant impacts on protected species, particularly water voles.

Provided that the mitigation for protected species is followed and a S106 secured for the long term management of the site, the net impacts of this development will be positive within the site and local area and neutral elsewhere.

This complies with SEP policy NRM5 Conservation and Improvement of Biodiversity “Local planning authorities and other bodies shall avoid a net loss of biodiversity, and actively pursue opportunities to achieve a net gain across the region”.

Therefore I do not have an objection to this proposal from a biodiversity point of view subject to appropriate conditions covering a raft of ecological issues as follows:

- 1) Macrophyte surveys of water bodies to be removed.
- 2) Works near badger setts.
- 3) Great crested newt surveys to be carried out less than one year before development commences.
- 4) Updated water vole survey to be undertaken.
- 5) Water bodies only drained down during winter months.
- 6) Exclusion fencing to be erected around Little Plover nests.
- 7) No disturbance to grassland areas during bird breeding season.
- 8) Sand martin colony quarry face not to be removed during bird breeding season.
- 9) No vegetation clearance during bird breeding season.
- 10) Lighting to be kept to a minimum.
- 11) Bat surveys on any trees prior to removal.
- 12) Water vole strategy to be agreed.
- 13) Detailed landscape and restoration scheme.
- 14) 25 year management and monitoring plan.

Landscape

Visual impact – the proposed EfW plant will be most visible within 2 km of the site and a permanent feature in the landscape. The predicted impacts will be between a moderate and major effect, creating a visible new structure where there is presently open ground, although the architectural design of the proposed EfW plant could result in it subjectively being considered as a landscape feature. At a distance greater than 2 km, the EfW building will be less visible but the chimney stack and plume would still be visible.

Landscape character – the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) has identified the landscape type associated with Sutton Courtenay as lowland village farmland. The key characteristics associated with this landscape type are:

- a varied gently rolling and almost flat topography
- medium to large sized arable and hedged fields
- thinly scattered hedgerow trees, which are mostly ash
- ash, willow and poplars fringing ditches and streams
- prominent village settlements scattered throughout the area.

The overall landscaping of the proposal conforms to this pattern of hedged fields and tree-lined water courses and includes significant areas of new woodland and scrub planting. The applicant has given some indication of the tree, shrub and grass species present but more detail will be required (which can be dealt with by condition should permission be granted).

Conclusion – the proposals include a landscaping scheme which complies with VLP policy DC6 Landscaping “All proposals for development will be required to include hard and soft landscaping measures designed to protect and enhance the visual

amenities of the site and its surroundings and maximise the opportunities for nature conservation and wildlife habitat creation”.

The ES concludes that with incorporated mitigation, the proposal will not result in a likely significant effect on the landscape. However, it is evident that the proposed development, particularly in relation to the chimney stack and its associated plume, will have a permanent impact on the local landscape.

A decision therefore has to be made about whether the proposed development demonstrates special circumstances and whether this outweighs the potential, permanent visual impact of the proposed development on the local landscape.

32. County Archaeologist

First and Third Consultations

The development is sited within an existing quarry where extraction has previously taken place. The current proposal does not include any further extraction or significant disturbance of previously undisturbed land.

Although the area has seen extensive activity from the earliest prehistoric periods onwards the previous mineral extractions have removed any surviving archaeological deposits. As such no archaeological investigation will be necessary.

33. Rights of Way

Asks for mitigation measures to mitigate the impacts of the development on the on site and off site public rights of way network. These are necessary in terms of providing a public rights of way network that is safe and easy to use. Enhancement measures should include items like seating, information boards, viewing platforms or amenity planting – not route creation, surface works and signage. Would welcome additional funds to enable this type of work.

Simple fact is they are creating only one public right of way (extension to Footpath 373/12) and the rest are permissive routes. Would welcome the creation of permanent public rights of way on these routes provided there is no costs to the County Council.

34. Transport Development Control

Site location – this site is well located in respect of the surrounding strategic road network to receive imported waste from around the county and is an existing resource recovery park.

Site access – the existing site access is suitable for the proposed traffic generation and no alterations are necessary.

Local Highway Network Capacity – the TA states that the waste origins will be restricted to Oxfordshire. The information provided within the TA demonstrates there is capacity within the highway network for vehicles associated with the EfW. This is assuming that there will be a 320,000 tonnes per annum limit on waste being delivered to the site as a whole by road.

Routeing – a routeing agreement is required to ensure that HGVs are restricted from travelling through local villages and urban areas. The northern site access onto the B4016 should be limited to 100 vehicle movements per day as for previous permissions.

Parking – the revised planning application supporting statement indicates that parking spaces will be provided for 95 vehicles including 7 disabled bays. This statement also indicates that further parking will be provided for light goods vehicles, buses and cycling. I am unclear as to how many cycle parking spaces are being provided and further information is required on this aspect. This could be added as a condition on any consent granted. In terms of the proposed parking layout (for cars, light goods vehicles and buses), although a drawing of the proposed layout of the EfW has been submitted (Fig 4.1A), a separate drawing must be submitted showing the proposed parking layout. This drawing must be approved by the planning authority in consultation with the highway authority prior to the commencement of works on the site and this should be added as a further condition.

Travel Plan – a travel plan should be submitted to the planning authority to encourage staff travel via non-car modes. A travel plan co-ordinator is to be appointed and will have the responsibility for promoting sustainable travel journeys. The co-ordinator will need to liaise with the County Council and agree the travel plan; therefore a monitoring fee of £1,000 will be required via a S106 agreement.

A construction travel plan for the construction period of the EfW is also to be submitted and approved in writing the planning authority in consultation with the highway authority prior to the commencement of works on the site.

Financial Contributions & Agreements – the transport assessment estimates that the proposal will result in an additional 8 two-way HGV movements per day. It is estimated that 2 of these movements are likely to be in the peak hour. The proposal will also create employment opportunities for 50 staff. The TA states that the EfW facility will be in operation 24 hours a day, it is therefore assumed that staff will be working on a shift basis. Assuming 3 shift periods with an average of 17 staff on each shift, it is estimated that the proposal is likely to result in an increase of 9 movements in the peak hour. Thus, in total the proposal is likely to generate an additional 11 movements in the peak hour. The LHA therefore requests a contribution of £43,824 (index linked to May 2009 Baxter Index) towards the Didcot Integrated Transport Strategy (DIDITS). This is to be secured by way of a legal agreement.

Summary – the main effect of the proposal in transport terms is to reduce the amount of landfill (consented) being carried to the site by 250,000 tonnes per annum. A broadly equivalent amount of waste will however be carried to the EfW facility. The net effect in terms of the number of HGV movements is therefore relatively small. However, there will be an additional 50 staff travelling to the site each day.

Providing a limit is placed on the amount of total waste being carried to the site by road (ie up to a maximum of 320,000 tonnes per annum) and a routing agreement is entered into by the applicant, the highway authority has no objection to the application.

A condition should be added to ensure that the existing consent relating to clay extraction is reallocated to landfill and EfW importation.

A travel plan is required to encourage employees to use non car modes of travel. A contribution for the monitoring of the travel plan is also required.

A construction travel plan is required and this should be added as a condition. The construction travel plan should make reference to a before and after survey to ensure that any damage to the public highway as a result of the construction phase of the development is made good.

PN5(b)

Conditions should also be added relating to cycle parking provision and parking layout.

A S106 agreements will be required to limit the amount of tonnage to the EfW, to limit the amount of total waste being carried to the site by road, to limit the total number of vehicles using the secondary northern access and the number of vehicles travelling eastbound on the A4130, to secure contributions towards the Didcot ITS and to secure the travel plan and the contribution towards the monitoring of the travel plan.

Representations

Introduction

All of the representations and related documents referred to in this section are available in full to read in the members resource centre. A total of 868 representations have been received from members of the public over the 3 consultation and notification periods held. These include those originally sent to councillors, the waste management team and Vale of White Horse District Council, which have been forwarded to the planning department.

The application was initially sent out to consultation in August 2008. The statutory consultation period is 21 days, but an extended consultation period was provided to reflect the complex and controversial nature of this application. There were 380 representations received.

There was a second round of consultation due to amendments to the application and the submission of additional details. The formal consultation period ran 5 March to 30 March 2009. There were 415 representations received.

There was a third round of consultation following the further amendments submitted in July 2009. The formal consultation period ran from 15 September to 6 October. At the time of writing the report 73 representations have been received.

Any letters received following the drafting of the report will be considered in an addendum.

Support for the proposal

- Two letters of support were received during the first planning consultation. One of these outlined the disadvantages of Ardley as a site for an energy from waste plant. The other states that incineration is the only viable option and that a refusal at Sutton Courtenay would simply push the problem elsewhere.

Objections to the proposal

The vast majority of representations received were objections to the proposal, and raised a considerable variety of concerns about it.

The main areas of objection are set out below in bold. Officer comments on the individual topics are set out below the objections.

It is important to recognise that the mere numbers of objections on particular topics do not necessarily reflect the weight that should be given to that issue. The role of the committee as decision maker is firstly to identify whether that topic is a material consideration, and secondly to attribute appropriate weight to it. A particularly

compelling planning objection may be raised by only a few people, and conversely a large number of people may raise a matter that is not a planning consideration at all.

HEALTH AND AIR POLLUTION

Health risks - general

Health risks - not enough is known

Health risks of cumulative effect/interaction between gaseous particles from incinerator & waster vapour from power station

Small particles (and persistent organic pollutants) – health risks/no monitoring/ limits

Children/future generations – impact on children generally and in local schools (inc impact of bio-accumulative chemicals)

Air pollution – general

Air pollution - Cumulative effect with power stations on health & environment

Air quality – already very poor in this area

Banned in the USA (+ other countries)

Health risks - financial cost in long-term

Food chain – could get polluted

Livestock – impact of emissions

Health risks - no established ‘safe’ level for emissions

Health risks - historical underestimation of pollutant danger

Monitoring - continuous rather than spot measurements

Health risks - precautionary principle

Health & safety - no assurance the plant will be safe

External independent experts should scrutinise human health risk assessment

Health assessment does not compare upwind data with downwind data

Health risks – overlap of power station operations and incinerator operations

HPA statement states no unacceptable risk – should be no risk

DEFRA Review 2004 quoted on health matters - need more up-to-date evidence

University of Birmingham/Enviros Review of Environmental Health Effects of Waste Management

Health & safety - plant not entirely safe when not in optimal burning conditions

Low cloud/hot weather/venting of steam will prevent dispersal of emissions.

HPA refers to studies which only look at radius around the incinerator – do not consider villages further downwind of the site.

Health risks - may not be possible to measure health impact due to length of time involved

Could it be guaranteed to be well run to ensure minimal health risks?

Drayton dam – would cause more deposition of pollution

High dioxin releases at incinerator start up & shutdown of incinerators yet assumptions about safety are based on standard operating conditions

Stack should be higher to disperse emissions.

Acid rain increase

Emissions from power station already blot out sun

Small particles - intensification due to microclimate

Health risks – perception of risks

The above comments all relate to the health impacts of the development and air pollution issues. These will be addressed in detail as part of the Environmental

Permit application which is being considered by the Environment Agency and upon which the Health Protection Agency will provide comments. The issue of how health concerns relate to the planning application process is covered in the covering report for both the Sutton Courtenay and Ardley sites.

Health risks - no human health assessment/initially omitted/inadequate

The human health risk assessment that was originally omitted was submitted as part of the amended application and consulted on from February 2009.

HPA statement is from 2005 – should consider new evidence

HPA statement has been misinterpreted by OCC – it does not say the incinerator is safe.

The HPA issued a new report in September 2009 which updates the 2005 statement. Details of this are given in the covering report for both the Sutton Courtenay and Ardley sites.

MONITORING

Monitoring - generally inadequate

Monitoring systems may not detect all harmful emissions – some emissions not monitored

Spot monitoring should be independent

WRG should not be given advanced warning of spot monitoring

Regulating authorities not good at enforcing or prosecuting breaches

No provision for monitoring of conditions or Section 106 agreement or routing agreement

The points made on monitoring appear to relate primarily to issues that would be monitored by the Environment Agency as part of the Environmental Permit, rather than by Oxfordshire County Council in relation to monitoring planning conditions. Compliance with matters covered by planning conditions and agreements would be monitored by minerals waste monitoring officers several times per year if permission was granted. Planning conditions should not cover matters which are covered by the environmental permit. The Environment Agency could issue an enforcement notice if any condition on an environmental permit is contravened, or even if they think it likely. Contravention of a permit condition is an offence (maximum £50,000 fine or 12 month prison sentence). In addition to or instead of penalties, the court may require the convicted person to take steps to remedy the situation. The Environment Agency also has powers to take steps to remove a serious risk of pollution or to remedy it and recover the cost from the operator.

VISUAL IMPACT

Visual impact on landscape inc view from Wittenham Clumps

Visual impact - cumulative with power stations

Visual impact - plant too big

Visual impact - less attractive to tourists

The visual impact of the development has been assessed as part of the Environmental Statement. The assessments were revised when the building design was altered for the second round of consultation. A plant of this type must be expected to have some visual impact on the surrounding landscape. Although there would be a landscape impact, the direct impact on people is limited due to the distance from residential properties. The plant is too large to completely screen by planting as can be done at other waste management facilities. The design of the building has been considered by the Commission for the Built Environment (CABE) who have made positive comments.

Screening - inadequate due to size of planned development

Woodland for screening will not mitigate the adverse effect on views from the Clumps/Chilterns/Ridgeway

Woodland for screening will not be a mitigating factor as it will take years to mature

The woodland planting would not fully screen the development and it would take some time to mature. However, it would help to soften the impact of the development.

Visual impact - unattractive/inappropriate building design

Whether a building is attractive or not is to some extent subjective. However CABE have been consulted on this application and offered positive comments about the design.

Visual impact - plant should be sunk into the ground like Didcot B.

The plant is proposed to be located on an area that has been landfilled and therefore setting it down would not be practical. There are areas within the wider Sutton Courtenay site which have not yet been landfilled. However, to place the plant there would not be in accordance with development plan policies which require landfill void to be husbanded. Due to the size of the building, even if it were set into the ground it would still have a visual impact.

TRAFFIC

Traffic – increased congestion in villages/local area

The impact from traffic has been assessed in the Transport Assessment. Any permission granted would be subject to a routeing agreement to route traffic away from sensitive areas such as the villages of Sutton Courtenay and Appleford.

Noise - from traffic

Noise from traffic would be most likely to cause an effect on amenity on minor roads through villages. However, the traffic would be routed away from sensitive villages onto main roads.

Traffic – increased congestion on A34/general in county

The transport assessment submitted with the application indicates that the proposals would increase weekday traffic flows by less than 10% during periods of peak activity on site. The assessment states that in accordance with Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) guidelines, such increases are unlikely to create any perceptible effect on the road network.

Traffic – cumulative traffic increase with other developments

If landfill is extended until 2030 lorry movements would not decrease as suggested in the Transport Assessment

TA assumes grant of permissions which have not yet been issued

This has been considered in the submitted transport assessment. The findings have been consulted upon and there is no objection from Transport Development Control subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions and agreements.

Traffic – increased pollution

Traffic – increased carbon emissions

The air quality effects of the proposals arising from traffic have been assessed in the Environmental Statement Air Quality Assessment. The significance has been assessed to be negligible. There has been no objection from the Environmental Health Officer.

Traffic – increased safety risk

The Environmental Statement considers the accident statistics and assesses the likely change in the frequency in accidents as a result of the proposed development. It concludes that the significance of this impact is neutral.

Traffic – increased cost of road repairs
Traffic – increased cost of congestion

Waste has to be managed and the associated vehicle movements related to the movement of waste will affect roads somewhere in the county.

Ancient bridge in Culham threatened by increased traffic

If permission is granted it would be subject to a routing agreement that would ensure that all traffic other than local waste deliveries uses the southern access from the A4130.

Transport of fly ash/APC residues by road (rather than treating at source) increases risk of accidental spillage/site contamination

It is not proposed to transport ash or Air Pollution Control (APC) residues by road. Ash would either first be treated in the IBA plant then transported by road offsite for use as an aggregate or landfilled on site. It is not hazardous. APC residues are classified as hazardous but would be landfilled at the Sutton Courtenay site, which is seeking consent to deal with this type of waste as part of this application.

Should encourage rail freight, not road.
Rail – increased burden on passenger rail infrastructure

Sutton Courtenay has the capacity to take waste by rail and currently takes some waste from London for landfilling. However, policy does not support the import of waste from London for treatment processes such as incineration. As waste is proposed to be brought in from within Oxfordshire only, it is not practical to bring it in by rail as there are not the facilities or line available.

Self-sufficiency – import of waste from other counties/need to spread the risk, not concentrate it

It is proposed to take waste from Oxfordshire only.

Insufficient waste to supply proposed level

There is a significant amount of commercial and industrial waste arising in Oxfordshire that could be treated in an EfW plant in addition to residual household waste. The second amendment to the application included reducing the size of the plant and the annual throughput of waste.

**Plant staff & visitors not considered in application - increased congestion
Routing agreement would not apply to staff cars**

Vehicle movements associated with staff have been considered in the transport chapter of the ES. Transport Development Control confirm that staff car movements should not be part of any routing agreement.

BIODIVERSITY

**General biodiversity - impact on
Loss of habitat for protected species**

The application and Environmental Statement has been considered by OCC's Ecologist Planner and also by consultees such as BBOWT, Natural England and the Environment Agency. There has been no objection on biodiversity grounds.

Conservation area/SAC/SSSI – impact on

Ecological consultees were specifically asked to provide their views on whether the development would have a significant impact on nearby sites of nature conservation importance. There has been no objection from the ecological consultees. Indeed, in relation to the possible impact of the development on the SAC, Natural England have confirmed that there is no requirement to undertake an Appropriate Assessment.

No over-wintering bird survey

The wintering bird survey was requested from the applicant and supplied for the third round of consultations.

UNSUITABLE LOCATION

**Proximity to residential areas
Great Western Park in Didcot – development too close
Sutton Courtenay/Appleford area has suffered enough**

Energy from Waste plants in other parts of the country are located closer to residential areas. The stack is designed to disperse air emissions and there is no reason not to permit plants of this type near residential areas. The effects of noise, air emissions and other potential nuisances are considered in the Environmental Impact Assessment.

Industrial process not suitable for rural area/landscape/greenfield

Policies relating to the location of a waste management facility in this location are considered in detail in the main report.

Built heritage - impact on

Heritage - should not be built near Sutton Courtenay - site of George Orwell's grave

Impact on historic garden at the Manor House, Sutton Courtenay or the Scheduled Ancient Monument.

English Heritage has been consulted on this application and has not raised an objection. The main report provides details of their comments. The plant would not be visible from most of Sutton Courtenay village and it is not considered that it would have an adverse impact on the historical qualities of the village.

Consultant advised this was not a suitable location

This comment was made in a large number of letters which were not specific about which report was being referred to. It is assumed that it is a report produced for OCC in 2007 by consultants ERM on 'Site Selection for Strategic Waste Management Facilities'. These reports were done as part of the initial work on waste site options for the emerging new Minerals and Waste Plan (the Minerals and Waste Development Framework). These are regarded as technical reports by consultants and have been published them on the County Council website for information, but the County Council has not yet formally considered them or come to a view on them.

The Sutton Courtenay Landfill Site is one of a number of potential locations for a strategic waste management facility that the reports cover and for which ERM have done a site assessment. ERM's conclusion on the Sutton Courtenay Landfill Site is that it is one of 8 sites 'that is considered to be appropriate to safeguard for a future waste use'. Parts of the report may have been interpreted as suggesting that this site is not suitable for an incinerator as ERM say:

"This site is within a 5-10 km range of the Little Wittenham and Cothill Fen Special Area for Conservation (SAC). ERM considers that waste management involving incineration, gasification and pyrolysis would be likely to have a significant effect on the identified SAC."

And "ERM concludes that development should not include thermal treatment unless it can be demonstrated through appropriate assessment that such development would not have an adverse impact upon the integrity of the Little Wittenham SAC."

The issue of possible impact of air emissions on these Special Areas for Conservation has been the subject of consultation with Natural England, the Environment Agency and the County Ecologist. It has been concluded the development would have no significant effect on any of the SACs and Natural England have confirmed that an Appropriate Assessment is not required.

**Facilities should be spread around the county more
Smaller facilities needed instead of one large facility / need to spread the risk**

The application that has been submitted must be considered to determine whether it is acceptable in planning terms. The suggestion is not supported by any specific planning policy guidance.

**Incinerator unsustainable - longer-term solution needed
Incinerator technology out of date/inappropriate - likely to be phased out/being outlawed globally
Other counties with incinerators wish to be rid of them eg Kent & Stockton
Other authorities have rejected incinerators eg Norfolk & London**

The application has been submitted and must be determined on its planning merits not on its engineering merits.

**CHP - heat and power should be utilised/residents not benefiting
CHP assessment has no financial model/customer assessment/provisional plan
Service pipes will heat new houses but not existing ones**

Development plan policies support CHP utilisation, as set out in the main report. However, there is no current proposal for its use.

Incineration least popular waste management strategy

The reasons for the unpopularity of incineration need have been considered as part of this annex. If there are justified planning reasons why the proposal would not be acceptable then approval would not be recommended.

Application misleadingly associates energy produced by EfW plant with renewables

The proposal has been considered against waste management policy and not renewable energy policy in the main report.

**MBT plants cheaper & more efficient
Incineration as waste management strategy - councillors (and public) not consulted
Reflects national bias towards incineration
Alternative technologies should be considered
No evidence for claim that MBT is more costly - gate fees for EfW are far higher than for MBT
Energy recovery – not efficient
Anaerobic Digestion cheaper & more efficient (produces valuable gas)**

These are matters for consideration as part of the procurement process and are not material planning considerations. Anaerobic digestion facilities are being planned in Oxfordshire to treat food and green waste.

Consultation Process

Environmental Permit not yet considered by EA – should wait for this before determining application

There is no statutory requirement to wait for the outcome of the Environmental Permit application before making a decision on the planning application. Both consents would need to be in place before any development could commence.

Consultation – insufficient time/rushed

Consultation – generally inadequate/no public debate

An extended consultation period of five weeks was allowed for the initial consultation period. This was further extended for consultees who requested an extension such as the District and some Parish Councils. Following that consultation period the comments received were fed back to the applicant who subsequently submitted a revised application. This revised application was the subject of a second consultation exercise. The statutory 3 week period was allowed for this consultation as the revisions were limited. By that time OCC had been accepting comments on the general concept of an energy from waste plant in this location for over 6 months. A further amendment to the application, basically reducing the throughput of waste through the EfW plant and restricting the plant to dealing with Oxfordshire's waste only was submitted in July 2009. This amended proposal was the subject of a third consultation period which ran from 15 September to 6 October. The application therefore has been available for public comment for (?) months overall, this far exceeds the statutory period for consultation and has generated considerable correspondence.

Not clear that WRG 'presentations' were part of public consultation

WRG held presentations as part of their own consultation on their proposals, before the application was submitted. Oxfordshire County Council have undertaken consultations on the application since it has been submitted.

Consultation – insufficient information

The entire planning application and Environmental Statement have been available on Oxfordshire County Council's website. The public have been notified of the submissions through press adverts, site notices, consultation with parish councils and by letter.

Objections ignored/over 10,000 signatures on petition/undemocratic

No objections have been ignored. All points raised in objections have been considered in this report. The decision will be made by democratically elected councillors. No members or officers are involved in both the procurement and planning process.

The Council did not attend a meeting in March where the public could put questions forward - snub to voters

It is appropriate for the applicant, rather than County Council planning officers, to answer questions relating to the proposals. Oxfordshire County Council as planning authority would not have been able to express a view on the application at that stage.

WRG keep on pushing the boundaries of the application – underhand

Although this is a complex application and there have been numerous changes all the necessary information has been received and consulted on prior to making a decision on the application.

District & parish councils (+ MEP) oppose – should not negate their opinion.

The views of all objectors are taken into account and made available in this report. Members of the Planning & Regulation Committee are made aware of these objectors prior to making any decision on the application.

LACK OF INFORMATION

Weather data from Brize Norton used – does not reflect Sutton Courtenay weather

Microclimate - would make it unacceptable/has not been considered

No data provided in application on EA's assessment of greenhouse gas emissions from incinerator

Effects of dust spread from raised IBA storage has not been assessed following change in design.

No assessment of how increase in dust affect/spread to surrounding villages & no abatement process

Need risk assessment

No assessment with regard to toxicity limit alterations

No air modelling of dispersion

No details in application of monitoring of ecotoxins

Greenhouse gases - no assessment of net effect (of increased emission from incinerator and traffic) on Oxfordshire Carbon Plan

Health risk assessment assumes population is evenly distributed - risk needs to be considered on site by site basis.

Application does not explain how pollution levels will be kept below recommended levels

Application does not demonstrate how the proposal will comply with the incoming PM2.5 particulate limits

Economic or health effects of SNCR or SCR Nox reductions - not assessed

No BAT assessment

HHRA does not assess risk from location within floodplain, proximity to B4016, nor the cumulative impact of extraction beginning on the Bridge Farm site

No evidence for claim that emissions from cooling towers are not qualitatively different to factors such as rainfall/humidity

No evidence for claim that accidental releases are not likely to be significant - accidental dioxin discharges from Eastcroft facility have been measured as high as 900% above the limits

Small particles (PM2.5) - no evidence for how they will be continuously monitored as claimed

Proposal suggests that the power stations will cease to emit cooling vapour by 2015 - ignores possible extended use of cooling towers for Didcot B

Mercury emissions from low energy bulb incineration - not considered

Proposals are based on computer-modelling, not local conditions.

High dioxin releases at incinerator start up & shutdown - cost of shutting down plant will be disincentive against proper monitoring of emissions - will result in more emissions either way - not assessed

Weather parameters used on stack height calculations have not been justified. Contribution to local pollution/deposition levels should be assessed (independently and on site by site basis)

This are matters for the Environment Agency in their consideration of the Environmental Permit application.

Independent studies (on health, environmental, financial impacts) – need

No evidence of assessment against alternatives in application

Air quality & Human Health Risk Assessments not revised to consider the increase in height of the plant

No environmental health study

Wording of environmental assessment not accessible - too technical. Should be a non-technical summary

Application barely mentions impact on Sutton Courtenay and Appleford, despite their proximity

Highway assessment – lack of

No site specific flood risk assessment

Landscape proposals not submitted with application

Hydrological impact assessment – lack of

Independent ES/EIA needed

Environmental impact - more studies/ full ES/EIA/Environmental Health Study needed

These were required as part of the Environmental Statement, submitted and consulted on.

**Geological impact assessment - lack of
No independent geological survey
No assessment with regard to carbon tax changes
No assessment of potential impact on future investment
Traffic - cumulative carbon emissions with incinerator (not assessed)**

These were not required.

Proposal does not demonstrate how energy will feed into national grid

Further information was submitted with the amended application. Full details are not required as planning permission is not needed for this aspect of the development.

Need assessment of full lifetime pit requirements

It is difficult to estimate the requirements of the air pollution control residue (APCR) disposal facility as it may be possible in the future to recycle it. However, the application states that the proposed area would be sufficient and estimates that it would have a 39 year capacity based on the landfilling of 9,000 cu m of conditioned APCR residue a year. If it were not big enough the APCR would have to be taken elsewhere and if it were too big the remaining void would have to be filled with another material.

Need assessment of proportion of bottom ash likely to be hazardous

Bottom ash is not classified as a hazardous material.

**No assessment of forward projections for waste treatment at the higher end of the waste hierarchy scale
No assessment of future waste generation and recycling to support claim of OCC's reduced liability to LATS penalties**

This would not be expected as part of the planning application

No assessment with regard to fluctuating waste levels

The application is for a maximum tonnage (250,000 tpa) and if permission were granted a planning condition would restrict throughputs to that amount.

Environmental impact of importing waste from outside county - not considered

It is not proposed to bring in waste from outside the county

Planning statement frequently refers to documents which are not available.

All documents that were submitted as part of the application and ES have been made available on the Council's website. Where some documents were originally missing, these were all submitted for the final consultation period.

Maps in application are poor

Officers consider the maps to be of a good standard.

Application does not state what will happen to toxic ash blocks

The application sets out what would happen to both the bottom ash and the air pollution control residue.

Application focuses on impact on Sutton Courtenay when Appleford is only 200 m away - inadequate assessment

I consider that the impact on Appleford was adequately addressed in the ES

**Jobs - no assessment of net impact on employment
No evidence to support claim of benefit to local employment levels**

Details of proposed job generation is given in the planning application.

**Survey of alternatives inadequate - factors not weighted
Application does not include comparison of traffic miles for alternative sites
Didcot A site not considered as alternative location
Application does not compare energy efficiency data of incineration with alternatives
Independent assessment of alternatives sites should be carried out**

I consider that the work on alternatives submitted with the ES and application was adequate. The issue of alternative sites is addressed in the main report.

**No evidence for social, environmental, or economic benefits claimed in application
No evidence that the effect on groundwater flows will be minimal**

The ES provides evidence about the impact of the development. The Environment Agency have no objection to the proposals.

Industrial re-use of APCR - no detail of treatment of before re-use

It is proposed to landfill the APCR and information is provided about this. There is little information regarding the alternatives to landfilling it.

Cumulative impact assessment of other large scale developments in the area does not take in account the redevelopment of the 40s, 50s, and 60s site at Milton Park

The proposal needs to be considered on it's merits against the development plan. Cumulative impacts have been considered in relation to health and air quality.

Environmental Statement has not used the new lower critical levels of ammonia in the analysis of the impacts of air pollutants (and its impact on biodiversity)

This issue was raised in the first period of consultation; the amended application addressed this.

Revision of application do not justify any further, or make it any clearer

I consider the information that has been submitted to be sufficient to make a decision on this application.

PROCUREMENT

Incinerator not cost-effective – economic risk/too costly

Potential cost of penalties/fines for insufficient waste supply

Long term nature of contract

Economy-driven - trying to avoid fines

Tendering - biased/market-led

Likely to be over-turned by High Court – money wasted.

Tendering - OCC should not be technology neutral

Incinerator - cost of updating technology/decommissioning

No guarantee waste will increase

Unpredictable financial costs eg carbon tax increase/ volatile markets/law suits

Financial cost of construction – WRG will pay for majority of construction costs, but OCC may have to contribute

Capacity should be proportionate to waste arisings - should be no excess

County Councillors not given chance to debate

Financial cost of importing waste from other counties

Preferred bidder with site at Ardley

Points made in relation to the procurement exercise are not relevant to the consideration of the planning application. The County Council role as the Waste Planning Authority is entirely separate from its role as Waste Disposal Authority.

SUITABILITY OF APPLICANT

WRG poor track record – other incinerators e.g. documented breaches at Nottingham

WRG poor track record – SC landfill/composting

WRG is Spanish company – will have little interest preserving/serving the local area

WRG do not monitor toxic release concentrations at existing facilities

WRG would not operate plant as stipulated

WRG poor track record on meeting environmental obligations

WRG poor track record - supervision on site is minimal

WRG have no experience in running high-tech EfW plant

Environmental Permit conditions have not been met

WRG's track record of compliance with environmental permits in the UK - no evidence provided

These points are not relevant to the consideration of this application. Matters which would need to be covered by planning condition would be regularly monitored by Oxfordshire County Council. Matters that would be controlled through the Environmental Permit would be monitored by the EA.

WATER ENVIRONMENT

Flood risk and water contamination risk

The EA has not objected to this application.

LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Odour

This would be covered by the Environmental Permit.

Dust/soot

Black soot – effect on houses/washing, etc

The main operations would take place within a building. The IBA and APCR areas would only be permitted with proper controls to ensure that dust would not be a nuisance.

**Millennium Common unusable – no access
Millennium Common – development too close**

This development would not affect access to Millennium Common.

Housing - prices would reduce

This is not a planning consideration.

**Didcot - impact on planned growth
Housing - impact on potential new development**

This development would not have any significant impact on new housing in the area.

**Noise – construction
Noise – operational
Single monitor for noise – inappropriate location (noise of operations will be blocked by
Noise from 24 hour operation wind)**

Noise is assessed in the Environmental Statement and would be covered by condition. There has been no objection from the Environmental Health Officer.

Longer operating hours

The longer operating hours for delivery to the EfW plant are considered acceptable as the HGV route to the site would pass few residential properties.

**Amenity of site adversely affected (notably for walkers)
Bridleways – impact on amenity & safety of riders
Impact on horses – landscaping of routes necessary
Safety of users on right of way**

There has been no objection from Oxfordshire County Council Rights of Way team and the proposed section 106 agreement would provide improvements (including improvements to safety (eg better signage and landscaping)) to the rights of way network.

Light pollution

The application explains that external lighting would be required during the construction and operational phases of the development. External lighting has the potential to cause an adverse impact on local amenity. However, no specific concerns in relation to the lighting proposals have been raised by the Environmental

Health Officer. The lighting can be controlled by condition. The application states that lighting units will be positioned horizontally, with no upward tilt, to ensure that excess light is not spilt from the area being illuminated.

Flies & vermin & litter

The operation will take place within a building and therefore has less potential for these nuisances than the existing landfill site.

Environmental impact – general

The environmental impact has been thoroughly assessed in the ES.

Wildlife Centre (Sutton Courtenay) – impact on

There has been no objection from the ecological consultees

Increased likelihood of further applications on the site

It is possible that other development might be proposed in future. However, such development would require planning permission in their own right and which would be assessed on their planning merits.

Greenhouse gases - increased emissions

This proposal would produce less greenhouse gases than landfill.

ADEQUACY OF APPLICATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

Application uses old map that does not feature all nearby houses

The information submitted with the application is sufficient to properly consider it.

ES inadequately assesses and mitigates potential biodiversity loss

Ecological consultees on the application and ES have not raised any significant concerns relating to the content of the ES. They have no objection to the application.

WRG claims to have taken into account the objections made, but in the briefing they admit they've only made minor changes, so haven't really taken anything into account at all.

The application has been amended since its initial submission in areas including capacity, waste catchment area and building design.

Applicant should not submit ES – bias

In all planning applications requiring the submission of an ES, it is the applicant who provides the ES. The technical work contained within the report is normally done by experts/consultants.

HAZARDOUS WASTE LANDFILL AREA

Hazardous waste storage does not have sufficient storage for 25 year contract

It is difficult to predict the rate of filling for the APCR landfill. However, the applicant suggests that there is sufficient capacity.

Landfill should be separate application

There is no requirement for the landfill to be dealt with in a separate application and as the APCR landfill is linked to the EfW plant it is clearer for consultation purposes to have both aspects of the development in the same application.

Hazardous waste barriers - no response on their reliability

Ash disposal – inadequate

Hazardous landfill – impact of toxic waste/land pollution (+ potential to interact with Harwell waste & other landfill)

Toxic waste will form depository for many years

There has been no objection to this application from the Environment Agency. The APCR site would be clay lined to contain the hazardous material.

Export of hazardous waste and bottom ash will result in leaching and spread of dust

There has been no objection from the Environmental Health Officer in terms of dust. Dust could be controlled by condition.

Denmark already ships toxic ash from their incinerators to other countries

This application details the proposals for dealing with hazardous APC residue. It is to be landfilled in clay lined cells within the Sutton Courtenay landfill site.

EXISTING LANDFILL SITE

Impact on restoration of landfill site Landfill – increase to lifetime

The diversion of waste from landfill will lead to the landfill being filled less quickly and a delay to its final restoration. However, waste will have to be diverted from landfill whatever the outcome of this application. There is already a resolution to grant permission for the Sutton Courtenay landfill site until 2030, in anticipation of reduced levels of waste being sent to landfill.

Waste will be diverted from landfill whether it is sent to this plant or elsewhere. Husbanding the void complies with planning policy. A slowdown in the rate of infilling would mean that the landfill had reduced impact in terms of traffic movement and other potential sources of nuisance.

If incinerator is intended to replace landfill, why is the landfill licence being continued?

This planning application does not seek to extend the life of the landfilling permission. The landfill has permission until 2021, or 2030 after the latest permission is granted following the completion of a legal agreement. Even if permission is granted for the EfW plant there will be some waste which is unsuitable for incineration that will have to be landfilled.

WASTE POLICY

Waste should be dealt with at the source – in cities Proximity principle

Waste policy is considered in the covering report for the Sutton Courtenay and Ardley sites. It does not rule out rural locations for waste management facilities and this location is not far from Oxford and other urban areas that produce large quantities of waste.

Undermines waste hierarchy of district councils

This is a proposal to treat residual waste and therefore should not undermine the drive to reduce, reuse and recycle.

Development Plan – prematurity

This is covered in the covering report for the Sutton Courtenay and Ardley sites.

Sutton Courtenay/Oxfordshire will become waste capital of the South East

It is not proposed to take waste from outside Oxfordshire.

City Council should be more involved as Oxford produces most of the waste

This application is for development classed as a 'County Matter' and as such must be determined by the County Council. However, Oxford City Council have been consulted on this application.

SPECIFIC POINTS

Development plan policies – conflicts with

The compliance with relevant development plan policies is fully considered in the main and covering reports.

Endanger plans for European School nearby to be taken over by the government

Detract from the arts – local Abbey/concert venue nearby proposed site.

This development would not directly impact the European School in Culham or nearby arts venues.

Subsoil may not be suitable for incineration as it may be contaminated if there is a breach of the membrane containing the waste

There is no intention to incinerate subsoil

May become a target for terrorists

This statement could apply to any new development but is not a reason to avoid new development.

Financial cost of environmental impact

This is not a planning consideration

Energy recovery - Didcot Power station/landfill more efficient

Didcot Power station may be more efficient at energy recovery but it does not treat waste. Landfill is not efficient at energy recovery.

How can such a massive plant be considered when an application for a small house on the edge of Appleford was refused as it was deemed too industrial for such a rural area?

This development must be considered against waste management policy. There are different policies for residential development.

Energy produced is inadequate incentive for EfW plant as the grid does not need such a volume of power in that locality - inadequate infrastructure

National Grid have been consulted on this application and have not objected. The grid transports electricity to where it is needed.

Need resources for future generations

This development would deal only with residual waste. It would not prevent the recycling or reuse of waste.

Not enough infrastructure for '220 jobs' WRG claims the incinerator will provide

Jobs - alternative technologies would create more

The application provides an estimate of the jobs that would be created by this development. However, this is only an estimate and employment policy is not a key policy in determining this application. Therefore, if fewer jobs were created it would not affect how the development fits in with policies.

Plasma gasification – alternative to incineration

The Environmental Statement considers alternative technologies. However, this application should be considered as submitted and be determined on its planning merits.

EA & HPA will not be able to produce an assessment that is independent of government

The Environment Agency is the statutory consultee and we rely upon them to provide expert advice as part of the consultation response.

Not convinced that OCC has yet developed a strategy with regard to the obligations within Directive 2008/50/EC to minimise air pollution. The WRG application has inadequate plans with regard to the monitoring of air pollution.

This Directive does not have direct relevance to planning decisions. More detail is given below.

Directive 2008/50/EC is aimed at EU governments. According to the DEFRA web page it is primarily a consolidating directive (ie brings together a number of earlier directives), although it does provide a new regulatory framework for PM2.5. The directive requires member states to bring national legislation into effect by 11 June 2010. The current national legislation is the Air Quality Standards Regulations 2007 (SI No 64 of 2007). These provide that the Secretary of State is the 'competent authority' under the directives, and in relation to PM2.5, monitoring is a responsibility of the Secretary of State. Therefore the obligation to develop a strategy to reduce PM2.5 is put upon UK government, not OCC, and national legislation is to be in place by 11 June 2010. It is not yet in place. If the precedent of the present regulations is followed, the Secretary of State will be responsible for the location of sampling points to meet national obligations.

Directive 2008/1/EC

This directive codifies previous directives relating to integrated pollution prevention and control. Again, member states are obliged to bring equivalent national legislation into effect. The current regulations are the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2007 (SI 2007 No 3538). The functions of regulator under these regulations are split between the Environment Agency and the relevant district council. Accordingly the County Council has no specific obligations under the directive. 'Best Available Techniques' will however be a relevant factor in relation to the issue of an Environmental Permit by the EA

Implications of the Capel decision

The issue of prematurity relates to and is considered in the covering report for the Sutton Courtenay and Ardley sites.

COMMENTS MADE BY CONSULTEES WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN ADDRESSED IN THE MAIN REPORT

Impact of piling operation not assessed

Piling will be short term and located some distance from housing. Conditions can be added restricting the times for noisy construction operations.

Impact on AONB

The site is not within the AONB.

St Dennis incinerator in Cornwall should be taken into account as a precedent

The application as submitted should be determined on its own planning merits.

PN5(b)

Would like assurance that an Appropriate Assessment will be undertaken

Natural England has confirmed that an Appropriate Assessment will not be requested.

**Not clear if water in ponds would be treated before entering river system
Not clear how well these pond would hold water in an extreme rainfall event**

The Environment Agency has not raised any objection regarding this issue.

Relevant Policies

Waste Management Policy

PPS10 contains guidance on making decisions regarding waste management and promotes sustainable waste management, the moving of waste up the 'waste hierarchy' and disposing of waste to landfill as a last resort after reduction, reuse, recycling and energy recovery.

SEP policy W3 refers to regional self-sufficiency and states that waste authorities and waste management companies should ensure management capacity equivalent to the amount of waste arising and requiring management within the region's boundaries.

SEP policy W4 states that waste planning authorities should plan for net self sufficiency. A degree of flexibility should be used when applying the sub-regional self sufficiency concept and where appropriate and consistent with SEP policy W3 capacity should also be provided for waste from adjoining sub regions.

SEP policy W5 sets out targets for the diversion of waste from landfill for the region and goes on to state that the optimal management solution will vary according to the individual material resource streams and local circumstances and will usually include one or more of; re-use, recycling, mechanical/biological processing, thermal treatment. Priority should be given to processes higher up this hierarchy. It states that sufficient landfill should continue to be provided for residues and waste that cannot practicably be recovered.

SEP policy W13 states that provision should be made for continuing but declining landfill capacity. Non-inert landfill capacity should be husbanded to provide for disposal of residual non-inert waste.

SEP policy W16 states that policies should aim to reduce the transport and associated impacts of waste movement.

SEP policy W17 states that in identifying suitable sites for waste management facilities, priority should be given to safeguarding and expanding suitable existing waste management sites. The suitability of sites should be assessed on the basis of characteristics including good accessibility from existing urban areas, good transport connections, compatible landuses and ability to meet environmental and amenity criteria.

OMWLP policy W2 states that provision will be made to accept waste from London and other parts of the South East for treatment/disposal within Oxfordshire, provided that the treatment/disposal is consistent with regional, structure and local plan policies. Proposals for the treatment or disposal of waste from London requiring road transport for the principle component of its journey will not be permitted.

OMWLP policy W5 states that waste treatment plant, machinery, buildings and stockpiles must be properly screened from the surrounding landscape. Such screening – by landscaping or other means should be in place before any waste stockpiling or treatment begins.

OMWLP policies W3 and W4 cannot be applied to this application. They refer to proposals for reuse and recycling and energy from waste is neither. Although the IBA reprocessing plant is a recycling operation this will operate as an ancillary function to the EfW plant. OMWLP para 3.21 states that there is unlikely to be a large increase in waste disposal by incineration in Oxfordshire in the short term. Although the situation has changed since the plan was published, this makes it clear that the policies were not intended to apply to major waste treatment facilities.

SEP policy W6 sets targets for recycling and composting within the South East region until 2025. It states that waste authorities should adopt proposals to assist delivery of these targets.

SEP policy W7 states that waste planning authorities should provide for an appropriate mix of development opportunities to support the waste management facilities required to achieve the targets set out in the SEP.

SEP policy W12 states that waste development documents should only include energy from waste as part of an integrated approach to management and that proposed waste facilities should operate to the required pollution control standards and include measures to ensure that appropriate materials are recycled, composted and recovered where this has not been carried out elsewhere. Proposed thermal facilities should, wherever possible, aim to incorporate combined generation and distribution of heat and power.

SEP policy W15 states that waste development documents should identify assess available landfill provision and where necessary encourage the creation of protective cells for stable hazardous waste.

General Strategy for Development

SEP policy CO1 sets out the core strategy for Central Oxfordshire. This states that the region's economic strengths should be built on in ways which will: ensure the provision of infrastructure that is essential to the proper functioning and future development of the area, protect and enhance environment and quality of life, protect the setting and character of Oxford, make best use of urban previously developed land and concentrate development where the need to travel can be reduced. Development will be concentrated in Bicester, Didcot, Wantage and Grove and Oxford and limited development will be permitted elsewhere to support the local social and economic well being of communities.

Impacts on the Local Environment

Pollution and Amenity

PPG23 covers planning and pollution control. It states that, 'any consideration of the quality of land, air or water and potential impacts arising from development, possibly leading to impacts on health, is capable of being a material planning consideration, in so far as it arises or may arise from or may affect any land use'. It also states that 'where it will save time and money, consideration should be given to submitting applications for planning permission and pollution control permits in parallel and co-ordinating their consideration by the relevant authorities'. It states that, 'planning authorities should work on the assumption that the relevant pollution control regime will be properly applied and enforced' and advises that 'the controls under the planning and pollution control regimes should complement rather than duplicate each other'.

Other matters that PPG23 states may be material considerations in the determination of planning applications include the possible impact of potentially polluting development on land use, including effects on health, the natural environment or general amenity, the potential sensitivity of the area to adverse effects from pollution, the environmental benefits that the development might bring, the economic and wider social need for development, the existing, and likely future, air quality in an area, the need for compliance with any statutory environmental quality standards, the need to limit and where possible reduce greenhouse gas emissions and possible adverse impacts on water quality.

PPG24 provides Government Policy on noise. It outlines the considerations to be taken into account in determining applications for development which will generate noise and advises on the use of conditions to minimise the impact of noise.

SEP policy NRM9 states that local authorities should seek an improvement in air quality in their areas.

SEP policy E7 states that local authorities should work with the Environment Agency and others to play a positive part in pollution control and encourage measures to improve air quality. At the planning application stage local authorities should ensure that air quality is taken into account along with other material considerations.

SEP policy NRM8 states that measures will be developed to address and reduce noise pollution at regional and local level.

VLP policy DC9 states that development will not be permitted if it would unacceptably harm the amenities of neighbouring properties and the wider environment in terms of loss of privacy, daylight or sunlight, dominance or visual intrusion, noise or vibration, smell, dust, heat, gases or other emissions, pollution, contamination or the use or storage of hazardous substances or external lighting.

Ecology

PPS9 on Biodiversity and Geological conservation sets out the Government's objectives for planning and biodiversity and geological diversity. The broad aim is that planning and development should have a minimal impact on biodiversity and enhance it wherever possible. The objectives set out to achieve this include the promotion of sustainable development by ensuring that biological and geological diversity are conserved and enhanced so that development decisions integrate biodiversity and geological diversity with other considerations and the conservation and enhancement of wildlife and geology by sustaining and improving the quality and extent of natural habitat, physical processes and species.

PPS9 also identifies key principles to follow in the determination of planning applications. These include that decisions should be made on the basis of up to date information about the environmental characteristics of areas, appropriate weight should be attached to designated sites and the aim of planning decisions should be to prevent harm to biodiversity. Where granting a planning permission would result in significant harm to that those interests, planning authorities should be satisfied that the development cannot reasonably be located on any alternative sites that would cause less harm. In the absence of such alternatives adequate mitigation should be put in place. Where harm cannot be prevented or mitigated against appropriate compensation measures should be sought. If significant harm cannot be prevented, mitigated against or compensated, permission should be refused.

SEP policy E1 states that priority should be given to protecting areas designated at an international or national level for their intrinsic nature conservation value.

SEP policy E2 states that the region's biodiversity should be maintained and enhanced with positive action to achieve the targets set in national and local biodiversity action plans through planning decisions and other measures.

SEP policy NRM5 states that local planning authorities shall avoid a net loss of biodiversity and actively pursued opportunities to achieve a net gain across the region. The highest level of protection shall be given to sites of international conservation importance. Where a likely significant effect cannot be excluded an appropriate assessment will be required. If this is unable to conclude that there would be no adverse effect on the integrity of the site the plan or project will not be approved. Damage to nationally important sites and county wildlife sites will be avoided. Plans shall require green infrastructure in conjunction with new development.

OMWLP PE14 states that sites of nature conservation importance should not be damaged.

VLP policy NE4 states that development likely to harm a site of nature conservation importance will not be permitted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the reason for the development clearly outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation value of the site and adequate compensatory habitats will be provided.

Landscape

SEP policy C4 states that outside nationally designated landscapes positive and high quality management of the region's open countryside should be supported.

VLP policy GS2 states that outside the built up area of existing settlements new building will not be permitted unless it is on land that has been permitted for development in the development plan or it is in accordance with other specific local plan policies. (The site is not allocated for development in the local plan.)

The application site is within an area marked as Lowland Vale on the Local Plan. Therefore policy NE9 applies. This states that development in the Lowland Vale would not be permitted if it would have an adverse effect on the landscape, particularly on the long open views within or across the area.

The part of the site in which the Energy from Waste plant is proposed is also identified as Important Open Land between Didcot and Appleford. Therefore policy NE10 applies, which states that in these areas development or changes of use that would harm the essentially open or rural character will not be permitted.

The site is also within an area marked as an Area for Landscape Enhancement. Therefore VLP policy NE11 applies. This states that proposals for development within these areas must provide a landscaping scheme which enhances the appearance of the area. Development which would further erode or damage the character of the area would not be permitted.

VLP policy DC6 states that all proposals for development will be required to include hard and soft landscaping measures designed to protect and enhance the visual amenities of the site and maximise the opportunities for nature conservation and wildlife habitat creation.

Rights of Way

SEP C6 states that local authorities should encourage access to the countryside particularly by maintaining and enhancing existing rights of way, identifying opportunities and planning for routes within and between settlements and where possible making routes multi-functional to allow horses, pedestrians and cyclists to use them.

OMWLP policy PE11 states that the rights of way network should be maintained and individual rights of way retained in situ. Diversions should be temporary, safe and convenient and should be reinstated as soon as possible. Any proposal for permanent diversion should fulfil the functions of recreational and communications use of the right of way. Improvements to the rights of way network will be encouraged.

Design

SEP policy CC6 states that decisions associated with the development of land will promote the creation of sustainable and distinctive communities. This will be achieved by developing a vision which respects and where possible enhances the character and distinctiveness of settlements and landscapes and creates a high quality built environment which promotes a sense of place.

VLP policy DC1 states that development will be permitted provided that it is of a high quality and inclusive design such that the layout, scale, mass, height, detailing, materials used and its relationship to adjoining buildings and open space do not adversely affect those attributes that make a positive contribution to the character of the locality and it takes into account local distinctiveness and character either in a modern or a traditional interpretation.

VLP policy DC3 states that the design and layout of new buildings and the spaces between them as well as access provisions, must be arranged to increase security and deter crime.

VLP policy DC6 states that all proposals for development will be required to include hard and soft landscaping measures designed to protect and enhance the visual amenities of the site and its surroundings and maximise the opportunities for nature conservation and wildlife habitat conservation.

SEP policy CC4 states that the design and construction of all new development will be expected to adopt and incorporate sustainable construction standards and techniques.

Impacts on Water Environment

Government policy on flood risk is set out in PPS25. This aims to ensure that flood risk is considered at all stages of the planning process. It states that a risk-based approach and the sequential approach. Planning authorities should consult the Environment Agency and they should provide advice on flooding for all development on land exceeding 1 hectare. Site specific Flood Risk Assessments should be provided for development over 1 hectare in flood zone 1 and for all proposals in flood zone 2 and 3.

SEP policy NRM1 relates to the protection of the water environment. It states that development should not be permitted that presents a risk of pollution.

VLP policy DC14 states that development generating surface water run-off likely to result in adverse effects will not be permitted unless the development's surface water management system accords with sustainable drainage principles and has been designed as an integral part of the development layout; and the system will effectively control and adequately mitigate or attenuate any adverse effects from surface water run-off.

VLP policy DC13 states that where a risk of flooding is identified, new development will not be permitted unless an adequate assessment has been made of the risk

including whether the proposed development would increase the risk of flooding elsewhere, the flood risk is found to be acceptable and any proposed mitigation measures are acceptable.

VLP policy DC12 states that development will not be permitted if it would adversely affect the quality of water resources, including groundwater, rivers and lakes, as a result of abstraction, or the nature of related surface or waste water discharge, or the disturbance of contaminated land.

Hazardous Landfill

SEP policy W14 states that high quality restoration and, where appropriate, aftercare should be secured on waste management sites.

OMWLP PE13 states that landfill sites should be restored within a reasonable timescale to an afteruse appropriate to the location and surroundings. Restoration proposals should be submitted at the same time as any planning application for mineral working.

OMWLP policy W7 states that proposals for landfill sites will be assessed against the following criteria:-

- (b) there is a definite need for the facilities which cannot be met by existing or permitted landfill sites;
- (c) no material damage or disturbance to the environment or to the amenities of residential and other sensitive uses;
- (d) no impedance of floodplains or risk of pollution;
- (e) no material damage within a Site of Special Scientific Interest or other site of nature conservation importance;
- (f) no material damage to an ancient monument or archaeologically important area;
- (g) no adverse effects on an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- (h) no injury to the visual amenities of the Green Belt or conflict with its purposes;
- (i) suitable access and transport routes;
- (j) progressive restoration and completion within an acceptable period;
- (k) meet with hydrological and geological requirements for safe disposal.

Traffic and transport

PPG13 sets out the Government guidance in relation to transport. The key objective is to promote more sustainable transport choices.

SEP policy T1 states that management proposals and policies should favour sustainable modes of transport, encourage development which is located and designed to reduce average journey length, improve the maintenance of the existing transport system, include measures to minimise negative environmental impacts and where possible enhance the environment and communities.

SEP policy T5 states that development documents and transport plans must identify categories of major traffic generating development for which travel plans should be developed.

SEP policy CO5 states that there should be a co-ordinated approach to effective management and development of transport networks in Central Oxfordshire and access to Oxford from major towns will be a priority.

SEP policy T2 states that development plans should include policies that give priority to; the maintenance of the existing transport system, improvements to the overall levels of safety and access, reduction of the environmental impact of movement and ensuring that new transport infrastructure enhance the communities and environment affected.

OMWLP policy SC3 states that planning permission will not be granted unless a routeing agreement has been secured to: encourage heavy goods traffic to use the Didcot Northern Perimeter Road, prevent heavy goods traffic from entering the villages of Sutton Courtenay, Appleford and Long Wittenham, except for local access and limit the use of Culham Bridge to heavy goods vehicles serving local markets in the eastern parts of Abingdon and eastwards along the A415.

VLP policy DC5 states that proposals for development will only be permitted provided that safe and convenient access will be provided to and from the highway network for all users, the road network can accommodate the traffic arising from the development, adequate provision will be made for loading, unloading, circulation, servicing and vehicle turning, adequate and safe provision will be made for parking vehicles and cycles , off-site improvements to highways infrastructure can be secured where these are not adequate to service the development and the scheme is designed to minimise the impact of vehicles and give priority to the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, users of public transport and those with impaired mobility.

Energy

SEP policy NRM12 states that policies should encourage the integration of combined heat and power (CHP) in all developments.

Employment

SEP policy RE3 states that local development documents should provide a range of sites for general employment purposes in locations which are accessible to the labour supply, make efficient use of underused sites, focus on urban areas and promote the use of public transport.

Historic Environment

Government policy on planning and the historic environment is set out in PPG15 as amended by Circular 01/01 and 01/07. This urges planning authorities to ensure they have appropriate specialist advice on any application which, by its character or location, might have an adverse impact on any sites or structures of the historic environment. PPG15 states the Secretary of State's view that the desirability of preserving or enhancing conservation areas should be a material consideration in decisions regarding proposals outside the conservation area, but which would affect its setting or views into or out of the area.

VLP policy HE1 states that proposals for development which would affect the setting of a conservation area will not be permitted unless they can be shown to preserve or enhance the established character or appearance of the area.

Other Issues

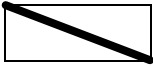
SEP policy E8 states that development plans should set out policies on the level of protection to be offered to the best and most versatile agricultural land and ensure that soils are protected.

Key for Sutton Courtenay Plan 2 – Site Plan

1. EFW Plant
2. Visitor Centre
3. IBA Processing and Stockpiling
4. APCR Landfill Area
5. CHP Infrastructure
6. Office Building
7. Car Park
8. Surface Lagoon
9. Railway Siding
10. Millennium Common
11. Didcot Power Station
12. Bridge Farm
13. Culham Bridge
14. Hill Farm
15. Hartwright House

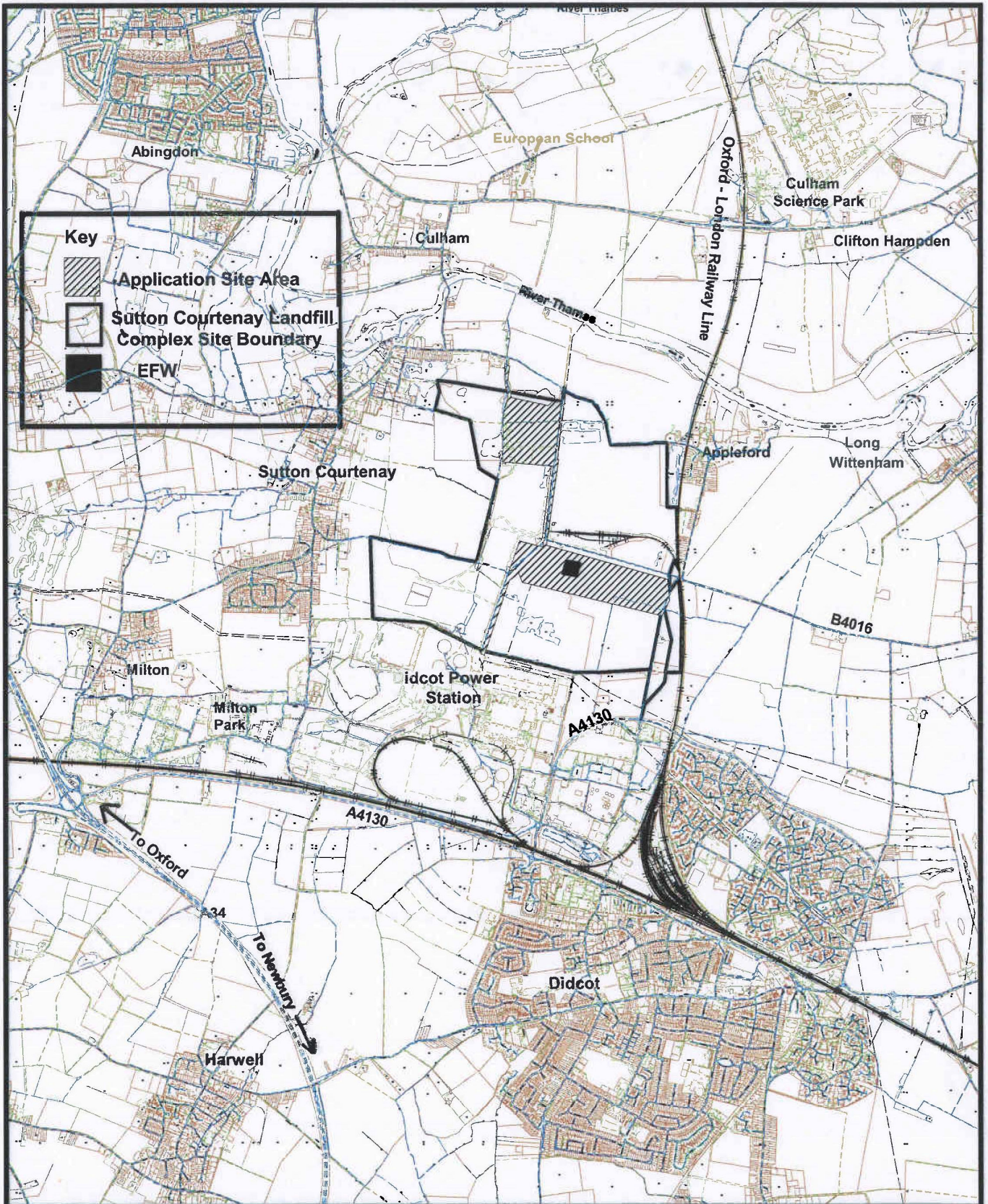


Vehicular Access Point



Resource Recovery Park

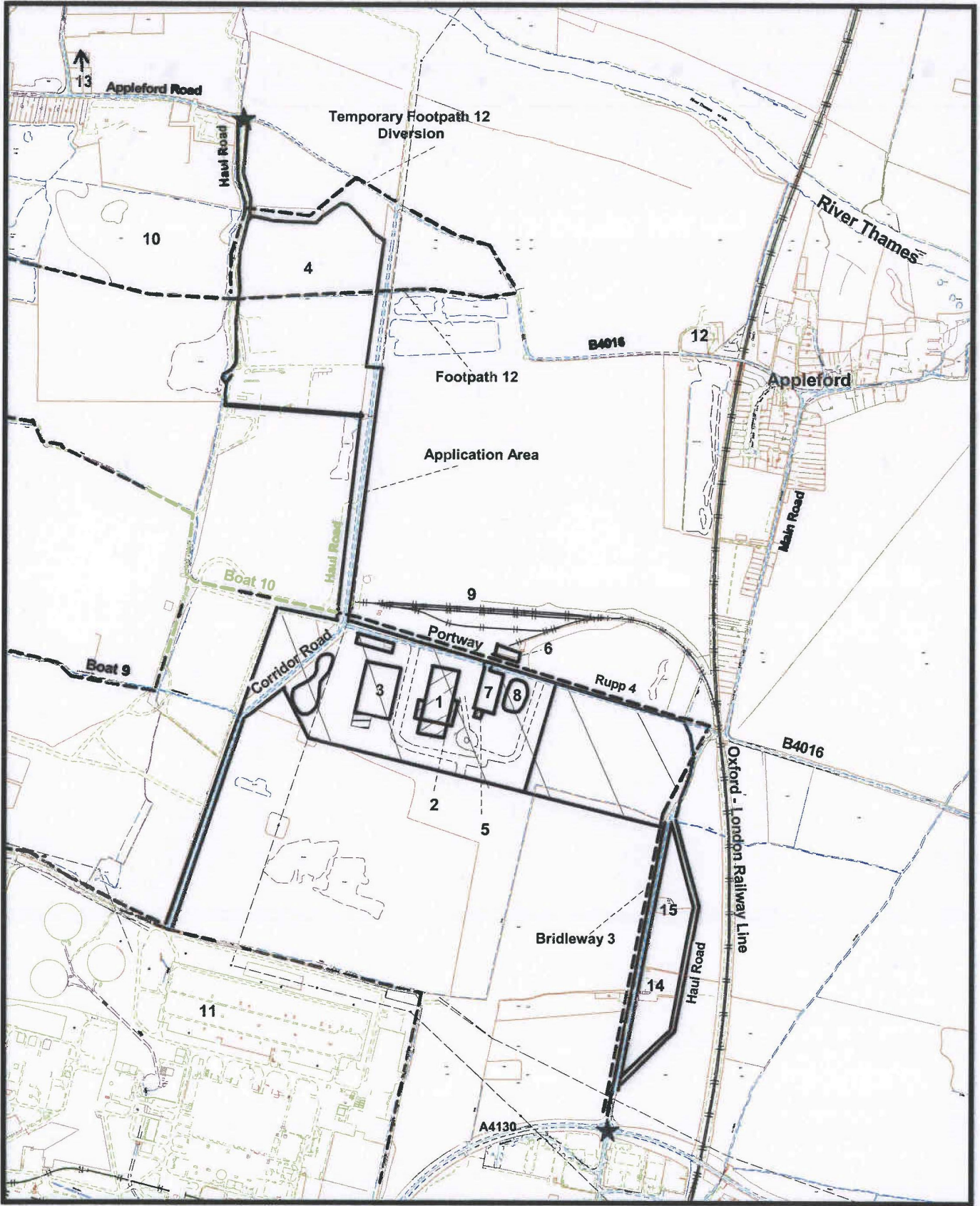
Plan 1 - Location Plan



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By: T.Philp
Dept:

Plan 2- Site Plan



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