

Rookery South RRF Community Liaison Panel Meeting 9 Notes

Rookery South RRF Community Liaison Panel Meeting 9 Monday 26th April 2010, 18.30 – 20.30

Introductions and actions from last meeting/follow up queries

Actions from last meeting:

- Action Covanta to present the final planning case with more detail on the key issues for the CLP – design, landscape, traffic, noise, air quality – once IPC application submitted: Now application has been postponed this item to be deferred until the application is complete
- Action CLP members to consider whether they wish to have a presentation on noise and air quality issues – to be discussed for next meeting agenda below
- Action RN to discuss the issue of the choice of Stewartby views with LDA Design and if necessary the English Heritage officer and report back to the CLP - on agenda below
- Action Covanta to provide the section 37 Consultation Report to the CLP once it has been drafted, to include specific reference to the CLP Terms of Reference. Work on collating this report is just starting and is being authored by LDA Design – to be presented to a later meeting
- Action KF to continue to ensure the notes convey a balanced representation of the depth of feeling CLP members express. CLP members to provide any comments on notes to KF on receipt – completed, comment received re Meeting 8 Notes asking for clarification on how much oil the plant uses to fire, included in responses at end of these notes.

Follow up queries:

Kate Fairweather (KF) has circulated a full list of Covanta responses to CLP queries (see attached document).

Action CLP members to review and inform KF by 10th May of any items they wish to add to the next meeting agenda

Review of photomontages showing views of the plant from Stewartby

Alister Kratt (AK) of LDA Design presented on this issue. He covered the stages that Covanta had gone through to select views for consultation and the IPC application:

The first stage, in June last year, was to prepare the method for the Cultural and Heritage Assessment which had been issued to English Heritage (EH) and the local authorities. It included how the Assessment would record Cultural Heritage Assets following good practice of taking into account assets within 3 km and 10km of the proposed site. It included views Covanta felt were relevant for photomontages using a photo and a location plan, plus historic features.

Additionally Covanta provided a similar method for the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment that was agreed with Central Bedfordshire and Bedfordshire Borough Council officers. This used the same views where appropriate to give a common point of reference.

After preliminary acceptance of the method EH and the local authorities attended site meetings with Covanta in November to verify that the selected locations were right.

In Stewartby where Covanta had suggested a mid point on the Green, EH suggested two other views – the road at the back of the Village Hall and one at the back of the Common Room.

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Other views agreed were from St Katherine's Cross, Amptill Park House, Houghton Conquest, Marston Moretaine and Millbrook. Additionally views were requested from Wrest Park, Woburn and Cardington.

In response to requests Covanta had also re-photographed these views in sunnier weather to show how the plant would appear in a brighter background landscape.

In February Covanta met with EH and the local authorities to discuss the outcome and which views were to be provided as photomontages, which as wireframes only and which as photographs with descriptions. The choice of photomontage view was based on the best view covering North, South, East and West, so another view in the same plane and from a similar distance would be provided as a photograph and description.

In February the CLP had requested a further view from the high point on the Green in Stewartby which had been provided to the last CLP meeting.

EH have now requested fully rendered photomontages of the plume (as it will typically appear in the weather conditions when it will be visible) to indicate the cumulative impact of the plant, chimney and plume. Covanta will include this in both the Cultural Heritage and Landscape and Visual Impact chapters of the Environmental Statement accompanying the IPC application.

Altogether a total of 20 views have been agreed, all of which will be included in the Environmental Statement – the principle views in the main report and all the others in an appendix.

AK offered to provide the CLP with all views and photomontages to be used in the application on disc – the CLP agreed that this was the best format for them. Each photomontage will contain the current view, a wireframe model and the combined photomontage view. There may be minor changes to the presentation as the application work progresses in terms of labeling.

Action Covanta to provide the full set of view and photomontages to be used in the application to CLP members on disc

Rachel Ness (RN) said that she had a letter from EH confirming that EH had agreed the photomontage locations with Covanta, to clarify the query at the last CLP meeting.

Action Copy of the letter to be distributed

Update on community benefits

RN referred to the Exhibition booklet where Covanta outlined their community benefit proposals (see Exhibition Leaflet circulated to CLP members in March). These include a 10% rebate on electricity, a Community Trust Fund of £150k year one and £50k per annum thereafter, a Forest of Marston Vale Trust Fund of £250k year one and £50k per annum thereafter, a Visitor Centre, and preliminary strategy to reconnect and enhance severed footpaths in and around the Rookery Pit.

Covanta are now analysing the 260 responses from the public in response to the consultation activity including the 120 feedback forms from the exhibitions to identify how the community benefits offer has been received and any changes that may be required.

RN confirmed that the offer of community benefits would be handled via a number of avenues including a draft legal agreement which will be submitted with the IPC application.

Questions:

Will Covanta offer compensation to house owners suffering from “planning blight” as a result of the proposal?

RN stated that energy from waste developers do not offer compensation, as the effect on the local housing market is not a planning issue, the issue is the suitability in land use planning terms of the site for this project.

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Do the IPC judge whether the community benefit is a fair deal for hosting the plant?

RN said that the IPC Commissioner will consider the public's views and the community benefits on offer as part of their consideration of the merits of the application. The IPC's primary focus however will be to make sure that the proposal is acceptable in terms of its environmental impacts. The IPC would be unlikely to make an increase in the financial benefits offered by Covanta a condition of approval. However Covanta want to be a good neighbour and would wish to ensure it makes a positive contribution in a number of different ways to the local community.

Some CLP members commented that the benefits are not commensurate with the loss of amenity to the local community of hosting the plant and taking waste from outside the region – these are hidden costs that are not taken into account in the planning process or the tendering process.

How can the local community be certain that the benefit of the lower unit cost from the larger EfW facility (a critical factor in the planning case) will flow through to the local authority, reducing the local tax burden?

RN advised that this issue was outside of her planning remit and that Covanta will address this point at the next meeting.

Action Covanta to describe how lower costs will flow through to the local authority for the next meeting

Are the Government National Policy Statements approved yet, if not will the previous policies which referred to waste being managed within the region producing it be applied?

No, they are still in draft. The IPC will also take regional and local policies into account in their decision. For further information on policy see Policy presentation at the January CLP attached. If the relevant draft National Policy Statements are not approved by the time the application is to be determined goes in, the IPC will make a recommendation to the Secretary of State, who will judge it against the draft NPS and local policies, although it is not known how much weight they would give to the draft NPS.

Environment Agency presentation on their role and the Environmental Permitting process

Alasdair McKellar (AM) of the Environment Agency (EA) presented – see handout attached.

Questions:

Can the CLP see EAs input to the consultation process?

See attached EA Scoping opinion.

Action EA to provide a copy of their opinion on the Rookery South EfW proposal to the consultation process to the next meeting

How long does the EA permit last?

The permit lasts for the life of the site: However EA review their criteria for operation for each sector on a 6 – 8 year cycle and then update permits for all operators. Additionally EA continuously monitor the performance of each site to ensure compliance with requirements in the permit. Any proposed change to the operations on site could also lead to the permit being reviewed

If EA provide a positive view of the proposal in the planning process, is the permit a matter of course?

No, the planning process and the permitting process are separate and Covanta have to convince EA that their methods of operation will meet the Permit requirements before the permit is given and the plant can operate. Covanta intend to apply for the Permit shortly after the validation of the IPC application.

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Could the EA funding be cut with public sector cuts presently expected?

Not likely, the EA's regulation of this industry is funded by a charge levied on operators. The size of the levy is based on the risk – an operator who contravenes acceptable limits is charged more. There are no plans for the method of funding EA to change.

What are the measures of air quality used?

EA require operators to use approved dispersion models and maximum allowable limits to assess the impact on air quality in the surrounding area – these models have been proven effective over approximately 20 years so there is not a requirement to monitor air quality on the ground.

When operational, the plant will be required to continuously monitor the releases to air.

It was agreed that AM should attend further CLP meetings as an observer to input on issues relevant to EA

Rookery RRF plant height relative to other UK facilities

Nick Gamble (NG) of Fichtner Consulting Engineers Ltd presented – see handout attached.

Questions:

Is the gate fee directly proportional to capacity?

There is not a direct comparison between capacity and cost – there are many other factors that an operator can use to reduce prices for a tender than just plant efficiency. A rough indication is that a 100k tonne capacity plant operates at about £130/tonne; a 600k tonne capacity plant operates at about £70 – 90/tonne. Additionally a small plant may be less commercially viable, many small plants serving only their local community have to be underwritten by the local authority for a 30 year life span.

Can energy generation rates be improved?

There are examples of EfW achieving higher efficiency levels – however the main cap on efficiency is the quality of the waste: Plastic and food waste contain high levels of chlorine which restricts the operation of the boiler. The quality of waste is the local authorities responsibility and rates of recycling and what is recycled is very variable between local authorities.

Any other Business

RN provided information on the initial feedback from the exhibitions: 560 people attended the exhibitions this year, of which 60% had not attended the exhibitions last year. 85 came to Ampthill, 73 Houghton Conquest, 125 Marston Moretaine, 70 Millbrook and 206 Stewartby.

The top three issues are Public Health, Traffic and Landscape/Visual Impact.

80% feel that Covanta had responded to feedback from the first exhibition.

A majority are opposed to the project, although a substantial minority is positive about it.

There have been 260 written responses to the Preliminary Environmental Report from the public, which Covanta are replying to at present, and 34 from prescribed consultees.

RN advised the CLP that the application date has been postponed for a number of reasons – the need to pick up issues raised in the consultation, some areas of the design are still not fixed, Fire and Rescue have asked for a risk assessment on access to the site (there may be a need for 2 access points) and the Primary Care Trust has asked for a full Health Impact Assessment (HIA) to be completed. The HIA will build on work already done, but requires further engagement with the public on health issues including the effects of noise and visual impact. NB Following the meeting the CLP will be invited to participate in this process.

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Additionally Covanta are still awaiting the final Scoping Opinion from the IPC on what the Environmental Impact Assessment needs to address and how –this should arrive within the next 2 weeks.

Consequently the application will not be submitted before mid-July, Covanta will be able to provide a better forecast at future meetings.

RN circulated an IPC submission signposting document showing what documents will be submitted to the IPC and what they will contain and their interrelationships. See attached.

Date of next meeting and items to cover

The next meeting will be on May 24th, 18.30 at the Forest Centre.

Current agreed agenda –

Noise impact assessment

Air Quality impact assessment/HIA

Plus any items CLP members wish to cover from the Covanta responses to queries circulated just before the meeting – to advise to KF by 10th May so that presenters can be provided.

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Attendance

Nigel Milway	Chair of "Revamp" Ampthill
Hugh Roberts	MMAG
Barry Halton	Volunteer with Beds CPRE - apologies
Tony Talbot	MD Forest of Marston Vale
Gary Summerfield	Ampthill Town Council - apologies
Lisa Frangiamore	Houghton Conquest P. C.
Jennie Thomas	Millbrook Parish Meeting
David Cooper	Stewartby Parish Council
Alan Barnard	Maulden Parish Council
Peter Neale	Marston Morteyne Parish Council
Richard Franceys	Resident
Ed Hiam	Resident – Unable to attend
Covanta representatives	See below
Kate Fairweather	Independent Chair

Attending this meeting for Covanta:

Rachel Ness Director of Planning, Paul Cole Engineering Director

Presenters:

Alister Kratt LDA Design

Alasdair McKellar Environment Agency

Nick Gamble Fichtner Consulting Engineers Ltd