

STRATEGIC PLANNING BOARD

Date of meeting: 17th June 2009
Report of: Head of Planning and Policy
Title: Erection of an Energy from Waste Facility with Associated Buildings, Car Parking and Hardstanding Areas.

Planning Application Reference: 09/0738W formally County Council reference 8/2009/CCC/3

Proposal:

Erection of an Energy from Waste facility with associated buildings, car parking and hardstanding areas.

Site Address:

Land off Pochin Way, Middlewich.

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to outline the main components of the current proposal by Covanta Energy Ltd for the construction and operation of an Energy from Waste Facility, as well as to provide an overview of the key considerations which will be important in the determination of the planning application and to update members in relation to progress with the application. Members are not being asked to determine the application at this stage but rather to familiarise themselves with the proposal in advance of the full report and recommendations of the Head of Service, Planning and Policy. A proposed site plan outlining the site area and position relative to its surroundings will be available at the meeting.

It should also be noted that due to the scale and nature of the proposed development an Environmental Impact Assessment has been carried out and the findings of this are detailed in the Environmental Statement (ES) which accompanies the planning application.

Details of Proposed Development

Covanta Energy Ltd have submitted an application for an Energy from Waste (EfW) plant, commonly known as a waste incinerator, on 9.5 ha of land situated between Pochin Way and the railway line to the east of the centre of Middlewich. The development would process 370,000 tonnes of non-hazardous wastes annually and includes a mechanical treatment facility that

would receive a proportion of the waste (up to 185,000 tonnes) for pre-treatment enabling the recovery of predominantly ferrous and non-ferrous metals. A bottom ash facility is also proposed to handle the incineration residues enabling further recycling. Heat from the process would be used to raise steam and produce 35 megawatts of electricity, with surplus heat being available to adjoining industrial units such as British Salt who have expressed an interest.

The three main buildings proposed are the mechanical treatment facility, the bottom ash recycling facility and the main and largest building the EfW facility which would be 48m high with chimney stack of 80m high.

The construction period is anticipated to be between 33 and 36 months with a life expectancy for the EfW plant of 35 years. Whilst the combustion process will be a continual one, delivery of waste vehicles would be restricted to 0730 to 1800 Monday to Friday and 0730 to 1300 on Saturdays.

A short (100m) length of the Middlewich bypass would be constructed to facilitate access into the site.

Main Issues

There has been considerable public interest in the proposal and several hundred letters and e-mails of objection have been received. Members may be aware of some of the concerns raised as they have been canvassed directly by the public.

The objectors concerns do mirror the main issues that need to be considered within the final report and these include;

- the traffic impact, were there is a local perception that traffic levels are already unacceptably high,
- the possibility of health impacts from traffic increases and emissions from the incinerator particularly dioxins and particulate matter ,
- the visual impact of what would be a very large and obvious building with a high chimney stack,
- the site is not identified as a preferred site within the Cheshire Replacement Waste Local Plan,
- and the need for the facility bearing in mind the company are no longer involved with the Cheshire household waste contract and the recently approved incinerator at the Ineos works in Runcorn and outstanding appeal for an incinerator in Ellesmere Port.

Conclusion

This is a large, technically complex and controversial application supported by an Environmental Statement. There has been wide consultation on the application which has generated numerous requests for clarification and further information to enable a full assessment to be. There are still important consultees that have yet to complete their consideration of the application and respond; these may result in further requests for information to be supplied by the applicant.

Whilst it is not yet possible to finalise a report for the reasons set out above, or confirm which date the item will be on the Board agenda, it is however considered

appropriate to update members on the progress in processing the application and the main issues that are likely to be of consideration when a report is brought before Board. It is also considered that members would benefit from an opportunity to visit the site and it is therefore recommended that Members undertake a site inspection prior to the full report being presented to Board.