

CONSULTATION BY ADJOINING AUTHORITY

CESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER COUNCIL – PLANNING APPLICATION

Ref: 09/02430/WAS

Proposed Waste Treatment Plant, Wincham, Northwich.

Location

The proposed waste treatment facility is located off Wincham Lane, Northwich, within the District of Cheshire West and Chester and consists of a site extending to 5.22ha of land on the Wincham Industrial Estate formerly occupied by the Wincham Salt Works. The site lies approximately 1km from the Cheshire East boundary at Pickmere. The application is supported by an Environmental Impact Assessment and has been received by Cheshire West and Chester Council who will determine it and have now consulted Cheshire East Council as a neighbouring Authority.

Background

The applicants Resource Recovery Solutions Ltd (RRS) are one of two remaining companies bidding for the Cheshire Household Waste PFI Contract. The contract to be let by Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East Council's, will address the treatment and disposal of residual waste from all kerbside and household waste reception centres (HWRC's), i.e., the waste collected by both Council's, over the next 25 years, which is currently being disposed of in landfill sites. The contract will assist both Councils in meeting the EU Landfill Directive and National Targets to reduce the amount of biodegradable municipal waste going to landfill. The successful bidder for the contract is expected to provide a waste treatment facility, ideally located centrally within Cheshire. Whilst waste collected locally to the facility would be delivered directly (in bin lorries), a series, probably three, of waste bulking stations would be needed to serve more peripheral parts of the two Council areas, current expected to be Ellesmere Port, Macclesfield and Crewe. Separate applications for these facilities are expected later this year. The other remaining bidder for the contract Viridor has already submitted a planning application for a waste facility in Lostock Gralam, Northwich, which was reported to this Committee on 2nd December 2009.

Proposed Development

Whilst some buildings on site will be demolished Victoria House, which is a low modern building will be retained and used for offices, visitor and education centre. Three new large interlinking buildings are proposed that will house a waste reception hall (74.5m x 40.2m x 16.3m), material recovery facility (57.4m x 55.8m x 16.5m) and advanced conversion technology (ACT) hall (78.6m x 89.6m x 23.1m). The buildings therefore vary in height from 16.5m to 23m and are not out of scale with other industrial buildings in the area. Flue gases would be emitted from a 60m high stack which would be 4m in diameter.

The facility would be capable of handling 200,000 tonnes of waste a year which currently accords with that generated within Cheshire after recycled material has been taken out of the waste stream.

Access to the proposed facility would be off Wincham Lane with vehicles from the Ellesmere Port bulking station likely to use the M56 and A559, those from Macclesfield the A559, A556 and A537 and those from Crewe probably the A530.

It is estimated that daily traffic levels would be 57 incoming HGV's delivering waste, 15 outgoing HGV's removing recyclable material and bottom and fly ash from the process, and up to a maximum of 50 staff cars.

Normal hours for the reception and removal of material would be 0800 to 1730 Monday to Friday and 0800 to 1630 Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays. The plant itself would work continuously round the clock.

It is estimated that the facility would take 33 months to construct and commission during which hours of construction working would be limited to 0700 to 1700 Mondays to Saturdays.

Waste vehicles entering the site would be directed into the waste reception hall to offload waste. All waste would be received and handled within the buildings which would be kept under negative pressure thereby drawing air into the facility and reducing the likelihood of odour emission. Waste would then be transferred into the material recycling facility where a number of processes would remove recyclable material and then mix and mash the remaining waste. Recyclable waste would be removed from site. The remaining processed waste would then be fed by hopper in the ACT Hall to the gasification plant where it would be thermally treated. The process is similar to incineration but oxygen is reduced at the initial combustion phase to be introduced later to further burn the emission gases. This process is expected to significantly reduce the emissions from the stack. The heat from the process would be used to raise steam and produce it is estimated 13MW of electrical power, some of which would be exported to the national grid.

The fly ash from the process, captured from the gas emissions prior to discharge from the stack, would need to be taken to a hazardous waste facility, whilst the bottom ash could be used for building block processes or disposed of to landfill.

Potential Impacts on Cheshire East

Should RRS be the successful bidder for the Cheshire PFI Waste Contract, all Council (both Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester) collected waste from domestic premises and Household Waste Reception Centres would be delivered to this site. Waste collection rounds proximate to Northwich are likely to deliver directly to the facility, however more distant collections are expected to initially discharge at one of two bulking stations expected to be located at Crewe and Macclesfield. Planning applications for these facilities will be submitted in due course. Cheshire West and Chester are likely to utilise a bulking station in Ellesmere Port. The routing of such vehicles could if necessary be controlled by the Council and operator. It is estimated that a total of 57 waste vehicles would access the site daily; approximately half coming from Cheshire East, such figures are not considered significant or likely to have an adverse impact on the highway network.

Considering the scale of buildings proposed, local topography and landscape features, it is not considered that the proposed building are likely to have a significant visual impact when viewed from Cheshire East.

This facility would also be subject to a waste permit issued, monitored and enforced by the Environment Agency. The plant would therefore need to meet the emission standards required by the Agency. The handling of waste would be carried out within buildings equipped with negative pressure and filters; it is therefore not considered that odour or dust would be a problem, both could be controlled through condition. The Environmental Health Officer has yet to comment on the consultation; any comment received will be reported verbally or through a report update.

The more local environmental impacts would be considered by Cheshire West and Chester Council.

This application has been specifically submitted to serve the identified need to treat the waste collected by Cheshire West and Chester, and Cheshire East Councils. A second application to treat this waste source has also been submitted by the other bidder (Viridor) for the PFI Contract. It is considered important that any permissions that may be granted, limits the use of those facilities to this sole purpose. This would thereby ensure the unsuccessful bidder is unable to implement a permission that could otherwise seek to attract other private waste contracts in an area that is already over provided with planning permissions for waste facilities. Existing planning permissions for the Bedminster Plant immediately next to this proposal and the very large Energy from Waste Plants and facilities at Ince Marshes and Weston Point, Runcorn will result in those and any further facilities having to unsustainably source the waste to operate those facilities from considerable distance, contrary to the principle of treating and disposing of waste close to source. The unsuccessful bidder would however be able to resubmit should they wish, based on private sector waste arisings. Such an application would be determined on the need for further facilities serving the private sector.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Council indicates to Cheshire West and Chester Council that it wishes to raise no objection to the proposed application, subject to conditions and or legal agreement restricting the use of the facility to that solely to serve the municipal waste needs of the two Councils and subject to the Council being consulted on routing agreements.