

Present: Councillor Judith Skinner (Chairman), (Vice-Chairman), Councillors George Cornah, Anton Dani, Deborah Evans, Paul Goodale, Neill Hastie, Peter Watson, Judith Welbourn and Stephen Woodliffe

In attendance:

Officers –
Assistant Director - Regulatory, Assistant Director - Planning and Senior Democratic Services Officer

59 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were tabled for Councillor Peter Bedford. It is noted Councillor Bedford attended this meeting for the initial presentation of the item but left thereafter taking no part in any deliberation. Councillor Stephen Woodliffe was in attendance for Councillor Bedford.

60 MINUTES

With the agreement of the committee the Chairman signed the minutes of the previous meeting held on the 14 July 2020.

61 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were tabled for the meeting.

62 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions.

**63 BOSTON ALTERNATIVE ENERGY FACILITY (BAEF) PHASE 4
CONSULTATION SUBMISSION**

The Council had provided feedback on previous phases of public consultation, which had been warmly welcomed by the agents acting on behalf of the applicant. Many of the amendments to the revised scheme before Members today had been incorporated into the development proposals as a direct result of feedback provided by this Council. Significant changes included reductions in shipping movements, reduction in road transport movements, site layout and noise mitigation, siting of concrete batching facilities, addition of a public footbridge and a proposed visitors' centre, both on site and in the town centre.

Phase 4 consultation enabled the Council, as a consultee, to make further comment and seek clarity on outstanding issues to continue to influence the final proposal in a positive way for the benefit of the residents of Boston and the Borough as a whole.

Madam Chairman invited Gary Bower, Development Consent Order Project Manager for the applicant's agent, to address the Committee.

Mr Bower gave a PowerPoint presentation setting out the details of the BAEF proposal as they stood for Phase 4 consultation, and highlighted the differences between the Phase 3 proposal and the Phase 4 proposal.

The facility remained an Energy from Waste (EfW) facility, although the technology used to convert waste to energy had switched from gasification to traditional EfW thermal technology. The changes were anticipated to have only minor and net positive effects, resulting in an overall reduction in potential negative impacts from the development.

[A copy of the PowerPoint presentation to be e-mailed to Members upon request.]

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services expressed concern regarding emissions from the site, in particular, the release of CO₂ into the atmosphere, and the importance of using the facility for Lincolnshire's waste, particularly Boston's, rather than transport it anywhere else by road.

In response to these issues and other questions raised by the Portfolio Holder, Mr Bower explained the following.

The site would have three lines of thermal plant and there would be additional plant on site capable of capturing CO₂ from the exhaust gas connected to two of the three lines. Each CO₂ plant would capture 12% of the CO₂ emitted by the line it was connected to; however, there would be no CO₂ capture from the third line, which would release 100% into the atmosphere.

At the current time of submitting the Development Consent Order (DCO) application, it would not be possible to connect a CO₂ plant to all three lines. This was because the amount of CO₂ that would be produced by the facility was dictated by market demand and it would not be appropriate to create more CO₂ than there was a defined market for it. The facility would still be compliant with emission limits without capturing any CO₂; therefore, capturing any amount of CO₂ was beneficial.

The household waste currently bulked at Boston's Slippery Gowt transfer station was taken to the North Hykeham Energy from Waste facility. The Applicant and the County Council (as Waste Disposal Authority) had both expressed an interest in taking the Boston waste into the BAEF site, although this could not be guaranteed because it was subject to current procurement rules. Dialogue would continue with the County Council on the matter.

The Port of Boston did not dredge at the point of the proposed berthing pocket for the BAEF. The Applicant proposed to dredge and excavate the land in front of the flood defence line to create the berthing pocket for the wharf. The wharf would form the new flood defence line at a height agreed with the Environment Agency in line with Boston's Flood Defence Strategy. The Applicant would then have to keep this clear and the sediment would be used as the binding agent in the facility's aggregation process.

Committee Members raised similar concerns to the Portfolio Holder. However, there were some positive comments regarding the effect of planned shrub planting on CO₂ emissions and creation of the berthing pocket on water flow making the level more stable between the Haven and the Witham leaving less mud visible.

In answer to further questions, Mr Bower explained there was more evidence available regarding the environmental impact of energy from waste schemes than from gasification schemes and it was not possible to make a direct comparison of emissions. Each facility was unique because there were variants in waste streams. The actual level of emissions would not be known until the facility was operating, which was the reason requirements were in place that would have to be met. These requirements were European Union Commission-level standards.

The estimate of actual CO₂ emissions was all part of the Environmental Impact Assessment, which included impact assessments of the level of CO₂ and air quality. The applicant and agent recognised the significant importance of Boston as an agricultural area and the need to meet requirements with respect to emissions.

Two assessments overlapped in terms of identifying the approach for visual screening, one identifying biodiversity and another the use of landscaping; this was all part of the assessment work. The sediment process, water flow and water quality were all important parts of the assessment work.

A Member then voiced particular objection to the proposals in terms of the location, deeming its proximity to residents inappropriate, and concern regarding the chimneys' plume dispersal. The chimneys would be high, at 70m, and it was considered that the prevailing wind would spread gas emissions quite widely, affecting two wards, reducing house prices and tourism. Furthermore, the site would emit not only CO₂ but also other, more toxic, chemicals.

Mr Bower responded by pointing out that the location was an industrial estate identified in the local plan for energy from waste development for facilities of this type. The air quality assessment would cover the plume dynamics. The recommended modelling approach, the national ADMS dispersal modelling (a planning standard) would be used. It would model the three stacks omitting exhaust at certain velocities and how they interacted with each other under the standard and worst-case perspective. They used five years set of wind data and took into account the height, shape of roofs etc. Contaminants would be emitted, as they were from all combustion engines, including vehicles, and would have to comply with standards in the same way. For example, dioxins were measured by extremely stringent standards set by scientists to EU Commission-level in respect of the impact on human health and the environment. It was not possible to have zero emissions. The facility would be designed so that it would not cause an unacceptable risk; it would be within acceptable limits.

Still concerned, the Member remarked that the emissions would not be known until the facility was operating and it would be burning feedstock without knowing what was in it. Mr Bower explained that was exactly why they would be continuously monitoring exhaust gases to ensure it was demonstrating that it was working at the best operational limits.

Another Member agreed that the location was too close to schools, amenities, and villages, particularly as the proposed site was significant in size with a high chimney and they did not know what emissions it would produce or its effect on the town. Globally, there had been explosions at such facilities in the past. Although supporting the project in principle and the jobs it would create, the Member had reservations, including concern about waste being stored for 4-5 days and the odour it could cause.

Mr Bower advised Members that there was potential to create over 120 jobs plus 300 during construction. They would attract engineering skill sets and they were looking to engage with Boston College in relation to apprenticeships.

They had increased the capture of CO₂ for no other reason than that there was space for doing so on the site and there was a market for it. The health and environmental impact assessments were ongoing and it was hoped that the outcomes would be known by the end of September. The findings would be shared with Members before the application was submitted.

With respect to safety, allowing the developer and regulators to implement technology and requirements that were more stringent would mean there would be much tighter control on the build and operation and so reduce the chances of such things happening.

With respect to odour, negative pressure in the shredding building and bunker meant that air would flow into these buildings when a door was opened and, furthermore, the odorous air would be diverted to the thermal treatment plant to be destroyed in the EfW. For the bales stored outside, they would be tightly wrapped in plastic and only stored for a minimum period and would be monitored. They would go from the ship to the sealed bunker system and storage would be minimised. To comply with the environmental permit the operator of the facility would have to demonstrate there would be no odour outside the site boundary.

A non-Committee Member pointed out that Lincolnshire's waste did stay within Lincolnshire and considered the location of the site satisfactory, as it had been identified in policy and within the local plan. In addition, the prevailing wind was actually in a direction away from the town. The Member reported that Marsh Lane residents were satisfied there would be fewer vehicle movements and added that the response of the RSPB was disappointing, as it was unduly negative.

The Member asked how the system would compare with gasification scheme emissions, how it would compare with the unit at North Hykeham, and if the PEIR document had been updated or whether it was considered acceptable as it was.

Mr Bower confirmed that there was one proposed CO₂ unit with gasification. The volume of exhaust emissions without capture on either was approximately similar because there was similar power output. The comparison was the capture of 12% from 2 out of 3 lines compared to 12% with one on the previous gasification proposal. Mr Bower did not know the facility at North Hykeham in terms of its elements of abatement and capture, but assumed the composition of the exhaust gases would be similar and that the Boston site would capture more CO₂ because North Hykeham did not capture CO₂.

Mr Bower reiterated that the prevailing wind had been taken into account and modelled for accordingly in the air quality assessment. The PEIR had been submitted and formal consultation had been carried out. It had been updated and every aspect would appear within the environmental statement with the application. Again, all the information on all these topics that the assessment would cover would be shared with Members.

There had been two strands of negotiation with wider stakeholders and they had been working with the RSPB site manager at Frampton Marsh and the RSPB at policy level. There had been a change of policy contact and the letter copied to Members had been sent after a meeting with all parties. The writer had missed the first part of the meeting when compilation of bird data was reported. They had contacted all parties regarding the birds and marine life and had subsequently informed the applicant who was dedicated to provide adequate habitat compensation where there was unavoidable significant impact. They had not started consultation with the Wash local group, as it was not a statutory consultee, but they could still do so, and they were more than willing to attend meetings with colleagues and professionals working with the scheme.

A Committee Member voiced support for the scheme, having visited other such systems and finding them impressive. They had to be mindful of emissions for the sake of residents and the food producing nature of the area, but this would probably be no worse than sprays used in farming. It was understood that if the site's emissions went anywhere near the limit the plant would shut down and the scientists had to be trusted with respect to what they considered safe levels. It had to be borne in mind what the environmental impact would be if the facility was not built, particularly as landfill was harmful. They needed to be open to industry, with safeguards in place, and demonstrate that Boston was open and receptive to business, new industry and initiatives. A large private investor with a scheme that would provide a number of jobs could not be dismissed. The changes were welcomed with respect to vehicle movements, and the work put in by the applicant and the agent were commendable. It was reassuring that the agent and the applicant were organisations worth dealing with and it was hoped the Council would support the proposals.

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development commented that it had been a long process to get to this stage and he looked forward to the application's approval. Boston was definitely open for business. It had started as a port and had deteriorated; this would bring in more boats and increase jobs. There were no negatives; waste had to go somewhere. It would kick-start business positivity, attract more and improve the national profile of the town.

Madam Chairman was supportive the scheme and its location having received confirmation that notification would be sent to residents regarding piling and that the facility would be used for UK waste only for the lifespan of the facility. The site would reach its end of life after 25 years at which point the company was responsible for reinstating the site. It was especially timely, as the site at North Hykeham would soon reach capacity. All Committee Members would have sight of the results of the assessments.

Mr Bower added that he had held discussions with Boston Barrier's company liaison officer regarding notification of local residents with respect to piling and were intending to learn from their good experience. In terms of the use of the site for UK waste only, they had insisted on this at an early stage and it would be written into the Development

Consent Order, which was legislation. In terms of decommissioning, they were obliged to put this in place. It was usually a 25 five-year lifespan, or earlier if the technical environmental assessment changed and the facility could no longer demonstrate it met requirements. The site would be left in the condition it was found. The wharf would remain because it would be part of the new flood defence scheme.

The recommendation was then read out and it was clearly carried, with one Member voting against.

RESOLVED: To delegate authority to the Assistant Director Regulation, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Planning and Environment to finalise the Council's submission in response to the Phase 4 consultation.

The Meeting Closed at 7.50 pm