

Northacre Renewable Energy

**Revision of the layout and design of the
Advanced Thermal Treatment Facility permitted
under consent 14/12003/WCM at Stephenson
Road, Northacre Trading Estate, Westbury, BA13
4WD**

**Non-technical summary of the
Environmental Statement**

October 2018

Introduction

Northacre Renewable Energy Ltd (a company set up by the Hills Group) proposes to develop and operate an advanced thermal treatment facility on land between Arla Foods Westbury Dairies and Northacre Resource Recovery Centre (RRC) on Stephenson Road in the Northacre Trading Estate, Westbury.

The Hills Group is one of Wiltshire's largest employers with over 400 staff working across the regions it serves. Established in 1900, The Hills Group is a privately owned family company with a broad and successful portfolio of business activities which include recycling and waste management; quarrying of aggregates and production of ready-mixed concrete; and building new homes. From its base in Wiltshire, Hills serves customers in central Southern England and Wiltshire.

Hills Waste Solutions, which is part of The Hills Group, operates the Northacre RRC under contract with Wiltshire Council.

The proposed development is a modification of the design of an advanced thermal treatment facility, which already has planning consent (ref 14/12003/WCM).

An application for revisions to the layout and design was initially submitted in April 2018 (ref 18/03816/WCM) and, despite being recommended for approval, was refused in July 2018 on the grounds that the *"proposed development, by reason of its height, bulk and location on rising ground on the edge of the built-up area, would have an adverse impact on the appearance of the area. This would conflict with Core Policy 51 in the Wiltshire Core Strategy, which seeks to protect, conserve and enhance the visual amenity of the landscape."*

This application relates to further revisions to the approved layout and design, which address the reasons for refusal of the April 2018 application. The changes to the development as already approved in 2015 can be summarised as follows:

- Increased height of buildings to incorporate more efficient boiler system and to facilitate safe access around the boiler plant.
- Increase in stack heights to comply with emerging Environment Agency guidance on Best Available Technique.
- Enclosure of the thermal process plant (gasifier, boiler and turbine) to assist in year-round operations and maintenance.
- Installation of one fewer turbine and a reduced bank of Air Cooled Condensers due to improved efficiencies in the process.

The proposed development uses advanced thermal treatment technology to generate electricity and heat from a mix of solid recovered fuel (SRF) and commercial and industrial waste that would otherwise be exported to mainland Europe as SRF or landfilled in Wiltshire respectively. Some 25.5 MW electricity / year will be generated.

The Environmental Statement

Environmental impact assessment (EIA) is the process by which the positive and negative environmental effects of a proposed development are identified before development consent is granted. The report documenting the outcome of the EIA process is called an Environmental Statement (ES).

This non-technical summary accompanies the ES and provides a simplified overview of the contents of the ES.

The full ES is available for viewing at Wiltshire Council, County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge or can be downloaded from www.northacre-energy.co.uk. Full copies of the application including the ES can be provided on CD for £10.

Assessment of environmental impacts

Following a detailed scoping exercise in 2014, as part of the successful, planning application, the topics identified for further investigation in the EIA were air quality, noise, landscape and visual impact, transport and access, archaeology and cultural heritage. This current assessment has also included biodiversity and nature conservation and climate change but has excluded archaeology from consideration given the findings of the previous assessment. The findings of the EIA process under each of these topic headings are given below. The EIA also considers cumulative effects and includes a detailed description of the development and a chapter on the policy context.

Policy support for the proposed development

The proposed development has been assessed against prevailing planning policy at the national and local level.

The proposed development is an appropriate use of the site.

Northacre Trading Estate is identified in Core Policies 32 and 35 of the adopted Wiltshire Core Strategy as a Principal Employment Area and in the adopted Waste Site Allocations Plan as suitable for 'Materials Recovery Facility / Waste Transfer Station, Local Recycling and Waste Treatment'

The proposed development is in accord with policies on climate change, design and appearance, ecology and nature conservation, economy, pollution, archaeology and cultural heritage, visual impact, traffic and transport, waste management and water resources.

Air quality

Detailed atmospheric dispersion modelling has been undertaken to assess the effects of emissions from the proposed development.

The results of the dispersion modelling and assessment demonstrate that, with a stack height of 75 m, the maximum predicted concentrations of all substances emitted comply with relevant air quality objectives at nearby sensitive locations, including residential areas and nature conservation sites, and the air intake of the adjacent Westbury Dairies.

Noise

A noise assessment was undertaken, which calculated the potential impact of noise levels arising from the proposed development at the nearest residential receptors during both daytime and night time.

The assessment showed that with the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures, noise at the nearest residential receptors would be below background for all six receptors.

Biodiversity and nature conservation

An ecological survey has been undertaken which found that the proposed development site contains common habitat, which is not scarce, threatened or of high conservation status.

No positive signs of any wildlife of note were recorded during the surveys. There is a small, outlier badger sett on the site boundary, which has its entrance outside the site and the scrub vegetation on the site has the potential to be used by nesting birds. Mitigation measures have been specified, implementation of which, will ensure adequate protection of badgers and nesting birds so that there are no residual effects.

Landscape and visual impact

The potential landscape and visual impact of the proposed development has been assessed through field and desk studies and the preparation of photomontages of before

and after views from viewpoints agreed with Wiltshire Council.

The effect on the important visitor destination viewpoint adjacent to the Westbury White Horse has been deemed to be moderate – slight adverse due to the distance from the site.

The majority of visual effects on long distance views have been categorised as slight adverse or moderate to slight adverse as the adjoining Westbury Dairies and other trading estate buildings are already very prominent features in the landscape.

There is a moderate-substantial adverse at a single viewpoint immediately following construction; this impact reduces to moderate adverse as the proposed landscaping matures.

Transport and access

Consideration of vehicle movements resulting from the proposed development shows that the proposed development will not have an impact on the local highway network.

The proposed development would add 41.5 HGV movements / day, routed to the Yarnbrook roundabout via the West Wilts Trading Estate and the B3097. From Yarnbrook, 31 of these movements would use the A350 to the north with the remaining 10.5 passing through Westbury on the A350 to the south.

Vehicle movements will be spread evenly over a 15 hour period meaning that there will be an additional 4 HGVs in the peak hour. This increase amounts to about 0.35% increase in traffic through the Yarnbrook junction. HGV traffic through the air quality management area in Westbury town centre will be equivalent to one additional HGV movement every 1.4 hours

Northacre Renewable Energy Ltd will put in place measures to help reduce reliance on cars and will develop a Green travel plan, which will be finalised when the site is operational. The design incorporates secure covered cycle parking and showers and lockers will also be provided for staff.

Heritage

The heritage assessment identified ten heritage assets within a 5 km radius of the proposed development that required assessment.

For the more distant heritage assets the proposed development is so far removed that it is insignificant.

For the five heritage assets within a 2 km radius, it is considered that the proposed development will have no impact on four of the assets.

There is a minor adverse residual effect on the setting of Brook Farmhouse, given its proximity to the proposed development.

Climate change

Consideration of climate change includes both the impact of the proposed development on climate and climate change and the impact of climate change on the proposed development and its implementation.

The proposed development will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as it will generate energy from waste, which would otherwise be landfilled, and emissions associated with transport will reduce as the development will result in some 2,000 fewer HGV movements compared with the current situation.

In terms of potential effects of climate change on the development, it is not located in an area at risk of flooding nor are any special measures considered to be required to protect the development from extreme weather events.

Summary

The proposed development would divert waste from landfill, generate electricity from waste which is currently landfilled and recover valuable recyclables. It would also utilise SRF produced from Wiltshire's municipal waste, which is currently transported to mainland Europe.

There is one adverse effect arising out of the proposed development, which is classed as significant, namely that of the visual effect on users of the footpath north-west of Brook Farm.

The conclusions of the EIA are the same as those reached in the EIA undertaken in support of the approved development (ref 14/12003/WCM), which also recorded one significant adverse effect on users of the footpath north-west of Brook Farm.

In the context of the whole development, this single effect is considered to be acceptable and there are therefore no material considerations arising out of the EIA process.

In summary, the proposed development would:

- Be part of a local circular economy, turning waste into a fuel to generate renewable energy
- Generate local energy to power local businesses – 25.5 MW of electricity / year
- Deal with local waste, primarily from Wiltshire
- Create local employment – 40 permanent positions
- Promote a sustainable Wiltshire and Wiltshire's aspiration for a green economy.