

IN PARLIAMENT
HOUSE OF COMMONS
SESSION 2010-12

The Rookery South (Resource Recovery Facility) Order 2011

Petition of General Objection

To the House of Commons.

THE PETITION of HOUGHTON CONQUEST PARISH COUNCIL

Declares that:

1. Your Petitioner, Houghton Conquest Parish Council, have powers under the provisions of various enactments and their concerns include the protection of the environment. Your petitioner represents the interests of the residents of Houghton Conquest parish ("the Parish"). The Resource Recovery Facility and associated development ("the Facility") proposed to be authorised by the Rookery South (Resource Recovery Facility) Order 2011 ("the Order") is located in a parish that is adjacent to the Parish, and is therefore very close to the Parish. Your petitioner is one of 25 town and parish councils or meetings who came together to object to the Facility through the Infrastructure Planning Commission ("IPC") examination process.
2. Your petitioner alleges that it and its property, rights and interests in the area of the Parish and the inhabitants of the Parish would be injuriously and prejudicially affected by the provisions of the Order and it accordingly objects to the Order for the reasons, amongst others, appearing in this petition.
3. The Order grants development consent for the Facility, that comprises an energy from waste electricity generating station with a gross electrical output capacity of 65 MWe, together with associated development including a post treatment materials recovery facility at Rookery South Pit in Bedfordshire in close proximity to local houses and schools.
4. In order to generate this amount of electricity, the Facility is designed to burn 585,000 tonnes of waste per year which is significantly in excess of the waste treatment needs of Central Bedfordshire thus requiring the transportation of waste into the area from a wide but undefined waste catchment area. Although the site is close to two rail lines there are no immediate plans to transport waste to the Facility by rail.
5. Because of the size of the Facility the application for the Order has been considered by the IPC. That harm would be caused to residents by the proposed development was accepted by the IPC in the Statement of Reasons for the decision to grant the Order.
6. The negative effects on the residents of Houghton Conquest would come from the Facility's visual impact, re-industrialisation, emissions and anxiety about safety and the blight associated with living so close to it.
7. Your Petitioner objects to the Order because—
 - (a) It is not compliant with the adopted local plans for our part of Bedfordshire that have been properly developed through an exhaustive planning process reflecting the aspirations and needs of local people, nor with the emerging minerals and waste core strategy for Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough.
 - (b) The proposed development will damage the regeneration and restoration of the Marston Vale, which has suffered decades of the effects of brick manufacturing and landfill operations. The Order provides no security that the applicant or its

American parent company will complete the long awaited restoration of the Rookery site. Since brick making ceased, and with reduced land filling that is coming to an end, there have been major improvements in the vale. It is now a rural peaceful landscape, and it is no longer a scarred industrial landscape. This development would lead to the re-industrialisation of the Vale.

- (c) The Facility is of an inappropriate scale and design, out of keeping with what is a rural area and of a size and bulk that would have a detrimental visual impact on residents of the Parish. The bulk and mass of the Facility, the chimneystack and plume would be clearly visible, intruding on the parish, a constant reminder of its presence.

Visual impact would be particularly adverse from the many vantage points affording long distance panoramic views across the Marston Vale, from the parishes surrounding the site, including Houghton Conquest, and long distance footpaths and a national cycleway that take advantage of these views. Visual impact would also be adverse on the view from Heritage assets found in the parishes surrounding the site, such as Houghton House and Ampthill Park, which are very popular leisure amenities.

- (d) It has become clear that a facility of this size would need to process waste from a wider area than that proposed in the planning application. The residents of the Parish have had to endure the importation of waste from London for landfill for many years with all of the associated problems and this incinerator would represent a backward step.
- (e) Building incinerators of this scale reduces incentives for increasing recycling. Only a small proportion of the waste to be burnt can properly be considered as renewable, so the Facility would only go a small way to helping achieve the country's renewables target and it will stifle innovation in the development of more effective waste facilities.
- (f) There are no immediate plans for the transport of waste to the site by rail. The Facility would generate a significant number of additional HGV journeys on already congested roads over a wide area, waste may need to be transported to the Facility on roads as busy as the M1, M25, A1 and A14 to fill its capacity. We have seen no properly thought out plans for the redirection of vehicles when main highways are blocked because of accidents or road works or sheer weight of traffic as frequently occurs.
- (g) Residents of the Parish are fearful of the risk to their health from emissions into the atmosphere, particularly given the effects of temperature inversions in the Marston Vale on the dispersion of the emissions, something that the population of the surrounding area is only too familiar with from years of brick making in Stewartby when noxious fumes were regularly trapped near the ground. Even if these emissions can be controlled the risk to health that they could cause will be a cause of anxiety and stress for residents both of which cause health problems.
- (h) The Facility will cause a risk to the quality of the water supply if the foul water treatment plant, which was a late addition to the proposed development, fails. This would be needed as there is insufficient capacity at the local sewerage works for a facility of this scale. This could also lead to polluted water running into Stewartby Lake which is a popular local water sports and leisure amenity.
- (i) We believe the proposed development will have a negative economic impact on the area reversing its regeneration. It is contrary to the local plans for the area and would not assist in achieving the objective of fulfilling the potential and enhancing the Marston Vale.

8. Another reason your Petitioner objects to the Order is that this is the only opportunity under the Planning Act 2008 for your Petitioner to have its inhabitants' elected representatives consider the merits of the proposed development and decide whether the benefits to the wider population that it might provide outweigh the harm that the development will cause to the local population. Such a decision should not be imposed on the local population by unelected commissioners, a practice that in future will come to an end when the Localism Act comes into force.
9. For all these reasons, your Petitioner believes that the Order should not be approved.
10. The petitioner therefore requests that, should a joint committee consider this Order, it, or someone representing it in accordance with the rules and Standing Orders of the House, be given an opportunity to give evidence on all or some of the issues raised in this petition.

And the petitioner remains, etc.

16 December 2011

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