

Written statement summarising oral submissions given at the planning meeting (Open Floor Hearing: Thursday 23 February from 10.00 am)

Statement of Neil Elcome, [REDACTED]

(speaking in a personal capacity as a local resident/interested party)

Unique Reference: 20032819

Summary of Submissions

1. Personal experience of the statutory consultation events held by MVV. In particular the fact that no feedback from these events was recorded at the time and there was no opportunity at the events for any feedback.
2. Concern about the misleading written information provided at those events, including examples.
3. Evidence that at first glance the project appears to include Carbon Capture technology, based on the publicity materials, however this is misleading.
4. Lack of effort by MVV to make materials available in foreign languages.
5. Summary of overall impression given by the events and the marketing materials provided, and submission that this represents a wilful attempt to mislead the public.
6. Notes

1. I live in the local area and would like to express my strong opposition to the proposed waste incinerator. This is a project which is not wanted by the local community and is a step backwards in the way we generate power as a country.

But I'd like to raise a specific point regarding the consultation process which has been undertaken by MVV. In my experience this has been deeply inadequate and not fit for purpose. I attended a 'consultation event' in person (this would have been the statutory consultation event, held at various locations. The one I attended was held in Friday Bridge, at the Tower Hall), and on arrival I asked how the comments of people visiting the event would be recorded. I was advised that they would not be recorded, only the number of people attending the event would be noted. Feedback they said could be given via their website, which I had already done.

No doubt that the attendance figures will be presented here as evidence of participation in the consultation process. But, in the sense that a 'consultation' event would surely require a two-way process, this can be said not to be a consultation event at all in any meaningful way. I would strongly suggest therefore that these events do not fulfil the remit of

'consultation' with the local community, and should not be considered as such for the purposes of this planning process.

2.The information on show at the event itself I felt was completely biased and really just an exercise in PR for the company.

For example, the booklet provided at the event**, on page 11 shows a variety of artists impressions of how the finished plant will look. They tend to show it from a long distance away, and in those pictures, it looks smaller in size than the existing cold store facility nearby. As we know the reality is that it will be far bigger. It is a little bit insulting that they clearly believe people in this area don't understand perspective. [Note that I have subsequently been advised by Mr Carey, the Managing Director of MVV, that the reason that these images were used was because that was all they had ready at the time, and that there are much better images including computer generated graphics available now at their website. Quite frankly this excuse is laughable. They must have known that these images would give people the wrong impression, favourable to their cause, and chose to use them rather than more accurate images. Whether better images have been subsequently made available, on a website somewhere, months after the event, is irrelevant]

3.I asked a member of the MVV team at the consultation specifically about how this project fits in with the drive towards net zero and a general aim to cut carbon emissions and was treated to enthusiastic words about carbon capture technology. When pressed however they admitted that this would be an option in future, if government regulations required it, and depending on the technology available at the time. Indeed, in the same booklet I referred to before, on page 15 there is a map with a large area (area 36) designated as 'Carbon Capture'. The small print however, reads 'Carbon capture and storage or other environmental requirements, as determined by future government policy'. In other words, 'we'll put something here, if the government tell us to, if the technology exists by then'. Which absolutely is not the initial impression you get from the presentation, and this flimsy promise is not good enough when we're dealing with such a vital issue.

4.It has also been pointed out that these consultation materials at the events and in general were not made available in foreign languages which excludes a large percentage of the population, Wisbech area having a larger proportion of the population describing themselves as 'non white UK', and a higher percentage within that who describe themselves as not speaking English, or not speaking it well***. Those people have been excluded by the process.

5.It makes me quite angry that even down to the imagery used, we are being manipulated. The booklet itself has on the cover a charming picture of a young child, playing with a frog, out in a park or green space somewhere. It evokes something natural, innocent and nurturing, It certainly has no resemblance to the reality of this project. I do not blame a commercial company for using its PR and marketing skills to promote its new project, but I feel that they have overstepped the mark into deliberately misleading and misdirecting the public. In short, it feels like they think we are stupid.

In summary, it has become clear to me that this consultation process, and the materials provided as part of that consultation are inadequate at best. My view however is that more than that, it has been entered into in bad faith on the part of MVV. It feels very much like the consultation process has been managed in a way which wilfully suppresses the facts and the reality of the situation.

This proposal is something which we should not be supporting, given the worldwide push to reduce pollution and slow climate change, and has nothing to offer in terms of energy security. Renewable energy sources such as offshore/onshore wind, solar and tidal are currently the cheapest forms of energy production and have a long term future, and these are where we should be investing our time and resources. If any of those are proposed in this area then I would absolutely be supportive of that.

Thank you for your consideration of these points and I wish you well for the completion of the planning process.

6.

*Please feel free to contact me in relation to this statement by writing to the above address or by email to [REDACTED] This written submission is based on my notes for the oral submission I gave on the day. I may have abridged some sections or made changes on the day, mainly to fit in with the 5 minute time limit, but this document represents the substance of my statement.

**the booklet is still available at the MVV website.

*** I refer to the most recent census data available from Cambridgeshire County Council's website.