



Meeting note

Project name	Medworth Energy from Waste Combined Heat and Power Facility
File reference	EN010110
Status	Final
Author	The Planning Inspectorate
Date	6 July 2020
Meeting with	MVV Environment Ltd / Wood plc
Venue	Telecon
Meeting objectives	Project Update Meeting
Circulation	All attendees

Summary of key points discussed and advice given:

The Planning Inspectorate (the Inspectorate) advised that a note of the meeting would be taken and published on its website in accordance with section 51 of the Planning Act 2008 (the PA2008). Any advice given under section 51 would not constitute legal advice upon which Developers (or others) could rely.

Background to the Project and Work Undertaken to Date

The Applicant gave an update on the project.

The submission of the Application is now deferred until Q4 2021. The facility is expected to take three years to construct, being operational in Q1/Q2 2026.

The Applicant continues to develop a proposed route for the grid connection through ongoing assessment and stakeholder engagement. This will seek to avoid impacts on the proposed Wisbech Garden Town. The Applicant intends to provide an update on this aspect of the project in its next round of non-statutory public consultation. The electrical connection will form part of the Development Consent Order Application.

The Applicant has held meetings with host local authorities and prescribed bodies.

Compulsory Acquisition

The Applicant is engaging with Network Rail (NR). NR control a portion of land that the Applicant proposes to use to deliver the proposed Combined Heat and Power Connection and the Applicant seeks discussion on how best to proceed. It is not intended to impede any proposal to reopen the Wisbech – March railway line and the Applicant is keen to engage with NR to agree how both projects can be successfully delivered.

Non-statutory and Statutory Consultation

The applicant conducted its phase one non-statutory consultation between March and May 2020. Due to the Covid-19 lockdown, all seven consultation events had to be cancelled and consultation was carried out remotely via telephone, by post and online.

Although not part of the Consultation Strategy, the Applicant confirmed that it has taken part in local radio interviews in order to answer questions regarding the project.

Correspondence received in phase one includes views on traffic, schools, air quality, visual impact and heritage assets.

The Applicant is in the process of securing venues to hold consultation events with stakeholders as part of its phase two non-statutory consultation. This will run for six weeks during September and October 2020, subject to meeting government requirements in relation to Covid-19.

Statutory Consultation is planned to take place between March and April 2021.

The Inspectorate noted that these changes to the consultation deviated from the non-statutory Consultation Strategy. The Applicant is advised to seek its own legal advice on how these changes to the non-statutory consultation would need to be addressed and a narrative of the consultation process should be recorded in the Consultation Report.

The Inspectorate advised that during the current Covid-19 situation, when gathering in numbers is restricted, Applicants should continue to engage with the relevant local authorities on its approach to consultation, ensuring that the process is thorough, flexible and avoids committing to anything that might not be achievable. The Applicant confirmed that it had updated its consultation strategy to set out the approach to Phase 2 of the non-statutory consultation and had issued this to the host local authorities for comment.

The Inspectorate provided some further advice on suggested approaches that may be taken in this post Covid-19 environment. There should be some flexibility in consultation methods to allow for changes in government advice. This will help to avoid any issues during the acceptance of the application.

The Applicant will also need to fully consider those parties who do not have internet access when preparing their consultation strategy and seek advice from the local authorities on potential consultation methods.

The Inspectorate suggested some further consultation methods that the Applicant may wish to adopt such as posting out information booklets; using webinars to present consultation information and provide an opportunity for attendees to ask questions; developing an enhanced website to enable the use of a wider range of tools such as video presentations and recordings of the webinars and offering appointments for telephone surgeries for those people less comfortable or unable to use the internet to discuss the proposals.

If the Applicant is to revise its consultation strategy for the non-statutory consultation and when it produces its Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC) for the statutory consultation, it should consider a flexible approach which considers the potential for further lockdown periods.

Anticipated Submission Date

The Applicant is currently intending to submit the application for development consent in Q4 2021.