

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **County Planning Committee** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Tuesday 7 September 2021 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor G Richardson (Chair)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors A Bell (Vice-Chair), C Hunt, P Jopling, C Marshall, C Martin, I Roberts, K Shaw, A Simpson and S Zair

1 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Simon Wilson.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members.

3 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Craig Martin declared that during the last local election he was an agent for a candidate who was against this application. His role as Agent did not involve him making any pre-determination of the matter that would prevent him from taking part in the consideration of the application.

Councillor Angela Sterling stated that she was a resident as well as a local Member and lived in the proximity of the site.

Councillor Carl Marshall declared that he had made a number of comments on this application as a local member of Stanley and as a Labour Group member. He had an open mind and would consider all of the facts put forward by all parties before reaching a conclusion on the application.

Councillor Kevin Shaw stated that he had previously commented on the application but that he had an open mind and would reach a decision on what he heard today.

4 Minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2021

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2021 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

5 Applications to be determined

a DM/20/03267/WAS - Energy from Waste Facility - Hownsgill Industrial Park, Templetown, Consett (Consett South)

The Senior Planning Officer, Chris Shields, gave a detailed presentation on the report relating to the abovementioned planning application, a copy of which had been circulated (for copy see file of Minutes). Members noted that the written report was supplemented by a visual presentation which included photographs of the site and details of the layout and access. Members had visited the site the previous day.

In presenting the report the Senior Planning Officer explained that as of the previous evening, representations against the application had reached 3585 and this number continued to rise. He also informed the Committee of the receipt of a 4,080 name petition which was available to view on-line.

All issues raised within the representations, including within the nine letters of support had been addressed in the report.

Councillor Dominic Haney addressed the Committee and stated that as the local member for Consett, Moorside and The Grove, he knew how devastating this proposed facility would be. Hundreds of people in his division had raised objections.

Notwithstanding the obvious concerns for health from burning 60,000 tonnes of waste in Consett, he advised that he would focus his representations on two areas: low carbon benefits and loss of visual amenity.

The Applicant had admitted in their environmental statement that their facility would have only a “minor beneficial effect over the baseline scenario”.

Councillor Haney was not surprised that the Council’s Low Carbon Economy team had in their assessment of the application been unable to support the proposed development and had noted that the Applicant had been unable to guarantee what amount of plastic would be in the waste they would incinerate. It was accepted by the Government that burning plastic would be a net negative on carbon emissions. Given that the Applicant could not be sure of the amount of plastic, he considered that the figures provided in their statement as to the carbon benefits of their facility were spurious at best and misleading at worst.

The Applicant had also stated that this facility would provide electricity and heat to the new hospital and new housing development. The hospital and housing did not exist, and may never exist. Moreover, Councillor Haney advised that the NHS had stated that if they did intend to build a new hospital near the site, they did not require an incinerator or other energy facility in order to proceed.

It was heavily disputed whether incineration was a green technology. Zero Waste Scotland had already concluded that incineration could not be classified as green, and much of the continent had moved away from, and actively discouraged the technology.

Even if it was carbon neutral, it was definitely not renewable. Once burnt the rubbish could only be replenished by creating more and more, which was the wrong approach to dealing with the waste problem.

The other reason the Committee should refuse the proposed development was the devastating impact it would have on Consett's beautiful, rural skyline.

He could not thank Planning Officers enough for coming to the same conclusion as himself and thousands of other residents of Consett; that the 150 foot high chimney with a flashing beacon on top would cause unacceptable harm to the landscape.

In addition to the listed buildings mentioned in the report, it was worth noting that views of the Grade 2 Listed Hownsgill Viaduct would be damaged by having the stack and its beacon in its backdrop.

Committee members who visited the site would have seen the North Pennines AONB just a stone's throw away. The loss of visual amenity caused by the proposed development could not be mitigated against. This scenic backdrop would be seriously damaged, all in exchange for nine jobs and vague and uncertain notions about green energy and heat.

In conclusion he paid tribute to the people of Consett for getting behind the campaign to stop the incinerator. It showed that a community could stand together, to make it clear that Consett would not be a dumping ground for other people's waste. Thousands of residents and their children had supported the campaign and would be delighted if it succeeded.

At this point a video created by the Say No to Consett Incinerator campaign group was played at the request of the Councillor, which heard from local residents about why they were saying no to the development.

Councillor Katherine Rooney stated that having lived in Consett all her life and knowing the town and its people as she did, she was not at all surprised at how much the community had rallied together to defeat this application. It had been a privilege to take a leading role in the effort to stop the incinerator.

She had spoken with hundreds of residents, asking them to lodge their objection with the Council, and could count on one hand the number that were in favour of the incinerator.

Those against the proposals knew that this would destroy the local environment, that there would be increased traffic, noise and pollution, and they knew that the glorious vistas from around the town and beyond would be dominated by the 50 metre high chimney.

She hoped that the Committee would take the same view and would refuse the application.

At the request of the Councillor a music video was played by local band Con Dawn and the Crew which demonstrated the strength of feeling of the campaign against the proposed facility.

Councillor Angela Sterling stated that she was speaking on behalf of herself and Councillor Michelle Walton, representing the views of the residents in their ward. Whilst the proposed site was not in their electoral division a huge number of their residents would be affected, with the closest living 300m away from the site. Everywhere across the ward Say No campaign posters were displayed. Together with Councillor Walton she had received countless phone calls and e-mails on the issue and she had not spoken with one person who was in favour of the proposals.

Residents across Delves Land and Templetown were against the development and their reasons were varied. Some were seriously concerned about emissions and the effect of the health of the community, citing birth defects and cancer among a long list of other health concerns.

Whilst the site was on an industrial park there were a large number of family homes on the doorstep and concerns about increased traffic, road safety, odour and noise had all been regularly raised.

One of the biggest issues was that of location. It was not a case of not on my doorstep; Consett had a proud industrial heritage which had left industry in the past and the town had undergone decades of regeneration. Consett was a desirable place to live with lots of new shops and new family homes being constructed.

An incinerator would not only hamper the town's regeneration but put it squarely back into the past. Many were also concerned about the impact on property prices.

Incinerators tended to be built in areas of deprivation and Consett had poor wellbeing scores. Residents had asked if such a facility would be built in Durham City Centre.

Residents had also criticised the small number of jobs created and were concerned about the potential ecological damage.

She was personally concerned with the scale of the development. The 50m high stack would be two and a half times the height of the Angel of the North. She asked if the emissions were harmless why the stack needed to be as high. It would dominate the skyline and be a blot on the landscape.

Residents had saved to buy their family homes in an up and coming town with outstanding views and local wildlife, and with safe places for children to play, only for them to then have a facility with a stack as high as the leaning tower of Pisa.

Councillor Sterling addressed the reasons for refusal listed in the report and thanked Planning Officers for their hard work. She acknowledged that many of the concerns were not based on material planning considerations but she felt that they needed to be conveyed. Therefore despite the residents having legitimate concerns the application must be rejected for material planning reasons. The scale and form of the incinerator would cause harm on the quality and character of the landscape which would not be outweighed by the benefits of the development.

Project Genesis had undertaken a lot of good work in the local community. Their passion for the regeneration of Consett was clear, however the disconnect with the community was troubling. She and Councillor Walton had asked Project Genesis to withdraw the application on two occasions, and she asked that if the application was rejected that they did not appeal the decision.

Councillor Alex Watson stated that he wished to make it clear that despite this public campaign which in his view had declared false information regarding toxic emissions, smell and noise, the appropriate agencies' reviews, including the Environment Agency, had provided facts, and he considered that the recommendation for refusal was based only on the fact that the development was visible.

The development would bring:

- £35m plus construction project creating jobs.
- An operating business creating sustainable jobs.
- Huge savings to the taxpayer which would allow for budget funds to be used on valuable services to the taxpayer.
- Saving on electricity bills both domestic and business.
- The delivery of a significant renewable energy opportunity to the Area.
- The attraction of further Industry to the area.

The County was in such a critical period where the economy needed this type of development to create jobs, attract industry and to deliver the Renewable Agenda.

The only point driving this recommendation for refusal was visibility. He pointed out that there would be mitigation by woodland, as was the norm in such developments. There were other industrial units on this site which could be seen. Wind turbines were higher, more visible, also part of the Renewable Agenda but would not give such significant benefits as job creation, industry attraction, a construction project, supply chain and local economy benefits. He questioned that if this development was refused on the grounds of visibility it should follow that all wind turbines should be pulled down.

A key statement in the report was around a Cost Benefit Analysis, and he asked how visibility would offset job creation, cost savings, and the attraction of renewable energy projects.

At this point the objectors were invited to make representation.

Christine Thomas stated that in 1991 she had been told that to succeed in her career she had to leave Consett. She decided to return in 2002 to a community that

was thriving and was on the up for the first time in many years. She joined the campaign because she worked with young people and had always taught them to fight for what they believed in. She decided that she needed to set an example and join the community to fight to make sure that this incinerator did not go ahead.

The Applicant had stated that to be truly sustainable communities should be able to provide the necessary infrastructure to thrive which included energy and heat, and the management of waste. The Government's Waste Management Plan highlighted that the principles of self-sufficiency and proximity were often over-interpreted to mean that all waste had to be managed close to its source as possible to the exclusion of other considerations. Local Authorities needed the required infrastructure to be able to do so.

Consett had been a phoenix out of the ashes following the steelworks; it was a lovely place to live and although it was still in the top 30% of the indices of deprivation, it scored highly in environment. The incinerator could rob the community of one of its greatest assets.

The scale, form and massing of the facility would cause harm to the quality of the landscape which would not be outweighed by the benefits of the development. The available land was from an era when the steelworks were the heart of the town, and when people lived near to where they worked. It was now known that living next to such high levels of pollution had a detrimental impact on health. Many have witnessed the early deaths of family members as a result of the pollution they had to endure.

The report noted that although the development was outside North Pennines AONB the proposal would cause unacceptable harm to its special qualities due to scale, form and massing. The community also agreed with the statement that the appearance of the proposed development did not conserve or enhance the special qualities of the landscape within the adjacent area of high landscape value.

There was a wealth of talent in Consett; artists, filmmakers and photographers; young people who had chosen to stay. This talent should be harnessed for the County Durham City of Culture bid. In addition COP 26 was coming up. Because of this campaign the people of Consett could show how hard the people of Consett had worked to protect their climate. The community now recognised that incineration should be a last resort and had no place in the local economy.

The next step was to ask the Committee to refuse this application and for the community to work together to put Consett the very top of the waste hierarchy and make it the greenest town in England.

Kirsty McKeown addressed the Committee stating that she was a resident of Shotley Bridge and her family had first come to the area in 1969 when her father had been given the honour of opening Consett's first supermarket which eventually moved out of the town centre. Back then it was a huge investment by the company and testament to their commitment to the town as it included a hairdresser's, non-food department and café. This added to an already thriving town centre, and whilst

the steelworks was industrial in nature it did bring significant employment, a vibrant market and many local businesses.

She was shocked that the proposed development would only bring ongoing employment for nine employees. The employment density guide advised that a typical B1 class use of a site this size could provide up to 1600 jobs. At the other end of the scale a distribution centre could provide 170 jobs. At 1.6 hectares the site should be used more productively. It would not take many businesses to decide to leave the area as a result of the development putting Consett in negative territory from an employment perspective.

She was also concerned that there was no Neighbourhood Plan, particularly given the number of new houses being built around Consett. The town was on the coast to coast route and rather than investment to encourage tourism, the proposed development would have the opposite effect. She had close links to a town in the North West of England which was similar in nature to Consett, having had a partly industrial history and the town centre had become rundown over the decades. Investors in that town believed that community engagement was key to their regeneration strategy and their aim for residents and businesses to take ownership and pride in their area. This was now a vibrant town with tourism on the increase. Such a forward looking investment would be welcomed by the residents and business owners. She feared that an incinerator would discourage business investment in Consett and also encourage those already there to leave.

In conclusion, Kirsty McKeown thanked Planning Officers for recommending rejection of the application. She urged the Committee to refuse the application. The vast majority of the community did not want to go backwards to an industrial town, they wanted to look forward, enjoy the beauty of the area in which they lived, whilst also finding ways of attracting local businesses and for the town centre to once again thrive.

Niamh McDonald stated that she had lived in Consett for 20 years, her whole life. Despite being born after the closure of the steelworks it was impossible to be unaware of the legacy the steel industry had left on their town. It was important that Consett's history and heritage was celebrated but there was a right way and a wrong way to honour Consett's past. A return to the pollution and terrible effect an incinerator would have was not the future residents deserved. Her generation had the right to create their own legacy, a legacy based on true sustainability. Climate change was a reality and the easy way out should not be taken. Incineration was the easy way out of waste disposal. Energy from waste facilities was not a sustainable way to rid the planet of the waste produced.

Consett should be prioritising prevention, re-use and recycling for the reduction of waste. The Government's 2021 National Waste Management Plan for England set out an ambition to work towards a zero waste economy by sustainably and efficiently managing waste.

Project Genesis argued that energy from waste was sustainable because it was giving waste an extra purpose, and because waste had to go somewhere. This was not a method of generating sustainable energy because it required people to over-

consume. Reducing consumption created more energy than burning waste created. If the long-term aim was achieved, the incinerator would not be operational because there would not be enough waste to burn.

Project Genesis had not specified a user for the heat generated by the incineration process and she therefore questioned whether there was a demand for this energy and heat. Furthermore the Applicant had not shown that the application met the NPPF's definition of low carbon. Energy would be distributed through the National Grid which was contradicting the claims that there would be a reduction in costs for the people of Consett.

These were only some of the many reasons why an energy from waste facility was not the right decision for Consett. Consett's fabulous location at the edge of the Pennines made it a haven for the community to enjoy the outdoors. If Project Genesis had truly consulted the community residents would have contributed much better ideas for land usage which would benefit the whole town.

She stated that her generation was the final generation which would possibly see the beginning and the end of the environmental impact climate change had on the world but it was her generation's responsibility to fight for the environment and challenge backward steps like incineration being forced upon communities. It was her generation's responsibility to say no to Consett's incinerator and urged the Committee to do the same.

Lucy Reed stated that she was a resident of Consett and a member of the Say No campaign group. Project Genesis had a plan and ambition to make Consett a green and pleasant land. More recently they had a destination plan to make people want to visit Consett. Instead of this the community was faced with a waste burning incinerator and 50m high stack protruding into the skyline. The visual dominance and incongruent nature would impact widely, whether on the nearby AONB and views, or the visual landscape and amenity of the locality and heritage, including the listed viaduct and farm buildings.

Many residents of the nearby Chequers Estate were sold their homes by Project Genesis on the basis of locality, countryside outlook and assurances that they lived next to a prestige industrial estate where no undesirable or polluting industry would occur. They could now potentially be only 400m away from an incinerator with a 50m high stack and its plume, a facility that would run 24 hours a day 7 days a week, imposing a significant impact on the residential amenity.

The Applicant had stated that the emissions would be insignificant, however they would be emissions and pollutants which were not currently there. Increased emissions and pollutants from the incinerator itself and the traffic increase would be detrimental to the town and the amenity of the area. 5000 23 tonne lorry journeys per year would travel into Consett. Further development proposed nearby included hundreds of homes and a hospital development who had also raised their own concerns.

As acknowledged in the Committee report it was not possible to rule out potential adverse physical health impacts of the facility. This was a risk that residents should

not be subjected to, no matter how insignificant it was deemed to be and which may not become apparent for many years.

Local Plan Policy 31 concerning amenity and pollution stated that there should be no unacceptable impact on an area, and the Applicant had not demonstrated this to be the case. This development would also impact upon mental health and wellbeing which had been consistently highlighted by many who had objected. The County Durham Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy recognised the links between improved environment and wellbeing.

The development did not accord with National Planning Policy Framework, the County Durham Plan or provide social, economic or environmental benefits to justify it. The industrial past bore no resemblance to the Consett of today and there were many people who had left and returned to a better town or who had chosen to come to Consett for the environment. Very few wanted to see this regress. She asked the Committee to agree the recommendation and refuse the application.

Roger Jeffries was invited to address the Committee and stated that he had moved to the North of England in 1989 for work and his first impressions had not been very favourable, remembering the Derwenthaugh coke plant. He had lived in three different areas of the County before moving to a new build in Consett in 2004.

Talking about his former properties in Sedgfield and Maiden Law, Roger Jeffries his final move had been to Templetown and to a town that had been re-born. The surroundings were of beautiful countryside with so many heritages to enjoy. He walked his dogs every day, enjoying different parts of the area and the wildlife. The North when he arrived was a different place entirely. Consett was called the red town, now it was clean, pleasant and vibrant, set in fabulous countryside. He had found it to be a great place to live.

The selling point of Consett was the area around town, the amenities in the town and its proximity to Newcastle and Durham, along with the light industry. He knew that further light industry and more housing would come to the town when he moved there and this was a selling point for him as the town was prospering and growing. If the incinerator was built it would tarnish the landscape in a totally inappropriate location. Putting it so close to food factories and housing was a stupid idea. The effect on the town would be disastrous and would have a profound detrimental effect on its future. He questioned who would come to a town with such an eyesore, not to mention the potential risk to health.

In closing he stated that the Committee must make its own mind up as to the value of the proposed development but he totally agreed with the Planning Officers that the scheme should not go ahead.

Kelli Turner stated that she was a resident of Consett having moved there 20 years ago. Her family were very much a part of the town, being involved with the Football Club, the Rugby Club and she had been a School Governor for 10 years. It was also relevant to the campaign that part of her job as an in-house lawyer for a company that built and developed properties was that she looked at sustainability in

development. She was also part of the Energy and Environment Alliance a national not for profit organisation that looked at development and sustainability.

She was not acting in a professional capacity in this campaign but her experience in looking at the bigger picture of sustainability and energy management for the future had helped her form a view of this development. She was very pro-development and people moved to Consett as it had great facilities and a lot to offer.

Waste incineration was a very controversial form of waste management, it fell at the bottom of the waste hierarchy. When waste incinerators were built, recycling reduced. It also went against the circular economy notion of putting items back into use. It also did not create many jobs.

The future of waste incineration was uncertain. The Environmental Bill was currently being discussed in Parliament and it was likely that would produce targets for waste incineration. It was also unlikely that what was currently going to waste incineration would be in the future. At best it faced an uncertain future even it could be proved it produced low carbon emissions and had a positive impact on the environment.

She asked the Committee to follow the lead of Sunderland City Council who refused the Washington Incinerator Plant on solid grounds. There were solid legal grounds in this application to reject it. The application failed the visual amenity test, and also failed the low carbon test at such a critical time in terms of climate change.

She asked the Committee to consider the true principles of sustainability against the backdrop of the County Durham Plan. True sustainability was how the planet could be left better than it had been found, whilst at the same time making the best environment for the people who were living in it. It was not just about emissions, climate change or green energy, but all of those things and at the same time improving the lives and environment of the people in it. A waste incinerator put in the middle of an established community was not a sustainable development.

At this point the Chair invited Mark Short and Sharon Queeney to address the Committee on behalf of the Applicant. Sharon Queeney referred to Policy 2 of the approved County Durham Plan which identified that Hownsgill Industrial Park was a protected employment site and currently housed a number of established businesses. The site was approximately 11 hectares of the development area. Project Genesis had for a number of years had difficulty in attracting new commercial and industrial business to the site due to a lack of investment in infrastructure, notably power grid infrastructure coupled with a lack of financial support from both local and national government.

The size and scale of the proposed energy recovery facility was a result of over 8 years of research and development into options available for a small scale energy plant. It involved detailed discussions with industrial leaders as well as visits to a number of facilities in the UK and Netherlands. The plant and delivery partner who was a Dutch company with an excellent track record provided an optimum solution for the delivery of low-cost renewable heat energy and power to the Hownsgill Industrial Park, and the proposed new development at Derwent View. The small

scale of the plant was carefully planned and decided upon in order to take account of location, fuel supply and availability, highways, visual impact, optimum heat and energy requirements of the estate, and followed consultation with a range of industry experts. The plant would be a catalyst for the hub of considerable investment in a district heating and electricity smart grid which would provide low cost renewable heat and power to support existing businesses and hopefully attract new investment and businesses to the site. It would provide grid connection and infrastructure to bring forward the Hownsgill solar farm which had the potential to provide a further 7 megawatts of renewable energy with additional battery storage technology and smart energy management systems. It had the potential to make the Industrial Park an exemplar site in the UK in renewable heat and power production and the management of local scale.

It would support the supply of renewable heat and power to the adjacent Derwent View health and wellbeing site which was hoped would house a new community hospital, retirement village, hotel and education and training facilities. It was expected that the total investment in Hownsgill would exceed £35m and would be of long-term social and economic benefit to the area in the provision of developments of renewable energy technologies and sustaining employment. It was also intended to bring forward a fast vehicle charging hub on the site as well as exploring the use of HOS technology and carbon capture when needs and opportunities arose.

The public benefits of the scheme were therefore clear and should be considered appropriately.

The plant would be powered by refuse derived fuel produced by local businesses in the Durham area providing a fundamental service to communities and employers. A refused derived fuel was a fuel which consisted of pre-processed waste material which was then transported to the energy plant. The RDF did not include materials which were source segregated for re-use or recycling and instead sought to manage the remaining waste which could not be managed by other options. The proposed plant sought to produce heat and power ensuring that all possible value was recovered from the materials that the community produced, used and disposed of. This was the fundamental principle of the circular economy and the treatment of residual waste in ways which accorded with both national and local waste management policy.

A number of established waste management companies which operated in North Durham had estimated that currently at least 160,000 tonnes of residual commercial and industrial waste, and that was waste after recycling and re-use, was produced annually in the area and was transported to landfill or even exported to Europe. This need for additional waste management capacity had not been contested by the Local Planning Authority. The development would provide an opportunity to divert 60,000 tonnes of this material to a new facility for the purpose of providing low-cost renewable heat and power. Locating the facility at Hownsgill would ensure the community could manage the waste that it produced while supporting other businesses on the estate. Its location was therefore supported by Policy 60 of the approved County Durham Plan in the management of waste streams as near as possible to their production and to the businesses which would benefit from the facility.

The report confirmed that the Council and their independent experts agreed that the development would not have a detrimental impact on human health, air quality, odour, dust, noise, traffic and ecology. The development provided the lowest carbon option for dealing with waste the community produced which could not be re-used or recycled. Zero waste Scotland in its most recent report agreed that energy from RDF still offered carbon savings over what Durham currently did with the waste it generated.

The report noted concerns over the visual impact of the plant as a reason for refusal; it was disappointing that the wider context of the allocated industrial estate which included three wind turbines, a solar park and other planned developments had not been considered in the review of this scheme. The photo montages shown had highlighted that the facility would be screened from the majority of views and those that it would be visible from would include wider built development, particularly in long range views. She reminded the Committee that just because it would be seen did not automatically register as adverse harm and hoped the Committee would support Project Genesis with this much needed development considering all matters. In any event she hoped the recommendation did neither prejudice or create precedent preventing future industrial and employment development on the site.

The Senior Planning Officer responded to the representations. Councillor Watson had raised the issues of renewable energy, visibility of the facility, the jobs it would produce and reduced energy costs. Paragraph 214 in the report noted that the facility would provide 9 jobs, 3 posts cross 3 shifts. The site was 1.64 hectares and based on employment density guidance could provide between 170 and 1600 jobs. This development would not maximise job creation on the site and there could be more jobs created from alternative employment. On balance Planning Officers did not consider this to be a significant benefit.

In terms of renewable energy, paragraph 235 of the report noted that for an incinerator to be considered renewable it must have an amount of biomass within the fuel mix; the Applicant had stated that there would be very little or no biomass or organic material within the mix to avoid odour. It was therefore not a renewable energy development.

Turning to reduced energy costs referred to by both Councillor Watson and the Applicant, the Senior Planning Officer advised that numerous benefits had been mentioned, including reduced energy costs for other businesses and the local area, power for local businesses, a hospital, solar charges and finance for the solar farm that was only partially built, but this was not included in the application. Planning Officers could only therefore consider what the application said it would do, which was connect to the National Grid. The District Heating Network was not in place so reduced energy costs could not be considered to be a benefit.

Members debated the application.

Councillor Marshall thanked the Officers for a balanced report which highlighted the material planning considerations and for the way they had handled this sensitive

application. He also thanked the developer for attending and making representation and to the local members who represented the views of their community, and the campaign. It was important to recognise the need for regeneration, growth, new and better jobs in Consett and in the local community around Consett as much as in the wider region. However it was important to recognise that in creating jobs there was a need to create a better, greener future for the younger generation who were seen in both the music video and the campaign video.

The benefit created by jobs did not outweigh the impact on the local environment. Councillor Marshall was of the view that a full, open and transparent pre-planning engagement with the developer working alongside the local community to try and overcome some of the issues should have been carried out, and to see whether or not it would have the support of the residents of Consett. He noted Councillor Watson's comments that he had served the community as Councillor for over 50 years, and having seen the way residents had to come together, he felt it was a shame that engagement had not taken place much earlier. and that more hadn't been done to try and bring the developer and the community together.

He had heard during the representations about the potential future risk to the health and wellbeing of residents; he considered that there would already have been an impact on the health and wellbeing of those 4,000 people who had signed the petition and those who in the last few months had fought to stop this development from going ahead.

In conclusion he said that this development was not in the interests of the town and paid testament to all of those who had attended today to make representations on behalf of the whole town. Only 9 letters of support had been received as opposed to over 3500 letters of objection. However the Committee must consider the material planning issues and for him the Officer's report highlighted two; the impact on heritage and the direct visual impact on the landscape and the wider community. This was the wrong development in the wrong place and he moved that the application be refused.

Councillor Cathy Hunt agreed with the comments of Councillor Marshall. Reference had been made to wind turbines already being in the landscape. The plan provided to members showed that there would be screen planting and mounding around the site. This indicated to her that the developer was aware that it would be a blot on the landscape and would impact quite significantly on the people of Consett. Trees grew 25 feet in 10 years, the stack would be 50 m high. She considered that the development should not go ahead.

Councillor Patricia Jopling stated that she was not opposed to incineration in the short term because burning was preferable to landfill. An incinerator plant she had visited had been very clean with no smell, and incinerators were very heavily regulated. However having said that she had lived in Consett just after the steelworks closed and the pollution from that site had been horrendous. Having visited the site yesterday it was clear that the facility would be in the wrong place. Proper ways of dealing with waste had to be found in a joint effort between businesses, the public and even the NHS. It was obvious on the visit around different aspects of the site, that the damage it would cause and the appearance of

the facility would ruin the area. The viaduct and AONB were close by and she considered that the application should be refused.

Councillor Craig Martin understood that in accordance with Planning Policy, to have these facilities the waste had to be produced in County Durham and that an incinerator should not be far away from waste processing facilities. He also understood that the waste wasn't actually being prepared in County Durham; it was being transported out of the County to be prepared before being transported back to be incinerated. He sought clarification on this.

The Senior Planning Officer replied that the Policy Framework stated that waste should be dealt with as near to its source as possible. In County Durham more of the type of waste that would go to this site was exported than was imported so there was a capacity gap. Therefore Planning Officers were satisfied that there was a need for this type of facility. Councillor Martin was correct that the RDF would not be produced on site so it would arrive as pre-prepared bales, and the reason the report was unclear in this regard was because the Applicant had not advised as to where this prepared waste would be coming from.

Councillor Martin therefore asked what safeguards could be put in place to ensure that the waste was from County Durham. The Senior Planning Officer advised that if the application was granted there would be no control of this. It had to be balanced with the need for Durham and the region to meet its capacity need. The transporting of waste long distance was not financially viable and whilst he couldn't give an assurance that it wouldn't travel outside the County there was capacity for this type of facility in County Durham.

Councillor Martin referred to the multi-million pound energy for waste plant in Teesside and was informed that the facility in Teesside was for municipal waste not commercial and industrial waste.

Councillor Martin stated that he was concerned about this proposed development not only for its impact on the community but also on businesses in the Business Park. It had been argued that it would harm economic development if the application was rejected but this application did not maximise job creation. Building the wrong type of business in a business park could kill a business park, particularly when there was no Economic Strategy. This was the wrong business in the wrong place. His biggest fear would be that if approved it would set a precedent for having multiple small facilities in communities across County Durham rather than pooling waste together into a larger facility which would be more efficient and sustainable. These smaller facilities could have a 50m stack dominating the skyline of these towns. He agreed with the Officer's recommendations.

Councillor Alan Bell concurred with the views of Councillors Marshall and Martin that Hownsgill was the wrong place for this development. The people had spoken and in particular the young generation, and they had to respect that. As had been said Consett had moved on from the era of the steelworks and was a much greener place, and he hoped that if the application was refused the Applicant would respect that. He seconded the recommendation for refusal.

Councillor Sam Zair had listened intently to the views of the community and respected the way they had all come together. Councillors Marshall and Martin were correct in saying that it was the wrong development in the wrong place and if the development went ahead Consett would lose more than it would gain from it. Councillor Zair **seconded** refusal of the application.

Councillor Isabella Roberts advised that she had visited the site the previous day, and agreed with her colleagues on the Committee that this was the wrong location. Everyone had a voice, including the children who were also out on site. The notes they had with them must have taken some time to prepare. It was their future they had to consider. The area was beautiful and would thrive; Consett had already its share of industry of this type. This would not be the right business for their area, and she agreed with everyone who had spoken that it was not the right place. She accepted that a facility was needed but not in this area, and not at the cost of the people of Consett.

Upon a vote being taken it was **Resolved:**

That the application be refused for the reasons set out in the report.