

## WYMONDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

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Kate Poyser  
North Hertfordshire District Council  
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2 June 2017

Dear Kate,

**Re: Case Ref No: 17/01195/1 - Full Planning Permission Application for Use of Land for a Gas-fired Electricity Generating Station on the Former Landfill Site, Blakemore End Road, Little Wymondley**

I am writing on behalf of Wymondley Parish Council to object strongly to the above application for full planning permission to build an electricity generating station on Green Belt land.

The Council's objections to this application are many and varied, and reflect the views of residents as expressed at a Full Council meeting held in Little Wymondley on 22 May 2017, and at earlier meetings in the Parish, including the presentation given by representatives of the developers and District Council in June 2016.

We have repeatedly aired our concerns regarding the way in which development of the land in and around our Parish is being taken forward by NHDC, (and by neighbouring local authorities such as Stevenage Borough Council), i.e. without due regard to the Government's Green Belt policy, or the detrimental impact on the local environment and residents' health of inappropriate proposals to locate industrial and large-scale residential developments in an area which lacks the infrastructure to support them, would have its character and identity destroyed by their creation, and its inhabitants quality of life downgraded due to increased traffic, noise, flood risk and air pollution.

We are creeping towards an undesirable coalescence with Stevenage and Hitchin via the destruction of our Green Belt, with the potential doubling in size of our main settlement along the way. A glance at our Wymondley Parish Neighbourhood Plan, (which awaits progression by NHDC) or our recent response to the public consultation on the pre-submission draft of the NHDC Local Plan, would therefore certainly clarify the reasons for our objections to planning permission for a gas-fired electricity generator on Green Belt land being granted. However, for ease of reference and the avoidance of doubt, our key objections are summarised below:

- 1) The site has a potential capacity of 50mw, which is sufficient capacity to power over 100,000 homes, and scarcely the requirement of a "peaking plant". An electricity generating station of the size and scale proposed is not needed in the suggested locality as its capacity far exceeds that required to satisfactorily supply the number of dwellings and business premises currently in existence. If it is needed to boost the

National Grid supply to other areas, we suggest that it should be located at another site, where it would be more in keeping with the surrounding area, and have a less detrimental impact on its character and landscape – and on nearby residents. (The fact that some 340+ houses and a new school are also proposed in the vicinity should not be overlooked.)

- 2) The very nature and design of the generator render it totally inappropriate for the suggested site, not only because it is on Green Belt land – and therefore not permissible – but because it would be a blot on the landscape, with an undoubted adverse environmental impact.
- 3) Hertfordshire is recognised to hold the poorest Air Quality measurement in the East of England. The area around Stevenage Road in Little Wymondley, particularly, is well known to be one of the worst areas for pollution, and it abuts the area of the proposed Power Station. Whilst the suggestion is that the Power Station is intended to support peak loading it is our opinion that it will eventually be used continuously, and therefore greatly exacerbate the poor Air Quality in this area.
- 4) The plant incorporates five blue chimneys, some 15 metres above the tree-line – on a former landfill site five metres above an existing borehole site. It will therefore be unsightly, with these chimney stacks rising out of the countryside, and certainly fail to comply with NHDC's proposals for maintaining the openness of the Green Belt. Also, the comparative Sightline document shows the deciduous trees in full summer foliage, but any amelioration that this growth provides would be largely lost in winter, when the likelihood of the plant running would be at the highest probability.
- 5) Aside from this, given the Luton Airport flightpath, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that the output from the chimneys may be hazardous to aircraft.
- 6) Given NHDC's current focus on noise nuisance, (i.e. its support for Noise Action Week 22-28 May, which highlighted the impact noise has on our health and well-being), we would urge NHDC to consider carefully the significant effect on the health and well-being of our residents that noise from the proposed generator is likely to have; and ensure that realistic figures regarding the generator's likely noise levels are presented and examined closely by the planning authority. This is particularly important, given the nature of the application, i.e. involving 50 x 1mw compression ignition (diesel) gas fuelled engines, and the fact that previously the company involved has used Cummins engines from the USA. Vibration, noise and pollution levels have not been adequately assessed.
- 7) The proposed format for power generation will undoubtedly create noise and resonance that will both be heard and felt by the residents of Wymondley Parish, not least because the slab on which the engines would be built will probably have to be mounted on piled foundations. This will transmit the sonic and vibratory oscillations to the underlying bedrock where the piles will need to be founded.
- 8) As you know, the proposed site is a former landfill site, which was previously a quarry until it became exhausted, and was then used for landfill. When the A602 Wymondley By-pass was constructed, (through part of the landfill site), the arisings and spoil were deposited on top of the remains of the quarry/ landfill site - resulting in a 5 metre increase in the height of the site. We have concerns about the nature of the material used to fill in the top 5 metres, and the application provides no evidence regarding these, as the borehole logs referred to in the application pre-date construction of the Bypass.

- 9) Soil instability, resulting in possible subsidence, has already been highlighted as a potential issue – which adds to our concerns about the environmental impact and the unsuitability of this site and the overall proposal for construction of a generator.
- 10) Flood risk is a real and ongoing concern, particularly for residents of Little Wymondley, due to its geological landscape and recent occurrences of flooding. Herts County Council (HCC) has itself recognised the problems in Flood Risk reports commissioned two years ago, and is taking steps this year to mitigate the risk of flooding to houses along Stevenage Road, by adjustments to traffic calming measures and regular and better maintenance of drains/gulleys and culverts.
- 11) As far as this application is concerned, flooding considerations have been undertaken based on a risk level of 1 in 100 years. However, the reports commissioned by HCC, (which are also mentioned in our Neighbourhood Plan), identify the land below the site (Ash Brook) as having a risk event level of 1 in 3 to 1 in 5 years. We would suggest that if HCC has accepted, and is acting on, its commissioned reports it would be inappropriate for NHDC to disregard them when considering this planning application.
- 12) Furthermore, although the site is on top of a hill in Flood Zone 1, with water run-off intended for Ash Brook, (and supposedly leaving Little Wymondley unaffected), no account has been taken of back pressure and we remain unconvinced that construction of a generator at the proposed site would not exacerbate the flood risk to Little Wymondley.

In conclusion, we see no reason or benefit in using this wholly unsuitable former landfill site as a location on which to construct an unnecessary and environmentally unfriendly gas-powered electricity generating station; and we strongly object to the proposal.

**Cathy Kerby (Ms)**  
**Clerk to Wymondley Parish Council**

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