

Observations on and Objection to Planning Application WSCC/011/21

Ford Circular Technology Park, Ford Road, Ford

By Peter Douglas Wright.

My name is Peter Douglas Wright. I live at Flintstones, Ford Lane, Ford, BN18 0DE. I hold an Honours degree in Urban and Regional Planning. I am a retired Chartered Town Planner with 30 years practical experience. I have practical experience of planning and developing major infrastructure projects including the development of a 1000Mw power station and the Channel Tunnel High Speed Rail Link. I am a retired Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute, having been elected in 1982.

I have previously made objections to planning application WSCC/036/20. I have read this new application and it's accompanying ES. I note very little difference between the two, other than a minor lowering of the height of the proposed structures. Although this is to be welcomed. It does not significantly change my views. I therefore wish to make the following objections:-

Pre Application Consultation

I am concerned that the whole preapplication consultation by the developers was incomplete. It was undertaken at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown. A public meeting scheduled for 25th March 2020 was cancelled but the process pushed on regardless. I am unaware of any meaningful pre application public consultation on this new proposal other than a single flyer circulated by the applicants. Surely, in such a time of crisis, it would have been more appropriate to put the process on hold and carry out meaningful consultation at a less stressful time. I believe that this is particularly important for WSCC as, being the waste disposal authority, the Council will be one of the main beneficiaries of any planning consent granted.

Strategic Planning Considerations

I have read WSCC Waste local plan 2014 and understand the implications for the Ford site. Site specific policy W10 clearly identifies the Ford site for future waste treatment. It does so, however, in the context of a number of other specific sites. The plan identifies the potential of the Ford site to handle up to 250,000tpa. The planning application documents identify a total throughput of 295,000tpa, an increase of 15% above Waste Local plan expectations. I accept the caveats about new technologies. I will deal with local issues later but strategically, there are potential conflicts with Strategic Objective 3 (to achieve net self-sufficiency within the plan period) and SO 7 (to maximize the use of rail and water and minimize lorry movements for the transportation of waste). Put simply, in order to run at capacity the site will appear to require the importation of some 45,000tpa from outside of the County. This will all have to be transported by lorry.

Global Warming and Combined Heat and Power

With the exception of a few woolly words about future opportunities, neither the planning application nor the ES make any serious assessment of the potential of this site to provide combined heat and power (CHP). The site is, somewhat strangely, surrounded by potential housing and commercial development. CHP is difficult to deliver. However, if we are to take global warming and greenhouse gas emissions seriously, strategic action needs to be taken to ensure that energy capture is maximized by these developments. If the developers truly wish to provide a state of the art facility suitable for the needs of the mid 21st century, it is not acceptable just to vent waste energy off to the atmosphere because to contemplate doing something else is just too difficult.

Electricity Transmission

Forgive me if I've missed it but I can find no reference in the application or ES as to where or how the generated electricity will be transmitted to the National Grid. I accept that the planning process is probably a matter for NG under the Electricity Acts but it is a matter of cumulative impact, particularly when considering power lines and their visual and potential EMF effects.

Visual Impact

By anybody's standards, these are two huge buildings and two very tall chimneys. I come back to my earlier comments about the proposed capacity of the development being beyond the expectations of the waste local plan. The buildings, I presume, are designed to meet that larger capacity. Therefore, a smaller capacity will require smaller buildings. Ironically, with the orientation of my house and intervening tree screen I probably won't be able to see much of the development from home. There is, however, a much broader strategic planning issue. Reading the ES Visual Impact Assessment, it is clear that the most significant visual impacts will be on the historic market town of Arundel, Arundel castle itself and the AONB of the South Downs National Park, three icons which go a long way to define the character of West Sussex. I don't accept the proposition in the ES that the use of reflective cladding on a 39 high building will sufficiently offset those impacts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I wish to object to the proposed development on the grounds outlined above. I accept the strategic need for the site to be developed in the 2014 Waste local plan but believe the proposal exceeds local plan objectives, conflicts with policies SO3 and SO7 and represents an overdevelopment of the site. Furthermore, the proposal badly misses an opportunity to maximize energy capture by failing to seriously consider CHP. Finally, I am seriously concerned at the visual impact this development will have on icons of the West Sussex countryside.