

ESCRICK PARISH COUNCIL

Representation on the Planning Application Reference 12/03385/FULM, North Selby Mine, New Road, Deighton, York.

"Demolition of existing buildings and re-profiling of bunds and areas of the former mine, construction of an anaerobic digestion combined heat and power facility and horticultural greenhouse and associated infrastructure and works."
(reconsidered application following quashing of approval)

Notification of the Decision of the Parish Council

The Parish Council reconfirms its **OBJECTION** to the proposal which is located within the civil Parish of Wheldrake on the planning grounds set out below:

Introduction

The Parish of Escrick lies immediately adjacent to the Parish of Wheldrake. Whilst the North Selby Mine is located in Wheldrake Parish, it should be noted that the main access road to the site is located immediately north of the village of Escrick, off the A19, and the village is a significant settlement within close proximity of the site. Any development here would therefore have a significant impact on the residents of our village.

The Parish Council acknowledges that there are National and Local requirements to deal with waste materials in a way which are sustainable and minimise the impact on the environment, and understands that such requirements are already being planned for elsewhere by the Council. The Parish Council also recognises the need to reduce carbon emissions resulting from the production of electricity and heat. However, we are concerned about the impact the proposed development would have on the Green Belt where 'very special circumstances' have to be demonstrated for any development to be permitted; we do not believe that these have been shown in any way that would override the presumption against major developments in the Green Belt. . We also believe there would be various significant amenity implications for our residents including those of visual amenity, noise, smells, light and, most importantly, traffic.

We note the recent quashing of the previous decision on the basis that the Council should have considered the application on the basis of a 'cleared site' (as the applicant's appeal against the Enforcement Action quite rightly taken by the Council to clear the site is still pending). However, we also believe that the Council's consideration of this application should treat the proposals as one inter-linked planning use, on the basis that the AD power to be generated is to be used for the heating and lighting of the proposed agricultural use and not transported into the National Grid, and therefore their uses are inter-related and inter-reliant.

Grounds of Objection

1. The Parish Council welcomes the reconsideration of this application but retains its assertion that the proposal would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt and that the 'very special circumstances' required to

permit the development have not been demonstrated. The proposed buildings would be on an industrial scale and include tall structures (tanks and stacks) and huge massing (A.D. plant and greenhouse building). The associated lighting and noise emission will also be of an industrial scale in a rural environment. We respectively submit that the suggestion from officers that the use of blinds in the Glasshouses in sensitive areas will mitigate light spillage and sky glow during hours of darkness is naive – how will this be monitored and enforced? There are no special circumstances as to why this development is appropriate or needed within the Green Belt and not within a more suitable location, apart from the fact that the owners do not wish to reinstate the site to agricultural use as they previously promised to do when originally granted planning consent. . This scale of development is totally inappropriate in a rural area and especially not within the York Green Belt.

2. The Parish Council considers further that there remains a big question relating to the principle of the development and the Council's assessment on whether the development amounts to inappropriate development in the Green Belt have regard to the NPPF and policies of the LDF. When the application was previously considered, they have treated the proposal as two planning units with two separate uses. They said that the horticultural aspect is one of the Green Belt exceptions and is therefore appropriate development (the same as agricultural buildings). This element is then taken out of the site assessment and the basis for assessing the AD facility is whether it would have a greater impact than the existing facility. Since the proposed AD buildings are grouped closer together and overall smaller footprint they concluded it is appropriate development which has no greater impact on the Green Belt. However, this is one proposal on one site for a mixed use facility and should be treated as one planning unit. The two uses are linked together as one scheme. The assessment in terms of previously developed sites should consider the scheme as a whole. The glasshouse will use heat from the AD and is therefore linked. Taken together the proposal is massively greater in footprint than the existing proposal and has a far greater impact on the Green Belt than the current development (ie. an increase from 10,363m² to 57,405m², more than five times larger!). As such it is clearly inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Harm to the Green Belt results from the substantial increase in built form, the heights of the structure, the visual impact on the surrounding area and the intensification of the use. There are clear grounds for rejection on this basis. The height of some of the structures at 22.5m (nearly 74 ft), 18m, 2 x 15m, 2 x 12 m will be widely visible from the surrounding countryside and compound the harm to the Green Belt.

3. There is also no certainty provided about the sources of suitable waste materials needed to power the operation of the AD plant, a large proportion of which is likely to originate from outside the local area. Assumptions are made about the availability of suitable waste from Hull and East Yorkshire and Leeds and West Yorkshire with no commitment to only source from these extensive areas; it is highly probable that some will come from further afield which must increasingly question the sustainability credentials of the proposals and the CO₂ emissions that will emanate from vehicles travelling long distances. We do not believe that it is appropriate to import feedstock and other waste materials

predominantly from outside the York and Selby area, with the impact that will have on the transport infrastructure, and particularly on the A19 through Escrick. It is also not sustainable for these materials to be transported long distances when it would be far more appropriate and sustainable to locate the plant close to the source of these materials, which is also more compatible with Government advice.

The proposal indicates that a large proportion of the waste feedstock would originate via the M62 corridor. We understand that a site search indicated that the best site was Kellingley Colliery. Peel Environmental previously started the consultation process for a large 'energy from waste' facility to be developed at Kellingley which is well located to receive feedstock via the M62 corridor. The Parish Council considers that the AD facility would be better located at the large Kellingley site or an alternative site near the M62 corridor which has road, rail and/or canal direct links. These are not Green Belt locations, close to the strategic road network and therefore far more appropriate locations for such a development.

4. The proposed facility would require significant movement of vehicles to import waste feedstock, remove residual products and transport employees. Whilst the submitted traffic surveys indicate that the vehicle movements generated by the development would not have a significant effect on the overall traffic movements on the A19, the Parish Council believes that the A19 corridor is already highly congested and experience significant delays both at peak times and at weekends. You will no doubt be aware that there were never previously any significant levels of traffic associated with North Selby Mine as employees operated a shift system and all coal was transported underground. The proposed net increase of traffic will exacerbate the already congested highway network and will make travel for local residents even more difficult. In addition the Parish Council is concerned about the routing of "merchants" vehicles which will be uncontrolled until they enter the site access road. This could result in a high proportion approaching via the Escrick Parish. We believe that a large proportion of traffic will travel through Escrick, coming from the M62 corridor. In any event, the A19 is already congested going both north to York and the A64 and south towards Selby and the M62, with significant delays experienced which the proposed additional traffic will severely add to. As a minimum, conditions should be imposed restricting HGVs from travelling through Escrick Village (via Skipwith Road) and the local rural road network.

5. The inter-relationship between the AD facility and the glasshouses is constantly emphasised throughout the application, with the power emanating from the AD plant to be used to power Plant Raisers Ltd's operation. There is no surplus proposed to be transferred to the National Grid nor local energy provided to the local community, despite the aspirations and conditional support from York Environment Forum on this basis. Moreover, the assumption that new jobs will benefit the local economy is also questionable. The future occupier and beneficiary of the glasshouse operation is stated as Plant Raisers Ltd, a company currently located some 17 miles away at Howden and '3 km away from the M62 (J37) and within 30 minutes from the M1 with excellent access to the UK and

ports' (according to their website). Also the Travel Plan says that some employees will be transported in minibuses to the new site as local public transport is poor and inaccessible. There appear to be no exceptional circumstances why a major development in the Green Belt should be permitted which is being justified by the translocation of a business close to the M62 corridor which is a far more suitable location for both the AD facility and the glasshouses.

6. There is also no information proposed regarding the eventual decommissioning of the plant and equipment, any measures for decontamination of the site and its following use or status. Please advise how these measures will be dealt with in an enforceable way.

Concluding comments

The Parish Council recognises that a semi-derelict site exists at the former North Selby Coal mine and that action needs to be taken. We have strongly urged City of York Council to enforce the planning conditions attached to the original consent for the mine which require the site to be restored to agricultural use, as was originally agreed by the vendor in exchange for the original planning consent, which is an appropriate Green Belt function.

There have been a number of public exhibitions and consultations within our village undertaken by the applicant where the overwhelming majority of attendees strongly objected to the proposals.

The view of Escrick residents is that the site must be restored to agricultural use in accordance with the previous consent. The York Green Belt has historically performed an important function in preserving the setting of the City of York and there have been no exceptional circumstances demonstrated in this application to overturn this principal. We strongly **object** to the application and request that it be refused.

We look forward to hearing from you further in due course in response to the above. I would also be obliged if you would advise us of City of York Council's decision on the application in due course.

Linda Reader, Clerk

on behalf of Escrick Parish Council

November 2013