Development Control Committee  
Meeting to be held on 31 October 2012

Electoral Division affected: 
Thornton Cleveleys North

Wyre Borough: Application No. 02/12/0637  
Increase in the height of 5 biofilter exhaust stacks from 12.65 metres to 25 metres. Thornton Waste Technology Park, Enterprise Road, off Fleetwood Road North, Thornton Cleveleys

Contact for further information:  
Hannah Brumfitt, 01772 531942, Environment Directorate  
DevCon@lancashire.gov.uk

Executive Summary

Application – Increase in the height of 5 biofilter exhaust stacks from 12.65 metres to 25 metres, Thornton Waste Technology Park, Enterprise Road, Off Fleetwood Road North, Thornton Cleveleys.

Recommendation – Summary

That planning permission be granted subject to conditions controlling commencement and working programme.

Applicant's Proposal

Planning permission is sought to increase the height of 5 biofilter exhaust stacks at Thornton Waste Technology Park from a height of 12.65m (43.65 AOD) to a height of 25m (56 AOD). The stacks would be manufactured from stainless steel and would have diameters of 1.5 metres for the 3 stacks serving the Organic Growth Medium (OGM) building and 1.3m for the 2 stacks serving the green waste building.

Description and Location of Site

The Thornton Waste Technology Park (WTP) is located on land within the former ICI Thornton/Hillhouse works, 3km east of Thornton Cleveleys. The site comprises series of waste treatment buildings within an area of approximately 15.5 hectares bounded on the west side by the Burn Hall Industrial Estate. Land to the south is currently being developed for residential uses and there are new properties approximately 310m from the site’s southern boundary. The planning permission for that development allows houses to be constructed up to the boundary with the Waste Technology Park. There are also existing residential properties approximately 200 metres to the north west of the site which front Fleetwood Road and 430m to the south of Bourne Road. A raised public footpath runs along the
northern boundary of the waste technology park which separates the site from a field to the north used as an ecological mitigation area. The former Poulton to Fleetwood railway line borders the eastern side of the site beyond which is a former industrial lagoon and the Wyre estuary.

The site is accessed via a purpose built road that extends between the south-west corner of the site and a purpose built roundabout on the B5268 Fleetwood Road.

The existing stacks (which are proposed to be increased in height) are located in a single line and protrude through the roof of the building located in the centre of the waste technology park which houses the control systems for air emissions.

**Background**

The Burn Hall site was first developed as a chemical plant in the 1940's.

Planning permission for the development of a Waste Technology Park for the treatment of municipal solid waste was granted in March 2007 (ref.02/06/1335). A number of variations to this planning permission have been granted relating to the construction access to the site.

Planning permission for the construction of an operations building, switchrooms, ammonium sulphate tank, substation and amendments to fan houses and biofilters canopies and development of an administration building, pumping station and sulphuric acid tank was granted in January 2010 (ref 02/09/0897).

A non material amendment (02/08/1136NM6) was approved in July 2006 for the installation of tapers to the stacks to improve the efflux velocity of emissions leaving the stacks.

**Planning Policy**

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27th March 2012; it sets out the Government's planning policies for England.

Although the NPPF does not contain specific waste policies, waste planning authorities must have regard to the policies in the Framework so far as relevant when taking decisions on waste applications.

The Framework sets out the meaning of sustainable development for the purposes of the planning system. It sets out three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development which for decision taking means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan. Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, planning permission should be granted unless there are any adverse impacts which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the
policies in the Framework as a whole or when specific policies of the Framework indicate development should be restricted.

Lancashire Minerals and Waste Local Plan

Policy 2 Quality of Life
Policy 5 Environmental and Other Benefits

Adopted Wyre Borough Council Local Plan (July 1999)

Policy SP14 Standards of design and amenity
Policy EMP8 Existing Industrial Sites

Fleetwood and Thornton Area Action Plan

Policy 3 Industry and Business

Consultations

Wyre Borough Council – No objection.

Environment Agency – No objection. The emissions from the site are regulated by the Environment Agency under an Environmental Permit.

Fleetwood Town Council – No comments received.

LCC Assistant Director (Highways) – No objection.

Representations – The application has been advertised by press and site notice, and neighbouring residents informed by individual letter. Four letters of representation have been received objecting to the proposed development for the following summarised reasons:-

- The visual impact of the waste plant is already severe and the larger stacks would increase its impact.
- The higher stacks will not resolve the odour problems
- More emphasis should be placed on the cleaning and scrubbing of the air before it is vented to atmosphere
- The raising of the stacks should be tied to an odour management plan setting out the action that will be undertaken should odour problems continue.
- The stacks will generate noise especially during the evenings.

Advice

Director of Transport and Environment – Observations

Planning policies and decisions must reflect and where appropriate promote relevant EU obligations and statutory requirements.
Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In considering the issues that arise from the proposed development, it is necessary to take into consideration the relevant policies of the Development Plan and the planning history of the site and all other material planning considerations. Government policy is a material consideration that should be given appropriate weight in the decision making process.

The principle of developing the site for a waste technology park was established through planning permission 02/06/1335 granted in March 2007. The facility commenced operation in April 2010. Due to the nature of the waste materials, odour management is a significant part of the site infrastructure and the air inside the buildings is kept under negative pressure with all doors kept closed when not in use.

Air from the various waste treatment buildings is passed through scrubbers and peat bed bio-filters to remove dust and malodorous particles before being discharged to atmosphere via 5 existing exhaust stacks which at present are 12.65 metres high. However, this system alone has failed to prevent odour emissions beyond the site boundary.

Efforts have already been made to improve dispersion by the installation of tapers to the stacks and increasing the fan speeds as a means of increasing the discharge velocity. The applicant states that whilst this modification has resulted in an improvement to dispersal, it alone has not been sufficient to fully address the problem and that raising the height of the stacks to 25 metres should provide better dispersal of the air emissions.

The applicant has submitted an odour assessment including air dispersion modelling to demonstrate that an increase in stack heights would improve the dispersal profile from the stacks following treatment in the bio-filters and reduce odour concentrations to a level required by the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency are responsible for regulating the management of odours and ensuring the necessary equipment is in place to address the issue as part of the Environmental Permit for the site. It is acknowledged that the stacks will only operate effectively in suitable weather conditions. However, if the stacks do not result in odour being dispersed in a way that achieves the levels by the Environment Agency, then the Agency can require further measures to be employed as part of the permitting regime. In the event further measures are required, the nature of such measures and the need for planning permission would be assessed at the time. The Environment Agency has raised no objection to the current proposal.

It is therefore considered that the development would result in improved dispersal of air emissions from the site with consequent benefits for the amenity of adjacent land users which is of particular importance given the ongoing residential development immediately to the south of the site.

The applicant has provided a visual appraisal supported by images of the likely view of the higher stacks from a number of vantage points. The assessment concludes that whilst the proposal would introduce additional vertical elements to an existing
large industrial complex, it would not result in a significant change in appearance to the plant given the scale of such and presence of other urban influences.

The nearest properties to the waste technology park are those currently under construction on the land immediately to the south. Planning permission is in place for houses to be built in this area immediately to the boundary with the waste technology park. There is an established residential development to the south of Bourne Road.

The houses that have recently been constructed nearest to the waste technology park and those which have planning permission to be built to the boundary of the park would have limited or no views of the proposed stacks. The reason for this is that the stacks would be located behind the green waste composting building which is located on the southern boundary of the site and which is a structure of significant scale being nearly 18 metres in height to the ridge. The stacks would be more visible from those properties being constructed and those located further south and to the south of Bourne Road where the line of sight would allow the upper parts of the stacks to be seen above the elevations of the green waste composting building. The visual impacts associated with such must be considered against the context of the surrounding waste technology park buildings. The stacks would be constructed from stainless steel. This is considered to be an acceptable finish given the light grey colour of the waste technology park buildings and can be secured by condition. It is acknowledged that there would be some adverse visual impact when seen from some residential properties. However, it is considered that the impact would not be significant when seen in close proximity to the waste technology park due to the presence of other buildings and landscaping in the foreground and the visual impact would diminish when seen from greater distances.

It is therefore considered that the visual impacts of the proposed stacks would be acceptable in terms of Policy SP14 of the Wyre Borough Local Plan which seeks to ensure that new development is of a good design and quality. Wyre Borough Council has raised no objection to the development.

The applicant has undertaken a noise impact assessment to demonstrate that the proposed development would not have an impact on the existing noise climate in the area. The assessment concludes that the raising of the stacks would not increase noise levels above the limits contained in the planning permission. The methodology of the assessment and subsequent findings are considered to be acceptable. Wyre Borough Council has raised no objection in this respect.

In conclusion, the purpose of the development is to achieve better dispersal of the air emissions from the waste technology plant and therefore ensure that the impacts on local amenity are minimised. The raising of the stacks should achieve this aim and therefore the principle of the development is supported. The design and scale of the stacks are acceptable when seen in the context of the existing buildings on the waste technology park. Whilst there would be some adverse visual impact associated with the increase in the stacks when seen from the surrounding areas, it is considered that the impact would not be significant when seen in close proximity to the waste technology park due to the presence of other buildings and landscaping in the foreground and the visual impact would diminish when seen from greater distances. However, it is acknowledged that there would be some adverse visual
impact when seen from some residential properties but that on balance such impact is outweighed by the overall benefits that the stacks would deliver in reducing the level of odour in the locale and which is demonstrated in the modelling supporting the application. It is therefore considered that the development complies with the policies of the Development Plan.

In view of the scale, nature and purpose of the development, it is considered that no Convention Rights set out in the Human Rights Act 1998 would be affected.

**Summary of Reasons for Decision**

The proposed development, in combination with the existing filtration processes, would improve the management of odours at the waste technology park by providing better dispersal of emissions to meet the requirements of the Environment Agency. The development would therefore reduce the impact of the odours associated with the operations at the waste technology park on the amenities of the area and on local residents. The design and scale of the stacks are acceptable when seen in the context of the existing buildings of the waste technology park. The higher stacks would be visible from some viewpoints on neighbouring land but would not generate unacceptable adverse visual impacts on the visual amenities of the area or on the visual amenities of residential properties and such impacts are outweighed by the benefits of reducing odours. The raising of the stacks would not increase noise levels above the limits contained in the existing planning permission. The development complies with the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework and the policies of the Development Plan. The policies of the Development Plan relevant to this decision are:

Lancashire Minerals and Waste Local Plan

Policy 2 Quality of Life  
Policy 5 Environmental and Other Benefits

Adopted Wyre Borough Council Local Plan (July 1999)

Policy SP14 Standards of design and amenity  
Policy EMP8 Existing Industrial Sites

Fleetwood and Thornton Area Action Plan

Policy 3 Industry and Business

**Recommendation**

That planning permission be **granted** subject to the following conditions

**Time Limits**

1. The development shall commence not later than 3 years from the date of this permission.
Reason: Imposed pursuant to Section 91 (1) (a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Working Programme

2. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following documents:

   a) The Planning Application and supporting statement received by the County Planning Authority on 10th September 2012.

   b) Submitted Plans and documents:

      Drawing no 4054-B000-09-123-026 Rev B
      Drawing no 4054-B000-00-121-999 Rev C
      Drawing no 4054-B000-09-123-101 Rev A
      Drawing no 4054-B000-09-123-100 Rev A

   Reason: To minimise the impact of the development on the amenities of the local area, and to conform with Policies 2 and 5 of the Lancashire Minerals and Waste Local Plan and Policy SP14 and EMP8 of the Wyre Borough Local Plan.

3. The stacks shall be constructed from stainless steel and have a stainless steel finish. The stacks shall be retained in the approved finish unless otherwise approved in writing by the County Planning Authority.

   Reason: To minimise the visual appearance of the stacks and comply with Policy SP14 of the Adopted Wyre Borough Council Local Plan.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
List of Background Papers

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<th>Paper</th>
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Reason for Inclusion in Part II, if appropriate
N/A.