

Amey Cespa take Cambridge County Council to Planning Inspectorate- Profits before community, council and climate

Amey's proposal of a giant 250,000 tonne 24/7 energy from waste burner was refused planning permission by Cambridgeshire County Council's (CCC) planning committee on 17th Sept 2018. Amey lodged an appeal with the planning inspectorate on 19th March 2019, just in time on grounds of there being a 'need' for the facility.

The CCC case officers report to the county council planning committee in September recommended for approval and while the planning committee acknowledged a need for more sustainable and innovative solutions to county waste, they decided that such an enormous industrial plant sited on the edge of historic Fenland villages would introduce overwhelming serious and significant harm to landscape, visual and heritage. Amey's own reports agreed the impact of harm was 'severe'.

The incinerator is sited only 5 miles from beautiful Wicken Fen, flagship of the National Trust, within several hundred metres of Historic England's 12th Century Denny Abbey, and of a size that would dwarf Ely Cathedral and its place as the 'Ship of the Fens'. The site also sits adjacent to historic Waterbeach, and the proposed new town and its 33,000+ future residents will live within 1 mile downwind of it, including many homes and schools that will be within 500m.

The council planning committee found that the proposed development went against national planning policy and the local plan because it would not be capable of being assimilated into its surroundings without causing unacceptable harm to the visual amenity and the local landscape character, would cause significant harm to any existing neighbouring land uses and be significantly visually intrusive, would have an adverse effect on the setting of a historic landscape. The harm outweighed the need.

The appeal process Amey have triggered will cost the county council tens of thousands of pounds of taxpayer money, if not into the hundreds of thousands and Amey could add legal losses on top if they win. An awkward position for subcontractor Amey to put its commissioner CCC in, with whom it has the pleasure of a £730M county waste deal.

Local recycling rates have been fallen year on year under the subcontractor, which nationally has a questionable performance history (well documented in national media), and whose Waterbeach waste park still has outstanding permit breaches under investigation by the Environment Agency. Cambridge manages just 46% recycling whereas many other areas like Wales achieve 70%. Incineration is not the answer to the problem of inadequate recycling.

Amey is determined to rail road the council into accepting its dream of a giant waste burner as a management solution- the most outdated, dirtiest and least efficient of the energy from waste technologies, as is well documented by DEFRA, the EU, WRAP and global scientific community and waste expert authorities. Amey's original application dismissed all the other preferred and recommended EfW options and CCC have not as yet produced their own independent review to stress test the validity of this plant for Cambridgeshire, against recommended EfW options.

A necessary money spinner for the financially unstable contractor, whose parent company Ferrovial has been trying to get rid of it due to significant losses and legal disputes (many of which are with UK councils). The Spanish giant recently slashed the Amey Cespa asking price by £650M leaving it valued at £88M.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2019/02/27/ferrovial-slashes-value-uk-outsourcing-arm-amey-650m/>

<https://www.transport-network.co.uk/Birmingham-rejects-Amey-245m-settlement-deal/15748>

"CBWIN are disappointed to learn of the appeal, but not surprised. We have prepared for a number of scenarios, this being one. We have spent time engaging with expert legal advisors, planning, environmental and industry professionals to understand the implications of this scenario for the local area, community and CCC.

Amey has gone against a robust council planning decision, widespread community opposition and the IPCC's recommendations against increasing pollution and protecting against climate change. This is not a company that has genuine interest in innovative solutions that improve lives for people living in Cambridgeshire. This is the wrong solution and in the wrong place.

We intend to fully engage with the appeal process and stand by the many reasons why our community remain fiercely opposed to this development. We continue to also be extremely mindful of the impact this development poses for the future 33,000 residents of the new town, who will live within a mile of the plant, some of which including schools will be within 500m and downwind of it. We hope that during the appeal, CCC will honour the strength of opposition from Cambridge residents and maintain in full their position of refusal and defend the full grounds on which that decision was made."

Local Press

<https://www.cambridgeindependent.co.uk/news/public-inquiry-looks-set-to-decide-on-incinerator-9065649/>

CBWIN (Cambridge Without Incineration)

<https://www.cbwin.co.uk> March 2019