

County Waste Strategy needs to talk in plain English to allow affected communities to make informed judgements

The Suffolk Preservation Society says 'NO' to the 'technologically neutral' SCC Core Waste strategy. The Core Waste Strategy is intended to provide a framework for the disposal of domestic, industrial and commercial waste until 2021. The principal area of concern is Residual Waste (RW) recovery. This is basically the treatment of material left over after selective sorting (recyclable, re-usable or digestible) materials are removed.

Landfill was traditionally the destination for this residue. Today, landfill, together with 'landraise' (above ground tipping) is no longer a sustainable option and consequently four sites are proposed to deal with this material. These are:

- the former Eye Airfield site;
- Masons Quarry and the SCC Highways Depot, both at Great Blakenham; and
- the former Sugar Beet Factory site at Sproughton.

The Society believes this document does not provide the requisite basic information to enable a balanced assessment of the appropriateness of the sites identified and how their use will impact on local communities; including tranquility, road traffic, light pollution, visual and landscape intrusion, noise and smell. These sites may blight communities for years to come. This is a cynical strategy that seeks adoption by omitting vital information. The Society believes that this strategy seeks to avoid raising objections from local communities by omitting to identify the technologies proposed for the recovery of RW. Consequently individuals cannot fully assess the implications for their communities. Once the strategy is formally adopted, it will be very difficult to resist detailed planning proposals on the sites identified that conform to the policies contained within it.

The Suffolk Preservation Society rejects the Core Waste Strategy as fundamentally flawed by omission and thereby misleading. The Society brands the document as obtuse and designed to avoid the critical analysis that will enable surrounding towns and villages to gauge the effect of the proposals.

We are being asked to make decisions that will affect future generations without basic information regarding:

- the origin and nature of the residual waste; and
- how the waste will be treated and all this entails.

The County appears to favour two linked approaches for RW namely 'Energy From Waste' (EFW) and Mechanical and Biological Treatment (MBT). EFW is basically burning material to make energy via a steam turbine. MBT is more complicated and involves various steps of material recovery and biological treatment, but finally concludes with the incineration of the combustible unrecoverable residue.

How can we reasonably judge whether the use of these sites for RW recovery is acceptable in the absence of more information regarding the technologies that would be used? We are being asked to commit to the use of sensitive sites for unspecified processes. This is unacceptable. The strategy must be based on an informed consensus.

The Core Waste Strategy has a real problem to solve. There is an annual shortfall in residual waste treatment capacity of 215,200 tonnes of municipal waste and 384,500 tonnes of Commercial and Industrial waste (in total about 600,000 tonnes). In response, policy WCS4 proposes the use of the above sites in Suffolk. Each site would have an annual RW capacity in excess of 100,000 tonnes. Please note that recycling, biodigestion, composting etc are dealt with separately.

'Recovery' of RW is frequently used as a euphemism for incineration (EFW). There are currently 8 incinerators in Suffolk with Eye Chicken Plant and Ipswich Hospital being the largest. In total, at present only 159,000 tonnes are incinerated. Each of the sites identified in the strategy would handle over 100,000 tonnes of residual waste annually.

The Society believes that whatever technology is used, it will involve incineration on a large scale. Large scale recovery inevitably involves large volumes of traffic associated with a large power station style building. This would be served by a very tall stack producing a plume of steam (at best) or particulates (air borne ash) at worst. The Society believes that the public are totally unaware of the implications of residual waste recovery. The Core Strategy is littered with Weasel words that conceal the potential implications of the strategy.

The Suffolk Preservation Society is very concerned about this issue. The Society will launch an awareness campaign this week. We need to ensure that all those affected are aware of the potential impact of this Core Strategy. The final consultation closes on the 22 February 2010. We need to send our response to the Secretary of State. Please contact me, Simon Cairns, Director SPS, if you would like to join us in our campaign or need further information.

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