

Stephen Barclay MP
stephen.barclay.mp@parliament.uk

Our ref: AMC/2020/8926

Your ref SB99789

Date: 27 November 2020

Dear Stephen,

Thank you for your email of 23 November 2020 regarding a proposal for a recycling plant in Whittlesey.

Proposed new recycling plant

On 14 October 2020 our officers attended a pre-arranged site meeting with representatives of Johnsons Aggregates and Recycling Ltd. Discussions took place in relation to the company's proposal to submit an environmental permit application to the Environment Agency. This permit is to operate an installation to accept and process in excess of 50 tonnes per day of non-hazardous Incinerator Bottom Ash (IBA) and inert waste.

As part of these proposals, at least one existing site building is to be retained and utilised for the treatment and processing of IBA, whilst another existing under-cover structure containing asbestos is to be dismantled and removed from site for appropriate disposal. The two large chimney stacks remaining from the former brickworks are also to be demolished.

Following our meeting, the company submitted a bespoke permit application to the Environment Agency on 11 November 2020, for the treatment of IBA to operate within a proposed permitted area totalling 40,192 square metres. The assessment and determination of this application is currently being undertaken by our National Permitting Service (NPS).

Although Johnsons Aggregates and Recycling Ltd have been advised that the successful determination of any application is by no means guaranteed, the company have indicated they intend to commence installing infrastructure and containment measures in advance of being issued a permit entirely at their own risk. The company have also been instructed to discuss any planning related matters directly with Cambridgeshire County Council.

Update on current situation

Our ongoing investigations have revealed the acceptance and disposal of 122,858 tonnes of non-conforming waste by the current operator of the excavation void area of Saxon Pit. This has been unlawfully buried within the void between October 2017 and February 2018. This excludes waste unlawfully accepted and buried by previous operators pre-October 2017.

Following extensive investigatory work, formal samples have been taken across the void to varying depths. Borehole drilling, conducted in September 2019, identified significant visual contamination of non-conforming waste down to depths of between 6 to 15 metres. Our assessment of the analytical data has confirmed that, of the 50 samples submitted, 43 contain sufficient chemical contaminants to render them hazardous.

On 10 June 2020 a formal decision was made to allow all non-conforming waste to remain buried within the excavation void subject to conditions. Since allowing the waste to remain in situ, ongoing discussions have taken place with specialist consultants acting on behalf of the operator. This involves further investigatory work to obtain sufficient representative information to demonstrate that, subject to the completion of the required works, there will be no adverse environmental risk.

Planning permission for the site was re-issued by Cambridgeshire County Council on 17 September 2020, in order to allow the operator to complete the remaining contouring works and restoration scheme. The proposed restoration scheme involves the importation of a further 78,000 cubic metres of substrate, to be deposited on top of the buried non-conforming waste.

Further preliminary investigatory works have now been agreed. On 23 November 2020 the drilling of 10 boreholes took place, with monitoring facilities installed along the eastern and southern perimeter of the site. These boreholes will be used to monitor both water ingress and gas over a minimum four-week period. Samples will then be collected and tested to determine the possible relationship between surface water, groundwater and water seepage. This information will then be used to determine the level of mitigation works required.

Once sufficient gas monitoring data has been collected, a risk assessment will be carried out to determine whether gas mitigation and control is needed. This is likely to include the installation of a low permeability cap, between the non-conforming waste and the proposed restoration material, to eliminate any pathway between source and human receptor. This cap will also allow the unimpeded vertical migration of gas.

Once complete, it is anticipated that all permanently required monitoring infrastructure and containment measures will be engineered and incorporated into the final restoration scheme. This will then allow the long term status and emissions of the site to be monitored.

We are continuing to monitor the site and gather evidence for enforcement purposes. As you can appreciate, due to the confidential nature of the ongoing enforcement action, we are unable to provide further details at this time.

I trust this has answered the matters raised to your satisfaction. If I can be of further help in this, please do contact me.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely



Simon Hawkins
Area Director
East Anglia Area
Tel: 02030 255472

Email: areamanagercorrespondence.eastanglia@environment-agency.gov.uk

Bromholme Lane, Brampton, Huntingdonshire, PE28 4NE or Icen House, Cobham Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP3 9JD

customer service line 03708 506 506
gov.uk/environment-agency