

---

ITEM APP/2007/5747 WARD Eastham

---

**Location:** North Road Eastham Wirral CH65 1AJ

**Proposal:** Erection of a waste recovery plant together with heat and power plant, ancillary buildings, plant and external works

**Applicant** Biossence Hooton Park Ltd  
78 Cannon Street  
London  
EC4N 6NQ

Agent: HB Architects  
The Triforium  
17 Warwick Street  
Rugby  
CV2 3DH

**Development Plan allocation and policies:** Wirral Unitary Development Plan  
Employment Development Site  
Policy CO1 - Development within the Development Coastal Zone  
Policy CO8 - Development in the Coastal Zone requiring an Environmental Assessment  
Policy EM3 - Land for General Employment Use  
Policy EM6 - General Criteria for New Employment Development  
Policy EM7 - Environmental Criteria for New Development  
Policy EM8 - Development within Primarily Industrial Areas  
Policy EMP1 - Provision of Employment Land  
Policy NC1 - The Protection of Sites of International Importance for Nature Conservation  
Policy NC2 - Sites of International Importance for Nature Conservation  
Policy NC4 - Sites of National Importance for Nature Conservation  
Policy PO1 - Potentially Polluting Development  
Policy PO2 - Development near existing sources of pollution  
Policy PO3 - Noise  
Policy PO5 - Criteria for the development of contaminated land  
Policy PO8 - Hazardous Installations and Substances  
Policy PO9 - Criteria for development near notifiable hazards  
Policy REN1 - Principles for renewable energy  
Policy TR9 - Requirements for off-street parking  
Policy WA2 - Development and Land Drainage  
Policy WA5 - Protecting surface waters  
Policy WA6 - Development within River Corridors  
Policy WM10 - Requirements for the Environmental Assessment of Waste Disposal Facilities  
PPS10 - Planning for Sustainable Waste Management.

**Planning History:** No relevant planning history.

**Representations and consultations received:** Representations:

At the time of writing this report 240 letters of objection have been received and a qualifying petition containing signatures from 638 addresses. These addresses where as follows:

36 St David Road, Eastham, 5 Merton Road, Hooton, 27 Seaview Avenue, Eastham, 9 Christopher Drive, Eastham, 15 Torr Drive, Eastham, 22 Crosthwaite Avenue, Eastham, Stanley Arms, Stanley Lane, Eastham, 14 Bankfields Drive, Eastham, 6 Bankfield Drive, Eastham, 98 St David Road, Eastham, 126 Ferry Road, Eastham, 81 Crosthwaite Avenue, Eastham, 16 Stanley Lane, Eastham, 21 Eastham Mews, Eastham Village Road, Eastham, 36 St John's Road, Eastham, 86 St John's Road, Eastham, 63 St David Road, Eastham, Ferry Bungalow, Green Lane, Eastham, 39 Delamere Close, Eastham, 25 Stanley Lane, Eastham, Flat 17 Eastham House, 131 Eastham Village Road, Eastham, 73 Chesterfield Road, Eastham, 99 Chesterfield Road, Eastham, 54 Stanley Lane, Eastham, 95 Chesterfield, Eastham, 107 St David Road, Eastham, 14 Stanley Lane, Eastham, 19 Eastham Mews, Eastham Village, 62 Stanley Lane, Eastham Village, Eastham Lodge Golf Club, 24 Eastham Village Mews, Eastham Village Road, Eastham, 12 Eastham Village Mews, Eastham Village Road, Eastham, 61 St David Road, Eastham, 348 Ferry Road, Eastham, 27 Torr Drive, Eastham, 80 St David Road, Eastham, 20 Stanley Lane, Eastham, 25 Eastham Mews, Eastham Village Road, Eastham, 4 Eastham Mews, Eastham Village Road, Eastham, 25 St John's Road, Eastham, 9 Lock Road,

Eastham,10 Lock Road, Eastham, 3 Church Lane, Eastham Village,18 Torr Drive, Chapel Walk, Eastham, 30 St John's Road, Eastham Village, 5 Vicarage Row, Ferry Road, Eastham, 29 Delamere Close, Eastham, 91 Fessy Road, Eastham, 78 St David Road, Eastham, Apt 12 Eastham House, 131 Eastham Village Road, Eastham, 20 Eastham Mews, Eastham Village Road, Elderberry Cottage, 87A Eastham Village, 6 St David Road, Eastham, Rose Cottage, 19 Ferry Road, Eastham, 100 St David Road, Eastham, 78 St John's Road, Eastham, 48 St John's Road, Eastham, 79 St David's Road, Eastham, 113 Ferry Road, Eastham, 4 St John's Road, Eastham, 352 Ferry Road, Eastham, 77 Ferry Road, Eastham, 53 Stanley Lane, Eastham, 342 Ferry Road, Eastham, 83 St John's Road, Eastham, 66 St John's Road, Eastham, 2 Seaview Avenue, Eastham, 15 St John's Road, Eastham, 11 Dudley Crescent, Hooton, 22 Eastham Mews, Eastham,104 St David Road, Eastham, Apt 11 7 Chapel View, Eastham,12 Seaview Avenue, Eastham, 2 Torr Drive, Eastham, 43 Ferry Road, Eastham, 23 Chesterfield Road, Eastham, 23 Ferry Road, Eastham, 84a Eastham Village Road, Eastham,1 Chapel View, Carlett Park, Eastham,31 Stanley Lane, Eastham Village,54 St David Road, Eastham,83 Ferry Road, Eastham,18 Dudley Crescent, Hooton, 67 Ferry Road, Eastham, 65 Ferry Road, Eastham, 6 Seaview Avenue, Eastham, 76 St John's Road, Eastham,13 Thornleigh Avenue, Eastham,15 Eastham Mews, Eastham, 23 Eastham Mews, Eastham Village Road, Eastham, 7 Eastham Mews, Eastham ,Flat 6 Eastham Mews, Eastham Village Road, Eastham, 45 Ferry Road, Eastham,16 St John's Road, Eastham,112 St David Road, Eastham,138 Ferry Road, Eastham Village, 70 Eastham Village Road, Eastham Village, 30 Crossthwaite Avenue, Eastham, 74 St John's Road, Eastham,13 Seaview Avenue, Eastham, 4 Merton Road, Hooton, 41 St John's Road, Eastham, Apt 10 9 Chapel View, Chapel Walk, Eastham, 35 Torr Drive, Eastham, 67 Crossthwaite Avenue, Eastham, 13 Chesterfield Road, Eastham, 43 Torr Drive, Eastham, 47 Windermere Road, Noctorum,1c St David Road, Eastham Village,101 St David Road, Eastham, 2 Hall Farm, Stanley Lane, Eastham Village, 51 Ferry Road, Eastham,142 Eastham Village Road, Eastham,The Hayloft, 36 Stanley Lane, Wirral, 93 Chesterfield Road, Wirral, 89 St David Road, Eastham, 4 St David Road, Eastham,Sunnybanks, 95 Ferry Road, Eastham,16 St David Road, Eastham,19 St David's Road, Eastham,10 St John's Road, Eastham 49 St David Road, Eastham, 9 Vicarage Row, Eastham Village, 63 Ferry Road, Eastham, 6 Vicarage Row, Ferry Road, Eastham Village, 60 St David Road, Eastham,17 Seaview Avenue, Eastham, 37 Stanley Lane, Eastham, 84 St David Road, Eastham,50 St John's Road, Eastham, 53 Ferry Road, Eastham, 37 Torr Drive, Chapel Walk, Eastham, 4 Bankfield Drive, Eastham, 70 St David Road, Eastham, 8 St David Road, Eastham, 23 St David Road, Eastham, 46 St John's Road, Eastham,19 Seaview Avenue, Eastham, 9 Christopher Drive, Eastham,15 Seaview Avenue, Eastham,8 Bankfields Drive, Eastham, 81 St David Road, Eastham,114 Ferry Road, Eastham, 53 St John's Road, Eastham, 26 St John's Road, Eastham,16 Seaview Avenue, Eastham, 79 St John's Road, Eastham, 21 Seaview Avenue, Eastham,10 St David Road, Eastham, 31a St David Road, Eastham, Torr Park Lodge, 27 Terry Road, Eastham, 2 Chapel View, Carlett Park, 103 Ferry Road, Eastham,134 Ferry Road, Eastham,15 Ferry Road, Eastham, 63 St John's Road, Eastham, 2 St John's Road, Eastham ,88 St John's Road, Eastham, 75 St David Road, Eastham, 31 St David Road, Eastham, 3 Woodheath Way, Eastham, 34 St John's Road, Eastham, 56 St John's Road Eastham, 24 Seaview Avenue, Eastham, 59 St John's Road, Eastham,15 Stanley Lane, Eastham Village,101 Ferry Road, Eastham, 60 Stanley Lane, Eastham Village, 67 St David Road, Eastham, 64 St David Road, Eastham,7 St David Road, Eastham Village, 64 St John's Road, Eastham Village, Flat 9 9 Chapel View, Eastham, 8 Vicarage Row, Ferry Road, Eastham, 8 St John's Road, Eastham, 6 St John's Road, Eastham, 13 St David Road, Eastham, 7 Seaview Avenue, Eastham,101 Ferry Road, Eastham, Mayfield, 218 Ferry Road, Eastham, 48 Chesterfield Road, Eastham, 46 Chesterfield Road, Eastham, 8 Chesterfield Road, Eastham,12 Lock Road, Eastham,1 Seaview Ave, Eastham, 2 Woodheath Way, Eastham,106 St David Road, Eastham, 94 St David Road, Eastham, 21 Stanley Lane, Eastham, 42 Redcar Drive, Eastham, 85 Ferry Road, Eastham, 39 St David Road, Eastham Village, 4 Seaview Avenue, Eastham, 97 Ferry Road, Eastham,25 Ferry Road, Eastham,111 Chesterfield Road, Eastham, 51 St John's Road, Eastham, 25 Picton Close, Eastham, 85 Stanley Lane, Eastham,Holly Cottage, 118 Eastham Village Road, Eastham, 56 Stanley Lane, Eastham Village, Wirral, 19 Eastham Village Road, Eastham, 58 Eastham Village Road, Eastham,130 Ferry Road, Eastham, 85A Eastham Village Road, Eastham,14 Torr Drive, Eastham,101 Chesterfield Road, Eastham, 93 Eastham Village Road, Eastham,105 Ferry Road, Eastham, Wirral, The Cottage, 2 Church Lane, Eastham,13 St John's

Road, Eastham, Canal Reach, 1 Bankfield Drive, Eastham, 52 St John's Road, Eastham Village, 70 St John's Road, Eastham, The Elms, 336 Ferry Road, Eastham, 12 Lock Road, Eastham, 8 Dudley Crescent, Eastham, 8 Woodheath Way, Eastham, 27 Redcar Drive, Eastham, 68 St John's Road, Eastham, 18 Seaview Avenue, 93 Ferry Road, Eastham, 69 Ferry Road, Eastham, 115 Ferry Road, Eastham, 75 Stanley Lane, Eastham, 1b St David Road, Eastham, 58 Eastham Village Road, Eastham, 38 St John's Road, Eastham, Flat 6 Eastham House, Eastham Village Road, Eastham, Apt 11 9 Chapel View, Eastham, 3 Eastham Mews, Eastham Village Road, Eastham, Hooton Arms, Village Road, Eastham, 68 Eastham Village Road, Eastham, 7 Vicarage Road, Eastham Village, 4 Elgar Avenue, Eastham, 16 Eastham Mews, Eastham Village Road, Eastham, 24 Neville Road, Bromborough, 20 The Pines, Bebington, 89 Chesterfield Road, Eastham, 67 Stanley Lane, Eastham Village, 358 Ferry Road, Eastham.

The points of objection are summarised below citing the following grounds:

- The proposed site is on the border of Eastham Conservation Village, less than 600m, on green field site with trees 200/300 years old. It is an insult to suggest the replanting and shrubbery of new trees would compensate for this.
- The plant is unique, untested on this scale using extreme temperatures creating steam, odours (which could be toxic) and noise as a result of the process. One stack is evident for venting even though it was advised there would be an enclosed system in operation.
- The proposed site is housed between KANEB (COMAH) Top Tier Site and Eastham Refinery. The site is unsuitable due to the potential hazardous environment.
- No details of the barges for transport of the waste material from Garston Docks are given. This leaves the use of Articulated Heavy Goods Vehicles, which would use the Mersey Tunnels, Runcorn Bridge, M53 or A41 and possibly the village.
- Wirral has its own Recycling Plant at Bidston and householders recycle at source.
- Merseyside Waste Planning favour local Recycling Plants requiring minimum transportation of waste thus reducing the unnecessary movements of HGV's and production of vehicle pollution.
- The majority of the site is Greenfield and used by a variety of wildlife including Owls, Bats and Kestrel. If this green field site is developed, not only will the home to these birds and animals be removed but also the food chain contained therein. There are no ecological plans available outlined what is planned to counteract the devastation that will be caused by this proposal.
- It has been stated that no waste will be imported from any areas other than Liverpool and Wirral. With the ever increasing recycling of domestic waste how can a constant and sufficient supply of raw material be ensured? Once the plant is built waste will need to be brought in from other areas to ensure its survival.
- If the development is to be carbon neutral, how does this account for the carbon emissions from the 50 plus vehicles a day travelling from Liverpool and the far reaches of Wirral to bring waste to the site. There is also the transport out of the site to be considered.
- How can it be stated the level of emissions are to be when the plant is untested. There is no certainty that dioxins won't be emitted and that plastics won't be included in the stream. How vigilant will the operator be regarding time, temperature and turbulence in the process?

The adjoining sites could mean any malfunction could result in a major environmental problem.

- The site is land acquired by the Manchester Ship Canal Company under a compulsory purchase order by way of the 1949 Manchester Ship Canal Act of Parliament and was to be used only in connection with the operations of the Queen Elizabeth II Oil Dock. The proposal has nothing to do with the dock. The agent of the

previous landowners should be informed.

- The description of the site as 'idle building land' is misleading. The site is unspoilt parkland with 14 mature oak trees, 200 - 350 years old and numerous young ones 20 - 30 years old. These trees make a considerable environmental contribution. Only two trees would be retained. "Previous use unknown" should be "agricultural grazing pasture".

- No mention has been made of any Forward Planning enquiries at Garston regarding "shipment of waste via the Manchester Ship Canal".

- The suggested route to the site would be impracticable involving what is almost a hairpin bend from North Road, Bankfields Drive to Power House Road. This could be an excuse for drivers of lorries to use Ferry Road and Bankfields Drive to detriment of Eastham Village.

- The sale of sorted materials would result in further traffic movements

- The prospect of additional air and noise pollution in Eastham from this unproven process is a risk that should not be taken.

- The existing Karting Track in the area already results in noise that is intolerable and inescapable.

Bromborough Society objects to the proposal on the following:

- Transport of waste material to and from the site.  
Potential for air and water pollution  
Impact upon protected wildlife species.

Wirral Wildlife objects to the proposed development on the following grounds:

- Barn owls are breeding on the site and use the whole area for hunting.
- Language used in supporting documentation being misleading
- Only water or rail transport should be used.
- They ask for a legal agreement to protect the local aquifer.
- Full ecological surveys should be carried out in full.
- A survey on bat activity should be carried out in full.
- Mitigation for loss of ground and habitat for feeding birds .
- A Great Crested Newt Survey should be carried out in full.
- There should mitigation for the loss of any oak trees.

Wirral LA21 support the comments raised by Wirral Wildlife.

Wirral Barn Owl trust object to the proposal on loss of habitat and ground for feeding Barn Owls which are national protected species.

Eastham Village Preservation Association objects to the proposal on the following grounds:

- Inappropriate location which is not located near enough to the source of waste resulting in unsustainable traffic movements.
- Proximity of the site to COMAH hazardous installations.
- Potential pollution and emissions.
- Potential for large volumes of traffic
- The proposed site is Greenfield, adjacent to a conservation village, and is a coastal site. There is potential for environmental impact to the site, the surrounding village and the estuary.
- The local community has not been fully consulted.

Wirral Green Belt Council support the objections raised by residents and adds the following:

- The site does not have the protection of the adjacent Green Belt designation but it has strong environmental attributes. It has a particularly attractive parkland

appearance with very fine and ancient oak trees together with well established younger specimens.

Kaneb Terminals Eastham Ltd raises the following concerns:

- Potential traffic congestion.
- On site and Off site emergency plans will need be adapted to cater for the new development.
- Potential for waste to stored on site leading to health concerns for staff.

Environment Agency: objected to the scheme on the grounds that no flood risk assessment had been carried out under PPS25. However this has since been submitted in support of the application by the applicant satisfying the concerns raised.

Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority supports the application subject to the following:

- Compliance with the MWDA Procurement Strategy.
- Confirmation with the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy and the reference project as set out in the outline business case as submitted to DEFRA in May 2006.
- Encourage the applicant to bid into the Procurement Process and enter into the competitive dialogue process.
- Promotion of the speedy development of plans and delivery solutions.

Consultations:

Director of Technical Services (Traffic Management): no objection.

Director of Technical Services (Highway Maintenance): no objection.

Director of Technical Services (Conservation): no objection.

Director of Regeneration (Pollution Control): no objection.

**Directors comments:** Proposal

The proposed development is for the erection of a waste recovery plant together with; a combined heat and power plant (CHP), ancillary buildings, and external works. The proposed waste to energy facility (WEF) is considered by the applicant to provide the local authority with a cost effective solution for the disposal of Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) which will be diverted from land-fill to help to meet national recycling targets set out in PPS10.

In brief, the facility will compromise the following:

1. A Waste reception hall for MSW;
2. A Waste treatment and recycling area;
3. A combined heat and power plant.

The plant is sized to accept up to 400,000 tonnes of waste per year and to remove certain recyclates, before it produces fuel for the combined heat and power plant.

Process

The process can be summarised as follows:

1. MSW Delivery - the majority of waste will be delivered to the site in containers by barge utilising the Manchester Ship Canal. Some waste will be delivered by road;
2. MSW Reception - the waste will be tipped onto the floor of the reception hall;
3. Pre-sorting and process feed - pre-sorting will be carried out manually using motorised grabs, which will then be used to load material onto the walking floor (conveyor belt) which feeds the waste processing area;
4. Steam Autoclaves - the waste will be thermally treated (steamed) to partially disintegrate and sterilise it;
5. Post-process sorting - paper, cardboard and organic matter will have been broken

down into a fibrous compound which will be used to form the fuel for the CHP plant. A mixture of techniques are used to separate and sort the recyclable materials such as ferrous metals, non-ferrous metals, glass, aggregates and plastic;

6. Fibre transfer - the fuel will then be transferred to the CHP area;

7. Fuel preparation - the fibre will then be dried to reduce the moisture content, and then may be pelletised if required;

8. Fuel gasification - the fuel will then be fed into the gasification units where it is converted into a synthetic gas (SYN GAS);

9. Electrical Power Production - the syn gas generated will be fed into a number of gas engines where it is combusted to run the power generators.

#### Environmental Controls

The following systems for continuous monitoring will be installed:

- Flue gas oxygen
- Flow
- Carbon monoxide
- Sulphur dioxide
- Ash and particulates
- Water content
- Temperature
- Pressure
- Nitrogen oxides
- Others as required by the permits.

All of the above will be measured by on-line equipment and monitored and alarmed by the Plant operational systems.

Air used to ventilate the MSW reception hall and the MSW processing hall will pass through an odour control system before leaving the building. This air will also contain steam (the only exhaust gas) released into the processing hall when an autoclave door is opened, and steam transpired from hot, treated MSW on the conveyor belts.

The proposed facility will operate on a 24 hour a day 7 per week basis for up to 8760 hours per annum.

The site will be regulated by the Environment Agency. This will ensure that the site is operated in an environmentally sound manner. The site will be required to obtain a PPC Permit from the Environment Agency prior to operation commencing. The application process for this permit is intended to commence immediately after planning permission should committee be minded to approve this application.

#### Principle of Development

The proposed development is situated on land designated as an employment development site. Therefore development is acceptable in principle subject to the criteria contained within Policy EM6 and EM7 of the Wirral UDP.

The site falls under schedule 2 of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations 1999. Following both a screening and scoping exercise, in this instance the local authority deemed it necessary that the applicant undertake a full EIA which has been compiled and completed to the council's satisfaction following extensive consultation with the Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS).

The Council has a statutory duty to undertake Habitats Regulation Assessment (Regulation 48 refers) of the development due to its proximity to the Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA). The regulation requires the Council to determine whether there is likely to be a significant effect on the SPA and to determine whether a more detailed evaluation (Appropriate Assessment) is necessary.

Wirral Council has again in extensive consultation with MEAS, carried this out in full to the utmost degree as it is their responsibility and duty when performing their role as a competent Local Authority even though this legislation is only material when influencing the decision of planning applications.

At the time of writing this report Natural England, the governing body on the Habitat Regulations 1999, had raised no objection to screening opinion compiled by the Council which concluded that habitat regulation assessment would not be necessary in this case. Natural England were given the statutory response period set out within the regulations of 5 weeks to reply to the screening opinion compiled. This period expired on 16th October 2007. Therefore, the recommendation is based on no further representations being received by Natural England.

#### Policy Constraints

##### The Need for the Development

The UK generates approximately 36 million tonnes of municipal waste per annum, with approximately 30 million tonnes of this waste being collected from households. Households waste contains large quantities of energy rich organic waste which can cause pollution problems, and which also contains materials that do not easily decay. These materials such as glass and plastics can be easily recycled.

England and Wales currently recycles about 13% of its municipal waste stream with 9% of waste production being treated by thermal treatment, primarily by incineration with energy recovery. The remainder of the waste stream generally goes to a landfill. These figures do not compare favourably with the waste management methods adopted by most of the UK's European neighbours who recycle and incinerate considerably more waste than England and Wales, with only a minor percentage being taken to landfill.

There are various Regulatory Drivers such as the Landfill Directive and the National Waste Strategy which set recycling targets that must be adhered to.

The applicant considers that the proposed Hooton Park facility will assist in helping the Local Authority to meet these targets.

In addition to the Landfill Directive and National Waste Strategy the following regulatory drivers are also relevant when considering this application:

- Regional Waste Strategy for the North West set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy;
- Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Merseyside; and
- Planning Policy Statement 10: planning for waste;

The proposed development is considered by the applicant to conform to all the relevant policies contained within these documents.

##### Alternative methods considered for the Disposal of Waste

Several options for alternative waste disposal techniques were considered by the applicant before deciding on steam autoclaving as the way to proceed, these included:

- Landfill
- Incineration
- Composting
- Mechanical and Biological Treatment

All of these options have been discounted by the applicant. The applicant discounted these options as they considered them to be prohibitively expensive, unable to be sufficiently scaled up in size and/or being unable to add value to the efficiency of waste streams locally.

It is considered that the evaluation of alternative process technologies provides a good balance between brevity and the need to consider different approaches for each of the treatment stages in the application. In all cases the principal issues and reasons for selecting the preferred approach are well defined within the Environmental Statement.

##### Alternative Recycling Options

Several techniques to generate energy from waste have been considered by the applicant within the Environmental Statement.

INCINERATION WAS DISCOUNTED AS THE COST AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF INCINERATION CAN OFTEN BE CONSIDERED TO BE UNACCEPTABLE.

Pyrolysis and gasification techniques were also considered. These techniques can be used to convert the fuel into energy. The use of this technology has been adopted due to the low emissions produced when converting fuel into syn gas. Gasification is also relatively efficient when compared with other technologies. Gasification is therefore considered by the applicant as the best available technology for the proposed facility.

#### Alternative Sites

Alternative sites such as Manchester Road (Paddington), Garston Docks (Liverpool) and North Road (Hooton Park) were considered in detail by the applicant within the accompanying Environmental Statement. The sites had various merits; however the applicant considers that the site chosen was mainly due to its close proximity to the Manchester Ship Canal and existing industrial setting and the ability to supply waste heat and electrical energy to local customers.

#### Policy Summary

The technical aspects of the proposal are consistent with national policy and priorities for sustainable waste management established by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), which encourage the use of innovative technologies to divert waste away from landfill and to move management techniques to the upper levels of the Waste Hierarchy. It is considered to provide a potential source of investment in the infrastructure to support this aspect of the Waste Strategy, and the high level of value recovery throughout the process is a particular strength of the proposed techniques.

The proposal is considered to be consistent with policy guidance in Planning Policy Statement 10 (Planning for Sustainable Waste Management), which encourages communities to take responsibility for managing the wastes they generate and to treat and dispose of them as close to their source as is feasible. The site is at the periphery of the Merseyside sub-region its location is not ideal in this respect.

The proposal to use barges to bring waste to the site is also broadly consistent with more detailed guidance set in PPS10 and in other Planning Policy Statements which seek to exploit alternative transport modes where this economically feasible.

MEAS can confirm that the site was identified in a review of potentially suitable sites for new waste management infrastructure, which was commissioned by MEAS in 2005 to inform the evolving Joint Merseyside Waste Development Plan Document.

MEAS advice the local planning authority that the proposal is satisfactory in terms of conformity with the Regional Waste Strategy for the North West of England, and with the basic principles of Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).

The proposal is considered by MEAS to be consistent with Policy WMT2 (waste management) and WA1 to WA3 (protection of water resources) subject to application of relevant planning controls and mitigation measures.

#### Site and Surroundings

The site is located 1.5 km to the south-east of the centre of Eastham. The site is a Primarily Industrial Area on the eastern coast of the Wirral. The site is surrounded by Oil Storage Tanks to the north, west and South these being associated with Eastham and Kaneb Oil Refineries. To the east of the site is a major oil pipeline and further east the Manchester Ship Canal.

The nearest settlements to the proposed development are at Eastham to the north,



Hooton to the south-west, and Ellesmere Port to the South. The nearest residential properties are those on the eastern fringe of Eastham, approximately 1 km to the north west of the site, along Riveracre Road a minimum of 750 metres to the south-west.

The immediate locality of the site consists of, and is dominated by industrial land, including the Vauxhall car plant and oil storage depots associated with Eastham Docks. A significant proportion of the industrial land is vacant.

Junction 5 and 6 of the M53 motorway lie approximately 1.5km and 1 km to the south west of the site. West Road, an industrial estate road, provides direct access from junction 6 of the M53 to the southern boundary of the site. Most waste delivery to the plant is envisaged by the applicant to arrive via wharfage off the Manchester Ship Canal with a new link road leading from this area to the site. Vehicular access to the site will be via Bankfields Drive and Powerhouse Road.

There are a number of oak trees within the boundary of the site. Where possible these trees will be retained. Tree and shrub planting will also be undertaken to add benefit to the visual impact of the facility. This will provide a visual screen to low level activities on site and would supplement the existing tree screen when viewed from across the Mersey Estuary.

#### Appearance and Amenity Issues

The development contains four main elements namely:

- Waste Recovery (Recycling and Processing) Plant;
- A combined Heat Power Plant;
- Vehicle Repair/Workshop Facility; and
- External Site works and associated infrastructure.

The waste recovery building and the CHP Plant will be the 2 main structures on site and would house the majority of the waste processing treatment, recycling operations. The 2 buildings would be constructed using a steel frame structure clad using a mixture of a flat panel, profiled and timber cladding systems. Circular external columns are used to visually break up the elevation. Surmounting the building is a light roofing system.

#### Waste Handling/Recovery Area

Arriving waste in sealed containers will be transported to the building from the wharf using specialised plant (or if by road by using specialised waste refuse vehicles) and will enter into the building through rapid roll doors leading into the receiving hall, once the vehicle is in the building the rapid roll door would close behind it following which the waste is then tipped onto the receiving hall floor. The vehicle would then leave through the rapid roll door through which it entered. The receiving hall is to be negatively pressurised preventing odour escaping to external air with the environment within being deodorised using specialist plant. The floor of the building would be constructed of reinforced concrete. Concrete push walls are to be located around the perimeter of the receiving hall to allow waste to be handled by mechanical loading shovels without damaging the external structure of the buildings. From the receiving hall waste is then transported using a system of walking floors into the processing plant where raw waste is firstly treated and sterilised using an autoclave process. Following this procedure waste is again moved using a series of walking floors into the recycling hall where the waste is separated into its various components and distributed into a series of skips with subsequent removal from site. The residual bio-mass flock material left over as a waste product is then transported by conveyors to the adjacent building housing the Combined Heat and Power Plant.

#### Combined Heat and Power Plant Area

This building houses the necessary plant to turn the bio mass flock product into a syn gas using a gasification process which then is used to fuel gas engines and hence electricity which can then be used to run the facility with any surplus generation being supplied to the national grid.

#### Visitor Centre and Administration Offices

A separate structure housing a visitor centre will enable interested third parties and educational visits to take place and examine the whole recycling and treatment process safely via a first floor glazed walkway. This building also provides for reception, administration and welfare facilities. The elevations proposed are differentiated in this area from the main buildings with the use of exterior clad in cedar boarding and flat resin bonded panels.

#### Vehicle Repair and Workshop Facility

The design of the workshop facility is to match and therefore complement the other main buildings on site and it will be constructed using the same materials as the Waste Recovery Plant and the Combined Heat and Power Plant.

This facility is required to provide day to day maintenance operations for the facility to ensure safe and correct operation of both plant and machinery.

#### Site Infrastructure/Externals

The main elements of site infrastructure are the access to the highway network, the weighbridges/gatehouse, manoeuvring yards and car parking areas.

External concrete yard areas would be constructed outside the building allowing for general manoeuvring, container storage and recyclates collection. These areas would be drained, via an interceptor, to either a mains sewer or to a discharge point agreed with the Environment Agency and authorised by discharge consent. Car parking areas will be block paved.

Externally there is various plant associated with the operational procedures of the plant including cooling radiators, thermal oxidisers, sprinkler tanks and deodorising plant. An exhaust from the thermal oxidation process will result in an external stack, the size of which has been determined using environmental modelling.

#### Weighbridge and Gatehouse

Twin weighbridges separated by a weighbridge office would be sited close to the site access. The weighbridges would be constructed at ground level, whilst the weighbridge office would be slightly elevated to provide visual access to the vehicles cabs.

#### Ecological Issues

An initial habitats survey was undertaken by the applicant on 23rd January 2007. The initial assessment was carried out by walking through the site, first along the northern boundary, then down the western boundary. Further north/south walks were made, parallel to each other, every 10 metres eastwards, across the site to the eastern boundary fence.

The applicant states that the site is roughly square in shape (except on the northern border) and consists of grassland, which is slowly being colonised by invasive weed species. Immature trees and shrubs are found around the perimeter and these are gradually encroaching towards the centre. The site is generally well drained, except for the south-eastern corner which contains a water-filled ditch and the remains of a low brick wall. The centre of the site is dominated by Oak. One of these trees is dying and several very large branches have fallen and are in the process of decay.

#### Flora

The site has obviously been left undisturbed for many years and during this time invasive species have moved in to create a scrub landscape around the boundaries containing immature trees, mainly Sycamore with some Willow, very young Oak and several hybrid Oaks, Elder, Ash and more rarely Silver Birch and Holly. There is a single Yew tree on the western boundary fence. At the north-eastern border is a group of young Elm trees. All the larger Elm trees here are showing evidence of damage, almost certainly caused by Dutch Elm disease.

The Oak trees which dominate the centre of the site are almost all Pendunculate Oak, but there are two Oak trees close together towards the western boundary - these are Turkey Oak, which is native to central and southern Europe, but is common here, mainly in gardens and parks. Shrubs included Gorse and Hawthorn with one example of Broome on the southern boundary fence.

Few flowering plants were present due to the time of year, but the site was dominated by grasses, mainly with Cock's foot and Creeping Bent. Those plants found were typical invasive species and included Bramble, Thistle, Broad-leaved Dock, Common Sorrel, Willow Herb, Ragwort, Wild Rose, Nettle, Common Hogweed and Ribwort plantain. There was a large bank of wild raspberries on the western boundary, just inside the fence.

Non-flowering plants included patches of mosses in damper areas, together with some examples of Fungi e.g. Jew's Ear. Three species of Fern were present - Male Fern, Broad Buckler Fern and Common Polypody.

#### Fauna

12 species of Bird were seen on site - a flock of about 20 Woodpigeon, which were roosting in a Oak, Great tit, Magpie, Wren, Blackbird, Greenfinch, Robin, Songthrush, Blue tit, Hedge Sparrow, Chaffinch and a Woodcock, which was flushed from the small wooded area in the north eastern section.

There was ample evidence of a large population of rabbits, with droppings, scrapes and tracks throughout. Two large rabbits were seen on entering the site at the north-eastern corner. A strong Fox scent was present throughout the site. A grey squirrel was seen on one of the mature Oak trees with a drey present on one of the upper branches. Squirrel damage (dead branches due to bark stripping) was evident on many of the immature trees, especially young Sycamore.

#### Invasive plants

##### Japanese Knotweed

This was introduced into the U.K. as an ornamental plant in the mid nineteenth century. It is a clump forming perennial weed typically found growing on riverbanks, roadsides, derelict wasteland and areas of disturbed soil. Its root system is extremely vigorous and can cause structural damage. It can penetrate hard surfaces such as tarmac and has even been known to penetrate through the foundations of buildings.

Under Section 14 (2) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) it is illegal to spread Japanese Knotweed. Soils and waste containing Japanese Knotweed should be disposed of as controlled waste and in accordance with Environmental Agency guidance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, to a suitably licensed disposal site.

##### Himalayan or Indian Balsam

This plant was introduced into the U.K. in 1839. Since then it has escaped into the wild and has rapidly colonised river-banks and other areas of damp ground. It grows in dense stands, suppressing growth of native vegetation and dies back in winter leaving bare areas of soil, liable to erosion. The plant produces a pod containing seeds, which explodes, scattering seeds, which are spread by water.

The seeds can remain viable for up to two years. Development within 7 metres of Himalayan Balsam should be avoided where possible.

Himalayan Balsam is not covered by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, but it is invasive and suppresses the growth of native grasses and flora. It is good environmental practise to implement similar precautions as for Japanese Knotweed.

##### Giant Hogweed

This was introduced to the U.K. in the late nineteenth century as an ornamental plant. It is a perennial, which is widespread in the U.K. and typically found growing on

riverbanks and areas of derelict wasteland. The plant is characterised by its size and can grow up to 5m tall with leaves up to 1m across. Growth starts in March and the plant can take 4 years to mature and flower. Each plant can produce several thousand seeds, which remain viable for up to 15 years. Seeds are dispersed by wind or water and may also be carried on footwear, vehicles or in contaminated soil.

The plant can also cause painful blistering and severe skin irritation from touching the poisonous sap found in hairs on the stems, edges and underside of leaves. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, it is 'illegal to plant or otherwise cause to grow' Giant Hogweed. Soil and waste containing Giant Hogweed could potentially cause environmental harm and should be disposed of as contaminated waste (see Japanese Knotweed above).

#### Results of invasive plant survey

When present, Japanese Knotweed leaves strands of dead canes during the winter months. There was no evidence of these on the proposed site. Himalayan Balsam dies back completely over the winter months, leaving no trace of the plant. No plant remains were found, though this should be checked again next May when the plant grows from seed.

Giant hogweed stems and old flowering head turn brown and remain over the winter months, slowly decaying. Old flowering heads were found, but these were almost certainly Common Hogweed and not Giant Hogweed.

#### Protected Species

Wirral Biodiversity Action Plans are currently in place for Barn Owls, Bats, Brown Hare, Great Crested Newt, Natterjack Toad and Water Voles. It is also proposed to add Sand Lizards to this list.

#### Water vole

The water vole is afforded some legal protection through its inclusion on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The legislation makes it illegal to:

- damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place where a water vole uses for shelter or protection;
- disturb a water vole whilst it occupies such a place.

Old LBAP Records show the presence of water voles in 1966 over 20 km away at Arrowe Park, Thurstaston and Parkgate. The national survey of 1989-90 revealed the presence of water vole populations in three 10km squares on Wirral. No detailed systematic survey for water voles has been carried out on Wirral. Therefore information on water vole status and distribution is currently very limited

As there are no permanent ponds on the site, only a temporary water-filled ditch just inside the SE boundary, it is very unlikely to be used as a shelter by water voles.

#### Red Squirrel

The Red Squirrel is protected under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The Act makes it an offence to:

- damage, destroy or otherwise obstruct access to any structure or place, which red squirrels use, for shelter and protection;
- disturb red squirrels whilst they are using such a place;
- kill, injure or take squirrels.

LBAP Records show the presence of Red Squirrels over 30 years ago (between 1967 and 1975) over 20 km away at Heswall and Thurstaston.

Red squirrels inhabit coniferous woodland and depend on pine seeds for food.

The fact that a Grey Squirrel was seen on site means that there is no chance of Red Squirrels being present.

#### Badger

The Badger and its habitat is protected under The Protection of Badgers Act

1992 and is also included on Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and Appendix III of the Bern Convention. The legislation affords badgers protection against deliberate harm or injury making it an offence to: -

- wilfully kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a badger (or attempt to do so);
- to interfere with a sett by damaging or destroying it;
- to obstruct access to, or entrance of, a badger sett;
- to disturb a badger whilst it is occupying a sett.

There were no obvious signs of badgers (a sett, tracks, diggings or latrines), but there were many well-defined runs throughout the site, which could have been badger, fox or rabbit.

#### Brown Hare

As a game species hares enjoy limited protection through the Ground Game Act (1880) and the Hares Protection Act (1911). The sale of hares between March 1st and July 31st is prohibited in order to act as a deterrent to culling during the peak of the breeding season.

The Brown Hare is a UK BAP Priority Species on account of its historic decline. There is currently no population estimate for Wirral. However Brown Hares are commonly found on farmland in mid Wirral with high concentrations of population around Landican cemetery. Other areas of Brown Hare sightings are from West Wirral on the farmland around the Dungeon through to the golf course at Caldy, then Frankby, Greasby and on into Hoylake. On the south east side of Wirral from Landican hares can be found in the farmland at Barnston, Storeton and continuing south through to Willaston and beyond.

Cheshire Brown Hare Group carry out an annual spring survey (in partnership with Wirral ranger Service) on sites across Cheshire and Wirral and are striving to reduce fragmentation of populations by targeting habitat improvement and friendly farming practices. There are National targets to double the Hare population by 2010.

There was a profusion of Rabbit droppings at the site, but no evidence of larger, Hare droppings.

#### Great Crested newt

Great Crested Newts are listed in Annex IV of the EC 'Habitats and Species Directive' and are also included in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which makes it an offence to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take a great crested newt (GCN);
- possess or control any live or dead specimen or anything derived from a GCN;
- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by GCN;
- intentionally or recklessly disturb a GCN while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose.

The GCN is also listed in Annex II and Annex IV of the Habitats (and Species) Directive. the directive is transposed into UK law through the Conservation (Natural Habitats.) Regulations 1994. GCN are included in Schedule 2 of the Regulations with Regulation 39 making it an offence to:

- deliberately capture or kill a GCN;
- deliberately disturb a GCN;
- deliberately take or destroy the eggs of a GCN;
- damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a GCN.

Old LBAP records show that GCN were present at Upton, Wirral in 1933 - the area has since been developed for housing. There has been a dramatic decline in the number of ponds throughout the area and further records of GCN in Wirral are unclear. However, a large concentration of GCN occurs to the west of Chester.

There are no suitable habitats for GCN at the site.

#### Bats

All bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside act 1981 and under Regulation 39 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, 7c.) Regulations 1994 (better known as the Habitats Directive). Under this legislation it is an offence to:

- intentionally kill, injure or capture a bat;
- deliberately disturb bats;
- damage, destroy or obstruct access to roosts (a bat roost is defined as any structure or place which is used for shelter or protection, whether or not bats are present).

Pipistrelles are widely distributed throughout the Wirral, and are the species most people come into contact with - they are the species most often found roosting in buildings and feeding in urban areas.

Brown Long-eared and Noctule Bats are less common but are also found throughout the Wirral, in the less built up areas. Daubenton's Bats feed almost exclusively over water. Therefore their distribution is localised and has been recorded from Royden Park, Arrowe Park, Raby Mere, Dibbinsdale and Burton.

Whiskered/Brandt's and Natterer's Bats are rare locally. Whiskered has been located in Royden Park, Arrowe Park, Raby Mere, Dibbinsdale and Burton. Natterer's has only been found in Royden Park and Burton, and Brandt's (confirmed identification) in West Kirby.

Serotine and Barbastelle have been picked up on time - expansion bat detectors in Royden Park, but have not yet been confirmed by visual sightings.

There are no buildings on the site, which would provide roosts for certain species of bat. Most of the trees on site are immature and therefore unsuitable, but the mature Oak trees contain holes and cracks in the bark that form possible roosting sites. The open nature of the site, with scattered trees and shrubs form ideal hunting areas for bats, many of which can fly several kilometres every night in search of food.

#### Barn Owl and other breeding birds

Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside act 1981 makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure, handle or remove any wild bird (with the exception of some pest species), to take or damage a nest whilst it is in use or being built and to take or destroy eggs.

Species listed in Schedule 1 of the Act include the Barn Owl, which is of Amber Conservation Value and is a European Protected Species. Also seen on site were Songthrush, which is of Red Conservation Value while Dunnock or Hedge Sparrow and Woodcock, a winter visitor, are both of Amber Conservation Value.

In 1999 Wirral had only 1 pair of nesting Barn Owls at Royden Park, Frankby. By 2005 there were 31 pairs of which 30 bred producing 92 chicks. In 1998 Cheshire Wildlife Trust devised a local biodiversity action plan for the Barn Owl. The plan covers the county of Cheshire with the addition of the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral. Also, Wirral and Ellesmere Port Barn Owl Group (WEPBOG), was set up to implement relevant parts of the BAP in Wirral area.

#### Sand Lizard

The Sand Lizard is listed on Annex IV of the Habitats Directive and Annex II (and Recommendation 26) of the Bern Convention. It is protected under Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations, 1994 (Regulation 38) and Schedule 5 of the WCA 1981.

LBAP records show that Sand lizards are currently found in North Wales (where they have been re-introduced, near Point of Ayr) and that there are no records for the Wirral.

Sand Lizards are highly colonial and stray only a short distance from their basking and nesting sites. Land on which development takes place can quickly destroy whole

colonies. The proposed site has no exposed sandy areas for burrows and is not suitable for Sand lizards.

An Owl nest box has been erected just outside the boundary fence at the south-eastern corner. The open grassy areas of ground there form suitable hunting areas for Barn Owls to catch voles and other small mammals.

The applicant has put forward the following key recommendations for further survey work. This is detailed as follows:

- Great Crested Newts, Red Squirrels and Sand Lizards and Water Voles are rare in Britain, their numbers have declined dramatically over the past 50 years and they now only occur in isolated populations. As there appear to be no recent records of any of these species close to the site, it is not recommended that any further survey work be undertaken on these species;
- Brown Hares rarely overlap their habitat with Rabbits, and due to the abundance of the latter, they are very unlikely to occupy this site, though a further check is needed as Brown Hares numbers seem to be increasing in Wirral and they can travel several kilometres in search of food;
- Although there was no direct evidence of badger activity, these animals do wander away from the sett to search for food. Due to the proximity of woodlands areas to the south of the site, badgers may be present and further survey work needs to be undertaken as new setts can be dug at any time;
- There were possible bat roosting sites present in the mature Oak trees and bats could well fly over the area to feed on insects. Further surveys need to be undertaken at dawn and dusk during the appropriate season;
- The holes and cracks in the mature Oak trees may form a suitable site for Barn Owls, together with other species of Owl and also Woodpeckers, to breed. They may well fly over the site, which provides a good hunting ground for food. The presence of an Owl box immediately next to the proposed site suggests that Owls are found in this area. A breeding bird survey needs to be undertaken in the spring as the variety of trees and bushes, together with a range of flowering plants, form a suitable habitat for small birds such as Warblers, Tits and Finches;
- The walkover survey found no real evidence of the three invasive plant species, but a further survey needs to be undertaken in May to check that Himalayan Balsam is not present and to ensure that the Hogweed is of the Common variety and not the Giant.

All of the above surveys and findings were subject of extensive consultation with MEAS who concur that they are happy with the work carried out under the Environmental Statement; and, that no further survey is necessary to be undertaken prior to any approval of planning permission.

#### Highway Implications

In terms of access and services, the Highway maintenance division and the traffic management division raised no objection to the proposal and felt that the provision proposed was more than adequate to cater for the development in question.

#### Road Access

A new access road is proposed off the existing access road running parallel to the Manchester Ship Canal. Two links are proposed, one for HGV traffic and the second for cars. The new roadways would be fully surfaced and kerbed and would extend into the main site area. The access roadway links to Powerhouse Lane and hence to Bankfields Drive and subsequently to the wider road network; NO TRAFFIC traffic will be permitted into Eastham village and this is clearly set out in the transport statement submitted in support of the application.

#### Water Access

The current planning application involves the transport of materials to site primarily by

water. Water borne access is available via the Manchester Ship Canal and subsequently the Mersey Estuary and the sea.

There is an existing berth on the Manchester Ship Canal close to the Eastham Locks. The berth is located adjacent to an existing oil storage depot and remote from residential properties. Access to the application site would be via a new bridge over existing major pipelines to the wharfage areas and would not involve any vehicles using the public highway. The berth and access road are all in the control of Peel Holdings LTD with whom necessary arrangements have been made by the applicant.

#### Rail Access

Adjacent to the site is a railway siding currently the railway line is disused; however the applicant has indicated that should this line again become operational (which presently unlikely) it is envisaged that this could also be utilised for the delivery of waste and the removal of recyclates materials.

#### Summary of Highway Issues

The Director of Technical Services (Traffic Management) comments that this is a proposal to construct a Waste to Energy Unit (WEU) at Hooton Park, where waste would be sorted upon arrival, recyclates (such as glass, metal and plastics) extracted and sold on and the remainder gasified to produce energy for the National Grid. A by-product of the process is ash, which may be utilised for construction block manufacture. A visitor centre is also proposed as part of the development.

Parking for the facility will consist of 70 employee spaces plus 24 car spaces and three coach spaces for the visitor centre.

BWB Consulting has submitted a Transport Assessment (TA) in support of the application, which has been checked and approved by the Traffic Management Division.

The TA deals in detail with:-

1. The existing traffic and highway conditions
2. Trip generation, distribution and assignment
3. Impact on local highway network
4. Car parking
5. Accessibility of site by means other than the car

The TA indicates that the waste would originate from Bidston Waste Transfer Station (WTS) as well as Gilmoos and Huyton WTS in Liverpool. It is hoped that the Gilmoos and Huyton waste would be transported across the Mersey using a small container ship and transferred to the WEU via the Manchester Ship Canal, although this is reliant on the construction of a compaction facility at Garston Docks. The Bidston waste would continue to be transported by articulated vehicles along its existing route on the M53. Final vehicle access to the site would be obtained from an un-named private road to the northwest of the site (adjacent to the Manchester Ship Canal).

The TA indicates that a routing protocol will be established and communicated to all drivers to ensure that all HGV movements will be required to route via the M53 and prohibited from routing via Eastham Village.

The TA indicates that there is sufficient capacity within the highway to cater for the predicted traffic flows arising from the proposed development.

In terms of sustainable travel, the TA acknowledges that the site is not well located for access by public transport or on foot. Consequently, the applicant intends to focus attention on travel by other sustainable modes such as cycle, motorcycle and car share.

In summary, it is considered that there are no sustainable grounds to refuse this application on grounds of road safety or highway congestion / delay subject to a Travel Plan condition.



Environmental/Sustainability Appraisal.

The process involved to process the waste received will use highly sustainable methods when paying regard to the waste hierarchy set out under the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West and PPS10: Planning for waste management. This is due to the fact the waste is broken down using only steam when compared to other less sustainable processes such as incineration.

The outputs resulting are also more environmentally friendly as the only waste emissions stated by the applicant will be water vapour (H<sub>2</sub>O) as a bi-product of the steam autoclaving process. Therefore, there are no foreseen impacts likely to standards of health and quality of life to neighbouring residents. However, regardless these key considerations will be scrutinised robustly through the processes of permits and monitoring controlled and governed scrupulously by the Environment Agency.

In addition to recycling waste through highly sustainable processes, the factory will use excess heat generated through the processes involved to produce electricity using Combined Heat and Power, which again is a highly efficient and sustainable method of energy production. The energy produced will consequently be produced using highly renewable technologies. This will aid the Local Authority in aiming to meet the targets set by the Central Government to reach 20% of energy produced by renewable resources by the year 2010 as set out within PSS22: Renewable Energy.

With regard to the design and layout of the plant proposed, it is designed in a manner to minimise visual intrusion with regard to the localised landscape. It uses the existing oil refineries, effective landscaping and tree retention to effectively screen the development in a manner that it will not be visible from outside the confines of the immediate site. The applicant intends to retain as much of the existing trees present on site as possible. This has led to an amended plant layout which aims to avoid the majority of mature specimens present on site. The trees will be protected during implementation through the numerous mitigation measures attached as conditions as part of this recommendation.

The building itself will utilise natural resources such as cedar cladding and natural paint colourings in order that it will further blend with the localised environment. It is important to note that the design employed is not a typical industrial design and is in fact a high quality contemporary facility which is at the cutting edge of modern design principles. The public realm it will create will be far in advance of any neighbouring development present in the localised vicinity; and, will set a good example for any future development within this designated employment development area of the Borough.

Employment rates in Merseyside have been increasing since the 1990s with the employment rate rising to 68.1% in 2004, from 67.3% in 2004, from 67.3% in 2003. However this rate is still below the UK average of 74.3%.

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council has developed a Economic Regeneration Strategy. One of the key policies is 'Investing in Wirral's People' the aim of this policy to 'extend opportunity, to combat poverty and social exclusion and to offer a better quality of life'.

The applicant considers that the Hooton Park to Energy Facility will take approximately 18 months to construct if approved. During this period a workforce of about 300 - 400 personnel will be required. This will include skilled and semi-skilled job opportunities.

During the construction phase, the applicant states local labour and suppliers will be used where possible.

The applicant considers that the project will have a positive effect upon the local economy as it will become a centre for employment. In addition to the direct jobs (approximately 85), further employment will be created in associated activities shipping and road haulage. Maintenance support services such as scaffolding, lagging, painting etc will be required throughout the life of the plant.

Biossence Ltd state that in addition to the employment opportunities, the site will also

become an educational resource as the visitors centre included in the scheme will encourage the public to visit the site, fully understand the nature of the operations undertaken and be aware of the environmental benefits of such of a facility.

All the socio economic drivers highlighted form the basis of material planning considerations for consideration when considering the determination of this application.

**Summary of Decision:** It is considered that the development proposed would not introduce a significant amount of harm to the street scene or to the character of the area. The proposal is acceptable in design terms and complies with PPS 10: Planning for sustainable waste management; and Policies EM6 and EM7 of Wirral's Unitary Development Plan and therefore is deemed acceptable.

**Recommendation:** **Approve subject to no further representations being received by 16th October 2007**

**Condition(s):**

- 1 Full planning permission: standard commencement date. (C03A)
- 2 Materials and sample panel to be submitted and approved prior to commencement (C59D)
- 3 Cycle parking scheme to be submitted and completed prior to occupation (C61L)
- 4 Detailed landscaping scheme to be agreed prior to commencement (C71A)
- 5 Replacement of diseased planting for a period of 5 years from completion. (C71G)
- 6 Landscaping works to be carried out in accordance with the approved details as set out in Condition 4. (C71J)
- 7 Land drainage scheme to be submitted and agreed. (C63B)
- 8 Development according to plans received on 28th June 2007. (C24C)
- 9 Scheme of land drainage and surface water drainage to be submitted and approved prior to commencement. (C61N)
- 10 Pedestrian visibility splays of 2.4m x 2.4m to be provided at Power Station Road (C61C)
- 11 Vehicular sight lines to be provided at Power Station Road. (C61E)
- 12 Floodlighting details to be submitted and agreed before use. (C63A)
- 13 Land drainage scheme to be submitted and agreed. (C63B)
- 14 Before the development hereby permitted is first commenced, a datum for measuring land levels shall be agreed in writing. Full details of existing and proposed ground levels and proposed finished floor levels shall be taken from that datum and submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, notwithstanding any such detail shown on previously submitted plan(s). The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
- 15 Prior to the commencement of development a habitat management plan for the application site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The application site shall be managed in accordance with the approved management plan unless otherwise first agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The management plan shall include suitable avoidance measures for any protected species including Great Crested Newts, Sand Lizard, Water Vole, Red Squirrel, Badger, Brown Hare, Bats, Barn Owls & Other Breeding Birds.
- 16 The development shall not be commenced until a Travel Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by Wirral MBC. The provisions of the Travel Plan shall be implemented in accordance with the programme contained therein so long as any part of the development is occupied and shall not be varied other than through agreement with the local planning authority.

For the avoidance of doubt, such a plan shall include:

- Access to the site by staff, visitors and deliveries;
  - Information on existing transport services to the site and staff travel patterns;
  - Travel Plan principles including measures to promote and facilitate more sustainable transport;
  - Realistic targets for modal shift or split;
  - Identification of a Travel Plan co-ordinator and the establishment of a Travel Plan Steering Group;
  - Measures and resource allocation to promote the Travel Plan; and
  - Mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing the Travel Plan, including the submission of an annual action plan to the local planning authority.
- 17 All development must comply and be implemented in accordance with all aspects of the

content of the accompanying Environmental Impact Assessment to this application hereby approved.

- 18 No works or development shall take place until a scheme for the protection of the retained trees (section 7, BS59837the Tree Protection Plan) has been agreed in writing with the LPA. This scheme shall include [include those that are pertinent]:

A; a plan to a scale and level of accuracy appropriate to the proposal that shows the position, crown spread and Root Protection Area (Para. 5.2.2 of BS5837) of every retained tree on site and on neighbouring or nearby ground to the site in relation to the approved plans and particulars. The positions of all trees to be removed shall be indicated on this plan.

B; the details of each retained tree as required at Para. 4.2.6 of BS5837 in a separate schedule.

C; a schedule of tree works for all the retained trees in paragraphs (a) and (b) above, specifying pruning and other remedial or preventative work, whether for physiological, hazard abatement, aesthetic or operational reasons. All tree works shall be carried out in accordance with BS3998, 1989, Recommendations for tree work.

D; written proof of the credentials of the arboricultural contractor authorised to carry out the scheduled tree works.

E; the details and positions (shown on the plan at paragraph (a) above) of the Ground Protection Zones (section 9.3 of BS5837).

F; the details and positions (shown on the plan at paragraph (a) above) of the Tree Protection Barriers (section 9.2 of BS5837), identified separately where required for different phases of construction work (e.g. demolition, construction, hard landscaping). The Tree Protection Barriers must be erected prior to each construction phase commencing and remain in place, and undamaged for the duration of that phase. No works shall take place on the next phase until the Tree Protection Barriers are repositioned for that phase.

G; the details and positions (shown on the plan at paragraph (a) above) of the Construction Exclusion Zones (section 9 of BS5837).

H; the details and positions (shown on the plan at paragraph (a) above) of the underground service runs (section 11.7 of BS5837).

I; the details of any changes in levels or the position of any proposed excavations within 5 metres of the Root Protection Area (Para. 5.2.2 of BS5837) of any retained tree, including those on neighbouring or nearby ground.

J; the details of any special engineering required to accommodate the protection of retained trees (section 10 of BS5837), (e.g. in connection with foundations, bridging, water features, surfacing)

L; the details of the working methods to be employed for the installation of drives and paths within the RPAs of retained trees in accordance with the principles of "No-Dig" construction.

M; the details of the working methods to be employed with regard to the access for and use of heavy, large, difficult to manoeuvre plant (including cranes and their loads, dredging machinery, concrete pumps, piling rigs, etc) on site.

N; the details of the working methods to be employed with regard to site logistics and storage, including an allowance for slopes, water courses and enclosures, with particular regard to ground compaction and phytotoxicity.

O; the details of the method to be employed for the stationing, use and removal of site cabins within any RPA (Para. 9.2.3 of BS5837).

P; the details of tree protection measures for the hard landscaping phase (sections 13 and 14 of BS5837).

Q; the timing of the various phases of the works or development in the context of the tree protection measures.

- 19 No equipment, machinery or materials are to be brought on the site for the purpose of the development until all the trees to be retained have been protected by fences or other suitable means of enclosure. With regard to this proposal the protective fencing shall be at least 2.0m high, comprising a scaffolding framework, (as detailed in section 9.2.2. of BS5837:2005), supporting a minimum of 20mm exterior grade ply or other approved robust man-made boards as shown in BS5837:2005, Figure 2, or such alternative as may be agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

No works or development shall take place until the requirements of any specifications to do with wildlife and ecology that affect arboricultural matters are formally included with the arboricultural protection measures and approved in writing by the LPA.

- 20 The following activities must not be carried out under any circumstances:

- a, No fires shall be lit within 10 metres of the nearest point of the canopy of any retained tree.
  - b, No works shall proceed until the appropriate Tree Protection Barriers are in place, with the exception of initial tree works.
  - c, No equipment, signage, fencing, tree protection barriers, materials, components, vehicles or structures shall be attached to or supported by a retained tree.
  - d, No mixing of cement or use of other materials or substances shall take place within a RPA, or close enough to a RPA that seepage or displacement of those materials or substances could cause them to enter a RPA
  - e, No alterations or variations to the approved works or tree protection schemes shall be carried out without the prior written approval of the LPA.
- 21 Construction works shall only take place between the hours of 08.00 and 18.00.
- 22 Any holes or trenches left overnight are to have a means of escape provided for badgers.
- 23 Materials containing lime are to be stored so that they are inaccessible to badgers.
- 24 Access holes are to be in place in any fencing erected.

**Reason for conditions**

- 1 Standard (CR86)
- 2 In the interests of visual amenity. Policies EM6 (General Criteria for New Employment Development) and EM7 (Environmental Criteria for New Employment Development) of the UDP (CR67).
- 3 To promote more sustainable forms of transport. Policy TR12 of the UDP (CR69)
- 4 In the interests of the visual amenities of the area. Policy GR5 of the UDP (CR79)
- 5 In the interests of the visual amenities of the area. Policy GR5 of the UDP (CR79)
- 6 In the interests of the visual amenities of the area. Policy GR5 of the UDP (CR79)
- 7 Ensure adequate land drainage. (CR24)
- 8 For the avoidance of doubt. (CR33)
- 9 To ensure satisfactory land drainage and to prevent flooding. (CR70)
- 10 Highway safety (CR13)
- 11 Highway safety (CR13)
- 12 To ensure satisfactory floodlighting and to protect local amenity. Policy EM6 of the UDP (CR74).
- 13 To secure adequate drainage and to protect local amenity. Policy EM6 of the UDP (CR75).
- 14 To protect the amenity of neighbouring premises and to ensure a satisfactory development having regard to policies EM6 and EM7 of the Wirral UDP.
- 15 In order to protect nationally protected species.
- 16 In accordance with PPG13 paragraph .89

"The Government considers that travel plans should be submitted alongside planning applications which are likely to have significant transport implications, including those for:

- All major developments comprising jobs, shopping, leisure and services (using the same thresholds as set out in annex D).
- 17 In the interests of local amenity. Policies EM6 and EM7 of the Wirral UDP.
  - 18 To protect trees which are of significant amenity value to the area. Policy GR7 of the UDP (CR80) and to ensure that the Arboricultural work is carried out to a satisfactory standard. Policy GR7 of the UDP (CR82).
  - 19 To ensure bat roosts are protected (CR83)
  - 20 To protect trees which are of significant amenity value to the area. Policy GR7 of the UDP (CR80)
  - 21 To protect the local badger population.
  - 22 To protect the suspected local badger population.
  - 23 To protect the suspected local badger population.
  - 24 To protect the suspected local badger population.

**Last Comments By: 16 October 2007**

**56 Day Expires On: 17 August 2007**

**Case Officer: Mr N Culkin**

**Notes:**

No vehicular access from the western end of Bankfield Drive at any time.