

SUMMARY PROOF OF EVIDENCE
OF

ROBYN BUTCHER

ON BEHALF OF CORNWALL COUNCIL

APPEAL REFERENCE: APP/DO840/A/09/2113075
(PLANNING AUTHORITY REFERENCE 08/00761)

In respect of the Planning Appeal by SITA Cornwall Ltd

Relating to the decision by the former Cornwall County Council (now Cornwall Council) to refuse planning permission for the Cornwall Energy Recovery Centre (CERC) and associated development on land at Rostowrack Farm, Wheal Remfry, Goonvean and Parkandillick Dryers St Dennis St Austell Cornwall.

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1. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

1.1 I am Robyn Butcher, hold a BA Hons and Graduate Diploma in Landscape Architecture from Leeds Metropolitan University, have been a Landscape Architect for 15 years, and achieved Chartered Membership of the Landscape Institute in 1998.

1.2 I have worked at The Terra Firma Consultancy since 1995, becoming Senior Associate in 2007, and have frequently advised on the potential visual and landscape impact of development proposals including other schemes in the energy and waste sectors.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 In October 2008 I was commissioned by Cornwall County Council to review Chapter 9 of the Appellants' ES to help inform the planning process.

2.2 I was appointed in October 2009 to give evidence on behalf of Cornwall Council on landscape and visual aspects of the refused application.

3. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

3.1 These are described fully in my full proof and those of the others before the Inquiry.

4. SCHEME DESCRIPTION

4.1 The proposed development comprises the CERC Facility and its related ancillary buildings, access and haul roads and infrastructure.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 Landscape Impact Assessment

5.1.1 Due to the wider scale nature of county landscape character documents and the absence of detailed local guidance in the immediate vicinity, I carried out an assessment of landscape character of the site context. An assessment of sensitivity was then undertaken to help assess the landscape impact of the development on local and wider character zones, within the 15 km area.

5.2 Visual Impact Assessment

5.2.1 Locations of all viewpoints are indicated in my LVIA. The sensitivity of receptors from viewpoints was assessed, along with the nature and magnitude of change in each view. These were used to determine the visual impact of the development proposals on viewpoints.

6. RELEVANT POLICIES

Policies reviewed include:

- PPS1
- PPS7
- Regional level: Draft Regional Spatial Strategy 2008
- Cornwall Structure Plan 2004: policies 1, 2 and 6
- Cornwall Waste Local Plan 2002: policies L6A, L6B and C1
- Restormel Borough Council Local Plan 2001: policies 6, 10, 11 and 18

7. LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT

7.1 Landscape Impact

7.1.1 The impact of the development would lead to a significant adverse change in the agricultural landscape character for the main application site and the access road. The high sensitivity 'agricultural land' would be reduced to low sensitivity 'working industry'. There would be a loss of a landscape with positive character and quality, valued historically, and significant adverse impact on the landscape character in the surrounding site area. The impact of the development on the wider landscape character would also be substantially adverse.

7.2 Visual Impact

7.2.1 Visual impact of the development has been assessed from representative viewpoints in the close and wider landscape, with the

majority of viewpoints being of high sensitivity and the magnitude of change being consistently adverse.

7.2.2 The resultant visual impact significance of the development on all representative viewpoints in the close and wider zone of visual influence would be significantly adverse, with 16 viewpoints on which the development would have a high adverse impact and 10 viewpoints on which the development would have a high/medium adverse impact.

7.3 Night time visual impact

7.3.1 There are no light sources present on the existing site. The development would be highly visible at night, with pole and wall mounted lights, translucent panels in walls and roof of the CERC facility, and warning lights to the stack. The plume would reflect light sources from the surroundings.

7.3.2 The application does not illustrate correctly the level of night time visual impact of the development. The development would also require lighting of car parks, main building entrances and ancillary buildings, and signage at road junctions. There would be lights from movement of vehicles after dark. The extent of the translucent panels on the roof is not clear.

7.3.3 The impact of the development at night will be more significant than stated but the degree cannot be substantiated without further information.

7.4 Scale, massing and height

7.4.1 The main body of the development would be screened in medium and longer views from the south and west, but the stack and plume

would be visible. The development, stack and plume would be visible in medium and long views from the north and north east

7.4.2 The stack and plume would not contribute positively to views and vistas.

7.4.3 There is a range of scale and massing of development in the surrounding area, from small scattered properties to industrial works formed of grouped building and structures of larger scales.

7.4.4 The industrial nature of the proposals is broadly in character with some of these precedents, but the scale is significantly greater than any other development found in the area.

7.4.5 The development bears little relation to the local topography in terms of scale, and integration is only possible in views looking southwards. When seen against a landscape of agricultural land the development would look obtrusive in the rural scene.

7.4.6 The location of the stack on the lower slopes of the site, separate from the CERC Facility makes its presence more prominent.

7.4.7 The scale, massing and height of the development would exacerbate the adverse impact. The development would not integrate with its landscape setting and would stand out prominently, more so in views from the west, east and south. The design has not been demonstrated to overcome the fundamental problems of scale and massing which significantly contribute to the high adverse impact of the development.

7.5 Landscape Features

7.5.1 The main site area is Grade 3 agricultural land, bounded by and divided by Cornish Hedges, a key characteristic of the Agricultural

Landscape character zone, and a key element in the Character Area CA17. The development removes these features.

7.5.2 The loss of these features would be significant in an area where there are only '*Small areas of pastoral farmland*'¹ left in a landscape already dominated by industry.

7.5.3 The removal of existing Cornish hedges would be damaging to landscape character. Relocating and constructing new hedge cannot instantly recreate this.

7.6 Haul Road

7.6.1 The proposals for the haul road include the vegetation removal, road engineering and the construction of a bridge over the River Fal, all of which would constitute an adverse landscape and visual impact.

7.7 Visual Amenity of Public Rights of Way

7.7.1 The site and immediate surrounding area have a network of linked footpaths.

7.7.2 Footpath 5, runs along the southern boundary of the development, offers panoramic views to the north. The proposed re-routing of the path runs around the boundary, increasing the length of the route and losing views as a result of changes in elevation and planting.

7.7.3 The realigned routes of footpaths 2 and 5 to the west of the site run along the pavement of the heavily trafficked access road.

7.7.4 The impact on the visual amenity of the users of footpaths 2 and 5 would be severely adverse and would be likely to reduce their use, potentially severing the footpath link between the two villages.

¹ J1 Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Landscape Character Study June 2007. LCA17 pg. 1

7.7.5 The impact of the development on footpaths in the closer area is consistently and significantly adverse, and the impact would be significantly detrimental to the amenity of the overall footpath network.

8. ASSESSMENT AGAINST POLICY

8.1 Relevant policies assessed carry identifiable themes can be used to assess whether the development is contrary to policy.

- Protection and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, landscape character and distinctiveness.
- Protection of the amenity value of the landscape
- High quality design that contribute positively to character and quality of an area

8.2 The development is contrary to these themes through adverse impacts on landscape character, direct loss of landscape features and important historic landscape, and adverse impact on visual amenity.

8.3 Policy L6A of the Cornwall Waste Local Plan² sets out criteria that would deem refusal and the development meets all these through: harm to landscape features; adverse impacts from the loss of local landscape; adverse impacts on landscape character zones; lack of relationship to its setting due to its significant size, massing and height; lack contribution to the area character; adverse impact on visual amenity; adverse night time visual impact.

8.4 Policy L6B of the Waste Local Plan has requirements which the development does not meet: The design, siting and appearance of the proposal do not complement the landscape setting as the

² D5 Cornwall Waste Local Plan pg 41

substantial scale negates any attempt at complementing the landscape setting or topography; materials bear little relation to locally used materials; landscape proposals are incorporated, but the substantial scale of the proposals negates any attempt at mitigation through planting; and the proposals are not of a quality that would overcome the significant adverse impacts of the proposal's substantial scale on landscape character and visual amenity.

9. CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 The CERC development is contrary to policy on national, regional and local level.
- 9.2 The impact on the immediate and wider landscape character zones is consistently adverse.
- 9.3 The development would destroy the landscape features of the site.
- 9.4 The visual impact of the proposals is consistently adverse.
- 9.5 The development has a detrimental effect on the visual amenity of users of footpaths.
- 9.6 The scale, height and massing give a significantly adverse level of impact on landscape character and visual amenity, and with the high degree of visibility, would not integrate with the landscape setting, standing out prominently. This impact has not been demonstrated to be mitigated by design.