



The Planning and Development Manager
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
Civic Offices
London Road
Basingstoke RG21 4AH

29 April 2016

Dear Sir/Madam,

Planning Reference: 16/011112/FUL

Address: Land At Spindlewood, Stag Oak Lane, Basingstoke

Proposal: Construction of a 24MW gas fired energy reserve facility and associated ancillary equipment and components

I am writing as the Member of Parliament for Basingstoke, on behalf of my constituents who are residents of Chineham, the main residential area adjoining the land for which the planning application has been lodged. I wish to register my very strong objection to this planning application, for the following reasons.

My key concern is the site that has been chosen by Centrica for building a new power generation plant which I consider to be highly inappropriate. Although the proposed site is on commercial land in Chineham Business Park, it is adjacent to a children's nursery (Bright Horizons), fitness centre and restaurant, as well as a busy railway line, and immediately opposite an established residential area and the scout hall, which also houses a nursery school (Abacus). The impact of the power plant on all these interests needs to be considered, alongside the impact on the business park users.

The visual impact of the power plant on local residents would be very considerable, and particularly the five 25 metre high exhaust stacks, which will be located adjacent to the railway line and therefore in very close proximity to the homes opposite. The Visual Impact Assessment produced for the applicants suggests that the only homes that will be impacted will be in Larchwood and Aghemund Close. However, it is clear that with 25 metre high exhaust stacks, very many Chineham residents would be impacted, not just in their homes, but going about their daily business, including walking children to the nearby Four Lanes Primary School.

The application states that the power plant is designed to provide back-up power to the local grid when it is needed most and will be limited to a maximum of 1,500 hours a year – and average of 4.1 hours a day. However, with ever-increasing levels of housebuilding in Basingstoke, there would be a significant risk that future power requirements would lead to

increased operating hours of the plant, which in turn would mean more emissions and more noise – all in a residential area.

Although the planning application states that the emissions would meet current standards, I remain concerned about any emissions of this nature so close to a residential area and facilities for very young children.

While I note that, once operational, the proposed plant would not generate a great deal of traffic, I also note that during the construction phase (lasting at least 12-15 months), there would be up to 50 Heavy Duty Vehicles (HDVs) visiting the site per day – which means 100 HDV movements on our already highly congested road network. This would be at the same time as construction work is underway at the nearby Sewage Treatment Works, and also planned major road works at a number of the roundabouts and junctions on the A33. Any additional traffic from the construction of the proposed power plant would place an unacceptable burden on the local road network and should not be allowed.

More broadly, while the application refers in detail to policies in the soon to be adopted Local Plan, there does not appear to be a Borough strategy for the siting of power stations. There have been a number of ad-hoc planning applications in recent years for different types of power plants in various parts of my constituency, but there does not appear to be any guidance on where such sites are needed for the long term benefit of residents. I am also concerned about liability for the power station were the operators to lose their licence, as has happened in Lychpit. In such a situation, who would be responsible for decommissioning the plant?

The proposed plant would be located next to a major railway route, with considerable passenger and freight traffic, and which is likely to become of even greater strategic importance when Crossrail 2 comes on stream. It is questionable on security grounds whether a new power plant should be located so close to the railway line.

In view of the very considerable arguments against the use of the land at Spindlewood for the construction of a power plant, I very strongly urge the Borough Council to refuse this application.

Yours faithfully,

Rt Hon Maria Miller
MP for Basingstoke