

Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

Telephone 08459 335577
Email Helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
Website www.defra.gov.uk



Councillor Nick Daubney
Leader of the Council
Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk
King's Court
Chapel Street
King's Lynn
Norfolk
PE30 1EX

16 . January 2012

From the Secretary of State
The Rt Hon Caroline Spelman MP

Dear Nick,

I should like to thank you for your several representations about Norfolk County Council's application to my department for waste infrastructure credits for their energy from waste infrastructure project, most recently your letters of 6 and 9 January and 23 December. I do apologise that you have not previously had a reply to your letters, which I assure you have been brought to my attention and fully addressed as part of our consideration of this case. Indeed your 23 December letter was part of the backdrop to my discussions, at their request, in early January with local MPs Henry Bellingham and Liz Truss.

I have considered your suggestion that we should ourselves meet to discuss the case. However since I have reached my decision on Norfolk CC's application in full recognition of your Council's strong opposition to the project and your withdrawal from the joint waste strategy, I have concluded that a meeting was not necessary. I have not, for your information, met the Leader of Norfolk County Council either.

My department's criteria for waste infrastructure credits cover a range of issues including value for money, the project's contribution to diverting biodegradable municipal waste from landfill, and the authority's approach to wider waste diversion and recycling. In addressing the County Council's application I have, as you know, been considering particularly carefully the unusually high level of local public concern about the project and your Council's formal withdrawal from the partnership's joint municipal waste strategy.

Local opposition is not, in itself, unusual in major energy from waste projects, and is something which the planning system is well placed to weigh, in reaching its judgement on whether the project should proceed. The relevant criterion for my department's waste infrastructure credits does not therefore require support for the project itself at local level, but rather that there is a broad consensus on a recognised long-term waste management strategy, and that the project is consistent with that strategy. We consider that 'broad consensus' does allow for some dissent and does not in particular require unanimity amongst the interested local authorities.

Having carefully considered the County Council's project's case for waste infrastructure credits in the light of all the information available to me, including the evidence of support for the strategy from most of the participating councils, and opposition from your own Council, I have concluded that the project does meet my criteria for support.

You will understand that this decision solely concerns the availability of Defra's waste infrastructure credits should the project eventually proceed, subject to planning and other consents, to construction and operation. Meanwhile I am sure that you share my continuing concern that the project is generating such strong negative feelings locally. While I recognise that your Council may continue to object to the project through the planning process, I hope that if it were to proceed, all local authorities and the contractor will now put fresh effort into working constructively with local interests, to maximise the project's potential benefits for sustainable waste management, local employment and regeneration, and to minimise reasons for local concern.

I am enclosing a copy of my letter today to Norfolk County Council, and sending them a copy of this letter; I am also writing with a copy of both letters to Henry Bellingham MP and Liz Truss MP.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Caroline'.

CAROLINE SPELMAN MP