

6 January 2011

Mr Richard Howard
Woodlands Farmhouse
Edgcott Road
Doddershall
Buckinghamshire
HP22 4DE

Dear Mr Howard,

Thank you for your letter of 9 December to the Prime Minister expressing your concerns about the impact of a proposed waste incinerator on your community in Buckinghamshire. Your letter has been passed to the Department for Communities and Local Government as we are responsible for the planning system, and I have been asked to reply.

I am grateful for you to take time to spell out your concerns. I regret that given the Secretary of State's role in the planning system I am unable to comment on individual planning proposals or decisions. However, I am able to offer the following general comments in response to the issues you raise about waste incinerators.

The planning system helps to ensure that development takes place in the public interest, in economically, socially and environmentally sustainable ways. The Government wants a planning system which people can see the point in engaging with, because they can see that their opinions are taken into consideration and that sustainable development benefits their community. We want collaboration in all aspects of the planning system, with people working together to encourage a genuinely bottom-up approach to development which will strengthen grass roots engagement with the development process. The recently published Localism Bill sets out further details on how the Government wants to make this happen.

At the same time, it is important that there is sufficient infrastructure to deal with the waste that is produced in this country. Whilst the Government is committed to working towards a zero waste economy, it is the responsibility of local authorities to decide how waste is managed in their area, and to ensure that there are sufficient waste management facilities in place to meet the needs of their community.

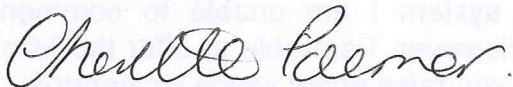
In deciding which locations to identify for waste management facilities in their development plan documents, waste planning authorities should assess their suitability against criteria including the physical and environmental constraints on development, existing and proposed neighbouring land uses, and any significant adverse impacts on environmental quality.

When considering planning applications for waste management facilities, waste planning authorities should take into consideration the possible impact on the local environment and on amenity. Existing planning legislation means that any decision must be made in accordance with the development plan for the area, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Local authorities are also able to use conditions to mitigate any adverse impact of the development. This could include conditions on traffic movements to and from sites, and limiting hours during which vehicles can enter and leave it.

You may also be interested to know that last month Greg Clark announced the next steps in the Government's commitment to publish and present to Parliament a simple and consolidated National Planning Policy Framework covering all forms of development and setting out national economic, environmental and social priorities. It is important that community groups and members of the public have an opportunity to shape the new Framework and the Minister has invited organisations and individuals to offer their suggestions to the Department on what priorities and policies we might adopt to produce a shorter, more decentralised and less bureaucratic National Planning Policy Framework. Further details can be found on our website: <http://communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/planningpolicy/planningsystem/npolicyframework/>

I hope you have found the above information helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Charlotte Palmer