



## Summary of Engagement and Representations

On the Change to the Household Recycling Centre (HRC) service model from nine to ten sites

### Summary of the engagement

This is a summary of the engagement and representations, a comprehensive pack of representations in their entirety has been sent to Cabinet members in advance. However, there are key themes and topics in the range of representations, this summary aims to make it easier to review the key issues raised.

Representations were received from seven individuals and two organisations (Bledlow Parish Council & Chilterns Conservation Board). Some individuals have added to their representations after the original Cabinet meeting was postponed. Two representations were solely positive about the opening, whilst the remaining either objected entirely, or raised concerns that would need addressing before accepting the decision.

### *Traffic in and out of site*

Most representations focused on the location of the site and the likely impact on the approach roads and nearby villages. Specific issues raised were:

- Danger of queues building up on the road outside the site making it harder for vehicles & bicycles to navigate the road safely. Many of these concerns raised;
  - The access to the site being single vehicle width, slowing down entrance and exits of vehicles
  - Charges for non-household waste, which need to be managed now, where they were not when the site last opened, causing likely delays at the entrance
  - Oxfordshire users having to pay to visit, again leading to delays at the entrance.
  - Charges for garden waste collections starting in the Wycombe area will lead to more visits as people avoid the charges and bring to site for free.
  - Site lines into and out of the site making it hard to enter and exit safely.
- Overall visitor numbers were expected to be higher than the Council has estimated. Especially when local housing growth is considered. This would lead to more traffic than currently expected.
- Surrounding roads and the likely impact of visitors & waste vehicles travelling to the site.
  - Specific issues raised around school pick up and drop off times making the village very congested



- Limited options to access the site with no ability to spread traffic over alternative routes.
- Since closing Wigans Lane has become a popular route for cyclist including local cycling clubs, particularly at weekends.

**Councils Comment:** Whilst it is acknowledged that there were sometimes queues outside the site at peak periods (predominantly weekends in Spring) the overall reduction in visitor numbers should reduce the frequency and severity of queuing off site. The Council cannot predict how many users will continue to visit from Oxfordshire, but it is likely to be fewer than did before. That in turn would reduce the expected visits down even further, although clearly, that is an assumption.

The Council would also work with the site contractor to make entering and exiting the site as smooth and quick as possible for visitors to avoid blocking the entrance. The Highways Team would also be approached to identify any possible mitigation to the potential difficulties of queues outside the site if they arise.

### *Previous Planning Committee views*

Some representations raised the Councils views on the application by a local CIC for planning permission to open the site. The Council, in its role as the Planning Authority, opposed reopening the site. The Councils objections to that application are being referenced in some the representations as either a reason not to open the site, or as issues that need addressing before a decision is made.

**Council Comment:** The decision by the Planning Authority was made to the specific application by the CIC and do not apply to this proposal.

The original permission held by Buckinghamshire County Council remains extant and as such, it can be relied upon to reopen Bledlow.

### *Consultation*

Some representations wanted and/or expected a consultation to be held locally before a decision was made. The representations felt that local views would have been useful for decision makers to;

- gauge demand for the site to reopen and public opinion, and to;
- benefit from local knowledge of the transport network and how it is used in the immediate vicinity.

They do not consider the engagement with local Councillors and the Parish Council prior to the decision to be adequate for this decision.



**Council's comment:** The subject of consultation is covered in the Cabinet Report. No consultation is legally required and whilst local views are important in any decision, the Council considers it has the relevant information, whether from the previous Consultation in 2019, subsequent Customer Satisfaction surveys or from the research & data gathered as part of the project planning.

The Cabinet paper does suggest looking at a local focus group if the decision is approved to ensure we keep local stakeholders informed, this would also enable the Council to factor in detailed local knowledge to any mobilisation plans.

#### *Site suitability*

Representations also raised issues around the suitability of the site, especially when compared to other, newer, Buckinghamshire Council sites currently in operation.

Specific concerns were raised about the risk of fires on site given the woodland surroundings, space on site and access to emergency services in the event of a fire. There was also concern around using the site given its location above an old landfill site.

Representations also suggest that the site would reach capacity quicker than the Council has anticipated. Representations put forward suggested that as a result of garden waste collection charges and housing growth in the local area the site would reach or exceed total waste capacity in the short term.

**Councils Comment:** The site has been surveyed since closing including the land underneath the site. It is still suitable for its proposed use as a Household Recycling Centre. Similarly with the concern around fire, the site would be managed like the other HRCs in Buckinghamshire. It would have a comprehensive fire management plan, including managing overhanging trees, storage and movement of waste and evacuation plans. The contractor FCC currently manages other Buckinghamshire sites with similar features in a safe manner and this would continue into the Bledlow site if it were opened.

The Cabinet paper gives estimates on visitor numbers and waste expected to come to site in the first year. The estimates are well below previous usage, and there is no expectation, despite local growth in the area that the site would reach capacity in the short term.