



## Cabinet agenda supplement

Date: Thursday 22 September 2022

Time: 9.00 am

Venue: Oculus, Gateway

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## Household Recycling Centre Service (HRCs) model change from nine to ten HRCs - Supplementary information

This information is supplementary to the report to be considered by Buckinghamshire Council Cabinet meeting due to be held 22 September 2022. This information is being provided for reassurance that a wide range of information and data sources has been considered to estimate visitor numbers and waste flow.

The changes to the HRC service model are a recommendation put forward to Cabinet by Neighbourhood Services – Strategic Waste Management & Enforcement which acts on behalf of the Council as the Waste Disposal Authority (WDA). Resource Futures, as the Council's waste technical advisors have provided input and advice in the preparation of forecasts and due diligence on the rationale, assumptions, and calculations. For further information please refer to Addendum 1.

### Key waste flow information

A copy of the external advisor's report is included as an addendum to the supplementary information for completeness. In addition, this summary highlights the methods and evidence used by the Council as Waste Disposal Authority to estimate the waste flow and visitor numbers at Bledlow HRC if it were to open.

Based on the latest housing growth projections waste growth has been considered across the administrative boundary in relation to a ten site HRC service model.

### Using Burnham HRC as an appropriate proxy for the reopening of Bledlow HRC

Burnham HRC is the closest proxy site based on historic performance. Burnham had 97% of the total tonnage of Bledlow in the ten-year period before Bledlow closed which makes the site a suitable proxy for Bledlow HRC if it were to open.

### Identifying which sites Bledlow HRC users shifted to post 2019 service changes

An analysis was undertaken of postcodes collected during the December 2021 HRC survey, of which there were 250 respondents per HRC site. The 2021 customer survey showed that most HP14 & HP27 users visited High Wycombe HRC. There was a clear split between HP14 areas used High Wycombe HRC solely, with residents in HP27 (Princes Risborough) 60% used the High Wycombe HRC, 27% Aston Clinton & 13% Aylesbury HRCs.

### Estimating future visitor numbers using Burnham as a proxy site

- a. Traffic counter data. Bledlow had 90% of the users of Burnham in the 6 years prior to closing. Using this figure to estimate future usage is robust as the current Burnham figures take into account the services changes since 2019 which are assumed to be replicated at Bledlow (5 day opening, charging for non-household waste) and would reflect the reduction in visitor numbers experienced. All sites have seen fewer customers since 2019 irrespective of covid restrictions.
- b. Estimating the number of out of county users that will return to Bledlow. Historically 32-35% of users of Bledlow were from the Oxfordshire area. Since 2019 all sites have seen fewer users & volume of waste. This means HRC sites that were previously exceeding or nearing tonnage

capacity are now less congested and see less waste. If Bledlow HRC were to re-open, and more so if the site was solely for Buckinghamshire residents, it would be reasonable to assume similar lower waste volume and visitor trends. Burnham HRC can be used by residents from Slough, although this is facilitated by an administrative charge between authorities. Even still, since 2019 Slough users have dropped by 7.5% points. The key difference between Bledlow and Burnham is that users are not directly charged at the entrance at Burnham. We must therefore assume, that there will be a much lower return of Oxfordshire residents when charging is taken into account

Overall, the forecasts are based on best available data and reasonable assumptions. For further information please refer to Addendum 1.

## Addendum - 1

# HRC Model Tonnage Forecast Due Diligence

Buckinghamshire Council, 4 March 2022, Ref: RF3866

## 1 Introduction

Following the award for the contract for management of the Council's Household Recycling Centre (HRC) network Buckinghamshire Council is in the process of considering options for increasing capacity and access to HRCs to residents in the County.

The Council is considering reopening of the site at Bledlow Ridge which was closed in 2019.

The Council has evaluated the impact of opening the site on the numbers of site users, the types of site users (Buckinghamshire residents and out of county residents) and tonnages forecasts.

Resource Futures, as the Council's technical advisors have provided input and advice in the preparation of forecasts and due diligence on the rationale, assumptions, and calculations.

This report provides a commentary on the methods used to for calculating site use and tonnage forecast.

The key documents produced by Buckinghamshire Council as part of the forecasting exercise and reviewed by Resource Futures include:

- HRC Service Model change – waste flow and forecast review
- HRC proposed forecast\_24-05-21v2 (MS Excel)

Resource Futures' consultant has also attended a number of meetings where methods and the forecasting result have been discussed.

## 2 Key assumptions and rationale

Buckinghamshire Council currently operates nine HRC sites across the Council. In order to forecast the site user numbers and the tonnages that may be generated at the Bledlow Ridge site the officers compared tonnage and user number history for the sites before and after the service changes in 2019. These changes included the closure of Bledlow Ridge site, changes to site opening times and the introduction of charges for non-household waste. Based on the tonnage and site user history the Council concluded that the Burnham site is the most accurate proxy site due to:

- Similar tonnage, performance and composition of waste before the Bledlow site closed
- Similar numbers of visitors
- Similar make up of visitors (in terms of ratio of Buckinghamshire residents and out of county use (in Burnham from Slough and from Oxfordshire in Bledlow)

Based on these similarities the Burnham site is a reasonable proxy and benchmark site to use for the development of the forecasts.

## 3 Site users

As part of the HRC contract the contractor carries out annual user surveys to assess the residents use and satisfaction of the HRC network. The Council considered the 2019 survey where previous Bledlow users

were asked about the site they were using following the service changes. The results showed that the residents were most likely to use the High Wycombe, Aylesbury and Aston Clinton sites.

The Council used the data from the last three years to consider the numbers and location of the users that are likely to use the Bledlow Ridge site should this be reopened.

The Council identified the key postcode areas closest to the potential Bledlow site and those that have previously been most likely to use the site before the closure in 2019. These included HP 17 which includes Haddenham town, HP27 (Princes Risborough and Monks Risborough), HP14 (rural area surrounding Bledlow Ridge) and HP16 (rural area which includes Great Missenden). The analysis showed that the majority of the residents from these postcodes were currently using the High Wycombe site with some users travelling to the Amersham and Aston Clinton. Most residents from the HP16 postcodes were using the site further afield in Amersham and Chesham. Looking at the road systems these residents are unlikely to use Bledlow site in the future.

It is challenging to forecast the exact movement of the site users and the tonnage from the currently operational sites to the newly reopened sites. The estimates are therefore considered based on local knowledge, resident self-reporting and geographical catchment areas. The estimates are reasonable and considered in light of lack of directly comparable data sets (i.e., data from similar scenario where a comparable site was reopened following service changes).

The Council has also considered the possible scenarios where different number of residents (both Buckinghamshire and out of county) would be returning to the site. This allowed the Council to consider the range of possible tonnages that could be deposited at the site and the level of risk associated with these differences.

## 4 Tonnage forecast

The Council and the financial advisors prepared a forecast across the HRC contract term. The forecast considered:

- Housing growth estimates
- Overall tonnages-based on Burnham tonnage
- Composition of the waste largely based on Burnham tonnages with some reasonable adjustments based on previous differences between the sites and service changes since Bledlow closed

Overall, the forecasts are based on best available data and reasonable assumptions.

**Document prepared by: Agnes Chruszcz, Senior Consultant**

**Document checked by: David Lerpiniere, Director**

### Limitations

This report has been produced by Resource Futures on behalf of Buckinghamshire Council. Whilst Resource Futures has taken all due care to interpret and collate the information presented within the report, any third party relying on the results of the analysis shall do so at their own risk and neither Resource Futures nor Buckinghamshire Council shall be liable for any loss or damages arising there from.



## 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.

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