

Appendix B

Dear Mr Gorry,

I refer to your e-mail of Sunday June 6th addressed to Members of the Health Policy and Performance Board and to the attached presentation.

Your presentation raises a number of points, which warrants a response.

Firstly, I must emphasise that the planning process was carried out properly with a decision made by the Secretary of State having considered all the relevant information, including that related to health issues. I should remind you that whilst the Council raised no objections to the proposal, it sought the imposition of a number of conditions if planning permission was to be granted. The Council also asked that "the Secretary of State is fully satisfied that the proposal will not have any adverse impacts upon the health of the Borough's residents before authorising the proposal. Particular attention is drawn to the observations of the Director of Public Health and the request for further information made therein. Unless the matters raised are satisfactorily addressed by the Secretary of State, the Council would wish to object to the granting of permission". I attach a copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Development Control Committee of 31st July 2007 for information. The planning process and decision of the Secretary of State found that the development of an incinerator at Ineos in Runcorn was appropriate.

You are presently seeking funding for a study "intended to determine whether or not there are any negative health effects" and say that residents need reassurance regarding their families health. The Director of Public Health, Fiona Johnstone has commented as follows:-

"It is impossible for me to comment on the value of the proposed research study, since I have not received a copy of the research proposal, and are therefore unable to assess its scope, methods or usefulness.

"It is important to have some assurance that the research proposal, including the proposed methods, is designed and carried out to answer the question being raised whatever that might be. I cannot provide the PPB with that assurance without having seen the defined research question and proposed methods. Certainly no research funding body that I am aware of would support or fund research without seeing some detail of what will be carried out".

You will recall that the Director of Public Health produced an independent report which was considered by the Development Control Committee before reaching its decision and which was then forwarded to the Secretary of State for his consideration. The Director of Public Health has affirmed that an updated review of the evidence, which has been published since then, does not alter the views contained in that independent report.

You have also selectively quoted the Health Protection Agency's Chief Executive. You will, of course, be aware that in September 2009 the HPA published a paper "The Impact on Health of Emissions to Air from Municipal Waste Incinerators". I attach a copy for information. You will know that this report concludes that "modern, well managed incinerators make only a small contribution to local concentrations of pollutants. It is possible that such small additions would have an impact on health but such effects, if they exist, are likely to be very small and not detectable. The Agency, not least through its role in advising Primary Care Trusts and Local Health Boards, will continue to work with regulators to ensure that incinerators do not contribute significantly to ill-health". In the summary to this paper the HPA states that "since any possible health effects are likely to be very small, if detectable, studies of public health around modern, well managed municipal waste incinerators are not recommended".

In February 2010, the HPA published a further report having reviewed research undertaken to examine the suggested links between emissions from Municipal Waste incinerators and effects on Health, re-affirming its position. A copy is attached for information.

You make reference to three other incinerators in Cheshire. These are presumably the proposed incinerator at Ince, for which planning permission and the environmental permit have been granted and those at Middlewich, for which planning permission has been refused and at Northwich. Given their wide geographic spread, it is hard to see how these could have a cumulative impact.

The proposed energy from waste facility at Ineos is large and has a capacity of 850,000 tonnes per annum. It is, of course, designed to deal with waste that has previously been treated and should not be confused with mass burn incinerators where this waste is not previously treated. At present, the proposed incinerator is subject to the permitting process by the Environment Agency. You say that it is feared that permitting and regulating authorities may be swayed by political policies addressed at other pressing issues. I have to say that it is my considerable experience that neither the EA nor the HPA will be swayed by any external influences and neither organisation will entertain "data or theoretical models that are "demonstrably flawed and/or not validated by those agencies".

I would hope that HAGATI would be satisfied that the impartial assessment of the proposal by the Environment Agency based upon advice from the Director of Public Health and the Health Protection Agency gives the public ample reassurance that any new incinerator will be constructed and operated so that there is no adverse impact on the health of local residents.

I hope that you will find my response to be helpful. I have copied it for information to those Councillors to whom you originally sent your presentation.

Yours sincerely,

Richard G Tregear
Strategic Director – Environment & Economy