

Hertfordshire County Council's Cabinet on March 14th 2016 accepted in principle Veolia's Revised Project Plan (RPP) for dealing with Hertfordshire's local authority collected residual waste.

[JW edited, as underlined]

The statement from HCC says this about the next steps: "Cabinet has accepted in principle Veolia's plans for an Energy-from-Waste facility at Rye House in Hoddesdon. Veolia will now begin work on a planning application which they hope to submit towards the end of the year. As part of this process Veolia will need to ensure local residents, businesses and other interested parties have an opportunity to properly understand the proposals and contribute their thoughts and ideas".

The Cabinet decided to accept Veolia's RPP on the recommendation of Richard Thake (HCC Exec member for Community Safety and Waste Management). At a previous meeting the HCC Community Safety and Waste Management Panel had been divided on the issue, 5 to 5. At the Cabinet meeting no-one spoke against the proposal, and it was agreed by the whole Cabinet (who are all members of the Conservative party).

Two county councillors for Hoddesdon, Tim Hutchings and Alan Searing, attended to listen, and joined objectors for a photograph on the steps of County Hall. About twenty members of the public also attended: these included representatives of Herts WithOut Waste, Friends of the Earth, Hatfield Against Incineration, members of the Hoddesdon Society and many residents from Hoddesdon and area. Prior to the meeting, emails putting the case against a new incinerator in Herts were sent to HCC leader Robert Gordon and the Cabinet.

The decision was made by the Cabinet for HCC in its role as Waste Disposal Authority. The planning application to be made by Veolia will be considered by HCC in its role as Waste Planning Authority, via the Development Control Panel. Planning issues were touched on in the March 14th Cabinet meeting, but were not dealt with in any detail.

The proposed incinerator would deal with 320,000 tonnes of waste per year. The cost to HCC of incinerating waste over the 30 years of the contract with Veolia is estimated at £1.1 billion.

Opponents of the incinerator plan fear that an incinerator would discourage efforts to improve "reduce, re-use, re-cycle". At the moment about 50% of waste that is classed as "residual" could in fact be recycled or composted. Members of HCC Cabinet argued that the guaranteed minimum tonnage that HCC has agreed with Veolia would be sent by the county to the proposed incinerator would still allow recycling, up to 75% or 81% in 30 years time. Opponents of the incinerator believe that that "reduce, re-use, re-cycle" will have advanced massively in 30 years time, and that an incinerator in Herts would be a "white elephant" long before that, and is already totally unnecessary because of over-provision of incinerator capacity in the UK and on continental Europe. The capacity of the proposed Veolia incinerator not used for Herts waste would be used for waste from wherever Veolia manages to source it.

There was no attempt at the Cabinet meeting to discuss alternatives to incineration, except when councillor Richard Roberts dismissed Mechanical and Biological treatment because apparently he visited one plant in Germany many years ago and it looked untidy.

HCC Cabinet said they were aware of planning issues at the Rye House, Hoddesdon site, but Richard Thake said that "if Veolia fail to overcome the problems, we can walk away". Richard Gordon said that planning issues "are for someone else at a different stage". The planning issues of the Rye House, Hoddesdon site (previously called Fieldes Lock) are many, not least the fact that HCC themselves did not include it in their Allocated Waste Sites plan because they considered it to be unsuitable to be a site for waste.