

THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

(Please note that "Information Only" reports do not require Integrated Impact Assessments, Legal or Finance Comments as no decision is being taken)

Title of meeting:	Cabinet
Subject:	Anaerobic Digestion Plant Project
Date of meeting:	7 March 2023
Report by:	James Hill, Director of Housing, Neighbourhood & Building Services
Report Author:	Colette Hill, Assistant Director Neighbourhoods
Wards affected:	All

1. Requested by

Leader of the Council

2. Purpose

2.1. To update Cabinet on the progress of the project to develop an anaerobic digestion(AD) facility.

3. Information Requested

3.1. Background

3.1.1. This is a commercially sensitive project and the sites that have been considered are therefore not named in this report. The project is still in the site selection phase with several workstreams underway to inform a potential planning application.

3.2. Progress to date

3.2.1. The initial feasibility work was undertaken by the Housing Neighbourhood and Building Services (HNB) waste management service arising from the roll out of food waste collection. The waste management team worked with an external consultant (Bio Watt) and through the Assistant Director of Neighbourhood Services they continue to lead the work. The preliminary feasibility case was developed in 2019 with an options appraisal of 3 plant sizes - this was developed with a site in mind (1).

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3.2.2. A cross directorate project board was set up early 2020, the Senior Responsible Officer is the Director of HNB, and the board brings together the waste management leads, planning and the commercial property team (supporting the site selection).

3.2.3. PCC is undertaking this project with a view to provide food waste disposal for other local authorities in Hampshire. PCC's waste disposal partners Hampshire County Council and Southampton City Council have been updated.

3.2.4. Key activity undertaken to date:

- In Summer 2020, a Hampshire wide site search was conducted to appraise sites against the criteria needed to deliver an AD facility. A technical review of the site (1) was carried out.
- In Autumn 2020 investigations started at a second site (2), not in PCC ownership. This included technical options and gas to grid feasibility. The teams undertook work to understand alternative uses the site could have should AD not get planning permission and interim uses to pay the borrowing costs needed to purchase the site.
- In February 2021 investigations started at a third site (3) - these included topographical studies, technical drawings, and gas to grid feasibility studies.
- In March 2021, site (1) was discounted as deemed not suitable for an AD plant.
- Site (2) was then subsequently discounted due to the purchase price increasing to an amount which meant the business case for developing a plant at this site was no longer feasible.
- In Summer 2021, the team submitted a confidential pre-planning advice request for site (3) to Hampshire County Council (HCC) - planning authority for minerals and waste sites in the County. In addition, a capital bid was submitted for funds to continue investigations at the site (3) in order to inform completion of the business case for site (3).
- Autumn 2021 pre-application advice report received from HCC. This highlighted the constraints of the site but was overall fairly positive.
- Autumn 2021 - Autumn 2022 work has been undertaken to understand the cost implications of developing AD at the site (3). This included a refresh of the business case, considering the rise in, for example, build costs since the original work was undertaken.
- November 2022 a briefing to Group Leaders was delivered to outline the work to date to identify a suitable site for an AD plant.
- December 2022 progressed with time sensitive ecology surveys and setting studies to inform whether commitment to an outline planning application for site (3) can be made. The outcomes of the preliminary ecological survey and setting study are due at the end of January 2023 - these will also inform any future planning application for the site. Commitment to submission of an outline planning application will be

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dependent on whether the ecological and setting constraints can be suitably mitigated.

- 3.2.5** A draft communications plan has been developed in preparation for when the project is ready to be in the public domain.
- 3.2.6** The commercial property team continue to review site availability throughout Hampshire and will continue to do so. At the time of writing this update report site (3) remains the only viable site in consideration.
- 3.2.7** An assessment regarding the decision to proceed with planning will be made by the project board in conjunction with the cabinet member and the Director of Regeneration & Director of Finance and Resources will use their delegations to progress the project. Progress reports will be made to Climate Change and Environment member and Cabinet as appropriate and the project will report via the Major Project Board.

3.3. Indicative Delivery Timeline

3.3.1. The below timeline is indicative of how the programme of works could look if funded through unsupported borrowing and we are able to take forward site (3):

Table 2-2 - Indicative programme

INDICATIVE TIMELINE	2022	2023				2024		
	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3
Planning application				Submission	Decision (16 weeks from validation, best case)		Contingency	
Engagement with HCC								
Prep of planning deliverables including Planning Statement		Drafting starts	Check & Review					
Stakeholder engagement								
Public engagement (by others)								
Design (by others)	Design freeze 1		Design freeze 2					
EIA	Scoping	Surveys / ES drafting	Finalisation					
Habitats Regulations Appraisal		HRA drafting						
Water Framework Directive Compliance Assessment		WFD drafting						

The ecology surveys will take place across the spring/summer survey season between March and September and are required for the planning application. The team will work to compress the timeline where possible.

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Signed by James Hill, Director of Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services

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Appendices:

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location