



# Portland Energy Recovery Facility

## Appeal Against the Refusal of Planning Permission by Dorset Council

**PINS Ref: APP/D1265/W/23/3327692**

**LPA Ref: WP/20/00692/DCC**

### Landscape and Visual Effects PPF6: Summary Proof of Evidence of Jon Mason

Prepared for



Powerfuel Portland Limited

November 2023  
3460-01-Proof-02



# Document Control

Revision	Date	Prepared By	Reviewed / Approved By
3460-01-Proof-02		JM	N/A

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## CONTENTS

<b>1.0</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF EVIDENCE.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Qualification and Relevant Experience.....	1
1.2	Scope of Evidence.....	1
1.3	Proof of Evidence Structure .....	2
1.4	LVIA Overall Conclusions .....	2
1.5	World Heritage Site.....	3



## **1.0 INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF EVIDENCE**

### **1.1 Qualification and Relevant Experience**

- 1.1.1 I am Jon Mason, a Technical Director of Axis, a multi-disciplinary planning, environmental and landscape consultancy.
- 1.1.2 I am a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute and hold a BSC honours degree in Landscape Design and Plant Science from the University of Sheffield as well as a Diploma in Landscape Architecture also from the University of Sheffield.
- 1.1.3 I have been employed by Axis since 2001 and have over thirty years of professional experience since graduating in 1989. I have extensive experience of assessment of major infrastructure projects across the UK.
- 1.1.4 The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) which accompanied the original planning application was prepared by TOR, as was all subsequent supplementary information and correspondence with consultees. I have subsequently become involved following the decision by the Council to refuse planning consent and the decision of the Appellant to appeal.
- 1.1.5 I am familiar with the Site and the immediate surrounding area having made a number of site visits during the summer and autumn of 2023.
- 1.1.6 The evidence which I have prepared and provide for this inquiry in this proof of evidence is true and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions. My professional fees in respect of this project do not depend upon the outcome of this inquiry.

### **1.2 Scope of Evidence**

- 1.2.1 This Proof of Evidence (PoE) has been prepared to consider landscape and visual matters relevant to the Appeal, and in particular the second reason for refusal. I also provide evidence in respect of the extent to which there are effects upon the Dorset and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site.



### **1.3 Proof of Evidence Structure**

- 1.3.1 My evidence is divided into a number of sections as follows:
- 1.3.2 In section 2 of my evidence, I present some analysis of the second reason for refusal.
- 1.3.3 In section 3 of my evidence, I outline points of relevance to landscape and visual matters in Dorset Council's Statement of Case.
- 1.3.4 In section 4 of my evidence, I outline points of relevance to landscape and visual matters in the Rule 6 Parties Statement of Case.
- 1.3.5 In section 5 of my evidence, I discuss the design of the Appeal Proposal.
- 1.3.6 In section 6 of my evidence, I describe the landscape and visual impact assessment submitted as part of the Environmental Statement, the consultation responses received during determination and the Supplementary work that I have undertaken in preparation for the Inquiry.
- 1.3.7 In section 7 of my proof, I consider the World Heritage Site.
- 1.3.8 Finally in section 8 of my proof, I discuss relevant contemporary activity at the Port.

### **1.4 LVIA Overall Conclusions**

- 1.4.1 The design of the Appeal Proposal is the result of an extensive and considered process, including extensive pre-application consultation with Dorset and Dorset AONB landscape officers and the Jurassic Coast Trust. Consultee correspondence during the determination process recognises that the design is well considered, with reservations restricted to the now superseded printed PVC mesh cladding system.
- 1.4.2 My primary observation from my first involvement in this case has been that in terms of scale and how the ERF sits within its site, this is an unusual example of an ERF which is of a scale that is subordinate to its landscape setting.
- 1.4.3 The central argument raised in the reason for refusal is that the introduction of the ERF would have a significant effect firstly on the quality of the landscape, and secondly that it would be harmful to views of the Portland landform and by extension to the setting of the World Heritage Site.



- 1.4.4 My assessment the quality of the landscape would not be significantly affected by the introduction of the ERF, but rather it would be experienced as simply one more additional operational component within a working Port.
- 1.4.5 With respect to appreciation of the distinctive wedge-shaped landform of Portland I am very clear that the relative scales of the ERF and the Portland landform are such that in none of the available views does the ERF come close to diminishing the landform.
- 1.4.6 Outside of consideration of the WHS, I have identified that there would some very localised harm to visual amenity and character in the vicinity of the east end of the Royal Naval Cemetery where the stack of the ERF would be visible in isolation in the context of some outward views to the Dorset coast where the Port is not currently visible.
- 1.4.7 In terms of residential property, in response to concerns expressed about effects in the Council's Statement of Case, I have examined the degree to which the ERF would appear in views from residential property in Weymouth. My assessment in relation to these properties is that there would be a moderate adverse impact that would not be significant.
- 1.4.8 Concerns about aviation lighting are unfounded. The MOD requirement for marking the stack consists of a low intensity beacon, and there is an infra-red (invisible to the naked eye) alternative.
- 1.4.9 The visible plume from the ERF has been modelled using historical meteorological data and it has been demonstrated that plumes of any length would be rare events, totalling just over 20 hours annually, and occur exclusively in the winter months.

## **1.5 World Heritage Site**

- 1.5.1 The WHS is inscribed for its natural heritage. Its Outstanding Universal Value refers to an outstanding combination of globally significant geological and geomorphological features. It is not inscribed on account of its natural beauty, although it does coincide almost entirely with land designated as an AONB.
- 1.5.2 The Appeal Site is visible from a very small proportion of the WHS.



- 1.5.3 The closest areas are an approximately 3km linear strip of the WHS on the north of Portland Harbour located 3.5 to 4.5km from the Appeal Site, and the very eastern end of Chesil beach which is approximately 3km away.
- 1.5.4 Much more distant views are possible from the coast to the east of Weymouth, from Bowleaze Cove (c.7km to the north) across to Durdle Door (c.12km north east) and beyond.
- 1.5.5 There is no buffer zone to the WHS on the considered and explicit basis that one is not required due to the presence of the other mechanisms that offer protection including AONB designation, a defined Heritage Coast and SSSI status.
- 1.5.6 No significant landscape or visual effects will occur within any of the areas of the WHS that experience intervisibility with the Appeal Proposal.
- 1.5.7 With respect to the AONB this is due to a combination of distance and the fact that any views of the Appeal Site are views of an established operational Port with industrial scale artefacts and a dynamic assemblage of Port infrastructure and shipping including very large Cruise ships. The nature of these views will not change.
- 1.5.8 ADMS modelling indicates that visible plumes from the ERF stack would be extremely rare. In the worst-case scenario, a long visible plume would increase visual impacts and alter character, but the frequency of such an event would be so low that I do not consider it to be harmful.
- 1.5.9 Aviation lighting on the ERF stack will be limited to a low intensity beacon (seen in the context of a brightly lit Port and adjoining urban area) and could be mitigated further through use of infra-red.
- 1.5.10 It is not part of the case of either Dorset Council or the Joint Rule 6 party that there would be significant visual effects experienced within the AONB as a result of the Appeal Proposal.
- 1.5.11 From the two areas of the WHS (North Portland Harbour and Chesil Beach) that are located out with the AONB but closer to the Appeal Site, I conclude that significant effects would not result due to the fact that the fundamental nature of the views available would not change.



1.5.12 In overall conclusion therefore I consider that the OUV of the WHS and the ability of the general public to appreciate it would be unaffected by the Appeal Proposal.

