Planning Statement

John Munroe Independent Hospital

A Biomass System *from* A SHADE GREENER

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This statement is submitted in support of a planning application to install containerised biomass boilers at John Munroe Independent Hospital, Leek.

1.2 The Planning Statement is a summary of the pertinent national and local policies in relation to this proposal.

2.0 Background

2.1 The UK Government has made legally binding international commitments to cut greenhouse gas emissions. The Climate Change Act 2008 sets out a requirement to cut emissions of greenhouse gases by 80% below 1990 levels, by 2050.

2.2 To help drive this reduction, the Government has recently introduced the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scheme. The scheme makes payments to businesses that switch to low carbon heat generation technologies, such as Biomass, thereby reducing CO_2 emissions.

2.3 To help businesses overcome the high capital cost of installing Biomass systems, **A Shade Greener** has introduced a unique scheme. We purchase a Biomass system for the customer, install it and then service and maintain it for a maximum period of 20 years. By claiming the Government RHI payments over the 20 year lifetime of the scheme, we recover our investment over several years. Each scheme is individually tailored to meet the needs of the site.

2.4 We also provide the customer with the high energy Biomass wood pellets required to fuel the boiler. Because we have preferential purchasing contracts for the pellets, we guarantee to provide them to the customer at a price that will reduce your displaced heating costs by a minimum of 50%.

2.5 This site represents a suitable opportunity for the installation of a biomass boiler to supply low carbon heat generation to assist in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and reduce costs to the site.

3.0 The Site and Surroundings

3.1 The site is situated to the north west of Leek centre. The site is accessed from Cross Street, the main route into the hospital.

3.2 The biomass boiler is proposed to provide a renewable heat and hot water source to the hospital.

4.0 The Proposed Development

4.1 The application is for the installation of a containerised biomass boiler system. The biomass boiler is containerised for a number of reasons which will be detailed throughout the report. The containerised biomass boiler has been clad in timber to provide a more aesthetically pleasing appearance, alternative cladding can be used should the Local Authority require. The boiler is containerised to allow for the ease of installation for the customer without the requirement of costly construction works. The container includes an area to store the wood pellets reducing the need for further storage areas. Due to the standardised form the boilers have been developed within, the installation is carried out within a limited timescale with minimal disruption to the day to day operations of the business and its setting. The pipework required to attach the boiler to the building will be run over a short distance over ground through a small opening created in the wall at low level.

4.2 A Shade Greener's business model has been developed using standard installations to ensure the customer benefits from the maximum saving possible and the company can continue to provide this service to a maximum number of suitable businesses. Although the units are standard the sites are carefully chosen taking into account local planning policy and planning issues and the positioning of the unit within the site is placed where it causes minimum harm and visual intrusion.

4.3 Due to the variety of elements required to install the biomass boiler, from its development requiring heating engineers, electricians, joiners, CAD technicians, surveyors to its installation requiring ground workers, delivery drivers and engineers, the biomass initiative developed by A Shade Greener provides job creation on a wide and varied scale.

4.4 It is estimated that the reduction in fuel costs created by the biomass boilers will be a minimum of 50% savings. This will be a significant saving for most business over the lifetime of the boiler. This assists local businesses creating additional inward financial investment, which within the current economic climate will help a great number of small local businesses remain. In addition further savings are made to the customer as there is no requirement to pay the Climate Change Levy, the tax on energy products for use as fuels for lighting, heating and power by business consumers.

4.5 As previously mentioned A Shade Greener install the boiler free of charge with 20 years maintenance at no cost to the customer. In the current climate many businesses struggle to find the capital to pay the £200k the boiler would cost should they purchase one on the open market. This is a considerable amount of investment being made into the local economy by A Shade Greener to enable businesses to reduce their carbon footprint by utilising the carbon neutral source of heat.

5.0 Planning Policy and Scheme Appraisal

5.1 The following paragraphs are intended to briefly deal with national and local policy contexts and provide an appraisal to indicate the proposals acceptability from a planning perspective. It will also address all relevant policy areas that have been taken into account as material considerations.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

5.2 One of the 12 principles that should underpin the planning system, as stated in the NPPF, is to 'support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change, and encourage the reuse of existing resources, including conversion of existing buildings, and encourage the use of renewable resources (for example, by the development of renewable energy)'.

5.3 Para 95 of the NPPF seeks to support the move to a low carbon future with local planning authorities to actively support energy efficiency improvements to existing buildings.

5.4 Para 98 of the NPPF requires local planning authorities when determining planning applications to recognise that small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions and should approve applications if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.

5.5 The NPPF seeks to proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs.

5.6 The proposed biomass boiler will assist with the transition to a low carbon future by reducing the need for the use of fossil fuels such as gas, electricity and oil.

5.7 The savings made on the current energy bills by the introduction of the renewable energy will support the economic development of the business.

5.8 Para 79 states the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

5.9 Para 80 states that the Green Belt serves five purposes:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

5.10 Para 87 states 'as with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances'.

5.11 Paragraph 88 of the NPPF advises that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

5.12 Paragraph 91 advises that elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. Developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with increased production of energy from renewable sources.

5.13 Although the proposed biomass boiler, by definition is considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, due to the proposed siting screened by trees it is considered that the proposal will not have a detrimental impact on the openness of the Green Belt or any other purpose of including land within the Green Belt.

5.14 The application is fully consistent with these objectives.

Local Policy

The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (1998)

5.15 The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan was produced as part of the old planning system, certain policies have been 'saved' until it is replaced by the emerging Core Strategy. The following policies were 'saved' and relevant to this proposal.

N2 & N7 – Green Belt
N8 & N9 – Special Landscape Area

5.16 The site falls within the Green Belt allocation of the local plan therefore Policies N2 and N7 have been considered. The Green Belt policies states that except in very special circumstances there will be presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Policy N7 restricts development that would injure the visual amenity of the Green Belt by virtue of its siting, materials or design in locations that are within or visually conspicuous from the Green Belt. As mentioned previously the proposed boiler will not have a detrimental impact on the openness of the Green Belt and would not injure the visual amenity of the Green Belt. It is considered that the proposal is not contrary to the requirements of Policies N2 and N7.

5.17 The site falls within a Special Landscape Area, Policy N8 states permission will not be given for development which would materially detract from the high quality of the landscape because of its siting, scale, design and materials. Policy N9 requires especially high standards of design for development. The siting and scale of the proposed boiler results in minimal impact on the Special Landscape Area.

5.18 It is considered that the proposal is not contrary to any of the relevant policies within the local Plan.

Core Strategy DPD – Revised Submission Document Dec 2011

5.19 The Core Strategy is the key strategic document within the emerging Local Development Framework. Although the document in not adopted policy the document is close to adoption therefore the directly relevant policies have been considered.

5.20 The renewable energy policy of the local plan was deleted, its replacement policy with the Core Strategy is SD2 – Renewable and Low-Carbon Energy. The Council are seeking to support renewable energy schemes giving consideration to the scale and nature of the impacts on the landscape, environmental impact and impact on the amenity of residents. The proposed scheme due to its scale, size and siting has minimal impact on the landscape and will cause no noise or environmental issues to neighbouring residents.

6.0 Justification for the proposal

6.1 The proposed siting of the boiler avoids any problems of environmental intrusion and there is minimal loss of amenity due to the location and its surroundings. The boiler is an exempt appliance in accordance with the Clean Air Act 1993 and the use of renewable resources promotes energy conservation.

6.2 The design of the boiler housing is limited to its functional needs. The container unit houses either a 200kw boiler with a fuel store and hopper to feed each boiler, the hopper is linked to the fuel store. As previously mentioned the boiler has been containerised for the following reasons, each reason is detailed in the following paragraphs.

(a) Water proof
(b) Ease of installation
(c) Limited disruption to the customer
(d) Standard design and installation

6.3 Developing the boiler and fuel storage within the container ensures the boiler and the fuel storage stay dry as it is completely water tight.

6.4 The installation of the unit is very simple. In most cases a small hole is required to be made into the existing plant room to allow the pipes from the biomass boiler to connect into the existing heating and hot water system. Where suitable hard standing exists for the container no further ground works will be required. Should the ground be considered unsuitable by our engineers the container will likely only require 4 no. concrete pads of 1000mm x 1000mm x 150mm at each corner.

6.5 The ease of installation and limited disruption is a key contribution to its desirability to the customer, along with the financial savings on heating costs and reduction in carbon

emissions. The containerised boiler results in minimal disruption to the customer in comparison to the construction of a building to house the boiler, such as an extension to the existing building. The free standing unit is generally easier to accommodate on site than an extension or a more permanent structure. After 20 years, which is the lifetime of the Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme, the unit can be removed easily should the customer require.

6.6 The containerised biomass boiler has been developed as a standard unit in line with a successful business model to allow great benefits to the customer and to ensure the company can continue to offer this product to a large number of customers nationwide. Although the unit is standard great care is taken to ensure the unit is sited within the most suitable place to ensure it does not cause any significant harm in planning terms. On most occasions the boiler will be placed within rear service areas, therefore it is considered that the standard design will have regard to the character and appearance of their surroundings and it is appropriate to its location. The chosen location is considered to be the most appropriate for this site due to access issues and other site considerations.

6.7 The installation of the boiler will be saving the individual businesses significant amounts of money over the lifetime of the boiler. This is then available for reinvestment into the business. As a number of these units are likely to be installed within the Staffordshire Moorlands area, should suitable sites be found, a large amount of investment is being made into the local economy by A Shade Greener. In addition to the financial benefits to the individual businesses the overall biomass boiler development being undertaken by A Shade Greener is creating a large number of jobs over a variety of skill sets.

7.0 Conclusion

7.1 The proposed biomass boiler will be making a significant contribution to a low carbon future. A Shade Greener are looking to install a number of these boilers across the UK to assist in meeting the Governments renewable energy targets. This application is submitted after giving a great deal of consideration on the impact of the proposed setting, balanced against the benefits of this renewable energy provision. The proposed location will be visible from areas around the site, the existing trees and wall will provide an element of screening.

7.2 The proposed biomass boilers will have a minimal impact on the proposed location with wider benefits, including financial benefits for the customer, which in term assists with maintaining the local economy, the job creation and reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. On balance it is considered that the proposal is of great benefit to the customer, A Shade Greener and the emissions targets of Staffordshire Moorlands Council.

7.3 In summary, it is considered that the application is fully consistent with National and Local Policy and all the benefits highlighted above constitute an acceptable proposal.