

ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT


VOLUME 3 – NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Fornax Environmental Solutions Ltd
High Temperature Incineration Plant

Prepared by:
Sol Environment Ltd

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Fornax Environmental Solutions Ltd (henceforth known as '*Fornax*' or '*The Applicant*') is seeking to obtain planning permission for a High Temperature Incineration (HTI) Plant processing clinical and hazardous wastes located on land known as Plot 1.2, Land south of Heighington Lane, Newton Aycliffe.
- 1.2 The proposed development will require the construction and development of a new facility on an undeveloped industrial plot located on land south of Heighington Lane. The proposed site is located immediately north of the Hitachi Rail Factory and associated sidings and holds planning consent as part of Merchant Park for B1 (Business), B2 (General Industry) and B8 (Storage and Distribution) uses.
- 1.3 The HTI Facility will use a proven combustion technology to generate recovered heat from hazardous and clinical wastes produced by the industrial and health care sectors. It will process up to 10,500 tonnes of waste per annum. The processing activities will be enclosed in a building specially designed and operated to minimise potential odour and noise impacts.
- 1.4 This document provides a non-technical summary (NTS) of the findings of the Environmental Statement (ES), which has been prepared on behalf of Fornax to accompany a planning application for the Proposed Development. The ES presents the findings of assessments that were undertaken as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).
- 1.5 The scope of the ES that has been produced in support of the Proposed Development responds directly to the findings of a scoping opinion provided by Durham County Council on 13th April 2021 (Ref: SCO/21/00003).
- 1.6 The ES have been updated and revised in order to respond to the recommendations and comments made by the Planning Inspectorate as part of a request for more information under Regulation 25¹ of The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (hereafter referred to as the EIA Regulations).
- 1.7 The ES identifies and records the results of the EIA undertaken to examine the impacts of the Proposed Development. The assessment examines the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development and considers the environmental effects the development will have on a

¹ PINS Regulation 25 Request for additional information dated 29th April 2022

range of topics. It describes a range of measures that Fornax will adopt to mitigate the identified effects and, where opportunities exist, to introduce best practice and / or enhancement measures.

- 1.8 The main body of the ES and the material conclusions of the assessment have not changed as a result of this update.

2 THE SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The proposed development will be sited on land south of Heighington Lane, Newton Aycliffe and forms the undeveloped portion referred to as Plot 1.2 of a wider development plot sitting immediately north of the Hitachi Rail Manufacturing Facility.
- 2.2 The Site is located in a predominantly industrial area sited on the south western perimeter of the Newton Aycliffe Industrial Estate. The Site lies approximately 850 m southeast of School Aycliffe, 1.3km west of Aycliffe Village and 1.9km east of Heighington Village.

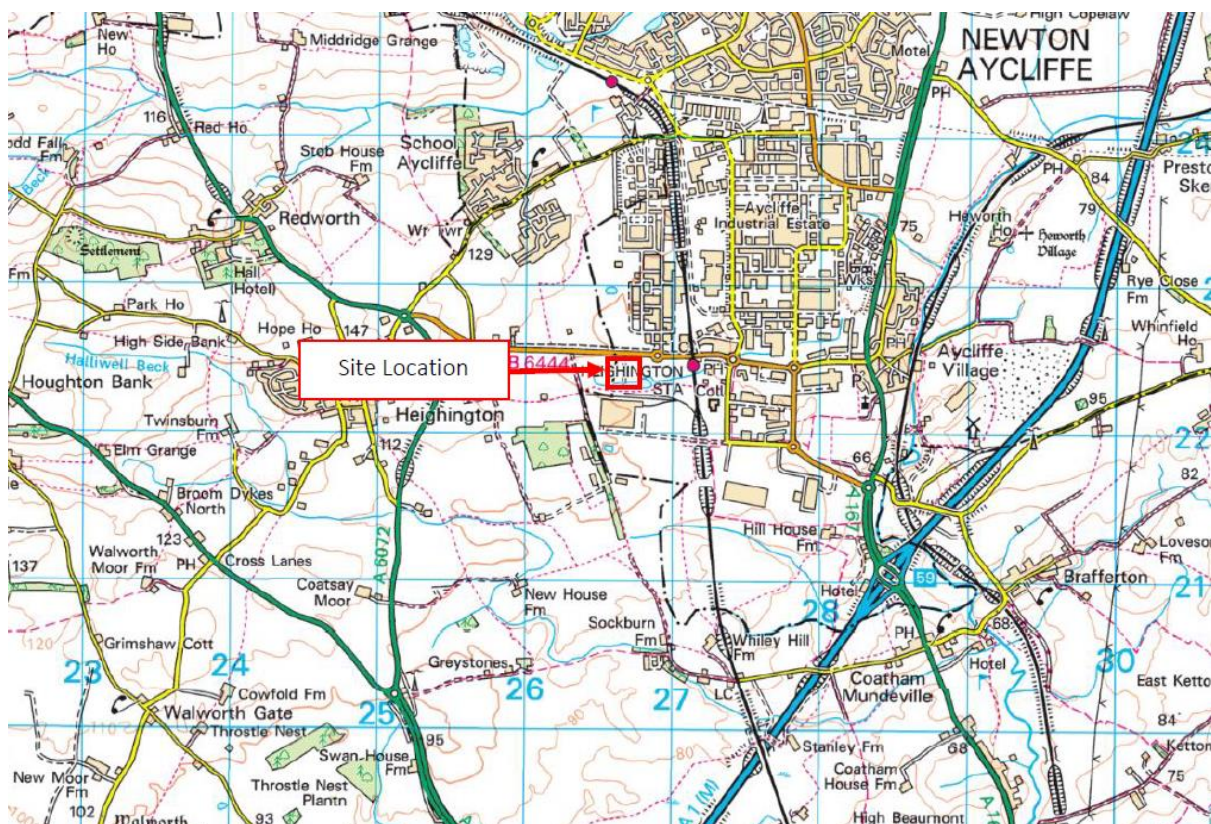


Figure 1.1: Site Location

- 2.3 The application site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) NZ 26654 224216 and lies at an elevation of approximately 109 mAOD.
- 2.4 The development Site will be approximately 2.02ha in size. The Site is generally level with significant earthen embankments forming the south, east and western boundaries. It is currently undeveloped and has been prepared in readiness for development of the extant planning permission, as such it does not contain any notable vegetation, trees or shrubs.

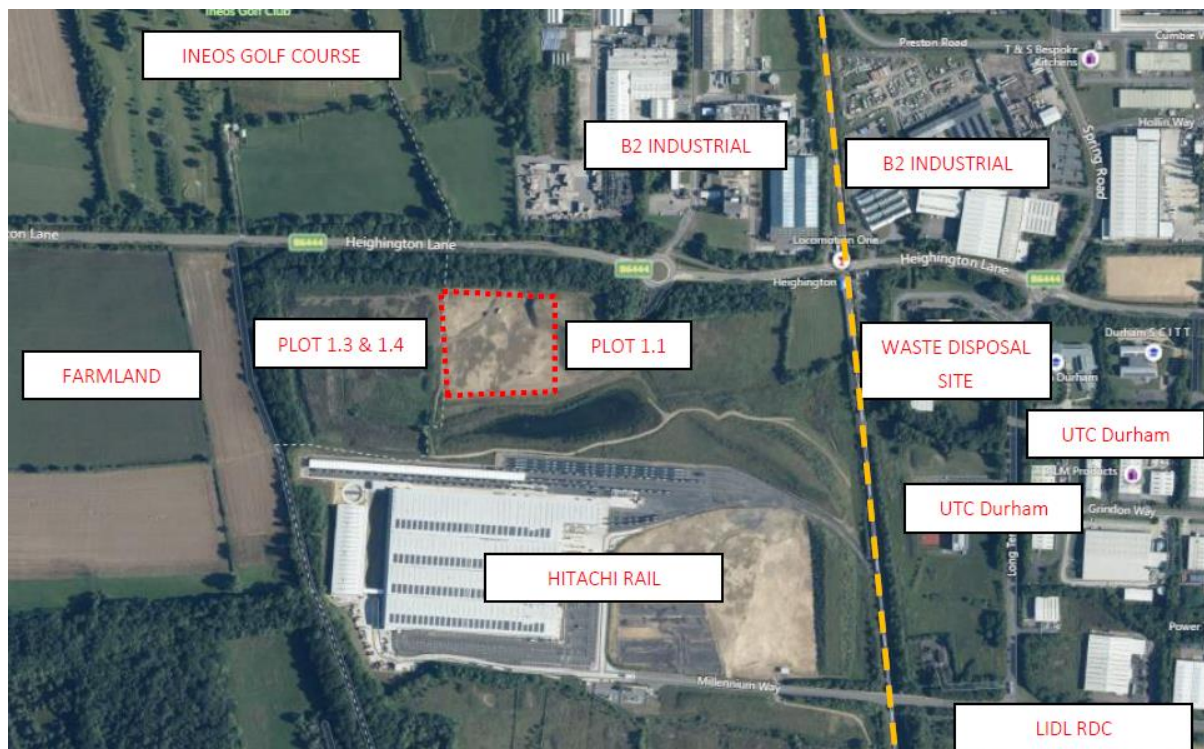


Figure 2.1: Site and Surroundings

- 2.5 There are no nature or geologically related sites with statutory designations within 2 km of the site, and it is remote from sensitive residential receptors, the closest located on Heighington Lane approximately 800 m northwest.
- 2.6 The closest surface water feature to the Site is Demons Beck and its associated balancing pond directly adjacent to the sites southern boundary. Demons Beck flows in an easterly direction before joining the nearest major watercourse feature, the River Skerne, at a point approximately 2.3 km to the northeast.
- 2.7 The risk of flooding from rivers, sea, surface water or groundwater on site is assessed as low.
- 2.8 There are no on-site surface water features, though it is noted that the site is often waterlogged.

3 ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 An EIA Scoping exercise was undertaken by Durham County Council to determine what topics the EIA should include. It was based on a review of the proposed development provided by the Applicant and the conclusions it reached on likely significant environmental effects.
- 3.2 In summary the following environmental topics were scoped into the EIA and the overall findings for each are presented in this Summary. The following topics were scoped-in to the EIA:
- Climate Change;
 - Population and Human Health;
 - Accidents and Natural Disasters;
 - Air Quality;
 - Water Quality and Hydrology;
 - Waste Management; and
 - Heritage.
- 3.3 With the exception of Waste Management, an ES chapter is provided for each of the topics scoped into the EIA and meets the requirements stated within the scoping report. The quantification and management of construction and operational wastes generated by the development are provided within the relevant chapters (Chapter 5 '*The Proposed Development*' and Chapter 6 '*Development Programme and Construction*').
- 3.4 An ES chapter is provided for each of the topics scoped into the EIA and the overall findings for each are presented in this NTS. For each topic, environmental baseline conditions and significance of environmental effects before and, where necessary, after mitigation were identified.
- 3.5 A number of assessment criteria have been used to determine whether or not the potential effects of the development proposals are significant. Where possible the effects have been assessed quantitatively.
- 3.6 The significance of effects have been assessed using one or more of the following criteria:
- International, national and local standards;
 - Relationship with planning policy;

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- Sensitivity of receiving environment;
 - Reversibility and duration of effect;
 - Inter-relationship between effects; and
 - The results of consultations.
- 3.7 The effects that were considered to be significant prior to mitigation have been identified within the ES. The significance of these effects reflects judgement as to the importance or sensitivity of the affected receptor(s) and the nature and magnitude of the predicted changes. For example, a large adverse impact on a feature or site of low importance will be of lesser significance than the same impact on a feature or site of high importance.
- 3.8 The following terms have been used to assess the significance of effects where they are predicted to occur:
- Major Beneficial or Adverse effect – where the development would cause a significant improvement (or deterioration) to the existing environment;
 - Moderate Beneficial or Adverse effect – where the development would cause a noticeable improvement (or deterioration) to the existing environment;
 - Minor Beneficial or Adverse effect – where the development would cause a barely perceptible improvement (or deterioration) to the existing environment; and
 - Neutral / Negligible – no discernible improvement or deterioration to the existing environment.
- 3.9 Where individual assessment sections deviate from these terms, the alternative terminology has been explained as appropriate within the relevant chapter.
- 3.10 Cumulative impacts from proposed or committed developments in the vicinity of the proposed development have been considered within each of the following technical Chapters.
- 3.11 In addition, the Applicant has investigated the details of any other projects which could in combination with the existing development and the proposed development, give rise to cumulative significant socio-economic effects.
- 3.12 No such other schemes have been identified.
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4 ALTERNATIVES AND DESIGN EVOLUTION

- 4.1 The Applicant has confirmed that the Proposed Development has evolved over a number of design iterations, and has responded to local authority planning and development aspirations. It takes account of the Applicant's development objectives, design aspirations and prevailing environmental constraints.
- 4.2 The ES chapter explains the design process and confirms the national and regional need for new clinical and hazardous waste treatment capacity primarily driven by the following factors i) a national shortfall of high temperature incineration plants being driven by increase population growth and Covid-19; b) a significant market distortion due to a lack of operators and iii) a long-term underinvestment in the sector UK combined with the requirement for the incinerator sector to meet much tighter environmental standards.
- 4.3 The alternatives to the Proposed Development that have been considered by the Applicant include:
- 'No Development' Alternative;
 - Alternative Sites;
 - Alternative Technologies; and
 - Alternative Designs.

'NO DEVELOPMENT' ALTERNATIVE

- 4.4 The 'No-Development' option refers to leaving the Site in its current state, and continuing with the current methods for the disposal of waste. Key issues are summarised below:
- The failure to supply a sustainable local source of waste disposal for the target market;
 - Locally arising wastes will continue to be exported long distances to locations as far distant as West Midlands for disposal to landfill or incineration;
 - Inefficient and unsustainable HGV movements both on-site and beyond which could be eliminated; and
 - Unsustainable company overhead costs associated with transport and disposal (for companies needing to find disposal routes for their wastes).

SITE SUITABILITY AND ALTERNATIVE SITES

- 4.5 The applicant confirmed that they have actively pursued a number of alternative site locations but has selected this site following consultation with the Durham County Council Sustainability Team.
- 4.6 The Site was identified as being suitable for industrial redevelopment and given the nature of the surrounding land uses, the proposed use was considered appropriate. The Site has been allocated for commercial and industrial use with an implemented planning permission, and there are no major environmental constraints on the Site in relation to the proposed use.
- 4.7 At feasibility stage the development team engaged with local land agents and DCC's Asset Strategy Officer to explore land availability and suitability options across a broad range of physical, legal and planning constraints. The site search included available plots as far as Teesport, and several other sites around the Newton Aycliffe Business Park. An alternative location, at Preston Road within the Newton Aycliffe Industrial Estate, has been considered for this development, however, this location was unable to be pursued due to title defect rights over the land ownership.
- 4.8 In concluding the development appraisal, the proposed site offered the lowest potential negative environmental impact, was in accordance with planning policy and offered a simple freehold legal interest when compared against the other sites being appraised.

ALTERNATIVE TECHNOLOGIES

- 4.9 The Applicant has undergone a review of available waste treatment and energy recovery processes that are suitable for the proposed use.
- 4.10 Due to the specific nature of clinical and hazardous wastes, their management and disposal is limited to a very few approved processes. A rotary kiln was selected as it is a proven technology for high temperature incineration and is recognised as being able to meet the key principles of the relevant regulatory controls and Guidance relating correct segregation, storage, disposal and documentation of waste.

ALTERNATIVE DESIGNS & LAYOUTS

- 4.11 A constraints analysis of the Site had determined that the building layout would be better placed towards the southern end of the Site with the additional benefit of maximising vehicle flows within the plot, reducing the visual impacts and more appropriately locating the SUDs ponds.

5 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1 The Proposed Development will incorporate a High Temperature Incineration (HTI) Plant using sector proven combustion and air pollution control and monitoring equipment. The facility has been designed with the capacity to export approximately 5MWth of heat to neighbouring industrial users should it be practically and commercially possible to do so.
- 5.2 The proposed development consists of a conventional industrial-style building, within which a thermal waste to energy process will be operated, processing up 10,500 tonnes per annum of clinical and hazardous wastes. The waste will be delivered in bins, containers or sealed packaging in accordance with the necessary guidance.
- 5.3 The design of the building limits noise, odour, and visual intrusion, and contains the incoming waste in accordance with Environmental Permitting requirements.
- 5.4 Accordingly, a significant proportion of the internal space of the building will be occupied by bin storage. The requirements of the regulations dictate that all material is unloaded and secured within an enclosed and controlled building, and that no material is stored externally in an uncontrolled manner.
- 5.5 In addition to the process building, a hard-surfaced yard would be required for access, manoeuvring and parking, and a surface water runoff attenuation pond will be provided, along with appropriate landscaping. The overall site footprint will be around 2.02ha including the access.
- 5.6 Within the building would be a reception area for incoming materials, a small office, a bin store and wash area, and the principle process equipment. The operation will occupy a basement level (702m² gross area), ground floor (4,548m² gross area) and mezzanine floor (972m² gross area). Vehicles will reverse and enter the ground floor through a docking system and deposit the contents inside the building. A small office to accommodate staff for the documentation, and emission and system monitoring will also be provided within the building. Weighing of the waste will be take place on the process line, with an external weighbridge also provided.
- 5.7 The proposed site layout is identified in Figure 5.1 and 5.2 below.

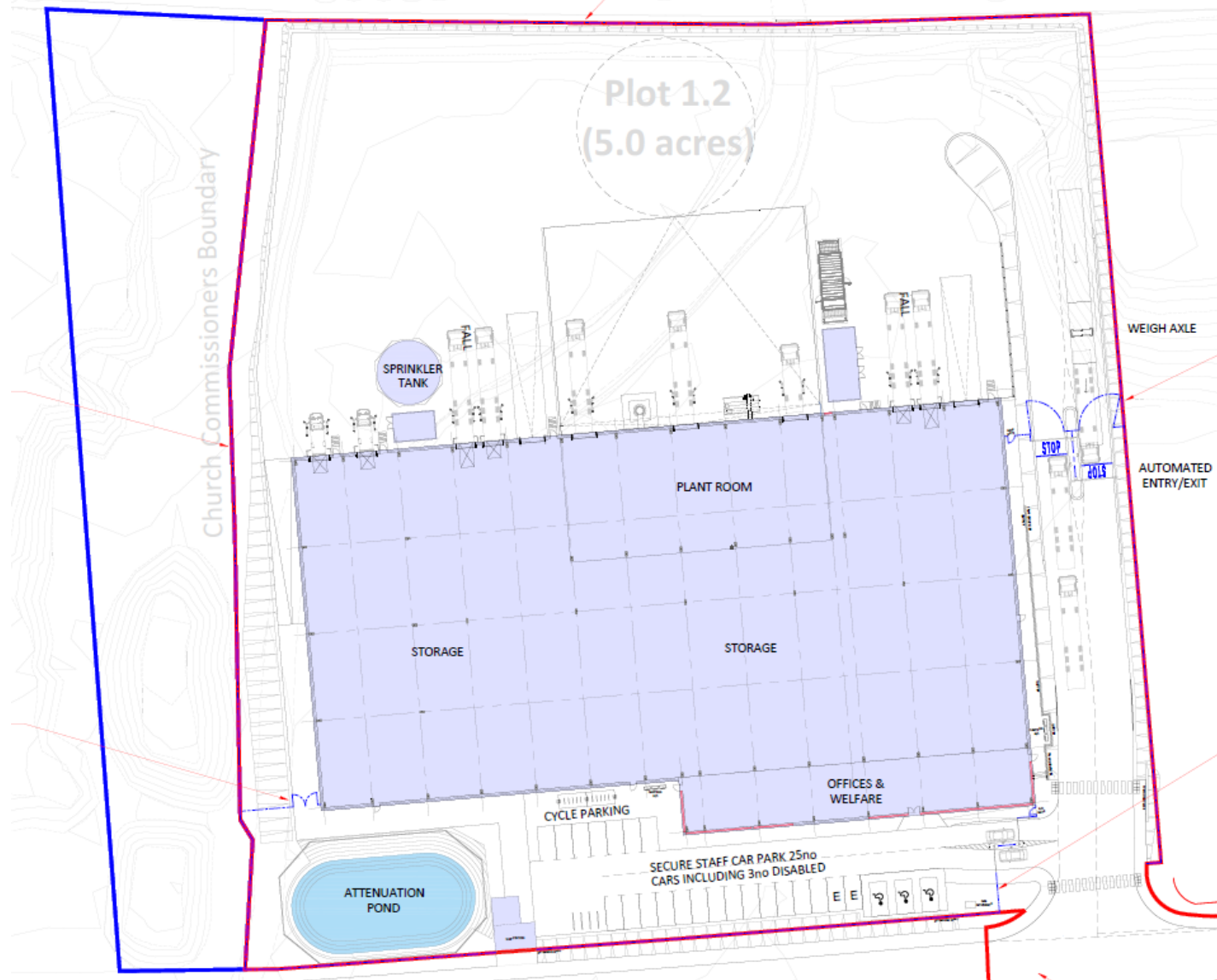


Figure 5.1: Site Layout

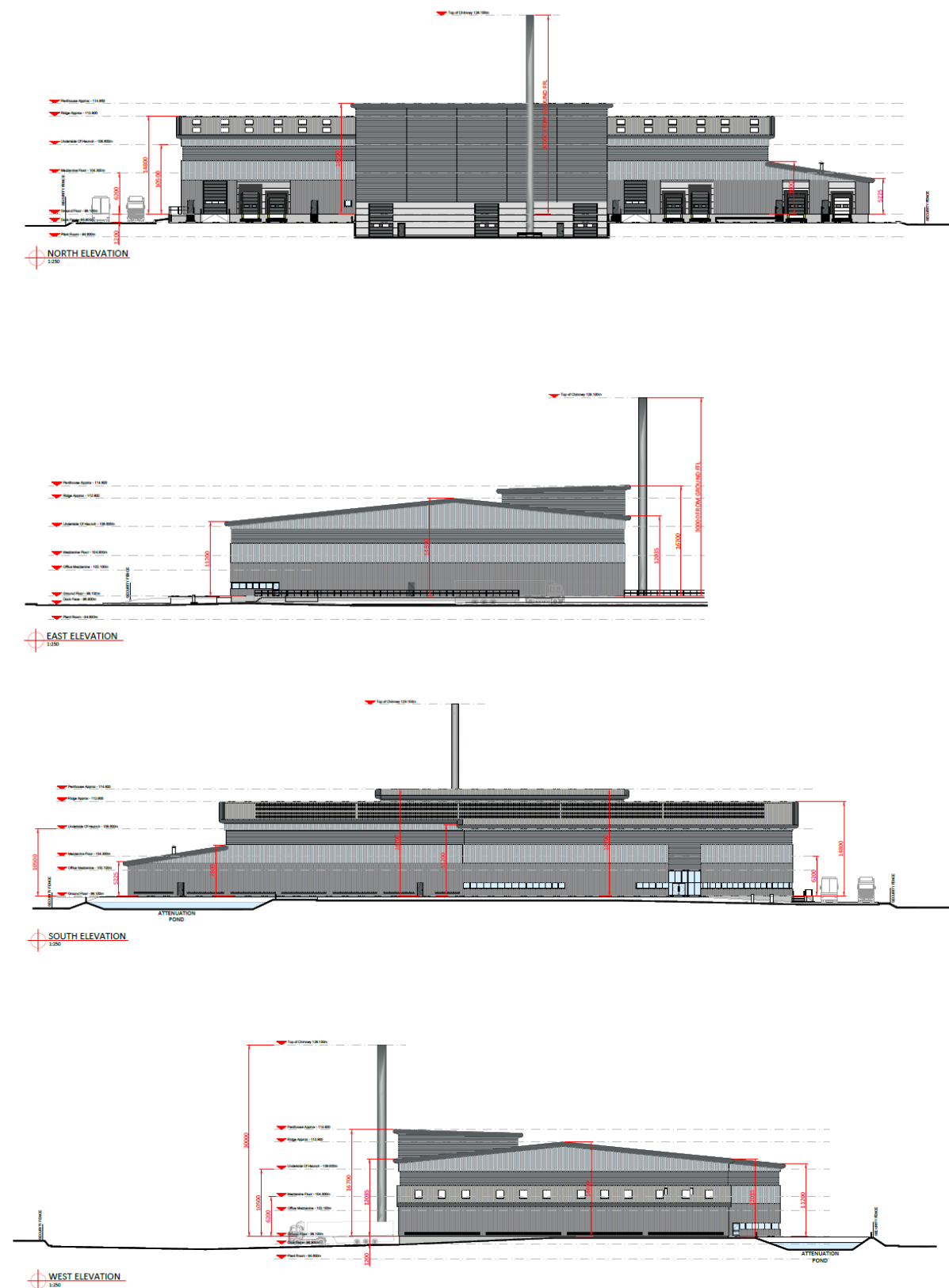


Figure 5.2: Site Elevations

6 DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AND CONSTRUCTION

- 6.1 This chapter provides the programme of construction including all necessary enabling works and associated mobilisation requirements.
- 6.2 The project programme within the ES demonstrates that the construction of the Proposed Development is estimated to take a total of 14 months including 4 months commissioning.
- 6.3 It is proposed that a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) be prepared and implemented. This will be discussed and agreed with DCC prior to the commencement of works at the Site.
- 6.4 The CEMP will outline methods for contractor working and general public liaison, hours of work, methods to deal with complaints and outline management practices to control dust, traffic and access, waste, water resources and ecological effects, ensuring a high level of control throughout the construction works.
- 6.5 The procedures within the CEMP will be developed to help ensure the delivery of a high level of environmental control throughout the construction phase, thereby minimising the potential for adverse effects; in particular in relation to traffic and access, air quality and dust, materials handling and storage and contaminated land, site drainage and ecological resources.
- 6.6 The impacts of the proposed development are therefore considered to be **Negligible** in terms of construction impact.

7 CLIMATE CHANGE

- 7.1 The ES provides an assessment of the potential climate change impacts and follows IEMA Guidance for Assessing Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Evaluating their significance.
- 7.2 The development of the proposed project of a regional HTI facility would deliver carbon benefits over the current management method (baseline scenario) involving the out of area incineration of hazardous and clinical wastes.
- 7.3 The project has also been designed to recover all available heat produced during the high temperature incineration of waste, and to utilise it for all potential parasitic process heat and building loads. Furthermore, the project has been designed with the capacity to export approximately 5MWth of heat to neighbouring industrial users should it be practically and commercially possible to do so.
- 7.4 A regional facility will provide an 70% reduction in overall vehicle transport miles and associated carbon emissions.
- 7.5 The proposals would deliver carbon equivalent savings of more than 40% under normal operating conditions.
- 7.6 In the event that the proposed development exports the available 5MWth of heat to the neighbouring industrial sites, then the potential carbon equivalent saving that can be delivered by the development would be even greater.
- 7.7 The impact of the resulting GHG emissions from the project are considered to be **Beneficial**, as the results of the WRATE assessment demonstrate that the project will achieve the definition provided by IEMA.
- 7.8 The project's net GHG impacts are below zero and it causes a reduction in atmospheric GHG concentration, whether directly or indirectly, compared to the without-project baseline. A project with beneficial effects substantially exceeds net zero requirements with a positive climate impact.

8 POPULATION AND HUMAN HEALTH

- 8.1 The Applicant has carried out an assessment of potential effects on population as a result of the proposed development and has confirmed that the impacts are negligible across all three areas; social, economic and human health.
- 8.2 The assessment also included the possible impacts on human health arising from dioxins and furans and dioxin like PCBs emitted from the proposed facility. This assessment also demonstrates that the impacts are negligible.
- 8.3 The impacts of the proposed development are therefore considered to be **Negligible** in terms of human health.

9 ACCIDENTS / NATURAL DISASTER

9.1 The ES provides an overview assessment of the Proposed Development against all potential manmade events or 'accidents' and naturally caused events or 'disasters' including those caused by climate change.

9.2 It concluded that the Proposed Development is not unusually vulnerable to accident or disaster, and that the day-to-day onsite management measures, enforced by the Environmental Permit, will be effective in ensuring the safety of the facility.

9.3 Furthermore, although it is recognised that the nearby Prefere Resins plant present significant offsite environmental risks, the high degree of regulation of the facility under the COMAH Regulations more than adequately mitigates the risk to an acceptable level.

9.4 The impacts of the proposed development are therefore considered to be **Negligible** in terms of accidents or natural disasters.

10 AIR QUALITY

10.1 Due to the nature of the development, air emissions have the most significant potential to impact the environment. Air emissions from the plant predominantly relate to combustion products, acid gases and halides.

10.2 The EIA included an assessment of local air quality impacts associated with the Proposed Development.

10.3 Consideration was given to the potential release of dust during construction, for example from earthworks, handling of soil and construction materials, and the movement of vehicles around the Site. The significance of potential effects from dust was assessed as negligible following the implementation of appropriate, routine best practice mitigation measures.

10.4 The facility will include a single rotating kiln equipped with boilers and abatement plant to reduce potential air quality emissions. Exhaust gases will be vented via a single 30m exhaust flue (chimney).

10.5 Consideration was given to potential air quality impacts arising during the operation of the facility, including via the flue and all diffuse emissions sources (doorways, transport etc.).

10.6 Detailed air quality modelling was undertaken to predict the impacts associated with the stack emissions (known as 'process contributions'). Emissions from the Proposed Development will be within limits identified in the Industrial Emissions Directive. The process contributions predicted at nearby sensitive human receptors were predicted to be negligible in most cases. Some minor impacts were identified for some metals in the 'worst case' scenario, however in practice and typical scenario effects are predicted to be not significant.

10.7 The potential impacts from emissions on sensitive wildlife sites were assessed and found to be insignificant.

10.8 Operational traffic movements, and the potential for odour to arise, from the facility were also considered. The impact of operational traffic associated with the Proposed Development was assessed as negligible.

10.9 No significant cumulative air quality effects are expected with the Proposed Development and the cumulative schemes. The assessments carried out in support of the ES and Environmental Permitting application conclusively demonstrate that the impact from the plant during both construction and operation will not have an adverse impact on the local and regional air quality or habitats.

10.10 The impacts of the proposed development are therefore considered to be **Negligible** in terms of air quality.

11 WATER QUALITY, HYDROLOGY AND FLOOD RISK

11.1 The EIA included an assessment of the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on the water environment in the local area. The key considerations are the potential effects on water quality, water resources, water supply, infrastructure flood risk and surface water drainage.

11.2 The key potential effects during the construction and operation of the Proposed Development include contamination arising from general construction activities or through routine site drainage. Mitigation has therefore been recommended through the preparation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). With these implemented, the risk of contamination to surface water and groundwater will be minimised.

11.3 The Site is not located within a floodplain and, therefore, there is little or no risk of the Site flooding from rivers or the sea. The Site is also not vulnerable to flooding from groundwater, sewers or reservoirs. Potential effects relevant to flood risk are associated with managing surface water runoff from the Site.

11.4 The Proposed Development will increase the overall impermeable area compared to the existing greenfield use; however, in line with current policy, the feasibility of a sustainable drainage system has been investigated, and surface water runoff will be managed to provide a negligible impact.

11.5 The key potential effects during the construction phase is the potential for contamination from general construction related activities and the operational phase is the contamination of controlled waters from routine site drainage. However, with the recommended mitigation measures in place, the residual effects are considered to be Negligible.

11.6 The impacts of the proposed development are therefore considered to be **Negligible** in terms of water quality, water resources, drainage and flood risk.

12 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT

- 12.1 The Site is a prepared plot within Merchant Park which is a does not lie within or close to a valued landscape subject to a protective designation. Merchant Park is designated within the Local Plan as a Prestigious Business Park and has outline planning permission for up to 900,000sq ft 83,600 sq m of new buildings. Currently the main completed development is the Hitachi Rail Europe train factory which occupies a large building immediately south of the Site.
- 12.2 An Environmental Statement was produced as part of the outline application for Merchant Park and this included a landscape and visual impact assessment based on parameters for large warehouse type buildings and the planning authority concluded that the predicted landscape and visual effects would be acceptable. One of the main reasons for this is that Merchant Park benefits from substantial mature woodland screening on the north and west sides. Subsequently the train factory, bunding and landscaping will screen the Proposed Development from views further south.
- 12.3 From the majority of the surrounding countryside the proposed building will be screened by the substantial perimeter woodland and the nearby Crumby's Plantation. The trees within the woodland are a similar height to the tallest part of the building, but the trees will push the angle of view elevation above the building in nearly all views (due to the lack of elevated viewpoints), the building will not be visible. While the flue will be 15m taller than the building, the angle of viewing elevation due to tree cover means that only the tip will be visible from the few potential vantage points within the surrounding countryside (mainly from a small area to the west). Since the flue is only 700 mm wide and the viewpoints are distant it will be a small and barely noticeable component within a wide panorama. No landscape mitigation to screen the building is required or proposed and it is impractical to screen the visible part of the flue in any views.
- 12.4 Residential areas lie a considerable distance from the Site and the proposed development will be screened by either intervening industry or tree cover. It is concluded that, overall, the proposed development will have no significant adverse effects on the visual amenity of residents.
- 12.5 It is concluded that the proposed development will **not result in any significant adverse** landscape or visual impacts.

13 CULTURAL HERITAGE

13.1 The EIA included an assessment of the potential effects upon the historic environment predicted to arise from the Proposed Development.

13.2 A review of baseline conditions, refined by field survey has identified around 67 designated heritage assets, recorded on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE), which may be subject to environmental effects. These assets hold national and regional significance. Two conservation areas, Heighington and Aycliffe Village fall within the vicinity of the Site to the west and east respectively.

13.3 An assessment of potential impacts upon NHLE recorded assets was undertaken. The Proposed Development will not impact, through direct physical interaction, upon the significance of the assets identified.

13.4 During the Construction Phase the Development will have a temporary residual impact of negligible to low magnitude upon the setting to a number of designated heritage assets although impact upon significance, as exhibited within these settings is assessed as minor adverse in extent and affect. Overall effects will be temporary in nature and subject to mitigation through implementation of a construction environmental management plan are considered insignificant in heritage terms.

13.5 During the Operational Phase the Development will have a residual impact of negligible to low magnitude upon the setting to a number of designated heritage assets. These impacts will primarily relate to the visual impact of the Development and will give rise to minor adverse impacts upon the identified assets/receptors.

13.6 In accordance with guidance set out within the 1990 Act and National Planning Policy Framework, the adverse residual impacts identified should be considered, with due weight attached to the nature and extent of harm assessed, in the context of the wider benefits of the Proposed Development. These benefits are set out within the Socio-Economic Chapter of the Environmental Statement.

14 CONCLUSIONS

14.1 Fornax Environmental Solutions Ltd is planning to submit a full planning application for construction and operation of a High Temperature Incineration facility for the secure thermal destruction of hazardous and clinical wastes.

14.2 The Facility comprises a purpose designed building, within which there would be a proven rotary kiln combustion technology along with waste storage and handling areas, and outside the building a new access, landscaping, and associated works.

14.3 In accordance with the EIA Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the Scoping Opinion issued by Durham County Council, this Environmental Statement has considered the main potential environmental effects of the proposal. It has concluded that no unacceptable adverse impacts will arise. In terms of principal statutory environmental constraints, the assessment work has concluded that the proposal will not affect any nationally or regionally important sites designated for nature, landscape of historical reasons.

14.4 The Proposed Development is not considered to have an adverse visual impact on the surrounding industrial landscape, on the amenity of neighbouring users, or the air quality of the surrounding.

14.5 In overall conclusion, it is considered that the proposal will not give rise to unacceptable environmental effects, and that the potential benefits of the scheme are substantial enough to clearly outweigh any potential negative features of the proposal.

14.6 The proposal is considered to be supported by the Local Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.