



DEVELOPMENT OF A SUSTAINABLE ENERGY PLANT.

KEMSLEY PAPER MILL, SITTINGBOURNE, KENT

**ST REGIS PAPER COMPANY LIMITED & E.ON
ENERGY FROM WASTE UK LIMITED**

ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

CHAPTER 2:

THE SITE AND ITS SETTING

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2 The Site and its Setting

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 This chapter of the Environmental Statement describes the physical and environmental characteristics of the scheme, site and surrounding environs. Other chapters of the Environmental Statement provide detailed descriptions of the application site in relation to particular environmental topics, providing “baseline” surveys against which the effects of the proposals may be evaluated.

2.2 General Location

2.2.1 The site (OS Grid reference 592070, 16651) is located on land adjacent to and immediately north east of the existing Kemsley Paper Mill as indicated in Figure 1.1. The site lies within the ward of Kemsley (0.85km to the south west) and Milton Regis (2.6km to the south west). Sittingbourne is approximately 2.5km south of the proposal site and is located centrally within north Kent. The town of Maidstone is 19.5km to the south west, and Gillingham is 15km to the west.

2.3 Site Description

2.3.1 The site lies on the industrial northern edge of Sittingbourne, which forms the largest settlement within the district of Swale. Development dates mainly from the 19th and 20th centuries, clustered around the A2 and railway which pass through the centre of the town. The rapidly expanding industrial and commercial district which extends from the edge of Sittingbourne north to Ridham Docks forms the immediate context to the site.

2.3.2 The proposal site extends to some 7.0 hectares of which 4.6 hectares is proposed built development, the extent of which is shown in Figure 1.2.

2.3.3 The Kemsley Mill site currently comprises a paper mill and associated infrastructure, including access, car parks and administration buildings.

2.3.4 The site is accessed from the A249 *via* Swale Way (Western Entrance) or from Swale Way onto Barge Way (Northern Entrance). An internal access road which runs to the south and east of the paper mill buildings provides access to Swale Way.

- 2.3.5 The proposed development site has been previously used for temporary storage and as a lay down area, with the wider area to the north comprising areas of reed bed. Other areas in close proximity to the site comprise mostly bare ground with sections of dense and scattered scrub together with semi-improved grassland, bounded by a sea wall protecting the land from the tidal effects of the Swale estuary. Signs of the historical 1970s paper mill waste tipping activity are evident in the surrounding land although the tips used have since been restored, profiled, capped and levelled and are covered by scrub vegetation and grassland. One tip to the south east of the site remains visible.
- 2.3.6 The Swale River lies to the east, separating the area of land on which the site sits from the Isle of Sheppey to the north. The route of a dismantled railway bisects the western and south western edge of the site as it runs southwards away from Ridham Dock. The topography of the site is shown on Figure 1.3.

2.4 Access and Right of Way

- 2.4.1 The site is accessed *via* the Swale Way section of the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road which, when complete will provide a route around the north of Kemsley and Sittingbourne to join the A2 at Bapchild. Swale Way (opened in 2005) serves a number of industrial uses in the area including Kemsley Mill, Morrisons, Knauf and Ridham Dock. Swale Way has a junction with the B2005 (A249 (T) to Sittingbourne) approximately 1.7km west of the site. The A249 (T) (Queensborough to M2) has junctions with both the A2 (Gillingham to Faversham) and M2 (Gillingham to A2) approximately 4.8km and 7.8km south west of the site respectively.
- 2.4.2 There are no public rights of way which cross the site. The closest footpath is the Saxon Shore Way long distance path which follows the top of the sea defences which line The Swale and Milton Creek. The path to the east of the proposal site extends along the Kent coastline throughout the Swale District.

2.5 The Surrounding Area

Residential Areas

- 2.5.1 There are no residential receptors located adjacent, or in close proximity to the site. The nearest properties are located approximately 730m to the south west of the site along the north eastern edge of Kemsley.

Ecological Designations

- 2.5.2 The land is disturbed and its character is heavily influenced by its location within the urban fringes of Sittingbourne. Consequently the site cannot be defined as wild. However, the adjoining open water, mud flats and salt marshes of the Swale have a wild character and provide a strong contrast to the site and its immediate context.
- 2.5.3 The site is not covered by any statutory nature conservation designations; however The Swale Estuary and Medway Estuary and Marshes cover a large area of land spreading from the north west round to the south east of the site. These areas are designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and are also internationally designated RAMSAR sites.
- 2.5.4 Located approximately 0.2km from the site, The Swale SSSI, SPA and RAMSAR site is the largest remaining area of freshwater grazing marsh in Kent and a good example of estuarine habitat. The Medway Estuary and Marshes SSSI, SPA and RAMSAR site forms the largest area of intertidal habitats in Kent and is located approximately 2km from the site. Both sites are internationally important for wintering wildfowl and waders.
- 2.5.5 Elmley Island, a National Nature Reserve (NNR) is located to the north east on the Isle of Sheppey, approximately 0.6km from the site. It provides grazing marsh and estuarine salt marsh habitat which attracts wintering wildfowl and waders.
- 2.5.6 The closest area designated for its nature conservation interest is the Milton Creek, Sittingbourne Site of Importance for the Nature Conservation (SINC), a local designation. The SINC is important for the existence of salt marsh, wet pasture and freshwater dykes. It lies approximately 0.2km to the south of the site at its closest point and covers a strip of land stretching southwards from the site towards Sittingbourne.

Historical/Archaeological Designations

- 2.5.7 A search of all designated and non-designated archaeological sites has shown no sites are recorded within the site boundary. No part of the site is situated within a Conservation Area, a registered Historic Park or Garden or a Historic Battlefield.
- 2.5.8 There are two Scheduled Ancient Monuments within a 2km radius of the site:
- 'Castle Rough' Medieval Moated Site
 - Murston Old Church, Sittingbourne

- 2.5.9 Eighteen additional Scheduled Ancient Monuments, 25 Grade 1 and 43 Grade 2* listed buildings are recorded within a 10km radius.

2.6 Landscape Character

Landscape Designations

- 2.6.1 There are no designated landscapes which lie within the site area. The Swale Borough Local Plan recognises that the coastal landscapes and coastal margins enhance the value of the Borough's landscape. This is supported, in part, by the designation of a Special Landscape Area which extends over the Swale and adjoining coastal landscape. The area includes the Chetney and Greenborough Marshes which adjoin the site and extend along Milton Creek. This area is valued for the open character of its landscape.
- 2.6.2 Other designated landscapes within the Borough include an Area of High Landscape Value approximately 1km to the south east of the site. This area of landscape lies inland of the marshes and coincides primarily with the Teynham Fruit Belt. The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty lies on high land approximately 10km to the south east of the site.

Land Use

- 2.6.3 The majority of the site is currently disused. The southern corner of the site contains a small area of storage for materials and vehicles with associated access tracks. Vegetation on site has occurred through natural colonisation and is unmanaged.

Topography

- 2.6.4 The proposal site and the majority of its surroundings are relatively flat and lie at approximately 5m AOD within the coastal plain of The Swale estuary. The tidal mud flats and shingle beaches of the Swale lie beyond the sea defences to the east. The restored landfill site immediately to the south rises to approximately 15m high. This man made landform forms an uncharacteristic and distinctive feature in the flat estuarine landscape. The land rises gradually over the Kent plains to the south before rising more steeply to form the North Downs, which rise to approximately 200m AOD 10km to the south.

Vegetation

- 2.6.5 The site supports a mixed range of ruderal weeds and woody vegetation which have colonised the most of this disused location. Dog rose (*Rosa canina*), elder

(Sambucus nigra), hawthorn (Crataegus monogyna) and silver birch (Betula pendula) up to approximately 3m high are scattered sporadically throughout the site.

Views

- 2.6.6 The site is currently concealed in views from the majority of the settlement of Sittingbourne by industrial development on the edge of the town and the restored landfill mound. To the north of the site, where views are less constrained, the Saxon Shore Way long distance footpath forms the closest visual receptor as it follows the alignment of the sea defences. Views can be gained from a section of path which extends approximately 2km north along the edge of the Swale from the site. The industrial edge of Sittingbourne forms a dominant urban influence within views from this section of the path and may therefore be less attractive to walkers.
- 2.6.7 Views of the site from the premises along the industrial edge of Sittingbourne would be fragmented by industrial development and gained by people at their place of work. The gently rising, open landscape of the Isle of Sheppey to the north east contains several small settlements, public rights of way and roads which provide views of the site. The industrial townscape of Sittingbourne is visible as an expanse of development along The Swale, of which the site forms a small fragment of disused land.
- 2.6.8 The Swale forms a transport corridor which defines the edge of Sittingbourne and divides the towns' industrial edge from the salt marsh, mudflats and open water of the estuary at Elmley Reach and Clay Reach. Views from occupants of vessels would be gained towards the site with a backdrop of dominant industry at Kemsley Paper Mill.

Existing Landscape and Townscape Character

- 2.6.9 The landscape and townscape character context is identified at different levels, with the Countryside Character Initiative (CCI) and English Nature's Natural Areas Map (1999) providing the broader framework to determine the character of the British countryside at a national level. Within the CCI character map, the 15km radius study area lies within Character Areas 81 Greater Thames Estuary, 113 North Kent Plain and 119 North Downs.

Local Landscape Character Assessment

- 2.6.10 The character of the local landscape within the Borough of Swale has been assessed as part of the Swale Landscape Character Assessment and Guidelines, March 2005. This assessment has identified 42 landscape character areas within the district. Those within 3km of the site include 01 Elmley Marshes, 02 Elmley Island, 06 South

Sheppey Marshes and Mudflats, 11 Chetney and Greenborough Marshes, 12 Lower Halstow Clay Farmlands, 14 Iwade Arable Farmlands, 26 Teynham Fruit Belts and 27 Luddenham and Conyer Marshes.

2.6.11 The proposal site forms part of the Sittingbourne urban area which lies outside any of the landscape character areas identified within the Swale Borough Councils assessment. However, the settlement which lies within the study area can be divided into 2 separate townscape character areas which display distinct characteristics, Sittingbourne Industrial/Commercial and Sittingbourne Residential. The following key characteristics of the townscape areas can be defined as follows;

- Large scale industrial development in flat topography adjoining The Swale.
- Complex skyline of built forms contrasting with strong vertical elements of stacks, pylons and cranes.
- Active, at times visually chaotic, townscape due to operations and construction activities.
- Noisy environment with HGV traffic and noxious odours.
- Smaller scale light industrial and commercial development adjoining Milton Creek.
- Rapidly changing and expanding character area with remnants of past industrial heritage.
- Extensive urban fringe having striking contrast with the adjoining natural landscape of The Swale.
- Linear tree belts and screens and blocks of scrub and woodland surrounding development.

Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation.

2.6.12 The Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation (May 2001) recognises that *“landscape is dynamic and constantly changing in a manner that reflects the immediate preoccupations, future aspirations and past activities of societies and individuals”*. Historic landscape characterisation identifies *“characteristic patterns of change and important relics of past change”*.

2.6.13 The site lies within Historic Landscape Character Area 17: Northern Horticultural Belt. Within this area the site lies within the Historic Landscape Type 12.4: Large Scale

Industry. At paragraph 4.36 the report states *“Although primarily rural in nature, Kent has a considerable quantity of industrial areas, abandoned or otherwise, which account for 1.78% of the county’s land surface. For the most part industrial activity tends to be confined to the areas adjacent to major urban centres, ie. east of Maidstone, although significant groupings can also be found in the coastal areas”*. The site is associated with the extensive strip of industrial land uses which form the northern edge of the settlement of Sittingbourne where it adjoins The Swale.

2.7 Planning History

- 2.7.1 The manufacture of paper in Sittingbourne has taken place for over 300 years. In 1924, Kemsley Mill was built as a way of expanding operations carried out at the Sittingbourne Mill. Kemsley Garden Village was built at the same time to house the mill workers.
- 2.7.2 The wider Mill site has a long and complex planning history with numerous planning consents having been approved and implemented since the 1970’s. There have been other major planning applications locally, but those planning consents considered to be most relevant to this proposed development are summarised in Tables 1 to 4 below:

Table 1: Combined Heat and Power (CHP) Plant

LPA Ref	Year	Description	Decision
SW/92/999	1992	An application made under S.36 of the Electricity Act 1989 for the Construction and operation of a combined heat and power gas turbine generating station.	Approved by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry 27.08.93
SW/98/0218	1998	Extension to existing CHP plant to deal with paper related wastes from Kemsley and Sittingbourne paper mills (County Matter).	Approved by Kent County Council 23.09.98
SW/00/0031	2000	Application pursuant to SW/98/218 to reduce the design capacity of the combustion plant	Approved by Kent County Council 07.04.00

Table 2: Kemsley Landfill Site

LPA Ref	Year	Description	Decision
SW/76/453	1976	Disposal of rubbish	Approved by Kent County Council 20.09.1977
SW/91/0793	1991	Re-application of planning permission for continued use of land for waste disposal	Approved by Kent County Council 28.01.93
SW/93/626	1993	Recontouring and extension of existing landfill site and restoration.	Approved by Kent County Council 11.04.94
SW/98/1026	1998	Extension of time to the waste disposal operations permitted at the existing Kemsley Landfill from 2003 to 2013.	Approved by Kent County Council 16.03.99

Table 3: Land to the North of Kemsley Mill

LPA Ref	Year	Description	Decision
SW/98/367	1998	Construction of hard standing for the storage of paper bales and overnight lorry parking, associated engineering works and erection of fencing and fire hydrants.	Approved by Swale Borough Council 03.11.98

Table 4: Land at Kemsley Mill

LPA Ref	Year	Description	Decision
SW/94/0064	1994	The construction of a paper recycling facility and associated facilities	Approved by Swale Borough Council 29.04.94
SW/04/1547	2004	Building to house raw material processing equipment and alterations to site perimeter road.	Approved by Swale Borough Council 16.12.04
SW/06/0013	2006	New distribution and transfer enclosure.	Approved by Swale Borough Council 06.01.06
SW/06/0824	2006	Building to house raw material processing equipment and alterations to site perimeter road.	Approved by Swale Borough Council 17.07.06

- 2.7.3 In September 1977, Kent County Council granted planning permission (reference SW/76/453) for the continued use of land adjoining the mill for the disposal of inert solid waste and other non-toxic wastes arising from the paper mill including mill effluent slurry, fly ash, wood bark, sawdust, hardboard strippings and waste paper. Applications SW91/0793, SW/93/626 and SW98/1026 have subsequently been granted by Kent County Council for retention of use, recontouring and extension of the landfill site and an extension of time to permit operations at the site from 2003 to 2013 respectively.
- 2.7.4 On 27 August 1993, the Secretary of State for the Department of Trade and Industry granted permission for the construction and operation of a Combined Heat and Power gas turbine generating station with a capacity of 80MW . The CHP plant replaced an existing coal-fired power station and associated boilers and was developed on an area of adjoining land to the east of the main mill complex.
- 2.7.5 The CHP plant comprises one gas turbine, two waste heat recovery boilers one steam turbine, ancillary equipment and buildings. The plant was commissioned in 1995, it is operated by E.ON and supplies heat and electricity to Kemsley Mill for St Regis Paper Company Limited.
- 2.7.6 In April 1994, Swale Borough Council granted planning permission (reference SW/94/0064) for the construction and operation of a paper recycling facility and associated facilities. This enabled the paper mill to receive waste paper from Kent and Greater London and incorporate the recycled paper pulp into the paper manufacture process.
- 2.7.7 The paper recycling facility occupies a large area of land located in the western segment of the main paper mill complex.
- 2.7.8 Kent County Council granted planning permission on 23 September 1998 (reference SW/98/218) which permitted an extension to the existing combined heat and power (CHP) plant to deal with paper related wastes from the Kemsley and Sittingbourne Paper Mills (now closed). The extension took place on an area of land located within the main CHP plant complex and comprises:
- PRW (fibrous sludge-cake) storage plant;
 - Fluidised bed combustion plant / boiler house;
 - Fabric filter building;
 - Two ash hoppers adjoining the waste storage plant; and
 - One 72m high chimney stack.

- 2.7.10 A further planning permission (reference SW/98/367) was granted on 3 November 1998, by Swale Borough Council, permitting the construction of an area of hardstanding for the storage of paper bales and overnight lorry parking. This now lapsed consent related to the area of land on which the new Sustainable Energy Plant is proposed.
- 2.7.11 In December 2004, Swale Borough Council granted planning permission (reference SW04/1547) for a building to house raw material processing equipment and alterations to the perimeter road. Application SW/06/0824 was for a similar proposal; however the alterations to the existing road went beyond minor alterations to the highway and incorporated a new road layout which skirted existing reservoirs close to the south eastern corner of the site. Application SW/09/0627 (Renewal of planning permission SW/06/0896) was approved in August 2009, enabling the existing car park (currently located to the south of the mill reception) to be extended and improved for disabled and visiting users.