

Sir

I'm writing in response to your recent stories about the planning application for an incinerator at Dunston as well as the more recent plans for a Waste Transfer Station at Corbriggs and the composting site at Arkwright.

Neither Dunston nor Arkwright are in my constituency, but smells, rats, and hazardous particulates know no constituency boundaries, so I feel duty bound to get involved.

The fact is, and everyone knows, that we are producing too much waste and we are wasting too much valuable energy.

It is for this reason that the government has set very high targets both for recycling and for carbon neutral energy production.

Everyone agrees that we should stop burying our waste in landfill sites, and everyone thinks that sources of 'green' energy are good. That's until we start getting into the detail of what the alternative should be and where it should be built.

The Cyclamax application at Dunston is the most controversial of these. Let me reiterate at this point that I agree wholeheartedly with the campaigners who are fighting against this incinerator being built so close to so many homes, schools and businesses.

Not only is the proposed 'new' technology unproven, but the increase in lorry movements bringing in industrial waste will undoubtedly have a negative impact on the local environment.

The meetings both at the Winding Wheel in Chesterfield as well as last week at the Dronfield Henry Fanshaw school were attended by concerned and frightened residents. Their vast numbers speak louder than their words.

This is the wrong application in the wrong place.

More recently, last week, I attended a public meeting of concerned residents in Grassmoor who object to a proposal for a Waste Transfer Station being built at Corbriggs. Again, the meeting was attended by over 100 very angry and weary people – they have been through all of this before.

Much of their anger comes from the fact that this part of northern Derbyshire has had a lifetime of being polluted and being dumped on. People have had enough.

Just because the Sheepbridge Industrial estate used to have heavy industry on it, just because Arkwright and Grassmoor have a mining heritage, doesn't mean that people want their communities to be dumping grounds for ever more.

North East Derbyshire is seeing projects such as the Eco-Dome at Unstone, the regeneration of Clay Cross, the beautiful Country Park at Grassmoor and now finally the clean-up of Grassmoor lagoons at a cost of £4.9 million.

The government (and that means the taxpayer) is spending £172 million to clean up the former coke works at The Avenue in Wingerworth – the most polluted site in Europe.

What is the point of any of these if we keep dumping rubbish on our land, and pumping filth into our air?

These are not matters that planners will take into consideration, but they should be.

We should all – residents, businesses and most of all those county councillors who sit on the planning committee – take a step back and look at the bigger picture.

A woman who attended the meeting at Grassmoor last week wrote to me suggesting that we combine the campaign groups from Dunston, Arkwright and Corbriggs and that we look at using Junction 29A more intelligently to deal with the composting, the waste transfer and the incineration. This new Junction is directly off the M1 (no lorries through villages) and it's miles away from homes and schools.

I agree.

Over the coming weeks, I will do all I can to get the three campaign groups working together. Ultimately, only people power will win the day. The more people there are and the more pressure they apply to the County Council, the more likely they are to win.

Thank you to all those people who have contacted me. Please keep writing so that I too can keep putting the pressure on.

Natascha Engel MP
North East Derbyshire