**PIPERS AREA RESIDENTS’ ASSOCIATION**

19th December 2014

To: Mr Andrew Brown

Planning Officer

Swindon Borough Council

cc Mr David Rudland

Environmental Health Officer

Swindon Borough Council

Dear Mr Brown,

**Planning Application S/14/1683: Installation of a Biomass Heating System at Units 11-14, Central Trading Estate.**

Thank you for contacting Pipers Area Residents’ Association requesting a statement of the association’s position on planning application S/14/1683.

We wish to object to this application. We believe that it should be rejected under Policy EN7 (Pollution) of the Local Plan 2026 which states that:

“Development that is likely to lead to emissions of pollutants such as noise, light, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust, grit or toxic substances that may adversely affect existing

development and vulnerable wildlife habitats, shall only be permitted where such emissions are controlled to a point where there is no significant loss of amenity for existing land uses, or

habitats.

4.3634.365 The policy is aimed at all forms of development including residential, retail, industrial and commercial premises, ensuring the protection of the environment from potentially polluting neighbours. In most cases this may entail controls placed on incoming development to ensure that the amenities of existing occupiers in the adjoining area are not adversely affected from potentially polluting neighbours.”

The boiler will be burning industrial waste – offcuts of MDF and laminated wood/paper/plastic products. The fumes and particulates from incomplete combustion of these products are known to cause eye, throat and chest irritation, and the formaldehyde which they contain is listed by WHO as a carcinogen. Melamine from worktop coatings is also an irritant when inhaled or in contact with the skin or eyes. Detailed statutory regulations are in place to protect the health of people handling these materials in the workplace.

These boilers are tricky to operate and the manufacturer has acknowledged that if they are not operated correctly, “smoke” will be produced. Mr Bennett of TT Manufacturing Ltd, who explained the processes to some members of the residents’ association, says that smoke will be produced every day for up to half an hour in the morning and at the end of the day, when the boiler is being fired up or dying down. The smoke indicates incomplete combustion and at this time noxious fumes will be being released.

The boiler is a basic model and will be fed by hand. It is hard to see how the necessary temperature will be maintained all day in this way.

The address of the factory is “Units 11-14”. This suggests that at some stage it took the place of four units which were the same size as the others in this industrial estate, which are appropriate to their surroundings.

The building is in a very small industrial estate closely surrounded by tightly packed houses. It is important to note that the building stands in the old railway cutting, so the mouth of the flue will not be at roof level: it will be at about ground level relative to surrounding houses. Any fumes generated will not be able to disperse quickly but will linger in the surrounding area. Since the industrial estate was built, the number of dwellings surrounding it has been greatly increased by the building of houses and blocks of flats in Dewell Mews, Strouds Close and most recently Station Approach. The wide access area for the garages behind the north side of St. Margaret’s Road and immediately adjacent to units 11-14 also attracts the many children living in the road.

In 1981 and 1982, planning permission was granted for erection of industrial units in Signal Way for **B1 class 3 use**. Under the legislation,  a B1(c) use, otherwise known as “light industrial” must be capable of being undertaken

"in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit".

Other industrial processes fall into the B2 category, unless they involve incineration or waste management, both of which seem to be involved in this case and for which there are special provisions. As the boiler will be producing smoke and fumes (at the least), surely it should not be located in an area designated for B1 use. Note that it is simply the “amenity” of the area which has to be protected – there does not have to be proof that residents’ health is being affected too, although we are concerned that it will be. According to the Department of the Environment, it is for local planning authorities to determine, in the first instance, depending on the individual circumstances of each case, which use class a particular use falls into. We hope that SBC planning department will decide that this boiler should not be allowed to operate in this particular “light industrial” area.

It is not possible to make this objection without referring to the history of the site, which shows that SBC Planning Department is well aware of the problems created by the unique nature of this site. The units were previously occupied by another shopfitting company, W. J. White’s.

Residents who lived close to Units 11-14 while W. J. White was there have referred, in their objections to the current planning application, to their experiences at that time. They refer to a high-pitched noise and an unpleasant smell, to dust on the windowsills, to nose and throat irritation and asthma attacks, and to requesting visits from the Environmental Health Officer. White’s had no biomass boiler but they had a dust extraction system. Companies cutting MDF and similar products are obliged by law to fit a dust extraction system to protect the health of their workers. Mr Bennett explained to PaRa that with the aim of keeping the noise down, tt solutions mean to install their system inside the building. He said that the noxious dust will be sucked in and the air will be filtered before it is expelled.

As the planning department will know, W. J. White’s were refused planning permission for a dust extractor three times in 1993 but they ran it anyway.  In 2006 a report by Dust Control Systems Ltd.  told  Whites that their dust extraction system had not been working properly, had not been safe for the workers and did not meet current legislation.   It was the filter system that was at fault. So they installed a new system, which was also denied planning permission the following year.  W.J. White’s moved away a couple of years later.

The plan attached to the 2007 closure order shows the old dust extraction unit external to the building. It is situated very close to the gardens of two residents who have contracted throat cancer (they are still living in the same houses); at the same end of the road, a boy was diagnosed with the same problem after moving away from the street. It is not surprising that residents are worried about the health effects they may suffer if the biomass boiler and the dust extraction system are allowed to operate. We believe that both should be disallowed on this site under the provisions of the Local Plan and the conditions of B1 (c) light industrial use.

The planning application form has not been very carefully completed. Against Paragraph 13 “Biodiversity and Geological Conservation”, the applicants have put “N/A” . However, the site is within 50 metres of the border of the Railway Path SSSI and 500 metres of the Great Quarry SSSI. The unique fossil-rich rock faces for which these SSSIs were listed are vulnerable to corrosion caused by pollution in rain and in the air. The air quality in Devizes Road is monitored by SBC and is among the worst in the town. We should be trying to avoid any new source of air pollution in this area.

Against Paragraph 20, “Hours of Opening”, the applicants have put ”Monday to Friday 6 – 6” but in another note to SBC they have stated that there may also be some night shifts and Saturday morning working. “Noise, disturbance and smells” would be particularly unwelcome at these times.

Taking into account all these very serious considerations, we trust that Swindon Borough Council will reject this application. We believe that it should be rejected under the provisions of the Local Plan 2026 and the restrictions on B1 (c) light industrial use.

Yours sincerely,

Colin Doubleday

Chairman

Linda Kasmaty

Secretary

Jane Milner-Barry

Committee Member

on behalf of

Pipers Area Residents’ Association