The need for a new Waste Management Centre in Bridport is well known and accepted locally, however the location for a new facility proved difficult to identify. Naomi Harvey from Nicholas Pearson Associates summarises the extensive review process.

The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 and local planning policy make it clear that the consideration of alternative sites can be an important part of the EIA process (where alternative sites have been considered). It should be undertaken at the beginning of a project and not as an afterthought! How many alternative sites and how they should be considered is not straightforward and can vary greatly between schemes.

This article focuses on the Review of Alternative Sites process undertaken for the Bridport Waste Management Centre (WMC) scheme in Dorset. Dorset County Council (DCC) has a responsibility to provide local facilities to deposit waste collected from households and for the provision of Household Recycling Centres (HRC) where residents are able to deposit their bulky household waste and recycling. Dorset Waste Partnership (DWP) is a partnership of DCC and the seven district councils, and is responsible for running waste collection, management, recycling and disposal services in the county of Dorset.

The proposal was for a Waste Transfer Station (WTS), to bulk up kerbside collections and an HRC. The existing HRC in Bridport only has a temporary permission and is the smallest in the county at only 100m x 20m, the first 35m of which accommodates the access road, a small office and staff parking. Due to complaints from neighbours the opening hours were reduced in 2011 to the facility being closed on a Sunday and open a half day on Saturday for green waste collection only.

In order to meet local recycling and waste targets a new facility is desperately needed in the west of the county. The search for a new site began back in the 1990’s and since then 6 studies have been undertaken.

The whole of Bridport and the surrounding area is located within the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The need argument centred around a shift away from landfill and the need for facilities to be located close to where the waste/recycling is generated, i.e. the proximity principle in the Waste Framework Directive. Therefore looking for potential sites outside of the AONB was not practicable.

Sites have been identified throughout the process in several ways, including:

- Sites allocated in the Waste Local Plan;
- Sites complying with the WMC locational criteria in the Waste Local Plan 2006 (Policy 30), for example on land or within buildings previously used for employment/industrial type uses;
- Sites identified by members of the public, including through public exhibitions.

After the first 5 assessments, the Council’s preferred site was located to the north of Bridport. There was strong local opposition to this site. Nicholas Pearson Associates (NPA) was commissioned to review the previous assessments to ensure site selection reflected the current planning policy context and current best practice.

The study undertaken by NPA, Robert LeClerc Consulting and IMA Transport Planning in 2009/2010 reviewed 40 sites in total. The sites were reviewed against the locational criteria set out in Annex E of PPS 10 Planning for Sustainable Waste Management:\(^1\)

- Protection of water resources
- Land instability
- Visual intrusion
- Nature conservation
- Historic environment and built heritage
- Traffic and access
- Air emissions, including dust
- Odours
- Vermin and birds

\(^1\) PPS10 has not been revoked by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012) and is still in force until the new National Waste Management Plan is published.
Review Process
Stage 1
Stage 1 considered 32 sites, including those identified in the previous assessments. The sites were reviewed against the PPS10 locational criteria and scored either 1, 2 or 3. A score of 1 represented a significant constraint and 3 represented compliance with the criteria. Any site with a score of 1 was eliminated, including any site with access onto the A35 due to the Highways Agency’s objection in principle. Three sites were also eliminated as one was known to be unavailable, one had a restrictive covenant and one was subject to a planning application for a supermarket.

Stage 1A
Stage 1A considered additional sites identified through public consultation in 2009 and reviewed them against the PPS10 locational criteria. This stage also reconsidered the sites accessed off the A35. A scoping study undertaken by IMA Transport Planning was submitted to the Highways Agency which set out traffic flows on the A35 and provided potential access proposals and improvements for each site. Through discussions with the Highways Agency, sites with an existing access off the A35 were identified as potentially acceptable; however nil detriment to the road network and safety compliance would need to be proven. This report shortlisted 6 sites to be assessed in more detail in the Stage 2 report.

Stage 1A Addendum
The neighbouring property to a site was contacted in an attempt to identify the owner. Although they were not the owner they identified some of their own land as a potential site. This was then also reviewed against the PPS10 locational criteria and put through to Stage 2.

Stage 2
Stage 2 considered the 7 shortlisted sites against the locational criteria in more detail. In addition, an initial review of utilities on site and the broad costs associated with developing each site were considered. Three sites were identified as having the most potential for development, however the site at Broomhills to the south of the town was considered as having ‘a greater potential for successful delivery’.

Through the process described above there has been a comprehensive review of potential alternative sites, extensive discussions with the Highways Agency and local planning officers and local people have been involved in the process.

A planning application was submitted in October 2013. NPA co-ordinated the scheme design and the planning application, including Planning Drawings, Design and Access Statement, Environmental Statement, Transport Assessment, Flood Risk Assessment, Planning Statement and ES Non Technical Summary. This involved managing the interactions between the multi-disciplinary design team.

NPA produced the overall scheme design working closely with Dorset County Council engineers, and the wider design team. As well as co-ordinating the submission, we prepared the Landscape and Visual and Ecological Assessment chapters of the ES, the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan, the Design and Access Statement and the Non Technical Summary.

The application was granted planning permission in January 2014.

This has been the most challenging and thorough review of alternative sites I have been involved with. As always, there are many local people who agree with the findings of the review and many who think Broomhills is the wrong site. I suppose you can’t always please all of the people all of the time!

This article was written as a contribution to the EIA Quality Mark’s commitment to improving EIA practice. Naomi Harvey is an Environmental Planner at Nicholas Pearson Associates, an Associate Member of IEMA, an Associate EIA Practitioner and a Graduate member of CIWEM. The input of the client and all of the consultants who contributed to the Review of Alternative Sites is acknowledged.