

## Planning permission for controversial waste plant in Mallusk, County Antrim, refused by North of Ireland Infrastructure Minister



An artist's impression of the proposed Arc21 incinerator, one of the major planning applications stuck in the system

*By Christopher Leebody*

Planning permission for the development of a controversial £240m waste facility for the North of Ireland has been refused by the Infrastructure Minister Ms Nichola Mallon. The decision came amid a series of planning announcements by the minister on Sunday.

The arc21 proposal was planned to see the facility built at Hightown Quarry in Mallusk, with proposals for 455 jobs during its construction and around 337 direct and indirect once completed. The site at the former quarry was expected to burn some 300,000 tonnes per year of municipal waste.

However, Ms Mallon said as it was a regionally significant planning application, the final decision rests with her, and she cited 5,000 objections to the plans as part of why she made the rejection. *"I consider that this development for a residual waste treatment facility in the former Hightown Quarry of Boghill Road should be refused"*, she said.

*"I have carefully considered all the information before me and I have listened to the concerns of local people and their public representatives. There have been in excess of 5000 objections to this application. My priorities for this assembly mandate were to improve lives, connect communities, grow a balanced economy and tackle the climate emergency. In respect of the latter, I am committed to climate action, and promoting recycling is an important aspect in that regard.*

*"This development could result in an increased market for waste disposal and to maintain a facility such as this, in addition to the other approved waste facilities, could discourage recycling. I am not persuaded that there is a need for this specific facility. In that context I do not consider there to be any need for this proposal."*

Alliance Party MLA Mr John Blair welcomed the decision, claiming it was a *"result of sustained pressure by the local community and cross-party opposition across south Antrim and north Belfast"*.

SDLP councillor Ms Roisín Lynch also believes it's *"an incredible result for all of the campaigners who have tirelessly worked to protect communities in Mallusk and across County Antrim that would have suffered if this incinerator project went ahead"*.

"Arc21" is the name of the waste management group acting on behalf of 6 district councils in the north-eastern part of the North of Ireland, with the project at Hightown first proposed around nine years ago. Arc21 was approached for a response to the decision.

<https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/planning-permission-for-controversial-northern-ireland-waste-plant-in-mallusk-refused-by-infrastructure-minister-41492341.html>