

**THREE RIVERS DISTRICT**

**APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMISSION FOR A HOUSEHOLD WASTE SITE ON LAND ADJACENT TO THE EXISTING WATERDALE TRANSFER STATION, A405 NORTH ORBITAL ROAD, GARSTON, NR WATFORD.**

Report of the Director of Environment

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Local Member:- P Goggins  
[Adjoining Member A Lee]

**1. Purpose of Report**

To consider planning application ref. 8/1018-01 for a household waste and recycling centre adjacent to the existing Waterdale transfer station on the A405 at Garston, Watford.

**2. Summary**

- 2.1 The application seeks planning permission for a split level household waste site at which members of the public deposit waste at the upper level and where containers are serviced at the lower level. General (residual) waste would be taken directly to the adjacent 'tipping hall' of the Waterdale Transfer Station. The operation proposes the generation of a maximum of 20 lorry movements (10 in and 10 out) per day but that on average 10 lorry movements (5 in and 5 out) would be generated.
- 2.2 However, the significant traffic generator of the operation would be members of the public bringing waste to the site in their cars. Concern has been expressed regarding the possibility of queuing traffic on the A405 and therefore it has been suggested that a warning sign should be erected as part of the road works.
- 2.3 The applicant has applied for hours of operation between 6am – 8pm Monday to Sunday specifically to avoid problems of queuing at the site and so that the actual opening hours of the facility can be adjusted within this time band to take account of seasonal trends and periods of higher usage. This is considered to be acceptable in this location as it would not adversely effect any residential properties.
- 2.4 The views of Three Rivers District Council are awaited at the time of writing the report.

- 2.4 The main issues in considering this application relate to the location of this site within the Green Belt, the need for this facility given problems at existing sites within the south west of the County and the supportive stance of Waste Local Plan Policies and Central Government Guidance for facilities that encourage recycling, re-use and composting.

### **3. Conclusion**

- 3.1 The development as proposed is inappropriate development within the Green Belt, however special circumstances have been shown that warrant the development of Green Belt land in this instance. The proposal also accords with Government Strategy to increase recycling and locally will provide a facility to help Hertfordshire as a County realise its statutory waste recycling targets.
- 3.2 It is not considered that the facility will significantly impact on the environment outside the boundaries of the site, given its location between two major highways and its proximity to one of the largest waste transfer facilities in the country.
- 3.3 The report therefore concludes that, subject to no intervention from the Secretary of State, the Director of Environment should be authorised to grant planning permission, subject to appropriate conditions to include:
- completion of site access works prior to the use of the site commencing;
  - a landscaping scheme utilising native species;
  - safeguards on noise, dust, odour and litter generation;
  - hours of operation;
  - submission of drainage details;
  - erection of adequate signage on the A405, and
  - suitable areas for parking, storage and delivery of materials that do not interfere with the use of the public highway.

## **1. Description of the site and proposed development**

- 1.1 The application proposes the construction of a household waste (civic amenity) site on a piece of land to the south west of Bricket Wood. The application site is 1 hectare in size and is adjacent to an existing County Council operated waste transfer station. The site is located to the east of the A405 North Orbital Road and to the west of the M1, just south of Junction 6.
- 1.2 The site is situated within a triangular area of land with two sides being formed by the A405 and the M1 and the third side by the Waterdale waste transfer station. Currently, part of the application site is used as a maintenance depot with the rest of area consisting of grassland and un-managed trees and shrubs. Access to the site would be via the existing access from the A405 that is used by vehicles entering and egressing the transfer station facility.
- 1.3 The application proposes the development of a split-level household waste site at which members of the public can deposit waste at the upper level and where the containers are serviced at the lower level. This type of design has the advantages that it keeps the public and servicing operations separate, avoids the need for the site to be closed for servicing (emptying the waste receptacles) and also avoids members of the public having to climb steps to deposit waste. It is stated in the application that the emphasis of this facility would be towards the separation of materials for recycling or re-use.
- 1.4 Material that cannot be re-used or recycled (residual waste) would be transferred directly from the lower level of the household waste site to the adjacent 'tipping hall' of Waterdale transfer station for onward transfer to the disposal facility. It is proposed that the operation would generate a maximum of 20 lorry movements (10 in and 10 out) per day, although on average it is anticipated 10 movements (5 in and 5 out) would be generated.
- 1.5 The proposed development also includes an office/messroom to accommodate site staff, with up to ten members of staff working at weekends. The office would have approximate dimensions of 6m x 3.9m x 3m high, constructed from painted galvanised steel and would be connected permanently to utility services for foul drainage, water and electricity. The site would be secured by 2.4m high palisade fencing and lockable gates (colour coated green). The application proposes that the former area of redundant highway would form an additional area of landscaping to offset the trees and shrubs removed from the main part of the site.
- 1.6 The proposed hours of operation are 6am – 8pm Monday to Sunday. The applicant has specifically requested that the hours of operation are not too restrictive in order that operational hours may be adjusted within this time band to account for seasonal variations and periods of higher usage. The application states that the facility is unlikely to remain open for the full period.
- 1.7 The application site is located within the Green Belt.

## 2. Consultations

- 2.1 Three Rivers District Council are due to consider the application on 13 September and their response will be reported orally. Three Rivers Environmental Health consider that there are very few environmental drawbacks to this development at this location, which appears ideal in terms of proximity to users and distance from sensitive local residents. They also state that the environmental benefits of a local recycling facility more than offset the minimal impacts of lorry movements and that the proposed hours of operation should not be problematic. However they do state that at similar facilities litter blown off site has been a problem and therefore recommend that planting shrubs and trees at the perimeter may solve this problem and has the additional benefits of screening the site and deterring intruders.
- 2.2 St Albans City and District Council as adjoining local authority welcome the proposal as providing a much needed facility in a location where there is good vehicular access and unlikely to be any significant detriment to local amenity.
- 2.3 The County Council - Highway Authority do not wish to restrict the grant of permission subject to conditions relating to the access works being completed prior to the use commencing, adequate signs being provided on the A405 to indicate potential vehicle queuing on the approach to the access and parking and storage areas to be provided within the site on land which is not public highway or does not interfere with the use of the public highway.
- 2.4 Thames Water have no objection to the proposal
- 2.5 The views of the Highways Agency, the Environment Agency and Abbots Langley Parish Council are still awaited and will be reported orally.
- 2.6 St. Stephen Parish Council (adjoining Parish) consider that: when designing layout, signing and speed limits, safety implications should be top priority; although it appears that there is sufficient queuing space, they are concerned that future closures of smaller, less efficient sites could cause congestion on the A405; the opening times are excessive - in the winter months and on Sundays 9.00am to 4.00pm would be more realistic and safer for users.
- 2.6 Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre comment that as the new development is based around the existing tarmaced surface refusal could not be recommended on ecological grounds. It is suggested that the existing shrub and tree cover is maintained and reinforced as necessary by native species so as to retain the wildlife corridor feature.
- 2.7 Bricket Wood Residents' Association have concern that as the facility is likely to prove popular, that there is sufficient workable space available within the site to ensure the queues to use the facility do not obstruct the free flow of traffic on the A405. They also state that as there are existing traffic congestion problems in the area, that the hours of operation do not exacerbate the traffic jams and subsequent 'rat-running' through residential areas.

- 2.8 Local residents and businesses - the occupiers of eight properties in the vicinity of the application site and one adjoining landowner were consulted on the application. At the time of writing this report one letter of representation has been received that raises concern that the development would increase traffic on the slip road egress from the site which may be in conflict with the access for Brookdell Yard.

### **3. Planning Considerations**

- 3.1 In considering this application the main issues relate to the location of this facility within the Green Belt, the supportive stance of Waste Local Plan Policies and Government advice for facilities that aim to recycle and re-use waste materials and the need for this facility in this location.

- 3.2 The relevant development plan policies are:

Structure Plan Policy 5, Three Rivers Local Plan Policy GB1, Waste Local Plan Policy 16 (green belt)

Structure Plan Policy 55 (waste management)

Waste Local Plan Policy 2 (need)

Waste Local Plan Policy 13 (facilities for waste management facilities outside preferred areas of search)

Waste Local Plan Policy 18 (safeguarding of waste management facilities)

Waste Local Plan Policy 10 (waste separation and storage facilities at existing and new residential and industrial areas)

The report will address whether the general presumption against inappropriate development within the Green Belt is outweighed by the benefits and need for this type of facility.

#### Green Belt

- 3.3 The application site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt as defined within the Three Rivers District Plan Review 1991 (adopted 25 August 1993) and also in the emerging Three Rivers Local Plan 1996-2011 (deposit draft).

- 3.4 Policy 5 of the Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991-2011 states that there is a presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt, except in very special circumstances, for purposes other than those detailed in PPG2 'Green Belts'. A similar policy is contained in the adopted Three Rivers District Plan, GB1, which states *inter alia* that within the Green Belt the construction of new buildings and engineering operations, will be refused except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 3.12 of PPG2 states that:-

*'...The carrying out of such operations and the making of material changes in the use of land are inappropriate development unless they maintain openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt.'*

- 3.5 The application proposes the placement of a permanent portacabin style building as well as waste containers (30 cubic metre capacity), the erection of palisade fencing (2.4m high) and 10 metre high lighting/cctv columns. Although the site is located within a triangular piece of land between two main highways, this development would not maintain the openness of the Green Belt in this location and it is therefore considered to constitute inappropriate development. Paragraph 6.28 of the adopted Waste Local Plan reiterates this point as it states that amongst the range of waste management uses only waste disposal by landfilling to restore a mineral void, raising land which would result in improvement and composting on a less than industrial scale could be appropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 3.6 Paragraph 3.2 of PPG2 states that inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development will not exist unless the harm caused by reason of inappropriateness is clearly outweighed by other considerations. In addition, Waste Local Plan Policy 16 states that the use of land in the Green Belt for the re-use, recovery, recycling and storage of waste will not be permitted unless it maintains openness and does not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. It continues to state that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt for such purposes will not be permitted except in very special circumstances.
- 3.7 At present the application site cannot be said to contribute to the wider openness of the Green Belt, particularly as part of the site is currently used as a highways depot. Developing this land would not conflict with the five purposes of including land within the Green Belt as set out in paragraph 1.5 of PPG2, however, very special circumstances still need to be demonstrated to warrant the setting aside of Green Belt policy in this instance.

#### Special Circumstances

- 3.8 The facility has been designed to place emphasis on the separation of materials so they can be recycled, re-used or composted. Policy 55 of the Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review states that facilities further up the hierarchy of waste management will receive more favourable consideration. Advice contained in the Government's Waste Strategy 2000 reiterates this policy and also sets targets and goals for local authorities who are responsible for disposing of waste (Waste Disposal Authorities). Hertfordshire County Council as the Waste Disposal Authority has the target to double their 1998/99 recycling rate by 2003. It is considered that this facility will play a key role in the realisation of the County Council's statutory waste recycling targets.
- 3.9 The facility would satisfy Structure Plan Policy 55 because it provides an opportunity for waste materials to be separated for their onward transition for re-use, to appropriate recycling facilities or to composting facilities and as such enables the removal of the recyclable element of the waste stream, thereby reducing the amount of waste to be sent to final disposal at landfill sites.

- 3.10 Waste Local Plan Policy 13 sets out criteria for waste management facilities outside preferred areas of search. In this instance, it is considered that this proposal accords with the criteria set out in Waste Local Plan Policy 13, as there will be a minimal impact on the local and natural environment. The application includes proposals to landscape with trees and shrubs the area of redundant highway to the north of the site to compensate for those removed within the area of the development.
- 3.11 The proposal also accords with Waste Policy 13 as the site is accessed off the main road network and serves Hertfordshire's main population and employment areas. It is anticipated that the catchment area for the site will include urban areas in close proximity such as Bricket Wood, Abbots Langley and North Watford but will also capture people from further away who will use the site as an alternative to queuing at Hunton Bridge, Elstree or Watford. The proposal is in a suitable location to serve a large population because of its proximity and access to the highway infrastructure. In addition, the proposal is also in accordance with Waste Policy 13, as it lies adjacent to the existing Waterdale Transfer Station.
- 3.12 Waste Local Plan Policy 18 seeks to safeguard the existing Waterdale waste transfer station. Developing a household waste site adjacent to this safeguarded facility would therefore be appropriate as the two uses are compatible as neighbours and it provides the advantage that the household waste site can utilise the adjacent facility for removal of the residual waste collected without the need for additional journeys on the public highway.
- 3.13 The proposal accords with Waste Local Plan Policy 10, which states that the County Council will encourage proposals for establishing, in appropriate circumstances and locations, source separation and storage facilities for waste generated in existing and proposed dwellings and groups of dwellings.
- 3.14 This compliance with Structure Plan and Waste Local Plan Policies as indicated above, contributing to increasing the amount of waste material recycled in accordance with Central Government advice and targets and contributing generally to the sustainable principle of recycling is considered to be a special circumstance.

#### Need

- 3.15 The application has highlighted that there is a twofold need for this facility in this location. Firstly, the County Council has a statutory duty to provide places at which 'person resident in its area may deposit their household waste' (household waste sites). There are currently no household waste sites in close proximity to this location, with the nearest sites located at Elstree, Hunton Bridge and Watford. Secondly, these existing sites are finding it increasingly difficult to deal with the numbers of people using these sites. This is resulting in complaints being received from local residents regarding the queuing of vehicles outside the site, which is also exacerbated by the fact that these sites

have to be temporarily closed during site servicing (the exchange of waste containers) for health and safety purposes. With the recognised continued rise in the generation of municipal waste the pressure on these sites can only increase and it is therefore considered that there is a need for an additional facility to take the pressure off all three of the above mentioned sites.

- 3.16 The established need for this facility in this location accords with the aim of Waste Local Plan Policy 2 and contributes to the special circumstances that are considered sufficient to warrant the setting aside of Green Belt Policy in this instance.

#### Highways Issues

- 3.17 At other household waste sites within the County, the queuing of vehicles outside the site waiting for the site to open or whilst the waste containers are emptied is one of the most significant problems. This facility proposes to overcome this problem by seeking hours of operation that allow the site to open from 6am – 8pm Monday to Sunday. This gives a wider period of time than usual for members of the public to visit the site. These hours of operation are considered to be appropriate for this facility in this location, as it would not adversely affect any residential properties. In addition, the fact that the waste containers can be emptied from the lower level avoids the necessity for the site to close during servicing. The geometric layout of the site will also allow adequate space for up to 50 cars to queue into the site when the first set of access gates (those by the mini-roundabout) are opened. These three factors combined should help to avoid queuing traffic on the A405 emanating from this site.

- 3.18 However, the County Council as Highway Authority have still expressed concern over possible queuing and therefore recommend a “Possible Queue” warning sign along the A405 on the approach to the site.

#### Environmental Safeguards

- 3.19 It is not considered that there will be significant environmental impacts arising from this facility given its location adjacent to one of the largest waste transfer stations in the country and also because of its position between the M1 and A405. Noise levels from the site are unlikely to be perceptible outside the site above the working of the waste transfer station and the noise from traffic using the M1 and A405. Further it is considered that dust, odour or litter generation are unlikely to cause significant problems. However, it is considered necessary to have appropriate conditions in place that allow for the mitigation of any potential problems should they arise.

#### Ecological Issues

- 3.20 Three Rivers Environmental Health officers have commented that planting around the perimeter of the site has the three-fold benefit of helping to prevent litter escaping the site, providing screening and deterring intruders. At present

the site benefits from trees and shrubs around the perimeter of the site, however this could be augmented where required, specifically at the northern boundary of the site where the old road exists at present. Hertfordshire Biological Records have commented that there is a well-established wildlife corridor running along the eastern edge of the site beside the M1 and they would be concerned if this was disrupted for aesthetic purposes. In light of this it is considered appropriate that the existing shrub and tree cover along the eastern side is maintained and reinforced where necessary by native species to retain the wildlife corridor feature.

#### **4. Conclusions**

- 4.1 The report concludes that the development as proposed is inappropriate development within the Green Belt, however special circumstances have been shown that warrant the development of Green Belt land in this instance. The special circumstances relate to the site's location within an existing waste management facility, the proposal according with to the aims of Waste Local Plan Policies 2 and 13 as there is a clearly established need for this facility and it meets criteria for the development of a waste management facility outside a preferred area. The proposal also accords with the Government's strategy to increase recycling and locally will provide a facility to help Hertfordshire as a County realise its statutory waste recycling targets.
- 4.2 It is not considered that the facility will significantly impact on the environment outside the boundaries of the site, given its location between two major highways and its proximity to one of the largest waste transfer facilities in the country. However it is still considered that appropriate conditions be attached to any planning permission to mitigate any potential environmental impacts of the facility.
- 4.3 The report concludes that, subject to no intervention from the Secretary of State, the Director of Environment should be authorised to grant planning permission, subject to appropriate conditions to include a landscaping scheme utilising native species, safeguards on noise, dust, odour and litter generation, hours of operation, drainage details to be submitted and completion of site access works prior to the use of the site commencing, erection of adequate signage on the A405 and suitable areas for parking, storage and delivery of materials that do not interfere with the use of the public highway.

#### **5. Financial implications**

- 5.1 This is an application for the County Council's own development under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992 and so there are no financial implications for this Committee.

#### **Background information used by the author in compiling this report**

Planning application reference 8/1018-01

Consultation responses and representations received in response to planning application ref. 8/1018-01.

Hertfordshire County Structure Plan Review 1991-2011

Three Rivers District Plan Review 1991, Adopted 25 August 1993

Three Rivers Local Plan 1996-2011 (deposit draft).

Hertfordshire Waste Local Plan 1995-2005, Adopted January 1999

Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 'Green Belts'

Waste Strategy 2000 – England and Wales