

EAST HERTS DISTRICT

**APPLICATION FOR THE TEMPORARY STORAGE OF CLAY REQUIRED FOR
ENGINEERING AND RESTORATION AT THE SOUTHFIELD WOOD LANDFILL
SITE, LAND AT WATERHALL EAST, WATERHALL QUARRY COMPLEX,
HERTFORD**

Report of the Director of Environment

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Local Member: B Hammond

1. Purpose of the report

To consider planning application 3/1502-01 for the temporary storage of clay required for engineering and restoration at the Southfield Wood Landfill site, on land at Water Hall East, Water Hall Quarry.

2. Summary

2.1 Water Hall East forms part of the Water Hall Quarry Complex, which is located 4km to the south west of Hertford. The complex runs parallel to the River Lee and B158 Lower Hatfield Road, within the Lee Valley. It is an active sand and gravel extraction and landfill site that has been operational since the 1940s. The Quarry Complex is comprised of four distinct areas, Water Hall Quarry, Southfield Wood, Bunkers Hill Quarry and Pollards Quarry. Water Hall East is located west of Grotto Wood and south of the haul road.

2.2 The proposal is to store clay arising from the extraction operations at Southfield Wood quarry and landfill which is required to form the lining of the landfill cells. The application is partially retrospective, as some storage of clay has already taken place within the Quarry in the area of the proposed development.

2.3 The main issues to be considered are the requirements for the storage of clay to be used in lining of the Southfield Wood landfill, the use of recently restored land and the landscape impact of the proposal in the locality.

3. Conclusion

3.1 The proposal is not considered acceptable as it would result in the loss of an area of previously restored land for a period of 5 years and is in a prominent location visually. The need for storage of clay necessary for the permitted landfill operations is however

acknowledged and there may be opportunities within the active Southfield quarry and landfill site. The unauthorised bunding alongside the haul road should be regularised .

3.2 The report therefore concludes that, the Director of Environment should be authorised to:

(i) refuse planning permission for the following reasons:

- the proposal would result in the loss of an area of previously restored land for 5 years;
- the site is prominent in the local landscape and therefore detrimental to visual amenity.

(ii) invite the applicant to submit proposals to regularise the unauthorised bunding along the haul road;

(iii) invite the applicant to consider the potential for storage of clays within the active Southfield Wood Quarry site.

1. Description of the site and proposed development

- 1.1 Water Hall East forms part of the Water Hall Quarry Complex, which is located 4km to the south west of Hertford. The complex runs parallel to the River Lee and B158 Lower Hatfield Road, within the Lee Valley. It is an active sand and gravel extraction and landfill site that has been operational since the 1940s. The Quarry Complex is comprised of four distinct areas, Water Hall Quarry, Southfield Wood, Bunkers Hill Quarry and Pollards Quarry. Water Hall East is located west of Grotto Wood and south of the haul road.
- 1.2 The application is for the temporary storage, at Water Hall East, of approximately 65,000m³ of clay that arises from extraction of sand and gravel within Southfield Wood Quarry. Southfield Wood has planning permission for the extraction of sand and gravel and restoration to agriculture by infilling with Categories A, B and certain category D wastes. The landfill of these categories of wastes requires containment in order to provide environmental protection e.g. prevention of leachate polluting ground water and migration of landfill gas. Containment is provided by lining the cells with clay that is engineered to a standard approved by the Environment Agency. The sequence of material at the Southfield Wood is top and sub soils, some sand and gravel, then brown clay, then grey clay, then sand and gravel which lies over the chalk bedrock. The clay lining cannot be placed until sand and gravel has been extracted from over the underlying chalk.
- 1.3 The need to temporarily store engineering clay was recognised in the original design of the Southfield Wood site. It was originally proposed that the clay would be transported to Pollards for temporary storage and the transported back to Southfield Wood when needed for lining and restoration.
- 1.4 It is now proposed to store up to 65,000m³ of brown and grey clay on an area of 4.1 hectares within the northern part of Water Hall East. All the clay would be transported to the storage area this year (2001) and removed during 2005 and 2006, to be used in the latter stages of restoration of Southfield Wood Quarry.
- 1.5 It is proposed to store clay to a maximum height of 74 metres AOD, ensuring that it is no higher than the height of the existing screening bund around the edge of Water Hall East. This would ensure that existing views from properties to the north are not affected.
- 1.6 Topsoils would be stripped separately from the storage area and stored within the storage areas, close to its perimeter, prior to their replacement. Clay would be transported to the area by dump truck and spread out across the area using a bulldozer. The clay would be stored to a depth 1-4m. The topsoils would be replaced on the stored clay, by hydraulic excavator and bulldozer and the area cultivated and sown with a grass/clover mix.
- 1.7 The hours of operation proposed by the applicant are between

07.00 hours and 18.00 hours Monday to Friday; and
07.00 hours and 13.00 hours Saturdays
No working on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

1.8 The application is partially retrospective, as some storage of clay has already taken place within the Quarry in the area of the proposed development alongside the haul road.

2. Consultations and representations

2.1 East Hertfordshire District Council – (these comments apply to both the applications for clay storage at Water Hall East and Southfield Wood) Have no objection to the proposals and make the following comments; new mounds near to the valley ridge will adversely impact on the surrounding landscape, it would be preferable for storage to be maintained within the Southfield Wood area to reduce vehicular movements and to avoid use of virgin or restored land, EHDC has previously raised its concerns at the height of the overburden storage at the site, expert arboricultural advice should be sought regarding the impact of storage on adjacent woodland areas, if the proposed solution provides an opportunity to reduce traffic movements across the B158 that will be of benefit.

2.2 Hertford Town Council – expressed concern as to where the water running off the clay would be discharged and felt unable to comment further until more information was available from the relevant agencies on the discharge of water.

2.3 Environment Agency – had no comments

2.4 The County Council as Highway Authority – do not wish to restrict the grant of planning permission

2.5 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs – does not wish to comment on the principle of the proposal and does not wish to object to the proposal because it would not result in the loss of any best and most versatile land. DEFRA draws the Authority's attention to the following agricultural consideration – Soils should be handled when dry and friable and in such a way as to ensure that damage to the structure is avoided.

2.6 Vivendi Water Partnership – do not object to the application but inform that this area is in a ground water protection zone and the development should be done in accordance with the relevant British Standards and Best Management Practices.

2.7 A total of 23 properties were consulted and four responses have been received. The main issues of concern are:

- noise from vehicles 'bleeping warning sirens';
- visual impact;
- dust nuisance;
- piecemeal approach to the development of the site;
- movement of overburden into regions that have already been restored and landscaped and further modifying the landscape in the sensitive part of the Lea Valley;
- proximity to residential areas.

3. Planning Considerations

- 3.1 Planning permission for sand and gravel extraction and infill with waste at Southfield Wood was granted in 1991. Since that date there have been a number of revisions to the original permission, which have had a cumulative impact.
- 3.2 Due to the nature of the mineral deposit, there have been problems with overburden storage at Water Hall and, particularly in recent years, at Southfield Wood.
- 3.3 If the proposal were not allowed the company would be likely to look at storing the overburden elsewhere within the terms of the existing planning consents. The material could be stored at Bunkers or Pollards Quarries. This would involve the transport of the material over the B158 to these locations. This would result in additional traffic movements, which would take up part of the limitation of traffic movements that could otherwise be used for importing material for the restoration of these sites. The placement of this overburden could also delay an early restoration at these sites.
- 3.4 On these grounds the proposal has some merit, but there is an issue as to whether the proposed location represents the best option within the site. The report relating to clay storage at Southfield Wood elsewhere on this Committee's agenda recognises that there is capacity within that part of the site to store clays and it may be able to accommodate additional material.
- 3.5 3.4 ha of the proposal area is on recently restored land. The proposal would require the removal and storage of soils from this recently restored land where soils have not had time within the aftercare period to recover from their previous movement and handling. The proposal would therefore result in the loss of restored land and disturb an additional area of the site.
- 3.6 This area of land is prominent within the local landscape and the store would be required for a period of 5 years. Material would need to be added to and taken from the store at different times. In the location proposed, outside of an active quarry and landfill area, this would have a significant impact upon the local landscape.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The proposal is not considered acceptable as it would result in the loss of an area of previously restored land for a period of 5 years and is in a prominent location visually. The need for storage of clay necessary for the permitted landfill operations is however acknowledged as are the benefits of storing it within the main Water Hall complex, however, there may be more acceptable locations within the active Southfield quarry and landfill site. The unauthorised bunding alongside the haul road should be regularised.

- 4.2 The report therefore concludes that planning permission should be refused on the grounds that:
- the proposal would result in the loss of an area of previously restored land for 5 years;
 - the site is prominent in the local landscape and therefore detrimental to visual amenity.
- 4.3 The report also concludes that the applicant should be invited to submit proposals to regularise the unauthorised bunding along the haul road and to consider storage of clays within the active Southfield Wood Quarry site.

5. Financial implications

- 5.1 Planning applications should be determined on the basis of material planning considerations, and not on the basis of their financial implications for the County Council. However, it is a requirement of the County Council to advise all Committees of the financial implications that may arise from a decision of the Committee.
- 5.2 If a planning application is refused or is not determined within a specific period, the applicant has a right of appeal. Any appeal would result in additional costs, which in part can be met from existing budget provisions. However, a major public inquiry may give rise to significant costs for which there is no specific budget provision. If the County Council refuses an application without reasonable planning grounds on which to base its decision, it may be liable to pay the costs of the applicant in contesting the appeal.

Background information referred to by the author whilst compiling this report

Application documents i.e. application form, supporting statement and drawings

Consultation responses and public representations received

Planning permission reference no 3/ 0003-99 (093)

If you would like to know more about the issues referred to in this report please contact Brian Owen (Tel: 01992 556255)