

WATFORD BOROUGH

APPLICATION FOR A CANOPY EXTENSION TO THE WASTE TRANSFER BUILDING AT LAND AT RAILWAY YARD, OFF COLNE WAY, NORTH WATFORD, HERTS.

Report of the Director of Environment

Author:- Clive Inwards, tel: 01992 556256

Local Member:- V Muspratt

1. Purpose of Report

To consider planning application ref. 9/0787-01 for a canopy extension to the existing waste transfer building at land at Railway Yard, off the A41 Colne Way, North Watford.

2. Summary

2.1 This application seeks planning permission for a canopy extension to the existing waste transfer building which was granted permission (ref. 9/0574-99) on 30 January 2001. The canopy would have dimensions of 10m in length and 8.85 metres in height to the ridge. The canopy would be designed and constructed to match the existing building which has dimensions of 30m x 45m x 14.75 m high. No machinery would be operated beneath the canopy but it is proposed that this cover would be used for the storage of materials.

2.2 The application has been made to provide additional screening of the waste transfer operation from the Meriden Infants and Primary School located adjacent to the Abbey Flyer Railway Line to the east of the site.

3. Conclusion

3.1 Whilst the canopy would provide an additional visual feature to the building this would not be significant given the scale of the canopy when set against the dimensions of the existing building. As the canopy would provide additional environmental protection for the School to the east and the residential properties to the north-east it is considered that the proposal is acceptable.

3.2 The report therefore concludes that the Director of Environment should be authorised to grant planning permission subject to conditions which include, those requested by Railtrack for purposes of safety during the construction of the canopy, to ensure materials used in construction match the existing waste transfer building and to ensure that only reclaimed materials are stored underneath the canopy.

1. Description of the site and proposed development

- 1.1 The application proposes the erection of a canopy extension of dimensions 10m in length by 8.85m to the canopy ridge. The canopy would provide an extension to the existing waste transfer and recycling building on land at Railway Yard, off the A41 Colne Way in North Watford. The canopy would be located as an extension to the eastern side of the existing building i.e. closest to the 'Abbey Flyer' Railway Line. The existing building has dimension of 30m x 45m x 14.75m high.
- 1.2 The existing waste transfer station has the benefit of planning permission 9/0574-99 granted on 30 January 2001. The waste transfer station was constructed in approximately six months during Spring and Summer 2001 and opened in late July 2001. At present the site is almost fully constructed although some landscaping works remain to be undertaken as required by Condition 7 of the planning permission. These works are to be undertaken in the Spring planting season of 2002.
- 1.3 The application states that the canopy would be designed and constructed to match the existing building and that no machinery would be operated beneath the canopy, although it would be used for the storage of materials.
- 1.4 The application states that this proposal has been submitted to provide additional screening of the site and environmental protection for neighbouring uses.

2. Consultations

- 2.1 Watford Borough Council *these will be reported verbally.*
- Environmental Health *these will be reported verbally.*
- 2.2 The County Council as Highway Authority does not wish to restrict the grant of permission.
- 2.3 Highways Agency has no comments.
- 2.4 Transco has plant in the vicinity which may be affected by this proposal and as such if planning permission is granted, the applicant would need to provide further details.
- 2.5 Thames Water Utilities has no objection.
- 2.6 Railtrack has safety concerns regarding the construction phase in respect of the use of plant and machinery adjacent to an electrified railway and as such has provided conditions they have advised be attached to any grant of planning permission.
- 2.7 Environment Agency has no objection.

- 2.8 A total of 18 properties were consulted on the application including Meriden Primary and Nursery School, Lea Farm Junior and Garston Infants School, Sainsburys Supermarket and Sun Chemical Inks. 243 signed copies of a standard letter have been received by the County Council. This letter raises a number of objections to application reference number 9/0787-01, however the issues raised relate to issues of noise and dust associated with the current operation and not specifically to the construction of a canopy. The canopy has in fact been designed to further mitigate against any noise and dust from the operation of the waste transfer station.
- 2.9 Three other letters have been received which again set out objections to the application giving reasons relating to increases in noise, pollution and unpleasant odours. Two letters specifically object to the canopy application as an extension to the existing site.

3. Planning Considerations

- 3.1 The principal issues to be considered in determining this application are:-
- Would the canopy provide additional mitigation of the site for neighbouring uses;
 - Would the extension be visually acceptable;
- 3.2 Operations commenced at the waste transfer station site in late July 2001 and these have caused considerable local concern resulting in the County Council receiving a number of complaints from local residents and the Meriden Primary School relating to dust and noise from operations. Whilst the operators have installed three 'Probe' dust suppression units that are largely effective in mitigating against dust (as required by planning permission 9/0574-99), it is considered that an additional physical barrier would provide an additional mitigation measure and protection for local residents and the School.
- 3.3 The County Council continues to receive complaints relating to noise from the operations within the site. However, this issue is currently being investigated and it appears that one piece of machinery (the power screener) is the main source of the problem. The operators have commissioned a report from noise consultants that will enable measures to be put in place to reduce noise levels. Although when implemented these measures will reduce noise from operational machinery at the site, it is considered that the introduction of an additional physical barrier will assist in reducing overall noise levels from the operation of the site.
- 3.3 Planning permission 9/057-99 granted in January 2001 did include for the provision of a free standing canopy structure to house screened material, this proposal to extend the existing building by the addition of a canopied structure seeks to make that provision. The canopy extension is to be 10 metres in length and 8.85 metres to the ridge adjoining the existing waste transfer building on its eastern elevation. Set against the existing building which measures 30m x 45m x 14.75m, it is considered that the visual impact would be minimal. The application proposes that the canopy would be constructed from materials to

match the existing building and this can be secured through the use of a condition.

- 3.4** Currently materials such as soils and hardcore that have been reclaimed through the use of the power screener and picking station are stored in an open area outside the confines of the building. The construction of the canopy would provide a covered area where these type of materials could be stored thereby assisting in minimising noise and dust when materials are moved or loaded to be exported from the site. a restrictive condition can be imposed to ensure that the area located within the canopy is utilised for the storage of reclaimed materials only and not general waste that arrives at the site.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 Whilst the canopy would provide an additional visual feature on the building this would not be significant given the scale of the canopy when set against the dimensions of the existing building. As the canopy would also provide additional environmental protection for the School to the east and residential properties to the north east it is considered that the proposal is acceptable.
- 4.2 The report therefore concludes that the Director of Environment should be authorised to grant planning permission subject to conditions, including those requested by Railtrack for purposes of safety during the construction, to ensure materials used match those of the existing waste transfer building and to ensure that only reclaimed materials are stored underneath the canopy.

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 their decisions.
- 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 used by the author in compiling this report

Planning application reference 9/0787-01.

Consultation responses and representations received in response to planning application ref. 9/0787-01.