

Teesdale District: Proposed reclamation of derelict land to agriculture by the importation of inert material, land at Barford Camp, Streatlam, Barnard Castle for F&R Jackson Ltd.

Background

- 1 Barford Camp is the site of a former army barracks located approximately 1 mile to the east of Stainton Grove off the A688 (see attached plan). It contains a mix of buildings in a poor state of repair and a motor sports race track. A number of buildings within the former barracks have been demolished over the years and this process is continuing on an intermittent basis.
- 2 The applicant (F & R Jackson Ltd) is a firm of building contractors, plant and skip hire and stone suppliers based at Staindrop that has been involved with the demolition programme. The business has a waste transfer station at Barnard Castle and also operates Windy Hill Quarry. It employs a workforce of 23 in total.
- 3 The 2.0 hectare parcel of land to which this application relates was previously occupied by 20 buildings. These were removed several years ago and some soils imported to infill the resulting voids and cover buried rubble. The area has been grassed over but is uneven and pot marked with heaps of buried material. It is used occasionally as rough grazing for sheep. The applicant considers that landfill and landraise operations, involving the importation of inert waste, would improve the profile and the quality of the land and bring it into beneficial agricultural use.
- 4 Planning Permission was granted in 1998 for a similar but smaller land reinstatement scheme on the west side of the camp.

Proposal

- 5 The proposal involves the importation of 30,000m³ of waste clays, subsoils and topsoils to the site over a 5 year period (based on the projected availability of approximately 6,000m³ of materials per year). The material would be sourced from the waste transfer operations at the applicant's site in Barnard Castle. The 6,000m³ figure represents a 50% increase in the volume of materials currently generated by the site and is based on the ability to tender for more earthwork contracts should planning permission be granted for the development. Material currently generated by the waste transfer station is transported approximately 17 miles to Barton Quarry, North Yorkshire.
- 6 The site would be stripped of existing soils, with any concrete and rubble from the previously demolished buildings being removed and transported to the applicant's waste transfer station for recycling. No crushing would take place at the application site. It would be tipped in 5 phases, working in a west to east direction with infill operations in each phase being completed from north to south. The depth of fill would be to a maximum of 2m across the site which slopes gently to the south. [Stripped topsoils and subsoils would be stored in separate heaps to a maximum height of

no more than 3m along the western edge of the site for use in reinstatement at the end of tipping.]

- 7 Material would be imported and exported using heavy goods vehicles and would involve an average of six vehicle movements per day (3 in/3 out). Demolition waste from the application site would be moved west along the A688 to the waste transfer station at Barnard Castle, and clay soils and topsoils brought in the other direction to the application site.
- 8 Upon completion of the works soil forming materials to a minimum depth of 500mm would be placed on the restored land, with the upper 200mm comprising topsoil. Each phase would be seeded with an appropriate grass seed mix once soil placement is completed in that phase. A 5 year aftercare programme has been suggested by the applicant that would include an annual review. The final land form would fall gradually from 175m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) in the north of the site to 167m towards the south. This would serve to provide natural drainage towards the south.

Consultations and views received

- 9 Teesdale District Council makes the following points in relation to the scheme:
 - i) The access to the site is located at a particularly unsafe section of the A688 and additional traffic by slow moving vehicles could exacerbate the safety issues at this junction.
 - ii) Details of the location of the 'applicant's waste transfer station' should be requested prior to approval as it is not clear where the crushing will be carried out and therefore consideration of potential impact cannot be undertaken.
 - iii) Concern has been raised that crushing will occur at the applicant's site near Barnard Castle, to the north of the residential housing estate of High Riggs. If this is the case, and this is not clear from the submission, then a condition restricting hours of working at the crushing site will be essential.

Comment: Highways issues are considered in paragraph 21.

The applicant has confirmed the location of the waste transfer site at Shaw Bank, Barnard Castle and that the crushing of material would be carried out at this location. Relevant planning conditions controlling operations at the WTS are attached to Planning Permission 6/00/358CM. These include Condition 7 restricting hours of working from 0800 to 1800 Mon-Fri and 0800 to 1200 on Saturdays.

- 10 Stainton and Streatlam Parish Council object to the proposal on the grounds that the development would result in the unreasonable increase in traffic movements (maximum 20 per day) and that crushing (if undertaken at the existing waste transfer site) would cause unacceptable nuisance to local residents.

- 11 The Environment Agency noted that the proposal does not involve a desk top study to consider any contamination issues, and does not wish to comment on this issue. However it endorses the recently published Planning Policy Statement 23 relating to land contamination which states that it is the developer's responsibility to ensure the site is safe and suitable for its intended purpose, having regard to previous contamination.

Comment: The applicant has provided a history of the application site and highlighted possible sources of contamination and it is intended to produce a suitable risk management assessment prior to commencement of work. No excavations would take place near buried asbestos cement sheeting. It is likely that the application would be exempt from the need for a Waste Management Licence but any exemption would have to be obtained from the Environment Agency before works commence.

- 12 Natural England (Geology Landscape and Soils) has no objection to the proposal and does not wish to comment in detail on the principle of the development but draws attention to a number of general reclamation standards.
- 13 Natural England (Ecology Team) has no comments to make.
- 14 The proposal has been advertised on site and in the press. No representations from local residents have been received.

Planning considerations

Policies

- 15 The strategy for the adopted County Durham Waste Local Plan reflects the principles of national guidance that decisions on waste proposals should be guided by the waste hierarchy which encourages reduction, reuse and recovery of waste as a resource, before consideration is given to disposal as landfill. This approach is reflected in Policy W1 and in W2, which requires the demonstration of need for a particular development which cannot be met by an alternative solution higher up the waste hierarchy.
- 16 Policy W47 deals specifically with landfill and land raising proposals to improve the quality of agricultural land and states that these will only be permitted if there are no more suitable methods of improving the quality of the land; it represents Best Possible Environmental Option; there is no unacceptable loss of amenity from the operations; restoration would not be unduly delayed; and the materials are inert.
- 17 Policy W3 seeks to ensure that waste proposals adequately protect the environment and local amenity and Policy W33 requires that suitable mitigation measures are incorporated within schemes to ensure that any harmful impacts are kept to an acceptable level. Detailed issues regarding the proposal are considered below.

Residential amenity

- 18 The site is fairly isolated and the nearest residential dwellings are located at High Barford and Streatlam House Farm, approximately 450m to the east and 850m to the north respectively. Any nuisance from noise, dust or odour experienced by local residents or visitors to the area is unlikely given the distance from residential properties, public areas and the proposed nature of operations. This view is supported by Teesdale District Council's Environmental Health Officer.
- 19 The site would operate between the hours of 07:00 to 18:00 Monday to Friday and 07:00 to 12:00 on Saturdays, with no operation being undertaken on a Sunday or any Public Holidays.

Landscape and nature conservation

- 20 The application site lies approximately 600m to the south of the A688 but is well screened from the north by remaining former army barracks buildings. It also lies on a low lying part of the site directly behind the motor sports track which is situated on a raised embankment. Views of the site from the south are greater but these are at a distance and there is limited public access in this direction. Although it has a degraded appearance it is grassed over and is not visually intrusive especially when seen in the context of existing buildings. Site operations would increase the overall visual impact, albeit on a limited scale until restoration. The site is used on an occasional basis for rough grazing for sheep and has limited nature conservation value. An Extended Phase One ecological survey was carried out which identified no important or unusual plants or habitats.

Access

- 21 Access to Barford Camp is currently gained via an existing access to the A688 and a long tarmac internal road which was part of the original army development. The A688 road at Barford carries some 6,500 vehicles per day, 680 of which are heavy vehicles. Visibility is good onto the A688 and providing the applicant uses the one way access system, with vehicles entering the site using the site entrance east of the bend, there would be no highway safety issues. It is unlikely in view of the length of the internal road that mud would be transferred onto the highway. However, the applicant has stated that a road sweeper would be used when appropriate to prevent this happening. The Head of Highways Management Services does not believe that an increase from 680 to 700 heavy goods vehicles per day along this stretch of road would be an unreasonable increase in traffic movement and does not think that a refusal on this basis would be substantiated on appeal.

Need

- 22 The applicant seeks to justify the proposal on agricultural improvement grounds. The site is currently used for rough grazing and it would benefit from reinstatement and re-profiling, even though the quality of the land may not change significantly and this type of limited agricultural use is

likely to continue. Landraise operations at the site are also considered a more sustainable way of disposing of waste generated in the local area. Disposing of the subsoils, clays and topsoils at Barford Camp would reduce the distance these materials are transported (17 miles to Barton Quarry outside County Durham), and would also enable concrete and rubble removed from the site to be recycled as bulk fill at the existing waste transfer station.

- 23 On balance given the condition of the site, the scale and nature of the works and operational timescales, it is considered that the proposal represents a practical and sustainable approach to a local land reinstatement.

Recommendation and Reasons

- 24 Barford Camp is a derelict former army site that retains an assortment of barracks and buildings. These are gradually but progressively being demolished. When this occurs the land reverts to open use. The application site was previously occupied by buildings but these were removed without adequate ground reinstatement and much waste and rubble remains buried on site. The site is currently suitable only for rough grazing and is of little agricultural value.
- 25 Although, there would appear to be no essential need to resort to tipping to secure the agricultural improvement it would benefit from reclamation and would offer a sustainable option for the disposal of waste clays and soils generated in the local area. Planning Permission has previously been granted for a limited operation of this type on the west side of Barford Camp. In view of the quantities of material involved and current disposal patterns, it is not expected that these operations would divert materials from land reinstatement uses on authorised sites in the County.
- 26 It is therefore considered that the benefits of the scheme outweigh the negative impacts associated with tipping operations in planning terms and would contribute to the sustainable waste management system for County Durham and secure the reclamation of degraded land. I therefore **recommend** that planning permission for the reclamation of derelict land to agriculture by the importation of inert material, at Barford Camp be granted subject to appropriate conditions and for the following reason:
- (i) The proposals would secure the improvement of an area of degraded land that is of limited agricultural value in accordance with Policy W47 of the County Durham Waste Local Plan, and suitable mitigation measures would be incorporated with the scheme to ensure that identified environmental impacts would be minimised in accordance with Policy W33.

No departure

Background Papers: Planning application and supporting statement, plans and additional information on planning application file ref: CMA/6/30.

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Key Facts

Site area:	2.0 ha total area
Existing land use:	Derelict land - occasional grazing use.
Proposed land use:	All land to be used for agricultural use.
Type of waste to be deposited:	Inert materials including clays, topsoils and subsoils.
Amount of material to be deposited:	30,000m ³ to a maximum depth of 2m.
Duration of operations:	5 years
Hours of operation:	07:00 – 18:00 Mon to Fri 07:00 – 12:00 Sat No operation on Sundays or Public Holidays
Lorry movements:	An average of 6 (3 in 3 out) per working day in total.
Lorry routeing:	As most of the reclamation material will be sourced from the applicants waste transfer station in Barnard Castle, lorries carrying reclamation material would travel east from Barnard Castle to the application site approximately 2.5m along the A688.
Employment:	2 full time jobs for the duration of the works.

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