

Planning Committee

17 October 2007

**Applications to be determined
by the County Council**



**Report of John Byers, Business Manager,
Planning Development Control**

Purpose of the report: To enable the Committee to determine applications for planning permission which have been received in accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Wear Valley District: Application not to comply with Condition 3 of planning permission 3/97/20CM to extend the life of the facility for a period of 5 years, Todhills Household Waste Recycling Centre, Newfield, for Premier Waste Management Limited

Introduction

- 1 Planning permission was granted in 1997 for the provision of a household waste recycling compound at the then operational Scoby Scarr waste disposal site, near Newfield. This was originally granted until 31 December 2007 or upon cessation of the adjacent Todhills waste disposal site, whichever was sooner. Todhills waste disposal site closed at the end of September 2007 and soils will be deposited to restore the land by November 2008. Once restored the site will be subject to a 5 year aftercare period and thereafter used as woodland and grassland.
- 2 The County Council is currently undertaking a review of household waste recycling centres as part of its waste procurement strategy. It is anticipated that the review will take 3 years to complete and implementation will require a further 2 years. Having regard to this review and the lack of any alternative sites in the short term, agreement is sought to extend the life of Todhills HWRC for a further 5 years to maintain the service the facility provides.

Site and Proposal

- 3 The site has an area of approximately 0.37 ha and is accessed from Cobey's Carr Lane (C96) as shown on the attached plan. The compound was improved to provide better facilities for public users following the receipt of planning permission in 2003. Separate recycling facilities for wood, green waste, soil, rubble, cardboard and paper have been provided. The site is open all year round except Christmas Day and New Year's Day, and is manned and supervised during operating hours. Day to day management controls and safeguards are provided through a Waste Management Licence determined by the Environment Agency.
- 4 The site receives approximately 4,540 tonnes of household waste per annum of which 58% is recycled, and principally serves the residents of Willington, Newfield and surrounding areas. The nearest alternative facilities are located at Tudhoe, Spennymoor (4 miles away) and Romanway, Bishop Auckland (4.3 miles away). Continued use of the facility is considered essential to meet a known local need and without an accessible alternative site in this part of the County there is likely to be an adverse affect on recycling rates and the possibility of increased fly tipping.

Consultation and Representations

- 5 Wear Valley District Council has no objections to the proposal, on the understanding that the site will be restored by the applicants on expiration of the additional 5 year period.

Comment: Existing planning conditions require the restoration of the site to woodland and grassland on cessation of the use.

- 6 Sedgefield Borough Council has no objections to the proposal.
- 7 Spennymoor Town Council (consulted 14 August 2007) has not commented on the proposal.
- 8 The Environment Agency has no objections to the proposal.
- 9 Newfield Community Association (consulted 14 August 2007) has not commented on the proposal.
- 10 The application has been advertised on site and in the press. No representations have been received.

Planning Comment

Policies

- 11 Relevant planning policies are contained in the adopted County Durham Waste Local Plan (April 2005) [WLP].
- 12 The WLP recognises that Household Waste Recycling Centres need to be located near to the County's main centres of population to maximise their accessibility and usage. Policy W37 permits facilities where they help to achieve a network of facilities accessible to centres of population and where they can be satisfactorily located on land identified for general industrial use; or on previously developed land in sustainable locations; or as part of an existing waste management facility. Policy W33 requires waste development to incorporate suitable mitigation measures to ensure any harmful impacts are kept to an acceptable level.
- 13 The provision of suitable waste collection and recycling compounds form a key part of the County Council's Municipal Waste Management Strategy for recycling, as these facilities make a considerable contribution to the County's recycling rate. The Strategy states that sites for HWRC's should maximise their potential in terms of the location and range of facilities they are able to provide.
- 14 Todhills is not ideally located as a recycling facility, being situated in the countryside and relatively remote from the main centres of population. However it has been established for some time in association with larger waste disposal operations and its continued use on a temporary basis would meet an identified need in line with wider waste objectives. It would also allow further opportunity to bring forward an alternative site in a suitable location in accordance with WLP policies. The proposal would not therefore materially conflict with adopted policy.

Residential amenity

- 15 The nearest residential properties to the site are in Newfield approximately 1500m to the south. The waste facility would operate within existing planning and licensing conditions and its retention for a further 5 years would not raise new amenity issues. No planning related complaints have been received to date about the facility.

Visual impact

- 16 A 2.0m high close boarded fence along the boundary to the north of the site and fronted by tree planting helps to screen operations from the direction of Willington. A 2.0m high steel palisade fence surrounds the site on its other sides. Todhills waste disposal site lies to the south of the site and separates the HWRC from Newfield, which occupies an elevated position. Existing trees around the waste disposal site and planting proposed under the restoration scheme would provide further screening.

Traffic considerations

- 17 Access to and from the site along Cobey's Carr Lane (C96) would continue. This road is not highly trafficked and there would be some reduction in waste related vehicle movements now that the landfill site is closed. There are no highway objections to the retention of the household waste recycling centre.

Recommendation and Reasons

- 18 A 5 years extension to the use of Todhills HWRC is sought pending a countywide review of all these facilities as part of the Waste Procurement Strategy. Although the countryside location of the HWRC is not ideal, it was originally linked to the waste disposal site and is a relatively small scale facility serving an important purpose in the local area. A temporary permission for the period envisaged would not prejudice site restoration and would coincide with the restoration and aftercare period on adjacent land.
- 19 Having regard to wider planning policy objectives and other material considerations I therefore **recommend** that planning permission is granted to retain the existing compound for a further five years, subject to continuing controlling conditions, for the following reasons:
- i) The existing site is well used and needed for a further five years whilst a more permanent solution is found in line with the objectives of Policy W37 of the WLP.
 - ii) Controls on the use, operation and general appearance of the facility will continue through conditions on the planning permission in accordance with Policy W33 of the WLP.

Minor departure

Background Papers: Application, consultations and responses, site location plans.

Contact: John Byers Tel: 0191 383 3408

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