

Planning Committee

18 June 2008

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



Report of Rod Lugg, Head of Environment and Planning

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.

City of Durham District: Change of use to Recycling Recovery Facility at the former National Coal Board building, Tursdale, for Greencycle Plc, (Retrospective Planning Application).

Background

- 1 The applicant is a national waste recycling firm specialising in household waste recycling and the diversion of materials away from landfill. The firm has secured kerbside contracts to collect waste from Chester-le-Street, Durham City, Derwentside, Easington and Sedgefield Councils. Recyclate recovery operations, to which this planning application relates, commenced at Tursdale Business Park on the 1st April 2008.

The Site

- 2 The site is part of a large existing industrial unit located towards the centre of Tursdale Business Park (see attached plan) and has a floorspace of approximately 8,000 square metres. The building was unoccupied prior to the commencement of operations by Greencycle Plc but was formerly used by the National Coal Board for heavy engineering purposes. The building is accessed via the existing industrial estate onto the A688 road.

The Proposal

- 3 The development involves the use of the existing building as a material Recycling Receiving Facility (RRF) that accepts collected household recyclables in both separated and co-mingled form.
- 4 The site accepts paper, cardboard, cans and plastics. Collected material is brought to the site using the company's kerbsider vehicles. The material is weighed using one of three weighbridges including one recently constructed in the outside yard, and then stored in a series of bays located within the building. Co-mingled material which needs to be sorted is tipped and divided using a combination of mechanical and hand manual processes.
- 5 The materials are then baled (glass is placed in appropriate containers) and stored on site before final transportation to recycling centres. The majority of the recyclate is sent for processing at recycling facilities in the UK with the remainder being exported around Europe and Asia.
- 6 Based on the current volumes of material received at the site it is expected that approximately 40,000 to 50,000 tonnes of material would be processed per annum. Recyclables are received by vehicle between approximately 9am and 9.30pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 6pm on a Saturday. Greencycle operate 18 kerbsiders and 4 small box tippers from the site. These are parked at the site overnight and leave on collection rounds on a daily basis from 6am. In total this would involve an average of 180 vehicle movements per day (90 in / 90 out). Processing operations are carried out on a 24 hour basis within the building although most vehicle movements take place within the core working hours of 8.00 to 6.00pm

- 7 Approximately 117 full-time jobs have been created as part of the development. Included within this figure are 34 members of staff that transferred from the company that previously carried out the waste contract on behalf of the District Councils.

Consultations and Representations

- 8 City of Durham District Council (consulted 7 April 2008) view is not yet available.
- 9 Cassop-cum-Quarrington Parish Council objects to the proposals and has raised a number of concerns and perceived discrepancies in the application. These can be summarised as:
- I. Concern that the application is made retrospectively.
 - II. It is questioned whether vehicle movements associated with the operation at times when significant commuter traffic is on the public road adjacent to the site warrants the construction of a mini roundabout at the entrance to the Tursdale Business Park. The Parish Council also note some discrepancies between the expected volumes of material to be received at the site and expected traffic movements.
 - III. No predictions are given in the documentation about the anticipated noise levels associated with glass shattering during the recycling process and whether sound proofing is required to minimise noise intrusion. It is also noted that ambient noise levels are not provided for vehicles using the site after 6.00pm.
 - IV It is queried whether there is a need for outside storage to deal with the amount of recycled material and whether the company has given serious consideration to the risk of arson given the materials involved at the site.
- Comment: A letter has been sent to the Parish Council that seeks to clarify and address as appropriate the issues raised. Paragraphs 21 and 22 of the report consider traffic volumes and the Head of Highway Management's comments in relation to the need for a new roundabout. The Environmental Health Officer at City of Durham Council has no objections to the proposal in terms of noise.*
- 10 Cornforth Parish Council (consulted as neighbouring parish 7 April 2008) has not commented.
- 11 Coxhoe Parish Council (consulted as neighbouring parish 7 April 2008) has not commented.
- 12 The Environment Agency has no objection to the proposed change of use from a planning perspective and notes that the applicant has received an exemption for the activity from the licensing department of the Environment Agency.

- 13 The application has been advertised on site, in the press and neighbouring users on the industrial estate and nearby residents were notified by letter. No representations have been received.

Planning Considerations

Policy Issues

- 14 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that the determination of planning applications should be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Relevant policies are contained in the County Durham Waste Local Plan (April 2005) [WLP] and the City of Durham District Local Plan [DLP] (Adopted 2004).
- 15 PPS:10 Planning for Sustainable Waste Management provides advice and guidance in relation to more sustainable waste management, moving the management of waste up the 'waste hierarchy' of reduction, reuse, recycling and composting and only disposing as a last resort.
- 16 Though not a planning requirement there is a County Durham Local Area Agreement Target that 35% of all household waste generated in the County will be recycled or composted by the end of 2008/09. The Durham County Waste Management Strategy also notes the need for Local Authorities to increase their kerbside collections both in the number of properties served and the range of materials collected to achieve the recycling target of 30% by 2010.
- 17 Policies W36 and W38 of the WLP support proposals for the recovery and recycling of inert waste materials provided that they can be located on land identified for general industrial use or on previous development land in sustainable locations and fully contained within well designed buildings. Policy W33 requires waste developments to minimise any harmful impacts arising from operations.
- 18 DLP Policy EMP7 seeks not to prejudice the physical development of the future regional rail freight interchange proposed at Tursdale and to safeguard part of the prestige and industrial business site which abuts Leamside Line for the first phase of the rail facility. The remaining part of the allocation, including Tursdale Business Park, is reserved for future development of the Rail Freight Terminal beyond the current Plan period. The site is covered by the Plan allocation but as it involves use of an existing building would not prejudice any future proposals.

Residential and Visual Amenity

- 19 The nearest residential properties are located on Ramsey Street to the east of the industrial estate and approximately 110m from the existing building. Although the building can be seen from the majority of these properties it is largely screened by mature trees on the periphery of the industrial estate and an existing bund between Ramsey Street and road A688.

- 20 Given the location of the operations within an existing industrial unit, distance from residential properties and intervening screening, there would not be any direct affects on the amenity of surrounding residents and very little visual impact outside the industrial estate generally. The City Council's Environmental Health Officer has no objections to the proposal and notes that the hours of operation and the loading and unloading of vehicles should be such so as not to cause a nuisance. Limits on specific activities can be regulated by planning conditions should permission be granted.

Traffic and Access

- 21 The industrial estate benefits from direct access to the A688 and is well connected to the strategic road network including the A1(M), (approximately 1 mile from Junction 61) and has a protected right turn lane for those vehicles arriving southbound on the A688. Current operating data indicates that an average of 66 vehicles leave and return to the site each working day (132 in total). It is predicted that this figure would increase to an average of 90 per day in and 90 out (180 in total). Whilst this would involve increased use of the junction it would be within the design capacity and should not give rise to road safety issues.
- 22 The Head of Highway Management is therefore satisfied that the vehicle numbers involved would not have a significant impact in traffic terms. The provision of a mini roundabout at the junction is not supported by the Head of Highway Management as this would be unsafe on a high speed road such as the A688.

Recommendation and Reasons

- 23 National strategies and planning policies encourage the aim of recycling and the proposal would accord with Policies W36, W38 and W33 of the County Durham Waste Local Plan. The development would also provide a significant contribution to the wider objective of dealing with household waste in a responsible way in particular the Local Area Agreement Target of recycling 35% of all household waste by 2008/09. This will increase over time and an appropriate range of facilities needs to be in place to deliver recycling requirements.
- 24 In detailed terms the development takes place within an existing building that has had an established general industrial use over many years. It has brought the building back into a productive use and generated new employment. From an operational viewpoint I consider that the recycling activity is being conducted in a manner that does not adversely affect residential or visual amenity, and the scheme does not impose unacceptable new pressures on the industrial estate access or the adjacent road network. Whilst accepting that the scale of operations may change to an extent, on site working and vehicle movements can be controlled by planning conditions. I therefore conclude that the development is acceptable in planning terms and **recommend** that:

- (i) Planning permission be granted for the material Recycling Receiving Facility for the following reason:

The use of the building would not be unduly obtrusive or adversely impact on the local community or environment, nor would it negatively impact on the surrounding road network. The proposal accords with Policies W36, W38 and W33 of the County Durham Waste Local Plan relating to the location of material Recycling Receiving Facilities and appropriate environmental mitigation measures, and Policy EMP7 of the City of Durham District Local Plan in relation to Tursdale Business Park.

- (ii) Greencycle Plc are advised of the Planning Committee's concern that the change of use of the building commenced without the benefit of planning permission and is reminded of the need to clarify and follow planning requirements about developments it intends to carry out.

No departure

Background Papers:

Planning application forms and plans dated 4 April 2008 and email from Greencycle to Durham County Council 23 May 2008. Consultation letters and responses and other correspondence on the application file CMA/4/38

Contact:	John Byers	Tel: 0191 383 3408
Local Members:	Councillors J Blakey and M Williams	

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