

Planning Committee

19 November 2008



**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 an application for planning permission which has been received in accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Sedgefield Borough: Provision of Mechanical and Biological Treatment Plant and extension to waste transfer station and regulation of external recycling activities at Aycliffe Quarry, Aycliffe Village, County Durham for Stonegrave Aggregates Ltd.

Introduction

- 1 Aycliffe East Quarry is an operational limestone quarry and waste disposal site (53 ha) located between road A167 and the A1 (M) to the south east of Aycliffe Village on the County boundary. The site is operated by the John Wade Group of companies which includes Stonegrave Aggregates. The Group has continued to develop its waste recycling capacity on the site in recent years and wishes to extend its operations to deal with a wider range of waste materials on a more integrated basis and meet its contractual obligations with Darlington Borough Council in particular. Planning permission is therefore being sought to extend the existing waste transfer station building, construct a mechanical and biological treatment plant and regularise existing external recycling activities.
- 2 The application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement (ES). This report has taken into account the information contained in the ES and that arising from the statutory consultations and other responses. The Planning Committee needs to consider the proposal in the light of relevant Development Plan policies, Government Guidance and policy statements and other material considerations.

Relevant Planning History

- 3 Consent to quarry magnesian limestone at Aycliffe Quarry was first granted in 1947 under the provisions of an Interim Development Order (IDO) permission. Planning permission for an extension to the quarry was granted in 1989, and a new scheme of working and restoration conditions for the area covered by the IDO Permission was agreed in 1994. A condition of the IDO was subsequently varied to allow materials recovered from the imported waste such as recycled soils, to be exported from the site. Planning permission for mineral extraction and restoration through infilling with waste exists until 2042 with final restoration by 2043. However, mineral extraction has been completed in the IDO area and working in the extension area is required to cease by 2014.
- 4 Separate planning permissions were granted in 1997 and 2000 (revised siting) for a waste transfer and recycling centre at the site and consequent changes to the phased restoration of the IDO area.
- 5 The Environment Act 1995 places a statutory duty on mineral planning authorities to undertake periodic reviews of mineral permissions. These are to take place every 15 years from the date of either a previous review, or that of the latest mineral permission if no review has been undertaken. The first periodic review for Aycliffe Quarry will be due in June 2009.

The Proposal

- 6 The proposal involves an extension to the existing waste transfer station building, construction of a mechanical and biological treatment plant and the regularisation and re-siting of existing external recycling activities. The application area (0.5 ha) lies on the west side of the quarry on land that has been worked but not yet restored. Planning permission is sought until 2042 to tie in with the end date of the IDO permission and final restoration of the site.

Waste Transfer Station Extension

- 7 Existing waste transfer/recycling operations take place within a 65m x 65m x 12m metal building and adjacent hardstanding (55m x 130m). The waste transfer station (WTS) is used for the recovery of recyclable materials from the incoming waste stream and the bulking up and onward transfer of materials from kerbside collections (e.g. glass, plastic, paper and cardboard, metal cans, soils, and rubble).
- 8 It is proposed to extend the waste transfer station building to provide a larger area for the reception, sorting and bulking of recyclable wastes and allow these to be processed more effectively. The extension [39m (length) x 54m (width) x 16.5m (maximum height)] would be constructed on a concrete pad on the north eastern side of the existing building that is currently used for external recycling purposes. It would be of portal steel construction, with concrete walls and profiled steel cladding on the upper elevations and pitched roof. The colour of the external surfaces would be the same as the existing WTS building (pale green).

Mechanical and Biological Treatment Plant

- 9 The proposed mechanical and biological treatment plant (MBT) is an enclosed in-vessel treatment process designed to reduce the mass and volume of biodegradable wastes in a controlled way. As a consequence of the treatment process the volume of waste sent to landfill is reduced by up to 50% due to the loss of water vapour, degradation of the material and increased proportion of recyclable materials recovered.
- 10 The MBT plant is designed to handle approximately 50,000 tonnes of waste per annum and would be enclosed within a building attached to the waste transfer station extension on its north east side. It would measure 80m (length) x 54m (width) x 12m (height) and be of steel construction with concrete walls and profiled steel cladding at upper levels.
- 11 The building would be arranged internally to provide a municipal solid waste reception and loading area, treatment tunnels (each measuring 37.5m x 6m x 6m and holding approximately 400 tonnes of waste), and rear-end unloading, screening and maturing area. The treatment tunnels would be constructed of concrete, with a special floor to accommodate the required aeration/leachate collection pipework. A biofilter would be situated on the roof of the MBT tunnels, to facilitate the release of treated air to the atmosphere. The maturation area would measure 33m (length) x 33.5m (width) x 7.5m (height). The colour of the external surfaces would be the same as the existing WTS building (pale green).

External Recycling Activities

- 12 The current WTS permission covers the tipping, sorting, processing and storage of soils and hardcore outside the waste transfer building. Other activities including crushing and screening of demolition material, shredding of green waste (prior to use on restoration areas) wood, tyres, and plastic also take place in this area. The application therefore seeks to regularise these operations and make provision for their relocation as part of the wider development on the site.
- 13 Existing external recycling activities would be located in areas to the south west and north east of the WTS and MBT plant. An area currently used for HGV parking to the south west of the WTS would be used for the chipping and stockpiling of recyclable materials (wood, green waste, tyres and plastics) and green waste composting. An existing concrete pad would be extended to accommodate these activities.
- 14 The processing and stockpiling of secondary aggregates and soils would initially be relocated to the east of the buildings before moving to the south west as quarry restoration progressed. Precise details of these external operations would be submitted for the agreement of the waste planning authority prior to commencement as part of any planning conditions.

Waste Processing Operations

- 15 Mixed wastes would be deposited in the extended WTS reception area for sorting. Recyclates (materials collected for recycling) and non-biodegradable material would be removed using a variety of mechanical processes and passed into the existing WTS for bulking up and transportation off site for further reprocessing at other facilities. Pre-segregated kerbside wastes not requiring pre-treatment or segregation would be received directly to the existing WTS.
- 16 Residual wastes would be bulked, loaded into a feed hopper and fed through a bag opener and a mesh screen. The biodegradable waste would then be deposited within one of the tunnels until filled. Once this occurs the tunnel door would be closed and the waste would be subjected to high pressure aeration for 10 – 14 days as part of a climate control system. This would enable the temperature, humidity and oxygen content to be maintained at optimum conditions. Processed air would be contained in enclosed duct work and passed through a wet scrubber and biofilter to reduce the odour and ammonia content and ensure that pathogens are removed before discharge to the environment. Leachate would be recycled in the tunnels or circulated in the scrubbers and there would be no effluent requiring discharge or further treatment.
- 17 Treated waste would be removed from the rear of the tunnel onto an aerated maturation floor for a period of 4 to 7 weeks. This is an optional process and material used for daily cover would not undergo maturation but material that was to be used for restoration purposes such as green waste would. The material would then be screened to segregate any

large organic fractions that had not stabilised sufficiently and to remove any other recyclable materials. These would be returned to the WTS operation by high level conveyor for secondary segregation/processing. The stabilised and dried waste would be removed from the building for use in the quarry as daily cover within the landfill operation or final deposit as landfill material. The treatment system would produce a high quality compost/soil conditioner if segregated green waste is used as a feedstock.

- 18 The MBT plant would primarily process residual Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) from domestic waste collection contracts, although the system could also be used to treat and process other biodegradable industrial and commercial waste fractions, or green waste (garden arisings).
- 19 The MBT plant would operate continuously on an automated basis over 24 hours, although waste would only be delivered to the facility during normal working hours. The hours of operation for the receipt of waste and dispatch of processed wastes would be 07:00 to 18:00 Monday to Friday and 07:00 to 15:00 on Saturdays. The receipt of wastes would be largely timed to the arrival and departure of Refuse Collection Vehicles from the Darlington Borough Council municipal waste contract.
- 20 Occasional extensions of normal working hours may occur to cater for any backlogs in waste collection that arise (after bank holidays for instance). The external recycling operations would take place between the hours of 06:30 to 20:00 Monday to Saturday (agreed hours for the IDO permission).
- 21 As a result of the proposed development two additional full time jobs would initially be created and may increase to four over time. An existing workforce of 166 are employed in association with the quarry and waste operations on the site.
- 22 Vehicle access to the development would be from the existing quarry road off Lime Lane, to the south east of the site which is in the Darlington Borough area. This is currently in use for HGV traffic linked to existing minerals and waste operations at Aycliffe Quarry. Traffic movements to the site are not controlled under existing planning permissions and are currently some 310 (155 in and 155 out) per day during working hours. The acceptance of MSW will increase vehicle movements by an additional 32 (in and out) and there would be up to 4 (2 in / 2 out) additional movements in association with the export of recycled material.

Consultations and Views Received

- 23 Sedgefield Borough Council has not commented (consulted on 29 May 2008).
- 24 Great Aycliffe Parish Council has no objections to the application.
- 25 Morden Parish Council has not commented (consulted on 29 May 2008).

- 26 Darlington Borough Council has not commented (consulted on 29 May 2008).
- 27 The Highways Agency has no objection and considers that the extension of the WTS and the introduction of the MBT plant are unlikely to have a material impact on the strategic road network.
- 28 The North East Assembly supports the objectives of the development proposal and considers it to be in general conformity with the principles of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) (July 2008). Proposed renewable energy measures are in general conformity with Policies 38 and 39 of the RSS which advocate the incorporation of embedded renewable energy in all new development.
- 29 The Environment Agency has no objection to the development as proposed but makes a number of comments. In relation to flood risk it considers that the existing surface water disposal methods are adequate to manage the increases arising from the development, without increasing the discharge to the River Skerne which is at a previously agreed rate with the Agency. It is also noted that biological treatment is not permitted under the current environmental permit for the site and a variation would be required that would require an appropriate risk assessment.
- Comment: According to the applicant a new Environmental Permit has been agreed in principle with the Environment Agency and would be issued if planning permission is granted.*
- 30 Natural England (Government Team), based on the information provided, advises that the proposal is unlikely to have an adverse effect in respect of species especially those protected by law. However, it requires a condition relating to mitigation measures to be attached to any planning consent and that the developer be advised that a Natural England Licence may be required prior to commencement of works.
- 31 Natural England (Soils, Agriculture and Land Use Team) has confirmed that this proposal does not appear to raise any significant agricultural, soil resource protection or reclamation considerations arising from its statutory land-use remit.
- 32 Network Rail notes that the proposed works are some 300m from the railway boundary and as such, has no comments to make on the proposal.
- 33 Durham Tees Valley Airport has not commented (consulted on 29 May 2008).

Representations from members of the public

- 34 The proposals were displayed at public exhibitions held by the applicant, prior to formal submission in line with the approach suggested in the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (August 2006). The application has also been advertised on site and in the local press as part of statutory publicity requirements. One letter of objection

has been received and one offering comments and concerns on the application. A further person requested information on a number of matters before making comments. This was provided but no further correspondence was received.

- 35 The objector considers that as the operator has already won the contract to dispose of the waste he must think that the planning application will inevitably be successful. This shows a complete disregard for the residents of Aycliffe village, a small community that is being eroded by big business and industrial intrusion and the development should not add to this.
- 36 The person commenting on the application has 2 main concerns.
- The increase in quarry traffic, in particular along the section of the A167 between the roundabout, quarry road and the service road is likely to affect the condition of the road. This is currently showing signs of distress as a result of HGV usage and therefore requires strengthening/improvement prior to the plant commissioning.
 - Concerns regarding emissions from the process and especially the lack of consideration given to moisture rich CO₂ discharges from low level stacks and the effects on the local and adjacent environment including woodlands.

Comment: In 2005 roadside verge improvement works were undertaken on Lime Lane under the supervision of Darlington Borough Council. The verges had been damaged by traffic entering and leaving the site and had given rise to problems of mud on the road. The Head of Highway Management Services has no concerns regarding of the condition of the roads within County Durham.

CO₂ emissions from discharge stacks would be regulated under the Environmental Permit as a Part A process administered by the Environment Agency. The Agency would regulate emissions within the agreed limits outlined in a site permit. These limits would be determined after appropriate assessment by the Environment Agency's national permitting team. Limits are unlikely to be set for water vapour and CO₂, but emission controls would be required for bioaerosols and odour. The Regional Environment Agency officers are awaiting the draft permit form from the national team and will liaise with them to have suitable controls included.

Policy Considerations

National Policy

- 37 "Waste Strategy for England 2007" sets out the Government's objectives for sustainable waste management. It aims to reduce waste and increase recycling and energy recovery before disposal. The strategy also refers to the need to combat climate change, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve Landfill Directive diversion targets for biodegradable municipal waste in 2010, 2013 and 2020.

- 38 PPS 10: Planning for Sustainable Waste Management, issued in July 2005 affirms the need for a step-change in the way waste is handled and significant new investment in waste management facilities. It states that Waste Planning Authorities should look for opportunities to co-locate waste facilities together and that development control decisions should have regard to the amenity and environmental impacts of developments.

Development Plan Policy

- 39 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that, if regard is to be had to the Development Plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan consists of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East of England (July 2008) [RSS], the 'saved' policies in the County Durham Waste Local Plan (April 2005) [WLP], the Sedgefield Borough Local Plan (1996) [SLP] and the County Durham Minerals Local Plan (2000).

Regional Spatial Strategy for the North East of England

- 40 The proposal is supported by Policy 2 of the RSS on sustainable development and Policy 45 on sustainable waste management, as it would move waste up the waste hierarchy, improve recycling rates for the region and utilise an existing waste management facility. The proposal would assist in meeting the objectives of Policy 46 which seeks to increase recycling and composting to 40% by 2010 and 46% by 2016 and the recovery of municipal solid wastes to 53% by 2010 and 72% by 2016.

County Durham Waste Local Plan

- 41 The WLP also reflects the principles of national guidance that decisions on waste proposals should be guided by the waste hierarchy that encourages the reduction, re-use and recovery of waste as a resource, before consideration is given to disposal as landfill. Policy W2 requires proposals to demonstrate an established need for a facility and whether it would move waste management up the waste hierarchy and contribute towards regional self sufficiency and the proximity principle in dealing with waste near to where it is generated.
- 42 Policy W3 sets the framework for the protection of the natural and built environment when considering waste proposals and Policy W4 lists the criteria that will be used to determine schemes. Reference is made to the identification of opportunities to integrate waste management facilities with related development and the benefits this can bring.
- 43 Policies W38 and W39 specifically cover waste transfer stations and materials recovery facilities. Policy W38 indicates that proposals will be permitted where they will assist the efficient collection and recovery of waste materials and they can be satisfactorily located as part of an existing facility. Policy W39 states that proposals for the recovery of inert waste will be permitted at existing landfill or mineral sites, provided that it can be demonstrated that the use will not prejudice the agreed reclamation of the site.

- 44 Policy W43 relates to aerobic and anaerobic digestion plants. This proposal is aerobic involving the biological degradation of organic material in the presence of oxygen. The Policy states that proposals for aerobic and anaerobic digestion plants which make a significant contribution to sustainable waste management in County Durham and which make the best practical use of by-products (soil improvers and recovered materials) will be permitted where they can be satisfactorily located on land identified for general industrial uses or on previously developed land in sustainable locations; or where the proposal forms an integrated part of an existing waste management facility or sewage treatment plant.
- 45 Other relevant policies include Policies W6 and W36 that indicate that new or expanded waste management facilities should normally be contained within well sited and designed buildings or structures appropriate in scale and character to their surroundings. Policy W42 relates to outdoor composting which would take place on a small scale.
- 46 Policy W26 relates to water resources and the protection of the quality and flow of surface or groundwater. Policies W31 and W32 relate to traffic impacts and highway safety issues. Policy W33 requires that suitable mitigation measures are incorporated within schemes to ensure that any harmful impacts are kept to an acceptable level.
- 47 Policy W35 considers the cumulative impact of past, current and proposed waste development. Policy W54 requires that planning applications for waste development should include proposals for the satisfactory reclamation of the site. W55 covers the after-use of waste management sites.
- 48 Policy M5 of the MLP is also relevant to the proposal. It states that proposals to develop recycling facilities for construction and demolition wastes will be permitted at active quarries and landfill sites for a temporary period not exceeding the permitted life of the quarry or landfill site provided that any existing adverse impacts on the environment or local community are not significantly increased, and the operation or restoration of the site is not prejudiced or significantly delayed.

Waste Benefits

- 49 The proposed facility would not make a direct contribution to the implementation of the County's Waste Local Plan strategy as such, given that most of the waste to be accepted at the site is from Darlington Borough. However, it would allow more waste to be moved up the waste hierarchy in line with national and regional objectives, reducing the amount of biodegradable waste landfilled and assisting in fulfilling Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS) targets and National Indicator (NI) requirements. Given the geographical location of the quarry in relation to the source of the waste in Darlington, the proposal would also accord with the proximity principle.

- 50 The increased size of the WTS would allow recyclables to be handled more efficiently and the MBT facility would make provision for the separation of recyclables at the beginning and end of the treatment process. This material from refuse collections is currently deposited directly to landfill. The end product from the MBT process would have a beneficial purpose as cover material. Other potential sustainability benefits of treating the biodegradable waste include reduced methane production from landfill and a reduction in transport mileage and CO₂ emissions as waste material would not need to be moved off site for final disposal following treatment. Electricity generation trials using landfill gas are currently being undertaken on the site and it is intended that this would be used in part to power the MBT plant and the WTS. On site sources of aggregate would be used to construct the concrete pad and as part of building works.
- 51 The John Wade Group has the contract to manage Darlington's residual waste for a period of 11 years to 2020 and this is likely to require the full capacity of the MBT plant over this period. However, the design life of the plant is 25 to 35 years and, over the life of the development, the capacity of the plant may be used to serve a single contract or multiple contracts from one or more non-hazardous waste producers. Beyond the current contract there is a possibility that the facility could be used for other purposes and users. These would still be consistent with waste treatment objectives although changes to the source of waste could affect transportation routes and distances. However, the contract situation does not affect the overall land use consideration of the proposal and it would not be appropriate to impose planning conditions that link the facility to time limited contracts that could materially jeopardise investment decisions.

Waste Types and Quantities

- 52 The applicant has an existing contract with Darlington Borough Council to bulk and transfer source segregated materials and there are a number of commercial contracts (including local councils in Durham, Darlington and Teesside) from which concrete, brick, soil etc. are derived. Green waste is received from Sedgefield Borough Council. The company receive quantities of clean cardboard, plastics, wood etc from industry within the region.
- 53 The existing WTS accepts approximately 300,000 tonnes of waste per year. 25,000 tonnes per year are trade waste, kerbside collections, yard arisings etc that require further segregation and separation and 275,000 tonnes are from commercial and industrial customers. It is expected that these levels would continue. In combination with the MBT plant an additional 50,000 tonnes per year of residual Municipal Solid Waste (45,000 tonnes per year in the Darlington Contract) would go through the recycling operations, increasing the overall tonnage to 350,000 tonnes per year in total. The biodegradable waste materials to be processed through the MBT plant would arise primarily from the Darlington Borough Council waste contract supplemented with waste from existing imported materials.

- 54 Full loads of hazardous waste are not accepted at the site but there may be small quantities of household hazardous wastes brought onto the site within the domestic waste streams such as paint tins. There is no facility for the treatment of this waste and any received would be stored in quarantine prior to removal from site.

Amenity

- 55 There are isolated residential properties with the vicinity of Aycliffe Quarry including Heworth Cottages that lie approximately 240m to the northwest of the application site at its closest point. Windmill House lies some 250m to the south of the application site but this property is considered to be derelict and is owned by the applicant. The nearest group of houses in Aycliffe village are between 270 to 300m to the northwest. Most waste recycling activities would be carried out within a building, as currently occurs on site, and the MBT process would also be enclosed. These would also take place on the quarry floor and in the context of existing minerals and landfill operations.
- 56 The potential amenity impact of the development has been considered in the ES and a risk assessment has been undertaken. The effects of dust, litter (including mud and debris), pests, fire and security on the wider environment is considered to be low given proposed control and mitigation measures that would be put in place. Examples of mitigation include the surfacing of haul roads and daily cleaning of access roads and vehicles, rejection of excessively dusty or powdery wastes, majority of operations taking place within buildings, requirement for regular inspections of the facility, procedures for dealing with infestations and fires as well as security measures including maintenance of fencing and security patrols.
- 57 The potential for odour generation and release of bioaerosols (microscopic, airborne particles including bacteria and fungal spores) from the proposed WTS extension and MBT plant is also considered low due to the nature of the received wastes and the enclosed system of treatment and storage of waste within a building. Abatement, control and mitigation measures are proposed.
- 58 The submitted noise assessment indicates that the proposed activities, together with the current waste handling operations, would in a worst case scenario be 5dB above the measured daytime background noise levels (07:00 – 23:00) at Heworth Cottages. Predicted noise levels during the night time (23:00 – 07:00) would be below the existing background levels. The proposed development would operate concurrently with other quarry and waste activities and the existing planning permission sets a limit on noise emitted from the site at various receptors at 55dBLAeq. The predicted noise levels associated with the proposed development would not exceed this overall limit. The Environmental Health Officer at Sedgefield Borough Council has no comments or objections to make with regard to the application.

- 59 Given the nature and location of the proposed waste treatment facilities and distances from residential properties there is little prospect of any direct adverse impacts on the amenity of nearby residents. Existing recycling operations have not been a source of complaint and appropriate controls and mitigation measures can be put in place to ensure that the impacts on amenity are minimised. These would complement the measures that are in place for the existing quarrying and landfill operations under the planning consent and the Environmental Permit (formerly known as a Pollution Prevention and Control Permit) for the site.

Visual Impact and Restoration

- 60 The proposed buildings would be located within the existing quarry at heights below those of the enclosing quarry face (the maximum roof height of the building would be 16.5m and this would be below the height of the adjoining quarry face). The building would therefore not be visible from public areas beyond the site boundary which is also relatively well screened. Although the buildings would have a basic industrial design they would be connected to the existing WTS and be in keeping with this building. The relocated external recycling operations would also be low lying and unobtrusive within the context of overall site operations.
- 61 The approved restoration scheme requires the oldest parts of the quarry to be restored first to enable continued use of the existing waste transfer recycling operations and progressive infilling and reinstatement over the site as a whole to the permitted end date in 2042. It is envisaged that there will be sufficient material for infilling over this timescale to ensure that the restoration of the site is completed. The remaining tipping capacity at the site is some 5.25million m³ and based on tipping rates of some 130,000 m³ per year the applicant considers that tipping will be completed by 2042. The permission is due for Periodic Review in 2009 and every 15 years thereafter. It is likely that 3 formal Reviews will take place by 2042 and progress on the reinstatement of the site will be reviewed through the regular monitoring visits to the site by the Council.
- 62 Given the remaining life of the quarry, existing tipping capacities and the intended life of buildings and contracts, it is not considered that the proposals should unduly affect or delay site restoration.
- 63 The use and duration of the existing WTS facility is tied to the 2042 end date or the cessation of importation of waste material at the quarry whichever is the sooner. Should planning permission be granted similar conditions would be imposed on the new facilities.

Nature Conservation

- 64 The site is within the worked out part of the quarry and no undisturbed land is affected by the development. A wildlife survey has found no evidence of protected species and considers that the risk of these species being affected by the proposals is negligible. However, a mitigation strategy is proposed in order to further minimize the risk of causing harm or disturbance to protected species and to enhance the ecology of the site in the long term. This being vegetation clearance of an existing on site pond

in order to increase the ecology of the pond for wildlife, to create an additional pond and to undertake development works in accordance with a method statement.

Hydrology

- 65 Aycliffe Quarry is located on a major aquifer, within a groundwater Source Protection Zone and a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone. The River Skerne runs along the western boundary of the quarry some 100m from the application site and 10m from the quarry boundary. The quarry lies within Flood Zone 1 (low risk) and the necessary Flood Risk Assessment has been carried out. As part of existing operations at the quarry water is discharged into the River Skerne under consent from the Environment Agency.
- 66 It is considered that there would be no impacts on the neighbouring watercourse or long term effects on the hydrogeology of the area or sensitive groundwater resources. The MBT process would include a leachate management system that recycles fluids in the tunnels. Consequently there would be no effluent requiring discharge or further treatment as the water would be lost through evaporation during treatment. Certain external recycling operations would take place on a concrete pad and revised drainage arrangements would be submitted for agreement with other layout details prior to implementation.

Traffic

- 67 The ES estimates that current HGV movements at the site are currently some 310 (155 in and 155 out). It is stated that the import and export of waste materials results in an average of 300 (150 in/150 out) HGV movements per day with a peak average of 30 (15 in/15 out) between 10:00 - 11:00 and 14:00 - 15:00. Ten additional vehicle movements are associated with the existing Darlington kerbside collection contract. The MBT plant would primarily treat waste material from Darlington and it is estimated that the Borough Council contract would increase the total import of waste to the Quarry from 300,000 tonnes to 345,000 tonnes per year. The acceptance of MSW will increase vehicle movements by an additional 32 (in and out) although the new traffic movements would also be from Darlington and would not pass through County Durham settlements. The proposed development would increase the export of recycled materials from 100,000 tonnes per year to 107,000 tonnes per year. The increased tonnage is predicted to result in an additional 1 to 2 loads per day or 2 (1 in/1 out) to 4 (2 in/2 out) vehicle movements per day due to the increase in export of the recycled material.
- 68 In considering the above figures it should be noted that regardless of whether the current planning application receives consent, there are no restrictions on vehicle movements in relation to the existing activities at the site. Waste coming from Darlington could be imported now under the existing planning consents and would occur in any event because of the contract requirements. The Darlington household waste collection vehicles have also accessed the Heighington Lane Waste Transfer Station nearby and these movements will in effect be transferred to the quarry.

- 69 The Head of Highway Management Services has no objections to the proposal as he does not expect the scheme to generate a significant amount of additional traffic or adversely affect local road conditions. Planning conditions requiring the sheeting of vehicles and the use of wheel cleaning equipment are already in place in respect of existing quarry operations and should planning permission be granted he requests that conditions covering these issues and the sweeping or removal of debris deposited on the highway should be imposed.

Socio-economic Issues and Benefits

- 70 The John Wade Group is an established minerals, waste and haulage business within the County. 166 people are employed on the site (of which 75% live within a 10 mile radius) and the business provides a small but important number of jobs and has a positive impact on the local economy both directly and indirectly. The new facilities would largely be operated by existing staff but 2 – 4 people would be directly employed at the site in association with the development. Additional jobs would be generated by the Darlington waste contract although these would not be at Aycliffe Quarry.

Alternatives

- 71 The proposals are closely linked to the waste contract with Darlington Borough Council and represent the preferred approach in this respect. Other options have been considered but do not provide the same range of economic and environmental benefits.
- 72 If the MBT is not provided kerbside collection and recycling operations could continue at existing levels to deal with part of the incoming waste stream. However, most of the municipal solid waste would be landfilled following basic sorting in the recycling area. An alternative off site facility would in time be needed to treat municipal solid waste before final disposal in line with landfill diversion targets.
- 73 This material is currently sent to Heighington Lane WTS, not far from the quarry under an existing waste contract with Premier Waste Management where it is bulked prior to onward transportation to Joint Stocks or Blaydon Quarries for final disposal.
- 74 When the existing contract ends in 2009 this option will cease and thereafter the responsibility for handling Darlington's waste will pass to the Wade Group. Treatment and disposal within the Darlington area is problematic as there are no active sites for non-hazardous waste in the Borough. Whilst it is conceivable that MTB facilities could be constructed no sites were identified as part of the tendering process for the new contract. Treated waste would also need to be transferred for final disposal at approved sites elsewhere in the region, such as Aycliffe Quarry.

- 75 The proposed scheme is therefore considered to provide an efficient and sustainable means of dealing with waste arising from the Darlington area. The site lies within 5 miles of Darlington Town Centre and the MTB plant would allow a greater proportion of waste to be recycled and reduced in an integrated way without the need for final disposal elsewhere.

Conclusion

- 76 Aycliffe Quarry is an operational limestone quarry and waste disposal site on the border with Darlington with planning permissions for these activities that extend to 2042. Commercial and non commercial waste has been imported to the site for a number of years and there is no restriction on the source of material accepted at the site. Waste is currently imported from Darlington area under kerbside collections arrangements between the Borough Council and John Wade Ltd, the site operator. The Company has recently been awarded the Council's municipal waste disposal contract and is seeking to develop the Aycliffe site to accept and treat waste generated from the Darlington area.
- 77 Although the proposal would result in additional waste material being brought into the County it would have environmental benefits in terms of reducing the amount of waste being landfilled in line with government targets and objectives and would accord with proximity principle requirements. It would also represent a continuation of a waste import situation that has occurred locally for a number of years under existing contracts that delivered Darlington waste to Heighington Lane Waste Transfer Station close by. There are no restrictions on the source of waste material delivered to the Aycliffe site presently and Darlington kerbside collection material is already processed here.
- 78 From a detailed planning perspective the MBT process and recycling activities would be part of a large operation at the quarry and can be suitably contained. Most of the recycling would take place within buildings on the quarry floor that are located well away from the nearest residential properties and hidden from view. The existing waste transfer station has operated for some time and has not given rise to amenity issues. The MBT plant would be a more complicated waste treatment facility involving drying and bulk reducing operations but these would be subject to appropriate environmental management systems and controls.
- 79 The development would give rise to a small increase in lorry movements but the site is well positioned in relation to the A167 and A1(M) junctions and traffic from the Darlington area would not pass through Durham settlements. Total vehicle movements to the site are unregulated in terms of number of vehicles and routes but the scheme would not give rise to unacceptable highway impacts.
- 80 The provision of additional waste related buildings on the site could have implications for the existing use of the quarry in the longer term, particularly in respect to progressive restoration and the cessation of minerals and waste operations. However, given the remaining life of the quarry, existing tipping capacities and the intended life of buildings and

contracts, it is not considered that the proposals should unduly affect or delay site restoration. Periodic minerals reviews and regular site monitoring reports would be a possible mechanism to consider these issues at appropriate intervals.

- 81 Changes to waste contracts cover the life of the buildings and could also affect where the waste material is generated from, although the need for appropriate treatment of materials in line with Government waste policy objectives will remain and this is the principle planning consideration in this case.

Recommendation and Reasons

- 82 Planning policy supports sustainable waste management initiatives and seeks to make provision for recycling and aerobic digestion plants on suitable sites.
- 83 The proposed development accords with WLP policies, and would have limited effect on the character or appearance of the area, the amenity of local residents or on the condition of the neighbouring highway and the wider environment.
- 84 Accordingly, I **recommend** that planning permission be granted for the proposed development subject to appropriate conditions limiting the development to the cessation of waste disposal activities at the site and to mitigate any potential environmental effects, for the following reasons:
- i) The proposals would contribute to targets associated with the recycling and re-use of waste materials in accordance with national and local strategies and Policies W36, W38, W39 and W43 of the County Durham Waste Local Plan.
 - ii) Given the scale, location, and nature of operations the proposals would not give rise to significant visual, amenity, highway or environmental concerns. The proposal accords with those elements of County Durham Waste Local Plan Policies W3, W4, and W33 intended to protect residential amenity and suitable mitigation measures are proposed.

No Departure

Background Papers:

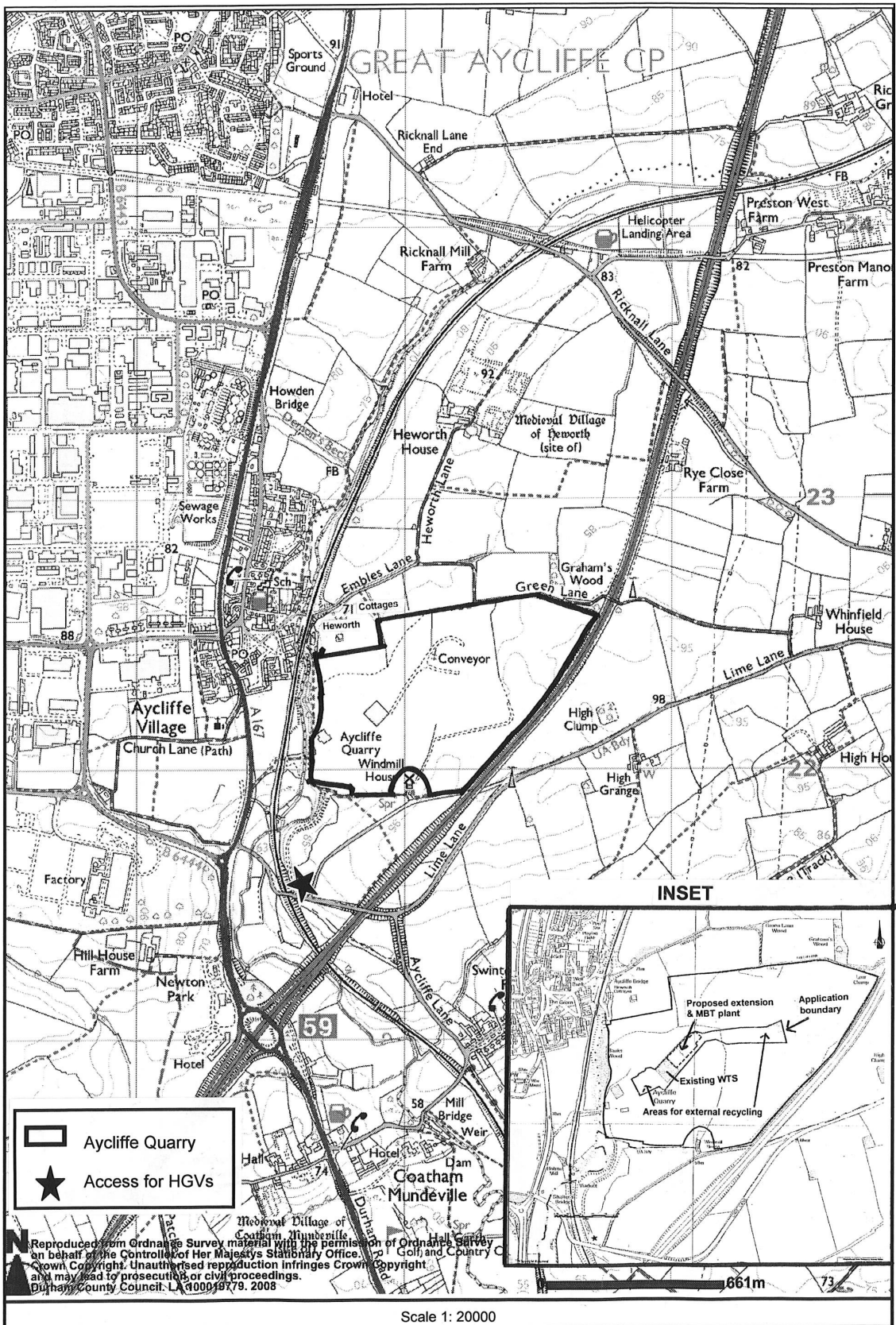
Planning application and Environmental Statement, plans and additional information on planning application file ref: CMA/7/65.

Contact: John Byers Tel: 0191 383 3408
Local Members: Councillors D Brown and J Robinson

Sedgefield Borough: Provision of Mechanical and Biological Treatment Plant and extension to waste transfer station and regulation of external recycling activities at Aycliffe Quarry, Aycliffe Village, County Durham for Stonegrave Aggregates Ltd.

Key Facts

Site area:	0.5 ha (Application area) within 53 ha (existing quarry and landfill site)
Existing land use:	Quarrying, landfill and waste recycling.
Type of waste to be accepted at the site:	<p>MBT plant would primarily process residual Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) from domestic waste collection contracts, although the system could also be used to treat and process other biodegradable industrial and commercial waste fractions, or green waste (garden arisings).</p> <p>External recycling activities – including soils, hardcore, wood, green waste, tyres, plastics.</p> <p>WTS – municipal wastes from trade wastes, segregated kerbside collections, yard arisings which include ferrous and non ferrous metals, steel and aluminium cans, glass, plasterboard, wood, plastic, paper, cardboard.</p>
Source of waste to be accepted at the site:	Darlington, Durham and Teesside.
Amount of waste to be accepted at the site:	<p>Up to 350,000 tonnes of waste per year in total. (300,000 tonnes per year is currently accepted at the WTS and this is expected to continue.</p> <p>An additional 50,000 tonnes per year is expected associated with the MBT plant).</p>
Hours of operation:	<p><u>MBT plant:</u> Continuous 24 hours operation, although waste would only be delivered to the facility during normal working hours.</p> <p><u>Receipt of waste and dispatch of processed wastes</u> 07:00 to 18:00 Monday to Friday 07:00 to 15:00 on Saturdays.</p> <p>Occasional extensions of normal working hours may occur to cater for any backlogs in waste collection that arise (after bank holidays for instance).</p> <p><u>External recycling operations</u> 06:30 to 20:00 Monday to Saturday (agreed hours for the IDO permission).</p>
Daily lorry movements:	<p>310 (155 in/155 out) existing average; 32 (16 in/16 out) additional when Darlington contract commences in 2009; 4 (2 in/2 out) additional movements per day are estimated as a result of the proposed development.</p>
Site access:	As existing, off the C34A road (Lime Lane).
Employment:	<p>2 – 4 additional full time jobs. Existing workforce of 166 at the quarry and landfill.</p>



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