

Division(s): Sutton Courtenay & Harwell

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PLANNING & REGULATION COMMITTEE – 16 JANUARY 2012

TO CRUSH, SCREEN, BLEND AND STOCK REJECT BUILDING BLOCKS, FURNACE BOTTOM ASH AND REJECT MATERIALS FROM CONCRETE MAKING TO MAKE MATERIAL FOR BLOCK MAKING

Report by the Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Growth & Infrastructure)

Location: Hanson's Sutton Courtenay Site

Applicant: Hanson UK

Application No: 11/02440/CM

District Council Area: Vale of White Horse

Introduction

1. This planning application has been made by Hanson UK to import reject building blocks, to mix them with other materials available locally and recycle them into block making materials for use in a local blockworks. This is a retrospective application.

Location and context (see plan)

2. The site lies within the Sutton Courtenay mineral extraction/waste management complex between the villages of Sutton Courtenay (900 metres to the west) and Appleford (1 kilometre to the east). The B4016 Appleford road is 700 metres to the north and Didcot Power Station 1 kilometre to the south. Didcot lies 1.6 kilometres (1 mile) to the south.
3. The site is 2.5 hectares in extent and forms part of an aggregate stocking area associated with the sand and gravel processing plant currently processing gravel from the Bridge Farm workings north of the B4016. The processing Plant and a concrete batching plant lie immediately to the north.
4. To the south is a composting site operated by WRG. Abutting the site to the west is a ditch leading to the River Thames. There is a tree screen between the ditch and the stocking area. To the east there are old silt ponds.
5. WRG's current landfill area lies some 600 metres to the south east.

Background and History of the Site

6. Sand and gravel extraction has taken place at the Sutton Courtenay complex since the 1930's and landfilling since the 1970's. In the late nineties the site ownership was split between two firms, Hanson and WRG.
7. Hansons have completed extraction in the main complex but were granted planning permission for sand and gravel extraction (APF/SUT/1815-CM) in 2008 for extraction at Bridge Farm, north of the B4016, until 30 September 2012.
8. In 2010 planning permission was issued to WRG (SUT/616/59-CM) to allow deposit of waste to higher levels at the Sutton Courtenay landfill site with landfilling to the end of 2030. The application site is within the landfill permission but no landfilling is to take place here.
9. In 2008 temporary permission to the end of 2020 (APF/616/57-CM) was granted to WRG to extend the life of green waste composting facilities and to establish recycling facilities on a site immediately south of the application site.

Details of the Development

10. The proposal is to import reject thermalite blocks from the company's block making sites at Coleshill, Birmingham (600 tonnes a week), Thatcham (500 tonnes a week) and nearby Milton (25 tonnes a week). The blocks would be stocked, crushed, screened and blended with furnace bottom ash from Didcot Power Station (400 tonnes a week) and reject materials from concrete making on the adjacent area (50 tonnes a week). The resulting material would be sent to the Milton Blockworks for use in the production of blocks.
11. Crushing and screening would operate for an average of 6 weeks a year. There would be one loading shovel on site and a mobile crusher during the 6 week screening and crushing operation.
12. The proposed development is for a temporary period to end on 31 December 2030.

Traffic and Access

13. The applicant proposes to use the access onto the Didcot Perimeter road (A4130). The activity would mean an additional 16 lorry movements (8 in and 8 out) arising from Hanson's Sutton Courtenay operations. Furnace bottom ash and reject concrete making material would be delivered on roads internal to the Sutton Courtenay landfill site.
14. The applicant is willing to make a contribution to road improvements in the Science Vale UK strategic schemes and to abide by the existing routeing agreement which prevents lorries from travelling through the villages of Sutton Courtenay and Appleford and restricts movements of lorries to the east along the A4130.

Consultation Responses and Representations

Vale of White Horse District Council:

15. No objection subject to crushing for no longer than 6 weeks a year and adherence to the current routeing agreement.

Sutton Courtenay Parish Council:

Strong objection:

- Incomplete, inadequate information. Crushed material will need to be stored prior to transport offsite, it is different to gravel storage so an EIA should be completed.
- Drainage issues on the landfill site should be resolved before the application is determined as the current proposal could impact on drainage.
- Vale policies protect the Area from adverse impact on the local landscape and provide for landscape enhancement when gravel extraction ceases and restoration follows. (VOWH LP policies NE9 and NE11).
- There is concern about the proximity to the Millennium Common and nearby conservation area. It will bring noise, dust and air quality issues to the users of the Common and local footpaths.
- The site is not close to the source of waste so the import of waste is not sustainable contrary to MWLP policy W3. It is contrary to MWLP policy W4 as no overriding need has been proven.

Didcot Town Council: No objection

Natural England

The Council should request survey information; should take advantage of features beneficial for wildlife, such as bat boxes, in accordance with paragraph 14 of PPS9.

Environment Agency - No comments received.

Ministry of Defence: No safeguarding objections.

Transport Development Control

There is an existing routeing agreement for the site. As there are 16 additional lorry movements a day proposed request a contribution of £7,084.48 (index linked) to the Science Vale UK Strategic Schemes.

Ecologist Planner:

The site is actively used for aggregate stocking and is of negligible biodiversity or landscape value.

Third Party Representations

16. There are no third party representations.

Relevant Planning Policies – (see policy annex attached to this Agenda)

17. Development should be decided in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
18. The Development Plan for this area comprises the South East Plan, the saved policies of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan and Oxfordshire Mineral and Waste Local Plan 1996 (OMWLP) and the Vale of White Horse Local Plan.
19. The South East Plan (SEP) forms part of the Development Plan. However, the Government has made it clear that it intends to abolish regional strategies. The Localism Act enables the Secretary of State to revoke the whole or any part of a regional strategy by order. Whilst no such order had been made at the date this report was drafted, the published intention to revoke is a material consideration to which substantial weight should be given.
20. The County Council is preparing a new plan for where mineral working and waste facilities should be located. The consultation period on the draft plan has just concluded.
21. All relevant Development Plan and other policies are listed in the policy annex. Relevant policies are:
- South East Plan (SEP) policies W3, W4, W5, W17, M1 and M2 and T1.
 - Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan policies W2, W3, W4, W5 and SC3
 - Vale of White Horse Local Plan policies NE9, NE10, NE11, DC5.
 - The Local Transport Plan (LTP3) requires contributions from developers to local road schemes to aid economic development through the Science Vale UK Area Transport Strategy.
 - Draft Minerals and Waste Plan proposed policies M1, W1, W5, W6, C3, C5, C7

Comments of the Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Growth and Infrastructure)

22. The main issues to be addressed in deciding this application are the need for recycled material, suitability of the site for development, protection of the local landscape, potential amenity effects and the long distance transport of some of the reject blocks.

Need for the recycled material

23. The South East Plan sets targets for diverting waste from landfill and indicates that a substantial increase in recovery of waste is required in the region. That

recovery can be by recycling. Sites should be brought forward for waste management, including open sites needed for aggregate recycling. The use of this site allows such reject blocks to be mixed with other suitable waste materials available locally and for them to accumulate to sufficient amounts for it to be economic to crush and recycle them. This recycling process means that less sand and gravel is needed for block making.

Suitability of the site

24. Priority is given for expanding suitable sites with a) an existing waste management use and b) good transport connections. The site is within an area which has permission for landfill until 2030, the same period sought for this development. Recycling is acceptable in such locations.
25. The site has good road access onto the Didcot perimeter road and then to the A34 without passing through built up areas. There is an existing routeing agreement which allows lorry traffic unrestricted use of this route. The applicant is willing to abide by this agreement. Transport Development Control note the existing routeing agreement and has no objections to the application. The Vale of White Horse District Council wants the routeing agreement to apply to any permissions granted at this site

Protection of the Countryside

26. The Vale of White Horse District Council policies protect the open rural nature of the area between Sutton Courtenay and Appleford and say that the landscape character of damaged landscapes should be the subject of a landscape scheme. The landscape should not be further or permanently eroded.
27. The site has already been developed as a storage area for sand and gravel and any change to storage of reject blocks does not in my view amount to a significant further erosion of the landscape. The longer term storage is not permanent and there is provision for a restoration plan through the latest landfill permission.

Amenity Effects

28. The site is screened from views from Sutton Courtenay, which is some 900 metres to the west, by a substantial tree screen and, if permission is given, the screen could be protected by condition and the heights of stockpiles limited to below the height of the screen. The site is hidden from view from Appleford, 1 kilometre to the east, by the lie of the land.
29. The distance from the villages will attenuate noise so that there would not be a noise issue for them. The District Council wants crushing limiting to the 6 weeks a year proposed by the applicant. That would further reduce the potential for noise intrusion and could be achieved by condition.
30. Crushing of blocks could cause dust so any permission should be subject to a condition requiring the wetting of the stockpiles and working area to prevent

dust rising. However, the site is adjacent to a ditch and any excessive use of water may cause discolouration of the water so a condition requiring works that would prevent runoff from the site would be appropriate.

31. The Millennium Common is some 400 metres to the north-west, beyond the potentially noisy gravel processing plant and beyond a significant tree screen and is, therefore, unlikely to experience unacceptable noise, dust or visual intrusion from the proposed development. No complaints have been received about noise from the operation of any of the mineral and waste developments in the area from users of the Common or rights of way.
32. Compliance with the current site routeing agreement would mean no lorries travelling through Sutton Courtenay or Appleford villages and most lorries using the Didcot perimeter road access towards the A34. A contribution to Science Vale UK Strategic Schemes would support necessary road improvements in the area to take place.

Long Distance Transport of reject blocks

33. Nearly three quarters of the lorry trips to the site would be from distance (Thatcham and Coleshill) but all of the resulting product would be delivered to the nearby blockworks at Milton 5 kilometres (3 miles) away. The other products to be recycled would come from Didcot Power Station or from the adjacent concrete batching plant. Although the site is not close to the main source of waste it is close to the market for the material so it is compliant with OMWLP policy W3.
34. SEP policy W4 says that there should be flexibility in providing waste management capacity such that waste from adjoining sub-regions, as is the case with this application, could be accommodated as well as from our own.

Other Issues

35. The Environment Agency has not replied to the consultation request at the time of writing this report. I will report any reply we receive at Committee. However, the site is not in a river flood zone and the proposal does not involve the use of water except small amounts to lay dust.
36. The Sutton Courtenay Parish Council says that the application is contrary to OMWLP policy W4 in that there is no overriding need for the development in the countryside. However, policy W4 has two parts and proposed development need only meet one part to comply with the policy. In this case it complies with the policy as it forms part of a landfill site and would be removed on completion of that landfill.
37. Natural England request that advantage be taken of any features that would enhance biodiversity. However, there are no features on site suitable for biodiversity enhancement.
38. The Parish Council argue that the application should be the subject of Environmental Impact Assessment. Officers assessed the need for an EIA and

concluded that the potential impacts of noise, dust, visual intrusion and pollution effects of the development were not significant enough to warrant formal assessment.

Conclusions

39. The proposed development is similar to the permitted activity of storage of sand and gravel which has been taking place for several years without complaint. The crushing of the blocks would only take place for 6 weeks a year and the District Council, responsible for Environmental Health, have no objections to that. The distance to the two local villages and the screening effect of vegetation and landform means that there should not be significant adverse environmental effect on them.
40. Whilst the site is located in the countryside, it is part of a minerals and waste management/landfill site and its retention until the end of landfilling would comply with OMWLP policy W4.
41. The site has good road access but it is important that any permission complies with the site routing agreement to direct most vehicles to the A34. A contribution to road schemes in the area in line with the Science Vale UK Strategic Schemes, as other developers are required to do, would also be necessary.
42. Although there would be some 55,000 tonnes a year of reject blocks being brought to the site from outside the County the process would enable that amount of material to be recycled and would reduce use of locally won sand and gravel. On balance the recycling outweighs the long distance travel.

RECOMMENDATION

43. **It is RECOMMENDED that subject to compliance with the current site routing agreement and a contribution of £7,804.84 (index linked) to Science Vale UK Strategic Schemes that permission for Application 11/02440/CM be granted subject to conditions to be drawn up by the Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Growth & Infrastructure) but to include those matters set out below:**
 1. **Detailed compliance condition.**
 2. **Operating hours – Mon – Fri 0700-1800 and Saturdays 0700-1300.**
 3. **No operation on Sundays and bank holidays.**
 4. **Operation to cease by end of 2030 with restoration to be completed by 2032.**
 5. **Crushing of blocks for only 6 weeks a year.**
 6. **Details of mobile plant to be submitted and agreed.**
 7. **Restoration and aftercare to take place in accordance with Landfill permission restoration and aftercare.**
 8. **Steps to be taken to prevent any solid matter, reject block material, concrete waste of furnace bottom ash or excess amounts of suspended matter from passing into any water course.**
 9. **No oil storage tanks to be sited.**

10. **All stock piles not to exceed the height of the trees to the west of the site.**
11. **Effective silencers to be provided on plant, machineries and vehicles.**
12. **Reversing vehicles shall not emit warning noise that may have adverse impacts on neighbours or properties.**
13. **No buildings, plant and machinery to be erected without consent.**
14. **No imported material to be deposited on the land except reject blocks from Coleshill, Thatcham and Milton, concrete waste from Concrete batching plants at Sutton Courtenay landfill site and furnace bottom ash from Didcot Power Station.**
15. **No material shall be exported except to Milton.**
16. **Existing hedges/trees on the site boundary to be retained and maintained.**
17. **Written notice to be given to MPA of the completion of this development.**
18. **No access to be used by HGVs other than on to the existing access onto the Didcot Perimeter road.**
19. **No vehicles to enter public highway unless its wheels have been sufficiently cleaned.**
20. **Working areas and stockpiles to be sprayed with water to suppress dust.**

MARTIN TUGWELL

Deputy Director for Environment & Economy (Growth & Infrastructure)

Background papers: File held in Directorate for Environment & Economy

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