

Division(s): Kidlington & Yarnton

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PLANNING & REGULATION COMMITTEE – 24 OCTOBER 2011

CONSTRUCTION OF STORAGE BAYS AND LORRY WASH DOWN AREA, EXTENSION OF CONCRETE PAD AND RELOCATION OF FUEL TANKS

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

Location: Worton Farm, Yarnton

Applicant: Worton Farm Ltd.

Application No: MW.0116/11

District Council Area: Cherwell District/ WODC (for access road only)

Introduction

1. Worton Farm near Yarnton has a number of waste management activities with a mix of permanent and temporary planning permissions.
2. The complex includes a skip waste recycling and transfer business and a construction & demolition waste recycling operation run by M&M Skip Hire (both with the benefit of permanent consents). This planning application seeks permanent consent for a covered storage building intended as an improvement to the skip waste and construction and demolition waste facilities.
3. The application also proposes to extend a concrete pad across the northern part of the main recycling yard. A wash down facility for the lorries and relocation of the existing fuel tanks to the northern edge of the site is also proposed.

Location

4. The application site is located in the Oxford Green Belt about 500 metres (0.3 miles) north of the A40 approximately 3 kilometres (1.9 miles) west of Oxford. The site lies about 1 kilometre (0.6 miles) east of Cassington and 500 metres (0.3 miles) south west of Yarnton.

The Site and its Setting (See plan 1)

5. The total area of the M&M site is 3.5 hectares in size. The proposed development would be confined within a small area (0.45 hectares). The site

already contains a range of buildings related to the waste management activities. It is set in a gently sloping landscape rising northwards from the A40 to the Oxford -Worcester railway line which passes about 130 metres to the north of the site. The land surrounding the site has been the subject of substantial mineral working, much of which has now been restored (mainly to lakes, but also to farmland). Immediately to the south of the site is an AD facility which has replaced previously approved composting operations. A planning permission has been granted recently for construction of a slurry lagoon associated with the AD plant, which is located to the west of the application site.

6. The nearest village is Yarnton which is about 500 metres to the northeast of the site, Cassington lies about 1.3 kilometres to the west. The nearest dwellings are Rectory Cottages on the eastern side of Worton village, approximately 500 metres to the west of the site, and Yarnton Manor House, approximately 500 metres to the north east.
7. A Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and an SSSI are located approximately 550 metres to the south of the site, south of the A40. No footpaths or sites of designated archaeological interest are affected by the proposal.

Details of the Development (See plan 2)

8. The proposal is to extend the existing concrete pad across the northern part of the main recycling yard, and to construct a series of covered bays around the perimeter inside the existing screen bunding. A wash down facility for the lorries would also be provided and the fuel tanks moved from southern to the northern edge of the site.
9. The new bays would be arranged in an L-shape along the northern edge of the recycling yard within the existing bunding that defines the edge of the site. The two parts of the L would be 99 metres and 63 metres in length. The bays would be 9 metres deep and of varying widths depending on the particular materials to be stored. They would be constructed with materials such as wooden railway sleepers or steel sheeting within an outer shell building constructed of steel uprights and steel cladding. The roof of the structures would be 5 metres at the ridge sloping down to 4.5 metres at the back.
10. The height of the structure covering the bays is defined by the need for lorries to be able to tip waste under cover. The structures proposed are of a simple utilitarian design, which is consistent with that of the existing waste transfer shed. The steel cladding would be painted in a matt colour matching the existing buildings with the intention that the bays blend into their surroundings.
11. The bays would be used to store items such as: green waste, soil, compost (for blending with soil), screened compost, blended soil, mulch (oversized compost), bagged compost, plasterboard, sorted metals, and sorted waste products. Some of these materials were previously accommodated on the composting site (which has been replaced by the AD facility).
12. The proposal is intended to improve management of the existing waste activities on the site; there would be no increase in the permitted throughput

(between 85,000 to 100,000 tonnes per year) and no change to existing lorry movements (312 movements (156 in, 156 out) per day) associated with the site.

13. The access to the site would remain as existing, a long concreted haul route onto well designed junctions directly onto the A40.

Consultation Responses and Representations

Cherwell District Council (Planning & Environmental Health)

14. Object. The development constitutes inappropriate development in the Oxford Green Belt affecting its openness and for which very special circumstances are not considered to outweigh the harm that would be caused. The proposal is therefore contrary to Planning Policy Guidance 2 (PPG2), Policy CO4 of the South East Plan 2009, Cherwell Local Plan policy GB1 and Non-Statutory Local Plan 2011 policy GB1”.

The District Environmental Health Officer (EHO) is still to comment on the proposal.

West Oxfordshire District Council (Planning & Environmental Health)

15. No Objection.

Yarnton Parish Council

16. No Objection.

Cassington Parish Council

17. No comments received yet.

Natural England

18. No objection to the proposal.

Environment Agency

19. No objection.

Ministry of Defence (MOD)

20. No objection.

Oxford Green Belt Network

21. No objection to the proposal. They request that the existing landscaping around the site is conserved. The storage bays would seem to be a sensible provision in the light of what goes on at this site and should help to keep it tidier.

Transport Development Control

22. No objection. The proposal would not increase vehicular movements to/from the site and would not have any significant impact upon the highway network.

County Ecologist Planner

23. No objection to the proposed development from a biodiversity point of view.

County Archaeologist

24. No objection.

Third Party Representations

25. No representations from the public have been received.

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

26. Planning applications should be decided in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
27. The Development Plan for this area comprises the South East Plan (SEP), the saved policies of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan and the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (OMWLP) and the adopted Cherwell Local Plan (CLP).
28. Planning Policy Statement 10: Planning for Sustainable Waste Management (PPS10) and Planning Policy Guidance 2 (PPG 2) on Green Belts are also relevant.
29. 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. Whilst this intention is a material consideration, legislation to achieve this is at an early stage of development in the parliamentary process, and therefore the weight attached to that intention is limited accordingly.
30. All relevant policies are listed in the policy annex. The Development Plan Policies that need to be considered in deciding this application are : (i) South East Plan – W4, W17, CO4, C4,; (ii) Oxfordshire Mineral and Waste Local Plan – W3, W4, W5, CY4 and iii) Cherwell Local Plan (CLP) – GB1, C7, ENV1

Planning Policy Statement 10 (PPS10) – Sustainable Waste Management and Planning Policy Guidance 2 (PPG2) – Green Belt are also relevant

Comments of the Deputy Director for Growth and Infrastructure

31. The main issues to address in deciding this application are -
- (i) the acceptability of the proposed development in this Green Belt location,
 - (ii) whether there is a need for the development,

- (iii) whether the impacts on local residents can be controlled satisfactorily and
- (iv) the impact of the development on the rural landscape,

Green Belt

32. The development is located in the Oxford Green Belt. Although it is proposed on an existing permanent waste recycling site (with the associated buildings and structures) this proposal would involve the construction of further permanent buildings (up to 5 meters in height). The development proposed is not one which is listed in PPG2 and SEP policy CO4 as an acceptable use in the green belt. The Committee must therefore be satisfied that very special circumstances exist to justify overriding normal green belt policy; otherwise the proposal should be refused.
33. The construction of the new bays and hard standing would provide much needed improvements to the operation of the site. They would allow the operation to be far more efficiently managed, enable the site to be better maintained and kept in a clean and tidy state. Such improvements to the efficiency of the operation would have the knock on effect of helping to improve the recycling taking place and improve recycling rates at the site.
34. It has been mention in paragraph 32 that very special circumstances are required to allow this development in the Green Belt. In this instance I would say that the circumstances to be considered are as following:
 - There is a significant need for waste management facilities of this nature to help move waste up the waste hierarchy. This site already makes a significant contribution to waste recycling targets in the County and it can continue to do so if improved facilities are provided within the site to manage the waste more efficiently. Oxford Green Belt Network supports the intention of the proposal stating that the storage bays would seem to be a sensible provision in the light of what goes on at this site and should help to keep it tidier. I agree with this statement.
 - Recycling sites such as this are best placed close to the main sources of waste or well related to where the recycled product can be used – this site is within 2 miles of the edge of Oxford, which is one of the main centres of development activity in the County. The site is well linked to the highway network to serve that market. Any site that is located as close, and as conveniently, as this one to Oxford is likely to be within the Green Belt. The site is also well connected to the main road network to serve Oxfordshire more generally;
 - Any development such as this should preferably be located in an area with compatible land uses – the site proposed is located alongside an existing anaerobic digestion plant (permanent consent). These facilities have been allowed to be established here because of the good transport links and proximity to the main centre of Oxford. Allowing the proposals would ensure that this site can handle the waste arising within the County in a

more efficient manner, and should assist in increasing the benefits and economies of scale that the site already generates;

- The site is located away from residential dwellings, is already well screened and further screen planting is proposed to take place. The proposed bays are not be significant in size and height in the context of other waste management buildings on site; they would be significantly lower than other buildings within the site. The distance between the site and the nearest properties means that direct environmental impacts in term of noise, dust and odour would be limited. We can help to ensure that such problems do not arise by imposition conditions.
- Policy W17 of the SEP advises that waste management facilities should not be precluded from Green Belts if the objectives of more environmentally sustainable forms of waste management are to be met.

My view therefore is that the development within the existing permitted site would enable significantly improved management of waste operations with associated improvements to waste recycling targets and as such the proposal is justified in that the wider environmental and sustainability benefits can represent very special circumstances that justify overriding Green Belt policy.

Need for development at this location

35. The Council has already granted permission for the existing recycling operations that take place at this site. As part of the Committee's consideration of the merits of that proposal the Committee was satisfied that there was a need for the facility and that in this case the Worton Farm site was an appropriate location for a permanent facility notwithstanding its Green Belt designation.
36. The structures proposed, together with the extended concrete pad, would increase the efficiency of the operation by improving the management of the site and would assist in improving recycling rates. There is a clear benefit therefore in allowing the development.

Impact on local residents

37. The application site is located about 500 metres from the nearest house. Recycling activity does generate a certain level of noise and dust. The existing operations have been operating now for some time without any significant problems in terms of noise and dust nuisance. Whilst at this point we do not have the benefit of advice from the District Environmental Health officer, the confinement of this activity within structures is likely to reduce further spread of dust and reduce noise impacts to neighbouring land uses. The proposal therefore, satisfies OMWLP policy W3 (c) and CLP policy ENV1.

Impact on the rural landscape

38. OMWLP policy W5, SEP policy C4 and policy C7 of the CLP seek to provide additional screening to the existing facility and also seek to protect and enhance landscape.
39. The site is in open countryside although it is in an area that has been the subject of mineral extraction and waste management activities for many years. The site is well screened and the planting and bunding around the north and western sides of the site were retained as part of the previous planning permission. In addition the bunding around the construction and demolition (C&D) waste recycling area has been made a permanent feature and is to be planted up with indigenous species as a continuation of the existing planting around the site. Further planting and screening measures are proposed to be undertaken in connection with the recently permitted AD facility (to the south -west of the site) to improve the visual and landscape aspect of the wider waste management complex. In view of these planting and landscape proposals the site should be well screened and should not unacceptably damage the local landscape.

Other Environmental Impacts

40. The proposed new drainage system would ensure that the proposed development would not pose unacceptable risk to the water environment and it is in accordance with OMWLP policy W3 (d).
41. European Protected Species are unlikely to be present and the Planning Ecologist has raised no objection to the proposals. No further consideration of the Conservation & Habitats Regulations is in my view necessary in this case therefore.
42. The land which makes up the haul road to the site is part of the old dismantled railway which it is proposed should provide or enable a pedestrian/cycle route between Eynsham, Cassington and Yarnton. This is required by policy CY4 of the OMWLP. The applicant has already contributed financially via a legal agreement (as part of the previous planning permission for this site) towards the provision of the new route.

Conclusion

43. This is a proposal for a permanent development contrary to Green belt objectives and the committee must be satisfied that there are very special circumstances to override this important policy.
44. This is an existing well established waste site which would become more efficient by way of the development proposed which would also lessen the impact of the waste recycling activity on surrounding amenity (reduced noise and dust) if the proposal were to be permitted.
45. The visual harm of the new structures in my opinion is limited, the site is well screened and the development should be seen in the context of other buildings and activities on the site and immediately adjoining areas.

46. The benefits of the proposal are as such that they would enable waste recycling rates to be improved in a much better controlled site with lower environmental impacts. Such benefits in view outweigh the fact that the proposal is contrary to normal green belt objectives. In my view there are very special circumstances to justify overriding Green Belt policy in this case. I therefore recommend that permission is granted subject to appropriate conditions.

RECOMMENDATION

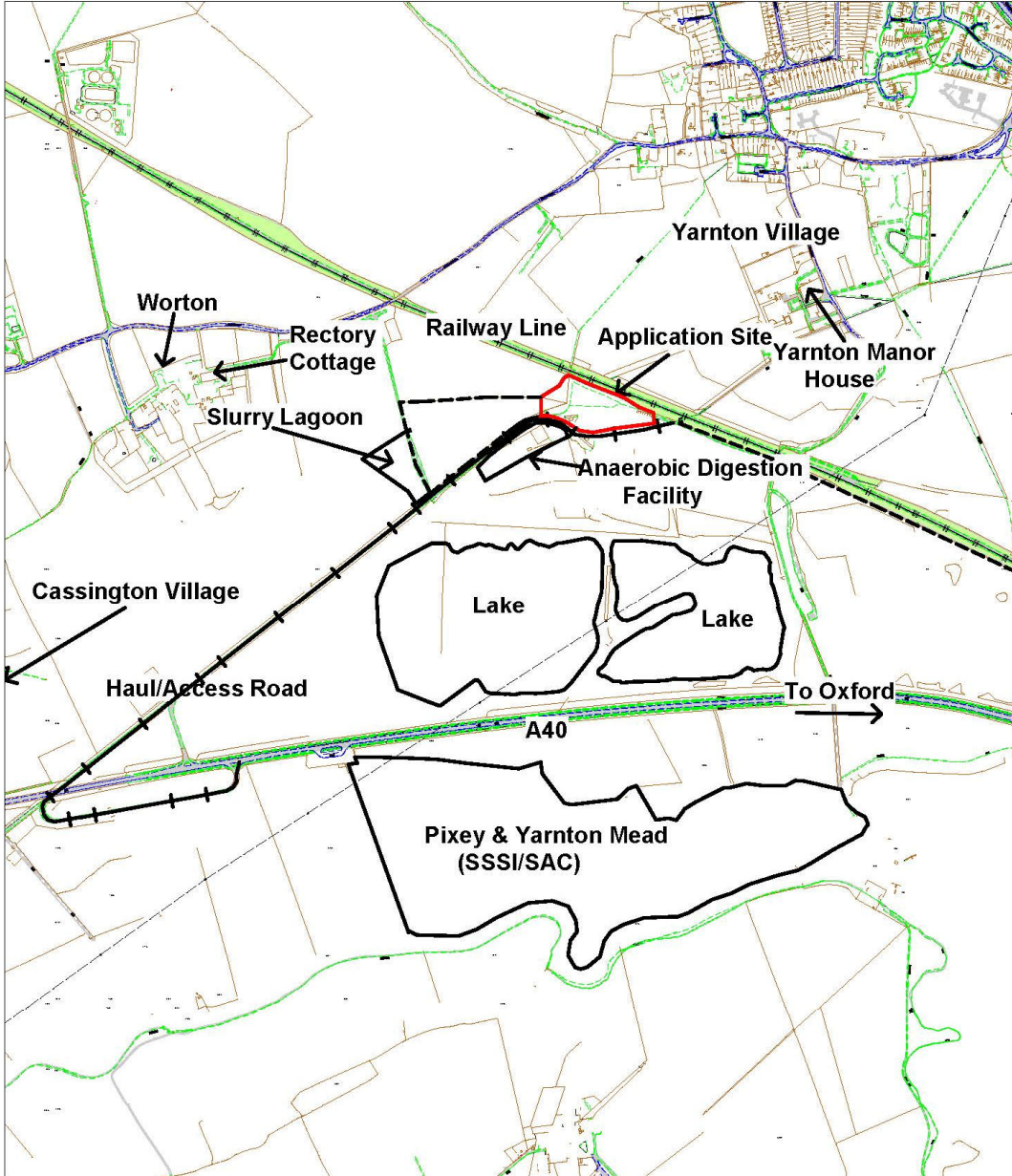
47. **It is RECOMMENDED that, planning permission for application no. MW.0116/11 is granted subject to conditions to be determined by the Deputy Director for Growth and Infrastructure dealing with matters outlined below:**

1. **Detailed compliance condition**
2. **Commencement date – within 3 years**
3. **Standard operating hours.**
4. **Existing vegetation to be retained and protected**
5. **Tree planting and boundary fencing scheme to be carried out as agreed.**
6. **Bund specifications (including height, angles and maintenance requirements) to be implemented as agreed.**
7. **Effective silencers on vehicles, plant and equipment to be implemented**
8. **External building materials to be agreed**
9. **Site signage on A40 to be kept to a minimum**
10. **Sweeping of access road and adjacent site to be carried out at regular intervals as required.**
11. **Existing dust control measures to be maintained**

MARTIN TUGWELL
Deputy Director (Growth & Infrastructure)

File Ref:
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Plan 1 (MW.0116/11)



Plan 2 (MW.0116/11)

