
Offham Downs	566109 156073	02.03.2006	TM/06/00762/WAS
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Proposal:	Development of a fully enclosed composting facility within the confines of the previously excavated area (KCC ref. TM/06/TEMP/0009)
Location:	Blaise Farm Quarry Kings Hill West Malling Kent ME19 4PN
Applicant:	New Earth Solutions Limited

1. Description:

- 1.1 As Members may recall, the Council's views have previously been sought by KCC with respect to the proposed establishment of a composting facility to handle 50,000 tonnes of Local Authority 'GFVC' waste at Blaise Farm (reference TM/03/01155/WAS). The Council resolved to raise no objection to the principle of the proposed waste facility - subject to certain conditions and restrictions being attached to any permission. Ultimately, a planning permission was granted by KCC.
- 1.2 The permitted scheme features a substantial main reception building which allowed for the acceptance and the initial treatment of waste (to assist and speed up with maturation of the composting process). The majority of the composting was proposed to take place in external windrows. The facility was to be sited on a part of the quarry that had yet to be worked (Phase 3) and that was unlikely to be worked for approximately 25 years.
- 1.3 This new application proposes an alternative scheme of composting with a facility that houses the entirety of the composting process 'in vessel'. Consequently, the number and extent of proposed buildings on the site is substantially larger than featured by the original proposals approved under TM/03/01155/WAS. The originally permitted reception building had a footprint of 15750 square metres with a height of 10.7m. The new 'in vessel' composting facility now proposed would involve a series of five principal buildings (plus other smaller offices/store/plant buildings) with a combined footprint of 24,153 square metres) with heights up to 12m. The principal buildings would be constructed from goose wing grey coloured steel cladding. It is proposed to site this development on the floor of part of the quarried area of Blaise Farm (Phase 1).
- 1.4 This newly proposed facility would have the same maximum handling capability as that of the permitted scheme i.e. of 50,000 tonnes but would utilise a dynamic process to speed up the composting process and this is largely computer controlled. All activities would all take place under negative pressure with all waste air extracted from the building being passed through air-scrubbers and bio-filters before emission to the atmosphere. Permission is sought on a temporary basis for 20 years.

- 1.5 In terms of highway impacts, the facility would not be open to the public and is only intended to serve the waste collected by TMBC and neighbouring authorities. Given that the maximum waste capacity in terms of tonnage would be the same as the permitted composting complex, there should be no increase in traffic with this new proposal in comparison to the original composting scheme. (It is estimated that it would be possible to accommodate all vehicle movements during peak periods within the permitted maximum number already agreed under the terms of the planning permission to quarry Blaise Farm for ragstone).
- 1.6 The above information is of course a summary of the salient points of the applicant's latest submission and Members are invited to view the details in full which includes:
- A Planning Statement.
 - A Traffic Impact Assessment
 - Alternative Site Assessment
 - A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
 - Extracts from the Organic Resource Agency Assessment of the applicant's earth composting technology in controlling odour emissions.
 - Restoration proposals - these provide options depending on the future workings of the ragstone quarry. Option A assumes that no further quarrying works take place and proposes marginal land raising using stored materials arising from mineral workings to the quarry floor and the creation of a pond/lagoon. Option B assumes that quarrying will continue of the adjacent Phase (Phase 2) and seeks to restore land to higher levels than the currently approved restoration scheme for the quarry. Full details of this option can not be determined at this point in time as until Phase 2 is worked it is not known precisely which depth the quarry floor will be in Phase 2 nor what tonnage of surplus material will arise.
- 1.7 This application falls to be determined by KCC. KCC has arranged for its Members to inspect the site, prior to determining the application, the site inspection being scheduled for 8 June.

2. The Site:

- 2.1 Blaise Farm Quarry as a whole covers an area of 116 hectares and has permission to quarry 57 million tones of ragstone on a phased basis over a period of 62 years. Permission was allowed in 1994 for stone extraction via four main phases, with the quarry phases being worked and then restored on a roiling basis. The restoration scheme involves infilling to lower than original ground levels with hassock (a quarrying waste product).

- 2.2 The site of the composting facility comprises approximately 6.74 hectares of land (inc. access roads and storage areas) and is situated on the quarry floor of a previously worked area within the Quarry.
- 2.3 Whilst quarrying has commenced at the site, those operations have currently been 'mothballed' because of a current lack of market demand for ragstone.
- 2.4 The site lies within open countryside designated as MGB and a SLA. The site is generally well screened by the land's topography and by existing mature woodland but is visible from more distant views, including from the AONB. Local views are principally obtained from nearby PROWs. The nearest residential properties are situated at Kings Hill and Offham and along King Hill/St Leonards Street, West Malling. No residential properties lie within 500m of the site.

3. Planning History:

- 3.1 TM/03/01155/WAS Approved by KCC 20.01.2005
Use of land and erection of buildings for the composting of green waste and green/garden, food, vegetable, cardboard (GFVC) waste (KCC ref: TM/03/TEMP/0027).
- 3.2 TM/01/03039/MIN Approved
The siting of a facility to manufacture and store soils utilising imported compost and in-situ overburden (KCC ref. TM/01/MIN/G).
- 3.3 TM/88/1002 Approved
Winning & working of ragstone/low level restoration to agriculture and forestry use, inc. construction of access road.

4. Consultees:

By KCC:

- 4.1 West Malling PC: No objections but wish to comment that vehicle movements should not be permitted through West Malling, Offham or other villages but should be confined to the bypass; vehicle movements should avoid peak times; lorries must be sheeted and steps must be taken to minimise dust/noise/odour and other pollution. The PC would also like to know what steps are being taken to prevent ground water pollution.
- 4.2 Offham PC: We have read the application material carefully and discussed all the relevant issues at our Planning Sub-Committee on the 18th April. Representatives from New Earth Solutions came along to our meeting to answer various questions. We have found New Earth Solutions to be most helpful in seeking to allay our fears regarding the proposed development and we hope that the seemingly open and frank relationship will continue in the future.

Bearing in mind that your Council has already granted consent for a composting facility, albeit on another part of the site and of a different specification, there seemed to be little point in debating the principle of the proposed development but to concentrate our efforts on the detail and our comments are therefore as follows:

Overall the proposed development is a significant improvement on that for which consent was granted in January 2005, bearing in mind that the proposed facility is fully enclosed and located within the former worked area of the quarry thereby eliminating all our concerns regarding visibility and impact on the local environment.

New Earth Solutions have explained their reasoning for applying for a longer time period to the temporary planning permission. Bearing in mind that we do not believe that 15 years is in reality "temporary", we have no issue with the 15 years being extended to 20 to tie in with the contract period. Page 6 of the planning application, final paragraph states "... The composting facility is of permanent construction and the need for composting to divert bio-degradable waste from landfill is a continuing requirement beyond 2020." - why therefore are we calling the consent, if forthcoming, temporary?

We would like to see the same stringent conditions, if consent is granted, imposed as were attached to the previous consent in January 2005 especially with regard to:

- Time limits - commencement and duration.
- Restriction of Permitted Development Rights.
- Access and Traffic routing.
- Hours of operation.
- Landscaping, restoration and aftercare.

Whilst we are aware that all the supporting information clearly states that there will be no noise or odour issues, bearing in mind the sorts of problems that have emanated from the Landfill site over the years these are still two extremely sensitive issues. New Earth Solutions agreed at our meeting on the 18th April that they would be more than happy to supply copies of their annual noise monitoring survey and bio-aerosol monitoring of the operation facility to all interested parties, including the surrounding Parish Councils and that they would accept this obligation as a planning condition.

Additional comments – We have no objection to the creation of a permanent lagoon in either restoration Options A & B, we would ask for an explanation as to the benefits of not restoring the site to its original levels which we interpret as

being required under the current composting planning consent. We would also question the reality of the facility being demolished after the temporary period in terms of commercial reality.

- 4.3 KHPC: Is seriously concerned that the Planning Authority has not publicly identified the location of this Composting Site given that recently “Here and Now” has published two lengthy features on the “Green Waste” service / in posted in Kent & East Sussex.

KHPC would draw members’ attention to the type of waste to be processed at Blaise Farm – originally it was labelled as “Green and Kitchen Waste” but the listing of additional sources must be better classified in how they are amenable towards the manufacture of compost: e.g. Wood Wastes (EWC Chapter No. 03); Organic Chemical Waste (EWC Chapter No. 07) Construction and Demolition Waste (EWC Chapter No. 17). Are these landfill wastes?: How can these for example biodegrade?

NB: The example of Poole Biodegradation is simply achieved by the NATURAL decay of greens and foodstuff!

The Poole Plant is only similar NOT identical to that proposed for Blaise Farm.

Monitoring is to be undertaken by those who “agreed the contract” and even “pay for the service”.

The capacity of Blaise Farm is limited by the depth of the quarry – any expansion should be similarly accommodated via a “below ground level hollow”.

The concern of New Earth’s Director, Ted Bleszynski, to, “fully appraise the local population as to the development of composting at Blaise Farm”, should be recognized BEFORE planning approval is appraised by the Planning Authority.

Conclusion: KHPC suggests the onus of identifying Blaise Farm as the Kent composting prospect site, falls upon the Planning Authority asap.

Given the unproven, “capacity prospect” and “performance” of this plant, and the varied diversity of wastes listed/expected some of which are inappropriate for “Biodegradable” composting purposes, this Planning Application has to be viewed as unacceptable in its current presentation: this is not a “fait accompli” application. It would also be quite unacceptable to approve this planning application anyway without a public consultation exercise, as called for by New Earth.

- 4.4 Mereworth PC: In principle, the PC is fully supportive of recycling waste, including composting. However, we believe that this proposal contravenes both MGB policies and locally adopted planning policies. If the proposal is approved we would like some measures included to prevent vehicles travelling on roads other

than major lorry routes. We would not wish to see the proposed operating hours, the 50,000 tonnes per annum or the proposed lorry movements extended beyond the present proposals without further planning applications made.

- 4.5 EA: No objections subject to conditions to require details of foul and surface water treatment, and the provision of oil interceptors and trapped gullies. EA authorisation will be required if restoration proposals create the need for importation of fill.
- 4.6 SEERA: It is not considered that the proposals materially conflict with or prejudice the implementation of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and the Government's proposed changes to the RSS.

The County should consider whether it would be appropriate to require additional biodiversity measures to be incorporated in the short term in line with Policy E2.

If the Council is minded to approve this application, it should use appropriately worded conditions/legal agreements to secure an appropriate restoration scheme following expiration of the temporary consent and the permission for the previously consented composting facility should be rescinded.

- 4.7 DEFRA: Views awaited.
- 4.8 SWS: No objections.
- 4.9 State Veterinary Service: In order to ensure that all the material of a plant operating to the UK standard of the Animal By-Products Regulations 2005 in a windrow is sufficiently treated a windrow must be turned at least three times and must have achieved a minimum temperature of 60 degrees centigrade for at least 2 days prior to each turn, and also following the third turn (i.e. at least three turns means that the 60 degrees C/2 days temperature standard must be achieved at least four times). Alternatively if operating to the EU standard of EC Regulation 1774/2002 the windrow must achieve the 70 degrees C/1 hour standard also at least 4 times to ensure all the material in the windrow is treated.

Housed first stage/phase windrows must operate on an all in all out basis. This means that all the material in the housed windrow will be considered to be the same batch, and to have been treated to the same standard. Systems where windrows at different stages of treatment are kept in the same building, and are removed at different times will not be approved as the capacity for cross contamination and bypass of the system is considered too great. The only exception would be where the windows are in completely separate parts of the building i.e. different rooms separated by floor-to-ceiling walls, separate entrances and exits, separate personnel etc. Second stage windrows do not need to operate on an all-in-all-out basis. However separation between windrows would still need to be demonstrated.

Internal cleansing and disinfection is not required of vehicles which deliver untreated catering waste and then leave the site. Vehicles delivering other animal by-products or a vehicle which is to be used for transporting treated material off-site must be cleansed and disinfected or steam-cleaned internally with provision of facilities accordingly.

On a routine basis steam-cleaning may be used as an alternative to the use of disinfectants. However the operator will need to demonstrate that facilities to disinfect are available and that the plant can be thoroughly disinfected should it be required. Pressure washing with cold water is not an acceptable alternative.

Some issues that will be considered by the State Veterinary Service are not covered in the supporting statement accompanying the planning application. However bearing in mind that the proposals are apparently similar to a plant that has already been commissioned at Poole it would seem likely that State Veterinary Service approval could be forthcoming in due course. Apart from some infrastructural matters clarification will be needed re HACCP/standard operating plan.

Proposers would be advised to consult the Defra website.

Owners of new sites at the design and planning stages are advised that they should submit site plans and details to the State Veterinary Service at the earliest opportunity, in order to ensure that plant design is in accordance with the Regulations and that potential problems may be identified and rectified prior to capital expenditure.

4.10 KWT: The restoration of the site for nature conservation enhancement is welcomed by the Trust. Details of the scheme are very general. However, we welcome the focus on Kent Biodiversity Action Plan priorities. We have not identified any missed opportunities.

4.11 Private Reps: 1 letter of objection has been received stating that this is not the best use of the site but if permission is granted then noise or contaminated air should be contained within the site.

By TMBC:

4.12 DHH: The environmental health issues raised by this application are noise and odour. I am concerned to ensure that the operation of the proposed composting facility does not cause significant detriment to amenity. The details submitted pursuant to the application include an evaluation of these issues.

Noise

The Environmental Statement (ES) includes an acoustic appraisal prepared by the applicant's consultant, reference 2969/MC/SRP/rc that evaluates the aural impact of the proposed development by reference to British Standard BS4142:1990 "Method for Rating Industrial Noise Affecting Mixed Residential and Industrial Areas".

The standard is based on the relationship of noise attributable to the operation of the noise source under consideration, termed the specific noise level (LAeq,T), corrected for any particular tonal or other characteristics, termed the rating level (LAr,T), with the measured background noise level (LA90,T); the assessment being made by subtracting the background noise level from the rating level. A difference of around 10 dB or higher indicates that complaints are likely; a difference of around 5 dB being of marginal significance. At a difference below 5dB, the lower the value the less likelihood there is that complaints will occur. A difference of -10 dB is a positive indication that complaints are unlikely.

The appraisal is based on a comparison of predicted noise levels from the composting facility at the closest noise sensitive premises to the north, south and east of the site against existing daytime and night time background noise levels. The differences between the predicted specific noise levels and measured background noise levels are between 0 and -13 dB. The consultant concludes that, subject to the implementation of specified mitigation measures, noise from the development will not affect residential amenity.

I agree with the methodology employed by the consultant and accept the conclusion that noise from the operation of the composting facility is highly unlikely to cause significant detriment to aural amenity. However, in order to safeguard the situation, it would be appropriate to impose a suitable noise control condition on any approval that might be granted.

Odour

The ES includes a report prepared by the Organic Resource Agency "Development of a dynamic housed windrow composting system: Performance testing and review of potential use of end products". Section 7 of that report addresses the issue of odour development and elimination. There is reference in the report to a measured "peak" concentration of 500 ou within the "cleaned" exhaust air from a biofilter at an operational enclosed waste composting facility but no mention of the volume of air that is to be discharged from the biofilter that will be installed at the proposed facility, modelling of its dispersion or odour impact assessment against relevant UK criteria all of which I would have expected to have been included in the report.

The Environment Agency (EA) uses a refined approach for regulating processes operating under the Pollution Prevention and Control (England and Wales) Regulations 2000 in which it sets a 'benchmark' criterion of 'no reasonable cause for annoyance' that is defined in numerical terms by an indicative odour exposure standard. The odour exposure standard takes into account the main factors for determining the offensiveness of an odour (intensity, pleasantness, duration and frequency) and requires that the 98 percentile concentration odour at sensitive receptors remains at or below an odour concentration of between 1.5 and 6.0 odour units per cubic metre of air (depending upon the unpleasantness of the odour). The guidance (Table A6.1 of H4 Part 1) places activities involving putrescible waste treatment in the 'more offensive' category for relative unpleasantness where the indicative odour exposure standard is 1.5 odour units per cubic metre of air expressed as a 98 percentile. There is deemed to be 'no reasonable cause for annoyance' if this benchmark criterion is met. This does not necessarily equate to 'no complaints' but is designed to be a level of odour exposure that residents with a normal sense of smell are likely to find acceptable on a long-term basis.

Because the composting will be aerobic in character and conducted within a fully enclosed facility I am satisfied that it can be carried out without causing significant detriment to residential amenity by virtue of odour. However, in order to safeguard the situation, it would be appropriate to impose a suitable odour control condition on any approval that might be granted.

The operation of the composting facility will require prior authorisation as a process subject to the Integrated Pollution Prevention Control (IPPC) regime. Any authorisation will be subject to conditions relating to the detailed design and ongoing operation and management of the process.

In summary I have no objection to the application but recommend that, in order to safeguard residential amenity, any approval be subject to the following conditions:-

1. At no time shall the noise rating level $L_{Ar,T}$, calculated in accordance with the method provided in BS4142:1997, attributable to the operation of all fixed plant and machinery installed at the premises exceed the background noise level $L_{A90,T}$ by more than 3 dB at any noise sensitive premises.
2. At no time shall the measured odour emission rate associated with the operation of the permitted development exceed that which produces a predicted concentration of 1.5 OUE m^{-3} as a 98th percentile of a year of hourly means at any sensitive premises.

Waste Management

The Council is working in partnership with KCC Waste Management Services to introduce cost effective and sustainable recycling and composting services to meet statutory targets.

The success of the Council's pilot green waste scheme in Ditton/Larkfield has resulted in Tonbridge & Malling wishing to expand the service, borough wide over the next few years. The ability to take forward this project is conditional upon a composting site being provided in a suitable location in the Borough. The proposed works included in the application have in part arisen to meet the needs of the Council to take forward its green waste scheme. In particular there is a need to secure facilities to process "kitchen waste" included in the green waste. This requires an in-vessel system.

The site at Blaise Farm being centrally located in the Borough, provides major operational efficiencies to the Council in respect of its refuse collection service and has regard to the proximity principle.

5. Determining Issues:

- 5.1 The site falls within open countryside designated as MGB and a SLA. Additionally, the site can be viewed from the KDAONB. Accordingly, Development Plan policies relevant to those designations apply, as does PPG2. Since the proposals relate to a waste related development, the Kent Waste Local Plan applies.
- 5.2 The form of development being proposed is not one of those cited within PPG2 as being appropriate within the MGB. Accordingly, the development must be considered 'inappropriate' and one which must therefore by definition cause harm to the MGB. The proposals are thus contrary not just to the provisions of PPG2 but to policy MGB 3 of the KSP and P2/16 of the TMBLP.
- 5.3 In terms of the land's status as open countryside and SLA, the applicable policies are P3/6 of the TMBLP and ENV1 and ENV4 of the KSP. Essentially, these policies seek to ensure that any development that adversely affects the countryside and its landscape and natural beauty will not be permitted.
- 5.4 Since the site is visible from the KDAONB, the potential impacts upon that landscape of particular significance must also be considered and Policies P3/5 of the TMBLP & ENV3 of the KSP must be applied. Again, the primary thrust of these policies is to protect the natural beauty of the Area.
- 5.5 Policy T19 of the KSP deals with the issues surrounding the potential increase in traffic generation that would result from the provision of this complex within the existing quarry site.

- 5.6 The waste disposal aims of these proposals are generally supported by national, regional, strategic and local policy, which all post a notable drive towards more waste being recycled and avoiding the deposition of recyclable and biodegradable waste within landfill sites. Such policy derives from PPG10, RPG9, the Kent Waste Local Plan (KWLP) and the 'Joint Strategy For The Sustainable Management of Household Waste'. As Members will be aware, a trial for green wasting has already been carried out within the Borough and the Council intends to provide a green waste collection service across the Borough.
- 5.7 Of particular importance is Policy W10 of the KWLP which presumes in favour of composting facilities, subject to meeting certain criteria. Balanced against this is Policy W4 of the KWLP that presumes against proposals for waste within the MGB unless they relate to the temporary restoration of mineral workings.

Very Special Circumstances

- 5.8 As indicated above, being sited within the MGB and not being one of the forms of development specifically listed within PPG2 as being 'appropriate', the proposal must by definition cause harm to the MGB. Consequently, there needs to be a persuasive set of very special circumstances (VSCs) to indicate that the Council should support this form of development, otherwise an objection should be made even to the principle of the composting facility.
- 5.9 As the planning history reveals, planning permission has already been granted for a composting facility at this site. Whilst that proposal did feature a much smaller extent of buildings with 'open air' composting being the dominant method of production, the principle of this type of waste recycling facility has already been accepted at Blaise Farm and within the Green Belt. Although the scale of the proposed buildings featured by this 'in vessel' production approach is significantly greater than that featured in the consented scheme I still feel that the extant permission for a similar operation is a significant consideration – particularly since the applicants have sought to mitigate the greater extent of buildings by setting this proposal on the quarry floor as opposed to the permitted scheme which would have been at the much higher existing ground level of an 'unworked' area of the quarry.
- 5.10 A further significant VSC is the general commitment to recycling and composting waste and the fact that such a use/facility can realistically only be sited away from built-up areas because it involves the handling of waste and the related potential for odour creation. It would perhaps be unrealistic to expect that such a site could easily be found within or in close proximity to a village or town – unless situated in the very heart of a large industrial sector. (Although the claimed merits and benefits of the 'in vessel' process now proposed do mean that there is less potential for odour and noise emissions and that, in theory, this plant could be sited closer to sensitive areas, such a proposal would represent an inefficient use of land allocated for economic/commercial development).

- 5.11 The applicants have submitted an assessment of other potential sites to serve this part of the County. The assessment states that the site must be within either Maidstone BC, TMBC, Tunbridge Wells BC or Sevenoaks BC, must provide at least six acres of land, be located adjacent to principal roads, be located away from residential areas and be capable of being operational within 18 months to meet the waste management targets.
- 5.12 Essentially, the study does identify some other suitable sites within the search area but the sites that are acceptable in highway, size and locational terms do not have the surplus land. In my view, the assessment is not exhaustive in its site search and so can not be comprehensively conclusive. However, as indicated above, the fact that this site already has consent for a waste recycling/composting facility is a compelling factor in support of this proposal.
- 5.13 There are no proposed Green Waste (Green Waste or GFVC) composting sites allocated within the WLP, only the general criteria approach set out in Policy W10. However, the 'Sustainable Management of Household Waste Joint Strategy for Kent' (15 November 2002), identifies that an additional composting capacity will be needed to ensure continued provision for Dartford, Gravesham, Swale and the northern parts of Maidstone and Tonbridge and Malling. The Strategy does not say whether this should be one or several facilities. One larger facility serving several District Council areas (such as the one proposed at Blaise Farm Quarry) could be regarded as a 'strategic' facility to a certain extent whereas several smaller ones serving individual Districts could be regarded as being more 'local'.
- 5.14 Benefits would accrue from this proposal through a reduced deposition of green waste within Offham landfill (and similar sites) in line with current waste philosophy. The additional traffic generated would also be offset to a certain extent through the fact that there would no longer be a need to import compost into the Blaise Farm Quarry to serve the soil blending facility.
- 5.15 As Members will no doubt be aware, this is an unusual proposal. There are a number of green waste composting sites operating in the County which take green waste (i.e. garden waste) from Civic Amenity Sites and various landscape contractors and use the open windrow technique to compost the material e.g. Dunbrik (Sevenoaks) and Shelford (Canterbury). There are no composting facilities such as this operating within the County at present. Permission has been granted for a facility at Great Ness Quarry (Sevenoaks) but this has not yet been implemented and is much smaller in scale (10,000 tonnes of waste) and it is envisaged that the Great Ness facility would take compostable waste from the existing industrial and commercial waste streams in any event rather than from local authority domestic green waste collection.
- 5.16 With respect to the likely waste sources, the facility will be able to accommodate the whole of the Borough's green waste generation, which is likely to be in the region of 10,000 tonnes of GFVC waste when the green waste scheme is

operating at full capacity. (Although this figure could even rise to as much as 15,000 tonnes).

- 5.17 However, with a capacity to handle more than 15,000 tonnes of GFVC, the facility will also aim to accommodate GFVC waste from other sources, and it is envisaged that these sources will comprise Maidstone Borough, Tunbridge Wells Borough and Sevenoaks District.

Odour

- 5.18 The potential for odour obviously arises from the materials that would be handled at the site. The risks are naturally reduced with the operation of a totally 'in vessel' process operated in buildings with negative pressure when compared to the permitted scheme that involves open air windrows. However, odour is always potentially a problem with waste and, therefore, DHH comments that appropriate restrictions need to be attached to ensure that odour is not unduly problematic. I accept this assessment and consider that KCC should be advised that TMBC would wish to see an appropriate restriction placed upon the facility. It may be that the restrictions are placed upon the waste licence rather than any planning permission but either way it is important that DHH's concerns are expressed to KCC. I also feel that it would be beneficial to provide 'back up' power at the site to ensure that negative pressure can be maintained within facilities even during events of mains power failure.

Noise

- 5.19 The main potential source of noise is from the operation of mechanical plant at the site (including the air filtration systems and vehicles operating within the site). As with the issue of odour, DHH considers that the attachment of an appropriate condition will suffice in order to protect the amenities of local residents given the distance from nearby houses. Again, this is reflected in my recommendation.

Dust:

- 5.20 DHH has not expressed any concern about the issue of dust so I do not consider that this is likely to be an issue for concern.

Visual Impacts

- 5.21 The plant proposed by this application represents an extensive complex of buildings. The applicants suggest that the plant would be similar in appearance to some modern farms but I do not share this view and I feel that the buildings will appear as obviously commercial premises. Notwithstanding this fact, the buildings will be sited on the quarry floor and thus, although this is a large complex of buildings, there will be no significant visual impact upon the wider locality nor upon

views from the AONB. Views will essentially be limited to those from a nearby PROW. Indeed, the permitted plant that is 'at grade' would be more visually prominent in my view even though it features less built development.

- 5.22 There will need to be some external illumination and this element of the proposals needs further detailed consideration as inappropriately scaled and conceived lighting could be visible from wider views and cause harm to the amenity and openness of the MGB.
- 5.23 In my view, the visual impacts of the proposal will be greatly limited by the sunken position of the buildings and, therefore, I do not consider that objection should be lodged to the larger scale of this particular composting/recycling facility.

PROWs

- 5.24 The site is visible from adjacent PROWs MR286 & Lords Walk. MR286 will be diverted as a part of the Blaise Farm Quarry proposals but will be unaffected by this particular development.

Traffic

- 5.25 The application envisages that waste would normally be delivered to the complex from Monday to Saturday in HGVs – the precise number visiting per day would to a large extent depend upon the time of year as naturally more green waste is produced during the spring and summer. The waste would be delivered by contractors operating on behalf of Councils. Overall HGV movements associated with the delivery of waste and the export of the finished compost products are estimated to be approximately 14,208 per year with an average of 44 movements per day (with a maximum of up to 76 movements per day anticipated in spring and a minimum of 16 movements per day in winter.

It is also possible that there could be a further 2 HGV movements every two days to accommodate a waste disposal lorry collecting contaminated materials from the site and also 4 articulated 20 tonne tanker movements each day to dispose of any foul water that may arise during peak periods. This would increase the maximum HGV movements to 82 per day. Private vehicle movements of employees etc. is estimated at about 4800 annually.

- 5.26 The issue of highway safety is a matter for the County to assess but the extant permission allowed a facility to handle 50,000 tonnes of green waste and was approved on the basis that it would operate within the total limit of HGV movements set by the permission to win ragstone from Blaise Farm Quarry. The applicants have indicated that this scheme would also be able to operate within that limitation apart from the marginal increase from additional HGV movements to collect waste from the site as mentioned above.

5.27 The traffic generated by the proposal could give rise to further impacts upon the amenities of residents. However, there are no residential properties in close proximity to the site and the additional movements would be extremely limited in their impact in comparison to the existing levels of traffic using the A228. There could potentially be problems with traffic if the facility were open to the general public.

5.28 I would recommend to KCC that limitations be placed upon the number of vehicle movements and upon the timing and routing of HGV movements to minimise any potential disturbance.

Summary

5.29 In summary, this is clearly a major development within a rural Green Belt location and will be in existence for a significant period of time and will also have implications for the quarry's approved restoration scheme. However, the facility will meet the Borough's corporate green waste disposal requirements, is sited on the quarry floor of a site that already benefits from an extant permission for a waste recycling facility and is well located at the heart of the Borough and close to the principal highway network. On balance, I therefore believe that the proposals deserve this council's support providing that KCC is satisfied that there are no preferable alternative sites located outside the Green Belt. I would however advocate that KCC be requested to attach certain restrictions to ensure that only one of the two waste facilities is implemented and to ensure that any permission that may be issued adequately safeguards rural and visual amenities and highway safety.

6. Recommendation:

6.1 That KCC be advised that TMBC **SUPPORTS THE PRINCIPLE OF THIS FACILITY** in this location providing that KCC is satisfied that there are no preferable alternative sites located outside the Green Belt. In the event that KCC considers this site to be acceptable for the proposed in-vessel composting facility TMBC would wish the following comments to be taken into account:

- A restriction should be imposed that waste shall not be accepted from any sources other than from borough councils, district councils, unitary authorities or county councils and principally from the four boroughs identified by the applicants as the basis for the site assessment. There must be no 'at the gate' acceptance of waste. This facility should be for approved/licensed contractors use only and not a 'drop in' facility that can be accessed by trade vehicles on an ad hoc basis.
- As great a level of control as possible should be exercised over the routing of vehicles accessing the site to ensure that they deliver contract waste via Junction 4 of the M20 Motorway and the 'A228 north' – in particular the

Borough Council would not wish to see traffic movements approaching the site from the A228 south or via West Malling, Offham or Mereworth villages. KCC is to ensure that any contracts issued include vehicle routing agreements reflecting the route identified above and that TMBC be consulted upon the full details of any routes that are included within the contracts.

- A liaison group should be set up (or the existing Blaise Farm Quarry Liaison Group be expanded).
- Consideration should be given to measures to ensure continued control of odour emission during power failures.
- There should be a management regime regarding potential spread of wind blown litter, regular testing of odour emission levels and an action plan for remedying matters should the stipulated levels of odour emission be exceeded, and a policing regime for stopping 'at the gate' deliveries.

TMBC requests that planning conditions be attached to any permission to ensure the following:

- Illumination of the site is to be minimised. TMBC would wish to be consulted on any details that are submitted.
- There are no HGV movements to or from the site on Sundays, Bank or Public Holidays or after 1300hrs on Saturdays.
- Open storage is prohibited.
- The use of the land is to cease and the buildings removed and the land restored in accordance with an approved restoration scheme at the end of the twenty year permission.
- Full details of a restoration scheme to be submitted for approval.
- At no time shall the noise rating level $L_{Ar,T}$, calculated in accordance with the method provided in BS4142:1997, attributable to the operation of all fixed plant and machinery installed at the premises exceed the background noise level $L_{A90,T}$ by more than 3 dB at any noise sensitive premises.
- At no time shall the measured odour emission rate associated with the operation of the permitted development exceed that which produces a predicted concentration of 1.5 OUE m^{-3} as a 98th percentile of a year of hourly means any sensitive premises.
- Precise details of the storage of any discarded waste materials to be submitted for approval.

- There shall be no open storage of either compost or finished products outside of the areas detailed in the approved plans, and the height of the open storage shall not exceed 5 metres.
- Excluding movements generated by staff employed in the operation of the facility or vehicles collecting waste arising from the production process that can not be recycled, HGV vehicle movements to and from the facility do not exceed 16000 per annum, of which no more than 5000 movements shall be associated with the deposition of Green Waste.
- Either this scheme or that approved under TM/03/01155/WAS may be constructed, but not both.

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