

Application No: 08/02113/CM Ward: Caversfield

Date Valid: 26.09.08

Applicant: Agrivert Limited

Site Address: Ardley composting Site, Ashgrove Farm, Middleton Stoney Road, Ardley, Oxon, OX27 7PJ.

Proposal: Erection and operation of an In-Vessel composting centre, comprising of weighbridge, reception building, composting tunnels, office/welfare facility, bio-filter and maturation pad.

1. Site Description and Proposal

This application relates to 1.9 hectares of land on the south side of the Upper Heyford Road approximately 350 metres west of its junction with the B430 Ardley to Middleton Stoney Road, and adjacent (west) of the above grand grass covered reservoir. The nearest residential properties are Ashgrove Farm (600 metres to the north) and Manor Farm (800 metres to the south). Part of the site (1 hectare) is currently operated by the applicants as an open-air composting facility set up approximately 1 year ago. The site presently processes green waste collected from residential properties.

The proposal seeks to expand the existing facility from its current licensed maximum throughput of 12,000 tonnes per annum to 35,000 tonnes per annum of biodegradable organic waste. This would be sourced from Cherwell District Council and Oxford City Council household collections plus commercial and industrial sources. The applicant is the provisionally successful bidder for a 20 year contract for such services from Oxfordshire County Council.

The facility would consist of:

1. A reception building to receive incoming waste measuring 27m x 30m x 10m high. It would be a steel framed building with profiled metal cladding above a concrete lower wall section.
2. Site office and welfare building – prefabricated measuring 12m x 3.6m x 2.4m high.
3. A bio filter (13m x 10m x 3m high) containing bark and woodchip. This would facilitate and clean air extracted from the reception building.
4. A workshop building (6m x 2.7m x 2.3m high) and ancillary storage.
5. 10 composting tunnels each 30m x 6.8m with 2.2m high concrete walls with a pitched opening roof above (maximum height 6.5 metres high).
6. 2,700m² maturation pad when compost is matured in open piles.
7. External lighting will be required to allow safe working during working hours.

The material, arriving by refuse collection vehicles is received in the reception building where it is screened for contamination and shredded. It is then moved to the composting tunnels. After 2-3 weeks it is then transferred to another set of tunnels (allowing re-blending and aeration). After a further 2-3 weeks the batch is then moved to maturation pad for a final 8-10 weeks being turned weekly. The end product will be sold loose and bagged.

At maximum capacity the site will receive 15 refuse collection vehicles per day (286 days per year). The majority of the product the majority of the material produced is intended to go to Ashgrove Farm and other local farms. It is anticipated that approximately 3 vehicles per day would remove more bulk loads of material (landscape gardeners for example) and bagged product is estimated as no more than 40 vehicles per annum. The existing facility has approximately 12 hours per day using it.

2. Application Publicity

Oxfordshire County Council are responsible – Cherwell District Council is a consultee.

3. Consultations

Oxfordshire County Council are responsible – Cherwell District Council is a consultee.

4. Relevant Planning Policies

Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016	-	Policies	Policy WM2 has <u>not</u> been saved. Policy G5 and EN1 relevant
Oxfordshire Waste and Minerals Local Plan	-	Policies	Policy W4 provides that recycling proposals will not normally be allowed in open countryside unless overriding need and or other suitable sites. Policy W3 criteria based policy for assessing proposals for recycling including location, highways impact, nuisance impacts to amenity; histology.
Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996	-	Saved Policies	Policies C7, C8, C28, ENV1 and ENV7
Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011	-	Policies	Policies EN1, EN3, EN5, EN6, EN12, EN30, EN34 and D12.

5. Appraisal

This is a county matter application where the Council is a consultee. As such Oxfordshire County Council is best placed to assess the need for this facility in this location and the locational attributes of the proposal to serve the markets to be met. The application is accompanied by a letter from this Council's Head of Environmental Services in which it is stated:

“Ardley is a central point for Cherwell. Good road access from the 3 major population centres (Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington) makes the location of a composting site at Ardley very beneficial for Cherwell. When the current site opened for garden waste collections we were able to significantly reduce the number of miles our garden waste crews traveled. The current site works well and services our needs. For a single future processing plant a location in the Ardley vicinity would fit Cherwell's future needs”.

The County Council is also best placed to assess the highway impact of the proposal. The application indicates a 50% grant in traffic to the site, but still amounts to only 18 vehicles per day (36 movements) some of the extra will be diverted from vehicles going to current landfill sites (including Ardley). It is indicated that most HGV movements will take place between 1000 and 1430, along the B430, with most approaching/leaving to the north through Ardley but some will travel southwards through Middleton Stoney (and Weston on the Green). The Head of Development Control and Major Developments does not consider that the increased number of vehicles will cause undue harm to the amenity of residents who live alongside these access routes.

The remainder of this report therefore addresses the amenity impacts of the proposal i.e. noise nuisance; impact on air quality; landscape and visual impact; hydrology impact; archaeology; vermin/birds and litter.

Noise

Noise will emanate from the site from the shredder and from the movement of vehicles within the site. The shredder will be within the reception building. The nearest residential properties are a minimum of 600 metres from the site. This distance should ensure that noise nuisance is not experienced. An update of comments from the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Manager will be given at Committee.

Air Quality

Dust is a potential problem of any waste operation. The County Council are well versed in techniques that can be controlled by conditions to minimize (the existing consent already contains a condition regarding the dowsing of the external composting piles.

The potential of odour nuisance is raised given the intention to deal with biodegradable organic waste (this could include food waste). The reception building is designed to contain initial smells and is proposed to be equipped with a mechanical ventilation system with filters. The composting tunnels with their roofs are designed to minimize odour nuisance. They propose a complaints response system to enable rapid reaction to complaints. Again an update from the Anti-Social Behaviour Manager will be reported to Committee.

Visual Impact

The existing site is well screened from the B430 and the Upper Heyford Road by the reservoir and roadside hedgerows (the piles are limited by condition to a maximum of 3 metres high). The reception building and the tunnels are quite large structures. However the building will not be any larger than a large agricultural barn, and will be similar in design. The tunnels are less normal buildings, but their position west of the building will enable that building and the reservoir to screen them from the B430 to the east.

Additional landscaping is proposed to the north to limit their impact when seen from the Upper Heyford Road. On balance the Head of Development Control and Major Developments considers that the impact is tolerable in this large flat landscape.

External lighting is essential for winter operation given the outdoor nature of the tunnels and window piles. With careful attention to shielding and siting this issue should not create unsatisfactory levels of light pollution. Conditions can be attached to ensure lighting is

switched off outside of operational hours.

Hydrology

A flood risk assessment has been submitted and the Environment Agency will comment direct to Oxfordshire County Council upon this aspect.

Archaeology

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken for the existing site. A similar watching brief is proposed for the extended site.

Vermin and Birds

The tunnels are designed to prohibit vermin intrusion.

Litter

Litter is not perceived as a significant issue from this type of recycling operation.

6. Recommendation

It is recommended that Oxfordshire County Council is advised that this Council raise no objections to the proposal subject to the imposition of conditions concerning hours of operation (proposes 0800-1800 Mon – Fri and 0800-1230 Saturday only – as current operation); landscaping; surface water drainage; dust suppression; maximum height of material stock piles; floodlighting appraisal; odour control system (including complaints process); noise complaints process; archeological watching brief; no retailing of compost.

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