

UTT/0924/07/CC - GREAT DUNMOW
(Notification by Essex County Council)

Construction of Great Dunmow Resource Management Centre comprising: a Recycling Centre for Household Waste including the siting of storage containers and recycling facilities, Refuse Collection Vehicle Parking Area with associated mess room facilities for Uttlesford District Council, Waste Transfer/Bulking Station for mixed and source separated municipal and trade waste, associated works

Location: Land r/o Ambulance Station Chelmsford Road. GR/TL 636-205

Applicant: Essex County Council & Uttlesford District Council

Agent: Egniol Consulting Ltd

Case Officer: Mr M Ovenden 01799 510476

Expiry Date: 21/06/2007

Classification: OTHER

NOTATION: Outside development limit / allocated site for Civic Amenity Site and Depot (Policy GD8).

DESCRIPTION OF SITE: The site is located in the southern part of the town and the application drawings show it to have an area of 1.7461 hectares. To the north is the commercial part of the town – Smiths Farm (allocated for employment uses), Hoblongs industrial estate and new hotel. To the east is the A130 Chelmsford Road. Also to the east is an ambulance station sharing the same access to the public highway. There are three dwellings served from a spur off the former A130. Wrapping round the south eastern edge and southern boundary of the site is the new A120 and slip road at its junction with the A130. To the west is a further area of former A120 compound which is not covered by this application.

The site is former agricultural land used during the construction of the A120 as a site compound. Much of the site is covered by hard standings and shingle, subdivided in part by chain link fencing with height restriction barriers left over from its use as a compound. The land is gently sloping from west to east, including down to where Hoblongs cottages are. The A120 is on an embankment as it passes the site with the slip road descending to a lower level at the south east corner. There is a small embankment within the site along part of the southern boundary and there is some immature planting along the side of the A120. Currently there are clear views into the site from the A120 across towards the new hotel.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL: The proposal involves developing the site in three portions. The eastern part (approximately 5800 square metres) would be developed as a depot for Dustcart (and similar) parking, vehicle washing area, with street sweepings and skips and ancillary offices. Also within the compound would be a waste transfer station with weighbridge and office, warehouse type building for processing the waste (unloading, sorting and re packing) plus lighting and camera columns. The building would be 54 m long by 24 metres wide and would be up to 9.5 metres tall. It would be a portal frame building with block work up to 3 metres with walls above and roof clad in coated steel panels. It would incorporate various technologies to deal with dust and odour. It would be operated to have the adjacent door shut when waste is loaded or unloaded. To reflect changes in ground levels the building would step down mid way along its length by approximately 1 metre. This facility would be operated by Essex County Council between 6.30 am to 17.00 Monday to Friday only (except during bank holiday weekends when Saturday would be a normal working day). About 70 vehicle movements in and 70 movements out are anticipated plus a further 6 to 8 vehicles would remove the repackaged waste from the site each day. Uttlesford District Council would have offices within the building and its refuse vehicles would

feed the transfer station and use the depot to store its vehicles. Vehicles would be washed at the site but other than incidental maintenance not repaired at the site. There would be a distance of 27 metres between the site boundary and Hoblongs cottages (dwellings not their gardens) and a further planting strip of approximately 8 metres is proposed along this boundary. The site specific policy in the Development Plan (Policy GD8) covers the depot part of the proposal but not the waste transfer station.

Towards the northern edge of the application site a car park for 42 cars plus vans is proposed for Uttlesford depot staff covering an area of 1680 square metres. This would be ancillary to the depot and therefore covered under the site specific policy.

The other part of the site (4850 square metres) would be used for the siting of a recycling area for household waste. This would be operated by Essex County Council and open to members of the public the whole year round except for Christmas, Boxing day and New Years day. The opening hours are proposed to be 0800 to 1700, 7 days a week between March and mid October with one late night a week with 1600 closing between mid October and February. The site will operate under a licence issued by the Environment Agency which will restrict the types and quantities of waste processed together with day to day operation (e.g. dealing with surface water control and dust).

On the site there are various areas of planting proposed but along the northern and southern boundaries the proposal is reliant on existing planting some of which, particularly along the southern boundary, is has yet to create any meaningful screen. The whole site would have its perimeter enclosed by 2.4m metal palisade fencing.

A central spine road terminates at the western end of the site providing an access to the land beyond. The land beyond, part of which also forms part of the former A120 compound, is not covered by this application. The site specific policy in the Development Plan (Policy GD8) covers the Civic Amenity Site aspect of the proposal.

If permitted the site is expected to be developed in a number of stages over a period of years.

APPLICANT'S CASE including Design & Access statement: A 78 page supporting document explains the proposal, covers planning policy, need for the facility and alternatives, assessment of the proposal, noise foul and surface water issues, ecology and odour. The Summary and Conclusions are reproduced below.

Please see copy [attached end of the report.](#)

Officers' comment: The report explains the proposal in detail and puts forward the reasons and benefits of the facilities, the search for sites elsewhere and the reasons why the applicant believes it is acceptable.

RELEVANT HISTORY: Application for retail store refused 1993. Consultations by Essex County Council for civic amenity site withdrawn 2001, 2002 and 2005.

CONSULTATIONS: All carried out by Essex County Council as determining authority.

TOWN COUNCIL COMMENTS: Support subject to the improvement to the road junction at the Chelmsford Road/Hoblongs estate.

REPRESENTATIONS: This application has been advertised and two representations have been received.

One letter makes comments about the validity of the application. These have been sent to the County Council and it should satisfy itself that an application it is to determine is valid. The initial response of the County Council is that notwithstanding such comments is that it believes the application to be valid. Your officers do not believe the application to be invalid.

A second letter (addressed to ECC but copied to these offices) raises concern about the expansion of the proposal, the traffic implications; that this development is inappropriate for a gateway to the town and that other nearby developments have been required to be enhanced before gaining permission.

COMMENTS ON REPRESENTATIONS: Publicity to this application is carried out by the County Council and it may have received additional representations. Comments regarding issues raised in the second representation are included in planning considerations.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS:

Members will be aware that where an application is made to the County Council, it is the determining authority and the District Council is a consultee with an opportunity to comment on the proposal. Therefore the District Council does not approve or refuse the application but makes its comments known to the County Council so that they can be considered when it determines the application. In this instance the County Council has announced that the proposal exceeds what is allocated in the Development Plan – i.e. includes a waste transfer station in addition to the civic amenity site and depot proposed in policy GD8 - and is therefore a departure to it and if the County Council wishes to approve that application it would need to inform the Government Regional office (Go-East) providing it an opportunity to consider the application.

The main issues are

- 1) (ERSP Policy C5 & ULP Policies S7 and GD8, GEN2);
- 2) (ERSP Policy T12 & ULP Policies GEN1 & GEN8); highways and parking
- 3) (ULP Policies GEN2); design & landscaping
- 4) (ULP Policies GEN4 & GEN5); residential amenity

1) The site is located outside the town development limit where in accordance with rural restraint policy there is a general presumption against development unless it is appropriate to a rural area or has to be sited there to meet a functional need. There is however a site specific policy in the Development Plan relating to the site that is supportive of the provision of a civic amenity site and depot. This states:

“A 1.83 hectare site to the south of the Hoblongs industrial estate is proposed for a civic amenity site and depot. Proposals should include landscaping adjacent to the neighbouring properties and the A120 bypass. Any proposal must be subject to a Traffic Impact Assessment.”

Therefore in principle these aspects of the proposal must be acceptable subject to details unless there are material considerations that out weigh the policy presumptions in favour of these aspects of the scheme.

However the provision of a waste transfer station is not proposed under the policy. The County Council have determined that to permit this aspect of the scheme would be an exception to the Development Plan and therefore require the agreement of the regional office (Go-East).

In essence it is necessary to judge the positive aspects of the scheme against the harm that would result and form a view on where the balance lies.

Local plan policy GEN2 is supportive of proposals that reduce waste production and encourages recycling. This scheme for a waste transfer station would seem to support these aims. Local authorities are encouraged to increase the level of recycling of waste and there would be environmental benefits of doing this locally and avoiding having to travel long distances to alternative facilities. On the other hand the additional facility would increase activity; noise and its impact on amenity of neighbours (see section 4 below on amenity).

2) The County Council is the Highways authority and will consult its officers for advice on the matter. The junction of the A130 and B184 together with the junction of the old A130 spur road is substandard and this has been recognised in various planning permissions for example that for the police station and for the new hotel and proposed family restaurant in that S106 monies have been sought for road improvements. These improvements have not been carried out. In these circumstances provided that the highway authority can establish that the use of the site by waste vehicles would not give rise to highway dangers or unreasonable delays then this aspect of the proposal may be allowed to proceed. However to permit public access to what is likely to be a well used facility prior to road improvements being carried out would be unacceptable, creating unnecessary inconvenience and dangers to all users of the junction which is used as the southern access to the town and access to the Dunmow East junction of the A120. A traffic assessment has been supplied with the application. It identifies that there are already capacity issues relating to the nearby junction which have been identified previously which would be added to by the traffic travelling to the new facility. However unspecified junction improvements are planned. The County Council will be asked to establish that these works are sufficient to satisfactorily cope with future traffic at the junction.

3) In its former use as agricultural land the site was in keeping with its rural location. Since being used for the A120 compound the site has become disfigured and has been allowed to become derelict and unsightly. The provision of the depot and civic amenity facilities would to some degree have perpetuated the rather barren appearance but retained the potential for significant screen along the boundaries of the site as well as within it. Policy GD8 requires that Proposals should include landscaping adjacent to the neighbouring properties and the A120 bypass. The site plans indicates a planting strip to the rear of Hoblongs Cottages of about 8 metres in width and 40 metres in length, another between the depot parking and the civic amenity site of about 85 metres by 6 metres and a further strip along the site's western edge of varying width over a length of 115 metres dissected by an 8 metre gateway. Other than at the ends of the planting strips referred to above there is no planting proposed along the 350 metre southern boundary. The planting along the A120 and its slip road it is currently immature. The proposed bulking/transfer building would act as a screen to drivers and passengers travelling along the A120 which is elevated above the site. Given Members' previously expressed comments, when considering adjacent sites, about the importance of good design this omission of landscaping along the boundary is unacceptable and requires revision. It appears that the inclusion of a waste transfer facility has required the consolidation of other uses in the site to the detriment of landscaping whilst staying within the site allocated in the local plan. An appropriate planting belt along the southern boundary of the site would be of significant width and include earth bunding and some semi mature planting. The provision of the transfer building makes the need for planting more rather than less necessary. The applicant proposes that the conifer hedge at the rear of Hoblongs Cottages (and outside the applicant's control) should be allowed to grow higher to screen the development and be supported with additional planting within the site. It is unacceptable to rely on adjacent residents to have to allow their planting to grow higher to mask the development. Furthermore the lifespan of the buildings is likely to exceed that of the conifers.

4) In comparison to the previous use of the site for agricultural purposes the site would have an adverse effect on the amenity of neighbours. However the appropriate comparison is to assess the impact of the proposal for the development in comparison to the development proposed in the Development Plan allocation, i.e. the difference made by the inclusion of the waste transfer station. As stated above the proposal does include some planting along the rear of Hoblongs Cottages but this is fairly minimal and is proposed to be supplemented by acoustic fencing. The provision of the waste transfer station would add to and focus activity of vehicles in this part of the site, with associated reversing sirens. As stated above, activities on this site would occur from 6.30 am to 17.00 Monday to Friday plus occasional Saturdays. The impact of the dominant buildings will be permanent. Matters relating to the detail of lighting could be controlled by condition.

CONCLUSIONS: There is no objection to the civic amenity site and the depot in principle and the County Council should satisfy itself that subject to conditions the development can satisfactorily overcome the negative aspects of the proposal. Officers believe that this is the case. With regard to the waste transfer station this is beyond the allocation made in the Development Plan and therefore requires the agreement of the secretary of State. Officers can see the advantages of such a facility and of sharing a site occupied by related activities. However the inclusion of this additional facility appears to have restricted the applicant's ability to safeguard the amenity of neighbours and the character of this part of the town on one of the prominent entrances to passers by and visitors to the town. Officers believe that revisions – particularly to the landscaping along the southern and eastern boundaries of the site – could reduce the impact of the proposal. Public access to the site should be precluded until the adjacent highway junction has been improved. Members should be aware that should planning permission be granted then it may prove necessary to follow compulsory purchase procedures to acquire the site.

RECOMMENDATION: INFORM ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL THAT THIS AUTHORITY SUPPORTS TO THE PROPOSAL SUBJECT TO REVISIONS

1. Development to commence within three years of the date of the permission.
2. Development to be carried out in accordance with revised plans showing the relocation of the building by ten metres and the provision of a landscaping buffer along the entire southern boundary and along the entire eastern boundary.
3. No development to commence until details of odour dust measures have been submitted and implemented
4. Submission of landscaping scheme around perimeter of site and within it (to include bunding and semi mature planting.
5. Implementation of landscaping and protective fencing scheme prior to commencement of development.
6. Submission of noise fencing for construction and post construction to be submitted and implemented prior to commencement
7. Submission and implementation of scheme for treatment of water runoff & waste from office etc
8. Agreement of colour of cladding of building
9. No public access to the civic amenity site until road improvements to the junction of the B184/A130 have been carried out.
10. Implementation of scheme of car parking, motor cycle and bicycles prior to first use of depot.

Background papers: see application file.
