

REPORT 5

APPLICATION NO.	P04/W1169
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL
REGISTERED	14.10.2004
PARISH	BENSON
APPLICANT	Grundon Waste Management Ltd
SITE	Grundon Depot, Goulds Grove Ewelme (in the Parishes of Benson & Ewelme)
PROPOSAL	Redevelopment of depot involving construction of workshops and offices, formation of car parking areas and access road and associated landscaping.
AMENDMENTS	
GRID REFERENCE	464666190303
OFFICER	Mrs S Crawford

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application has been referred to the Committee at the discretion of the Western Area Development Manager
- 1.2 The County Council has resolved to grant planning permission for a permanent Waste Transfer Station on this site. The building would be substantial with a floor area of some 5,000 square metres and 11 metres in height. Work is ongoing to draft the section 106 agreement and conditions.
- 1.3 The site is situated in an isolated location in the open countryside within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The surrounding land is mainly farm land in arable use and open countryside. The site lies approximately 4.5 km (2.8 miles) east of Wallingford. Access is from Icknield Way via Clack's Lane. The village of Ewelme is located 1 km (0.6 miles) to the north and the village of Benson 2.5 (1.5 miles) km to the northwest. The site is identified on the Ordnance Survey extract **attached** at Appendix 1.
- 1.4 The Ewelme site is divided between two areas known as Ewelme No.1 and Ewelme No. 2. This application site is located on Ewelme No. 1; The application for the hazardous Waste Transfer Station (WTS) with the Oxfordshire County Council also relates to Ewelme 1. Ewelme No. 2 comprises a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) and landfill and is land restored to agriculture and woodland following landfill.

1.5 The site is a former mineral working area and much of the surrounding land has been restored. The existing complex of buildings consists of a number of buildings of a temporary nature. The buildings sit in a hollow created where gravel has previously been extracted. The land surrounding the building complex has been restored by landfill and returned to agricultural use. The building complex comprises existing offices, workshops, hazardous waste transfer station, areas which are currently used for skip/bin storage and lorry parking and the land intended for a new access and access road to the building. The application site also includes parts of Ewelme No 2 proposed to be used temporarily whilst the redevelopment works are constructed.

2.0 PROPOSAL

2.1 The application has been advertised as a departure from the Development Plan. It seeks full planning permission for a number of elements of the overall proposal;

- A two storey office building to provide a headquarter function for Grundons with a total floor space of approx 770 square metres. The building would be set into the higher level ground to the rear of the building. It would have a curved sedum covered roof with brick external walls to the front and sides;
- A new workshop building that would be used to continue the operation of the existing fleet of waste collection vehicles which undertake domestic and commercial collections for recycled materials around Oxford, Abingdon, Didcot, Aylesbury, High Wycombe, Wantage and Reading. The workshop would be attached to and share facilities with a new Waste Transfer Station (WTS) and would contain 6 vehicle workshops, 3 welding workshops, 1 paint workshop and 1 shotblasting workshop plus ancillary storage areas having a combined floor area of just under 1400 square metres. In addition and attached to the workshop an office and amenity block on three floors is proposed. This would consist of a transport office, canteen, washrooms and showers with a combined floor area of just over 600 square metres. The washrooms and showers would also serve the WTS. The WTS would have a floor area of approximately 5000 square metres.
- Parking for 145 cars at 105.5m above datum with access across the frontage of the office building;
- Lower level parking for 87 trucks (105.0 above datum level)
- A skip and container storage area to the north of the WTS.
- Associated landscaping around the boundaries
- Restoration of existing access points to Ewelme 1 and 2 and relocation of weighbridge with restoration (as part of the WTS proposal)
- Temporary parking area on Ewelme 2 during construction period (as part of the WTS proposal).
- New access to Ewelme 1.

2.2 The proposed workshop building would be the same height as the attached three storey office and amenity block. It would be constructed of a steel frame structure design. The “ground” floor would be fair faced concrete block walls and the upper levels would be a light brown coloured aluminium cladding. The roof would be of a shallow pitched curvilinear design made of aluminium and painted light green with

- rooflights. The building would be in an area cut down into the existing ground levels in order to reduce the visual impact of the building on the landscape.
- 2.3 In addition to the new buildings the proposal involves further lowering the ground level within the existing hollow to set the workshop, ancillary facilities and WTS into the ground as much as possible to reduce its significant mass.
- 2.4 A new access to the site will be provided further south along Icknield Way. The current access will be closed and screened from Icknield Way by mounding and planting. A new access to Ewelme No. 2 at the temporary lorry parking site is proposed with the closure of the current access.
- 2.5 The application proposes development in a staged programme of works in five phases to allow for normal operations to continue throughout the redevelopment works. Detailed plans of each phase accompany the application.
- 2.6 Ewelme No. 2 is an active inert waste landfill operation and material recovery facility and the former non hazardous waste landfill here has been partly restored. The proposal includes the temporary use part of Ewelme No. 2 for a bin and skip storage area and for lorry parking whilst the works associated with this planning application and the WTS are being constructed.
- 2.7 The application includes an Environmental Statement which details a search for alternative sites for this development. It concluded that there is no better site for the combination of uses that currently exist at Ewelme No. 1. The site search included an assessment of alternative sites for a stand alone depot but it concentrated on the search for the combination of uses which presently exist at Ewelme. The applicant's supporting statement indicates that the site should ideally be located closer to the London end of the M40 or the M4, though it does say they believe that Ewelme is well sited in central southern England. The applicant has also provided further information on the search for alternative sites and a Green Travel Plan.
- 2.8 The supporting statement argues that the development is needed to support existing waste collection operations which provide an essential service to the local area, including the operational base for vehicles collecting waste for recycling in South Oxfordshire. The headquarters offices will support operations undertaken at the Ewelme site (personnel and finance) and Grundon's other sites in southern England. The workshop building is required to service the vehicle fleet. The ancillary workshop facilities would provide washing and shower facilities and a canteen etc.
- 2.9 Reduced copies of the plans accompanying the application are **attached** at Appendix 2. The Environmental Statement and other detailed documents with the application available for inspection with the planning file or on the Council's website.

3.0 CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

- 3.1 Ministry of Defence Comments relating to the attraction of birds to waste and

	impact that can have on air traffic
Health and safety Executive	
OCC (Highways)	Comments. No objection subject to conditions.
Environmental Health (noise, fumes, odour)	No objection subject to conditions regarding noise generation.
Environmental Health (contamination)	Comments, no objection subject to conditions regarding contamination.
Benson Parish Council	Original - Refuse. Traffic and noise abatement considerations.
	Additional info - Councillors voted unanimously to approve the principle of allowing Grundon to have a head office building on this site. But they are anxious that any building is built to the highest environmental standards, going for BREEAM excellent rather than just very good.
Ewelme Parish Council	No objection.
County Archaeological Services	Given the ground disturbance that has occurred as a result of the grave extraction- No objection. But at NB is any artefacts are found during construction.
Monson Ltd	No objection s/t details of foul and SW drainage.
Thames Water Development Cntrl	No objection in principle subject to conditions regarding drainage and fitting of petrol/oil interceptors.
Ewelme Society	Concern regarding additional traffic movements from enlarge work force as local road network is inadequate to cater for this growth. Noise from early morning lorries is also a problem.
Environment Agency	No objection as this is an operational site. S/t conditions requiring a landfill gas risk assessment
	Details of foul and surface water drainage
	No soakaways to be constructed such that they penetrate the water table
	No soakaways to be constructed in contaminated ground.
Landscape consultant	1) The excavation to set the WTS further into the ground is welcomed given the significant mass of the building
	2) It is essential that any landscaping is maintained to minimise the visual impact as some of the existing landscaping measures are compacted.
OCC as Structure Plan Authority	Objection. The proposal is major development in the AONB and the justification is questioned

Neighbours (1) Support redevelopment. Would tidy up site and company is an important local employer.

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 The existing site has been used for a considerable period of time as a base by Grundons for their waste management collection and for related personnel and finance offices. Grundons have been on the site since the 1940's and there is a lawful use, in some capacity, on the site.

The site is made up of Ewelme sites 1 and 2. Mineral extraction has been followed by landfill on most of Ewelme no. 1 and 2. However, whilst the current application site has been extracted it has not been landfilled and so is set down below the general level of the surrounding landfilled area. Operations on the site were originally envisaged to cease once the site had been infilled and a long list of temporary planning permissions, conditions on various planning permissions and the temporary nature of some of the buildings reflect this.

The current landfill and Materials Recovery Facility activities at Ewelme No. 2 have permission to operate until 2016 and have routeing restrictions requiring the lorries to access the site from the Crowmarsh Gifford roundabout junction on the A4074 and via Clack's Lane and Icknield Way to avoid local villages. The existing agreement does allow lorries to go past Benson Airfield and out to the north as long as it is after 6:30am.

4.4 This planning application was submitted to the District Council in 2004 for the redevelopment of the depot including workshops and offices. At the same time a planning application was also submitted to the County Council for the construction of a new Waste Transfer Station building. There were also six applications for certificates of lawful development (CLUED) which had also been made to the Council at various times since 2001. Officers took the view that this application could not be determined until issues raised by the CLUED applications had been addressed as fully as possible and decisions issued.

4.5 Consideration of the CLUED applications revealed a very long and complex history of development at the Ewelme 1 and 2 sites. Generally, it would appear that development consisting of offices and workshops etc was envisaged to be of finite duration tied in to operations on adjoining land. Thus, some buildings on the Ewelme 1 site might be regarded as a matter of law as being susceptible to enforcement action requiring their removal at some point. Some planning permissions which have been granted on the other hand have appeared to recognise the evolving use of the site for general depot and office purposes not directly or mainly related to activities on adjoining land. Not all of the planning permissions which have been granted for the erection of specific buildings on the land have contained conditions requiring the removal of those buildings. When considered against the background of the buildings and disposition of uses on the site which may be immune from enforcement action, together with the County

Council's decision to grant planning permission for the Waste Transfer Station (see paragraph 5.1 below), enforcement action to require the removal of any existing unauthorised development would not be considered expedient.

5.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 5.1 The planning history related to this site is long and complicated. Only the most recent and relevant planning applications are listed below. A detailed list is available on the planning file.
- 5.2 P07/W0749/CM - Retention of existing hazardous waste recovery and transfer facility for a temporary period of two years. Approved. A further temporary permission is required to allow for construction of the permanent facility.
- 5.3 P04/W1164/CM – To construct a new building to enclose the current hazardous waste transfer and processing operations located within the Grundon Depot at Goulds Grove. The replacement waste transfer station would be permanent and would be on the same site as the existing one but it would be larger in order to enclose the operation.

The District Council was a consultee on this application which was submitted to the County Council for determination. The County Council has resolved to grant planning permission at their Planning and Regulation Committee on 21 May 2007 and work is ongoing to draft the section 106 agreement and conditions.

6.0 POLICY & GUIDANCE

6.1 Adopted Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016

G1 – General policies for development, G2-improving the quality and design of development, G3 – Development must have the necessary infrastructure to support it.

G5 Development outside settlements, G6 Energy and resource conservation, EN1 Landscape character, EN2 Environmental measures, E1 Employment development, E3 Restrain employment outside main towns, T1 & T2 -Sustainable travel, T8 - Development should be permitted only if there is adequate access and mitigation of adverse transport impacts, WM1 – Provision will be made to deal with the equivalent of Oxfordshire's own waste, except for waste that needs to be dealt with at a national, regional or sub-regional level, WM2 – Proposals that move waste management up the waste hierarchy will be encouraged.

Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan

W1 – Oxfordshire should be self sufficient in dealing with its own waste, other than that requiring specialised provision of a sub-regional or regional nature.

W3 – Proposals for reuse/recycling

W4 – Proposals for reuse/recycling will not be permitted in the open countryside

unless there is an established overriding need and no other site is available.

W5 – In all cases, the development must be adequately screened

Adopted SOLP Policies

G2 – Protection of District's resources, G3 – locational strategy, G6 – Quality of design and local distinctiveness, C1 – Landscape character C2 – Conserve and enhance Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, EP1, EP2 and EP3 – Proposals with an adverse impact in terms of noise, vibration, dust, odour and light pollution etc will not be permitted. EP6 - Surface water drainage requirements, EP9 – Development for use, movement or storage of hazardous substances will not be permitted where there would be an unacceptable risk to users of the site, D1 – Principles of good design, D2 – Parking for vehicles and cycles, D8 – Conservation and efficient design, D9 – Renewable energy, D10 – Management of waste, E3 – reasonable expansion of firms on existing sites, E4- Restraint on employment generating development, , E5 –Constraint on employment, T1- developments to provide for a safe access to the highway network and be served by an existing road network which can accommodate the traffic,T10 - Development which would increase lorries on unsuitable roads and cause adverse impacts in rural areas will not be permitted.

South Oxfordshire Design Guide

South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment

PPS1 – Delivering sustainable development

PPS7 – Sustainable development in rural areas

PPS10 – Planning for sustainable waste management

PPG13 – Transport

PPS 25 – Development and Flood risk.

RPG9 – Regional Planning Guidance for the South East

7.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 The main issues in this case are;

- Principle
- Impact on AONB and landscape setting
- Highway and sustainable transport issues
- Design details;
- Sustainable design

- Material considerations

7.2 **Principle.** This application is for major development in the AONB in the countryside where new development should be resisted. Structure and Local plan policies encourage employment generating uses to be sited in sustainable locations in towns close to the labour force where there is existing transport infrastructure and to protect the countryside (**OSP G1, E1, E3 SOLP G1, G4, C2, E3, E4, E5**). New commercial development in such a location would not be acceptable. However, the Development Plan allows for the reasonable expansion of companies on existing sites where they are not considered badly sited.

7.3 The application site has a long history of planning permissions dating from the 1940's for activities relating to gravel extraction and waste disposal operations in connection with the greater Ewelme site owned and operated by the Grundon Group of companies. The application site has been specifically developed for the purpose of a depot in connection with the above operations, including vehicle servicing and repair activities and some offices to support. Whilst the assumption has always been that the site would be filled and restored to agricultural use, there are office and workshop buildings that are immune from enforcement action and/or have the benefit of permanent planning permissions. In reality, the site has been used for the purposes of a waste management business for a considerable number of years. A further material consideration is the fact that the County Council has resolved to grant planning permission for the WTS. The WTS is a substantial and permanent building.

7.4 Where there are existing commercial uses in rural areas Policy E3 (vi) of SOLP would allow for the reasonable expansion of a firm provided that is not considered to be badly sited. In this case the proposal aims to replace utilitarian temporary buildings constructed in a piecemeal fashion with modern buildings with facilities to meet modern day standards and legislation. Some increase in the size of the buildings is included in the proposal but the increase is not significant. Grundons is also an employer within the District and the significance of this firm to the local economy is an important consideration. However, in recognition of the special circumstances relating to the site, conditions to link the functions on the site to a purpose associated with a waste disposal and collection business being operated from the site is reasonable in your officer's opinion to prevent individual elements from being sold off separately.

Impact on AONB and landscape setting

7.5

The site lies within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). AONB's have the highest status of protection in relation to their landscape and scenic beauty being of national significance and Government advice in PPS7 indicates that such areas should given considerable weight in development control decisions. The SOLP indicates that major development will not normally be permitted in the AONB as this would be inconsistent with its designation. Development which would be damaging to the beauty or distinctive character of the area will be resisted. Where new development is allowed the scale and materials used should be appropriate (Policy EN1 OSP/ C2 SOLP).

7.6 In assessing a proposal regard is had to the South Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment which is supplementary planning guidance and identifies the

landscape character of the District. The Grundon's site falls within the Central Vale Fringes Landscape and is identified as being an area of unnatural landform with incongruous styles of fencing and urbanised highways. The Landscape Assessment identifies it as an area for which 'restoration' is required. It has a low scenic quality, medium visual sensitivity and a low sensitivity to change. In your officer's view, the redevelopment could bring improvements to the appearance of the site, particularly the landscaping and the enclosing of plant, machinery and storage that is currently out in the open.

- 7.7 The County Council has resolved to grant planning permission for a substantial Waste Transfer Station some 5000 square metres in floor area and 11 metres in height. In terms of category, the current application for the workshop and ancillary facilities is classified as major development but they are less than a third of the size of the WTS at some 1630 square metres in footprint. In your officer's view they do not add a significant amount to the WTS and there are shared facilities of washrooms, offices and canteen between WTS and workshop that make a shared site beneficial. Furthermore the whole complex would be sunk into the ground and would have a limited wider impact. Whilst the materials for the workshop and ancillary facilities do not appear to be appropriate to the AONB, being of an industrial character, the use of traditional materials would be out of context for the scale and form of development.
- 7.8 **Highways and sustainable transport issues.** OCC highways officers have expressed concern on the WTS application about the suitability of Clack's Lane for the continued use by and increased number of HGVs associated with the increase in size of the WTS. Grundons have offered £650,000 towards improvements and a legal agreement to ensure that the contributions are provided is being drafted and will be linked with the issue of planning permission on the WTS. Whilst not the entire sum needed it is a substantial and appropriate contribution and was agreed direct with the Highways Authority.
- 7.9 This is not a sustainable location for new commercial development because there is no access to public transport and all journeys to and from the site will be by private car. However, this is an existing commercial site. In terms of this application, the proposal does not involve an increase in the numbers of staff in the offices (50) or with the fleet crew (80 vehicle fleet, 130 drivers and mates to man vehicles). The number of traffic movements associated with the existing collection of domestic and commercial recycling will also be the same (106 two way movements). There are existing routing agreements in place to prevent fleet vehicles from travelling through local villages and these routing agreements would remain in place.
- 7.10 Grundons acknowledge that the location involves reliance on private car journeys and have worked on providing a travel plan for employees. Staff questionnaires regarding travel to work were carried out in 2003 and 2007. The results have informed the development of a Travel Plan that is hoped will encourage staff to move away from single car trips to, where possible, car share or alternative means of transport. Excessive parking provision could undermine attempts to improve the existing car-based travel patterns of employees through a Green Travel Plan.
- 7.11 **Design and sustainable features.** The office building would be a two storey building of a modern design that would be partially built into the site. There are no

objections per se to the design of this building. The office building also incorporates a number of sustainable elements which are welcomed and accord with Policy D8 of SOLP. These are as follows;

- Sedum covered roof- reduces visual impact and provides thermal insulation reducing the heating and air conditioning requirements;
- Geothermal heat exchange system and heat pump to provide heating and air conditioning or similar to reduce the energy requirements of the building;
- Grey water re-cycling; water from roof drainage to be used in vehicle wash down facility, toilets and other non-potable water requirements;
- Grundons will consider use of photo voltaic cells within roof to provide electricity

The following options will also be considered:

- Sun light tubes for offices to the rear of buildings
- Solar panels
- BREEAM very good standard
- Lunch facilities to discourage car trips at lunch times

8.0 CONCLUSION

8.1 Whilst this is not a sustainable location for commercial development and involves major development in the AONB, there are justifiable planning reasons why your officers support this application.

The County Council have granted planning permission for a permanent Waste
8.2 Transfer Station on the site. This is a very large building of 5000 square metres floor area up to 11 metres in height. This would be a permanent intrusion into the Chilterns AONB. This permission means that the site will never be restored as originally intended and this is a material consideration. Furthermore, in order of scale the size of the buildings proposed under the application submitted to the District Council is limited to reasonable expansion of existing facilities on the site.

The existing site has been used as a waste management depot and for associated
8.3 workshop and office purposes for a considerable period of time and whilst there may be some development on the site which might be regarded as unauthorised, in the context of all the circumstances enforcement action in respect of such development is not considered to be expedient. Policy E3 allows for reasonable expansion in such circumstances and there are facilities required by the WTS and the workshops that make a shared site with linked facilities a sensible option.

The existing building complex sits within a hollow. The development would be sunk
8.4 further into the ground with the rear of the office and the WTS building being built into the surrounding land. The existing access which gives clear views into the site

would be closed and landscaped. The new access that curves into the site would allow much of the site to be screened from views from the road. Extensive landscaping is also proposed around all the boundaries such that the wider impact of the development on the AONB would be reduced in comparison to the existing situation and limited as much as possible.

Existing buildings on the site are utilitarian in form and design and some are terrapin buildings; they are not attractive. The proposal gives the opportunity to provide an office building of a high quality design using sustainable principles of construction and the workshops contain activities that had been carried out in the open and would be of a higher quality of building than existing workshops.

The provision of the WTS will ensure that necessary road improvements are carried out on Clacks Lane and the phasing of construction proposed will ensure that works on the WTS will be carried out prior to the workshop and office element of the proposal.

For the above reasons your officers recommend that planning permission is granted.

9.0 RECOMMENDATION

9.1 That Planning Permission be granted subject to the attached conditions

- 1. Commencement 3 years**
- 2. Samples of all materials**
- 3. Landscaping scheme**
- 4. Contamination**
- 5. The development hereby permitted shall not be used other than for a purpose associated with a waste disposal and collection business being operated from the site.**
- 6. Provide sustainable design features as specified.**
- 7. No floodlighting except in accordance with an approved scheme**
- 8. Audible vehicle reversing alarms used on the site must not be clearly audible at the boundary of Goulds Grove Cottages and RAF Benson housing between the hours of 22:00 and 6:00 hours.**
- 9. Noise from machinery and vehicle movements on the site must not exceed 50 dB LAeq (15**

minutes) at the boundary of Goulds Grove Cottages and RAF Benson housing.

10. All details relating to drainage and disposal of surface water as shown in drawing 007/P/27C (of planning permission P98/W0683/CM) shall be implemented and maintained for the life of this permission.

11. Provide landfill gas risk assessment

12. No soakaways shall be constructed such that they penetrate the water table, and they shall not exceed 2 metres in depth below existing ground level.

13. No soakaways shall be constructed in contaminated ground.

14. Restoration of temporary truck parking area on Ewelme
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15. Implement highway improvements detailed on drawing
no 2004/1729001

16. Construction of the site access in accordance with the standard specification

17. Construction of the estate road serving the development, including footways and verges in accordance with the standard specification.

18. The internal road layout to be agreed

19. Provide cycle parking.

20. Provide car parking.

21. Drainage strategy scheme.

22. No HGV's or skips parked within the car park at anytime.

23. Provide a Green Travel Plan.

24. Close existing site access and the footway (if applicable) and verge reinstated

25. Details of access including visibility splays for the junction of Icknield Way / Temporary Container and Lorry Park

26. Provide a Construction Traffic Management Plan

27. Petrol oil interceptors

28. That the development shall be phased in accordance with the details shown on drawing nos 02511 (08) 08A, 09B, 10B, 11B and 12B.

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