



Planning and Development
Environment Department
Elizabeth II Court West
The Castle
Winchester
SO23 8UD

My ref: Hill/Newbourne/12/HCC

Date: 24th February 2012

Dear Sirs

RE: TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 – VARIATION OF CONDITION 5 OF PLANNING PERMISSION 10/96302 TO INCREASE PERMITTED TONNAGE OF COMPOSTING MATERIAL FROM 8,000 TO 15,000 TONNES PER ANNUM, AT NEWBOURNE FARM, ROCKBOURNE

I attach a completed planning application for the variation of condition 5 of planning permission 10/96302, together with the appropriate fee of £170. As the application involves no operational development and no material change of use, it is accompanied by a location plan only.

Background

A Certificate of Lawfulness was granted in respect of the processing of green waste at Newbourne Farm in September 2007. The applicant carried out the operation from that time in accordance with the terms of the Certificate, but in 2010 changes to the rules introduced by the Environment Agency required his waste management licence to be amended and to specifically include composting. There was some doubt at the time as to whether composting was an implicit part of the lawful use of the site (within the terms of the 2007 Certificate), but as the Environment Agency was very keen to clarify the matter the applicant decided to make a planning application to specifically include the composting activity along with some additional hardstanding, a weighbridge and a portacabin. That application, 10/96302, was granted in December 2010.

The permission was subject to a number of conditions which govern the manner in which the site is operated. These included an 'hours of operation' condition, a



condition in respect of tree protection and a condition controlling the finishes of the portacabin, as well as a condition (condition 5) which sets an overall limit on the tonnage of composting material of 8000 tonnes per annum. It is this condition that this application seeks to vary – all other conditions attached to the planning permission would continue to apply.

The Need to vary the limit

At the time of the 2010 application, a specific limit on the amount of green waste to be composted was not envisaged by the applicant. The reason for this is that it is a difficult matter to reliably project, and is heavily dependent upon a variety of factors which include the weather and the availability of alternative sites. The facility at Newbourne Farm can literally be at standstill throughout a period of cold weather, and then one fine weekend can see it very active. In fact a limit was only raised at all as the County Council, as Local Planning Authority, quite properly sought to avoid an 'open-ended' permission that would prevent it having any control over future expansion. The limit of 8000 tonnes was suggested by the applicant as being appropriate to serve his needs for the foreseeable future (in other words, this was not a limit set by the LPA as being a 'ceiling' beyond which further levels should not rise). The figure of 8000 tonnes was, in effect, the applicant's 'best guess' based on his predicted levels of activity.

Since then, however, there have been some changes which he could not reasonably have foreseen. In particular, the site is now receiving green waste from the New Forest District Council's recycling centre at Pennington, as the site to which that was previously being taken (Thorns Farm at East Boldre) is no longer in active operation as it could not respond to the changes required in the waste disposal regulations.

Furthermore, whilst previously the applicant only had an informal arrangement with Veolia for the receipt of its green waste he is now at an advanced stage of formalising that arrangement with a long term contract. This will mean that he needs to build in capacity to accept additional loads where Veolia might have temporary problems with capacity elsewhere.

The Environment Agency has also advised the applicant that each time he requires even a small variation to his licence, this will incur a substantial fee in the order of £6000, and therefore it is in his best interest to apply for a limit that he is never likely to exceed.

A figure of 15,000 tonnes of composting material is therefore considered to be appropriate. Whilst this is an increase of 7000 tonnes on the existing limit, it is important to recognise that this would remain a relatively small facility by county



standards. Furthermore, there will inevitably be fluctuations within the levels received and processed and it is unlikely that the upper limit will ever be achieved. In practice, it is likely that the facility will continue to process around 8,000 to 12,000 tonnes per annum on average, with fluctuations above and below those levels. But it is important for the future of the applicant's business that he has sufficient flexibility to accommodate those fluctuations.

The variation of the condition requires no changes to the composting process and no additional buildings or other changes to operational activities are involved.

Economic considerations

Composting is a major part of Hampshire County Council's waste processing and disposal strategy. Much of the household green waste collected at Hampshire Household Waste Recycling Centres is composted at three major sites within the county. But in addition there are a number of smaller licenced sites where commercial green waste is processed, and one of these is Newbourne Farm. As stated above, Veolia already uses Newbourne Farm, and is very keen to remain able to do so as its next nearest practical alternative is in Basingstoke, which would clearly involve considerably longer road journeys than is currently the case. This would, in turn, increase its carbon footprint and add heavy traffic to the road network, and would consequently undermine the whole purpose of composting and sustainable waste processing and disposal.

It is therefore in the best interest of the County Council's waste strategy that the existing composting operation at Newbourne Farm continues and expands its important role. The operation provides a valuable outlet for the disposal of green waste in this part of the county, and is relied upon by local businesses as well as Veolia as a viable and competitive outlet. Lack of such outlets, or unnecessary limits to their capacity, would lead to longer journeys to other licenced sites or to additional, unlawful disposals that would then incur a cost to the public purse to remove.

Impacts

The existing operation has carried on since the grant of the CLEUD in 2007 with no complaints, as far as the applicant is aware. It is a well-run operation that is regarded highly by local contractors and by Veolia. The Environment Agency is also content with the operation, and has recognised the important role that the site plays in the county-wide strategy.

The operational part of the site is well removed from nearby residential properties, and thus unnecessary noise impacts are unlikely to occur. There are no large buildings required. The site is well screened, and hours of operating are reasonable.



The proposals will probably involve some additional traffic movements, but the extent of these is not anticipated to be significant. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, most of the vehicles now using the facility now are larger articulated vehicles, and these obviously carry a much higher load than the smaller vehicles that formed the bulk of the traffic in the early days of the operation. For example, Veolia articulated vehicles carry up to 24 tonnes whereas the smaller 8-wheeled vehicles carry approximately 7 tonnes. Throughout the mid 1990's and into the early 2000's the site was being visited almost entirely by smaller vehicles, ranging from pick-ups and trailers carrying a tonne or so, through to 7.5 tonne vans/lorries. Evidence submitted to the Council as part of the application for the CLEUD demonstrated that even though overall tonnage processed was relatively low, trip generation was actually very high – it averaged around 1500 trips per year, or 125 per month.

Trip generation presently equates to an average of 2.5 vehicles per day over a weekly (5 and a half days) operational period, or some 56 vehicles per month. That is because vehicles are larger and carry much higher loads, and because material is brought in bulk rather than in bits and pieces.

So more capacity at the site does not simply or necessarily involve more trips generated at the same ratio – whilst it is likely that there will be some increase in trip numbers from present levels as a result of the variation of the condition, based on current patterns the applicant estimates that this increase is likely to be in the order of 10%. But the overall trip generation figures will still be well below what they were before the involvement of Veolia and other larger vehicle operators.

Secondly, some of the vehicles now using the facility do not come through the village of Rockbourne but come in via the A354. There is no control over which route vehicles use of course, but the practicality is that some are now using this route, depending upon the point of origin of the green waste they are carrying.

In addition, for the last 4-5 months the site has been receiving waste at levels which would in effect exceed its 8000 tonne limit (if continued over the remainder of the year) in any event, and has done so without complaint. It is therefore reasonable to assume that such levels do not lead to any marked increase in complaints or in impact perceived.

In terms of physical changes, these too are expected to be limited. There may be some additional storage of material on the ground but there is no need to increase the area of land available to accommodate this, and any such additional storage would be absorbed into the arrangements already in place.



Planning Policy

The site lies within an AONB and within the countryside, but is not covered by any nature conservation designations. It already benefits from a Certificate of Lawfulness of Existing Use for green waste processing and a planning permission that specifically provides for composting.

At the national level, PPS10 states at paragraph1:

The overall objective of Government policy on waste, as set out in the strategy for sustainable development, is to protect human health and the environment by producing less waste and by using it as a resource wherever possible. By more sustainable waste management, moving the management of waste up the 'waste hierarchy' of prevention, preparing for reuse, recycling, other recovery, and disposing only as a last resort, the Government aims to break the link between economic growth and the environmental impact of waste. This means a step-change in the way waste is handled and significant new investment in waste management facilities. The planning system is pivotal to the adequate and timely provision of the new facilities that will be needed.

It continues..... *Positive planning has an important role in delivering sustainable waste management: through the development of appropriate strategies for growth, regeneration and the prudent use of resources; and; by providing sufficient opportunities for new waste management facilities of the right type, in the right place and at the right time.*

At the county level, the Hampshire Minerals and Waste Core Strategy 2007 provides the relevant policy framework, although most of its policies understandably relate to the establishment of new waste developments where the principle is not already established, as in this case. There are a range of policies that address this point. Policy S1 demonstrates how highly the aim of recycling and composting is held, as it requires new development to facilitate the sorting, recycling and composting of waste.

Policy S3 sets out how the county aims to become net self-sufficient in waste terms, and how waste should be disposed of at the nearest appropriate site. This includes green waste, and in this case the site is located where its loss would ensure greater journey lengths for established local contractors. The proposals therefore fulfil the aims of policy S3.

Policy S4 seeks to increase the percentage of waste recycled and Policy S5 seeks progressive increases in the capacity for processing all forms of waste, including



green waste. An increase in capacity at Newbourne Farm would therefore contribute directly to the achievement of these aims.

Policy DC8 seeks to ensure that impacts arising out of developments are acceptable, and for the reasons already addressed above that is the position with Newbourne Farm.

The Annual Monitoring Report 2010/11 produced by the County Council sets out indices for the achievement of various waste management targets. With regard to policy S4 of the Core Strategy, it is noted that the total recycled and composted waste (which includes green waste) is 39% of total arisings. This is down on the 41% achieved in the previous year, and well below the County's target of 50%. With reference to policy S5, the AMP (page 13) identifies that with regard to composting, three new composting or green waste facilities will be required to achieve progressive year on year cumulative targets.

It can therefore be concluded that the proposed increase in capacity of the site for composting at Newbourne Farm is an important part of the overall waste strategy for the county, and is a positive step in the Local Planning Authority's waste recycling ambitions. It would in fact reduce the need for new, additional sites to be created to achieve the County Council's strategic target. The proposed development complies with prevailing planning policy and would further its aims.

Biodiversity

A completed biodiversity checklist accompanies the application.

Flooding

The site does not lie within an area at risk of flooding, according to the Environment Agency's published flood map.

Access

There are no changes proposed or required to the access arrangements that already exist, as these are adequate and provide for a safe means of access to the site.

The variation to condition 5 sought can therefore reasonably be granted in the circumstances.

Finally, I have examined the 1APP checklist for both National and Local requirements and do not consider that any other information is required in the circumstances of this



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case. I therefore look forward to receiving confirmation of registration of the application in due course.

Yours Faithfully

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